

THE BLACK PRESS, 1945-1963

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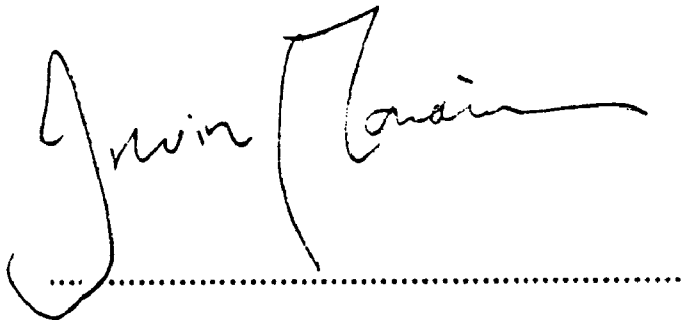
The growth of the black mass media and
their role as ideological disseminators

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I, Irwin Manoim, declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work; that no part of it has in the past been submitted to any university for any degree; and that the information contained here has not been obtained by me in any capacity other than as a student at this University.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Irwin Manoim". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal dotted line.

IRWIN MANOIM
April 10 1983

A number of editors, ex-editors and journalists provided me with valuable information for this study. Unfortunately, due to the contentious nature of some of this information, several of these people have asked not to be named. Those who can be named, and who proved most helpful, are Frank Barton of the International Press Institute in London; Ike Brooks and John Lee (previously of *Zonk* magazine); Arthur Maimane (previously of *Drum*); the late Colin Thompson (previously a Bailey organisation editor); and Denis Beckett (previously assistant editor of *World*).

I should also like to thank my supervisors, Dr Belinda Bozzoli, who provided me with much-needed suggestions and criticism; and Professor Tim Couzens, whose own research material on the subject, particularly on *Bantu World*, proved indispensable.

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Abstract

South African industry enjoyed unprecedented growth from the Second World war onwards, with substantial increases in foreign investment and in more sophisticated production techniques. Sales specialists began to search for new, untapped markets. One of these was the African market, hitherto no more than a dumping site for poor-quality 'kaffir goods'. Advocates of the African market argued that township spending, particularly by what they called the 'rising black middle classes' far outstripped expectations. They argued that unless the buying power of the African population was harnessed, the growth of industry as a whole would be impeded. Articles on the subject began to appear regularly in the marketing trade Press, and 'African' divisions were started at some of the larger advertising agencies. But while advertising expenditure on the African market did indeed increase, it never rose to the expected heights. The reason was that industry found itself snared between two conflicting requirements — for cheap black labour to produce goods, and for adequately-paid black consumers to purchase these.

This ambivalence in manufacturing industry's attitude to the African market was to shape the development of the black Press, which had begun in the previous century as an African- owned vehicle for the articulation of black political aspirations. Beginning in the nineteen-thirties, and accelerating after the war, the black Press attracted increasing attention from white entrepreneurs who believed that the African market offered lucrative commercial possibilities.

The first white-owned, black Press organisation, Bantu Press, was able to swallow almost the entire black-owned Press in only a few years, and to set up a distribution monopoly which was to last, unchallenged, for decades. But because advertising revenue was never sufficient to cover losses, the company was forced to seek aid from larger companies. Shares in the company moved into the hands of increasingly larger corporations, in particular Anglo American and the Argus Printing and Publishing Company.

The dominance of the Bantu Press publications was challenged after the war by a variety of mass-market publications, all designed primarily as vehicles for national advertising. The first of these was *Zonk* magazine, which, for a few years, became the first black publication to make profits. But *Zonk*, too, was unable to

sustain its initial momentum and was bought up by an Afrikaans publishing monopoly. A third company, the Jim Bailey organisation, published two popular publications, *Drum* magazine and *Golden City Post*. Both of these attracted considerable advertising support, but never enough to ensure profits. Only Bailey's personal wealth sustained his empire.

- The switch from a political, black-owned Press to a commercial, white-owned Press, changed the nature of the news published by the Press. Audiences were broadened from small, homogeneous elites, to heterogeneous mass readerships. Didacticism was displaced by entertainment and there was an increasing emphasis on readability at the expense of serious discussion. Journalistic skills were developed, particularly those which helped sell newspapers, such as layout, photography and sub-editing. Black, 'political' editors were displaced by white technical experts. Where once the black Press had been the political pacesetter for the black community, it became increasingly distanced from political developments during the fifties and early sixties.

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1 Introduction

To label this a study of the black Press is perhaps a misnomer. It is a study of a white-financed, white-managed, white-edited Press which happened to be aimed at black readers. It is a study of the absorption of African-owned newspapers by white commercial interests, some of which were absorbed in turn by still larger white interests. In many senses it reflects South Africa in microcosm — the growth of an urban black population in the wake of an expanding secondary industry; the ambivalent attitude of white-owned commercial interests towards blacks as labourers on the one hand and as consumers on the other; and the corporate tendencies towards monopoly.

The theme can be described briefly thus: the Second World War was followed by a boom in the South African manufacturing industry, which was accompanied by a search for new markets for locally-produced consumer goods. Certain manufacturers believed that the country's potentially most profitable market lay in the rapidly mushrooming — but commercially untapped — African townships. This increasing advertising interest allowed for an expansion in the existing black Press from small journals aimed at an educated elite to mass-circulation newspapers and glossy magazines aimed at the working classes. The shift in audience involved a change in the style, content and priorities of the Press, away from the staid, didactic style of previous years toward a razzmatazz, visually exciting 'pop' formula borrowed from foreign, predominantly English, models. Yet for all its gains in size, capital and equipment, the post-war Press was as financially unstable as its predecessors. A fundamental obstacle remained — the profits of commerce depended more on blacks as cheap labour than on blacks as moneyed consumers, and black wages would never rise sufficiently to interest the majority of advertisers. The black Press was forced to wage a near-constant war against financial disaster. Major white-owned corporations had to be persuaded to invest in the Press and these companies in turn made alterations to basic policies and organisation. The black Press became an arm of the entertainment industry and the articulation of

political aspirations took second place to escapism and amusement.

The time period for the bulk of this study extends from the post-war years, when the advertising build-up began, to the early sixties when the temporary slump that followed Sharpeville caused a decline in the fortunes of the black Press. But since history does not allow for tidy cut-offs, parts of the study go back as far as the early part of the century and others go forward into the late sixties and early seventies.

The black Press, ignored for many years by academics, has recently been the subject of several studies. Researchers such as Tim Couzens, interested in the development of black South African writing, turned to the Press when 'it became apparent that an understanding of early black written literature was dependent on a knowledge of the history of the black Press'.¹ The primary interest of the literary scholars has been newspapers as forums for an emerging black literature — rather than newspapers per se — and the stress has been on the emergence of different writing styles and different reading publics. The most useful works on the Press itself have been produced at Rhodes University's School of Journalism. The first major study of black newspapers was Fred St Leger's 1975 doctorate *The African Press in South Africa*, which was dominated by a statistical contents analysis of the major black daily newspaper the *World*. But undoubtedly the most valuable work in the field has been the extensive bibliography compiled by Les and Donna Switzer, *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho, 1836-76*, which contains scrupulously researched potted 'biographies' of every major or minor black publication to appear. The introduction to this book provides an invaluable overview of the full range of the black Press.

Media theory has become increasingly sophisticated of late, with some of the most interesting work emanating from British sociologists. Cultural criticism has a long tradition in Britain, dating back to Carlyle and Matthew Arnold, but has almost invariably involved an elitist distaste for 'debased' mass culture. F R and Q D Leavis, as well as T S Eliot, all three high priests of English literary purity, argued that only a select, knowledgeable, elite could safeguard a society's cultural heritage.² Even the later, more radical interpretation of Richard Hoggart, argued that pulp literature was destroying traditional folk and working class cultural forms.³

The first thorough-going British critique of the mass media came from another literary critic, Raymond Williams, whose approach combined a typically English

- 1 Tim Couzens, *A Short History of The World*, pl. Seminar paper, University of the Witwatersrand, 1976. A much-revised and expanded version of this has subsequently appeared, which provides an excellent outline of the history of the Press from its earliest years onwards. *A History of the Black Press in South Africa, 1836-1960*.
- 2 Q D Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*; F R Leavis, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*; T S Eliot, *Notes towards a Definition of Culture*.
- 3 Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*.

emphasis on culture with a more radical, neo-Marxist methodology. His approach has changed over the years, but the general thrust has been to reject the Hoggart view that the mass media impose alien forms upon existing culture, arguing that they work instead by borrowing from and transforming existing forms. The dominant culture is in a state of perpetual flux, continually reshaping itself so as to contain oppositional values. Williams was also important for his rejection of the orthodox Marxist opposition between base and superstructure, preferring a dialectic between social being and social consciousness. He played-down economic factors and insisted upon the totality of culture and other social processes within a society conceived of as a complex expressive totality.⁴

Another path-breaking work dating from the sixties was Cohen and Young's *The Manufacture of News: Deviance, Social Problems and the Mass Media*, which included a number of revisionist empirical studies of media coverage of strikes, gang violence, demonstrations and other 'fringe' events. Based on (but very different from) various American studies of 'sub-cultures', the thrust of the book was to examine the media role in upholding widely legitimated values and creating symbolic scapegoats. The core of their argument was a model of the media as a 'reality-distorting' form of social control.

The Cohen and Young book influenced a number of later studies, particularly in its emphasis on the distorting effect of the media and in its empirical methodology. The most prominent of these successors has been the Glasgow University Media Group, which has published two studies of British television's day-to-day coverage of specific strikes.⁵ Other writers have made similar studies of trade unions, the wire services and international coverage. Most of these works are rigorously researched, but tend at times to equate empirical description with explanation.

Perhaps the most important work has been done by what is loosely known as the 'Birmingham School'. The name stems from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, whose one-time director, Stuart Hall, is its most prominent writer, but most other 'members' work for the Open University or various universities and polytechnics. The frequently conflicting approaches of members of the 'school' fall into three main categories:

The first, represented by the school's work in the early seventies for the Open University, was heavily influenced by the then-current Althusserian orthodoxy.⁶ Discussions were usually at a high level of abstraction, dealing in particular with epistemological issues. The chief characteristic of the school was its structuralist understanding of ideology not as a distorted 'mirror' of 'reality', but as the active relationship of individuals to the conditions of their real-life existences. Ideology

4 As argued in his article in *New Left Review* 85, 'Base and Superstructure', 1973.

5 *Bad News*, published in 1976 and *More Bad News*, published in 1982.

6 *The Study of Culture*, eds Tony Bennet, Jay Blumier et al. Five volumes, designed around a course series in 1977.

was treated as a non-conscious, objective element in the social structure, which avoided the 'conspiracy theories' of some early theorists.

The second category, represented by Hall himself, was in some respects a return to the 'culturalism' represented by earlier British writers. His work has been influenced by Althusser, (although with reservations which have increased over the years), by Gramsci (Hall's major influence, particularly in his discussions of how hegemony must constantly be won and how ideological systems are internally contradictory rather than unified) and the Russian writer Volosinov (particularly in his discussion of ideology as a material reality residing in the particular organisation of visual or aural signs). Hall's work, like that of the structuralists, is usually abstract, concerned with questions of epistemology, the functioning of signs and the reproduction of ideology. And, like Williams, he rejects the base-superstructure model, concentrating on 'culture', which he defines as the set of values of particular social groups, arising out of their historic conditions, through which they understand and respond to their conditions of existence.⁷

But it is the third category to which I will devote the most attention here, for its general direction is the one I have made use of myself. I do this in the full knowledge that it has been severely criticised, particularly by Hall himself. The reason for my choice is that I believe that the characteristics of the particular era I have chosen cannot be adequately dealt with by any other approach. The approach is crudely labelled by some as the 'political economy approach'.

At its worst, this approach deserves all the approbrium it gets. It argues that because the Press is owned by powerful capitalist interests, it therefore works in the interests of Big Capital. In the case of the black Press, it argues that because the Press is owned by whites, it projects white ideas. But while it may indeed be true that the publishing industry is white-owned and has monopolistic tendencies, this is merely descriptive — one needs to *prove* that there is a necessary, simple, unmediated relationship between the beliefs of white, big-business owners and the reports that appear in their newspapers.⁸

At its best, the political economy approach is characterised by the work of Graham Murdoch and Peter Golding and, in a modified form, James Curran and Jean Seaton.⁹ Their method is to return to the (by now) much despised material base and work upward. Their chief area of interest is in unravelling the connections

7 Hall's work has appeared in a number of books, but the articles most immediately related to mass media problems appear in the two major 'Birmingham School' texts, *Mass Communication and Society* and *Culture, Society and the Media*, both edited by Gurevitch, Curran, Woollacott et al.

8 Examples of this kind of theory are *The Newspaper Game* by Paul Hoch and , in the South African context, Brian Bunting's polemic *The Story Behind the Non-White Press*.

9 Their work is included in the texts described in Footnote 7. Curran and Seaton have also produced a book on television, *Power Without Responsibility*.

between economic and intellectual production — without making the simplistic assumption that cultural output is a direct reproduction of economic interests.

Advocates of this school insist on treating the study of the mass media not as a self-contained discipline, but as one section of an overall study of social and cultural reproduction. Furthermore, they treat the 'communications industry' as a single unit, discussing film, radio, television, the Press and rock music as various aspects of a single cultural phenomenon. Their method is to begin with economic forces and relations and discuss how these give rise to particular forms of organisation, within which certain professional work practices develop. These in turn lead to particular beliefs about style, impartiality, brevity and so forth, which inform the newspapers and magazines which are produced. The 'political economy' method has two great advantages. Firstly, it facilitates empirical analysis far more easily than the 'culturist' methodology adopted by Hall, which, because of its high level of abstraction, meshes uneasily with research work. Secondly, it is flexible enough to expand into the field of historical study, unlike textual analyses, which by concentrating on the internal dynamics of particular texts, conceived of at specific moments, tend to be ahistorical.

This, roughly, is the method I have adopted, despite the criticisms by Hall that the approach runs the danger of 'conceiving the economic level as not only a necessary, but a sufficient explanation of cultural and ideological effects'.¹⁰ While acknowledging this, I shall argue that the chief characteristics of the black Press during the era I have chosen, are 'material' ones: a new interest in black consumers by advertisers; a switch from small-scale black to large-scale white ownership; a change in audience from elites to working-class masses. These factors in turn led to organisational changes, the replacement of certain categories of people, the supersession of certain kinds of editorial strategies, and, ultimately, to changes in the actual form and content of the publications themselves. None of this can be adequately explained in a 'culturist' exposition such as Hall's. I have also avoided isolating the Press and treating it as a phenomenon on its own — its growth has been linked to manufacturing industry in general, to changes in the composition of the township populations and to shifts in social and political attitudes. Where I have departed most substantially from the British 'political economy' theorists has been in ignoring the links between different sections of the mass media. In a country such as South Africa, where television is a recent phenomenon, cinema is underdeveloped and the major broadcasting interests are mouthpieces of the State, the argument for a single 'mass culture' does not appear to apply.

In keeping with recent trends in studies of South African society to attempt to 'rediscover' a lost, 'alternative' history, my study emphasises empirical research. This has included interviews with people involved in the Press, particularly at

¹⁰ Quoted in *Culture, Society and the Media*, op cit, p26.

decision-making levels; as well as archival research through trade journals, certain company documents, government publications and, of course, the newspapers and magazines themselves.

Strictures on time and length have necessarily placed limits upon the range of this study. It is confined to an examination of the effects of commercialisation upon the structure, direction and form of the English-language black Press. I have ignored, or underplayed, those factors which have already been much covered by others — State political action against the Press, for example. I have also not gone into the vexed problem of media political 'effects' upon audiences, or detailed semiological studies of the meaning of signs in the context of the black Press, both of which would require lengthy studies of their own.

Most of the material presented in this study has, to the best of my knowledge, not been publicised before. There have not been any studies which have linked the advertising industry and its particular history to a history of the Press. Although there have been studies of the daily newspaper *World*, much of the historical detail was not previously known. The material on *Zonk* magazine is entirely new — the magazine has been virtually ignored and credit for a good deal of its pioneering work has gone to the better-known *Drum* instead. Similarly, *Golden City Post* has been little researched before.

One last problem which should be noted here, is that in the case of a 'closed society' like journalism, where only a handful of employers control all potential job opportunities, interviewees are often apprehensive about being named in print. The researcher is left with the problem of either accepting 'off the record interviews' or losing many valuable insights. I opted for the first approach, with the approval of my supervisors. It should be pointed out that this reluctance to be quoted applied mainly to past and present employees of the Bailey organisation (the only Press organisation discussed in the study which still exists today) who were reluctant to jeopardise their futures with the country's largest employer of black journalistic labour.

2 The growth of manufacturing and expansion of marketing

A new gospel rose to prominence in South Africa soon after the Second World War. It had been around for some time, but only now was it being heard in the halls of power. It scorned the old virtues of thrift and simple living and preached instead a credo with only one catechism: What you buy is what you are. The high priests of this religion were South Africa's fast-swelling ranks of manufacturers, its missionaries were advertising agencies and the aim was to convert the as yet unbelieving mass of black South Africans to the new faith: salvation comes in a bottle.

One of the earliest expressions of this credo, couched in suitably evangelical terms, was to be found in the opening paragraphs of a booklet published by the biggest black newspaper organisation, the Bantu Press, and aimed at white business executives.

The advertising profession is in a very real sense the custodian of public progress. Our job is one which should and does dovetail into the development of commerce, without which there could be no civilised progress ... The buying habits and evolution of the Bantu have a direct bearing on the permanency of our civilisation in South Africa. We are very truly serving South Africa by promoting racial harmony, without which there can be neither industrial peace nor commercial progress.¹

Commerce, the argument went, was the great educator. Possession of consumer goods would train blacks in the habits of civilisation. And if blacks would only buy

¹ *The Approach to Bantu Press Advertising* p1, 1948. The elaborately expressed sentiment soon struck a sympathetic chord - the marketing magazine *Selling* quoted the first sentence of this paragraph approvingly in support of its own argument that 'the importance of advertising direct to the Bantu people' was insufficiently appreciated. (*Selling* April 1948, p57.)

A similar trend — and similar quasi-religious language — could be observed in America some two decades earlier: President Calvin Coolidge once told a gathering of advertisers: 'Advertising ministers to the spiritual side of trade.' (Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness* p33).

more goods, they would strengthen business, thus helping themselves.

The same sentiment was expressed in the literature of the marketing world. The magazine *Selling*,² aimed specifically at advertising agencies and marketing executives, began to articulate the idea as early as 1947. That year it ran articles pointing out that advertisers were wrong to think that the South African market was white only;³ articles stressing the need for free education to primary school level and a national health scheme for blacks;⁴ a true story about a Zulu herd boy who battled for years to become a lawyer (which suggested that blacks too could win the fruits of civilisation if they only tried);⁵ and a feature aimed at overseas readers, about university educated blacks.⁶

References to the subject continued steadily through the fifties in other advertising and business publications of the period. Some random examples were: Eric Rosenthal in a publication on black journalism stressed that: 'The role of the advertiser in the development of the African Press will one day be appreciated.'⁷ *Selling* argued in 1949 that for the well-being of the economy it was vital that black wages, and hence black spending, be raised.⁸ An article in the rival publication *S.A. Packaging and Sales Promotion* took up the same theme, stressing the need for marketing people to understand black languages and to develop adequate statistics about the black market.⁹ In 1957, the same magazine advocated putting electricity in 'native areas' because it would increase black spending.¹⁰ And in 1958, in a speech to the first-ever South African advertising convention, the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences, Mr M D C de Wet Nel, phrased the 'gospel' in consciously evangelical terms:

As a European and a Cabinet Minister, I am fully aware of my grave responsibility to the Bantu. You are no doubt just as deeply conscious of your own responsibilities (as advertisers) which will play an important role in the development of the Bantu market, yes, and also of the Bantu mind ... A great task awaits you. You will have to educate the Bantu. It will be education in the true sense of the word. Here you will have to fulfill the role of a missionary who is the bearer of a message ...¹¹

At the Second Advertising Convention, held the next year, the major theme un-

- 2 Published by Hortors Limited in Cape Town from 1947 onwards. It later became *Advertising and Selling* and was incorporated in the rival publication *Selling Age* in 1958.
- 3 *Selling* August 1947, p31.
- 4 *Ibid.* September 1947, p41.
- 5 *Ibid.* October 1947, p21.
- 6 *Ibid.* November 1947, p21.
- 7 *Bantu Journalism in South Africa* no date (1948?), p22.
- 8 *Selling* February 1949, pp34-5.
- 9 *S.A. Packaging and Sales Promotion* March 1955, p35.
- 10 *Ibid.* August 1957, p15.
- 11 *Report of the First Advertising Convention* 1958.

der discussion was 'the black market'.¹² One of the speakers, Mr Charles Marx, president of the Federated Chamber of Industries, echoed the Minister's plea:

Advertising has been and is the single most important factor in influencing particularly our urban Bantu towards acceptance of at least the outward symbols of our Western Civilisation.¹³

The catchwords were 'civilisation' and 'education'. But not everyone in the advertising community felt a need for euphemisms. At the next advertising convention, in 1960, one speaker could be quite blunt — if not downright cynical — about the role played by advertising over the preceding years:

A fallacy applicable to all marketing, but of particular importance when considering the African market, is the belief that marketing exists solely to satisfy the needs of consumers. What consumer need was there for roll-ons, lipstick, perfumes and so on until creative marketing stepped into the picture? Marketing creates needs ... it makes people desire what you have to sell ... We must realise that almost all our efforts in the African market should be designed primarily to change culture — the traditional way of doing things — and in some cases even to introduce ideas which are foreign to and contradict tradition.¹⁴

The theme of this first section of the study is why the advertising community's interest in the black consumer arose, how advertisers set about attempting to 'change black culture', and, ultimately, how this changed the structure of the black media.

The growth of the marketing sector

A brief outline of the economic history of South Africa is necessary to help explain the background to post-war advertising's interest in black consumers.

The development of gold mining in the latter part of the last century attracted massive foreign investment in South Africa¹ which helped to provide the pre-conditions for the rise of secondary industry after the First World War.² These pre-

12 In October 1959, *Selling Age* reported that 'The opening address by Mr Charles Marx expressed the belief of many delegates that an early increase in the purchasing power of the Natives provides the main possibility for a major expansion of turnover.' (p15).

13 *Report of the Second Advertising Convention* 1959.

14 J E Maroun, speech to the *Third Advertising Convention* 1960, p122.

1 Martin Legassick: 'Capital accumulation and violence', p260, in *Economy and Society*, Volume 3, 1974. Also: Robert Davies: *Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa*, pp43-45.

2 Legassick, op cit, p261. Also Graeme Bloch: *The Development of Manufacturing Industry in South Africa, 1939-69*, unpublished MA thesis, pp74-5.

conditions were not only financial — they included the forced marshalling of armies of cheap, unskilled black labour. The process of proletarianisation included the confinement of rural populations in areas too small and poor to sustain them; various strategies designed to hamper the production of marketable surpluses by the peasantry; and hut and head taxes which forced the cash system upon rural blacks.³ Men were proletarianised before women and for years to come, urban males would outnumber females.⁴

Other factors which contributed to the growth of manufacturing were: the First World War itself, which cut off many British imports and forced the production of local equivalents;⁵ the mining industry's need for readily-available heavy engineering, construction and explosive goods; the introduction of protective tariffs by the new Pact government in 1925; and manufacturing initiatives by the state, which established the giant public-funded corporations ESCOM (1923) and ISCOR (1928).⁶

Foreign capital played an important part in the development of secondary industries. Many of the early 'large' companies were subsidiaries of foreign concerns like General Motors,⁷ Ford, Nestle, Lever Brothers and General Electric. Most local capital went into the development of smaller industries, particularly in the consumer and processing industries such as food, drink, clothing and leather.⁸ The contribution of local manufacturers to the national income rose steadily, if unspectacularly, from 11,9 percent in 1921/2 to 15,4 percent in 1931/2.⁹ The majority of these companies were small, undercapitalised and undermechanised, relying heavily on cheap labour and tariff protection for their profitability.¹⁰

But the Second World War was the real watershed. 'Particularly after the Second World War,' writes Legassick, 'South Africa began to emerge as a state with significant secondary industrial capability.'¹¹ The contribution of manufacturing to the economy, which had already surpassed that of agriculture by 1930, outstripped mining by 1943.¹² The first initiative came from the state, which, through the Directorate of War Supplies, directed economic planning and the distribution of resources. Massive factory building schemes were undertaken, and consumer

3 Harold Wolpe: Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa, in *Economy and Society*, Volume 1, November 1972. Also Bloch, op cit, p65. Also Dan O'Meara, *The 1946 Mineworkers' Strike and the Political Economy of South Africa*. In *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 1979, pp147- 9.

4 Belinda Bozzoli: *Feminist Interpretations and South African Studies*, pp6-9. O'Meara (ibid) gives the male-female urban black ratio as 1:5 in 1921, rising to 1:3 in 1946.

5 Bloch, op cit.

6 Legassick, op cit. pp262-4.

7 Davies, op cit, p208.

8 Bloch, op cit, p76.

9 D Hobart Houghton: *The South African Economy*, p125.

10 Bloch, op cit, p91,92.

11 Op cit, p262.

12 O'Meara, op cit, p149.

goods manufacturers were contracted to supply food and clothing in bulk for soldiers. Factories were also established to supply 'replacement' goods from Britain.¹³ The drain on white male labour forced a search for replacement labour, particularly by white women and black men.¹⁴

The boom continued for several years after the war had ended,¹⁵ helped along particularly by the discovery of rich new goldfields in the Orange Free State¹⁶ and the development of processes for extracting uranium from gold ore residues.¹⁷ State intervention in the economy became increasingly active, 'stimulating industrial rationalisation, regulating imports and exports, securing foreign investment and foreign loans and countering cyclical tendencies'.¹⁸ An important government commission, the Agricultural and Industrial Requirements Commission, urged incentives for new manufacturing industries.¹⁹ Until about 1950, manufacturing was predominantly in labour-intensive 'light-industrial' sectors like textiles, clothing and footwear, metals, building and engineering, food and drink. Since then, the growth areas have been capital-intensive sectors like cars, chemicals, pulp and paper, electronics and military goods.²⁰

Foreign investment in local manufacturing, particularly by the Americans, increased considerably. The Second World War had also proved a boom period in the US, when the country's national markets became international for the first time.²¹ Companies found that their returns on overseas investments were frequently higher than at home. And as earnings abroad rose, profit margins at home began to shrink.²²

Helped by the cutting off of European goods during the war, American investment in South Africa, traditionally a home for British capital, rose rapidly. At the start of the war, imports from the US totalled £4 245 000. At the war's end, they totalled £31 149 000.²³ Once the war had ended, there was an abrupt spurt in overseas investment.²⁴ And in 1947 and 1948, several American multinationals started new subsidiaries in South Africa, including the huge General Motors plant

13 Houghton, p17, 18. Bloch, op cit, p91, 92.

14 Compare also Bloch: 'The suppression of strike activity under the various war ordinances and the patriotic call to make one's contribution brought not only a certain legitimacy to the control of labour, but helped pave the way for white women and African workers to enter the industrial scene in a qualitatively enlarged manner.' (Ibid, p92).

15 Until about 1949 (Ibid, p91)).

16 Houghton, op cit, p17.

17 Legassick, op cit, p281.

18 Ibid.

19 Houghton, op cit, p18.

20 Legassick, op cit, p270.

21 Paul A Baran and Paul M Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital*, p195.

22 Ibid, pp184-201.

23 *The African Market*, August 1947, p8.

24 Private capital inflow quadrupled between 1946 and 1947. (Houghton, op cit, p17.

in Port Elizabeth, Studebaker plants in both Uitenhage and Johannesburg, Goodyear, General Tyres, H J Heinz, Johnsons, AECL, Kayser Lingerie and others.²⁵

Continental investors followed the Americans, with Belgium, Sweden, Norway and France leading the way.²⁶ British investment remained dominant, particularly in consumer goods like food and tobacco as well as in engineering, but there was a change in style from wholly-owned subsidiaries to part-ownership together with local investors.²⁷

The flood of foreign investment could easily — as in so many other colonies — have overwhelmed local capital. But when the war began, local capital was sufficiently established to hold its own against the competition. South African interests dominated certain fields like textiles, canning and printing and a local company, the Rembrandt tobacco group, actually expanded into a multinational itself.²⁸ In 1947, the first ever 'industrial fair', a showcase for local manufacturing and the precursor of the Rand Show was held in August, followed by another the very next month.²⁹

From the perspective of this study two changes were particularly important. The first was the steady increase, despite Government curbs, in the number of black labourers. A war commission noted the 'constant increase in the proportion of non-European operative workers'.³⁰ The growth of a permanent urban black proletariat (elaborated on in later chapters) provided the base for the expansion of the black Press. The urban African population trebled between 1921 and 1946. By the end of the war, one in four Africans lived in urban areas. The percentage of migrant workers steadily dwindled.³¹ The second factor was the change in productive capacity of the manufacturing sector, what Bloch describes as the 'transition from manufacture to machinofacture'.³² The expansion of manufacturing capacity and the increasing sophistication of mass-production techniques precipitated the growth in advertising, as the next section will discuss.

25 *The African Market*, op cit, p11.

26 *Ibid*, pp39-47. An article in *The African Market* named every post-war foreign investment in South Africa. The list of names filled eight pages.

27 Legassick, op cit, p272.

28 *Ibid*, p273.

29 *The African Market*, op cit, p23.

30 Legassick, op cit, p269.

31 O'Meara, op cit, p150.

32 Bloch, op cit, p93.

Expansion into the African market

Advertising was with us long before capitalism, but only recently has it become an all-embracing, ever-present factor in cultural life. The classical economists of the last century, Marx included, gave scant attention to the subject. The marketing sector has expanded in importance from just another service sector to (in the case of the US, for example) second only to the military in its impact upon the economy.¹

In a relatively new market, where competition between a multitude of small companies is still fierce, advertising need play only a minor role. Any firm which wants to increase sales can do so by cutting prices slightly. But when concentration sets in and only a few companies are left, sales techniques change. As Baran and Sweezy put it:

... large firms are able to exercise a powerful influence upon the market for their output by establishing and maintaining a pronounced difference between their products and those of their competitors. The differentiation is sought chiefly by means of advertising, trademarks, brand names, distinctive packaging and product variation ... The differentiated goods cease, in the view of the consumer, to serve as close substitutes for each other. The more telling the effort at product differentiation, the closer is the seller ... to the position of a monopolist ... able to raise his price without suffering a commensurate loss of revenue ...²

The development of modern mass production techniques — assembly lines, high-speed machinery — has enormously expanded the productive capacities of industry. And, for the first time in history, the problem has been not the creation of goods, but the creation of buyers. The sociologist Stuart Ewen, describing the impact of mass-production upon American society some seventy years ago, has argued:

The mechanisms of mass production could not function unless markets became more dynamic, growing horizontally (nationally), vertically (into social classes not previously among the consumers) and ideologically. Now men and women had to be habituated to respond to the demands of the productive machinery. The corollary to a freely growing system of goods production was a 'systematic, nationwide plan ... to endow the masses with more buying power.'

The modern mass producer could not depend upon an elite market to respond to his productive capacity. From a dependence upon local markets or localised markets, scattered nationally, the manufacturer was forced to 'count on the whole United States if he was going to manufacture a large enough quantity of goods to reduce the cost to the point where he could compete with other manufacturers of the same goods' and subsequently distribute his mass produced wares more efficiently and profitably. He was required to create an ideological bridge across traditional social gaps — region, taste, need and class — which could narrow prejudices in his favour.³

1 Baran and Sweezy, op cit, p120.

2 Ibid. p121.

3 Stuart Ewen: *Captains of Consciousness — Advertising and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture*, pp24,5.

A similar trend can be observed in South Africa. The date is some thirty years later and the scale somewhat smaller, but the same tendencies — the growing sophistication of mass production, the search for a wider range of consumers and the need to break down traditional values, can be discerned. As in America, a major obstacle to the expansion of secondary industry was the limited size of the existing market. The white South African population was small and its most affluent sections preferred to buy imported goods, which they considered superior to local equivalents.⁴ For several years after the war, an enthusiastic and influential lobby propagated 'pan-African trade' — the expansion of the local market north of the Limpopo — as an alternative. A prestige magazine, *The African Market*, edited by Sir Alfred Beit, was founded in 1947 to publicise pan-African trade, but the project foundered when one by one the African states gained independence and severed ties with South Africa.

The second option lay with the expansion of the local African market. And indeed, as this section will discuss, this option became increasingly attractive to manufacturers. But it too would never become an ideal solution, due to the fundamental contradiction at the root of South African capitalism: the expansion of industrial production intensified the demand for cheap black labour; and the expansion of marketing depended upon black ability to consume goods.⁵ As Hobart Houghton puts it:

The limited domestic market is ... also due to the fact that a majority of the South African population has only a very low level of consumption. The three-and-three-quarter million whites have on average a relatively high standard of living, but the eighteen million other citizens live for the most part very little above a bare minimum standard ... mass production methods imply mass consumption of their products. Any increase in the income of the poorer section must, however be related to overall increases in productivity because, unless this were so, unit costs of production would rise.⁶

From the war years onward, the rallying cry of advocates of African buying power could be heard repeatedly in trade organs such as *SA Packaging and Sales Promotion; Selling; Selling Age; Press, Advertising and Radio Review*; in annuals like the *Press and Advertising Guide* and at conferences like the *Advertising Conventions*. That the cry was kept up at all was some gauge of its success, but that

4 'Until after the Second World War, a strong preference for imported goods existed among whites.' (Legassick, op cit, p263.)

5 'To each capitalist, the total mass of workers, with the exception of his own workers, appear not as workers, but as consumers, possessors of exchange-values (wages), money, which they exchange for his commodity.' (Ernst Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, p390.)

6 Houghton, op cit, p134. As Wolpe puts it: 'Reforms which would have resulted in higher real wages and improved economic conditions for Africans could not have been introduced without a corresponding fall in the rate of profit ...' (Op cit, p445).

it needed to be repeated so incessantly indicated that the basic contradiction between earning power and buying power remained.⁷

An early advocate of increased trade with local blacks was Sir Alfred Beit, who argued in 1947:

The only solution is to raise the standard of labour by training the African for skilled work and thus increasing his purchasing power ... No amount of argument can dispute the fact that a greater population ... coupled with higher purchasing power, is the best combination for increasing the volume of trade which is needed.⁸

The argument gained popularity among marketers,⁹ especially because its political implications (higher black living standards) could appeal to liberals, while its economic implications (better white profits) could appeal to the more conservative majority. In February 1949, for example, an article in *Selling* — a conservative publication¹⁰ — argued that raising black wages would boost the economy, thus improving things for whites.¹¹ Even the occasional state official, like Dr Werner Eiselen, Secretary of the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, could enthuse about the need for more black consumers.¹² But the most vigorous proponent of all was the liberal *SA Packaging and Sales Promotion*, (renamed *Selling Age* in 1956), which ran, for example, a lengthy feature on the buying patterns of a typical black family, intended to persuade whites that blacks were a viable market for quality goods,¹³ urged the installation of electric lights in the townships because it would increase black spending,¹⁴ did a survey of black

7 The low level of income of the black proletariat acted as a brake and outer limit on the size of the internal market, particularly with respect to commodities that were not 'necessities of life'. (Bloch, op cit, p222).

8 Editorial in *The African Market*, op cit, July 1947, p14.

9 But not necessarily among blacks in general. Marketing specialists, divorced from the problems of production, tended to be indifferent to capital's need for cheap labour. According to Stadler, the engineering journal *SA Industry and Trade*, aimed at manufacturers of technical rather than consumer items, showed, by contrast, a marked antipathy to higher black wages. (Alf Stadler: 'Birds in the Cornfields. Squatter Movements in Johannesburg, 1944-7', in Bozzoli (ed) *Labour. Townships and Protest.*)

10 *Selling* was often uneasy about the aggressive post-war spirit in the marketing sector. It was lukewarm about the introduction of the Audit Bureau of Circulations in 1948 (see later) for example, decrying the new obsession with figures and 'scientific' market research. The rival *Selling Age*, by contrast, advocated a 'modern' approach to advertising. *Selling Age* was edited by Ralph Horwitz, later to become a leading advocate of the liberal academic argument that the advance of capitalism in South Africa would break down apartheid.

11 'Underpayment of Non-Europeans costs Europeans money.' Op cit, February 1949, pp33-35.

12 August 1955, pp30-35.

13 *Selling Age*, August 1957, p15: 'This journal recognises that bringing lights into (township) homes opens up vast turnover possibilities for every type of product which makes a house into a home ... electric light will enormously stimulate the desire of the Native to buy.'

14 Ibid, pp16-22.

retail stores and gave regular publicity to the black media and products aimed at blacks.

The July 1956 edition of *SA Packaging and Sales Promotion* succinctly explained its attitude:

The Union's 12 million Africans form the biggest market — actual and potential — for a very large number of consumer products manufactured by secondary industry. As such they are the natural target for all those concerned with swinging their tastes, desires and habits one way or the other ... the general trend seems to be that advertising to the African seems to be receiving more attention from manufacturers than ever before.¹⁵

The marketers were evidently taking note. For in a brief review of the history of advertising to the black market, Mr William Parr, advertising manager of the Bantu Press organisation, was able to point to a definite post-war boom:

Consider the story of black advertising to date. For several decades, the story was almost totally blank. Advertisers generally assumed that blacks were too poor and too immersed in a subsistence economy to be a market for the output of an industrial economy.

In the post-World War II period a few advertisers began to question this assumption. They took the view that rather than look solely at what material possessions blacks ALREADY used, it would be interesting to discover what blacks MIGHT use if they were supplied with the relevant invitations.

Accordingly, these industrialists began to advertise articles like clothing and furniture to blacks. They weathered the derisive laughter of their competitors and before long it was the pioneers who were doing the laughing.¹⁶

For a while, these laughing pioneers did little more than allocate some of their budgets to the African market on a 'wait and see' basis. But, in the late fifties, a new confidence in the marketing world, caused in part by the ending of the post-war newsprint restrictions in 1956 (which had held down advertising allocations), and in part by a cyclical upswing in the economy, prompted some agencies to make more concrete plans for the African market. In 1957, JW Thompson, the huge international advertising agency, opened an African market research section, designed to analyse African buying habits on a 'scientific' basis. Some of the section's assignments included: analysing the delivery of fresh milk to the townships; common township medical ailments and what Africans believed to be the cause of these; the use of cosmetics; washing facilities and cooking facilities.¹⁷ The key staff member was a black man, Nimrod Mkele, whose opinions on black consumer habits during the fifties will be quoted at various points in this study. The following year, Grant Advertising followed suit, starting a Bantu Research Unit under the

15 Op cit, p19.

16 *Clarion*, May 1976.

17 *Selling Age*, February 1957.

control of a white field manager, with nine specially trained African investigators doing the interviewing.¹⁸

In 1959, the Society of Advertisers announced that 'looking ahead to the expansion of the African market', it had established regional committees throughout South Africa to study 'all aspects' of this market and report their findings to the Society 'as fully as possible'. Later in 1959, Mkele became the first African to be invited to the national convention of the Society of Advertisers, where he delivered a speech on 'Advertising to the Bantu' which, reported *Selling Age*, 'deservedly secured the keenest attention'.¹⁹

Several more agencies had meanwhile opened African market research units, but these were all headed by whites. In May 1960, Bernstein, Wilson and Robinson appointed a black manager for their unit, Mr Daniel Chocho,²⁰ who two months previously had made history on a minor scale by becoming the first black to contribute an article to *Selling Age*. Chocho evidently became a much sought-after man, for, only a few months later, in March 1961, he featured again in *Selling Age*, this time as an executive in the 'newly formed African section of Afamal', a large marketing company.²¹

But perhaps the keynote was struck by a report in 1960, issued for international consumption by the head office of JW Thompson in New York, on prospects for trade with South Africa. The report, published only a few months after Sharpeville, Langa and the State of Emergency (dealt with in more detail in the last section of this study) had made South Africa a pariah in international eyes, enthusiastically assured readers that:

An evolution of rising expectations among (blacks) could result in a market increase at rates that would have a greater effect on the economy of South Africa than did the mining of gold and diamonds ...²²

The enthusiasm of advertisers for the potential of the African market was becoming increasingly utopian. As later sections will show, though, black buying power would never altogether live up to these expectations. The decision of advertisers to devote increasing sums of money to the African market arose less from an understanding of the black sector than from a need to expand sales to keep up with the growing capacity of post-war goods production. The decision to incorporate blacks into the consumer market came first, the field research followed years later. The establishment of African marketing sections in the various agencies had a two-fold purpose: a public announcement of confidence in the black sector, and a

18 Ibid. February 1958.

19 Ibid. October 1959.

20 Ibid. May 1960.

21 Ibid. March 1961.

22 Ibid. November 1960.

private admission that the battle was proving more difficult than had at first been acknowledged. But the hazardousness of their self-appointed task would not deter the agencies and marketing specialists. They could not allow it to deter them — no matter how unpromising their potential customers, there were goods that had to be sold.

3 Advertising and the quest for the black consumer

'Frustration and need deprivation suffered by an individual as a consequence of his membership in a particular group (eg the African group) are important factors for the advertising psychologist to consider, since they create tension and predispose an individual to pay attention to — although not necessarily endorse — suggestions carried by related advertisements.'¹

Capitalist society splits the roles of production and consumption. In a pre-industrial society, the family or extended family forms one of the basic production units, catering for most needs, such as food, utensils, clothing, furniture, building and transport. But industrialisation has separated the functions of consumption and production. Mass production makes small-scale manufacturing uneconomic, high-density city living destroys the conditions which allow for home production, wage earning lessens the incentive to produce and specialisation leads to the erosion of basic skills.

Life in a pre-industrial society revolves around a social organisation in the form of friends, neighbours, elders and community, each with their own roles. But the urban dweller must rely entirely on the market for survival — not only for physical needs like food, housing and clothing, but even for recreation and hospitality or the care of the young, the old and the handicapped.² Consumption is self-justifying and self-perpetuating — even where it causes disruption or stress, even where it meets with resistance, it can offer its own remedies — in the form of more consumer goods. By transforming everything into a commodity, consumer society colonises people's lives.³

This is the kind of pressure that modern commodity production exercised upon South African blacks. Pre-capitalist values, based on an organic system of personal and community relationships, lost their meaning when confronted by the impersonal, atomist relationships of proletarian life. Skills developed over the years no

1 Hazel Rosenthal, *The Social Psychology of Advertising*, unpublished Phd thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1956. Volume II, pp5-6.

2 Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, pp271-283.

3 Ewen, *op cit*, p43.

longer meant much — the source of status and security was no longer the ability to make things, but the wherewithal to buy them. To buy, one needed the means, and those who lacked them were condemned to the social fringes. But there was a further problem. The most visible — and therefore the most powerful — symbol of success in this society could not be bought, it could only be imitated. That symbol was a white skin. This was a white world and to be black was to have already half failed.

The long and complex socialising processes which moulded this 'colonised mentality' fall outside the topic of this study. Suffice it to say that among these processes were a host of market-related institutions: the wage system, the tax system, shopping centres, instant food, pirate taxis, cinemas, billboards and buses. Each of these institutions embodied its own set of commodity-defined values, each of them in turn tied up with ideas about 'whiteness': WHITE civilisation, which was equated with technology, which was embodied in various material commodities ... which were available for purchase. WHITE efficiency, which was equated with organisational skill, which was necessary to acquire wealth ... which was necessary to accumulate commodities. WHITE science, based on logic, which was superior to black 'mysticism' and capable of its own marvels ... many of them available for purchase over the counter. WHITE education, of the skills that gave access to power, which had its own symbols of status ... which could be purchased by those with the necessary means.

This white-black divide may have been no more than a surface manifestation of deeper cleavages which arose from the relationship between labourer and capitalist, but it was its very surface visibility which gave it its power. In a speech to advertisers during the fifties, the leading black expert on consumer behaviour, Nimrod Mkele, appeared implicitly to recognise a class-basis to the problem, but insisted on an ethnic interpretation:

The most important values that influence African buying behaviour derive from European standards, which the African has come to accept as a yardstick to measure his own integration into a society whose ideals he has come to accept as his own ... the African whose income levels permit a closer approximation to the white man's levels is subject to the influences of Press, radio, cinema, outdoor and other forms of advertising ... to the African, English is the key to Western culture, which he desires above all things ...⁴

Whiteness was something that could be bought and displayed:

Africans, like some Afrikaners, are dazzled by degrees. Those Africans whose literacy is in some doubt will make every effort to acquire at least the external trappings of knowledge by parading about the streets with attaché cases which are known as 'bags of knowledge' ... Middle class blacks are nicknamed 'situations' or 'scuse me please' because of their inordinate politeness.⁵

4 Nimrod Mkele, speech to the *Second Advertising Convention*, 1959, p123.

5 Ibid.

Mr William Parr, advertising manager of the Bantu Press, urged that marketers deliberately capitalise on black status-seeking in their advertisements:

The vital point is that the African spends his money. The European subservience to a bank balance has not yet spread to the African. Their personal prestige is based more on the tangible evidence of furniture, clothing, bicycles or cars .. the African is susceptible to planned advertising.⁶

The idea of white superiority was of course not the invention of advertising. Its roots go all the way back to the beginnings of white settlement in the country. What made advertising different was the way it made use of this 'traditional' South African trait for reasons of marketing. It was able to take the ideas of 'whiteness', 'civilization' and 'education' and relate them to the acquisition of commodities. And in doing this, it played a part in the process of changing blacks from small-scale producers to large scale consumers.

How the ideology of white superiority originally arose and how it was related to notions of consumption in the early part of the century fall outside the time-span of this study. But in the late forties a new brand of marketing psychology, geared to overcome consumer resistance and specialising particularly in the 'African Mind', sprang up. 'Scientific' market research methods were introduced only after early attempts at advertising to black audiences⁷ had backfired disastrously:

The need to study the local markets started when pioneer traders peddled their goods to the rural Bantu and discovered basic prejudices which differed with each tribe ... Colour, for instance, was particularly significant ... There are recorded cases where merchandise had to be shipped back to Europe because its colour was not acceptable.⁸

By the forties, a white image of the black buyer had been set up, within limits defined by the consumer process. Shoppers who bought staples rather than luxuries were defined as 'immature buyers'; shoppers who bought high quality goods were defined as 'sophisticated buyers'. Immature shoppers could be made more sophisticated through advertising and there was no need to be too careful with the facts:

In general it is probably wiser to show (Africans) a more idyllic 'advertisers' heaven' than is usual for the European market. As a people who are on the threshold of a new world, Africans like to think of that world in rather more roseate hues than the facts warrant.⁹

6 *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, March 1956.

7 'Modern market research methods were only introduced into South Africa as late as 1947 ...' (Waldo Langschmidt, director of Market Research Africa, *Problems for Research among the Bantu in South Africa*, in *Selling Age*, September 1959, p19.) Another market research pioneer, W E Franklin of Franklin Research, Pty Ltd, gave the same date (1947) in an article in *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, March 1956.

8 Langschmidt, op cit.

9 George Clay: *Advertising and Press Guide to South Africa*, 1948, p181.

Exaggeration was fair play — audiences expected it and audiences were entitled to what they wanted. This attitude of 'give people what they are accustomed to' with its pseudo-democratic connotations, was the mainstay of marketing's self-image as an upholder of humanist values. Marketing strategy — in its own judgement — played a passive role, doing no more than respond to the tastes and values of the world outside without passing judgement. Customers might be persuaded to buy more or to switch products, but the inner urges which drove them to consume were either 'human nature' or 'tribal custom' and thus lay outside the advertiser's control.

The Bantu Press organisation, publishers of some of the largest black newspapers, published a guide for advertisers which stressed a 'whiter than thou' approach:

The features of the African should not be accentuated. Shading should be as light as possible and the lips and nose as close to European characteristics as possible. The African is most sensitive to anything he might construe as ridicule and this can only do harm to a campaign.¹⁰

The unspoken suggestion here, was that advertisers uphold 'whiteness' as the ideal. The unspoken corollary was that blackness was to be despised. Advertisers were being urged to reinforce black feelings of inferiority — with the rationalisation that 'this was what blacks preferred'.

Much the same message was still being preached in 1955, as this guide to advertisers in *Sales Promotion and Packaging* indicates:

A completely European approach to advertising to the African is undesirable, but a swing in the opposite direction is equally disastrous as the African is likely to think he is being talked down to ...

- Avoid types with thick lips and flat noses and Europeanise the features of the models.
- Always dress the characters well. The odd patch for 'realism' could offend.¹¹

The following year, the magazine discussed advertising to blacks once more, raising what it considered the prime questions about black buyers:

Is the African a sophisticate with a yen for all the outer trappings that go with that condition? Or is he a simple-minded working man suffering from chronic stomach trouble? Is he weak or strong, big or undersized? Is his wife as influenced by the use of a cosmetic as her European counterpart seems to be when it is used by the wife of a lesser member of the British peerage? Is the African more influenced by advertisements featuring African models or is he impressed by a white element?¹²

¹⁰ *The Approach to Bantu Press Advertising*, 1948, p7.

¹¹ *Op cit*, August 1955, p35.

¹² *Ibid*, July 1956. The article suggested that there were five possible approaches to advertising to blacks: prestige, beauty, social consciousness, relief of pain and education.

FOR A LOVELIER, LIGHTER SKIN FOR YOU

Thanks to this wonder
of modern science

NEW
ARTRA
Skin Tone Cream

with Miracle-Action
Hydroquinone



Developed by Doctors!
Laboratory Tested!
Proven effective by thousands
of satisfied users!

Now, a complexion cream for better results than ever before. It's the new Artra Skin Tone Cream with Hydroquinone—the scientific-artistic skin-lightening ingredient, laboratory proven for effectiveness and safe use on normal skin. Try it! Massage Artra, lighter skin than skin... it vanishes without a trace of coloration, leaving a perfect powder finish. Soothing and refreshing, too. And most magical

detail of all... Artra's deepening penetrating action begins to work at once to help lighten and soften your skin... gives you that creamy smooth complexion perfect beyond the yellow the best of thousands of beauty minded women everywhere. Use Artra and you, too, can have that radiant glow... that lovelier, lighter "Artra look" with the Artra Skin Tone Cream. Apply at your dressing time or cosmetic session.

Read these facts:

- Contains no ammonia, borax, mercury
- No skin-irritating, other poisons
- Vanishes like water on skin
- The complexion before getting used
- Helps keep skin clear and clean



Using Europeanised facial characteristics as a status symbol. The words tell the reader that Artra cream will give them a lovelier skin. The pictures seem to say that Artra can change working-class Africans into middle-class Europeans

An answer to these questions appeared the same year, with the completion of an influential doctorate study by Dr Hazel Rosenthal on the social psychology of advertising. Dr Rosenthal, who soon became recognised as the country's leading expert on the subject and wrote several articles in advertising journals, believed that ethnic divisions helped explain consumer behaviour. Her research method was to show sample advertisements to test groups divided along ethnic lines into Afrikaner, English, Jewish, Coloured and African sections. The response of the Africans led her to argue that:

Natives are very anxious to behave socially correctly by European standards ... At the present time, political goals appear to interest them very much less than the achievement of personal success and acceptability.¹³

In 1957, *Selling Age*, in a bid to improve its readers' grasp of the 'African mind', visited several township shops. The black store owners who were interviewed shared the marketing experts' opinions that, if goods were to sell, their image had to be 'white':

Mr Nabe (a shop owner) was emphatic that products specially made for the African and marketed to him under an African brand-name — with, presumably, publicity support in the Bantu press — enjoy little demand ... his customers desired more than anything else a European standard of living.¹⁴

In a 1958 article in *Selling Age*, Hazel Rosenthal again supported the doctrine of 'westernise and sell':

The African is eager to adapt himself to a European way of life and advertisements play a part in showing him ways of setting about this adaption. His realisation of their use to him in this regard makes him more 'advertisement prone' than the average European.¹⁵

A decade later, a text book for South African marketing specialists categorised all the inherited consumer lore of the previous years:

The African deliberately imitates the buying habits of the whites because he thinks they are superior and that their goods will give him superior social status among his own people ... The African will often buy goods which are above his means and which are not really necessary. He needs evidence that he is a wealthy man ... status-seeking is stronger among Bantu men than women ... Men's clothes are the main status products ...¹⁶

As the advertisers saw it, they had plumbed the 'African mind' and given blacks what they wanted. What they wanted, it seemed, was to be white.

¹³ Rosenthal, op cit, Vol II, p46. The belief that blacks were not interested in politics was widespread even among liberal whites at the time, as later sections will discuss.

¹⁴ Op cit, August 1957, p19.

¹⁵ Ibid, September 1958, p23.

¹⁶ *A Survey of the Retail Trade in South Africa*, pp33-35.

Once they laughed at him...
NOW HE HAS MARRIED
THE LOVELIEST GIRL
IN THE TOWNSHIP



The girls all used to say, "John is thin and miserable." They laughed at him because he was weak. John bought some Phosferine and

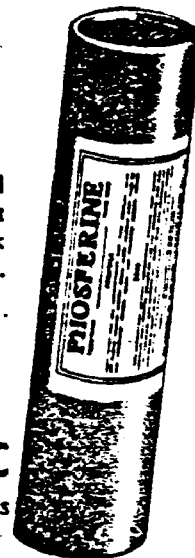
took it every day. He quickly became fit and strong and cheerful. Then he married Lena, who all people say is the loveliest girl in the Township.

Do you feel tired? Is your stomach ill and your body thin? Phosferine will make you fit and well. You can be liked by everyone. Ask the Chemist or the Storekeeper for Phosferine. Ask him to-day.

PHOSFERINE
THE WORLD-FAMOUS TONIC
In Liquid or Tablets from all Chemists and Stores

Distributors:
J. C. ENO (S.A.) Ltd., P.O. Box 1052, Cape Town.

Liquid or Tablets 1/6 & 3/6; Liquid only 6/-



P(N)50-3R

Social acceptability available in liquid or tablet form. The Phosferine advert departs from the standard 'macho' stereotype of the patent medicine advertisements and plays on social insecurities instead

The American negro model

For blacks, however, there was one problem with the white man's model: because it depended for its mystique upon the assumed cultural superiority of white values, it could never fully accept blacks — even westernised blacks — except in subordinate roles. It was a model for blacks to follow, just as long as they did not follow too far. Some supplementary model was needed, one to which blacks would not only aspire, but which they could also reach. Long before the forties, the model had already been found: the American negro.

The fascination with the negro seems to have intensified during the twenties, originally only among the black intelligentsia, but gradually spreading to the working classes.¹ The difference in emphasis is apparent in the choice of heroes — the earliest ones tended to be intellectuals like Booker T Washington and George Washington Carver. By the thirties, these had been joined by entertainers like Duke Ellington and Paul Robeson and boxers like Jack Johnson and Joe Louis.²

The original appeal of the negro model was partly a response to the 'white' model and partly a form of resistance to it. Black Americans had struggled for and won freedom from slavery. Some of them had become respected cultural or intellectual figures, proving that blacks need not be inferior to whites. As David Coplan describes it:

Like American blacks, Johannesburg Africans had tribally heterogeneous ethnic origins and downgraded these origins as emphatically as Afro-Americans did their 'slave-society' of the past. Both peoples had been in lengthy and intensive contact with a dominant white Christian society which discriminated against black aspirations in virtually every sphere of life except hard manual labour. Both were faced with the task of mobilising African-derived and European-derived social and cultural resources in the pursuit of racial unity, 'progress', and a viable modern urban social order despite obstructions by white political authority.³

Tim Couzens quotes the black intellectual Richard Selope Thema, writing in the twenties, that to the South African black, 'the American negro is a kind of elder brother to whom he rightly or wrongly looks for guidance and inspiration.'⁴

1 Tim Couzens, *The New African: Herbert Dhlomo and Black South African Literature in English, 1857 to 1956*. University of the Witwatersrand PhD thesis, 1980. Pages 354, passim.

NOTE: Although the word 'negro' is seldom heard today, it was the generally accepted term during the period under discussion, and for that reason, I have opted to use the word myself throughout this study.

2 Ibid. p345 and 372.

3 'The African Performer and the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry: The struggle for African Culture on the Witwatersrand'. In Bozzoli, (ed), *Labour, Townships and Protest*, pp189-90.

4 Couzens, op cit, p354.

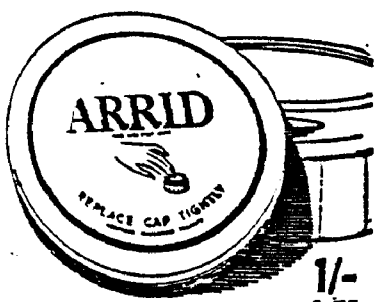
Smart
American
ladies use
ARRID
to stop

*perspiration
and smell*

— and smart African ladies
who are in the know also
use Arrid.

- ★ Arrid is a pure white cream in-
vented by American doctors
- ★ Arrid takes the smell from
perspiration as soon as you
put it on
- ★ It cannot harm your skin or
your clothes
- ★ A pot of Arrid lasts a long
time

Buy **ARRID** from the
chemist or at your store.



1/-
a jar

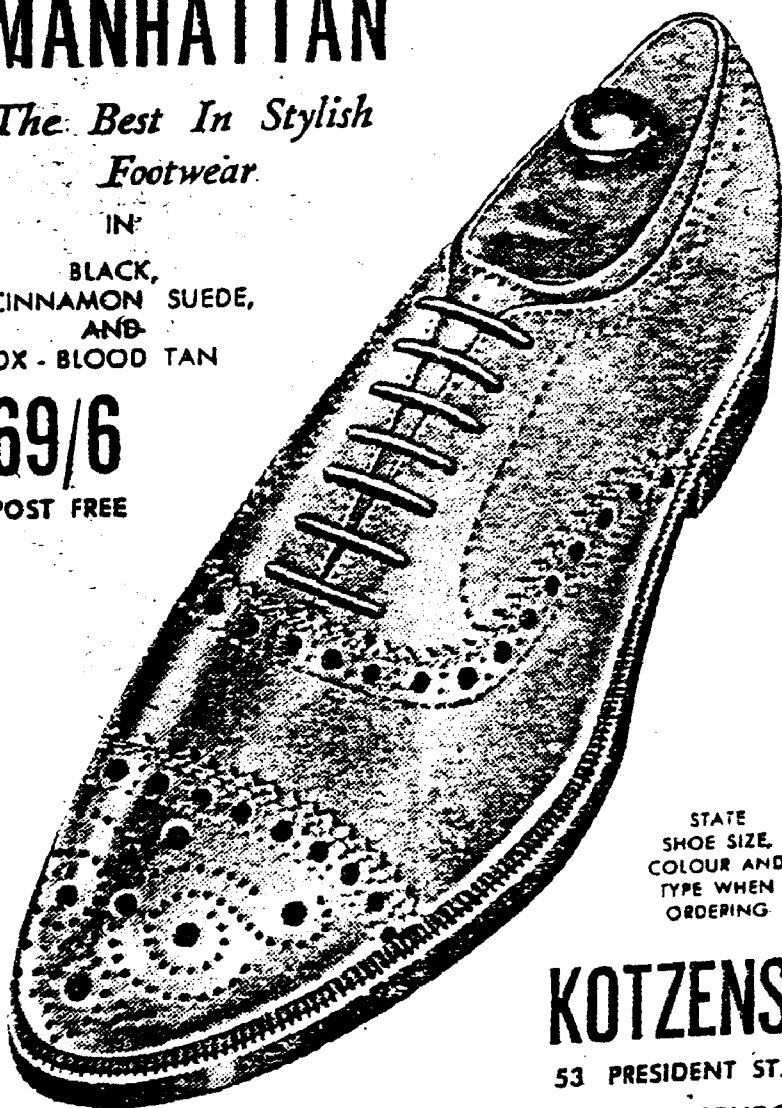
A product of Carter Products Inc., New York

MANHATTAN

*The Best In Stylish
Footwear*

IN
BLACK,
CINNAMON SUEDE,
AND
OX - BLOOD TAN

69/6
POST FREE



STATE
SHOE SIZE,
COLOUR AND
TYPE WHEN
ORDERING

KOTZENS
53 PRESIDENT ST.,
JOHANNESBURG

American imagery as a synonym for glamour: stylish footwear with an
American name, and a deodorant used by the 'smart' American woman

Film was an important medium for the dissemination of American ideas. Couzens describes the writer Sol Plaatje arriving home from America in 1924 with a 'bioscope' and inviting 'the people - and the native Press — to come and see for themselves the wonderful progress attained by our American kinsmen at Washington College and other places'.⁵ Similarly, the American missionary Ray Phillips regularly showed films such as Charlie Chaplin at the popular meeting place of the black intelligentsia, the Bantu Men's Social Centre.⁶ Gramophone records were also important, introducing jazz, blues and swing to local audiences. EMI, His Master's Voice and Columbia began exporting American records to South Africa in the early twenties and 'sales of hand-wound spring gramophones to Africans became appreciable in the late twenties'.⁷

But it was a post-war flood of American consumer goods that truly turned 'Americanism' into a mass-cult. America had always lagged well behind Britain in trade with South Africa, and it continued to do so through most of the forties and fifties. But the difference was that in the forties, American trade made a quantum leap forward. The government's official *Year Book of the Union of South Africa* gave these comparative figures on trade with South Africa:

Average yearly trade in 1 000 pound units

	UNITED STATES	UNITED KINGDOM
1930-4	7 486	25 100
1935-9	16 652	39 986
1940-4	31 068	37 554
1945	31 149	37 290
1946	56 745	74 065
1948	118 325	103 561
1949	76 639	112 552
1950	43 742	113 890
1951	89 073	157 636
1952	82 923	135 634
1953	73 930	149 375
1954	83 094	133 840
1955	100 430	166 606

⁵ *The Social Ethos of Black Writing*, in Heywood (ed), *Aspects of South African Literature*, p74.

⁶ Ibid. Also *The New African*, op cit, p352.

⁷ Coplan, op cit, p190.

⁸ Figures from the 1948 *Year Book*, p1036; 1952 *Year Book*, p1054; 1954-5 *Year Book*, pp658-9; 1956-7 *Year Book*, pp696-7.

TIMES SQUARE OF BROADWAY

IN THE NEW RICH
BROWN COLOUR
SPECIAL PRICE

46'6

POST FREE!

STATE HAT SIZE WHEN ORDERING



The Latest Craze From America!

TWO TONE

GABERDINE SUIT!

CHOOSE YOUR OWN COLOUR COMBINATIONS!



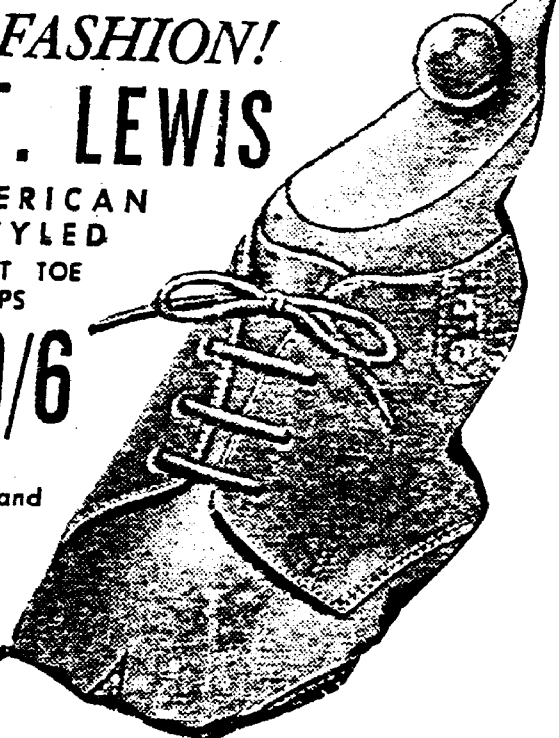
Great Pre-Xmas FASHION!

ST. LEWIS

AMERICAN
STYLED
PATENT TOE
CAPS

69/6

IN
BLACK and
BROWN



Random examples of early-fifties advertisements for clothing which emphasised the American connection

America was only number two, but theirs was the right kind of trade. America marketed consumer goods with instant mass appeal: Hollywood movies, jazz records, pulp novels, two-tone shoes, 'gangster' hats. Their goods were generally cheap and could be aimed at the township masses, not just the black elite. Blacks soon became the country's largest purchasers of Hercules cycles and Dunlop and Goodyear bicycle tyres.⁹

Clothes, those very important status symbols, always on public display, always a shrewd guide to the personality and station of the wearer, were heavily under American influence. Amongst the most popular were gangster-style Stetson hats by Battersby, Christy¹⁰, Baronet and Wilson,¹¹ two-tone shoes by John Drake, President,¹² and Jarman, and, one of the most popular, coloured 'takkie' style canvas boots by Tenderfoot. The most widely advertised cigarette was Gold Dollar, the favourite razor blade Gillette.¹³

Along with the commodities came the American negro cult. It was a cult tailor-made for consumer society; street-smart and populist, flashy and appearance-conscious, its very existence revolved around a series of consumer goods, from records to hats and weekly movies. And, most important, unlike the 'white-model' which could be followed slavishly only by the elite, this cult proclaimed itself open to all — which meant that the consumer market was instantly expanded.

Speaking at the end of the fifties, Mkele could look back on the cult like this:

The American negro influence, imported via the silver screen and glossy magazines, is still a potent one, especially among the younger set. It is obvious in the 'Robert Hall' and 'Gotham Park' suits and in the 'Jameson' shoes that our young men wear, and in their penchant for speaking English à la Peter Cheyney with an American accent.¹⁴

The negro-hero image helped break down the myth of white superiority. Nat Nakasa writes:

Gone is my image of the Superman. And it is looking to see how the image was destroyed which intrigues me ... For some of us it began when Joe Louis knocked out Max Schmeling in the late 'thirties. In one blow, Joe Louis proved that the black man can also make the grade if allowed to compete on the basis of fair play. So did Louis Armstrong and Nat King Cole.¹⁵

⁹ *The Approach to Bantu Press Advertising*, op cit, p9.

¹⁰ Ibid. The hats craze lasted unabated until well into the seventies. Stetsons were 'quite pricey' according to one marketing expert interviewed by *Selling Age*, but that did not stop blacks being their biggest buyers 'as any outfitter would confirm'. (October 1960, p29).

¹¹ *Sales Promotion and Packaging*, July 1956, p21.

¹² *The Approach to Bantu Press Advertising*, op cit, p9.

¹³ *Sales Promotion and Packaging*, July 1956, p21. The canvas Tenderfoot shoes were the most popular amongst the tsotsis, if one is to judge by the photographs in the tabloid weekly *Golden City Post* during the period.

¹⁴ Mkele, op cit, p124.

¹⁵ *The World of Nat Nakasa*, p69.

The Gold Dollar cigarette is
 a symbol of the American
 spirit. It is a symbol of
 the American way of life.
 It is a symbol of the American
 spirit. It is a symbol of the
 American way of life. It is a
 symbol of the American spirit.
 It is a symbol of the American
 way of life. It is a symbol of
 the American spirit. It is a
 symbol of the American way of
 life. It is a symbol of the
 American spirit. It is a symbol
 of the American way of life.



**AMERICANS
 DO THINGS IN
 A BIG WAY**
 Enjoy the rich
 full flavour of
**RICH
 GOLD DOLLAR**



10 for 11d 20 for 1'10d — **PLAIN OR FILTER**

MADE IN U.S.A. BY THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY, NEW YORK, N.Y.

A Gold Dollar advert from Drum in the early sixties — the American imagery is far from dead

American movies had an enormous influence, perhaps because of the immediacy of the medium and its accessibility to the semi-literate. Sampson gives this description of a trip to a township cinema to watch a gangster movie:

The film 'Street With No Name' was a regular — the tsotsi audience had seen it often before. They identified with the villain and booed the FBI. Afterwards they repeated the film cliches to themselves to look hip.¹⁶

The tsotsis may have been the most voluble members of the audience, but they were not the only ones who worshipped American models. After all, Sampson had been taken to the cinema by his own reporters, who as journalists ranked as members of the black elite. They, too, had learned about America at the movies, as one of them, Arthur Maimane, a former reporter on *Drum* and news editor on *Golden City Post*, told me:

I never had any journalistic training. I went into journalism straight from school. Everything I knew about journalism, I learnt from Hollywood movies.¹⁷

The mythical middle classes

The black American influence is still very much alive today, as evidenced by the 'disco-dancing' craze¹ and by slick American-style magazines like *Pace*. But during the forties and fifties its supremacy began to be challenged by the increasing influence of what was known as 'the black middle-classes'. The purpose of this section is to discuss the symbolic importance of this 'middle class' and to raise the question of whether there was any sound evidence that this class was indeed growing.

The importance of the 'rising middle classes' to advertisers was a favourite theme of the Bantu Press organisation. In a pamphlet distributed to advertising agencies

¹⁶ Ibid, pp101-2. Note the way the tsotsis in this passage have turned movie-going into a 'learning experience' in western values. White adult audiences tend to be passive, since clapping or booing can have no effect on celluloid characters, there is little or none of either. The tsotsis watch the same film repeatedly, acting out the 'film cliches' to one another afterwards, thus internalising the values which those 'cliches' embody. But the tsotsis do not simply digest the 'ways of the white man', for the values they attribute to the film are an inversion of those intended by Hollywood — they clap the villains and boo the cops. Outcasts themselves, they identify with other outcasts.

¹⁷ Interview in London, where he now works as a sub-editor for ITN Television — and has become thoroughly Anglicised. (May 1979).

¹ Black South Africa produced one runner-up in the world disco-dancing competition in 1979 (Lucky Mocketsi) and the world champion himself (Godfrey Raseroka) in 1980.

in the late forties, the company advised that:

The literate and progressive Bantu influences the buying habits of the native market ... (which makes up) five-sevenths of South Africa's total population.²

A decade later, Mkele could be quite emphatic about what he too described as the 'growth of the middle classes'.³ Local blacks had become famous beyond South Africa's borders, proving that it was possible to 'make it' in the white world:

The development of the middle class has dealt a death-blow to the cult of the American negro, which for a long time dominated African value systems. The negro was a symbol of all towards which the African was striving — education, wealth and fashion. Today, although Africans do not have all these things, they have found symbols of their aspirations among themselves; they have their own political leaders, educated and wealthy men, their own Miriam Makebas and fashionable women. Of course the vogue is not entirely dead — negroes continue to fire African imaginations, as witness the success of films like 'St Louis Blues', 'Stormy Weather', 'Carmen Jones' or 'Boarding House Blues'.⁴

During the late fifties and early sixties, the emergence of newly independent black states created overnight heroes like Kwame Nkrumah and Kenneth Kaunda, whose mystique rubbed off on local black leaders. Nat Nakasa wrote:

When Nkrumah became Prime Minister of Ghana he started the spiritual revolution which affected all black men in Africa and overseas. No black man who has heard of Nkrumah, Kaunda or Nyerere will ever again swallow the story that he is inferior to the white man.⁵

The rise of local middle-class 'personalities' was recognised and exploited by advertisers. In 1956, *SA Packaging and Sales Promotion* pointed to a new trend in selling to blacks:

Where the element of 'fashion' enters into consideration as it does with the clothing industry and, to a certain extent, with the manufacture of toothpaste, haircreams and the like, it seems that well-known African personalities have a big draw — their likeness always appearing in relation to the products advertised.⁶

The influence of the middle class on other blacks was a favourite theme. But it is debatable whether, in insisting on the need for an expanded market, the advertising

² *The Approach to Bantu Press Advertising*, op cit, p1.

³ Mkele, op cit, p128.

⁴ Ibid. David Coplan points out that the tendency to judge the ability of local performers 'against their conception of black American critical standards' remained. 'Miriam Makeba is more respected for her success overseas with African children's and wedding songs than she ever was for her jazz vocals at home.' (Op cit, p191).

⁵ Nakasa, op cit, p69.

⁶ Op cit, July 1956, p18.

community had not bestowed upon the ostensibly growing middle class' a size that was, at best, unsupported by reliable figures.⁷ *SA Packaging and Sales Promotion* made this confession in the course of an article on black consumers:

It is extremely difficult to get any accurate figures of 'non-European' buying power. Indeed, the very concept is misleading. Buying power has to be analysed in terms of different social classes amongst the non-Europeans themselves and related to particular products.⁸

The advertising community worked out a rough gauge to the size of the 'middle class' by totting up the number of licensed black traders in urban areas. *Selling Age* worked out that there were 6 000 such traders in 1959, double the 1951 figure.¹⁰ In 1961, the magazine announced that there were at least 3 000 black retailers on the Reef alone.¹¹ These particular statistics were much touted around by the advertising community¹² because they appeared to 'prove' that the middle class was growing. What was not pointed out was that in a population of millions, 6 000 is hardly a figure of consequence.

Only a tiny number of blacks could have been bourgeois in the traditional sense of 'owners of capital in the means of production'. Throughout most of this century, tight government restrictions prevented ownership of black businesses or eating houses in white areas; in many areas the purchase of land was prohibited and various segregationist laws pushed potentially profitable businesses back into the 'economic wilderness' of the townships.¹³

O'Meara points out that not even the rapid economic growth phase from 1933 until after World War II produced an African bourgeoisie of any significance. Instead, a small trading petty bourgeoisie, dealing largely with the food trade, emerged, together with professional, administrative and clerical workers. These people comprised 0,2 percent of the adult African population in 1929, rising to 1,2 percent by 1946.¹⁴

7 For example, in 1959 *Selling Age* quoted a government official to back up its views: 'A new middle class is emerging, earning salaries equivalent to those of some whites in Western countries.' — Mr C W Prinsloo, Chief Information Officer of the Department of Bantu Affairs. (October 1959, p22.)

8 A view fuelled by popular folk-lore. For example, one fifties myth was that there were plenty of black millionaires. But the salaries of such people were probably inflated by several decimal points, for, as Mkele points out: 'There are a few Africans who are regarded as millionaires, although 'thousandaires' would probably be a more accurate term. (Op cit, p126.)

9 *SA Packaging and Sales Promotion*, op cit, August 1955, p29.

10 Op cit, October 1959, p22.

11 Ibid, October 1960, p18.

12 The same set of figures were being quoted by marketing specialists as late as 1967, for example in *A Survey of the Retail Trade in South Africa*, 1967, p36.

13 P L Bonner, 'The Transvaal Native Congress, 1917-20. The Radicalisation of the Petty Bourgeoisie on the Rand'. p19

14 O'Meara, op cit, p152.

Tom Lodge, in his study of the Western Areas of Johannesburg,¹⁵ has found considerable disparities of wealth among urban Africans. Two percent of the population owned land, but many of them were heavily indebted to bondholders.¹⁶ Most landowners owned only one stand, but a tiny, relatively wealthy minority, owned between five and ten stands. Lodge describes the petty bourgeoisie as:

... consisting of professional people, teachers and ministers, clerical workers as well as traders, craftsmen and landlords (a minority of landlords depended upon their property for their sole income; they tended to be extremely poor as a result). This group comprised in the case of each suburb roughly 11 to 14 percent of heads of families. This group was very amorphous; it could embrace on the one hand A B Xuma, the former President of the ANC and a wealthy medical practitioner, whilst on the other hand there was the itinerant trader or craftsman who earned less than an industrial worker.¹⁷

In 1951, 82 percent of Sophiatown dwellers in regular employment held down blue-collar jobs. Over half of these were unskilled labourers, the rest were semi-skilled factory operatives, service workers, and lorry or scooter drivers.¹⁸ Lodge also estimates that between ten and fifteen percent of the potential workforce was unemployed.¹⁹

Yet the small size of this 'middle class' did nothing to dampen the myths about it. Its importance derived less from its wealth or power than its social status, measured in particular by the ability to consume goods. As Lodge, describing landlords, puts it, 'the majority were not much better off than their tenants and differed from them more in their social aspirations than objective situation'.²⁰

The advertising industry played its part in fuelling the myth of the middle class. In 1955, *SA Packaging and Sales Promotion* provided its readers with a guided tour around the home of what was described as a 'typical middle class' black, which revealed the following about the lifestyles of the kind of consumers the advertisers were interested in:

John Mokwena and his wife and their four children live in a municipal house in the Orlando district of Johannesburg. Their house consists of a living room, dining room, bedroom and kitchen and is furnished with a small lounge suite, carpets, occasional tables and fern stands. They have a dining-room suite, a radio and radio diffusion set, a bed settee, bedroom suite, coal stove, paraffin refrigerator, kitchen dresser and chairs. Working for an international travel agency in the city, John Mokwena earns £29 per month, a salary which he augments by £30 a month as manager of a stable of professional boxers. Against this gross income of about £60 a month, the Mokwenas have to meet relatively high living expenses:

15 'The Destruction of Sophiatown.' Seminar paper, 1981.

16 Ibid, p6.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid, p5.

20 Ibid, p6.

Rent: £7/6. Meat: £5. Vegetables: £2. Paraffin: £1:1s. Wood, coal: £1:11s. Insurance, burial: £1:7s. Groceries: £7. Transport: £2:0:3d ...

The following products were in the house at the time of the investigation: Brasso, Joko Tea, Kolynos toothpaste, Royal baking powder, Laurel paraffin, Aspro, Karoo nerve powder, Zebo stove cleaner, Gillettes' Javel, Sunbeam floor polish.

With the exception of coffee, mealie meal, jam and tomato sauce, Mrs Mokwena orders by brand name. For example, although not quite sure why, she insisted on Royal baking powder — not just baking powder ...

How some of the balance (of the money) is spent can be judged by John Mokwena. He dresses well: hats by Battersby, underwear by Jockey, President shoes, Ensign suit, Invincible shirts. All branded, advertised lines ...

The Mokwenas' way of life is not unduly cramped or in any sense raw. Their use of tablecloths, cutlery, adequate crockery, all demonstrate that their standard of living does not differ materially from many Europeans — and their tastes as consumers are largely identical.

The Mokwenas and people like them form a tremendous market which, as we have said before, has not yet been properly explored.²¹

But for the magazine's advertising industry readers, the most important sentence in the article would have been the one that read: 'The majority of branded goods in the house featured in advertising in the African's national magazines and newspapers'.²²

Selling Age was warning its white, suburban readers not to judge the lifestyles of all blacks by the lifestyles of their own servants. Large numbers of blacks lived comfortable lives which, judged in consumerist terms, appeared not too dissimilar from their own. The fact that this family of six lived (despite the Battersby hats, ferns and radiogram) in a one-bedroom house, was skated over. But *Selling Age* was not telling the full story. White readers would never know that John Mokwena, far from being an 'average, representative' black, was a prominent Soweto socialite who appeared not infrequently in the social pages of magazines like *Zonk*. And his stable of boxers included the likes of one of the sporting heroes of the fifties, Jake Tuli, the local boxer who went on to win the Empire title.²³ Whether *Selling Age* misled readers deliberately, we will never know. It is more likely that the error was an innocent one, caused rather by the magazine's blind pursuit of the mythical well-to-do black.²⁴ The notion that large numbers of blacks had the wherewithal to

²¹ Op cit, Aug 55, pp29-35.

²² Ibid.

²³ Mokwena was Tuli's manager until he left for England. (*Zonk*, December 1954.)

²⁴ The black magazine *Zonk* did a similar (but far more thorough) investigation into black income levels in 1952 and came to rather different conclusions. Four families, none of them with incomes near that of the Mokwenas, were investigated over a period of several months. One family earned £9 per month, the second £10, the third £13:19s, the last £20:11s. All the families were deep in debt, spending more each month than they earned. Only the best-off family spent any money at all on luxuries. The investigators concluded: 'Most African families simply cannot live on their earnings. The spectres of debt, illness and hunger hover perpetually in the background of the average African mind ... many Africans are forced to indulge in illicit activities to make up for the shortfall ... the main illegal source of income being illicit sales of liquor. Gambling, especially Fah-Fe, is extensively practised.' (October 1952).

pend lavish sums on any consumer items brought to their attention, was too tempting to resist. And indeed, even if not everyone was converted, a goodly proportion were, as Mkele pointed out:

The attitude of the advertiser has changed. No longer is the African regarded as the depository of kaffir truck. Today we find the advertiser — and I mean the blue-chip companies — sedulously wooing the African with all the arts of mass persuasion at their command.²⁵

Conclusion

The advertising specialists, those hard-nosed manufacturers of soft-focus twentieth-century Nirvanas, proved themselves as susceptible to their own myths as their audiences. The myth to which they clung most dearly was the one concerning their own power. During the forties and fifties, advertisers tended to classify readers as no more than passive consumers of messages. Given the need, advertising alone was capable of changing culture itself, or so the marketers believed. But in the case of the urban blacks, what happened was not that advertising introduced radically new elements, but that — in tandem with a good many other socialising agencies like cinema and gramophone records — it latched onto existing ideas and transformed them to its own ends. It took symbols which arose initially as forms of resistance — the negro musician, the black heavyweight champion, the black intellectual, the black politician — and incorporated them into commodity-centred lifestyles. It took outward symbols of rank and social status — whiteness, education, wealth — and put price-tags on them. Behind the seemingly egalitarian gesture of offering 'respectability' to all, it helped legitimise the structures that perpetuated those hierarchies. Advertising's second delusion was the myth of the middle classes. It was not only advertising that fabricated this notion — it suited many blacks, for it was a symbol that could be aspired to; on occasion it even suited the Government, for it seemed to prove that apartheid was indeed humane. The need to expand the consumer market had camouflaged the reality of low black wages. Not all advertisers were convinced, but there were enough converts to change the shape of the black media, as the next section will discuss.

²⁵ Mkele. op cit. p117.

Rent: 17/6. Meat: £5. Vegetables: £2. Paraffin: £1:1s. Wood, coal: £1:11s. Insurance, burial: £1:7s. Groceries: £7. Transport: £2:0:3d ...

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4 White ownership and the economics of concentration

The advertising industry has, in less than a hundred years, turned the scale, priorities and structure of the newspaper business upside down. Advertising supplies the money that makes up the bulk of modern newspaper revenue. In effect advertising 'subsidises' the Press, and the manner in which this subsidy is distributed has shaped the economic destiny of newspapers, putting some companies out of business and building others into giant cartels.

Modern commercial Press publishers consider advertising their lifeblood. The idea is one that advertisers themselves favour. As the Society of Marketers pointed out in its submissions to the Steyn Commission in 1981:

In its evidence to the Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media, the Society of Marketers put forward a calculation on cost to the consumer of various media not carrying advertising ... Secondly, they showed the effect of the media not carrying any advertising ... Daily newspapers, says the society, would cost between 50 cents and R1,50 if they carried no advertising¹

The claim, then, is that advertising has saved the newspaper industry by making papers affordable for mass readerships. Which is true in a sense, but only half the truth. What the advertising subsidy has done is cut costs for the customers and raise them for the owners.

For most of their history, newspapers have made their profits from cover prices rather than from advertising revenue. In the nineteenth century, advertising usually took the form of smalls, rather than display advertising. A former Group Advertising Manager of South African Associated Newspapers sums up the history of advertising this way:

¹ *Clarion*, Journal of the South African Communications Industry, July 1981.

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The advertising industry has, in less than a hundred years, turned the scale, priorities and structure of the newspaper business upside down. Advertising supplies the money that makes up the bulk of modern newspaper revenue. In effect advertising 'subsidises' the Press, and the manner in which this subsidy is distributed has shaped the economic destiny of newspapers, putting some companies out of business and building others into giant cartels.

Modern commercial Press publishers consider advertising their lifeblood. The idea is one that advertisers themselves favour. As the Society of Marketers pointed out in its submissions to the Steyn Commission in 1981:

In its evidence to the Commission of Inquiry into the Mass Media, the Society of Marketers put forward a calculation on cost to the consumer of various media not carrying advertising ... Secondly, they showed the effect of the media not carrying any advertising ... Daily newspapers, says the society, would cost between 50 cents and R1.50 if they carried no advertising¹

The claim, then, is that advertising has saved the newspaper industry by making papers affordable for mass readerships. Which is true in a sense, but only half the truth. What the advertising subsidy has done is cut costs for the customers and raise them for the owners.

For most of their history, newspapers have made their profits from cover prices rather than from advertising revenue. In the nineteenth century, advertising usually took the form of smalls, rather than display advertising. A former Group Advertising Manager of South African Associated Newspapers sums up the history of advertising this way:

¹ Clarion, Journal of the South African Communications Industry, July 1981.

Before 1900 (South African) newspapers derived their revenue from only one source and that was from the actual sale of copies and commerce was not particularly advertising-orientated. Most of the advertising in those days was by word of mouth or by means of handbills. Newspapers were viable in those days from the sale of newspapers alone because wages and salaries were low and cost of materials was not excessive. Although a certain amount of advertising was carried, it was not an important factor in the economy of the newspaper ... As costs escalated and commerce became more sophisticated, proprietors of newspapers realised that to remain viable they would have to look to a greater volume of advertising for profits.²

What advertising did was change the scale of the industry. It allowed newspapers with high advertising percentages to undercut their competitors and drive them out of business. The first English-language newspaper on the Reef, the *Diggers News and Witwatersrand Advertiser*, sold for sixpence, a relatively high price for the time.³ So did its early rivals, all owned by individuals with little money, using cheap technology, live handset type and manual presses.⁴ By the 1890s, with the increase in the number of traders in town, newspapers like the *Johannesburg Times*, *Transvaal Leader* and *Standard and Diggers News* received enough advertising revenue to cut prices to 3d. When the larger *Rand Daily Mail* was founded in 1902, it cost 3d too.⁵ In 1916 the *Rand Daily Mail* cut its price to 1d, going up to 2d not long after, a price that lasted until the late forties. It was entirely thanks to the subsidy provided by advertising that the *Rand Daily Mail* of the forties could cost less than that of 1902, despite almost half a century of inflation, a much expanded staff and spiralling paper, ink and machinery costs.

The more newspapers came to depend on advertising, the more expensive they became to run. The need for advertising pressured proprietors to increase circulations and numbers of pages. This required larger staffs, more efficient typesetting machinery and larger, high-speed presses. To pay for this, still more advertising was needed, which could only be attracted with larger circulations, which in turn forced expenses up still further. Having first become dependent on advertising, newspapers became increasingly so. The capital costs of starting a new newspaper soared. What advertising did by making newspapers cheaply available to the many, was to prevent their being owned by any but the few. The one-person newspaper became a rarity.

This was particularly significant in the case of the black Press. By subsidising the cover price of black newspapers, advertising made it possible for these to reach wider audiences. By forcing up the capital costs of newspaper operations, advertising priced newspapers out of the range of even the wealthiest black entrepreneurs.

2 Gerald Swanepoel in the journalism handbook *News Extra*, (ed: Phillip Jones), pp47-8.

3 Hedley Chilvers, *Out of the Crucible*, p249.

4 Theo Cutten, *A History of the Press in South Africa*, MA dissertation published by NUSAS, 1935, pp56-58.

5 The *Sunday Times* was launched in 1906 by 'four people with a hunch and fifty pounds each'. (*Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, March 1956.)

It made it possible for white-owned companies with better access to loans and ready cash to take over and reach larger audiences than black editors had ever managed.⁶ The purpose of this section is to examine how initially the black-owned Press was swallowed by white-owned papers, and how these in turn were swallowed by still larger corporations.

1 The beginnings of white ownership

One morning sometime in 1931, the eyes of a young advertising space salesman, Mr Bertram Paver, fell upon a few long forgotten copies of 'Bantu' newspapers in the corner of a filing room. Like most white South Africans, he was quite unfamiliar with black newspapers. Intrigued, he glanced through them. He was not impressed. They seemed wretched, poorly printed, poorly presented and poorly written. He might have tossed them back into their corner and forgotten about them if one thing had not struck him forcibly — these papers were virtually devoid of advertising. To Paver it seemed absurd that advertising representatives like himself could devote all their energies to directing their consumer gospel at the Union's tiny white population, while the huge black population went all but unnoticed.¹

It was an observation that was to change the face of the black Press in South Africa. Paver's idea would lead to the 'commercialisation' of the black Press and its take-over by white capital for the purpose of making profits from advertising. The African-owned Press is not the subject of this study. Suffice it to say that it had been established by men of ideals, whether they were Christian ideals or political ideals, and the primary aim was the propagation of a message.² Paver had a dif-

⁶ For example, one reason why the first white-owned, commercial black newspaper, *Bantu World*, was so quick in beating back its black-owned competitors, was that within months of starting up it could cut back its price. It began in March 1932, priced at the going rate of 3d, then cut back to 2d in October the same year.

¹ Donald Harrison, *The History of the Bantu Press*, unpublished Argus Company in-house document, no date, p1. Paver has confirmed this anecdote in a 1975 interview with Tim Couzens in which he describes his youth (born 1904 at Reitz in the Free State, educated at St Johns in Johannesburg and Kingswood — in Grahamstown); his brief career as a maize farmer in Bethal ('in amongst all the Jewish go-go farmers'); and his failure during the depression due to drought. He travelled to Durban, hoping to set up a cycle company which would sell to the growing African urban market through 'tied houses', using a method pioneered by the breweries. This failed and he went into advertising, then still in its embryonic period. (Tape recorded interview, unpublished, Pennington, Natal, 1975.)

² 'Journalists tended to be philosophical and moral commentators rather than reporters in search of contentious local items.' Couzens, *A Short History of the World and Other Black Papers*, op cit p17.

ferent kind of newspaper in mind, one which aimed to make profits first and convert souls second. If political comment proved marketable, he would run it. If not, he would find something else.³

Paver was not a man to let chance ideas go to waste. He investigated the black Press and found that there were no 'satisfactory' advertising media reaching the black population:

Such newspapers as existed were either organs of sectional interest, extremely limited in scope, or wretched sheets, almost illegibly printed on worn-out presses by Bantu proprietors without the capital to develop their papers properly.⁴

Advertising rates were a matter of bargaining and not even the proprietors could do more than hazard wild guesses as to what their circulations were.⁵ So little money was available, that the future of black journalism seemed doomed to perpetual penury:

Until there is sufficient prosperity among the ordinary Bantu, it is hard to see where the money is to come from to pay for better machinery, and, still more important, for better training of journalists.⁶

Paver did his homework carefully. He visited in turn each of the proprietors of the major black papers to find out what problems they faced. And he made enquiries among manufacturers and retailers about black spending power, which led him to the conclusion that 'goods to the value of £25 million were being sold every year to the natives.'⁷ To his mind, the figure was sure proof that the black Press promised an untapped fortune in advertising revenues.

He moved up to Johannesburg,⁸ where he managed to interest several businessmen in the venture. He even set up a meeting with General Smuts, a contact who was to come in useful later.⁹ On February 27, 1932, he set up a limited company with the name The Bantu Press, (Pty) Ltd, with the aim of 'acquiring a controlling

³ Although the subject of Paver's politics is discussed at greater length elsewhere, this point should perhaps be qualified here: although Paver was a businessman first and foremost, he had a stronger belief in the need for Press 'responsibility' than did some of his more profit-conscious successors.

⁴ *Black Gold*, op cit, p5.

⁵ Harrison, op cit, p1. Much the same attitude had prevailed in the white Press some forty years earlier: 'Advertising rates were higher in those days (the 1880s) than they are now (1935); advertisements were not canvassed — they were brought to the office ...' (Theo Cutten, op cit, p58)

⁶ Eric Rosenthal, *Bantu Journalism in South Africa*, 194?, p21.

⁷ Harrison, op cit, p7.

⁸ 'With only £300 in his pocket and an idea.' (*Black Gold*, op cit, p5.) Or, in his own words: 'I had to start with really nothing. My wife had to stay with her parents while I went to Jo'burg on my flat feet to look around.' (Paver interview, op cit).

⁹ Ibid.

interest in the native Press of Southern Africa'.¹⁰

Paver leased business premises in a small shop at 12 Von Weilligh Street, an area of town 'favoured by traders doing business with the Bantu'.¹¹ Before the end of March, the company had produced its first newspaper, a weekly named the *Bantu World*, sold at 3d. The driving force behind the paper was the editor-cum-managing director, an Afrikaans journalist named Izaak Le Grange, who had managed to convince Paver that he had 'a lot of money'.¹² Le Grange used what he had learnt on a study tour of America to good effect in producing a newspaper that was — its owners hoped — attractive to advertisers.¹³

Their hopes were premature. Paver's ideals were at least 15 years ahead of their time. To white advertisers, the black market was merely a dumping site for 'kaffir truck'. Paver would have to wait for the post-war consumer boom before any significant advertising interest in blacks would begin. Meanwhile he would learn two painful lessons and learn them over and over: the lesson that the sums required to keep a newspaper going were enormous; and the lesson that constant cash shortages would mean an endless search for new sponsors, new shareholders, new owners, new policies.

2 Consolidating the white monopoly

In a little known paper written for publication by the Argus company — but ignored by them — a former Managing Director of the *Bantu World*, Mr Donald Harrison, has detailed the financial structure of the Bantu Press organisation from

¹⁰ Harrison, op cit, p2. A capital of £2 000 divided into 4 000 ten shilling shares was issued. The first meeting of the company was held on March 4, in the New Street South chambers of the auditing company Howard Pim and Hardy. Present in the room were the leading financial figure Howard Pim, who had lent Paver much of the initial cash, Izaak Le Grange, black journalist and politician Richard Seloape Thema, and Paver himself. Shares in the new company were allotted as follows: 251 to Paver, who was appointed manager, advertising manager and secretary, 350 to Le Grange who was made managing director (and later editor of *Bantu World*), and 50 to Seloape Thema (later made associate editor of *Bantu World*). See also Paver interview, op cit.

¹¹ *Black Gold*, op cit, p5.

¹² Paver interview, op cit. Le Grange's claims turned out to be a 'washout' according to Paver.

¹³ Harrison, op cit, pp2,3. The paper was stylishly modern — at least by South African standards — with news on the front page, unusual at the time. Le Grange resigned in August the same year and Seloape Thema (whose career is discussed in the final section of this study) was appointed editor. Le Grange later became editor of the country newspaper, the *Worcester Standard Electric Press*. (Letter from Le Grange to *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, February 1957).

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his earliest days until the nineteen seventies. Harrison is a businessman, not an historian, so his paper concentrates on the movement of shares, company costs and circulation figures rather than on issues or controversies. Indeed, he is at times so maddeningly 'discreet' that one wishes he were less of a loyal company man and more of a gossip. But the value of his paper is that it gives an inside view by a man senior enough to know what was going on and trusted enough to have the confidence of the people he writes about. By piecing together snippets of information plotted about his paper, one arrives at a picture of a newspaper perpetually short of money, buying into papers with even less money, whilst being bought into by organisations with more money.

Paver had started off with £2 000, but very soon needed more. In Harrison's words:

Capital was extremely difficult to come by during this time (1932) and, through Dr Edgar Brookes, Paver obtained an introduction to Mr Charles Maggs of Pretoria. In actual fact when Paver arrived at Mr Maggs' office, he was busy and asked his eldest son, Mr Eugene O' Connell Maggs, to see him. Mr Charles Maggs was interested in Paver's venture and agreed to guarantee a bank overdraft of £100 with an option to acquire 200 shares in order to give the company some financial relief. In December, Mr Charles Maggs increased the bank overdraft to £450. At Mr Charles Maggs' request, Mr Eugene Maggs joined the Bantu Press board in August 1932 ... and in December ... took over as chairman, a position he held for over 30 years.¹

Charles Maggs Investments Limited, the first of many outside companies to take an interest in *Bantu World*, was formed in 1929 as a public investment company. The older Maggs began his career as a recruiter of mine labour before becoming a mining financier. All the major shareholders in his company were members of the Maggs family, including his wife, his two sons and his daughter-in-law. By 1955, the company had investments in some 54 companies, most of them in gold and coal mining (including major companies like Anglo American, Central Mining and JCI) and in industry. Bantu Press was the company's sole — and by its standards, rather minor — venture into newspapers.²

The Bantu Press's technology was, to begin with, rather primitive — hand-set type and a flatbed Wharfedale Press, all scrounged by Paver from contacts, usually

¹ Harrison, op cit.

² Ibid, p3. Maggs died in January 1983. Edgar Brookes, like Howard Pim (who gave Paver his first loan), as well as Rheinhold Jones (a good friend of Paver's) and Orlando Leake (after whom Orlando was named and who also gave Paver money) were all prominent members of the liberal establishment. But they were business contacts of Paver's rather than political influences: 'They wouldn't remember me any more than I remember them because the contacts were nebulous.' (Paver interview, op cit.)

³ Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Press, Annexure VII, pp59-64. Also Paver interview, op cit. The Maggs interest in the Bantu Press had no political overtones and was 'purely commercial' according to Paver. (Ibid).

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on credit. With some difficulty, he managed to negotiate an agreement with the whites-only South African Typographical Union, giving Africans the right to operate composing machinery. Paver, in turn, had to agree not to branch out of the newspaper field, a decision he later regretted because it prevented him moving into book publishing.⁴

Meanwhile, Paver was devoting himself to the less-than-easy task of convincing white entrepreneurs that the African market was worth taking seriously. As he put it:

It wasn't that there was resistance. There was just no reaction whatsoever. It was just so unheard of, something so out of its time and context ... I mean, people thought you were mad. It was heartbreaking trying to make contact.⁵

Paver may have been a budding Press entrepreneur, but he wasn't left much time to concentrate on newspapers. For the next two years, he spent all his energies on promoting the concept of the African market to manufacturers. He organised two trade exhibitions, housed in a warehouse borrowed from an engineering company. Only through a mixture of guile, persuasion and discount deals did he manage to attract exhibitors at all. But the promotions did make some converts:

Some of the exhibitors who had been sceptical about the value of the 'Native trade' were astounded at the buying power of the visitors.⁶

Paver also organised a cookery demonstration for housewives and sent a demonstration truck on a 6 000 mile tour of the country, introducing the newspaper — and the goods produced by it — to more than 50 000 urban and rural blacks.⁷ The truck was fitted with a slide projector and at each stop slides showing consumer goods were screened.⁸

The circulation climbed to 4 000, a satisfactory figure for the time, and distribution problems, including the problem of getting back money from newspaper sellers, were overcome. Paver had to build up his distribution system from scratch, modelling it on that used by 'small newspapers in the (American) Middle West.'⁹

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 *Black Gold*, op cit. The figure of two trade exhibitions is given by *Black Gold*. Harrison gives the number as three. (Op cit, p4.)

7 Ibid.

8 Couzens, *World*, op cit, p9. The idea of a mobile van was resuscitated more than two decades later by Paver's spiritual heirs in the advertising industry, who were evidently unaware of his pioneering efforts. An article in *Press, Advertising and Radio Review* in 1956 described a new project for sending a mobile cinema, equipped with a movie projector, into rural areas 'as pioneered by the Tea Board years ago'. The article said that the van 'attracted an average audience of 2 750 per show. At the biggest attendance, police made a count of over 12 000 people — 2 000 of them behind the screen'. (Op cit, November 1956.)

9 Paver interview, op cit.



Black linotype operators, top, and compositors, below, at work at the Bantu Press works. Paver was the only publisher in the black media to extract an exemption agreement from the powerful white South African Typographical Union

Bundles of papers were sent to local agents in particular areas, usually teachers or businessmen, who were then responsible for distribution. A team of African circulation managers from the head office went around the country keeping an eye on the agents and looking for new recruits.¹⁰

But the capital problems continued, forcing Paver to make a decision with enormous repercussions for the future: he went to the Argus newspaper organisation and asked for help. He would turn to them increasingly in later years, and their 'help' would one day lead to an Argus monopoly over most of the black Press. As Harrison describes the Argus arrival:

Lack of capital, however, continued to retard the paper's growth and in October, 1933, Paver disposed of the share capital of the company to the Argus Printing and Publishing Limited for £2 500. Simultaneously, the firm of Charles Maggs Investments took up £1 000 shares and with a fully paid-up capital of £5 000, the Bantu Press, in January 1934, launched its campaign to build a united and influential Press. In March 1936, the capital of the company was increased to 17 000 shares of 10 shillings each, with Charles Maggs Investments holding 4 000 shares as proxy for the Argus company for obvious policy reasons which existed at the time.¹¹

The same pattern was repeating itself at another level — while Paver was persuading others to buy into the Bantu Press, he himself was buying into smaller papers. As he describes it:

Either we went into this thing as a commercial thing entirely and just knocked out those other papers that had been struggling for years and years — but that wouldn't have been cricket — so we decided that they had to be picked up.¹²

The older black papers were easy prey for any entrepreneur willing to pump in capital and buy new machinery. As the Switzers point out, the black owners were 'deprived of the opportunities to own land lacked newsprint, equipment, buildings, skilled tradesmen and distribution agents.'¹³

It took just six years for Paver, armed with his superior access to funds, modern machinery and national advertisers, to swallow the whole of this black Press. In July 1934 he bought a majority shareholding in *Mochochonono*, (The Comet), one of the earliest black-owned, black-edited newspapers, founded by the Tlale family of Maseru in 1911.¹⁴ The agreement was that Bantu Press would hold 476 one

- 10 Ibid. As Paver describes it, parcels had to be flung off moving trains at 'funny little huts'. But there was very little inefficiency, according to him, and rarely any complaints about distribution snags. 'Sometimes we'd have readers cycling miles to get copies.' (Paver interview, *ibid.*)
- 11 Harrison, *op cit*, p4. The 'obvious reasons' are less obvious today — possibly the Argus company, as a 'white' organisation, wished to distance itself from the black Press.
- 12 Paver interview, *op cit*.
- 13 Switzers, *op cit*, p7.
- 14 Couzens, *World*, *op cit*, p5.

pound shares, Mr N M Tlale would hold 474, and Mr S Tlale would retain the editorship.¹⁵

In January 1935, Paver bought the country's oldest and best-known black newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, started in 1884 in King Williamstown by the founder of the black Press, John Tengo Jabavu. The paper cost Paver £867, including the cost of the property. In June the same year, he bought into the largest and most profitable black paper, *Ilanga Lase Natal*, founded in 1903 by the Reverend John Dube. *Ilanga* was floated as a public company with 1 500 one pound shares, of which Bantu Press held 250 and Dube the rest. Dube very soon sold Paver another 500 shares for cash and gave Paver the option to buy the rest of the company after his death. He was kept on as manager of the paper at a salary of £15 a month.¹⁵

In 1936, Paver bought the *Native Mirror*, published by the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company, for £900. He changed the name to *Bantu Mirror*.¹⁶ And in 1939, he made an arrangement with *Um-Afrika*, a Natal-based mission publication, and *Umthunyuwa*, a Transkeian weekly, that the Bantu Press would represent them for national advertising but that the papers would retain their independence in all other respects. This arrangement was similar to one made in 1932 by various 'white' papers which formed an advertising and editorial 'pool' system called the SA Morning Group — still in existence today — as a means of fighting off Argus group competition.¹⁷

What Paver had done was to buy up every significant black paper in the country with just two exceptions — the white-owned Chamber of Mines publication *Umteteli Wa Bantu*, circulated in the compounds and started in 1920 to 'counteract the influence of more radical black papers';¹⁸ and the communist weekly *The Guardian*.

By 1939, therefore, the independent, black-owned Press in South Africa was effectively dead.¹⁹ But one should not imagine that the black proprietors gave up their independence willingly. They sold out because they had no choice — the options were either to join the Paver bandwagon or be crushed by an organisation with more capital and more marketing clout. As Paver himself put it:

- 15 Harrison, op cit, p5.
- 16 Ibid. Paver also agreed to take care of the education of Dube's children after his death. (Paver interview, op cit).
- 17 Bantu Press sold its Rhodesian interests in 1953 for £14 000. (Harrison, op cit, p21.)
- 18 The Morning Group includes all South African Associated Newspapers publications (with the exception of the *Sunday Express*) as well as the *Natal Mercury*, *Natal Witness* and *Daily Dispatch*. (Elaine Potter, *The Press as Opposition*, p43.)
- 19 David Bristow in the *Star*, May 11 1981, p55. Paver did however manage to persuade the Chamber of Mines to give him the printing contract for *Umteteli*, which provided an important source of income for Bantu Press until the paper was closed down in 1955. (Harrison, op cit, p23.)

History Endorses
Co-ordinated Effort

Unity achieves
as much to-day
as it did in 1888.



CECIL RHODES replaced the confusion of individual diamond diggers and small competing companies by a single corporation. Coordination of effort put South African diamonds on the markets of the world and opened up the Rhodesian territories.

IN ADVERTISING to the native market, confusion has given place to coordinated effort. Let the unity of 12 weekly, 1 fortnightly, 7 monthly and 2 quarterly publications associated with the Bantu Press carry your sales message to eleven million consumers who, on an average of 12/6d. per month per head of population, constitute a market of £82,500,000 per annum.

Write or Phone for
Specimen copies
Advertisement Rates
Language Details
Advice on Media



Serves South Africa
by
Promoting Racial Harmony
Developing a New Market
and Guiding a People

Phones: 35-4145 (3 lines)

P.O. Box 6863 Johannesburg.

The Bantu Press uses the analogy of Cecil Rhodes (who, it is explained, ended the 'confusion' in the diamond industry by creating a monopoly), to boost its own value to advertisers as a Press monopoly. This 1948 advertisement appeared in the trade journal *Selling*.

They (the black proprietors) were very suspicious at first. I always remember Jabavu asked me where I was born and he smiled and said: 'Can any good thing come out of the Free State?' With Dube, the only way I could come to terms with him was on a 50-50 basis and only much later, when he was eighty, because he had diabetes. But we had some pretty tough rows.²⁰

3 Friends in high places

Every year, Paver's dream of creating a viable medium for black consumer marketing seemed one step closer to fruition. But for all the improvements in advertising revenue, circulation and technology, the dream itself proved elusive. Paver had been right that there was a need for an African market to consume 'white' goods; the problem was, that there was no need yet for a market big enough to sustain its own institutions. The Bantu Press did not pay its directors during the period I have dealt with and there is no record either of it ever having paid a dividend. In the years when it made modest profits, these were immediately ploughed back into the company.¹

As Harrison puts the problem, 'retail advertisements were difficult to come by because of colour prejudice, but national advertising continued to grow.'² Harrison provides the following tables recording the growth in advertising and circulation:

1932/33	£2 622	(1 paper)
1933/34	£3 144	(1 paper)
1934/35	£3 814	(2 papers)
1935/36	£6 425	(five papers)
1936/37	£7 052	(five papers)
1937/38	£8 184	(five papers)
1938/39	£10 049	(five papers)

20 Paver is probably referring to one of Jabavu's sons — the old man had died some years earlier. Very few new black-owned and published papers have been launched since. The black-owned and edited *Inkundla wa Bantu* which was published from the nineteen thirties until its demise in the early fifties. More radical than the white-owned papers, it supported the ANC Youth League. (Couzens, *World*, op cit, p12.) The black-consciousness weekly *Voice*, launched in October 1976, closed down in 1982. (For an advertising industry discussion of *Voice*, see *Insight*, Journal of the Institute of Marketing, March 1979.)

¹ Harrison, op cit, p9.

² St Leger says the *World* 'once paid a dividend', but I can find no record of this in the period I have been dealing with. He may be referring to the sixties or seventies. (St Leger, op cit, p78)

But in 1938, Bantu Press found itself a new ally to help it out of its financial quagmire — the State. General Smuts, whom Paver had met earlier, was temporarily holding the portfolio of Native Affairs. Paver arranged a meeting with him:

I said to him: 'Look here, this is extremely confidential. I don't know what you feel but I'm damn sure we're heading for war.'

'Here I have a group of newspapers. They're small, but they constitute the only (African) mass media in the country and yet there is no contact with Native Affairs. That's got to be broken down.'

He first asked me why I thought there was going to be war and then asked me if I had any ideas and I said: 'Yes, I have. I would like to start on an information campaign. Unfortunately, it would have to be paid for. But (it will carry) articles on destocking, on agriculture, on a wide range of topics which Native Affairs can start on.' And he said: 'And then?' And I said: 'When war breaks out, we have a bridge.' And he said: 'Leave it to me.'

Soon afterwards, an arrangement was made allowing the Department of Native Affairs to make use of space in any Bantu Press paper, in return for payment of a regular grant of £400.⁴ The deal became increasingly important during the war years and was to last right through into the early years of National Party rule.

When the war began, the Bantu Press was swept up with patriotic enthusiasm. Any white business which dealt in 'native trade' at the time was considered slightly seedy, yet here was a chance to win establishment approval by showing that black papers, too, could be responsible. The following paragraphs in *Black Gold* indicate some of the tone of the Bantu Press fervour:

When war broke out in 1939, the Bantu Press Group rallied to its responsibilities. Wrongly guided, the teeming millions of Bantu people in Southern Africa, so recently won over from a bloody and warlike tradition, could have been a grave menace to the cause of the United Nations.

Not only did the Bantu Press present the war news in its own columns with a balance, sanity and commonsense which gave its readers confidence in their leaders, but it undertook to print and distribute on behalf of the Union Government a vast supply of weekly War News bulletins in all Bantu languages. It also developed, edited and produced *Indhlovu Tlou*, a first-rate weekly newspaper for the Bantu men serving in South Africa's forces — in the Native Military Corps which gathered honour to itself in the East African, Mediterranean and Italian campaigns.

The mighty force of the Bantu Press asserted itself and the Bantu peoples remained calm, loyal, co-operative. 'Fifth Columnists' and enemies of the United Nations looked on angrily, powerless to stem the flood of reason and common sense that flowed from the Westdene buildings of the Bantu Press week by week.⁵

³ Paver interview, op cit.

⁴ Harrison, op cit, p15. *Bantu World* carried prominently on its masthead the words: 'Authorised to publish Government proclamations and notices of the Native Affairs Department'.

⁵ Op cit, p7. The Fifth Columnists (members of the Ossewa Brandwag) certainly did try — twice bombs were lobbed at the Bantu Press offices, the first one causing only minor damage, the second one wrecking several offices and part of the plant. Smuts offered an aircraft hanger as temporary accommodation, and the Maggs family financed building repairs. (Paver interview, op cit.)

Bantu Press took over several functions on behalf of the Government. Every fortnight its newspapers carried articles on the war written by the Department of Native Affairs. Paver himself organised a circulation system, using the Bantu Press's own distribution network, to help the Government Printer hand out 90 000 free war bulletins every week. Harrison estimated that half-a-million people received war news from the Bantu Press, either in the newspapers themselves or in the government bulletins. And the cost did not hurt the company's finances either — the Native Affairs Department picked up the £10 000 a year tab.⁶

The close co-operation with the State paid off in other ways too. When the war started, paper was severely rationed. The two major employer organisations in the publishing trade, the Master Printers Association and the Newspaper Press Union, were authorised to ration supplies for the whole country. Since the Newspaper Press Union was a whites-only organisation,⁷ the Bantu Press papers had no representation and were left out of the paper quotas.⁸ But Paver went to see Smuts again, who agreed to exempt him from the quotas, provided he used imported paper. Smuts also decreed that the paper be allowed into the country duty-free. Since Paver had business contacts in Canada, he managed to keep up a healthy stream of supplies throughout the war years. The little organisation which had been snubbed by the white Press establishment, ended up with better supplies than anyone else.⁹

The grants continued after the war, Paver managing to persuade J H Hofmeyer, leader of the 'liberal' faction in the Smuts cabinet, to increase the grant to £10 600 in 1948.¹⁰ Even when the National Party came to power, Paver remained in favour — for a while, at least. In 1949, for example, Bantu Press was given a grant by the Rhodes Trust in Britain, but due to foreign exchange restrictions, the deal needed the Prime Minister's approval. According to Harrison, Dr Malan's agreement was 'readily given'.¹¹ The same year, the annual general meeting was told that 'the

6 Harrison, op cit, p11. The war bulletins were printed both in Cairo and Johannesburg — 'the first time I know of a newspaper being printed simultaneously on both ends of the continent'. (Paver interview, op cit.) Army transport planes were used to transport matrices, moulded from type set in Johannesburg, for the purpose of casting plates in Cairo.

7 The Newspaper Press Union was founded in 1882 at a meeting of newspaper proprietors, to further and protect the aims of Press owners. Membership was confined to whites only. (*Press Commission*, op cit, Annexure VIII, pl.)

8 'My newspapers were persona non grata — they didn't exist. It was like the Arabs and the Israelis — they don't exist. So the result was that these two associations solemnly sat down and apportioned what their quotas were. Well, we had damn all.' (Paver interview, op cit.)

9 Ibid. Much of the precious paper was destroyed later in the war when the Ossewa Brandwag fire-bombed the Bantu Press building.

10 The favour did not only work in one direction — the Under-Secretary for Native Affairs during the Smuts era, Mr F Rodseth, was given a seat on the Bantu Press board as an Anglo-American representative in 1954.

11 Harrison, op cit, p17.

South African government considers our policy to be above party politics and of value to the country as a whole.' ¹²

In 1950, Paver had a meeting with Dr Malan himself and the newly-appointed Secretary for Native Affairs, Dr Werner Eiselen, and succeeded in persuading them to renew the grant at the same rate. But the Bantu Press relationship with the State came to an end when Dr Hendrik Verwoerd was appointed Minister of Native Affairs. He called in Paver and gave him an option: support apartheid or lose the government subsidy.¹⁴ Paver describes the meeting like this:

Eiselen walked me down the corridor and when we got in he said: 'Mr Paver's here.' Verwoerd just waved him away as if he were an office boy. He said: 'Just sit down, you know what I want to talk to you about'. I said, yes, I did, and he said: 'Well, it's as simple as this: We are paying you for these information services. You have got to support apartheid.' I said: 'Well, I'm sorry, the answer is no.' Well, he said: 'Do you know what's going to happen? We're cancelling right away.' ¹⁵

4 Cutting back the deadwood

Newspaper monopolies — like any other monopolies — go through a period of expansion, followed by a period of contraction. The American Press, for example, dropped from 2 600 papers in 1906 to 1 750 in 1947. In all but 61 of the 1 461 American cities with newspapers, one monopoly owned all the papers in town.¹ In Britain, the three biggest newspaper chains, which accounted for only a small fraction of sales in the 1890s, controlled 46 percent of all sales by 1948 and 64 percent by 1976.²

The expansion phase is propelled by the ability of large chains to undercut competition, install more sophisticated technology, and dominate distribution chains. Constantly rising production costs become prohibitive and the market leaders become so well entrenched that smaller publications are forced to sell out. The

¹² St Leger, op cit, p112.

¹³ Harrison, op cit, p17.

¹⁴ Verwoerd's own father had a rather different opinion of the paper: 'The only news agent selling the *World* in Brandfort, Orange Free State, is Mr W J Verwoerd, the father of the Minister of Native Affairs ... Asked what he thought of the *World*, Mr Verwoerd said: 'It is a good paper. More should be sold.' ... Mr Verwoerd is one of the most popular Europeans among Africans in Brandfort. He has helped location residents solve some of their problems ...' (*The World*, January 21, 1956.)

¹⁵ St Leger, op cit, p112.

¹ A J Liebling, *The Press*, p2, 16, 17.

² James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility*, pp106,7. Also Curran, *Capitalism and Control of the Press, 1800-1975*, in *Mass Communications and Society*, op cit, p224.

A POWERFUL PACKAGE!



WITH A CIRCULATION OF
110,321

Get at the heart of this ever-expanding market through this group of newspapers now!

THE WORLD
(ENGLISH, SOTHO)

IZWI LAMA SWAZI
(SWAZILAND)

ILANGA LASE NATAL
(ZULU, ENGLISH)

NALEDI YA BATSWANA
(BECHUANALAND)

IMVO ZABANTSUNDU
(XHOSA, ENGLISH)

LENTSOE LA BASOTHO
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ENQUIRE ABOUT OUR GROUP-FLAT-RATE
OF 44/- P.S.C.I. ON CASUAL INSERTIONS

52 INSERTIONS
ON GROUP
39/-

The Advertisement Manager,
Bantu Press (Pty.) Ltd.,
P.O. Box 6663,
Johannesburg.

26 INSERTIONS
ON GROUP
43/-

INCREASE TURNOVER!



"Remember —
we like to read about
your products before
buying them"

A BULK ADVERTISING CONTRACT ON THE IMPROVED BANTU PRESS GROUP SCHEME IS YOUR SUREST WAY OF REACHING THIS EVER-EXPANDING MARKET.

Latest readership survey confirms that Bantu Press Group of publications offer the best overall coverage of the African, with least duplication, of readership, and all this at the most competitive rate in the field.

Ask your advertising agent for details and vouchers or write to:

THE ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER
BANTU PRESS (PTY.) LTD.
P.O. BOX 6663
JOHANNESBURG

Bantu Press advertisements from the late fifties. Note that the company does not advertise its publications individually — it emphasises the value of their combined circulations to national advertisers

driving force behind the contraction phase, on the other hand, is the spread of cost efficiency accountancy methods. Managers tend to equate efficiency with rationalisation and the elimination of 'waste'. The increasing inability of rival independent companies to dent the monopolies' domination of advertising and distribution, makes large empires unnecessary.

The Bantu Press's period of contraction was during the forties and fifties, when several 'deadwood' papers were closed down, vigorous attempts were made to root out 'inefficiency', and control by the major shareholders tightened.³ As the Press Commission characterised the period:

Bantu Press Ltd experienced considerable difficulty in financing its newspaper undertakings. A number of shareholders could not meet the calls on the shares they had taken up and the company's financial resources were insufficient to meet the needs of its newspapers.⁴

Between 1945 and 1948, the Maggs and Argus share capitals were twice increased, but the parity between them was continued. In 1948, the shareholdings were:

ARGUS GROUP	Press Trust	46 564
	Argus Printing and Publishing	16 328
	Argus New Issue	6 702
		69 594
MAGGS GROUP	Charles Maggs Investments	36 928
	Charles Maggs (New Issue)	20 000
	E. O. C. Maggs	13 298
		70 226
		4 812
OTHERS		
TOTAL		144 000 ⁵

³ The major changes in the Bantu Press empire were a restructuring of its interests in Rhodesia; the purchase of *Izwi Lama Swazi* for one hundred pounds; and the purchase of the group's only 'white' newspaper, the *Times of Swaziland*, for £2 450. (Harrison, op cit, p16, 18). Three small, unprofitable newspapers, *Mochochonono*, *Mphatlalatsane* and *Naledi*, were closed down during the fifties. (Press Commission, Annexure VII, op cit, p29.) But, as the commission noted, even without these papers, overall circulation grew.

⁴ Ibid. p31.

⁵ Tables from Harrison, op cit, p13. The Press Trust was 'intimately connected with Argus' with two of its three directors Argus officials, as the Press Commission pointed out. (Op cit, p50.)

In May 1952 Paver left on a five-month trip to Britain with the object of raising £100 000, either in the form of grants, loans or shares, and to persuade major British companies to pressure their South African subsidiaries to advertise more in the black Press.⁶ He returned to report that he had persuaded Imperial Tobacco, the Colonial Development Corporation, the British South Africa Corporation, the Rhodes Trust and the Syfrets Trust to make grants which varied between nine and twelve thousand pounds each.⁷

But Paver also returned with something even more significant — an introduction to Sir Ernest Oppenheimer. Anglo American held no shares in the Press at that time, due to personal bitterness between Sir Ernest and his most powerful rival in the mining world, John Martin, who also happened to be chairman of the Argus Company.⁸ As a director of an Argus-allied publication, Paver did not feel he could even approach the Oppenheimers for a loan. But while in London, he managed to interest the directors of Imperial Chemicals, a major British company with close ties to Anglo American. Imperial agreed to help him — but only with Sir Ernest's approval. As Paver remembers the meeting:

They said: 'We couldn't possibly step out of line. You must see Sir Ernest.' So I said: 'But I've got no contacts.' So they said: 'We'll arrange it'. And that's how I came to meet Sir Ernest. Went to see him and he'd already been briefed by them. Marvellous old chap. And he said: 'Well, this is all very interesting. I want you to say all of this to my son.' Harry came in. Now Harry was quite a young man — this is all going back quite a long time - and we clicked. I liked him. And they said: 'Alright, we'll sit in, pretty massively.' Well, it caused a bit of a flush in the dovecotes with Maggs and the Argus Company, but they couldn't say no.⁹

Relationships on the Bantu Press board had begun to cool a little, for reasons which will be discussed further on. Two camps had begun to form, with Paver on the one side and Maggs, allied with the Argus company, on the other. Significantly, Harrison, who was closely associated with the Maggs camp (Maggs had offered him a job on the Bantu Press while they were in the army together during the war) offers a quite different interpretation of the Anglo American arrival:

Early in 1952, Mr Eugene Maggs was talking to Mr Harry Rissik in the Rand Club, Johannesburg, and mentioned the difficulties the Bantu Press was facing. As a result of

6 Paver had in mind major consumer goods manufacturers like Cadbury Fry, Reckitt and Colman, Bovril and Gillette. (Harrison, op cit, p18).

7 Ibid, p19.

8 Martin, who more than any other South African newspaper director resembled the British 'Press Baron', was (among other things) chairman of the Central Mining Corporation, president of the Chamber of Mines and a director of the Bank of England. From 1910 to 1951, all Argus Company directors were from the Corner House Group or from Johannesburg Consolidated Investments. (Press Commission, Annexure IV)

9 Paver interview, op cit.

this conversation, Mr Eugene Maggs received a phone call from Sir Ernest Oppenheimer asking him to call on him. This Mr Maggs did, and Sir Ernest offered to take up shares in the Press. Mr Maggs made it clear that there was little, if any, likelihood of the Anglo American Corporation receiving any return on their investments for many years, if at all. However, Sir Ernest was not to be deterred and in March that year the issued share capital of the Press was increased to 317 712 shares.

The shareholding was arranged so that there was parity between the Argus company and the Press Trust; Charles Maggs Investments and E O C Maggs; and the Anglo American Corporation plus a subsidiary and an associated company. The position then was:

Argus Publishing and Printing Press Trust	28.96%
Charles Maggs Investments	28.96%
Anglo American, Rand Selection Trust, New Era Consolidated	28.96%
Imperial Tobacco	11.33%
Others	1.79% ¹⁰

Anglo made a verbal agreement with Colonel Maggs that he could continue as chairman and that Argus would choose the deputy chairman.¹¹ Harry Oppenheimer, then an MP, and W Marshall Clark joined the Bantu Press Board as Anglo American representatives. Gavin Relly, later to become heir to the Oppenheimer empire, was appointed an alternate director.¹²

The *Bantu World* drifted between years of profit and years of loss. It lost £2 276 in 1945 and £1 744 in 1946. It made a profit of £1 357 in 1947 and average profits of £494 in the years 1948 to 1950. In 1951 it made a loss of £165, followed by a profit of

10 Harrison, p20. The 'others' included 12 blacks who held interests varying in size from one to five hundred and fifty shares. In 1932, more than half the shareholders had been black. (Press Commission, Annexure VII, op cit, p30, 31 and 49.)

11 Ibid, p50.

12 Oppenheimer resigned in March 1954 to be replaced by Mr F Rodseth. Others on the board were Paver, still managing director; H W Paynter, the Argus Company secretary, who was made deputy chairman of the Press; Mr C O' C Maggs of Maggs Investments (soon to be replaced by the Maggs' secretary, Mr M B Hofmeyer), Mr R H Nethersole (who replaced Paynter later as Argus secretary); and Mr P U Rissik, a director of Syfrets, a company which also had a large shareholding in the *Cape Times*.

A speech delivered during this period by Harry Oppenheimer (in his capacity as an MP) indicated that he firmly supported the new orthodoxy about the importance of the black consumer, but stopped short of a belief in racial equality. The *Star* reported on 15 January 1953 that he said that 'the solution to the Native problem had more to do with economics than ideologies. Only if the standard of living were raised would there be a real chance of solving problems. All people in South Africa stood for social and residential segregation. That was a cardinal point of United Party policy ...'

£132 the next year and a loss of £220 the year after. Its worst year was 1954,¹³ when the loss was £13 944, followed by a loss of £9 912 in 1955. The Press Commission provides this table of circulation and advertising revenue:

<i>Bantu World</i>	1945	1946	1949	1953	1955
CIRCULATION	16 000	17 000	25 000	28 000	33 647
ADVERTISING	5 576	6 954	15 443	19 592	29 974
REVENUE (pounds)					
<i>Ilanga</i>	1945	1946	1949	1953	1955
PROFITS	626	288	317	-528	2 552
(pounds)					
CIRCULATION	Estimated	13-15 000		24 000	27 490
ADVERTISING	4 416	4 893	9 076	19 529	22 127
REVENUE (pounds)					

What the tables do is vindicate the belief that advertisers were turning more and more to the black market. Advertising revenue in the *Bantu World* went up almost 600 percent in the ten year period after the war, and *Ilanga's* revenue went up more than 500 percent. Unfortunately for Paver, there was no simple relationship between rising revenues and profits. What kept *Ilanga* afloat were the cost advantages of a smaller staff, small circulation, smaller distribution area and less editions than *Bantu World*.

Ernest Oppenheimer may have shrugged off the losses, but the Argus Company did not. Argus pressure on Bantu Press's management steadily increased, and one of the first victims was Paver himself. In March 1953, Mr C L C Hewitt, a senior Argus executive,¹⁴ wrote to Eugene Maggs, suggesting that 'a thorough investigation into the affairs of the Bantu Press plus a little really thorough management as opposed to empire building, may completely change the profit picture.'¹⁵ And, as Harrison rather coyly puts it, 'he indicated to Mr Eugene Maggs that it might be worthwhile encouraging Mr B G Paver to move to Salisbury, vacating the manag-

¹³ Harrison describes 1954 as 'a year in which considerable attention was paid to the *Bantu World's* circulation, which had ... been lagging and by October it had risen to 34 000.' (Op cit. p22.)

¹⁴ Press Commission, Annexure VII, p84.

¹⁵ Later to become managing director of the Argus Company.

¹⁶ Harrison, op cit, p25.



Mr S Moleko, acting editor of Bantu World after Selope Thema's death, is interviewed by Zonk's chief reporter, Simon Sekgaphane

ing directorship of Bantu Press but remaining on as a director.¹⁷

The Bantu Press founder, meanwhile, had a similarly unflattering opinion of his rivals, particularly of Eugene Maggs, whom he considered the chief obstacle. Complaining about the board's indifference to the new schemes he suggested to them, he said:

The Argus Company wouldn't play. Nor would Maggs. In retrospect, my misfortune was dealing with people who couldn't see the wood for the trees ... The old man Maggs is a dear. Eugene's basically a nice chap, but not creative.

For the time being, both sides circled warily. But Paver was outnumbered on the board and his position had clearly become shaky. The first Argus troops to move in were on the editorial side. In June 1955, Mr D Brecht, a journalist on the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, was seconded to Bantu Press for three months to re-organise the editorial department. Mr Albert Fick, an assistant editor at the *Star*, was appointed managing editor, and Mr K E L Hooper, who had been Paver's editorial adviser since the war years, was edged out.¹⁸

But the worst year of crisis for the company was 1956. The immediate problem was competition — a new tabloid rival to *Bantu World*, called *Golden City Post*, had appeared on the streets the year before and was already outstripping the Bantu Press flagship in circulation. *Golden City Post* was only the latest manifestation of a problem that had begun in the nineteen forties and early fifties with the launching of the glossy magazines *Zonk* and *Drum*,¹⁹ aimed, unlike the Bantu Press publications, at the masses rather than the elites. Worse still, these new rivals could all boast substantially higher circulations than the modest Bantu Press figures. The problem facing the board was how to restructure the company's policies to meet the new challenge.

Some of the solutions were cosmetic. In January 1956, the name *Bantu World* was changed to *World*. The official explanation was that the word 'Bantu' had come to have derogatory connotations. Which was true enough, but reading between the lines, one could detect another, more commercial reason too:

The name 'Bantu' has come to be a new designation for what are sometimes called 'Natives', a name which became unpopular as soon as it discarded its real universal meaning and became a discriminatory label for a particular group ... *The World* is for everyone, Africans, Europeans, Coloureds and Indians to read ...²¹

17 Ibid.

18 Paver interview, op cit.

19 Harrison, op cit, p22.

20 All three of these rival publications are discussed in greater detail in later sections.

21 *The World*, January 7 1956. A gossip column in the same issue, 'Talk of the World', was still more explicit, recounting the case of a coloured man who had in the past always refused to read the paper because the word 'Bantu' appeared in the masthead, but who was now happy to buy it.

The Bantu Press board was trying a new circulation-boosting tactic — attracting non-African readers. The strategy was never pursued with much enthusiasm and little more was heard or seen of the idea, other than the change of title. But some of the other changes were more permanent — for a war, of sorts, had broken out at board level. Paver attempted to persuade the board that the best way to beat the new competitors was to join them. He was keen to amalgamate with *Zonk* and *Drum* and bring out one 'super-magazine' under the Bantu Press aegis. He believed that the market was not big enough to support both *Zonk* and *Drum* and that the battle between the two would damage both. Bantu Press could also offer these magazines more capital and a well-established distribution network.²² But neither Maggs nor the Argus company were interested in the scheme. The Bantu Press chairman was convinced that the logical next step to beat back the competition was to turn *World* into a daily. This difference of opinion was to spell the end for Paver, as he himself remembers it:

I didn't believe the time was ripe to start a daily. I was very opposed to a daily on logical grounds. I didn't feel the African had got to the stage where sufficient news could be generated to produce a balanced daily and that pressure on reader interest would change the whole structure, the whole nature of the newspapers, which were gradually growing with the people. It would introduce a lot of disturbing factors too soon — they would have to inevitably compete for news, would have to carry all sorts of articles which would have been counterproductive. But unfortunately I couldn't get Maggs to see that. He had this idea 'I want to start a daily, this is what I'm creating.'²³

As Paver's words make clear, there was a second division of opinion as well — businessman first as he was, there was a limit to how far he would allow commercial pressures to take him. He may not have believed that the Press had any missionary or didactic purpose, but he could not stomach the idea of a Press that titillated rather than informed.²⁴ His more profit-conscious colleagues on the board had no such qualms — they were quite willing to head off the new rivals on their own 'blood 'n guts' territory. The ideological wrangle between these two publishing philosophies would dominate the Bantu Press organisation for years to come, as later sections will discuss.

Paver's end came at a board meeting in March 1956, when Maggs finally scrapped the managing director's magazine ideas and the board committed itself to the prospect of a daily *World*.²⁵ Harrison, always the good company man, is less than expansive about the behind-the-scenes intrigues that must have accompanied the ousting of the company's founder and guiding spirit. He notes only: 'In March this

²² Paver interview, op cit.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The clash between these various 'schools' of journalism is discussed in more detail in a later section.

²⁵ Paver interview, op cit.

year (1956) B G Paver resigned as managing director to take up full-time duty as chairman of African Newspapers Limited in Salisbury. He remained a director of the Press and was granted a pension of £500 per annum for a period of three years.²⁶ The man appointed to replace Paver as managing director was Maggs's closest ally — his old army comrade, D H Harrison, himself.

It took Paver's successors several years before they could put their daily paper plans into operation. In August 1960 the midweek edition of *World*, which had dropped back by £1 500 in advertising revenue the year before, was scrapped. In January 1962, a tabloid daily *World* was produced, running from Monday to Thursday — there was no Friday edition — with the weekend broadsheet edition datelined Saturday. The launching of the daily seemed to confirm Paver's suspicions — it was a thin eight pages, padded out with 'canned' foreign news bought from the wire services.²⁷

Meanwhile, the Argus take-over plans, set in motion with the behind-the-scenes jousting that preceded Paver's demise, continued. Later in 1962, Mr D Ollemans, chairman of the Argus Company, suggested to his board that the time had come to take over the Bantu Press. Some of his reasoning was rather similar to that of Paver thirty years earlier. He pointed to the profits made by papers catering to blacks elsewhere in Africa and the success of *Ilanga*, despite poor facilities. He said the Argus company's papers were 'too advanced and too expensive' to appeal to blacks, but that black newspapers provided an introduction to the English language in simple form. Finally, growing African nationalism might increase black interest in newspapers.²⁸

Ollemans' plan was to buy out some of the smaller shareholdings — he specifically decided against buying out either the Anglo or the Maggs shares — to give the company a total of 53.8 percent of Bantu Press. But the other Argus directors felt that 53.8 percent did not give sufficient control. Ollemans then persuaded the Anglo and Maggs groups each to sell their smaller shareholdings, giving Argus a 58.39 percent share. In return, Maggs was allowed to retain his chairmanship.²⁹

Argus immediately took even tighter control of the management. Mr C H Kinsley, assistant manager of the *Daily News*, was appointed to investigate the entire company and suggest changes.³⁰ He recommended that the Saturday editions

26 Harrison, op cit, p24. The decision to allow Paver to remain on the board was not an act of charity. The articles of association of the Bantu Press made him a permanent director who could not be removed, even by a special resolution. (Press Commission, Annexure VII, op cit, p50).

The choice of Salisbury was Paver's own — his brother was managing director of the African Newspapers company. (Paver interview, op cit).

27 Harrison, pp24,5. Harrison puts the date of the first daily as 'late 1961'. But the earliest copy I can locate is January 8 1962, which appears to be issue No 1.

28 Ibid, p26.

29 Ibid, p28. Maggs eventually retired as chairman in 1969.

30 Ibid.

of the *World* be scrapped and that a Friday edition be introduced to replace it. He also suggested that vernacular pages be scrapped and that circulation be concentrated in urban rather than rural areas. His suggestions were accepted.³¹

Within months of this Argus 'second-wave' takeover, there was another senior casualty on the board — the non-Argus managing director, Harrison himself. He was replaced by Mr Layton Slater as managing director, with Kinsley appointed general manager.³² Harrison, in his discussion of his own ousting, is as discreet as ever — he makes no excuses, points no avenging fingers and gives no explanations. He notes only, referring to himself in the third person: 'Towards the end of 1962, D S Harrison was transferred to the *Star*.'³³

The new Argus team did at least have a sense of irony. With the black Press very firmly in the grip of the country's largest white Press monopoly, they gave the *World* a new slogan: 'OUR OWN, OUR ONLY PAPER'.

5 Zonk and the new mass-market journalism

The first white to make a major impact on the black South African Press was Bertram Paver. The second was a musical show director turned publisher named Ike Brooks. With the very first issue of the first publication he produced, he changed the direction and meaning of the black media in South Africa. He gave to a slow, cautious and paternalistic industry a new razzmatazz and self-confidence that appealed to the new kind of advertiser.

Yet his name appears in virtually no histories of the black press. And the name of his most important publication, *Zonk*, seldom moves beyond the footnotes. St Leger's major work on the black press refers to *Zonk* once.¹ Rosalind Ainslie shrugs the magazine off in a single phrase.² Barton ignores it entirely.³ The three books that have been written on *Zonk*'s better-known rival, *Drum*, give scant at-

³¹ In 1968, *Weekend World*, a Sunday paper, was launched to compete with *Golden City Post*.

³² It is interesting to note how *World* functioned almost as a 'nursery school' for Argus Company executive training. Some of the company's top men were 'weaned' there — Slater is now chairman of Argus, and Liff Hewitt, mentioned earlier, is a former managing director. The paper's last manager, John Marquard, was being groomed as an heir-apparent to the Argus throne when he decided instead to emigrate. And Kinsley, after rising rapidly through the Argus ranks, switched sides to join the rival South African Associated Newspapers, of which he is now managing director and deputy chairman.

³³ Harrison, op cit, p30.

¹ *The African Press in South Africa*, op cit, St Leger's primary interest is newspapers rather than magazines.

² *The Press in Africa*, Rosalind Ainslie.

³ *The Press in Africa*, Frank Barton.

tention to their chief competitor.⁴ To date, the only historians to give *Zonk* any recognition at all are the Switzers, who give a brief account in their recent bibliography.⁵

If *Zonk* were just another fly-by-night black magazine, the indifference would be understandable. The industry has, after all, sprouted any number of black magazines that have suddenly appeared, attracted middling reader interest and indifferent advertising support, then quietly expired.

But *Zonk* was not just another magazine. It could lay claim to a place in any history of the black Press for these reasons alone:

It was the first successful mass-circulation black magazine aimed at urban audiences.⁶ Most magazines that have followed it have to a greater or lesser extent continued its basic formula. It was the first black publication to capitalise on the American negro influence on South African blacks. It was the first black publication to break away from the obsession with white models and stress — albeit in rudimentary form — a version of black pride. It was the first South African magazine — white or black — to make photo-journalism rather than text its prime focus. It was the first South African publication to run a photo-comic book.

With *Zonk*, the black Press moved away altogether from the form, content and structure of the early black Press. No black ever owned shares in it or held down a senior editorial position. Where the early black Press played a vital role in black political life, *Zonk* deliberately avoided overt politics. Although it did have some didactic overtones, its primary emphasis was on entertainment.

Like so many other black South African publications, *Zonk* began almost by accident. Its history starts during the Second World War with an estate agent-turned-NCO named Isaac Brooks Baruch, (he later referred to himself as Ike Brooks) who made a name for himself organising variety shows for his fellow soldiers. Late in the war his commanding officer, Major Myles Bourke, sent for him and asked if he would like to teach African soldiers music.⁷ He jumped at the chance and was attached to the Native Military Corps at Driefontein in the Transvaal, with the rank of lieutenant. There he auditioned some 179 would-be musicians, gradually whittling them down to twenty-two. For almost nine months he trained them as enter-

⁴ *Drumbeat*, by Anthony Sampson, *In The Fiery Continent* by Tom Hopkinson and *The Beat of Drum*, edited by Angela Caccia. Only Sampson refers to *Zonk* at all.

⁵ *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho*, op cit. The Switzers are the only ones to name Brooks.

⁶ But not the first black magazine. The first was *Umlindi We Nyange* (The Watchman), an East London publication started originally as a promotional exercise by Baker King and Company in 1934, then revived from 1945-52. Its content resembled that of the 'old' black Press: 'stories from the Bible in picture form, English lessons, agriculture, health and sports notes, knitting patterns, cartoon strips and biographical sketches of prominent Africans.' Quoted in Switzers, op cit, p231. Also: Rosenthal, op cit, p23).

⁷ *Stage and Cinema*, July 7 1950.

tainers. Then he formed them into a group named the 'African Flashes',⁸ and took them on shows in army camps throughout the country, wherever there were enough Coloured and African soldiers to make up an audience.⁹ As he himself puts it:

Among my group were some who were positively brilliant. They were virgin soil — they knew nothing. But they learnt so damn fast it wasn't true.

After the war, Brooks returned to being an estate agent and was, he says, 'pretty successful'. But several members of his old army band had other ideas about what he should be doing. With the war over, they were unable to find jobs and wanted to start up a civilian version of the old army show. They managed to persuade Brooks to join them as manager and to write a black musical. The result was the show called 'Zonk!', named, as was to be expected from an ex-soldiers' revue, after an army nickname.¹⁰

The show was enormously successful. It played to half-a-million viewers all over the country.¹¹ The Schlesinger company even made a film version of it in 1950, scripted by Brooks and with the same cast, which ran for ten years at black cinemas.¹² In the words of the man who wrote, directed and produced the show:

It would knock you flat on your ass. It makes all those later black shows look sick.¹³

But the *Zonk* saga had still hardly begun. In 1948, one of the leading members of the cast, Simon Sekaphane, showed Brooks some copies of the black American

⁸ *The Star*, May 21 1943.

⁹ This section relies heavily on information supplied in separate interviews by *Zonk* founder Mr Isaac Brooks and *Zonk* editor Mr John Lee.

¹⁰ 'Where does the name *'Zonk'* come from, people often ask. Do you remember the story of the conference of generals in North Africa ... at which, after some long speeches by some of the generals, the one in charge called on the silent Danie Pienaar, idol of every South African soldier, for his opinion. The opinion came very briefly, 'Let's zonk 'em.' (*Rhodesia Herald*, March 1959).

¹¹ There was also a follow-up show called *'Nu-Zonk'* (*Stage and Cinema*, July 7, 1950).

¹² It was one of the earliest black films in the country. African Films Production Ltd, of Killarney, have filmed *Zonk* as a full-length feature ... Mr Baruch is producer of the film, with Hyman Kirsten ... as director.' (*Ibid*).

¹³ Brooks interview, op cit. A typical newspaper review of the time: 'This unit will hold its own with any concert party in the Union. There is not a passenger in it. Apart from ability and enthusiasm, I have seen no performers with such power of personality. It is amazing to reflect that, except for an odd man here and there, Lieut. I Brooks wrought these artists from raw material.' (*The Star*, May 21 1943). David Coplan, an authority on black music, writes of Brooks that 'despite his paternalism (his pioneering theatrical venture at a period of transition in the agencies of production and the nature of the audience for Black performing arts, stands as one of the few examples of genuine cooperation between White and Black, creatively and financially satisfying to most of the people concerned.' Coplan, op cit, p200.



Making the movie version of the 'Zonk' show. Ike Brooks is seated in the centre, next to the cameraman.

(Picture: Courtesy IKE BROOKS)

picture magazines *Our World* and *Ebony* and suggested to him that he start a local equivalent. Brooks replied that the idea was absurd — he knew nothing at all about journalism:

So he challenged me. He said, 'Basie, you wrote the number for the show 'We'll never fail'.¹⁴ Well, you're failing now before you try.'

'You know, he really got me. I told him to get stuffed. But this kept annoying me.'¹⁵

The idea was, however, not altogether new to Brooks. He recalls that before the war he was asked, informally, to give advice to a group of British investors interested in buying into the Central News Agency. He told them that the future in publishing lay with the Afrikaans and African markets, which would become increasingly valuable to advertisers. The idea had stayed in the back of his mind over the years. Now he decided to take up the challenge.

He began by asking around for advice on magazines. He found a British journalist named George Smith, who suggested that the magazine be centred around picture journalism. He gathered together various friends and acquaintances and, between them, they scraped up £6 000 to start a magazine.¹⁶

A company named Zonk Publications was formed on May 13 1949.¹⁷ Its offices were in a single back room in Annan House, a building in central Johannesburg. A total of 6 600 shares was issued, shared between 15 people, all of them white, each holding between 1 000 and 100 shares. The first directors were: I Brooks (Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief), G C Smith (Editor), G M Walford, F H Hughes, M Garden, L Berman and H Braveman. The articles of association made both Brooks and Smith permanent directors 'as long as they held no less than 500 shares'.¹⁸

That *Zonk* was going to be a very different publication from those of the Bantu Press was made clear by the first staffing decision the new management took. Where *Bantu World* aimed at a small, educated elite, this publication was aimed at the masses. And, so the belief went, the poorly educated — even illiterate — township workers would appreciate pictures more than words:

Smithy and I decided that what we needed most was a first-class Press photographer. But we weren't sure whom to hire. One day I saw a young fellow walking down the street carrying a camera. I said to Smithie: 'That's our new photographic editor.' He said: 'You're mad.' I said: 'No, I've got a hunch.' I got out of the car and went over to the chap and said I could give him a job. He took it.'¹⁹

¹⁴ A reference to the South African forces.

¹⁵ Brooks interview, op cit.

¹⁶ 'Years later, someone told me I should have had about thirty-seven thousand pounds to start a magazine. But I told him that my ignorance had stood me in good stead.' (Ibid.)

¹⁷ *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, March 1959.

¹⁸ *Press Commission*, Annexure VII, op cit, p103.

¹⁹ Brooks interview. Lee confirms the story.

The new photographic editor was John Lee, a former airforce pilot who was then running his own photographic business, Fotokraft Studios, but struggling to make ends meet. The deal was that he would continue to run the studio²⁰ but would also take photographs for *Zonk* and train blacks as Press photographers. He would be paid seven pounds and ten shillings a month.²¹ Not even Brooks earned much: 'We were paid next to nothing. I had a sports jacket and a pair of grey flannels — that was all.'²²

There were very few black journalists in the country in 1949. Rosenthal, writing at that time, has said that 'the number of professional African journalists — full-time — can probably be counted on the fingers of two hands.'²³ Since recruiting fully-trained journalists seemed out of the question, Brooks and Smith decided to train their own. And the handiest people available for the task right then, were the cast of the show *Zonk*. So began an extraordinary staffing arrangement: a group of people who were journalists by day and musicians at night (and movie stars too, during the making of the *Zonk* film):

There was no-one then you could buy as a reporter. Certainly not anyone who could also handle a camera. At first, our guys were just musicians. They would go out, look for stories, then come back and tell us what was happening. Then we would write the story and do the pictures. Gradually they learnt what it meant to be a reporter and what the idea was.²⁴

The integration of roles went even further. Everyone was expected to take pictures as well as write words, and journalists were expected to help out with circulation. Not even the editors were exempt.²⁵

The first copy of the new magazine came out in August 1949. The difference from the Bantu Press publications could not have been greater. In contrast to the staid, grey, usually pictureless *Bantu World*, here was a magazine with a searing yellow cover, a huge, bold calligraphic title 'Zonk!' emblazoned across the bottom.²⁶ That exclamation mark was in itself an indication of change. *Bantu World*

20 An advert in the September 1949 issue of *Zonk* announced: 'John Lee of Fotokraft Studios. Official photographer for *Zonk* magazine at your service — weddings, social functions, studio portraits and whenever you need *top class* photography'.

21 Lee interview, op cit.

22 Brooks interview, op cit.

23 Rosenthal, *Bantu Journalism in South Africa*, op cit, p20.

24 Lee interview, op cit.

Over the years, other staff were added, most of these freelance or occasional contributors. Among these was the country's first black woman photographer, Mrs Mabel Cetu, a midwife from Port Elizabeth. (*Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, November 1956)

25 Lee says he often loaded magazines into the boot of his car and sold them door-to-door in the townships. The only exception to the role-integration was advertising, which Brooks handled himself: 'I sold every penny's worth of advertising.' (Brooks interview, op cit.)

26 The magazine always called itself *Zonk! African People's Pictorial*.



AUGUST
1949
VOL. I NO. 1

ZONK!

1/-
MONTHLY

AFRICAN PEOPLE'S PICTORIAL

The first cover of Zonk. A huge calligraphic title and a picture of a less-than-bashful beauty in tribal regalia

would have considered it undignified. But this was the first of a new breed of magazines that saw all of life in exclamatory phrases.

The history of publishing in this country is full of false starts. *Zonk* was not one of them. As Brooks describes it:

That first print-order was for 20 000. It hadn't been on the streets more than a day when the CNA phoned up and said: 'Hey, Ike, bloody wild-fire! Double the print order.' But I was always a cautious fellow. So the next issue I put up to 30 000.²⁷

The advertising community gave a cautious nod of acknowledgement. *Selling* stressed to its readers that the new magazine would be no militant muck-raker:

A new photomagazine called *Zonk*, designed mainly for the African reader, was published for the first time at the end of July. It is a monthly publication and has, we understand, the full approval of the Department of Native Affairs. It is non-political and non-controversial.²⁸

Zonk was the first black magazine to adopt modern marketing techniques. It ran regular competitions — for example the first-ever black beauty contest,²⁹ a contest for a university bursary³⁰ and even a male 'beauty contest'.³¹ Contests are much beloved by advertisers. Not only do they push up circulations,³² the size of the response is believed to give some indication of reader interest in the publication. Advertisers also conducted their own 'surveys' by running their own contests or by including clip-out coupons:

The advertisers — the big companies, that is — in many instances kept a note of the response to their advertisements. They would phone up and say: 'Christ, Ike, it's overwhelming, the response we're getting.' It was the same with catalogue offers. Then they started their own competitions. They had occasion to ring up and say 'Come up to the office — look at all this bloody mail. A fantastic response.'³³

Much as Paver had done twenty years earlier, Brooks kept knocking on advertis-

27 Brooks interview, op cit. The printing was done by T W Hayne Ltd, a Dagbreekpers subsidiary.

28 *Selling*, August 1949.

29 Announced in *Zonk*, April 1950.

30 *Zonk*, November 1952. A man and woman were sponsored by the magazine throughout their undergraduate years at Fort Hare. This also boosted the magazine's image of being concerned about black welfare.

31 Called 'King of Good Looks'. The names of the first winners appeared in *Zonk*, April 1952.

32 They force casual readers to buy copies rather than just borrow them, because every contest includes a coupon which must be cut out. Some of the contests required readers to have a stock of back-copies — which gave the magazines longer 'reading lives': 'Incidentally, from time to time we've advised you to keep your old copies of *Zonk*. You'll need them for an unusual and amusing competition, with valuable prizes, that is coming up soon. So we're reminding you again — keep your old *Zonks*!' (*Zonk*, September 1952).

33 Brooks interview, op cit.

ing doors, spreading the new gospel that the African market was of increasing value to consumer industries. If Brooks was not completely successful in convincing the majority of advertisers, times had moved on and he certainly managed to make more converts than Paver:

I kept telling the advertisers: 'Look, you've got to keep hammering away at these people' (black readers). I think in a great measure my talks to the ad agencies paid off. I would say I encouraged advertisers to recognise the huge potential of the market.³⁴

and:

I said they should stick to institutional advertising. Get the reader used to the names. Get him used to seeing, say, Chrysler, and he'll buy a second-hand car, even if he can't afford a new one.³⁵

George Smith left *Zonk* in March 1951, to return to England. He was replaced as editor by the only woman to edit a black magazine, Janet Eliza Hasted. Smith's place as second biggest shareholder was later taken by Hubert Ponter, a Rhodesian, whose stake in the magazine rose to over eighteen percent by the mid-fifties.³⁶ Ponter, together with his brother Bernard,³⁷ promoted the magazine in the Federation, where it soon became a big seller. Rhodesian stories became more frequent in *Zonk* and Brooks himself visited the country several times.³⁸ The magazine's reputation spread elsewhere, too — letters were received from Algeria, China, England, America and Denmark.³⁹

The Hasted editorship did not last more than a few months. Following disagreements with the directors,⁴⁰ she left, to be replaced by the man who was to become the magazine's longest-serving editor, John Lee. He describes it this way:

(Brooks) called me in late one afternoon to say: 'As from tomorrow, you are the editor of *Zonk*.' 'You must be mad,' I said. 'I don't know an em from an en.' 'Well,' he said, 'you've got twelve hours to learn.'⁴¹

³⁴ Ibid. *Zonk* also produced its own market survey for advertisers.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Press Commission, op cit, Annexure VII, p106. Ponter, who joined the board in August 1953, was described as a director of seven other family-owned companies. According to Brooks, he later became chairman of the Rhodesian Chamber of Commerce.

³⁷ Later a mayor of Salisbury and Rhodesian Front MP. He also held shares in *Zonk*.

³⁸ *Zonk* did not publish any separate Rhodesian editions the way *Drum*, for example, would later publish separate East and West African editions. And the Press Commission notes that although the circulation spread over a wide area, the bulk of sales remained in the Transvaal. (Annexure VII, op cit, p103.)

³⁹ An example, the main letter in one issue: 'Zonk in Yugoslavia.' Thank you very much for your magazine *Zonk* that I accept every month. I know no many English, but I read your magazine with greatest interest — Wecrik John, Maribor, Yugoslavia. (*Zonk*, April 1952).

⁴⁰ The main reason, according to Lee, was a disagreement over whether she, as editor, was responsible for doing advertising as well as editorial dummies, as was expected on *Zonk*.

⁴¹ Lee interview, op cit.



The return of the 'Zonk' show: Ike Brooks, right, with the cast of his second show, 'NuZonk'.

(Picture: Courtesy IKE BROOKS)

Brooks has the highest praise for the man he made editor:

Without John Lee there would have been no *Zonk*. Apart from being a brilliant Press photographer, he was also a brilliant editor and a brilliant lay-out man. He transferred his journalistic abilities to our black photographers and they became damn good journalists.⁴²

By the mid-fifties, the board of directors and relative shareholdings had changed:

I Brooks (Managing Director)	39,9 percent
H Ponter	18,3 percent
M B Lazar	6,2 percent
R N Toms	2,3 percent
J Lee	1,16 percent

Other shareholders were the auditor, A Van der Bijl (6,28 percent); the company secretary's husband, F T Ziervogel (8,72 percent); H Braveman (9,88 percent) and G Katz (5,82 percent).⁴³ In the mid-fifties, therefore, all the directors and all the shareholders were private individuals, all of them white, none of them with any connections with major corporations.

In 1954, Brooks began a second publication along similar lines to *Zonk* called *Hi Note*, aimed at coloured readers. The editor of the magazine, which emphasised short stories, was John Lee. But *Hi Note* never became a second *Zonk*. In its first two months, the average circulation was 29 636, dropping back to 24 825 in the next six months. In its first year, it cost the company close on £4 000.⁴⁴

Zonk itself was doing rather better than any of its rivals, however. The only year it made a loss was the first one, when it lost £5 853. In 1951 it made a profit of £416, which rose rapidly to ten times that amount by 1955, aggregating a total profit of £11 523 in five years.⁴⁵ That five year period made *Zonk* the first black publication to make consistent profits over any extended period of time.⁴⁶

The magazine's formula had taken shape by now: regular crime stories, particularly a long-running series about a black James Bond figure called Ray Malaga; brief photo stories in which models acted out pre-prepared scripts; lots of pictures, including snaps sent in by readers, entertainment and sport. There were occasional campaigns, particularly against theft, violence and prostitution.

⁴² Brooks interview, op cit.

⁴³ All figures from the Press Commission, Annexure VII, op cit, pp106, 110.

⁴⁴ Press Commission, Annexure VII, op cit, p117. *Hi Note* was incorporated into *Zonk* in 1957.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p115.

⁴⁶ One should be careful with this figure though — *Zonk* was by no means a money machine. As Lee points out, profits were just enough to keep the venture going: '*Zonk* never made any real money — just enough to keep our heads above water.'

The next important figure to enter *Zonk's* history was Marius Jooste, managing director of Dagbreekpers, which owned the firm that printed *Zonk*. Jooste was then the rebel of Afrikaans journalism. While advertising manager of *Die Vaderland*, he had broken away in 1947 to start his own rival newspaper, *Dagbreek*, financed largely by English capital and mining interests. The original intention had been to publish a 'politically independent' newspaper, but within a few years the shares in the company had fallen increasingly into the hands of Transvaal Nationalists and the paper became openly pro-government.⁴⁷

In 1955, Jooste paid a visit to Brooks to ask him for some advice on black publications:

Marius said: 'Ike, the Minister (of Native Affairs, Dr Verwoerd) has suggested to us that we start a magazine for Africans in English, Zulu and Sotho.' He told me that many people had been very discouraging about the project. 'What do you think?' he said. I said, 'Marius, go back to the people who've been discouraging and say Ike Brooks says it'll be a roaring success.' Then he asked if I objected that it was in competition with us. I said, 'Not at all. Competition is a good thing.'⁴⁸

In 1956, Dagbreekpers started *Bona* magazine, which, unlike *Zonk*, appeared only in the vernacular, in separate Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho editions.⁴⁹ And as Brooks had predicted, it was indeed a success from the start. The initial circulation was 45 000, rising to 94 000 by 1959 — the highest circulation of any black magazine at the time.⁵⁰ *Bona's* formula, as was to be expected from a pro-government printing house, was innocuous good cheer. As Brian Bunting describes the early editions:

All 64 pages of *Bona* are devoted to the pleasanter side of African life ... Society Africans who make good, happy children, weddings and boxing ... How to conduct a choir, the pros and cons of witchcraft, musical bands and smiling women.⁵¹

Within a year there was a row over *Bona's* circulation, after this article appeared in the *Sunday Express* in October 1957:

47 Jooste's maverick image soon faded and by the sixties he had become managing director of the giant Perskor chain and something of a 'King-maker' in Afrikaans politics. (*The Press as Opposition*, Elaine Potter, Chapter 2).

48 Brooks interview.

49 *Bona* means 'Look' in the vernacular. The magazine stressed pictures over words for commercial reasons — pictures could be re-used in the different vernacular editions, text required translation. (*Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, March 1956).

50 Figures supplied by Dr Werner Eiselen, Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development to the *Second Advertising Convention*, op cit, p103. *Press, Advertising and Radio Review* gives different figures: 55 000, then 71 000, then 80 000 for the first three months. Both sets of figures were supplied by Dagbreekpers and probably exaggerated.

51 *The Story Behind the Non-White Press*, Brian Bunting, 1959, p6.

Though privately run, *Bona* benefits from public funds, for Dr Verwoerd, when Minister of Native Affairs, had made it compulsory reading in Bantu schools which in 1957 were taking about 35,000 copies a month. Thanks to this sizable state subsidy, the total circulation of *Bona* is in the region of 85 000 a month.⁵²

The row flared up again two years later at the Second Advertising Convention in 1959, when Mr John Fairbairn of the *Rand Daily Mail* accused the Government of subsidising *Bona*. Mr G H van Niekerk of Dagbreekpers admitted that about 20,000 copies of *Bona* 'and other publications' were supplied to schools.⁵³

Meanwhile, Brooks had a surprise for Jooste — after urging him to start *Bona*, he now decided to take the lucrative *Zonk* printing contract — worth between four and five thousand pounds each month — away.⁵⁴ He approached the rival Afrikaans printing house of Afrikaanse Pers and 'they jumped at it.'⁵⁵ The move would have a significance for *Zonk* that would only be apparent later.⁵⁶

Zonk was encountering stiff competition from another rival, *Drum* magazine, started in 1951 (discussed in detail in the next section). Although *Drum*'s circulation remained well below *Zonk*'s for several years, by late 1953 it had caught up.⁵⁷ *Drum* editor Anthony Sampson has said that his magazine remained behind *Zonk* until it was decided temporarily to change the policy to include political campaigning and investigative journalism. This lifted the 'fog of suspicion' that lay between his magazine and its readers, who until then had suspected that it was run by the Chamber of Mines.⁵⁸ Thereafter, *Drum* pulled ahead of *Zonk*, which continued to see itself as a non-political entertainment magazine.⁵⁹ A 1956 survey of the Press in Africa by Ruth Sloane Associates gives *Drum* an average circulation of 75 000 in

52 Quoted by Bunting, *Ibid*, p6.

53 *Second Advertising Convention*, op cit.

54 'I went to Marius and said: 'It's time to leave you. There's an old African adage that says you can't have two bulls in one kraal. You're starting *Bona* and it'll just be an extraordinary success. But my stuff is laid out in your shop. Let's just say that this might lead to 'accidental plagiarism.' (Brooks interview.)

55 *Ibid*.

56 Afrikaanse Pers Beperk was also showing some interest in the African market. In 1954 the company brought out the first Afrikaans book by an African, *Johannie Gier Die Beeld*, by court interpreter Arthur Nuthall Fula. *Die Vaderland* described it as 'the first book which describes objectively the life of raw Natives who arrive in the Golden city; it is also the first book which attributes the difficulties of urban Natives to their unfamiliarity with city life and does not blame Europeans for it.' (*Vaderland*, 15 January 1954.)

57 The Press Commission gives *Drum* an average 1953 circulation of 64 024. There is no 1953 figure for *Zonk*, but the 1954 figure is 62 556. (Op cit, pages 96 and 103.) Brooks points out that *Zonk*'s significant Rhodesian circulation would not be included in a South African ABC audit, though.

58 *Drumbeat*, Anthony Sampson.

59 Ironically, although *Drum* had a bigger circulation, *Zonk* was more profitable, at least during this period.

South Africa and a further 12 000 in the rest of Africa, compared to 62 000 for *Zonk*.⁶⁰

Brooks, however, has said that although *Drum* had more buyers, *Zonk's* readership figures were higher,⁶¹ and that this impressed a good many advertisers:

For example, I spoke to an executive of African Amalgamated Advertising, the Schlesinger Group ad agency, and when I sat down wanting to tell him about the merits of *Zonk* and went on to circulation, he said: 'I don't give a damn about circulation. I've done a little research on my own and I know that *Zonk* has a colossal readership per magazine. I want my people to advertise in your magazine.'⁶²

But even *Drum's* advertising was moving ahead. An advertising analysis by *Selling Age* gave *Zonk* an average of 34 pages of advertising in the period January to June 1957, compared with 40 pages for *Drum*.⁶³ Yet *Zonk* never made *Drum's* huge losses — partly because Brooks, a businessman all his life, ran a tighter operation than his rivals.⁶⁴

Zonk had managed to impress at least one important group of people — its printers. In 1958, Afrikaanse Pers decided to move into the black publications market themselves. But rather than start their own publication in the way Dagbreekpers had done, they chose to buy out an existing one. After doing a survey of the magazine market, they came to the conclusion that the best buy would be the magazine they were printing already — *Zonk*. Their managing director, Mr Jan Victor, approached Brooks:

He took me to lunch and asked me to sell. I said I was not a dictator, I would have to speak to the board. They were all in agreement. In addition to the commercial aspect where we all got some monetary compensation — let's be open about that — we all felt that a giant company like Afrikaanse Pers offered the means to expand *Zonk*. They had enormous financial resources, they could do more for the magazine, more for the African, than we may perhaps have been able to do on our own.⁶⁵

Afrikaanse Pers bought all shares except a small number which Brooks continued to hold. He also remained on the board. The conditions of purchase and sale

⁶⁰ *The Press of Africa*. Edited by Helen Kitchen. Page 45.

⁶¹ Lee confirmed this.

⁶² Brooks interview, op cit.

⁶³ *Selling Age*, September 1957.

⁶⁴ The Bailey group was well-known during the period for being strong on editorial, weak on management.

⁶⁵ Brooks interview, op cit.

Press, Advertising and Radio Review said much the same: 'Press Review understands that it will not be long before *Zonk*, with the substantial financial backing of APB, will stride forward with bigger papers, possibly full colour covers and four colour advertisements. APB, now with its first magazine in the African field, is likely to look to wider spheres of influence, possibly in the Rhodesias.' (March 1959.)

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For example, I spoke to an executive of African Amalgamated Advertising, the Schlesinger Group ad agency, and when I sat down wanting to tell him about the merits of *Zonk* and went on to circulation, he said: 'I don't give a damn about circulation. I've done a little research on my own and I know that *Zonk* has a colossal readership per magazine. I want my people to advertise in your magazine.'⁶²

But even *Drum's* advertising was moving ahead. An advertising analysis by *Selling Age* gave *Zonk* an average of 34 pages of advertising in the period January to June 1957, compared with 40 pages for *Drum*.⁶³ Yet *Zonk* never made *Drum's* huge losses — partly because Brooks, a businessman all his life, ran a tighter operation than his rivals.⁶⁴

Zonk had managed to impress at least one important group of people — its printers. In 1958, Afrikaanse Pers decided to move into the black publications market themselves. But rather than start their own publication in the way Dagbreekpers had done, they chose to buy out an existing one. After doing a survey of the magazine market, they came to the conclusion that the best buy would be the magazine they were printing already — *Zonk*. Their managing director, Mr Jan Victor, approached Brooks:

He took me to lunch and asked me to sell. I said I was not a dictator, I would have to speak to the board. They were all in agreement. In addition to the commercial aspect where we all got some monetary compensation — let's be open about that — we all felt that a giant company like Afrikaanse Pers offered the means to expand *Zonk*. They had enormous financial resources, they could do more for the magazine, more for the African, than we may perhaps have been able to do on our own.⁶⁵

Afrikaanse Pers bought all shares except a small number which Brooks continued to hold. He also remained on the board. The conditions of purchase and sale

⁶⁰ *The Press of Africa*. Edited by Helen Kitchen. Page 45.

⁶¹ Lee confirmed this.

⁶² Brooks interview, op cit.

⁶³ *Selling Age*, September 1957.

⁶⁴ The Bailey group was well-known during the period for being strong on editorial, weak on management.

⁶⁵ Brooks interview, op cit.

Press, Advertising and Radio Review said much the same: 'Press Review understands that it will not be long before *Zonk*, with the substantial financial backing of APB, will stride forward with bigger papers, possibly full colour covers and four colour advertisements. APB, now with its first magazine in the African field, is likely to look to wider spheres of influence, possibly in the Rhodesias.' (March 1959.)

included an agreement not to change the direction of the magazine and three-year contracts for the senior white staff — Brooks himself, Lee and the photographer and editor Ben Lindeque.⁶⁶

Zonk Publications, like its predecessor Bantu Press, had given up its independence to become part of one of the big Press chains. And its reasons had been similar too — only a large chain offered the resources for expansion.

There was a certain splendid irony to the composition of the new Zonk board. Apart from Brooks himself, there were Mr Jan Victor, Dr Ben Havenga (brother of the Afrikaner politician N C Havenga who was one of the founders of Afrikaanse Pers) ... and Dr Albert Hertzog, better known later as the first Herstigste Nasionale Party leader.⁶⁷ With the exception of Brooks then, all members of the board of this black publication were senior representatives of the Afrikaner establishment. And in those days, the Afrikaner establishment treated African publications with some suspicion. Yet both Brooks and Lee say there was never any interference in editorial policy by the new owners.⁶⁸ And indeed, *Zonk* did not appear to change during the late fifties. There was a greater emphasis on short stories and comic strips than before, but the basic entertainment formula remained the same. Readers were assured that the policy ban on overt political comment remained intact.

As promised by the new owners, *Zonk* still managed to do some pioneering on the technical side — it was the first black magazine with four-colour comic strips⁶⁹ and the first one to offer full-colour advertising on inside pages.⁷⁰ It was also a leader in full-colour covers, which considerably boosted advertising.⁷¹

In 1962, Brooks fell ill with a recurrence of old injuries sustained during his army days. While he was in hospital, major upheavals occurred in the Afrikaans Press. *Zonk's* new owners, Afrikaanse Pers, were in financial trouble, largely as a result

66 Brooks' contract was requested by Afrikaanse Pers. The other two got contracts at his insistence.

67 Hertzog's father, General Barry Hertzog, was the first chairman of Afrikaanse Pers. Brooks describes Hertzog as most amenable. While Minister of Health, for example, he gave the magazine every assistance on a story they were doing on the fight against kwashiorkor.

68 Brooks and Lee interviews, op cit.

69 '*Zonk* was the first magazine for non-whites to introduce full-colour comics for readers ...' (*Zonk*, March 1959)

70 '*Zonk* made history in their March issue with two full-colour page ads on the inside pages of the magazine. Ike Brooks, MD of Zonk Publications, told *Selling Age* that this is the first time that any non-European paper has reproduced full-colour adverts on its inside pages. Mr Brooks added that the reproduction was so good that it impressed even the most critical of advertising agents. One of them is reported to have said: 'Now we have got to go for colour'. (*Selling Age*, March 1961.) (Both adverts were for Ponds cream.)

71 *Selling Age*, September 1960. 'Ike Brooks, manager of *Zonk*, told *Selling Age* that the introduction of colour (spot colour) on the front page had an appreciable effect on circulation in the last six months. He felt that the introduction of full-colour would be even more effective.' (September 1960).

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of attempting to start a Sunday newspaper, *Sondagblad*. There were rumours that the Argus group would move in and take them over. But then, in an effort to prevent an English language Press group taking over an Afrikaans newspaper organisation, Marius Jooste made a bid to take over his old rivals. The bid was accepted and a new Afrikaans Press giant, *Afrikaanse Pers* (1962) Beperk was created. The trustees of the new group would include the Prime Minister, Dr Verwoerd, three Cabinet Ministers, one National Party Senator and the Administrator of the Transvaal.⁷² Jooste himself became managing director.

Zonk had no part in the machinations at the top of the newspaper hierarchy — yet it was destined to become the first victim. Still in hospital, Brooks decided he'd had enough of journalism and wanted to go into freelance advertising consulting. His resignation was accepted with reluctance.⁷³

Like Brooks, founder of *Zonk* ... has severed all connection with the publication and is to set up as a consultant on African marketing and advertising ... he stresses that his departure from APB is on the most amicable of terms ... With 13 years of intimate association with the African market as a background, Mr Brooks is now confidently offering his services to advertisers and others interested in marketing to Africans.⁷⁴

The new company now had two black magazines — *Zonk* and *Bona*, as well as the newspaper *Imvo*. Lee was made editor of all black publications. He modernised *Bona*, putting the emphasis on urban, rather than rural blacks, in similar fashion to *Zonk*.

In 1962, *Zonk* came up with its last innovation, a natural progression from its picture stories — the photo-comic. A small pull-out booklet was stitched into the centre of each magazine. It had its own cover and readers could purchase back-copies separately from the parent magazine. The photo-comics were comic books without drawings — they used actors posing for the camera instead. The situations, all romance plus dastardly intrigue, were dreamed up by *Zonk's* sub-editor, Max Fleischer, who wrote under a variety of black pennames.⁷⁵ The idea for the photo-comic was originally an Italian one, but *Zonk* was the first South African publication to import it. It was an instant hit — indeed, photo-comics are to this day the staple reading matter of vast numbers of South Africans, black and white. But it was an innovation that cost *Zonk* dearly — the Hyman brothers in Durban, publishers of Republican Press and Jim Bailey, publisher of the rival *Drum*, moved

⁷² Potter, op cit, p71.

⁷³ 'They were very sweet about it. They didn't want me to leave.' (Brooks interview, op cit.)

⁷⁴ *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, June 1962.

⁷⁵ Sample: *Separated Hearts*, by 'Neo Thabo'. 'Jim Nhlapo, medical student, did so well in his exams that the university offered him a study grant to study surgery overseas. A few friends, Beth, Sammy, Jack and most important of all, Winnie Temba, Jim's sweetheart, were at the station to say goodbye ...' (*Zonk*, January 1963).



'Your last chance to enter our July Handicap competition', read the cover of the July 1964 issue. Readers would find out later that this would also be their last chance to buy a copy of Zonk

into the market, producing cheap photo-comics which cut into *Zonk's* circulation.⁷⁶

For the time being, *Zonk* continued as it was, in direct competition to its new stablemate *Bona*. But the advertising was dropping off and so was the total number of pages per issue. The days when *Zonk* produced 200 page magazines were over — the average issue during 1963 had only 56 pages.

Lee explains the problem this way:

First, we couldn't keep up with *Drum*. Second, the powers-that-be kept a close watch on expenses. They kept our costs down so much that it became to the detriment of the magazine. Eventually it was decided 'why have two publications fighting each other?' so *Zonk* was turned into an English version of *Bona*.⁷⁷

The last issue of *Zonk* appeared in July 1964. The magazine had to write its own obituary:

We wish to announce that this is the last issue of *Zonk* to be printed as a separate edition. As from next month, *Zonk* will be incorporated into a new English edition of the ever-popular *Bona*.

We look back proudly over the past fifteen years; fifteen years of dedicated service to the African people, fifteen years in which we achieved so much — pioneers of so many firsts in the field of African journalism that even we have forgotten some of our magnificent achievements ...⁷⁸

6 Drum: The black media come of age

Had political developments not Balkanised Africa into conflicting States, *Drum* magazine would have been even earlier the sales brochure for Africa and Jim Bailey would have been the Beaverbrook of Africa.¹

Only one man could have written the sentence above — Jim Bailey himself. The quote encapsulates the cool self-confidence of the man who has all but turned the

⁷⁶ Most of this information comes from John Lee.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Editorial, July 1964.

¹ Quote from a J R A Bailey Organisation document announcing changes to the structure of the company. No title, no date (probably 1966), no page numbers. (Hereafter referred to as *Bailey Report*.)

It should be mentioned here that Bailey, the first person to be interviewed for this study, was somewhat reticent in his replies to my queries. I was told by one of his employees that this was because he wished to write the definitive book on his organisation himself. Whatever the reasons, I have made little use of this interview and relied instead on discussions with past and present employees and friends.

black Press in South Africa into his personal plaything. This man has made and broken newspapers, magazines and printing companies; he has spent larger fortunes than other entrepreneurs ever manage to earn; he has shrugged off one disaster after another, to remain, after more than thirty years, his own boss and the only pioneer of the commercial black Press still in the business.

His empire confounds all the normal rules of publishing — he has lost vast sums, yet keeps going — and one can only understand why, by beginning with the man himself. James Richard Abe Bailey is the younger son of the mining magnate Sir Abe Bailey, from whom he inherited the fortune which allows him to dabble in publishing, indifferent to the vagaries of the market place. He is a former Battle of Britain pilot (where he learnt a certain chilly self-control and relish for combat) and Oxford University student (where he picked up an enthusiasm for ancient history and literature.) He leads a Bohemian life-style, dressing in worn corduroys and polo-necked shirts to attend board meetings; he surrounds himself with an eclectic coterie of friends — black and white, working-class and aristocratic, ruffianly and respectable. He stays at the very best clubs in London, yet is at home in some of the seedier shebeens in Soweto, Lagos, Nairobi or Dar-es-Salaam. He is both Man of Letters (author of several scholarly books on ancient history, collections of poetry and a novel) and Yellow Press Baron (accused by many of producing the most scurrilous publications the country has ever seen). He will, on the spur of the moment, make decisions of the sort most people mull over for months; he is capable of extravagant kindness and sudden cruelty. His employees are in awe of his domineering personality; many fear him and a few bear him grudges. Yet at bottom, the most plausible explanation for this wilful indifference to the norms of bourgeois behaviour seems to hinge upon money: this is the care-nothing life-style of the English country gentleman, sustained by wealth accumulated by his elders and cushioned by it from the slights of ordinary living. Such cavalier indifference to mere reality helps explain the eccentric history of the Bailey publishing empire.

Jim Bailey did not actually start the publishing venture of which he is now sole owner. A company called African Drum Publications was formed in Cape Town in September 1950 with three shareholders: Mordaunt Milner Pty Ltd, Edna Jaffee and Robert J Crisp. The nominal share capital of the company was £1 000.² The driving force behind the company was Bob Crisp, a former Springbok fast bowler, a much-decorated war hero and a radio broadcaster popular for his debonair charm — in short, one of white South Africa's favourite sons. There was one thing Crisp lacked — he did not know a thing about publishing for the African market.³

Jaffee and Milner dropped out within weeks, and Crisp started peddling his idea — for a magazine which would sell right across Africa — to others. He interested a

² Press Commission, Annexure VII, op cit, pp90-91.

³ Sampson, op cit, p14. Also Sampson, 'The Early Drum', p15 and Bailey, 'Letting the Genie out of the Bottle', p123, both in *The Beat of Drum*, ed: Angela Caccia.

Cape Town about 100,000 pounds.
who then approached...
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market. The *Bailey Report*

⁴ Press Commission, *Announcement*
⁵ *Ibid.*, p90.

⁶ The magazine was first printed...
and printed by the *Sunday*...
⁷ Crisp emigrated to England...
in by the *London Sunday Express*...
ing and Radio Review, July...
⁸ As Bailey caustically put it...
want to talk to dukes and

prominent Cape Town advocate, Mr Robert Stratford QC, and persuaded him that a mere thousand pounds would be needed to launch the new magazine. It was Stratford who then approached Bailey for a loan. Bailey seemed a good choice of 'banker' — he was then one of the executors of his late father's estate and as such one of five directors of Bailey's Nominees Limited, formed in 1941. He was also one of five directors of the family mining corporation, Union and Rhodesian Mining and Finance Corporation.⁴ These two companies in turn held the Bailey group's majority shareholding in the second-largest English newspaper organisation, South African Associated Newspapers, and appointed three directors to its board, one of them Bailey himself.⁵

On February 13 1951, both Stratford and Bailey joined Crisp on the board of African Drum Publications. They produced four issues on cheap newsprint of a publication named *African Drum*, priced at sixpence. The magazine (as later sections will discuss) showed no understanding of the slick picture formula pioneered by *Zonk* and was aimed at rural, rather than urban blacks. Not surprisingly, the circulation plummeted with every issue, beginning with 24 000 and sliding down to a dismal 16 000. Equally predictably, the company soon ran out of money.⁶

Following rows with Bailey over editorial policy, Crisp sold his share in the company to the other two and resigned in January 1952.⁷ In October 1952, the now-bankrupt African Drum Publications was liquidated and immediately replaced by a company called Drum Publications, with Bailey and Stratford as equal partners. Stratford's interest in the company gradually waned however, and he sold out his share to Bailey in June 1954.⁸ Bailey was now the sole owner of the company, which he has remained to this day.

The publishing philosophy of the new company, like everything else about Bailey, was rather more flamboyant than that of Paver and Brooks. South African advertisers, as mentioned in the first section, had pinned their hopes on two markets to expand their trade. The one was local black consumers, the other was pan-African trade. Bailey hoped to take both markets with the same strategy — with a magazine that would appeal to Africans all over the continent, carrying with it the advertising messages of South African manufacturers aiming at the export market. The *Bailey Report* makes this clear.

4 Press Commission, Annexure IV, pp397-400; Annexure VII, p89.

5 Ibid, p90.

6 The magazine was first printed in Cape Town by Unie Volkspers, then moved to Johannesburg and printed by the Sunday Express Ltd.

7 Crisp emigrated to England where he went 'mink and duck farming in Norfolk', but was called in by the London *Sunday Express* as a special war correspondent during Suez. (*Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, July 1957.)

8 As Bailey caustically puts it: 'Stratford decided to leave South Africa and live in England. 'I want to talk to dukes and earls,' he said to me.' (Bailey, *The Genie*, op cit, p124.)

Commercially, *Drum* was intended to be a vehicle for South African manufacturers to sell manufactured goods to the African continent ... *Drum* does present to manufacturers the only worthwhile media to advertise their goods throughout English-speaking independent Africa.⁹

This marketing strategy caused some raised eyebrows at the time. Paver, for example, considered it 'pioneering at the wrong time'. He predicted that Bailey's 'continental club' would be a disaster, because 'what was good for Kenya wasn't good for here'.¹⁰ As this section will discuss, the idea never did work out quite as Bailey had planned it — but it was far more successful than Paver foresaw.

Bailey's second aim was still more ambitious. This son of a mining magnate was not going to defect from his family's comfortable financial background merely to produce any magazine — he was going to produce one of the great magazines in the world. A letter he wrote to *Press, Advertising and Radio Review* in 1957, explained that 'we have been endeavouring to lay the foundations for one of the world's great papers'.¹¹ The *Bailey Report* repeated the same theme: '*Drum* is intended to perform for the continent of Africa the sort of job undertaken by the other great magazines in the world for their respective countries.'¹²

Armed with these ambitions, Jim Bailey set off to produce the Great African Magazine. Whether he succeeded is a matter hotly debated among journalists, but the very fact that the subject is debated at all is some indication of his success. Where Bailey differed from Crisp — and from Paver, or even Brooks — was in his attitude to his readers. His predecessors had filled their publications with material that they believed the readers would — or should — read. Bailey, by contrast, preferred to 'sound out' the market to find out what his audience expected. *Drum's* first editor, Anthony Sampson, has described how Bailey asked their first reporter, Henry Nxumalo, to give them a guided tour around the townships:

'Henry took (us) round to African homes and clubs and we talked unendingly about *Drum*. 'Ag, why do you dish out that stuff, man?' said a man with golliwog hair in a floppy American suit ... 'Tribal music! Tribal history! Chiefs! We don't care about Chiefs! Give us jazz and film stars, man! ... You're just trying to keep us backward, that's what!'¹³

This kind of 'gut-level' market research, or 'mingling with the people' became a Bailey trademark. He also started a regular series of *Drum* 'parties' to which a variety of township people from different social strata would be invited, plied with drink and asked their opinions about the magazine. How genuine a reflection these

9 *Bailey Report*, op cit.

10 Paver interview, op cit.

11 Op cit, April 1957.

12 Op cit.

13 Sampson *Drumbeat*, op cit, p20

were of 'grassroots sentiment' and how much they influenced the content, is a matter for discussion in one of the later sections. For the purpose of this, economics, section, it is sufficient to note that these meetings convinced Bailey that the appropriate strategy was to aim not simply at an African market, but at the working class as a whole. He took the advertising trade's own class-based grading system to its natural conclusion and aimed at the down-market end of the spectrum, attempting to appeal to Africans, Coloureds and Indians. His letter to *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, (op cit) explained that his publications were not strictly aimed at the 'Bantu' market — 'they aim to provide reading material for the new South African urban working class'.

Bailey's first move towards expanding his empire came in January 1954, when he launched a West African edition, which was to prove his financially most successful venture. The history of the West African edition (and the East African edition which joined it later) is interesting enough to warrant a study on its own, but falls outside the scope of this study. In March 1954 he launched an entertainment magazine called *Africa!* based in part on the *Zonk* model. It was never a success and was incorporated into *Drum* from August 1955. He also set up bureaux in Durban and Cape Town which gradually became more independent, with Cape Town producing its own version of the magazine, aimed at a Coloured audience.¹⁴

The Crisp legacy was soon forgotten and *Drum's* circulation started climbing fast, passing that of *Zonk* first, then that of every other magazine in the country. Sales jumped from 20 710 in 1951 to 60 024 in 1953 to 73 657 in 1955.¹⁵ In May 1956, Bailey was able to announce to the marketing trade, through the pages of *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, that *Drum's* circulation 'had outstripped the sales of every other magazine in Africa, white or non-white, English, Afrikaans or vernacular.'¹⁶ *Selling Age*, which began recording the number of pages per month in South African magazines from 1957 onwards, gave *Drum* a higher advertising percentage than many white magazines. The number of advertising pages per issue rose from the mid-thirties in 1957 to the mid-fifties in 1959, considered respectable figures for the time. The overall number of pages in the magazine, which is determined by the advertising budget, not by editorial requirements, rose to over 100 pages by late 1959, which *Selling Age* ascribed to 'local and overseas advertisers'

- 14 Interview in London with Frank Barton, former Cape editor of *Drum* and *Golden City Post*, 1960-63. Now a lecturer at the International Press Institute in London and author of the book *The Press in Africa: Persecution and Perseverance*.
- 15 Press Commission, op cit, Annexure VII, p96.
- 16 Op cit, May 1956. Elsewhere in the same issue, it was announced that *Bona* was now averaging sales of between 71 000 and 80 000. *Bona* would in fact soon beat *Drum* in South African sales. The difference, of course, is that *Drum* did not have the advantage of a generous 'subscription' from the Department of Native Affairs. (See previous section)
- 17 Op cit, November 1959.

interest in the Bantu market'.¹⁷ By 1957, the Bailey empire included branch offices 'from Cape Town to East Africa' and distribution systems 'across Nigeria, the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone,' and Bailey was cockily predicting that *Drum* would soon be on sale everywhere in Africa 'up to the borders of Abyssinia'.¹⁸

Drum's strength was in the calibre of the people it employed. The editors included the likes of Anthony Sampson (now a best-selling author and sought-after columnist) and Tom Hopkinson (a pioneer of photo-journalism during a long and distinguished career as editor of *Picture Post* and one of few British journalists to be knighted). The white staff included international award-winning photographers such as Ian Berry and Jurgen Schadeberg and highly regarded journalists like Dave Hazelhurst (now managing editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*), Bob Hitchcock (highly regarded war correspondent), and Humphrey Tyler (now assistant editor of the *Argus*). But it was the black reporters who were perhaps the most remarkable, for their talents dwarfed those who have followed them. They included Henry Nxumalo, nicknamed 'Mr Drum', who was responsible for a series of courageous investigations which brought world-fame to the magazine (discussed in the last section); stylish and much-copied feature writers like Arthur Maimane and Todd Matshikisa; and the widely-acclaimed photographer Peter Magubane. The literary world treats the magazine's writers with reverence — the *Drum School* is considered a golden age in black fiction, including names like Can Themba, Casey Motsitsi, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Bloke Modisane, Nat Nakasa and Lewis Nkosi. As Frank Barton puts it:

One has to hand it to Jim — he financed the training ground for black South African journalists. In fact that, I'd say, was *Drum's* greatest contribution to South African journalism.¹⁹

Yet for all its success at attracting and holding readers, *Drum* was a failure at making money. Between July 1951 and June 1955, it lost £71 568. It lost £7 029 in 1951, £20 542 in 1953 and £21 092 in 1955.²⁰ It would continue costing Bailey vast fortunes until May 1965 when he closed it down and made it a supplement inserted in his newspaper *Golden City Post*.²¹ Any other entrepreneur in the same position

¹⁸ A boast which the rise of independent Africa prevented him from ever living up to. (*Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, op cit, April 1957.)

¹⁹ Barton interview, op cit.

²⁰ Press Commission, op cit, Annexure VII, p95.

²¹ The reason for *Drum's* demise was similar to that of *Zonk* — competition from photo-comics. Bailey himself blames it on: 'being assailed by stiff competition from the film-book type of magazine and Radio Bantu, which had been introduced by the Government some two years before.' (*Bailey Report*, op cit). He learnt his lesson, though, and went into the photo-comic business himself, starting a company called Impala Publications to produce these booklets. Since the overheads on producing photo-comics are minimal, they became his most profitable venture. (Interview with Jim Bailey, 1978).



Some of the Drum news staff in 1955. Those who can be recognised are Henry Nxumalo, seated at the typewriter at left, Jerry Khumbane at the other typewriter, with Mathew Nkoana between them

would have sold out long before or ended his career in a bankruptcy court — Jim Bailey simply carried on publishing. As Barton put it to me, '*Drum* was a rich man's plaything'.²²

Bailey's money is something of a mystery. As sole owner of the company, he is under no obligation to issue public statements or company reports. Even his editors and close friends are not entirely sure how much money he has or how much he has spent on publishing. What is known is that he receives a regular income from the Abe Bailey Trust, which is used not only for his publishing business, but also for his two very large farms and for his personal requirements. Arthur Maimane recalls being sent on errands to the Trust offices near the law courts for his boss: 'The Bailey Trust controlled all the finances and paid all the bills. I had to run to the Trust offices every week to collect my salary. I didn't get the impression that they told him what to do, though.'²³ During the fifties, the Bailey Trust was administered by a group of trustees whose number did not include Jim Bailey, although other members of the Bailey family were on the board.²⁴

The *Bailey Report* of the mid-sixties, which is as close as one can get to a financial statement on the organisation, reveals that all losses were made good by Bailey himself from his 'Director's Loan Account':

DRUM PUBLICATIONS (Pty) Ltd: Authorised share capital — 2 000 shares of 50 cents each. Issued share capital — 3 shares of 50 cents each, fully paid. Accumulated losses to 30th June 1965 amounted to R106 499,92c, and the necessary working capital was provided by Mr J R A Bailey's Director's Loan Account, amounting to R119 577,80c.²⁵

There seem to be two theories as to why *Drum* could at one and the same time be a circulation success and a profit disaster. The first is the 'managerial conspiracy' theory subscribed to by every editorial staff member I met, but succinctly summed up here by Barton:

Although *Drum* had the best editors, it was appallingly badly managed. It lost astronomical sums through sheer mismanagement.²⁶

There is likely to be some truth in this claim. Although each publication had its own individual editorial staff, a single management structure controlled the whole organisation. This meant that any weaknesses affected all publications. The most serious case occurred during the fifties, when the business manager, who discovered

22 Barton interview, op cit.

23 Maimane interview, op cit.

24 The right-wing commentator Ivor Benson has suggested that the Trustees are appointed by the Rhodes Trust in London. The Rhodes Trust, whose directors during the fifties were people at the very centre of the British establishment, had links with Argus, SAAN and also with Bantu Press. Benson, *The Opinion Makers*. cf Press Commission, Annexure VII, op cit, p95.

25 Op cit.

26 Barton interview, op cit.

he had made substantial losses due to errors in his calculations, tried to conceal these by 'cooking' the books. Bailey puts the matter in his own inimitable fashion:

When the balance sheets giving the correct figures appeared, I spoke to the manager, who then spent some days in hospital.²⁷

Bailey himself had no business qualifications before going into *Drum* — unlike his predecessors, Paver and Brooks. Although neither Paver nor Brooks knew any more about publishing than Bailey when they started off, they at least had solid business backgrounds. Paver had been a space salesman, Brooks an estate agent — and they were both adept at corporate hustling. Bailey went into *Drum* as much for the adventure as anything else, and adventure appears to have remained more important than bookkeeping.²⁸

The second theory as to why *Drum* — like most of the Bantu Press publications and *Zonk* too — never became financially stable, has to do with the structure of the advertising industry at the time. As was discussed in the first section, enough advertisers were interested in the black mass media to get them started, but not enough were interested to keep them afloat. It was not sufficient that *Drum* was packed with advertisements — the only way it could lure them was by offering uneconomical rates.

Further, there were some flaws in Bailey's advertising strategy. As Paver had pointed out, one could not market a single magazine to a whole continent. Bailey had got around this by 'regionalising' — offering quite separate editorial for each country. Some of these regional sections were profitable in their own right, but as a whole, the strategy proved enormously costly. It involved the expense of running separate bureaux throughout Africa and airfreighting in vast bulk from London every week. It also negated the whole idea of the 'continental magazine' — what Bailey was offering were several separate publications. The rise of the independent African states also negated the fundamental premise of Bailey's credo — that *Drum*, through its advertisements, would be the 'sales brochure' of South African exports to the continent. Although he himself managed (but only just) to keep a foothold in independent Africa, the South African companies upon whom he banked his hopes, had no such luck.

Similarly, the strategy of aiming a single editorial product at the whole 'South African working class', regardless of race, never materialised. By keeping his Coloured and African versions of *Drum* separate, Bailey was implicitly admitting to flaws in his own marketing strategy.

Like its predecessors in the black media, *Drum* was launched upon the tantalising

27 Bailey, *The Genie*, p132. The losses were so severe on this particular occasion that Bailey had to sell his house.

28 Asked why it was that *Zonk* made more money with less readers than *Drum*, Brooks suggested that it might have had something to do with the relative quality of the managements.

ing dream of solid advertising support. Like them, it had to learn that large as this support seemed, it was somehow never large enough.

7 Post: Beaten by the monopolies

In March 1955, Bailey launched the tabloid *Golden City Post* in direct competition with *Bantu World*. The contrast between the two papers could not have been greater, both in content (puritan vs libertine) and in sales (modest vs meteoric). The irony was, that after a sixteen year battle in which *Post's* market dominance was never in doubt, it was *World* which triumphed. The history of *Post* is the history of a losing battle against monopoly power.

The Press Commission calculated that in its first year of existence, *Post* stole from the Bantu Press papers 38.26 percent of 'the total annual circulation of Bantu newspapers'.¹ The reason, or so its proprietor and editors thought, had to do with its go-all-the-way-and-damn-everyone philosophy. Frank Barton, one of the few people to work on both *Drum* and *Post*, told me that he left South Africa 'because of the shame I felt at working for a paper like *Post*'.

It was the most scurrilous paper on any bloody continent. There were — literally, I tell you — standing instructions to lead pages, say three, five and seven, on a rape. I look back in shame on it. It was bloody disgraceful.²

Post, in Bailey's words, was to be 'a tabloid newspaper for the South African masses which would be racy, modern, hard-hitting and honest'.³ The man behind *Post*, one of the few Bailey editors to manage a relatively harmonious relationship with the proprietor, was a British immigrant called Cecil Eprile. Eprile arrived in South Africa a sober enough gentleman, 'with a grey Homburg hat and a little bit of the Edinburgh Evening News'.⁴ He went to work on the Schlesinger organisation's *Daily Express*, which entirely changed his attitude to journalism. The *Express*, edited by Arthur Barlow, was South Africa's first taste of racy, mass-market journalism in the Fleet Street style.⁵ It used photographs and headlines with a new

¹ Press Commission, Annexure VII, p121,124.

² Barton interview, op cit.

³ Bailey, *The Genie*, op cit, p144.

⁴ According to a former editor of the *Express*. (*Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, March 1958.)

⁵ For this information I am grateful to Saan archivist Charles Bloomberg, who is working on a history of the *Express* group. The history of the *Express* is remarkably similar to that of *Post* — it made such damaging inroads into the circulations of its chief rivals, the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Star*, that the two big newspaper groups colluded in buying it out and shutting it down.



WHADYA KNOW?

- there are over 1,260,000 literate urban Africans
- over 1,263,000 African children at school
- over 25,000 African teachers

DRUM URBAN READERSHIP 865,000 (S.A. Edition)

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?

- Africans earn (and spend) 25% of Union's annual income.
- 60% of African spending power is in urban areas.
- average earnings of semi-skilled urban African—£28.6.0.



**GOLDEN CITY
POST**
URBAN
READERSHIP
435,000
(ESTIMATED)

Urban Africans spend over £400,000,000 a year
IT'S THE FIRST MASS MARKET IN AFRICA—AND
IT'S YOURS, ALL YOURS—FOR THE ADVERTISING

Bailey organisation advertisements for Drum and Golden City Post,
aimed at marketing executives, which appeared in Selling Age in 1958

boldness and regularly 'scooped' its more cautious competition. Eprile became an important member of the *Express* staff, rising in rank to Chief Sub-editor. At *Post*, Eprile and his assistant editor, Hank Margolis, also a former *Express* employee, took the Barlow-formula further than ever before — or ever since. *Post*'s philosophy was summed up in the advertisements that appeared in *Drum* early in 1955 heralding the launch of the new tabloid as if it was a major title-bout rather than a newspaper: 'It's what they've all been waiting for. IT'S NEW. IT'S BOLD. IT'S FEARLESS!'.⁶

Unlike *Drum*, *Post* has not been the subject of a single book or major academic study. This is an extraordinary oversight, because, in terms of influence alone, it must rank as the most important black newspaper to appear. As the first successful mass-market black publication, its format and sales policy (discussed in the next section) have mesmerised subsequent generations of publishers and editors to the point where the *Post* style is not only the reigning orthodoxy, it is unthinkable to use any other approach. The Bantu Press, as the next section will discuss, was almost immediately thrown into a tizzy by the appearance of the new tabloid, and any number of different 'copy-cat' versions of *World* were produced over the years. In the late sixties and early seventies in particular, it took a practised eye to tell the difference between a page from *Post* and one from *World*. Similarly, the *Rand Daily Mail* and *Sunday Times* 'Extras', aimed at township readers, were staffed by former *Post* employees who were considerably influenced by that paper's style.⁷

It is some indication of how much capital costs had risen since Paver's day, that even the wealthy Bailey could not afford to buy his own newspaper composing room and press.⁸ Part of the problem was that, unlike Paver, he was unable to get permission to use 'cheaper' black works staff.⁹ *Post* was typeset instead by South African Associated Newspapers and printed by Afrikaanse Pers Beperk. Contract printing caused a number of problems; in particular, awkwardly long deadlines imposed by printers who gave priority to their own papers.

Post reached the 70 000 sales mark within months of its launch, and then became

- ⁶ *Drum*, January and February 1955.
- ⁷ The same applies to the 'Extras' published as black adjuncts of some white newspapers. The man hired to do the original feasibility study on the 'Extras' was the former deputy editor of *Post*, Dave Hazelhurst. The first two editors of the 'Extras', Gavin Stewart (*Rand Daily Mail*) and Jack Blades (*Sunday Times*) both arrived straight from *Post*. (cf Gavin Stewart, *The Development of the Rand Daily Mail as an Inter-Cultural Newspaper*, Unisa BA Hons dissertation, 1980.)
- ⁸ He did set these up some years later, however, when the new photo-setting and offset-litho technology eliminated some of the enormous costs involved. One should stress the word *some* however — the value of the plant was R350 000. (*Bailey Report*, op cit).
- ⁹ He complained bitterly about this in *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*: 'We have so far been unable to obtain permission to use non-European labour to print our own papers, although there is supposed to be such a thing as positive apartheid.' (April 1957.)

the first black paper to 'break' the 100 000 barrier.¹⁰ In 1958, *Selling Age* was telling readers that *Post's* mushrooming circulation was causing the printers, Afrikaanse Pers Beperk, production headaches and that a new rotary press had been installed to cope.¹¹ The production problems continued and Bailey installed his own press, which in 1963 was transferred to a separate company under his control called Trinity Printing and Publishing.¹² During the mid- sixties, the circulation climbed above the 200 000 mark and, in 1971, *Post* had a circulation of 235 000, second only to the *Sunday Times* among English language newspapers.¹³

But beneath *Post's* public image of triumph-following-upon- triumph, the paper was actually in serious trouble. The first problem had to do with the fact that the glittering circulation figures owed a certain amount to bookkeeping embellishments. There were, in fact, two *Posts*. The first was the one everyone knew, the nation-wide Sunday edition. The second, rather smaller edition, usually published on Thursday, was called the 'Midweek'. The midweek edition carried the same advertisements and similar features to the Sunday edition, but the front news pages were different. There is nothing unusual about one newspaper appearing twice a week — *Bantu World* did so for years. But what was controversial about *Post*, was that the midweek and Sunday sales were added together and publicised as a single, conglomerate figure. Bailey's explanation was that these were merely different 'editions' of the same newspaper, added together in the same way that sales figures for the 'Stop Press' and 'Late Final' editions of evening newspapers are added together. The argument did not convince everyone — some pointed out that the *Star*, for example, does not add together its Tuesday and Friday sales totals. There was a second problem too: Bailey had to carry the circulation, printing and editorial costs of two editions in return for the advertising revenue of one.

A still more serious problem was that distribution of *Post* was always in the hands of Bailey's chief rivals — the Bantu Press and Argus. By the 1950s, the sale and circulation of 90,8 percent of black newspapers and magazines was dominated by a single company, the Bantu News Agency, which exercised such tight control over national distribution that potential competition was effectively shut out. To understand the problem, one has to go back to Paver and the early years of the Bantu Press. An American missionary named Dexter Taylor, an associate of the better-known liberal missionary Ray Phillips, asked Paver to employ his son, which he did. The son had started a small bookshop, which Paver took over, thinking that it would be a useful adjunct to branch into the bookselling field.¹⁴ In 1938 he

¹⁰ Microfile SA Ltd. *South African Newspapers and their Histories*, pamphlet, 1971.

¹¹ *Selling Age*, September 1959.

¹² *Bailey Report*, op cit.

¹³ Microfile SA Ltd, op cit. Bailey gives the 1971 circulation figure as 260 000. (*The Genie*, op cit, p159).

¹⁴ Paver interview, op cit. The agreement with the Typographical Union (mentioned previously) prevented the production of books by Bantu Press, but did not prohibit Paver from selling them.

founded the Bantu News Agency, the original intention being to limit the company to the distribution of *Bantu World* and *Imvo* only, branching out into the book field later, rather like the Central News Agency.¹⁵ Distribution had always been a serious problem for the black Press, as Rosenthal has pointed out:

The main problem ... is that there is nothing in the field of Bantu economy corresponding to the corner news agent. Every publisher so far has had to build up a chain of distribution points on his own, a most wasteful and costly method. For many Bantu journals, this has meant ruination.¹⁶

Using a distribution system based on paid agents in each area (discussed in previous section), Paver soon managed to build up an efficient circulation network which grew to include all the newspapers in the Bantu Press group. But the bookshops idea never materialised. As Paver explains it, Bantu News Agency failed to 'take a leaf out of the breweries' book and get tied houses, so we had outlets'.¹⁷

In 1952, Paver began talks with the CNA, the organisation which monopolised the distribution of 'white' newspapers, magazines and books. Paver had a close association with A V Lindbergh, one of the owners of CNA, from whom he had borrowed money previously to buy the *Ilanga* stand in Umgeni Road, Durban.¹⁸ He believed that the CNA's expertise and capital would be an advantage to the Bantu News Agency and that, in return, he could offer them 'an opening in the field for the development of African literature ... schoolbooks and that kind of thing'.¹⁹ The share capital of the Bantu News Agency was substantially increased and CNA bought a 75 percent share²⁰ with Bantu Press retaining the other 25 percent and the right to appoint three directors.²¹ The agreement, as the Press Commission pointed out, gave the CNA a monopoly on distribution throughout the country.²¹ The interlocking shareholdings were still more complicated, for the Argus company owned a large share in the CNA, which in turn, (via its own largest shareholders, the Lindbergh Group), was the second largest shareholder in South African Associated Newspapers.²² As the Press Commission put it, 'after 1953, the scope of the CNA monopoly has tended to increase ... in respect of numbers of copies handled and the importance of the newspapers it delivers'.²³

15 Harrison, op cit, p7.

16 Rosenthal, op cit, p2.

17 Paver interview, op cit.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Harrison, op cit, p20.

21 Press Commission, Annexure XII, *The Central News Agency Group, its Distribution Activities and Interlocking with Newspaper Companies*, p344.

22 Ibid. Today the CNA is a subsidiary of the Argus Company. The CNA's role is in some ways similar to that of W H Smith in Britain, which, as early as the mid-nineteenth century, acquired 'strategic control' over the Press. The company has been accused of censoring newspapers and books. (Curran, *Capitalism and Control of the Press*, op cit, p222.).

23 Press Commission, Annexure XII, op cit, p347.

Bailey followed in the footsteps of Brooks in deciding that the Bantu News Agency²⁴ was the only efficient distribution agency, that it was not possible to compete with it, and that it therefore made more sense to use its services. In February 1952, therefore, he switched from CNA to Bantu News Agency. This arrangement worked adequately while he published only *Drum*, for the magazine was not in direct competition with any Bantu Press publications. But it became far more serious when *Golden City Post* came out in direct competition with *Bantu World*. For, as the Press Commission pointed out:

The fact that Bantu Press is represented on the board of Bantu News Agency means that the largest customer of Bantu News Agency, viz, the Bantu Press group, has a say in determining the conditions of the distributing contracts for all other owners whose newspapers are distributed by the Bantu News Agency. If the Bantu Press uses its position ... to obtain better terms (for its own newspapers) than can be obtained by another owner, Bantu Press would be making use of CNA's monopoly to protect its papers against the competition of *Golden City Post* or a new newspaper. The fact that Argus Printing and Publishing is one of the controlling shareholders in both the Bantu Press and the CNA ... means that a company which has a financial interest in the largest customer of the Bantu News Agency has a say in determining the conditions of the distributing contracts of all other owners ... CNA or Bantu News Agency can prevent other owners of the native Press from being able to negotiate ... on equal terms.²⁵

Bailey would have agreed wholeheartedly with the Press Commission's opinion. His problems with the circulation of *Golden City Post* began when sales topped the 70 000 mark and the Bantu News Agency raised its distribution fees. Bailey had no option but to raise *Post's* cover price, which caused a drop in circulation:

Post proved an immediate success from inception and, in a short space of time, reached a circulation of 70 000 copies. However, the growth pattern was to be abruptly checked when our publishers forced a price increase from 3d to 4d and this inhibited growth for a number of years.²⁶

By the mid-sixties, circulation was climbing again and the *Bailey Report* could confidently predict 'substantial profits' in the future. But the war was not yet over, particularly since it had its personal side too — a passionate enmity between Bailey and the Argus company's Layton Slater. In 1968, the Argus company opened a 'Second Front' in its war against Bailey — a Sunday paper, called *Weekend World*, was started in a deliberate attempt to muscle Bailey out of the market. The editorial director appointed to run *World* and *Weekend World* was Mr Charles Stills, a highly-skilled journalist in the Eprile mould who produced a newspaper

24 The name was changed to Banner News Agency in 1956 to coincide with the change of *Bantu World* to *World*.

25 Press Commission, Annexure XII, op cit, p349.

26 Microfile SA Ltd, op cit.

remarkably similar to *Post*, differing in marketing philosophy only in that it was aimed exclusively at Africans.²⁷ But despite the changes, *Weekend World* never managed to outsell the now well-established *Post*. The Argus company won its victory in other ways ...

Bailey's version of why *Post* folded is that the Argus company was big enough to run *Weekend World* at a loss, which gave them the freedom to deliberately undercut him on advertising tariffs and cover price, to the point where he could no longer keep going. He also claims, in particular, that his distribution via the CNA was manipulated and that Argus used their influence with the merchant banks against him.²⁸

The only distribution agency I could use, the CNA, was owned (by Argus) and in the Cape, certainly, the control of my distribution was manipulated against me.²⁹

In 1971, at the very height of its circulation success, *Golden City Post* was sold to the Argus company, which immediately down-scaled it to an Indians-only newspaper, based in Durban. Bailey has nurtured a deep bitterness against the Argus company ever since, which is the reason for his decision to launch the *Post* 'clone', *Golden City Press*, in 1982.³⁰

Bailey's experience at the hands of the Argus company demonstrated just how far the level of economic concentration in the black Press had come. To begin with, there were the small, African-owned papers, each independent of the next. Then Paver moved in, still with a relatively small company, and managed to swallow almost the whole black Press in less than a decade. Paver himself found it expedient to sell out to larger companies, which increasingly took over his company, ultimately pushing him out of the door too. And now Bailey, free-spending millionaire son of a mining magnate, found that not even he could take on a publishing monopoly and win.

- 27 Stills told me that the paper was modelled on the British *Daily Mirror*, which would also have served as a model for *Post*. It was for Africans only he said, because there was too much enmity between Africans, Coloureds and Indians for one newspaper to cater for all three. (Stills interview, 1976).
- 28 It should be pointed out that Layton Slater, now Argus chairman, has denied all of this. The highly complicated controversy as to why *Post* folded was waged in the columns of *The Journalist* in February and March 1982.
- 29 Bailey, *The Genie*, op cit, p159.
- 30 Not all can be blamed upon Argus manipulation, however. One of the reasons Bailey was unable to stand up to the *Weekend World* onslaught had to do with mismanagement in his own organisation. He received 'expert' advice that it would pay him to buy an expensive, high-quality gravure press to print *Drum* and do 'jobbing' printing for outside companies. The cost of the press almost bankrupted him and brought in very little in the way of outside revenue. He was forced to sell it to Argus, who in turn sold it to Republican Press ... who now use it to print one of Bailey's biggest rivals, *Bona* magazine.

5 From staid didacticism to slick sensationalism

Newspaper and magazine publishers, like any other consumer goods manufacturers, use the standard marketing technique of aiming their commodities at the centre of the largest audience. The problem, however, is that in publishing there is more than one commodity on sale, and more than one audience of consumers. Newspaper publishers do not just market newspapers — they also trade in human beings. First, they offer their publications for sale as bait to lure customers. Then, they count and sort these customers and sell them, in turn, to advertisers.

The leading American publisher, Conde Nast, had this explanation of his own role:

I used to think of publishing as something very grand — even mysterious. But a little clear thinking led to the conclusion that publishing, analysed to its basic elements, can be resolved into nothing more than a Name-Brokerage Business. The publisher fills a certain number of pages with reading matter, drawings and photos. He, so to speak, baits his pages with such editorial matter that he believes will attract either a great number of readers or a specific class of readers, which he offers them at a considerable loss.

Then, he turns to advertisers and merchants of the country and in the manner of a Name Broker, he says: 'I have gathered together a list of names. Access to them will enable you to promote your business, and I will let you have access to such names.'

The customers have themselves become the commodities, aimed at an audience of consumer goods manufacturers. Publishers, therefore, unlike many other kinds of manufacturers, cannot simply aim for the centre of one market. They must weigh the preferences of one audience (readers) against those of another (advertisers).¹

¹ Theodore Peterson, *Magazines of the Twentieth Century*, op cit, p65.
² Hirsch and Gordon, op cit, p41.

There is nothing unusual about producers aiming at more than one market at once — it even has its own economics label, 'joint supply'. Timber, for example, can be used for furniture, roof beams, paper, toothpicks, cricket bats or whatever. The lumber mill owners watch the different markets and go for whichever are the most lucrative. What makes the Press unique is the relationship of its two markets — the one decides the parameters of the other.

If newspaper publishing behaved like any other consumer industry, editors would aim for mass tastes — aim to give readers 'what they want'. And in many senses, newspapers do behave that way — but not entirely. Editors must perform the most exotic juggling act in consumer marketing. They must produce material of the kind that they think the advertisers will think the readers will think they want.

To advertisers, the measure of a good newspaper is its ability to 'reach' large numbers of the right kinds of people. And the right kinds of people are those most likely to spend on consumer goods. The media are alone among consumer industries in that they do not merely count their customers, they weigh and classify them too. A manufacturer of trousers is indifferent to who buys the product — what counts is that it is bought. Since newspaper customers are themselves sold to advertisers, they must be picked with care. Advertisers break down newspaper readers into six categories:

A MARKET: Top rank business executives, entertainment and sports stars, highly qualified professionals.

B MARKET: Business managers, directors of smaller companies, senior civil servants, middle-rank professionals.

C1 MARKET: Junior managers, white collar workers, clerical staff.

C2 MARKET: Skilled artisans, lower rank civil servants.

D MARKET: Semi-skilled or unskilled workers.

E MARKET: Pensioners, unemployed.

The criteria for selection are ambiguous — ostensibly, the breakdown is on income lines, but there is some class differentiation. C1, for example, is white collar and C2 blue collar, yet many of the latter earn more than the former. Similarly, there are racial implications — A and B readers are mostly white, D readers are mostly black. For all their shortcomings, these categories have become gospel to the advertising industry.

Advertisers favour publications high on A and B readers, preferably living in urban areas where most of the shops are: Marketers of household and cosmetic goods prefer women readers (who do most of the shopping); car manufacturers, banks and machinery advertisers prefer men.

While consumer goods manufacturers aim for most markets, including C2 and D, luxury goods advertisers do not. Some of the biggest spenders in advertising — car, photographic equipment and hi-fi manufacturers, luxury hotels, 'posh' liquor and jewellery retailers — ignore 'downmarket' publications entirely. And even for

consumer goods advertisers, a 'downmarket' publication is only a viable vehicle if its circulation is enormous.

Advertisers dislike audience 'scatter'. A publication which appeals to too many different categories is difficult to assess as a marketing vehicle. A publication with a narrow, clearly defined target audience minimises 'waste' advertising. 'Specialist' magazines are the favourite, since most readers can be assumed to share common tastes — at least in that particular field. Advertisers particularly like specialist magazines which can be tied to specific categories of consumer goods: pop-music magazines appeal to record and hi-fi advertisers; car magazines to the motor trade; women's magazines to any cosmetic or household goods manufacturer.

One particular kind of specialised publication is the black publication. It is aimed at a specific category of reader, most of whose members share roughly similar 'lifestyles', live in specific geographic areas, and who, as discussed in section one, are major consumers of American-style clothing, records, bicycles, specialised cosmetics and patent medicines. During the pre-war period, advertisers aimed only at the black elite in the belief that the 'masses' were too poor to be taken seriously. But, as discussed previously, the post-war expansion of secondary industry compelled advertisers to look elsewhere for new markets and some, if not all, chose the black 'downmarket' masses as a target.

The purpose of the final section of this study is to discuss the impact of this kind of 'market-orientated' publishing upon the editorial content of the black Press.

Marketing and the ideology of professionalism

There was a time when the 'sales-effort' was confined to marketing departments.¹ Production departments concerned themselves with their own particular tasks and no more. Marketing was of secondary importance — indeed, none of the 'classical' economists paid more than passing attention to it. But this is no longer the case. Marketing strategy has infused every aspect of goods production, publishing included. This section will argue that editorial techniques have become so closely integrated with marketing strategy that the two are often barely distinguishable.

The history of the media, both in South Africa and abroad, can be said to have moved through three phases:

1. The earliest equivalent to a newspaper was the pamphlet, usually dealing

¹ Baran and Sweezy, quoting Vance Packard, reveal that 'whenever engineers in the appliance industry assembled at conferences in the late fifties, they frequently voiced the complaint that they had become little more than push-buttons for the sales department'. (*Monopoly Capital*, op cit, p134).

with matters of current controversy, invariably either political or religious. The tone was customarily indignant, if not vitriolic.² The belief was that the printed word carried enormous persuasive power.

2. By the end of the sixteenth century, the first proto- newspapers appeared, in response to a need by the rising bourgeoisie for practical information about the state of the world on which to base business decisions. These newssheets, containing political and economic titbits, were issued for in- company use only by the large European trading companies, to ensure that staff made informed investment judgements.³ Soon it occurred to printers that current events were a marketable commodity which could be sold to the public at private profit.⁴ The discovery of the telegraph in the nineteenth century prompted the growth of international 'wire services' which sold news to the newspapers. The wire services developed the technique of phrasing reports in a bland, ostensibly neutral, tone, which could appeal to customer publications of widely differing political hues. It came to be understood that the written word's powers of persuasion were limited: articles contradicting readers' own opinions might not only fail to convert them — they might instead alienate them altogether. A new self-image for the journalist arose — that of the independent, objective seeker after truth who reported all opinions without comment.

3. The growth of consumer advertising (in the twenties in the US, in the forties in South Africa) prompted the development of 'leisure' magazines which aimed for large circulations of specific categories of readers. New techniques were developed to 'bait' readers — particularly sophisticated editing skills, designed to make content as easily digestible as possible. Liveliness was stressed above social purpose and controversy was avoided. The value of editorial content was determined by its appeal to a carefully defined 'target audience'.

As this section will argue, the early black papers in South Africa can be said to have fallen into the first category — they were owned and run by blacks with the dual purpose of 'uplifting' their fellows into the ways of white civilisation and fighting for their rights. The first newspaper of the second kind was *Bantu World*, which, although it continued to cling to didacticism, was primarily a commercial venture. The significance of *Zonk* magazine is that it was the first black publication of the third kind — its primary purpose was to provide entertainment. Later

2 In the year 1525, for example, of the 498 pamphlets issued in Germany, only 80 did not concern themselves with the Protestant- Papist controversy. (G Barrie, *Communication and Language*, p131.)

3 S H Steinberg: *500 Years of Printing*, p240.

4 'The desire for quick information and for regular entertainment brought into existence the periodical Press which ... owed its origins to the business instincts of the printers. They realised that the 'swift currents of the age' ... required new channels of expression ... and they were determined to canalise these swift running waters so as to turn their own mills.' (Ibid.)

publications such as *Drum* and *Golden City Post* — and, eventually, *World* itself — followed suit.

The two earlier forms of journalism confined themselves to providing descriptions or analyses of particular events. The focus of interest was the content. The third category, by contrast, focusses on the audience. Explaining the difference between new and old forms of popular journalism, one widely followed Fleet Street manual of journalism explains:

He (the journalist) must be able to pick out the dominant fact, or the talking point, and put it right there at the top, so that there is no danger of the customer missing it. In a sense, he is doing the customer's work for him, in the same way as the man who sells prepared or predigested food. People eat more peas now because Charlie Birdseye found a way to quick-freeze them and so made it easy. People read more newspapers now because men like Northcliffe and Beaverbrook and Bartholomew, to name but the dead, found a way to quick-thaw news and so widen the market.⁵

Old-fashioned journalism, such as that of the early *Bantu World*, for example, tended to be dry and prosaic. Reports were baldly stated, with little embellishment. This was not because older newspapers had a higher regard for notions like impartiality, it was because the skills of dramatisation, central to 'sales-orientated' journalism, were as yet underdeveloped. Editing became a lure to catch readers and excitement was the bait. The most favoured retort to critics of Press 'sensationalism' was this one, by British Press magnate, Lord Northcliffe:

Sensationalism is not the distortion of truth. It is the dramatic and simple presentation of the facts so as to fix them with forceful impact on the mind of the reader. People who mistake brightness for so-called sensationalism are to be pitied.⁶

Marketing-orientated journalism gave birth to its own ideology of professionalism which prescribed what was understood as news and how it was presented. The most prominent characteristics of this definition of 'news' are discussed in brief below, and then analysed in more detail in an examination of each black publication in turn.

Newspapers were aimed less at people who read them than at people who did not. Holding the interest of those who subscribed to newspapers was secondary to attracting casual street sales — the number of subscribers was already fixed. But the number of street sales could be increased by a single 'hard-sell' story. The top half of the front page, the only part of the paper that can be seen as it lies folded on a pavement, became the most important part of a newspaper. It came to be characterised by attention-grabbing gimmickry like huge headlines and pictures (capable of being seen at a distance) and colourful cross-references. Magazines, similarly, devoted much time and attention to their front covers. Editorial colour

⁵ Leslie Sellers, *The Simple Subs Book*, 1968, p6.

⁶ Quoted in *News Extra*, handbook of South African Associated Newspapers, p142.

was pioneered for the purpose of selling magazines.

Visual display became increasingly important, giving an appearance of excitement and urgency to the news. Layout had the same function as packaging — it made the goods appear different even when the contents were much the same. Magazines, in particular, were forced to compete with sophisticated advertising layouts for reader attention.

As publishing became more oligopolistic and less competitive, news gathering became *more* competitive. A small number of newspapers gathering much the same news, needed constantly to scramble for 'new' angles to hold reader loyalty.

Brevity became much prized. If stories are brief, more of them can be fitted in, enhancing the appearance of 'value for money'. This led in turn to a stress on events rather than causes — the description of events is easily kept brief; the discussion of causes is of necessity often lengthy. News was defined by its own ephemerality. The need to be constantly interesting made it necessary to say something new each day. As a result, events which changed rapidly were preferred to those which evolved slowly.

A new pseudo-science, analysing 'readership traffic', arose. It was discovered that most people had only the most casual commitment to reading newspapers: they would skim most stories, read only the first few paragraphs of others, prefer short stories to long ones, 'light' topics to taxing ones. It became *infra-dig* to write anything but brief, pithy sentences, digestibility was admired, complexity scorned. This format was self-justifying; by encouraging reader-passivity it made customers even less likely to tackle something more taxing.

News was compartmentalised, for example, into women's pages, show pages, motoring pages and so on. This appealed to marketing planners, who had a clearer idea of what kind of readers were most likely to be attracted to each section. Feature supplements, dealing with commodity-related topics, brought in lucrative advertising.

Since the media had to aim at general audiences, events tended to be interpreted within a range of meanings most likely to appear 'natural' or 'commonsensical' to the mass of readers. By taking dominant interpretations for granted, the media implicitly legitimised them.

Media marketing strategy revolved around consumer averages: average consumer tastes, average consumer incomes, average consumer ages. Fringe tastes were of secondary importance — the biggest sales were to be found straight down the centre. One result was the much-decried bland uniformity of newspapers, reluctant to take up issues which might offend readers.

The need for story credibility required that information come from 'trusted' sources. The hierarchical structure of society lent greater credibility to official as opposed to 'alternative' sources; senior people were more credible than 'unknowns'.

The notion of a 'balanced' story permitted the inclusion of 'deviant' opinions.

But since news itself was framed within terms of widely legitimised 'common sense' interpretations, the parameters of any debate were pre-determined. Alternative views invariably appeared out of context, which devalued their plausibility and strengthened the credibility of dominant ideas.

1 Bantu World: The first phase

The first white-owned black newspapers were aimed at the black elite, partly because they were the only blacks who could read, partly because in the days before the rise of the black mass-market, they were the only blacks advertisers were interested in. The very act of reading a newspaper conferred status, for it indicated education. The newspaper itself strove to encourage this status-symbol image, for this enhanced its value both to the reader and the advertiser. It did this by adopting a tone of high seriousness, giving preference to items which implied social correctness, learning and western culture.

Since there was no such thing as a 'typical' white set of values, a model had to be created. The tone adopted by the early, black-owned Press, and later 'colonised' by Paver's papers, was a particular representation of those 'white' traits the black Press most admired. To a modern reader, it resembled the priggish tone of the mid-Victorian country parson: exaggerated in its seriousness, its piety, its prudery, its scathing contempt for the uneducated, the superstitious, the unwashed.¹ It was a representation which could appeal just as strongly to white Press owners and advertisers, for it embodied a caution and moderation which suggested little urge to rock the establishment boat.

The content of the early *Bantu World* reflected the prejudices of its owners and advertisers and the vanities of its journalists and readers. Its advertisers were interested in westernised blacks with the means to spend on consumer goods. It was written by educated blacks with white aspirations who defined their world in terms of western values. It was aimed at a small audience of 'elite' blacks able and eager to read a 'sophisticated' newspaper.²

- ¹ *Bantu World* was consciously elitist. Advertisers were told that it was the 'favoured newspaper of the most advanced Bantu people in all territories.' (Black Gold, op cit, p4). The image was specifically *English*. As Nimrod Mkele put it, Africans 'find it easy to identify with the upper-class values of whites, but tend not to identify with the Afrikaner. The attitude of the African to the Afrikaner can only be described as antipathetic. (Mkele, op cit, p124.)
- ² Its psychology was two-edged: the paper was aimed mainly at those who had 'made it' in black terms, but also, to a lesser degree, at those who hadn't but dearly wanted to. Indeed, it was Bantu Press policy to stress that even illiterate blacks were enthusiastic about its products. A pamphlet aimed at potential advertisers said: 'The average literacy of adult Bantu people is about 25 percent and it is a common practice for newspaper readers to form a kind of reading circle, at which the whole paper, including the advertisements, is read to a group of illiterates. (Black Gold, op cit, p16.)

DROUGHT AND NUTRITION

**DECLASSIFICATION**

**AFRICANS DEMAND
HOUSES**

**AFRICANS DEMAND
HOUSES**

A meeting of members of the
Bureau, located, arranged by the
African National Congress on the
location of the on Sunday, with
with regard the failure of the
Bureau membership to provide
communication for Africans in the
Bureau area and presented the

The meeting, which was attended by about 100 persons, was held at the home of Mrs. J. H. Smith, 100 N. 1st St., and was presided over by Rev. J. H. Smith.

We demand on the one hand our
 passages to provide the food for
 our families and ourselves, and in
 the days that lie ahead death
 threaten must be watched and
 timidity if they are to cope ade-
 quately with the demands of the
 new world.

In these sections we shall not yet
 mention maps, words, your com-
 miter to be a intelligent and care-
 fulness. You will realize that this
 is of vital importance for those
 who wish to become a whole
 people, to put on the fullness of
 you from your reading in
 these words to reach for them.

It seems again to be the time

NEW SCHEMES PLANNED FOR BRITISH AFRICA

During the war the severely handicapped declined to let the war effort of the "War Work Administration" pass. (Steve Lewis, N. Y. Times, Gold Coast and General news that by the appointment of Assistant Minister.

[illegible]

EXPLOITING OF
CITY AFRICANS

EAST AFRICA
For East Africa the British Government has formulated new plans of the work providing for the...
...of the...
...of the...
...of the...

THEIR PENDANTS

Colonel J. Remondino R. S. Gibson gave \$2500 to the old unit of the Imperial Light Horse, a similar unit to be detailed among the Regiment: British, the Regiment of the Bay and the Regiment Front Street, and \$1500 to the Army of the Republic. These units are to be used for the training of new soldiers. The unit is now in the hands of their dependents who have suffered through war conditions.

Colonel Remondino has been associated with the Imperial Light Horse since the formation of the regiment. In the Spanish American War, he was a Captain. He was twice wounded and was captured in the Philippines. He was awarded the D.S.O. He was awarded the D.L. H. from 1911 to 1912.

In the last war, the command
D Squadron of the Second L. H.
in the South-West African cam-
paign, they being the first com-
pound to land in South-West
Africa.

EMERGENCY WELFARE GIFT

[illegible]

Government is to support Indians and Aborigines and through the Government's propaganda was advanced as a basis for discussion it is unlikely that the Labor Government will withdraw the

LIGHT SENTENCES

You can, too, where con-
servation has probably failed partly
here. Lumber has not been im-
ported in with progress over
the country. Shown and re-
gulation of local conditions.

*Old Friends
are best—*



FLAG
CIGARETTES

The first copies of the paper borrowed their content from the older black newspapers and their form from American newspapers, which had particularly impressed Izaak le Grange during his US tour. Eddie Roux has described the impact of the first issues thus:

With its modern set-up and lively presentation of news items, it was easily the most sophisticated of the Native newspapers.³

The word 'lively' is perhaps a little misleading. Lively relative to the other black newspapers, yes. Lively by later black Press standards ... definitely not. The paper was didactic, stylised and elitist, its contents very similar to those of the older black papers. News, in its meaning of 'current events', was often pushed aside by a form of pamphleteering. One of the first front page headlines was:

THE EMERGENCE OF AFRICA FROM DARKNESS.

Africa's Soul Freed from Slavery of Superstition.

The Spirit World Conquered.⁴

The early phase of the *Bantu World's* history falls outside the scope of this study and will not be examined in detail here; suffice it to say that the style and content remained much the same until after the war.

The January 1, 1949 *Bantu World* provided a typical example of the early post-war format. It was a twelve page, seven column⁵ broadsheet, mostly in English, but partly in the vernacular. Its writers aimed for a tone of dignified profundity, but more often achieved only archaic primness. An excellent indication of the self-images of the people who wrote the paper and those who read it, was provided by an advertisement in the paper:

'Ten years ago, I followed the example of my school principal. He smoked Flags and I did too. I have smoked Flags ever since. Flags enable me to concentrate on my work ...' says Mr Austin Xaba, who writes for a newspaper in Johannesburg. Mr Xaba is an educated man who knows the difference in cigarettes ...⁶

A journalist, then, particularly one living in Johannesburg, was an educated man, a member of the social upper-crust, just like a school principal. And he had to write and behave in accordance with this elevated status.⁷

The main headline in the January 1 issue consisted of nothing more than a label:

³ Roux, op cit, p351. Harrison, op cit, p2.

⁴ As Couzens puts it: 'Because the newspapers appeared weekly, they relied less for their impact on the immediacy of their news than on comment. Journalists tended to be philosophical and moral commentators rather than reporters in search of contentious local items.' (*World*, op cit, p17).

⁵ Most page one leads were in English, but the vernacular was used on occasion.

⁶ *Bantu World*, January 1, 1949.

⁷ Being educated was the journalist's key to the top echelons of black society: 'The middle class sets the pace for the rest. In a largely non-literate society, education is the most important single factor that makes for class distinctions.' (Mkele, op cit, p126).

'THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS'. The article, by Dr S M Molema, a guest writer who enjoyed the largest byline in the paper, was less a discussion of the political significance of the ANC than a discussion of how it fell short of 'European' standards:

Year after year, on the historic and so-called Dingaan's Day, one attends African National Congress meetings at Bloemfontein, only to come away with a sense of defeat, disappointment and frustration verging on despair and disgust. And when one reads the laughing and victorious headlines 'The African National Congress Breaks Up in Disorder' — in the European daily papers, one feels humbled and casts one's eyes down in shame to think that the childishness, inefficiency and nakedness of one's family group is known to the world ...

The second and third lead were both local: 'Less Rowdiness at Christmas but Serious Incidents mar Festivities', and 'Crops Threatened by Continuous Drought'.

The fourth story was about Britain, which the black Press, like the local white Press, used as its model of civilised modernity: 'King's Christmas Broadcast Heard in 40 Languages'.

Page two was the leader page, featuring an editorial on 'A Man of Great Vision', Colonel Donaldson, who founded the Bantu Welfare Trust. This page was also the regular spot for the sermonising column known as 'Our Monthly Chat', run by the New African Progressive Alliance (Napa), a welfare organisation which readers were invited to join.⁸ The column comprised a series of staccato admonitions such as: 'No lies, always the truth. Never any cheating or stealing ...'.⁹ The one other item on the page was a speech by the ANC president, who was not named. The speech, printed in its bombastic entirety, turned to Page ten, occupying a full six and a half unbroken columns of text.

Page three was a local page, all in the vernacular. It consisted of news briefs from overseas and from small South African towns, each by a local correspondent, who was given a small byline.¹⁰

Pages six and seven added a rather dry gossip column: 'Mr and Mrs Bob H Lamolah of Springs left on Thursday by the Bloemfontein train for Aliwal North.' The new black elite clearly took its status too seriously to tolerate the waspishness that characterised Fleet Street's gossip columns.

The local news was stylised and distant rather than informative: 'EVATON: The funeral of Alfred Fodo Zwane who met with an accident was conducted at Evaton by Bishop Sims of the African Catholic Church.' A more populist newspaper

8 The column could be downright patronising: 'Those members who wish to obtain a Leadership certificate must first write and supply us with SEVEN REASONS why you consider yourself worthy of such a certificate ...' (*Bantu World*, January 1, 1949, p2).

9 Ibid.

10 Giving 'stringers' bylines is a time-honoured tradition — the thrill of seeing their names in print is often the only hold the newspaper has over its freelance staff.

would have shown greater interest in the details of Mr Zwane's mysterious 'accident' and less interest in the Bishop.

What news there was tended to be politely affirmative rather than investigative. This did not necessarily mean that *Bantu World* was an establishment 'tool'. It is quite likely that the local stringers upon whom the paper relied for copy, lacked the skills, confidence or security to supply anything less gushing than this, for example:

P Mothlabe, in moving a vote of thanks said contentedness existed in Vaal compound because inmates were justly treated by Mr Kemp who went personally into grievances, thereby preventing dissatisfaction. There were no employees who found it necessary to go to trade unions for any redress, as there was nothing to redress. Perhaps if all Africans were treated in this way, there would be no grievances nor necessity for trade unions, we only ask for justice, truth and a square deal, which we get at Vaal compound.

Page eight was another 'society page', this time about the white society to which the paper's readers aspired. The one picture on the page showed 'Miss Lightbody of Edinburgh ... who has been appointed 'Nanny' to her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth's baby'. Another story, from 'Our Guiding Correspondent', announced: 'One Saturday recently, Mrs Raikes, wife of the Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand, opened the gates of her garden as she often does, to the guides for a whole day's training'. The story, in defiance of the customary norms of newspaper organisation, started on page eight and ended on page seven.

The back page was, in traditional newspaper style, devoted to sport. But it was a genteel non-sportsman's idea of a sports page — priggish and utterly without energy. The lead was on Joe Louis, the negro sporting idol of the moment; the second on the England vs South Africa cricket; the third on 'Garden Lawn Tennis'; the rest consisted of sport-related letters from readers.

This, then, was the black newspaper in the era of 'white imitation' - very sober, very cautious, often archaic in its language and typography ... just like the image of sobriety the proprietors presented to advertisers in this statement of editorial policy:

What sort of newspaper would you expect Bantu people to like? Ask for a specimen of the *Bantu World* and study it. You will see that the educated Bantu likes a good newspaper, a balanced news-paper. We offer:

- An ably edited resume of world news from reliable sources.
- Extremely thorough coverage of SA news of particular interest to the Bantu people, presented without propaganda bias and gathered from a network of local correspondents.
- Sane and constructive editorials on world problems as well as on topics of particular interest to the Bantu.
- Excellent domestic features for women readers.
- Bright social and personal news.
- Literary features by Bantu writers.¹¹

¹¹ Black Gold, op cit, p10

2 Zonk and the new journalism

Bantu World had hardly changed since the thirties, but the demands of manufacturing industries had. The paper's marketing strategy had been based on the belief that advertisers could only reach the better-educated, better-paid black elite. But, as argued in section one, post-war consumer goods production had expanded and advertisers needed to reach mass-markets — small elite groups were no longer enough. In the fifties, rising literacy rates made this increasingly possible. About 13 percent of blacks had been literate in the thirties when Bantu Press set out its 'elites-only' marketing strategy. By 1946, 21 percent could read. Five years later, 30 percent could read, and in 1959, over forty percent were literate. In the mid-fifties, six out of ten urban blacks could read, as opposed to three out of ten rural blacks. By 1959, every second child of school-going age was at school.¹ The potential appeared to be there — what advertisers required of the black Press now was a racy, populist paper that would reach the masses. And if *Bantu World* was slow to respond, others were not. The first mass-market publication was the magazine *Zonk*.

It is significant that *Zonk* began as an entertainment show, (see previous section) for this shaped the magazine's self-perception. Just as the function of a musical is to provide amusement for an audience in return for a fee, so *Zonk* was a magazine which made leisure its business. And to understand *Zonk* fully, one must briefly discuss the white-dominated black music-culture from which it sprang.

As David Coplan has pointed out, in the early years of black proletarianisation, entertainment was more than mere diversion. It provided 'expressive cultural images which served as repositories for emerging urban social value systems. Performing events were an essential element in the countervailing processes of regularisation (attempts to crystallize and concretise reality) and of situational adjustment (attempts to maintain the elements of indeterminacy or plasticity in social arrangements).'²

The stratification of township society was very early expressed by the emergence of a variety of different performance styles and venues. The black elite formed itself into various formal associations, both religious and cultural, whose meetings were frequently accompanied by music, usually western-inspired and either choral, orchestral or 'dance' style. The larger mass of labourers and unskilled domestic workers, generally non-westernised, held 'stokvels' and 'marabi parties' characterised by liquor, dancing and African melodies 'pounded out ... on battered organs, pianos or guitars, to the rattle of milkbins filled with pebbles'.³ The keynote of the middle-class entertainment was a missionary-inspired dignity which found its

¹ Mkele, op cit, p126.

² Coplan, op cit, p188. Also Muff Andersson, *Music in the Mix*, p23.

³ Coplan, op cit, p184.

verbal counterpart in black newspapers like *Bantu World*. The tone of the working-class amusements was a gung-ho indifference to bourgeois respectability or moral admonitions. It was this kind of music which would provide the foundation for all subsequent forms of African jazz.

To begin with, shows were arranged by Africans, for Africans, with African musicians, promoters, organisers and finance. Professional concert and dance-hall bands, whether of the 'elite' or 'popular' variety, gained increasing popularity.⁴ Then, in 1936, several African groups were invited to perform at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg and impressed themselves upon white audiences. Some bands were invited to tour the country, others to tour overseas, and several were contracted to make records. For a twenty-five year period, 'African jazz, in the 'hot' American 'swing' idiom of Duke Ellington and Louis Jordan ... was as widely featured on recordings as in the dance halls of the locations.'⁵ White recording studios began to exercise increasing influence over black musicians, hiring them, chopping and changing them to suit studio needs, even altering their names, styles and racial classifications for marketing purposes.⁶ Musical forms which had had their roots in 'lower-class' township styles were 'cleaned up' for white and black middle-class consumption.

The relationship between African performers and the townships changed. Musicians, who had long been cultural 'progressives' in their role of transmitting 'modernising' Afro-American cultural values, now became conservatives — aiming at the widest possible audiences by avoiding the contentious or sectional in appeal. In the late forties, white impresarios moved into the African musical field, training highly talented musicians to perform in polished, westernised, shows aimed at white suburbia as well as the townships. American-style gimmickry was mixed with indigenous styles and a 'star system' was evolved, with major performers like Dolly Rathebe, Hugh Masekela and Kippie Moeketsi canonised in the name of marketing. Music became a major industry, which spawned other, related industries, one of the most important being the black entertainment magazine.

Zonk magazine was, in many senses, the verbal and visual expression of the post-war, white-dominated black music industry. It had the same showbiz flair for self-projection — it offered spectacle and entertainment first. Similarly, it sought to maximise its audience by aiming straight at the centre, espousing popular trends and avoiding the contentious or distressing.

One should, however, be careful not to overstress the point. Although *Zonk* was always an entertainment-first magazine, it never became an entertainment-only magazine as some later publications did. Throughout its history, it retained strong overtones of didacticism of the kind that typified *Bantu World*. It waged constant

⁴ Ibid, pp193,4. Andersson, op cit, pp24-26.

⁵ Coplan, op cit, pp196,7

⁶ Ibid, pp197,8. Andersson, op cit, pp27-9

war on crime. It was at pains to stress its own self-image of being a magazine that cared:

Zonk stimulated interest in education through such gestures as the *Zonk* bursary that permitted two Africans to study at Fort Hare. They will remember that *Zonk* has encouraged African entertainers as no other publication ever has. It has reflected the African interest in religion through our many sermons.

It has acknowledged the part played by African women in this modern world and has encouraged them to play that part fearlessly. It has tried to help movements such as the Boy Scouts, the schools and it has set out to do good for the sick, the maimed and the poor. Who can forget the Christmas and birthday fund?

Zonk found its formula much faster than many rival magazines and stuck to it to the end. Its style was a transitional one, falling midway between the didacticism of its predecessors and the aggressive marketing techniques of some of its successors. As this section will discuss, the chief characteristics of this formula were the advocacy of a middle-class, westernised life-style (where 'westernised' was defined in consumerist terms) and a conservative, passivist set of moral values. These themes manifested themselves through the use of various stylistic devices, kinds of language and choices of subject matter, discussed, in turn, below.

STRESSING THE VISUAL

To readers, long accustomed to the grey drabness of the Bantu Press publications, the first issue of *Zonk* must have induced the visual equivalent of culture shock. *Bantu World* had used words and images with caution, almost as if any extravagance might tarnish its reputation for solid reliability. Caution was a word which did not appear in the *Zonk* stylistic code. The first issue was wrapped inside a searing yellow cover with the huge red title *Zonk*, borrowed unchanged from publicity leaflets for the show, blaring out at readers. The pictures were enormous and plentiful. Spot colour⁷ was liberally splashed over the inside pages. This stress on visual images was the key to the *Zonk* formula. The earlier black publications were indifferent to pictures because in a largely non-literate society, an ability to read pictureless publications indicated learning. But, by 1949, literacy — if only of the more rudimentary kind — was sufficiently widespread for the snob-appeal to have diminished, which permitted *Zonk* to aim at skilled and semi-skilled labourers as well as the elite. Visual drama was a technique Brooks imported from the *Zonk* show, which had combined musical and theatrical effects for the first time in the commercial black entertainment business.

The stress on the visual demanded more professional, technical and editing skills

7 Naturally, all this charity could also serve to boost the magazine's image, as in this self-promotional piece. But there seems no reason to doubt that the intention was sincere. (*Zonk*, August 1954).

8 Single hues, as opposed to full-colour which includes all hues and which, for technical reasons, was infrequent in South African magazines until the late-fifties.

than had hitherto been the case. A publication that demands to be looked at, as well as read, requires more sophisticated packaging. *Zonk* was the first black journal to use spot colour and to make use of elaborate photo-cropping techniques like deep-etches and overlaps. The first issue was, for its period, something of a decorative extravaganza, with spot colours and typographical gimmickry lavishly spread through the inside pages. A headline 'CRIME DOES NOT PAY', for example, had the word 'CRIME' hand-drawn to resemble dribbling blood and coloured bright red. A spread describing a day in the life of a traffic policeman included cut-out pictures superimposed one above the other and overlapping onto the headlines.⁹

But it was the photography that was most striking. This was, after all, the only black magazine where photography had more status than writing, where the chief photographer was later promoted to editor. The magazine's two photographers, John Lee and Ben Lindeque, were both experienced professionals; the writers were invariably unskilled amateurs. While the standard of the writing was seldom especially memorable, the photography was vastly superior to that of any rival publications of the time, white or black.¹⁰ And photographs were presented better too — strikingly cropped, they often filled full pages. The first few issues ran a 'Photo of the Month' series, which included sophisticated 'mood' pictures with chiaroscuro lighting — not the kind of pictures that were found very often outside the photographic salons of the time.

Zonk's particular addition to the photo-journalism genre was the picture strip. A series of carefully staged photos were linked together to illustrate a single theme in comic-strip fashion.¹¹ These picture-strips were another example of *Zonk's* borrowings from other mass-media — the model for all the strips was unashamedly that of the American gangster movie. The earliest strip was in the very first issue and its theme became a favourite, repeated regularly over the years. It showed a masked robber, armed with a chisel, leaping a wall and breaking a window, then being caught in the act by baton-wielding police and hauled off to gaol. The moral, hammered home like a hell-fire sermon, was that 'CRIME DOES NOT PAY'. Later, the plots would become more elaborate and the gangsters would wear B-movie handkerchief masks and drive big cars.

⁹ In later issues the spot colour disappeared and the layout became more disciplined. But *Zonk* only learned to use double-page spreads, the basic picture-magazine format, early in the sixties.

¹⁰ It would remain superior to that of *Drum* too, until the end of the fifties when Tom Hopkinson, former editor of *Picture Post* and one of the fathers of modern photo-journalism, joined the Bailey group.

¹¹ This does not mean that *Zonk* introduced the photo-comic genre to South Africa — there was already a thriving trade in imported (largely American) pulp fiction and comic books. But twice during the period 1949 to 1953, these were banned for import as a currency-saving device by the Department of Economic Affairs — which may well have helped boost *Zonk* sales. (*Press Digest*, 1954, ed: Myra Franklin, p5.)

Don't ask Mary
to our Party!



Colgate gets in between your teeth and cleans out all those little bits of food and bad food. And Colgate polishes your teeth till your teeth are shiny and white.

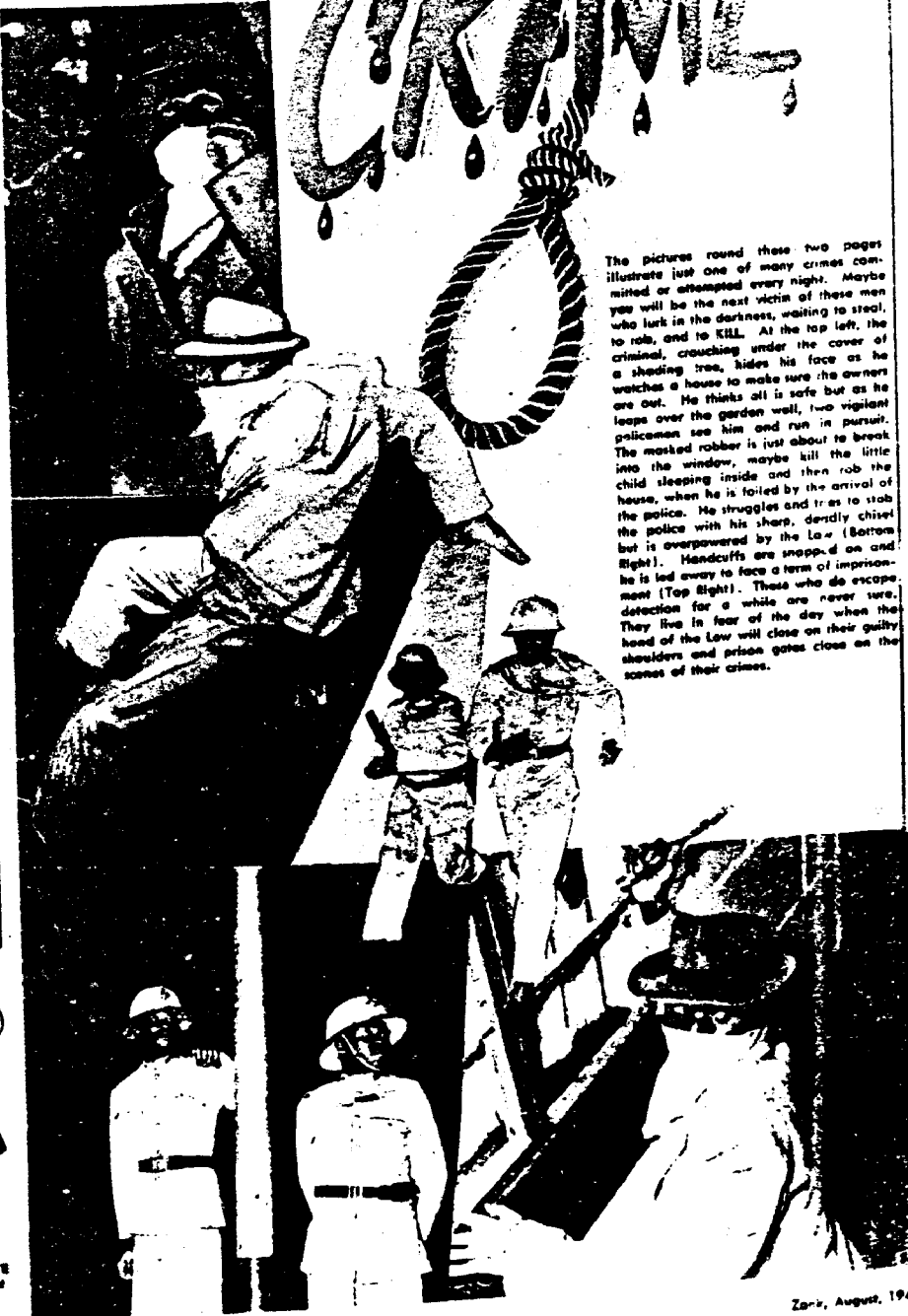


Colgate
TOOTHPASTE
Cleans Your Breath
While It Cleans
Your Teeth!



Always use
COLGATE TOOTHPASTE
after you eat and before you go out

CRIME



The pictures round these two pages illustrate just one of many crimes committed or attempted every night. Maybe you will be the next victim of these men who lurk in the darkness, waiting to steal, to rob, and to KILL. At the top left, the criminal, crouching under the cover of a shedding tree, hides his face as he watches a house to make sure the owners are out. He thinks all is safe but as he leaps over the garden wall, two vigilant policemen see him and run in pursuit. The masked robber is just about to break into the window, maybe kill the little child sleeping inside and then rob the house, when he is foiled by the arrival of the police. He struggles and tries to stab the police with his sharp, deadly chisel but is overpowered by the Law (Bottom Right). Handcuffs are snapped on and he is led away to face a term of imprisonment (Top Right). Those who do escape detection for a while are never sure. They live in fear of the day when the head of the Law will close on their guilty shoulders and prison gates close on the scenes of their crimes.

Zink, August, 1946

These photo-sagas were essentially written stories illustrated with pictures. But there was another form of 'posed picture' in which the message was entirely visual — the photo-gag. In one, for example, a girl visited a photographer who, using the fiendish secrets of his art, 'cut off' her head, enlarged and reduced her. The entirely visual set of gags was accompanied by brief, wise-cracking copy.¹² Other, similar gags involved the adventures of a large, fat man and a small, thin man¹³, a visit to the hall of magic mirrors and so on.

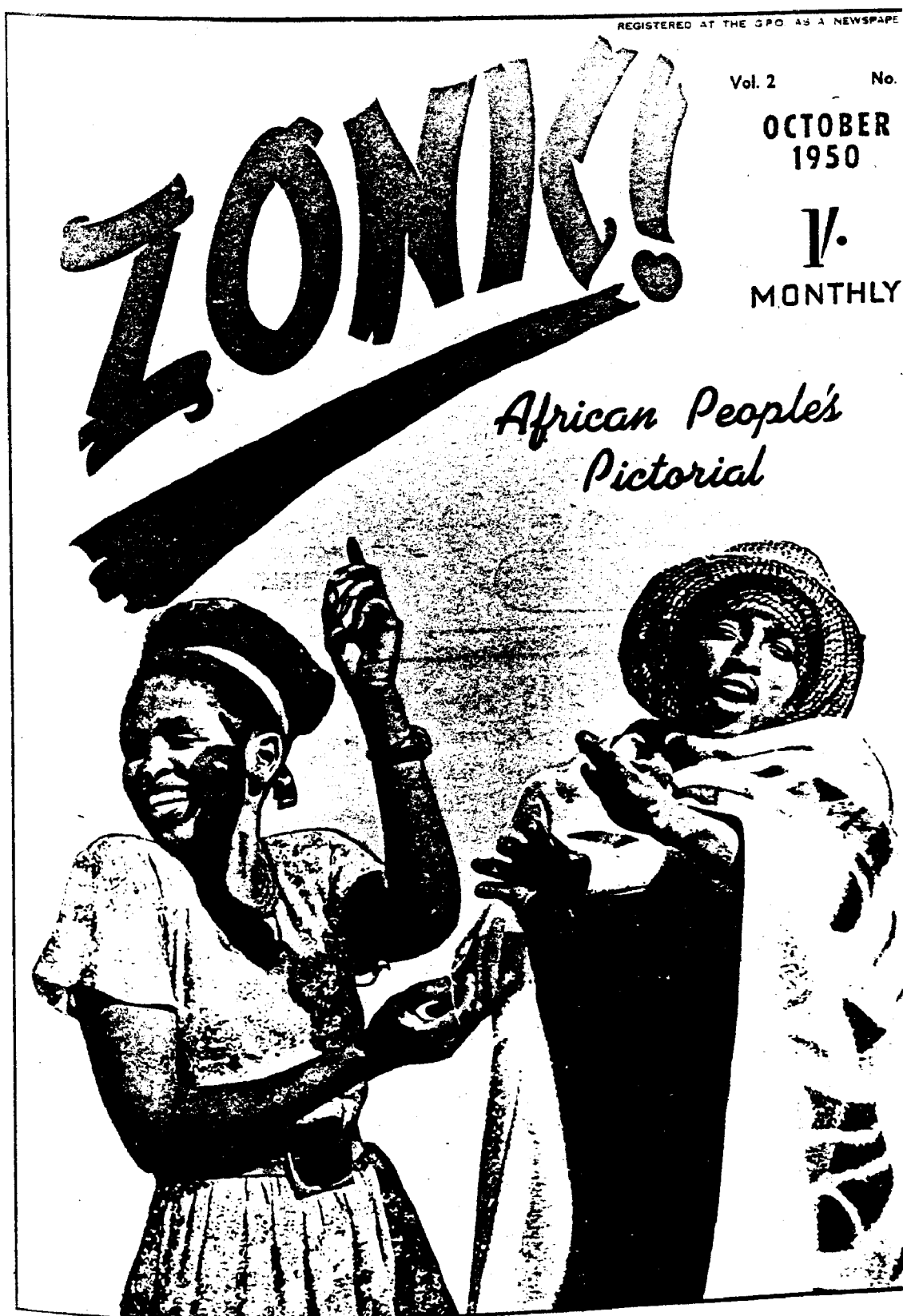
There were also the beginnings of 'shock-horror' picture journalism, with photos of the kind that grabbed reader attention simply because they were so fascinatingly awful. Any number of bloodied corpses were spread across pages as examples of the evils of crime. One particularly gruesome picture showed a dead crocodile, cut open to reveal the arm of a woman it had devoured.¹⁴ The picture caused such a stir, that it was bought by the black American magazine *Jet* — one of the first examples of local black pulp-journalism being exported abroad.¹⁵

Zonk's stress on visual imagery, then, was a manifestation of a switch in marketing strategy; away from an educated readership, towards a mass, partly literate audience. It involved a change in editing priorities because photo-journalism required sophisticated packaging and technical skills which had been under-developed on earlier black journals. The increasing concentration of editing power in the hands of skilled technicians (usually white) rather than civic leaders or political strategists (usually black), would become an increasingly important phenomenon in the black Press, as later sections will discuss. So, too, would another characteristic which first began to manifest itself on the pages of *Zonk* — the emphasis on form above content. Photo-journalism led easily to a philosophy of photography-for-photography's sake. Pictures and picture themes were chosen increasingly for their visual impact (composition, print quality, enlargement possibilities, links with other pictures), rather than as accessories to the written word. As display became an end in itself, photography and typography reached new heights of technical excellence, with content demoted to little more than the excuse to justify the form.

THE CULT OF THE AMERICAN

Where *Bantu World's* model was the English country squire, *Zonk's* was the /

- 12 'That's no way to treat a gal, I said. So they enlarged me and I must say ... I felt pretty good. I was quite ready to use all my strength on that insignificant little photographer at the desk, but just as I moved in to chip him on the jaw ... he reduced me ...' (*Zonk*, November 1955).
- 13 'Thin Man, Fat Man! A Story With Some Weight Behind It'. (*Zonk*, November 1951).
- 14 *Zonk*, July 1952. The editors justified their decision to print the gory picture in moralistic terms, ostensibly as part of a 'crusade' against crocodile deaths: 'CROCS ARE KILLERS! YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED ... It is with no pleasure that *Zonk* publishes the photograph reproduced on the opposite page, but we felt it our solemn duty to show this ...'
- 15 *Zonk*, August 1954.



A typical Zonk cover of the early fifties — cut-out black and white pictures, usually of entertainment personalities, on a coloured background

Harlem negro, particularly the negro who had 'made it' up the social ladder. As was discussed in the first sections of this study, the cinema, gramophone and clothing industries were first to exploit the marketing potential of what had begun as a symbol of resistance. Americanism became a vital ingredient in local music, which is one of the reasons why Ike Brooks incorporated it in the musical version of *Zonk*.¹⁶ All the various mutations of commercially-inspired Americanism transformed the original negro symbol into a more generalised, American symbol:

The black wanted to be an American. Not even a black American. Just an American, the way he saw him in the movies. Eventually all the goods became 'Yankee this', 'Stars and Stripes that'.¹⁷

The early black journals were already captivated by the American cult — prominent negroes regularly featured in articles in *Bantu World*. But *Zonk* was the first black publication to incorporate the American style - flashy, brash, seemingly egalitarian and indifferent to old-world snobbery, yet obsessed in its own way with social station. *Zonk's* love affair with America began in its first issue and continued throughout its publishing life. The editorial page of each of the early editions was devoted to an 'American Letter', invariably simpering in tone and innocent of substance, but deemed worthy of prominent display because the authors were famous negroes. This one, for example, is from the singer Lena Horne who, with her Europeanised features, light skin and straightened hair, was the forties ideal of 'black beauty':

To the editor of *Zonk*. It is with great pleasure that I extend my heartfelt greetings to the African people. I and fifteen million other American peoples share the same aims for a happy, prosperous and peaceful life. Sincerely, Lena Horne.¹⁸

American heroes included Joe Louis, who wrote a how-to-box series during the fifties, extravagantly ballyhooed as 'yet another step in the progress of the African people'.¹⁹ Since *Zonk* was primarily a showbusiness magazine, the American jazz, blues and film idols from Duke Ellington to Sammy Davis jnr to Eartha Kitt, featured regularly. Occasionally, negro intellectuals of the kind who had appealed

¹⁶ A white critic, presumably unaware of the level of American influence upon ostensibly 'indigenous' South African music, complained in a review of *Zonk*: 'My main criticism ... is that there was too much that was derivative, too much copied from the American negro model ... If there were, to the South African-born like myself, moments that grated, that was because I did feel that Harlem and New York's Street of Jazz had too preponderant an influence upon the producer and that Hanover Street was being left too far behind.' (*Cape Times*, December 30, 1948.)

¹⁷ Lee interview, op cit. *Zonk's* own adverts bore this out. The local company, Dugsons, offered readers 'the smartest number this season, Yankee Cut'. (December 1949). Hats on offer over the years included names like Broadway, Times Square, New Yorker and Chicago Special, all of them American, but none especially negro.

¹⁸ August 1949.

¹⁹ *Zonk*, February 1950.

AMERICAN LETTER



To the Editor of Zonk,

It is with great pleasure that I extend my heartfelt greetings to the African people.

I and fifteen million other American people share the same aims for a happy, prosperous and peaceful life.

Sincerely,
Lana Horne.

For the story of Miss Horne's rise to stardom, see page 40.

Zonk, August.

Page 4

A 'fan letter' from a famous American admirer, Lana Horne, in Zonk's first issue. This kind of promotional stunt typified the new magazine's departure from Bantu World's more prosaic style

to earlier black writers, were featured: during 1953 a months-long series on the rags-to-riches life of negro scientist, George Washington Carver, was published. 'Unknowns' also appeared, particularly negroes who held down jobs which readers would customarily have associated only with whites:

JET PILOT! A tremendous explosion and the enemy is a swirling mass of flames - shot down by America's ace negro pilot.²⁰

The American heroes didn't have to be real — or even American. In *Zonk's* later years, one of the most popular features was a short-story series describing the exploits of a black version of a Peter Cheyney hero, a man named Ray Malaga. Malaga was a South African adventurer, but the style of the story was American through and through, from the man's name (an Americanised African name) through to the Chicago-inspired clothing he was pictured wearing in the sketches that accompanied each instalment. The writer was 'Robert Roro', an Americanised pen-name for a white journalist with the more prosaic name of Bob Toms.²¹

On occasion, even *Zonk's* prose adopted the American jazz-rhythm style: 'Jive giant Milbert Mapes in smooth routine with hep-cat Dorothy Moloi ... probably the world's best action shot of rug cutters on the hoof ...'²² But this was rare — *Zonk's* relatively unsophisticated writers seldom made a feature of American-derived 'township lingo' the way some of the *Drum* writers would later do.

By exploiting symbols that had already established themselves among both elite and working-class blacks, *Zonk* was using a vocabulary which made it instantly familiar and accessible to the kind of mass-based readership it strove to reach. But the form in which *Zonk* adopted the negro cult was transitional — other publications would take the process much further, as later sections will discuss.

DIDACTICISM LIVES ON

Unlike many British and American entertainment magazines which stress fun and leisure to the exclusion of all else, *Zonk* retained much of the didacticism which characterised earlier black publications. But *Zonk* broke away from the formula of its predecessors by switching the emphasis from overt 'white imitation' to a rudimentary form of black pride. This did not mean that *Zonk* was an 'Africanist' publication.²³ It continued to emphasise those established values associated with

20 The 'two sides' of these heroes was invariably stressed — tough and efficient at work, but capable of being gentle family men at home. The picture accompanying this article showed a heavily equipped jet pilot, helmet in one arm, younger son in the other, 'a modern hero and his son'. (December 1955).

21 Brooks interview, op cit.

22 *Zonk*, February 1950.

23 Although both Brooks and Lee deny that any political developments influenced their emphasis on 'black pride', it is worth noting that this policy was not adopted in isolation — *Zonk's* launch coincided with the rise of the conservative 'Africanist Bloc' and the radical Youth League in the ANC.



American-style hero Ray Malaga rescues a damsel in distress

the white bourgeoisie — the schools system, religion, charity, the boy scouts, the need for self-education, the need to root out crime.²⁴ It stressed that blacks could 'make it' up the social ladder if they went about it with determination. The emphasis was always on the individual and 'knocking the system' was avoided. Lee described the *Zonk* philosophy this way:

The policy we developed came to be known, many years later, as 'black is beautiful'. We showed him that he could make it in all spheres of life — business, beauty, teaching. We said: 'You don't need a white to speak for you. You're capable of top-class ability in sport, entertainment ... even ordinary people are capable of becoming, say, motor mechanics.'²⁵

The philosophy, then, was a conservative one, stressing not that society had to be changed, but that individual progress was possible within the social framework. The philosophy was occasionally 'preached' at readers in *Bantu World* fashion, but it was generally only implied rather than overtly stated. Every issue, for example, carried a feature on blacks doing some form of skilled labour, the unspoken suggestion being that, if they could do it, so could everyone else. The various forms of work were presented in idealised form, emphasising particularly their importance to the African community. Some of these people had highly qualified professional jobs — they were doctors,²⁶ or school inspectors,²⁷ or dress designers,²⁸ or social workers²⁹; but others had less exotic occupations, like traffic policemen.³⁰ Reporters and photographers were regularly sent to cover university graduation ceremonies and bring back pictures of black students in gowns and mortar boards.³¹

24 One editorial described *Zonk's* philosophy this way: 'Civilised life consists of hard work in co-operation. *Zonk* does indeed stand for civilisation ...' (November 1950). Civilisation, in *Zonk's* definition, would have stood for modern, as opposed to tribal, values. One was responsible to one's fellows for doing one's job and doing it correctly.

25 Lee interview, op cit.

26 'In the fight against sickness and suffering, the African doctor plays a front-line part. No call is too far, no demand too much ...' (*Zonk*, October 1952).

27 For example, a feature on recently graduated MA student Cedric Phatudi, later of 'Bantustan' fame, who was then a sub-inspector of schools: 'Twenty-six Years of Dedication to Education'. (Ibid, July 1961).

28 'The Norman Hartnell of Orlando'. (Ibid, January 1957).

29 'Man-sized Job -The Prisoner's Friend'. (Ibid, January 1953).

30 'Of his very responsible job, Inspector Mbalweka says: 'I joined the Traffic Department to teach my own people about traffic and help them in the crowded streets. Many people, however, do not realise that we Inspectors are doing this work in their interests.' (Ibid, August 1949).

31 Some reporters let their enthusiasm for education run away with them: 'As each student came forward, in order that the degree may be conferred on him, and we looked at their determined, enthusiastic faces, we knew that despite our fears, the future was assured. These men were going to lay the foundations of a true South African society, so that the African people could become self-reliant and self-sufficient and become intolerant of the social slurs of crime, violence and illegitimacy in their midst ...' (Ibid, September 1955).

A regular feature, carried under various different names over the years, such as 'Zonk Salutes' and 'Me', paid enthusiastic tribute to the achievements of various local blacks. No political leaders were included, and the choice tended to centre around people doing solidly 'respectable' jobs like teaching or business. Titles, learning and importance were stressed in a manner reminiscent of *Bantu World*:

ZONK INTERVIEWS AN AFRICAN PERSONALITY

Mr Harry P Madibani, BA. Headmaster, Social Worker.

Dignified, scholastic Mr Madibani was pleased to see a reporter from *Zonk* as he thinks it high time the African people had a good-class magazine of their own ...³²

There was a certain air of unreality to this enthusiasm for self-reliance — *Zonk* was launched shortly after the National Party came to power and began tightening up the already stringent job-reservation laws. Blacks would be increasingly hindered in their pursuit of those very middle-class occupations the magazine strove so earnestly to promote. But this contradiction was never explored in the pages of *Zonk*. Committed to a 'non-political' philosophy, it never once criticised the onset of apartheid. Indeed, as the last section of this study will discuss in greater detail, there was no apartheid at all in the world portrayed on the pages of *Zonk*.

The kind of black who most epitomised the *Zonk* ideal of success was the sportsman, the symbolic impersonation of 'macho' prowess, capable of equalling white standards on the relatively innocuous terrain of 'play'. The man who, more than anyone else, captured the magazine's imagination was Jake Tuli, the barely-known local boxer who went overseas to seek glory and returned as the Empire flyweight champion. It was *Zonk* which 'discovered' Tuli and made him into a media star, then followed his every minor adventure with a proprietorial passion. As Lee remembers it:

I saw Jake in three of his early fights. I thought this bloke was tremendous. He was working as a printer's apprentice and was also a choirboy at an Anglican church. We took some pictures of him in his choirboy's outfit outside the church before he left. Next thing, the *Daily Mirror* wanted to publish the picture under the headline 'The Fighting Choirboy from South Africa'.

We supported Jake when he fought for the Empire title. I wrote the story two weeks before the fight, naming the round he'd knock out the other guy in and committed it to the paper. The very day of the fight, *Zonk* hit the streets — and I'd named the right round. It was a hell of a chance, completely crazy, when I think of it now.³³

This kind of philosophy would have been entirely alien to *Bantu World*. That paper would no doubt have found the 'local boy makes good' angle appealing, but would have missed exploiting the photographic ironies of a boxer dressed as a choirboy. And *Bantu World* would never have dared risking all on a crazy circulation-boosting gimmick designed to beat the competition to the Big Fight verdict. But to *Zonk*, the symbol of a local black sporting hero promised oppor-

³² Ibid, August 1949.

³³ Lee interview, op cit.

tunities that could not be missed.

Zonk all but became a Jake Tuli 'fanzine'. He appeared in almost every issue — on the cover in November 1952 after his win; with an autographed message to *Zonk* readers;³⁴ telling his own story of the big fight;³⁵ and hamming it up with another group of local heroes, the Manhattan Brothers musicians, while making a secret record.³⁶ His family's decision to leave to join him in England made news,³⁷ as did their reaction to their strange new environment.³⁸ *Zonk* finally wrote off Jake's ring career in October 1957 when he lost to a minor Irish boxer, but, as a personality, his appeal was undiminished, and he was given his own boxing column, 'Neutral Corner', from 1958 onwards.

Most of *Zonk's* didacticism was indirect, but occasionally the magazine would adopt an explicitly moralising tone. Every issue, for example, carried a sermon by a different minister of religion. And one issue, that of December 1949, put religion on the cover, with a Christmas picture showing the interior of a church with three people kneeling around a crucifix.

But the subject that most roused the preacher within *Zonk* was crime in the townships. The middle-class morality it adopted was much the same as that in *Bantu World*, but the style was less abstract and the tone more direct. *Zonk* wrote its sermons person-to-person, addressing the reader directly:

The pictures round these two pages illustrate just one of many crimes committed or attempted every night. Maybe you will be the next victim of these men who lurk in the darkness, waiting to steal, to rob and to KILL ... those who DO escape detection for a while are never sure. They live in fear of the day when the hand of the Law will close on their guilty shoulders and prison gates close on the scene of their crimes ...

In later years, *Zonk* would adopt a technique borrowed from *Golden City Post* of issuing blunt challenges to the public (discussed in more detail later). In 1957, for example, Lee wrote a series of anti-crime articles following an upsurge in the crime rate:³⁹

Decent people must fight back. 'They' must be curbed, controlled, destroyed! Fight back now! Expose the thugs who are terrorising you ...⁴⁰

STRAIGHT TALK BY THE EDITOR

Alexandra: The criminal university of South Africa. Action must come from the people of Alexandra to clean out the scum in your midst ...⁴¹

³⁴ *Zonk*, November 1952.

³⁵ Ibid, December 1953.

³⁶ Ibid, October 1953. This was presented as a major *Zonk* scoop.

³⁷ Ibid, September 1954.

³⁸ Ibid, September 1955: 'PEGGY WILL WATCH JAKE'S FIGHT ON TV' and 'Peggy in her American-style kitchen. She found England a little strange at first ...'

³⁹ Lee explained this particular campaign to me this way: 'Advertisers were getting agitated by the number of crimes against whites, particularly against European women. This was the first time *Zonk* did such straight talking to its readers.' The crime campaigns were thus — at least in part — designed to placate white fears of black lawlessness.

⁴⁰ *Zonk*, May 1957.

⁴¹ Ibid, July 1957.

ZONK!

Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper

NOVEMBER 1952 Volume 4 Number 11

AFRICAN PEOPLE'S PICTORIAL

HOW I TRAINED
YOUNG JAKE TULL
By John Mokwena

EXCLUSIVE
PICTURES OF JAKE
TULL'S WIFE AND
CHILDREN

YOUNG JAKE
BRITISH EMPIRE
CHAMPION WRITES
TO ZONK READERS

LATEST PICTURES
FROM LONDON OF
YOUNG JAKE

6d.
MONTHLY
52
PAGES



An autographed front cover for Jake Tull's fans, soon after he won the Empire title. Note that the contents blurb at left features a story by Jake's trainer, John Mokwena, whose 'typical' lifestyle, as defined by Selling Age, was discussed earlier in this study

Without belittling the extent of the 'crime problem' which so disturbed *Zonk*, there is something of the old *Bantu World* zeal to protect respectable values about *Zonk's* anti-tsotsi crusades. Society is classified in terms of Them (wicked individuals) vs Us (good individuals) and crime explained as the product of debased human motives such as greed. There is no discussion of social structures, certainly not of the kind which might include political implications. To *Zonk*, society is a human gymnasium in which all may compete equally to reach the comfort of the top rungs, as long as no-one cheats and ruins the game for everyone.

WESTERN VALUES AND COMMODITIES

More than any of the Bantu Press publications, *Zonk* succeeded in becoming a vehicle for advertising. The small magazine format lends itself to advertising — adverts which might easily be lost in the vast expanse of a broadsheet newspaper page can easily dominate magazine spreads. And *Zonk* was full of advertising — indeed, the magazine seldom published a page that did not have at least one advertisement on it.

To begin with, most of the advertisements either used white models or showed negroes rather than local blacks. But by the mid-fifties, advertisements showing whites were a rarity. Many continued to show American negroes, but an increasing number were local.⁴² The theme of the advertisements had not changed much from the *Bantu World* days — possession of commodities enhanced one's status in society. Right through the fifties, there was never any shortage of dignified teachers-turned marketers enthusiastically extolling the virtues of some commodity or another:

I teach English and Geography but I can't teach my wife anything about stoves. She knows that ZEBO polishes brightest and best.⁴³

Another advertisement, 'The Well-shaved Man Gets On In Life', showed a glum, unshaved man riding a donkey alongside a beaming — and shaved — man in a suit driving a car.⁴⁴ Just as wisdom came in a bottle, so did beauty. And once again, the technique was the personal recommendation by someone who had 'made it':

Ribbon Dlamini, star of 'Cry The Beloved Country', says: 'I use only Sweet Sue MAGIC! FACE! CREAMS!'⁴⁵

The editorial in *Zonk* stressed the same themes — that civilisation had much to

⁴² For example, the *Rand Daily Mail's* Bob Connolly drew regular cartoon strips of local black sporting situations for SUPER D TABS 'blood and kidney purifiers'.

⁴³ Accompanied by a picture of a black man with Europeanised features in academic gown and mortar board. (*Zonk*, February 1959.)

⁴⁴ Ibid, January 1953. A similar advertisement of the period showed 'Joseph' being promoted to 'liftboy' because the boss was so impressed by the shine on his shoes.

⁴⁵ Ibid, September 1952. The reference is to the film version of Alan Paton's book.

do with dressing correctly. A brief series, 'ELIAS ADVISES', was designed to provide advice for the many young men who come to the big cities and do not know how to make a success of themselves'.⁴⁶ Phrased in a quaint, quasi-Biblical style to emphasise its own wisdom, it contained some thoroughly worldly advice:

'Now, my brother,' went on Elias, 'do you not see that, by selling your suit, you have sold your job ... Do you not know that all good men look first to see what it is that they do before they do it. You go now to seek a job, but all men who see you will know that because you dress yourself badly, you will do other things badly too.'⁴⁷

This was the era of the black peacocks, when men with virtually no money would spend their every last penny on clothes — almost the only symbols of status and 'maleness' available to them. Although the number of women in the cities had increased considerably by the forties (see first section), the advertising messages were still predominantly aimed at men. On this point in particular, *Zonk* differed from white magazines, which were aimed particularly at the housewife, the member of the family who did the shopping. The later proletarianisation of black women and the comparative rarity of black 'housewives' meant that advertising interest in African women would have to wait until the latter part of the fifties (discussed in more detail later). *Zonk* carried some women's pages, but it was male clothing that was the priority. A men's fashion page in an early issue, called 'Right Dress for Men', told readers:

Your clothes are the most important things you have. People look at them to see what kind of man you are ...⁴⁸

The same theme was more subtly underlined in casual throwaway phrases dropped into other kinds of stories. A description of boxing trainer and socialite, Harry Mekela, included the picture caption: 'Smart as they come — Harry in one of his twenty-two suits and fifteen hats.'⁴⁹ The editorial matter in *Zonk* was reinforcing the gospel, first expounded by the advertisers (discussed in the first section), that civilisation was both desirable and accessible — to those willing to pay for it.

PUTTING ONESELF FIRST

Brooks imported from showbusiness the flair for flashy marketing and self-promotion. Always the salesman, he never let slip an opportunity to hustle his wares. When the *Zonk* film was being made, he insisted that the producers allow

⁴⁶ Ibid, September 1949.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, August 1949. The series included dress tips supplied by the menswear shop, Bevans. The tips were all American-inspired and none of them was cheap: 'A popular American idea which has spread to this country and is particularly suited to the Christmas climate in South Africa is the habit of wearing a lightweight dinner jacket or tuxedo at dances and formal parties.' (Ibid, September 1949).

⁴⁹ Ibid, January 1950.

him to write an advertisement for his magazine into the script. They agreed, and the song, 'The Girl On the Cover of Zonk' became a hit tune and did wonders for sales. Naturally, the magazine followed the same 'showbiz' formula. *Zonk* was full of attention-grabbing gimmickry of the kind that the staid publishers of *Bantu World* would have deemed vulgar ... until years later when they too, would reluctantly follow suit.

The chief ingredient was a brazen lack of modesty. *Zonk* never ceased to remind its readers of its virtues. When, for example, in October 1953 the magazine published its biggest issue yet (64 pages), the opportunity for trumpet-blowing was not allowed to pass:

The secret is that *Zonk* is getting better and better all the time. Month after month, more Africans are finding that *Zonk* is the authentic voice of the African people.⁵⁰

Beneath every act of altruism lay an opportunity for self-advertisement. Charity schemes, for example, could help with image-building:

YOU AND ZONK HELP THE HELPLESS!

It's no use talking about what you are going to do to help people - there is only one way of proving your good intentions — and that is to act! *Zonk*, the African People's Pictorial, does not talk about what it's going to do to help Africans. Fine words do not help! *Zonk* does the deed!⁵¹

Zonk pioneered the technique, almost universally copied by later black publications, of attracting readers by encouraging letters. Letters were already popular in the earliest black newspapers, but their function was rather different. Then, letters pages were forums for debate; now, they were platforms for self-display. The winning letter was always paid some money and thousands of readers wrote in with flattering words about the magazine in the hope of winning the prize money and seeing their own names in print. Most letters were edited down to a crisp few paragraphs, which made for lively reading but discouraged serious discussion. Silliness and banality were no disqualifications and, although at times genuine debates appeared in the letters columns, these were largely dominated by simpering words of praise for the virtues of *Zonk*. Indeed, so monotonous did the flood of praise become, that one irritated reader eventually wrote:

Ever since you started publishing *Zonk* you've had congratulations streaming into your office. Or rather, you've published so many letters of congratulation that I (and some of my friends as well) don't bother to look at that column any more ...⁵²

A refinement of the letters idea, started in the earliest issues, was inviting readers to send in pictures of themselves. Large numbers of pictures were published over the years, not only of individuals, but also of sports teams, choirs, associations,

⁵⁰ Ibid, October 1953

⁵¹ Ibid, May 1954.

⁵² Ibid, September 1955.



Ike Brooks (centre) handing over a donation to an Institution for the blind. His magazine devoted a good deal of space to projects which assisted sightless people.

(Picture: Courtesy (IKE BROOKS))

school outings and the like. Women were encouraged to send in pictures of their babies.⁵³

The promotional stunts helped enhance the magazine's image of friendship and egalitarianism. The involvement in 'good works', partly out of a genuine desire to be helpful, partly for reasons of self-advertisement, would have boosted the magazine as a kindly helping hand reaching out to those in distress. The letters and readers' pictures would have impressed audiences that this was a magazine everyone could participate in as equal partners. Gone was the aloof dignity of the *Bantu World* - this was a magazine willing to join the people. Or so it appeared ... deceptively so. One of the characteristics of *Zonk's* brand of populism was a surface 'democratic' spirit designed to appeal to mass audiences — with none of the corresponding commitment to grassroots issues. *Zonk* was enthusiastic about charitable works, but continued to be indifferent to fundamental injustices. Readers were given more space than before to express their opinions, but *Zonk* was no forum for intelligent discussion. The friendliness of *Zonk* was no warmer than the smiles radiating from the commodity-fixated heroines in its advertisements.

3 Drum: Refining entertainment

When *African Drum* was launched in 1950, its abortive first few issues were a white man's vision of romantic, primitive black culture, a 'diet of improving stories written by so-called white experts' as its owner, Jim Bailey, later described it.¹ The paper so pleased the government that it sent copies around to its information offices abroad as examples of 'Bantu achievement'. The first few issues contained a good deal of religion — even one of the strip cartoons was biblical in theme — a serialised history of the old days of the chiefs, another serial on tribal music, folk tales, poetry, farming and the deeds of great men. What changed *Drum* from a publishing disaster into the best-known, best-read black publication of the fifties, was a switch in marketing strategy. Instead of aiming at 'tribalised' rural blacks, it followed *Zonk* in offering advertisers a vehicle to reach the township masses. But where *Zonk*, in many ways, straddled two journalistic styles — the old, didactic style aimed at the elites, and a newer, racier style aimed at the working classes — *Drum* was unambiguously a mass-market publication.

The formula for mass-media success has become an international one. One can

⁵³ Some of the 'babies' were long past the nappy stage when their doting mothers sent in their pictures: 'Robert Dlamini of Springs pictured at 16 months. He is now four years.' (Ibid, December 1949).

¹ Bailey, *The Genie*, op cit, p124.

read near-identical magazines almost anywhere in the world.² They make gestures towards local culture, but their real focus is the culture of consumerism. Almost vanished is the moralising of old — the mass media are hedonistic, urging readers to live for today, to have fun, excitement and adventure. They are superficially indifferent to social station, prying nosily into the private lives of the powerful as if they were the people next-door, yet they are awe-struck by success, by riches, by beauty, by the 'star-syndrome'. Their rationale is that the lives of their readers are essentially dull, that they read magazines to bring them some excitement. What they find exciting, it appears, are blood, crime, sport and sex.

This was the formula that Bailey and his first editor, Anthony Sampson, adopted. They did not adopt it casually — as discussed in the previous section, they 'toured' the townships along with Henry Nxumalo, in search of what might be called 'popular culture', and invited readers to attend *Drum* parties where they could voice criticisms about the magazine. This, in itself, was something new — an attempt to 'sound out' the needs of the market first, rather than impose a pre-prepared product upon it. Whether this was as democratic as it sounded is debatable. The strategy that evolved from these contacts was a mixture of what the township critics said and what Bailey and Sampson wanted to hear. It stressed excitement over intellect and was dominated by the paraphernalia of consumer society: the American cult and its manifestations in clothing, cinema and music; the westernised lifestyles of the black elite; 'civilised' consumer living as opposed to 'tribal' subsistence living. The formula did not appeal to everyone. Ezekiel Mphahlele, features editor of *Drum* in the early fifties, was convinced that the magazine, far from reflecting the reality of township culture, was imposing a 'pulp' model copied from abroad:

I was supposed to let in the wet, sentimental, sexy stories and tough crime stories. I tried to argue with the proprietor, whenever he interviewed me, that *Drum* had plunged into a reading world which hadn't developed any definite magazine tastes and that it should produce healthy material in an original style wherever possible, and, in a sense, dictate what the public should read, without necessarily being snobbish and intellectual. He told me it wasn't *Drum's* mission.³

But Bailey and Sampson were not dictating to the public. As previous sections have discussed, mass, commercially inspired 'culture' was already firmly established in the townships — *Drum* was simply going to ride with the waves. This section will look at how *Drum* interpreted this mass culture.

Each *Drum* editor received from Bailey upon his appointment a confidential

² Similarly, as one disgusted commentator in *Press, Advertising and Radio Review* put it, there is very little difference in style between the white and black mass media: 'Just compare the headlines from *Golden City Post* with any issue of the *Sunday Times* and of *Drum* with *Outspan* or *Keur* — there isn't much of a difference.

³ Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, p188.

memo, known as the 'Drum Style Sheet', which laid down the proprietor's policy. One ex-editor has given me a copy of the 'Style Sheet', which is an invaluable guide to Bailey's private, unpublished thoughts on journalism and his magazine's readers. It is significant that the sheet was drawn up specifically at the behest of the proprietor. Paver and Brooks, both managers rather than journalists, would never have bothered. Also significant is the general tone of the memorandum: technical more often than philosophical, it is a discussion of editorial strategy rather than a pronouncement upon the magazine's principles. With *Drum*, the editor as moral arbiter was being replaced by the editor as technician.

The memorandum is too long to be quoted in full, but some themes stand out clearly:

Unlike the early, African-owned papers, *Drum* was not issue-orientated, it was reader orientated. Almost every statement Bailey makes in the *Style Sheet* implies a salesman's attitude to words and photographs — will this be read, will this be understood, will this offend, will this appeal. The memo gives the editors no directives on what kind of issues to deal with, the brief is to produce a magazine that sells, and the way to do that is to market escapism:

BALANCES: Grave and Gay. Even when it is necessary to do a serious exposé story, the balance of every issue should nevertheless be gay and happy. People whose lives are careful also like to be taken out of themselves. Avoid pictures of slums and misery for its own sake. It is what our public is desperately trying to escape from.

Drum, then, would create a fictive universe quarantined off from the discomforts of actual township life. The people in it would be idealised, and would be chosen for their 'consumer appeal'. This applied particularly to the cover girl:

The cover girl must be happy and good looking — preferably aged 15 to 18 so that she appeals to young readers. Every second or third cover girl should be Coloured, preferably Africanish. The cover must be bright and striking and this depends on the use of a model who is not static — movement is an important part of the cover's appeal. The girl must be doing something — cheerfully.

There is no suggestion that the editor is permitted to use anything other than a model girl on the cover, indeed the statement is so phrased as to suggest that covers and dolly-girls are indivisible categories.⁴ The idea of appealing to the youth and to both Africans and Coloureds is emphasised again elsewhere — the editors must never lose sight of the composition of the potential audience:

Average age of our public is around 20 to 26 ... They are interested in what is happening

⁴ Although there were occasional other variations, particularly during the fifties. The early covers usually had two people on them, a male and a female, presumably an attempt to lure both sexes as readers.



A typical Drum cover of the late fifties — a stock girlie picture of a woman who could be either African or coloured and would thus appeal (so the theory went) to men of both ethnic groups

NOW, in people who are reaching the top, not in old people reminiscing about the past ... Magazines the world over are principally read by women; newspapers by men. But education in our market has gone to sons and the daughters have had to help mother. This is changing. Advertising is mostly directed at women, so that features of interest to women should appear ... *Drum's* potential readership is approximately 55 percent African, 20 percent Indian, 20 percent Coloured and 5 percent white ...

The readership was therefore not only larger and more working class than that of a newspaper like *Bantu World*, it was also younger and included a higher percentage of women and 'non- Africans'. To appeal to this largely petty-bourgeois and proletarian audience, it was necessary to develop an easily accessible 'language of the people':

Use people's own words wherever possible. It is thrice better to use *oratio recto* than *oratio obliqua* ... *Drum* should develop idiomatic writing, using the idiom of the people, not a bogus one from the outside. Many of your readers read with difficulty, so we use short simple words, not long pretentious ones.

The insistence on simplicity led to an insistence upon the concrete rather than the abstract, which meant that the magazine tended to describe the world without attempting to explain it:

The important feature should be written in the simplest of English. Almost all adjectives should be cut out. We require instead, every conceivable detail. Facts. Facts. Facts. If the story is built up out of details, the narrative carries you along with it.

What was good for language, was good for photography. Bailey adopted the *Zonk* formula of pictures first, words second, although *Drum* never took the principle quite as far as did *Zonk*.

Photographs are more important than text ... Let the photographers loose to make their own features rather than act as reporters' lackeys — there are occasions when the writer should be strictly second string.

How the theory, as spelt out in the *Style Sheet* was put into practice, will be examined below by looking at the four main themes that dominated *Drum's* pages, some of them already familiar from previous examples. They are: the black hero, the schizoid relationship between black and white, 'civilised' western values and the horror story.

THE CULT OF THE HERO

As in so many other kinds of story-telling throughout history, a key ingredient in the modern mass-media recipe is chronicling the deeds of heroes. And the contemporary legends recounted by *Drum* were not all that much different from those of old — they told tales of courage, manliness, strength or talent. But there was one important difference: the heroes of old performed their brave deeds in defence of noble causes: their gods, their countries or their loved ones. *Bantu World* had had

such heroes, men like Washington Carver and Booker T Washington, whose achievements had enhanced the self-esteem of blacks everywhere. The new heroes were ordinary mortals, much like their readers, who had managed to 'make it' up the social ladder. Their heroism was self-centred — they were admirable, not only, because they were blacks succeeding in a white world, but also, because they were succeeding for THEMSELVES.

As with *Zonk*, many of the heroes were American negroes, particularly sport and entertainment stars. But an increasing number of *Drum's* heroes were local blacks, who, during the fifties and early sixties, were beginning to 'make it' abroad. Boxers and soccer players usually got priority, but even minor sports (in black magazine terms) could produce stars — golfer Papwa Sewgolum, for example. Nor did these stars need to be notably successful. Samai, a coloured tennis player who reached the Wimbledon play-offs several times but never made it to the final rounds, did not lose the obligatory title of 'star'.⁶ But the ultimate accolade was recognition from prominent whites abroad. Miriam Makeba, all but shouldered out of *Drum's* pages by the adulation for her rival, Dolly Rathebe, suddenly became a Big Name when she sang at the United Nations:

The girl who was born and raised and who sang in our dusty townships and was often in danger from over-fond gangsters, stood on the platform at the United Nations, the great tiered assembly hall filled with some of Africa's most famous names. It was a long way from her mother's tiny house in Mofolo ...?

One series was designed deliberately to 'create' heroes. Called 'Masterpieces in Bronze', it was a series originally created by news editor Henry Nxumalo, saluting black achievement. Bailey considered it the kernel of the magazine, as this paragraph from the *Style Sheet* shows:

The 'Masterpiece in Bronze'. This ought to set the tone of the whole issue. Selection should be as intelligent as possible and the paragon written up with the eye of a novelist, revealing the bad side as well as the good. It needs to be sensitive and honest. *Drum's* 'masterpiece' should acquire the status of a 'Time' cover.

Most of the 'masterpieces' were local personalities, but a good few featured people from the newly independent states like Nigeria and East Africa. In the early days, it was usually two pages long, the first page illustrated with a picture showing the man-as-achiever (there were few women) at work, the second projecting the

⁶ 'SAMAI IN LONDON!' South Africa's Coloured tennis star plays international tennis at Wimbledon for the third time ... (July 1954).

⁷ Most success stories were about middle class blacks who made good. But a few were about blacks who were born at the top — royalty for example. *Drum's* equivalent of the white Press's 'Royal Family' syndrome was an obsession with every trivial activity of Prince Bereng of Basutoland, a young, handsome and rich fifties equivalent of today's Prince Charles.

idea of the nuclear family, with the subject at leisure alongside his wife and children. The series expounded so idealised a notion of black achievement that the writer, Peter Abrahams, complained that it made all Africans look like angels. He suggested to the editors that it was time blacks started being critical of one another.⁸

Sometimes, the readers, rather than the editors, created the heroes. A good example of this was *Drum's* imported American comic strip, 'Don Powers', which aimed at being a negro version of the favourite fifties comic strip 'Steve Canyon'. Powers, a boxer with a black skin but rather Europeanised features, fought for black justice, black equality and black welfare. But he was so insipidly respectable a character that readers tended to prefer his villainous rivals, in particular a hair-covered, latter-day 'caveman' called Karg. The repulsively ugly, uncouth, unloved, clumsy, ruffianly Karg, a misfit in a modern society he did not understand, was the perfect anti-hero for *Drum's* proletarian audience. Letters poured in giving Karg advice and asking for his autograph. Adopting the sound mass-media tactic of jumping onto fast-moving bandwagons, *Drum's* editors responded by turning Karg into an idol, using him on feature and sports pages as a kind of magazine mascot. For months, the boxing pages carried 'Karg Says' quotes with distinct class undertones — the uncouth plebian made sure that everyone knew he was out to beat the clean-cut college boy. In an inversion of a tradition that was as old as black newspapers, brawn was stressed over brain, barbarism over civilisation: 'Book learning hasn't made anyone a fighter yet. You just gotta be tough — and full of guts too'.⁹ In the event, civilisation triumphed and Karg was defeated and banished from the strip. But his voice lived on for a long time in the letter columns of *Drum*, the only hero in the black Press to symbolise the reality of social ostracism rather than the fantasy of social success.¹⁰

THE WHITE-BLACK SYNDROME

A favourite theme of black South African papers was the racial turn-about. Articles that fell into this category included those about black men who married white women (the current state of the marriage of Ruth and Seretse Khama, who wed in 1948, was a regular topic throughout the fifties) or whites 'going native', or freak medical accidents that allegedly turned blacks into whites. In 1956, a white

⁸ Sampson, 1956, op cit, p65. Abrahams, a close friend of Nxumalo's, was himself idolised by the magazine — he was featured in a series in May and June 1954: 'TELL FREEDOM: The amazing life story of Peter Abrahams, the South African coloured writer who rose from the slums to international fame.'

⁹ A typical reader's letter on Karg: 'I would much appreciate it if you could send me a photograph of Karg, the champ, with his autograph. I'm waiting patiently for Karg to win the fight against Powers — A Naidoo, Natal.' (October 1954).

¹⁰ Months after Karg's demise, the letters column still had the occasional missive to the monster-champ. Asked his weight in April 1955, he replied: 'Three tons'.

DRUM OCTOBER 1954

Don Powers

I FIGHTING TO RAISE MONEY FOR A HOSPITAL NEEDED A SUM AMOUNT. DON BUTLER KARG, A FIGHTER SCIENTIST WHO CALLED A MATCH BACK TO THE TRUE CAVE-MAN AND OVERWHELMINGLY BEHIND DON. DON WAS BLASTED KARG DOWN THREE, AND NOW THE LEADER WHO WAS KARG BY A SOLD BLOW, A STRANGE LIGHT AND HIS LITTLE EYES AND.....



...when suddenly the cave-man leaps forward and.....

ARRRRGH!



As Karg moves in, Don flicks out a light jab.....



LET GO! SAID! I'LL DISQUALIFY YOU, THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO!

And in the ring Karg has eyes only for Don's...



HEY... CUT THAT OUT, YOU! LET HIM GO!

Afrikaner professor researched her family 'roots' and discovered that she had some black ancestors. The ironic discovery prompted a major story — much ballyhooed in *Drum's* advertising — on 'just how white are the whites?'. When a white joined the Coon Carnival, he earned a picture spread in *Drum* (Cooning Scotsman!)¹¹ A much-loved example was the case of Regina Brooks, a white woman who lived with blacks, conduct which outraged white South Africa in the mid-fifties. But to the black media, she was something of a heroine, and *Drum* ran a lengthy and sympathetic feature on her:

'One thing is certain. I couldn't be happy living among whites. I am not used to them. I can't speak their language ... I cannot imagine myself being employed as a white woman because I cannot behave as a white woman ...'¹²

The appeal of the 'racial turnabout' lay in its inversion of social ranks. It was the converse of the 'black making good in a white world' theme — a white sliding down the social ladder to land on the same rung as the readers. It offered plenty of scope for irony and poetic justice, particularly if the victim had once been a staunch white supremacist. And every time such a 'turnabout' occurred, it served to prove that the social system was neither universal nor immutable.

WESTERN VALUES

Drum never pretended to an interest in education and civilisation of the kind that infused the pages of *Bantu World* and remained evident even in *Zonk*. Yet, although there was no overt 'teaching', the magazine acted, like its predecessors, as an informal instructor in social values. In its every picture and every phrase, *Drum* was reflecting upon and refracting different kinds of lifestyles, classifying and ranking social knowledge and assigning contexts to them. Take this example:

Thanks a lot, Peter Rezant. Your band has been a great civilising agent. My cousin Joe says he felt real small at your last dance. You and your band turned out smart. Nugget shines, toothbrush smiles, gold cufflinks. And there he was waltzing ... in brown shoes and grey pants. Heavens!¹³

The band referred to above was the Merry Blackbirds, a dignified 'old-style' group, most popular among the black elite. Yet here it was being extolled by the magazine of the masses. *Drum's* attitude would always be ambivalent — rough and tough at one moment, elitist at another. Yet the two were not necessarily incompatible: a key characteristic of mass media populism (as discussed in the previous section on *Zonk*) was its guise of egalitarianism camouflaging an essentially conservative attitude towards social hierarchies. In *Drum's* world, as much as *Zonk's*,

¹¹ *Drum*, January 1955.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Todd Matshikiza in *Drum*, September 1954.

civilisation and correct dress were not entirely separate issues.

In the forties and early fifties, the bulk of clothing advertisements — and the related editorial matter — were aimed at men rather than women. *Drum's* handling of men's clothes and their implicit class symbolism was generally similar to that of *Zonk*, and therefore does not bear repeating. More interesting is *Drum's* handling of women's fashions, a relatively little-exploited area in *Zonk* which remained a predominantly male magazine. This is not to suggest that there were no women's articles in the forties, but they remained a sideline rather than a regular and important feature. There appear to have been three reasons for the initial advertising bias towards men. Firstly, men still substantially outnumbered women in urban areas (see first section). Secondly, a large proportion of women were domestic servants who were expected to wear uniforms on duty and would not have been tolerated around the madam's house sporting such middle-class symbols as makeup and cosmetics. Thirdly, since clothing symbolised social status, it was more important that the patriarch carry on his person the family's social rank.¹⁴ But from the early fifties onwards, clothing and cosmetics manufacturers, seeking to expand their markets, took an increasing interest in African women. Advertisements for skin-lightener creams, usually on the same lines as the famous Lux soap advertisements, with a well-known entertainer personally recommending the product, became regulars.¹⁵ Mkele notes that African women started wearing lipstick in the mid-fifties.¹⁶ On this subject, Mkele is something of an expert, as *Selling Age* revealed in January 1959:

A world-wide cosmetics firm is working on a revolutionary style of cosmetics aimed at the African. An African representative of the firm, N Mkele of Johannesburg, said ... that plans were going ahead to design cosmetics to enhance the beauty of African women ... It is becoming increasingly apparent that the African woman is becoming more familiar with cosmetics, Mr Mkele said ...

Drum gave increasing space to women, indeed the *Style Sheet* advised that 'something like 25 percent of *Drum* should be able to pull the girls in'. Pictures of women were useful in that, as cheesecake, they appealed to men, as fashion models they appealed to women. The plethora of pictures of entertainer Dolly Rathebe in *Drum's* pages may be, at least partly, explained by the fact that she arrived in the public eye just when the interest in women's fashions was beginning. She became a symbol of the ordinary girl who became something special, and her superiority was

¹⁴ 'Status seeking is more common among Bantu men than women.' (A Survey of the Retail Trade, op cit, p35). An equivalent would be white men driving Mercedes Benzes to work while their wives go shopping in Volkswagen Golfs.

¹⁵ *Drum* finally banned advertisements for skin lighteners in 1982, the only black magazine to have done so.

¹⁶ 'African women started using lipsticks as a beauty aid 3 or 4 years ago' (ie, in 1955 or 1956). Mkele, op cit, p121.

symbolised by her clothes: 'She doesn't wear the same dress for two days. Women go to her shows to see what she's wearing.'¹⁷

Drum did a photo-story on one of its cover girls, which projected a Damon Runyonesque picture of an ostensibly ordinary township girl:

Her temper flared, her beauty glowed, and in a moment I knew that Hazel Futa takes no sass from nobody, not even reporters ... 'If it were not that I failed to get a passport I would be in the States now,' Hazel explains. 'Jesse was sincere and his letters were not full of sweet nothings like some of the ones I am getting from our local Cardboard Casanovas and Weeping Willies' ... Something struck me and I asked: 'Do you go for culture, Hazel? You know, the top-shelf stuff?' She assaulted me with a look that told me I would be rejected even by a garbage can, and answered: 'Me, I'm not made for culture, but I like anything that is refined, but not over-refined. The man I would have as a hubby must be damned well-off ... I want a big home, a car and luxury ... Swollen ankles from walking? Nix, not for me ...'¹⁸

The captions to the picture strip indicated that Hazel's day was occupied almost entirely by looking after her figure or buying goods:

Hazel hangs up last night's washing. You'll have to wake early to catch her napping. Then she makes for the hairdressing salon for a sophisticated hair trim. 'Makes me feel under-dressed when my hair is unkempt,' she says, smiling.
A quick bite is just the thing to keep a girl energetic all day long. She's no trencher, but she likes most things, from cabbage to caviar.
There's nothing like window shopping to show a girl the latest in dress. Hazel goes for the kind of clothes that would not offend the folks in LM.¹⁹

Hazel is the perfect modern miss. Carefree, but not careless, the sophisticated, independent city girl with an American negro boyfriend (plus a coterie of lesser, local suitors) who does all the things which white movie-stars do, such as going to the hairdresser and window shopping and eating expensive Western food. She is a goddess and, like all goddesses, treats her suitors with a calculated indifference. She is no blue-stocking. She likes a bit of culture but not too much of it. Her husband will be a man who has climbed the social ladder and owns a car and house. Yet Hazel lived in a Johannesburg township in the mid-nineteen fifties, a place where hairdressers were a rarity and caviar dinners with rich Negro husbands who owned cars rarer still. *Drum* may well have enhanced Hazel's image, but it is unlikely that they invented her. She was the female equivalent of the male peacock, representative of a tiny number of people who were of interest to advertisers because of their consumer-addicted lifestyles, and of interest to magazine readers because they represented a fantasy world to be aspired to.

A similar kind of ambiguous, half-fantasy world was being propounded in the

¹⁷ *Drum*, October 1954.

¹⁸ Joe Louw in *Drum*, August 1958.

¹⁹ Ibid.

advertising, which presented 'typical' black domestic situations modelled more on the white suburbs than on the townships. This one, for example, which plays on feelings of guilt and inferiority, takes for granted middle-class home ownership and the 'leisured housewife'.

I SPIED ON MY NEIGHBOUR!

We moved into one of the new houses and I was so proud of our home. I wanted to be the best housekeeper in the whole township. But on the first Monday, I watched my neighbour as she was putting her washing on the line. It was so white and clean, I was ashamed of my wash and could not hang it up. I sat in my kitchen and cried! Then my neighbour came in and I had to tell her what was wrong. 'Cheer up,' she laughed. 'All your wash needs is SUNLIGHT SOAP'.²⁰

The heroine of consumer advertising sets her life's goal in domestic terms: above all else she wants to be a good housekeeper. But if she can't keep up with the neighbours in the washing stakes, she loses social status. Fortunately there is a remedy, which, like all remedies offered by advertising, is readily available over a counter.

A different kind of pressure was being put on men in other advertisements. *Drum* was always dotted about with dozens of small medical advertisements, especially ones for 'blood purifiers'. More than any other commodity, cure-all patent medicines symbolised what consumerism was doing to blacks — psychic stresses were created, and the victims were told that the cures came in a bottle. The medical adverts were largely aimed 'down-market' at male labourers and stressed the virtues of physical exertion. Obsessed with 'macho' imagery, they offered their customers — black, working class males deprived of every vestige of social or political power — the one power that was still available to them: the power of their own bodies. As evidenced by the number of brands available, they must have struck a sympathetic chord in their readership, offering an exaggerated 'maleness' as a compensation for oppression. The advertisements invariably included a picture of a boxer, a body-builder or a football player and the words hammered out a message of strength:

'Yusisiwe pills give you POWER!'

'BB tablets are fresh and strong.'

'Puritone Nol STRONG blood purifying tablets.'

'Men! be admired! MADI builds strong bodies. Friend, throw away your tiredness. Cast off your weakness. Madi sends strong new blood pulsing through your body ... makes a new, exciting, REAL man of you.'²¹

20 Ibid, August 1954.

21 Even advertisements aimed at women continued the 'strength' theme: 'Metamorphosa beauty cream is EXTRA STRONG, a cream that is STRONGER THAN STRONG' and 'Klim milk is strong health food'.

Peggy loves school now



1. "I won't go to school!" said my little girl. "The other children have such smart frocks."



2. Her frock was dingy and dull. A friend was visiting me and she laughed.



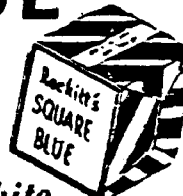
3. "I use Reckitt's Blue to make my white things snowy-white and my coloured things sparkling bright."



4. Reckitt's Blue made all the difference and now Peggy is the smartest girl in her class.

Reckitt's BLUE

makes
washing
really white



1277-1

A cartoon-strip advertisement in which Europeanised Africans play out suburban stereotypes: a housewife invites a friend for afternoon tea in the lounge. Note too, the use of social ostracism as a form of consumer pressure, and the correlation of 'smart' clothes with 'smart' minds

CRIME AND GORE

Blood has been a chief ingredient in popular writings ever since pamphlets detailing the confessions of condemned people became popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²² And naturally *Drum* too had its fill, although the magazine carried a lot less blood 'n guts than its tabloid sister *Golden City Post*. Many were on the traditional 'last words from the death cell' line: 'I was condemned to die! One man's story of how he appealed against the death sentence for murder.'²³ *Drum's* contribution to the genre was to use the technique of serialisation for its murder reports. A single crime 'mystery', written in thriller-story style, would continue over several issues, each ending, in true pulp-fiction style, on an appropriately gripping note. One long-running serial dealt with the splendidly-named 'Zorro, Terror of Alexandra', who obliged the editors by continuing his life of crime inside the prison itself, thus allowing for some extra episodes. Another series on the 'Axe-Killer' included pulp-book come-ons at the end of each episode: 'What will be the fate of Dano? Follow this gripping true drama next month in *Drum*'.²⁴

But the bulk of *Drum's* 'horror' material dealt with gangsters. Gangsters occupied something of an ambiguous position in black society. On the one hand, they were the scourge and terror of their fellows, on the other hand, they were heroes, men who scorned the system that oppressed their fellows and who created their own laws. Tom Lodge, in his paper on the destruction of Sophiatown, says that the incidence of violent crime increased by 20 percent in the post-war period, due in part to large-scale unemployment among urban youths and to the decline in real wages for working class Africans after 1951.²⁵ Four gangs dominated Sophiatown during the forties and fifties: the Gestapo, a group of street fighters who expended their energies more on territorial warfare with other gangs than on crime; the Berliners, preoccupied with 'petty crime, often against members of their own community; the 'elite' Americans gang, which dressed in flashy clothes, drove huge, imported cars and preferred large-scale crime to preying on the Sophiatown community; and the Vultures, a child-gang which ran protection rackets and engaged in small crime.²⁶ With the exception of the Berliners, the gangs did not steal from fellow blacks and considered themselves the community's Robin Hoods:

22 Some of these sold as many as one and a half million copies. They were superseded later in the nineteenth century by 'Penny Dreadfuls' which carried fare like (to quote the contents page of one publication, the *Terrific Register*): 'An account of a family who were all affected with loss of limbs ... Universal pestilence ... Immolation of human beings ... Horrible murder of a child by starvation.' *Popular Literature*, Victor Heuburg, p154).

23 Including a 'personal signature' at the end for authentication. (*Drum*, June 1954.)

24 *Drum*, November 1955.

25 *The Destruction of Sophiatown*, History Workshop, 1981, p10.

26 *Ibid*, p11.

It would be an exaggeration to assert that the working class ... saw gangs as fighters for social justice, (but) it was popularly believed that gangs 'seldom harm ordinary folk'. Most of their non-interneccine violence was directed at universally disliked people: the more prosperous traders, the South African Police and the Municipal 'Blackjacks'. But it (the Robin Hood image) could provide a sense of identity for the gangsters, and more vicariously, a heroic mythology for the community from which it sprung.²⁷

Drum editor, Anthony Sampson described the gangs syndrome this way: 'Crime was not, as in Britain, a vicarious excitement for suburban lives: It was a day-to-day reality for nearly all our readers. Their survival depended upon keeping on the right side of the gangsters.'²⁸ The bible of gangster activities in the black townships was *Drum* magazine, which seldom omitted to run at least one gangster feature per issue during the fifties. Not that *Drum* suggested that gangsters were heroes. Indeed, the one subject which *Drum* did moralise about was the menace of crime. And part of the reason for this uncharacteristic preaching was the fear that, for all the magazine's editorialising to the contrary, the real interest in its gangster stories lay in the fascination that the free 'n easy criminal life must have evoked among readers. Take this quote about the American gang:

The method used by the Americans was simple and effective. They would spy a trailer loaded with easily marketable goods like ladies' and men's clothes. Then one of the gang would go up to the white man guarding the trailer ... he would distract the guard's attention by offering to sell him a watch and while they haggled over the price, the rest of the gang would unload whatever they wanted over the other side.²⁹

All the ingredients for hero-worship are here: a smart group of blacks (symbolising the oppressed) impudently outwit a not-very-intelligent white (symbolising the oppressors) — and gets away with it. Not even the pat moralising at the end of the story can undo the glamour of these 'social bandits':

The power and attraction of this gang of bullies, crooks and thugs is one more example of the effects of bad housing, bad conditions and the lack of opportunity. But the bitter end to which the gang leaders have come shows what a hopeless course they took and how short-lived their power is.³⁰

That *Drum's* editors were concerned that readers may perhaps have been missing the point of the gangster stories was made clear in an editorial in 1954:

The other day someone asked me: 'Why is *Drum* always attacking gangsters? They don't do us any harm!' ... Not much they don't! Only a few murders, a few stabbings, a beating up every day or so ... Why is it that gangsters always think they're much cleverer than anyone else? Well, a short time ago, some scientists made investigations into criminals in America. They found that one thing criminals

- 27 Ibid. *Drum* also ran features on many gangs from other areas, most notably the dangerous and mysterious Russians, who carried concealed weapons under their Basotho blanket garb, and the Durban Indian 'Mafia'-style protection racketeers, the Salots.
- 28 Sampson 1956, op cit, p96.
- 29 *Drum*, September 1954.
- 30 Ibid. The moralising is reminiscent of *Zonk*, but note that *Drum* points to social causes of crime; to *Zonk*, evil is caused by individual weakness.

had in common was that they were below average in intelligence! . . . So don't be fooled when someone says about a gangster: 'Gee, he's clever, man.' ³¹

Drum's position was once more ambivalent: siding with middle class respectability in the war against crime, but exploiting the undercurrents of working class sympathy for gangsters to feed its own circulation figures. But the moralising did, in fact, decrease over the years. It was, after all, out of step with the typical mass-media self-image of cool, 'objective' detachment. And indeed, *Drum's* conscience seemed to hurt less as the years went by. In the late fifties, gangsters like Dawood Salot and Badman Sibisa were allowed to speak for themselves, without rebuttal, even where they glorified themselves. The criteria for selection had become the entertainment value of the particular story and moral considerations became increasingly irrelevant. The black Press had come full circle from its early form. The committed journal of ideas had been replaced by a journal whose most fundamental commitment was to the marketing ideology of the 'good read'.

4 Post: The guise of commitment

Zonk and *Drum* had in their own ways spelt an end to the old journals of commitment, substituting detachment, entertainment and readability for the moralising of their predecessors.¹ But with *Golden City Post*, the trend was abruptly reversed. *Post* adopted the guise of passionate commitment for the very same reason that *Drum* and *Zonk* had rejected it — audience impact. The shouted message pioneered by *Zonk* became the message shouted with combative passion. Where *Zonk* and *Drum* strove to provide low-key wit and entertainment, *Post* was squalling and righteously indignant. The style of the paper — both verbal and visual — was one of he-mannish aggression, in many ways a counterpart to the 'macho' posturing of some of the advertising discussed in the previous section. *Post* aimed to be the paper of the oppressed masses, taking upon itself the folksy role of defender of the people. But there was little bite behind all that barking — *Post* was, in reality, a rather timid paper, no less committed to the values of middle-class respectability, westernisation, consumerism and self-advancement than any of its predecessors, as this section will discuss.

The urge to be shocking led *Post* to adopt a hectoring tone. The letters page, for example, was not merely labelled, in the conventional low-key fashion, a 'Letters Page'. It was called 'SAY WHAT YOU DAMN WELL LIKE TO YOUR WISE OLD ED', a phrase which rather neatly encapsulated the two sides of *Post*: a one-of-the-boys egalitarianism (SAY WHAT YOU LIKE), yet a deference to superiors (YOUR WISE OLD ED). The religion column, a carry-over from the old black

³¹ *Drum*, November 1954.

¹ With occasional exceptions, such as crime stories, as noted in the previous two sections.

newspapers, had the very worldly title of 'RELIGION STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER'.

The classical journalistic notion of a split between 'comment' and 'news' often got short shrift as *Post*, in a style adopted from the British *Daily Mirror*, threw itself into vigorous campaigns, usually conducted on the news pages: 'STARTLING ALLEGATIONS ABOUT COALBROOK. POST DEMANDS TO KNOW THE TRUTH' and 'COALBROK! SOME BLUNT QUESTIONS. WILL THE DEAD BE BETRAYED? WHAT'S THE PRICE OF A MINER'S LIFE?'² A single incident could spark a *Post* campaign, such as the case of a baby abandoned in a dustbin, which *Post* inflated into a universal problem: 'STRAIGHT TALK TO WOMEN WHO LEAVE BABIES IN DUSTBINS'.³

The huge type used in the front page 'splash' headlines required a vocabulary of three and four letter words, which by their nature tended to be more aggressive and a good deal less subtle than their multi-syllabic equivalents. CRITICISE became HIT or SLAM. PROHIBIT became BAN or BAR. DEFEAT became SINK or SLAY. Policemen were 'cops' and their charges were 'raps'. The use of Americanised jargon became steadily more crass. By the late fifties, for example, the label 'doll' was given to almost any female of any age. As Obed Musi, former chief sub-editor of *Voice*, recounted:

When my grandma died in 1959, a young white sub-editor wrote: 'DOLL OF 88 DIES'.⁴

Post borrowed the *Zonk* formula for brazen self-advertisement, but even Brooks never took narcissism quite as far. A front page lead, customarily the spot reserved for the most important news of the day, could be turned, instead, into a *Post* 'puff' with the inevitable 'macho' embellishments:

THE STRONGEST STORY WE'VE EVER PRINTED

Hold everything. *Post* has just obtained exclusive rights in South Africa to the most powerful series of articles ever published. We make this claim knowing how big it is. On November 25 we start the grim, factual story of the Sing Sing Death House — giving, at first hand, details never published before of the last hours of murderers condemned to die in the electric chair.

You'll need strong nerves for this series — authentic to the last detail. From the moment you start reading, you won't be able to stop.

It is also one of the strongest deterrents to crime ever published, showing, in words that sear the mind, the inevitable end of the so-called glamour boys of crime.⁵

² *Post*, January 24 and February 7, 1960.

³ *Ibid*, May, 1957.

⁴ The account, I suspect, may be exaggerated, but the point is clear. (Speech on the black Press at the University of the Witwatersrand, 1979).

⁵ *Post*, November 11, 1956. This bit of chest thumping took up most of the front page. The reason, readers would discover a few weeks later, was that the price was about to go up.

Notice too, that the prison which *Post* is exposing is American, not South African.

GOLDEN CITY
Post

**THE SADDEST PICTURES
WE EVER PUBLISHED**

suicides

...the pictures of the tragedy which
in Africa—the most heinous of the
world, it appears that the five sisters
... Pictures show members of the
... who failed at the graveyard.

30-TONE
RECORDING
MEXICAN
CREAM

**anned' Fort
e Student
ys: 'We'll
To Court**

Post turns its front page into a picture spread to dramatise the suicides of five sisters

There was a plethora of superlatives: This 'strongest story we've ever printed' soon had competition from several other 'strongest evers'. The 'saddest picture ever', published in February 1956, was overtaken just five months later by another 'saddest picture we've ever published.'⁶ The 'hottest ever singer' soon had competition from a host of rival 'hottest evers'. So did the world's longest legs, Africa's toughest boxer, history's most shocking tragedy, Harlem's curviest gal, the most brutal death in decades ...

The newspaper borrowed from the advertising trade the strategy of doing the readers' thinking for them. Bold paragraphs, italics and capitals for emphasis, all made it quite clear which parts of a story were deemed to be particularly shocking or amazing or ironic or strange:

WHAT made Rambiritch Maharaj (22) and his lovely 19-year-old wife Jesmathi hang themselves from a mango tree when they were very much in love?
That is the question that has BAFLED police, SHOCKED a village and MYSTIFIED friends ...'

Post's pages were dominated by the same themes as *Drum*; it was the style and emphasis that differed. This section will examine these themes in turn, under the same headings as the previous section: heroes, the schizoid relationship between black and white, horror stories and 'civilised' white standards.

THE HERO LIVES ON

Post often treated its heroes rather more frivolously than *Drum's* earnest 'Master-pieces in Bronze'. A woman reporter once wrote about the six men she would most like to propose to: Kwame Nkrumah, Louis Armstrong, Seretse Khama, Elijah Mokone (South African boxing champion), Louis Rathebe (local comedian) and an unnamed coloured doctor. Her reasons for wanting to marry Nkrumah, for example, were that 'all the Gold Coast girls are ga-ga over him' and 'maybe we'd go to Britain for a state visit and I'd be able to shake the hands of great people like the Queen, Churchill, Eden and who not.'⁷ Not all the heroes were men. Heroines were not unusual but invariably were expected to play the sex-kitten role. The favourite was American singer Eartha Kitt, 'that red-hot night-time girl' who regularly featured in major picture stories.

But the majority of stories followed the now-familiar pattern of recounting the exploits of ordinary local blacks who had made some inroads into spheres customarily identified with whites. Ezekiel Mphahlele, for example, wrote a story on what it was like to be capped for a university degree and become a recognised

6 Not only the headlines were similar — so were the stories. The first told of two lovers who hanged themselves from a mango tree; the second was about the suicide pact of five sisters who hanged themselves from a tree. (*Post*, February 14 and July 31).

7 February 14, 1956. The entire second paragraph is in bold italics in the original.

8 March 11, 1956.

Weds Her Former Manager In London



MARIE BRYANT, singer and dancer, who was once featured with the Duke Ellington orchestra and came to London, recently married John A. Rajakumar, former manager of the Harlem Blackbirds with whom Marie toured in India according to Down Beat Magazine.

Father's World Comes Crashing About His Feet

Man Whose Name We Won't Print

"Post" reports court cases of crime, it makes a publishing names— they may happen to be because the publication of names of convicted is a deterrent to crime.

TRUTH ABOUT MYRTLE

CERTAIN facts regarding Myrtle Martin are false. I, as her brother, should know her life story better than anyone else.

Redhead Man Woman To

TETERBORO, New Jersey, U.S.A.—When the American Polar-Basic Expedition left New Jersey's Teterboro Airport this month the 11 men and one red-haired woman in the party were well equipped for all emergencies. On its return, the party will bring with it the first and complete—and potentially the first antibiotic—ever to be dredged from the bottom of the sea directly at the North Pole.

The expedition... The company of...

SPE

NY

Colours of... IMMEDIATE

"BA" Slightly sharp and...

YOU CAN'T

BAE

131-12

POST-BAG

MAN OF COURAGE

MAIL

Elaborately cropped girlie picture from Post. Like many of the paper's cheesecake subjects, the model for this picture, Marie Bryant, was an American entertainment personality

class audiences partly because of its 'macho' connotations (discussed earlier), partly because crime is an important part of the reader's world. Asked in 1957 to explain the blood 'n gore obsessions of his newspaper, Bailey justified the choice both in marketing terms and in terms of the kind of lives his readers led:

As to editorial, we endeavour to develop it out of the needs of our market, whose requirements and tastes are not necessarily identical with the Afrikaans market ... Crime stories we indulge in. But our critics, from the comfort of European suburbs, are probably unaware how much crime is part and parcel of non-European life.¹¹

Post did indeed 'indulge' in crime fare as no local newspaper had ever done before. The paper took a vintage Fleet Street stereotype, tried it out on a community where violence was a part of life, and helped form a new stereotype in popular reading tastes. Week after week, audiences would be assailed by stories of the 'TEENAGE KNIFE GANG KILL SEVENTY' kind. And, as in *Drum*, the major crime stories were inevitably written in 'purple-prose' style borrowed from American pulp-fiction:

They led respectable lives by day and turned into murderous killers at night. They had elderly parents who depended on them and whom they treated gently, but at night they chose to spill the blood of fellow residents in their homes in dark Alexandra ...¹²

The crime formula has been discussed previously, in the *Drum* section. But *Post* had one addition to the standard stock of shock-horror tales — the supernatural horror story. The same paper which so constantly upheld the virtues of white, western, civilisation, traded shamelessly on the superstitions of its readers:

Wizardry — witchcraft — black magic. It is not confined to Africa ... On these pages *Post* publishes an exhaustive story on the practice of this wicked and blasphemous craft through the times from the Dark Ages to last week.¹³

Stories about lightning killers, and conventional crime stories pepped up with elements of the supernatural, became regular fare: 'BOY DIVES TO DEATH. WAS HE UNDER A SPELL?' But *Post* never quite decided what kind of tone to adopt towards the supernatural. In keeping with its advocacy of white civilisation, it generally treated the supernatural as dark, wicked and a regression to tribal 'primitivism'. The tone adopted in descriptions of the supernatural tended to be supercilious and distant, with descriptions of occult phenomena usually placed inside quotation marks. Yet other stories would show unashamed acceptance of

¹¹ May 19, 1963. This kind of wishful thinking was not unusual. The paper also assured Coloured readers that they would get the vote back, for example.

¹² *Press, Radio and Advertising Review*, April 1957.

¹³ *Post*, February 21, 1960.

¹⁴ March 25, 1956.

man of learning. The theme was reminiscent of countless similar stories in *Zonk*, the difference was the more immediate 'I was there myself' style.⁹ *Post* particularly adored the 'rags-to- riches' kind of hero and even started a series called 'SELF-MADE MEN', which invited readers to write and tell about people who had made it in the world. Even falls from greatness could invite respect, as long as the plunge was deep enough:

THE AMAZING RISE AND FALL OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

About ... the rise of a small, poor farm boy to the millionaire owner of a chain of enterprises in Natal ... and the fall that tumbled him from the throne of his large empire. ... the ruins do not deter him, his heartbreak has not finished him. Instead, bubbling with enthusiasm as never before, he is ready to build up again and once more wear his crown.¹⁰

Post's enthusiasm for creating black legends could sometimes run ahead of the facts. One front page lead announced the ultimate hero: 'THE FIRST BLACK MAN IN SPACE'. Some twenty years later, the world still awaits the event. What *Post* actually meant to say was that a black man had been accepted on the initial training course for astronauts. But that was not nearly as good a story ... ¹⁰

Despite the changes in style, then, *Post's* attitude to black heroes was not markedly different from that of its predecessors. As long as society remained stratified, stories dealing with social mobility would continue to appeal both to peer groups who identified with the subject matter and working class readers who aspired to 'better things'.

THRILLS AND HORRORS

Horror stories attract readers by repelling them. Audiences are distressed by what the newspaper tells them about the evil, anarchic world beyond, yet they must clutch at this self-same paper as one of their few means to making sense out of the chaos. This strategy is not too dissimilar to that used by medicine advertisers: playing upon anxieties, then offering cures. Newspapers sell themselves on bad news because they offer the small (and probably spurious) consolation that, in a grim world, it is better to know the worst than have it creep up unawares. Not that *any* kind of bad news sells. One cannot sell the bad news about apartheid to a white, working class audience, because it requires of them a re-adjustment of fundamental attitudes. The reason that crime is such a popular form of bad news, is that it is detached and vicarious, tugging at the heart without disturbing the intellect.

Crime stories are a traditional hallmark of the working class newspaper: a reader, looking at an unfamiliar publication for the first time, will grade its social class by the number of blood 'n guts headlines. Crime seems to appeal to working-

⁹ July 24, 1955. Mphahlele received his BA Hons from Unisa.

¹⁰ January 13, 1963.

sorcery, usually where it was necessary to enhance the plausibility of the report. This passage, for example, contains elements of both attitudes:

**AN INVISIBLE HAND CUT HER HAIR
FEMALE TIKOLOSHE TO BLAME?**

A sixteen-year-old Durban girl is being haunted by a 'short, aged woman dressed in a sari' — described as a female tikoloshe!

Strange things have happened in her home. Stones have fallen from the ceiling, although windows and doors are closed. An invisible hand has pulled and cut her hair ...

A *Post* reporter checked the credibility of the statements made by the family and found them to be true ...¹⁵

The first paragraph treats the tikoloshe with caution, putting the description inside quotation marks. But the last paragraph is emphatic that the supernatural menace exists. Another gimmick invented by *Post* and much-emulated by later black newspapers, was calling in witchdoctors to make prophesies or find missing people: 'THE STRANGE CASE OF MR BALOYI WHO NEVER CAME HOME. THE BONES SAY HE IS NOT DEAD'. Successful diagnoses were gleefully trumpeted, but no apologies were run for those that went wrong.

Post was edited by whites to whom the idea of witchcraft must have been anathema, and staffed by 'progressive' black journalists who scorned primitive ideas. But the paper was aimed at readers who, much as they were susceptible to ideas about 'civilisation', would have been equally susceptible to stories that played upon their insecurities and superstitions. Similarly, stories about the successes of witchdoctors would have appealed on the same level as stories about blacks who 'made it': black 'science' managing to do things no white 'science' could do.

THE WHITE CIVILISATION MODEL

In the fifties and sixties, the closest equivalents in newspapers to 'editorial advertising' were the women's pages. They defined 'female interest' in consumer terms and their content centred on what to wear, what to cook, how to furnish a home, how to put on make-up and how to bring up well-nourished families. The immediate, obvious function of women's pages was to act as an advertising vehicle for manufacturers of domestic and female-market goods. The less obvious, long-term social function was to construct an image of 'correct living'. They ranked the degrees of social status, they indicated which kinds of behaviour were acceptable and which were not, they defined and justified the domestic role of women. And specifically, they presented a stereotype black woman who aspired to the values of the white suburban housewife. Although *Bantu World* had made sporadic attempts in the forties and early fifties to start up small women's pages these soon folded due

¹⁵ September 16, 1956.

to insufficient advertising response. The first major attempt to start a women's page in a black newspaper (as opposed to magazine) had to wait until 1957, in the pages of *Post*.¹⁶ And the announcement of the launch, in the trade Press, left no doubt as to the function of the pages:

Golden City Post announces that starting in May, they intend to publish the only women's service in Non-White journalism. They intend to build these pages into a top feminine attraction, covering all the needs of home, husband and children. It is hoped that it will become one of the big influences in the social life of African females, suggesting dress styles, make-up for dark skins, hygiene and other hints. The editors will provide a unique service to manufacturers, so that good products can earn a good name.¹⁷

The first page ran in fact a month early, in April, and included an editorial aimed at female readers which seems to bear out the theme of the *Selling Age* announcement:

DOLLY HASSIM SAYS:

Dear readers, I think it's high time we had a page about ourselves. Don't you? ... Our experiments, apart from being fun, are going to make a more attractive, smartly dressed, confident YOU.

... 'Oh, its all very well for her to talk, she works in an office and can afford to look smart.' How often have I heard those words. Most of the 'smart' girls I know — and I mean that both ways — (a) do not work in offices and (b) do not spend a fortune on clothes. They plan.

But first, let's do away with the idea that only office girls want to look smart. Any woman — and that includes most of us — who is on parade all day, wants to look her best ...¹⁸

The message was clear enough: a lack of money was no reason not to dress smartly, and even working class women should be dress-conscious. Furthermore, a smart appearance was a sure sign of a smart mind. The advertising on the women's pages propagated a parallel smart-minds-equals-smart-bodies philosophy. An advert for Vaseline began:

Meet Dorothy Bincefield. American college girl. Dorothy is a popular student at world-famous Columbia University where she is studying to be a doctor ...¹⁹

¹⁶ Although the first formal women's page in *Post* had to wait until 1957, the paper had carried occasional fashion titbits right from the start. An early example, from 1955: 'Mrs Sheila Tozana went to court yesterday and came out depressed. She was sad about the number of women who don't wear hats but wear berets instead ...'

¹⁷ *Selling Age*, May 1957.

¹⁸ *Post*, April 28, 1957. By the time this piece was written, most of the models in fashion advertising would have been local blacks, with whom women could have identified. A few years earlier, it would have been rather different, as *Selling Age* pointed out: 'Five years ago, the same advertisements used in European publications were used in Bantu papers. But today, Bantu models are used almost entirely to advertise products ranging from bicycles to toothpaste'. (December 1959).

¹⁹ *Post*, February 26, 1956.

*"LUX Toilet Soap
will make you
Lovelier"*

LAUREN BACALL



LUX
TOILET SOAP

used by beautiful women
all over the world

Although most advertisers stopped using white models early in the fifties, some, like Lux, used them until the sixties, playing on the prestige and glamour connotations of recommendations from Hollywood stars

Education could be dropped in as a casual throwaway line. A product claim could be given status by the fact that the words were uttered by a teacher:

'VIM keeps my home so clean and healthy' ... says Mrs Kathleen Phungula, a schoolteacher in Orlando.

What you drink is who you are: an advertisement for Fanta orange showed a black graduate in cap and gown drinking a cooldrink in front of the fluted columns of an ornate building: 'Clever people all agree — Fanta's the finest drink for me!'²⁰

The entertainment pages promoted the idea of white culture in a different kind of way. For all the emphasis on jazz, the Americans and Eartha Kitt, there was a residue of snobbishness that would not have been out of place in *Bantu World*:

The Social Centre became a castle with Dame Sybil and Sir Lewis. It happened last Sunday afternoon. The stage of the Bantu Men's Social Centre, Johannesburg, vanished. And before my eyes stood an ancient castle. There an ambitious woman plotted the murder of a Scottish king so that her husband, Macbeth, would be king instead ... All this was achieved by the sheer personality of two people — Dame Sybil Thorn-dike and Sir Lewis Casson, her husband ... two elderly people. But two very wonderful people. After Shakespeare, Dame Sybil gave us another thing of terrifying beauty — a woman of dreadful vengeance in the Greek drama 'Medea' ... ²¹

Snobbery was evident in subtle ways on the news pages too, where the old *Bantu World* love of titles and society pecking-orders was still far from dead: 'The judges in our contest were: Dr A B Xuma, medical practitioner, Johannesburg, and former president of the ANC; Mrs Dora Philips, lecturer at the Jan Hofmeyer School of Social Work and wife of Dr Ray Philips; Mr D C Themba BA (SA) editor of 'Africa'; and Mr E Mphahlele, BA Hons (SA), *Drum's* fiction editor'.²²

But this enthusiasm for the paraphernalia of 'white civilisation' was ambivalent — it did not go so far as to include the whites who created the civilisation. *Post's* readers, after all, included many who desired the worldly goods that comprised bourgeois living, yet considered whites their oppressors. Not surprisingly, whites, with the exception of a handful of liberals like Father Trevor Huddleston, seldom made it into *Post's* pages, unless they fell into one of four categories: thugs committing some villainy against blacks; police arresting, baton-charging or shooting blacks; Cabinet Ministers passing new restrictive laws; businessmen handing over money for sport competitions.

²⁰ March 13, 1960.

²¹ April 1, 1956. Similarly, Ezekiel Mphahlele ran a series on the European literary tradition, taking the classics and translating them into short story form. The headlines, however, made the contents sound more like the standard *Post* crime fare. This, for example, is Oedipus: 'HE MURDERED HIS FATHER AND MARRIED HIS MOTHER!' (November 1955.)

²² April 24, 1955.

★ ★ ★
 "Thanks to MUM
 I keep sweet and fresh always"

says beautiful

RIBBON DLA MINI

FAMOUS AFRICAN STAR IN THE FILM

"CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY"

which will shortly be shown in New York, London and all over the world. Ribbon was specially selected for the film by a leading English film producer.

"Making a film is hard work," says Ribbon. "It is hot under the bright arc lights, and you have to be close to people all the time. If a woman does not keep fresh and delectable she so easily offends others. I cannot afford to take chances. That's why I use MUM. It keeps me fresh as a flower all the time."

Everyone perceives, of course, but MUM atops any unpleasantness. Simply rub a little MUM under your arms every day before going out, and you will stay fresh and charming. MUM cannot injure your skin or clothes. Get a jar from your chemist or store, and be popular always.

MUM

KEEPS YOU NICE TO BE NEAR

SMALL SIZE 1/- — — MEDIUM SIZE 2/3 — — LARGE SIZE 2/6
 Product of Bristol Myers (Pty.) Ltd., successors to Bristol-Myers Co., New York.



Unlike the rival Lever Brothers (manufacturers of Lux soap), the toiletries firm Bristol Myers used black models right from the start, as in this 1952 advert for Mum deodorants. But the style — personal recommendations from film stars — remained the same.

Post (like other black publications) deliberately disguised its own white ownership for fear that its credibility as a 'non-European' publication would be tarnished. White names normally only appeared in the small type of the political credits. It was an extraordinary about-face — whites had taken over real power in the black Press, then had nurtured an illusory image of black control.²³ The unease about printing white names continued well into the seventies — white bylines appeared only in exceptional cases. The irony was that the decision to leave out white bylines was taken by white liberals who felt guilty about their whiteness — yet the lack of white bylines may have contributed to the belief that whites had no interest in black welfare.

If local whites had a poor image, foreign whites did not. Foreign politicians were considered less racist than local whites and therefore more amenable to argument. A great favourite was the Queen, beloved of the Bantu Press organisation, but feted with no less ardour by *Post*. When the Queen visited Africa in 1955, she received regular coverage in picture spreads, showing how a white Queen was spellbound by black culture.

When Harold Macmillan visited South Africa in 1960 to deliver his 'winds of change' speech, his trip excited *Post* for weeks. To begin with, Macmillan was presented as an English Santa Claus bearing gift-wrapped liberation for the black people of South Africa. Among the many headlines: 'MAC WARNS VERWOERD'; 'OLD MAC GAVE NATS A HIDING'; 'LUTHULI: WHAT I WOULD HAVE TOLD MAC'. But his trip produced nothing but frustration for black ambitions and the enthusiasm died down. Tom Hopkinson, editor of *Drum* at the time, has recounted how the black staff of Bailey's publications listened to Macmillan's speech on the radio, first eagerly, then with 'mounting disappointment'.²⁴ Yet he continued to remain a symbol of western, bourgeois moderation in the face of Afrikaner intransigence, as *Post's* last plea to its fading hero made clear:

DON'T DO A MONTY ON US MAC!

As Prime Minister — and an old politician — of a country which prides itself on free speech, you must be used to Home Truths. We believe you would like to hear the TRUTH from us, the (non-white) people of South Africa, about ourselves, our country and your visit.

... you surely must know that the United Party is not the real Opposition in South Africa, but that the Congresses — under the leadership of that fine Christian Gentleman, Albert Luthuli — have the biggest following in the country ...²⁵

²³ One of the few occasions when the names of the white executives appeared in print was in 1957, when Bailey, Eprile and Margolis all paid public tribute to their murdered ex-colleague Henry Nxumalo. (*Post*, January 6 1957.)

²⁴ Hopkinson, 1963, op cit, p248.

²⁵ *Post*, January 31, 1960.

Post never did give up Macmillan altogether. Even after he had returned home, this article appeared, re-affirming the old black- makes-good theme once more:

MAC DROVE IN ONE OF OUR CARS

Although not a single Non-White met Mr Macmillan during the short time he spent in Durban, the beautiful silver-grey Cadillac convertible that was used to drive him around belongs to ONE OF US. The owner was one of the Rajal brothers, Mr A K Rajal ...²⁶

Santa Claus had arrived empty-handed and left without leaving so much as a few promises to hang onto. Yet the belief in the values he represented, unchanged since the early days of *Bantu World*, continued regardless.

SQUEEZING OUT THE RACIAL IRONIES

Post's refinement to the *Drum* menu of stories about whites trapped in the black world — and vice versa — was the medical freak case. Once again, the key ingredient was a perverse kind of poetic justice: the victims were often white supremacists who suddenly found themselves forced to join the ranks of the ungodly:

A WHITE NAT TURNS BLACK

MANY SUCH CASES ON THE RAND

A lanky Afrikaner from the Cape town of Paarl is living in misery in the hills — because the colour of his skin has turned black. He is afraid to face the world, and has left his home and business to become a hermit. The change came suddenly. His skin turned dusky practically overnight because of an illness which deposits iron in the body until the white skin goes bronze.

A DOCTOR IN THE GENERAL HOSPITAL SAID THAT THERE ARE MANY SUCH CASES IN JOHANNESBURG AND PATIENTS COULD EASILY BE TAKEN FOR INDIANS OR COLOURED ...²⁷

This kind of story worked just as well when the racial roles were reversed:

A COLOURED GIRL TURNS WHITE!

Nine-year-old Zogora Ornie has a delicate white skin, freckled face; fair hair and brown eyes.

BUT LESS THAN FOUR YEARS AGO, ZOGORA WAS COLOURED — WITH

26 February 7, 1960. The MacMillan episode did not dampen the *Post* enthusiasm for overseas whites. When Dag Hamarskjold arrived in South Africa only a year later, he got much the same treatment: 'COME SEE US, DAG!' (January 8, 1961) and 'DAG SCOOP! MIDNIGHT CALL ON EX-ANC LEADER' (January 15, 1961).

27 February 21, 1960

28 The story continues with another favourite ingredient, reminiscent of *Post's* stories of occult practices which defy the explanations of science: '... and since this startling change came over her, doctors in South Africa and throughout the world have been baffled ...' (February 28, 1960)

FLOWING BLACK HAIR A DEEP OLIVE COMPLEXION, AND DARK FLASHING EYES.²⁹

Since *Post*, unlike *Bantu World*, had a large coloured readership, the 'twilight' world of coloureds who pretended to be white was another favourite, with frequent headlines of the 'MY LIFE AS A PLAY-WHITE' variety. The problems of families who had been split by eccentric race classification rules was another regular: 'IF I HAD BEEN MADE BLACK: BY THE COLOURED FATHER WHO WON HIS APPEAL'.²⁹ Other stories were less serious. Ironical incidents in which blacks managed to turn the tables on whites were recounted with a certain glee:

Had a long-distance call from colleague Lewis Nkosi, now at Harvard University, in the United States. Seems the first habit he has lost is making his own bed — all because of a white woman!

'Here I have my own rooms, complete with bedroom, study and bathroom,' says Lewis.

'The first day I slept here I woke up and made up my bed. At about 11 o'clock a white woman knocked on the door.

'I have come to make up your bed, Sir!

'I told her I had already made it up. That was the last time I did it!'³⁰

A similar story in the same issue dealt with the *King Kong* cast in London: 'Stephen Molo, Kong's trainer, has not got over being called 'Sir' by taxi-drivers, ushers and the staff of the Newcourt Hotel, Bayswater, where the gang are living. 'I thought they were pulling my leg,' he said.'³¹

For all the stylistic differences between *Post* and the old *Bantu World*, then, there were clear continuities in theme. The obsession with social status, with the embellishments of 'civilisation', the cautious, bourgeois morality, had hardly changed over the years. What differences did exist were due to changes in target audience — *Post* fed its working class readers on tough-guy heroics, blood and witchcraft, written in a folksy, 'one-of-the-boys' style.

29 May 13, 1956.

30 February 12, 1961. Nkosi specialised in this kind of racial twist. He once placed the following advert in the newspaper: 'Clean-living European wanted for two African writers. Good opportunity for decent girl.' He got one reply — and a finger-wagging visit from a white policeman. Barton, 1979, op cit, pp201,202.

31 February 12, 1961

5 The schizoid case of Bantu World

At this point it is necessary to return to *Bantu World* to examine the effect of the new competition upon the old grey lady of the black Press. And indeed, *Bantu World* could not ignore its rivals, particularly not when its circulation started lagging. But the history of the newspaper throughout the fifties would be one of perpetual dither. For *Bantu World's* publishers were conservatives whose attempts to go 'down-market' lacked the necessary relish for street-smart journalism of the Bailey kind. *Bantu World's* owners dreamt of producing a black *Daily Telegraph*, but the post-war working-class readership would have preferred a black *Daily Mirror*. The paper never managed to straddle that gap. A previous section has discussed the schism in the Bantu Press organisation between people like Paver, who resisted the idea of mass-market journalism, and people like Maggs, who supported it. The Maggs faction ultimately won, but it would be years before *Bantu World* would sort out who it was aimed at and how it would reach that audience.

The Paver-faction considered black journalism something more than simply a business enterprise. They believed that the white owners of the black Press had an educative task to fulfill. This attitude, not altogether dissimilar to the didactic philosophies of the original black newspaper owners, was still a widespread one during the fifties. Its arguments are well summed up in an article in *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, criticising the moral degeneration of the black Press following the appearance of *Golden City Post*:

I object strongly ... to overemphasis in the White man's newspapers on blood and busts; I object even more strongly to White men educating non-Whites to acceptance of the same standards ...
In the newspaper business we are the teachers of the African. What he knows about newspapers he learns from us ... if circulation is such an important factor in their planning (and the advertising that accompanies it) and they are afraid that there might be a drop if they are not quite so sensational as at present, I suggest the publishers of all newspapers for Africans come together and agree on an unofficial code of ethics which will eliminate a certain degree of competitiveness, but will allow a proper, not an undue, emphasis on sex and crime.¹

The theme of this section is to show how *Bantu World* switched from this kind of didactic philosophy to a more market-orientated one, a change prompted by a broadening of the target audience from elites to the masses. The first acknowledgment at *Bantu World* of the need to fight off the opposition came in 1953, when the circulation dropped alarmingly. A picture supplement was introduced to rival the

¹ Hardie Stewart, chairman of the magazine division of the Newspaper Press Union, January, 1957.

new photo-magazines, *Zonk* and *Drum*. As Harrison puts it:

In 1953 the paper's circulation had dropped back to 20 000 and was static. The board ... decided the paper should carry a pictorial insert entitled 'Mayibuye' in an endeavour to boost sales.²

'Mayibuye' was *Bantu World's* first move away from its traditional elite readership towards a mass market. It was also the paper's first effort at popularisation. The name itself, 'Mayibuye', was an attempt to tap popular currents for commercial purposes. The political slogan 'Mayibuye Afrika' had been popular since the early part of the century, but came into vogue particularly when it was adopted as the slogan of the Defiance Campaign of 1952. *Bantu World* borrowed the connotations of the phrase (community solidarity, freedom, equality, hope) but emptied it of its content. There was nothing remotely political about the 'Mayibuye' supplement. Its pages were *Zonk/Drum* clones, filled with gangster stories, soccer and boxing ('King of the Ring'), two pages of domestic features for women ('Woman's World'), puzzles, a Junior World for children, a page of answers to readers' queries and a comic strip called 'Tim Tyler's Luck' which dealt with the adventures of white men in tropical Africa. Its back four pages were devoted entirely to sport, usually minor sports like inter-school matches. But 'Mayibuye' was a failure and closed down after less than two years.³ Caught between its traditional elite readership and the township proletariat, it could satisfy neither. Its brand of journalism retained much of the old caution and sobriety and lacked the verve and imagination of its competitors. The women's pages, designed to attract 'female market' advertising, were ahead of their time and failed to earn sufficient revenue.

Also in 1952, *Bantu World* invested in an important new piece of machinery:

The selling price of the paper remained at 3d and a Klischograph (a mechanical engraving machine) was purchased for £2 700 in order to reduce block making costs.⁴

That *Bantu World* was willing to spend so much money on a picture-making machine, despite its financial difficulties, indicated a major change in attitude. The paper had never before shown much interest in pictures — they had appeared infrequently and were invariably of indifferent quality. In a paper aimed at an educated elite whose status was closely tied up to its literacy, pictures were, if anything, a liability. But now the potential audience was different and *Bantu World* was learning its lessons from *Zonk*.⁵

In 1954 there was more concern about the circulation problem. This time the remedy was managerial — the distribution system was overhauled and tightened

² Harrison, op cit, p21.

³ It was scrapped in early 1955.

⁴ Harrison, op cit, p21.

⁵ Certainly, the *Zonk* people thought so. Editor John Lee told me: 'We started to make the *Bantu World* wake up. It became a decent newspaper.' (Interview, op cit).

up. The results were gratifying, and by October, sales had risen to 34 000.⁶

Meanwhile, even bigger changes were afoot — *Bantu World* was about to shed its old elitest image entirely, and (at least so far as readers were concerned), quite without warning. The editorial content and display style were abruptly 'jazzed up'. Headlines were inflated in size. Crime, soccer and witchcraft became staple fare. Foreign news stopped dominating the front pages, to be replaced by local stories, more often than not about crime: 'YOUNG TERROR OF SOPHIATOWN' or 'STOMACH SLIT OPEN'.

But some resistance to the changes was evident in the pages of the paper, particularly in the weekly column written by the editor, Dr J M Nhlapo. Despite the *Drum*-derived snappy title, 'LISTEN TO ME!', the content was straight out of the old *Bantu World* — didactic, verbose, even pompous, the personal soapbox of a 'Man of Learning' putting his erudition on display, as in this example of one-upmanship:

Let me quote the words of George C Bastion, who used to be on the staff of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, a large paper which I used to read regularly when I was in Chicago. He was a lecturer in news editing at the Medill School of Journalism of Northwestern University, one of the many seats of higher learning I visited in the United States ...⁷

The column was also used to propagate the anti-communist Christian fundamentalism of the Moral Rearmament Association; the benefits of sound character and good manners; the need for patience rather than activism. Nhlapo, the senior black journalist on the paper, was attempting to perpetuate the old, elitist journal of ideas even as his masters edged ever closer to the *Golden City Post* model. Ultimately, their commercial philosophy would win.

A comparison between two front pages, one from 1952, the other from 1954, makes the change clearer:

	JANUARY 12 1952	JULY 24 1954
LEAD	Advisory boards appoint committee to consider bills	People shocked by train fare increase
2nd	King will spend holiday in Union	Death stabbing at drinking party
3rd	The questions parents ask: Where must my child go?	Excited crowds see crack teams draw

⁶ Harrison, op cit, p22.

⁷ *Bantu World*, July 17, 1954. For a more detailed discussion of Nhlapo's editorship, see Heather Hughes, *Dr J M Nhlapo and Editorship of the Bantu World, 1953-7*. (Paper presented to the History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978)

BANTU WORLD

Highway Safety Training

५

**Mendi Service
at Milner Park**

**"No Fall Asleep In Every Man And Woman Who
Believes In Your God and nothing Else May Have To Do."**

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY
AFRICANS HELD MEMORIAL
SERVICES FOR THE KING

Talata Ya Kosi Gama

[illegible]

SECRET

**Marche Police
Experiment
Works Well**

The headline type schedule was changed from a mixture of rather dated looking serif and slab-serif faces to sans-serifs and slab-serifs. Both editorial content and visual display were, like everything else *Bantu World* did at the time, a compromise, somewhere between highbrow elitism and mass-market 'pop0.

In February 1955, a tabloid Monday edition was started, partly as an experimental precursor to a daily paper; partly as an attempt at mass-market journalism, exploiting popular interest in sport by carrying comprehensive weekend results. Once again, the project was a dismal failure. Readers were not going to wait for Monday to read sporting results which the *Golden City Post*, started that same year, could provide on Sunday. Sales were a mere 12 000, advertising a losing 30 percent and — unexpectedly — the tabloid cut into the sales of the Saturday edition.⁸

The same year, editorial received another springcleaning. Harrison does not explain why a second shake-up was needed so soon after the first, but it is not difficult to hazard a guess as to the reason — the instant success of *Golden City Post*. In June, the Argus company seconded Mr D Brecht from the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* to reorganise the editorial department. He was followed in October by a much more senior Argus man, Mr Albert Fick, an assistant editor of the *Star*, who was made Managing Editor of *Bantu World*. In Harrison's words: 'Mr Fick succeeded in making a number of improvements and by the end of the year the weekend edition of the *Bantu World* was back to its original figure of 42 000'.

The two consultants did indeed shake up the paper — between them they led readers a merry dance as the paper switched style, content and marketing strategy almost from month to month. The Brecht policy was a return to something akin to the old *Bantu World* — serious, but not highbrow, usually competent but seldom exciting, dignified in appearance, but with just enough trivial titillation (buried on inside pages) to hold more frivolous readers. For the first time, the paper began to show some signs of technical proficiency of the kind pioneered by its rivals. Long-winded prose appeared less often, replaced by pithier writing and shorter sentences to the approved Fleet Street style. The typography was improved and made slightly quieter. The slab-serifs were thrown out and the front-page lead headline went back to a serif face, with the other headlines in sans. The content stressed local news, but 'serious' items such as politics returned to the front pages. Crime, largely culled from court cases, was demoted to the inside pages. A typical front page indicates the difference: the brashness had gone, but the paper had not returned to its forties fixation with foreign 'white' news:

⁸ Harrison, op cit, p22.

JULY 9 1955

LEAD	Factories bring prosperity to African nation
2nd	Women lock church against a priest
3rd	Newclare tenants due for removal
4th	School pickets get heavy fine
5th	Professor Dent conducts separate inquiry

The philosophy appeared to be to favour 'good news'. The rather eccentric lead story above, for example, seemed a deliberate attempt at avoiding controversy at all costs:

A river of prosperity has been flowing towards the African nation over the past decade. It has all been made possible by the growth of industry. Factories have sprung up everywhere. Africans have streamed into the cities to take up jobs in those factories.⁹

This version of *Bantu World* lasted a mere two months. The August 13 edition displayed a new nameplate, with the word 'Bantu' made smaller and the word 'World' made bigger, evidently in anticipation of the paper's change of name to *World* in January of the following year. Indeed, as the year progressed, the word 'Bantu' got smaller and smaller. The layout remained similar in general appearance, but the typography became bolder. Pictures, which had never been a *Bantu World* forte, became larger and more prominently placed. But the stress on good news as a sales strategy continued, with front page headlines like 'BASOTHO CROWN PRINCE FLIES HOME ON HOLIDAY'.¹⁰

Bantu World's brief career as a Press Father Christmas, dispensing good cheer whatever the season, ended abruptly with the arrival of Mr Fick in October. Mr Fick was evidently a man of the orthodox journalistic school, who believed that the bad news appealed more than the good. His first front page displayed a gruesome picture of a battered corpse under the somewhat eccentric headline 'HELLO, I'M GOING TO MURDER YOU!'.¹¹ Crime pictures became more frequent, varied occasionally with more cheerful subject matter. Witchcraft, a topic for which the old, 'civilised' *Bantu World* reserved its most heartfelt derision, became a serious matter. In *Golden City Post* fashion, superstition was exploited as a crowd-puller. A description of a feared multiple-murderer of the period, for example:

ZULU FEAR OF AXE-KILLER'S EVIL SPIRIT

In buses, trains and other forms of conveyance, there has been much talk about the im-

⁹ *Bantu World*, July 9, 1955.

¹⁰ A reference to the fifties royal darling, Prince Bereng, mentioned earlier. The main picture showed the first negro judge in the US. (August 13, 1955).

pending execution of Elifasi Msomi. There is a growing feeling that the spirit of Msomi might return to Zululand and continue the axe murders ...¹¹

It was not only the spirit of Msomi that lived on — the spirit of the old *Bantu World* had not been laid to rest either. For notice how little the prose-style of this *Golden City Post* imitation resembled the real product. The idiomatic language, township slang and jazz-rhythm are altogether missing. And *Golden City Post* would never have foisted Latinisms like 'conveyance' and 'impending' upon its readers. This schizoid pattern would become more marked as the year progressed.

On the one hand, headlines grew bigger than ever before and crime stories became frequent, including a special series of long features on famous murder trials by a white writer, Benjamin Bennet.¹² On the other hand, the old caution and enthusiasm for the embellishments of education lingered on. In November a series of parallel articles in English and Sotho began, the aim being to improve readers' mastery of both. The editorials retained their piety intact — for example, they warned readers not to get drunk and to go to church instead.

On January 7, 1956, *Bantu World* died and the first issue of *World* appeared. To begin with, it marked a return to the quietness of old. The huge masthead was scrapped and replaced by one in deliberately old-fashioned blackletter style,¹³ not dissimilar to that of *The Star*. Blackletters were popular in the fifties among newspapers which wished to emphasise their long-standing traditions and unwavering integrity — even where their claims to the former were spurious and their claims to the latter debatable. The typography was sobered up and made distinctly old-fashioned, with the same 'formula layout' repeated week after week. Pictures, which had enjoyed a brief renaissance, were sized right down. 'Mayibuye', with its sport, crime and fashion, vanished altogether. The proportion of space devoted to the vernacular was cut — it now appeared in scattered stories on the front page only. The only 'pop' item was an expanded comics page which included 'Little Iodine' (white); 'Pete the Tramp' (white); and 'Roy Rogers' (white). 'Little Iodine' survived a mere three weeks before being replaced by 'Rita and the Mau Mau Gang'.

The changes attracted the attention of the trade journal *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, which ran an interview with Albert Fick:

Since Mr Fick moved to the *World* from *The Star* at the end of last year, he has introduced several changes and new features which are resulting in increased circulation. The format of the midweek edition has been changed from tabloid to broadsheet in line with the weekend edition; Sapa's service gives a world coverage on matters of interest to Africans; makeup and presentation have been considerably improved; news coverage is now better and new features have been added.¹⁴

¹¹ October 8, 1955.

¹² Bennet was one of few whites to get a byline in *Bantu World*. His series, largely about white criminals, was actually written for the *Argus* newspapers and later bought by Bantu Press.

¹³ A blackletter is a typeface modelled on mediaeval manuscript writing.

¹⁴ March 1956.

AMERICAN OWNED
BLOODLINE
TWINSON
PUBLISHED BY THE
WORLD NEWSPAPER

Week-end
Edition

The World

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING AFRICAN NEWSPAPER
WITH ENGLISH AND ZULU EDITIONS
PUBLISHED DAILY, MAY 12, 1956

EARN THE MONEY
IN THE WORLD

Price
6d

TSOTSI GANGSTERS STRIKE TERROR IN REEF 'TOWNSHIPS'

A rash of terror attacks of unknown identity is sweeping the township of Johannesburg, forcing thousands of living things to flee the area in which just lately had a million Africans live.

Each month, waves of people are brutally shot, stabbed or beaten to death. People are so terrified that they dare not go to the Police, which is known to be present in all districts, impossible for the police to bring the criminals to justice.

More pay needed to stop crime wave

A local newspaper of the township of Johannesburg has reported that the crime wave is continuing to spread in the area.

The newspaper, which is known as the "World", has reported that the crime wave is continuing to spread in the area.

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Tiny tots came to broadcast



Big crowd chased Police — say witnesses

These tiny tots came to broadcast the first of a series of programmes on the life of the township of Johannesburg. The programme was broadcast on the radio and was watched by a large number of people.

Shooting terror strikes southern townships of Johannesburg

A shooting terror attack has struck the township of Johannesburg, forcing thousands of people to flee the area. The attack was carried out by a group of unknown identity.

MAN CUT IN THREE BY A TRAIN

Within the space of a few minutes, a man was cut in three by a train. The man was walking across the tracks when the train arrived. The train was moving at a high speed.

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After the name-change — World in 1956. The appearance is still sober, with old-fashioned blackletter nameplate and toned-down typography, but the contents all deal with crime

With this latest 'new-look', *World's* changes became less frequent and less dramatic, although the gradual movement was steadily 'downmarket'. By 1958, the paper had evidently found a formula which proprietors believed could straddle the gap between the traditional elite readership and the potential working class audience. That formula, similar to one pioneered in Britain by the *Daily Telegraph*, was to offer the titillation of a mass-market paper under the guise of up-market dignity. The typography was sober and old-fashioned, but a modern-looking index ran across the top of the page under the masthead (replaced later in the year by a *Post*-like line of self-promotional 'puffs').¹⁵ Despite the sombre wrapping, the contents were garish:

MAN KILLED, SHOPS BURNED IN NIGHT OF TERROR
Big Gang Alliance Rumoured; Fear now Stalks Alexandra¹⁶

The pictures were bigger and had returned to the crime theme — a surfeit of mutilated corpses sprawled across the front pages. Witchcraft was played up — a new book on the subject was given prominent review, the subject even made the occasional front page lead: 'DURBAN MAN CLAIMS HE CAN HANDLE TIKOLOSHE'.¹⁷ The sports page remained indifferent in quality, with a preference for elite sports like golf and tennis and titbits about minor local events.

But this formula did not last either. In October 1958, another white specialist was brought in from outside. Paul Irwin, later to become well-known as a boxing writer, was appointed editor-in-chief of all Bantu Press publications. Irwin, who had by then had thirty-five years experience in journalism, including twenty in Fleet Street and ten in South Africa (as sports editor, then night editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*), was once again a big 'catch' for Bantu Press.¹⁸ Under his general direction, *World* confronted *Golden City Post* head-on in its own territory for the first time. By mid-1959, he had turned the paper into a black *News of the World*, with an unashamedly 'down-market' front page thundering out at readers with giant gothic banner headlines. The inside pages were not quite so garish and retained the old serif type faces. But pictures dominated the pages, particularly pictures of crime. Page four was turned into a permanent picture page, in *Zonk* fashion. The magazine similarities went further — the paper now appeared in two sections, one with news, and one with entertainment features, focussing on consumer-goods related lifestyles and escapism. Even Cecil Eprile must have approved of his rival's choice of front page leads:

¹⁵ Later in the year, the puffs were run in red, the first use of colour in *World*.

¹⁶ *World*, January 4, 1958.

¹⁷ January 11, 1958.

¹⁸ *Selling Age*, December 1958 and *Press, Advertising and Radio Review*, October 1958.

STOUTER JAMES AND DAUGHTER
 THE LONDON LITERATURE
 LITERATURE - BUT STOUTER
 THE LONDON LITERATURE
 LITERATURE - BUT STOUTER
 THE LONDON LITERATURE
 LITERATURE - BUT STOUTER

The World

Price 4d.

Weekend Edition

SOUTH AFRICAN LEADING AFRICAN NEWSPAPER
 WEEK ENDING SATURDAY APRIL 24 1960

\$70
 WEEKLY THE LONDON LITERATURE
 LITERATURE - BUT STOUTER
 THE LONDON LITERATURE
 LITERATURE - BUT STOUTER
 THE LONDON LITERATURE
 LITERATURE - BUT STOUTER

RAND COURT REMANDS NORAH MOSIAKOKO

EX-BEAUTY QUEENIS ON SEX CHARGE

GLAMOUR-GIRL, NORAH MOSIAKOKO, THE LOVELY 21-YEAR-OLD PHOTOGRAPHY MODEL AND MANNEQUIN WHO WON THE FIRST "MISS JOHANNESBURG" SLUTTY QUEEN CONTEST, HAS BEEN CHARGED UNDER THE IMMORALITY ACT.

She came to country with "Miss World" when she was kidnapped in 1957 - the same year that she came second in the "Miss South Africa" contest. She was also runner-up for the national title in 1956.

Arrested with her two sisters, Mosiakoko, 21, and her sister, Mary, 19, she was taken to the Johannesburg Police Station.

The charges against Mosiakoko are that she had an illicit relationship with a white man, a charge which she denies.

The charges against Mary are that she had an illicit relationship with a white man, a charge which she also denies.

The charges against the two sisters are that they had an illicit relationship with a white man, a charge which they also deny.

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The charges against the two sisters are that they had an illicit relationship with a white man, a charge which they also deny.

The World A NEW DEAL FOR THE AFRICAN

AFRICANS generally will support most of the proposals made by Mr. Paul Sauer, the Minister of Lands, in his "New deal" speech at Johannesburg.

He has called for a new deal for the African people, a new deal which will give them the right to own land, to work the land, and to share the fruits of the land.

And there will be wide support for Mr. Sauer's appeal for consultation of top level with Africans.

Even his proposal to begin the sale of European land to Africans will be welcomed by

the African people.

She was once kidnapped



NORA MOSIAKOKO, LOVELY GLAMOUR GIRL AND MODEL

WHITE DOCTOR IS FATHER OF MY CHILD¹⁹
THE AMAZING STORY OF A MAN THOUGHT TO BE DEAD. TWO HANGED
FOR HIS MURDER BUT HE IS STILL ALIVE²⁰
EX-BEAUTY QUEEN ON SEX-CHARGE²¹

During August 1960, a dramatic build-up began in the paper, announcing a 'new-look' *World* to be ushered in the following month. Readers, who must have become accustomed to a rapid turnover in 'new-look' *Worlds* by then, may have been puzzled by the hullabaloo. The reason, they would discover some time later, was that the paper was going up in price by fifty percent — from 4d to 6d. The change was announced with Ike Brooks-like hyperbole:

Bigger and better than ever. That's what we hope you will say about this first issue of the new-look *World* ... we hope you like it. We hope you will agree that this is a big development in African journalism ...²²

The new look was less dramatic than some previous — and less loudly proclaimed — changes, but it did finally set the seal on the paper's commitment to a mass-market strategy. The paper now included a tabloid 'magazine' supplement which concentrated on sport and comic strips. The main section now had a gossip column, closer in tone to the acid society columns of London newspapers than the gushing adulation of the forties *Bantu World*. The women's page, in hibernation since the 'Mayibuye' days, returned, as did 'Junior World'. An extra column of vernacular news was provided, as was a 'doctor advises' column.

Two years later came the next metamorphosis — Maggs' daily *World*. An announcement in *Selling Age* made it clear that 'bright' journalism had finally replaced the old solemnity:

'My company has been planning to launch the first African daily newspaper for years,' said Col. Maggs ... 'A few years ago, a daily newspaper would probably have been shortlived. But there has been an astonishing spread of the reading habit among the African people and today the African newspaper market is of increasing importance. The new daily has been planned to be a bright, informative daily with a comprehensive service of international and African news and pictures as well as news of events in this country' ... Col. Maggs said he thought a price of 1 cent would be a special attraction to the Africans who were among South Africa's keenest readers of newspapers.²³

In the pages of *World* itself, the big event was preceded by several weeks of

- 19 *World*, January 16, 1960. Note the use of the more direct first-person style, borrowed from *Golden City Post*. A year earlier, *World* would have headlined the same story: 'WHITE DOCTOR IS FATHER OF BLACK WOMAN'S CHILD'.
- 20 February 6, 1960.
- 21 April 30, 1960.
- 22 September 3, 1960. There was also an oblique swipe at *Golden City Post*: 'Don't forget that 16 big pages and an 8 page magazine equals 40 pages of any South African tabloid paper — white or non-White. And what non-White paper gives you 40 pages for sixpence?'
- 23 *Selling Age*, December, 1961.

literary drum-rolling: 'A milestone in the history of publishing and the advance of the African people'. Yet, when it appeared, it must have been something of a disappointment to readers. It was very thin — only eight pages, or two sheets. It was more serious than the weekend edition, with more foreign news:

INDONESIA POISED FOR ATTACK ON DUTCH
INDIA NOT TO ATTACK PAKISTAN
TWO DIE IN BEER BRAWL²⁴

The seriousness of the content should not be mistaken for another switch in marketing strategy, back to the elite readership. It is more likely to have been due to a shortage of the funds necessary to maintain a large enough staff to provide general news coverage on a day-by-day basis. Instead, the paper was forced to rely heavily on the wire-services, which were dominated by white, foreign and party political news. The result: the paper appeared more 'upmarket' than it may have intended to be. Adding to the general seriousness was a column by the new editor, M Moerane, strongly reminiscent of Nhlapo's similarly wordy elitism ten years earlier:

Our thesis is that we have before us the opportunity of seeing the flowering of the miracle that has brought us all together.²⁵

The daily *World* only began to match *Golden City Post* in the blood 'n guts department after 1966, when editorial direction of the paper was taken over by Mr Charles Still, a shrewd tabloid journalist very much like Eprile who sold the paper on sport and crime. A sample page one lead from the Stills era: 'CRIPPLE ATE DOLL'S LIVER — COURT TOLD'.²⁶ By the mid-sixties, it required a practised eye to tell *Post* from *World*. Paver's didactic legacy was well and truly buried; the very kind of paper he most feared was now firmly established.

From 1952 to 1962, *World* had been in a state of near-perpetual indecision, trying one strategy and then another, in a desperate bid to regain its market leadership. The content and style of the paper were dictated by the painful reality of wavering circulation and advertising figures. This was a paper that most dearly wanted to be cautious, sober and elitist, yet was forced by market reality to attempt the bold raunchiness of its successors. The result: a newspaper of much confusion and little conviction. The newspaper company which had been first to cajole advertisers into advertising to blacks, became the victim of advertising's own need for larger audiences than the old, elitist *Bantu World* could supply.

²⁴ *World*, January 8, 1962.

²⁵ *Ibid.* The conflict between the mass-audience marketing strategy of the managers and Moerane's own cautious didacticism led to his firing some years later.

²⁶ *World*, June 21, 1968. Also interview with Charles Still, 1976.

THE WORLD
Daily Edition

INTERNATIONAL PRISONERS WELCOMING

GENERAL LACROSSE RECORD
 ACTION TIME MIGHTY FOR
 BATTLE OF THE
 INJECTO
 ALL ACTION MIGHTY
 BATTLE OF THE

MONDAY JANUARY 8, 1962

Price 1 cent

"We demand our Rights" - Sukarno

Sunday Morning.—Indonesian today continued its massive build up of troops and naval forces for the Government conquest of Dutch West New Guinea, including the dispatch of an Armoured to Port Moresby and the mobilization of all people between the ages of 15 and 20 in the Netherlands area.

to a future Saturday. From
last Saturday night a heavy
rain. We don't want to stop
the train. We will wait for
the next opportunity. There
will be a meeting at night.

RESEARCH OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
1955-1956
RESEARCH OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
1955-1956
RESEARCH OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
1955-1956

The undersigned hereby certifies that the above is a true and correct copy of the original document as the same appears in the records of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Washington, D.C.

[illegible]

CONFIDENTIAL

Thant told: 'don't come'

Answer: Asking if it necessary to know if there was
wages by representation of two. Therefore pulled
money out of the bank.

PREACHERS DEATH

The company said that the order refers to their business with the government and not to the company's other work.

Bomb Attack on Sukarno

Whisper about subject
Theory: A well-organized
about the people they presented
Sullivan, an informant, had
been, since they were and
working in.

TWO DIE IN BEER BRAWL

PARSONVILLE, SPENCE—Two automobiles were seen flying through the air and crashing into the ground during the explosion.

India not in attack Pakistan

DEATH

Yesterday the police of New York City announced the death of a young man, Howard C. Rosenberg, 21, who was shot in the chest in the Bronx. The police said that the victim was a member of the Rosenberg family, which is well known in the city. The police also said that the victim was a member of the Rosenberg family, which is well known in the city.

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

A glance at a front page from a 1949 *Bantu World* (sober typography, slightly pompous prose style, earnest subject matter) and one from *Golden City Post* of a decade later (screeching typography, one-of-the-boys prose style, titillating subject matter) makes the point with indisputable clarity: in the space of ten years, the aims, priorities and methods of the black Press changed out of all recognition. The cause of the upheaval was pressure upon publishers to fit their products to a mould shaped less by the preferences of readers than by the requirements of marketing.

It is true enough that newspapers choose their contents to suit their audiences. But audiences do not spontaneously create themselves — they have to be consciously selected to some specific purpose. One of the factors which created the mass-readership of the fifties was the spread of literacy. But an ability to read does not in itself, attract entrepreneurs willing to supply reading matter. Far more important was the need of consumer goods manufacturers for widened markets, including, for the first time, working class blacks. Advertising's interest in black consumers never reached the promised substantial proportions, but this did not lessen the pressure — indeed, the very scarcity of advertising actually increased competition.

The change in the structure of the Press was from issue-orientated journals of opinion and of record aimed at a narrow elite, to audience-orientated journals of entertainment aimed at a general readership, partly petty bourgeois, partly proletarian. There was a shift in style towards easily accessible subject matter, simpler prose styles and more dramatic photography and presentation. An ideology of media professionalism arose, which stressed technical skills, often borrowed from the British Press model. The black Press came under the control of technocrats, largely hired from white papers for their professional abilities rather than any familiarity with black affairs.

But if the style was new, the subject matter was not. Its themes had long been manifest among township blacks of whatever class. Like the advertising industry discussed in the first section, the Press incorporated existing images and transformed them to its own ends. These themes corresponded closely to those chosen by the advertising industry: the ambiguities of class, as represented in stories about blacks who had 'made it'; the American model, by now almost emptied of its undertones of resistance; racial ambiguities, as expressed in stories about ethnic mix-ups; and crime, partly for didactic reasons, partly as a form of folklore. And, in particular, the Press reinforced a commodity-based image of the paraphernalia of 'civilisation': shoes, hats, suits, cosmetics and skin lighteners. For all the differences in style between the old and new Press, the core theme had not changed at all: black 'advancement' within a laissez faire model of society.

There's a reason!

OUR OWN OUR ONLY PAPER

Handwritten text, mostly illegible due to blurring and low contrast. Visible fragments include:

Handwritten text, mostly illegible due to blurring and low contrast. Visible fragments include:

UNION GRAMOPHONE SALOONS
 21 HARRISON ST., JOHANNESBURG.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 2, 1964

Price 2c

World champion Lenny Buss

Anthony "Doc" James Martin

LIONEL ROSE, the world bantam weight champion, will not make any decision with regard to fighting the South African champion, Anthony "Blue Jaguar" Morosi, until after his world title fight against Rubin Olivares in Los Angeles. The fight takes place this month.

An approach had been made to Ruse through his manager, Jack Renne, for the Australian Aborigine to meet Morda. This followed the South African nationalist victory over the Afrikaners.

The only thing that I have in line for Lionel is the title fight in Los Angeles," said Mr. Renshaw. "I won't make any plans until that fight is over."

REVEAL

I can now reveal that
these sources in Germany
have been working on
a scheme to start the Rome
March World War
which commenced in
Germany, before the end
of the war.

Had the scheme involved
any it would have been the
first all-black one in
the country.

The fact of this case is that the defendant was not a member of the Communist Party at the time of the alleged conspiracy. The defendant was not a member of the Communist Party at the time of the alleged conspiracy. The defendant was not a member of the Communist Party at the time of the alleged conspiracy.

(Continued on back)

A FRIGHTENED YOUNG woman interrupted a court session to inform her worth-while mother and her father and they found were being released with slacks, a poncho and a bulwer's knife. In Orange County Court was told yesterday.

[illegible]

Miss Hwang was said to be a young girl
that on the evening of 4/23/50
was with her
late father and her mother.

Mr. Kuntz, who has twice
said "good" for her

ATTACKED

SURVIVED

... .. Ten

Man is burned to death — P12 **Ten knifed in Vaal 'war': P12**

Anthony Bros.

Free

cameras with



36" Las Vegas
Automatic Ektachrome
\$99.00 Deposit \$10.00

Write for free catalogue

Carnie's

CONCESSIONS • AMUSEMENTS

300 MARSHALL ST., JERSEY CITY, N.J. 07310

World in 1969 under Charles Stills — a far cry from the Selope Thema days. World's contribution to the tabloid genre was to regularly put sport on the front pages. Eprile had generally confined sport to the back of the paper, and led on crime stories

6 The market place and the hidden censorship

During the most turbulent period in modern black political life, the black Press opted for innocuous escapism. From the post-war period until the clampdown on major black political organisations in the early sixties, there was a surge in grass-roots activism. Yet, one of the most remarkable characteristics of the black Press during this era was how skimpily it reflected the range of political life. Indeed, it is in some measure the fault of the commercial Press that the politics of the period were so little known that it became necessary for historians to 're-research' it.

Summarised briefly, the period was characterised by large numbers of localised and national protests focussed on specific grievances, and by re-alignments in black political groupings. In 1946, there was a major strike of mine workers on the Witwatersrand, bloodily suppressed by the State.¹ In 1948, with the National Party's rise to power, pass laws were tightened, with police implementing regulations in an 'increasingly punitive fashion'.² In 1950 a tram boycott led to bloody battles with police in the Western Areas townships, and a May Day stayaway, mainly organised by the Communist Party, led to further clashes across the country and a number of deaths.³ 1952 saw the start of the months'-long Defiance Campaign, influenced by Gandhist passive-resistance philosophy, in which thousands of people broke minor apartheid restrictions en masse, then chose jail sentences rather than pay fines.⁴ The Government decision to 'clear' Sophiatown and the subsequent demolition of shacks and houses lasted several years and sparked a variety of resistance strategies.⁵ The implementation of Bantu Education in 1955 similarly spawned nation-wide protests, in particular, boycotts by parents in the Eastern Cape and on the East Rand.⁶

There were numerous bus boycotts following fare increases, when commuters

¹ Dan O'Meara, *The 1946 Mine Workers' Strike and the Political Economy of South Africa*.
² Tom Lodge, *The Creation of a Mass Movement, Strikes and Defiance, 1950-2*, pp2,3.

³ Ibid, p2.

⁴ Ibid, pp14,15.

⁵ Lodge, *The Destruction of Sophiatown*, op cit.

⁶ See also Lodge, *The Parents' Schools Boycott*.

chose to walk miles each day rather than pay the new rates, and a number of boycotts of consumer goods, often in sympathy with strikes at factories. There were new political alignments, in particular the Congress Alliance in which African, coloured, Indian and white groups formed a loose coalition; and the Africans-only Pan-Africanist Congress, formed in 1959. Bannings and arrests of African political leaders became more common, culminating in the mammoth Treason Trial which ran from 1956 to 1961. An anti-pass campaign organised by the PAC in 1960 turned sour, resulting in the incidents now known as 'Sharpeville' and 'Langa'. A State of Emergency was declared, and soon after that, the major black political groups were finally banned.

Black politics are not the topic of this study. What is important here, is why the commercial Press became 'blinded' to what was going on around it. The most appropriate way to study the problem would be an incident-by-incident analysis of the period, comparing commercial Press coverage with that of other sources, for example, the radical Press. Since a study of this kind would require a dissertation of its own, this section will, of necessity, be confined to a less ambitious task: an examination of how the specifically 'commercial' aspects of the commercial Press tended to narrow its ideological range. The theme, then, is the market's role as an invisible censor.

Popular conspiracy theory has it, that the power of advertisers over editorial is a direct one — they exert immediate pressure on editors to withdraw stories which annoy them. There are, indeed, instances of this, but they are isolated ones. Journalism is a profession which glories in its own myths and one of the most potent is that of the solitary reporter doing battle against institutionalised corruption. No matter how cynical they may profess to be, the perception most journalists have of themselves as seekers after truth is so ingrained, that crude attempts at arm twisting are more likely to provoke a backlash.

The advertising industry, in turn, does not perceive newspaper functions in social or political terms. To an advertiser, a newspaper is simply a vehicle for carrying a message to a set of potential consumers. The advertisers understand their role largely in narrow economic terms, expressed in a technical jargon which cloaks the potential political implications of their decisions. The successes and failures of publications appear to be determined entirely by the natural interplay of market forces, which are assumed to be neutral. What neither the advertisers nor the publishers seem to notice — or care about — is that the market consistently discriminates against certain categories of publications.

Business magazines, catering to the A and B market only, tend to do well even with small circulations. The *Financial Mail* bulges with advertising and makes enormous profits year after year, despite a circulation that seldom moves above the mid-twenty thousand range. The antithesis of a business journal, a paper aimed at the bottom end of the market, is likely to have to battle for advertising, because its headline readership must be enormous before it will appeal to advertisers. *Golden*

City Post, with a circulation ten times that of the *Financial Mail*, attracted substantially less advertising revenue. This tendency to prefer up-market readers has political implications. It means that the market will favour publications aimed at those who have most to gain from the status quo, and discriminate against those who have most to gain from radical changes.

Advertisers prefer publications with clearly defined audiences which correspond to their own target markets. A woman's magazine, for example, offering an editorial diet of fashion, beauty and cooking, guarantees advertisers the right kind of readers with the right kind of consumer-goods related interests. A feminist magazine will struggle — few advertisers will waste money on readers who scorn cosmetics and the dictates of fashion. The result is, that the shelves of bookstores overflow with magazines which present women in terms of motherhood, domestic efficiency and dress sense. Those feminist magazines which do manage to exist, are available only at specialist shops.

Advertisers, then, prefer publications which deliver large audiences with above-average incomes and well-defined consumer-goods related 'life-styles'. The views expressed in publications which conform to these criteria tend to fall within the prevailing consensus. Publications with 'fringe' views will invariably fail to deliver the appropriate kinds of audiences.

The case of black newspapers from the post-war period onwards demonstrates how marketing priorities serve to narrow ideological ranges. Although advertisers prefer 'elite' publications, the older black newspapers, despite their undisguised elitism, were unsatisfactory advertising vehicles. The problem with the black elite was that it was not exclusive enough. Measured against the ranking system used by the marketing trade, (see previous section for details) it was merely lower-middle class. Unable to get sufficient 'quality' (ie, wealth) from the African market, advertisers insisted on 'quantity' (ie, mass readerships). Publishers were compelled to aim for audience breadth, crossing class, age and geographical barriers to attract every possible reader. This in itself had political implications. The older black newspapers were aimed at a relatively homogeneous group, the black petty bourgeoisie, whose members had common interests, grievances and aspirations. The Press was able to act as an articulator of their position, working through and crystallising ideological positions appropriate to this class at particular times. But the mass-market black Press had to aim across class divisions at fragmented, even antagonistic groups. The result was that instead of taking up an activist role as ideologue for a particular group, it adopted the more passivist stance of blurring over differences, giving preference to widely legitimised values. It spoke the language of consensus and avoided the contentious.

There was a second contradiction in the 'audiences' of the mass-market newspapers. As discussed in the previous section, there were two audiences, one of advertisers and one of readers, and it was the publisher's role to strike a workable balance between the two. The task was not an enviable one: the interests of

£22,000,000 EXTRA A YEAR !

THE FACTS :

This press cutting authoritatively emphasises the enormous importance of South Africa's Non-European market for nationally advertised goods.

THE DIFFICULTIES :

To reach these potential consumers every advertiser must decide on choice of media AND language to use in presentation.

THE SOLUTION :

The advertiser must choose a medium offering a large circulation* with national coverage.

The "GUARDIAN" is exclusively in ENGLISH. ALL its Non-European readers (estimated at 85 per cent. of total sales) read and understand English! This means no translation worries—no extra production costs.

THE NEWSPAPER WHICH IS A MUST ON ALL PLANNED SCHEDULES AIMED AT THIS MARKET.

GUARDIAN

GUARDIAN NEWSPAPERS (PTY), LTD.

to the
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ole
will
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of
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Big Release of Money

Spending Power of non-European

For every two non-Europeans employed in factories before the war there were three to-day, and for every £2 they drew in wages they were drawing £6 to-day, he said. It meant that from the non-European release of £22,000,000 a year for buying food and other necessities that could not be bought before the war.

Mr. Brooke devoted most of his address to a discussion of the Union's prosperity.

Extract from an address by Mr. R. S. Brooke, M.P. for Mowbray, at the Mowbray Town Hall.—CAPE TIMES, 19 MAY, 1948.

* "GUARDIAN" IS A MEMBER OF THE AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS

* The Independent Weekly

Even the communist publication, Guardian, had to compete for the shekels of capitalist advertising. This is one of a series of promotional advertisements which appeared in the trade journal Selling in 1948. Note that no mention is made of the newspaper's political

manufacturing capital and of largely working class township readers have little in common. The schizoid nature of the problem went still further. As advertisers, it was in the interests of manufacturers that newspapers maximised audiences by whatever means ... including, perhaps, grassroots politics. But as employers of labour, it was in the interests of the self-same manufacturers that newspapers contributed to a 'stable' social environment — by not 'inciting' labour, for example. Faced with all these contradictory requirements, it is not altogether astonishing that newspapers opted for avoiding the politically contentious, focussing on those issues which would interest readers without antagonising advertisers.

The increasing concentration of the Press also played a part in de-politicising newspapers. The early, African-owned, Press was run by people at the very centre of political activity. The post- 1932, white-owned, Press was run by men who, although substantially less politically involved than their predecessors, had at least a personal interest in black affairs. But as the smaller groups, particularly Bantu Press, were swallowed by larger corporations, this personal involvement waned. The large corporations were staffed by technical specialists, hired for their professional expertise rather than their knowledge of black politics. Black publications were only a small section of larger publishing empires, their performances measured in revenue-producing rather than political terms.

Since it was industry which supplied the advertising 'lifeblood' of publishing, media proprietors were anxious to stress the respectability of their publications. This applied particularly to the black Press, aimed, after all, at the potential antagonists of capital. Publishers of black newspapers and magazines found it necessary to formulate specific political philosophies which they emphasised to advertisers. These philosophies, the core of which was a commitment to political moderation, came in two parts: a didactic one, encouraging black education and economic advancement, and a social stability one, encouraging moderation and respect for the due processes of the law. For example, this was the philosophy of the Bantu Press, as expressed in the advertising pamphlet *The Approach to Bantu Press Advertising*:

... We are very truly serving South Africa by promoting racial harmony, without which there can be neither industrial peace nor commercial progress.⁷

And as expressed in an advertising handout issued by *Zonk*:

Zonk provides the African with exactly the type of publication in pictorial form that he requires, with friendly guidance in citizenship, road safety, social welfare, health, hygiene, sport, entertainment, etc. It fosters in him a pride of race through pride in his own national magazine ... *Zonk* is a completely NON- POLITICAL publication and its staff consists of people genuinely interested in the welfare of the African.⁸

⁷ Op cit, p1.

⁸ Advertising rate card for 1956. Only the Bailey group did not spell out such a 'welfare' philosophy for advertisers; its handouts and public statements concentrated on marketing matters only.



DOLLY RATHENE
— Zonk's first cover girl —
later to become Africa's top
Radio, Stage and Film Star.



MIRIAM MAKEBA
featured and publicised by ZONK,
which has contributed to her
present fame as T.V. and night-
club star in America.



ABIGAIL KUBEKA
graced the cover of ZONK
and shortly after was
chosen as "STAR" of
King Kong.

ZONK considers its first duty to be the welfare of our African people and so has always given its readers articles and features specially designed to help them towards a happy future.

●
ZONK is the first pictorial ever published solely for the non-white population in the whole of the Union, others followed, but remember, ZONK was the first to realise and provide for the needs of our non-white people.

●
Through ZONK's hard work we have today non-whites in specialized jobs, i.e. press photographers, advertising models, journalists, stage and film artists and market research workers.

●
ZONK is, we believe, the only non-white newspaper to provide a bursary for non-white students. ZONK spent hundreds of pounds this way for the education at Fort Hare University of Oswald Makunga (who is now a Bachelor of Science) and Miss Winnie Ntlokwano.

●
ZONK has something for the whole family — Children, Teenagers and Parents.

A Zonk publicity hand-out emphasises the magazine's image as an advocate of black progress within the economic system

Advertisers could breathe freely — as long as the Press was locked into the market system, there would be no revolution encouraged in the back rooms.

Any brief discussion of the politics of the various black mass-media, particularly during so incident-ridden a period as the fifties and early sixties, is bound to be sketchy. The rest of this section will, therefore, be confined to a brief overview of the politics of each publication, followed by a discussion of the way they reported on the only political incident that was covered in all black publications — Sharpeville.

Bantu Press: The politics of moderation

The politics of the Bantu Press organisation were defined in economic terms, specifically the kind that could appeal to advertisers. In their promotional leaflet *Black Gold*, the Bantu Press publishers stressed their middle-of-the-road policy:

The Bantu Press believes that the Bantu peoples will fulfill an important economic destiny in the course of their parallel development with the advance of the modern world. The Bantu Press at all times guides and counsels the Bantu people on lines of sane and steady progress within the commercial system of today and in co-operation with constitutional authority. The Bantu Press presents the news as fully and factually as possible — and as truthfully — avoiding sensationalism and distortion. The Bantu Press is not a propaganda medium, but an organ of education, enlightenment and appreciation. Its readers trust it — and they trust the advertising which appears in it.¹

Progress meant increasing integration with the market system. Sane progress meant progress within the restraints of South African capitalism. The Bantu Press was essentially offering to help foster a black middle class, one which would buy consumer goods and have a stake in the system.

It would be a mistake to assume that the conservatism of the Bantu Press was entirely due to its white ownership. Paver's company was in fact continuing a philosophy that dated back to the beginnings of black journalism. Eric Rosenthal, writing in the late forties, could point approvingly to a long history of conservatism in the black Press:

Generally speaking, the tone of politics advocated in Bantu papers is responsible and restrained. This is not universally true, but it is the rule. The tradition was established by Tengo Jabavu and his contemporaries and has survived to this day. The African is inherently conservative and though he sets forth many grievances, his arguments are those of reason, not force ...²

¹ *Black Gold*, op cit, p6.

² Rosenthal, op cit p24.

There was in fact a second tradition in the black Press, one of radicalism, as espoused by papers like *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, *Workers Unity*, *Umvikeli-Thebi* and *Guardian*, and by writers like Jordan Ngubane, Nelson Mandela and Govan Mbeki.³ But it suited advocates of the white-run Press to shrug it off as a minor sideline. What the white Press owners had done was to ally themselves with the conservative black faction, producing papers which advocated a cautious middle-class reformism that both could believe in. Paver himself insists that there was, by and large, mutual agreement:

I didn't interfere with editorial. I had the same approach that as long as the chaps realised that flying for the moon wasn't going to get them anywhere — that it had to be done slowly-slowly catchee monkee and there had to be moderation. They had to do the editorials so the policy was really a co-operative one, we used to have meetings and when I had new reporters I'd brief them ...

I suppose there was a lot of goodwill and faith and there wasn't any nonsense ... In our dealings in the office there wasn't any master and servant basis because we'd sit down and have tea together.⁴

This harmony was largely, but not entirely, true. Until the end of the war years, Paver himself was general overseer on editorial matters. This was, of necessity, a loose arrangement, in part because the bulk of his responsibilities had to do with managerial matters, in part because day-to-day communication with the more far-flung papers, particularly those in the High Commission territories, was often impossible.⁵ But after the war, he appointed a former Director of Native Education in Bechuanaland, Mr H J E Dumbrell, as a general editorial director for the group. Dumbrell's appointment coincided with a clash between the Bantu Press head office and the relatively radical editor of the Maseru paper *Mochochonono*, Mr NM Tlale. Tlale attacked the British Resident Commissioner of Basutoland, who sued for libel and, following several anxious meetings with the Attorney General, Bantu Press summoned Tlale to Johannesburg. As Harrison describes the meeting:

The editor, Mr N M Tlale, was summoned to Johannesburg and his brother requested to be present. As a result of this meeting, Mr N M Tlale was stripped of all his hitherto complete authority in editorial matters and the late Mr H J E Dumbrell ... joined the Bantu Press and was given full editorial control.⁶

Dumbrell's role was soon expanded to include other High Commission papers as well. It appears that his job was to act as an unofficial censor on behalf of the British colonial administration, for whom he continued working:

³ For more details of the above, see Switzers, op cit.

⁴ Paver interview, op cit.

⁵ Swaziland and Basutoland were 'difficult to contact by phone'. (Ibid.)

⁶ Harrison, op cit, p5.

H J E Dumbrell, who at that time was undertaking special duties for the Swaziland Government, in addition to keeping a watchful eye on the Press' High Commission territory publications, was given the further task of 'vetting' all editorial content.⁷

A second white appointment was also made, that of Mr K E L Hooper, who was made 'Editorial Advisor' to all Bantu Press publications.⁸ St Leger confirms that this was a response to 'restiveness' on the part of some black editors.⁹ Meanwhile, Dumbrell's power also increased and in September 1956, he was put in day-to-day charge of *Bantu World* and *Imvo*.¹⁰

Such restiveness should not lead one to imagine that the editors were frustrated radicals under a reactionary white yoke. *Bantu World's* longest serving black editor, Richard Seloape Thema, was an important 'moderate' black politician of his era. He was one of the key black councillors on the government-sponsored Native Representative Council, appointed Transvaal and Orange Free State representative in 1937.¹¹ In his later years he was leader of the conservative 'Africanist' faction in the ANC and opposed the 1952 Defiance Campaign in a speech which argued that 'co-operating with Indians is like a dying man hanging onto a shark'.¹² The conservative bloc received substantial coverage in *Bantu World*, which, Lodge has argued, was out of all proportion to its actual influence.¹³ Thema's successor, Dr J M Nhlapo, was almost as conservative, although he preferred calls for unity in the ANC to Thema's deliberate divisiveness. Also a politician, Nhlapo had been a member of the ANC executive in the organisation's conservative mid-forties period. A deeply religious man, he was involved in the Christian Council of South Africa, Moral Rearmament and the AME schools.¹⁴

The kind of politics espoused by *Bantu World* were, not surprisingly, cautious. It was pro-business and anti-strikes; enthusiastic about industrial progress and passionately anti-communist. The paper's moderation ensured Paver's cordial relationship with Smuts (discussed earlier) at whose specific request the Bantu Press published a pictorial souvenir of the Royal Tour of 1947.¹⁵ Although the

⁷ Ibid, p13. The Tlaes resented the presence of Mr Dumbrell, and a complicated series of personal and political clashes over the next few years culminated in the severing of the Basutoland connection in May 1953. Harrison, pp13,14 and Couzens, *World*, p13.

⁸ Ibid, p13.

⁹ Various incidents reported in the Minute Books indicated that there was, at one time, a restiveness by editors (African and white) at the general editorial policy laid upon them and this appears to have been the reason behind the appointment of white editorial directors to oversee the work of African editors. (Op cit, p107).

¹⁰ Press Commission, Annexure VII, op cit, p35.

¹¹ 'Report of the Proceedings of the Native Representative Council', 1946, p1. *Official Year Book of the Union of South Africa*, 1947, Chapter XI, p5.

¹² Speech to the 1951 congress, reported by Anthony Sampson in *Drumbeat*, op cit, p132.

¹³ *The Creation of a Mass Movement*, op cit, p8

¹⁴ Hughes, op cit, pp2,3,4.

¹⁵ Harrison, op cit, p14.

paper ostensibly supported the ANC, it was as often critical as supportive. The paper reserved its greatest scorn for anything smacking of radicalism, particularly when it involved non-African movements. Brian Bunting, in a 1959 polemic against the white-owned black Press, described *World* as:

... chauvinistic in its approach to the racial question, opposes the ANC policy of co-operation with other racial groups, continually tries to make out that the ANC is 'bossed' by COD and is bitterly anti-Communist ... *World* opposes every ANC campaign and supports the 'opposition' in Congress whether they are called Africanists or Nationalists or what have you ...¹⁶

Bantu World's unease with black leaders was late in starting, coinciding with the increase in Congress militancy in the late forties. *Bantu World* was less worried about what black political groups were saying, than about what they were doing to back up their words. The paper joined in the general chorus against Bantu Education, for example, but denounced the ANC-backed boycott as a 'muddle' soon after it had begun.¹⁷ The paper rejected the Congress Alliance and the subsequent Congress of the People in 1955, which it deliberately underplayed. Heather Hughes notes that the Durban July received better coverage than the Congress, which took place the same week.¹⁸ That same year, the ANC retaliated by expelling the *Bantu World* reporter from its congress, because 'our meeting cannot start in the presence of a hostile Press'.¹⁹

World's split with the ANC, then, was not because the paper had changed, but because it refused to change. While black politics became increasingly militant as the fifties progressed, the paper remained wedded to the politics of the thirties and forties.

Zonk: The invisible politics

To its publishers, the fundamental guiding principle of *Zonk* magazine was its neutrality. There was a ban on all political articles:

The rules are simple. All material must be non-political and it must show what the African of today is doing ... crime and ignorance, dirt and bad living are out of date. The

¹⁶ Bunting, *The Story Behind the Bantu Press*, pp2,3.

¹⁷ Lodge points out that the paper ended up on the same side as Dr Verwoerd, and for similar reasons. (*The Parents' Schools Boycotts*, op cit, p11.)

¹⁸ Hughes, op cit, p9.

¹⁹ Bunting, op cit. *Bantu World* made no mention of the expulsion, but admitted to a 'dispute'. It reported that the ANC accused the paper of publicising Congress failures and ignoring achievements. (*Bantu World*, December 24, 1955).

ZONK!

Non-Political ★ Photomagazine ★ 6d. Monthly

For the African Nations

ZONK is the first good class pictorial monthly specifically published for the African population. ZONK contains photofeatures and photonews exclusively about Africans and their activities. The subjects are based on the results of constant research in locations and compounds throughout the Union, the Protectorates, and the Rhodesias.

OBJECTS OF ZONK

ZONK provides the African with EXACTLY the type of publication in pictorial form that he requires, with friendly guidance in citizenship, road safety, social welfare, health, hygiene, sport, entertainment, etc. It fosters in him a pride of race through pride in his own national magazine "ZONK."

PROPAGANDA VALUE

YOUR ADVERTISEMENT in ZONK reaches right into the heart of the enormous African market, and your sales message is assured of reception. We are in a position to advise you on the best method of presenting this sales message to the African and shall be happy to do so at all times.

POLICY

ZONK is a completely NON-POLITICAL publication and its staff consists of people genuinely interested in the welfare of the African.

"ZONK" UNQUESTIONABLY THE LEADER IN THE AFRICAN FIELD.

Front page of the Zonk advertising rate card, urging advertisers to exploit the potential of the African market

modern world is for modern men — and women — and of them it can be said that 'all their ways are sweetness and all their paths are light'.¹

Yet although *Zonk*, for most of its career, was scrupulous about avoiding overt political discussion, the magazine was never neutral. Its stress on modernity was a political emphasis — *Zonk* wanted an urban black middle-class, one which could ally itself with whites and contribute its increased buying power to economic prosperity. If *Zonk* itself did not realise this, others did:

I don't think Verwoerd liked us very much. Once Marius (Jooste) told me that the Minister thought we were a bit too modern. I didn't ask what that was supposed to mean. I just said: 'You just tell the Minister that as long as I own the magazine, I'll look to the contents.'²

To a man like Verwoerd, a magazine which stressed the bright city lights when he wanted blacks back in the reserves was too liberal. To others, it was just the opposite. In a period when the ANC claimed a membership of 100 000, when thousands of blacks allowed themselves to be arrested during the Defiance Campaign, when mass removals, bus strikes, demonstrations, bannings and riots occurred month after month, *Zonk's* decision to ignore politics was tantamount to implicit acceptance of the status quo.

We wanted the African to forget about politics. That would come later. We were not Communist Party or ANC. We just wanted the African to improve his status.³

Zonk may genuinely have wanted a better dispensation for Africans. But because it offered no analysis of the problems, let alone any suggestions for solutions, its sentiments were meaningless. The world as *Zonk* pictured it was one of entertainment and fun with the majority of people working hard at their jobs in the knowledge that they would one day be rewarded; while a small and greedy minority indulged in violent and irrational crime.

African political leaders were all but ignored. Although articles on prominent local black personalities were regular features, politicians were never included. Dr A B Xuma, conservative former ANC president, occasionally made it into the magazine, but only in non-political contexts like opening a recital of negro spirituals⁴ or presenting 'safe driver' awards to PUTCO employees.⁵ Albert Luthuli

¹ *Zonk*, October 1950. The first issue ran this letter to the editor: '... I must congratulate you on your abstention from all political matter publication and I, personally, am quite bored with politics ...'

Since it is most unusual for publications to receive spontaneous letters of congratulation from the public before their first issue appears, it seems plausible that it was written by a member of staff and reflects the magazine's 'official' attitude. (*Zonk*, August, 1949).

² Brooks interview op cit.

³ Ibid

⁴ *Zonk*, August, 1949

⁵ *Zonk*, November, 1955. In a decade of frequent bus strikes, PUTCO received regular complimentary write-ups.

appeared in *Zonk* only after his political career was over, as the first South African to win a Nobel Prize. In contrast to the eulogies other black personalities received in the magazine, Luthuli's write-up was low-keyed and distant, listing only his many arrests and bannings.⁶

When political events were discussed at all, they tended to be understood in non-political contexts. When William Tubman was elected president of Liberia for the second time, *Zonk's* article focussed on the festivities rather than the politics:

Nightfall was a time for feasting. From special platforms set up in the capital, an awesome display of fireworks burst into the African sky ...⁷

The same kind of ostensibly politics-free article could be used to legitimise National Party activities. *Zonk* covered the first opening of the Transkei Legislative Assembly in 1964 which initiated the Bantustan independence programme. By choosing to give the event prominent coverage and by choosing to present it uncritically, *Zonk* was, in effect, condoning a controversial policy. The opening was presented as a high-society event at which prominent black personalities had an opportunity to mingle on an equal footing with the most important whites in the land:

The grand old man of African herbalism ... Khotso Sethsuntso, recently attended the official opening of the Transkei Legislative Assembly in Umtata, where he was greeted by the State President, Mr C R Swart, as well as by Chief Minister Kaizer Matanzima and members of his cabinet ...⁸

If *Zonk* was willing to cover official events, it was less willing to cover 'unofficial' political disturbances. The entire Defiance Campaign period was ignored, as were demonstrations, petitions, marches and the Treason Trial. But in 1955, Lee did go out to cover the Evaton bus strike. He presented the controversy as a light picture story, a series of tongue-in-cheek captions and accompanying pictures of the absurd ways people coped with the transport shortage: an old woman sitting in the parcel carrier of a bicycle; a dignified old man in a white suit riding a donkey; a man climbing into a car boot. The text skirted the political controversies surrounding the strike and adopted a gently ribbing tone:

THOSE EVATON TRANSPORT BLUES

Damn these shoes — they pinch and I'm two miles from the station. I'll miss that confounded train for sure — and the boss'll blow his top when I tell him the same old story; 'Sorry I'm late in! It's the bus strike, sir!'⁹

⁶ *Zonk*, December, 1961

⁷ *Zonk*, November, 1952

⁸ *Zonk*, July, 1964

⁹ *Zonk*, December, 1955

But *Zonk* was quite capable of political comment on events outside South Africa. A major story on the Mau Mau, for example, which, in a magazine that ostensibly shied away from politics, should never have appeared:

In Kenya, the fight against Mau-Mau terrorists goes on with increasing intensity. The authorities and the great majority of Africans are determined to wipe out the murderers whose knives and bullets strike down innocent people, irrespective of creed and colour, who do not co-operate with them ... the terrorists are learning that it is dangerous to go against law and order, but it is even more dangerous to go against the wishes of their own people ...¹⁰

Zonk was identifying the wishes of the people with the interests of their rulers. Where *Zonk* did break out of its self-imposed political silence, it showed itself cautiously conservative.

But these politically related articles were rare. In the main, *Zonk* was as good as its promise and — at least while Brooks was still in charge — kept away from overt politics. But a change did come over the magazine in its dying months under Perskor control. Four issues away from the end, a new monthly column called 'AFRICA REPORT' was begun. It advertised itself as 'the news behind the news', an in-depth look at Africa through the eyes of a 'famous political writer' pen-named 'MENTOR'. The implication was that Mentor might be black, although the writing was unmistakably that of a white government apologist.

The thrust of the articles was to applaud the principles of self-determination and ethnic pride. The discussion began by enthusing over black attempts to wrestle freedom from the British colonialists, linking this to the National Party's battle for a South African republic. No doubt, later articles would have brought in the then-new homelands policy as an example of self-determination, but *Zonk* died before that could happen. Mentor presented himself as a friend of blacks in their struggle against communism:

In most African states today, revolutionary forces are at work, in some cases encouraged in secret by communists or communist-trained agents. These were the people who upset the centuries-old rule of the Sultan of Zanzibar recently. The same unrest is evident in Kenya and Tanganyika ...¹¹

National Party policy, far from being antipathetic to African aspirations, could be seen as the forerunner of the desire for independence from colonialism:

From my earliest youth, I have always had an intangible but very deep feeling for our great continent and its peoples. A moment in history which has always stirred me to the core is the story of how a delegation of seven Afrikaner leaders ... had gone to Europe in 1919 to plead for freedom in South Africa ... This was the first historic statement of what

¹⁰ *Zonk*, September, 1954
¹¹ *Zonk*, April, 1964

IONK, JULY, 1964

23

AFRICA REPORT

What Mr. Nikita Khrushchev Came To Tell Africa COMMUNISM WILL DESTROY AFRICAN NATIONALISM



by
"Mentor"

"Mentor" is the pen-name of a famous political writer, broadcaster and author, and an acknowledged expert on African Affairs. His interesting and up to the minute commentaries will appear exclusively in IONK each month.

THE face of our continent of Africa is changing so rapidly that the map-makers of the world have, in sheer desperation, given up their attempts to keep pace with the changes. Before the end of this year — on October 24, to be precise — another new name will be added to the mounting new list of independent states in Africa. It is a beautiful name — Zambia — under which Northern Rhodesia will emerge as a sovereignly independent state and will take its place, as the 115th member of the United Nations, in that magnificent glampalace on the banks of the Hudson River in New York. We who belong to this continent, love it, and have to make our future in it, sincerely hope that

Zambia will live up to the promise of its lovely name and to the ideals which her first President, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, have laid out for her people.

Strong President

Dr. Kaunda's powers will be modelled more on those of the presidency of the United States of America than on the British system. There are broadly two types of republics and they are distinguished by what, in simple terms, called the "weak president" and the "strong president" systems. South Africa and India with many other republics, have the "weak president" system,

which means that their presidents, as heads of state, are, like the British monarchs, the symbol of the highest authority in the land. In these "weak president" republics, the real power vests in the office of the Prime Minister, and his government, ruling under a direct mandate from the people through a popularity-elected Parliament.

In South Africa, the President is, accordingly, the formal head of state, elevated above all practical politics, the symbolic personification of the republic. Freedom of the South African state. The power of real, practical government vests in the

Prime Minister, Dr. Verwoerd, and his Cabinet, just as the power of government over the self-ruling state of the Transvaal vests in the Chief Minister, Kainer Matanzima, and his Cabinet, ruling through his Parliament, under the formal authority of the President of the S.A. Republic.

Directly Elected

The best example of "strong president" republic is the United States of America. Here the President is directly elected by the people and is all powerful. He stands above Parliament and although most of his legislative and financial measures must receive Parliamentary approval, he personally never — or rarely — appears in his Parliament. In fact, the American President does not even appoint his Cabinet Ministers from the people's elected representatives in their Parliament.

The tendency in most African states has lately been towards strong president institutions. Dr. Kenneth Kaunda is now the uncontented dictator of Ghana where only one party is recognised. Dr. Kenneth Kaunda will have "strong president" powers in Zambia, but unlike Dr. Nkrumah he will still have Parliamentary government.

There is no doubt that Dr. Kaunda will assume the decisive power in Zambia in October this year as one of the most highly privileged African heads of state on our continent. The Northern Rhodesia which

he will inherit, is one of the best developed African states, exclusively due to European capital and skills. It enjoys a colonial income from copper, fly and large Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, if he is a wise and far-sighted ruler, has perhaps the brightest future of any African head of state in our Continent today.

Egypt's Aswan Dam

The second major event of the past month in Africa was the visit of the Soviet Russian Prime Minister, Mr. Nikita Khrushchev, to Egypt. He came primarily to open the huge Aswan Dam which Russian technicians have been building on the Nile with Russian troubles for President Nasser. Thus Aswan Dam, you will remember, caused one of the biggest crises of the post-war era. In 1956 Colonel Nasser who had then been in power for about four years, negotiated with the Americans for the billions of dollars needed to build his Aswan High Dam. The deal was virtually clinched

Continued on page 25

Zambia Conference in London



Dr. Kenneth Kaunda (fifth from left) Prime Minister of Northern Rhodesia, led the delegates to the independence conference held at Marlborough House, London, recently. Delegates in the picture are, left to right, Mr. M. M. Khamisa, Mr. J. K. Chirunga, Mr. A. N. L. Wina, Mr. M. M. Chona, Dr. Kaunda, Mr. S. M. Ka propro and Mr. E. M. K. Mubanda.

In Mentor's fourth and last report, he sided with African nationalism against communism

we all know today as the right of self-determination — the self-same right which brought independence to thirty-three African states ...

I close with the words of Dr Kwame Nkrumah himself: 'The problems of Africa must be solved in Africa by Africa'.¹²

Zonk began in the determination to remain neutral. But by failing to take a stand during a decade of high tension and conflict, it implicitly condoned the status quo. And in its dying months, under the control of a pro-apartheid publishing house, it was used unashamedly to propagate Government views.

Drum: Raising the fog of suspicion

Jim Bailey has never been the kind of publisher to leave his journalists alone and stick to looking after the accounts. His publishing business is his passion; he scrutinises every last detail of the news 'diary' and his constant stream of suggestions, complaints and demands has caused frequent clashes with employees.¹ The politics of his publications, therefore, are more due to him than anyone else. And as anyone would expect, those politics are eclectic. Bailey is a liberal in colour terms, but a social-Darwinist in economic terms; one who firmly believes in a survival-of-the-fittest market system. He is passionately individualist and deeply suspicious of collectivism. He sees history in terms of power struggles between competing social groups, no group necessarily more right or wrong than another. He is contemptuous of activism and collectivism. Yet he is capable of romantic sentimentality: 'I believed I was dealing with the soul of man, and able, in some impalpable way, to contribute to the societies of the future'.² He is anti-communist and believes in black assimilation into the capitalist system. He is capable of being passionately aroused by certain injustices and is as capable of pragmatism.

In 1952, he made a decision that was to rocket *Drum* to world fame — he decided to 'go political'. Much has been written about *Drum's* crusading years when, under the editorships of Anthony Sampson and Sylvester Stein, reporters like Henry 'Mr Drum' Nxumalo and Can Themba showed a courage and flair that still stand out today as landmarks in South African journalism. But behind all the romance lay a practical strategy. A major reason why *Drum* turned to politics is that it was suspected that politics would sell. As Sampson recounts in his book,

¹² *Zonk*, June, 1964. Mentor (note the symbolism of the name) received several complaining letters from readers who wanted to know why he condemned everything black Africa did.

¹ One ex-editor of *Drum* told me he considered it his chief function to shield the staff from the proprietor.

² Bailey, *The Genie*, op cit, p160.

Drumbeat, eighteen months after its launch the magazine faced two problems: its circulation was still below that of *Zonk*; and there was still a 'fog of suspicion between *Drum* and its readers and we were far from being accepted as a black paper'.

Drum's formula needed an ingredient that would dissolve black suspicions, and politics, which identified the magazine with black causes, seemed the solution. In one sense, the new policy succeeded — within a very short space of time, the magazine's sales pulled well ahead of *Zonk's*. But in another sense it failed — while advertising revenue did go up, it did not go up enough. White advertisers were keeping the new, more controversial magazine at arm's length⁴ and within a few years, *Drum's* enthusiasm for campaigning would wane.

One should not exaggerate the frequency with which political investigations appeared in *Drum*. Although many issues carried articles with political overtones, the magazine's reputation as a campaigning journal rests on just three stories, each of them carried in a March issue to 'celebrate' the magazine's birthday. Since the investigations have been described in detail by Sampson himself,⁵ they will be dealt with only briefly here.

The first, in March 1952, was an investigation of farm labour conditions in Bethal, which revealed that labourers were sent to Bethal against their will, beaten, underpaid and badly fed. Despite the fact that the revelations were not new,⁶ they caused an instant public furore. Several newspapers, including some foreign ones, followed up the story and the matter was raised in Parliament by Dr Verwoerd, who accused Bailey of reneging on an undertaking to refrain from politics which he had given when applying for his paper quota. The publicity did the magazine no harm — circulation rose to 60 000.⁷

3 *Drumbeat*, op cit, p37. Elsewhere in the book he says: 'Africans hated the 'white hand'. They suspected every African paper of being a white man's trick to keep them quiet.' (p21.)

4 While Sampson does not, unfortunately, discuss managerial problems, he does mention the impact the 'new' *Drum* had on whites in general. A woman at a northern suburbs party, for example, said to him: 'We used to buy *Drum* for our native boys. But it seems to have changed a lot now ...' (Ibid, p82.)

5 Ibid.

6 It is an interesting reflection on the Press attitude to 'fringe' sources that a scandal which had been widely publicised in radical papers for some years had to wait for exposure in a commercial publication before arousing controversy.

In 1947, Ruth First, Reverend Michael Scott and Gert Sibande, all of them associated with the left-wing publication *Guardian*, revealed that labourers in Bethal were subject to floggings and shootings and were housed in jail-like compounds guarded by vicious dogs. Various reports and pamphlets were published, culminating in a *New Age* pamphlet entitled *The Farm Labour Scandal*. The matter was also discussed at length at the 1947 ANC congress and calls were made for a commission of inquiry. None of this attracted much notice outside radical circles.

7 The reason for Nxumalo's interest in the problem was that he assisted Scott during the 1947 investigations. Bailey's interest, according to Sampson, was because he himself was a farmer 'with 50 African labourers'. (Sampson, *Drumbeat*, op cit p38.)

In March 1954, *Drum* ran a spectacular investigation of prison conditions. Again, the subject was not a new one — earlier in the year Manilal Gandhi, a key figure in the Congress Alliance, had published an account of his own prison experiences, which aroused heated debate in the letters column of the *Rand Daily Mail*.⁸ But what was remarkable about the *Drum* investigation was its insolent cheek. Photographer Jurgen Schadeberg coolly rigged up a camera on the roof of the hospital overlooking the Fort and Nxumalo, not satisfied with other people's second-hand accounts, arranged for his own arrest to get into the prison. Again, the story roused controversy, again the circulation rose, this time to 70 000 with an added 30 000 outside the country.⁹

The last, in March 1955, was an investigation of farm labour conditions at the notorious Snyman family farm in Harmonie, Northern Transvaal. Nxumalo, once again, put himself at considerable risk by actually signing on as a labourer and working on the farm. Circulation rose to 77 000.¹⁰

There was no denying that the three investigations ranked among the finest examples of South African investigative journalism. Although many investigations have involved personal risk, few have required the reporters to use themselves as 'guinea pigs' under dangerous circumstances, as Nxumalo did.

Sampson's lesser-known successor was a South African, Sylvester Stein, perhaps the most hot-headed of Bailey's editors. Where Sampson preferred the investigation, Stein's technique was to set up deliberately provocative stories that forced latent social tensions to the surface. A good example was his feature on whether Christians really did love their neighbours. He sent Can Themba to various white churches to attend Sunday services. Some churches accepted him, others did not — and some came close to lynching him. The story raised a storm in Parliament and politicised the Anglican church for the first time. The other lasting impression Stein left upon South African history was his discovery that the rules of the Olympic Games barred nations which discriminated against competitors on the grounds of race. This country's banning from the games stemmed indirectly from the *Drum* story.¹¹

But Bailey was not happy about Stein's militancy. The fifties marked the start of the National Party's campaign against the Press. Two commissions of inquiry had been appointed, one into the Press and one into undesirable literature. The radical papers *Guardian* and *Advance* had been banned, and *Drum* itself had several times

⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, 14-16 January 1954.

⁹ Figures according to Sampson, *Drumbeat*, op cit, p198.

¹⁰ Not everyone was impressed by the investigations. Bunting tartly observed of mine-magnate's son Bailey: '*Drum* has never printed an investigation of the conditions of African labourers on the mines.' (Bunting, op cit, p4.)

¹¹ Bailey, *The Genie*, op cit, p130.

been attacked in the Afrikaans Press and in Parliament.¹² Not surprisingly, Bailey suspected that he might be the next victim:

Sylvester, encouraged by his heady successes, intimated to me that another major feature or so from him would topple the Government. I thought, correctly, that if anyone was going to be toppled, it would be me and Sylvester. I believed we should take risks when there were important social changes to be made, but at no time should we trail our coat and invite trouble. I was sensitive to the fact that it was tempting for an editor to invite a clash with the Government, have his paper closed down and himself become a seven day hero to the liberal clique of the world. He could walk over the road to land another job; I would be left with the ruin of the paper, the debts and a fine staff to be sacked ...¹³

The problem with political stories was that, not only did they antagonise Afrikaner nationalists, they also antagonised 'moderate' English speakers. To supporters of the United Party, politics was a white domain. As Bailey recalls it:

For the European papers to be full of trenchant political articles, my white critics judged to be fair enough; but for the one African political article we carried in *Drum* we were accused of being exclusively political or downright subversive.¹⁴

Bailey's dilemma was that the very stories which brought him huge readerships were the ones which alienated the kind of people he most relied upon for advertising. While white liberal ideology could easily accommodate the idea of investigations into the inequities of apartheid, mainstream white opinion could not accept notions of black political involvement at all.

But it would be a mistake to treat *Drum* as an example of a potentially militant investigative journal pushed out of the political arena by white antipathy and the danger of State intervention. The magazine was never more than casually involved in politics. Says Sampson: 'We did not want *Drum* to become involved in political agitation or to develop into a narrow paper of protest.'¹⁵ Politics was simply another ingredient in the *Drum* formula, along with other subjects with grassroots appeal, like gangster stories, American heroes and fashion. Bailey himself became

¹² The Press commission was appointed in 1950, the undesirable publications commission was appointed in 1954. *Guardian* was banned in 1952, *Advance* in 1954. (Alex Hepple, *Press under Apartheid*, pp16-26.)

Bailey was attacked in the *Transvaler* in 1952, for example, for inciting race hatred (23 February) and in *Die Burger* in March 1957 for producing 'yellow reading matter for natives'.

¹³ Bailey, *The Genie*, op cit p131. The end came when Stein decided to run a cover picture of black Wimbledon tennis champion Althea Gibson embracing a white woman. Bailey said no. Stein resigned in a huff and gave his story to Sapa, accusing Bailey (quite unfairly) of being a racist. Stein subsequently went to Britain where he joined the labour paper *Reynold's News* and later worked on photo-magazines.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp125,126. It is not clear which 'political article' Bailey is referring to; certainly there was more than one.

¹⁵ *Drumbeat*, op cit, p52.

convinced that politics, far from appealing to working class readers, alienated them. A memo he wrote to his third editor, Tom Hopkinson, makes this clear:

We need much less serious and much less political stuff — certainly not more than one political article every month. We must concentrate on tough, down-to-earth hard-selling features ... its the strong sensational stories such as we have in *Post* - the 'Confessions of a Panga Man' and so on. That's what people really want — not the highbrow stuff.¹⁶

One suspects that Bailey may have foisted his own distaste for politics upon his readers. And his characterisation of the proletariat as non-sentient toughs hovers perilously close to the familiar white stereotype of blacks as the savages in the back yard.

Still, he had some examples of black antipathy to politics close at hand — in the shape of his own staff. Unlike the editors of *Bantu World*, *Drum's* staff kept well away from the political arena. Few were ANC members: their presence was seldom noted at Congress meetings. ANC militants reciprocated by treating them with some contempt, regarding them as drunken layabouts with no political commitment and less understanding. The *Drum* journalists bore a remarkable resemblance to the people they wrote about. They adored things American, whether clothes or cars or films and they enjoyed letting themselves be fussed over at northern suburbs cocktail parties. They were feted by foreign diplomats, the Americans in particular, who for reasons of their own, were eager to know what was going on in the townships.¹⁷

But with the rise of the PAC, founded in April 1959, the *Drum* group began to flirt with politics. The PAC's appeal lay in its mixture of political militancy and economic conservatism: it combined impatient calls for immediate action with a race-based analysis of society which was blind to divisions of class. It offered an African-ruled, capitalist South Africa, with the black elite — such as journalists — in command. Pan-Africanism was the political creed of the men whom the fifties black intellectual vanguard most admired — the nationalist leaders of emerging independent Africa: Nkrumah, Kaunda, Kenyatta. Like the *Drum* journalists, the PAC was resentful of leftwing white involvement in the Congress movement and suspicious of communism. The *Drum* journalists who became associated with the PAC included Lewis Nkosi, Benson Dyanti and Nat Nakasa. Mathew Nkoana was arrested along with Sobukwe during the PAC's 1960 anti-pass campaign and sentenced to 18 months imprisonment. And David Sibeko, later to become one of the most important PAC leaders in exile, started his career on *Drum*.

¹⁶ Hopkinson, *In the Fiery Continent*, op cit, p342.

¹⁷ These contacts prompted accusations that certain *Drum* journalists were in cahoots with British and American foreign intelligence. And the *Drum* journalists seemed eager to promote the idea: 'It just so happened,' (*Drum* reporter Lionel Morrison) claims, that the timing of (my) operations in Indonesia, Ghana and Peking coincided with major political upheaval ...' (Jacky Heyns in *The Beat of Drum*, op cit, p14.

FACES IN CONGRESS...

20 DAY-BLANKS gathering in session by police in Washington. CONGRESS KIDS are pushed between speeches. Scheduling on left means results.

NEW

As September proceeds, thousands of men come forward in place of having leaders.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has been named as the new leader of the SCLC. He is a Baptist minister from Montgomery, Alabama. He has been active in the civil rights movement since 1955. He is a powerful speaker and a strong leader. He is the son of a Baptist minister. He is a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He is a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He is a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is named as the new leader of the SCLC. He is a Baptist minister from Montgomery, Alabama. He has been active in the civil rights movement since 1955. He is a powerful speaker and a strong leader. He is the son of a Baptist minister. He is a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He is a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He is a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Political stories in Drum tended to stress personalities ahead of issues. Following banning of many black political leaders in the mid-fifties, Drum carried a feature on their successors in the ANC hierarchy, giving each a picture and a potted biography

The anti-communism of the PAC also made it appealing to white liberals, who shared the distrust of communist influence on the congress movement, but who had no significant power base of their own. One of those who showed a more than passing interest in the PAC was Tom Hopkinson,¹⁸ then editor of *Drum*, who once lectured ANC leaders Robert Resha, Nelson Mandela and Duma Nokwe on the virtues of their rivals:

'What these people (the PAC) argue is that the country today is like the veld in dry weather — all ready for a blaze. They say the people are angry and fed up, waiting for a lead. They believe they can get through to the people ... not by talk, but by example.'¹⁹

But despite all the unofficial links with the PAC, *Drum* was slow in warming to the new idea. The professional ideology it had adopted did not permit the intrusion of advocacy politics, and the militancy of the organisation placed it outside the framework of 'safe' political topics. A magazine which had already courted trouble by running investigations of apartheid injustices, could ill-afford the risk of siding with patently 'anti-white' activists. Besides, there were influential people in Bailey's organisation who disapproved of the PAC. The politically conservative Can Themba, the most senior black in the organisation and the first African to edit a Bailey newspaper (he edited the short-lived *Africa!* magazine),²⁰ was entrusted by Bailey with writing much of *Drum's* political material. In February 1958 for example, not long before the PAC was formed, he wrote a scathing attack on the Orlando branch of the ANC, hotbed of 'Africanist' opinions in the congress movement. He compared Potlako Leballo, later the PAC leader, with Prime Minister Hans Strydom, suggesting that the two shared rather similar kinds of racial chips. So cautious was *Drum's* 'official' attitude to the PAC that it was only in the few months before Sharpeville that it gave the movement prominent publicity, as the next section will discuss.

- 18 And, for a man so publicly scornful of political processes, Bailey himself revealed some soft spots for members of the PAC. It was on his initiative that the staffs of *Drum* and *Post* raised money to pay Nkoana's fine. The *Drum* memorial edition *The Beat of Drum*, assembled under Bailey's general guidance, contained a eulogy to David Sibeko, who had been mysteriously murdered a few months before the book appeared. It is most unusual for South African publications to dare carry any praise for active, senior members of outlawed movements.
- 19 *In the Fiery Continent*, op cit, p253. Hopkinson's attitude was ambivalent, however. He came to know Sobukwe quite well, but considered him at times 'strangely naive' and felt that any *Drum* article on the PAC would have to list 'some of the obvious objections'. (Ibid, p251).
- 20 The present *Drum* editor, Stan Motjuwadi, is also black. But despite being the magazine's longest-surviving staff member, he is essentially a figurehead editor; the real power is wielded by the managing editor, always a white.

Post: All bark and not much bite

Golden City Post's Cecil Eprile was the epitome of the new kind of mass-media journalist — technician first, ideologue second. He attended to those functions which his brand of journalism deemed most important — sub-editing, design, news coverage and production — leaving policy (what little 'policy' there was at *Post*) to Bailey.¹

At first glance, the politics of this paper were misleading. *Post's* attitude to politics was as fiercely combative as its attitude to everything else. The favourite technique was the screaming headline exhorting this or that political leader to follow a particular line. But underneath all the shouting, *Post* was more conservative than *Drum*. For all its prowess in exposing gangsters and racketeers, the paper showed little stomach for political investigation. There are no *Post* political investigations to match those of Nxumalo in *Drum*.

Like the other commercial black papers, *Post* generally backed the ANC old-guard. But it was quite capable of changing tack and giving coverage to rival factions. Indeed, *Post's* ideological switches could be maddeningly confusing to anyone mistakenly assuming that they were the product of conscious political strategy. But the reason had less to do with changes in editorial stance than with the structure of the paper's news selection criteria. Like any other news organisation, *Post* made sense of the apparent confusion of the world by slotting events into pre-determined (but not necessarily conscious) categories. This form of ideological work, discussed in more detail in the next section, was particularly evident at *Post*, where news selection was tied to a highly stylised, individualistic, 'human interest' interpretation of society.² Life was understood as a perpetually unfolding melodrama characterised in the main by clashes between individuals rather than antagonistic social forces. Universally identifiable human traits (for example, personal emotions) were emphasised over sectional antagonisms (for example, class). This, in turn, was the result of *Post's* cross-sectional readership, ranging from African labourers in Sophiatown to the Indian bourgeoisie in Natal.

To take one example, apartheid could be portrayed as an irrational ideology which resulted in great human suffering:

¹ There was a certain irony to Eprile's professed indifference to politics — office gossips were convinced he was a CIA agent. His decision to leave South Africa and join the American-funded Congress of Cultural Freedom, which Barton described to me as a 'CIA front organisation', did nothing to stop the rumours. (Barton interview, op cit.) A number of other staff members were also suspected of having intelligence links — among them, one Gordon Winter.

² This does not mean it was more prevalent at *Post* than on other papers; it just happened to be more blatant.

BOMBED? NO, BULLDOZED!

A golden moon shone over an appalling scene of human misery in the Mooiplaats Squatters Camp near Pretoria, where over 1 000 people, including a woman who gave birth three days before, slept in the open with their belongings ...³

Post's style was to aim straight for the gut — cerebral analysis was a secondary matter. While this example portrayed the enforcers of apartheid as villains and their victims as martyrs, the opposite view was equally tenable. This was its report of the first Treason Trial arrests, which focussed on the drama of the 'hunt' and on police efficiency and showed scant sympathy for the detained political leaders:

Operation 'T' for Treason — in which 140 men and women of all races from all parts of the country were caught in the dragnet, was carried out by the Special Branch Police with the aid of the South African Air Force, with the precision of a planned military manoeuvre ...⁴

Secrecy, efficiency, military code-names — all gripping, spy- novel material which totally overshadowed any focus on those arrested. The apparent ideological switches could move right across the political spectrum. The PAC, for example, of which *Post* was deeply suspicious, was arguably given more coverage in *Post* than anywhere else — because the PAC had a knack of providing the kind of news *Post* was looking for. *Post* gave such generous display to the start of the anti-pass campaign which culminated in Sharpeville, that readers may well have been misled into imagining that the paper backed the campaign wholeheartedly. The first paragraph was even set entirely in bold capitals to emphasise its point:

GO TO JAIL CALL

PAC calls for Congress support for war on passes

**THE PAN AFRICANIST CAMPAIGN WILL CALL FOR EVERY MAN TO
LEAVE HIS PASS AT HOME, MARCH TO THE NEAREST POLICE STATION
AND SURRENDER HIMSELF.⁵**

But note what it is that interests *Post* most about the campaign: the directness of the call upon 'EVERY MAN' (including the reader or the reader's father, brother or husband); the element of danger and self-sacrifice; and the atmosphere of pending battle. Less than a month later, an editorial made quite plain *Post's* belief that the PAC plans had gone quite far enough:

The Pan Africanists have yet to convince THINKING PEOPLE that they will do more than make a bang ... instead of throwing out challenges to the Congresses, the Pan-Africanists should ask themselves if it would not be more effective to throw in their lot

³ *Post*, February 14 1960.

⁴ *Ibid.*, December 9 1956.

⁵ *Ibid.*, February 21 1960.

— on this one occasion — with the Bishop's committee of 14 responsible organisations which is organising a less dramatic but carefully planned campaign against the pass laws.⁶

Post, like *Bantu World* or even *Drum* preferred caution to activism. And though its views were timid, they were never timidly expressed. The paper particularly favoured a technique Eprile may have picked up from Arthur Barlow's *Daily Express* (discussed in a previous section) of issuing demands to world leaders.⁷ *Post* lectured Dr Verwoerd on more than one occasion,⁸ and Harold Macmillan and Dag Hammarskjöld were 'spoken at', too. One campaign, against left-wing influences in the ANC, caused particular controversy:

WE SAY the official ANC leadership must answer these allegations by many people in order to justify their claims to be the only true voice of the people.

1 That they are too greatly influenced by left-wing groups.

2 That they have shown weakness and confusion of policy in such blunders as the Three-Day strike that didn't come off.

3 That they have failed to take Our Public and Our Press fully into their confidence on these issues ...⁹

Brian Bunting's indignant response to this was: 'What colossal cheek! So Mr Bailey, the millionaire, and Mr Eprile, the man behind the scenes at *Post*, and Mr Can Themba, the assistant editor, are issuing ultimatums to the ANC. 'We' demand explanations! The ANC must account to 'us'.'¹⁰

Conclusion

During the forties, relationships between the ANC and the commercial Press could not have been cosier — men like Selope Thema and Nhlapo even held senior positions in both organisations. What prompted the split in the fifties was that the ANC changed, while the politics of the Press never moved out of the past. The increasing militancy of the ANC, its ever-closer ties to radical organisations, many of them non-African, alarmed the commercial Press. It remained wedded to the politics of moderation, middle class values and discussion rather than demonstration. For all the differences in style and tone between a *Golden City Post* feature written by Can Themba and a *Bantu World* column by JM Nhlapo, they advocated the same black advancement within a laissez faire system and despised the same demons —

⁶ Ibid, March 1960.

⁷ The *Express* was in the habit of lecturing Hitler, Mussolini and various local politicians who incurred its wrath. (Information from Charles Bloomberg, op cit).

⁸ For example, an article urging him not to expel children who boycotted schools during a Bantu Education protest in 1955: 'STRAIGHT TALK TO DR VERWOERD: DON'T DO IT!' (*Post*, May 1 1955).

⁹ Ibid, November 16 1958.

¹⁰ Bunting, op cit, p5.

communism and political militancy. Similarly, although certain political clashes did occur, there was a surprising degree of consensus over political matters between white Press proprietors and black editors. They shared equivalent middle class values and fears of working-class militancy.

Much of the blandness of the commercial newspapers could be ascribed to the need to aim across class-barriers to achieve high circulations. Those issues which might have aroused antagonisms between different groups of readers (for example, radical politics), were avoided. Instead, there was a preference for themes which were universally understood - for example, interpersonal conflicts, the family, and the emotions. The lack of homogeneity among readers inhibited 'advocacy politics' except over widely acceptable issues. This in turn prevented the newspapers from ever becoming ideological innovators — they were forced always to follow in the path of the most popular.

To understand how this worked in detail, it is necessary to concentrate next upon a single incident and follow each publication's interpretation of it in turn. I have chosen Sharpeville, partly because it is one of the very rare political events covered by all the Press (even the non-political *Zonk*) and partly because, as I shall argue, it is an example of the media bestowing 'significance' upon an event.

7 The Press in action: Life as a melodrama

Sharpeville was neither the most brutal, nor the most unexpected, nor the most significant event of its era. It prompted not a single permanent reform in the apartheid laws. More spectacular demonstrations had been organised before and would be organised again. It was not the first time shots were fired at unarmed black demonstrators and it would not be the last.

Several other incidents during the forties and fifties were comparable to Sharpeville in levels of violence, yet have been largely forgotten by history. Sixty thousand blacks were involved in a mine strike in 1946, for example, when armed police took punitive action over several days, resulting in thousands of injuries and twelve deaths. But the 1946 strike is barely remembered outside academic circles.¹ In 1953, police forced an East London crowd from a church prayer meeting with drawn bayonets, then drove them at gunpoint back to the location. Shooting continued throughout the night. Eight blacks died. History has forgotten the incident, although some people still remember that two white nuns were killed in a riot which erupted as a result of this fracas.² And there were other such incidents which flared up out of the boycotts and demonstrations that marked black politics during the fifties. Most of these were little publicised; there may be others that were altogether unreported.

But the public reaction to Sharpeville was very different. Only days after the gunfire had ended, the name of this obscure Transvaal township was on the front pages of newspapers all over the world. People to whom South Africa was only a name, now knew one fact about the country — South Africa was where Sharpeville was and Sharpeville was the newest addition to the world's mythology of horror.

¹ O' Meara, *The 1946 Strike*, op cit, describes it as a 'relatively unexamined watershed event'.
² Lodge, *The Creation of a Mass Movement*, op cit, pp29,30.

stories. The BBC commentator, Richard Dimbleby, summed up the views of his contemporaries when he used the harshest metaphor he could find to describe the shootings: he compared them to the Nazi genocides in Guernica and Lidice.

A better reason, I shall argue, is that Sharpeville had its importance bestowed upon it by the media, particularly the foreign media. Foreign journalists latched onto it because of its relationship to other, then-current stories and because of the kind of pictures and eyewitness accounts that were available. The local Press down-played Sharpeville at first and only followed the foreign lead later in the week.

Previous sections of this study have examined the place of the mass media in the market economy, their ownership and the dominant images they propagated. This section looks at the way in which organisational, professional and technical factors which result from the commercial nature of the media, influence the manner in which issues are reported.

1 Sharpeville through white eyes

Sharpeville occurred on March 21, a Monday. The day of the week is significant. For in 1960 there were still no black daily newspapers and black readers had to wait until Saturday to find out what the *World*³ had to say about the shootings, until Sunday for the *Golden City Post* and until the next month for *Zonk* and *Drum*. Between Monday and Saturday, black readers would have had to rely on white papers for their news, particularly the *Rand Daily Mail*, then under the editorship of its most liberal editor, Laurence Gandar. This section therefore begins with a brief discussion of the *Mail*.

Until 1956, the *Mail* had been a conservative newspaper, aimed at the white petty bourgeoisie, while its chief rival, the *Star*, was aimed at the bourgeoisie. The *Mail* was lagging behind the *Star* in circulation, and during the post-war period, this caused a drop in its advertising revenue, in particular its classified advertising. Gandar was appointed editor in 1957 (previously he was public relations officer for Anglo American) with the brief to give the paper a new image. His policy was to move the *Mail* upmarket, particularly in its politics, which became the most liberal of any white newspaper in the country, advocating unfettered black advancement

³ There was a midweek edition of *World*, but by 1960 its circulation had slumped so far that it was scrapped altogether in August of that year. On the assumption that the majority of *World* readers would not have seen the midweek edition, I have discounted it for the purposes of this section. (cf Harrison, op cit. pp24,25).

within a capitalist system.⁴ These ideas were not altogether unique for the time - they bore some resemblance to the views propagated by Ralph Horwitz in *Selling Age*, for example. The *Mail* became the first white paper to give black politics any consistent coverage, appointing an 'African Affairs Reporter', Benjamin Pogrand, in late 1958.⁵ Blacks were referred to as 'Africans' rather than 'Natives' and given the courtesy titles of 'Mr', 'Mrs' or 'Miss'.⁶ Not surprisingly, the paper attracted an increasing black readership, which was encouraged by some, like Gandar, who believed that black readers constituted the reading market of the future. But the attitude of the paper towards black readers was ambivalent, for there were some who feared that a black readership would dilute the paper's A, B and C income profile. As a result, the policy was pursued with more discretion than speed, and was more evident in the leaders than on the news pages.⁷

Despite the growth in the paper's liberal white and black readership, market survival meant aiming at the centre of its audience and, by and large, opting for widely-acceptable 'common-sense' values. The paper's news sections were dominated by much the same obsessions as other white papers of the time: the star syndrome, whether of the political, royal or Hollywood variety, human dramas and crime. With the exception of Pogrand's reports, news was defined in white, middle-class terms and blacks appeared only where their actions impinged upon white society (in crime or riot stories, for example). Photographs of blacks were virtually unknown.

Under the circumstances, it is not altogether surprising that Sharpeville took the *Mail* by surprise. This was despite the fact that the PAC did not skimp on publicity in the build-up to their anti-pass campaign, which was deliberately designed to undercut a rival demonstration by the ANC, planned for March 31. PAC meetings around the country hammered home the message: on March 21, all Africans were

4 As an editorial policy, it brought the *Mail* its finest years as a crusading, investigative newspaper. But as a marketing strategy, it was a disaster — the paper's traditional petty bourgeois readership became increasingly alienated and the circulation plunged from 125 000 in 1957 to 112 000 in 1962. (cf Gavin Stewart, *The Development of the Rand Daily Mail as an Intercultural Newspaper*, unpublished Honours thesis, UNISA 1980, particularly pp29, 30, 46.)

5 Ibid, p29.

6 By contrast, here is the *Star's* reaction to the *Mail* decision: 'If the *Star* continues to speak of 'Natives', it is not because we would deny to this section of the Non-Whites the dignity which our own correspondents and others associate with the term 'African'. It is because we have taken our stand on the official usage running through the terminology of the South African state ...' (January 3 1958).

7 Although space does not permit analysis of Gandar's case here, his is the classic example of commercial considerations 'censoring' an editor. His liberalism — extraordinarily daring for the time — alienated both advertisers and conservative readers. He unbalanced the paper's reader 'profile' by aiming at incompatible sections of the market, upmarket whites and mid-market blacks. He was eventually 'frozen out' of the paper in 1965. The paper's finances have never recovered from his legacy. (cf Stewart, op cit.)

to either burn their passes or leave them at home, then surrender to the police. The catchy slogan was: 'No bail, no defence, no fines'.

On March 19, two days before Sharpeville, the *Mail's* only mention of escalating black tensions was a filler on page two: 'RIOTS — WITNESSES JAILED'. On March 21, the morning of Sharpeville, readers would have had little reason to assume that this might be an historic day. The third story on the third page was the single hint of what was to come:

SARACENS USED IN RAND 'SHOW OF STRENGTH'
SIX Saracen armoured cars packed with policemen and firearms paraded through the streets of the African townships to the South West of Johannesburg yesterday morning ... The parade took place while meetings were being held in various parts of the townships to discuss the start of today's Pan Africanist Congress campaign aimed at the abolition of the pass laws ... The meetings were poorly attended ... A senior police officer said he was satisfied that the mere presence of the Saracens cooled tempers ...⁸

Although the story is about the Pan Africanist Congress, the expert quoted in the story is a policeman. The commonsense values of the *Mail's* readership would attach more credence to the opinions of a state official (our protector) than to those of a black radical (threat to society). Since black politics fell outside the range of what was understood as rational political activity, the meetings were understood in terms of emotional outbursts, ('the Saracens cooled tempers') rather than the product of historical circumstances. Some idea of the white Press' perspective on black politics at the time is provided by former *Drum* editor, Tom Hopkinson:

Most whites had heard vaguely of the ANC and regarded its activities as a joke — black men playing at politics. But this PAC they had never even heard of. On the Sunday, (the day before Sharpeville) I rang the editor of a 'white' newspaper and asked him what he thought of the position and whether his staff were expecting anything to happen; he said that all was quiet and his staff fully expected it to remain so.⁹

In a sense, the white editor's claim proved not entirely untrue. As it happened, there were only two places in the country where any significant mass action occurred — in Cape Town and the Southern Transvaal. But the editors of the newspapers could not have known this in advance. What Hopkinson and the white editor were trying to do on the evening before the demonstrations was solve a perennial problem of newspaper editing — anticipate an event which had not yet occurred. The only way they could do that was to situate the event-to-come in terms of paradigms based on their interpretations of previous events. Commercial news-paper editors must attempt to fit the often-perplexing chaos of society's activities into mental pigeon-holes which are sufficiently formal to permit the rapid assimilation of vast quantities of material in time to meet fixed deadlines. The social

⁸ *Rand Daily Mail*, March 21 1960.

⁹ *In the Fiery Continent*, op cit. p255.

flux then, must be cut up and sorted to fit the requirements of a bureaucratic structure centred about imperatives like time, space, labour and money. Two sets of ideological factors help journalists 'make sense' of society; the first, a set of commonsense assumptions about the world based on values generally familiar to the bulk of readers; the second, a set of 'professional' routines. The first set are the ritualistic themes discussed in the previous section, which can express class aspirations (heroes), class awareness (society talk), latent resistance (Robin Hood figures), consumer values (fashion) and so on. The second takes the form of those journalistic values which grew with the rise of heterogeneous mass-audiences — impartiality, event-orientation, brevity, impact.

In the particular case of March 21 1960, editors were faced with a militant black organisation attempting to mobilise a nation-wide civil-disobedience campaign. There are a number of ways such an event could have been interpreted: as an example of selfless passive resistance in the Gandhian tradition; as an eruption of frustration against oppressive laws; as a dangerous example of politically-inspired lawlessness against responsible authority. The *Rand Daily Mail* chose a different interpretation, shaped by its own position as a newspaper with a white, largely petty bourgeois readership, and by the event-orientated framework of its 'news values'. It defined the massing of large numbers of blacks in public places for political purposes as potential 'trouble' which would either explode into a riot or fizzle out into nothing. This preconception would colour the paper's interpretation of Sharpeville when it occurred the next day, and would continue to dominate its interpretations for several days thereafter.

There was a further, logistical problem. No paper had the staff to keep every potential 'trouble spot' under surveillance. Reporters could be sent to some areas only, those where newsworthy events seemed most likely. Since news tends to be defined in hierarchical terms, with the activities of political leaders given greater weight than those of their followers, and the cities (where most of the readers live) deemed more important than rural areas, the key staff would have been sent to Orlando, where the PAC 'elite' were gathered, including Sobukwe himself. Other staff would have been assigned according to administrative factors such as the size of particular centres, their closeness to newspaper offices and so on.

Since the news values of the white papers attached little significance to the PAC demonstrations, and since Sharpeville itself was neither large nor important, only one white publication bothered to send reporters there — the *Mail*. Like every other white paper of the time, the *Mail* did not have a single black reporter. Instead, the news desk sent out the crime reporter, Harold Sacks and photographer Warwick Robinson. Sacks had no particular knowledge or interest in black affairs, but the fact that he — the crime specialist — was chosen for the task, gives some indication of how the potential demonstration was classified. Crime reporters are a unique breed — they depend almost entirely on police tip-offs for their stories and

must therefore build close relationships with them, which often include mutual exchanges of information. Sacks, a conservative journalist,¹⁰ was considered by some to be the best crime reporter in the country at the time because he 'had the ear of the police'. It was not surprising, then, that on arriving at Sharpeville police station, he immediately went inside. He was still inside when the shooting broke out and was therefore not a witness to the crucial moments.

Sacks's story, sewn together with contributions from other reporters elsewhere in the country, made the front page lead the next day. The headline was slightly larger than usual, but smaller than that used a month earlier to hail the birth of a second son to Queen Elizabeth.¹¹ The shooting at Sharpeville was treated as only one of several similar incidents, all interpreted according to the preconceptions of the previous day — as outbreaks of rioting:

**62 KILLED, 191 INJURED IN TWO RIOTS
ANTI-PASS DEMONSTRATION LEADS TO VEREENIGING, LANGA
BLOODSHED**

ARMY CALLED OUT IN CAPE OUTBURST
IN two serious outbreaks of violence yesterday: a total of 54 non-whites were killed in three locations near Vereeniging and 191 injured. At least 8 were killed at Langa location, Cape Town. Many were wounded.

Seven buildings, including two schools, were set on fire. The riots followed anti-pass demonstrations instigated by the Pan Africanist Congress. It called upon Africans to leave their passes at home and surrender to the police ...

Last night police were able to put together full details of yesterday's bloodshed in the Vereeniging and Vanderbijlpark areas ...

The first sign of trouble in the area came early yesterday morning when Pan Africanist Congress organisers woke up residents of Baphelong location and urged them to join the anti-pass demonstration ...

About 4 000 Africans marched on the Vanderbijlpark police station and surrounded it. They were told to disperse. They refused. After five minutes, armed police tried to force them to break. One man was shot dead. That was the first death in the day of blood ...¹²

Inset in this story was a boxed-off paragraph in bold: 'Dr Verwoerd told Parliament that no order to fire was given to police at Sharpeville.' The Page 3 lead began:

SIX South African Air Force Sabre jets and eight harvards dived within 100 feet of a crowd of 10 000 Africans and saved Evaton police station from destruction yesterday morning.

The next day the Page One lead was **'VERWOERD: REVOLT WAS PLAN-**

¹⁰ This information comes from various 'old hands' who worked on the *Mail* during the period. At least three people at SAAN claim to have 'been there' during Sharpeville (still the ultimate accolade today) but it appears that they arrived in the late afternoon, when the shooting had been over for several hours.

¹¹ 'WORLD HAILS NEW PRINCE', *Mail*, February 20.

¹² *Ibid*, March 21 1960

NED'. The one and only quote from the black side was a statement from the Treason Trial dock by ANC president Albert Luthuli condemning the bloodshed. On Thursday, the Page One lead was 'LOUW PROTESTS TO U.S.' which said that the Foreign Minister objected to America's official condemnation of the shooting.

Several points can be made about the *Mail's* coverage in the two days after Sharpeville:

The overwhelming focus of interest is upon the perceived threat to the status quo, that is, to people like the paper's readers. The theme is a nationwide series of riots which police were called upon to suppress, but unfortunately did so with an excess of zeal. The tone-setting first paragraph of the first story gives no suggestion as to how the black casualties occurred, but the implication is that they were killed by fellow rioters. The burning of schools is linked with the deaths, leaving the impression that both were caused by the same people. The riots are described as erupting out of the anti-pass campaign, rather than as a reaction to the police shootings. Indeed, the only mention at all of the police is as the source of reliable information on what happened. The danger to the police is emphasised, particularly in the 'diving Sabres' story, and their response is accepted as a necessary one. The stress on the threat to the status-quo leads to a latent 'them against us' bias in the reports.

The reporting device the *Mail* employs to reinforce the credibility of its story to its heterogeneous readership is a low-keyed, ostensibly non-partisan tone. But the neutrality is a surface effect only. On the very simplest level, impartiality requires the admission of alternative viewpoints. But there are no alternative views expressed in the lead paragraphs here — the definitions of reality are those provided by recognised authority figures like Cabinet Ministers and police. No 'rioter' is asked for an opinion. The opinions of blacks who engage in 'rioting' are so far outside the general consensus that it occurs to no one to canvass them. Even where space is given to blacks, this is within parameters already mapped out by the official version. Thus Luthuli is not asked to discuss the grievances that led to Sharpeville, he is quoted condemning the violence.

The stress is on events, not significances. To a journalist, events are news. Significances are merely metaphysics. Hence the coverage takes a descriptive form, telling of black 'riots' at 'trouble spots'. The concentration on the immediate moment robs the reports of any historical perspective, which makes it impossible to ascribe causes. This, in turn, reinforces the image of apparently 'mindless' behaviour by the rioters.

There is no discrimination between different levels of violence. Crowds surrounding a police station, stone-throwing and sten-gun fire are all 'violence'. Although the word 'Sharpeville' appears occasionally, it has not yet attained the status of a catch-phrase. Most references are to Vereeniging, which white readers are more likely to be familiar with than an obscure black township.

To understand the context within which the *Mail* reports appeared, one must turn to the only publication with reporters who actually witnessed the scene — *Drum*. The editor, Tom Hopkinson, originally assigned no one to cover the Sharpeville area, sending his political reporter, Benson Dyanti, and photographer, Peter Magubane,¹³ to follow Sobukwe in Orlando instead. At mid-morning he received a tip-off that trouble seemed to be brewing in Sharpeville. As he himself put it: 'None of us knew where Sharpeville was ...'¹⁴ He sent out his assistant editor, Humphrey Tyler, and photographer Ian Berry.¹⁵ They arrived and took up positions outside the police station. When the shooting started, they were the only journalists to see what was happening, Berry lying under the bullets and snapping off picture after picture.

But there was a problem. *Drum* was a monthly magazine and its next issue would only be on sale several weeks later. In journalistic time, a few weeks was almost forever — success on the newstands depended on a constant succession of rapidly changing 'angles'. In the world of the commercial Press, news of even the most shattering kind is a perishable commodity and Hopkinson, unable to use the material himself, decided to sell it. Since it would have been damaging to sell to one of his own rivals, he sold instead to the foreign Press. His decision would have repercussions he could not have anticipated, which would change the whole meaning and importance of the Sharpeville story. Here he explains the situation:

The news that *Drum* had got pictures of the shooting seemed to go around the world almost as fast as the story of Sharpeville itself. Within a few hours, I received five cables from overseas papers asking for photographs. As no one else had the full facts and contrary to our usual custom, we decided to sell the story ...¹⁶

Hopkinson was highly regarded on Fleet Street. He had been the innovative editor of Britain's most popular magazine, *Picture Post*, and features editor of the liberal daily the *News Chronicle*. This reputation enhanced the credibility of his magazine in the eyes of international journalism. Editors cannot verify every fact in every article they receive — at some point they must accept stories on trust. Invariably, the words of people they know count for more than the words of strangers.

Drum eventually opted to sell five pictures to Britain's biggest selling newspaper, the *Daily Mirror*, to be landlined to London via the Post Office. But

¹³ Magubane had just won the photographer of the year award for the first time.

¹⁴ In the *Fiery Continent*, op cit, p257.

¹⁵ Tyler was acting editor of *Drum* after Stein walked out (see previous section) and until Hopkinson arrived. In 1962 he became editor of the black magazine *Elethu*, published by a group of National Party supporters. He infuriated both his liberal friends (by accepting the job) and his conservative employers (by hijacking the magazine to his own purposes, publishing pin-ups and anti-pass stories) and soon had to leave. He is now an assistant editor on the *Argus* in Cape Town. Ian Berry, who the year before had won the Commonwealth Best Photographer award, later went to Britain where he gained international fame.

¹⁶ In the *Fiery Continent*, op cit, p263

something mysterious happened to the pictures at the Post Office. First, there was an inexplicable delay. The Post Office explained that this was due to 'unfavourable conditions'. Eventually, only one picture got through — the only one of the five that did NOT show any shooting.¹⁷

The *Mirror* displayed the picture as sensationally as one might have expected from the paper which taught Eprile his tricks. On Tuesday the *Mirror* was the one publication in the world to carry an on-the-spot picture of the event, with its single Sharpeville picture wrapped around the spine of the paper, spread out across both the front and back pages. That picture came to encapsulate what the world later understood as the Sharpeville horror. It helps explain why now, years later, the image most people associate with the event is not one of Berry's pictures of the shooting, it is the picture the *Mirror* ran, taken seconds after the shots had ended, showing bodies scattered across the grass amongst images of suburban quiet — parked cars, bicycles, flowerbeds and hedges. Where the *Mail* had chosen to treat Sharpeville in low-key fashion, the *Mirror* presented it as an epoch-making moment.

Journalism feeds off two levels of 'reality' for its information. The one is the external 'world outside', the other is the internal world of journalism itself. Faced with the apparent chaos and flux of society, newspapers rely upon one another as ratifiers and sorters of information. A story which has appeared in a trusted newspaper stands a good chance of immediate acceptance by rival publications. The competitive nature of commercial journalism pressures newspapers into following up or knocking down rival newspaper 'exclusives'. This can be a self-generating process — it tends to create its own momentum which carries the newspapers along with it, and can even lead to the media constructing their own, solipsistic, semi-fictional 'reality' without being aware of it.

Sharpeville was, in some respects, such a case. Fleet Street, the most competitive, and therefore the most incestuous newspaper environment in the world, immediately tagged onto the *Mirror* story. They could not ignore it, not when the *Mirror* was suggesting that the event was of historical importance. More British newspapers bought and displayed that one Sharpeville picture. Even right-wing newspapers like the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Express* deplored the violence in editorials. The usually pro-South African government *Daily Mail* was still leading on the story on Thursday, March 24, with the headline 'CAPE TOWN IN THE DOCK'.

Fleet Street invented the name 'Sharpeville'. The *Rand Daily Mail* had referred only to 'Vereeniging', which was instantly recognisable to its white readership, unlike 'Sharpeville'. Since 'Vereeniging' meant no more than 'Sharpeville' to British readers and was a good deal less pronounceable, 'Sharpeville', a name with a

¹⁷ Ibid, p263.

suitably chilly ring to it, was unanimously preferred. By coining a name for the shootings, the Press was announcing that it was important, for only important episodes are given labels. The name became a stock symbol for the event, condensing within itself all the subjective responses associated with it. It summoned up images of horror at a ruthless deed; it implied racism, brutality, police-statism, bureaucratism, helplessness and martyrdom.

There seemed to be three reasons for the British interest in Sharpeville:

1 RELATION TO OTHER STORIES. An atrocity committed at the southern tip of a continent which seldom attracts much Fleet Street coverage would not normally have aroused such passionate indignation. One reason for the excitement was that Sharpeville came only a month after the much-publicised visit to South Africa of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, which focussed widespread British media attention on the race problems of South Africa for the first time. Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech had been prominently quoted; Sharpeville seemed to prove him right.

2 POST-COLONIAL CONSCIENCE. Nineteen-sixty was the year of independence for most of Britain's African colonies. Revulsion against imperialism was widespread and South Africa represented the last citadel of white domination. Sharpeville appeared to sum up all the worst aspects of colonialism: a group of technologically superior whites slaying unarmed blacks.

3 NEWSPAPER METHODS. Sharpeville had all the ingredients of a 'good story'. Firstly, it happened rapidly, between daily paper deadlines. This made it more newsworthy than its cause, the erosion of black rights, which, because it happened over a period of decades, was difficult to chronicle and label as an 'event'. Secondly, there was a photograph. Berry's pictures counted for more than anything Tyler could have written. To newspaper readers, photographs are untainted by bias, they represent unmediated life itself. A single picture is enough to ensure the credibility of a story, for it reinforces the text with its message of 'this event really did happen'. The text in turn reinforces the photograph by giving it meaning. The Sharpeville picture, for example, was (in purely technical terms), fit only for the picture editor's waste basket: indifferently composed, fuzzy and not especially dramatic. Its power came from the message provided by the text: that this was a photograph taken during a massacre by a photographer whose own life was in danger. The picture, then, functioned as authenticator of the truth of the reported event, the text anchored the photograph's generalised images of chaos and fear in a specific ideological context.

The British coverage of the event — which, after all 'scooped' the local white papers — soon had its effect here. Britain still represented the 'civilised standards' towards which white English-speaking South Africans looked for guidance. They

ON A PLATTER

^{Rand}
Daily Mail

THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 1960.



A cartoon by Bob Connolly in the Mail of March 24 neatly sums up the paper's attitude to Sharpeville: Government intransigence has forced blacks into the arms of agitators

were not yet used to being scorned by their brothers abroad, nor had they learnt the rationalisation of later years that 'foreigners don't understand our problems'. The *Mail's* editors were quite clearly reading the British papers carefully,¹⁸ and the foreign reaction became a story in itself. On March 23, the second lead on the foreign page, Page 9, described the reaction overseas:

SILENT PROTEST HELD IN LONDON

ALL Britain has been shocked by the 'Sharpeville Massacre' as Monday's riots have been described by the Press here. Some newspapers devoted half their front pages to enlarged pictures of the battleground, showing the twisted bodies of the dead and dying. Radio bulletins broke the news and the newspapers took it up with headlines such as 'CHILDREN SHOT BY POLICE' and 'I SEE TERROR' ¹⁹

The tone was slightly peeved, hinting obliquely that the British were blowing it out of all proportion. The *Mail* was still referring to 'Monday's riots', not to 'Sharpeville'. The next day, the foreign page lead was 'THE WORLD RISES IN PROTEST OVER RIOT KILLINGS. NEVER BEFORE HAS SOUTH AFRICA BEEN SO UNDER FIRE'.

By the next day, the 25th, the subject of the British attitude had moved up to second lead on Page 1: 'RIOT DEATHS STILL DOMINATE UK PRESS'.

The British attitude had a belated effect on the *Mail*. In that same edition, four days after the shootings, the *Mail* finally took sides on the issue. An editorial written by Gandar and displayed prominently on Page 1 instead of the leader page, gave English-speaking South Africa's stock response to any crisis: 'VERWOERD MUST GO'. The leader, which said that the authorities had to bear full responsibility for the shootings, marked an abrupt change from the paper's attitude during the rest of the week. Faced with the indignant response of Fleet Street, the *Mail* had retreated from its earlier 'riotous blacks' interpretation. The 'riot' interpretation did not vanish entirely, instead it became incorporated in the 'massacre' version. The new South African orthodox version, which persists to this day, was that the police, faced with a potential riot, fired in panic at the crowd.

2 Sharpeville through the eyes of World

The first black paper to report the crisis was *World*. If *World* had once been sympathetic to the old-style Africanists in Congress, particularly while Seloape Thema was alive, little of this remained visible in its 1960 coverage of the PAC. It would be

¹⁸ To this day, most Fleet Street papers are flown over each morning for the edification of senior editorial staff at SAAN. American newspapers circulate much less frequently.

¹⁹ *Mail*, March 23 1960

simplistic to say *World* snubbed the PAC, but the paper certainly showed minimal interest in the organisation. Those few stories it carried about the movement dealt either with court cases (reinforcing the image of the PAC as a group of 'troublemakers'), or with chest-thumping statements by the PAC leaders (reinforcing the image that the PAC was prone to violence).

On January 2 1960, for example, the second lead was 'LEBALLO FACES PERMIT CHARGES'. There were pictures of him and some supporters in front of the court. The PAC surfaced again a month later, in a single-column story at the top of Page One: 'PAC WARNS CITY STORES'.²⁰ A story in January in which black leaders were asked to comment on the Republic referendum, significantly left out the PAC leaders. A lengthy Page One story on March 5 about the right-wing Sofasonke Party included a brief mention at the bottom saying that the PAC rejected Sofasonke calls for an all-party convention. Two days before Sharpeville, when the PAC campaign was nearing a climax, the one mention of the organisation was a filler at the bottom of Page 6, which read, in its entirety:

NO PAC MEETING

Johannesburg's City Council refused to allow a Pan Africanist Congress meeting in Dube square. In his letter of refusal, the Town Clerk, Mr Brian Porter, did not give any reason.²¹

It is easy enough to understand the lack of coverage given to the PAC in the *Mail* during the weeks before Sharpeville, but to find the same thing in the *World* is more puzzling. The *Mail's* all-white staff could be expected to treat the PAC as an irrelevant sideshow. *World's* black reporters must have been aware of the build-up of tension over the weeks, given added impetus by a disastrous mining accident at Coalbrook earlier in the year when many blacks lost their lives, and by an incident at Cato Manor when a crowd turned on raiding police and killed nine of them. But none of this simmering discontent is evident in the paper. The value of a reporter to a commercial newspaper is determined by production yardsticks — there is a given amount of space to be filled and each journalist must contribute a satisfactory portion. To succeed, a reporter must internalise the values of the newspaper, and provide information of the kind editors expect, in the style they consider appropriate and at the speed they require. This involves a certain amount of deliberate self-censorship — stories which appear to fall outside the framework of acceptability are ignored, even if the reporters privately consider them important. The editors, in turn, measure the quality of a story in terms of rapidly recognisable themes. Their function as classifiers of information for a broad range of readers is not to add to social knowledge, but to reaffirm that which has already been appropriated and accepted as 'common sense'. Solipsism creeps in once more —

²⁰ *World* February 6 1960.

²¹ *World*, March 26 1960

reporters avoid stories which may cause difficulties with the editors; the editors in turn become increasingly isolated from certain kinds of information and therefore ever less willing to acknowledge them.

World's first issue after Sharpeville appeared on the Saturday, when the story, in newspaper terms, was already fraying at the edges. For that reason, the lead story adopted a follow-up angle, with discussion of the actual event buried lower down the page:

BLACK MONDAY — THE REASON
TROUBLE WAS BOUND TO BREAK OUT SAY SHARPEVILLE BOARDSMEN
67 DEAD AND 180 ON CASUALTY LIST
OVER 480 POLICE PATROL TOWNSHIP

... Trouble was bound to come up here, even if the PAC had not called for a campaign against passes, boardsmen and residents told *World* reporters. Hundreds of youths roamed the streets. Influx control prevented them from getting jobs. There were not enough schools and influx control also stopped them from going to schools in other districts ...

On the one hand, the story was more generous to the demonstrators than the *Mail* because it blamed sociological causes rather than individuals. But on the other hand, by explaining how it was that black youths become 'troublesome', *World* was accepting the official explanation that the 'rioters' were to blame. This becomes clearer when one reads *World's* account of the shootings, based on police information:

The police were putting up loudspeakers to address the crowds in the square when young people started shouting, singing and throwing stones. The police opened fire and the square was littered with dead and wounded.²²

The *World* introduced an element that was missing from the white versions of the story — that 'young people', by implication wild and reckless, were the guilty ones. The white papers lumped all blacks together. *World*, as so often in the past, was playing the role of the 'moderate' middle class voice, dividing the black community into responsible and irresponsible camps.

South African law requires that newspapers may not prejudice any incident which may lead to court proceedings. This explains the circuitous writing of *World's* passage above, which gives no explanation for the sudden appearance of dead and wounded among the crowd. The newspapers could discuss in general terms the activities of the crowd, but had to be oblique in their descriptions of the police who could still have faced an official investigation or charges of manslaughter or murder. As a result, the descriptions of police actions were worded with such caution as to give the impression that the crowd was largely to blame.

There was a further legal proscription. On March 30, the Government declared a State of Emergency that was to last six months. Hundreds of people of all races were arrested. The effect upon the newspapers was two-fold: Editors interpreted it as preventing further reporting on the Sharpeville shootings; the opinions of black leaders disappeared from sight because they were all in prison.

Sharpeville remained in the news, but there were no further direct descriptions of the events of March 21. The topic now was the regrettable aftermath of an unfortunate tragedy. On April 9, for example, the lead in *World* was:

HUNGER IN SHARPEVILLE

WHITES GIVE TO RELIEF FUND

While Sharpeville still mourns its dead, a number of families are starving. Many families lost their breadwinners, killed or wounded on March 21. In other families, the wage earners have lost their jobs ...²³

A second theme was also emerging — that of the 'tsotsi agitator', a familiar theme in *World* whenever political tensions escalated. Half of Page 2 that week was devoted to pictures, ostensibly of workers being terrorised into staying away from work. The headline read: 'STAY AT HOME MUDDLE'. But there was something odd about the pictures. They showed nothing but crowds of people looking at some event off camera; not one portrayed a 'tsotsi' or his terrified victim. It was almost as if the editors, determined to believe their own agitator theory, managed to read it into even the least appropriate pictures. The question of 'tsotsi' also dominated the leader of April 9:

Both the PAC and the ANC have lost control. Tsotsis, hangers-on and terrorists have taken hold of the situation. Who says so? The words are those of Mr Mitchell, leader of the United Party in Natal, when speaking in the House of Assembly. But Mr Mitchell ignores or has forgotten the obvious facts that the African leaders are in prison. Once men who appealed for non-violence were no longer there to call again for calm and good order, the door was thrown open to the communist agitator — and worse.²⁴

For all their differences, *World*, with its 'communist agitator' and Mitchell, with his 'tsotsi', are speaking the same language, from the same viewpoint: that of the frightened middle classes.

3 Post: Reacting to Fleet Street

Golden City Post came out on Sunday 27, six days after Sharpeville. Its story made it clear that, not only was the paper aware of British reactions, it considered them

²³ *World*, April 9 1960.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

GOLDEN CITY
Post

THE
PICTURE
THIS

**SHOCKED
THE WORLD**



...the ground by the leading ...
...the ground by the leading ...
...the ground by the leading ...
...the ground by the leading ...
...the ground by the leading ...

ASSES GO!

STORY ON PAGE 2

EXTRA STRONG
KURRA POWDERS
STOPS PAIN
-FAST!



KURRA
POWDERS

Corpses scattered over the ground — the Sharpeville picture as it appeared in Post. By now, the picture itself has as much news value as the actual event

as important as the event itself. *Post* reprinted the same picture Hopkinson had sold to Fleet Street, which it displayed boldly across most of Page One, headlined 'THE PICTURE THAT SHOCKED THE WORLD'.²⁵ The caption underneath listed the British papers which had carried the photograph. Though the picture was identical to that which had appeared five days earlier in the *Mirror*, the change in context had altered its meaning. To *Mirror* readers, it signified human carnage, racism and authoritarianism in a far-away, rather backward colony. To *Post*, the picture meant 'this is the picture that shocked people overseas. At last, they have recognised our plight'. The meaning of the photograph, then, was not a static one embedded in the actual image, it was capable of transformation and re-interpretation by different audiences.

At the foot of *Post*'s front page was a prominent reverse-block heading, a cross-reference to the Page Two lead, which said: 'IT'S TRUE — PASSES SUSPENDED'. The Page Two story read:

Through Johannesburg, through the townships, on the buses, in the queues, the terrific news spread like fire: 'WE DON'T HAVE TO CARRY PASSES!' A *Post* reporter, emerging from the conference with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Colonel J Olivier, at the Grays, was the first to pass the news along: the police have decided that they will not ask for passes or any other documents and they will not arrest anyone who does not have these documents.²⁶

The police had indeed issued such a statement on Saturday but the suspension was intended to be temporary and, as it transpired, lasted no more than three weeks.²⁷ Even during the period of suspension, some raids continued.²⁸ The *Post* story played down the temporary nature of the suspension and all but suggested that Armageddon had arrived. It was sheer wishful thinking; a desperate attempt to salvage some hope in the midst of strife. The holocaust of Sharpeville had come and gone and it seemed that things could never revert back to the way they had been before.

For reasons discussed in the previous section, *Post* was quite capable of switching its stance from story to story, even within the same issue. Sharpeville is a good example of this. The Page Three lead showed *Post* quite willing to accept official versions of events, and even produce a black variant on 'swart gevaar':

ANC'S SECRET PLAN

A DOCUMENT containing details of a secret ANC plan, known as the 'M plan' which

- 25 South Africans have a peculiar habit of equating Britain with the whole world. Therefore, what horrifies Fleet Street must naturally shock the rest of humanity too.
- 26 *Post*, March 27 1960.
- 27 Roux, op cit, p409.
- 28 The very next week, *Post*'s second lead was on a police raid.

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CHICAGO CITY NEWS, MARCH 27, 1935

THE PASSES SUSPENDED!



Chicago, March 27.—The city's mammoth pass raids have been suspended for the time being, according to a statement issued today by the police department. The statement said that the raids had been suspended because of the weather, but that they would be resumed as soon as conditions improved.

They Were Wounded

The bullets they used — by a doctor —

Sobukwe: "Cops Assaulted"

Sobukwe, who was arrested last night, said that the police had assaulted him and his companions. He said that they had been taken to a police station and that they had been beaten and tortured.

High hopes in the midst of despair: Post trumpets the news that passes have been suspended. The following week, the same paper would report mammoth pass raids

was seized by police in a recent raid, was the cause of a special bill now being pushed through Parliament empowering the Government to ban the ANC and PAC ...²⁹

One had to read a long way down the story to discover that the 'M Plan' was nowhere near as sinister as it sounded — it was a discussion of how to organise legal demonstrations. The mysterious undertones of 'secret plans' with espionage-sounding code-names was more appealing to *Post* than the implications of the story — the banning of the major black political organisations. Yet two or three pages further on, the same newspaper gave the most sympathetic coverage yet to the black victims of the shootings. In the hierarchy of commercial news values, the Sharpeville shootings were already 'old' news by Sunday. The latest news was the reaction to the event — and most of the reacting had been done by foreign whites and by the State. As a result, the black side of the story was pushed inside the paper. But there, *Post* gave the most detailed descriptions to date from the point of view of the crowd rather than the police. All of these were framed in personalised, human-interest terms, the stress on drama and tragedy rather than political significances. *Post* was in its element here, its talents for milking every last drop out of a human drama came to the fore: eyewitness accounts of the shooting, the names of the wounded, 'COPS USED DUM-DUM BULLETS SAYS DOCTOR', 'SOBUKWE TELLS COURT OF ASSAULTS', 'WHY DID THEY SHOOT ME', and 'DEATH IN THE SUN'. The angle of these stories was close to that of the British papers — Sharpeville was a great horror, perpetrated by an unfeeling authority upon 'our' people.

But the next week, *Post* had switched tack again to lead with the 'tsotsi' story that invariably pops up in times of crisis. The source appeared to be the police:

BOY THUGS TAKE OVER FROM POLITICAL LEADERS IN THE TOWNSHIPS
POLICE: WE'LL DEAL WITH THEM
VICIOUS young thugs cashing in on the crisis have taken over the townships in the past few days. In savage outbursts of violence they have in the past week been responsible for hundreds of assaults, at least one murder of an African cop and scores of rapes. The Deputy Commissioner of Police on the Witwatersrand, Colonel J C Lemmer, told *Post*: 'The Bantu public must give us information about these people and we will deal with them'.³⁰

The story was similar to the one *World* would run the following week (quoted earlier) but differed in that *Post* described its thugs as criminals; *World* saw them as political agitators. The source of *Post*'s information was an official police statement, conceivably designed to justify the expanded police presence in the townships. Certainly, large numbers of assaults, rapes and murders are not unusual in African townships in any given week of the year; the difference was that police

²⁹ *Post*, March 27 1960. The 'M plan', according to the story, gave details of how to plan demonstrations.

³⁰ *Ibid*, April 3 1960.

THERE has been good humor and tension with the major debate in the demonstrations in Orange on other evenings. These guys actually climbed "the wall" last. Let's put it up, then. In they came a few glows for the cops and the crowd, and the police in front got so crowded up to want business a day... all in help-again.

You can't see the fairness in this picture, but as Page 3 you can see some of the guys in Orange who got a few days on a Saturday when the cops in charge pulled the crowd along to a sports field.

Who says we're not on **THE** SIDE OF PROGRESS?

[illegible]

A dark, high-contrast, black and white image of a textured surface, possibly a book cover or endpaper. The surface features a grid-like pattern of raised lines, creating a series of small, rectangular indentations. The lighting is dramatic, with deep shadows and bright highlights that emphasize the tactile quality of the material. The overall appearance is aged and worn, with some areas showing more significant texture than others.

concern about them was not as publicly expressed. The cause of the *Post* anxiety was more likely to have been the threat to the status quo; the sudden crime wave may have been 'read into' the situation by the editors.

Post also ran what could perhaps be called 'defusing' articles — those that stressed that normal life could go on, even in the midst of crisis. The second lead on the front page of April 3 was such a story:

JIVING IT UP

THERE has been good humour and fun as well as the lighter side — in these demonstrations at Orlando and other townships. These guys suddenly decided 'What the hell. Let's jive it up, kids.' So they gave a free show to the cops and the Saracens ... some of the guys in Durban got a free ride on a Saracen when the cop in charge jollied the crowd to a sports field. Who says we've lost OUR SENSE OF HUMOUR?³¹

The days of tension were not yet over and *Post* was expressing a yearning for peace. The picture told readers that for all their differences, blacks and whites were much the same because they enjoyed the same kinds of fun.

4 Zonk: Bringing politics into the open

So great was the trauma that Sharpeville left in its wake, that even *Zonk* found it appropriate to desert temporarily its 'apolitical' formula. The May issue of the magazine, which would have been prepared in late March and early April, devoted six pages to the State of Emergency. Since the law forbade discussion of the specific details of the Sharpeville shootings, *Zonk* turned to editorialising instead. And in its first ever piece of overt comment about South African politics, the magazine revealed itself far more conservative in tone than either *World* or the Bailey publications:

Zonk makes this special appeal:

- Let every person behave in such a manner that there shall be no more violence and bloodshed.
- Let there be greater understanding and feeling on All Sides so that we may all live in Peace and Happiness ...
- ... What started off as an alleged protest against the 'pass laws' has been condemned by the Government as a massive revolt and an attempt to overthrow the Government of this country. Political demonstrations have gotten completely out of hand in several

³¹ Ibid. Similar stories followed the revolts of June 1976. The *Sunday Times*, for example, ran a huge front page picture of policemen playing soccer with black youths in Soweto under the headline 'NOW THE CALM'.

centres and ... into riots, bloodshed, ... on their followers ... 'home' strikes. The economic ... buildings in the Workers ... have been turned or townships ... destroyed ... police station. Police At Sharpeville ... opened fire ...

Zonk was indeed ... what it wanted was a restoration of order ... after all, it was addressed to 'all sides' — ... The official version of events was the only one ... the Sharpeville protest was referred to as an 'incident'. The word 'protest' was used with distaste — *Zonk* preferred ... Demonstrations, strikes and pass burnings were ... riots, bloodshed and arson. The number ... 150 policemen told readers 20,000. The fact that ... a justifiable motive for the police. nothing about the ...

The magazine ran ... pictures, as was to be expected in *Zonk*. There was a picture of ... and black nurses running to ambulances, helping the wounded. Another ... 'Sobukwe' (sic) who 'lead the movement for the abandonment of inferior ... and then handed himself over to the police.' The implication was that ... a crime, which Sobukwe acknowledged and therefore handed himself over. A small picture at the foot of the page showed an injured white woman, blood pouring down her face: 'Rioters at Langa on the night of March 21 stopped a car with four white women and tried to drag them from their car. This woman, streaming blood, was one of those injured in the incident.' *Zonk* carried no equivalent pictures of blacks who had been shot. Another picture showed 'A mob of protestors halted on their March on Durban by police ...' The overall impression was one of great suffering, by both black and white, caused by the miscalculations of an extreme political group whose plans had altogether got out of hand.

The Sharpeville story was the first-ever acknowledgement in *Zonk* of the existence of such things as 'reference books'. In the fictive world portrayed in the pages of the magazine, apartheid was a taboo topic. Blacks lived in a market society where hard work alone could get one to the top and no obstacles based on race existed. Sharpeville forced *Zonk* to face the reality of apartheid for the first time — and it immediately came down on the side of the authorities, demonstrating itself to be far more conservative than any of its black media rivals. Owned by a

centres and tsotzis have since the demonstrations have developed into riots, bloodshed, arson and pillage. In some instances the PAC and ANC calling on their followers not to use violence ...

The economy of the country has been affected because of 'stay at home' strikes. Workers have been beaten up and intimidated. Houses and public buildings in the townships have been fired and in many instances, 'passes' have been burned or destroyed ...

At Sharpeville 20 000 Africans surrounded 150 policemen at a police station. Police opened fire and 67 were killed and 186 wounded ..."

Zonk was indifferent to the causes of the demonstrations — what it wanted was a restoration of order. Its plea for peace sounded liberal — after all, it was addressed to 'all sides' — but it was peace on the State's terms. The official version of events was the only one given. Loaded phrases were used; the Sharpeville protest was referred to as an 'alleged demonstration'. The word 'passes' was used with distaste — *Zonk* preferred to talk of reference books. Demonstrations, strikes and pass burnings were breaches of the peace, to be equated with riots, bloodshed and arson. The number of blacks said to have been at Sharpeville had now risen to 20,000. The fact that this monstrous crowd surrounded 150 policemen told readers nothing about the crowd's motives, but implied a justifiable motive for the police.

The magazine ran some good Sharpeville pictures, as was to be expected in *Zonk*. There was a picture of white and black nurses running to ambulances, helping the wounded. Another showed 'W Sobukwe' (sic) who 'lead the movement for the abandonment of reference books and then handed himself over to the police.' The implication was that leading such a movement was a crime, which Sobukwe acknowledged and therefore handed himself over. A small picture at the foot of the page showed an injured white woman, blood pouring down her face: 'Rioters at Langa on the night of March 21 stopped a car with four white women and tried to drag them from their car. This woman, streaming blood, was one of those injured in the incident.' *Zonk* carried no equivalent pictures of blacks who had been shot. Another picture showed 'A mob of protestors halted on their March on Durban by police ...' The overall impression was one of great suffering, by both black and white, caused by the miscalculations of an extreme political group whose plans had altogether got out of hand.

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National Party printing house, it served a dual purpose: to pretend, during times of peace, that apartheid did not exist; to propagate, during times of strife, that apartheid *must* exist.

5 Drum: A very different story

Drum was the only publication whose staff were eyewitnesses to the crucial moments of the Sharpeville shooting. It was their pictures and their descriptions which roused the British papers to fury. Yet *Drum* was the only black South African publication not to carry a Sharpeville report. For the reasons, one has to go back a month or two before Sharpeville.

Because of *Drum's* close PAC contacts, the staff came to know that Sobukwe would call a Press conference on March 18 at which he would call for a day of action of some sort for the 21st. Humphrey Tyler and Benson Dyanti persuaded Hopkinson that the PAC claims were genuine, even though many people scoffed at them, including *Golden City Post* editor Eprile. Hopkinson called a staff meeting where the issue was discussed and it was eventually agreed to run a cover story on the Africanists, giving a history of the movement. 'Though we would give the facts, we would take no sides or advocate any action; readers would simply be given the fullest information on the personalities and the issues.'³³ The resulting story was unusually long for *Drum* — five pages — and consisted mainly of personality profiles. If the intention was to play the story low-key, there were still definite undertones of sympathy. This is part of the Sobukwe profile:

... He has given up his big job teaching white students at the University of the Witwatersrand and also his chance of bacon and eggs for breakfast each day, a car for life and the chance to move freely in white society ...³⁴

Drum's deadline was put forward a few days so that the issue would appear at the same time as the demonstrations. A bright yellow flash on the front page announced the story: 'WHO ARE THE AFRICANISTS?'. Hopkinson was shrewdly capitalising on what he expected would be a major political event — but the deadline switch would cause problems later. On the 21st, Hopkinson was the only editor in town who took the PAC seriously. Eprile had phoned the police over the weekend and they had said they were not expecting trouble. As a result, he decided to play down the issue.³⁵ Mid-morning on the 21st, as related before, an unnamed

³³ In the *Fiery Continent*, op cit, p253.

³⁴ *Drum*, April 21 1960

³⁵ In the *Fiery Continent*, op cit, p255.

caller tipped off Hopkinson that trouble might begin brewing at Sharpeville. He in turn sent Berry and Tyler, who were joined soon after the shootings by Magubane.³⁶

But Hopkinson faced a problem: the April edition had already come out by now. The next issue was only due in May, too late for a story like this one. Hopkinson let Tyler give his story to the *Observer* in London and to Patrick Duncan's liberal magazine *Contact*, which, as a limited-circulation, non-political magazine, was not in competition with *Drum*. Then a more serious problem arose — the Emergency Regulations were promulgated, preventing any further discussion of Sharpeville. They were not lifted for six months, by which time, in Hopkinson's opinion, there was no longer any point in carrying the story. The irony was that *Drum*, the one commercial publication NOT to carry a Sharpeville story, was raided by the Special Branch. The police, assuming that the April issue was indeed an April issue as advertised, concluded that the six-page story on the Africanists was *Drum's* post-Sharpeville attempt to idolise the PAC leaders and was therefore in breach of the Emergency Regulations. Hopkinson eventually persuaded them that the issue was printed in March, but it was nonetheless banned.

It is worth quoting parts of Tyler's never-printed *Drum* story simply as a contrast to those carried by other black publications:

... I heard no warning to the crowd to disperse before the shooting started. Yet the police had all morning to rig up a public address system which they could have used and I understand that police Saracens carry loudspeakers. Nor was there a warning volley. When the shooting started it did not stop until there was no moving thing in the huge open space in front of the police. I have heard the police claim they were in desperate danger because the mob was stoning them. But only three policemen were reported to have been hit by stones and more than 200 Africans were mown down. So there seems some disparity here ... I was told that the crowd around the police were armed with ferocious weapons and that these littered the area around the police station after the crowd left. But I did not see them ... I saw only shoes and hats and a few bicycles left behind among the bodies.³⁷

The contrast between this piece and that carried by the *Mail* and quoted at the beginning of this chapter, demonstrates the difference in perspectives between the man outside with the crowd who saw the event and the man inside the police station who got his story from official sources. There is no mention of rioting here at all, yet in the *Mail* version, it predominated. Tyler expressed doubt as to the accuracy of the police version; the other newspapers accepted the official account as gospel. Tyler's sympathies were clearly with his fellows in the crowd, indeed, it is possible that in making his point he has tended to romanticise them. The *Mail*, by

³⁶ *The Knight's Tale*, op cit, p22.

³⁷ *In the Fiery Continent*, op cit, p261.

contrast, treated the crowd as an anonymous mob. Tyler was not an especially radical journalist and his world-view would probably have corresponded with that of his contemporaries. But his perspective on Sharpeville was different because he had no need to piece together an account embroidered by the interpretations of officialdom and sifted by the preconceptions of his editors.

6 Conclusion

Sharpeville is an example of an event whose significance has been created by the intervention of the media. The London Press latched onto it because of the photograph and because Britain was at that time passing through a brief phase of interest in post-colonial Africa. The British interpretation of the event, shaped by the evidence of the photograph and the new distaste for colonialism, was that Sharpeville was a massacre. The white South African version was coloured by a preconception that the massing of large numbers of blacks automatically constituted a riot, and a fear that the dreaded 'revolution' might be on the doorstep. The black South African media version was a mixture of shock at the shootings, and middle-class fears of resulting black radicalism or anarchy.

Because journalism creates its own internal dynamic, the Fleet Street version was taken seriously here and became amalgamated with the local interpretations. The importance which Fleet Street attached to the event — the label, 'Sharpeville', and the idea of the 'massacre' — stuck. But the local Press continued to rely on official sources for information, which reinforced the image of police battling to contain anarchy. The myth of a 'riot' at Sharpeville continued, and various pseudo-crises followed in the next few weeks — red scares, intimidation and tsotsi violence. Each of these was more an expression of panic than the result of carefully researched, concrete evidence.

The commercial media presented Sharpeville as an isolated event, not as part of a long-standing political struggle. Where the earlier journals of opinion might have concentrated on analyses of political significances and lessons to be learnt, the commercial media concentrated upon immediate action. The news was rapidly assimilated and instantly disseminated, even where it was only partly understood. Presentation of the event was shaped by the exigencies of a commercial operation geared to production of news as a commodity to fill pages within fixed deadlines. Sharpeville was presented in terms of immediately familiar representations of society, which, like mental Lego blocks, could be rapidly assembled by the editors and instantly understood by the readers.

8 Conclusion

Studies of the Press tend invariably to be studies of journalism — discussions of what is said, with what frequency, by whom, with what consequences. The approach is not an unreasonable one — journalism is, after all, the publishing industry's most visible product, and it is the chief reason why people bother to buy newspapers at all. But the argument of this dissertation has been that to concentrate upon journalism alone, is to neglect the various material forces that cause particular journalists to write about particular subjects in a particular style, for dissemination to particular groups of readers.

A textual approach to the black media could hardly fail to note the enormous differences between the staid, didactic Press of the thirties and its slick successor of twenty-five years later. But though such an approach could accurately dissect the dominant themes and the direction of change, it would be hard-pressed to posit an explanation as to what prompted these changes. Textual analysis can tell us what is being said; it cannot begin to examine why. There is more to newspapers than collections of texts and images composed by abstract individuals for dissemination into a void.

The basic argument of this study has been that the commercial black Press was the child of South African manufacturing capital. The growth of manufacturing rested upon a balance between two interconnected, but mutually contradictory, factors: the need for an expanding, but cheap, labour force, and the need for an expanding and prosperous buying public. The marshalling of an urban black proletariat satisfied the cheap labour requirement — but in doing so, it curtailed the growth of a profitable consumer market. The ambivalence of manufacturing's attitude to the African consumer is the key to understanding the black Press. It helps explain why entrepreneurs, like Bertram Paver, believed that black publishing offered an untapped, and potentially lucrative, market; it also explains



THE GULLS WERE
WORK ON PANTS

SHOULD KIDS WORK LIKE THIS? THIS?

Anywhere in the world address may help or harm. But not for every town house. And the vast majority of people are not without proper priorities. And the vast majority of people are not without proper accommodations and good food and drink. Learning should not be the only proper accommodation and good food and drink.

in being a slaveholder. The sacred character
of the office requires that he should be
a man of pure heart and upright mind.
He should be a man of peace and
gentleness, and one who is not
easily provoked. He should be a
man of good will, and one who is
not contentious. He should be a
man of good character, and one who
is not a hypocrite. He should be a
man of good reputation, and one who
is not a liar. He should be a man
of good conduct, and one who is not
a thief. He should be a man of good
faith, and one who is not a cheat.
He should be a man of good
character, and one who is not a
hypocrite. He should be a man of
good reputation, and one who is not
a liar. He should be a man of good
conduct, and one who is not a thief.
He should be a man of good faith,
and one who is not a cheat.

[illegible][illegible]

Beautiful



...to
...a strong
...Graham

A high-contrast, black and white image showing a dense, textured surface. The texture is composed of numerous small, dark, rectangular elements arranged in a grid-like pattern, creating a complex, almost abstract visual effect. The overall appearance is reminiscent of a book cover or a piece of fabric with a woven or printed pattern.

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...the ... of ...

THE TIME

[illegible]

The two sides of the media: an investigation into farm labour face-to-face with a skin-lightener advertisement. In mid-fifties, Drum became famous for investigations such as this one, but the advertisement is a better reflection of the magazine's overall values

why, ultimately, they failed. Further, it explains why the black Press, despite its constant liquidity problems, could always find corporate 'sugar-daddies' willing to shoulder its losses in the belief that there were long-term gains to be reaped. The cash-crises of the black Press had two further consequences — a movement towards oligopoly as outside interests secured ever larger shares in the industry, and fierce competition as publications vied for a limited pool of advertising revenue. These, in turn, had repercussions upon the editorial content of the Press.

A primary difficulty in discussing the Press is determining the relationship between a publication and its audience. Journalists themselves generally argue that publications cannot move outside their readers' range of preferences. The market is seen as a kind of spontaneous democratic forum — readers choose publications freely, and titles which perish do so because they fail to attract sufficient interest. There is a rival argument to this, which argues the opposite: that because it is advertising which provides the bulk of media revenues, it is the advertisers who hold the power. Newspapers are primarily vehicles for the propagation of advertising messages and the function of editorial is to bait potential customers.

There seems to me to be some truth in both arguments. Audiences do not spontaneously select themselves. Blacks did not arrive in the townships out of either choice or chance — proletarianisation was compelled by the State, to satisfy the labour requirements of first the mining, then the manufacturing industries. The composition of the work-force changed over the years from largely migrant to largely permanent labour, from all-male to male and female. A network of restrictive laws stunted the rise of a black bourgeoisie on any significant scale and prevented the growth of a class of skilled black labour. By the post-war period, the townships were composed of a small, educated petty-bourgeoisie, only a tiny number of whom earned substantial incomes; and a vast, poorly-educated, poorly-paid, working class. The differences in income and real power between the 'elite' and 'masses' were often so slender that degrees of social rank came to be measured in other terms, such as education and ownership of status-conferring commodities. All these factors, in turn, shaped the nature of the black Press.

The second factor which shaped the nature of the audience was the change in manufacturing capital in the forties from labour-intensive small-scale industry to capital-intensive 'machinofacture' which swelled production capacities and necessitated a search for new markets. The African town dweller presented one such market, albeit (in the eyes of the marketing sector) a somewhat flawed one. From the perspective of marketing, not all readers of a given publication were equal — they had to be sifted and weighed to establish incomes, geography and consumer 'lifestyles'. Post-war advertisers preferred specialist publications which provided them with clearly defined audiences with particular consumer lifestyles. One such specialised audience was provided by urban blacks, who were major consumers of particular kinds of clothing, footwear, haberdashery, cosmetics, records and patent medicines. But since individual blacks lacked sufficient buying power, manufac-

turers insisted upon mass-audiences to ensure cost-effectiveness in their marketing campaigns. Publishers found themselves under market pressure to find ways of attracting wide-ranging, heterogeneous readerships, preferably in urban areas. Thus the process was not merely one of audiences selecting a publication to read; rather, the publishers first selected the audience *they* wanted, using criteria based on the needs of manufacturing.

But, while audiences may have been 'pre-selected', this is not to assume that they were altogether malleable, mere dupes of the machinations of advertising agencies. The campaigns of advertisers were still limited by the nature of the available readership, and persuasion only worked within the limits set by readers' existing preferences. Although advertisers have been widely accused of force-feeding the masses with an alien consumer culture, their method has, in fact, been to incorporate existing values to their own purposes. Thus the research into the 'African mind' discussed in the second section of this study, was an attempt to understand existing township values, then 're-interpret' them. Themes of resistance (for example, the American negro cult) were transformed into clothing and music fads; notions of inferiority (for example, lack of education) were played upon to sell deodorants and soaps; social aspirations (for example, 'copy-cat' white behaviour) were tempted with fanciful satisfactions in the guise of skin lighteners and briefcases.

A third problem is how the change from an African-owned to a white-owned Press changed the nature of the newspapers themselves. There is an oft-heard argument that the reason for the banality and political timidity of the modern black Press has to do with the fact that it is owned by white corporations. But this does no more than transform a surface description (white ownership) into a cause (conservative politics). The fact that white owners possess the *de facto* power to dictate the contents of the black Press in terms suitable to themselves, does not mean that they do so in practice. The early, African owned, newspapers were political and cultural rallying points for the tiny, educated black elite. Business interests were secondary to the didactic role of reflecting and articulating changes in the ideological positions of this particular, homogeneous social group. When Bertram Paver founded the *Bantu World*, these two roles switched in importance: business interests, to which Paver devoted most of his attentions, predominated, and didacticism, although still strong, came second.

In the late forties and early fifties, when advertising interest in the black Press developed, a further change came about. Advertising required mass-audiences, which an elitist publication like *Bantu World* was unable to deliver. The Bantu Press hegemony over the black Press was increasingly challenged by large-circulation publications like *Zonk*, *Drum*, and *Golden City Post*. But these, by aiming across class and geographic boundaries at heterogeneous audiences, sacrificed their role as ideological 'rallying points'. The mass-media aimed at the centre of their diverse market, preferring widely-accepted consensus ideas to contentious —

and therefore divisive — notions. Occasional breaches of this code — for example, the investigations by *Drum* magazine — roused sharp antagonism and were soon abandoned. Commercialisation changed the black Press from an intellectual vanguard into a follower of fashionable trends.

The ambivalent relationship between manufacturing and the black media was also a source of indirect pressure. Manufacturers were caught between two conflicting roles: employers of labour and marketers of goods. As advertisers, it was in their interests that the Press disseminate those ideas which were most likely to have the widest appeal to the most readers. But as employers of labour, it was in their interests that these ideas excluded any notions which might disrupt labour peace or threaten the general interests of industry. This did not mean that there was a direct, 'bully-boy' relationship between advertisers and the Press. But it did mean that publishers, forced to compete for limited advertising revenue, were required to deftly balance the preferences of capital (their advertisers) against those of labour (their readers). Not surprisingly, they adopted policies of low-keyed caution. Publications emphasised their commitment to black causes by involving themselves in welfare appeals, but these 'good works' were invariably apolitical. Entertainment became a priority and there was a change in emphasis from issues which were considered important to issues which were considered to have 'audience appeal'.

For their themes, editors tapped the same sources in existing 'popular culture' as did the advertisers. Social aspirations were expressed in stories about blacks 'making it', heroes, sports and entertainment stars. 'Civilisation' was expressed in articles about education, 'high' culture and religion. The American cult in particular saturated the media, from its prose style to its choice of subject matter: American music, American fashions, American sporting and intellectual leaders. Another theme with its roots in the everyday township experience was crime, particularly crime by gangsters. Gangsters were presented as the township dweller's chief enemy, yet their anti-establishment behaviour seems likely to have provided a vicarious fascination for readers.

The amount of advertising revenue apportioned to the black media never reached the heights which propagandists for the African market expected. Yet the meagre extent of marketing support, far from reducing advertising's influence, made the black Press all the more vulnerable. In the fifties, when competition was at its fiercest, the Bantu Press organisation closed down several 'deadwood' titles and threw their flagship, *World*, into a frenzy of typographical, stylistic and contents changes designed to stave off its rivals. Editorial and marketing functions became increasingly intertwined and technical skills designed to increase sales — such as more sophisticated layout, more dramatic photography and more accessible prose — became paramount. The old-style, usually black, 'political' editor was increasingly shouldered aside by technical experts, usually white.

The professional practices of commercial journalists had their own effects upon

the kind of news which was printed. The need to produce a constant, relatively fixed amount of news for each issue, gave rise to the notion of 'news sense' — an informal, organising ideology designed to impose some kind of order upon the seeming chaos of the outside world. News sense was a set of preconceptions about how the 'world outside' worked. Events would be slotted into an ideological sorting system to determine their relative 'news values'. News sense was shaped partly by the marketing requirements of competing newspapers, partly by organisational imperatives such as deadlines, and partly by prevailing commonsense notions about how society functioned. The 'real world' tended to be understood in individualistic terms, with social conflicts the result of personal differences between actors in the melodrama of life. News came to be understood in terms of events rather than ideas, and issues which promised 'action' were preferred to those which could offer only introspection. Thus there was more coverage of the 'disturbances' which resulted from political actions than, for example, the often lengthy political debates which preceded them. The uncertain nature of news resulted in an almost fawning reliance upon 'trusted' sources and a wariness of 'dubious' sources. Trusted sources included the opinions of other newspapers and the statements of prominent people, particularly state officials. The opinions of unknown people, or of members of 'fringe groups', were treated dismissively. The result, in the black Press, was a schizoid split between an openly stated suspicion of Government policies, and an implicit willingness to accept official interpretations of events, as, for example, demonstrated in the coverage of Sharpeville.

The black Press was born out of the need for a medium to articulate and propagate black aspirations. But its history has been circumscribed by the pressures of both capital and the State to incorporate blacks into the market system, firstly as labour and secondly as consumers. The resulting changes in the nature of the reading public and in the relationship between the media and their audience, have transformed that original purpose. Yet the irony has been that, despite all the alterations in ownership, purpose and style, the essential message of the black Press has not changed substantially. The Press began as the voice of the black bourgeoisie seeking no more than their place in a free-enterprise society, and it has continued to articulate those same 'moderate' ideas to this day. The net effect of commercialisation upon the politics of the black Press has not been change, but resistance to change. The script has been rewritten, but the mouthpiece of the people is still reciting the same lines.

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