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The Rand Daily Mail and the 1976 Soweto Riots. An examination of the tradition of Liberal journalism in South Africa as illustrated by The Rand Daily Mail coverage of the Soweto uprising on June 6 1976

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The *Rand Daily Mail (RDM)* was arguably one of the most influential and important English newspapers in South African history. It was held in high esteem internationally for its pioneering reportage of African issues and the way it dealt with these. At home it met with mixed opinions. Many saw it as a prime example of the strengths of liberal journalism in South Africa. Others felt it illustrated the limitations of liberal journalism within the country.

The main aim of this thesis is to evaluate whether either of these perspectives adequately captures the nature of the *RDM* and the form and context of its news coverage.

Newspapers are, by definition, complex entities and although a newspaper, as a business organisation, is constructed of a number of departments including editorial, managerial, advertising and administration, the main focus of this thesis will be to investigate the nature of journalism at the *RDM* within the editorial department, but the research will not look at this department in isolation from the rest of the organisation and will remain sensitive to the impact other departments, management and owners had on this department and its policies.

Furthermore, it is not possible to cover the editorial department's entire history. One key moment in the history of South Africa and the newspaper – the 1976 Soweto Uprising - will therefore be used to evaluate and demonstrate how the newspaper operated. This period will also be used to test the actions of the *RDM*'s editorial staff against their claimed beliefs and practices.

The professed aim of the *RDM,* starting in 1958, was to be a liberal newspaper. It did not believe that apartheid held any merit and set itself the task of speaking out vociferously against the notion and its practice. Shortly after his appointment as editor in October 1957 Laurence Gandar set about making the newspaper more relevant to its readers. He is quoted as saying:

> "Apartheid is meaningless because it cannot, on the highest admission, bring separation to the economic sphere. Apartheid is unrealistic because it is geared to a timetable that will be surely and completely overtaken by events. Apartheid is a sham because there is no evidence of any willingness to face the sacrifices it involves. Apartheid is unworkable because it is set to run counter to the massed forces of world opinion and the tides of contemporary human progress,"(Gandar in Pogrund 2000: 53).

The *RDM*'s supporters claim it lived up to this ideal in the crusading role it played in offering more balanced and varied news than its contemporaries. It was held up as a model of liberal journalism. In this thesis the researcher will look at whether this is a true reflection of the newspaper's practice in terms of its internal organisation of values and its news coverage.

Also to be examined is the strongly-articulated opposing view, that, while the newspaper attempted to be liberal it was in fact an example of the way liberal journalism failed in 1970s South Africa.

Several key areas must be examined in this thesis. These include:

- **Staffing** – how were the black staff treated by their white bosses and contemporaries, were they given any training which would allow them to aspire to higher positions at the newspaper and if so how well was this training conducted?
- **Working conditions** – what were the working conditions at the *RDM*? Did conditions differ for different racial groups? How were complaints dealt with and negative situations remedied?
- **Government-imposed laws** – how stringently did the government impose restrictive laws? What were the ramifications of contravening these laws? How did the *RDM* deal with these laws? To what extent can the newspaper be accused of hiding behind these laws to avoid doing what the black majority saw as the "right thing" in accordance with the struggle?
- **Liberalism** – was the newspaper a successful working example of a liberal newspaper? How true was the newspaper to the values of liberalism and the values the newspaper claimed to believe in? Was there a place for liberal journalism in South Africa in the 1970s and, if so, how did the newspaper practise liberal journalism and how did the public respond to this style of journalism?
- **Soweto Uprising** - what does the newspaper's coverage of the 1976 Soweto Uprising reveal about the nature of the *RDM*?

Finally, in looking at these areas, the overriding question "How did the *RDM* perform during the time under review?" must be answered taking, into account the various

elements mentioned above.

1.1 Liberalism

To fully appreciate the work of the *RDM* one must start with a firm grasp of the concept of "liberal journalism".

In the abundance of literature on the notion of liberalism, one overriding definition becomes apparent – the need for individual freedom and democratic reforms within society. This necessarily extends to a search for equality across all groups, irrespective of race, gender or creed. Amid the myriad definitions of liberalism are the central tenets of equality for all and the freedom of everyone to be educated, speak on their own behalf and have their ideas and beliefs heard by those in power.

Each theorist consulted sets out liberalism, and by extension liberal journalism, as a slightly different idea of the central notion of equality. Leatt et al (1986) contend that there is no simple definition of the term because it is such a multifaceted idea. For this reason, what appears below is the working definition used in this thesis to test the *RDM*'s policies and actions, rather than a comprehensive definition of the term in all its aspects.

At the core of the definition given by Marquard (1965) is the idea that liberty is the ability to do anything the individual desires, as long as this does not interfere with the free will of others and their ability to carry out their desired actions. All members of society must be allowed to enjoy the same rights in equal proportions and practicing these should not infringe on another's rights or dignity.

In addition Marquard (1965) states all citizens have a right, either personally or through a chosen representative, to play a part in the making of laws and how these are applied. Laws should apply equally to all citizens and each person should receive the benefits of education and the materials and opportunities necessary to make the most of this education. He adds: "Law should be the same for all whether it protects or punishes," (Marquard 1965: 3).

Gray (1995) takes the definition of the quest for liberty for all a step further. "Liberty involves more than having the legal right to act. It signifies, primarily and centrally,

having the resources and opportunities to act so as to make the best of one's life," (Gray 1995: 36).

Looking to South Africa, one can consult Leatt et al (1986: 63) who contend: "South African liberals share with others certain convictions, among them the beliefs that: all men share a common humanity; differences between men are secondary. Man is viewed optimistically; as naturally good, capable of and responsible for shaping his own destiny." The individual is the basic unit of social analysis. Rights of individuals should not be overshadowed by the community.

This is particularly important in South Africa where the rights of non-whites were completely discarded in favour of white rights. In a country like South Africa where everyday living was charged with racial tension, it is natural that the people saw race as a central issue to be dealt with in every facet of life.

1.2 Liberal Journalism

With an understanding of liberalism, one can look at the place of liberal journalism. Curran (in Curran and Seaton 1997) feels the liberal press acts as a two-way communication between the government and the governed. It also fulfils other supplementary roles of articulating the agreed aims and values of society, helping a community adapt and change, and protecting members of the public from wrongdoing or exploitation.

The democratic role of the liberal press is to act as a check on the state, to monitor the State's activities and to expose human rights violations being committed by those in authority. Curran (Curran in Curran and Gurevitch 2000: 123) believes: "State should be the main target of media scrutiny because the State has a monopoly on legitimated violence, and is therefore the institution to be most feared."

Krugman (2000: no page) believes "liberal journalists come up through the newsroom ranks, a culture that demands a show of intellectual independence from politicians" showing liberal journalism requires the ability of newspapers and journalists to remain independent from external pressures in order to uncover the truth. It requires that those involved make their own decisions, based on the facts presented to them, no matter what

the government of the day would have them publish.

Supporting this is Skjerdal (2001) who comments the root of liberal journalism lies in the idea that the liberal media "enjoys full independence from the government. A full-grown libertarian system encourages the press to challenge official government policies," (Skjerdal 2001: no page).

1.3 Liberal Journalism in South Africa and at the *RDM*

Looking to a South African context, Matthews (in Rich 1993: 92) "stresses the role of co-operation between whites and blacks, in furtherance of the multi-racial goal". Matthews (in Rich 1993: 92) believes this is a more active notion than that of racial integration, which implies a passiveness, which sees events happening to the individual instead of the individual consciously participating in his own destiny. This co-operation, according to Matthews (in Rich 1993), appealed to South African liberals during apartheid as it sanctioned action against a government whose ideology ensured this co-operation could not take place. By creating a huge void between races it was impossible for people to share a single view of government across the colour-line.

At the core of liberalism in the press is the belief in individual thought and freedom of expression, with everything else following on from these. The state exists for the protection of its people, and as such is charged with doing what is in the best interest of every citizen. This is important to note in a South African context were the apartheid era government constantly put the state before the people, offering the majority of people no rights to personal protection. In this setting it is natural that all citizens were obsessed with racial relations and the racial divide created by the government. This made the task of the liberal press all the more important.

Potter (1975) believes liberalism incorporates the belief in the press enjoying maximum independence from the government, which allows it to provide an arena for political debate with all political parties and community groups being given the chance to be heard and their ideas considered. This is the only way the press can be an effective conduit for communication between government and society.

Having looked at aspects of liberalism and the liberal press one must devise a succinct definition of the term which can easily be used to measure the work of the *RDM*.

The role of the liberal press is to be an entity separate from and independent of the government so that it can act as a check on the state. It exists to monitor the state and report to the people the actions of the government, both positive and negative, which will affect citizen's lives. It must keep the people informed. The press should also be an arena for debate between political parties, a space where people can state their views without the fear of negative repercussions. However, far from being out of contact with the government, the liberal press should serve as a means of communication between the people and those running the country.

1.4 Literature

In looking at the available literature the researcher primarily considered two diverse points of view, both of which discuss the actions of the *RDM* during this crucial period (1976). The main criticism used is Petersmann's 1997 Masters thesis in which she strongly criticises the English press in South Africa. While she has a number of positive points to make about their conduct during the 1970s, her overriding sentiment is that the press failed the people. A close reading of her work dealing specifically with the *RDM* shows her as rather critical of how the newspaper handled itself during this period.

Many of Petersmann's critiques were born from and supportive of criticisms levelled at the English press by those who testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Media Hearings (TRCMH). She writes from the perspective of a white European academic who studied in South Africa but did not live in the country for very long. Although she had a thorough understanding of the country and the concept of life during apartheid, she did not live in the country during apartheid and therefore no practical experience and only an academic knowledge of the country at that time. Her (Petersmann 1997) thesis was written from a point of view of asking questions and investigating the press in hindsight, her understanding gleamed from analyses written in retrospect.

This led to a thesis, which had, as it's only first hand information data gained in the interviews she conducted. Rather she looks mainly to testimonies given at the TRCMH for her information.

While she makes many valid points in her work, several observations seem incongruous with the facts and the manner in which articles appeared in the *RDM*. These differences will be closely examined in this thesis.

On the opposite side of the spectrum are members of the journalistic fraternity who served on the *RDM* during the 1970s. Pogrund (2000) and Sparks (1990) are, to a large extent, extremely positive about the actions of the *RDM* and the role it played in educating the people about each other. They also believe it reported what was going on in the country in a more fair and balanced manner than any of the other newspapers being printed at the time. However, one must remember these men, having been on the newspaper's staff, are predisposed to defend the newspaper against attack. They could be perceived as being obliged to endorse their own work. While these men have an insider's eye one must consider the possibility of their memories and words being tainted by their loyalty to and a vested interest in, the newspaper being seen favourably.

Pogrund's perspective is born of having served on the newspaper for a number of years. He was also assigned the role of educator in Boston, USA, during 1976 when he was asked to interpret and explain for the benefit of the general American public the events of June 16 and how they were covered. His involvement with the *RDM* may have clouded some of his objectivity when writing about the newspaper and the state of journalism in South Africa. Sparks (1990) speaks from the vantage point of having been one of the newspaper's last editors and therefore has a personal interest in having the newspaper retain its (mostly) positive image.

Like Pogrund (2000) and Sparks (1990) is Mervis (1989) also comes out in favour of the *RDM*, praising the manner in which it was run and defending it against many of the criticisms it had to endure. He has first hand knowledge of the media industry in South Africa. He worked on the *Sunday Express* in the 1930s before moving to the *RDM* where he was a sub-editor from 1939. In 1956 he became editor of the *Sunday Times* where he worked until his retirement in 1975. He too has a vested interest in the newspaper being seen in a positive light and, like the other staff members quoted, may have changed his views of what was done in order to ensure the newspaper continues to be considered positively.

Having looked at the views of people who served on the newspaper one can also see the positive manner in which some academics and other authors have viewed the *RDM*. In contrast to Petersmann, herself an academic, Jackson (1993) is a white academic writing what he describes as a criticism of the South African press and the conditions under which newspapers were printed. His work is based solely on library research. The text does however give the *RDM* a favourable glow when assessing many of the criticisms levelled against it and the English press by other authors.

1.5 Methodology

With a grasp of existing literature, the researcher looked at three other qualitative sources of information: the transcripts from the TRCMH, interviews with people who worked at the *RDM* and content analyses of stories which appeared in the newspaper between January 1, 1976 and June 30, 1976.

1.5.1 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Media Hearings

The TRCMH is a major source of information on the period under review. It is also a major source of debate and gives rise to a number of critical considerations. It is a key source through which the press can be examined and shaped many of the interview questions used in this thesis.

Jeffery (1999 in Enslin no date) contends that there is some debate on whether the TRC revealed the truth and functioned to foster reconciliation between the races. The commission has been criticised for its reliance on unverified statements made in applications for amnesty and on unsubstantiated statements made by victims, few of them given under oath or tested under cross-examination. However, whether it served either of these functions, according to its supporters, the TRC offered victims an opportunity to tell their stories which served as a catharsis, enabling many to put their past behind them and move forward.

Criticisms sited in the TRCMH transcripts included the idea that the laws of the time were in fact not as restrictive as newspapers claimed. Rather it was felt by some that the *RDM* hid behind government legislation, using it as an excuse not to publish information, denying South Africans their right to information. Those testifying assert that the *RDM*

had a responsibility to challenge the government and give its downfalls sufficient exposure. However it was felt the newspaper did not do this vociferously enough. Critics further contended the *RDM* failed to expose human rights atrocities taking place in the name of government-sanctioned laws.

Many who testified either wanted amnesty for their actions during the apartheid period and sought a scapegoat to blame, or were people with a newfound freedom in a democratic country playing political games. That anyone could be called upon to testify, even at the risk of revealing self-incriminating information, made many eager to move attention from themselves onto other individuals and groups. This could have lead to some of those testifying giving inaccurate declarations, to divert attention from themselves. This would suggest not all of what was said about the media – both positive and negative memories of the newspaper – where a true reflection of the work done by the *RDM* during the period under review.

This does not deny the TRCMH elicited valid criticisms but it must be remembered that the hearings took place during an extremely politically-charged period in South African history which could have impinged on the validity of the arguments presented. These must be questioned in assessing the legitimacy of denigration emerging from these proceedings.

While not part of the TRCMH, it is prudent to mention the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) under this heading. The commission seeks to act as a watchdog for, among others, the South African media and while it does speak to the media and its role in society it has not been used to inform this thesis for a number of reasons. One of the most important reasons is the fact that its main area of concentration is with the media in the present, looking at how to eliminate discrimination in the current media climate and moving into the future of the South African press rather than concentrating on the past. It has also said relatively little about the South African press in the 1970s and what has been said to this commission was covered in greater detail and with far more attention during the TRCMH. As the TRCMH gave a great deal of attention to the media during the apartheid era this information was seen to be more important than and inclusive of everything relevant said by the SAHRC, rendering SAHRC of little value to this work.

1.5.2 Content analysis

The researcher also used content analysis of stories appearing in the newspaper between January 1, 1976 and June 30, 1976. According to Lather (in Kvale 1996: 227) textual (content) analysis "demystifies via a hermeneutics of suspicion; it seeks deep truth underlying the hegemonic discourse of the texts."

Information gained from this process was used to assess the context of liberal journalism and the place it played in South Africa at the time of the Soweto Uprising.

Articles which appeared before the uprising and discuss the situation at schools in Soweto were examined as well as some of the articles in which prominent black community members spoke out about the impending action which blacks would be forced to take should the situation not improve. Most of these stories cover the language issue and actions resulting from the implementation of the 50-50-language law, which was added to the Bantu Education Act. All articles relating to the uprising and published between June 16 and June 30, 1976 were used in analysing the manner in which the *RDM* covered the events of June 16.

The strength of examining the newspaper is that it is the only true record of what appeared in its pages during this crucial period. These texts cannot be changed by politics or the wishes of those who worked on the newspaper. They are a static record of how news was covered and entertain no argument. The weakness of studying these stories is that it is impossible to know for certain what was rewritten or cut out before being printed and what stories simply did not appear.

Theorists including Baker (1994), Babbie and Mouton (2001), Lewis-Beck (1994) and Krippendorff (1980) agree content analysis is "a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text. These inferences are about the sender(s) of the message, the message itself, and the audience," (Lewis-Beck 1994: 25). It is a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context," (Krippendorff 1980: 21).

"Content analysis is objective: it stipulates that each step in the research process must be carried out on the basis of explicitly formulated rules and procedures. Content analysis

must possess generality, which requires that the findings must have theoretical relevance" (Baker 1994: 268). It must say something about the time in which the content was produced Palmquist (in Babbie and Mouton 2001: 491) expands on this contending: "by examining the presence or repetition of certain words and phrases in these contexts, a researcher is able to make inferences about the philosophical assumptions of a writer, a written piece, and even the culture and time in which the text is embedded."

In applying content analysis, the researcher needs to set objective categories for coding data, which will, in future examinations, prove to be both reliable and valid. These should at a simplistic level ensure that the same results would be derived from the same data using the same method if the data were to be coded a second time or by a second coder.

The design of the research method must be decided upon at the onset, with the researcher deciding on the time frame from which the data will be drawn, the questions which need answering and the context in which they should be answered. For the purpose of this research the *RDM* and the English press during 1976 is the context within which the research and therefore the content analysis took place. According to Krippendorff (1980) the research design accounts for the manner in which the data is obtained, what is done to it during the analysis and provides others with instructions on how to replicate the results.

The researcher must decide on a method of sampling before setting out to code data. In considering sampling the researcher has elected to study data pertaining to issues of interest to the black community, which appeared in all editions between January 1, 1976 and June 30, 1976.

Categories into which data will be coded must be decided upon and rules for their use must be laid down to inform other coders of the parameters within which the results of this study were conducted. Following this, coding can begin, followed by the task of assessing coded data and making inferences from it. This is the pivotal reason for conducting content analysis and allows the data to be related to the overall research questions.

"Categories should reflect the purpose of the research, be exhaustive, be mutually exclusive, independent and be derived from a single classification" (Holsti 1969: 95). Krippendorff (1980) asserts that after inferences have been made the researcher needs to

summarise the data and represent it so that others can better comprehend the data, its interpretation and analysis. All inferences must test the rational hypothesis of the research question.

The research design pertaining to this study will be set out in Chapter 5 which will discuss the *RDM* at work in an examination of the newspaper as an example of liberal journalism.

In looking at reliability and validity Baker (1994) asks whether the coding addresses the research questions and whether the scheme will fairly extract the meaning from the data. In assessing the validity of research it is imperative that the process measures what it is meant to measure.

A reliable procedure, by Krippendorff's (1980: 150) account, should "yield the same set of results from the same set of phenomena, regardless of the circumstances of application". Such data should meet three criteria - stability, reproducibility and accuracy. In saying that data analysis is stable one expects that a single coder will get the same results from coding the data twice. If results are to be reproducible two coders should get the same results using the same data and method in varying circumstances and at different times. The accuracy of results speaks to the degree to which a process functionally conforms to a known standard.

In addressing validity and making inferences from the data, Lewis-Beck (1994) notes it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent. To establish consistency different people should code the text in the same manner, using the same method and guidelines to achieve the same results. "Validity designates that quality of research results which leads one to accept them as indisputable fact," (Krippendorff 1980: 155).

Content analysis has several advantages, making it a beneficial research tool in various types of communication and the manner in which the message impacts on the audience. Lewis-Beck (1994: 252) comments that one of the advantages of this methods include:

> "Communication is a central aspect of social interaction and content analysis procedures operate directly on text or transcripts of human communications. Documents of various kinds exist over long periods of time. Culture indicators generated from each such series of documents constitute reliable data that may span even centuries. Content analysis usually yields unobtrusive measures in which

> neither the sender nor the receiver of the message is aware that it is being analysed. Hence there is little danger that the act of measurement itself will act as a force for change that confounds the data."

Holsti (1969) believes that this is a valuable research tool even in instances where the researcher has direct access to the subject. He says, interviews necessarily place the interviewee in an artificial environment. This, coupled with the knowledge that one is being studied, could alter aspects of the behaviour or facts about the event being studied, thereby negatively affecting the results and calling their validity into question. Content analysis is also useful as a supplementary source of data, in this case as backup to and a means of confirming information given in the interviews, as it offers a line of validation, which is independent of the subject.

1.5.3 Interviews

Kvale (1996) describes the interviewing process as a conversation, which gives the interviewer a chance to find out how people understand their world and their life. "The researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words, learns about their views on their work situation and family life, their dreams and hopes," (Kvale 1996: 1). The purpose of this is to understand the world of the interviewee as they see it, taking into consideration their perception of self, life and their experiences.

Interviews were conducted with nine people who worked on the *RDM*. Raymond Louw was the editor in 1976. Patrick Laurence (political reporter) and Gordon Amos (sports reporter) were both on his staff in June 1976. Gavin Stewart and Benjamin Pogrund were not on staff in June 1976 but had been in the employ of the newspaper until December 1975 and May 1976 respectively. They have been included in this research because both have a wealth of knowledge about the newspaper and its *Township Extra*. Since the primary research area was the exploration of liberal journalism and the idea of the *RDM* as a working paradigm of liberal journalism, the researcher decided the benefits of using their interviews far outweighed any disadvantages resulting from the fact that they did not work at the newspaper during the uprising.

Stewart lives in East London and the researcher e-mailed the questions to him for comment. He answered these and e-mailed them back to the researcher. Pogrund resides in

Jerusalem, Israel. The researcher e-mailed the questions to him. He recorded his answers onto audiotape and posted these back.

Black staff interviewed were journalists Doc Bakitsha, John Mojapela, Gabu Tugwana and photographer Peter Magubane. All worked at the newspaper during the period under review.

Those interviewed present an even spread of black and white journalists. However, they were all well regarded by their colleagues and the journalism fraternity and represent some of the best the newspaper had to offer. While this sample does not encompass everyone who could have shed light on the newspaper's actions during 1976, the researcher believes that this is a knowledgeable sample of people and therefore a useful group to use. These men were chosen because they were prominent and accessible. The fact that most agreed on salient points led the researcher to believe these views would be the same or similar beliefs held by other people who could have interviewed. This is seen to be true if one looks to the work of Petersmann (1997) where her interviewees held similar views to interviewees quoted in this thesis.

Another weakness of interviews, which must be addressed, is that memories fade and change over time and interview material may not be true to the reality of 1976. This is, however, countered to a degree by the fact that most of those interviewed gave the same answers to many of the questions regardless of race.

During interviews, open-ended questions were used to gain an overall impression from each participant with more specific questions being drawn from previous answers or from themes brought up by the participant during interviews.

These took the form of descriptive questions to enable the researcher to gain information about the event and its coverage as the interviewees saw it. Descriptive questions allowed the researcher to ascertain the degree and accuracy with which each person remembered the period. "In addition it [descriptive interviewing] is regarded as a non-threatening strategy because the interviewer is not probing for specific answers but allowing the informant to take control of the information," (Minichiello et all 1990: 121).

Once descriptive questions were asked, making use of similar questions for each participant, specific questions based on race and particular involvement in covering the riots were explored.

Contrast questions which "enable informants to make comparisons of situations and events within their world and to discuss the meanings of situations," (Minichiello et all 1990: 122) were then asked. These helped the researcher explore personal themes and meaning and how an event and writing about it or photographing it affected the individual. This also allowed the researcher to explore the idea of race making a difference in how people saw and wrote about the events of June 1976.

In all interviews a question schedule was used to examine several topics and themes. Each person was asked most of the questions but some were slightly altered during the interview to expand answers to questions already given or to clarify meaning. Others were omitted as they were deemed irrelevant to that person or had already been addressed in a previous answer.

Questions were designed to look at two aspects of the study. These were to test criticisms and comments made against the newspaper, and to examine liberal journalism and whether or not the *RDM* was a liberal newspaper.

Except where stated above, all interviews were taped with the consent of participants. This was done so the interviewer could be involved in the dialogue, which contained detail that would be valuable to the research and would not be captured if the researcher were to take only written notes. "The more complex the information, the less the method should depend upon the interviewer's memory. The more we wish to explore for unanticipated types of responses … the more we should use a tape recorder which omits nothing and allows the relevance of the responses to be decided later" (Gorden 1969: 177). All tapes were then transcribed verbatim.[1]

Gorden (1969) suggests the interviewer should transcribe the tapes to ensure fewer mistakes. When tapes are not entirely clear it is easier for the interviewer, rather than a

[1] Verbatim transcripts of all interviews can be found in appendix B.

stranger, to recall what was said and fill in the missing words without changing the meaning or facts of the answer. The researcher did the transcriptions and took brief written notes during interviews, which were used in cases where tape clarity was a problem.

1.5.4 Reliability and Validity of interview transcripts

Gorden (1969) states that the improvement of reliability and validity of the information obtained should be the central aims of data gathering for the purposes of research. Interviewees in this case have had almost 30 years to formulate their beliefs about the work of the *RDM*, how they were treated at the newspaper and their work environment as well as their thoughts about the English language press of 1976 in general. It is therefore conceivable they would express the same opinions and responses if asked the same questions by an independent researcher with no knowledge of the results generated in this study.

Kvale (1996) suggests that in order to test the reliability of interview transcripts the interviewer and another person, who is not involved in and has no knowledge of the research, should transcribe the same piece of taped material. These can be compared and the accuracy of the transcriptions can be verified using the differences and re-listening to the tape to check which of the scripts' differences are incorrect.

In the case of this research, a control transcriber reproduced the beginning of Raymond Louw's interview and this was compared to the researcher's script. The comparison showed nine differences[2] in a passage of 158 words. The researcher believes this shows the transcripts are a fair and realistic reproduction of the interviews and can be considered as reliable.

"By validity we mean the extent to which we are able to observe or measure that which we intend to observe or measure" (Gorden 1969: 40). This research sought to examine specific issues relating to the press of 1976 and questions were structured to guide interviewees into talking about these. In addition, newspaper articles detailing the Afrikaans language issue at secondary schools and reports on the Soweto Uprising were analysed.

[2] This comparison can be found at the end of Appendix B: Interviews.

Kvale (1996) contends that ascertaining the validity of interview transcripts is far more difficult than checking their reliability. He states that when transcribing from an oral language, with its own set of rules, to written language which has a different set of rules, it is necessary to decided what type of transcription is most useful for the purposes of the investigation and gaining as much knowledge from the interviews as possible which will be of use in the research and further the goals of the study. For the purpose of this research the words used to describe the events and situations are important. For this reason only the words, not tone, body language and tension were recorded in the transcripts.

Rogers (in Millar et al 1992: 181) contends that in checking validity one must remember that an interview, conducted using an interview plan, "Aims at providing us with a simple but scientifically-defensible assessment system." Through the use of the plan one can see whether the interview does in fact shed light on the themes and questions it set out to test.

In assessing these interviews it must be remembered, on the whole, all interviewees were exposed to the same questions and themes. In testing the validity of interview data these interviews conform to Fowler and Mangione's (in Millar et al 1992: 181) contention that the goal of standardisation across these interviews would be that: "each respondent be exposed to the same question experience, and that the recording of answers be the same, too, so that any differences in answers can be correctly interpreted as reflecting differences between respondents rather than differences in the process that produced the answers."

1.6 Chapter breakdown

The remainder of this thesis will be divided as follows:

Chapter 2: The *RDM* - This chapter looks at the history of the newspaper and the challenges the staff faced working on a newspaper which was necessarily both a public source of news and a business which sought to be profitable.

Chapter 3: Critiques of the *RDM* - Criticisms levelled against the newspaper are grouped into the most prevalent clusters and laid out in this chapter for in-depth examination in later chapters.

Chapter 4: How valid were these critiques? - This chapter examines the criticisms presented in chapter 3 and discusses how valid these were in relation to the editorial department of the *RDM*.

Chapter 5: The *RDM* in action - This chapter examines the *RDM* as a working example of liberal journalism. The researcher assesses the work of the newspaper during the 1976 Soweto Uprising and how this compared to claims editorial staff made about the way they covered news.

Chapter 6: Conclusion – This chapter examines, in light of the evidence presented, whether the newspaper was an example of successful liberal journalism and to what extent this was so**.**

CHAPTER 2: THE *RAND DAILY MAIL*

In understanding how the *RDM* covered events during the apartheid era, one must have an understanding of the newspaper and how it was run. This chapter offers a brief look into the history and workings of the newspaper including a look at the three main entities which affected what was published in the newspaper – the editorial department, advertising department and the managers and owners of the newspaper.

The *RDM* was started in June 1902 by Harry Freeman Cohen with London *Daily Mail* journalist Edgar Wallace as editor. It was bought by Sir Abe Bailey in 1905 and operated as part of the private company, The Rand Daily Mails Ltd until 1955.

For many years the *RDM* worked in harmony with, but separate from, the Sunday Times Syndicate and the Argus Company. In 1920 these three newspapers entered an agreement not to publish any newspapers in competition with each other. This agreement was still in place in 1960. Over the preceding 40 years the triad had purchased opposition newspapers in a bid to oust all competition. In 1955 the South African Associated Newspapers (SAAN) was formed when the Rand Daily Mails Ltd and the Sunday Times Syndicate merged. This merger left SAAN in control of the daily and Sunday morning newspapers. Argus controlled afternoon newspapers.

Appearing for the first time on September 22, 1902, the newspaper's first editions subscribed to and supported the beliefs of mine owners. According to Mervis (1989) these early editions supported a racist view that whites should be given preference for jobs. Blacks were not seen to exist as ordinary people and featured in the newspaper only in so far as they caused division amongst whites.

However, this stance changed with the appointment of Laurence Gandar as editor in 1958 when he radically altered the newspaper's conservative and racist editorial policy. Gandar's policy was against everything the National Party (NP) stood for and he embarked on a crusade to have all members of South African society represented in the newspaper. This included not only writing about issues which affected black people but also meant hiring the newspaper's first black journalists, Laurence Mayekiso and Sidney Hope and the inclusion of the *Township Extra* in the early 1960s. According to Pollak (1983), by 1978 one quarter of the *RDM* employees were black. It was also during this

period that the newspaper stopped using the term Native and began referring to black South Africans as Africans, the term preferred by them.

Talking about Gandar, Mervis (1989: 338) comments: “His crusade against race discrimination and injustice was conducted with an intensity and on a scale not matched by any other newspaper in South Africa. What he said jolted and irritated many South Africans, but it needed saying and he had the courage to say it loud and clear”.

Extending this view Manoim (1983: 199) claims: “Until 1956, the *Mail* hade been a conservative newspaper, aimed at the white petty bourgeoisie”. He adds when Gandar was made editor in 1958 he was given a brief to change the newspaper’s image, “his policy was to make the *Mail* upmarket, particularly in its politics, which became the most liberal of any white newspaper in the country, advocating unfettered black advancement within a capitalist system,” (Manoim 1983: 2000).

Added to this was the fact that he also changed the newspaper’s political alliance from the board-approved and -supported United Party (UP) to the newly formed Progressive Party (PP). This change of alliance to a party, which Gandar believed was more dedicated to equality for all, would set the tone for the newspaper’s future as a crusader for equality in South Africa. This was the prevailing tone until the newspaper’s death in April 1985.

“The *Mail* was South Africa’s best-known newspaper in the international community because of its long and admirable record as a champion of human rights and its readiness to voice black interests and perspectives” (Jackson 1993: 71). It offered a platform for views that may otherwise never have been printed and therefore remained unheard within the white community and in, Louw’s (Louw in Jackson 1993: 71) opinion, by airing opposing views the *RDM* “played a unique bridging role between blacks and whites in South Africa, serving as one of the few institutions in a segregated land where ideas and views could meet across the colour-line.”

“The *Mail*, together with the *Sunday Times*, was the pioneer of modern popular journalism in South Africa, bringing improvements in lay-out, more illustrations and cartoons, and more venturesome feature journalism” (Ainslie 1966: 45).

Commenting on the quality of the newspaper and the work done under Gandar's leadership, Percy Qoboza, (in Jackson 1993: 71) said: "the Mail was not just another newspaper, it was an institution, a courageous crusader for justice and peace. Far ahead of which public opinion, it gave us the courage to go on."

2.1 Editorial department

2.1.1 Editors

The editors at the *RDM* shaped the newspaper and were responsible for the newspaper's political allegiance to the PP. The most influential in setting the tone and carving national and international respect for the newspaper was Gandar, under whose leadership the *RDM* set an admirable example for other opposition newspapers in the country to emulate. The newspaper not only attracted flagging liberals and those who supported its anti-apartheid policy, it also served to irritate government and bring its shortcomings to the public's attention.

Tyson (1993: 35) contends "the newspaper was unashamedly political" but believes that politics were dealt with in an extremely professional manner, "winning the newspaper the respect of both the international community and South Africans opposed to the rigid regime in which they were forced to live".

The newspaper operated under the rule of an exclusively white parliament, but in declaring its support for the PP, the newspaper was supporting parliament's most radical and liberal sector. However, while the PP may have been radical it was not extra-parliamentary and still operated within a white world in which blacks were voiceless.

Expanding on Gandar's influence on the newspaper and the press as a whole, Tyson (1993: 393) says: "He also turned his newspaper into a crusading one, leading the English-language press into an era of investigative journalism, of lengthy but dramatic exposé-type articles such as the series on prison conditions". In leading this crusade, Gandar found himself pulled in opposite directions by his readers and advertisers, setting the scene for problems the newspaper would face until its death.

When Louw took over as editor in 1966 he not only inherited but fully supported Gandar's crusade to encourage liberty for all. However, the divide between readers and advertisers

grew even wider during his 10-year tenure, with advertisers becoming increasingly upset by the newspaper's refusal to turn its back on the black readers, which had swelled its circulation.

This crusade to represent all readers brought with it social, economic and managerial concerns which the editors had to overcome. Economically the newspaper was losing money as advertisers reduced the amount they were prepared to put into a newspaper, which seemed not to appeal sufficiently to their target audience[3]. The newspaper was losing white readers who felt they were being force fed too much news about blacks, their lives and problems.

Both of these problem areas led to a number of concerns being voiced by the newspaper's management who responsible for ensuring the business was profitable.

2.1.2 Editorial policy

In looking at the newspaper and the parts various departments played in its operation one must examine the understanding journalists had of the newspaper's editorial policy.

At the heart of this policy was Gandar's idea that a newspaper should support a non-racial society, sans a colour bar or segregation. He believed blacks should be given equal opportunities and should participate in the country's political system with the newspaper supporting a qualified franchise. "Apart from wanting to make the *Mail*, a better all-round newspaper in the straightforward professional sense I wanted it to become a beacon of light, an instrument of change, engine of reform," (Gandar in Pogrund 2000: 128).

Editorially, the newspaper's philosophy backed the notion of freedom for all and sought to report on a greater range of life in the country, exposing human rights abuses and reporting cases of colour discrimination.

> Gandar believed it "was absolutely essential to help keep up the spirits of the small embattled forces of liberal-minded people who might otherwise have been crushed, to demonstrate to blacks that there was at least one sizeable white institution that understood and was prepared to fight for the removal of their grievances, and to show the outside world that there were still some upholders of Western norms and values alive and kicking in South Africa" (Pogrund 2000: 129).

[3] Potter (1975) contends that by 1967 the newspaper had a 29.5 percent black readership with this figure increasing by 50 percent by 1968.

Practicing equality for all, Gandar hired the newspaper's first black reporters, Mayekiso and Hope, and by doing so expanded the *RDM*'s policy. The newspaper was now telling people about the lives of blacks as well as exposing their views first hand through the pens of black writers who lived among black readers and had personal knowledge of the effects of apartheid.

Looking at the editorial policy in the 1970s, Mojapelo's beliefs sum up the ideas most of those interviewed had of the *RDM'*s practices. He describes the editorial policy:

> "It was against the government policy, it was for the release of political prisoners. It was for holding talks with those who had been imprisoned for political business, those who had left the country and those who in one way or another had been silenced by the laws of the country and people who had been marginalized who were outside the political mainstream. And the newspaper was saying there had to be talks with them. The *RDM* clearly came out in support of the then opposition, " (Mojapelo 2003).

However, when looking at the policy of any newspaper one must remember editorial policies are not dictated purely by the editor and his staff. For many editors there is a degree of control exhibited by the managers and owners of the newspaper who may attempt to dictate the policy to ensure profitability of the business. This control is of vital importance in assessing whether or not the editorial being printed in the *RDM* in 1976 conformed to the concept of liberal journalism.

Giliomee (1982), lays down three ways in which management can interfere in what is printed in the newspaper. The first form of subtle control is informing the editor in private, preferably outside the editor's office, "that a certain line in the editorials or reporting gives rise to disagreement or discomfort. They may be advised that full exposure of certain events is bad for race relations and economic growth, and should be played down" (Giliomee 1982: 89). Louw was subjected to just such conversations.

During McPherson's tenure as chairman of the SAAN board he occasionally asked Louw into his office. Here in the company of the managing director, he would discuss certain stories, which had been run. These discussions included questions on why Louw's team had dealt with them in a certain way and given stories particular amounts of prominence. These meetings were always prefaced with a declaration that the board was looking for answers.

Louw (2003) describes this as post-facto interference. McPherson was not trying to stop Louw running stories, but was questioning the way stories were covered. He never rendered an opinion on the handling of stories or indicated whether the board was dissatisfied. Some of his colleagues suggested to Louw (2003) that this was McPherson's way of telling him these and similar stories were unacceptable and should not be printed in the future. Louw chose not to see these meetings in this light and continued to print the news.

Pogrund (2003) comments that once he became deputy editor he was questioned about the way stories were handled. The managing director would come into his office after a contentious piece had appeared and remark on the article. These remarks often alluded to the fact that the article could cause trouble but he was never directed not to print them. This was after-the-fact interference but Pogrund (2003) said he was unaware of any direct interference.

"In the second instance, control is exercised in the selection of an editor who is chosen because the management feels confident he will not step over the boundaries based on how he has previously conducted himself," (Giliomee 1982: 89).

This form of control was seen in the selection of Louw as editor. One of the primary reasons, according to Louw (2003), the board was amenable to Gandar's suggestion of Louw as editor was that he was known to be more interested in gathering news than in politics. The board felt he would be a less political leader and approved his appointment. Louw continued the line the newspaper had taken under Gandar's leadership and vociferously supported the idea of freedom and equality for all.

The third notion of subtle control is that of public support. "No newspaper can survive in the face of public opinion unless some tycoon or financial interest is prepared to subsidise losses in pursuit of self-aggrandisement, an ideological goal or a personal vendetta. If these factors are absent the circulation figures of a newspaper are the final arbiter," (Giliomee1982: 90).

This need to make the readers, and the newspaper's financial supporters, happy can be seen in a contract Gandar and Louw signed when they became editor-in-chief and editor

respectively. The document addressed the UP's concern that they were not getting enough coverage and committed the newspaper to recognising the UP, in addition to the PP, as an official opposition party. It stated the newspaper would give it more coverage. This was board interference as it was enforcing the belief that the UP should be better represented in the newspaper.

2.1.3 Views of liberal journalism

Liberal journalism is defined by those who worked at the *RDM* in various ways. The central tenets are of exercising social conscience, representing all South Africans and dealing with all racial groups in a fair manner - covering both the positive and negative aspects and actions of all groups. Those working on the newspaper set out to give all racial groups equal coverage.

Viewing the *RDM* as a liberal newspaper, one can look at its editions to extrapolate much about it. However, one must start by looking at how staff understood the ideas of liberalism and liberal journalism[4] in a quest to understand the work they did at the newspaper and the view they took of its ethics and policies. Stewart (2003) equates the term with what he knew as "investigative journalism", printing "some of the really strong stories of what apartheid meant". According to him, journalists saw their job as reflecting what was happening in the country and what the citizens were thinking, it was a matter of straight reporting and telling the truth as far as reporters were able to get and print it.

Pogrund (2003) defined the newspaper's job as "getting the newspaper to more clearly reflect the totality of South African existence". He described his role as writing about a largely neglected sector of the society and its existence.

Laurence (2004) gives a more textbook answer. "Liberal journalism functions within a paradigm of liberalism as a broad philosophy, which wants to maximise human rights, and with the maximisation of human rights expansion to the greatest possible limits of human development." In the case of the *RDM,* he notes, the newspaper was operating in a society tightly controlled by a government, which had a fanatical devotion to racial segregation.

[4] Liberal journalism was not a term used in 1976 but does label the type of journalism described by staff members.

Liberal journalism was a process of educating people about the world outside their narrow dogma.

Gray (1995) takes Laurence's definition a little further. "Individual freedom in the full sense involves having an opportunity for self-realisation. If certain resources, powers or abilities are needed for self-realisation to be effectively achieved, then having these resources must be considered part of freedom itself,"(Gray 1995: 36).

In short, whether they believe they subscribed to a policy of liberal journalism or not, these definitions are in accordance with the definition of liberal journalism laid out in chapter 1. According to Louw (2003) liberal journalism opens up a society, it gets access to and prints information. It is, in essence, the quest to access and publish all news about, and for, all members of the population. It also rejects suppression of information.

Gray (1995) adds to the quest for liberty for all. "Liberty involves more than having the legal right to act. It signifies having the resources and opportunities to act so as to make the best of one's life," (Gray 1995:36).

2.2 Advertising and Readership

In looking at where income was being lost, management turned immediately to the circulation figures and the dwindling number of white readers. Circulation, according to Pollak (1981) was at 129 068 in 1978, down from the figure of 137 363 quoted as the September 1976 circulation figure in Chimutengwende (1978).

If a newspaper is to sell it must offer the public what it wants, but the pertinent question here is "which public?" The *RDM* was faced with at least three broad and separate publics. It had to please the advertiser, white reader and black reader and in some instances had to choose to serve one more diligently than the others.

> "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," (Manoim 1983: 38).

As the lifeblood of the Press, advertisers want to reach large numbers of the correct type of readers for their advertising rand. This was one of the largest problems the *RDM* faced in

relation to advertising because it held no appeal for women, which in turn meant that retail and grocery stores were not inclined to advertise in the newspaper.

Both Gandar and Louw started their tenures as editor with the task of increasing circulation and black readers could not therefore be ignored or seen as the least important audience as they were the reason the newspaper's circulation increased, especially during 1976. According to Potter (1975) in 1967 male readers outnumbered women in all racial groups. Black readers accounted for 29.5 percent of the newspaper's readership and of this figure 85.1 percent were men. By 1968 the newspaper had seen a 50 percent increase in the number of black people reading it regularly. However, while circulation continued to increase, the number of whites reading the newspaper was going down.

According to two of the directors: "The problem with the *Rand Daily Mail* was that its readership profile had gone awry. It had too many black readers. It was too strident. It alienated whites, especially businessmen and housewives," (Mervis 1989: 510).

Many white readers did not like the newspaper's liberal slant and the fact that the newspaper raised issues and asked questions they would rather not think, read or hear about, issues which made them uncomfortable. Those white people who did buy the newspaper, especially businessmen, were seen to be buying it for its business coverage, not its editorial slant. As one such businessman commented: "It was not popular with whites. It was unnecessarily vitriolic and not prepared to concede the government's good moves," (Jackson 1993: 76).

"Many of his [Gandar] white readers showed their disapproval by not buying the newspaper or by not advertising in it. Superimposed on that trend was the dilemma of a board of directors struggling to find a way to reconcile the virtues of moral integrity with the reality of financial setbacks," (Mervis 1989: 340).

By 1985 readership was 70 percent black, and still lacked the white women-readers who so appealed to retail outlets and supermarkets. Advertisers prefer publications with clearly defined audiences, which correspond to their target markets and, as one advertising agency's media director summed up the problem, "The *Mail* was neither fish nor fowl. It

appealed to businessmen and blacks alike, only a few products, such as beer and cigarettes appealed to both areas," (Jackson 1993: 77).

As the number of black readers increased, and with them the circulation figures, advertising sales representatives contended that fewer advertisers were prepared to advertise in the newspaper, but the readers' colour was only one of the things causing a downward spiral in advertising.

An important consideration was that the newspaper did not have a dedicated sales staff. In Louw's (2003) opinion the newspaper needed a staff whose sole responsibility was to sell advertising space in the *RDM*, made up of people who were motivated to do so. The head office strategy of centralising the advertising sales rather than having representatives working directly for the *Mail* cost the newspaper money in lost revenue. It had to fight for advertising and was not as easy to sell as its SAAN sister, the *Sunday Times*. For this reason sales staff tended to encourage advertising in the publication that was easier to sell and would garner them greater commission for the least amount of effort, resulting in relatively little space being sold in the *RDM*.

Advertisements should have sustained the *RDM* as the newspaper operated in the largest market in the country and led the morning newspaper market in Johannesburg and the country. However, this was not the case and one of the main reasons was that, due to very little space given to editorial, there was incredibly little news in the newspaper.

In order to bring in more revenue and generate more editorial space, Louw suggested the advertising rate be changed. He recommended rates be put up to be in line with those of *The Star*. As he (Louw 2003) explained to management and the advertising department *The Star*'s rates at the time were R5 per single column centimetre against the *RDM*'s R3.40. Putting the rates up to R5 would bring in more revenue for the same amount of advertising. This would allow the adverts to be spread across more pages, generating more space, which could be utilised for news coverage. Acting on his recommendation, the advertising department increased the rates, giving more editorial space and circulation figures immediately began to soar.

According to Louw (2003) during the rest of his editorship the circulation increased

steadily at between 12 and 14 percent per year whereas other newspapers in the SAAN morning group were growing at between one and three percent. This, he believes, proves that the problem did not lie with the editorial policy. As soon as the editorial department got more space and therefore more news stories into its pages the newspaper became a much more attractive to the public.

There was another argument to be made for putting up the price of advertising – it would encourage agencies to book space on behalf of their clients. Agencies earned a 16.5 percent commission on all space booked and the lower the advertising rate the lower the commission. It was therefore far more attractive to book space in the newspaper with the higher rates. However, with the introduction of equalised rates agencies were not losing money by supporting the *RDM*. They could now encourage their clients to use the smaller newspaper where the adverts would be further forward in some cases and less likely to be lost among the stream of adverts in the larger newspaper. This led to a growth in advertising revenue as agencies booked *RDM* space.

The newspaper also became more popular as people began to buy it for its news content. When Louw took over as editor the sales of the newspaper had fallen to their lowest ever at 108 000. At the same time *The Star* was selling 160 000 copies a day. The *Mail* had, before the Prison case (of 1965 and detailed below in 2.4), been up to 122 000 but as a result of this and the newspaper's policies, circulation had dropped.

Louw (2003) felt the major problem the *RDM* faced was not its policies but its lack of news. The newspaper was running at between 24 and 28 pages while *The Star* was between 72 and 80 allowing it to cover more news and in far more depth. Because the newspaper was so thin the *RDM* either followed on from what had appeared in *The Star* or gave no coverage of events its rival printed. In Louw's (2003) opinion this lead to the *RDM* looking like an addition to *The Star.* To stop this perception and set the newspaper apart as an independent and separate publication he decided it had to start reporting news in a more in-depth manner. He told his staff that every story of significance had to run in the newspaper. "If *The Star* has run it we will not give it the same amount of space but we must give a mention to it or possibly take it further, explore it from a different, sometimes more in-depth angle," (Louw 2003). This he believed would ensure the newspaper ran all the news people wanted to read and would encourage more readers to read the *RDM*.

2.3 Owner and Management control

The main purpose of a newspaper is to make money. It is a business like any other with its primary objectives being to offer a product, which in turn generates revenue and makes the business profitable and by extension successful.

This success depends to a certain extent on how the business is managed. As Broughton (1961: 21) comments: "The balance of real power rests … with the owners, through their instruments, the business managers and directors".

Gandar and Louw were seemingly left to formulate their own editorial policy with little or no overt interference or guidance from the newspaper's managers. They were never told what could be published. Louw believes this style of management was not necessarily a good strategy. "The *Mail*'s culture, which involved 'hands off' management to the point where journalists had to manage themselves, was part cause of its downfall," (Louw in Tyson 1993: 373).

However, overt control was not the only manner in which the management could and did wield its power over the editor and his staff. The newspaper's editorial team operated under a board and management which was increasingly worried about the financial bottom line and, as losses grew, management started to reign in the editorial department, attempting to curb their spending and attract a larger white readership.

2.4 The Prisons stories and trial

Interference from the newspaper's owners and management was exacerbated by the government's attempts to dictate what should appear in the media and to silence journalists on matters, which it did not want the public to know about.

Unhappy with these attempts to silence the press the newspaper did its utmost to ensure that the public was informed about what was happening in the country. To this end it ran a series of articles written by *RDM* journalist Benjamin Pogrund and a colleague from *Golden City Post*, Obed Musi detailing the conditions in which prisoners were living in South African jails.

"The articles portrayed a grim system that condoned everything from unhygienic and overcrowded cells to solitary confinement and systematic brutality. Gandar called on the authorities to begin an immediate investigation of the prison system and promised to publish further revelations if they did not," (Pollak 1981: 54).

When the Government refused to look into the matter Gandar published the stories, which included several statements from people who had been imprisoned, including white political prisoner Robert Strachen, and prison warders. "Strachen told the *Mail's* editor, Laurence Gandar, that while in prison he had frequently seen Black prisoners being whipped and tortured with an electrical machine," (Barton 1977: 203).

Manoim (1983: 54) notes that in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the publication of final article in the series, the security police raided the *RDM* offices, "seizing manuscripts and notes dealing with the prison conditions" and according to Tyson (in Pollak 1981) this search extended to searching drawers, wastepaper baskets and tapping phones.

These stories, which were published in 1965, were judged to be in contravention of the **Prisons Act** of 1959. The security police raided the newspaper's offices and seized documents and tape-recordings pertaining to the stories which were used against the *RDM* when the newspaper, Pogrund and Gandar were charged under section 44(f) of the Prisons Act on June 23, 1967.

The Prisons Act of 1959 dealt with the administration of jails. The most pertinent for journalists were clauses 44(e) and 44(f), which pertained to the dissemination of information about prisons (including prison conditions) and prisoners. In short[5] these sections stated that it was an offence to photograph or sketch any part of any prison or building used to house prisoners or to draw or photograph any prisoner or person who has been detained for questioning by the police and to publish these without the written authority of the commissioner. It was also an offence to commission someone else to procure these representations for the purpose of printing them in the media. The act further stated it was an offence to publish false information about the behaviour or experience in prison of a prisoner or ex-prisoner or about the manner in which the prisons were

[5] A fuller account of this law can be found in Appendix A.

administered if the person printing the information was aware the information was incorrect or untruthful. The onus of providing proof that reasonable steps had been taken to verify the information before printing fell on the journalist, editor and newspaper concerned (paraphrased and shortened from Stuart 1977).

The Prisons Act was amended by Act 75 of 1965 to define the word prisoners as "any person, whether convicted or not, who is detained in custody in any prison or who is being transferred in custody or is en route in custody from one prison to another prison …" (paraphrased and shortened from Stuart 1977: 58 and 59).

The law was extremely detailed and wordy but did not state exactly what its parameters were. Editors and journalists were expected to interpret the Act for themselves and there was no guarantee they would interpret it in the same manner as the government. The NP was also known to adapt or change laws to meet their desires.

This was particularly true when it came to assessing the light in which the government saw the prison series. Pogrund (2003) explains the situation: "there was a basic clause which said that if you publish any material about prisons or prisoners knowing the information to be false or without taking reasonable precautions to ensure accuracy you shall be guilty of an offence." This he says was taken by journalists to mean that prisons were out of bounds and off limits for them.

However, when Pogrund decided to take a closer look at the prisons and the treatment people were receiving in 1965 he sought advice from the newspaper's lawyer Kelsey Stuart on how to handle the matter. After much discussion, the two agreed that in order to avoid being prosecuted the journalist in question should have the informant swear in front of a lawyer and sign an affidavit that the information given was factually correct. This affidavit they agreed would meet the requirement of taking steps to verify information before publishing. The account also had to be substantiated by other accounts, but with these steps taken Stuart was confident the newspaper could publish the prison stories without fear of reprisal.

Pogrund (2003) explains that, thinking he was in line with the law and that he had taken the necessary precautions to ensure the information was truthful, the newspaper went to

print with the stories. However, Stuart's advice and Pogrund's actions were not found to be adequate as the stories were not read by the government in their entirety. Rather the government chose to read the articles as separate words rather than complete paragraphs, sentences and stories and the newspaper was asked to defend certain lines and in some cases individual words. The newspaper could not make a defence under these circumstances.

Three years after the case began, on July 10, 1967, Pogrund and Gandar were both proved guilty by prosecutor Hendrick Liebenburg on counts of "publishing false information and failing to take reasonable steps to verify their reports," (Manoim 1983: 55). The prosecutor reminded the court: "It puts the onus of proof on them. Reasonable steps is defined as having the allegations cleared before publication with the commissioner of prisons," (Barton 1979: 203). Knowing the story would not be approved Pogrund had not sought this approval from the relevant authorities but had taken what he believed to be reasonable steps to ensure his information was reliable.

2.5 Opposition Press

Aside from being an internationally acclaimed newspaper, the *RDM* was also a supreme example for other opposition newspapers of the time. However, in order to assess the value of the opposition press and the *RDM* during the 1970s one might look at the place the opposition press and the *RDM* played in the society of the day.

According to Potter (1975) The English Press became the opposition by default rather than by choice because in the final analysis the 'real' opposition in the country was the African." It seems the English press may not have taken on this role if the real opposition – the African people - had been in a position to speak out for themselves and be assured that they were being heard. "It was the total exclusion of the African from constitutional politics in South Africa which cast the English-language press in the role of opposition," (Potter 1975: 27).

To varying degrees of conviction and effectiveness the English press uniformly opposed the government and its policies throughout the apartheid era. However, Potter (in Jackson 1993) believes the English-press did not merely offer the opposition a platform from which to be heard, in her opinion it was the opposition. She comments, "it became such a

dissenting voice against the government that the English Press in reality became the official opposition in South Africa, replacing the weak and ineffectual voice of the English speakers in parliament," (Potter in Jackson 1993: 5).

However the newspaper did not operate in isolation. It was grappling with a number of problems created by complex, external stimuli, not least of which was government persecution.

The newspaper sought to create a bridge between people on opposing sides of the racial divide and sought to entice all racial groups to find common ground, which could be used to destroy the government's stronghold over white citizens and to find a way of annihilating apartheid.

With an understanding of the newspaper and the manner in which it operated one can continue with a study of the newspaper in search of an answer to the research questions set out in chapter 1 and an examination of the way in which the *RDM*, if it did, fitted into a model of liberal journalism.

CHAPTER 3: CRITIQUES OF THE *RDM*

This chapter will look at some of the most common criticisms made against the *RDM*. However, in considering each, one must bear in mind who made the criticism and when. A number of the criticisms made against the newspaper are most succinctly discussed by Petersmann (1997) and people who testified at the TRCMH. While these people are quoted and drawn from for the purpose of this chapter they are by no means the only people to have made these criticisms.

The *RDM* and the English press came under a barrage of criticism from the Afrikaners and Africans both during the apartheid era and at the TRCMH. One group felt the newspaper said too much about the realities of life in South Africa for non-whites, the other thought the newspaper was too conservative in its coverage.

Criticisms came from a number of sources, some of whom only levelled their objections at the TRCMH to the manner in which the newspaper was run, 12 years after it printed its last issue and 21 years after the period in question. Some of these people praised the newspaper when it was being printed but belittled it at the TRCMH. A prime example of this was Desmond Tutu.

Louw (2003) recalls: “When Desmond Tutu was the Dean of Johannesburg he wrote a letter about black deprivation and black complaints and black sorrow and anger”. Louw thought it was an excellent letter depicting how black people felt and instructed the letters editor to use it that week as the front-page leader, to “give it all the force and backing that that position gives it, to say we concur totally with this view so we are giving over our front page leader to it” (Louw 2003).

Two years later when he met Tutu for the first time, Tutu commented on the placing of the letter and said that he thought it was a considerable thing for a white newspaper to do. He added he had been delighted by the prominence the newspaper had given to the cause and he thought it had been a courageous thing to do in a white environment. It seemed that the act had pleased him greatly as he remembered and mentioned it two years after the incident.

However, when the two met at the TRCMH, Tutu described the incident as quaint and said that he had found it difficult to understand. “That really surprised me and I found it slightly intimidating that a view he held in the apartheid era as being something that was worthy should have been dismissed as a kind of triviality when the TRC came about in the new South Africa,” (Louw 2003).

3.1 Legislation

One of the major critiques, which needs to be examined, is the question of whether or not legislation and ever changing laws laid down by the NP Government had a restrictive effect on the news English newspapers covered. An extension of this is the accusation that English newspapers hid behind these laws, and in so doing did not expose police brutality sufficiently.

While critics, including Mondli Makhanya (at the TRCMH) acknowledged: “The legislation did play a pivotal role in hindering the free flow of information” they felt laws were not as stringent as the newspapers made them out to be. Many felt that the newspapers used these laws as an excuse for inadequate exposure of everyday events, the atrocities committed by government offices and racial injustices suffered by non-whites under apartheid. Many felt the media houses were overly cautious, hiding behind the government as they were either too scared or unprepared to make bold statements, which might brand them, in the eyes of both the people and the government, as opposed to the government or revolutionary. Media houses were seen to prefer the safety of being non-committal in their coverage.

“The media houses could have gone much further in exposing police brutality in townships, for instance, and they deliberately chose not to. They could have done more to challenge those very acts, which inhibited the press from doing its job, they chose not to” (Makhanya at the TRCMH).

Further to this, critics believed the English newspapers used legislation as an excuse to allow them to enter into covenants with the government, which would prevent a free and fair flow of information. They believed that the onus, to present the public with all the facts about the way the country was being run, lay with the media houses, who were not living up to their responsibilities to the people. These critics commented that it was

expected that the government would implement laws aimed at restricting the flow of information and this should have put even more responsibility in the hands of the media to challenge the government.

One of the areas, which could have been challenged by the media houses more stringently, was self-censorship. By law the only stories, which had to be pre-approved by the government were those mentioning the Defence Department, prisons and police force. In light of these facts it was often felt the newspapers could have gone further to offer the public information unpalatable to the NP. As no censors were placed in the newsrooms by the government there was no real force preventing newspapers from printing what was happening in the country.

As many pointed out, by the time the government was able to take action the news would already have been published and read by the people. There would be nothing the government could do to withhold information already printed or prevent the public from being informed about what was happening in the townships, why, and what effects it was having on the people. In addition, there was a common belief that the government would not take the threatened action and many black journalists saw the self-censorship practiced at the time as a means of agreeing with the government without newspapers having to say so publicly.

3.2 Human rights violations

The next charge to be examined was the idea newspapers were guilty of withholding information and, in so doing, perpetuating human rights violations.

It was asserted during the TRCMH that by enforcing the government's discriminatory laws within newsrooms, the English press was helping to perpetuate human rights violations. By not giving the people all the information they required, the press was allowing the government to enforce discriminatory laws without challenging these and keeping the people in the dark about exactly what was happening in the country.

According to Makhanya (at the TRCMH): "The newspaper industry in this country played a pivotal role in the upholding of apartheid system and colluded wittingly, with successive apartheid governments to perpetuate the system of apartheid". In the same testimony he

also said that by enforcing discriminatory laws within newsrooms, including the use of discriminatory language and terminology, newspapers were not only subscribing to but also agreeing with the government's bigotry. This he believed was "ideologically congruent with the NP Government and in conflict with various liberation forces in this country," (Makhanya at the TRCMH). As he sees it, this led to members of organisations, which opposed the government being labelled as terrorists. Opposition organisations were labelled radical and extremist, branding any organisation, which did not support the government, as evil.

Mike Tissong and Jon Qwelane (both at the TRCMH) take this criticism further saying that in their opinion the press was depriving South Africa of the truth of what was going on in the country during the apartheid era and especially during the period under examination.

According to Qwelane (at the TRCMH), "By not exposing some of the atrocities that the security forces of the time were involved in, and in fact, having these censored and watered down was depriving the South African community as a whole of the truth of what was actually going on in the townships". People were aware that something was happening but, without information in the press, had no way of knowing what. This meant that, short of visiting the townships, whites had no way of knowing what atrocities were taking place. Without this knowledge it would have been impossible for them to comprehend the magnitude of the problems brewing in the country due to the ill treatment of non-white citizens. This lack of information not only denied black people the exposure they craved, but also denied white people knowledge they needed in order to make important decisions about the government they continued to vote into power.

However, some of the people testifying, including Qwelane praised the English press and in particular the *RDM* saying English newspapers did, for the most part, perform noteworthy tasks in attempting to keep the South African public informed.

However, for many the *RDM* was no better than its contemporaries. While the newspaper's staff claimed it did more than any other newspaper in the country at the time to keep the readers informed, many believe it withheld a number of stories, which could have been published within the framework of the law and without any negative

repercussions. This criticism was one of the most repeated and possibly one of the most severe criticisms of the English press and the *RDM* and requires an in-depth examination.

3.3 Working conditions

Complaints more specific to the *RDM* claimed that the working conditions for black staff on the newspaper were inferior and unacceptable.

Many of the critics stated that the *RDM* served as an extension of the State as it continued to institute government imposed working conditions rather than taking a stand and going against these stipulated conditions. Of particular concern were the separation of ablution facilities and canteens. This was strongly criticised at the TRCMH by Makhanya who said: "They did nothing to oppose these, they did nothing to show that these acts were actually unjust and immoral acts, they merely implemented them."

This criticism was backed up by Tugwana (2004) when he recounted an incident when he used the "European only" toilets in one of the *RDM*'s basements and had to deal with an irate white staff member from the works department who was incensed that a black man had dared to go into a "whites' only" toilet. The man's indignation was sufficient to warrant a trip to the editor to lay a formal complaint against Tugwana.

Speaking about the separate toilets, the complaints went further than mere separation. According to Makhanya (at the TRCMH) the facilities for whites were more conveniently located and had superior facilities. He says there were three ablution blocks for white men on each floor with washbasins and mirrors. Black men had to be satisfied with one tiny cubicle on each floor. In his view this disparity constituted a human rights violation.

Many of those giving evidence at the TRCMH, including Qwelane, complained that canteens at the *RDM* were separated and that protests about these separate canteens only elicited a third canteen, termed the international canteen. There was a consensus that this third canteen served to perpetuate the separation, rather than to bring the races together. Furthermore, in this international canteen there were designated seats for different grouping which were not based on race but rather on job title but none-the-less served to separate people and put them into difference categories. While this may have been done for practical reasons – people from the printing department often had grease on their

clothing and they were thus given black seats to sit on – it did not impress the majority of black staff members.

Furthering the human rights violation argument, Don Matera (at the TRCMH) added that black staff were given iron plates and mugs, while their white contemporaries ate off porcelain.

There were also complaints by some of the black journalists that they were given desks and typewriters in one corner of the newsroom designated for blacks, completely separated from the white staff. This, they complained, made the division between the races palpable and extremely obvious with the whites enjoying more space around their work areas and better positions within the newsroom. Matera (at the TRCMH) comments that conditions in the offices denigrated black people and constituted gross human rights violations. According to him black people could be found fawning and cringing in the corner designated for them instead of joining their white colleagues in the main area of the newsroom.

3.4 Detained

Makhanya (at the TRCMH) further criticises working conditions by contending English mainstream newspapers had no regard for their black staff if they were arrested in the line of duty. According to some of those who testified, staff who were detained were either fired or their salaries were stopped while they were being detained, making it hard, if not impossible, for their families to support and feed themselves, especially in cases where the breadwinner was incarcerated for an extended period.

Commenting on this Thami Mazwai (at the TRCMH) said: "We were arrested and after two days we paid admission of guilt fines after being in police custody. As if this was not enough, the *Rand Daily Mail* and *The Post*, from where we came from further punished us be deducting two days from our leave or two days salary. We were told we had disgraced the profession."

However, not everyone speaking at the hearings took this stance. In his testimony, Qwelane (at the TRCMH) commented that the English press stood by its journalists, paying their salaries even when they were detained without trial.

3.5 Training

A further accusation against the *RDM* is that there was no training offered to black staff and therefore no possibility of them being promoted. This implies white staff members received training, which was not always the case. Critics believed the *RDM* created a method of ensuring management jobs always went to whites. If blacks did not have the training to take on more responsibility and to take charge of an editorial team they could not be promoted into positions of authority, offering the *RDM* a convenient excuse for holding black people back.

This critique is taken further. In Makhanya's (at the TRCMH) opinion black staff members were used merely as "running boys" rather than being considered serious members of the editorial team. Critics assert black staff members were used only for jobs considered either beneath white staff or unsavoury by them and were not given serious or important stories to report on. These stories were reserved for their white colleagues.

"They [blacks] were used to go and cover the stories in the townships, the ones that white journalists, could not do because they were scared of going into the townships, but in so far as career advancement, there was none whatsoever," (Makhanya at the TRCMH).

The government had a hand in ensuring capable black people were not advanced into positions of authority by making it illegal for blacks to be put in charge of white colleagues. It was acknowledged that media houses did not want to give the government an excuse to clamp down on them and they thus adhered to the law. However, some believed the legislation, which stated blacks could not be promoted into positions in which they issued orders to white subordinates, was also a convenient excuse used by newspaper managers not to promote black journalists.

Speaking to this point Tissong (at the TRCMH) felt that instead of rejecting the notion of promoting black people, managers and editors should have tested the government's resolve by making appointments and defending them, rather than merely avoiding friction with government. However this would have meant that newspapers would have had to make an independent stand which many believed they were not prepared to do.

3.6 *Township Extra*

Apartheid edition or regional newspaper with regional news? This is the debate, which still haunts the *RDM's Township Extra* almost 20 years after the demise of the newspaper. The answer to this question is one, which, like nothing else featured in or about the newspaper, is determined by the race of the person being asked. More than any other issue, this is the most disputed and disagreed upon.

One of the critics of the *Township Extra*, Qwelane (according to Louw 2003), saw this as an apartheid edition with news separated along racial lines and at the TRCMH said he considered what was included to be unfit for white readers. He stressed the violation of people's right to knowledge in reminding the commission that business and finance pages were dropped to incorporate the *Township Extra*. "The right to be informed is a basic human right and, in misapplying themselves in this manner, the mainstream liberal newspapers were guilty of violating the basic human rights of the black people through denying them information," (Qwelane at the TRCMH).

3.7 Principals

During both Petersmann's (1997) assessment of the newspaper and discussions held during the TRCMH a number of accusations were made against the principals of the *RDM*.

Among the accusations was the idea that the *RDM* remained attached to its white news reporting ideals and made no inroads into black advocacy or liberal journalism. Petersmann (1997: 156) contends the newspaper should have embraced advocacy journalism in 1976 saying: "Black advocacy journalism at the time of the Soweto uprising did not propagandise revolution. It rather stood for the preparedness to uncover and publish indignities and brutality on a day to day basis".

Before addressing her critiques of the newspaper, it is pertinent to take a closer look at the manner in which Petersmann (1997) views the work done by the *RDM* during the 1976 Soweto Uprising. She begins her discussion of the newspaper noting that on the day after the uprising began the newspaper ran a front-page story blaming the government for "not defusing the situation sooner despite massive early warning signs. It accused the authorities of ignorance, for they had allowed hostility to build up to such an enormous extent without rezoning either its nature or intensity" (Petersmann 1997: 156). She adds

the newspaper urged government to take action, to stabilise the situation.

However, her attack on the newspaper begins immediately after this assertion. Petersmann (1997) found the newspaper guilty of using discriminatory language to describe aspects of the uprising. In her scanning of the texts she found the newspaper focused on angry Africans and bands of vandals setting fire to buildings and cars and acting violently towards whites entering Soweto. Her contention is that injured and killed whites were given prominence while blacks were left unknown. According to her work, in its reports on the first day of the uprising, the *RDM* gave substantial coverage to the death of Dr Melville Edelstein, going so far as to interview his family. Hector Peterson's death, however was given far less prominence and there was no interview with his family. She says very few injured or killed black people were identified, but whites were identified and the details of their injuries and deaths written about.

She (Petersmann 1997) continues that while black youths were blamed when they vandalized buildings or acted violently against whites, very few details were given of police brutality and its results. This speaks to the fact that the newspaper never directly attributed deaths to the police. While the newspaper spoke of black youths pulling whites from their cars, stoning and injuring them, when it came to police brutality the same blame was not laid at their feet.

She believes the newspaper looked for ways of appeasing the State rather than challenging it which she says is evident in Clive Emdon's experiences. According to Emdon (in Petersmann 1997: 157) the *RDM* was over-cautious in its reporting of the death toll. He wrote a story about how many deaths there were in the first days of the uprising but his figures, gathered from walking around Baragwanath Hospital, were never published as they put the number of deaths three times higher than the figures released by the State and consequently published in the *RDM*.

Petersmann (1997) refers to her interview with Louw who commented the newspaper could not accuse the police of killing people for fear of liable laws but Petersmann (1997) contends that there were people prepared to condemn police brutality and the use of live ammunition against children.

She concedes the *RDM* did try to highlight police behaviour through its reporting, referring to an article by Nat Serache in which he says he heard no warnings from the police before they threw teargas canisters into the crowd. The newspaper also reported on how the police hindered journalists' newsgathering. However, in summing up the coverage, Petersmann (1997: 159) comments:

> "During the Soweto uprising black reporters were often confronted with emotional scenes which they often reported on the spot, but then white news editors would later place more emphasis on the police version of events and alter stories by cutting out parts of the black reporters' eyewitness accounts. The typical front page story would give piece versions of the events which always included the official side."

She accuses the *RDM* of continuously creating the impression the police shot in self-defence, complaining it failed to challenge gross human rights violations being committed and capitalised on chaos, anarchy and hooliganism, which it failed to distinguish from student protest. "The frequent use of terms like tsotsie, vandals, thugs, drunken rioters and marauding gangs degenerated the valid protest of black school children into the sphere of the criminal," (Petersmann 1997: 160). She sums this up saying:

> "The students ceased to be the subject of reports, there were no interviews with their leaders and no human touch stories on their hopes and dreams and fears after their march had been gunned down. The political aspirations of the students were not focused on, neither was the students' struggle presented as part of the wider liberation struggle," (Petersmann 1997: 160).

However, immediately afterwards she changes her view, saying that throughout its coverage the *Mail* constantly criticised government for its apartheid policy. The newspaper ran a number of stories detailing the deprivation and dire plight of black people. She notes the newspaper also carried stories on how black children were being brutalised by their social environment.

This leads to the pinnacle of her criticism of the *RDM* idea that it did not publicly take the side of the African National Congress (ANC). Petersmann (1997) says the newspaper advocated white reform through parliament and the government, but neglected direct communication with the banned exile liberation movements or black civic organisations as part of the solution.

Petersmann (1997: 161) quotes Philip Mtimkulu, "the liberal SAAN flagship wanted to give support to the black community, not to the liberation struggle. Their motivation derived from a liberal human rights perspective. The issue of black liberation was not an immediate concern on their agenda." Mtimkulu adds, "The *RDM* simply wanted to expose

the government's policy of racial discrimination. It was very hesitant in saying 'the ANC is right', 'the ANC is providing the political alternative'. They didn't do it," (in Petersmann 1997: 161).

She concludes her section on the *RDM* saying:

> "But through its coverage of the Soweto uprising , …, the *Rand Daily Mail* failed to explore the political aspirations of the rebellious students. The revolt was presented from an essentially white angle with black protest activity being criminalized. The majority of reports capitalised on vandalism while the *Mail* did not play the same amount of attention to the violations of the protesting pupils' rights to choice and education. Some features relegated to the black pages did provide a careful description of the roots of black anger and frustration. The plight of black people under the apartheid system was explored in editorials, but solutions were exclusively sought within the white political framework. Commentary often criticised government in retrospect for what it didn't do, not for what it was currently doing" (Petersmann 1997: 161/162).

While these are only some of the criticisms levelled at the English-language press during the TRCMH, they are the most prevalent. The TRCMH was a highly charged setting in which many people came forward to make their objections to the apartheid era press without fear of reprisal and it is therefore feasible to assume that some of these criticisms may have been aired for the first time during the TRCMH because it was the first time wronged individuals had been offered a safe platform from which to speak.

However, it is also important to bear in mind that time and retrospect may also have played a part in compounding the problems. Some of the criticisms mentioned above may not have been overly problematic at the time. However, over time people may have come to view the problems as larger than they were and this exaggerated sense of importance would have been attached to incidents when they were reported on at the TRCMH. The critic must therefore bear in mind the effect time has on memories and the manner in which people perceive past experiences.

Criticisms laid out in this chapter will be discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4: HOW VALID WERE THESE CRITIQUES?

In this chapter and the next, the researcher will examine the criticisms of the *RDM,* in an effort to ascertain the extent to which the newspaper practiced liberal principles. The *RDM* was operating in a period in which a number of complex factors, including race relations, laws and management-imposed boundaries had affected how the newspaper operated and the news which could appear on its pages.

4.1 Effects of government legislation

Staff at the *RDM* unanimously disagreed with Makhanya's (at the TRCMH) allegations that newspapers used government legislation as an excuse not to publish everything the public needed to know about the manner in which the country was being run.

In contrast, while interviewees agreed the English mainstream media did not oppose government vociferously enough, they were adamant the newspaper did much to try to keep the people informed. In looking at the manner in which it covered events one can see the laws imposed by the Government affected newspapers gravely, impacting on what could legally be printed.

To appreciate the impact of these laws one should examine the most pertinent ones, listed and briefly explained below[6].

- The "**Official Secrets Act** sought to protect information affecting the security of the state" (Pogrund 2000: 233). This made it an offence to be in the vicinity of places the government declared prohibited, to have material which could be used against the State and to communicate this information with a third party who could use it against the State.
- The **Native Administration Act** of 1927 made it a crime to promote hostility between blacks and whites. Any reports detailing inter-racial upheavals was a contravention of this law. The government also had the ability to exile or banish blacks to designated rural areas.
- The **Riotous Assemblies Act** of 1956 gave the government the power to ban the media from publishing anything, which it saw as being "calculated to engender hostility between blacks and whites" (Pogrund 2000: 234).

[6] A full account of these laws can be found in Appendix A.

- **Section 205** (previously 83) of the **Criminal Procedures Act** made it a crime for journalists to refuse to name sources if asked by the police. The law allowed offenders to be imprisoned.
- **Section 24 of the Police Act** made it an offence to "publish anything which would indicate a particular activity was being carried on or under the provisions of the Police Act or under the patronage of the Police Force unless this was done with the approval of the Minister of Police," (Stuart 1977: 225). This included making sketches or taking photographs of arrested people or witnesses in police custody.
- The **Suppression of Communism Act** (No. 44) of 1950 declared "the Communist Party and its ideology illegal. The act defined communism as any scheme 'aimed at bringing about any political, industrial, social, or economic change within the Union by the promotion of disturbance or disorder' or encouraged 'feelings of hostility between the European and non-European races of the Union'" (Separate and Unequal 1996).
- The **Criminal Law Amendment Act** of 1953 made "it an offence to use language or to do anything calculated to cause anyone else to break the law by way of protest," (Pogrund 2000: 234).
- The **Public Safety Act** of 1957 (often used in conjunction with the Criminal Law amendment Act) gave the government the right to declare states of emergency and increased penalties for protesting against a law or supporting its repeal. During a state of emergency the government had absolute control over State and citizens, and could close down newspapers.
- "The **Reservation of Separate Amenities Act** (No. 49) of 1953 stated all races should have separate amenities," (Separate and Unequal 1996) building the unequal allocation of resources into the legislation governing general facilities, jobs and education.
- **Pass Laws** prevented blacks from living and working were they pleased, infringing on newspapers' rights to employ whom they wanted. In addition, no racial group had access to all parts of the country making newsgathering difficult when journalists had to go into areas from which they were banned.

In examining the work of the *RDM* it must be remembered that many of these laws were not rigidly imposed, rather the threat of prosecution was left as a deterrent to journalists and editors who considered contravening any of the laws.

In looking at whether the newspaper's efforts amounted to a demonstration of liberal journalism one must ask whether it gave the people of South Africa all the news all the time. In examining this one of the largest problems the press faced in 1976 was censorship and curbing of what could be printed.

Although the government never placed censors in the newsrooms to repress news, many of the laws it implemented were extremely vague and left editors open to the laws being changed to suit the government as and when it pleased. The only stories, which were strictly censored, were those pertaining to the Defence Department, police force and prisons for which editors had to get approval from the relevant authorities before going to print. Other than this, editors had to assess stories and determine for themselves, case-by-case, whether stories would contravene any of the laws. This lack of defined parameters led to the need for editorial staff to exercise great caution and self-censorship.

While it has been agreed the newspaper could have gone further to expose the government's and police's wrongdoing the *RDM,* in the pursuit of a free and fair press, vigorously opposed the attempts by the Newspaper Press Union (NPU) in the 1960s to draw up and implement a strict code of conduct for newspapers to follow, which would amount to self-censorship rules. The NPU tried unsuccessfully to enforce this code, fearing that the government would carry out its long-standing threats to establish a press code, which would be far more restrictive, putting an end to press freedom in South Africa.

The *RDM* fought strongly against any form of censorship, believing "a proud and healthy press was not going to be intimidated into self-censorship" (Hachten and Giffard 1984: 67). In September 1973, in response to a letter penned by a black person, which appeared in the *RDM,* Vorster gave the press until January of the following year to adapt to the expectations of the government, saying "either the press must heed now, or he would step in and bring them to heel," (Hachten and Giffard 1984: 67). Vorster believed that the letter should never have been published and in light of this disagreeable event self-censorship

was expected. Once again the newspaper stood firm against censorship of any kind and continued to speak robustly about the government's attempts to dictate to the press what should be published, in consultation with Stuart, pushing the laws as far as the newspaper deemed possible.

The *RDM* did a considerable job of defying the laws in the areas that it perceived to be safe, such as warning people about impending strikes. Incitement laws prohibited newspapers from telling their readers about upcoming demonstrations and the newspaper came up with a number of ways of telling the people what was happening without overtly contravening the laws. One way, according to Louw (2003), was to approach the police and ask if they could issue a warning about an impending strike or riot. This publishable warning served to tell the people there was a strike planned, where it was to be held and when. The ingenuity of this system was that the newspaper was telling people where they could join the demonstration against the government. However, because they were using government issued information they were not breaking any laws and could not be charged with incitement.

Another manner in which journalists could circumvent the laws was to use the anniversaries of banned organisations to write detailed stories about them. These usually offered a history of the organisation and in these circumstances it was legal to give details about its manifesto, membership profile and aims and objectives. These stories were not construed as illegal as long as they were factual and sans sensation. Journalists were not allowed to use them to encourage people to join, however, with detailed information provided the public was well enough informed about the organisation to seek out membership if they so desired. This allowed journalists to tell people about anti-government parties without contravening the law.

By retaining Stuart the newspaper was able to get around many of the censorship laws. Before Stuart got involved in newspapers and made media law his speciality, stories referred to the lawyers were often rejected on the grounds they would cause friction with the government. However, Stuart devised a way of changing a word or sentence within the story to make an otherwise illegal story publishable. This consultation served to guide staff and enabled them to develop a way of writing, which told people what was happening but was not so overt the government could charge them with breaking the law.

The seriousness with which the newspaper took its quest to circumvent the laws can be seen in the fact that, in a discussion with an American journalist, Pogrund (2003) commented that the *RDM* consulted its lawyers six times per day. When he told Stuart about this conversation Stuart corrected him saying the figure was closer to 14 times daily. The newspaper was vigilant about giving all the news, all the time and thus enlisted the services of a man equally dedicated to finding vocabulary and phrasing which enabled it to break the laws in a less detectable manner.

Black journalists did not believe self-censorship was entirely necessary and saw it as a way of tacitly agreeing with government. In addition, Mojapelo (2003) comments, having lawyers check stories and give them their stamp of approval was a way of appeasing black journalists while still acquiescing to the government. It was a way of showing the newspaper was making the effort to ensure stories written by blacks could be published but did little to convince them of the newspaper's desire to oppose government.

This leads to the idea, suggested by Petersmann (1997), that "balanced journalism under apartheid meant cooption and collaboration with the regime". However it can be argued a certain amount of co-operation with the government was necessary to ensure the newspaper retained access to certain places including parliament, without which the newspaper would be unable to inform the readers, with first hand knowledge, about laws being passed and matters being discussed in the countries control room. However, this cannot be seen as co-option or collaboration, rather it was one of the ways in which the newspaper was able to follow the liberal principle of informing the nation.

It must also be considered that, during the apartheid era and the Soweto Uprising, news was printed as it happened with little time allowed for lengthy considerations and discussions on how to make the most of a story, or whether or not the coverage was "enough". It was a matter of processing information and circulating it as fast as possible. It is therefore feasible that while the newspaper was trying to do what it perceived as the "right thing", it was not giving the public as much information as they wanted or needed. However, at the time the newspaper did offer more intense reports of the news than its English counter-parts. This coverage was also far better than anything the Afrikaans

newspapers were publishing. It is easy to condemn in retrospect but one must examine the events and reportage in the context and time in which they happened.

The *RDM* is often treated as a special case because it pursued a radical political line. It was reporting on black news more intensely than other English newspapers. This idea arises out of Petersmann's (1997) thesis and begs the question: "Was the *RDM* not advancing the black cause?"

In looking at Petersmann's (1997) argument one must also look at the fact that advancing the black cause was, under the Suppression of Communism Act, an offence, which was punishable with a banning order. Through the stories written in the newspaper is it arguable that it was consciously furthering the liberation struggle, but it had to do so less overtly than Petersmann (1997) would have liked. This, however, does not make the attempt worthless or powerless.

The newspaper may not have come out boldly against the government, but it did converse with black organisations and community leaders, making itself a channel for communication between the these groups and the government which could have, with cooperation from both sides, led to peaceful talks and the avoidance of bloodshed.

4.2 *Township Extra*

In addressing the idea that the *Township Extra* was an apartheid edition, Pogrund (2003) says he had mixed feelings. He supported it in order to have black people and their world reflected in the newspaper and looked upon in the same way he viewed other regional editions. It was, in his eyes, not the perfect way to introduce black stories into the newspaper but it did fulfil an important role.

The T*ownship Extra* started its life on the stock exchange page and gradually increased until it took over the entertainment page, page three, various other pages and the back page, tailoring it to the black community. As with the Reef and Pretoria editions, the most important and universal stories coming out of these editions were used for the morning final edition.

While there is much debate about the merits of this edition it was viewed as a good

concept at the onset as it offered tailor-made information for a specific community who would otherwise not have their news included in white mainstream newspapers. Through this edition blacks received news about the country and what was happening, as well as information about their community. The newspaper offered them the same service it gave other communities who wanted both an overview of events across the country and news about their lived world.

Louw (2003) supported this edition, not least because it created opportunities for black journalists. The newspaper had a comparatively large black staff with nine on permanent staff and at least 10 stringers who may not have had the opportunity to pursue careers in journalism if it had not been for this and similar township editions in white newspapers. This also gave the newspaper an added resource when the uprising broke out.

Black journalists were able to gain experience on this edition, especially during 1976, and so gained the experience they needed to escalate themselves to the top of their profession. This also aided the *RDM* which had the only stories coming out of Soweto, apart from the police version. It was the only white newspaper with all the facts and both sides of the story and it was also thus the only newspaper, which did not have to accept police propaganda for lack of the true facts. Many of the stories contradicted the police version of events as information coming from dedicated journalists in the field painted a different picture.

Qoboza (in Louw 2003), *The World* editor in 1976 accused Louw of running an apartheid edition to which Louw replied *The World* could equally be seen to be an apartheid newspaper as it catered only to a black readership. Louw reminded him and other critics that the *RDM* had a number of regional editions which catered to the interests of the people in certain areas. The *Township Extra* was no different from these. He (Louw 2003) adds it may have been seen as an apartheid edition by some, but had a far more important purpose as it enabled the newspaper to employ black journalists and photographers.

Further, the contention that it was an apartheid edition did not stand up to an experiment conducted to gauge the popularity of the edition. Louw (at the TRCMH) described the experiment. Both the *Township Extra* and *Morning Final* were placed where black people

were likely to buy the newspaper. With both available readers had the choice of what they wanted to read and the result was that they chose to read the *Township Extra*.

The edition also allowed the newspaper, using black reporters, to get a number of interesting stories about life in the townships. These stories were also placed in the main edition and were effective in telling people what was going on in the townships and about pertinent issues arising. The fact that everything during apartheid was divided along colour lines does not discredit the value of the edition as an additional source of information for the main edition and a training ground for black journalists who developed their reputations working on this edition.

Bakitsha (2003) comments the concept of the *Township Extra* was a white one and one not necessarily endorsed by the black community for whom it was supposedly written. "The original concept was not from the blacks but rather a circumstance-induced practice for economic and political reasons. Blacks wanted an instrument that could air their grievances but the bulk of newspapers could not feed this desire because they had to please their white readers," (Bakitsha 2003). He allows that the intention behind its establishment was a noble one but says its implementation was flawed.

Bakitsha (2003) believes that before starting it those producing the *Township Extra* should have thought more carefully about the purpose of the edition and what the *RDM* hoped to achieve by introducing it into the market. He believed the *RDM* should have encouraged its audience to read the same newspaper, one which covered news for all people. While less educated blacks who were not prepared to raise their standards accepted the newspaper, according to Bakitsha (2003), the intellectuals rejected the need for a separate edition. They recognised that to bring unity all communities should read the same edition to learn more about one another and develop tolerance. They expected the *RDM* to train its readers to be interested in other communities and to read a unified newspaper which embraced all nations.

There are mixed feelings about how staff at the *RDM* thought the edition was being viewed by black readers. Many believe that it was well received with Louw (2003) quoting the experiment previously mentioned saying that, given the choice, black readers preferred the *Extra Edition*.

Stewart (2003) agrees that it was well received based on the fact that it sold. When the *Mail* figures soared in the middle of the 1970s it was due to an increased number of black readers. This was taken as a sign black readers were enjoying the *Township Extra*.

Stewart (2003) believes that in looking at the newspaper one must examine the readers closely and examine both who they were and what they wanted. "For the sophisticated, educated and politically-aware it was a disgrace for a liberal newspaper like the *RDM* to be peddling a ghetto type newspaper." However, for the ordinary reader it was merely part and parcel of the *RDM*. These readers did not think about the merits of the newspaper or what they were missing in the main edition and, because the *RDM* was known as an excellent newspaper, it was taken for granted that this was a good edition. Consequently, it was good in their minds because it gave the black community meaningful coverage of issues which were important to them. This in itself indicates there were those who got value from it and it therefore, for a portion of the black community, made a valuable and meaningful contribution their lives.

One must consider the merits of the edition. It had a separate staff employed to cover the news in the townships and the newspaper always had a stream of stories, which may not have been written had the staff of the main edition attempted to cover the township news as well. With a dedicated staff, township issues were not only well covered but were available for use in the main edition where whites would see them and, it was hoped, take an interest in the way black people were forced to live. This was particularly important in the months before the Soweto Uprising, when whites were being exposed to and gaining an understanding, in some cases for the first time, of the appalling conditions black children had to endure at school including a lack of classrooms, under-qualified teachers and gross overcrowding in lessons.

While there were successful black journalists before 1976, there were very few newspapers and magazines that needed black journalists. As Mojapelo (2003) points out, while there was a forum for black journalists it was a group of people speaking to themselves. 1976 saw a more enlightened class of white people coming to the fore. They were more aware of the fact that not everyone was given the same liberties and the effects this had on those affected. For the first time there was a group of whites interested in what

was going on around them and prepared to listen to the 'other side'. With this new interest in seeing black people represented in the media and have their plight brought future into the consciousness of all white people, black journalists were in higher demand than ever before and were given far more scope to write about issues which were important to them and the communities in which they lived.

As Stewart (2003) explains: "Soweto June 1976 gave the reporters a chance to show their real mettle. Not only did the *RDM* merge its editions for that time, but the reporting was comprehensive and it was accurate and all the training and hard work at *Extra* proved worthwhile. The *RDM* was ready for the biggest black story ever." It was a time when those who had access to the news and the areas in which the news was taking place got the information and wrote the stories irrespective of their cultural and racial background. Stories were not allocated to journalists based on their colour and it gave black journalists an opportunity to tackle the most important stories of the day, allowing them to build reputations for themselves.

The newspaper was not a perfect vehicle, but it did serve a purpose of gathering news about the atrocious conditions in which non-whites lived and used this information, often gathered by black reporters, to enlighten white readers in the hopes that a united citizenship would break down the NP's stronghold.

A further problem faced by the edition was the fact that at the onset separate and additional facilities were needed if newspapers had black staff members. When the *Township Extra* was started journalists reported to a white news editor, and had to be housed in a special area because of the Group Areas Act. Louw (2003) comments that this often led to complaints from black staff but noted that the newspaper was not prepared to be closed down on a technicality which had nothing to do with the task they had set themselves of being a government watchdog. To defy the government on matters that had nothing to do with the content of the newspaper would have been counter-productive and Louw (2003) was not prepared to jeopardise the life of the newspaper.

4.3 Spies

In examining the effect government-planted spies had on how news was printed and the part they played in the newsrooms in which they worked, one must look at their arguments for being in the newsrooms and consider the power of hindsight.

It has been claimed the *RDM* knew about the spies in its newsroom and that these spies were welcomed at the newspaper which, it was claimed, agreed with what they were doing in reporting to the government what was going on at the newspaper.

However, the argument can be made that the fact that the government had to employ spies to report the actions of individual journalists and the newspaper as a whole meant the *RDM* was not in favour of spies and was not offering the government enough support and information. This sentiment is backed up by TML representative Neil Jacobson's (at the TRCMH) comment: "The fact the State saw fit to plant spies in our newsroom, I would suggest, decries any suggestion we were willing lapdogs of the State. It seems to me to make a mockery of any suggestion we colluded with the State. Those spies were never planted by the newspapers, they were planted by government and, therefore, the newspapers themselves, were as much victims of this process."

There is no evidence to suggest the spies altered the news in any way or that they posed a threat to the newspaper's ability to print the news. They held watchdog roles and were required to report trends within the newspapers rather than to manipulate what was printed.

Although the spies who testified at the TRCMH admitted they had not altered the news they did claim that the profession was an extremely popular one and reported that there were a great number of spies on all the newspapers, making their task seem less unusual and despicable. Two spies, John Horak (*RDM*) and Craig Kotze (*The Star*), in an attempt to vindicate themselves, told the TRCMH there were a number of people at both these papers who approached them, asking for guidance on how to become operatives. This however is not important to or investigated in this thesis.

What does ring true about their testimony is the fact there was no form of normality during the period in question and therefore no normal journalism could prevail. "This resulted in

a distorted working environment especially for the media, where duty, truth and what was considered right and just, were extremely subjective concepts," (Horak at the TRCMH). There could be no neutrality, and therefore no objectivity, forcing every journalist to choose a side. However, while there was no objective journalism, fair journalism was a possibility. Through its diverse coverage of events, the *RDM* attempted, and to a large extent succeed, to maintain a standard of fair journalism.

One might turn Kotze's (TRCMH) words around on him in a defence of the work being done on the *RDM*. According to him all journalists suppressed information of which they did not approve. He goes so far as to say he was merely balancing the reportage in media, which was being manipulated to support the anti-government cause. However, the researcher argues that, rather, it was the newspaper that sought to balance the coverage by printing stories which, for the most part, offer both sides of a story.

The spies could however have been seen as a help rather than a hindrance to the newspapers on which they worked. Being aware that there where spies working in their midst, editors had to be extra vigilant in ensuring stories were factual and that all stories printed could be backed up with quotable sources and hard proof. This aided them in circumventing the laws because, as they checked each story for liability, they were also able to develop the manner in which they wrote to ensure stories were not noticed as being against the law even when a story was defying the law.

Spies were never an important consideration for editors as they did not affect the manner in which news was covered. Seeking to stay unseen, most spies were tasked with the job of watching what was going on among staff and reporting any action, which may have been interpreted as anti-government, or staff affiliations with banned organisations. This, however, did not make them any less effective as journalists as they continued to do their jobs to an acceptable standard to ensure they were not suspected of being government operatives, thereby jeopardising the trust of the staff.

The informant role of the spy was, in Tugwana's (2004) opinion, demonstrated when he was arrested on September 20, 1976. Because of his youth[7], many of the students saw him

[7] He was 22-year-old in 1976.

as an equal and confided in him, giving him, and by association the *RDM*, information about their actions and the locations of student leaders' safe houses in Soweto in the days before the uprising. Shortly after the unrest began Tugwana's Soweto home was surrounded by policemen looking for him.

He was later arrested, in Turffontein where he was staying temporarily, as he got off a bus. He was later arrested, after getting off a bus, in Turffontein where he was staying temporarily,. He was held in custody for three months under Section 10 of the Terrorism Act. "They got it from my colleagues I was going to work. There was always tension because of the spies," (Tugwana 2004). This he believes supports the idea there was no collusion between journalists and the operatives.

In the newsroom there was an overriding belief that while the spies were not to be seen as a threat, journalists did have to be careful what was said around them as anything seen as suspect would be carried back to the Intelligence Service and used against the newspaper and staff. This does not support the idea of cooperation between government and the media.

4.4 Human rights violations

Those interviewed unanimously believed the newspaper was a crusader for human rights and vehemently denied claims they had either withheld information or perpetuated human rights violations[8]. For the most part interviewees believed any information withheld was held back only because it could not be published without contravening the law and running the risk of having the newspaper closed down.

The *RDM* put on a superior case for liberalism far beyond that of the other mainstream newspapers operating at the time. The Afrikaans press was doing little or nothing to voice any disdain about the government's apartheid policies, and the rest of the English press remained rather shy about being too vociferous in their support for those fighting against the government.

[8] Phrases 'human rights crusader' and 'human rights violations' were not in use during apartheid. These are phrases which served to label the problems of apartheid when democracy has been secured in South Africa and solutions were being sought and labels needed.

Rejecting Petersmann's (1997) criticism on this point, it can be noted that in discussing the laws that affected the media, she takes no cognisance of the labour laws and the manner in which they were worded and implemented. She contends the newspaper never said the police were murdering people. While this is a true reflection of the newspaper's reportage, there seems to be no recognition of the fact that in terms of Section 29b of the Police Act which made it clear if a newspaper accused the police of misconduct – or made allegations they denied, the journalist and editor concerned could be criminally charged if they could not prove their claims. Accusing the police of murder it would have been completely impossible to prove and would have led to prosecution. Although the journalists did not directly accuse the police of murder, they did report that the police shot at the crowd and people died as a result. While the word murder was not used, articles about the transgressions of the police and the results frequently appeared.

All interviewees including the black staff exhibited a strong loyalty. Louw (2003) points out there were some stories, which could not be printed because, upon investigation, they were based on rumours. Printing stories pertaining to the Defence Department, prisons and police force also posed a problem as these had to be vetted by the department before they could be printed legally.

For Pogrund (2003) the fact the *RDM* was a crusader for human rights goes without argument. He firmly believes it did not violate human rights or withhold information. "These newspapers were owned, run and aimed at whites and in their very nature they were restrictive. The *Mail* pioneered the idea of reporting on black life and broke through barriers because we began to report black politics and then the lives of blacks as news," (Pogrund 2003).

Black employees did not perceive the newspaper to be withholding information. Magubane (2004) comments on the allegations that the newspaper perpetuated human rights violations by withholding stories: "The *RDM* was the only vehicle that gave the news to South Africans and the outside world by going out there exposing" (Magubane 2004).

The journalists were very careful to ensure, as far as possible, that the newspaper and its staff could not be found guilty of any transgressions. Many saw this as a negative factor

and criticised the *RDM* for its vigilance in checking the validity and credibility of every story with the newspaper's lawyers before going to print. This was seen to be a way of acquiescing to the government, ensuring stories would not offend it too much. Instead of viewing the newspaper as wanting to stay open for business in order to continue educating the people, it was perceived to be supporting government laws.

Mojapelo (2003) backs up his belief that the newspaper did not withhold stories by reminding critics the *RDM* was the first newspaper to break the news about Steve Biko's death and the real cause of death according to an independent coroner. This is a good example of the fact that the newspaper was prepared to print any story they had the facts to prove. It was a story that sympathised with black people - Biko and his family - and without pointing any direct fingers at the police, let readers know what had happened and that the police were to blame. Without breaking the law or contravening the Police Act, the *RDM* told the people exactly what had happened to Biko.

4.5 Working conditions and separate amenities

Working conditions and the amenities within the building came under heavy scrutiny. One of the main complaints, which surfaced during the TRCMH, was black journalists claiming they were forced to use enamel plates and mugs. This can be addressed by looking at the fact that SAAN had an efficient editorial chapel, which dealt with staff complaints. Reporters could have used this chapel to have the situation rectified but the problem did not surface as a strongly held grievance until the TRCMH took place. Louw says: "The news editors of the *Township Extra* assured me they had no recollection of their staff being forced to use other than the crockery available to all the others in the newsroom," (Louw 2003).

Looking at the separate amenities, there was a feeling in the newsroom that although there were laws in place to separate bathrooms for the different races, the *RDM* took little notice of these. The staff refused to tolerate separate toilets on the editorial floor and tore down the signs designating race. These were replaced with green signs which indicated that any race could use the bathrooms, separated only by gender. When management noticed these signs and, fearing government reprisals, replaced the segregationist signs the editorial department would soon tear them down and put the green signs back up.

However, there was still separation in the canteen, which was frowned upon. The works department was given black chairs to sit on to designate where they had sat so others could avoid sitting in these seats and getting grease transferred from works employees' clothes onto their clean clothes. This was done to prevent other employees having their clothing stained but did not ingratiate the management with those singled out to sit on these seats.

It should be remembered that certain laws had to be adhered to, to avoid being closed down. There was no point being closed for an infringement, which had nothing to do with the purpose of the newspaper – to tell the public what was happening in the country. The editorial department did attempt to disregard the laws that separated the races. However, they had to do so cautiously.

In other areas of the newspaper separation was ever present. Other departments were in favour job preservation and separate toilets. "The newsroom was more liberal and I think it had a lot to do with the fact they were working more closely with Africans on the beat, on the street, in the newsroom itself. They had a greater respect for their capabilities and their abilities. So I think it was quite liberal," (Louw 2003).

4.6 Training

There is some argument about whether or not black journalists were trained. For this to be a question of discrimination it would have to be true to say that white journalists received training. This, however, was not always true. At the time there were few institutions offering formal training in journalism and most whites received on-the-job training. It is therefore invalid to make a sweeping statement that the newspaper's lack of training for black staff amounted to a human rights violation.

Tissong (at the TRCMH) complains black journalists were given no training, saying all black journalists were self-taught, learning by trial and error and adds that the lack of training was used as an excuse to deny them promotions.

In defence of the *RDM*, many of laws including the Group Areas Act and Job Reservation Act, prohibited black staff from being promoted above white staff. The law also dictated that while people of any race could rise to supervisory and management positions, they could only supervise people of their own race. Only whites were exempt and could

supervise anyone, of any race. This meant a limited number of blacks could take up senior jobs in the newsroom and it prevented them from rising to senior positions.

SAAN and the *RDM* did attempt to take on more black staff and elevate them into supervisory roles, using the *Township Extra* as a vehicle to further the careers of black staff and to offer them on-the-job training. It was one of the places a black person could be put in charge because most of the journalists working on it were black. After offering black people a vessel they could use to get experience in senior editorial positions, a second aim of the *Township Edition* was to use it as a place where black staff with less education than their white counter-parts could receive intense tutoring which would better equip them to take on greater responsibilities.

The two formal training options open to all journalists were the cadet and OilBurn courses. OilBurn, devised and run by the *RDM*, saw the newspaper taking groups to the Magaliesburg for a week. Here they would have lectures prepared by members of all departments at SAAN. The aim of the course was to inform the journalists about the roles staff in the various departments played, in an attempt to give them a better understanding of how all departments worked as a unit to put out the newspaper. Aside from lectures the staff also produced the *OilBurn Express*.

Defending the *RDM*, Bakitsha (2003) contends the staff was encouraged to seek out and participate in training. According to him there were plans at the *RDM* "to improve a lot of journalists but circumstances did not allow it. They did encourage training but implementation was slow".

Looking at the training, one must consider the instruction journalists got on-the-job working for the *RDM*, especially during the Soweto Uprising which is seen by many as a turning point for black journalism in South Africa. While black journalists had been working on publications like *Drum* for years and there were many working in the field, June 1976 was the first time white daily newspapers needed black staff to get the news.

As the action played out in Soweto, whites who did not have the necessary passes to enter Soweto found themselves watching from the sidelines as their black counter-parts charged in, spoke to the people in the township and produced the stories the whites could not.

Newspapers without black staff found themselves in a difficult position. For this reason the Soweto Uprising of 1976 is seen as a coming of age for black journalists, a chance to have their work recognised, to raise their profiles and excel nationally and internationally.

One must also examine whether black journalists' copy was taken seriously and to what extent it was changed in the subbing process. During the interview phase there was a resounding declaration from most of the interviewees that they were taken seriously, provided they did their work to an acceptable standard.

The greatest hindrance to meeting these standards was the language barrier which most black writers had to overcome. While Pogrund (2003) says that black reporters were respected by other members of the editorial team, he comments that one of the biggest problems faced by both the writers and those subbing their work was that, with English as their second or third language, many battled to write in acceptable English and their copy was often changed in subbing. This led to a great deal of frustration for the subs. Similarly journalists felt their work was being changed simply for change sake.

This benchmark however was a taught standard and most of the black journalists who did not conform at the start were tutored and, according to Stewart (2003), within two years their copy was indistinguishable from English first language speakers. This on-the-job training formed part of the skills base these journalists took with them when they left the *RDM*.

Because journalists had to adhere to set standards, those on permanent staff were more often considered to be able and serious journalists, while other journalists often dismissed freelancers as their writing skills were inadequate and the language barrier was a hindrance to those with low education levels. That said, one of the most respected and revered journalists of the time was Gabu Tugwana who, until September 1976 was a freelancer.

However in general, there was a consensus that black staff did have the respect of their white colleagues and superiors. "Yes they were taken seriously. It [copy written by blacks] had to be because they provided the majority of the on the spot actuality reporting. It was taken seriously" (Laurence 2004).

Laurence (2004) counters the accusation that only black stories were checked thoroughly before being printed, saying that all stories were thoroughly checked for accuracy and to ensure facts could be proved. This was a process that all stories went through and was not used as a method of censoring stories written by blacks.

Mojapelo (2003) however contradicts this, saying black stories were censored and changed before being printed. "Much was changed, there's absolutely no doubt about it. This was the general complaint from black journalists that our stories had been changed. Not the stylistic elements but content-wise and the approach, and the most important thing as you know is the opening paragraph and those were changed" (Mojapelo 2003).

4.7 Fired while in jail

While the accusation was made that the *RDM* fired staff who were arrested, Qwelane (at the TRCMH) and Tugwana (2004) claimed the opposite. Qwelane told the TRCMH white-owned and -run newspapers had stood by their journalists, supporting the families of those imprisoned without trial. They continued to pay detained journalists' salaries and did not automatically find them guilty.

Tugwana (2003) bears testimony to this. In his view one fact which proves the *RDM's* support of its staff is the manner in which he was treated when he was detained. Until September 1976 he was a freelancer with the *RDM*. Upon his arrest he was given permanent employment to allow the newspaper to offer him legal representation, which they could not offer to freelancers. A lawyer was sent to see him in Modderbee prison in Benoni to get him to sign his permanent employment papers to enable the newspaper to offer immediate representation. In addition to legal council being provided and paid for by the newspaper, his job was held open for him during that three-month incarceration and a later 17-month prison term.

The actions of the newspaper in this instance speak louder than any proclamations by its critics. It is clear from the manner in which both Tugwana and other jailed *RDM* staff were treated that the newspaper did have a loyalty to its staff and ensured that they were offered legal advice and that their families were looked after in their absence.

One could conclude that this criticism was baseless as those who were imprisoned, including Mojapelo (2003) and Magubane (2004), who was jailed twice for extended periods, found their jobs waiting for them when they returned from prison.

4.8 Media's role in apartheid society

With an understanding of the defences used to counter criticisms against the *RDM*, one must consider the question: "What is the media's role in a society deliberately divided along colour lines?"

Interviewees for this thesis conveyed the idea that newspapers have a role to play in telling different races about other racial groupings and their way of life. According to them, newspapers are tasked with the primary responsibility of facilitating understanding and dialogue between races. The media also has the job of encouraging greater tolerance and acceptance among and between racial groups.

There is a common belief that the role of a newspaper in a divided society was to expose it, to bridge it, to keep reminding readers it was there. However there is also a fine line between exposing and bridging racial divides, and going too far and alienating the readers. Ideally a newspaper in this situation should foster and strengthen relations across the colour barrier. It should also act in a reconciliatory role, which aims to bring people together by educating them about each other. For those who wanted to know what was going on in other areas and among other racial groups, the *RDM* gave the full story.

Curran (in Curran and Gurevitch 2000: 134) expands: "Traditional liberal theory perceives the political system to be constituted primarily by government and individuals. In this theory the media protect, inform, gather together and represent private citizens, and enable them to supervise government through the agency of public opinion."

While the *RDM* faced a multitude of problems, ranging from decreasing advertising to managerial interference, the researcher feels the newspaper went further than any of its contemporaries to educate the people, both about the ills of the society in which it was functioning and about the various members of that society, their lives and the part they had to play in the development of an apartheid-free country.

CHAPTER 5: THE *RDM* IN ACTION

In assessing the newspaper and the manner in which it operated one must look at the extent to which the editorial ideology correlated with the work done by the newspaper during the 1970s. In this chapter, the relationship between editorial policy and reporting practice will be explored in the context of the coverage of the Soweto Uprising and the way the uprising was covered. This will be done through a content analysis of stories that appeared in the newspaper.

Holsti (1969) asserts that communication is composed of six different elements – sender, the encoding process, the message, channel of transmission, detector or receiver and the decoding process. According to him content analysis is always carried out on the message while inferences can be made, from a study of the message, about the other five processes. In order to do this is it equally important to look at the sender and receiver as it is to study the message.

5.1 Research design

Content analysis[9], for the purposed of this research, will be done using a single source, the *RDM,* over two periods: immediately preceding the Soweto Uprising (January 1, 1976 to June 15, 1976) and the period immediately after (June 16, 1976 to June 30, 1976).

Holsti (1969) speaks about the effect of the message stating "the question 'with what effect' is, in some respects the most important aspect of the communication paradigm," (Holsti 1969: 33). This is particularly important in assessing the *RDM* as a liberal newspaper as many of the critics at the TRCMH asserted that the newspaper violated or denied the country's citizens' human rights. The aim here is therefore to assess the effect the editorial messages had on the readership.

In sampling articles to code, 62 were found between January 1 and June 15. In order to ensure articles appearing on the same day in the main edition and the *Township Extra* could be compared the researcher chose to code all stories appearing in both editions. The newspaper appeared six days a week offering 146 days' worth of possible coverage. With two editions per day this rendered 292 editions which needed to be searched for applicable

[9] Full notes of the content analysis phase of this research can be found in appendix C.

stories to be coded. All articles appearing in either edition between June 16 and June 30 were coded and assessed. This rendered 85 articles for coding over 26 editions (13 main and 13 *Township Edition*).

In setting out the parameters of the content analysis the researcher has decided upon 10 categories to be coded. These are set out below.

Language was divided into two separate concepts. In the first instance it was coded looking at **biased language** which described members of different racial groups in a negative or derogatory manner. It also looked at articles which were biased towards one racial group.

Words which merely differentiated the races including white, black and coloured were not coded as being biased. “Mob”, “thug” or any derogatory names for black people were however construed as being biased. This language study looked specifically at words used about people in their personal capacity.

The second use of language studies was what has been termed in this study as **loaded language**. Words used to elicit an emotional response from the reader were of particular interest. While the words examined might be perfectly acceptable in their usage to describe a situation, the researcher looked specifically at words which could have been substituted with less emotive words, while not changing the meaning of the sentence. The study looked at instances where the words used, rather than the event reported on, could have caused an emotional response from the reader. In this category words including “pelted” and “hurled” will be coded as being loaded while “threw” and “hit” are not loaded.

The third category is the treatment of **headlines**. The researcher looked at how large these were in relation to other headlines on the page, the words used in the headline and whether they were active or passive. In looking at the words used in the headline the coder looked at whether they were worded to draw attention or to go unnoticed on the page. Headlines should be written to get attention and the coder looked at how effectively this design element was used.

This, as Garcia and Stark (1991) remind one, is particularly important because headlines are twice as likely to be seen and processed than the copy which follows. This figure is higher in Ogilvy (1983) who believes that five times more people read headlines than read body copy.

Treatment of **photographs** in the newspaper is also important in assessing the newspaper's coverage of the prelude to and the uprising. Garcia and Stark (1991) contend that readers look at all photos in a newspaper as they are the dominant point of entry on almost every page on which they appear. However, while all photos attract attention, large photos garner more attention and can thus be used to greater effect to tell a story without relying on people to read the corresponding text.

In coding photographs the researcher looked at the size of the picture, where it was placed on the page and whether, together with the caption, the photo told the reader what had happened at the event at which the picture was taken. The stories told by photographs were looked at both as independent entities within the newspaper and as part of a large story with corresponding copy.

The next two coding categories to be looked at are the **placement** of the story - what page it appeared on and where on the page – and which **edition** the story appeared in.

The placement category includes looking at the context in which the story appears. What are the other stories on the page and what is the importance of the stories in relation to the prominence they are given on the page and within the newspaper as denoted by the page on which they appear?

In looking at the edition in which stories appeared the researcher looked at where they were most likely to appear and whether stories which appeared in the *Township Extra* had a different treatment to those that appeared in the main edition. In measuring the treatment of articles the researcher looked at variances in language in articles which appeared in both editions as well as the amount of space given in each edition and the relative importance of issues. The importance was measured by looking at which facts appeared first in the story in each edition. As the most important facts are normally to be found early in the story it is possible to see which facts were considered to be most important to

which group of readers. It was important to look at whether the newspaper was speaking with one unified voice or two separated and opposing voices. This extends to looking at what page the story appeared on in each of the editions in an examination of how black stories were regarded by the staff on the main edition, especially lay-out subs. This also speaks to the seriousness with which the *Township Extra* and its copy were taken.

Length and the amount of space given to stories was also coded. Stories were coded according to word count along an ascending gradient with five possible points.

1. Brief – 30 words or less.
2. Short – 150 words or less.
3. Medium – 350 words or less.
4. Long – 600 words or less.
5. Feature – more than 600 words.

The aim here was to see how much space was given to issues which may not have been important to the white audience advertisers coveted.

The eighth category to be coded was the source of information and particularly looked at the use of **eyewitness accounts** from either journalists or witnesses at the scene of an event. These were viewed in relation to how often the newspaper used the police version as well as or instead of an eyewitness account. The use of eyewitness accounts was important in looking at stories reporting on the Soweto Uprising.

The use and prominence of **black journalists** at the newspaper was also coded. The aim here was to look at whether the newspaper made consistent and full use of black staff. The researcher looked at whether the use of black staff was dependent on the newspaper needing them during the uprising because white journalists could not easily access Soweto to get eyewitness accounts and to cover the event completely. In looking at the work of black journalists the researcher also looked at how effectively they were allowed to report on and write about events as they them. This speaks to the amount of space they were given for their stories and whether stories were assigned adequate space or relegated to small news holes.

The final coding category was the **frequency** with which stories appeared. This was examined only in the lead up to the uprising as the uprising received daily coverage in the

period under review. This looks particularly to how often a story appeared in the main edition where white people would be exposed to the news of student unhappiness and the problems being faced at schools both in terms of inadequate schooling and in terms of strikes which were taking place at various schools in protest against the 50-50 language issue.

5.2 What could be expected of the *RDM*?

In making inferences about the *RDM* one must lay out what could reasonably be expected from a liberal newspaper operating in South Africa in 1976. Looking at the working definition laid out in chapter 1 it could be expected that the *RDM* would remain separate and independent from the government, acting as a check on the state, as well as rejecting the demands of other external organisations. It could also be expected to monitor the government and report to the people its actions, both positive and negative, keeping them informed of issues affecting the readers.

The primary and most important expectation was that it would keep the citizenry fully informed about everything of importance happening in the country. It could be expected to be an arena for debate between various political parties and a space where people could state their views without the fear of negative repercussions. The liberal press could be expected to serve as a means of communication between the people and those running the country. Added to this, it should aspire to be objective and free of bias, offering all sides of every story or event, thereby allowing the populace to form their own opinions about what to believe and who to support.

One must also bear in mind the legal parameters within which the *RDM* was operating. Taking into account the laws set down and the manner in which employees claimed the editorial staff had found of circumventing these laws with the help of Stuart. The newspaper was required to cover all news with the exception of stories involving the Defence Force, police force and prisons – the only arenas which was strictly and specifically prohibited by law and could have led to the closure of the newspaper. While other laws restricted the scope of what could be written, journalists did not have to get external permission to publish stories covered by most of the laws instituted to curb the media and people of South Africa.

5.3 The lead up to the Soweto Uprising

The coverage of what was to become the uprising of June 16, 1976 started at least a year before the uprising took place with the *RDM* committed to paying attention to certain of the pertinent issues from the beginning of 1976. Many of the issues contributing to the volatility of June 16 centred around conditions in black schools with the most relevant being the implementation of Afrikaans as a mandatory language of instruction in some black schools from January 1976. This will be used as a benchmark of how the newspaper covered prominent issues of national and international interest.

Between January 1 and June 15 the *RDM* ran 62 items[10], including stories and stand-alone photos, addressing the problems being faced at schools by teachers and pupils alike due to the enforcement of Afrikaans as a language of instruction. Of the 62 stories 79 percent were in excess of 150 words and 20 percent exceeded 350, showing the newspaper was both aware of the need to cover stories which affected black people and committed to doing so.

During this period 29 of the items were written by black journalists, nine by whites and 24 had no by-lines. The *Township Extra* published 24 of these stories, 34 appeared in the main edition and four appeared in both. This further shows that the newspaper was not shying away from publishing these articles in the main newspaper. Stories were not relegated to the *Township Edition*.

The four stories which appeared in both editions had slightly different headlines but the stories themselves were exact replicas, taking the same mount of space and being given equal prominence in the two editions. The staff was aware of the need to speak, from both editions, with one united voice. This is illustrated in the fact that stories appearing in both were exactly the same, language and importance of certain elements was not changed to suit the particular edition. While staff members may have had differing opinions based on race these were not reflected in the manner in which news was covered across the editions.

In looking at the coverage of the events leading up to the uprising, the results of the content analysis will be looked at under five broad heading – warnings, fair and accurate reporting, use of language, police brutality and treatment of headlines and photographs.

[10] Refer to Appendix C.

However, before looking at these areas of the newspaper one must look at the manner in which black staff's work was treated in the days before the uprising took place. Did the white staff, especially senior editorial staff, value the contributions made by their black colleagues?

There are a number of stories including 'Govt created school crisis says Kambule' (Nonyane, *RDM* January 22, 1976: 1); 'Afrikaans is schools stalemate' (Ndlazi, *RDM* March 8, 1976: 1) and 'Language burden on too few teachers' (Mojapelo *RDM* April 21, 1976: 1), written by black journalists and given great prominence in the newspaper, appearing on pages one and three in both the main edition and *Township Extra*. This shows that the editor had a degree of confidence in these journalists and believed their work to be good enough to print on the first few pages where most readers would see them.

Stories written by black journalists were of the same standards as those written by whites. This can be seen by the fact that, looking at stories which do not carry by-lines, it is impossible to say conclusively who the journalist was or to what racial group they belonged. A good example of the level of writing by black journalists is Mike Ndlazi's front-page story on March 8. In 'Afrikaans in schools – stalemate' *RDM* March 8, 1976: 1 he writes:

> "A stalemate still exists between defiant members of the Meadowlands Tswana School Board and the Department of Bantu Education regarding the controversy of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in the 14 schools that cater for 15 000 children" (*RDM* March 8, 1976: 1).

The language used in this story is well constructed and unidentifiable as a black man's work showing that black journalists were able to write well and that their work was respected enough to be the newspaper's lead – the story on which impulse buying of daily newspapers rests. While management had little faith that black issues could sell newspapers, the editor believed they would and showed his faith by risking advertising revenue and street sales by using black reporters to cover black issues which were placed prominently in the newspaper.

It is impossible to say to any degree of certainty how much impact the sub editors had on what was printed in the newspaper. However, deferring to the opinions of some of the

interviewees it seems that there was very little of the content changed, rather facts were vigorously checked and changed in situations were these were not one hundred percent accurate. However, this was the case with all journalists regardless of their race. Mojapelo (2004), Laurence (2004) and Bakitsha (2003) all agree that the work of good and competent journalists was not changed. However there are some discrepancies between some of the headlines and accompanying text which may allude to the impact subs had on what was printed. This is discussed later in this chapter.

In looking at the work of black journalists and whose stories were given prominence in the newspaper there are a few journalists whose names appear regularly. This regularity with which they were entrusted with writing the page and in some cases newspaper's lead seems to suggest that subs did not have to expend very much effort on making their stories publishable and this would have been counter-productive in a situation were deadlines were tight and subs did not have the time or the inclination to rewrite stories for publication.

5. 3.1 Warnings

The newspaper was acutely aware that black pupils were unhappy with their schooling. In a bid to help avoid violent actions by these students, the *RDM* published warnings from prominent members of the black community. As early as January 22 the *RDM's Township Extra* carried a front-page warning from Tamsanqa Kambule, Orlando High School headmaster, that the government had created a problem to which he could find no immediate solution.

Reporting on Kambule's opinions of imminent problems caused by the fact that primary schools had to take in extra Form One[11] pupils, Mateu Nonyane, in 'Govt created school crisis says Kambule' (*RDM Township Extra* January 22, 1976: 1) notes there were not enough teachers or facilities to accommodate the sudden increase in the number of pupils at primary schools. Nonyane also suggested pupils would suffer psychological disadvantages as they had expected to move into high school and were instead kept at primary school for an extra year. This article indicated that there were imminent problems that would arise during the school year if something was not done to alleviate the problem.

[11] Form One, was now part of the primary schooling where it had previously been part of secondary school.

To overcome the overcrowding and a shortage of schools and teachers, parents demanded a platoon system be introduced. In his editorial, 'No room for school hungry hundreds,' Mojapelo explains: "Most of Mamelodi schools are to re-introduce the platoon system of afternoon classes as a result of the school accommodation problem caused by the introduction of Form One classes into primary schools this year" (*RDM* January 22, 1976: 1). However, this system could still not accommodate all the children who were turned away at the beginning of the year. A further problem, which was to cause friction between learners, school principals and the department of Bantu Education, was that very few teachers were suitably trained to teach.

While this was a warning there were problems that would be hard to solve, it was in not a blatant one. However, a month before the uprising a story by Lynn Stevenson proclaimed 'Tutu letter warns PM of violence' (*RDM* May 24, 1976: 2 and *RDM Township Extra* May 24, 1976: 1). Stevenson reports Tutu had written to Prime Minister Vorster of "his growing nightmarish fear of possible bloodshed and violence in South Africa. I am dreadfully frightened we may soon reach a point of no return, when events will generate a momentum of their own, when nothing will stop their reaching a bloody denouement which is too ghastly to contemplate." In this letter Tutu outlined ways in which the government could avert inevitable bloodshed.

This story was followed the following day when Gerald Reilly claimed in 'More Black leaders fear race violence' "Prominent Black leaders share the fear expressed by the Dean of Johannesburg [Tutu] violence may erupt unless urgent moves are made to remove political and economic restriction against Blacks," (*RDM* May 25, 1976: 2). Both articles, which appeared early in the main edition of the newspaper, and were therefore seen by white readers, are clear indications there was some fear of violence coming. However, these warning were ignored. Reilly's footnote reads: "The Prime Minister has received Dean Tutu's letter. Mr Vorster's private secretary, Mr Johan Weilbach, said yesterday the letter would receive attention in due course" (*RDM* May 25, 1976: 2) indicating a complete lack of concern over this warning.

By January 30 the children had already brought their dissatisfaction with Bantu Education to the attention of the Deputy Minister of Bantu Education and Administration, Dr Andries

Treurnicht. In a story 'Treurnicht promise to Black children' (*RDM* January 30, 1976: 14), Treurnicht promised black children would soon receive the same compulsory education received by white pupils, which he assured them would lead to an improved learning environment. However, he added it would be impossible to implement this system immediately due to the high number of children of school-going age who had been refused entry into schools at the beginning of the year due to a lack of space. This left his path clear to continue the status quo. Nothing changed at black schools and the *RDM* regularly reflected this in its editorials.

Other stories detailing the growing impatience of the pupils, parents and teachers continued to abound. In early February 1976 the regional director of Bantu Education, WC Ackerman decided to fire the chairman of the Meadowlands Tswana School Board and another executive. In response to this the entire board resigned in protest. Parents, who had elected the board to represent them and their children felt they alone could decide whether the board was serving their interests and whether or not to dismiss any of them, also showed their outrage at the dismissal and consequent resignation.

In 'Sacking shock – 14 000 kids may walk out' (*RDM* February 10, 1976: 1), Nat Serache writes: "Parents are threatening to remove 14 000 children from school in support of the protest resignation of the Meadowlands Tswana School Board. If the department does not bring them back, we are going to withdraw our children and they can bring their children because they want board men who represent them," (*RDM* February 10, 1976: 10). Officials of the Bantu Education Department refused to comment when approached by the *RDM*.

5.3.2 Fair and adequate coverage

With an understanding of the warnings given, one must consider the question of fair and accurate reporting of issues relating to life in the townships. In looking at fair coverage one must consider how much coverage was given to these stories, where these stories appeared, in which edition and on what page, and the length or amount of space dedicated to the issue in addition to the content and quality of the story.

In the case of the *RDM* in the first half of 1976, the newspaper printed 59 of the 62 stories within the first six pages, with 37 appearing on page one. Most of these, in relation to

other stories in the *RDM*, are an average length indicating the newspaper was offering these matters as much, if not more, space as was being given to other topical issues. The school crisis was also given huge amounts of coverage in comparison to the space given to other social problems being reported on during the period under review.

This suggests that the newspaper was offering black readers a fair amount of coverage on issues which interested and affected them. However a closer look at the stories make it clear that while black issues were being given space the content of the coverage was not necessarily a fair and accurate account.

There are two reasons for asserting that this coverage was neither fair nor accurate. In the first instance coverage was extremely broad. The newspaper was looking at black concerns but was doing so only in a wide sense. The newspaper looked at issues like pass laws and housing conditions but did not go into the economic difficulties black people experienced. If the coverage was to be fair it should have reported more comprehensively, delving deeper into the greater details of issues and how these affected black people and their freedom to live full and rewarding lives. The *RDM* was not paying enough attention the continuous stream of laws being made which strangled black people economically and forced them into taking jobs as migrant workers in order to support their families. The newspaper should also have given more space to how these laws affected people's quality of life. The newspaper could have covered a greater array of issues, in more depth, looking at the people affected and their stories, rather than just listing the laws.

The second reason the coverage was not fair was the fact that of the 62 stories, 25 contained biased language including accusing the police of "storming the crowd" in 'Fists raised after trial' (*RDM* March 19, 1976: 3). While these did not all paint a negative picture of the black citizenry, it showed that the *RDM* did not present readers with objective reports of the events on hand. The newspaper, through the language used, had a tendency to choose sides, offering the readers its opinion instead of laying out a balanced report reflecting both sides of the story, allowing the readers the freedom to form their own opinions. This can be seen in 'I saw police batter men, women as crowd sang' (*RDM* May 30, 1976: 5) which tells how the police "waded into the crowd … and battered whoever was in their way." No information is given about why the police had been called to the scene or why they took action other than to mention that a 600-strong crowd was

striking from the factory in front of which they were standing and that they were chanting Nkosi Sikelele iAfrika.

Another example is 'I saw death at the hands of child power' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 3) which tells of extreme violence on the part of Soweto children who dragged a man from his vehicle and stoned him to death. Mention is also made of a second man who was battered to near death by the same students. Again only one side of the story is told - that of the victims' and no comment is sought from them.

If one refers back to the definitions of liberalism and liberal journalism set out in chapter 1, the fact that the newspaper was choosing sides goes against the idea of keeping the people informed. While the newspaper was telling the people what was happening, it was in many cases informing the people from certain perspectives rather than simply laying out the information needed to form beliefs about the implications of an event or action. This in turn defies the idea that the newspaper could be a means of communication and co-operation across the colour-line. By writing one-sided stories there was little possibility for communication as the newspaper had already told people what to think and thereby negated the ability of people from both sides of an altercation to have a meaningful conversation from a neutral vantage point in which the newspaper had not already assigned blame. By using language which put the blame on one party, communications could only begin with recrimination.

While liberalism does not preclude journalists and editors from expressing their own opinions, these opinions should not be printed in news stories. Rather they should be reserved for comment and analysis pages which have been set aside for personal comment. Journalists could also have made use of the front-page leader on Saturdays to air the opinions of the newspaper.

An example of telling people what to think can be seen in 'Mob stones police in city clash' (*RDM* March 19, 1976: 1). The report states that two angry crowds of over 1 000 Africans each pelted police with stones, bricks and bottles resulting in at least one policeman being injured. Mention is made that police used dogs to disperse the crowd but no mention is made of civilians being hurt. The insinuation is that the police were victims and were blameless in the event with the crowd being painted as the villains who escaped without

injury. In addition to the story insinuating that the crowd was in the wrong, the headline also assigns blame claiming that the mob attached the police, who by implication did not retaliate. The headline assigns the only wrong doing to the crowd involved.

Above all by telling people who was at fault and what to think the newspaper was taking away every reader's right to express individual thought and freedom of expression. While the newspaper had a responsibility to its readers to speak out against apartheid and police violence, comments should, as has been pointed out, have been reserved for the appropriate pages and columns in the newspaper.

5.3.3 Language

The idea of fair reporting leads naturally to an examination of the language used in the newspaper and the manner in which it covered stories.

There were 12 stories which were biased and 25 (including the biased 12) which contained language which could be considered to be loaded – almost half the stories published contained such language.

In dealing with general issues, the newspaper managed to remain neutral in the language used in reports, however, as June 16 drew closer there were more incidents of police clashing with students and the *RDM* become more emotional in its language usage, especially in headlines.

Three specific language ideas can be considered. The first is attributing characteristics to people through the use of specific words. In 'Elite speak English', Mike Ndlazi writes "To Africans the weakness of Afrikaans lies in the fact it is a language spoken in one country of the world, by a White minority who dominate politics. As a result English is the language preferred by the Black elite," (RDM April 21, 1976: 15). This statement separates black people into an upper and lower echelon. Those who spoke English, a universal language, well were regarded as better than other black people. It is interesting to note this distinction, which sets up two sectors within the black community. While this is not an untrue statement or a derogatory one it does show the manner in which language was used to attribute characteristics to individuals and entire communities.

The second use of language under investigation is the use of derogatory words with negative connotations to describe people and actions. Here one can look to March 19. In a front page story in the main edition detailing an altercation between police and blacks the headline read 'Mob stones police in city clash' and the article reads "Two angry crowds each of more than 1 000 Africans … after near riot scenes in which police were pelted with stones, bricks and bottles. … Several dustbins were hurled at passing police cars" (*RDM* March 19, 1976: 1).

This use of suggestive and emotive words creates a more sinister picture than other options. The word *crowd* would have been less dramatic than *mob* in this headline as would *hit* instead of *pelted,* and *thrown* instead of *hurled*. Both *pelt* and *hurl* engender a sense of force and violence, which the alternative words do not and make the story an emotional one.

Finally, language which can be clearly seen as a tool to elicit an emotional response is the use of factual words which have emotion attached to them. While the use of these words is justifiable in describing a scenario accurately, the dictionary definitions may not be the reason for their use.

At least three examples can be found of emotive words being used for effect - 'Striking pupils stone police after Soweto teacher stabbed' (*RDM* May 28, 2976: 2), 'Orgy of plunder will cost millions' (*RDM* June 18, 1976: 2) and 'Riots Rage – Army on standby' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 1) which mentions that the "marauding Blacks rampaged through Soweto last night, plundering buildings and terrorizing people …". In the first story a teacher was stabbed by one of the "rowdy" students who managed to escape arrest when his fellow students hurled stones at the police.

In all three cases the adjectives used are extremely sensational. While the words "burnt" and "stoned/stoning" are factually correct, they elicit a response that would not have been gained with less passionate words such as "damaged".

5.3.4 Police brutality

During the interview phase of this study all those interviewed believed the newspaper did an exemplary job of exposing police brutality and condemning the police for their part in

turning a peaceful march into a violent confrontation. While Petersmann (1997) may disagree, proof of the *RDM's* contempt for the police was evident in some of the stories in the newspaper during the first half of 1976.

The *RDM* did not reserve emotive language for blacks' misdeeds and was equally critical of the police, using this same tactic to express journalists' outrage at their actions. In two articles, in the main body of the newspaper, covering an altercation at the Heinemann Electric factory in Elandsfontein the headlines on these stories stir up more emotion than other words may have done. Nat Diseko's story is headed 'I saw police batter men, women as crowd sang' (*RDM* March 30, 1976: 5) in which it is reported that a policeman prodded a worker with a stick, while Clive Emdon, a white journalists writes, 'Cops club workers in baton charge' (*RDM* March 30, 1976: 5).

One can see the words "club", "charge" and "batter" could have been used to create an impact while other words would have conveyed the same meanings but would not have stirred the reader as much. Emdon writes: "The 40 baton-wielding police with dogs who charged …, the police clubbed the crowd with wooden batons 'not unlike pickhandles'" (*RDM* March 30, 1976: 5). In this case baton-wielding is far more sinister than holding and the use of the word "clubbed" make the action sound far more violent than "hit". While these words are used to convey a specific meaning, the same meaning about the events being reported could have been achieved without manipulating the language used to suit the opinions of the *RDM* and its staff.

Furthermore, what was written about the police in articles detailing the events of March 29, as reported on March 30, was also illustrated by two pictures by Willie Nkosi. One shows three policemen beating a black person. The reader can only see the clothing (a skirt) of the black person and it appears these men are attacking a woman. In the second picture a pregnant woman is seen lying on the ground, being comforted by another woman. The caption tells of her distress at being one of the workers involved in the altercation with the police. These pictures show the horror, victims and perpetrators clearly.

Police brutality is further illustrated in a photo entitled 'Stoning terror at Orlando' (*RDM Township Extra* February 10, 1976: 1). It shows people running up a grandstand with police lower down facing them. The caption reads:

> "Crowds in the western grandstand at Orlando Stadium ran for shelter when members of the South African police and individuals hired by the NPSL pelted them with stones and broken bricks. The trouble took place at the end of the Chiefs-Bucs game on Saturday. A stone can be seen in the right of the picture sailing towards the crowd". (*RDM* February 10, 1976: 1).

In addition to reporting on police brutality the newspaper also offered the opinions of the community on police actions. Clive Emdon in 'Factory attack will be seen as mini-Sharpeville' (*RDM* March 31, 1976: 2) wrote: "Eleven African trade unions on the Reef – and the Trade Union Council – in independent statements yesterday deplored the unnecessary violence of the police on Monday when they baton-charged African workers in Elandsfontein".

5.3.5 Treatment of headlines and photos

There were 13 pictures printed in the period leading up to June 16. These appeared with stories and as stand-alone elements. Generally, photos were not used as effectively as they could have been. Most of them are no larger than four columns on a 10-column grid. This meant that while most photos were very emotive and could have told a great story without accompanying text, the size at which they were used rendered them less effective as they were often too small to give the reader a clear understanding of what was happening in the picture. While Louw (2003) explained in his interview with the researcher that the editorial department was given relatively little space in which to publish the news, this space could have been used for more, larger photos as these would have negated the need for corresponding pictures in some instances and space set aside for the story could have been used to print the photo larger. A good example of photos not needing a story to tell the reader what had happened was Kwey's stand-alone photo 'Stoning terror at Orlando' (*RDM* February 10, 1976: 1). This is an expressive photo which tells the reader exactly what is happening but was used relatively small and there some of the detail, which make the story richer, is lost. This approach to telling the news could have been better used.

The second drawback to many of the photos, especially those of protests, is the fact that protestors have their backs to the camera. The reader can therefore see a large number of people gathered but without being able to see their faces the reader must take the

journalist's word that the crowd is angry, violent or happy. It is impossible to see the people's emotions and therefore impossible for readers to judge for themselves the mood that prevailed at an event.

In looking at headlines it is interesting to look at the words used in contrast to those used in the story. In 'Pupils loot vans at Orlando roadblock' Nat Diseko writes:

> "The area around Uncle Tom's Hall in Orlando West yesterday was something like a war zone. … it was clear that no car could pass the roadblock set up by pupils … It was risky for newsmen to venture anywhere near the crowd at the hall. All cars going up to Uncle Tom's Hall were stopped by the pupils and the drivers questioned. The contents of commercial vans were taken. … Every black driver had to raise his fist and shout 'Power' before being allows through the barricade." (*RDM* June 16, 1976: 6)

While the headline speaks of looting the story has no such emotive language. The story is a factual account of what happened at the scene.

Sub-editors are often responsible for putting headlines on stories and this story shows the difference in the manner in which the headline, while being a reflection of the story, is a reflection of the sub's idea of what happened. It is instances like this where one can see the difference in opinions expressed by white and black staff members and journalists, subs and editors. This goes against the perception that the newspaper and its staff spoke with one unified voice.

Another example is 'Mob stones police in city clash' (*RDM* March 19, 1976: 1) which calls the people involved a mob while the story merely refers to them as an angry crowd.

Extending the idea that headlines and the stories the newspaper used did not always bear the same message one must take an overall look at headline use. There are very few were the wording used catches the reader's attention. For the most part headlines are blandly constructed and belie the emotions of the people who are reflected in the accounts presented in the newspaper.

Headlines are also generally used quite small. Harrower (1989: 14) comments that headlines are one of the most powerful tools in a newspaper's graphic arsenal. They grab the readers' attention and draw them into the story. However, in order to do this they should be relatively large and bold, especially where the story in question is the page lead. If a headline is too small it and the story get lost. The *RDM*, being a broadsheet using a 10-

column grid, often had a number of stories on each page and the headlines of some of these were so small that the story could easily be lost to the reader who was not searching for stories on a specific event or topic.

5.4 Coverage of the Soweto Uprising

While the uprising was no surprise to any one following the news throughout 1976, what was astonishing was its intensity. There had been several warnings in the months leading up to June that trouble was on the way and, even after the uprising began, the government ignored pleas to change the language policy.

In 'The man who warned of another Sharpeville' (June 17, 1976: 4) which spoke of Mosala's warning to government stated: "enforced instruction through Afrikaans in some schools could result in another Sharpeville." Since the beginning of the year more than 2 000 pupils had boycotted classes and the story demonstrated, through its reportage that four students who continued going to classes during boycotts had been stoned, that students were serious about forcing the Bantu Education Department to do away with Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools.

In 'Blacks tried to tell Govt of Trouble' (June 22, 1976: 4) the *RDM* reported on a meeting that took place the previous day at which African leaders, addressing Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, contended that they had warned the government three years previously that the implementation of Afrikaans as a mandatory language of instruction would never be accepted. The government simply chose to ignore this warning, as they did with future warnings.

Perhaps one of the most obstinate denials of impending retribution was the response of Minister of Police, Jimmy Kruger, who told the Assembly the police had not expected riots. In 'We didn't expect riots Kruger tells Assembly' (June 18, 1976: 2) he commented the police had, on numerous occasions, managed to convince pupils to go back to classes when they chose to boycott. "We did not expect something like this to happen. We managed to resolve the issue each time," he said in response to questions from the Assembly.

It is interesting to note that the government, despite the uprising and the violence it had led

to, was still unsure of whether or not to repeal the language ruling on June 22 when the matter was discussed in the Assembly as reported in the *RDM* (June 23, 1976: 2). The minister of Bantu Education, M.C. Botha said only that the department intended to take a decision before the schools were reopened.

It is ironic that the very people (government and all its departments and extensions) who were witness to the extreme emotions which surfaced during the uprising, and the amount of pent up anger which was released, did not realise that steps would have to be taken to ensure talks were held at which blacks and whites spoke with equal rights and that both parties listened to each other. This was the only manner in which government could ensure the situation never reoccurred. This is made more interesting by the fact journalists at *Time* magazine, an international publication, in 'Riot was an explosion of race tension, says *Time*' (reproduced in the RDM June 26, 1976: 2) recognised that the student uprising became so intense because "it was an explosion of the racial tensions that seethed beneath the surface of South African life and a soul-cry of rage from Soweto".

In the two-week period after the uprising occurred, 85 stories about the riots in Soweto and other townships across the country and the resulting violence appeared in the *RDM*. In contrast to the period before, all these appeared in the main edition. While stories with by-lines were written predominantly by whites totalling 26 articles, there were 16 written by blacks and 40 which had no by-lines. Bearing in mind the danger black reporters faced during this time it is conceivable that the majority of these were written by blacks who could not safely put their names to their stories for fear of retribution from the masses, however there is no way of knowing for sure. In addition to these figures, three stories where written jointly by white and black journalists.

Coverage will be looked at in 5 sections – fair and accurate reporting; language; police brutality; student violence; and treatment of headlines and photographs.

5.4.1 Fair and accurate reporting

After June 16, 82 stories were printed – a huge number for a single event. Of these, 67 percent were longer than 150 words with 18 percent being longer than 350 suggesting that the *RDM* took the matter, and the people's right to be informed, extremely seriously.

One of Petersmann's (1997: 158) criticisms of the *RDM* was the newspaper "carried many reports on killed or injured whites, or on whites who had narrowly escaped black attacks. But they published only very few in-depth articles on blacks killed or injured. They reported the official casualty numbers without putting names to the many victims." This leads one to believe she did not read many of the news articles in the days after the uprising began. It is true that on June 17 the newspaper dedicated a piece at the bottom centre of the front page to Melville Edelstein's death. It is also true the newspaper spoke to his family and published their reaction to his death. It is not true that the names of black people were not printed or that there were very few articles published detailing black people who were killed or hurt during the uprising.

Including the death of Edelstein, the researcher came across only five articles detailing and naming whites who had been hurt or killed. What is most noticeable about these reports is that, of the five people mentioned, only two are named. During the same period, the deaths of 47 black people were recorded with six of them being named including Hector Peterson (13), Patrick Rakau (14) and Petros Kgokong (16) who were all shot by the police, as well as Tandi Plaatjies (5), Amos Mbata (17) and Enoch Follie (14). Looking at these numbers it is fair to say the RDM did not report with a white bias.

In considering the accuracy of the reports in the newspaper one must look at how much of what was written was one sided. As will be discussed in sub-section 5.5.3 Kruger was given a large amount of space in which he praised the police without any contradicting statements from the black population. This shows that there were instances when the coverage was neither balanced nor accurate as it is impossible to assert that the police were blameless as suggested by Kruger.

While one cannot look at stories like the one above in isolation, an examination of the day's newspaper (June 18, 1976) reveals that the closest story offering balance or another side to the story is featured on page 5 while Kruger's comments appear on page two. While it could be argued that the newspaper as an entity balanced the Kruger story with an opposing one, one must consider the fact that the most important news of the day appears on the front page with news being placed on other pages in descending order of importance. Kruger's page two story is thus seen by the reader to be considered as far

more important to the staff of the RDM the page five story which documents the plight of the children hurt in the riots.

There are also instances when only the black point of view was shown. Examples can be found in 'The man who warned of another Sharpeville' (*RDM* June 17 1976: 4) which tells of Councillor Leonard Mosala's claims to have sent out warnings to the government long before the uprising began. The story claimed that these simply went unacknowledged. Another story, 'Riots in Soweto – warning signs were there' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 15) also claims the government had ample warning that the pupils and the black people as a whole would take action if something was not done to alleviate the plight of black children being forced to learn in a language they did not understand. These stories, like the ones Kruger had printed, were extremely one-sided laying the blame or the extent and intensity of the uprising at the feet of government.

While such stories cannot be looked at in isolation one must consider the extent to which there is balance in on a particular page or throughout a specific day's reporting. There are too many instances, of which the above are only two examples, in which the newspaper chose to write one-sided stories giving no indication that the journalist concerned had attempted to get comment from the party being criticized in the story – be it the police, government or representatives for the students involved in the uprising.

However, most of the stories included were a fair, balanced and accurate account of what was going on in the country at the time and the newspaper cannot be ignored as one which was doing its best to adhere to liberal principals. Of the 82 stories written in the aftermath of the uprising, 55 are writing in a factual manner with a neutral tone which does not assign blame or feature one-sided opinions.

5.5.2 Language

In an examination of the language used, 18 stories (21 percent) contained biased language and 21 stories (25 percent) contained loaded language. Seven bore the express opinions of people other than the *RDM* staff.

There was comparatively less biased in the stories written after June 16. However, there was still a large number of stories which contained biased language and loaded words. In a

number of stories, including 'Vandals burn down shop that won't serve them' (*RDM* June 18, 1976: 5) and 'looting and death in Alexandra' (*RDM* June 19, 1976: 3), the crowd is referred to as a mob – a derogatory word bringing to mind thugs and thereby giving the police and their actions more credibility. The newspaper's use of the word in at least two stories - 'Police fires – then I saw children fall' (RDM June 17, 1976: 2) and 'I saw death at the hands of child power' (RDM June 17, 1976: 3) – sets the tone of blaming the students for the violence which erupted and, by insinuation, takes the blame and responsibility off the police.

On June 17, Hector Peterson is mentioned but no blame is assigned for his death. "During the clash an African school boy, Hector Peterson, was shot dead," (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 10). The manner in which this is written leaves the cause of his death open to interpretation. Did the police or a fellow rioter kill him? The newspaper does not say how he came to be shot dead and who held the gun that killed him. Added to this the first paragraph of the story leaves the blame for the violence open to interpretation as well and the wording insinuates that the uprising turned violent because of the actions of the students. "Troops were on standby outside Soweto last night while thousands of angry Africans set fire to buildings and cars after a day of violence and death."

5.5.3 Police brutality

The next question to be answered is whether the *RDM* did enough to expose and criticise police brutality and the part the police played in making the Soweto Uprising the beginning of a violent war, which spread across the country and lasted almost a year. Those working on the *RDM* agree the newspaper did its best to show the police in an honest light, despite pressure from a government reluctant to have the police and other government departments portrayed negatively. A look at the newspaper shows how staff covered police brutality. Petersmann (1997) acknowledges that the *RDM* did tell its readers about police brutality. However she contends the newspaper tried to portray the actions of the police as self-defence.

In 'Riot 'peacemakers' gassed' (*RDM* June 22, 1976: 2) Nat Serache and Mike Louw write: "A Kombi loaded with teachers … had teargas thrown into it by police yesterday. We saw a policeman open a door and throw in teargas. The police held the doors closed after the teargas had exploded."

There are several reports of the police using unnecessary violence, which both shocked and horrified staff. Serache reported in 'Police fired – then I saw four children fall' (June 17, 1976: 2) that police threw teargas canisters into the crowd of over 10 000 children before they started shooting. At least one child was killed by police fire.

The following day Tugwana reported in 'I saw a child shot, and I couldn't look' (June 18, 1976: 5) "In Meadowlands and Rockville we saw police in camouflage suits opening fire with automatic weapons. … An unknown 14-year-old boy was shot dead in front of us in Rockville. He had tried hiding in a yard not far from where the police were firing on looters. We saw him stagger and collapse on the doorstep of a house". He reports he saw two boys shot in Meadowlands while they played and were no threat to the police.

Kruger however attempts, in a number of reports, to put the actions of the police down to necessity and goes so far as to refer to them as heroes. Kruger stated in 'We didn't expect riots, Kruger tells assembly' (June 18, 1976: 2) "the police had acted with great self-control and a minimum of violence in the face of the greatest defiance and provocation." This statement contradicts many of those written by the staff at the *RDM* like Serache's story in 'Police fired – then I saw four children fall' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 2): "I did not hear the police give any order to disperse before they threw teargas canisters into the crowd of singing school children," indicating that the police did not merely react in self-defence but attacked the children without warning.

Kruger, in a further two separate incidents, praised the conduct of the police. On June 21 he commented that the police were worthy of high praise and the newspapers had not given enough attention to their efficiency. "The South African Police have done an outstanding job and deserve headlines for it," (*RDM* June 21, 1976: 50).

Two days later Kruger, in 'Kruger praises riot police' (*RDM* June 23, 1976: 2) commented that the police "worked day and night in conditions of difficulty and danger. They had been sworn at and taunted. They had withstood tremendous provocation". He claimed they were often only 18 or 19 years of age and the students they were shooting at were bigger and older than them. This Kruger seems to believe, made their actions heroic rather than barbaric, especially when the police were shooting at people armed only with stones and

sticks and many of them, like Hector Peterson, were far younger and smaller than the police attacking them.

Kruger was given a large amount of space on at least three occasions to defend the police and their actions. These stories were one-sided and glorified the actions of a force which murdered a number of unarmed children. This begs the question of how fair a newspaper can be said to be when it allows a government spokesman to speak unchecked and without any balance in the reporting. These stories do not seek out comment from the aggrieved, are not balanced or objective and do not fall under what would be acceptable of a liberal newspaper. While they are presented as opinions and it is made clear that the stories are Kruger's ideas and words, such opinions could once again have been better used in the comments and analysis pages rather than on news pages were it is expected that what the reader sees is a factual account of the news and not the opinion of one party involved in an event.

In addition to the force they used to keep pupils in line, the police, unnecessarily heavily armed, were also used to ban a meeting of the Soweto Parents Association. The *RDM* reported in 'Parents' meeting is banned in Soweto' (June 19, 1976: 5) that 15 minutes before the meeting was to start "police officers travelling in two cars and escorted by three truckloads of policemen armed with FN rifles and in camouflage suits, arrived and pinned notice banning the meeting …" This was a show of police strength as there was no need to have so many armed policemen attend the delivery of a piece of newspaper. This is a clear demonstration of the government's attempts to scare the people with the threat of violence and speaks to the newspaper's willingness to write about its deeds, despite threats of closure.

Finally police brutality was explored in 'Police made teenagers load Orlando corpses' (*RDM* June 19, 1976: 2), an article in which it was claimed: "Almost 20 black teenage prisoners were forced to hop and run on the spot by black policeman at Orlando Police Station soon after midnight on Thursday and then ordered to load corpses into a mortuary van". There is no police response and no indication is given that the journalist attempted to their response as nowhere is it noted the police declined to comment.

5.5.4 Student violence

When looking at the riots and the part police violence played in the intensity of the event, one must look at reports of police violence in conjunction with those reporting on student violence. While the newspaper was bound, by simple journalistic ethics and by the principals of liberal journalism, to report on the actions of the government organisations, including their shortcomings, so too was it bound to report on student violence and the manner in which they behaved doing the uprising.

Students may have started out marching peacefully but rapidly took their part in the violence which ensued. Just as the newspaper reported on police brutality there are also articles detailing brutality by the students or what Derrick Thema (in the *RDM*) refers to as 'child power'.

There are numerous stories of students burning buildings and police cars, as well as damaging white-owned cars. One such story is 'I saw death at the hands of child power' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 3) in which Thema describes how children were setting up roadblocks to prevent people from entering or leaving Soweto. Those who stopped were pulled from their cars and beaten. Thema sums up the feeling at these roadblocks: "I saw mob anger. And it was ugly I saw black power in its most violent mood. And ironically it was child power".

Chris Smith, in 'Women dragged off by student mob' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 3) writes: "Two young women, one White and one Black, were dragged from a car and carried off by a gang of students. They were beaten and held until the police made their first sortie into the area."

In 'Thugs and spivs cash in on the chaos' (*RDM* June 19, 1976: 2), Martin Mahlaba comments that thugs have taken what was a legitimate student protest and turned it into a chance to demand money from motorists entering Soweto. He reports that taxi drivers are suffering most because of the number of trips they make into the area and they are getting ready to attack those forcing them to pay protection money to get into the township. Added to this, food supplies were getting low as shops have been looted and shop owners unable to restock due to theft and the problems of getting deliveries made because vans have to pay to get into he area and are often robbed on their way to their deliver points.

5.5.5 Treatment of headlines and photographs

The manner of reporting did not change in the aftermath of the uprising. While the event and the ideas behind it became a national and international lead story the newspaper still neglected to use headlines and photographs well. Had headlines and photographs been used bolder and larger they could have played a greater role in telling readers what was happening in the affected townships.

In examining the headlines in the period after June 16, these are used better and to greater effect than those seen in the lead up to the uprising. There are three distinctive techniques used to make headlines more effective.

The first is the use of white text on a black background as seen in 'Riot in Soweto – warning signs were there' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 15). This headline also reflects the second technique of running the headline across the entire page irrespective of how many columns the story covers.

The third, and most popular, technique is running a bold headline across the page with a smaller, bold, sub-head above the story running across the same number of columns as the story as seen in 'Flaming night. Riots rage – Army on standby' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 1).

The opposite was also used by the *RDM* who ran a strap across the entire page and utilised a large, bold, multi-deck headline above the story as was the case with '90 dead, 1 000 injured as riots and pillaging sours. Police guard white suburbs' (*RDM* June 19, 1976: 1).

On the whole headlines were bold and even smaller stories had larger headlines in proportion to the length of the story. Headlines were also more descriptive and emotive. Examples of headlines on smaller stories which were well used include: 'Police fired – then I saw four children fall' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 2), 'I saw death at the hands of child power' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 3), 'I saw a child shot, and I couldn't look' (*RDM* June 18, 1976: 5), 'Vandals burn down shops that won't serve them' (*RDM* June 18, 1976: 5), and 'Orgy of plunder will cost millions' (*RDM* June 18, 1976: 2)

Looking at photographs, printed both before June 16 which show various clashes between

black people and the police and photos take of the uprising in the two weeks after June 16, there were a number of opportunities for photographers to take graphic photos explicitly portraying what was happening in Soweto (and other townships affected later on) by *RDM* photographers. These were, in many cases, not used because they were too graphic and those which were used were often too small to have any real impact on the reader. While newspaper were not inclined to use horrific pictures showing dead and mutilated people during the 1970's the pictures that were used could have been given more prominence which would, as previously mentioned, have allowed the newspaper to tell the news through more stand alone pictures requiring no explanations.

Front-page photos were used on June 17 with two pictures accompanying 'Flaming night', sub-headed 'Riots rage – Army on standby' (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 1 and 3). The first shows the destruction in Soweto with a burnt out van in the foreground. The second shows a group of police with the charred body of an unnamed white man in Soweto. Both photos are very emotive and both show whites in a more favourable light as in both photos the loss is to whites not blacks. The story is continued on page three with an additional two photos. The first shows protesting students while the second shows smoke form a number of burning vehicles with a burning truck in the foreground.

This is one of the rare occasions when picture opportunities are used to full effect with a long story having multiple photos to support the text. However, the pictures do paint the students as villains and the police and whites as innocent victims. This is particularly true of the picture in the middle of page 3 whose caption reads: "Police of the special anti-riot squad with the charred and mutilated body of a white man in Soweto yesterday" (*RDM* June 17, 1976: 30).

The main photo on page two, June 17 shows students with placards protesting Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. While the photo is used relatively large the students appear to be motionless. There is no sense of movement or emotion. Many of the children also have their backs to the camera – a reoccurring problem with many of the photos used both before and after June 16. This negates any impact the photo may have had because there is no indication of how the people being photographed feel about the events on hand.

However, having noted the problems with the photographs used, it must also be remembered that there were problems of identifying individuals who might then be targeted by the police and secondly photographers often had to choose to take photos facing either the police or the students as they could not get in the middle of a conflict to get photos of both groups facing the camera. With this decision the photographer would either have to show the backs of the police and the faces of the students or vice versa. It is possible that having the backs of the students to the camera and the police facing the camera, the RDM was showing the menace with which the police attacked civilians, thereby taking the side of the black students who the photographers sympathised with. However, it is clear that photographer had to choose which group to have facing the camera and the implications of his decision would, to a degree have a direct effect of the manner in which the reader perceived the photographer and his attitudes to the people involved in an altercation.

The *RDM* used head and shoulders photos of people involved in the uprising, either as victims or spokespeople. These do little to portray events or enhance stories. They have no impact and serve no purpose. On page 5, June 17 there is such a shot of Jack Hauptfleish who was twice stoned in his vehicle. His story could have been better portrayed by sending a photographer to get a photo of him in his damaged car. This picture would have told the reader far more about his ordeal.

In contrast the photo, on the same page, of two elderly brothers – Joseph and Israel Kruger – is a far more emotive picture of two old men looking hurt and forlorn. This picture which is far more emotive and tells a story is used at half the size of Hauptfleish's face.

On June 17, page 15 there is a large photo showing the riot in excellent and graphic detail. The picture is the point of entry on the page and used larger than any of the other elements to draw attention and shock the reader with the scene. It is an effective use of this medium to make a statement and convey the message of the division caused by the uprising. However, with most of the hard news being covered in the first few pages of the newspaper it is likely that this photo and the scene it portrays could have been lost on the reader due to the fact that the picture is only featured half way into the newspaper.

Finally many of the photos that were used large and well positioned in the newspaper showed damaged, inanimate things and did nothing to portray the effects the uprising had on the people. Two examples are June 18: 1 which has a large, well placed photo of a beer store going up in flames, and page 2 of the same edition which shows the burnt out shell of a Johannesburg Municipal bus used daily to transport workers from Soweto into town. These seem to put more emphasis on the damage caused than on the people who were killed and hurt suggesting that the newspaper was looking to sensationalise the story. As they had to cater to even the most sensitive reader they could not show photos of dead people and the newspaper thus seemed to rather feature visible damage than concentrate on the people who had suffered emotionally or mentally as this damage was not tangible and could not be photographed.

Having looked at the ways in which the newspaper failed to use photos effectively, the paper did, on occasion use photos very well. However, these were exceptions rather than the norm. Two examples of this were on pages 1 and 3 respectively on June 19. In the first photo, the body of a dead girl lies in the foreground. This is an extremely emotive picture which has been used large and is therefore extremely effective in telling the story of what was happening. In the background is a marching crowd which adds to the effectiveness of the picture as it tells the readers that the dead woman died for a cause as denoted by the placards being carried by the crowd. The second photo shows adults wielding placards – "Why kill kids for Afrikaans". This picture draws the reader in as it is an emotional picture depicting the fact that black children were slain because of a language which was not theirs. However, it could have had even more impact had it been used larger.

One can see that both before and after the uprising the *RDM* did attempt to report in a liberal manner. However, praise from staff aside, it is apparent that the newspaper failed in a number of areas to live up to the notion of liberal journalism. The most important of these areas was the question of whether the *RDM*'s reporting was balanced and fair. While this chapter has looked at the idea that liberal journalism does not prevent the editor and staff of the newspaper having their own beliefs and opinions, it is important to remember that there are spaces allocated for such comment within the newspaper. The researcher has also suggested, in this chapter, that the staff at the RDM could have taken more care in their choice of words and the tone used to report on the Soweto Uprising and these elements tend to undermine the principles of liberal journalism. The researcher argues that

these were the gravest mistakes a liberal newspaper functioning in 1970s South Africa could make to undermine itself in the challenge of living up to the *RDM* aims of liberal journalism.

These and other ideas which point to ways in which the *RDM* both succeeded and failed in its quest to be liberal will be discussed further in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The wisdom of hindsight has given rise to a tendency in post-apartheid South Africa to judge past practises negatively. From the comfort of South Africa's democratic current disposition, researchers and historians too often judge what happened in specific periods by the standards and norms enjoyed when the research is done.

The case of 1976 journalism is no different and it should be remembered the freedoms South Africans enjoy in the new millennium are nothing like what black South African's, and the few white liberals fighting alongside them, faced daily in the pre-democracy years. One must judge what was done in the context in which it was done, without the advantage of hindsight.

One must also consider the norms to which the journalistic community adhere in 2005 and the manner in which these differ from those practiced in 1976. It is important to consider the manner in which newspapers were printed during the time under review and to keep the expectations of the current press separate from those of the 1970s media.

In assessing whether or not the *RDM* was a working example of liberal journalism one must consider both what the newspaper tried to do and measure what it did achieve against its goals and the definition of liberal journalism laid down earlier in this thesis.

While the newspaper attempted to adhere to the tenets of liberal journalism it did not always succeed. However, as with every textbook definition, the reality can rarely meet all the theoretical criteria. As Segola (2003) comments: "Like all the other newspapers that functioned under the country's draconian press laws of the time, the *Mail* could not have been expected to be that perfect".

While the *RDM* made a genuine attempt to attain the ideals of liberal journalism, it did not manage to perfect this, and, like all human endeavours, its attempts were flawed. It is therefore impossible to say unequivocally that the newspaper was practicing liberal journalism. In theory the *RDM* was an excellent example of liberal journalism at work, however, in practice it sometimes fell short of both its own aims and those of a general definition of liberal journalism. This shortfall can be seen in the manner in which black

news was reported in 1976. To appreciate the *RDM*'s attempts to adhere to liberal journalism, it is necessary to look both the *RDM*'s strengths and weaknesses in this regard.

6.1 Meeting the challenge

The researcher will begin by looking at the areas in which the newspaper adhered to and practiced the principals of liberal journalism. Here one can refer back to the original working definition laid down in Chapter 1 and the ideals which could be expected of a liberal newspaper as set out in Chapter 5.

The *RDM* subscribed to the ideals of liberal journalism, believing apartheid held no merits and sets itself the task of speaking out vociferously against the notion and its practice.

One of the central themes of liberal journalist which the *RDM* adhered to vigorously was the idea that a liberal newspaper stands independent of the State and acts as a check on the government. A liberal newspaper is charged with the responsibility of monitoring the actions of the State and reporting on these to the people, keeping them informed of any actions which might adversely affect them. The *RDM* was also expected to keep citizens informed of everything happening in the country.

In addressing race discrimination and injustice the newspaper was determined to speak out against these principals, irritating many white South Africans who did not want to read about black problems in the newspaper. While the newspaper made itself a number of enemies within the white readership pool it remained committed to showing readers that apartheid was a gross miscarriage of justice.

This policy was against everything the NP stood for and it set itself the task of crusading to have all members of South African society represented in the newspaper. This included writing about issues which affected black people and hiring black journalists. The newspaper saw the need to give all sectors of the community information about the country and the specific area in which they lived and, through the writings of black journalists, the newspaper was able to offer this coverage from a first hand point of view, publishing stories written for the people by their peers, people who lived the same lives as them and understood what that entailed.

Aside from believing in the tenets of liberal journalism, the *RDM* believed that a liberal newspaper should act as a two-way communication between people and government as well as providing a check on the state. A prime example of the newspaper standing behind this belief was the manner in which it handled the prison stories discussed in chapter 2. While it was illegal to write about the conditions in South African prisons, the newspaper allowed Pogrund to write and print the stories detailing conditions in South African prisons and, having being sued by the State, stood behind him for the three years it took for the case to be completed.

The newspaper agreed with Potter (1975) that liberalism incorporates the belief in the press enjoying maximum independence from the government, and that such a press should provide an arena for political debate with political parties being given the chance to be heard and their ideas considered. While the newspaper did not set itself up as a political arena it did act as a communication platform for the government and various organisations, printing letters and commentary from black leaders – both political leaders like Mandela and community leaders like Kambule who was a local high school principle. While the newspaper was opening itself up as means of communication between these two diverse sectors of society, the government chose to condemn the newspaper rather than utilising the opportunities it offered to enter into discussions with aggrieved parties.

When writing about black issues it was also important that the newspaper not only print stories about black life, but that these be given adequate coverage in a position in the newspaper where they would be seen. This the newspaper did well. Within the first six months of 1976 at least 147 stories about black issues where printed, 141 of which appeared in the first five pages of the newspaper and 123 appeared in the main edition. The length of these stories was comparable to stories about white issues and can therefore be said to have been adequate in terms of the amount of space given to black issues.

In offering coverage of black events, some of which appeared in the main newspaper, *RDM* was also playing a bridging role between white and black South Africans serving as one of the only publications which allowed all race groups to learn about one another's lives.

One of the newspaper's strengths in practising liberal journalism was that it stood independent not only of government but of other pressures as well. The newspaper was serving at least three readers – black, white and advertiser – and had to ensure that everyone was catered for. With a large black readership which boosted the newspaper's circulation it could not afford to ignore this sector of the population. However, the newspaper also had to appease advertisers who did not approve of the newspaper's demographics, believing that the space taken in the *RDM* would not reach the preferred audiences and was therefore wasted money. There were also many white readers who did not enjoy the discomfort they felt reading about black people and their problems. These readers did not like the newspaper's liberal slant and the fact that the newspaper raised issues and asked questions they would rather not think, read or hear about. The *RDM* catered to all three groups but allowed no one group to dictate what news was printed.

In offering people all the news, one of the newspaper's greatest strengths with regards liberal journalism was its refusal to enter into any censorship agreements, with any parties including the government and NPU. When the NPU tried to get the South African media to agree to self-censorship the newspaper spoke out against it and refused to be silenced on any issues. When the government threatened state imposed censorship the editorial staff continued to publish as much news as possible, catering to its entire readership in a bid to keep them informed of what was happening across the country. Many of the laws implemented by the government were extremely vague and left editors to interpret them themselves. There was always a risk that their interpretation would not correlate with the government's but, as seen during the prison stories, the *RDM* continued to print news, taking heed of the laws but not allowing them to curb what stories were printed and what subject matter was left untouched, ensuring it maintained its status of being independent of the government.

In acting as a check on the state the *RDM* was diligent in its reporting of police wrong doing and kept a running account of police brutality, criticising and exposing it in its many forms and exhibitions. The newspaper was extremely good at ensuring that while it stayed within the laws and did not directly accuse the police of transgressing the law, the manner in which stories were written made it clear that the police were at fault and that the newspaper did not approve of their actions. A prime example of this was the fact that in

1977 the newspaper was the first to print the details of Steve Biko's death in detention and the cause of his death.

Having discussed the newspaper's views on police violence one can also commend staff for the fact that they did not merely condemn the police and side with the students. Rather they adhered to the idea of telling the people what was going on – all the news, about all events, all the time. In doing this the newspaper was equally critical of students who became violent, injuring and in at least one case killing, innocent bystanders.

The newspaper followed the line of thinking which asserted that all citizens were entitled to individual freedom including equal rights for all, the right to education, to speak on their own behalf, and to have a say in the manner in which the country of their birth was run. It sought to give the disenfranchised a voice, believing that laws should apply equally to every citizen. The newspaper also sought to ensure all citizens had the necessary tools, resources and opportunities necessary to practice their freedoms, and in so doing set itself up as a practitioner of liberal journalism.

Far from looking only to the outside world, the newspaper also tried to practice its beliefs within its own structure, offering staff the tools they needed to practice their individual freedoms. One such case was the training ground offered to black staff working on the *Township Extra*.

While there is much debate about the merits of the *Township Extra* there are strengths which need to be remembered. The most important of these is that it offered black journalists a training ground on which to practice and hone their skills. Many used the skills the learnt and developed while on staff at the *RDM* to carve out a niche for themselves in the national and international journalism arena, garnering international accolades. While there was no formal training for these staff members, the on-the-job training gave many of them an opportunity that they would not have gained had this edition not existed.

The edition also created a space for black news to be published, which would otherwise not have been printed. In so doing it not only offered blacks news about the country and their community but, since some of the stories written for the *Township Extra* appeared in

the main edition it, also educated whites about how blacks were living and the manner in which apartheid was impinging on their human rights. Through the creation of this edition and the hiring of black staff the *RDM* was able to offer all racial groups information about each other in a bid to create interracial understanding and harmony.

The *Township Extra* also gave South Africa a new breed of journalists who had both the first hand knowledge of black life and the writing skills to keep the people informed about black issues and the way these impacted on black people. These journalists were particularly valuable to the people of South Africa in 1976. "Without the courage and determination of the black journalists, the world would never have known what really happened in the Soweto riots," (Hachten and Giffard 1984: 4).

Another example of the value *Township Extra* had was the fact that Tugwana was given a place on permanent staff and a lawyer to fight his case when he was arrested during the Uprising. These were both tools necessary to ensure he was treated fairly while in prison and that he had a job when he was released.

One of the newspaper's greatest strengths is that it offered a bridge across the racial divide and sought to be a voice of opposition in a country which had no effective opposition to the NP as the PP and LP were both too small and ineffectual to count as a real opposition. As Potter (in Jackson 1993: 5) notes, the English-press "became such a dissenting voice against the government that the English Press in reality became the official opposition in South Africa, replacing the weak and ineffectual voice of the English speakers in parliament".

6.2 Falling short

We must now look at the areas in which the newspaper fell short of its own goals. These shortfalls were primarily a result of the manner in which stories were printed rather than a reflection on the newspaper's mission statement, aims and objective. While the *RDM* told people what was happening in the country, it often gave one-sided accounts that were unbalanced. It would have served better by giving readers all the facts, from all affected parties, so they could come to their own conclusions based on balanced reporting.

Aside from publishing one-sided stories there are also a number stories giving the unbalanced opinions of Kruger who used this platform to tell the readers what heroes the police were. These stories could be said to be propaganda pieces, which went largely unchallenged and gave the impression that the *RDM* believed that the police had shot at students in self-defence during the Soweto Uprising. These pieces, and the fact that they were printed without any comment from civilians or students who had been affected, gave rise to the idea that the newspaper not only supported the government but that it put all the blame for the Soweto Uprising squarely on the shoulders of the students. The public had no counter-evidence to suggest that the police were not blameless and could not form their own, educated options.

As an example of this, there is no indication in the story detailing Hector Peterson's death of how or why he was killed. There is no mention of who was holding the gun which fired the shot that killed him. The police are excused for their actions because the *RDM* did not state that the shot fired had come from the gun of a policeman. While laws were in place preventing the newspaper from pointing a finger directly at the police, the story is written in such a manner that it left the reader into some doubt as to whether the police were to blame. This offers evidence that while the newspaper spoke out against police brutality, there are instances in its coverage of the uprising where it might seem to the reader that the newspaper supported the polices' actions.

The *Township Extra* was constantly under fire and may have been one of the newspaper's greatest weaknesses and strengths. As Bakitsha (2003) pointed out there was need for one unified newspaper that told both sides what the other was thinking and feeling about South African political life and this is where its weakness lay. Instead of creating this unified newspaper and encouraging its readers to understand one another, the editorial department saw fit to start and continue to publish a segregated newspaper.

There was a need to encourage tolerance amongst all citizens but the *RDM* did not live up to this fundamental role fully and therefore did not live up to the ideal of acting as a communication device for the various political and social spheres. The *RDM* was expected to train its readers to be tolerant of one another and to read a unified newspaper which embraced all nations, the newspaper however failed in this arena.

Aside from separating news, the newspaper's greatest downfall was that the coverage of black news was not fair and accurate as discussed in chapter 5. The editor and editorial staff on the newspaper proclaimed they were in favour of equal treatment of all citizens but did not live up to this ideal themselves as they failed to do any in depth reporting on the plight of black citizens.

Rather the newspaper offered wide sweeping, cursory stories which did not go beyond the surface problems faced by blacks. While the quality of white life was seen as important and written about in depth if white people had their rights violated, blacks were not treated with the same concern and had their grievances dealt with in a very general manner.

However, the newspaper's greatest mistake was to allow biased language to creep into a large number of articles which were printed. While the newspaper professed to have liberal ideals these were not exhibited in the manner in which stories were written. Much derogatory language was used to describe students involved in the uprising. While these did not all paint a negative picture of the black citizenry, it showed that the *RDM* had lost its objectivity and was resorting to assigning blame through the words it chose to describe people and events.

In offering fair coverage the newspaper could also have made better use of headlines and photographs which would have given the uprising better coverage. Had headlines been used larger and bolder they could have had a larger impact on the reader, drawing more readers into the articles, thereby educating readers who were not specifically scanning the newspapers for stories on the uprising.

Photos could also have been used more effectively to tell people about the uprising, what was happening and why it had started. Instead the newspaper resorted to using pictures of inanimate objects, playing on the horror of seeing things on fire or destroyed. Instead the newspaper could have expended more energy on getting and publishing photos which told individual stories – how real people were affected.

Photos need no language to be understood or to tell their stories. Had the newspaper made better use of photos which showed the plight of people rather than inanimate objects it would have been better able to educate people about what was happening both in Soweto

and across the country. Photos could also have been used to negate government laws which prohibited accusing the police of anything the newspaper could not prove as photos not only tell a story, they are also the proof that the story happened as it has been reported and would made it hard for the police to deny their actions.

In looking at headlines it is interesting to contrast words used in headlines with those used in the stories. Headlines tend to be more derogatory than the wording used in the text. In many newsrooms the sub-editors are responsible for putting headlines on stories and examination shows the difference in the manner in which the headline, while being a reflection of the story, is a reflection of the white sub's idea of what happened. This goes against the perception that the newspaper and its staff spoke with one unified voice and showed that the prejudices of some of the white staff were, on occasion, allowed to be reflected in the *RDM* which professed to advocate equality for all.

All of these issues could have been rectified but were paid no real attention and therefore diminished the value of the reports the *RDM* was carrying both in the lead up to and the uprising itself.

6.3 A final analysis

Looking at the ideologies of the RDM one can see that there was a place for liberal journalism in South Africa during the 1970s and, in theory, the *RDM* was a good vehicle for such journalism. It offered all people news about all aspects of life in South Africa and the lives of all its readers. Looking at the newspaper's belief system and the manner in which it sought to and managed to circumvent the laws imposed by government to curb what could be printed, it is obvious that, there was both a place and a need for a newspaper, dedicated to the tenets of liberal journalism, which was prepared to speak out on all aspects of South African politics, including the transgressions of those charged with running the country and catering to the needs of its people.

So, did the *RDM* conduct itself in accordance with the beliefs of liberal journalism? Benson (1967: 32) defines the press as "gathering sifting and interpreting the information which a community must have if it is to survive and unfold its inner possibilities". If a newspaper is to live up to this press ideal it needs to serve its entire readership. If it fails only one part of that community it fails in this challenge.

The *RDM* wrote with all readers in mind and covered news relevant to each social and racial group. It was in many respects an example of liberal journalism at work and the manner in which it did meet the tenets of this type of reporting far out number the ways in which it failed.

Having said this, one must consider who was to blame for its failure. While it is easy to blame the government it is clear that government laws did not play an overwhelming role in the failures of the *RDM*. Rather the newspaper allowed contradictory ideas within the newsroom to show through in the manner in which stories were reported. Had there been a more unified body within the newsroom these differences and the biases of individual people would not have been allowed to appear in the newspaper and subjective language and reporting would have been neutralised, leaving reports more fair and accurate.

The newspaper was also to blame for not offering both sides of every story. Possibly its greatest downfall, which had nothing to do with government and everything to do with the editing process, was that those charged with guiding the journalists and ensuring the newspaper was a fair and true reflection of what was happening across the country failed to ensure that the newspaper was in fact giving the public everything it needed to make an informed decision. Perhaps this was what some of the critics were alluding to when they charged the newspaper, at the TRCMH, with withholding information and thereby violating people's human rights and their right to all the knowledge all the time.

In the final analysis, while the *RDM* was, in theory, an excellent example of liberal journalism. Its staff needed to have the courage of their conviction and apply themselves far more stringently if the newspaper was to have been a true example of liberal journalism in 1976 South Africa. Hachten (1971: 248) states even before the uprising the "The *Sunday Times*, *RDM* and a few other English-language press were much more liberal than most of their reading public, reminding it of certain unpleasant realities in prosperous, affluent South Africa. This was an important press function in SA, since the government dominated the Afrikaans press."

There is no doubt the *RDM* did more than its competitors but, looking back, its best seems not to have been good enough to help the newspaper reach all its liberal goals. This however does not negate the areas in which it did succeed.

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APPENDIX A: LAWS THAT BOUND NEWSPAPERS

There were a number of laws, which were laid down by the government which affected the media. These laws ensured that while there was no official government imposed censorship, editors and their staff were forced to practice self-censorship to avoid finding themselves and their papers in contravention of the myriad laws which made the most mundane of activities criminal offences if practised in the wrong place or worded incorrectly in a news report. These laws affected what could be written, what subjects, people and organisations could not be written about or quoted and the manner in which the media was expected to conduct itself.

There were 12 acts, which were of particular interest to the media in 1976. While there were many more these were the most troublesome for newspapers and the ones which were most likely to be contravened in the day-to-day running of a newspaper.

The researcher lays out these 12 acts and explains them as they pertained to journalists using the work of Kelsey Stuart (1977) and Benjamin Pogrund (2000). The definitions below are not quoted in their entirety, but only in so far as they applied to the media and in so far as there were clauses, which the media had to pay special attention.

The **Official Secrets Act** includes a number of definitions of terms used in the list of offences. Here the researcher has reproduced one of these as it pertains strongly to the work of journalists and their understanding of the list of offences.

The Act states that "*Communicating, receiving, obtaining* and *retaining* have special meaning in the Act and any reference to communicating or receiving anything includes a reference to communicating or receiving any part of the substance, effect or description thereof. Any reference to obtaining or retaining anything includes a reference to obtaining and retaining any part or copying or causing to be copied the whole or any part thereof, whether by photography or otherwise and any reference to communicating anything includes a reference to the transmission or transfer thereof" (Stuart 1977: 13).

It is an offence to (clauses a to j quoted from Stuart 1977: 137 & 138): "Approach, inspect, pass over, be in the neighbourhood or enter any prohibited place;

a. “Make any sketch, plan, model or note which is likely to be directly or indirectly useful to the enemy;
b. “Obtain, record, collect, publish or communicate to any person any secret official code or password or any sketch, plan, model, article or note or other document or information which is likely to be directly or indirectly useful to the enemy;
c. “Use any information obtained in any manner or for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the Republic;
d. “Retain any sketch, plan, model, article, note or document without right of retention or contrary to directions by lawful authority with regard to the return or disposal thereof;
e. “Fail to take proper care of or to endanger the safety of the sketch, plan, model, article, note, document, code, password or information;
f. “Publish or communicate, directly or indirectly, any sketch, plan, model, article, note or document or information relating to munitions of war or any military, police or security matter to any person in any manner or for any purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the Republic;
g. “Receive any secret official code or password, or sketch, plan, model, article, note or document or information, knowing or having reasonable grounds to believe at the time of reception that it has been communicated in contravention of the provisions of the Act, unless it can be proved that the communication was made to the recipient against his wish;
h. “Neglect or fail to hand over to lawful authority or to a member of the South African Police any official document found or otherwise acquired;
i. “Fail to report forthwith to a member of the South African Police the presence of or any information relating to a foreign agent, or a person who has been or is in communication with a foreign agent, in the Republic.”

Stuart (1977: 138), who was the legal counsel for the *RDM* during the 1970s including 1976, notes: “By the very nature of their work reporters may acquire information and copies of documents of value as news which they should neither retain nor use. The penalties for offences under the Act are severe, ranging from imprisonment for 15 years downwards, and the definitions are wide in their scope. The advice of the editor should immediately be sought when a reporter suspects that he may be in danger of contravening any provisions of the Act.”

In short the "Official Secrets Act sought to protect information affecting the security of the states" (Pogrund 2000: 233). In 1965 the act was amended in order to include the South African Police in the group of people protected by this act. The National Party therefore added the term *police matters* which they defined as "any matter relating to the preservation of the internal security of the Republic or the maintenance of law and order by the South Africa Police" (Pogrund 2000: 233).

Native Administration Act of 1927 made it a crime to promote hostility between blacks and whites. Under this law any reports about upheavals between the different races could be said to be in contravention of this law. In addition by 1956 it also allowed the government to exile or banish blacks to designated rural areas, which were, in some cases, far from their jobs and homes. "Under the terms of the Native Laws Amendment Act (No. 54) of 1952, African women as well as men were made subject to influx control and pass laws and, under Section 10 of the act, neither men nor women could remain in an urban area for longer than seventy-two hours without a special permit stating that they were legally employed" (Separate and Unequal 1996: no page).

Riotous Assemblies Act of 1956 was similar to the Native Administration Act as it gave the government the power to ban the media from publishing anything which it saw as being "calculated to engender hostility between blacks and whites" (Pogrund 2000: 234).

There are, according to Stuart (1977: 146), five portions of the Act that were of particular relevance to journalists. The following does not quote the act in its entirety but only gives what is necessary to understand the Act and the constraints it placed on the media.

Convening, encouraging or promoting prohibited assemblies (section 1) "The minister of Justice may prohibit any gathering, concourse or procession of persons having a common purpose, lawful or unlawful, and any person who thereafter –

a. "convenes or encourages, promotes or by means of threats, causes the attendance of, or presides at or addresses; or
b. "prints, publishes, distributes or, in any manner whatever, circulates a notice convening, or advertises or in any other manner makes known the proposed assembly,
c. "shall, unless he satisfies the court that he had no knowledge of the prohibition, be guilty of the offence" (Stuart 1977: 146).

d. “For the purposes of this subsection, a person shall be deemed to have convened a gathering –
e. “if he has caused a written notice to be published or distributed inviting the public, or any section of the public, to assemble at a specific time and place;
f. “if he has himself, or through another person, orally invited the public, or any section of the public to assemble;
g. “if he has taken any active part in making arrangements for the publication or distribution of such a notice, or in organising or making preparations for such a meeting” (Stuart 1977: 147).

“News reports and advertisements may well be construed as notices convening meetings and care must be exercised to ensure that such meetings have not been prohibited,” warns Stuart (1977: 147).

Recording or reproducing speeches of persons prohibited from attending gatherings (section 2). It is an offence “for any person without the consent of the Minister of Justice to record or reproduce by mechanical or other means or to print, publish or disseminate any speech, utterance, writing or statement of any extract from or recording or reproduction of any speech, utterance, writing or statement made or produced or purporting to have been made or produced from attending any public gathering” (Stuart 1977: 148).

Engendering feelings of hostility between European and other races (section 3). “Section 2 provides that whenever in the feeling of the Minister of Justice there is reason to apprehend that feelings of hostility would be engendered between European inhabitants of the Republic on the one hand and any other section of the inhabitants of the Republic on the other hand –

a. “by any gathering in any area during any period or on any day or during specific times and periods within any period; or
b. “by a specified gathering or any kind of gathering at a specified place or in a specified area or wheresoever in the Republic during any period or on any day or during specified times or periods within any period; or
c. “if a particular person were to attend any such gathering;
d. “the Minister may prohibit the particular person from attending the gathering” (Stuart 1977: 148).

"Section 3 provides that the State President, whenever he is of the opinion that the publication or dissemination of any documentary information calculated to engender feelings of hostility …, may by notice published in the *Government Gazette* and in any newspaper circulating in the area where that documentary information is made available to the public, prohibit any publication or other dissemination thereof" (Stuart 1977: 148).

Speaking on the clause on incitement to public violence Stuart (1977) warns that newspapers are vulnerable to this clause and must be careful of contravening it as an argument that the paper had no intention of inciting violence is not an accepted defence against charges under this Act or clauses therein.

The incitement to violence clause (section 4) states that "it is an offence to incite another to public violence and section 17 of the Act provides that a person shall be deemed to have committed the crime if, in any place whatever, he has acted or conducted himself in such a manner, or has spoken or published such words, that it might reasonably be expected that the natural and probable consequences of his act, conduct, speech or publication would, under the circumstances, be the commission of public violence by members of the public generally or by persons in whose presence the act or conduct took place or to whom the speech or publication was addressed" (Stuart 1977: 149).

Stuart (1977: 148) therefore warns, "Care must be exercised by editorial staff to ensure that nothing published may be construed as aiding or inciting the commission of any offence."

Section 5, offences relating to employment, boycotts, strikes and the like reads, "It is an offence to intimidate another into doing or refraining from doing an act which he has a legal right to do or abstain from doing by threats of injury or the use of violence. These threats might easily be contained in newspaper reports, particularly in reports of speeches and where they occur should be carefully examined. Similarly, it is an offence to do an act in order to compel any person to become a member, or to refrain from becoming a member, of any society or association" (Stuart 1977: 224).

Section 205 (previously 83) of the Criminal Procedures Act made it a crime for journalists to refuse to give the police the name of a source if the name was asked for. The law allowed offenders to be imprisoned. This was a particularly effective law on the part of the NP government because, as Pogrund (2000: 236) points out: "No editor in his right mind was going to risk losing a reporter to jail through publishing a report likely to lead to a demand for a source."

Stuart (1977: 224) sets out this law which prohibits journalists from protecting their sources as such: "This section provides the machinery whereby the police can subpoena a witness to attend before a magistrate to answer questions relating to an offence or suspected offence under investigation. At the hearing the witness has no right of representation by counsel or attorney. If the witness refuses to answer a question put to him, the magistrate may summarily enquire into his reasons for doing so and unless the magistrate is satisfied that the reason advanced constitutes a just excuse in law, he is empowered to commit the witness to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 12 months. At the termination of the period of imprisonment the witness will be brought before the magistrate again and if he still refuses to answer the questions, he may be re-committed to prison. In this the police are upheld by the law and it has been established that the refusal to answer a question based on reluctance to breech the journalistic code of ethics is not a good and sufficient reason in law".

Prisons Act of 1959 dealt mainly with the administration of jails but 44(e) and 44(f) were of interest to journalists as they pertained to the dissemination of information about prisons (including prison conditions) and prisoners. "Sections 44(e) and 44(f) originally provided that any person who:

"44(e) – without the authority in writing of the commissioner –

a. "sketches or photographs any prison, portion of a prison, prisoner or group of prisoners, whether within or outside any prison, or any burial reference to in photograph (referred to elsewhere in the Act); or
b. "causes any sketch or photograph of any prison, prisoner or group of prisoners, whether within or outside any prison, or any burial referred to in photograph (referred to elsewhere in the Act) to be published in any manner; or who

"44(f) – publishes any false information concerning the behaviour or experience in prison of any prisoner or ex-prisoner or concerning the administration of any prison, knowing the

same to be false, or without taking reasonable steps to verify such information (the onus of providing that reasonable steps were taken to verify such information being upon the accused); was guilty of an offence" (Stuart 1977: 58 & 59).

The Prisons Act was amended by Act 75 of 1965. This act defined the word prisoners as "any person, whether convicted or not, who is detained in custody in any prison or who is being transferred in custody or is en route in custody from one prison to another prison …" (Stuart 1977: 59).

The Act further defines prison as "any place established or deemed to have been established under the Act as a place for the reception, detention, confinement, training or treatment of persons liable to detention in custody, and includes the seashore, the sea within a distance of one nautical mile from the low-water mark and all land, outbuildings and premises adjacent to any such place and used in connection therewith and all land, branches, out-stations, camps, buildings, premises or places to which any such persons have been sent for the purpose of imprisonment, detention, labour, treatment or otherwise, and all quarters of members of the Prisons Service used in connection with any such prison; and for the purposes of any offence under this Act or any contravention of or failure to comply with any provision of the Act, further includes every place used as a police cell or lock-up" (Stuart 1977: 59 & 60).

This law, whilst fairly detailed and long-winded does not in fact state exactly what the parameters of the Act are. Editors and journalists were expected to interpret the Act for themselves. There was no guarantee that they would interpret it in the same manner as the government meant it to be interpreted when they wrote it or any changes they made to that interpretation when the need arose.

This was the lesson that Pogrund and the other staff at the *RDM* learnt when the paper and Pogrund were charged with contravention of this Act. The charge was made in the 1960s after Pogrund and a journalist from *City Post* wrote a series of stories detailing the conditions in prisons using a number of informants all of whom were also interrogated. These stories were seen as a contravention of the act and the trial lasted four years.

Pogrund explains the situation in his taped interview: “there was a basic clause which said that if you publish any material about prisons or prisoners knowing the information to be false or without taking reasonable precautions to ensure accuracy you shall be guilty of an offence.” This he says was taken by journalists to mean that prisons were out of bound and off limits for them. The *RDM* published articles in cooperation with *Golden City Post* in 1960 during the state of emergency when Pogrund worked with Obed Musi of *Golden City Post* and they got away with publishing these stories, “somewhat to our surprise” says Pogrund. Other than these stories the media wrote nothing about the prisons until the series, which got the *RDM* sued.

“In 1965 because I had friends in prison and I’d been in for a short time in 61, I was very close to the issue and I went and looked at the Prisons Act and scratched my head about it and went to see Kelsey and said ‘what does this mean about taking reasonable steps, how do we meet those?’” he explains, adding “We discussed it and worked out a formula that if you took someone and you questioned him extensively then took him to a lawyer and made him swear on oath about the accuracy of what he had said and you also were able to integrate it with other accounts, this would, in Kelsey’s view, be sufficient to meet the requirements of section 44(e).”

This is what Pogrund did, thinking that he was in line with the law as he taken the precaution of verifying the information he had obtained. As it turned out, “Kelsey wasn’t right, well he was correct but the way the government used it they went for us and where they got us was instead of taking the article as a whole, and there were 12 000 words in the initial prisons report, they took selected phrases and sentences. So they narrowed it and we had to find evidence to back-up those very specific phrases and we were on a highway to nothing. We needed the resources of the state to do something like that. We couldn’t do it so we went down there for four years. But that’s a classic example of what I mean. We tried, we went for the law, we tried to observe it but we got defeated on it and it became a terrible offering lesson for everyone else. But we had tried to expose that law, and that’s what we kept trying to do.”

Section 24 of the **Police Act** “makes it an offence for any person, in connection with any activities carried out by him to take, assume, use or in any manner to publish any name, description, title or symbol indicating or conveying or purporting to indicate or to convey

or calculated or likely to lead other persons to believe or infer that such activity is carried on under or by virtue of the provisions of the Police Act or under patronage of the Police Force, or is in any manner associated or connected with the Police Force, unless he does so with the approval of the Minister of Police" (Stuart 1977: 225). Extending from the Prisons Act, this act made it illegal to make sketches or take photographs of arrested people or witnesses who had been taken into custody. This prohibition held for anyone who escaped whilst in detention but did not extend to dead people or those who had been released, either permanently or on bail.

The Suppression of Communism Act (No. 44) of 1950 declared "the Communist Party and its ideology illegal. Among other features, the act defined communism as any scheme that 'aimed at bringing about any political, industrial, social, or economic change within the Union by the promotion of disturbance or disorder' or that encouraged 'feelings of hostility between the European and the non-European races of the Union the consequences of which are calculated to further . . . disorder" (Separate and Unequal 1996: no page).

According to Pogrund (2000: 235) under this law, which had been changed a number of times since it was written to allow the government to overcome loopholes created by court decisions, newspapers could be banned if "they were deemed to be spreading Communism. The ideology was so broadly defined that virtually anyone opposing the government could be slapped with it. The earlier prohibition on banned people attending meetings – which in practice meant not being with more than one other person at a time – was expanded to include a bar on publishing anything said or written by a banned person."

According to Stuart (1977: 125) the Act became known as the Internal Security Act and "declared the Communist Party to be an unlawful organisation and it empowers the State President to declare unlawful any other organisation, which he considers to be furthering the aims of communism."

Stuart (1977) advised journalists, when dealing with this law, to bear in mind the fact that because this prohibition was wide enough to include reports detailing evidence statements and evidence given during court proceedings they had to be extremely cautious when reporting on court cases. However there was some flexibility because "the Minister of Justice has given his permission for the publication of bona fide newspaper reports of

court proceedings, provided the evidence is not abused for the airing of political views. Furthermore, the Minister of Justice has authorised the publication of statements, which would otherwise be prohibited, if they are made in the United National Organisation or if they arise from proceedings in Parliament, Provincial Councils or in the Transkeian Legislative Assembly. The reason for this relaxation is that it is considered of national interest that the proceedings of these bodies should be fully reported" (Stuart 1977: 127). This allowed journalists to report bona fide information from court cases, but as per Kelsey's warning they were required to be extra vigilant in ensuring that what was reported was within the scope of the law and its clauses.

Stuart (1977: 129) explains, "The Minister of Justice has power to prevent certain persons from communicating with others and to forbid them to receive visitors and it would be an offence at common law for a reporter to seek an interview with such a person as he would then be inciting the commission of a crime."

He furthermore suggests that newspaper people should bear in mind the wide powers of the State President. In terms of the Act if the State President is satisfied that any periodical or other publication:

a. "serves inter alia as a means for expressing views or conveying information, the publication of which is calculated to further the achievement of any of the objects of communism; or
b. "serves inter alia as a means for expressing views or conveying information the publication of which in calculated to endanger the security of the State or the maintenance of public order ;
c. "he may, without notice to any person concerned, by proclamation in the *Government Gazette* prohibit the printing, publication or dissemination of such periodical publication. It is not only the publishing of comment but the conveyance of news without comment which can bring about this drastic step of closing down a newspaper for so long as the State President deems it fit" (Stuart 1977: 130).

The **Criminal Law Amendment Act** of 1953 "took incitement a great deal further [than the preceding Act] by making it an offence to use language or to do anything calculated to cause anyone else to break the law by way of protest. For example a newspaper could campaign for the repeal of a law, but it faced punishment if it advised, encouraged or

incited its readers to break the law as part of a campaign" (Pogrund 2000: 234). A newspaper could be found guilty of incitement if it published a report about an illegal strike, which was planned to protest apartheid. In addition the Act stated: "Anyone accompanying a person found guilty of offences committed while "protest[ing], or in support of any campaign for the repeal or modification of any law," would also be presumed guilty and would have the burden of proving his or her innocence" (Separate and Unequal 1996).

The **Public Safety Act** of 1957 was often used in conjunction with the Criminal Law amendment Act and "empowered the government to declare stringent states of emergency and increased penalties for protesting against or supporting the repeal of a law. The penalties included fines, imprisonment and whippings" (The History of Apartheid in South Africa: no page).

The Act stated: "if the government declared a State of Emergency, its absolute control included the ability to close down newspapers and forbid the printing or distribution of any material" (Pogrund 2000: 234). In 1961 the first State of Emergency, lasting 156 days, was instated after the Sharpeville Massacre.

Sabotage Act of 1962 is dealt with in both the General Law Amendment Act and the Terrorism Act. "The portion of the General Law Amendment Act which is of most interest to newspapers is the provision that the crime of sabotage is also committed by any person who incites, instigates, commands, aids, advises, encourages or procures any other person to commit any wrongful and wilful act whereby he injures, damages, destroys, renders useless or unserviceable, puts out of action, obstructs, tampers with, pollutes, contaminates or endangers –

a. "the health or safety of the public;
b. "the maintenance of law and order;
c. "any water supply;
d. "the supply or distribution at any place of light, power, fuel, food-stuffs, water, or of sanitary, medical or fire extinguishing services;
e. "any postal, telephone or telegraph services or installations, or radio transmitting, broadcasting or receiving services or installations;
f. "the free movement of any traffic on land, at sea or in the air;

g. “any property, whether removable or immovable, of any other person or the state” (Stuart 1977: 140 &141).

Stuart (1977: 140) warns that “the accurate reporting of facts and the expression of opinions genuinely held is perfectly permissible but care must be exercised to ensure that what appears to be a news report, article or story cannot be construed as incitement, instigation, aid, encouragement to commit wrongful and wilful acts of the nature set out above.”

Pogrund (2000: 236) adds that the penalty for sabotage included hanging. The same applied to the 1967 Terrorism Act which had an extremely wide definition and was almost impossible to avoid contravening because it was so open-ended and included so many activities which could be seen as offences if the government so wished. According to Pogrund, “Lawyers told me that creating a traffic jam to oppose the government could be considered terrorism.”

The concept of unequal allocation of resources was built into legislation on general facilities, education, and jobs. “The Reservation of **Separate Amenities Act** (No. 49) of 1953 stated that all races should have separate amenities--such as toilets, parks, and beaches--and that these need not be of an equivalent quality” (Separate and Unequal 1996: no page). Under the provisions laid down by this Act signs were erected on facilities across the country, including in the workplace. This is one of the laws that the staff at the *RDM* ignored, going so far as to pull down the signs denoting which toilets were to be used by which racial group.

The **Pass Laws** also created difficulties both for black workers and whites who wanted to employ them. These laws prevented blacks from living and working were they pleased and, “the right of newspapers to employ whom they wanted. We could not, …, hire a black reporter living in Cape Town. He/she had to apply for permission to live in Johannesburg and was at the mercy of capricious officials” (Pogrund 2000: 235). Furthermore, Pogrund (2000) explains that travelling around the country to gather news was also difficult because of these laws. An Asian could not travel through the Orange Free State without permission and whites were required to get permits to enter black townships, which fell outside cities, and rural areas set aside for blacks.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

The following are verbatim transcriptions of interviews held with both black and white journalists who were on the staff of the *RDM* in 1976 when the Soweto Uprising took place.

The following people were interviewed during this research:

1. **Gordon Amos** started at the *RDM* in March 1971 and was a sports reporter during the Soweto Uprising in 1976.

2. **Doc Bakitsha** started at the paper in January 1976 and wrote the black entertainment and features pages. During the uprising he also wrote about the uprising but remained, officially, on the entertainment and features pages.

3. **Patrick Laurence** was the political reporter concentrating on the black community and its development. During the uprising he was tasked with writing an overview of the day's most important stories and an analysis of what these events might mean for the country.

4. **Raymond Louw** was editor of the *RDM* in 1976. He began working on the paper in 1946. He was appointed editor in 1966 and 10 years later was fired without reason.

5. **John Mojapelo** began his career at the *RDM* in 1974 as a general reporter and retained this position during the uprising.

6. **Peter Magubane** was a photographer on the *RDM* during the Soweto Uprising and took photos, throughout his stay that the *RDM,* for the main edition.

7. **Benjamin Pogrund** started at the newspaper in 1958 and focused his efforts on reporting on black existence. Under Laurence Gandar and then Raymond Louw he was one of the journalists who pioneered the idea of writing about the totality of the country's citizenship. This included covering black politics and black life in general. Pogrund left the *RDM* in May 1976 to take up an exchange on the *Boston Globe*. During the 1976 uprising he covered the uprising for the *Boston Globe* and a number of other publications, television and radio stations in the United States of America. An

interview with him is included because, although he was not at the *RDM* in 1976, he has an extensive knowledge about the newspaper's policies and its coverage of black issues.

8. **Gavin Stewart** ran the township extra from 1970 and was editor, sub and production editor on this edition. He left the *RDM* at the end of 1975. Although he left the newspaper shortly before the uprising occurred an interview with him has been included because he had a large part to play in the *Township Extra*.

9. **Gabu Tugwana** was a freelance reporter on the *RDM* in the months leading up to the Soweto uprising in June 1976. He was taken onto permanent staff shortly after the uprising when he was arrested on charges of terrorism. As a freelancer the newspaper could not offer him legal council and in order to do so appointed him onto permanent staff. Until shortly before the uprising Tugwana had been writing for the sports pages but was transferred into the general news section in May 1976 when it became clear to the editorial staff on the *RDM* that some sort of uprising was inevitable.

Words or phrases in square brackets and italics are those added by the interviewer in order to clarify statements or words used by the interviewee.

B.1 Interviews with Gordon Amos

Editorial policy

1. What was your position at the paper in 1976 and how long had you been with the paper?

Sports reporter - reporting mainly on rugby. I had been at the *RDM* since March 1971.

2. What was the editorial policy at the RDM in 1976 and did you as an individual agree with this policy?

Well, it's difficult for me to actually say in 1976. When I arrived there there had been an upheaval. Ray Louw had taken over from Laurence Gandar as the editor, Benji Pogrund was assistant editor and I was a sports sub so I didn't have much to do with them really for a couple of years but then I went to the features department for about 18 months where I handled letters and feature articles and then went back into sport. But we were quite sort of insular in the sports department, although certainly from the general policy of the paper people were a lot more careful about what was published. You know if you were in doubt of anything you phoned Kelsey Stewart, he was the newspaper lawyer who actually wrote a book, "The newspaperman's Guide to the Law." So certainly in the features department if there was anything that I came up against that I wasn't sure of I would always phone Kelsey.

So the *RDM*'s tradition of fearless and outspoken journalism hadn't changed but it's just that people had got more careful. The government was certainly fixing the newspaper with a beady eye and anything that it could stomp on it for they did. But the people who ran the newspaper, Ray Louw and Lyn Menger and Benji Pogrund himself who was the assistant editor although by that time he wasn't. He'd been the main writer in the prisons expose, he'd been made the assistant editor and one of the main things he did was run the book stage, that meant that I got to review all the science fiction. Benji and I were good friends. But that all changed when I left in 1978 to go to the *Citizen* and Benji Pogrund never spoke to me again. Of course I didn't realise that the government had bought the *Citizen*, you know, I'm a working journalist. But a lot of us were sort of ostracised by the liberal element at the *RDM* for having gone to the *Citizen*. But we came down to the "Fed" for a drink, they would, I wouldn't say shun us because there were people who would talk to us but there were some people who really took a dim view of us, sort of crossing the line.

3. To what extent did the management and owners of the *RDM* interfere with what was included in the newspaper?

Well, there was very little interference. I started work on the Argus Company. I did an Argus cadet course. I joined *The Friend* in 1966 and I went on the Argus cadet course at the beginning of 1967 in Cape Town and I worked on *The Friend* for about four years before I went overseas. I sort of vowed that if I never had to work for the Argus company I never would again. You know you never say never but, and I never did because the perception certainly was that management interfered in everything.

On the *RDM* it was almost totally the other way. Perhaps in retrospect to the detriment to the newspaper because the editors were a law unto themselves. Money seemed to be no object; people were sent everywhere on stories. In the mean time the *RDM* was haemorrhaging a lot. The only reason things kept afloat was because of this juggernaut *Sunday Times* which propped up the *RDM* so ja, it paid the price for being a liberal newspaper because it alienated a lot of the readers. As I say, Anglo were basically the owners and there was very little interference from managers regarding, or any, I didn't know of any in fact regarding policy. That was left to the editors. I would imagine that somebody had said, after Pogrund got into trouble, "hey be a bit more circumspect with what you are doing." But that's, I'm just surmising. I don't really know.

4. Do you think that the RDM perpetuated human rights violations by neglecting to print pertinent information – did they withhold information due to fear of reprisals from the government?

I very definitely think that it was not the case. I think of all the newspapers the *RDM* within the framework of those draconian laws at the time did their level best to make sure that the people knew what was going on at the time. To the very sort of, very much walking on a tight rope of letting our readers know what was happening but also keeping our, keeping from being closed down by the government so I think that that is absolute rubbish.

5. Did the [white] readership and advertising profile influence the editorial stance on writing about this matter?

Yes, very much. It was sort of like a vicious circle. A lot of the white readers, it was a different era and a lot of the so called more liberal whites, the English speaking South

Africans were United Party supporters and they were less sort of verkrampt than the Afrikaners but the general readership in those days was not liberal. Generally speaking. A lot of people didn't want to hear the bad news stories, they didn't want to hear about the pass law problems and detentions and things. They very much, I suppose a lot of the whites were like that, they were ostriches with their heads in the sand. They would really rather not know about it and a newspaper like the *RDM* could make them uncomfortable.

6. Was there any shift when the Progressive Party came to the fore and the RDM came out in support of them?

I don't know. I don't know about that but certainly from the advertising point of view I think that the general feeling amongst a lot of whites was that they didn't really want to hear what was going on in the country that sort of rubbed off on the advertisers. Of course there was another main problem internally for the advertising at that time. They had an internal, it was a centralised advertising sales department for quite a long time and the reps would go out and they would be selling advertising for the *Express*, the *RDM* and the *Sunday Times*.

Although at one time I think the *Express* had their own people. I'm not really sure how much they were involved in that. But certainly it was much easier to sell advertising for the *Sunday Times* than it was to sell advertising for the *RDM*. And that was to the detriment to the *Mail* because you know human nature being what it is the adverts in those days – they didn't push the *Mail* as a sale and I think that is why they reorganised the advertising department so each advertising representative was responsible for a particular paper and selling advertising for that paper.

Liberal Journalism

7. How did you understand the term liberal journalism within this editorial policy (how did the paper in your opinion define this term)? Did the paper subscribe to this view?

I sort of gauged it by the number of people who used to walk around in Kaftans and sandals, and that was the men. There were a lot of people who sort of played on the fact that they were liberal. You know, "don't talk about my garden boy, he's my horticultural advisor" that sort of thing. I think that although some of the journalists there were quite idealists, I think a lot of them and myself included, we felt that there were wrongs in the

country. You know particularly the schooling. I always thought if you don't educate people then that is the biggest tragedy. I wasn't like a fervid liberal.

I don't know, we are trying to work out what is understood by liberal journalism and I'm not really sure. I think most people just went in and did their jobs and their leanings were sort of away from the Afrikaners. Not so much because they particularly liked blacks, I think there was certainly a fear of being swamped in those days. But a lot of people had consciences like I did, but some of them were more developed than mine. You know I'm no great intellectual and I was never a political journalist but I would think that perhaps the definition of a liberal journalist was one whose conscience was a little bit more developed than the run of the mill.

8. How diverse were the views about liberal journalism amongst staff?

I don't know. It's a difficult one for me because sports journalists are different. They tend to be quite insular and not have very much to do with other journalists in the newsroom or not have many thoughts about being liberal and the many political set ups.

I had a run in with the Transvaal Rugby Union. Jannie Le Roux's mob. As the Rugby writer I used to go to the meetings and they talked about having the young Americans, the black team was going to be playing at Ellis Park and "this will just show the world that we are not as bad as we are painted and that we are allowing blacks to come and to use our facilities and actually join our union."

Then there was a guy called Ibrahim Patel who was the boss of the black rugby union who had been completely at loggerheads with Jannie Le Roux's mob. I phoned him up and he said that it was an absolute white wash. He said, "That's not black rugby coming to Ellis Park. The young Americans are one little team." They actually came and played a match against the Transvaal country district side and I mean they were hammered about a hundred odd nil. And we used to write little sport editorials in those days and I actually wrote an editorial about that saying who does Jannie Le Roux think he's fooling by having the young Americans coming to play at Ellis on the hallowed turf. I said this is not integration at all. This is just a white wash. And for my pains when I arrived to cover a rugby match one Saturday, at the end of the match I used to go up to the glass house because you would get quotes from the players for the Monday because it wasn't good

enough just to have the match report because that was in the Sunday paper, so you went up and you spoke to the coaches and to the captains and things like that. And I wasn't allowed to go up to the glasshouse. Eventually I called Dawie Schoenwright who was the secretary and he said "okay well you can come in but I want to see you in my office on Monday morning because you are telling lies about the Transvaal Rugby Union."

So on the Monday morning I went there with my scrapbook and I said, "I've never written any lies about you and I would like you to spell out when I did this."
"No Gordon, you haven't actually but you know you are just saying embarrassing things. You know you English journalists are all the same".
So I said, "Well if you want to try bullshitting people that you are doing something and they find you out, that its really just a whitewash job then you mustn't get upset about it. You know just roll with the punches and move on."

Again the definition of liberalism, you certainly had, in the sports department you never really saw those political people who had come from the universities. They didn't want to be subs, they didn't want to do the police beats or anything else, and they just wanted to write politics. That was the all consuming thing and newspapers, especially the *RDM* was the place to be. You know they were idealists and it was politics, politics, and politics. There were three or four fervent people like that but the rest were just unhappy that the blacks were getting a bad deal. But nobody was going to storm the barricades about it.

9. Was the *RDM*, in your opinion, the country's number one crusader and champion of human rights?

Yes, I do believe it was. I started off at the *Friend* in Bloemfontein and then went to Scotland for a year and when I came back I didn't even bother to apply to the *RDM* because I just thought I wasn't good enough for that. I just thought it was the best paper of all, well certainly in this country. So I got a job on the *Natal Witness* and I was actually poached from there to come and work on the *RDM* and I was so proud to work at the *Mail*. I thought it was a wonderful newspaper. I thought its ideals were top draw and I thought it carried the torch, the anti-apartheid torch as well as it could. Overseas observers and commentators criticised journalism in South Africa but as I say to work within those draconian laws and regulations was very, very difficult. It was a fine line to actually sprout the ideals of liberalism and not be closed down. So yes, I think its was a champion.

10. Did the English press cover the political, social and economic life of the country's black majority in a fair way?

No, I don't think so. You used to have all these black editions that the various groups started. You know the *Sunday Times*, until very recently had particular regional editions. Certainly in those days you were catering, you know you've got to look at your market when you are doing something like this.

There is no point in covering the social occasions, and all the events, the road accidents and what have you that are taking place in rural South Africa when your core readership is not interested in that. You really have to give the readers what they want and to an extent that's what alienated the readers. They just thought they were getting a little bit too much of this liberalism and what is happening to the poor blacks. But no they didn't cover these things adequately but for pertinent reasons.

11. That is an opinion which is quite popular now in 2003. At the time do you think that the editorial staff thought they were giving adequate coverage or were they aware throughout the process that they weren't doing an adequate job?

Yes I think we were aware of it. We didn't carry any black sport but the idea was, I always thought, well that must be covered by their own papers. And it was actually quite difficult, you know in that period these black journalists and to a large extend it hasn't changed because I still get the most atrocious copy to sub not because they are black but because they are writing in a second or third language. Its not their fault but you know they would come in with their soccer reports from the townships and at one stage I used to handle the township sports page and I would actually pull up the typewriter and rewrite every story that came through because it was impossible for me to sub it into what I considered to be acceptable English so everything was in a way sanitised by a white writer.

No, we didn't cover it. But then again it gets back to the old thing – to try be all things to all people. You've got to look at your readers.

12. How do you see the role of a newspaper in a society that is deliberately divided along colour lines?

Well, I suppose that ideally it should be fostering and strengthening relations across the colour barrier. I don't know, I think that people were quite naive in those days and they thought "well if we give people these township editions, cause they don't have their own papers, that will be enough." But obviously it wasn't. You know people felt patronised, excluded. So you know you take a paper like *Business Day* today the new Editor has done a marvellous job revitalising the paper. He has got a lot of black people on board and I think it is a lot easier for a paper like that to do because more and more blacks are coming into business so people are being seen as being in government and business and not necessarily for their colour. They are seen for their positions and they come from both sides of the colour divide so that it makes it a lot easier. I don't know if it is fostering, what it is doing is trying to minimise race and just say "hey we are businessmen, or we are parliamentarians so we must be reading the paper to find out what is going on in business." To try and do it that way and I suppose by doing that you have reached your goal.

It is far easier to do that now but I think we did pretty well to foster talks across the colour line.

13. Did the *RDM* do enough during that period to oppose government?

I think that the *RDM* did what it could.

Writing

14. How much of what was written was changed in the subbing process?

I don't know, that's a difficult question. It depends, are you talking about cutting or actually re-writing? If you are asking if the copy was re-written because it wasn't good enough, well very often it wasn't good enough but you tried not to change what was being said. You just tried to put it into proper grammatical English.

15. The National Party government did not impose official censorship where a state censor would sit in the newsroom to control what was published? Instead editors would censor themselves - do you agree and did the *RDM* ever use self-censorship? Why was this?

Oh there was a lot of self-censorship. All of us had to be pretty well clued up on Kelsey's book but we weren't lawyers and we were all conscious of the fact that we could get the paper into trouble. We wanted to publish the truth and we went, I think the paper went as far as it could. But yes there was self-censorship, self-censorship for survival.

16. Do you believe that government planted spies made any difference to the manner in which the *RDM* covered the riots? Specifically with John Horak being a sub, do you think he made changes to copy when subbing to alter the leaning of the paper?

No he was a bloody joke. He was a joke in the department. Everybody knew he was a spy and people were very disdainful of him. I don't think that people did or didn't do things for fear. Well if they were doing something that the government could really get you for, well then obviously you had to tread more carefully and be very secretive because you knew that these spies existed and that your actions would come to the attention of the government. You know if you were involved in things other than the newspaper. But in the straight day-to-day stuff I don't think that people like Horak or Gordon Winter or who ever they were had any real impact on the way that the news was printed. A guy like Horack was sub and he didn't have any power over what was printed. He didn't formulate policy and what went into the paper wasn't decided upon by him.

17. How did an ever increasing number of prohibitive laws imposed by the NP government restrict what was written both before and after the riots?

Well, it really hurt all of us because more and more people were conscious that if we printed certain things we were going to be shut down. To quite a large extent the government's policy paid off for them. A lot of stuff that would have been printed in a normal society wasn't. But I still believe that the paper actually was quite inventive and flexible. It did its damdest to get something in, even if it was a bit bleak.

18. Was there any reading between the lines required?

Well I think that sometimes, in a lot of cases what was left unsaid was more indicative of what was going on than what was actually said. You knew what was happening, mind you

so many white people didn't know about it. They knew something was going on, they knew there was unrest but they didn't know what was happening. The black reporters who went in there, they got the stories. Some of it could be printed, some of it couldn't and we tried to find a way to print as much as possible without contravening any of those draconian laws. There were a lot of very brave people trying to get that news – photographers risking their lives.

Yes, I think you had to read between the lines. As I say people knew there were things going on but they didn't know the details. They didn't understand the magnitude of the problem. It was all happening in Soweto and even today when there is trouble in Soweto – people had no desire to go there. To a large extent whites haven't changed that much. What we've done more and more is get the attitude, "well then let them get on with it" you know sort of a Faith Popcorn thing – cocooning. She is an American market researcher who termed the word cocooning. People are entertaining at home more and more so you don't have to listen to other people. A lot of people felt that way n those days and a lot of people still do. There's an attitude of: "So we don't rule the country anymore, so what let them get on with it, at long as it doesn't affect us too much."

Soweto

19. The Soweto Uprising is seen as the coming of age for black journalists. For the first time white papers had to rely heavily on their black journalists. How did the *RDM* approach the uprising?

Yes, I think it was a coming-of-age because they were the only ones who could actually get into the township. So for the first time we needed them, we had never needed them before. They had always been second-class citizens. Most of them weren't on staff they were stringers who were paid linage. There were a lot of great guys who went out there. Most of them didn't actually prove they could write. That's not actually a prerequisite to being a good writer. If you can go out there and get the facts we can always find somebody who can put it into English. They were able to get into areas whites could not get into and gave the *RDM* a lot of stories so yes, it was a coming of age for them.

20. Did the *RDM* adequately criticise the police for their part in the uprising and their brutality?

I hate to be repetitious about my answers but again I just feel that the *RDM* did its critical best in all these areas.

Black staff

21. Was there training offered to black staff and did the paper encourage black staff to aspire to higher positions within the paper?

No, there was nothing of that. It was very sad. They came in and were shown to typewriters. A lot of what they produced was absolute garbage. People used to criticise them, look down at them but nobody helped them. Certainly up till the late 80s, early 90s of all the people sent on the Argus training course there were very few blacks. There was nowhere to promote them to and as I said many of them were stringers, they were not actually on staff. So they went and got stories but there was no training in journalism for them.

22. Do you think that the working conditions of black journalists were adequate?

Their conditions were much the same as ours except that just like everywhere else there were black toilets, white toilets but that changed. They sat in the same chairs we did, their conditions were the same as ours. They weren't held in the same regard as the whites, but hell we all worked in crappy newsrooms. Their benefits were not good but there was no difference in working conditions.

Township Extra

23. What did you think of the *Township Extra*?

Well, I think it was certainly better than having nothing at all. You know it attracted no advertising so it was in a way a lost leader for the company. It wasn't supported by advertising but it was an attempt to broaden the readership base. I can't see what else they could have done at that time. They felt something should have been done so they decided what they would cover and decided to cover mainly soccer and in the news things like muti murders. It was in a way quite yellow journalism on the news side and then there was the sport. Black politics as such just never saw the light of day.

24. Do you think it was well received by black readers?

I don't know, who knows. Certainly if people wanted, those were the days when there was little else to read. I think the white newspaper proprietors where not enthusiastic about actually providing this. You know it cost money without money to supplement it. They probably didn't do enough, but it was read. It sold so some of the black readership were choosing to read this edition.

Looking back

25. Do you think you, or any of the white journalists or editors on the *RDM* had cause to apologise at the TRCMH?

No, not the journalists and certainly not the Editors I worked for. People like Ray Louw who were dedicated to putting out the best product and doing the best for everybody within the framework. I don't think that they have anything to apologise for. The government might have something to apologise for but I don't think the journalists do and I don't think the newspapers themselves do.

B.2 Interviews with Doc Bakitsha

They always called me Carcass in the newspapers. They gave me this name in the 1950s and it is still used. I followed my own dictates. I don't follow anyone else, I was a drunk and we have our own dictates.

Editorial policy

1. What was your position at the paper in 1976 and how long had you been with the paper when the uprising occurred?

I wrote the entertainment and features pages. I started at the paper in January 1976 and was there until the end (1985).

2. What was the editorial policy at the *RDM* in 1976 and did you agree with this policy?

There were several schools of thought in journalism at the *RDM*. I am of the 50's mind. I am just a journalist – a newspaperman. I was not affected by colour, language. I came from a background of self-abuse, I was an alcoholic. Anyone who could do the job deserved fair remuneration and I was able to write.

The other side was the political view. Blacks and whites were appointed with little to offer as journalists. They came to write politics and they knew nothing of legwork. When I came to the *RDM* and saw the standard of some of the journalists – they were a different calibre from us. Some had degrees but I made the mistake of accepting these degrees at face value. Journalism is primarily experience, which was lacking. I knew old reporters who were magnificent journalists, great all-rounders. I was of that school. It is a God given talent and I was amongst the greats.

To talk about the attitudes – there were divided camps. I was in NASUS with Benjamin Pogrund and there were whites like him who were working with me. Some welcomed June '76. But there is a tendency to paint any white who is pro black as a liberalist. This term was used to degrade them for their support of doing away with oppression.

Others (like most of the Afrikaners) said, "You blacks don't know what is good for you."

The ANC was considered as being not very effective by the enlightened blacks who saw them as the political party with no muscle or bite till things started happening. In the 1950s I found Mandela and Tambo as being un-street wise and very arrogant. I doubted the quality of their suits because I wore good quality suits and dressed well. I changed my opinion of them after the Rivonia trials. It was a sad day for many of us when they loaded them into vans to take them to the prison cells in Pretoria before taking them to Robben Island. I think that day was a turning point for many of us and for the revolution.

There were whites who supported and understood June 16, 1976 and then there were the Calvinists who saw blacks as ungrateful. The other side said that the better man would win eventually, and we did. There was a division in the different beliefs and ways people within the paper viewed the racial situation and the revolution.

3. To what extent did the management and owners interfere with what was included in the paper?

Practically everything. I don't think there was much autonomy. The general manager, Kingsley, always had to see the final proof. It was an ongoing battle between the editor and the management and the editor was fighting a loosing battle. But there were many things that went into the paper that management was unaware of. I included the names and statements of people who were banned. I was quoting them because I did not take any notice of banning orders – it was not in my nature to read them. I got away with murder. Some of us wrote anything we wanted about June '76 but mine were more about the comic element. The editor and journalists found a way to write what we liked and get around management interference.

4. Do you think that the *RDM* perpetuated human rights violations by neglecting to print pertinent information – did they withhold information due to fear of reprisals from the government?

Yes, information was withheld. I am aware that they could not believe some of the things I wrote and that laid a foundation. I think it was more a management directive. I don't think the editor wanted to withhold information. He was for the revolution but there was nothing he could do. Information was withheld to protect the business side of it and so as not to fall foul of the government the paper had to withhold so many things. There were many threats to close the *RDM* and publishing certain information about June '76 would have

been a perfect excuse to close it when it *[the presence of the paper]* was most needed. There was an element of toning down but how do you tone down the truth?

In any paper, for the safety of the publication, certain information was withheld within the laws of the country. Most revolutionary stuff was breaking laws. Those who withheld did a marvellous job.

Liberal Journalism

5. Was there an element of Liberal Journalism amongst staff at the paper?

Yes, but essentially it was not patronising but more tolerant. They always treated the disadvantaged black man with compassion. I was not aware of any hidden agendas. Some of them were labelled liberals just because they tried to champion black rights. Benjamin Pogrund was on NASUS with me and a great friend of Robert Sobukwa. Allister Sparks was a champion for black rights.

Jews were particularly referred to as liberals but Jewish tradition is understood by blacks because there were always Jewish businesses around the townships so we knew them. We found their behaviour helpful, not compromising.

Some of the rebels were not well cooked upstairs and ignorance bred ignorance and predators. The liberals seemed to be fighting that.

6. How did you understand the term liberal journalism?

It is a state of mind where an individual perceives those not on his level or not enjoying his rights and what he enjoys to be in need of assistance. It is not a political phenomenon but more a humanitarian one. Liberalism in South Africa is greatly distorted. The Afrikaans labelled anything that opposed them as liberal but liberalism should rather have been called democracy. The definition changes according to the era but it is about people who want to help each other.

7. Did you align yourself with Black Consciousness?

Yes most of the blacks did, as did some of the whites. One of our main aims was to get rid of non-tolerance and patronisation which some whites were also fighting for. But there were also some whites fighting with us. They welcomed the revolution.

8. How do you see the role of a in a society that is deliberately divided along colour lines?

They could have played a reformist role, a catalyst for discussion between parties. Newspapers were very necessary. The role should be to teach and entertain but not to make a profit. *RDM* was a proper vehicle for that time but the evil force of profit came in and killed it. It was the people working there, bent on profit that killed the paper, not the government. If left to do its job properly it would have been an excellent vehicle for the revolution and good journalism. Forget *The Star* and other namby pamby papers, this was the paper to read. All the great journalists were working on this paper during 1976. If they had been left to get on with the job they would have even won over the Nats eventually, that's why the Nats wanted to buy the paper *[the company rather than the daily edition]*.

A photographer friend of mine said when Verwoed realised that English was loved by blacks and that they were using it well because they saw its beauty he wanted to do the same for Afrikaans. His biggest mistake was to enforce it in the schools. Rather he should have said that those showing enthusiasm to learn Afrikaans would benefit. It was the way he went about promoting his language that was the problem. Can you see it like that?

9. Did the English mainstream papers do enough to oppose government?

No, No, No. They were afraid to lose their rights and franchise. It was lukewarm *[the coverage]*.

Understanding the nature of what newspapers where, not as much as what was expected. They could have done more. It became an individual thing – there were white people who went out of their way to get stories and to print what was happening but the English-speaking people could have done better. They tried but the commercial odds were stacked against them. The general feeling among black intellectuals - not enough. The question is what were their *[whites]* loyalties and where were these loyalties supposed to lie?

Writing

10. How much of what was written was changed in the subbing process?

My copy was never changed but some people did have their stories changed in editing. It had to do with how well you wrote and presented your work. If you were good they left it but some of them did not write well and theirs was changed.

Once I went to cover the funeral of a comrade at one of the graveyards. The cops barricaded everyone in but I was on the outside of the barricade. There were some boys toy-toying next to me and suddenly shots rang out. One of the boys was hit in the head. People saw he was bleeding and asked the taxi driver to take him to hospital. The taxi driver refused to do it until he was paid. So I asked my photographer but he wanted me to pose with the boy first so that he could take a picture of me with the wounded boy for the paper. The boy was bleeding and I was not going to waste time having my picture taken so I dismissed him and looked for someone else to take us to the hospital. Eventually the chairman of Azapo raced us to the hospital. I was holding the boy in the backseat and he was driving like mad. By the time we reached Barragwanath he had died there in my arms. I went back to the newsroom to write the story and my sub thought that it was too dramatic to be true. He came to me and asked if this had all happened. I showed him my white shirt covered in blood and said, “This is where he died.” Later he went to the pub and told a colleague he could not believe it but then he saw the shirt and he knew it was true. After that the subs realised what was going on and they did not change my stories.

Some of us did not like the way stories were rewritten because when you change a man’s copy you kill it. My style was township and few of the editors and sub editors understood it. They had to leave it the way I wrote it because they did not understand it. I was teaching them the township style so they could not query the language of the teacher and the people loved it.

11. How did you as a black reporter put aside your skin colour to cover the uprising? Did you see yourself as black or a journalist first and how did this affect your writing?

I was a journalist, plain and simple. I was not affected by colour but by how best to do the job. Journalism is a natural gift and I did not have to think about being a journalist or being black, I was just a black journalist.

12. Do you believe that government planted spies made any difference to the manner in which the *RDM* covered the uprising?

No, they did not change our work. We wrote what we wanted and they had no effect. I remember at the *RDM* there was a sub who belonged to a church cult – this guy John Craig (Horak) went out of his way to be friendly to all but everyone avoided him like the plague because he had already blown his cover. I did not avoid him. Sometimes if there were problems with black reporters' work he would come to me to help him because they would leave before he had subbed their work. I would correct the copy and shout at them to stay until he was finished. The spy thing did not make a difference to the fact that they must stay till the job is done.

But during the revolution everyone was seen to be suspicious. Ethel Hazelhurst who did the women's pages would come and ask me for black stories which she could use in her pages and she would pay cash on delivery. She was paying me well – when most were making R2 400 per month I was making R8 000. People were suspicious because I worked with this white women but I was doing well. I never thought of syndicating though, I was a damn fool, instead I wrote new stories every time someone in the *[SAAN]* group wanted a black story. Everything I did they were suspicious of. In the townships you were dead if someone spread a rumour that you were a John Craig *[the name given to all spies after the RDM's John Horak]*.

We had a different approach to the spies. The great Ken Themba said to me, "the great security guys want information from us but why don't we get information from them?" I had not thought about it but he explained, "When we drink with them in the townships we would get information about things like raids. What could we disclose? We had no information that could help them. But they could tell us about what they were doing and we could use this information to warn the people." So the spies played into our hands and we used them but gave them nothing in return.

13. Were black journalists and their copy taken seriously?

Journalism in my opinion is distinguished by the individual's capabilities. During my time from the 50s many of the journalists weren't supposed to be in newsrooms. Most at that time *[1976]* viewed journalism as a means to a living, they were not well suited to the job.

Some were better equipped than others and they were taken seriously. Some believed that they were not being treated as well as they should be but in my opinion the editors were superior, superb in the way they treated the copy of black journalists.

Your copy was taken seriously according to how it was presented. Competent writers were taken seriously. The work of freelancers needed much rewriting but there were great and competent writers whose work did not need to be rewritten – like the late Gordon Sowane – and their copy was very much welcomed and respected. Subs made allowances for bad copy from freelancers.

14. Was there a language barrier with black journalists writing in English as their second language?

No, not for us because the great journalists recognised the beauty of English and used it well. The less intellectuals had a problem and that affected their writing but this was not my personal experience.

Soweto

I know the reason the Soweto Uprising broke out. Afrikaans was only one of the reasons. The students were fed up with the apathy from their teachers, parents and elders. It is funny, after years of suppression you come to believe, to live with it despite the fights going on. The kids just got fed up with it. There was a sense of doing something, a pride of being African. There were many factors and this is a big one.

When it happened there were security police guarding the entrances and exits to Soweto. They were blocking the obvious routes and I told my driver that they were a lot of idiots. There were better entrances. The passages which ran between the buildings where the sanitation people emptied the toilets were not guarded so I told my driver to create a diversion. While he did this I easily walked into the township using these passages. I jumped fences as well and they never stopped me, I don't think they *[the security police]* were vigilant enough.

15. What was it like reporting from the middle of the burning township?

Not at all. I had been in the wilderness for five years. I was a drunk and did not want to be in civilised society. When I came back some of them knew me and gave me space. I threw

myself into my work. I loved legwork. I had been at the paper just five months when the riots broke out. I was on the outside, I had just come back to a new Soweto that I didn't know. When I went to a Shebeen, "Peter 5-piece" to offer my respects he immediately gave me a half jack on the house. I told him I wasn't drinking anymore so he told me to take it for later. I took it and gave it to the next person I saw. I did not want to work in that environment so I mainly rewrote the releases the young boys brought me with their stories. Depending on my mood I would use them in different ways. But I stayed out of the Soweto that had developed in my absence. Rather I was a mouthpiece for the people who were involved. The schoolboys wanted their story to be heard so they wrote what had happened and asked me to publish these stories. I wrote great stories using what they gave me.

I wrote that June '76 was our French Revolution. I said we were lucky we parents, adults and elders who had been apathetic did not have kangaroo courts because that would have been worse than the guillotine. One leader of the Kangaroo courts liked to hoist criminals up the national flagpole and flog them with a Sjambok. I saw how the kangaroo courts worked and I think those who were not politically active were very lucky we were not subjected to these courts for they would not have survived these floggings.

16. The Soweto Uprising is seen as the coming of age of black journalists. How did the RDM approach the uprising?

We were black journalists before June '76. We needed no revolution to establish our identities. Journalists were better in the 40s, 50s and 60s. Before '76 journalists had courage, independence and got jobs on merit. The 70s spawned a generation of tailor made journalists who depended on riches. The new group of journalists in the 70s were not made for legwork. The older journalists would walk from the s to Wits to do research and back to the offices – we were good at legwork, we worked hard. These new journalists were handed jobs because papers needed black journalists who could go into Soweto and other townships but these people knew nothing of hard work and did not earn their places in the newsrooms.

I don't believe that June '76 made black journalists, there was no coming of age. Who in the 70s can match up to the greats before them? Those who came before discovered their own form of journalism based on the white journalism. We still have to discover a black

universal journalism but good journalism is good journalism. We cannot criticise the English as long as we follow the journalism they taught us.

I learnt my journalism in the beer halls and the streets and I used what the English had taught us and adapted it for the people. I became a journalist as a fluke. I was teaching at a school in Krugersdorp where Tutu was already teaching. The principle did not like change. He would lock the school gate as soon as the last bell rang in the morning and would not let the stragglers in and he got on my bad side. I was one of the stragglers. I put a bumper on him to watch him.

I thought the English students must keep abreast of the times so I encouraged them to use their money to buy a copy of the *RDM*, or to club together to buy it every morning and read it before school. Then when the children came into my class I would ask them abut the headlines and talk about the international news as well. He came to eavesdrop where I could not see him and did not like what he heard. But the kids loved it. They loved to discuss the news and what it meant for the people. They also liked to know what was going on overseas. It was interesting to them and they loved it but he did not. He called me to his office and said that this was not the way to teach, it was revolutionary and that my ideas must stop and my teaching methods must change. He broke my back like the camel and I walked out.

I got on a train from Krugersdorp and headed to Johannesburg. I saw a poster for *Bantu World* and got off the train. I went to their offices and asked for a job. I was prepared to try anything. They gave me a job as a photographer and I was taught by Bob Gosane, one of the best photographers in Africa. The only photography training I had was that I understood the eye from Biology at school. When I told them about the eye they thought I knew my stuff. Gosane bought me a small camera and I started work as a photographer. I was a photographer for two weeks and then the editor asked me to make summaries of 20 press releases. When I gave them to him he had forgotten who I was and I had to remind him. Later he came into the dark room and asked to watch while I wrote a story. As soon as he saw me do it he told me to get out of the darkroom and into the editorial department, he was sending me to the Magistrates Court. I was an incidental journalist, like so many greats. Journalism is a natural talent. It is daily life and I liked the sensual, physical pleasure of getting out and doing the job. We were made before the revolution.

17. Did the *RDM* adequately criticise the police for their part in the uprising and their brutality?

On treatment of the material they *[the editorial staff]* did an excellent job but it fell on deaf ears. *RDM* was the foremost pioneer in their coverage of this period. The sub editors had an acceptance for the work of the black journalists reporting on the revolution, which raised the level of the journalism at the paper. There was co-operation between writers and subs that was beautiful, especially when the subs realised we were doing our best.

I liked the rewrite guys like Patrick Laurence who came and asked what we meant before just changing stories – they asked what our stance was, why we took a specific angle. There were not patronising. The *RDM* was outstanding in their coverage and treatment of the revolution. I was very lucky to be there, I count my blessing to have been part of this paper.

Black staff

18. Did the paper encourage black staff to aspire to higher positions within the paper?

Staff was encouraged to get training and in truth there were plans to improve a lot of journalists but circumstances did not allow it. They did encourage training but implementation was slow. There were guys without matric so how can you train such a man to aspire to higher things if he did not have a basic education?

They should have sorted the chaff from the wheat from the beginning but life does not only serve up good. Maybe there were two good journalists out of every 10. There weren't enough good candidates. If they had come with an improvement plan they would have been going back to schools to look for people. People got into journalism because the powers were humanitarian and thought, "let him come he will improve". But this did not always happen. They should have used cadet schools to gauge the quality that was needed. I can tell you an example: There was a girl there when I was there and her copy was atrocious but because she was good looking the subs would ask me to help rework her stories so that she would not be fired.

19. Was all staff trained to facilitate promotion?

They planned to but circumstance did not allow it to come to pass.

20. Do you think that the working conditions of black journalists were adequate?

That law of having blacks and whites separate was broken from the word go. There was many a time you would find me lounging at the editor's desk when he was not there. They were not class conscious.

The cadets loved me because I would take them under my wing and help them get stories published. When they arrived the news editor would give them menial tasks to do and they would not get their stories in the paper. They would come to me and I would assign them typewriters around me and get them to write stories and whatever they wrote I used in my pages. They could bring me any story and I would help them make it something we could publish and sometimes it was just one or two words that I changed. The keywords were "Operation Early", if they came after 9am they didn't get anything published. The news editor reminded me that he was the news editor, not me and said something to Raymond Louw but when he questioned me about why the cadets came to me and I told him he said to carry on.

The demarcation and separation was there, it always is between editor, sub editors, journalists. But in the newsroom we all sat together with no racial segregation. A photographer pointed out that the toilets were still segregated and [editorial] management soon pulled down the signed, which stated toilets were for particular racial groups.

In the canteen we ate together but the works people sat separately. You don't expect a works person in a greasy overall to sit next to me with my white shirt and smear the grease on the seat and my nice clothes. If they changed before coming to the canteen they could sit with us so it was more about having dirty clothes than about what colour they were but people don't have time to change to go to lunch.

So much for apartheid. There were die hard Afrikaners who separated themselves from other races. There was one photographer in particular who used to wear khaki safari suits and would not mix with the blacks. I asked the editor to give me time to break him down and he said go for it. I spent six months with him, driving around the country covering

stories and at the end of that time he was singing my praises. Our work conditions were the same as everyone else's so yes they were adequate.

Township Extra

21. How did you view the township extra?

The concept of the township edition was a white one. The original concept was not from the blacks but rather a circumstance-induced practice for economic and political reasons. Blacks wanted an instrument that could air their grievances but the bulk of papers could not feed this desire because they had to please their white readers. The intention was a noble one but its implementation was subject to many foibles of inefficiency. They needed to think more carefully about the education levels of black readers and the price.

In the long run it should not have continued to run. They should have gotten people not to read a paper divided into two so they would be trained to read a paper without deviations. It was a gamble to see if it would be profitable. Was it really a paper to supply information? As a whole the concept should not have taken off but they had to experiment such as things were. They soon discovered the township edition was ineffectual but they continued with it. One paper covering everything would have been more welcome.

22. Do you think it was a good idea?

The intention was a noble one but its implementation was not good.

23. Do you think it was well received by black readers?

It was well received among the lower educated readers. Readers were not prepared to better their standards and accepted what they were given. It was not popular among the intellectuals, the middleman. It smacked of separation and apartheid. The intellectuals wanted to know why they had a separate edition, why not read the main edition? The intellectuals knew that every one had to read the same paper and learn about each other and this is what they expected from a paper like the *RDM*. I wonder what would have happened if they had labelled the black edition the Main Edition and the white edition the Township Extra for a week.

24. Would you describe it as an apartheid edition?

To the intellectuals it was exactly that.

B.3 Interviews with Patrick Laurence

Editorial policy

1. What was your position at the paper in 1976 and how long had you been with the paper?

I was the political reporter and my concentrating in general was on the black community and in particular on development. That would be in the putatively independent and quasi-independent black communities. In that particular year leading up to the Soweto Uprising I did a lot of work together with a colleague on removal and relocations.

2. What was the editorial policy at the *RDM* in 1976?

Editorial policy was to cover developments in South Africa as completely as possible. The *RDM* played an important role in leading newspapers, which sold predominantly to white communities, towards greater coverage of the black communities and their issues.

3. To what extent did the management and owners interfere with what was included in the paper?

I am not aware of any direct attempts by management to dictate coverage. I am aware of concerns which filtered down indirectly to me, in other words the information did not get conveyed directly to me, that management was concerned that if there was too rapid a switch towards covering developments within the black communities it might alienate advertisers. As I'm sure you are aware the economy was supper dominated by the white community, in part but not only, but in part because the then government had a policy of restricting Black Economic Empowerment in areas that were designated for whites. They did not attempt to dictate coverage but were weary in case we lost white advertisers and readers.

The fear, I'm rationalising the fear, it didn't come to me directly but I am aware of the rationale of the fear. If advertisers thought that there were too many black readers they would be advertising to blacks directly and to an undesirable sector of the market. That attitude was slowly beginning to change but in '76 I think it was still a major mindset and it was a process of unlocking that mindset.

Liberal Journalism

4. How did you understand the term liberal journalism within this editorial policy (how did the paper in your opinion define this term)?

Liberal Journalism functions within a paradigm of liberalism as a broad philosophy, which issues dogma, which wants to maximise human rights, and with the maximisation of human rights expansion to the greatest possible limits of human development. And there are a lot of corollaries, which I am sure you don't need me to spell out to you. Strong civil society, not too much government control. Particularly clearly and manifestly opposed to racism and dogmas that advocate separation according to colour. Doing away with the belief that people are judged by colour whereby white is good and black is bad.

The *RDM* functioned within a society that was still tightly controlled by a government that had almost, had come to power with an almost fanatical devotion to the idea of racial separation, which sometimes, quite often was simply a cover for racial oppression. There was a theoretical difference between separation – separate but equal – and oppression but they were fantastically dedicated to racial separation, which often amounted to racial oppression. In fact the distinction is only of academic importance. They fell back on the idea that in the Quasi-independent areas blacks have paramouncy in their own areas to rule themselves and reasoned that whites were entitled to the same in their designated areas. That of course was not realised because there was not an equitable division, territorial division that would make that self-government a reality in black areas.

5. How diverse were the views about liberal journalism amongst staff?

The staff covered the complete spectrum. There was a photographer who was quite open about his German background and almost fascist sympathies but he was an exceptionally good photographer and although he would shoot his mouth off ideologically screaming terms and his support for apartheid what he did was to provided superb photos covering news events. The other extreme would be covert members of the South African Communist Party who indicated, with matching conviction, the need for a revolutionary overthrowing of the existing order. One of the political reporters was subsequently charged and convicted as being a covert member of the South African Communist Party and was sent to prison, I think six years if I remember correctly.

Between those extremes there would be a range but the predominant ethos was one of liberalism, if you like, that took cognisance of the law because it was the editor's job to keep publishing the *RDM* and not to incite rebellion against the government and suffer the consequences of a closure. Most people lived within the legal framework including the vast majority of the black people. A rider is that as the pressures against the apartheid ideological camp increased so too did opportunities for bypassing the law and in some way perhaps, in minor ways, extending the areas of freedom. We learnt to write between the lines - to convey messages, which were quite clear to the readers but not in contravention of the law.

We could, for example, recount the history of the ANC on the anniversary of the founding of the ANC. I remember writing an article on the 70th anniversary of the ANC, which stopped short of promoting the aims of an unlawful organisation, as you are aware there was such an act, but which nonetheless told the readers that here was a party which was very much part of the South African tradition of people fighting for freedom, a party peopled by black people predominantly but also but a minority of whites who supported resistance to what I term the racial oligarchy *[omen]* whose prime objective was to uphold white hegemony.

6. Did the English press cover the political, social and economic life of the country's black majority in a fair way?

I think they did their best to provide coverage, which was fair. No doubt, as in all human endeavours they may not have lived up to their aspirations. But you know so-called black editions were much maligned but in fact they were covered because there was a demand for them in the black community. There was substantial racial segregation in South Africa but people were working cheek by jowl and their residential areas were not vastly separated from one another on terms of distance and you had different cultures and different traditions and different interests. The black edition of the *RDM* was a favourite attacking point of expo facto critics but it was in truth quite good.

There were many black journalists who started there and learnt the trade there as journalists and moved on so it became a kind of seething bed of new generation journalists many of whom rose to win fame and distinction for their courageous reporting and photography not only in South Africa but internationally too. A career in journalism was

opened to those with talent through this paper. You think of people like Segola, just check with him, my understanding is that he started life as a messenger at the *RDM.* He was a voracious reader and obviously intelligent man who was unable to acquire the kind of formal education needed for greater opportunities. But he rose through the ranks and in the end became one of those rare species of black sub-editors. He was very, very good. So here you have an example of a career opened to talent. Doors weren't closed in the faces of blacks and if you take those comments I have just made and look at them with the comments I have made about the black edition that also opened doors for aspiring black journalists. He was a very erudite person. I first came across him reading one of those major classics, "War and Peace" or "Vanity Fair" and I knew that there was so much more to this man than I had realised. I know now for a fact that he is a very, very talented journalist. The fact is that the *RDM* gave black journalists the chance to tell the story of the black masses.

7. How do you see the role of a newspaper in a society that is deliberately divided along colour lines?

Well I think a , I would work for a newspaper and subscribe to the ideals of bringing people together but one which obviously, well I say obvious but its obvious to me, not deny racial cleavages or a past that includes racially-based resentments or hatreds. You can't deny historical realities. That to some extent was what the *RDM* did. I think the *RDM* played an important pioneering role in the evolution of a newspaper that was articulating a national vision for South Africa beyond the parameters of race and ethnicity.

A testimony to the *RDM* is that it was loathed by the National Party Government and several *RDM* supporters were prosecuted under various laws ranging from the Suppression of Communism to the Criminal Procedures Act – the one that has a clause about where you are required to give evidence and if you refuse to give evidence you are declared a hostile witness and you are sentenced to imprisonment for periods until "the witness is no longer hostile" and then of course there was the Prisons Act.

Another example of the kind of pressures that journalists committed to a liberal outlook had to endure. I think that at the time of Woods' assassination the *RDM* was besieged by angry Nationalists threatening to burn the building down.

8. Did the English mainstream papers do enough to oppose government within the laws imposed by government?

What's enough? How long is a piece of string? Obviously I have to say they could have done more. The *RDM* was loathed, it was seen as a communist paper. Certainly the eyes of the National Government were always on it. It was seen as doing too much rather than too little. I also think it is greatly significant that when the United Democratic Front emerged, even before its formal emergence which was the start of the death of Black Consciousness and the rise of the Charterists as they were called, one of the tenets of strategy of the Charterists was not to shun newspapers because they were white, not to shun the white press which was the maxim of the Black Conscious ideals. One of the tenets of the Charterists is that you must make maximum use of the existing media to promulgate your message. They weren't ideological purists. They were saying these papers have a big circulation, they may be a little cautious, they may be a little pusillanimous even, elements in them might be cautious but they can be used. The very fact that they saw this shows that they saw potential, they could be used to convey a message which was more potent than the Black Consciousness message in terms of mobilising. People who sit back and say they didn't do enough should bear that in mind.

I have a personal experience, which is pertinent to the issue. In 1972 I was the only white reporter to cover the annual conference of the South African Students Organisation, an organisation which was strongly Black Consciousness. At one point there was a move to throw out the last remaining white reporter. I hadn't done to my knowledge anything to alienate people personally but they just thought I was the wrong colour. Biko made a speech and he said that you must judge journalists by their work and not by their colour. He quoted an example of a black reporter who had behaved rather crudely. Biko was the great exponent of Black Consciousness but he knew the difference between being motivated by being black and being motivated by myriad of hatred against whites. The two are not synonymous.

Writing

9. How much of what you wrote was dictated to you – were you allowed to write what you saw rather than what the paper's management wanted to see published?

Well let me tell you what my role was and I'll come back to that question because I was not in the sub editing room. My primary role was to write an over view of developments

and that *[Soweto 1976]* was a major news development, which went on for maybe six weeks. All the copy that was written about the uprising was given to me and I took pieces out of all these including agency copy, radio broadcasts and especially stuff that had been written by our people. It didn't mean that if I used something from a story written by one of our staff that it wouldn't be printed because I often only used snippets and the meat was in these stories, which were still used. My duty was to provide an overview of the day's events and I did these overviews for most of the uprising. I did try to avoid being chained to my desk by going into Soweto to the mass rallies and meetings so I would have a sense of what was happening.

What I had to decide was what the most important developments of the day were then weave these into a coherent overview of events and what these events meant for the future.

I am not aware of any ideological twisting of people's writing. Maybe the grammar was changed and changes may have been made to ensure the report was not in contravention of the law. This was a tricky but necessary process. There was no point in inviting retribution from the government, which would result in the *RDM* being closed down. We got substantial encouragement from black staff and the readers.

10. Do you believe that government planted spies made any difference to the manner in which the *RDM* covered the riots?

Of course. One assumed that they would either slant stories in a conservative direction to moderate or compensate for reports they couldn't change. On the other hand they may have been more radical because it would appear to improve their disguise or alias. I don't think their object was to influence the manner in which the *RDM* covered the news but to see who the ANC sympathisers were and who supported a revolution. John Horak was quite an able journalist but widely suspected to be a political informer. You knew what you said to him would be relayed to the authorities. The ANC had Anthony Holiday in the newsroom. It didn't change the way we wrote but there was a degree of caution which needed to be practiced around potential spies.

11. Were black journalists and their copy taken seriously?

Yes. It *[black written copy]* had to be because they provided the majority of the on the spot actuality reporting. It was taken seriously. If there was a process of checking it was

not directed at them as black journalists but rather as journalists. Sometimes there would be a report by a reporter, which would say Orlando East and the Police would say Orlando West then we would have to check which it was. I am not aware of a single incident where the reportage of a black journalist was not taken seriously but there had to be checking of the facts and that was the same for all journalists. It's the function of the sub-editor to verify and if they don't verify they are not doing their duty.

12. How would you describe the changes taking place within black journalism at this time? Would you say that the Soweto Uprising changed the face of black journalism?
I think it enabled a coming-of-age because it certainly enabled some relatively unknown journalists to raise their profiles as journalists who would excel nationally. As you well know there were journalists from the 50s and 60s, black journalists, who acquired international let alone national fame after this period. One of the best articles I ever read was about Sharpeville. It was written by a black journalist writing in retrospect. Of the generation we are talking about there were also many who rose to fame and they were bred in the newsrooms of the Soweto era. Of course, one of the talented and intelligent journalists which came to the fore during this time was Jon Qwelane. So yes it was a coming-of-age, not necessarily as a genre but for individual journalists who saw this window of opportunity and took it. Magubane raised his already very high statue during this period.

Black staff

13. Did the paper encourage black staff to aspire to higher positions within the paper? Was all staff trained to facilitate promotion?
I think one of the purposes of the black edition was to include a training component but I'm not sure about that. There was lots of on the job training. Whether they had specific classes I am not sure but the idea in the newsroom was to offer as much tutoring as possible. It was a knife-edge process, balancing between tutoring and being patronising. Gavin Stewart did a good job in negotiating his way around those obstacles as did the late Peter Wellman.

Township Extra

14. What did you think of the township extra – was it a good idea and was it well received by the black readership?

The Black edition rose primarily in response to a demand for specific news. News which was of specific interest, high interest for blacks and of low interest to whites. It was fulfilling a need. The British papers have local editions too and this was a local edition. There was a demand for it. It wasn't forced on the people; they didn't have to buy it.

It is probably true that there were on occasion events which should have been included in the black issue which were not but the township edition had earlier deadlines and a completely different kind of news agenda. Black editions were to tell black news and white editions told white news and these lines were seldom crossed, except of course when the Soweto Uprising occurred it was front-page news in the main edition.

Errors may have been made in not including major news in all editions. But the *RDM's* Township edition was not as offensive to me as the *Bantu World,* which used to Americanise life in Soweto. *Bantu World* was filled with cops and robbers and dolls. It glamorised crime and a ghetto lifestyle. The *RDM* never used the same demeaning terminology. We did not trivialise or romanticise crime. The black edition of the *RDM* was a good newspaper – there is no doubt it had its faults but what paper doesn't have faults. We certainly did not go down to the level of *Die Transvaaler.* I remember reading in the early 1970s a whole long profile on the National Party candidate during a municipal bi-election, which ended by putting down the opposition and the fact that he was unknown.

B.4 Interviews with Raymond Louw

Editorial policy

1. When did you join the *RDM* and when were you made editor?

1946 and became editor in 1966 but I joined not as a journalist, I joined in the works department as what was called in those days a copyholder, they don't exist any longer. They're the people who assisted the proof-reader by reading the copy to the proof-reader so the proof-reader could make the correction marks on the proofs and I was in that job for about two years before the *RDM* suddenly had a rush of blood to the head and decided to take on a group of junior journalists and I was one of the group. Then I was there until 1950 when I went overseas. I was overseas for 6 years working on various papers in Britain. Then came back in '56 as night news editor, then went to the *Sunday Times* as news editor then news editor of the *RDM* and then editor of *RDM*.

2. What was the editorial policy at the *RDM* in 1976?

Well the editorial policy had been in fact in a sense framed; well you know the *Mail* was always a slightly maverick paper. Even in the times when the United Party was in power it wasn't a subservient, although it supported the United Party it wasn't subservient in its support and was in fact critical. When the Nats took over it became more critical and I think the policy was really formulated by Laurie Gandar you know in 1956 – 1966. His policy was either you go the whole hog and go in for separation and that was impracticable so what you've got to do is go in for a multiracial society, a non-racial society and our policy was exactly that.

We believed in a non-racial society, there shouldn't be a colour bar; there shouldn't be segregation, that blacks should be given equal opportunities and that they should participate in the political system. While some of us felt that the participation in the political system should be on a no holds bar situation at 18, I think that some of us felt that there should be some educational qualification to vote but others felt that there should be a free vote. And the paper's official policy was that there should be a qualified franchise, certainly as a start.

We also criticised Bantu education. I don't think we put forward a view of what it should be, we just felt that Bantu education was too segregated and we certainly didn't go along with the Verwoedian philosophy that blacks had to be educated as hue of wood and draws

of water. We believed that they should aspire to the same kinds of education as white kids were exposed to. Certainly we felt that the tertiary institutions should be mixed, that blacks should be admitted to the white tertiary institutions. We didn't feel there was any call for the building of black tertiary institutions. Our focus on Bantu education was that it was ill appropriate, it was discriminatory; it didn't enable black people to have the opportunities that should be available to them.

So the paper's general policy in opposition to apartheid was that we were critical of apartheid, to highlight the plight of black people, the various exposures. We went in for how black people lived. Oddly enough if one looks at the SABC TV now one gets the impression that black people live worse now then they did then because of the amount of exposure they get now compared to the exposure then. What we were exposing then wasn't individual living conditions. We were exposing group removals, land expropriation and that sort of thing. Rather more the broad picture than the individual plight of individuals. Although we did carry a certain number of that type of story but not to a large extent. I should perhaps preface this that in the earlier days of the *RDM*, I wouldn't say it was a written rule but an unspoken rule that one didn't print pictures of black people. That wasn't the only the *RDM*, most the English language newspapers and certainly the Afrikaans language newspapers did not print that sort of picture. But that gradually also diminished under Gandar because Gandar introduced the first black columnist on a white newspaper. It may have been Nat Nekaza, the celebrated Nat Nekaza, I'm not all together sure there may have been one other person, I think there was one other person before him. But certainly the most celebrated was Nat Nekaza. Young journalist, a very articulate young journalist, wrote extremely well and he was brought onto the paper to give *RDM* readers an idea of what blacks thought of things and eventually he was banned. Or I'm not quite sure if he was banned, he was given some kind of an award and he wanted to go to America to get it and they wouldn't give him a passport so he took the other option which was to leave the country and went to New York where the belief is that he committed suicide. There's a certain amount of mystery about his death. Stories have appeared was he pushed or did he fall or did he jump. But he was very young, no more than about 30 and since then an award has been named after him, the Nat Nekeza award for enterprising journalism so the *RDM* was in fact not only recording what was going on in the lives of and condition of black people it was also trying to have their views given some kind of exposure in the paper.

You asked about black education specifically but we didn't only criticise black education, we criticised obviously the rigorous apartheid laws, which prevented black people from gaining entry into the economic side of the country, into the economy and into business. For instance job reservation – we criticised that very severely although the mining industry, or not so much the industry but the mining unions, didn't like us for doing that.

3. Did you as an individual agree with this policy?

Oh absolutely.

4. To what extent did the management and owners interfere with what was included in the paper?

There was never any interference, direct interference in the editorial policy of the *RDM* from the board of directors or the management. Now I'm talking about interference in the sense of saying "you can't use that story", now in terms of interference in terms of policy it was accepted, I'm not sure when Gandar became editor for instance, whether they spelled out for him this is a paper that supports the United Party. You know it was taken for granted that the paper supported the United Party, which was the official opposition. So I don't think that was particularly spelt out but then when the Progressive Party was formed and I think that was 1959 if I remember correctly, Gandar, without consulting the board of directors changed the policy of the paper to support the Progressive Party and there's been a certain amount of questioning of whether that was the proper way for him as an editor to act because the brief under which he was acting was to support the United Party. But he decided that he would make that decision as an editorial decision that he was in control of the editorial policy of the paper and therefore had the right to do so. I would have thought that, you see if he had consulted with the board about it then that would have amounted to him admitting that the board had a right to interfere with the editorial policy. So quite rightly he decided to act on his own. I think as a matter of courtesy he should have informed the chairman of the board that he was doing so without inviting any criticism. The board could have then fired him if they wanted to but I don't think the board had any really strong views about it except that they were, well in those days most English speaking South Africans supported the United Party and they would have felt that the paper shouldn't perhaps change. However they didn't do anything about it and the paper went merrily along supporting the Progressive Party.

Then came the Prisons Act case and I don't know if you know anything about that. That was a series of articles by Benjamin Pogrund in which he quotes a number of sources, identifiable sources about the conditions in prison and then they first of all went for each one of the informants, some of whom were prison officers, and charged them, convicted them and then went for the *RDM* and that took about two years or so, if not longer. Cost the company an enormous amount of money in the days when the Rand was really worth something. And I must say the board had backed Gandar up to a point, but that support, what I mean by that is that it supported the paper in its fight against the court case.

As far as I know there was never any interference. They never said well what we think you should do, its costing us too much money please change your plea to one of guilty and lets cut our loses. They didn't do anything like that. They supported the editor and the paper against the charge. But when it came to the convictions and you know the convictions were remarkably light when you consider it. I mean suspended sentence or was it a fine, I think it was a fine on Gandar, a fine and suspended sentence on Benjamin Pogrund and there was a view should we go for appeal and the leading defence lawyer, Sydney Kentridge felt that we certainly should go on appeal and I certainly supported that, I was then news editor and I supported that we should appeal and that we shouldn't accept the view of that particular judge that the *Mail* was guilty but the board at that stage said "no, we don't really feel that we want to go further to support this matter any further. We feel that we have got off fairly lightly why don't we just let it go." And Gandar himself was so physically exhausted by the trial and fed up with it that he also felt that he didn't want to take the matter any further so the matter was dropped.

But there's a sense, there was at that stage a change in the thinking of the board and that culminated in the view shortly afterwards that they wanted to fire Gandar thinking that he'd damaged the paper in doing the Prisons Act series and then in having that long trial both financially as well as in terms of its status and standing in the community. There were some board members with connections with government, business connections with government who obviously were under considerable amounts of pressure so then came the decision that they wanted to fire Gandar and there was a revolt by the staff. Gandar nominated me as his successor.

I made a plea to the chairman of the board that they should not fire Gandar, that in fact he should be elevated to a position of editor-in-chief and I would very happily work with him in that position. The staff, the rest of the staff, I'm talking here the senior staff like the assistant editors, political correspondents, they went to see the chairman of the board as well and indicted their great displeasure and I'm not sure that they threatened that they would resign in block but they indicated sufficient displeasure and the essential argument of all of us was that this was going to harm the paper. Gandar was by that stage internationally recognised as a very courageous editor and had won numerous, large number, many awards, international awards for the paper and we felt that it would damage the credibility of the paper, not only among, internationally which wasn't of course a great commercial concern, but internally because there was a very strong, despite the fact that a lot of people disliked the man, there was a very strong support for the man as well and particularly among black people there was a very strong support for the man.

So then it was decided that I would become acting editor and Gandar would be editor-in-chief and he would be in charge of the editorial policy of the paper, writing the leaders and looking after that area of the paper, where as I would be responsible for the news coverage. We signed a document at that stage which Gandar and I concocted together. The one complaint that they wanted us to address was that the United Party felt that the *RDM* was not giving it a fair amount of publicity. What that document contained was wording to the effect that the *Mail* recognised that in addition to the Progressive Party, the United Party was also an opposition party and would give fair coverage to its activities. It was a slightly, somewhat neutral expression of, not support, but of giving it due recognition.

That's the way we went on for about three years. I was interned six months later as editor and that arrangement seemed to work out very well. There was no change in the policy of the paper; we just gave the United Party a little bit more space. They didn't really deserve it because the United Party was sinking as an opposition and its own policies which certainly weren't as liberal as the Progressive Party's were and the Progressive Party wasn't as liberal as the Liberal Party, but its [UP] own policies were in some respect very close to National Party segregationist policies although they were never hard segregationist party in the sense that people had to live in separate areas etcetera, it merely encouraged the thinking that people should live together in the groups in which they were more comfortable but not in the rigid lines outlined by the National Party. In fact the

difference was that the Nationalist Party wanted everything to be in a geometric pattern with strict dividing lines and very tight control where as the United Party was very much laissez-faire. I think Smuts once described the United Party's policy towards Africans as "let things develop." Which is sort of an open door, "well we'll make accommodations as things go on" which is just opposite to the National Party which wanted everything in strict compartments.

Board interference, well I suppose you can say that was board interference because it was a direct attempt to try and swing the paper to a United Party supporting paper but found that the staff wouldn't go along with it and that's why the compromise agreement that we give them more space was reached. Gandar left after about two years. I was told that he left because he was getting fed up and wanted to change his lifestyle to a certain extent, he felt uncomfortable being editor-in-chief with me as editor, felt that he didn't have total control of the paper, those were the thoughts that I had. But Benji in his book indicates that there was pressure brought to bear upon Gandar to retire. Gandar, with whom I became very close later on, even after he left the paper never confided that to me at all, never indicated to me at all that he'd gone for any other reason at all other than he just wanted a change of scenery. But Benji may be right; he was quite close to Gandar too.

Then when I was on my own as editor I had in fact the most marvellous relationship with Cecil Payne who was in fact the chairman. He was a mining man with an accountancy background and knew very little about newspapers when he was appointed chairman but he was most supportive, absolutely marvellous. He never interfered. He would ask me sometimes what we felt about this and what we felt about that.

On one occasion and when I mentioned this to Gandar he expressed great horror, he asked me, Cecil Payne asked me what kind of line were we going to adopt about something that had happened in Rhodesia and I said well our thinking is something along these line and he gave no further comment he said well thanks very much. Gandar said he should never have asked a question like that, it was interference. I didn't regard it as interference. I regarded it as seeking information rather than interference because he never made a comment as to whether we should change our minds and there was never any suggestion as to how we should conduct the paper and he was like that with all the other papers in the group.

Then came McPherson, who we learnt later had good connections with government, well we knew he had connections with government when he came. He was put in by Harry Oppenheimer apparently and we don't quite know what was the thinking in Harry Oppenheimer's mind when he did that because McPherson had a reputation in the business world of being a meeter and greeter, a person who paved the way for deals to take place or creating contacts, networking at a high level in the business community. His politics were supportive of the United Party. He didn't like the Progs.

He didn't interfere until about two or three years into his chairmanship when he began to get restive and I had one or two well they were clashes I suppose some of them, some of them were disagreements when they introduced the, because of the fuel restrictions in the country they introduced a speed limit on the national roads, something like 50 miles an hour. He was very supportive of it and we felt that you didn't need to have to do that if government would change its policy and he got very cross that we weren't being patriotic and I said to him in a flash of anger, "the problem with you is that you don't understand newspapers."

On the surface by the way we had a friendly relationship but beneath it all there was a determination in him to get rid of me. He, at one lunch we were attending I was standing with Joel Mervis when he joined the party and I can't remember what the subject was and we got onto politics and he got a little angry and flustered about it and he turned round to me and said "well you just see where you'll be in two years time" and Joel turned round to me and said "what do you think that means," and I said "well I haven't the faintest idea, what do you think it means?" But I then got to know what that meant because after that, for the last two years of my editorship I was asked to go down and see him in the company of the managing director where he would discuss certain stories which had appeared in the *RDM*; and why we had treated them in a certain way, why we had given them that sort of prominence or why we had dealt with them in a particular way. I can't remember which stories they were but there were about two or three questions of that kind and he would always preface them by saying, "I've asked to see you because the board has raised certain questions about our treatment of stories and I'd like to know why you treated these stories in this particular way." So I gave him the answers.

That was a post-facto interference in the sense that he wasn't trying to stop me running stories but questioning them in a way that there was no comment. He didn't say that the board felt that these were inappropriate stories, that the treatment was inappropriate. He just said that the board wanted to know why you had done them in a certain way. There was no suggestion by him that he agreed with our decision making or whatever, which some people would say should leave me with the feeling that I should temper the manner in which I was dealing with certain stories, that this was a kind of, a form of censorship, a kind of chilling effect. I didn't choose to take it that way, partly because I think I'm a bit stupid and secondly because I felt that there would be no other way I could run those stories than the way I was running them. I once said in exasperation to Lester Walters, the managing director, on the way back from one of these meetings. I said, "Tell me Lester does he understand what I'm saying. Does he have any understanding of what I am trying to convey to him" and Lester said, "Well I don't know, he reads the leaders very carefully." But obviously it was a softening up process to finally get rid of me.

The problem was that the circulation of the *Mail*, which had reached its lowest ebb under Gandar at about 108 000 sales a day, with *The Star* being 160 000, the *Mail* had been up to 122 000 but as a result of the Prisons Act case and I suppose as a result of the policies of the paper the paper's circulation was reduced. So when I was appointed editor I was asked to aim to get the circulation of the paper up to 160 000 to be on a par with *The Star*.

Yes I suppose I can go into it now. I decided that the major problem the *Mail* faced wasn't its policies because there was a very loyal readership of those policies and there would always be dissension in newspapers about policies in newspapers, you know those for and against but who would never the less continue reading the paper, simply rise above it because they derived some other benefit from it. The paper had about 24 pages, sometimes 28. *The Star* was running papers of 72 to 80 odd pages which was fat as its fat today and I came to the conclusion, that because we were so thin there was no way in which we could repeat the stories or give different angles to the stories that appeared in *The Star*, we could only follow on from the stories that appeared in *The Star*. So *The Star* would break the story and we would then follow on or not touch it at all and I said that what we have signalled to readers is that we are not a paper in our right. We are an adjunct, an addition to *The Star* and what we've got to do is to become a newspaper in our own right, where we covered all the news people wanted to read. Well obviously with the amount of pages I

had compared to what *The Star* had the prospect of doing that was a little different. So I proposed to the management that I, I said I must have more space. I mean the space was pitiful, utterly pitiful compared to *The Star*. Even if people only bought *The Star* to wrap their fish and chips in it was a better prospect than the *RDM*.

So I proposed that they change the advertising rate. *The Star's* rates were at that time R5 per single column centimetre each against our R3.40. We were going to put it up to R3.80 and I said why don't you put it up much higher than that figure and give me the extra space that will become available as a result of the higher profitable advertising percentage. This went on for about a year and eventually I was told by the advertising manager that my idea had been turned down and I went to see Walters and I said, "You know Lester, you've asked me to bring the circulation of this paper up to the level of *The Star* and I'm telling you its impossible to do so with the amount of space that we have. I must have more space. What I'm suggesting to you is that you raise the advertising rate and sell it to the advertiser on the basis that if the chap goes into *The Star* his advert appears in many pages and its lost in the sea of advertising and editorial material. If he goes into the *Mail* it's a very much more focused publication, even though its got smaller circulation the advertisement gets much greater exposure and therefore his advert carries greater value." And he said: "well what figure would you put on that?" and I said "well why don't you put it at the same figure as *The Star*?" Now I mean that's heresy, here we with 110/ 112 000 circulation and *The Star* 160 000 and we're saying the same advertising rates but he tried it out on one of his advertising friends and the chap said well you know it could work. When I mentioned this to am American publisher many years later he said: "that was smoke and mirrors" but we were now R5 per single column centimetre, we were able to expand immediately the editorial space. I think the editorial space on the *Mail* in those days was 76cm per page; we were able to expand immediately to 90 to 100, which gave us an enormous space in terms of what we used to have.

We also changed the editorial policy in this way. I said: "every story of significance and importance that occurs we must run. Now if *The Star* has run it obviously we will not give it the same amount of space but we must give a mention to it and even better if we can take it further than *The Star* and give it a fresh look, that's even better. But we must turn our paper into a paper on its own merits so that it carries all the news that people need to read. So they don't have to read us as a secondary paper to *The Star* and that was the

policy that we followed. The circulation started to increase and in fact during the rest of my editorship the circulation increased steadily at between 12 to 14 percent per year whereas other papers in the morning group were stumbling along at 1, 2 and 3 percent and that proves it wasn't the policy that reduced the circulation of the *RDM*, it was the fact that it wasn't providing a newspaper service as it should. As soon as it got more air into it, more space, more news stories it became a much more attractive proposition to the public.

Oh we also did other things, for instance we were a morning newspaper coming into a city with a very early rising population all dictated by the Mining industry, you know daddy goes down the mine at 7am so if daddy is going to read the newspaper he should read it at 6.30am and the newspaper has got to be so designed that he can read it quickly before he goes down the mine. Unlike coming up from the mine at 3pm and he's got several hours in which he can browse through *The Star* and take his time about it. The *Mail* had to be designed that he could get to whatever was going to interest him as quickly as possible.

So number one we put, it seems to have become rather commonplace now but they were rather unusual in that time, we put an index on the front page, something similar to the one Business Day runs now. Then we compartmentalised, the news stories used to float around on the page just anywhere in the paper. I'm talking now the news section used to carry international news, South African news, Johannesburg news and Cape Town news just anywhere in the paper. What we decided to do was compartmentalise the news so that the most interesting National news and Johannesburg news would appear on pages 1,2,3. The most important news of the day would appear on those pages. The first two pages were the most important news of the day. The third page was the most important news of the day in terms of in the first edition it would be the country areas that we served, that page would change in the second edition to the African news because we ran an African edition, the in third edition it would be Pretoria, the news in and around Pretoria and the fourth edition would be Johannesburg. And then page 4 would be politics, page 5 international news of a lesser importance than that which would have appeared on the front page. Page 6 would be general news again but what I'm trying to say is that the areas were carefully designated. If a reader was interested in Politics he could look at the front page because if it was an important political story obviously it would be on the front page but if he was deeply interested in politics he could go directly to page 4. And then of course there was finance news, feature news and sports news. All those things tended to work and as I say

the circulation went up 12 to 14 percent per year. While the other morning and daily papers were going up by 1 and 2 percent.

Coming back to my point if I can reiterate it because I think it is very important. That proves to me that it wasn't politics. Now why I'm doing that again is because during this period there is a still obviously a concern about getting more advertising and considerable paybacks came from the advertising department and marketing departments that it was the policies of the paper that was preventing the paper from selling more. In the circulation department it was hard for them to use that line when the circulation was going up at that sort of rate. But they were maintaining that and of course the company was very aware of it so they had internal research done on people's attitudes to the paper and I can remember having long sessions with the head of Markinor I think it was that were doing the research who had come at one occasion to the conclusion that it was the policies of the paper that was creating certain amounts of antagonism toward the paper. I argued vociferously against that and I think I, I don't think I managed to get them to say they agreed with me but I think I managed to convince them that I was right. The thing was this of course, circulation was going up but management was looking at the Black circulation. Black circulation was going up quite strongly, white circulation was taking its time about going up and the management was feeling that the reason for this was because of our policies and as I said I believe I managed to convince them that that wasn't so.

There's another argument incidentally about that advertising rate. Now this will be vociferously denied by all advertising agencies but the way advertising is sold in newspapers is that the advertising agency gets a commission of 16.5 percent. Now we never propagated this as an argument but I did that internally of course. You go up to R5 you're telling the advertiser he's only got to make a choice of your paper in terms of its value to him and his customers, in terms of its reach, the kind of people who read the paper and that type of advertising or the people who are likely to buy the products from that type of advertising. They don't have to worry about whether his income is going to be enhanced if it goes in *The Star* and depleted if it goes in the *Mail*. And of course, I believe that that did have an effect because a lot of advertising agencies went into *The Star* because they thought it was good for their clients but also it was good for their own pockets because R5 at 16.5 percent compared to R3.40 was better for them. But with rates being the same this would not be the case. *The Star* incidentally were absolutely furious,

advertisers now had the opportunity of say: “I don’t like the way *The Star* treats us, I’m going to the *Mail* because I get better service from the *Mail*. The *Mail* puts my advertisement closer up to the front than it does in *The Star*” all that sort of thing happened so advertising was growing.

What else can I say about that aspect of it? Oh, yes I was dealing with McPherson, with circulation going up and at the time these meetings were taking place with McPherson we were up to about 145 000, we had broken the gap by about 35 000 from 60 000, at this time when McPherson was asking me why we ran stories as we did. So it was very difficult for him to get rid of me on the grounds that the paper was not prospering and succeeding and in fact, you started off with the Soweto Riots and during the Soweto Riots, it went up to an even greater degree. The gap was reduced further – 157 000 and *The Star* was around 180 000. We reduced the gap during that period to about 23 000 so it was a substantial improvement. So he couldn’t throw me out on the grounds that the paper wasn’t succeeding.

So that was the policy and then eventually I, the managing director said to me that the board had decided that it was time for me to move on. They weren’t firing me for any reason but I would remember that when I was first appointed I was asked how long I thought an editorship should last and I hadn’t the faintest idea and I said “I suppose about 10 years or so” little thinking that Lester Walton had such a retentive memory so they used that. They said, “well you said about 10 years and you know your 10 years are up and it’s just a feeling that there should be fresh blood.” I was never told why I was fired, despite the fact incidentally that the paper had started to incur loses. What had happened in 1974 when there was a slight recession, the management without my knowledge, had reduced the price of advertising. I’m not sure to how much but immediately there was a fall off in advertising which comes back to prove my point about 16.5 percent and the paper incurred a loss in 1975 of about R300 000 and I went to Lester Walton and said I was very concerned and what could we do about it? What should we do about it because I don’t like running an unprofitable paper, and he said: “Well I wouldn’t worry about it all that much.” Don’t forget that circulation at that time was going very well, no longer were there complaints of the policy of the paper retarding its sales, that sort of thing. He said, “Oh no I wouldn’t worry about it you know papers have their ups and downs.” Which I thought was a very laissez-faire attitude for him to adopt but it made it very difficult for him to say

that I wasn't interested in the financial future of the paper. Of course that loss grew which was one of the reasons, the ostensible reasons for the paper eventually being closed down. I think I've dealt enough with McPherson. Dear fellow I must say.

One of the reasons they appointed me in the first place was because I was a news editor and I was regarded as being quite a good news editor but also a non-political news editor in the sense that I was more interested in news than in politics. Well, we had a political correspondent and certainly my first approach as news editor was news, of course politics would come into news but news was my driving force as news editor. The politics and political correspondence was handled by Gandar. So the board had the charming thought as an editor I would be more interested in news and therefore if I was given the editorship I would reduce the political element in the paper. Of course that's a great thought in theory but once you appoint an editor to a paper like the *RDM* he assumed the characteristics of the paper and I followed on in the approach of the political philosophy of the paper and that upset the board somewhat. But they followed that theory as well before they got upset down in Durban by appointing James McMillians who was the news editor of the *Natal Mercury.* They appointed him as editor of the paper in succession of Robinson when he came to retire on the same basis that as a news editor he was more interested in news rather than in politics. Of course I once made the statement that if I wanted to change the policy of the *RDM* I would not be able to do it as the editor of the *Mail* because the staff would not let me. And that is one of the essential elements of the *RDM* which is very different to papers like *The Star*, the *Citizen*, *Beeld.* The staff was so committed to the paper that they would have reacted and revolted if there had been, I'm not talking about small changes in policy that you do through circumstances and crises, I'm talking about a major change in policy. The staff would have revolted and would have left, I have no doubt which in a sense was proved when the paper closed down and a lot of journalists, instead of looking for jobs at papers like *The Star*, went to Australia and now hold high positions there.

The staff was very, very committed. They came from everywhere. There were ANC members, Liberal members, Prog party members, Communist members, United Party members. They were all there and they all worked on the basis that this was a paper that told the news as it was. They liked the way the paper told the news of the day. The other day I was up at a meeting in Northern Transvaal where I met a woman journalist from

Benoni who was friend of a person, one of the reporters, Johan Buys who was our correspondent in Springs and he was a Nat and he had told her many stories of how he had worked at the *Mail* and how he had loved to work at the *Mail* and what great pleasure he derived from being on the *Mail* despite the fact that it was a paper opposed to his own political policies. That kind of loyalty and I've only come across it again once and that was last year in Tel Aviv. The *Mail* staff was very special. The *Mail* was regarded for many years as the Fleet Street of the country. If you got on the *Mail* you were on the best paper in the country and I think they had every right to say that because it was the best paper in the country. It wasn't just done, I may have been the editor but it wasn't just done by me, I certainly had a hand in it in a sense but it was because of the staff, because of their commitment to the paper, commitment to the ethics of the paper, commitment to the principles of independent journalism. Independent in the sense that we went for every story of the day. Although we were not totally independent in the sense that we were supportive of the Prog party but in the times that would have been regarded as very independent journalism. It was there, they had a loyalty that is very difficult to find, you don't find it very frequently today. I've been giving lectures at the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism and I've been dismayed at the bitchiness of journalists about their papers and about their superiors at the papers. There's always a certain degree of that but is seems to be rather more all pervasive now than it should be, it wasn't like that at the *Mail*. People made enormous sacrifices to get stories and laying themselves out in dangerous situations, exposing themselves to danger, working hellish long hours knowing that there was no special reward for it except that they saw their story in the paper.

Have I exhausted that question?

Lets deal with one other aspect because you asked right at the start about the 1976 uprising. We were the only paper with a large black staff. You haven't asked about the genesis of the Africa edition.

All right we can come back to that later. But anyway as a result of the formation of this *Township Edition* we had this large black staff. We had about eight or nine black journalists, photographers, maybe more and we had another ten or so stringers. So when the riots broke out whites didn't go into the townships. Some of our white reporters did

and they got into tough situations and were rescued, had to be rescued. But it was the blacks who brought in those stories.

Now we were very conscious, obviously, we were the people with the only stories really coming out of Soweto, apart from the police version. And obviously a lot of our stories contradicted the police version so the African journalists covered this and covered this extremely well but we ensured a quality control. I was determined that we were not going to be caught out with extravagant stories which had hearsay without having the facts properly checked. So I put a senior member of the staff onto the job of fact checking, I think Liz Menny was one of them at one stage. When the journalists came in with their stories she would go through them with their stories one by one and check the facts with them and then the story would go in the newspaper. Now some of these journalists regarded that as a form of censorship, well I didn't go along with that. I was determined that we were not going to be had up for printing something that was inaccurate. But in fact it helped them as well because they never had that kind of treatment before on their stories. You know I took one of those sessions at one stage and I remember the reporter had written, "The police opened fire on the crowd."
And I said, "No wait a minute, the police opened fire on the crowd, how many people dropped dead?"
"Oh no, nobody dropped dead,"
"Well how can you say they opened fire on the crowd, surely they fired into the ground in front of them or they fired into the air, they missed them. Can you established, where, in fact how, the police fired?"
The chap then thought about it and then came up with the proper answer. So it was that kind of reporting where you got it really down to the fine edge of accuracy. But by and large there wasn't a great deal that we had to change. It was just that sort of excessive reporting. But we were then of course far and away leaders in the field and the circulation shot up because we were the people telling the public what was going on.

The Star had one or two black reporters but didn't have anything like the coverage we had. They lagged very badly behind. And of course the Afrikaans newspapers got nowhere. The black newspapers, they were under much severer restrictions than we were, *The Sowetan [then The World]* for instance. Somehow they ran the stories but they ran them a lot more circumspectly.

Writing

5. How did what was written before and after June 16 differ?

I don't think so. Don't forget that we were very strong in our coverage of black issues before the riots and I don't think there was any marked change in that philosophy. One of the aspects that did occur, there was of course a commission of inquiry run by a judge called Cilliers into the riots and the officials were trying to blame the newspapers for having created, through incitement, created the climate and then incited people to revolt.

I was then in management so this must have been after 1977 the commission was started. They gave me some statements from the commission but fortunately they mixed them up because the officials in fact came out against the government and said that some of the officials in government were going around igniting piles of straw with their language policy which in fact set the whole place ablaze. So some of those documents came to me. I went through our coverage of the riots and gave a very detailed account of what we said and how we could not have been held accountable for the uprising or for the expansion of the uprising because some of the uprising took part in places where we didn't have any circulation. That sort of thing.

I don't know what has happened to the document but it was quite a considerable document and I think the commission came out with an exoneration of the newspapers for being an inciting force for those riots. But my document was regarded as such a success, I did it by the way with the lawyers, Kelsey Stewart played a big hand in it, that when the Eastern Province Herald was similarly accused they asked me to draw up a document for their coverage which I did in the same way.

6. How much of what black journalists wrote was changed in the subbing process?

I don't think very much at all. I never had any serious complaints, there were sometimes some complaints that copy had been changed but I can't recall that there was anything of any substance or significance in the way copy was changed. One of course one has got to remember that black journalists suffering then under apartheid sometimes felt constrained that they couldn't complain although some of them were quite vociferous. My impression, I don't think it was substantially changed at all.

7. As the editor did you have any cause to go into Soweto yourself and report on the issues?

During that time no. I had been in Soweto as a reporter from 1949 onwards; in fact I was stoned in Soweto in 1948 during the stay-aways. I've been in various other things in Alexandria and Soweto but during that time no.

8. Ideally journalists always say that when they are working they are journalists first. In reality as a white person and a journalist which came first?

That really should be a question you should ask of the black journalists. The Swiss Consul General once asked Sam Mabe "now how do you operate as an independent journalist?" and he replied, "Well I am an independent journalist but you must remember that I am black first and a journalist second." I said to him "But how can you be a black first and journalist second?" and he replied, "You must remember that you are living in a privileged society. I am living in a deprived society. I am fighting first for my independence and my freedom and secondly I am doing a job as a journalist so that's why."

But as a white I didn't have to consider my whiteness first. I think a lot of journalists on the Afrikaans papers thought that way because they were supporting the government policy and in a sense their conditioning was that they were white first and journalists second. I don't think that applied to any white journalist that I knew on the *RDM*. It may have applied to the advertising staff as well and the management.

9. Do you believe that government planted spies made any difference to the manner in which the *RDM* covered the riots?

In the news stories? I came across one example of that on *The Star* where a chap who eventually became a police major wrote a story about a certain incident which was also covered by our journalists and his version was totally the police version where as our reporters ran what they believed to be an accurate account of what had taken place. I regarded that as an attempt by this guy to use his position on *The Star* and as a police spy to coddle the news.

I didn't come across anything like that at the *Mail* and I tried to work it out. I came to the conclusion that these people were spies wanting to know what we were doing, what contacts we had in the black underground movement and that sort of this. Our political

attitudes and whether we were supporting an insurrection or anything else. They didn't see their jobs as having to change the news and they recognised that if they did change the news they would become immediately identifiable as this guy had become identifiable by colouring the news. I think that they were quite fastidious in covering the news in the way that it should be covered. So although there were quite a number, although we don't quite know how many, we know there was 007 – he was the chap who shot Braam Fisher – Ludi, I think it was Gerard Ludi. He was one of the main witnesses against Braam Fisher at his trial. He had infiltrated the Communist Party but he had worked as a journalist on the paper and nobody on the paper had the faintest idea that he was a spy. The first thing that will start to give a person away if he is going to cover the news is in fact how he reports and nobody had that idea. When his name came up as the prime witness in this case everybody in the newsroom was shocked.

Then there was John Horak, with the cripple leg, he was accused by Benjamin Pogrund of being a spy. No first of all Benjamin Pogrund defended him when people said he was a spy and Benjamin said, "No, I know him very well, he's not a spy." Then one day somebody came to me from the subs room and said, "John Horak, he's a spy and we are very unhappy about it." So I called John in and I said, "John, people on the staff are saying that you are a spy and I'm not sure what one does about that but I think I've got to ask you whether you are a spy."
And he said, "Mr Louw, I'm not a spy, I'm a genuine journalist and I work in the interest of the newspaper and I'm prepared to swear that on the bible."
And I said, "Well I don't really require you to swear it on the bible but if you say so I must accept your word for it and I'll tell the staff members who've complained."

Well John Horak was quite a good sub and as far as I know he never tried to alter stories but there were quite a number. There was another chappie, Ocket who became a brigadier in the prison services but he also was quite a good reporter and he was a crime reporter. I think maybe his spy relationships enabled him to get better stories than the others.

On that issue a number of journalists came to me over a period of time. I think it was about five or six and they said they wanted to discuss things with me in private. They had been called down to John Vorster Square and had been asked to spy on their fellow journalists and they wanted to know what advice I could give them and I said "I can't give

you any advice except one piece but its up to you, its your decision, its your conscience that's at risk so you have got to make up your own mind what you are going to do about it. But I tell you this, if you do become a spy in their employ you will never ever be able to get out of it again." But they said, some of them said to me, that they had in fact turned it down.

I think they came to me for protection in the sense that if something happened to them afterwards I would know that that was probably the reason. But it gave me an indication of how many of the staff were tempted and how many had succumbed that hadn't come to me.

10. The NP Government did not impose official censorship where a state censor would sit in the newsroom to control what was published? Instead editors would censor themselves. Do you agree and did the *RDM* ever use self-censorship? Why was this? How did the varying laws actually affect what could be written without the paper getting into trouble?

Well in total there were about 100 laws. The Nats were very clever. They didn't put censors in newspaper offices except in the sense that if there was a defence story to be written, before you could publish it you had to go to the Defence Department to get approval, so that was in a sense a direct censorship but in all other instances the government passed laws that turned censorship into a do-it-yourself operation or a self-censorship operation where you had to work out what, if you published whether that would be a contravention of one or other law. Of course one could have, and we did consider from time to time disregarding that but we realised that would last a day before the paper was closed down or something would happen to the paper which would not help it at all in doing what it should be doing.

We got around a lot of the censorship by having a brilliant lawyer, Kelsey Stewart, who we retained as an advisor and also appeared for us at various court cases. Up to then, until he got involved in newspapers and made this a speciality of his, if we referred a story to a lawyer and there was something in it which offended some law the lawyer would generally say "no you can't use that" so the whole story would be canned. Kelsey devised a way of saying, "Well if you change this sentence to read this way then you're okay" and the story got in. He was a pass master at devising ways around the law and in fact he and

Willy Lane, Willy Lane was also very good at it, David Dyson who is now practising elsewhere, all of these chaps devised this way of getting around the law, of saying, "Cut out that sentence and you're okay, the rest of the story can go." But we also got around it by changing words or rewording it. One of the other ways we got around it, incitement was a big worry because it was so open ended that you could be brought up on incitement for virtually anything, when the Africans or the opposition was going to stage a demonstration if we wrote about it, it would be regarded as a crime. So what we used to do is go to the police and say, "Look we understand that there is going to be a demonstration and we understand that you have taken precautionary measures. Could you tell us something of the precautions you are taking and could you issue any warnings?" and the police would then issue a warning and that is the way in which the news would get out that there was going to be a demonstration.

11. As an adjunct to the issue of censorship, did the RDM write in such a way that the readers had to read between lines?

There was a certain amount of that but not much. You couldn't do that very easily. On one occasion we tried using blank spaces and that was immediately stopped. On another occasion what we did was when a soldier was killed in Angola we ran his death notice on the front page as the news story. We couldn't run the story that he had been killed in Angola because the authorities wouldn't allow us to do it. So what we did was took the death notice from the family and printed that. There was a suggestion that you should run poems and songs. We thought that wouldn't necessarily convey the message. I think there were censorship laws that if one tried to do that they would come down on you as well so we didn't go in for that. The overall philosophy was that it was better to stay alive and print what you could print rather than be so confrontationist that you were closed down.

12. There was an accusation made during the TRCMH that the *RDM* perpetuated human rights violations by neglecting to print pertinent information and withholding information about what was really going on. Do you think there was any truth is this statement?

I can't think. There was obviously information that we withheld. I'll give you an example. There was a strong, a very strong rumour floating around that during the riots that excavators were out in the township near Orlando Police Station excavating the ground and scores of bodies of people who had been killed were thrown into them. Well that was

the story that came into the office and I know we investigated it and there was no truth in it so we didn't run it. There were one or two of that kind of thing that happened, in fact it constantly happens in the newspaper offices. You get wild stories floating in and then when you investigate them they turn out not to be quite so wild or they turn out to be something different.

They're saying we withheld stories that we knew were stories and had checked. No, never. Maybe we withheld stories under the Defence Act that we were prevented for publishing but is that a withholding or is that a prevention from publishing?

I don't have any recollection of any major stories being withheld. Oh wait a minute there was one occasion when I complained to PW Botha at a meeting in Cape Town. This was during the Angolan War where South Africans were advancing up the west coast of Angola to Luanda and they got to within 10km of the city and they weren't clearly identified as South African except by certain insignias and some of them were using Afrikaans. These indicated they were probably South African and we were unable to run that story, the Defence Department canned it. I complained to Botha that "you have prevented us from using those stories, you've canned it and yet on the way down here this morning I bought the *International Herald Tribute* at the airport and here's a story of South Africans being within 10km of Luanda." Oh he went for me on that one. He accused me of all sorts of things but that thing happened where we were totally prevented from running the story but that's not a withholding to my way of thinking, we would have contravened the censorship laws.

Liberal Journalism

13. How did you understand the term liberal journalism within the editorial policy (how did the paper in your opinion define this term)?

I don't think we were as liberal as we are now.

I don't think we ever defined it. We just went out and did journalism according to professional standards that we believed in. I suppose in a sense it was liberal journalism because it certainly wasn't conservative journalism. But you know we believed and the *RDM* ethic was to go out and get the story and publish it. If the news was in the public interest, that means any news, whether it is in accord with the philosophies of the paper or

not, but if its news and its worth printing you could print it. What one is saying therefore is that liberal journalism is getting access to as many sources of information as possible of all kinds and printing that which is believed to be relevant to the society. That's good, bad and indifferent. That is in support of your principals if you are a liberal.

I think most journalists tend to be liberal in outlook but of course there is a large number who are very conservative as we discovered during the apartheid era when the Afrikaans newspapers would not entertain many of the stories that we considered news and wanted to run. They believed that they were contrary to their philosophy, their political philosophy and therefore should not be run, should be suppressed.

Liberal journalism opens up the society – it gets access to information, as I say printing the information good, bad or indifferent. I think that rule permeated the newsroom at the *RDM*. *RDM* never believed in the suppression of information except of course that which one was forced to suppress in accordance with the laws of the time. One couldn't for instance, willy-nilly publish information about the military without being in conflict of the Defence Act – I mean that's an extreme example but one had to be extremely cautious about how one went about it. But the approach, the driving force was in fact to try and get the maximum amount of information that was in the public interest and publish it. I think we at the *Mail* and the staff at the *Mail* were way ahead of many of the other papers in the country during apartheid in that respect and I think it may have been a lot to do with the fact that we encouraged people to go out and seek out the news whether it was unpalatable or not. And so that ethic grew in the newsroom "if it's a story go out and get it and lets see if we can publish it". If it was in conflict with the law then you tried to get around it in some way. I've never known a definition of liberal journalism but I think that's what its all about.

14. How diverse were the views about liberal journalism amongst staff?

I don't think all the staff had a liberal outlook but they did believe in the need to get hold of the news and print it and cover it. I mean don't forget that we had a very remarkable mix of people ranging from Nationalists to Communist Party members and some of those wouldn't have voted in a liberal context and didn't have a liberal attitude except of course in the gathering of news. I mean Johan Buys, a Nationalist who was able to go and gather news and I don't think, I may be wrong, I didn't get the impression that he suppressed

news because it conflicted with his political outlook. He was a journalist at the *RDM* and the *RDM* wanted to know what was going on and he supplied them with well-researched articles.

Now within the newsroom, what were the attitudes of the reporters towards the black staff? I think some of the reporters, not very many of them, probably concealed their real attitudes but were not terribly comfortable working with the black staff. I wouldn't say there were very many, say four, five, something like that. I just had that impression. One of the photographers was a very conservative fellow and I think a supporter of apartheid but he was working in this environment and he conformed but I think his personal attitudes were that he would have preferred not to have very close contacts with black people.

When one got into other areas of the newspaper like the works department, the works was very strong on preserving job preservation, separate toilets and all that sort of stuff. You know the kind of paraphernalia of apartheid in keeping people separate. They were very strong on that and to some degree in the administrative parts of the newspaper, that's the accountants and the administrative staff. But the newsroom was more liberal and I think it had a lot to do with the fact that they were working more closely with Africans out there on the beat, on the street, in the newsroom itself and had a greater respect for their capabilities and their abilities. So I think that it was quite liberal. I must say I didn't see any real racism in the newsroom and I never had, I can't recall that I had any serious complaints of racism against the staff.

Now there were complaints from the black staff about not being able to go into the white canteen, they had to go into the black canteen and they didn't like that because they regarded themselves a cut above the black people who worked in the works department. Black people in the works department wore ink stained overalls and these gentlemen *[journalists]* wore suits so there was the possibility of your clothes being messed up. They certainly didn't like the fact that there was separate cutlery, that kind of thing and they had every right to complain about it.

We tried to integrate the canteen and I think we managed to do that with a degree of success but it wasn't easy, there was a labour law, which made it very difficult and

certainly the African staff resented the fact that there was, and if you look at the TRC submissions by black journalists there's the constant complaint that apartheid came into the newsroom. They didn't seem to recognise the fact that we had to conform to the labour legislation, which was that there were separate amenities. I know what the staff did, and that gives you an impression of the kind of liberal attitude the staff had, they refused to tolerate separate toilets on the editorial floor. The way the building was organised you would have different signs for black and white, male and female toilets and they devised a green sign for the editorial department which meant that anybody could go in except of course the separation of the sexes and they used to pull down the signs when management got a little itchy about the labour department noticing this contravention of the labour laws and then going for us. The staff would pull down the signs when they were reverted to the old ones and replace the green signs.

But you know it was difficult. We believed that there was no point in taking one's opposition to the law to such an extent that you were closed down, that meant you lost your voice and you would have pleased the government mightily by proving them and excuse to close you down. But that didn't only apply to editorial conduct in terms of the censorship laws, it also applied in terms of labour laws particularly and the last thing we wanted to do was to be closed down on the grounds, not because we had written a story that the government didn't like but because we didn't conform to a standard labour law. We were quite careful about that but the black journalists never understood that. They always thought that we were punishing them. They thought we were living in an apartheid society and we were enforcing the laws, as if to say that we turn them over or go headfirst against them and then face the consequences.

15. Was the *RDM*, in your opinion, the country's number one crusader and champion of human rights?

Yes, I have read Petersmann's thesis and I've read through quite a lot of her work. She talks about the laws that affected the media but she doesn't not take any cognisance what so ever of the labour laws we had to contend with and the possibility that that could have been used as a defence. She doesn't talk about that. My recollection of her dissertation was that she contended that we never said that the police were murdering people and I said to her that you couldn't say that in terms of Section 29b of the Police Act because if you said anything about the conduct of the police which the police regarded as inaccurate and of

course the charge of murder would have been regarded as inaccurate they would have immediately charged you and how would you prove that they were murdering people? There's no way you could prove it so what you did was you said that the police opened fire and people fell dead and one could put two and two together on that one. She didn't seem to take that into consideration.

I thought that the *RDM* put up a very strong case for human rights starting in the 50s when the Nats first came to power. I wouldn't have thought that it was, in those days it was a very strong argument in the terms that would be used about human rights today but if you go back to the kind of society that people were living in, in those days it was quite a strong argument. It certainly went against the grain of entrenched white feelings at that time. During Gandar's time the question of human rights came forward very strongly and I think carried on in that tradition. Whether we expressed ourselves as vociferously as we would do now, I think we didn't do too badly. I think we pushed the human rights line.

Of course while one may personally have believed in one person, one vote, I don't think I particularly at that stage believed in that. I thought the way to go would be to have a qualified franchise, which of course was the Progressive Party way. But I know that we had discussions in the office with particularly the Black Sash and Sheena Duncan who said that there's no way that you can go with a qualified franchise, you have to go one-man-one-vote or one person one vote and she made that point very strongly. But I weighted that up and thought how could you inject that into a society as bound as this one was by apartheid segregation laws. One wouldn't get to first base and also the chances are the paper would have been banned so ...

But human rights generally I think we put on a fair case and we certainly put on a stronger case than most other newspapers. In the context of the time I don't think that the record is bad but there is always the question could you have done it better and could you have done it more comprehensively and of course the answer is yes, we never did it sufficiently. We tried, we went as far as we thought we could go but in hindsight you say to yourself, "We could have done it better, we could have done more."

16. Did the English press cover the political, social and economic life of the country's black majority in a fair way?

I think they tried to but the orientation was, don't forget the readership was a white society and where does one start that particular argument, is it in the 50s or the 30s? If one goes back to the 30s I think the English press paid no attention what so ever to what was going on in the black community apart from the possible upheavals that may have occurred from the black community. Going into the 50s when the Nats came along with their very strong segregationist views there was a growing tenet of the other side who were being deprived.

It was only I think around about the early 60s when the *Mail* consciously developed the *township extra*, it was the first paper to do so, possibly with the exception of the *Evening Post* in Port Elizabeth under Sutherland. Sutherland I think started the process of starting to report more closely on the black community and their economic and social position. Then the *Mail* began the township edition, which was much more conscious of doing that and from that moment there was the other factor that came in of employing black journalists actually on the staff of the newspaper and obviously as a result of that a greater consciousness of the black situation came about. And I don't think we did it as comprehensively as we could have. For instance I can remember as an editor being surprised at the fact that there was a law that deprived black people from conducting businesses in the townships except on a very limited basis. I can't remember now what the law was but there was one, but the point I'm trying to make is that when I was an editor I came across the knowledge of this law whereas as a journalist I should have been aware of that earlier on in life and it shows, that indicates that the degree of coverage of black deprivation on an economic level was never as extensive as it should have been. That started to be dealt with in the *township extra* but I have a feeling that it was never dealt with on a sufficiently comprehensive level. Until, I suppose in the middle 70s when we began looking at that area much more closely.

But I am talking now about the *Mail,* the rest of the white paper, the English papers didn't pay particular attention to the black issues.

In 1976, and over a long period of time, the *Mail* paid a great deal of attention to these areas. However it dealt with in the sense of a broad argument in the sense that you can't deprive people of their birthrights. You were talking about a comprehensive coverage,

comprehensive would have been that we should have dealt with these issues in greater detail. We only dealt with it in a very broad way looking at pass laws and those types of things. We didn't go into the economic difficulties of black people to any large extent until somewhere in the mid-70s, around about the time of the Soweto Uprising. I'd say maybe even a little bit earlier than that with the influence of people like Edelstein who was murdered and there was this chap Carr who had been a manager of Bantu Affairs and had been very conservative at the start and the gradually changed into a person who was rather more liberal and gave us a lot of information. But the point is made that these laws were being made that in fact were strangling black people economically and forcing them into a position of being workers and we weren't paying sufficient attention.

17. There was a suggestion (in Petersmann's thesis) that the principle of balanced journalism under apartheid meant cooption and collaboration with the regime. Do you agree with this?

It's a fine line. I think that she *[Petersmann]* was looking, this was done in 1997, that was 21 years after the Soweto Uprising and she was coming from a country that had gone through the trauma of Nazism and was still apologising for what had happened 50 years later and there was a great conscience among German people. I remember going to my first IBI conference in 1970, 26 years after the war and the German finance minister came to that meeting and was apologising for Nazism and I thought "Well that's incredible that they should feel that they have to do it every year." There was imbued in the German people a sense that now that they had cleansed themselves that other people should be behaving as they were and of course the answer was, you either conformed to the legislation and survived or you didn't conform and didn't survive. Don't forget we have the living example of 1977 of Donald Woods being banned as editor of a major newspaper and a lot of the black people still argue that they *[the NP Government]* wouldn't have banned the newspapers or closed it down. I'm not totally convinced of that. On the other hand there is quite an evil strength in that argument that it would have done a hell of a lot more damage to the black readers if they had close the *RDM* down. They were sufficiently mad to do those sort of thing; well if they did it to Donald Woods they would have done it to others. Eventually they banned issues of the *Mail and Guardian* and they banned *New Nation* for a month.

I suppose in a sense she's right that we had to conform and so therefore our journalism was affected by that. It certainly was tainted by the censorship laws.

Hers is a very negative dissertation and there is a strong thread running through it that the whites were all oppressors even if they claimed to be liberals and the blacks were all oppressed and on the rough end of the stick. That to me comes quite clearly from her background. She didn't investigate widely enough. She had no concept of the role of the journalist. She's not a journalist and she didn't understand what the processes where. She tends to suggest that when we were quizzing the journalists when they came back from reporting on the Soweto Uprising. She is almost critical of our intensions to run the police side of the story as well as our journalist's side of the story and also our insistence on accuracy. She's got no concept of what it was like working, knowing that if you got things wrong the government would come down on you like a ton of bricks and sitting above you was a board of directors who were extremely itchy, nervous to hell that their other business interests would be affected negatively by their involvement with the *RDM*.

There was the reporters, I think 18 over a period of time, who were imprisoned, detained without trial. There were black reporters who were beaten black and blue and she has no concept of the environment we were working in and the pressure we were working under. Don't forget she is looking at things 30 years later. We were looking at things as they were happening with no concept of what the hell was going on. The very first day of the Soweto uprising there was this huge conflagration of kids floating through the township, the police opening fire on them and then they are going berserk and killing people. Some of our reporters had to be rescued out of Soweto, some of our white reporters as well as some of our black reporters. There's the great story of Jan Tugwane sitting in that coal box. If he had given away his position they would have killed him and a lot of our reporters were under that type of threat. She had no concept what so ever. And the enormous strain we were under. We were dealing with it in a dilettantish way, we were right in the thick of a very dangerous position. Percy Qaboza told me that his own kids were going to those meetings and they wouldn't tell him what was going on so how were we in a white environment supposed to know when the blacks *[adults]* didn't even have access to that knowledge?

18. The *RDM* is always treated as a special case because it was pursuing a radically political line. It was reporting on black news more intensely than other English newspapers. Was the *RDM* not also advancing the black cause?

I think that it was advancing the black cause. It was a conscious thing. That was another criticism she had. She said that we criticised apartheid but we never said that the blacks should be given power. We didn't advance the black political cause. Well, advancing the black political cause in those days would have been regarded, under the Suppression of Communism Act, as an offence and the newspaper would have been laying itself open to being banned so one had to be very careful how one worded that. We went so far as to say that what we should do was talk to the leaders of the black community. But the proper leaders. We made a distinction between fellow travellers and others. I think there was an essential element in all this. Don't forget; just look where the paper came from, a white market, white privilege, white staff. They weren't suffering the discrimination that the blacks were suffering. They weren't being deprived, well there was a degree of deprivation among English speaking whites not being able to be taken up in the government services for instance, they didn't have access to those kinds of jobs, only Nats got them. But, the whites could find their way into business. But they felt that this was wrong.

They *[English speaking whites in general]* did from this a point of principle. They felt that it was wrong that black people should be treated in this sort of way and they felt that there should be a better, a proper dispensation in the country. These people *[English speaking whites in general]* felt that just the United Party view in a sense, that merely the worst excesses of apartheid but the segregation should continue. Others went further.

From the paper's point of view these people were all working on the basis that this was terribly unfair and terribly wrong and they wanted to right it. That was the starting point. The second point was the human rights feature of trying to reduce those wrongs and criticising them. The third point and coming up to the point of sharing power and how to deal with it, I think that we dealt with that aspect of it and it was very difficult to do so because of the incitement of Suppression of Communism Act to get into that sort of public argument.

Black staff

19. Were black journalists and their copy taken seriously?

By some of the staff. They lacked training. Bantu Education had had its effect on their ability to command a second language or a third language in some cases. They had great difficulty in getting stories. In some instances you couldn't use black journalists in white environments for instances. Although increasingly I noticed the news department sent black journalists in to cover white stories and they weren't thrown out. But we had to be rather selective. I mean you wouldn't send a black journalist to cover a National Party meeting. Today they would welcome you with open arms. I noticed they always seemed to send an Indian journalist to interview the leader of the Conservative Party and I was always amused at the way the news editor did this but I didn't stop it. They were stretching the limits a little bit. In fact Hertzog never rejected it.

Black journalists – we had, the history of the township edition was that when it started off the black journalists reported to a white news editor. Not the news editor of the paper. It was a special section of the paper; we had to house them in a special area of the paper because of the Group Areas Act. They complained about that but never the less that was one of the things I was saying. We tried to be squeaky clean in not confronting the authorities on extra-editorial matters such as the Group Areas Act and all those sort of things because we didn't want the paper to be closed down or action taken against it in terms of legislation which had nothing to do with the editorial policy of the paper which would have been, would have given the government an opening to say, "We are not acting against the paper and their editorial line, we are doing it because they are breaking the law." So there was a white news editor at the start and they had to be tutored. Some of them became very skilled. At the end we decided that that wasn't the ideal way of doing it so we put a black guy in charge of them. He asked to be relieved after six months because of the number of threats he received from the free-lancers because he didn't give them stories and from some of the members of staff because he didn't give them enough good stories. They said he always gave the good stories to somebody else. He asked to be relieved. We then went back to a white news editor and we then decided to try it again with a black news editor and that worked. That was Gordon Sowane.

But around in the newsroom there were some people who didn't think very much of them. But there was a strong body in the newsroom that liked the black journalists and

fraternised with them and went out on parties with them into the townships. So they were a mixed bag.

Difficult situations came in the canteen where we had a segregated canteen and of course the black journalists didn't like eating with the workers from the nether regions of the building such as the printer's assistant. But there was nothing very much that we could do about it. I think there was a time when we integrated the canteen and there were black seats and multicoloured seats. The black seats were for printers, people who came into the canteen in overalls and had ink on their clothes and they were expected to sit on black seats and this was seen as a racial thing when in fact it was a very practical thing. I mean girls in nice pretty dresses didn't want to go and sit on the seat that had been smeared with printer's ink or grease on it which could easily happen with people coming into the canteen in overalls. The other way of doing it of course was to make them change back into normal clothes but that would have lost production time.

I think a lot of them were greatly respected. I mean there is an enormous body of admiration for Peter Magubane as a photographer on the staff. Laurence Mayakisa who showed great courage. The sports people like Gordon Sowane very much. A kind of mixed view really came out of their attitudes. I can't say that I had any problems in that regard. There were murmuring now and again, there was of course a constant undertow of disaffection of the black journalists that they had to be forced into a different room. Whether they blamed that on us or on the law I am not altogether sure. The point was that the law forced that. Then on one occasion the law forced us to bring Peter Magubane, who had his separate studio outside the building which we thought was what the law intended - the Group Areas Act, and the Group Areas inspector said we had to bring him in the building and he had to be under the control of a white person in the building.

Well I knew the white person in the building was a rather right wing guy who liked to collect Nazi memorabilia and I wondered how the two would get on. Anyway we moved Peter Magubane in and the day before he moved in I called down the chief photographer and said "this is going to happen and I'd like you to come to me if there is any problem you have about this arrangement. Come to me first." Then I called Peter Magubane in and told him the same thing. Well nothing happened. For six weeks everything went fine, I never heard a murmur. So I called them in one by one. I asked, "Herbert, how are you

getting on with Peter?" And he said, "Oh well you know he has a chip on his shoulder and I sometimes find it difficult to talk to him but you know he's a bloody good photographer." Then I called Peter Magubane in and he said virtually the same. He said, "Oh well you know what Herbert is like, right wing and all that sort of thing but you know he's a bloody good photographer." Which in a way was the way you got over the racial divide.

20. Did the paper encourage black staff to aspire to higher positions within the paper? Was all staff trained to facilitate promotion?

Promotion was very difficult because of the Group Areas Act and Job Reservation Act. You couldn't employ a black person over a white person so promotion was really out of the question. The only thing we could do was to promote within the black township unit, which was where Gordon Sowane became the news editor.

Training – yes we were running courses, mainly for new entrants to the publications, to the company. We ran courses for those people and among them were blacks. Zwelake Sizulu was one of them. But the actual staff, some of those people had had training and there was not advanced training mechanism at SAAN, but what we did do was that we used to run a course called Oilburn where we took reporters away in the middle levels of training to a place out of Johannesburg and gave them lectures from advertising department, circulation department and this was trying to give them information about every department. We used to take them out to Magaliesburg and go to one of those lodges or farms out there where they would go for a week and were given all this input from management, from circulation, from advertising, from editorial people, from the lawyers and then, it was called Oilburn because they produced the Oilburn Express over a period of a week. So people would get an idea of the responsibilities of each department of the newspaper and how they worked and the lines were drawn between them. Some of those reporters went on but I don't have any recollection of the detail of that training.

One of the aspects that the black reporters raised and its justifiable to a point is they talk about training and the lack of training. You know I received no formal training as a journalist. I received three weeks of training at a programme of Management Development at Cape Town University when I was editor but that was to try and get me to understand finances more. I had no formal training as a journalist, Sparks had no formal training, Rex

Gibson had no training, he came in as an accountant. We all learned on the job and that was the standard. There was no Rhodes Journalism School, there was no Mr Harber. Today there are training courses all over the country for journalists but there was nothing in those days.

When one goes into whether black journalists were trained – there were no real facilities. In house training started at the *Mail* and we think we devised a good training course for journalists. Then there was the Oilburn course and the people who came out of that went a long way in journalism and in other aspects of newspapers. One would like to see courses like that being done today but they have fallen away. The training course that we devised was to bring the newcomers in for a six month training course in a classroom atmosphere where we explained what journalism was all about and they were then taken around to the courts, to city council meetings and shown what the role of a journalist was. Then they were inducted into the various SAAN newsrooms. After they had spent a year on those papers they would be switched around. And the benefit of that is that the papers did things differently. Journalists discovered these differences and could decide where they wanted to work. The people who came out of that course which lasted three years were pretty soundly imbued with the different aspects of journalism and the different methods of gathering stories and the different purposes of how those stories would be used in the market place.

Township Extra

21. **You came out in support of this edition to the TRCMH (17 September 1997: 119) and against the notion that it was an apartheid edition. The TRC was obviously a submission in retrospect. At the time when you were first a journalist and later the *RDM's* editor, what did you think of the township extra? Would you have described it as an apartheid edition?**

You know Percy Qaboza once criticised me and accused me of running an apartheid edition and I said "What are you running? You're not running any white news. You're running a paper for black people and it's doing quite well. You don't regard that as an apartheid paper do you?" And he said, "Of course not." So I said, "Now we run editions in the country, for Pretoria, for Johannesburg and we run a township edition for people living in the township. We tailor the news to the different market places. Papers all over the world do this. If you look at the national papers in Britain for instance, they run a London

edition, a Northern Scottish edition and a Northern English edition as well which gives the news about people in those areas. People don't regard those as apartheid editions, they regard that as editionising to appeal to the people in each market place."

I never saw the township edition in any other light than that, that it was an attempt to make the paper more attractive to people in the township and it did have that effect and it had another effect which people don't seem to have recognised and that is that it enabled us to bring black people onto the staff. Now I know in Petersmann's work she talks about them not being trained. I'm not altogether sure, I don't think we were training them in 1960 because we were taking them from *Drum* where they had received some degree of training. But certainly later on training became a big thing at the *Mail* and while the journalists on staff were not trained they went on courses which were called mid-career courses and that's not even looked at by Petersmann and they were very good courses.

Now, my simple answer, there is a very simple answer, I have given you the one simple answer about editionising but the other simple answer about the township edition and whether it was regarded as an apartheid edition, by who incidentally, by the whites or by the blacks? Is shown by I believe by a simple experiment we conducted and when I told this to Percy he was a little non-plussed. I said, "You know we have taken to heart the fact that this is regarded as an apartheid edition so what we have done, we have, at various points where black people are likely to be buyers of the paper we have put two piles of the paper, the morning final which is the English language, white edition related to Johannesburg and another pile of the *township edition* and we've given them the choice of what to buy. Which do you think they bought? The black paper." Now as the editor I used to be driven to various functions, because one couldn't get parking, by a black driver and invariably when I got into that car to drive home at night there would be a paper that he had been reading and considering he had access to all editions of the *RDM* it would always be the black edition. And I said why and it was because the material there in that paper appealed to him. He didn't want to read about laws in Johannesburg; he wanted to read about people in Soweto.

Now there's another factor about this and one of the reasons why I supported it very strongly because, as a result of that special page, page 3 being given over to township news, incidentally it eventually became part of page one and a section of the back page,

sports page. And then eventually, and this was controversial, we took out the financial pages or at least the stock exchange prices on the financial pages and we put a lot of black news there as well. The issue became quite a considerable black paper. It enabled us to get hold of stories which we would never have got hold of before with our white reporters. We got them through the black reporters who were working for the township edition and those stories, on their own merit got into the white parts of the paper so that we could more effectively tell white people what the devil was going on in the townships and what were the issues that were arising there. That wasn't being done by any other white newspapers in the country.

22. During the Soweto Uprising the circulation and sales figures were at an all time high due to an increase of black readers. How were the white advertisers reacting to this surge in black readership?

That was another factor that came in. Soweto was in 1976 and in 1974 there was a recession and I think, I have spoken already about the drop in the advertising rates and I believe that advertising was being taken out of the newspaper not so much because of our circulation rise in the black community but because of that recession but there were white advertisers who said that they don't get any benefit out of the black readership.

I think people may have become more conscious of it a little bit later than 1976. You know the advertising agencies may have, but not ordinary advertisers at that time. Later on they did. Later on, I'm now talking when I was on the management of the paper in about 1980, Nigel Twido who was then the advertisement manager came up with what I regarded as a very good idea and that was to say to advertisers, "Don't worry about the colour of the readers of the paper. Worry about the money in their pockets and here is the economic break-down of our readership, black or white," and I thought that was the right approach. Kingley told me that it didn't work, but I never got chapter and verse from him as to why it didn't work because I couldn't understand why it wouldn't work. I just think that the thing was not done properly, maybe there wasn't enough steam put into it, don't forget at that stage they had amalgamated the advertising departments to work for all the newspapers and what the effect of that was, was that everybody sold advertising for the *Sunday Times* because that was the easiest newspaper to sell for and nobody sold for the *Express* and the *Mail* so it could be a combination of that. There's a curious lack of appreciation among advertisers. I once went to a mine and I was being shown around the

place and they took me to the shop where clothing and shoes were being sold to the black miners and I was impressed with the quality and I said that one would have thought that these guys would have gone in for rather cheap goods and the shopkeeper told me that they wanted good quality and they were prepared to pay for it. I don't think that was ever pursued in the advertising department at the newspaper.

By the way I think the highest we ever got to was about 156 000 in June, July of 1976.

Looking back

23. Do you think you, or any of the white journalists and Editors on the *RDM* had cause to apologise at the TRCMH?

John Battersby really set this in motion with his apology at the first meeting of the South Africa National Editor's Forum. Most of us were astounded that John Battersby should have wanted to apologise because up till them he had had a fleeting acquaintance with journalism in South Africa but had mostly been working outside the country so he could not be regarded as a person who had been part of the system here as it were. Most of us felt that we had tried our best in the circumstances of the time and we had done it largely as a matter of conscience and in the interests of fair play and we didn't see the necessity for having to apologise for what we had done. We do however accept that perhaps we could have done more, that we could have done it better. When I go back and think why didn't I start a campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela in 1976 or even earlier and I think what stopped me I can't think what stopped me. I suppose really that thought hadn't entered my mind. To apologise, apologise for what? For trying to do the best one could? I find it a little bizarre.

24. **Are you surprised that the English-language press became such an intense point of investigation and interest at the TRCMH?**

I'll tell you what surprised and in fact disappointed me, and I've never really said this to anybody. At one stage I can't remember the year, when Desmond Tutu was the Dean of Johannesburg he wrote a letter about black deprivation and black complaints and black sorrow and anger. A remarkably good letter about what blacks felt and the letters page editor brought it to me and said, "This is an extremely good letter, what do you think we should do with it?" And I said, "You know on Saturday mornings we run a front page leader, why don't we give it over to that and give it all the force and backing that that

position gives it, to say we concur totally with this view so we are giving over our front page leader to it."

I think it was quite a considerable thing for a newspaper to do and in fact when I met him at a party of a mutual friend of ours, I think it was about two years later, for the first time and I had forgotten we had done it actually and he reminded me. He said, "You may remember that you ran one of my letters as your front page leader in the *RDM*."
And I said, "Oh yes, that's right, I didn't realise that you were the writer"
And he said, "I thought it was a considerable thing to do. I was delighted that you gave us that kind of prominence and gave our cause that kind of prominence and I thought it was somewhat courageous to do in a white environment."
He was obviously very chuffed and very pleased to the extent that he remembered it. But when he got to the TRC and introduced the press session, I can't remember what actual words he used but he said, I think the word he used was quaint, there was a quaint instance where a newspaper, he may even have mentioned the name of the newspaper, ran a letter that he had written to the paper as a front page leader, which he found difficult to understand. I thought, I have known Desmond for a very long time and I have a very high regard and respect for him and I thought to myself, "You don't do yourself justice saying a thing like that." Particularly in view of the background that I know about that. That really surprised me and I found it slightly intimidating that a view that he held in the apartheid era as being something that was worthy should have been dismissed as a kind of triviality when the TRC came about in the new South Africa.

Attacks on the English press, I wasn't really surprised by them after all the English press stuck its neck out more than the Afrikaans press. The Afrikaans press did not come forward to give evidence or to justify itself so therefore it didn't expose itself. Don't forget I was part of the FXI, well I still am, which went a long with the idea that came from the TRC that they should put the media under the spotlight, I don't think they put the media sufficiently under the spotlight, that's the problem. And when we offered at the FXI to see what we could do in terms of making a presentation. Of course we came under a great deal of flack and I personally came under a great deal of flack from Tammy Mazwi particularly, saying that I wanted to investigate the English press and do it in such a way that I would white wash the English press and he didn't seem to understand that when we said that we would help the investigation that we would engage an outside person, we

engaged Boesak to do the impartial investigation into the industry. What we did was to provide them with documentation, as much as we had and I did make a personal presentation in relation to my editorship and the *RDM,* as I knew it. I think I was invited to do so, it was felt that while there was an impartial investigation going on there had to be some presentations by people who were involved in the press. I think Rex Gibson did one for the Argus. Well if you stick your neck out you are going to be criticised and that is why the *Mail* and the other English press were so roundly criticised. I suppose one surprising feature was the very strong criticism, which came from black members of the staff who had not raised those criticisms in a very vociferous way at that time. I think they were a little unfair because it if hadn't been for the English press black journalism would not be where it is today.

25. **Is there anything else you would like to add?**

One aspect that I don't think has been given enough coverage is the courage of the journalists. You know they were, its quite remarkable that reporters would put themselves in grave physical danger to get a story and many of them did that. The most obvious one is the Jan Tugwana one sitting in the coal box, (coal box spelt wrongly by the way – cole box). But in their day-to-day activities they exhibited the courage. Those reporters that I sent to Morsgat – Sean Styles and two black reporters who went with him. They were arrested and threatened with being beaten up and I think the black reporters were beaten up to some extent, they didn't touch Sean. That was there all the time, particularly when the black reporters went out and came into contact with the police. There was always the possibility that they would be arrested and be beaten up. They just showed remarkable courage. And quite a number of the white reporters too. Terry Bell, I think Terry was imprisoned for a while. They all did their job and I'm constantly amazed at the dedication and courage that they showed. Photographers too, I mean Peter Magubane was unbelievable.

I'd give a few marks to the management as well in spite of the fact that they fired me. Looking back in hindsight and looking at the way managements operate I am amazed that they put up with us, that they didn't try to clamp down on us in a way that would have reduced our effectiveness.

B.5 Interviews with Peter Magubane

1. **What was your position at the paper in 1976 and how long had you been with the paper?**

1966. I have always been a photographer.

2. What was the editorial policy at the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1976 and did you agree with this?

The policy that was in place in '66 was still in place in 1976. There only thing was that in '66 they made slight changes by employing a black photographer and also having an edition that served the townships around Johannesburg. They had two editions the city edition and the township edition, the township edition had its own staff but I was not with the township edition, I was with the *Mail.* And it was Raymond Louw's policy that I cover all kinds of news irrespective of whether it was verkrampte news or not. It was for the people to chase me away and the readers decide what to read. He did not believe in a black photographer and a white photographer. He believed in photographers and even though we had some verkrampte photographers there and writers, he did not believe that there was news that I cannot cover. There were separate amenities for black and white – toilets.

Of course the darkroom, by law I was not supposed to work in the darkroom without the supervision of a white person. As a result Raymond Louw hired a room for me on top of the building were we constructed a darkroom. But the police soon found out and then posing as a minister of religion came over, a black man, and said he was looking for me. Because he had a collar on they didn't doubt him, they thought there was something serious whereas they always used to say no that person is not here. When he said he was looking for me and I came, I was then arrested for trading in a white area but I was released without any charges. So we had to close down that darkroom. Now I had to go into the main darkroom.

3. **Raymond Louw told me that in the main darkroom one of the white photographers was very pro apartheid. How did you work together in that setting?**

I put him straight. I put him straight, I chased him with a knife. Not with a knife, with a pair of scissors. I was cutting my negatives when he started funny things and I took the knife and chased him away.

4. Obviously being a photographer, you weren't subjected to owner interference on the writing side, but how much owner interference was there in editorial in general?
There was none, no one interfered with my pictures and I don't think there is anyone that interfered with the texts coming from black writers at all because the facts were there and you couldn't wash them, you couldn't say no this didn't happen.

5. In the TRCMH Mike Tissong said that *Rand Daily Mail* had perpetuated human rights violations by withholding information from the public, do you think there is any truth in that?
No we did not, the *Rand Daily Mail* did not withhold – the *RDM* was the only vehicle that gave the news to South Africans and outside of the world by going out there exposing, the *RDM* is the one that exposed prisons, the prison law came in after the story that Bengi Pogrund had written, which affected prisoners as a result of that there was this prison law you could not take pictures of the prison, you couldn't take pictures of the Police station, you couldn't write anything about the prison now I don't understand why he says that the *RDM*, the *RDM* was the only newspaper it was only in 1976 that there was a white paper that joined forces it was Die Beeld. Die Beeld reported the truth about 1976, I remember a run in with a white reporter from Die Beeld he lives in Alexander township, running for the story, chasing the story. Now who ever says that I said that - they can go to hell.

6. I want to talk a little bit about the Dynamics of being a photographer in 1976. Before you started with the *RDM*?
I was with *Drum* magazine

7. So you had some training as a photographer?
No –I had no training I was a photographer. I was a self-made photographer, by reading, by looking at other peoples work, by asking questions from other photographers.

8. The 1976 Uprising is seen as being quite a watershed a coming of age for black writers because they were needed where white people couldn't go. Do you think as a black photographers opened the way for later black photographers in the same way that the writers did?
Well apartheid played against the white writers and white photographers at that stage – you needed a permit to get into Soweto. Now the first day they could not go in because

they didn't have permits. They were only able to go in the next day – you know I think the next day they had permits but the first day many writers and many photographers were born – black photographers – and the writers because now there was no one to cover that, they just got anybody to go in as long as you are talented enough to go in and write and just bring the facts and the facts would be dealt with.

9. So you think for photographers it was also a watershed?

Some black photographers it was that, some became photographers from that day, some became writers from that day.

10. **Do you think that after that day there were more job opportunities for black people?**

Not for black people as such but for there began to have openings for young budding writers and young budding photographers.

11. Do you think that during that period the RDM criticised the police adequately for their part in making it a violent uprising?

Very much. I have cuttings, I don't know where I put them. The RDM ran so many front page. The Beeld also ran so many front pages. We were out doing the job and there was no one withholding any information what so ever. Because we were there to watch the story as well. No if there was something wrong with the story we would say, no, no, no this did not happen. Or we would say, Why you haven't said this or that, or why haven't you used that other picture, that bloody picture or that picture that shows a policemen, white policeman or black policeman beating up a young child.

12. Talking about that – some of the writers I have spoken to said that when they came back the whites in the newsroom couldn't actually believe that this was the truth because the stories were so graphic and so bloody. How were your photos which obviously portray exactly what had happened, how were your photos received by people who could not believe it had been that violent?

Well, I mean I got a Stellenbosch Farmer's Winery Award which is like a South African Pulitzer Prize. I was the first black to get that which took me overseas and I was able to do quite a lot in America within the three weeks that I had. So I wouldn't at all belittle the judges that were there that took part in that. It was graphic. That is why I have this book

"June 1976, never, never again". It was graphic. I covered June 16, not only in Soweto, all over the country. You see it lit up like wild fire and I was all over the country because at the same time I was covering it for Time magazine so I was able to move freely.

13. And your pictures were used as they were?
Oh yes. My pictures were used as is. There was no running away from it, leaving a good picture that is graphic and using some pictures of police just standing. No.

14. Did the RDM encourage black staff to get further training?
Yes we had the cadet course

15. Where you encouraged to seek promotion?
Well, you know promotions don't mean anything when it comes to photography. It is about what you can bring out.

There were senior black writers but during the time when I was there they were in the Township edition. In the white edition they were just writers.

Now in photography – I didn't aspire to be a chief photographer because that means I would probably be running around the office getting pictures from other people. Its not the promotion that makes you. It is the work that you bring in. It is the work that you do.

16. What was it like being a photographer where you were quite conspicuous with your camera. What was it like taking photos during that time?
It wasn't easy. We didn't have those long lenses, I had a 35mm and a 105mm and you keep them under your jacket. Every time you see something you take them out and shoot. You don't want to expose yourself to the police.

17. Did you feel at any stage that your life was in danger?
Oh yes. In Dube I called Raymond Louw and I said, "Ray, I feel I can't take it any more. Its getting too hot now." And he come back. As I was preparing to come back I heard a gun shot. I made a U turn. I went and found a young schoolgirl being carried. She had just been shot and I started taking pictures from there. I met up with the hostel dwellers marching into the township and I started taking pictures. I made a U turn and when I came

back I was stopped and they said "Yes we have been looking for you" I said what for. They said no come with us. I was taken in and I went and spent 126 days in Modderbee with Jan Tugwana and others.

18. Did the *Rand Daily Mail* provide you with legal council?

Oh yes. We didn't go to court. The *Rand Daily Mail* was there watching for us even when I was detained for 500 days in solitary confinement they could have tortured me to hell and back but they did not do that because the knew that the *Rand Daily Mail* was there watching.

19. When were your two arrests?

The one was in 1969 that is the 500 days solitary confinement in Pretoria Central. When I came back I was banned for five years. I couldn't work for five years and then in 1975 my banning order expired and I was back with the *Rand Daily Mail*. The other arrest was in August 1976.

20. If we talk about your time in Modderbee, Tugwana says that he got friendly with his oppressors. He says that he got a lot of information because he was friendly with them and he was using them Did you have any similar experiences?

Well I am not going to comment on that – on what he said. But what I can tell you and a lot of other people like the mayor of Pretoria, Zwelake Sizulu can tell you I was a prime mover in prison. All these people had never been to jail before and they thought they had rights. I told them in prison you don't have any rights. In prison you have privileges but you don't have rights. What we need do is get the captain and his squad. Sit down with him and tell him what it is we are asking of him. He should understand who we are, were we come from and where we are going to. You don't fight in jail. You ask and if they don't give you keep on asking. So as a result the captain came, we sat down with him and I was the main speaker and I said to him: "Look what we are asking for is for permission to use the playground, the football field from morning until lock up time. We don't want to be inside we are asking let us be outside and move around freely there." And that was granted. In prison you can't make demands. There is nothing like you have rights. I mean in Pretoria when I was detained with other people this guy came to me and gave me exercise and then he said he was late so he was not going to give the other guys exercise. Now he came to me as the spokesperson. I let him give me exercise and when my time

passed 30 minutes and I was going into the cell I said “no I am not going into the cell before you give these other people exercise as well.” He said” alright go in I’ll give them exercise” I said I wasn’t going in until he opened for them. He was not supposed to open all the cells and we hadn't seen each other since we had been put in there, you know for months we hadn’t seen each other then he opened for everyone to come out and we saw each other and met people we had never met but we had talked to each other.

And also I didn’t eat the food the others were eating. Because my Afrikaans is quite good so I asked (*in Afrikaans)* what food the colours were eating. And they told me and I said I wanted that food because I was a coloured. They asked if I was a Bantu and I said no I was from Griqualand and the Griquas are dark. He fell for it and wrote down that from that day I would get D diet and I did.

21. Lets talk about the Township Extra. How did you view it? Do you think it was a good idea?

Well at the time I thought it was a good idea because there had never been a newspaper for townships. You know it carried half the news of the main paper and half the news for the Soweto people.

22. Did you view it as an apartheid edition?

It wasn’t an apartheid edition.

23. How do you think the regular man on the Soweto street viewed the paper?

That paper was selling like hot cakes. It was a hit, especially during June 16. You know we were not a people that were reading a lot but from that day people began buying newspapers to see what was going on.

24. Looking at Liberal journalism. Was there a place in 1976 for a liberal paper? What is you idea of the term of liberal journalism and do you think the Rand Daily Mail was a liberal paper?

The paper was liberal and the people working there, most of them, were liberals. They were quite prepared to teach. That is why we had a cadet course there. Also even though the amenities were not the same. There were people who were verkrampte but the paper

dealt with those people. If the RDM was not liberal they would have fired me and the couldn't fire me because they were liberal and I was within my rights.

25. How would you define the term liberal?
People socialising. People mixing in all kinds of activities.

26. Do you think that the *Rand Daily Mail* could be described as a crusader of human rights and there specific events that stick out in your memory?
I would say so. Well we covered child labour, we covered the prisons, anything that affected black people. The social issues affecting black people – that was covered. No one pulled back and said no this story we cannot cover. The *Rand Daily Mail* was like *Drum Magazine* in the 50s. It was a newspaper that was exposing what was going on. The Muldergate Scandal – that was brilliantly covered by the Mail. Everything that the verkramptes didn't want covered was covered by the *Mail*.

27. Would you say the *Rand Daily Mail* was covering black life in a fair way?
Especially the mail.

28. During a period when society is divided specifically along colour lines, what do you think the role of a newspaper is?
The role of the newspaper is to try put the two together. Expose what the one party is doing. No, saying no these are Gods children, we can't leave them as they are. I mean if a black attacks a white that should be reported, same as a white attacking a black. That should also be reported. That should be dealt with.

29. Do you think the *Rand Daily Mail* did enough to oppose government during that period.
Yes I should think so. This is why the *Rand Daily Mail* was not making money. It was not making money because it was not a ja baas newspaper. It didn't have good sales because of that. As a result the paper that claimed to subsidise the *Mail* was the *Sunday Times* and eventually the bosses decided enough was enough so they had to close down the *Mail*. The *Rand Daily Mail* was I think the first newspaper in this country to have a cadet course.

30. What was your overall experience at the *RDM*, specifically during the 1976 period.

It was not easy because one had to deal with the verkrampte element. One told himself that no one, but no one, is going to push me around. I am there with my camera. I will compete with my pictures. Whether the other party – whether white, green or yellow is better than I am then fine – let it be. I will not be afraid to go and ask questions if I had any problems. Nor if he came to me and asked, I wouldn't hesitate to give advice. I was not there as a black photographer. I was there as a photographer.

31. So for you – it wasn't black versus white, it was just being a photographer?

It was just being a photographer. Even the verkrampte photographers respected my work. You know after this exchange of words when Ray spoke to them separately they said: "You know he's a damn good photographer but he's stuck up." You know I gave them the same recommendation: "The are good photographers but they are just verkrampte".

I remember in Alexander Township I had my nose fractured. That was during 1976 but I wouldn't put my camera down because if you are a solider you die with your gun. So I have chosen to be a photographer and if there is any danger I will go in and expose what needs to be exposed.

32. Did you have an experience where your house was raided?

Yes, my house was burnt in August in 1976. I'm covering the hostel shops set alight and before I go back to the office I went past my house and that was about 11.30pm and as I approach my house I see smoke. I looked at the house. There was nothing I could do – smoke and fire inside. I just turned around and went straight to the office and told the night editor that my house is on fire and there's nothing I can do. We called the police and they said there were too many things on their hands and there's nothing they can do, they will just see me in the morning. The only hotels that took black people was the Holiday Inn, they got me a room at the Milpark Holiday Inn. I stayed there for about six months while I was fixing my house in Diepkloof.

33. What made you carry on despite the hardships?

When I went into photography I didn't go into photography for money. I went into photography because of the issues that affected black people, social issues that I read in

Drum Magazine before I became a photographer. It was then that I said I want to be like Bob Nkosana who was a brilliant photographer and writer who wrote about the social issues affecting black people. My struggle would be to photograph what is happening to me as a black and that's exactly what I did – fight apartheid with my camera. I had seen countries, governments brought down by photography. The super powers see what is happening in your country through pictures and then they intervene. So that is exactly what I wanted to do and that is exactly what I am doing and I think I have successfully done that. With my photography I was able to show the world how apartheid is, what apartheid is.

I was able to show how black and white people live in separate compartments, because before apartheid there were areas for white people. There were areas that were mixed. White people could go into black areas without a permit. We could socialise together without anyone saying "This is a mess you cannot do this". We could do that. But when they came into power in 1948 everything came to a standstill. We all of a sudden became enemies. The coloured began to think they were superior to black people. The Indians began to think that, the black people began to think that because here we were, we were put into separate compartments.

You see I wasn't at the *Rand Daily Mail* to be bothered about white or black. I was there to be bothered about my profession.

34. When you mentioned earlier about Indians and Coloureds believing they were better than blacks and that Blacks started to believe this that speaks to Steve Biko's assertion that in order to free themselves blacks needed to start seeing themselves as the equals of all other races. Did you subscribe to the theories of Biko?
No I didn't know that much of him but the theories he had were theories I had. I am coming from the background of what I learned of the non-violent ANC at the time. The ANC that had everyone – black, white, green and yellow. I knew I was an African and I respected being an African. Whether I had a profession or I didn't have a profession that would still be. I agreed in total with his thinking but I was not a follower of Black Consciousness.

35. **At the TRCMH a lot of white journalists apologised for their work during apartheid. Do you think that the *Rand Daily Mail* journalists had any cause to do so?** Not the RDM. Maybe journalists belonging to other newspapers, but not the Rand Daily Mail. The two – a woman and photographer – who went into the township to cover the uprising but I don't think they have anything to apologise for. Nor do I think that Raymond Louw and Lawrence Gandar – they don't have to apologise to anybody.

There are certain stories you leave them out because they don't have substance. You see what people don't understand you don't report about everything. Who is sleeping with who, who does what with who. The *Rand Daily Mail* was not that type of newspaper, it was not a gossip newspaper.

Colour did not matter. I came from a background that did not know colour – *Drum Magazine* did not know colour. It was a different land all together, when you walked out the door you knew you were back in apartheid land. We did everything together. Weekends we had parties together. I was used to having dealings with all kinds of people and therefore I understood. I also had to have patience with people to make them understand where I was coming from and where I was going to at the time I joined the *Mail*.

B.6 Interviews with John Mojapelo

Editorial policy

1. What was your position in 1976 and how long had you been with the paper in 1976?

I was then an ordinary reporter. I started in 1974.

2. What was the editorial policy at the *RDM* in 1976?

The Editorial Policy? Well I mean there wasn't any major shift. I mean it was against the government policy, it was for the release of political prisoners. It was for holding of talks with those who had been imprisoned for political business, those who had left the country and those who in one way or another had been silenced by the laws of the country and people who had been marginalized who were outside the political main stream. And the was saying there had to be talks with them. The *RDM* clearly came out in support of the then opposition, more specifically the Progressive Party.

3. To what extent did management and owners interfere with what was put in the paper?

That at that stage, like I said, I was still an ordinary journalist and only later on did I then, was I given the promotion to deputy news editor and finally assistant to the editor. But at this stage as ordinary foot soldiers in the newsroom we got the impression that management was worried about giving that much support for a black majority government. But at the same time they wanted a balance of retaining the newspaper as a form of getting their outlets and selling the newspapers. I don't think there was very much dictating of coverage but they were trying to get the editorial staff to exercise caution.

4. Do you think that the *RDM* perpetuated human rights violations by neglecting to print pertinent information, did they withhold due to fear of reprisals from the government?

I honestly don't think so. What type of information was being held from the public? The impression that one was getting, as soon as I became deputy news editor because I was then attending daily, I was the only black attending the daily conferences. That was not the impression that I was getting and not only that, as the deputy news editor you are on a rotation seat as a news editor at the weekends but I don't think it was knowledgeable to anybody that there was information that was withheld, the impression that I was getting

was that the paper was running all the information that was available whether people liked it or not. I mean the *RDM* was the first to break the news report, the actual cause of death of Steve Biko and that was a sensitive story and we had that confidential information, one of the doctors, a private doctor that was hired by the Biko family that conducted the post mortem indicated that Steve Biko was murdered and there was no hiding of that type of a story. The paper went out of its way to tell the people what was happening. Unless there is a specific mention of a specific case that people can mention that this is where it was done, not to our knowledge, no.

Liberal Journalism

5. How did you understand the term liberal journalism within this editorial policy (how did the paper in your opinion define this term)?

What they used to call struggle journalism. Being a member of MAWASA – we took a political stance to the fact that we are first black and we find ourselves being employed as journalists and that was our stance and we adhered to that. Whatever the news that we peddled, it was based on the fact that we were black. We had to look at our context and that context was the fact that we are vote less people in the country of our birth and that we are not going to be apologetic about it and we are going to express it in our columns and indirectly express it by giving the very people who have been silenced the voice to say that and we are not ashamed of that.

For instance there was a controversy that surrounded the issue that some members of the ANC were killed and the papers called them terrorists and we refused to use such a word. We described them as freedom fighters and we had a battle with the sub editors and the news editors who refused to use that term. We settled on "three alleged members of the ANC were found dead by the police" and we did not go with the terms used by government that they were terrorists. The newspaper refused to go along with use to call them freedom fighters so we had to reach a compromise and that compromise was to call the alleged ANC members.

6. When we talk about liberal journalism it is often a term used to describe white people who supported a move towards one-man-one-vote. Do you think that that was the case?

When I worked under Raymond Louw and Allister Sparks, and especially Sparks, I think there was no pretence of putting up a front. I am convinced that they were genuine in their support. They were the real macoy in their belief that there should be one-man-one-vote, they were what I saw as liberals. Subsequently the paper was taken over by the later crop of Ken Owens, Tertius Myburghs, when the *RDM* was doddering to its death – they really supported the government and looked at the motivation of the government and what they were trying to do. But the previous guys were genuine and true liberals who wanted racial equality.

7. Did you align yourself with Black Consciousness?

Very much so. As I said we were blacks without the vote in our own country and we were speaking about it in our columns and fighting for our rights.

8. Were you ever arrested without reason whilst performing your job?

No, I was not arrested but I was subpoenaed.

9. How would you describe the general political stance of the *RDM*?

It wasn't just only physical division, it was ideological division. Blacks, we were sitting literally in the corner while the rest of the *[white]* staff was seated on the other side. You felt not only physically are you moving to a different drum, in a different environment but psychological thinking there was absolutely no, very little interaction. Professionally yes, we were journalists serving the same newspaper but we came from different worlds.

It was clear that most of the whites knew very little about the blacks, where we came from and what we were thinking. Above all you were dealing with a different kettle of fish, here we were dealing with very articulate people who were principled and who held dearly do that. Most of them were just bleeding liberals, most of them were just really pretending. But at the same time both of us had to deal with the possibility that some of the people we were working with might be spies and there were plenty of them. Obviously there were one or two people who had absolutely no bases or evidence for being suspected as members of the security police. They came to the conclusion that they were spies because

their names were Afrikaans sounding – van Rensburg, Botha and so forth - and that they were therefore in support of the government. On the whole it was really a motley bunch of people thrown together in order to produce a product which had its own image.

10. Did the English press cover the political, social and economic life of the country's black majority in a fair way?

They tried, a few of them did try, specifically if you take people like Benjamin Pogrund. Those were genuine people who wanted to report the other side. Patrick Laurence even though he was supposed to be an expert on African Affairs he was that objective to the extent of being benign in his reportage about what the purpose of the other side was. Yes there was an attempt like I said by a few of them but the majority of them, oh ja, people like Peter Hazelhurst, brother to Dave Hazelhurst, people you could really feel that in their reporting there was an understanding. I am not saying they were sympathising, I am saying that there was an understanding of the environment in which they were reporting on which is different from the others. But on the whole it really, for them was a far away world which was not within their realms of understanding. Those who understood or who genuinely tried to understand the other side did try to be fair and to give adequate coverage.

11. How do you see the role of a newspaper in a society that is deliberately divided along colour lines?

Newspapers like the *RDM* really played a reconciliatory role. A role that brought two dictomous worlds to understand each other, a role that made the citizens of both worlds to know each other. A role that would try and educate them and said that there is another way to live besides what the government is imposing on us and its for you to try and strive for that and bring it about. I think the *RDM* played that role. To a certain extent later the *Cape Times* and the *Eastern Cape Herald* during the time of Donald Woods also played that role. Others were too commercially driven, it was that one has to look at that delicate balance of reporting on "the other world". They had to hire one black reporter to be able to report on black news at papers like *The Star*. There was nobody. There were whites like Tony Dickenson who were reporting but one was getting the understanding that he did not understand the other side. Honestly we did not know each other. We pretended to know each other when we met on occasion at some of the gatherings but we lived in different worlds.

Writing

12. How much of what you wrote was dictated to you as a black journalist and how much of your writing was changed?

Much was changed, there's absolutely no doubt about it. This was the general complaint from black journalists that our stories had been changed. They weren't stylistic changes but content wise, the approach and the most important thing as you know is the opening paragraph and those were changed. There was always a police slant put in. The stories really were a denial of what had happened so that in order to sweeten it what that did at the *RDM* was ask me as the most senior black to do the rewrites. I was then assigned to check with the lawyers, I mean we did that on an almost daily basis, I had to phone lawyers to check on whether a story would bring the paper into conflict with the law. I think things gradually changed and there was an acceptance of the reality. The reality being that these journalists are from that environment, they have got the confidence of the people. They had a link with the people who wanted to tell their stories. You could see a perceptible change in as far as the newsroom was concerned. There was a gradual accepted and they took the attitude, "lets take it as being told by the journalists." Obviously for some ostensible reasons there were some changes of the journalistic style, of the presentation of the story. Once they accepted that what we were saying was accurate there were less changes.

13. How did you as a black reporter put aside your skin colour to cover the uprising?

I never lost the definition of who I am – I knew myself to be a vote less, black marginalized, voiceless person. I had to accept the fact that I was operating in an environment which required me to blend into that environment. That environment was that I am a journalist. Look it might sound a schizophrenic type of living, to live as two people – a black person and a journalist - but I think we managed to merge the two quite well. On the other hand, obviously, it was difficult for them, to accept my blackness. I am sorry to use the word them, but it was us and them.

14. Do you believe that government planted spies made any difference to the manner in which the *RDM* covered the uprising?

Like any other situation were there was a paranoia of not knowing but a lot of suspicion. There was a rumour that John Horak was a spy. We sat with a situation where he was one of the sub-editors and had all the reason to come to me and be on a buddy-buddy basis

with me. We worked on that basis and John Horak would have all the reason to approach me and say what stories do you have? That did not in any way make us in anyway change the presentation of our stories or temper as to what the message was. Yes, there was that suspicion that people you are dealing with are spies but there was absolutely no basis – the rumours were just that. It did not in anyway paralyse our operation at all. With me he had reason to access me because I was the deputy news editor and was in charge of the news desk and especially the black stuff. He was occasionally subbing the black edition and when John approached me there was no problem. It was only later in life that this tension surfaced. They never tried to change our stories or manipulate coverage.

15. The NP Government did not imposed official censorship where a state censors sat in newsrooms to control what was published? Instead editors would censor themselves, do you agree and did the *RDM* ever use self-censorship? Why was this?
Yes, editors did self-censor. Not all that much but white editors, some of the things they could not believe and *RDM* had to exercise extra caution. It had to be done that way but blacks were saying we cannot understand that, they were asking, "are you not in a way tacitly agreeing with the National Party Government?" Then the whole thing now had to be sweetened and sweetened in the form of checking the stories with lawyers. When the lawyers had given a story their blessing it was legal, it was objective and there was no way that the paper was going to be compromised and it was accepted as such. It was a cop out on the part of the powers that be.

16. Were black journalists and their copy taken seriously?
Its difficult. There was a motley group of people – editors, deputy editors and they all had different beliefs and experiences and expectations. Honesty I won't attribute a certain understanding or outlook to the whole group. I hold Allister Sparks and his second in command, Benjamin Pogrund in high regard, but then comes the next level. This was the level of the generals who even during the interrogation of our stories gave away where they were coming from. Allister generally believed us. I suspect he was a secret member of the Progressive Party, he had an ear to the ground in the Progs.

You use the term “interrogation of stories”. Was it a hostile process?
No, I think it is just a word. Sometimes you felt that they were interrogating you but it was not hostile. They were checking it was not over dramatised and that the facts were correct. They were checking maybe not interrogating.

17. Was there a language barrier with black journalists writing in English as their second language?
Yes, we had that disadvantage added to our lack of educational qualifications. It really counted against us.

18. Would you say that the Soweto Uprising changed the face of black journalism in South Africa permanently?
I think it was a coming of age. In general it honestly was – there was a waking up of white education and it was established that there was another world that had to be covered and to do that effectively they needed people who could do the job of reporting on that world.

19. Some would say that there was no need for a revolution – that black journalism was fostered in the 1950s and 60s. What is your response to this?
My problem with that is that there was a limited forum for them. Aside from *Drum* there was little for them – there were few papers who needed black journalists before 1976. Secondly the forum said it was there for black journalists and for black people but it was a group of people speaking to themselves. Whites did not read *Drum*. The difference after the 1976 incident was that there was a sense in the white world came to know there was a different world. There was more response given to the black journalists because more people, including whites, were reading what they had to say. Some whites wanted to know what was happening and there was a sense of “lets listen to the other side.”

20. Did the *RDM* adequately criticise the police for their part in the uprising and their brutality?
I’m not sure what enough would be but they did, they did. For instance I was asked to write an editorial which editorial was critical of police action and it was printed as I wrote it, I mean absolutely no changes made to it. No, I have a problem as to enough. They did

criticise but whether it was enough I'm not sure. In retrospect they could have done more but at the time I think they were doing enough.

Black staff

21. Did the paper encourage black staff to aspire to higher positions within the paper?

Not that much.

22. Was staff trained to facilitate promotion?

Yes, training was offered. People like Zwelaki Sisulu went through the cadet school but some of us never had that opportunity. The *RDM* paid for these people to get training at the cadet school so there was that option if you wanted to take it.

23. Do you think that the working conditions of black journalists were adequate?

No. They were not.

Township Extra

24. How did you view the *Township Extra*?

I think I out grew it a bit. Look one has to look at the reality. It offered me a job and a forum to prove myself as a journalist. But I outgrew that after three years. I looked back and I thought what a shameful thing to have. It may be that it quotes my maturity, that I looked at it differently. I was strongly in the camp where we were shouting "shut it up and do away with it." I would have preferred to see the main edition more integrated. Its usefulness had expired and management could have changed. The main edition was more international. I think that at the time I started on the township edition it had some usefulness but this had expired and the main edition could have changed to include black issues.

25. Do you think it was a good idea when it was created?

Yes it was a good idea to start with. It offered us a platform – job-wise, although under humiliating and demeaning circumstances– the conditions were humiliating. I was the only black with a university degree and they kept saying "you are a good journalist but we cannot offer you a job." I went freelancing for almost a year and they had no opening for a black journalist and during that time I could see if a white, young journalist came in they

were taken onto the staff immediately. Almost all of us were like that with the exception of the few that went to the cadet school and they were contractually obliged to take them onto the staff.

It then offered us the opportunity of writing, to be mentored and tutored by experience journalists and we were grateful for that, they were true professionals. But later on there was a time when we felt that they had made their point and that it was time to integrate the main and the township editions. Reluctantly they were doing that and you could find some township news in the main edition, 1976 was one of the events that was in the main edition of the paper.

Peter Magubane always refused to take pictures for the township edition. He said that he was taking pictures for the *RDM* and not for any particular or special edition of the paper. People had to accept that because Peter was a world-class photographer and he could bargain on his own terms. But seriously we wanted the township edition to die so we could have one paper.

26. Do you think it was well received by black readers? Did they accept it or was it read merely because it was something to read?

One has to look at the readers. For the sophisticated, educated and politically aware it was a disgrace for a liberal newspaper like the *RDM* to be peddling a ghetto type of a newspaper. But for the ordinary reader on the street it was part and parcel of the *RDM*, a part of the tradition of the *RDM*. It had to be good and it was good for them. So you really had to look at the class, the status of the readers. Some liked it because they knew no better. Educated readers did not like it.

27. Would you describe it as an apartheid edition?

In the South African context yes. But you know they used to argue that the same thing is done with the *Washington Post*. In South Africa it was and is inevitable that people are colour conscious of everything.

B.7 Interviews with Benjamin Pogrund

(Questions were sent to him via e-mail. He recorded his answers onto an audio tape and sent this to the researcher from Israel)

Hello it's December 5 in Jerusalem. I have in front of me your questionnaire, which I will try my best to answer as fully as possible. I assume you have read my book, "War of Words" which is about the *RDM* and to some extent the media under apartheid and you can get a lot of the information you asked about there.

Editorial policy

1. What was your position at the paper in 1976 and how long had you been with the paper?

I joined the *Mail* in 1958 and I started off with three months at the Magistrates Court getting trained. At that stage I had three university degrees and then I was a general reporter but my interest was always, what until then had been totally ignored, that was political existence among blacks and black life generally. So I started off simply in my own time going to conferences over weekends and during the week and gradually this became accepted as an important aspect of news and I went into it full time eventually.

Within about a year I suppose I was doing it full time, even less. Ray Louw was the night news editor and then the news editor so he might have a clearer memory of that but it didn't take all that long. But eventually, I think it was 1960 that I asked for and was given the title of African Affairs Reporter. It was a totally new concept and I was also simultaneously reporting the surrounding territories, which were Basutoland, now Lesotho; Swaziland; and Bechuanaland, now Botswana.

By 1976 I was an assistant editor, I had already been night editor for two and a half years and of course I had gone through the prisons trial which had taken me out of circulation basically for about four years when I was on trial and all my informants were on trial and during that period I was in between court appearances, during recesses and so on I usually worked as a night news editor, Sunday news editor and I also did quite a lot in the subs room. I was trained in the subs room but that was an unhappy period because the subs who tend to be, as you might know, rather more conservative than most other journalists were very much against me and the then editor Laurie Gandar and life was uncomfortable with

them. They were always, some of them were making nasty remarks aimed at me and Laurie Gandar, and then I'd flare up. It wasn't a very nice time.

But in any event in 1976 I was an assistant editor but the point is that in May that year I went off to Boston on an exchange with the *Boston Globe* and I was there and I returned on I think it was January 1, the beginning of 1977 so I was not there throughout that critical period. But to explain it in Boston when June 16 happened I started off very dissidently because at that stage the Americans were totally ignorant about South Africa, on that paper, one of America's leading papers I remember even black journalists coming up to me and asking me to explain the difference between an African and an Afrikaner. The ignorance was just total and I landed very rapidly as a major reporter on South Africa and what was happening. I was doing, taking stories off the wires and writing analyses and reports for the *Globe*.

I wrote extensively for magazines, *The New Republic*, the *Harvard News*, *Saturday Review*, you name it I wrote for it. I did a lot of radio and television commentating. I became a fixture on the local WBH, which is the public television station in Boston. Every Friday I'd go in and do a commentary on what was going on and it became quite a thing. I just had a huge input into the part of America about what was happening in South Africa and of course to do this I kept a very close eye on what was happening through the agencies, through reading reports and I was phoning in all the time. I was talking to Ray Louw who was then the editor, I was talking to him a lot. I was talking to friends of mine, to Robert Sobukwe, the Pan Africa Congress leader, a very close friend who was confined to Kimberly. Chief Buthelezi was at the stage still more or less a friend of mine and I was talking to him. For example I can remember I phoned him once, he was at the Carlton Hotel in Johannesburg and he was, you could practically hear him wiping the sweat off his brow. He had just got back from Soweto and it had been a very brave thing for him to have done, it was at the, a lot of trouble going on, a lot of tension, fighting and he had gone in there and I think he counted himself lucky to have come out alive. We spoke about this on the phone so you know I was keeping very closely in touch. I used to stand at the machines at the *Boston Globe*, they were picture machines and pictures were coming in all the time, you know dozens of pictures all day long just coming over the drum of the machine and I would be standing there just watching them emerge and being astonished at the sights. I remember one in particular of that youngster standing with a small, with the

lid of a garbage can facing saracen-armoured cars. It was an extraordinary picture. It showed so clearly the change in people's attitudes towards the rulers in South Africa.

I had anticipated some of this. Just before I went I happened to have given a speech. It was to a Jewish group and I remember the title I gave it was, "The future is black". That was meant as a sort of very heavy and obvious play on words.

I thought we were in very great trouble. I was aware because of my work previously as African Affairs reporter and because I kept in touch with people across the lines. I knew what was going on in the black community. I knew there was huge tension, poverty pay was a major factor. Huge resentment, anger and distress about it. The passes were bearing down on people to an even greater extent than ever and the question of education was also bitterly resented because of the Afrikaans that was being enforced at that time. I was very aware that things would go pop at any moment and that was the subject I spoke about at that meeting.

So June 16 wasn't a total surprise to me although the extent to which the youngsters in Soweto gathered together and fought back did surprise me. As I say that did reflect the change in the head, the click in the head, a totally new attitude and I certainly hadn't anticipated that after the years of oppression and the years of Bantu education with all the regimentation that came with it.

2. What was the editorial policy at the *RDM* in 1976?

Well it was basically anti-apartheid, it had been articulated by Laurie Gandar when he was editor from 1958 until they threw him upstairs in 1965 and then he left the paper in 1969 if I remember correctly. That was at the end of the prisons trial. The paper was still continuing the policies he had developed and that basically meant the paper supported the Progressives, whatever their name was at that stage. As you will know they changed their name from time to time but call them the Progs.

3. Did you as an individual agree with this policy?

I agreed with the anti-apartheid policy but I was not in agreement with the policy about the Progs. They had a qualified franchise policy at that stage which meant they believed in the franchising of everybody but in a qualified basis which was simply a device to ward off

criticism from whites of course and it was meant to hold down the number of blacks who would have the vote and extend to them only gradually over a period of years as education improved and property rights and all that sort of stuff and I was totally opposed to that. I believe that the policy of what had been the Liberal Party, which was simply a non-racial policy, one-man-one-vote full stop. So I wasn't in agreement with the paper in that way.

4. To what extent did the management and owners interfere with what was included in the paper?

Well, not to my knowledge. I certainly wasn't aware of anything and if you look at my book. I think its there , I don't think it got edited out, there is one remarkable episode when I had been a young reporter but because the work I was doing, I had this usual link with Laurie Gandar and we became friends later on, very close friends later on. But as a young reporter I had access to him any time I wanted and I would walk in to see him and talk to him about what was going on and so on. I was sitting in his office one night and he took a phone call, and it was just after the paper which had been a United Party supporting paper and there were members of the board who were, there was a United Party member of parliament, Cronje, I think it was Dr Cronje. They were all UP characters and Gandar had switched the paper overnight from supporting the United Party to supporting the Progressives a new little group which had broken away from the UP. Someone phoned him as I say and to my astonishment I heard him say, "I suppose I'd better go and tell the chairman of the board what I'm doing. He must think I've taken leave of my senses."

And you know he'd changed the policy without even bothering to consult the board or even the chairman. Years later I asked him about that conversation and he told me that he had not gone to see the chairman who was then Edmons, I think it was Edmons, because Edmons would have been in a very difficult position. He would have had to tell Gandar that he couldn't do this because it wasn't his brief and he'd been appointed to and was supposed to support the United Party. So Gandar had simply not bothered to go around and see him and it became a fait accompli. Also of course at this time, and this again you should look at my book, was this remarkable man Cecil Payne who had been chairman and was, I think he was dropped in 1976 if I remember correctly. Raymond Louw can tell you that more exactly but Cecil Payne had been wonderful. He'd been appointed by the Syfrets people based in Cape Town to control Gandar and the *RDM* that was their hope. That's what we understood. And instead this conservative accountant fellow with links in

the mining industry had come along, looked at the *Mail,* decided he like what Gandar was doing and what the *Mail* was doing and became our greatest supporter. And just backed us in board meetings. Now and again he would mention to Laurie Gandar, cause Laurie used to tell me about it, that he used to sigh and say that he was having a hard time with the board defending us but he did.

What you did have and this is what I discovered later on when I became deputy editor and I was acting editor quite a lot, what would happen would be that something would appear, it happened to me only a couple of times but I knew how it was done. The managing director would stroll into my office all very casual and sit down and put his foot or his leg over the side of the chair and say, "Hmm that was a tough piece this morning,"
And you'd say, "yes it was."
"Could cause some trouble couldn't it?"
"Ja probably it could."
And there's been some muttering and so on and he'd comment, "I'll have to answer, the board will ask me about it," then it would just trail away. It was never, well what I knew in my experience, and Ray Louw and others can tell you more about their personal experience, there was never any attempt to say you must do this or not do that. But there would be that sort of approach.

I remember once with the budget, because we used to spend a lot of time with the budget deciding on the main headline because that would capture the feel of the budget. We put a lot of thought into it, you know staff meetings, when the budget details were known. But I remember one year when I was acting editor we did that and the then managing director, that was Clive Kingsley, he came down the next day, same sort of casual way and said, "that headline on yours on the budget, obviously you know the business people were worried about it." This had been a rather negative headline, which is how we viewed the budget and I defended it and said, well we looked at it and I discussed it and obviously he was not happy and that was as far as it went. As it happened events later on proved, as far as I was concerned, that our headline was absolutely accurate and a few days later I happened to be upstairs on the executive floor and I put my head into Kingsley's office and I said, "Clive you've probably seen what's been happening and our headline was in fact absolutely correct." And I got a rather unhappy, unpleasant look from him. But that's as far as it went. So, in terms of direct interference, I certainly wasn't aware of that.

5. Do you think that the *RDM* perpetuated human rights violations by neglecting to print pertinent information – did they withhold information due to fear of reprisals from the government?

This is a rather strange question you ask. Did we perpetuate human rights violations. No, the phrase wasn't even known then by the way. It's a more modern phrase but just taking the spirit of it by neglecting to print pertinent information. I don't know what neglecting meant. You've got to look at the whole history of newspapers in South Africa, especially the *RDM*, I hope my book will give you some guidance in that respect. These papers were owned by whites, run by whites, aimed at whites and in their very nature they were restrictive. What we did, and my particular role, what I did when I came into journalism I had a very basic simple idea that a newspaper that was more than just say community paper or an advocacy paper, had a duty towards their entire community to reflect what was going on there and I was enormously fortunate because just a few months before Laurie Gandar had become editor and he liked this, he believed in this also so that's why I was given my head to quite an extent, not totally but to quite an extent and the *Mail* pioneered this and broke through these barriers because we began to report black politics and then the lives of blacks just as news and it was a time of turbulence.

This is you know from the time I joined the paper and everything we had to change. So it wasn't that people took a conscious decision not to publish, just the ethos was such. You've got to put your mind back to then. You can't sit now and be clever about the events of 50 years ago. That was the ethos at the time and we changed it and gradually because we were publishing important news other papers began to follow suit.

Did we withhold information due to fear of reprisals from the government? Yes of course, you know that was the real situation. There's the old journalist phrase, "when in doubt leave out" we had Kelsey Stuart as our lawyer, we were very careful.

You know I can remember a story that might interest you. When I was at the Boston Globe in 1976 and I asked the then editor Tom Winchip one day, I said: "Tom how often do you consult your lawyers about a story?" and he said: "Oh one or twice a year." I said to Tom, "Wow you know we consult six times a day." I went back home and I had lunch with Kelsey Stuart and I told him this story, and he said, "You're wrong, the average is 14 times a day."

Well we were very careful but the important thing was we weren't just asking in order to cut and to leave out because what distinguished the *RDM* was that we wouldn't simply take Kelsey or one of the others lawyers at Bellview and Hall who would say no you couldn't do that and by the way what the lawyers said was only advice. It was an editorial decision whether to accept the advice or not. Obviously we accepted the advice. You'd have to be very strong in your beliefs and certain of your ground to defy the lawyers because if the lawyers, if you were proved wrong then you were really in serious trouble. I can remember only one occasion on which I deliberately went against the advice of our lawyers. It wasn't Kelsey, it was someone else in the firm. I'd asked for advice on something, I was told that this would be an offence, it affected I remember, the story about the speaker of Parliament. As you might know the executive speaker is a very curious one, the speaker has extraordinary powers, he can virtually do as he wants and to go up against the speaker is a very serious matter because you get called up to the bar of the house and all sorts of things but I was certain, or I believed that the lawyer, that he hadn't understood the role of the speaker and what the speaker couldn't do and I went against his advice and published the story and I was scared, very very nervous. In fact we were proved right so we got away with it. But otherwise you went along with it.

But what did distinguish us was we used to work with Kelsey and the others. More with Kelsey because he was the best because they'd say, "No you can't do this story because its against this law or that clause and so on, and then we would say, and the office – you know the news editors, the night news editor, assistant editor – who ever dealt with the lawyers would over the years become schooled in this approach and would say, "Okay what can we do about this story?" And I did a lot of this because if I was night editor, assistant editor or acting editor and the desk went and, it would come back and report to me the lawyers said we've got to can this. I'd either say go back and ask them this or I'd pick up the phone, Kelsey Stuart was a very good friend of mine, and I'd say, "Kelsey if we take out this sentence, if we trim that part, smooth that part out do you think we can get away with it?" And we'd discuss it along those lines and then we'd say what are the chances of a prosecution or being sued by whoever and they'd give us a percentage, 60, 50, 40 whatever and then we'd take a decision to publish depending on the gravity of the story and so on.

So we were pushing all the time and over a period of time this became the benchmark for the morning group of all the morning papers and you'd find on a big story, the story would land, it would go out to the group and they'd wait 15, 20 minutes and then they'd start phoning us and saying "what do your lawyers advise about this story?" It became known that this is what we were doing. Where the *Mail* was so important was we pushed the frontiers, we kept pushing away and tried to get the maximum.

And if I may suggest, you've got to remember all this in the context and you've asked this question a bit further on of a developing authoritarianism. The laws were being passed all the time and there were some that dealt directly with the press, others like the Police Act, which prohibited us from publishing. There were the grey areas of incitement when you had to work out, well if you published this tomorrow and you got charged and you were appearing in court in a couple of months time what sort of magistrate would you have, who was the reporter who wrote it, how would he stand up to tough cross-examination? You had to assess all these factors. You were working in an environment in which the authorities were against you and they were trying to kick you as hard as they could.

We were all very conscious that the *RDM* was more vulnerable than anybody else. That they were looking to prosecute us and if we gave them any chance they'd certainly go for us. But you've got to put it in the context of direct prohibitions, of the grey areas, the warnings off and it got worse all the time. There was noose around our necks, our throats and it was tightened all the time and it got more and more difficult to publish fully and freely on everything if you wanted to survive. If you didn't mind going out with a great bang, running a big story and being closed down the next day then fine you could do anything you liked. But if you were aiming to survive and go on reporting knowing it was a diminishing form all the time then you had to trim your sails, look over your shoulder, examine the laws and see where you could go.

And really you know the prisons stories in which I was involved are a classic example of this because up till the Prisons Act got enacted in 1959 this particular part of the act when they cleaned up all the prisons legislation and there was a basic clause which said that if you publish any material about prisons or prisoners knowing the information to be false or without taking reasonable precautions to ensure accuracy you shall be guilty of an offence. Well everyone took this as making the prisons a no go area and no information appeared

about prisons full stop. We published stuff in cooperation with *Golden City Post* as it was then in 1960 during the state of emergency when I worked with Obed Musi of *Post* and we got away with it, somewhat to our surprise. But otherwise there was a whole silence about prisons and no one published anything. Till in 1965, because I had friends in prison and I'd been in for a short time in 61, I was living with someone whose husband, although she was separated, her husband was in prison so I was very close to the issue and I went and looked at the Prisons Act and scratched my head about it and went to see Kelsey and said "what does this mean about taking reasonable steps, how do we meet those?" We discussed it and worked out a formula that if you took someone and you questioned him extensively then took him to a lawyer and made him swear an oath about the accuracy of what he had said and you also were able to integrate it with other accounts and Kelsey said that in his view would be sufficient to meet the requirements of section 44(e), if I remember correctly that's it. That was the clause, which is what I did.

Well Kelsey wasn't right, well he was correct but the way the government used it they went for us and where they got us was instead of taking the article as a whole, and there were 12 000 words in the initial prisons report, they took selected phrases and sentences so they narrowed it and we had to find evidence to back-up those very specific phrases and we were on a highway to nothing. We needed the resources of the state to do something like that. We couldn't do it so we went down there for four years. But that's a classic example of what I mean. We tried, we went for the law, we tried to observe it but we got defeated on it and it became a terrible offering lesson for everyone else. But we had tried to expose that law, and that's what we kept trying to do.

6. Did the [white] readership and advertising profile influence the editorial stance on writing about this matter?

Yes, basically that was the pattern of the paper and Laurie Gandar was trying to move the paper away from that but it was an uphill battle. The circulation manager was jumping up and down, the advertising manager, he had to get advertising and he was running into more and more complaints about the *Mail's* political stance. But Laurie just went on. To him this was not a factor, of that I have no doubt. He has always been blamed for the decline of the *Mail* because he ignored these factors but it was more complex than that. And again if you look at my book later on in the *Mail* the story about our policies making it possible for us to get advertising and circulation was a lie. These guys in management

hated us so much at that stage hated that they weren't working for us and then they'd use us as an excuse. So it's not all that straight forward.

Again I'll give you an example. When I was night editor I remember one night there was a story about black education and black education was one of my passions. I'd investigated it, I'd written about it and this is the story I wanted to lead the paper on and I looked at it and thought hell, I lead the paper on this tomorrow and my street sales are going to drop and the street sales, how many copies we sold on the street corners was sort of the test of how that particular issue did. And then we had some other story which I can't even remember which was a newsy general interest story and I sat at my night editor's desk with both of these stories in front of me and I decided with huge reluctance to lead the paper on the newsy story. I kept the black education story as number two so it got a lot of play but it wasn't the main story of the paper and I felt very upset with myself that night. But in fact I think it was the right decision to sell that paper and there was a phrase used many years ago about the *Daily Mirror* in Britain and it was the title of a book called the "Sugar pill" and I had that thought in my head that I was sugaring the pill of black education and to project it because I thought that was the important story of the day but I had to wrap it up to make it more palatable mainly to our white readers.

Liberal Journalism

7. How did you understand the term liberal journalism within this editorial policy (how did the paper in your opinion define this term)?

I don't remember anyone talking about that. We didn't talk like that. I didn't certainly. I didn't get involved in discussions like that. We didn't label ourselves. I didn't go around calling myself, or others, a liberal journalist. As far as I was concerned we were doing a job. I was trying to do a job of getting the paper to more clearly reflect the totality of South African existence. Here was this highly neglected area of black existence and blacks were the majority and it was township existence - sewerage, schools, education – that's what I used to write about and then there were all the political aspect, pass laws, poverty which was also socio-economical, housing problems and then the politics of everything. There was a huge range we were trying to cover with very limited space. So there was no conscious subscribing to a policy of liberal journalism, certainly not as far as I know. I'm not sure what that phrase means.

8. How diverse were the views about liberal journalism amongst staff?

About the views of journalists there was a very diverse range of people on the newspaper from left wing, to the right. They were a reflection of at that stage South African white society. A lot of them were very conservative, they hated the *Mail* in many ways. They hated Laurie Gandar, a lot of them hated me, they thought I was causing trouble and jeopardising the existence of the paper and they loathed Laurie Gandar for that also. Ray Louw got off rather better. Ray Louw, this perhaps is something I should mention at this stage. Ray Louw was a magnificent editor. He was editor in 1976 as you may know. Laurie was a political person, Ray wasn't. Ray was simply a wonderful newsman, a superb news editor, news gatherer and pusher for news. Tough and aggressive about it. But Ray was also an outstanding human being and he responded in a very human way. Later I worked very closely with him when I was night editor to him, I was night editor for two and a half years. And because I was very political I was very conscious of it and I used to sort of lean over backwards to ensure that I didn't impose too much of myself on what the paper was doing and Ray would actually correct me. I'd lean over too far and Ray would sort of push me back again and he would do so because of his human outlook. He was really a tremendous editor and he was of course fired in 1976, I think that comes up later on and I'll deal with it later on. So there was a lot of range of people in the paper. People got on basically well. There weren't all that many tensions amongst the white reporters that I can recall.

9. Was the *RDM*, in your opinion, the country's number one crusader and champion of human rights?

Yes of course. That goes without any argument.

10. How would you describe the general political stance of the *RDM*?

Well as I said earlier it was against apartheid. It was moving towards reporting a greater range of life in South Africa but it was slow process. It was exposing human rights abuses to use that phrase. It was reporting cases of discrimination caused by colour. In the sense of a balanced array of news. I'll give you an example again. I think I've mentioned this in my book. When I was doing African Affairs reporting I was a very hard working reporter. I would spend the day collecting information, I'd go to Soweto, and I'd go to Alexandria, all over the place. I'd be on the phone and late in the afternoon I'd sit down with my notes and start writing and many a day I'd write 10, 12 stories. Some might be two paragraphs

some might be 100 words, 500 words, 700 words. Well I was just loading this all on the subs who in any event hated all the stuff about blacks, all white subs room and the casualty rate of my stuff was colossal. It was being slaughtered and in fact it was quite right to be slaughtered in some way because had all my stuff been used it would have unbalanced the comparative news value of the various stories in the paper. That was part of the process of change and educating the subs and the rest of the paper and I went on doing it although I knew really I was over doing it but I was very keen and enthusiastic and young and energetic.

11. Did the English press cover the political, social and economic life of the country's black majority in a fair way?

No, the *Mail* as I have been saying was streaks ahead of everybody else, we were pioneering and God knows we didn't do enough. We had a limited news hole, it was a question of balance and so on and the rest of the English press were just way behind us. The closest was at one stage under John Sutherland the *Eastern Province Herald,* which was the first paper in the country to use the word African followed by the *Mail* a little while later. The Afrikaans press of course were somewhere else in another world. I was always dismissive of the English press, they just didn't report it full stop.

12. There was a suggestion that the principle of balanced journalism under apartheid meant cooption and collaboration with the regime. Do you agree with this?

I don't know what that means. If you're a journalist you have to deal with the government and you have to assign people to parliament. We didn't send blacks because they wouldn't have been accepted. So if you call that collaboration, I think it's stretching the meaning of the word. You had to send people to the provincial council. I can recall the first time we sent a black photographer it was in 1977 it was Peter Magubane to the Rand Park Club I think it was which was a very Afrikaans golf club and with a lot of anxiety we sent Peter off to this and we were very worried about his personal safety but Peter was a tough guy, brave as anything and a wonderful photographer and when he came back I asked him how it went. And we were worried also if it was actually fair to send a black photographer to an event like this but we had decided we had to break through. Peter told me he had no trouble at all. He said he got there, they warmly welcomed him and offered him a drink, they took him to the bar and that was it. But cooption and collaboration in the sense of formal dealings but otherwise no, we weren't co-opted by the government. They certainly

tried later on in the 80s with their playing with the English business community but we were totally against it, we kept writing about it and pushing it away. There was certainly no collaboration in the normal sense of that word.

13. The *RDM* is always treated as a special case because it was pursuing a radically political line. It was reporting on black news more intensely than other English papers. Was the *RDM* not also advancing the black cause?

Well if you mean by the black cause, the cause of freedom in the sense that we were publishing the news, then yes. We were publishing news that no one else was publishing. We were trying to get as much in with a lot of difficulty and a lot of back sliding but we were doing it more than anyone else. Editorially we were backing black freedom, freedom for everybody in South Africa. That was fundamental to us. And that was obviously the editorial stance of the paper.

14. Did the English mainstream papers do enough to oppose government?

No, the papers did not do enough. They were totally deficient in my judgement. They opposed apartheid but did not oppose the government enough.

15. **In general what was the relationship between white and black journalists at the *RDM*?**

If you are talking about 1976 the relationships were of course developing at that time. I don't recall anything special about that frankly. On the surface they were okay but as I was saying earlier remember there were white reporters and sub editors and they represented white society, some more liberal than others. There were one or two communists, there were liberals, nationals, there were simply prejudiced people. On the black side there were people who until '76 were still uncertain of their position but I certainly don't have any memory of any troubles or great problems or anyone coming to me to complain about anything.

Writing

16. Was there any difference in what you could write before and after June 16?

No, not that I'm aware. If anything June 16 opened the gates for more vigorous reporting because so much more was out in the open.

17. How much of what you wrote was dictated to you – were you allowed to write what you saw rather than what the paper's management wanted to see published?
I wasn't there of course but from what I know there was no attempt on management to push anything.

18. How much of what was written was changed in the subbing process?
There again you'd have to talk to Ray Louw. I have in my papers a memo that was sent out for how to handle copy, because you had clearly quite an extraordinary situation. The *Mail* had achieved a reputation, it worked very hard at it, that although we had such slender resources in terms of reporting staff, in terms of space. When a big story happened we would throw everything into it and we would do a vacuum cleaner job and we became very skilled at that. So the attitude was that if anything big and really important happened you could turn to the *Mail* and know the whole story. We took a lot of pride in doing that. But here was an event that just didn't last one or two days but went on and on and on, and material pouring in from all over the place and you couldn't just take everything and just plonk it in the paper. It had to be assessed, it had to be graded – where did the information come from, what accuracy had been placed on it, where would it leave the paper with regard to the various restrictions that were enforced that were getting tighter and tighter?

What about the personal danger to reporters? You know Magubane for instance – he was sure that, you've heard about the two white guys in the green car, the green car was never totally identified but it was believed to be two security people who were out to kill people and there was one remarkable picture of a hand out of a window of a hand holding a revolver, out of that car. Peter told me afterwards whenever he saw that car around he just ran like hell. He went climbing over backyard fences to get out of the way quick because he had no doubt that he was a target and if they saw him they'd kill him. So you've got to take all these factors into account but there was a whole routine that was developed.

19. Do you believe that government planted spies made any difference to the manner in which the *RDM* covered the riots?
Of course we had spies all the time. I don't think they affected the way we covered the riots just as the way they didn't affect the way we did reporting any other time.

20. The NP Government did not impose official censorship where a state censor would sit in the newsroom to control what was published? Instead editors would censor themselves - do you agree and did the *RDM* ever use self-censorship? Why was this?

Yes of course we applied self-censorship. We applied it as I said earlier to survive full stop. You'd have to be a nutcase if you didn't, unless you just wanted to go out of existence. If you look at the laws of the time there was one provision for incitement if I remember and a mandatory whipping for a second offence but it fell away after a certain age and I forget the age. It was either 35 or 40 so I think any editor who passed that age would sort of heave a sigh of relief. I don't think I heard of an editor getting whipped but the threat was there all the time.

21. Did you expect readers to read between the lines - hiding the actual message?

No. I think our problem was we were never subtle enough. There were a few times that we were clever and wrapped the story up we could get away with things but most the time we just weren't clever enough to do that.

Soweto

22. The Soweto Uprising is seen as the coming of age of black journalists. For the first time you had to rely heavily on your black journalists. How did the *RDM* approach the uprising?

Yes, definitely coming of age. Very definitely. If you want to know my assessment of how the *Mail* covered it sitting Boston, a) I was taking to people and b) the paper was being mailed to me so I was getting copies about 10 days after they were published and I remember I was filled with admiration about the way the paper was covering those troubles. You know I knew enough about the townships to know what that coverage meant. I knew enough about police activity and restrictions to know what was being acquired and I just thought the paper was magnificent. Day after day just unremittingly covering those troubles. The paper I thought was the best in that period. There were no by-lines – I just remember now talking about by-lines, by-lines were dropped very quickly in order to protect reporters from police vengeance or even from the crowds. Remember it was trouble from both sides, always even black reporters. You can ask Magubane, they were having troubles on both sides, there's the remarkable story of Gabu Tugwana hiding in the garbage can outside the Zulu hostel, if he'd been found he would have been killed.

And was it Gabu and someone else who went into the hostel posing as workers, took their lives into their hands. There was incredible courage, I could see it reading these reports the extraordinary courage of my colleagues and I think the paper was brilliantly edited and put together. There was a lot of censorship of the photographs and Ray and I talked about that later on but that's in terms of what a newspaper can publish. There's an indefinable line between how far you can go and what you cross over. And its not a political line I'm talking about it's a good taste line and the line has changed over the years. Papers are publishing today phrases and words and pictures that would have been inconceivable 30 years ago. Things do change in that way.

23. Would you say that the Soweto Uprising changed the face of black journalism in SA permanently?

Yes, very much so. Blacks were coming into their own. There was a confidence about them, they were doing a story that their white colleagues couldn't do. They were doing a superb job despite the language problems. Despite the lack of training, all that. They were just tremendous and that was a major, the turning point in South Africa and certainly it did change the face of black journalism permanently.

24. Did the *RDM* adequately criticise the police for their part in the uprising and their brutality?

As far as I know, Yes.

25. In light of what had been going on with the 50-50 language issue since the beginning of 1976, where you caught by surprise by the intensity of the student's struggle?

I was surprised by the intensity of the struggle but not surprised by the eruption of rage.

Black staff

26. Did the paper encourage black staff to aspire to higher positions within the paper? Was all staff trained to facilitate promotion?

I can speak about the time when I was an executive. The answer is yes. It was a very troubled area because we tried to stick to a policy of straight merit. This is difficult because the people whose educational background was not the same, was lacking in many ways. We kept looking for people, we kept trying to promote people. I think we should

probably have worked a lot harder in that area but we did try, we did encourage. There was certainly no bars from the time I was there, from the time that the paper began to change in terms of it's staffing.

Again as far as my memory serves me, I started reporting in African Affairs in '58 / '59 and I started hiring the first black people to work for the paper as far as I recall and they were people to whom I paid tip-off money. There were freelancers wondering around and again if memory serves me the first two were Laurence Mayekiso and Sidney Hope. Sydney was a coloured who had been with the Transvaaler Highlanders in Italy during the war. He had passed for white, he used to talk with some bitterness that he had gone through the war fighting for his country and now he was a coloured subject to discrimination. But as far as I remember they were the first two I started paying tip-off money to and then word got around and the circle started widening and then after a year or so we took on the first two full timers, Mayekiso and Hope. And it gradually spread.

27. Were black journalists and their copy taken seriously?

Yes. There were problems with the subs because the copy from most of the black reporters was not good. People's English wasn't very good, lousy schooling, lack of training and the white sub editors resented it. It took them more time to sub, they had problems with it. They didn't like it and there was tension anyway because they were whites and these were blacks at the time and that was the reason why a separate news operation was developed so the sub editors could spend more time with the writers developing their copy, checking their stuff and so on. And also the friction problem.

28. Was there a language barrier with blacks speaking English as a second or third language?

Yes, very much so. It was a big problem. I tried to meet this at one stage. I was very anxious to have greater training for journalists and I conceived a scheme where we would go to people and literally start with English, start from the basics developing English because that was the medium of communication in which people were writing and then developing skills and it was very labour intensive. It was a year long process and I raised about half the money from SAAN and from the Argus company and the other half from a foundation in Germany and at the last minute this foundation backed off because the South African ambassador in Bonn told them this was a seditious programme so I never got it off

the ground. Other attempts to get training, some work was done but never enough I think. Never enough attention given to the basic language skills.

Township Extra

29. What did you think of the *Township Extra*?

I always had mixed feelings about it. I supported it. I certainly had a role in it getting going because of the work I was generating and the interest in reporting about blacks to blacks which I helped to develop. But I was uneasy about it. I was worried about the apartheid aspect of it, that it was a separate thing but what I did I really accepted it as a part of life that because of space shortages, because of the need to put rugby in for whites and soccer for blacks with very small news holes, we had a very small news hole all the time, you know around 30 columns of news was the minimum but we sometimes got below that. It was never extensive and in the change over that was slowly happening at that time to have pushed football to white readers and rugby to black readers would simply not have played. Those were the facts of life of that time.

I basically viewed the *township extra* as a geographical edition. That we have the first edition – the late Reef edition it was called at one stage that went 300 miles, there was also a slip edition, but we had one edition that went 300 miles North, South, East, West of Johannesburg and covered the Reef. Then we slipped for township and I used that as a geographical edition. There were people there with different interests. The Reef people had stories about towns out on the Reef, Klerksdorp, Bloemfontein whatever it might be. Page 1 and page 3 in particular were used to accommodate stories from those regions, from those areas and they were written by correspondents we had in those areas on the Reef. Then we'd take out the most universal of those for the last morning final edition. But in between of course there was also a slip edition for Pretoria where we tried to put in Pretoria news so that was also geographical and then we had the township edition, the extra edition which at first was just the stock exchange page and gradually increased and increased and then we took over the entertainment page, page 3 and various other pages, back page. So the township edition became a very substantial changed edition. And the idea as with the Reef and Pretoria, the most important stories, the most universal stories would be used for the morning final edition, which went to Johannesburg.

It was the real sort of composite edition. So that's how I tried to console myself, that it

was a geographical edition and the fact that it was based on colour was almost incidental. These were the people in the townships and this was their particular news that was of interest to them and a story about a break down in sewerage in a township on Soweto might not have the same interest to people living in Morningside except of course if it was a political factor. Because I can remember one story on one occasion, there was a breakdown in sewerage in some black township on the Reef and I got my friend Dr Selma Brody who was then a provincial counsellor to go out there and this muck had been lying around for days and it was all totally disgusting and very dangerous to health and Selma and who was herself a doctor, we went out there and we took a colour picture of Selma walking in this filthy ooze and we ran this picture on page 1 in colour and if you couldn't smell it you can at least see it and to my astonishment we had immediate reaction that morning from officialdom. They rushed people in to repair the damage and to fix up the pipes. That was in the early 80s. To me that was remarkable because it was one of the few times we could run a story like that and get an instant reaction. It was a local story but in this case it had a political implication and we ran it on page 1 because it was such a disgusting event and officialdom wasn't doing anything about it.

30. Do you think it was a good idea?

So whether the *township extra* was a good idea – yes because it offered a tailor made edition for a particular area, a particular group of people. Just as we ran the Reef edition and the Pretoria edition it was tailored and targeted.

31. Do you think it was well received by black readers?

Well the sales figures will show that. The township edition did have a good sale. We eventually got to the stage of putting the township edition next to the morning final edition. I can't remember what the sales figures were on the different editions.

32. Would you describe it as a township edition?

Well I have dealt with that earlier. On the face of it yes but that is a cop-out way of looking at it. There were all the factors of work inside the paper, the divisions within the different pagings, the amount of space that was available we were trying to do the best of a bad job and also basically focusing on people's lives. If we had tried to run the whole life's entertainment and sport in Soweto and other townships in the main edition there'd be no space for anything else. And if we ran all the other in the township edition there'd be

no space for township news so I think it was a compromise. As I say I regarded it as a regional edition aimed at people in a particular area, in this case black and in other areas whites.

I can't remember if I mentioned earlier that of course the *Sunday Times* also ran an extra edition and I know it did extremely well. It was a very strong edition so all these figures, people buying them justifies it to me because people bought them and wanted them

33. The *RDM* had the most extensive coverage of 'African Affairs' of all the mainstream papers. Would you say that it covered the social, political and economic life of black South Africa in a fair way?

Well fair can mean in an honest way with good reporting or as good reporting as we could manage given lack of staffing and lack of skills, yes. I think when you look at what South Africa was then and what journalism was like then I think we did a reasonable job. Again there was always a lack of space. We were bumping up against it all the time, lack of reporters, lack of photographers, you know the *Mail* always had this problem, always short of money. We always struggled. This wasn't just on township, this was the whole newspaper. We were always under resourced. It was the basic problem of trying to run a newspaper, there was just a limit to how much information we could actually carry because the news hole was never all that big.

Looking back

34. Do you think you, or any of the white journalists on the *RDM* had cause to apologise at the TRCMH?

Well that's an individual thing. People must know whether they had cause to apologise. For myself I was always conscious, always, always conscious of what we didn't do and what we weren't doing and there were reasons for that. Speaking for myself if you look at my book there were times I got lazy, I was tired, I was scared, I wanted to keep my job, I had a family to support. All the usual factors that came into play and even when I was an executive and pretty much pushing the paper toward non-racism, again you can read that in my book, there were times I felt we should hang a red light out of the building towards the last years of the *Mail* that I just felt our purpose was so limited, our function was so limited.

But that was in my gloomy moments. In better moments I still thought all the way to the end that we were still doing a useful job, that we were still doing more than any other newspaper in South Africa and that justified our existence and that we were pushing the envelope all the time. Whether people should apologise, I don't see why unless as I say it's a personal thing if people see that there are things that they could have done that they should have done – well that's up to them.

35. Was it necessary for Editors to apologise?

Again that's up to them but I will say, although I start off saying that people must decide for themselves, I was always hard on the rest of the press as I was hard on us for our proficiencies and our failures. The Afrikaans press was of course beyond the bounds. *Beeld* was doing better later on, it became more of a newspaper but they were always so bound by ideology and adherence to the party even when they broke their formal affiliation with the party. In the last year *[of the apartheid period]* or so they were doing better things but it was still a pale shadow of what a newspaper should have been in terms of reporting the totality of South Africa.

The rest of the English press I faulted totally. At least we were trying. We had huge difficulties but we tried. The others mainly they didn't and I think they let themselves and South Africa down very badly. There were some exceptions of course. On the whole, and you were dealing with the morning newspapers really was a retched job. They were timid and backward and nervous of us. We were generating 60 / 70 percent of the news on the country and they were very nervous of us.

36. Are you surprised that the English-language press became such an intense point of investigation and interest at the TRCMH?

No. I wasn't really because people were looking for, I think there were some people who hadn't done all they could have done and should have done in the apartheid years and they were looking for ways to flog others and to blame others. I think also there were people who were looking for ways to lash out, to attack others. I think all the attacks on liberal journalists which have been coming up again lately I notice have been entirely misplaced. People like Raymond Louw did a hugely honourable and important job and to have Ray and my colleagues on the *Mail* brow beaten and castigated in this way, its all very well to

sit now and do these things but you've got to look at the way things were then in terms of the resistance to change.

Newspapers were no different, fear of jobs, problems in management and you know the reality of the economic situation of the *RDM*. As you probably know and I think it's in my book as well, the number of black readers we had was an embarrassment to management and it cost money. They wanted white readers for whom advertisers would put ads in. At the end we had close on 950 / 1 million readers with a circulation base of 110 / 120 000 and you had this readership of black readers per copy. Papers being handed from one to another, about eight or ten per copy.

That sounds fine but that's expensive. It means that every paper you are printing is costing you money and that was the reality. It finally gave management an excuse to crack down on us and to destroy us in fact. It was an insupportable economic situation and we were conscious of it and unless you were totally bent on self-destruction you couldn't simply go from day to day ignoring all these things. You could push, you could prod, you could try and talk to your management, you could try and talk to your friends outside, people who had influence on the board but again as my book tells, management were screwing us out of sight all the time on circulation and advertising with straight out lies and that sort of thing.

But the reality was we were up against it because of the large number of black readers who management and advertising didn't want and that put severe restraints on editorial. Editorial did its best and I don't think editorial was the place to go and brow beat. Brow beating and attacks should go on the management people who controlled the *Mail* and the people internally, the management level and the advertising and circulation people. Those were the people who were trying to obstruct us all the time, those are the ones who finally did the paper in. I think these attacks are misplaced in terms of whom they're directed at.

B.8 Interviews questions from Gavin Stewart (via e-mail)

Township edition

I wrote a paper called "Going the whole hog" which covers some of this stuff. It was going to be a PhD but it never got written. I will look for an electronic copy. There is more bull written about "township editions" than almost anything else in South African journalism, because they were considered the equivalent of politically incorrect. Tens of thousands of people bought them every day, what does that say about the people who bought them?

1. When and for how long were you in charge of this edition?

The edition had run since the late 1960s as "Township Mail" under Benjamin Pogrund and Peter Hazelhurst. About 1970, after Jim Bailey sold (*Golden City*) *Post* to the Argus Company and Dave Hazelhurst and I rejoined the *RDM*, Hazelhurst was asked by Raymond Louw to recommend a solution for the very unhappy Township Mail. At the time the Business pages were being re-plated as Township pages and subbed by the ordinary subs room, where most staff were not interested in the townships and hated the imperfect English. Hazelhurst recommended that the edition be given its own news editor and sub-editor. I was it.

2. What was your role and responsibilities on the edition?

News Editor, Sub-Editor, Production Editor (my title), Stone Sub, whatever. The reporters went out and got the stuff, I put it together. From time to time I had the assistance of another sub, but they seldom lasted very long. The work was hard and the days were long. If you didn't have passion you didn't last.

3. What did you think of the township extra? Was it a good idea?

It sold a lot of copies and employed a lot of people. Eventually it was the main growth area of the *RDM*, finally, I think, almost outselling the main edition.

4. Do you think it was well received by black readers?

The edition sold and sold. Sometime in the '70s, until 1985, Mail Extra (as it was called) and Late Final (with the Business pages) sold side-by-side on the streets. Readers could choose and tens of thousands of people chose to buy Mail Extra. Was it 50 000 a day? What does that tell you?

5. During the TRCMH this edition was described as an apartheid edition, printed only to separate the news and withhold important information from the black readers? Would you have described it as an apartheid edition – separating news along racial lines?

Everything was separated along racial lines – sport, news, sex, entertainment. That's what we wrote about. (We also published all the doomsday warnings about forcing Afrikaans onto the mathematics and science in black high schools. The government marched headlong into doomsday.) It seemed to me that it was politically correct (I don't think the term existed back then) to disparage Mail Extra even while you read it. Was it more an "apartheid edition" than The *World*, *Post* (from whence I came), *Sowetan* (which came later), *Ilanga lase Natal*, or for that matter, *Transvaaler, Burger*, *Rapport*. What black people did want (and all sane people wanted) was for white people to read and learn something about black people. Maybe they still do…

6. The RDM had the most extensive coverage of 'African Affairs' of all the mainstream papers. Would you say that it covered the social, political and economic life of black South Africa in a fair way?

All the reporters at Mail Extra were black. Not a lot of the news was taken over into the main editions.

7. Were black journalists and their copy taken seriously?

By them, yes, by the succession of Township News Editors (Ben Pogrund, Dave Hazelhurst etc), by me, yes. By Laurence Gandar and Raymond Louw as editors, yes. By the enlightened staff, yes. Not by the general subs. Certainly not by the advertising reps.

8. Was there a language barrier – black journalists writing in English as their second language?

Language was one of the things that irritated the main subs room and made the edition a huge burden for them. I sat amongst the reporters; while I was working on their copy many of them chose to sit and see what I was doing and ask me why. Then they went out and wrote more stories the next day. After about two years the best reporters wrote English nobody could distinguish from the rest of the reporters. Then we were all happy.

9. How would you describe the changes taking place within black journalism in the mid-70s?

Increasing ambition, rising irritation. Soweto June 1976, which happened shortly after I left, gave the reporters a chance to show their real mettle. Not only did the *RDM* merge its editions for that time, but the reporting was comprehensive and it was accurate and all the training and hard work at Mail Extra proved to be worthwhile. The *RDM* was ready for the biggest black story ever.

10. Did the paper encourage black staff to aspire to higher positions within the paper?

The editors did, I tried. Remember that Peter Magubane worked there. My ambition was always to leave a black editor in charge of the Extra edition when I left. Nobody arose. Maybe if we had separated the sub-editing job from the editing job we could have done it. Ike Segola could have done it, but I don't think he wanted it. Because of the "stigma". There were also problems relating to the compositors downstairs, all of whom were white, which would have called for exceptional qualities and tolerance in a black sub.

11. Were all staff members trained to facilitate promotion?

We went on the same courses, such as they were. Nobody was much trained for any job in journalism in those days. Training, apart from the Argus Cadet Course (which none of us did) and degrees were regarded with suspicion. You learnt by doing. First time I ever took a formal journalism course was after I started lecturing journalism at Natal Technikon in 1976.

12. Do you think that the working conditions of black journalists were adequate? How did the laws prohibiting black people from working in the same areas as whites affect the newspaper's and the journalists' ability to operate effectively?

After Hazelhurst's report and the new set-up in Township Mail, we all worked in the same big room. We had a corner with a certain number of tame whites around us as a buffer. Slowly the place integrated. Same toilets, eventually the same canteen. Similar (poor) pay. Remember black editions were also a "way in" for young people wanting to become journos. The classic route was 1) submitting sports results, 2) writing short sports reports of lesser games, 3) writing short news reports from lesser places, all on a freelance basis;

4) finding a hidden corner of the newsroom to freelance full-time, 5) grabbing a gap on the staff.

Public transport was lousy before the mini-bus taxi; the transport department was racist. The Classic, dry cleaners and beverages at all hours, was across the road.

13. In general what was the relationship between white and black journalists at the *RDM*?

From brothers to deadly enemies, it depended on the people. Most of the reporters at the *RDM* were there because they believed in the newspaper, so they believed in the people too. I spent one alarming morning convincing Mateu Nonyane that Steven Mulholland was not a racist, he was just a pig and a bully and he behaved the same way towards everybody. It would have been easier if Mulholland had not been standing there.

Liberal Journalism

14. What was the editorial policy at the RDM when you left in 1975?

Progressive in the Progressive Party sense – non-racial capitalism I suppose you could call it. Certainly very strong on rule of law, human rights, etc. Gandar's piece, which I have often quoted, "Going the whole hog," pretty well nailed our colours to the mast. Ben Pogrund and myself were the only members of the old Liberal Party. There were occasional Congress supporters on the white staff. There was also a steady supply of agents.

15. Did you as an individual agree with this policy?

Most of it. I think Pogrund, Hazelhurst and I were the only ones who took it for granted that democracy meant one-person one vote and that probably meant an ANC government. We had some terrible fights in the Fed over non-racial sport. The white sports writers couldn't see it as obvious.

16. How did you understand the term liberal journalism within the editorial policy of the *RDM* (how did the newspaper in your opinion define this term)?

Never heard the term. We called some of what we did "investigative journalism" and the newspaper came up with some of the really strong stories of what apartheid really meant.

We saw our job as telling people what was going on around them and reflecting what they thought.

17. Did you agree with this definition and do you think the newspaper subscribed to a policy of liberal journalism?

If you want to call what we did liberal journalism, okay. We called it journalism. But we didn't think much of what a lot of other newspapers were doing.

18. How diverse were the views about liberal journalism amongst staff?

Pretty well all the staff were committed to "straight reporting". That meant telling the truth, so far as it was possible to get it.

19. Was the *RDM*, in your opinion, the country's number one crusader and champion of human rights?

Among the mainstream newspapers, yes. By far. The only other paper which came close in the 60s and 70s was probably the *Daily Dispatch*, occasionally the *Cape Times*. The *Cape Times* caught up somewhat under Tony Heard. The *Dispatch* fell back after Woods. The performance of the English press under apartheid was not brilliant. White readers did not want to know. As has been said of Germans under Hitler… or just about anybody else not directly under the heel of an oppressive government. As Pastor Niemoller has pointed out: "When they came for the Jews…" But there were lots of other crusaders. Lots of them were in jail too.

20. Where did you draw the line between political sympathy and political allegiance?

Political sympathy we all had. Our allegiance, mostly, was to journalism as practised at the *RDM*.

21. Did the English press cover the political, social and economic life of the country's black majority in a fair way?

Fair sometimes, but never sufficient. Is it now sufficient? In the end, the reader dictates how much serious social commentary you can put into your newspaper before your sales die. When the *Citizen* appeared in 1976 and gave white readers a straight choice of morning newspaper, they fled in droves.

22. There was a suggestion that the principle of balanced journalism under apartheid meant cooption and collaboration with the regime. Do you agree with this?
To the extent that all of human life involves a degree of cooption and collaboration with some sort of regime. What did Conrad say: "In the hostile element immerse and with the motions of the hands and feet, keep afloat." We were all immersed in the hostile element. Was it better to do nothing? Not in my book. Was it better to blow up pylons? Ask Hugh Lewin, but if nobody was there to report on the pylons, there was not much point blowing them up. Try this: When the Silverton siege happened and several guerrillas (MKs) were shot in a Pretoria bank, the *RDM*, *Beeld* and *Sowetan* carried almost word-for-word the same story. Try reading them in the shoes of a white "liberal", white Afrikaner and a black "radical". Amazing what you can read into a story with the same words.

23. The RDM is always treated as a special case because it was pursuing a radically political line. It was reporting on black news more intensely than other English papers. Was the *RDM* not also advancing the black cause?
It was advancing the democratic cause, which is not necessarily the same as the black cause. But the people then excluded from democracy (if it can be called that) were black people. A country can slide into democratic despotism. It has happened more than once, even in Africa.

24. How do you see the role of a newspaper in a society that is deliberately divided along colour lines?
To expose it, to bridge it, to keep reminding our readers it was there. But you also have to keep your readers coming back for more, otherwise you are just a crashing bore and nobody wants to listen to you any more.

I also think that just by being there we contributed to black morale in some small way. We certainly contributed to white lefty morale. I was one before I joined the *RDM*. Getting a job on the *RDM* as a young reporter (and ex-detainee) was like being one of the chosen. One of the elect. It stood for something.

As I've mentioned, Gandar's "Yes it does mean the whole hog" was the declaration of total opposition to apartheid and its consequences. It came in response to a column by the then editor of *Die Tranvaaler*, who complained that what Gandar stood for would mean

going the whole hog: having a black person as your neighbour and a black person as your boss. Yes, replied Gandar, it does mean the whole hog. That's what we believed. We never knew it was going to be this hard…

Just reporting the political trials of the day told you plenty – if you wanted to hear it. As I've said, most whites didn't want to know (and many still don't).

Post was the most fun. We treated apartheid as the greatest joke the world ever played on anybody. (We couldn't write much more about politics with the SB around our necks.) Authoritarians take themselves very seriously, they cannot take being laughed at. The *RDM* did not have the same sense of humour as *Post*.

25. Did the English mainstream papers do enough to oppose government?
Our side won.

There was always the balance between what was "enough", what the law would allow and what the readers and advertisers would tolerate. When the *RDM* lost too many of its white readers and advertisers, it died. We could have done it better, even at the *Rand Daily Mail.*

I never thought that most of the other papers did very much. The *Dispatch* and *Cape Times* I've mentioned. *The Herald* under Kosie Viviers, very occasionally the *Sunday Times* on some issues, occasionally *The Star*.

No, the English mainstream papers could have done more. I'm not sure they cared more.

If the *RDM* had changed its line and gone soft on apartheid, I would have had to find another home. The black edition also helped to keep it on track. You cannot renege on half your readership.

B.9 Interview with Gabu Tugwana

Many of the questions asked of the other interviewees were not asked during this interview because Gabu Tugwana, having been asked certain questions began, on his own initiative to tell the story, which covered many of the questions. Thus, within the answers to the first 10 questions lies the answers to many of the other questions, which would otherwise have been asked. The interviewer did, during the telling of this story, prompt Tugwana to embellish certain points. It is also important to note that Gabu was known as Jan Gabu Tugwana during his time on the *RDM*.

Editorial policy

1. What was your position at the paper in 1976 and how long had you been with the paper in 1976?

My position was a freelance sports writer who was transferred to the newsroom and I used to write news sport. I was transferred about May when it became clear that there was likely to be problems in the township. I was taken on with guaranteed subsistence plus linage for stories. There was a name for it – I forget what they used to call it.

2. What was the editorial policy at the *RDM* in 1976 and did you agree with this policy?

You know personally I was never given or exposed to the policy of the *RDM*, however my understanding of their policy was that they were a commercial newspaper. I think in other words they have to produce a newspaper, which will have stories, which can make the paper to be bought by the public. Having a profit orientation in whatever they were doing. That was my understanding.

3. What kind of news were they looking for?

I believe they had all sorts of news. What might have been different as a white orientated newspaper was that they were also interested in a large chunk of black interest in the news approach. And I think probably it was also part of the marketing strategy; you know that they must get the black market. But then the people at the *RDM*, your niche was for your middle to high-income group, I'm now talking in terms of the black community. If you didn't have basic education you wouldn't grasp what the *RDM* was trying to say.

4. To what extent did the management and owners interfere with what was included in the paper?

Well you know I think generally they avoided interfering unless it became very obvious that an issue is very controversial. In those instances you would then be referred to legal company, which would read your story too, and they would ask you the same questions you were asked in the newsroom. "Are you absolutely sure that this is a fact, what you are saying happened." The lawyers would then go examine what you are saying and on the basis of their assessment then they maybe could make a suggestion of how best you could present it without creating a legal liability to the newspaper. Basically they just wanted to make sure that the story doesn't get the paper into trouble so to speak. But there is no doubt that they really pushed the limits of as you may call it today freedom of expression. They went as far as possible to obtain the news.

5. Do you think that the *RDM* perpetuated human rights violations by neglecting to print pertinent information – did they withhold information due to fear of reprisals from the government?

I'm not sure. Who was the source of that. You know I don't know. My own gut feel, I was not in the senior management, I would not be aware of very serious information being withheld. There were some stories that ended up being unpublishable because of the risk, which they bore for the publication. But I'm not so sure how they would have, you know, made a major impact on the TRC.

Liberal Journalism

6. How did you understand the term liberal journalism within this editorial policy (how did the paper in your opinion define this term)?

Well if it meant in the context of the dictionary or general, if like in a dictionary form, supporting the liberty of other people, their rights to certain things, commercial issues etcetera, ja I would say to a larger extent the RDM was such. It did support that. However I at times found a contradiction in that we had one of our colleagues, his name was Nat Serache, he used to cover hard politics so to speak. For instance he covered the Sasol Trial in Turfloop, which was in Pietersburg, and I know for a fact that he subsequently became a member of the BPC - Black People's Convention. I know for a fact that they gave him an ultimatum. He was asked to make a choice between his political association with BPC and the newspaper. That was after he had been arrested in Bloemfontein in a road block

travelling with some of the executive members of the BPC and I think inside they found, the security police said they found, literature which was going to cause hostility among communities in South Africa. So he was asked to make a choice.

Now I am saying it is a contradiction because if we are a liberal paper it means it means that your views should be very broad and you should tolerate that. I mean blacks had no official political party where they could vote for, express their political frustrations officially and therefore if they created an organisation which becomes an instrument for expressing that then the newspaper shouldn't be having a problem with that but they did. And of course he made his choice, his choice was to leave the newspaper.

7. How diverse were the views about liberal journalism amongst staff?

I'd say, you know there was very vigorous debate going on among journalists in general. I was one of those who fell in the group, which was talkative, of course I was very talkative and therefore I did attract a lot of attention because I had the ability to keep people not too busy with their work but dealing with the daily issues.

We also had Afrikaners, journalists from the Afrikaans families and you would normally describe them that they were lefties because they were those who were anti what we generally perceived of the Afrikaans community of the time. But come to think of it this guy who started the *Vryeweekblad*, a free Friday newspaper which was started around the 80s, he has a column in the *Star*. He is also one of the products from the *RDM* for instance so those are the sort of guys you would find in the newsroom.

But there was always the feeling you know that amongst those people that you had those who were police agents. I mean you had a queer behaviour of certain individuals, especially those that were covering crime daily and so they had daily contact with the police and at times they had to confirm certain stories with the police and this included, of course, security police. I remember one woman journalists who used to when she talked to the police used to take the phone and even go under the desk and even talk from under the desk and I mean we black journalists would draw each other's attention, "what's she doing?" you know, "Is there something she can talk about under the desk which would be considered from us, what exactly was she displaying?"

Ja there was that feeling that there's probably quite a number of agents there. Then we had another two agents, I forget the first name of the guy but I remember his surname was Geyer, he was Afrikaans and the woman, also I don't remember her name but today that woman stays in the Eastern Cape and she is in the ANC, I think in the media liaison there. They were boyfriend and girlfriend and this guy was a member, he had taken membership of the opposition party. I think at that time it was, I speak under correction because this party has changed names various times, I think it was the Federal what party, what did they call it? The Federal Progressive Party. So this guy we used to in fact suspect him because he was one of those guys you would call the provokers because he would come with the most radical things, he had radical things to say. And I actually feel sorry for him because I think we, because of us suspecting him we led him to try and prove that he is not a spy by going to plant a bomb somewhere and he got arrested and got sentenced and he left the country and went into exile. I'm just wondering where he is but I know this woman he was with in now with the ANC in the Eastern Cape.

So those are sort of things which you would find in the newsroom. For instance, in my coverage of June 16, I'm just trying to give the spy thing here. I left my home after the police came and they missed me. They came in something like eight vehicles surrounded the house armed with guns and they couldn't find me and my parents didn't know my whereabouts and I came in one evening, stopped in my car a street after my home and scaled the fence. They told me, hey you better get out of here these guys were looking for you blah blah and then I changed the venue of where I was staying in Soweto. I had to stay in a church in Rostenville in Turfontein. You know we strongly believed that for these guys to know that I still go to work, because I stopped writing my by-line, that they got information from within the paper, that this fellow is still there. They probably followed me from work because I was using public transport – the bus – and one evening in the early hours they came exactly where I was and of course I attempted to create a decoy. I denied my name and when they started searching they found my ID and positively identified me. So ja, there was tension at times about the presence of spies. There's a particular guy who subsequently went to work for SABC. I can't remember his surname but his first name was Chris, but he went to work for SABC at the time when they were so called, when terrorism was intensifying in the country they then showed people who had left the ANC who were trained Guerrillas and had joined the South African forces, it was late 80s and this particular guy was interviewing those chaps on behalf of the SABC but

we were once again saying, although the *RDM* had long gone, that it was shut down in 1985 so we basically said you know this guy was confirming his close relationship with the Secret Police because when they took him on that sort of thing they must have total confidence that you are the type of a guy who is not going to turn around and turn the programme to be hostile against the police or against the State. His name was Chris Olcas, I don't know where he is now. He also was on the police beat in the *RDM*. He was one of the guys that was always suspected.

8. The night that they came to find you, were you arrested?

Ja, because I was arrested. Well, when I arrived at John Vorster Square I was told I was being held under section 6 of the Terrorism Act, which was an act which I can be held indefinitely until I satisfy my interrogator with answers. But the long and short of it is seemed was that after a long fight between me and my interrogators the total sum of it was that they were saying they know what I have been doing and I should confirm what they have about me and in addition of that they would say they want me to go to court and give evidence that I was under extreme pressure to write the way I was writing the stories because I was worried that if I didn't do so the students would petrol bomb my home so I rejected that and I said to them they could take the cuttings of the stories which I wrote and go and make that presentation in the court because that is their opinion, certainly it was not my experience. Ja, however I must say now that it is over. I was an activist, I did see the opportunity as a journalist of playing a role in exposing the unfairness of the system against the majority of the people in this country. I did see my job as a platform but I really stuck to factual information in whatever I was doing because the *RDM* was not giving easy passage if you were going to come with propaganda. They really double-checked the information.

I mean an example of this would be that I participated in assisting the students to rent cars and its not part of my job description but it is important to allow the students to be active in what they were doing because it was not in my view criminal but it was challenging the roles of the country so I did participate in that. I did also, you know, when I go on trips I would offer them lifts, both in the official and my private car.

9. So did you know that the uprising was going to happen that day?

Well because of my age I think that at the time I was 22 years old, because of my age and a matric student would have been around 16 because some of them started school late or were not successful all the time you would still find students who were 18 up to 20 in matric. So I think I was easily disposed as a person in their age group in that they confided a lot of things that were going to happen to me. Yes I knew what was going to happen. It was extremely interesting in the week before. You know they had even intensified in terms of where they were staying, they were no longer staying long, because the police were getting suspicious they were staying now a much shorter time. Where as before they were staying a week or two in one place but now they had shortened the length of the time where they were staying, rotating places. But they stayed within Soweto, Long drawn meetings, which of course I didn't attend but I would receive the statement of what transpired at the meeting which I wrote on behalf of the *RDM*.

I think another thing which particularly drew the attention of the officials to me – I think I was lucky in knowing a lot of students, again because of my age group that I was able to get information of where the police action was at that given time and what they were doing. So they would call me and give me a tip. There was one particular green car, a Chevrolet 4.1 engine, a green car its known was shooting children indiscriminately. I followed that particular car for three successive days and I could count how many people were shot from that, from guns carried by people travelling in that car, security police and we even took a picture of that vehicle. So I think the consistency of each day knowing where this car was must have enough suspicion for these guys to put their attention on me.

You were talking about how free the stories were. The *RDM* adopted a system of you write what you see, it became your personal account and then Patrick Laurence would sum it all up from everyone's personal account. Then they say for personal account please turn to page two or page three then there your story would go in just as you had seen things happening. So in your own story you really had to a greater degree a free hand to say whatever you observed.

10. Once you were arrested, how long did they actually hold you?

The initial arrest was for about three months because I think it was September, around the 20th of September 1976 until December 23 the same year.

11. And did the RDM hold your job for you?

The exceptional part is that because of my arrest the *RDM* was able to give me full-time employment. My status was changed from freelancer to full-time employee. I think this had to do with legalities. When I say legalities I mean they would have found it difficult to provide legal representation as a company to me. They could not do this for freelancers. I signed employment forms at Modderbee Prison to become a full-time employee and they provided me with legal representation.

And also you know I think it would have drawn attention which they would not have liked to see in the public eye that people who were working so hard, writing so many stories and risking their own lives were fully employed so they started editorialising us. You know so and so has now been held for so many days without trial. That was the first stint of my arrest. After my release, the *RDM*, transferred me to the sports department and I wanted to know why. Well they felt it would help me because while I was away I missed a lot of things that were happening and it would help me to catch up with what was happening while I was away. But I just later discovered that it was just a way to get me out of the newsroom. I think I began assisting young cadets writing news. There were certain views, which I was not officially allowed to state. I was now having a new channel in that I could pass them on to trainee journalists. They would ask me from time to time to help them write a story and I would also give them my own contacts.

I think to show the effectiveness of spies I was subsequently rearrested even when I was back in the sports department. It was in May 30, 1977. While in the previous detention it was section 10 which was a preventive kind of protection where you share a cell with a number of people the second one was more harsher. This was the one where they held me under section 6 of the Terrorism Act which was in isolation. They are the only ones with access to you. I stayed in isolation for a total of 13 months and when I was taken out of isolation then they transferred me back to this preventative protection again, section 10 and under section 10 I was held for another four months which means that all in all I was held for approximately 17 months and I was released in, I think it was December again in 1978, shortly before Christmas.

I would say then, you know, at the time for the first time I reflected in this second detention when I shared a cell with other people that I didn't understand politics. That was the best time that I began learning and understanding politics and it made me to feel I had been arrested for basically no reason so when I came out of that detention I should be more determined to be a true political activist. I mean if you were to be kept in a cell with powerful people like Dr Motlana, you know, the Mayor of Twanse, Ismail Mkabela, his wife is now the CEO of the Nelson Mandela children's fund. Her name is Sibongile, Sibongile is one of those accused in the students case of 1976 for agitating other students to turn against the state.

I'm saying if you were to be held with those people and being a journalist surely you are to realise that objectivity, I told myself, is a myth. Because all that I was trying to do was to reach out and give the other view, which I knew my white colleague would never be able to espouse because of the inaccessibility, they don't have access to the black community, they don't understand the way of living of black people, the type of confidential information which got released to me, I don't think it would be repeated to them. But then you end up with people who almost full time were politicians. Then I realise there's much more I can do. I came out very, very upset with my poor past performance.

12. Did the English press cover the political, social and economic life of the country's black majority in a fair way?

Look it can never be adequate because of ownership of the particular publication, because it was owned mainly by the mining houses. The intention of some of those people in the ownership of the paper is to really have in a sense certain rights given to blacks yes, but there was always a suspicion that there is no guarantee that if you give wholesale rights to blacks that you will still retain capitalism in this country. So in that sense I am saying I do not believe that it would have covered completely all the aspirations and frustration of black people. However, it played a significant role as compared to for instance *The Star* newspaper and other established newspapers at the time.

13. How do you see the role of a newspaper in a society that is deliberately divided along colour lines?

Well I think its role is really to promote living together, understanding and tolerating.

14. Did the English mainstream papers do enough to oppose government?

You know, if they didn't have the commercial, if their predominant intension was commercial intension I would say yes but I am not sure, I just think that because of the commercial, the dominant factor being the commercial interest they may have not used all the muscle which they possessed.

Let me tell you a secret, you know in newspapers the language of the newspaper is to survive and each time you put something in the newspaper you must ask yourself will the newspaper survive to see the light of the day after I have written that. I am saying these people always had stronger weapons they could use but because of the commercial interest they wouldn't use it all because they want to survive.

Writing

15. How much of what you wrote was dictated to you – were you allowed to write what you saw rather than what the paper's management wanted to see published?

You know it really depended on the type of story you were writing. If you were writing a dicey story, the type of story which would lead to the paper being taken up by the government of the day then of course there would be a number, significant number of changes. But if you wrote just a basic story most of what you had written would have gone into the paper. But having said that mostly stories do get changed because English is not the first language for black writers. The only thing to add there is of course that often when you wrote to sub editors they found it amazing that on average we wrote much better than white younger journalists in terms of the command of the English language. I mean really I know this they used to come in and be amazed. Black people took more care because you didn't want to be embarrassed and they think you don't understand what you are saying and get the story to be left out simply because its misunderstood so you basically put much more care.

16. How did you as a black reporter put aside your skin colour to cover the uprising? Did you see yourself as black or a journalist first and how did this affect your writing?

You know, I moved in two eras. The first era was just where I saw myself black and nothing else. I looked at myself as a black person and how its affects me. My wake up call

was during my second detention when I realised I was being denied access to black and normal prison wardens.

Wherever I was I had to be guarded by white officials then I thought that was a challenge. I found that one of the most common things among South Africans was religion and I found that Christianity was much more dominant. I used Christianity to befriend my warder and the police who were dealing with me. So for the first time I realised that it was actually not the colour which was the issue. Flexibility could get you whatever you wanted. It worked to the extent of people going to my home, to my place of work, with various requests, requests for money, you know you were allowed to choose items to buy once a month. I was able to send them because they saw me differently from an average detainee because I was constructive. I was talking to them, I was debating issues and I was telling them how I saw things. They saw me differently. You see the weakness of the system there, was they wanted these guys not to cooperate with us, so they would say to them we are communists, we are Russian influenced so we hate white people. So I became an interesting character because I did not show this hatred so that is why I won a number of friends.

17. Do you think among the police there were some who were not supportive of the NP government. Did you find any disagreement amongst the police regarding their beliefs in apartheid?

That is an interesting aspect. I felt that mainly, that is difficult to answer because they always pretend because they want to get information from you. I found the one which I found most interesting was a certain Lieutenant General Potgieter who came from the Prisons Department and he was from Robben Island and he came to visit us in the Fort Prison down here. And you know these monthly inspections where the prison ward gets senior officials to come and see living conditions because there were also complaints that people hanged themselves and this guy after being in my cell he asked me a few things about being in the news paper, he said "oh yes I read about your *RDM*, oh that interesting paper." Then he came back later and told me "I am Afrikaans but to hell with this government, I have seen Mandela so many times on Robben Island and I can tell you I would not mind if this man would be my president." That was my total experience. In fact there are those who do not want to comply with government if they were given a choice, but which side of the government is given a choice? But this Lieutenant General was very

serious for a prison official. The other reason I acted differently was that if you were to come to know them better you could use that information to bargain for yourself.

Soweto

18. Would you say that the Soweto Uprising changed the face of black journalism in South Africa permanently?

Yes, it was because there were things that only a black journalist could do like getting into the township to cover a violent event, so yes that is how I saw it. It was a great opening of gates.

19. How did the *RDM* approach the uprising?

I really think that cannot be undermined. I really think they gave it all they could. I think they took the event very seriously. Certainly they saw the event as confirming some of the editorials where they had been warning the government that there was a powder keg, which could blow at any time among the black communities. They gave it attention, I mean they really prioritised it.

20. Did the *RDM* adequately criticise the police for their part in the uprising and their brutality?

Oh yes, they did do that. They didn't spare any cover for that. They really went out to cover that.

Black staff

21. Did the paper encourage black staff to aspire to higher positions within the paper?

You know I was not material for promotion myself but I know a lot of frustration, which I used to feel for my other colleagues. The late Amin Akolia became Niemand fellow, you know the Niemand Foundation, he went there and when he came back, the tradition at the *RDM* you got promoted to a senior position. When Amin Akolia came back from the Niemand he really battled to be promoted. He got in his own words, what he said was a window dressing position. John Mojapela was also one who felt that there were not that many opportunities. John worked for years at the *RDM* and the best promotion he got was to go and run a bureau in Pretoria.

You know there is this whole confusion about the *extra* – the newspaper for blacks. You know there was an excellent sports reporter there, Gordon Sowane, he did not deserve to be a editor of the *extra*, he deserved to be a sports editor of the *RDM* he knew all sports. He was an all rounder. He knew rugby, cricket all these sports for white communities, he knew them, boxing of course, soccer which is a basic thing, most people knew it in Transvaal and he knew it. I really think he had all the qualities.

22. Do you think that the working conditions of black journalists were adequate?
You know personally I find what you found on the newspaper, what you can be offered on newspaper to be different from what you can experience. I will make an example I had personally experienced a big fight because when you went to the lower floors of the Mail, basement one, two, three and four, there were four basements. When you go to basement one it is the garage, that's where cars were stored for transport, basement two is where the guys work on the machines, basement two to four. The guys who worked on the Litho were the most conservative you'd find.

One time I used a toilet on basement two. Basement two had toilets for blacks and toilets for Europeans so I went to the Europeans toilets, I mean I was really pressed and I didn't look what it was to be honest so while I was busy there wee weeing some middle aged white guy comes in wearing shorts with grease.
He says, "Hey what are you doing here?"
I really got cross and I said, "Hey what are you also doing here?"
He thought it was too ridiculous. He said "these toilets are not for blacks,"
I said "these toilets are not for whites."
He said "What do you mean."
I said "These toilets are for Europeans, you are not a European, you are in South Africa."
He said "you are so arrogant, where do you work."
I said, "you are so arrogant what do you want to discover."
You could see that he could really, if he had the guts he could have just hit me. Then he didn't even help himself. He waited to follow me because he wanted to know where I worked. At that time the person who was acting editor was Rex Gibson. So he arrived and went straight to Rex's office. Then Rex's secretary called me, at those times I was called Jan, she said, "Jan, Rex wants to see you. There is somebody complaining about you."
I said that's fine.

Rex said, “Jan we have trouble we have some people telling me that you went to his toilet.”

I said “No I did not go to his toilet. I went to the European toilets. Those toilets are for people who are based in Europe and this man is in South Africa so I don’t know why he saw it as a problem, me as a South African in the European toilet, him as a South African in the European toilet, we were both wrong.”

Hey he laughed. He thought that was a hilarious story and said “you know how those people are, I have to call him and tell him that I have spoken to you and that you indicated that you didn’t see anything wrong with it.” He called him in and said, “yes I have spoken to Jan and he says that he didn’t do anything wrong, he didn’t do any harm to you. You screamed at him, he screamed back but as far as using the toilet he didn’t do anything wrong. Can you please end it like that.”

Township Extra

23. How did you view the township extra? Do you think it was a good idea?

You know at the time it was a good idea because it laid a platform for us to say so many things that we wouldn’t be able to push through the white edition so it was a platform at the time.

However, I found it a bit difficult to understand why the *Mail*, which was such a forerunner in fighting for liberties that it should chose to give in to a structure of this sort. I think it should have used the opportunity to promote much more understanding across the language and racial lines. The *RDM* was dominantly, I mean its sales were black. They used to sell more copies to blacks than to whites so why didn’t they get those few whites to understand what really is happening among blacks.

TRCMH

24. Do you think when the TRCMH happened that white staff and white editors had cause to go forward and apologise for their actions?

You know personally to me, not necessarily but I think as a gesture to the larger public, the community it was a lot of an issue. And I also say that because when I came back from my detention Arnold Geyer was saying to me, I’m amazing because I could still laugh with the whites because most blacks would hate the whites. He asked why haven’t I changed, why wasn’t I angry with whites. I asked why should I be and he said that “we

either vote the government by voting the National Party, some of us or we vote the opposition party and therefore are justifying that there is some semblance of justice in the system and so you should be upset that we participate in this system, and you should hate us." My own attitude it that the system is a system that must be changed and it cannot be changed by my anger against one or two people. My anger should be directed at the system as a whole and for that to change I need you as individuals to assist me in changing that system. So if I get angry at the messenger then is the message going to be related. That is why I have always been laughing.

B.10 Transcript comparison

In order to verify the reliability of the transcriber's scripts the researcher asked a third party, who was uninvolved in this research, to transcribe a piece of Raymond Louw's interview. The following are the two pieces of script from the transcriber (researcher) and the control transcriber. Differences between the two are indicated in red.

Transcriber's script

1946 and became editor in 1966 **but** I joined not as a journalist, I joined in the works department in what was called in those days a copyholder, they don't exist any **longer**. They're the people who assisted the proof-reader by reading the copy to the **proof-reader** so the proof reader could make the correction marks on the proofs **and** I was in that job for about two years before the *RDM* suddenly had a rush of blood to the head and decided to take on a group of junior journalists and I was one of the group **of junior journalists**. **Then** I was there until 1950 when I went overseas. I was overseas for six years working in various papers in Britain. Then came back in **'56** as night news editor, then went to the Sunday Times as news editor then news editor of the *RDM* and then Editor of *RDM*.

Control transcriber's script

1946 and became editor in 1966. **I** joined not as a journalist, I joined in the works department in what was called in those days a copyholder, they don't exist any **more**. They're the people who assisted the proof-reader by reading the copy to **them** so the proof reader could make the correction marks on the proofs. **I** was in that job for about two years before the *RDM* suddenly had a rush of blood to the head and decided to take on a group of junior journalists and I was one of the **group. I** was there until 1950 when I went overseas. I was overseas for six years working in various papers in Britain. Then came back in **1956** as night news editor, then went to the Sunday Times as news editor then news editor of the *RDM* and then Editor of *RDM*.

Words: 158

Differences: 9 (5.75% difference).