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The World Newspaper 1968—1976

Fred St. Leger

World was founded in June 1932 as Bantu World by an ex-farmer, George Paver, to tap the then unexploited black advertising market and "to mould native opinion in the best interests of both white and black in South Africa".(1). The newspaper was banned 45 years later on 19 October 1977.

Economically, and to a considerable extent politically, the World and its weekend counterpart from 1968, Weekend World, reflected - and at times interpreted, many of the changes in black life in southern Africa during those years. Any analysis of its development and policy is therefore of considerable relevance to any study of the mass media in Africa.

The World Printing and Publishing Company, which owned World at the time it was banned was, from 1962 a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Argus Company, the largest newspaper monopoly in South Africa. Though staffed mainly by blacks, World remained under white ownership and control throughout its history. Until 1962, it appeared as a weekly or bi-weekly and was printed in various African languages as well as English. From 1962, however, it was re-vamped as a daily in English only, one of the few publications aimed solely at an African audience in South Africa (2). With a readership of 679,000 in 1975, World was read by 7 per cent of the African population aged 16 and over (3). It concentrated mainly on news in the Witwatersrand-Pretoria region, the economic and political heartland of the country. At the time World was banned, it was more widely-read and arguably more influential than almost all other newspapers, black or white in South Africa.

Objectives

The purpose of this article is to examine how World's performance changed over the last two decades of its life, particularly between 1968 and 1976, and to compare it with the Rand Daily Mail's performance during the same period. The Mail was chosen because it was the most liberal 'white' newspaper - and the 'white' daily most read by Africans at the time. The article is based on a content analysis of World in 1959, 1968 and 1976 and of Rand Daily Mail in 1968, with less complete data for World (1959) and Mail (1976).

Content Analysis

Content analysis reveals only one element of a communication medium's role in society. Media policy, or for that matter, the effects of the medium on its audience cannot really be analysed using this technique. Nevertheless, content analysis can tell us much about the nature of a medium's role in a community, in this case the role of World in the urban black communities along the Reef.

The year 1960 may be taken as a symbolic watershed in the history of the black press in South Africa. After Sharpeville, covert as well as overt constraints on 'opposition' white and black publications were much more severe than in the 1940's and 1950's. The 1960's represented a trough in black journalistic as well as black political militancy in South Africa. During this period, however, black newspaper circulations increased rapidly. The World's circulation rose from 11,000 (4) in 1959 to 90,000 in 1968. By 1976, World's circulation equalled the Rand Daily Mail - 145,000 newspapers sold mainly on the Reef.

Table 1 provides a general overview in terms of subject content of World in 1968 and 1976 and of Rand Daily Mail in 1968. Table 2 makes some comparisons with British newspapers:

Table 2: Percentage of editorial space for different categories of subject matter for certain British and South African daily newspapers.

	South African			British			
	<u>World</u>		<u>Rand Daily Mail</u> <u>1968</u>	<u>Mirror</u>	<u>Express</u>	<u>Telegraph</u>	<u>Times</u>
	<u>1968</u>	<u>1976</u>		<u>At 1 July, 1965</u>			
Categories 1 - 4	11	17	29	16	17	36	51
Category 6	13	7	3	16	16	3	4
Category 5	7	3	6	9	7	3	5
Category 7	22	16	15	20	35	15	12
Category 9	8	24	18	5	8	19(a)	9(b)
Category 10	28	23	20	12	9	9	8

(a) 30, if 'Arts, including radio and television' is included.

(b) 14

Source for British data is Williams (1968, p. 44)

Table 1: Contents of World, 1968 and 1976 and of Rand Daily Mail 1968

Editorial	World 1968		World 1976		Rand Daily Mail 1968	
	% Whole	% editorial	% Whole	% editorial	% Whole	% editorial
Politics, National	2.8	4.8	5.1	10.8	1.3	3.3
Politics, International	1.7	3.1	1.0	2.2	2.5	6.2
Economics	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.8	5.9	14.8
Social Welfare Social Problems religion and miscellaneous news	3.7	6.6	3.4	7.2	2.3	5.7
'Social' general and human interest	3.7	6.6	1.5	3.2	2.4	6.2
Accidents, court and crime	7.1	12.8	3.4	7.2	1.0	2.5
Sport	12.1	21.6	7.5	15.8	5.9	14.8
Editorials and correspondence	3.4	6.1	1.0	2.2	1.4	3.0
Features	4.5	8.1	11.5	24.1	7.1	17.8
Photos, maps, pictures, cartoons,	16.7	30.0	12.1	25.5	8.4	21.0
Other editorial	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	1.8	4.5
Total editorial	55.9	100.0	47.3	100.0	40.0	100.0

ADVERTISING:

	World		RDM
	1968	1976	1968
Display	37.7	49.9	48.1
Small's	6.4	2.6	11.9
Grand Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total no. items sampled	408	585	607
Average no. pages per issue sampled	16.3	23.4	28.4

Notes:

- (a) The data are based on a sample of 25 issues in each case (24 for Rand Daily Mail).
- (b) Sampling errors militate against placing too much weight on small differences between figures.

These two tables give a crude but useful indication of the main areas which interested World and its readers, of its position on a continuum from 'light' to 'serious' and of the major changes which occurred in its overall orientation between 1968 and 1976. They help to set World in context and to lay the base for a more detailed discussion of its editorial policy.

The Times and Telegraph are 'serious' papers, Mirror and Express 'light' or 'popular'. The Rand Daily Mail is broadly comparable to the Telegraph. It is clear from Table 2 that World in 1968 was a 'popular' paper in terms of its news coverage - (categories 5 - 7). In 1976 it had shifted significantly, however, towards more serious news, although it was not yet comparable to the Rand Daily Mail, Telegraph or Times.

World had also increased considerably in size and had become considerably more politicized and less sensational. These changes are illustrated much better from front page leads (i.e. the main article on the newspaper's front page) and from editorials. Front page leads, which express a newspaper's news values, generally have much more impact on readers than do editorials which are supposed to reflect newspaper policy on broad political, social, economic and cultural issues (Table 3).

Table 3: Front page leads, World April - September 1959, 1968 and 1976, Rand Daily Mail, 1969 and 17 - 30.0.1976

	<u>World</u>						<u>Rand Daily Mail</u>			
	April-Sept 1959		1968		1976		1968		1976	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
South African internal politics and race relations	7	26.9	30	11.8	111(57)	44.2(22.7)	44	14.6	32	41.0
International and foreign politics	0	0.0	7	2.8	50	19.9	113	37.5	32	41.0
Other 'serious' topics incl. economics, education, etc.	10	39.2	13	5.1	19(7)	7.2(2.8)	97	32.3	7	9.0
'Light' topics including human interest, crime, sport, etc. and 'other'	9	34.6	204	80.3	71	28.4	45	14.1	7	9.0
Total	26	100.0	254	100.0	251	100.0	301	100.0	78	100.0

- Notes: (a) These figures represent as far as possible complete enumeration, not a sample.
 (b) Figures in brackets for World (1976), refer to leads directly or indirectly relating to the Soweto riots of 1976. Under 'other serious' topics 7 leads dealt with the proximate cause of the unrest, the Afrikaans language issue in African schools.

These figures underline the conclusions derived from Tables 1 and 2, to the effect that World had become more 'serious' as well as more politicized (the latter is true even if all the leads relating to the Soweto uprising are deducted) between 1968 and 1976 and that the Mail was a more 'serious' newspaper than World even in 1976. Although the 1959 figures are very small they suggest, at least, that World had given more prominence to social problems (there were in fact eight leads in this category) and other topics of interest to the concerned citizen in 1959 than in 1968. Although World's foreign affairs coverage had greatly increased by 1976, it was still less than that of Rand Daily Mail - much of it focussed on Rhodesia, Angola and other parts of southern Africa. There was hardly any front-page coverage of anything but sub-Saharan Africa.

World editorials generally focussed on controversial issues of concern to its readers; therefore, the distribution of editorial subjects is somewhat different from that of front page leads (Table 4).

Table 4: Editorials in World and Rand Daily Mail

	World						Rand Daily Mail	
	April-Sept 1959		1968		1976		1968	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
South African internal politics and race relations	16	64.0	112	42.9	199(31)	61.6(9.6)	149	33.8
International and foreign politics	1	4.0	17	6.5	40	12.4	112	25.4
Economics: general	1	4.0	6	2.7	4	1.2	32	7.3
labour	-	-	12	4.6	14	4.2	26	5.9
Education: general	-	-	28	10.7	19(18)	5.9(3.1)	17	3.9
students, universities	1	4.0	5	1.9	3	0.9	24	5.4
Social problems, social welfare	4	16.0	22	8.5	20	6.2	18	4.1
Other 'serious' topics, e.g. religion, science, culture	-	-	21	7.9	3	0.9	48	10.1
Sport	-	-	22	8.5	7	2.2	7	1.6
Police, court and crime	2	8.0	7	2.7	6	1.8	3	0.7
Other	-	-	8	3.1	6	2.5	4	1.1
Total	25	100.0	260	100.0	323	100.0	441	100.0

Notes: (a) Percentages do not necessarily add to 100 because of rounding.
 (b) Figures in brackets in the first row refer to editorials directly or indirectly relating to the riots of 1976 and are included in the first figure.
 (c) Figures in brackets in row 4, Education, refer to the Afrikaans-language issue in African schools.

As one would expect, editorials in both newspapers are predominantly concerned with politics, though again the Mail has relatively more on external politics. Otherwise, the Mail lays greater stress on other 'serious' topics, e.g. space travel or the papal encyclical on birth control, than does World. In a newspaper known for its social conscience, however, the Rand Daily Mail devotes surprisingly fewer editorials to social problems. World in 1968 and to a lesser extent in 1976 gave considerable attention to such topics as poor train services and poor housing maintenance in Soweto.

Within the economics category, World's much greater interest in the problems of labour is to be expected in a newspaper catering for a mainly working-class audience which faced acute problems of low pay and of discrimination in the workplace. The Mail tended to look at economics more from the point of view of the businessman or the economist, although it was sometimes also concerned with issues affecting workers, such as poor wages.

Political topics are considered in more detail in the following tables:

Table 5a

	World 1968		Rand Daily Mail 1968		World 1976		Rand Daily Mail 1.7.-30.9.76	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
General	25	19.4	86	33.0	76	31.7	54	47.8
Legal Segregation, including urban areas legislation	16	12.4	18	6.9	29	12.2	3	2.6
Bantustan politics	25	19.4	5	1.9	21	8.8	2	1.8
Black leaders, parties	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	2.5	0	0.0
Guerrilla war, riots, security police	0	0.0	8(a)	3.1(a)	33	13.8	16	14.2
Race attitudes/relations	11	8.5	7	2.7	6	2.5	2	1.8
Local Government	25	19.4	8	3.1	6	2.5	2	1.8
Other	10	7.6	17	6.5	22	9.2	10	8.9
Total, Internal	112	86.8	149	57.2	199	83.3	89	78.8

(a) * Note: this category includes the guerilla war in Rhodesia in 1968.

Table 5b

	<u>World 1968</u>		<u>Rand Daily Mail 1968</u>		<u>World 1976</u>		<u>Rand Daily Mail 1.7.-30.9.76</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
General	6	4.7	46	17.6	1	0.4	3	2.6
South Africa and the wider world	0	0.0	18	6.9	12	5.0	9	8.0
Rhodesia and South African - Rhodesian relations	2	1.6	34	13.0	17	7.2	7	6.2
Rest of Africa and South Africa's relationship with it	9	7.0	14	5.4	10	4.2	5	4.4
Total, Foreign/International	17	13.2	112	42.9	40	16.7	24	21.2
Total, political editorials	129	100.0	261	100.0	239	100.0	113	100.0
Total, All editorials	261		441		323		153	

Table 5 shows that World's editorial comments on foreign politics were directed to:

- (1) South Africa's relationship to the wider world - mainly the United Nations, Britain and the United States. Much of the editorial writing on the 1976 Kissinger initiative on Rhodesia was included as it was also concerned with South Africa.
- (2) Events in Africa. Editorials were focussed almost entirely on neighbouring countries in Southern Africa and Uganda under Idi Amin, which got six editorials.

Rand Daily Mail, on the other hand, showed little interest in developments in the black states of Southern Africa but much in Rhodesia.

In general, the approach of the two newspapers was comparable: a broadly liberal, anti-communist (but not hysterically so) and pro-Western stance, though in relation to Africa World tended to sympathise more than did the Mail with black nationalist political movements in Rhodesia and elsewhere.

World's 1976 editorials were considerably more militant than those of 1968. Often right of the Mail in 1968, World tended to be on the left in 1976: for example, the Mail supported the Turnhalle in South West Africa/Namibia while the World rejected it.

Shifts in news content and tone in the World can more readily be traced in topics relating to internal politics rather than foreign affairs.

World in 1959 gave much attention in its news columns, feature articles and editorials to African political movements, especially the African National Congress and the Africanist movement. While it did not set out a specific political agenda editorially it did indicate general sympathy for the Africanists - whereas its weekly contemporary Post supported Congress. In addition to fairly vigorous attacks on apartheid - for example the 'fantasy' of the Bantustans - World criticised various social abuses such as homelessness (of those evicted from Sophiatown - a former black area allocated to whites), prison conditions and farm labour. Articles on the plight of farm labourers, for example, gave rise to a particularly poignant account of a man whose fingers had rotted through being forced to dig potatoes on a white farm, after arrest on a pass law offence.

In 1968 World was much less outspoken editorially than in 1959 and the pattern of its editorial concerns had changed. To a considerable extent, editorials dealt with subsidiary aspects of the political system - in particular, politics in the Bantustans (especially Transkei) and local government which meant the new Urban Bantu Councils. World's concern with these topics, however, was linked to the theme 'we do not agree with apartheid but we must use the institutions it sets up to forward our development'. Hence World urged its readers to vote in Soweto Urban Bantu Council and Transkei elections of 1968.

Several 'general' editorials dealt with the denials of political rights to urban Africans as well as with broad attacks on the policy of apartheid. Social criticism in 1968 focussed not on social conditions as in 1959 but on injustices under urban areas legislation - especially the denial of home ownership to urban Africans (a point which particularly affected the 'elite' group to which many black journalists belonged) and police abuses. Social criticism (though only a partial count of 'critical' articles was done) seemed to be both less frequent and much less pointed in 1968 than in 1959.

By 1976 World's editorial concern had switched from what may be seen as the peripheral to the central issues of South African politics, and from co-operation to uncompromising rejection of the institutions of apartheid.

Many editorials, of course, related directly to the Soweto uprising of 1976 - such as a call for the release of 'students' arrested during the riots or criticism of police brutality. No less than 10 editorials castigated attacks on press freedom through threats to and arrests of black journalists covering the riots. The disturbances were also used as a text in calling for major political changes. Social criticism was focussed largely but by no means exclusively on police behaviour in relation to the riots - for example, the shooting of a Soweto businessman at the funeral of a rioter shot by the police.

World gave considerable news and feature coverage as well as editorial comment to the revival of anti-apartheid African political groups. It supported the Black Consciousness movement and the Soweto Committee of Ten. (The first meeting was in World offices).

World also sought to advise the boycotting students in a 'moderate' direction. It provided a forum for the debate between Black Consciousness and the position exemplified by Buthelezi. But the impression, though difficult to quantify, is that World was rather less free or definite in its comments on black political movements in 1976 than in 1959 - perhaps because the situation itself was less clearcut and certainly more dangerous.

The main difference between the subjects of political editorials in Rand Daily Mail and World was the former's relative neglect of the detailed application of apartheid and, within the 'other' category, its concern with a range of 'white' political topics such as parliamentary or municipal elections which were not dealt with by World. The difference between the two papers narrowed in the second half of 1976, as the riots "served wonderfully to concentrate the minds" of leader writers on both newspapers (5).

World's political editorials in 1968 for the most part lacked vigour and conviction (except, perhaps, for three individual editorials on urban home ownership, salary discrimination between black and white doctors and examination results in African schools). Arguments tended to be phrased in persuasive rather than conflictual terms, or in terms of communication rather than confrontation of opposed interests. Thus the editor "appealed" for but did not "demand" a political voice for urban Africans. By 1976 the phraseology was far more direct, the metaphors of conflict and disaster much more frequent and attacks more often personalized. The Government was, for example, living in a dream world if it thought that blacks did not hate whites. Blacks, in another editorial, were swimming in the gutters of frustration and anger. Nevertheless, World was still surprisingly conciliatory in many of its editorials. Mr Vorster was urged to show courage in standing firm against the verkramptes in his party, for example, and the language used was not emotive.

The consensus theme which underly much of 1968 editorial writing was still present to some extent in 1976 as in colourful exhortation to catch "the Brotherhood Bus". This last editorial well sums up Mr Qoboza's overall attitude. The difference in tone from 1968 can be illustrated from the title of a leader page article by the editor ('Percy's Pitch') - "I will not be an Uncle Tom". His teenage daughter had asked him to explain why the police had had to defend themselves against a 10-year-old child by shooting him.

Comparison between Rand Daily Mail and World editorials also provides illuminating examples of differences in political style as well as differences in assumptions and outlooks between the two papers. Mail editorials - as well as its features and news stories - not only employ a richer vocabulary but are more complex in the structure of their argument. They also demonstrate a greater skill in the use of literary devices such as metaphor, contrast or verbal rhythm to stimulate interest and emotion. At the same time, Mail writing tends to be more factual and detailed and to place the subject of its editorial - whether, for example, a commentary on the Prime Minister's speech to a party congress (15.9.75, problems at Fort Hare University (6.10.68) or the forced removal of blacks (29.1.68) in a well realised setting. 68). Although World editorials on the same subjects cannot be quoted, in each case they contain far less detailed background information and usually less vivid imagery. World editorials tend to be straightforward statements or generalised exhortations, often couched in moral terms. The second, and more important, way in which the Mail differs from World was in the underlying values which inform and shape the style and the type of arguments used. The Mail appealed to expediency - including economic expediency - or prudence, generally the enlightened self-interest of the whites, rather than to abstract moral principles. The World rarely used these arguments except in reference to race conflict. While World would condemn low African wages as unjust, for example, the Mail would also argue that higher black wages would benefit the economy as a whole by increasing the size of the internal market.

Conclusion

In effect, the Mail emphasised consensus - shared interests of black and white in South Africa. Its response to a shooting incident at a funeral in Soweto: "some police are dangerously gambling with South Africa's peace and security". World insisted on justice for Africans which embodied a concern for blacks potentially (though rarely explicitly) in conflict with white interests and needs.

The Mail also spoke with an air of authority that was missing in World - the "armchair statesmen" style (6) which tends to identify the reader with a "superior power of insight" to those being criticized. World spoke much less hesitantly in 1976 than in 1968, but in neither case achieved the same weighty sonorous tone as the Mail.

The Mail's marshalling of evidence and the structure of logical argument in its editorials, the underlying assumption of its status as a major national - even world - newspaper, and its support of the white establishment, even though it was opposed to the Government, were all reflected in its perception of the role it had in recording and interpreting events and issues in South Africa.

Thus the Rand Daily Mail, in terms of social criticism, put viewpoints sympathetic to blacks more strongly and effectively than World did, but the gap between the two newspapers was much less in 1976 than in 1968. As former editor Raymond Louw put it frankly in 1977 to the writer, the Mail was essentially a "white-oriented" newspaper which did not and could not express the black voice in the same way as did World - even when that voice came through hesitantly and timidly as in 1968. Nor could either paper succeed in speaking effectively to - let alone for - both white and black in South Africa.

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Media, Politics and Culture

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What part do the mass media play in the formation of ideology? In what way can ideology be challenged by socialist cultural practice and what is the place of such oppositional cultural production in the struggle for socialism? These are the sort of questions which are increasingly asked by socialists and feminists and it is to these questions that the contributors to this collection address themselves.

For the first time an overview of the various strategies for socialist transformation of the media have been brought together in one volume - those dealing with alternative forms of cultural practice, those advocating workers' control and management of the existing media, and those taking their inspiration from the semiotologists and their tactic of 'the subversion of codes'.

In addition, the latter half of the book involves a substantial discussion of the vexed question of democracy and the control of the media in a post-capitalist society. Very few of the contributors are academics, being mostly practitioners and writers in and around the fields of cultural production and the media.

The book consists of 14 chapters. Some of these are "The Growth and Role of the Mass Media" by Raymond Williams; "Education and Television: Theory and Practice"; "Pop Music: Mobiliser or Opiate?"; "The Struggle for Song"; "Political Theatre and the Working Class"; "Class Strategies for a New Cinema"; "British Film Culture"; "Their Papers and Ours"; "Sexism and the Media"; "The Mass Media and Racism"; "Press Freedom: a Socialist Strategy"; "Workers Control and the Media"; "Culture, the Media and Workers' Democracy" and "Mass Media after Capitalism: towards a Proletarian Culture?".

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