

CURRENT AFRICAN ISSUES NO. 27

**MEDIA, PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND POLITICAL CONTESTATION
IN ZIMBABWE**

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NORDISKA AFRIKAINSTITUTET, UPPSALA 2004

Indexing terms

Civil rights

Freedom of information

Journalism

Mass media

Political development

Press

Zimbabwe

Language checking: Elaine Almén

ISSN 0280-2171

ISBN 91-7106-534-2

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Printed in Sweden by Elanders Infologistics Väst, Göteborg 2004

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Looking to the Future: Social, political and cultural space in Zimbabwe” was the theme of an International Conference organised by the Nordic Africa Institute from May 24 to 26, 2004, in Uppsala. This event brought together a blend of scholars and civil society actors from within Zimbabwe, Zimbabweans from abroad as well as scholars committed to research matters related to Zimbabwe from various other countries. The aim of the debates was to assess the character, causes and impacts of the country’s crisis and possible future perspectives.

The selection of participants was on the basis of their merits as committed scholars or civil society activists in advocacy roles not merely confined in their orientation to party-political affinity. Instead, they shared as a common denominator loyalty to the people of Zimbabwe and were guided by values and norms transcending narrow (party) organisational links. Participants were motivated in their discourse and deliberations to explore and occupy the “space in between” the polarised frontiers to secure – as much as possible under the given circumstances – common sustainable ground beyond the we-they dichotomy and divide.

Papers, opinions and comments were presented in thematically oriented sessions sub-divided into socio-economic, -political and -cultural issues. They were conducted under the responsibility of the three co-organising researchers at the Institute: Amin Kamete (programme “Gender and Age in African Cities”), Henning Melber (project “Liberation and Democracy in Southern Africa”) and Mai Palmberg (project “Cultural Images in and of Africa”) respectively. Karolina Winbo was in charge of the organisational and administrative support and offered the necessary reliable backup. Particular thanks go to my colleagues for the successful collaborative effort, without which this result would not have been possible. Funds, for both the conference and this publication, were generously provided by Sida and are herewith gratefully acknowledged.

The papers by Dumisani Moyo and Sarah Chiumbu were among the inputs prepared for the socio-economic and -political sessions respectively. They were selected for this publication as a result of their complementing each other on a subject of a highly topical nature and have been edited and revised since then. Thanks to the efficient collaboration between the authors and the Institute’s publication department, these texts are now available within a relatively short period of time for wider dissemination. I wish once again to thank all those involved in making this possible.

Henning Melber

Uppsala, July 2004

Inside the “Third Chimurenga” Media Repression, Manipulation and Hegemony in Zimbabwe – Some Introductory Notes

Henning Melber

We, the participants in the United Nations/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 29 April to 3 May 1991,

[...]

Declare that:

1. *Consistent with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation and for economic development.*
2. *By an independent press, we mean a press independent from government, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.*
3. *By a pluralistic press, we mean the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community.*

[...]

17. *In view of the importance of radio and television in the field of news and information, the United Nations and UNESCO are invited to recommend to the General Assembly and the General Conference the convening of a similar seminar of journalists and managers of radio and television services in Africa, to explore the possibility of applying similar concepts of independence and pluralism to those media.*¹

Media analyses focussing on African realities today tend to emphasize the increasingly crucial, strategically and politically relevant role of press, radio, television, and of late also other electronic communication in democratization processes towards more publicly pluralistic societies (cf. Hydén et al. 2002). The “Windhoek Declaration” cited above marked a highlight in the emerging discourse as a result of the so-called second wave (of democratization) on the continent. At the same time, this major continental event paid tribute to the newly independent Republic of Namibia as the host country.

1. Declaration of Windhoek on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, 1991 (http://www.unesco.org/shs/human_rights/hrfq.htm).

Not only had its people achieved the long fought for sovereignty just little more than a year before, they had also impressively enshrined the values and norms of universal human rights in an exemplary constitutional document defining the fundamental legal framework for the further process of decolonisation.²

For more than a decade after the adoption of the “Windhoek Declaration”, the processes of social transformation in Southern Africa reflected not only the final end of white minority regimes in previous settler colonies after long and bitter anti-colonial wars of liberation,³ they also consolidated the transfer of political power to the previous liberation movements. One is tempted to characterize in retrospect the changes in Zimbabwe, Namibia and (to a lesser extent) in South Africa from 1980, 1990 and 1994 onward respectively as transition processes from controlled change to changed control. Modified socio-political (less so -economic) structures, combined with (class) interests of the new elite, were accompanied by ideological patterns adapted to the revised social setting. A post-colonial hierarchical re-arrangement of power relations was consolidated, the results of which were not as democratic as some might have originally expected.⁴

Ironically, it was also in Windhoek – almost thirteen years later (end of February 2004) – that Zim-

2. See as a critical stock-taking exercise on the achievements and failures since then in terms of democracy and human rights the contributions to Melber (2003a).

3. A historical process of decolonisation formally beginning in the Southern African region with Angola and Mozambique in the mid-1970s, followed by the independence of Rhodesia as Zimbabwe in 1980, South West Africa as Namibia in 1990 and finally completed with the democratic transition in South Africa from 1994 onward.

4. See for various Southern African case studies the contributions to Melber (2003b) as well as other results published from within the research project on “Liberation and Democracy in Southern Africa” (LiDeSA). See for further information the link to the project and the NAI Discussion Papers accessible through www.nai.uu.se.

babwe's Minister of State for Information and Publicity signed a co-operation agreement with his Namibian counterpart on future closer collaboration.¹ During his visit he offered an in-depth interview to the state-funded Namibian newspaper, in the course of which he praised the Presidents of both countries "as two leaders that have remained steadfast, committed, not only as nationalists but also as Pan-Africanists, and as global leaders". He urged both countries to pursue the common task of "doing justice to the kind of solidarity that was born during the liberation struggle, and which must be upheld today and in future" and identified the following common challenges for the governing authorities in the sovereign states:

It is important to us in information to realise the critical role of the media in keeping the story of the liberation struggle (more in the post-independence period) alive because the majority of the people in our countries are increasingly young people who are not familiar with the story of the liberation struggle, yet it is a very current story (...). So we are here to cement these historic bonds and ties, and look at the new challenges that we are facing, as we in particular begin to consolidate the economic objectives of our liberation struggle, and identify the critical role of information, information not only in terms of the press, the print media, but also the electronic media and other multimedia platforms that are new, that are being used and that are accessible to these generations that may be prone to losing the bigger picture of the essential story.²

The Honourable Minister had not always used such language. As a Zimbabwean scholar, with at the same time a highly dubious track record, more recently labelled as "an academic mercenary on hire to Zanu PF",³ he stated with regard to his country at a Conference on Robben Island as late as February 1999:

... it would be a mistake to justify the struggles for national liberation purely on the basis of the need to remove the white minority regimes from power and to replace them with black majority regimes that did not respect or subscribe to fundamental principles of democracy and human rights (...) ruling personalities have hijacked the movement and are doing totally unacceptable things in the name of national liberation. Being here at Robben Island for the first time, I am immensely pained by the fact that some people who suffered here left this place only to turn their whole countries into Robben Islands. (Moyo 2000:17)

Only three years later, in March 2002, he now in a very different role praised the highly questionable results of the presidential elections in his country as an impressive sign

that Zimbabweans have come of age that they do not believe in change from something to nothing. They do not believe in moving from independence and sovereignty to new colonialism, they do not believe in the discourse of human rights to deepen inequality.⁴

Rhetoric of such calibre has earned Jonathan Moyo the label 'Goebbels of Africa'.⁵ But the current clampdown on the independent media in Zimbabwe is neither exclusively nor decisively – as relevant as his individual role in the current constellation might be – the result of a personal vendetta by a previously progressive scholar who for his own gains has embarked on a reactionary rampage in defence and further consolidation of a totalitarian system. Jonathan Moyo is just one – though admittedly due to his track record notably exotic – example of relatively high profile calibre representatives of a post-colonial establishment seeking their own gains through populist rhetoric covering up their selfish

1. This makes, among others, provisions for enhanced collaboration between the two national news agencies and foresees the establishment of a joint newspaper covering regional issues. Allegedly from July 2004 onward the *New Sunday Times* will be printed in 4,000 copies as a joint venture of Zimbabwe's Newspapers Group and the New Era Publishing Corporation of Namibia. Its Windhoek based editorial offices will operate under the current assistant editor of Zimbabwe's state run *Herald*.

2. 'Zimbabwe – the Challenges', *New Era*, Windhoek, 5 March 2004.

3. Takavafira Zhou, 'Jonathanosis Grips Zim', *Zimbabwe Standard*, Harare, 21 October 2001 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200110230321.html>).

4. Quoted from 'Zanu-PF Satisfied with Poll Proceeding – Moyo', *The Herald*, Harare, 12 March 2002 (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203120588.html>). See in contrast to this and as a result of the frustration over the manipulated presidential elections of 2002 the critical assessments in Melber (2002). For a recent background survey on the massive manipulation of public opinion before, during and after the presidential elections of 2002 see Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe (2004).

5. See Takavafira Zhou, op. cit. This is certainly too demagogic a label in itself, given the historically unique dimensions of the German holocaust to which the Nazi propaganda minister is related and associated with. A rather intriguing profile of Jonathan Moyo and his likes is offered by John Matshikiza, 'Harare Has a New Landed Gentry', *Mail & Guardian*, Johannesburg, 8 to 14 March 2002. He traces "Moyo's transformation from urbane, meticulous intellectual to petulant, ultra-nationalist furioso" with a sensible but sharp mind and tongue (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200203070404.html>).

motives. They have become part and parcel of a set of deep-rooted anachronistic values within a system of liberation movements in power. After seizing legitimate political control over the state, they turned their liberating politics of anti-colonial resistance under the disguise of pseudo-revolutionary slogans into oppressive tools. Their "talk left, act right" seeks to cover the true motive of aiming to occupy the political commanding heights of society against all odds – preferably forever – at the expense of the public interest they claim to represent in the light of deteriorating socio-economic conditions of living for the once colonised and now hardly liberated (and even less emancipated) majority.

Ironically (or actually sadly) enough, it was the same Jonathan Moyo, who at an early stage of the sobering post-colonial realities in Zimbabwe provided a role model for many others courageous and sensible analytical insights into these processes. While a lecturer at the Department of Political and Administrative Studies of the University of Zimbabwe, he frequently presented thought-provoking and painful analyses offering remarkable insights with regard to the values of the liberation war (*chimurenga*) perpetuated in all their dubious ambiguity. Read this:

There can hardly be any doubt that the armed struggle in Zimbabwe was a pivotal means to the goal of defeating oppressive and intransigent elements of colonialism and racism. However, as it often is the case with protracted social processes of a conflict with two sides, the armed struggle in this country had a deep socio-psychological impact on its targets as well as on its perpetrators (...). For the most part, the armed struggle in this country lacked a guiding moral ethic beyond the savagery of primitive war and was thus amenable to manipulation by the violence of unscrupulous nationalist politicians and military commanders who personalized the liberation war for their own selfish ends (...). This resulted in a culture of fear driven by values of violence perpetrated in the name of nationalism and socialism. (Moyo 1992a: 12 and 13)

Nowadays, the erstwhile critical scholar represents the same mindset he had questioned before and he has turned into one of the most vicious advocates of perpetration. According to a news report by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), he used a press conference on 30 April 2004 in Bulawayo to threaten that "there was enough space in Zimbabwe's prisons for journalists caught dealing with foreign media houses". As "terrorists of the pen"

they would be the next enemy targeted after dealing with corrupt financial businesses. The report quotes the Minister as saying:

President Mugabe has said our main enemy is the financial sector but the enemy is media who use the pen to lie about this country. Such reporters are terrorists and the position on how to deal with terrorists is to subject them to the laws of Zimbabwe.¹

This smacks of an attitude tantamount to paranoia and is scarily similar to the tune orchestrated the same day at the same place as this press conference took place in an article by a local state weekly. With reference to a forthcoming visit to Sweden by a group of Zimbabwean journalists the paper fumed:

Poor Swedish Ambassador, Kristina Svensson, it has taken her more than two years to realize that her silly government, which the British and Americans have turned into a mere megaphone, actually has a draconian media law with unprecedented restrictions on ownership and practice falsely presented as a democratic model.

Svensson has hastily put together a crisis trip for willing sellout scribes in Zimbabwe to visit Sweden to "provide a general understanding of Swedish society and culture and specifically Swedish laws on freedom of speech and access to information".

Come on, Ambassador Svensson, and get real. Sweden has a dreadful so-called freedom of information law and cannot be compared to the democratic and constitutional Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act that has survived scrutiny in the courts and in Parliament. The press in Zimbabwe should publish the full Swedish law on the media downloaded from the Internet. Maybe that would stop the sellouts from making a sellout trip to a sellout country that has become a pathetic British and American dog that no longer has a mind of its own.²

Apropos Internet: as the mere distribution of and access to such information is of course damaging the security interests of the same government represented by the Minister and so eagerly advocated and guarded by media practitioners of the kind quoted above, the next clamp down has already been initiated. This time it is directed against the

1. Peter Chilambwe, Minister threatens journalists (<http://kabaso.misa.org/cgi-bin/viewnes.cgi?category=3&id=1085391631>, accessed 11/06/2004)

2. 'Swedish Ambassador's Media Blues', *Sunday News*, Bulawayo, 30 May 2004. The author of this introduction is aware that he will find no more mercy for this text and his other deeds in such eyes and stubbornly admits that he is brainwashed to the extent that he prefers the Swedish limits to personal and academic freedom to the liberties offered by the current Zimbabwean regime.

private ISPs (Internet Service Providers) still operating in the country. The state owned telephone company Tel*One announced in early June 2004 that ISPs had to enter new contracts. These contain clauses that they as service providers agree to prevent or report to the authorities anti-national activities and malicious correspondence via their telephone lines. If they fail to do so, service providers will be liable, i.e. punishable by law.¹

This follows earlier appalling interferences resulting in the closing of independent newspapers and the imprisonment or expelling of journalists on a systematic and organised scale. The government and its executive branches are eager to emphasise that all these interventions are in compliance with the existing (and for such purposes adopted and enacted) laws of Zimbabwe and hence fully within “legality” (which, of course, is a far cry from legitimacy). But this emphasis of the “rule of law” simply shows that it can happen in the absence of any justice: “it is the strategy of the ban that, ironically, constitutes the rule of law” (Worby 2003:78). This “strategy of the ban” does not even come to a halt before government-friendly media productions and displays the comprehensive totalitarian nature of the system. One prominent example is the banning of the live-broadcast television production “Talk to the Nation” in mid-2001, which was sponsored by the National Development Association (NDA). Raftopoulos (2003:233) quotes the explanatory statement by an official of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) as an example of “the lack of a sense of irony of authoritarian regimes”:

It is not all about money. Live productions can be tricky and dangerous. The setting of the NDA productions was professionally done but maybe the production should not have been broadcast live. You do not know what someone will come and say and there is no way of controlling it.²

On another alleged breach of a legal clause under the notorious Access to Information and Protec-

tion of Privacy Act (AIPPA), the Media and Information Commission (MIC) has in June 2004 closed down the most recent press organ (*The Tribune*) for at least one year. Its publisher, himself a former ZANU-PF MP, was reportedly suspended earlier on by the ruling party for “disrespecting” ZANU-PF top structures as he had denounced AIPPA in his maiden address to parliament.³ It therefore does not come as a surprise that the latest annual overview on the state of media freedom in the Southern African region by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (2004) – issued on World Press Freedom Day (26 April) – records, with almost one hundred incidents, more than half of all the 188 media freedom and freedom of expression violations in 2003 among the ten monitored countries⁴ in Zimbabwe alone.

International agencies committed to freedom of the press and the professional ethics of independent journalism are currently in agreement that the situation in Zimbabwe is intolerable. The resolutions reproduced in the appendix of this publication speak for themselves. They document the degree of concern over the deteriorating situation, prompting the Annual General Assembly of the International Press Institute (IPI) in an unanimous decision “to retain Zimbabwe’s name on the ‘watchlist’ of nations that are seriously eroding media freedom”. And the Board of the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) condemned equally strongly the current “attempts to silence independent media”. At a meeting in Windhoek in early June 2004 a total of 24 newspaper editors from eight countries in Southern Africa organized in the Council of the Southern African Editors’ Forum (SAEF) not only adopted its constitution but also suspended its Zimbabwean wing, which was only represented by one person of the state media after the private media boycotted the national forum over their government’s clampdown on press freedom.⁵

1. Information based on a report in *Allgemeine Zeitung*, Windhoek, 10 June 2004. This is already the second attempt to curb electronic communication. The first effort failed, after the clause in a legal draft on telecommunication two years before was disqualified in March 2004 as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Government was subsequently prohibited from adopting the law.

2. Quoted from ‘ZBC switches off NDA-sponsored live TV programme’, *The Herald*, Harare, 6 June 2001.

3. Zimbabwe: Tribune closed by state commission’, *IRIN News*, circulated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Integrated Regional Information Network, IRIN Africa English reports, 11 June 2004.

4. Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

5. Tangeni Amupadhi, ‘New media organisation suspends Zim’, *The Namibian*, Windhoek, 7 June 2004.

It is important to note, that criticism of repressive policy not only but also with regard to the media is shared by some of those in established and responsible positions within the currently emerging relevant continental African bodies. Only two weeks after the Zimbabwe Conference at the end of May 2004, at which the following two papers forming the core of this publication were presented, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda attended another conference in Uppsala organised in collaboration with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Having worked as a legal expert on the drafting and conclusion of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (adopted in 1981), he did not mince his words when stating:

Good governance is not only about majorities; it involves the protection of all, including minorities such as those in the opposition. The right to free speech and dissent rests on the existence of an independent private media – both in print and on the radio, given literacy levels in Africa. The establishment of independent civil society organizations and the creation of the democratic space for them to operate effectively must be nurtured to diffuse the over-centralization of power and authority, empower the ordinary citizen and thereby reduce the risks of abuse of centralized authority (...). Governments should relentlessly strive to ensure the realization of all categories of rights and freedoms for all without distinction. (Jallow 2004:30)

It is obvious that this is under the present circumstances not the case in Zimbabwe. The narrowing down of the post-colonial discourse to a mystification of the liberation movement in power as the exclusive home to national identity and belonging finds a corresponding expression in the increased attempt towards full monopolisation of the public sphere and expressed opinion. This results in

efforts to control or destroy the independent media and to silence all alternative versions of history and the present, whether expressed in schools, in churches, on sports fields, in food and fuel queues, at trade union or rate payers' meetings, in opposition party offices or at foreign embassies. (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:28)

Comforting about this is, that such desperate initiatives to enhance control signal at the same time a lack of true support among the population, who otherwise could be allowed to speak out freely. The repression of public opinion beyond the official government propaganda is therefore an indication of the ruthless last fight for survival of a regime,

which has lost its original credibility and legitimacy to an extent, that it has to be afraid of allowing a basic and fundamental principle of human rights – the freedom of expression. A recently published volume on the role of the media in democratisation processes in Africa (Hydén et al. 2002) uses a quote from one of its chapters as the cover illustration. It captions in a strikingly realistic way the diagnosis currently applicable in Zimbabwe too:

... while the media may still be relatively weak compared to their positions in liberal democracies, they have come to play a much more important role than ever before since independence ...

From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: Change without Change? Broadcasting Policy Reform and Political Control

Dumisani Moyo

Broadcasting in Zimbabwe has been a contested terrain since its introduction in the then colonial Rhodesia in the 1930s. Despite claims to neutrality by both pre- and post-independence governments, the ruling elite has always used broadcasting as a tool for political control and manipulation of the masses. In the name of ‘national interest’, ‘national security’, and ‘national sovereignty’, broadcasting, from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, has been characterised by two salient features: first, its *legal* status as a state monopoly, and secondly, its location under the Ministry of Information which rendered it a *political* tool in the hands of the government of the day.

This chapter explores how ruling elites in both Rhodesia and Zimbabwe have sought to limit democratic space by restricting access to broadcasting. It seeks to draw links between normative theories of democracy and the media and the regulation of broadcasting in Zimbabwe. Its point of departure is that the media are central to modern democracy as primary sources of information. This is because democracy as a political system requires an informed citizenry that is capable of participating effectively in public debate and in the overall political process where they have to make informed decisions. Consequently, the exchange and free flow of information and the ability of citizens to have equal access to sources of information as well as equal opportunities to participate in political debates have been considered key elements of democracy. Broadcasting, in particular, has come to be regarded as the most effective mass medium worldwide in shaping people’s social and political perceptions – for good or ill. The accessibility, immediacy and intrusiveness associated with both radio and television have given rise to these assumptions about the power of broadcasting. Politicians throughout the world have increasingly become aware of this enormous influence of broad-

casting in both creating conditions for widespread political debate and providing a vehicle for the presentation of diverse viewpoints. However, they are also aware that placed in the wrong hands, broadcasting can become a dangerous tool, as illustrated by the way hate radio broadcasts in Rwanda led to one of the world’s most ghastly genocides, or the way the Nazis effectively used broadcasting as a propaganda tool. The other side to it is also that broadcasting is a powerful commercial tool in terms of its vast power to advertise and promote consumer goods. All these factors have led to increased interest in state regulation of broadcasting the world over, to ensure that these powers are not abused.

In Africa, there has been an obvious practical link between broadcasting and political power which has made ruling elites particularly cautious about its ownership. Coup plotters on the continent, for example, have always made broadcasting stations key targets. James Zaffiro accurately sums up the perception of broadcasting in Africa when he writes that:

It is characteristic of foreign critics and consultants to assume that something other than state control (of broadcasting) is possible. It may be desirable. *No African government in its right mind would willingly sacrifice direct control over broadcasting if it doesn’t have to.* During the crucial transitional years, when a new majority-elected regime seeks state-wide legitimisation for itself, broadcasting is among its most important tools. To lose it, or even to share it with other factions, is illogical and dangerous. (Zaffiro 2002: ix–x; my emphasis.)

Political party access to broadcasting facilities, particularly in the run-up to key polls such as the parliamentary and presidential elections, has always been grossly skewed in favour of the ruling parties in most of Southern Africa, as ruling elites have come to realise that monopolising broadcasting pays off in terms of legitimacy construction and perpetuation of their rule.

Thus while politicians in the West can claim that elections are won and lost on the nation's television sets (Barendt 1995:1), their African counterparts could also claim, with justification, that elections are won and lost on the nation's radio sets. This is mainly because television, which has become 'the defining medium of the age' in the West, is yet to make a wider impact in Africa, where radio remains dominant for a number of reasons.¹ With its capacity to overcome problems of illiteracy, distance, linguistic diversity and press scarcity, radio plays a far more significant role than both television and the press in reaching the majority of Africa's populations, which reside in the rural areas.² In Zimbabwe, for example, while television signals can be accessed by 56% of the population, radio signals are received by 75% of the population (Ibbotson Report 1997:17).³ Sub-Saharan Africa, as Paul Van der Veur (2002) notes, has a functional literacy rate of about 50 percent, and about 80 percent of its populations live in rural areas. In Zimbabwe, about 70% of the population resides in the rural areas. Under such conditions, broadcasting can act as a major platform for political debate, allowing citizens to 'see' and 'meet' their political representatives, apart from serving the general role of providing information, education, and entertainment.

Mass Media in the Colonies: Broadcasting in Colonial Rhodesia

The mass media of communication were developed in African and other colonies primarily to serve the interests of the settlers by helping them keep in touch with the motherland. In the same vein, the media also provided vital information to those "back home" on the developments taking place in the colonies themselves. Thus the media developed in most of Africa primarily as tools of European imperialism. The extension of the media to serve

the native populations was not for the purpose of advancing their democratic communicative rights, as often claimed under the rhetoric of "upliftment" and "enlightenment". On the contrary, it was for the purpose of interpreting government policy to the natives, as well as 'cultivating' them to make them employable in the new economies as skilled labour (see Van der Veur 2002:82–86). Authoritarian means such as the imposition of tough media laws together with licensing requirements and powers to prosecute, suspend or ban publications were commonplace throughout the colonies.

It is important to stress that for most of its existence, the colonial state did not consider its subjects as citizens, and hence little or no attempt was made to create institutions for democratic participation. The media were thus used to create a sense of what Benedict Anderson (1991) has called 'imagined communities' – though in the colonial sense these were 'bifurcated communities' with citizens on one hand, and subjects on the other (settlers and natives, respectively). Mamdani (1996) has argued that African natives under the colonial state were never considered citizens, as they did not have civil, political or social rights. Further, he argues, the post-colonial state has failed to meaningfully advance the citizenship rights of the majority of its rural populations who largely remain subjects.

The history of broadcasting in Zimbabwe dates back to the 1930s. Its development was closely linked to that of Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia), from where the first broadcasting to Africans was carried out in 1941. Broadcasting, as the then Director of Information for Northern Rhodesia, Harry Franklin, wrote, began more as an experiment, "to see whether broadcasting to Africans would be worthwhile from the viewpoint of war propaganda and of getting at the people quickly in the event of serious war emergency" (Franklin 1949:12).⁴ Realising the promise of radio shown by the experiment, the government of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) set up a small Government Broadcasting Station in Lusaka in 1941, with the main object of "stimulating the people's war effort" (*ibid.*). At about the same time, the Southern Rhodesia Broadcasting Service was formed, under the control of the Postmaster-General. By 1945, it had

1. According to the World Bank, there are about 59 television sets per 1,000 persons, and about 198 radios per 1,000 persons in Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa). Zimbabwe is estimated to have about 30 television sets per 1,000 persons, and 362 radio sets per 1,000 persons (The World Bank 2003:249).

2. Julius Nyerere made an interesting remark that while the developed countries are racing each other to reach the moon, in Africa we are still battling to reach the rural villages.

3. The situation might have slightly improved since 1997, but there are still some considerable parts of the country that do not receive national radio and/or television signals.

4. Africans in British colonies were recruited to fight in the Second World War.

become clear that Northern Rhodesia alone could not afford to establish an efficient broadcasting system for the entire “Central Africa” (meaning Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (now Malawi)). This led to the decision to split European from African broadcasting – with all European broadcasting done by Southern Rhodesia from Salisbury (now Harare), and all African broadcasting done from Lusaka – and have the three territories share the cost (ibid.). The British Government provided the capital funds through the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund. The result was the birth of the Central African Broadcasting Station (CABS), broadcasting to Africans in their different languages.

Right from the start, broadcasting for Africans in Rhodesia was mainly for propaganda purposes, for the control of their minds to ensure their loyalty to the colonial state. It is worth quoting Franklin at length:

“Educating the natives”, some people say in rather deprecating tones. Well, of course, much broadcasting time has anyway to be allotted to entertainment. But for the rest, using the word “education” in the widest sense we are doing our best in the education of the African, we believe *on the right lines* – hygiene, agriculture, housing, sanitation and so on. Apart from the fact that our critics can always listen in and judge for themselves whether we are *on the right lines* (...). The majority of Africans are still illiterate. Broadcasting is about the only way to get at them in the mass. But surely we must get at the mass, so as to avoid the unpleasant consequences which have arisen in other parts of the world, where the native population consists of a handful of intelligentsia and a completely ignorant black mass who can be so easily misled by a few agitators of the intelligentsia class. Whether you like it or not, the African mind is awakening, is thirsty for knowledge; if we don’t it will surely pick up the wrong. You know the old saying about idle hands and mischief. Well, the same applies to idle minds, and there are always people, even as far afield as Moscow, looking for idle minds in Africa (...). We want a happy and contented African people. Now what can the native do when he has finished his work, his or yours. He can get drunk if he has the money, or gamble or worse. If there is a full moon he can dance. But most nights he can only go back to his hut, with no light and generally no ability to read even if he had the light. There he can talk and think. (ibid.)

Implied here is that thinking is dangerous, and the best way out is to ‘drug’ the African with entertainment and keep him away from ‘mischief’. This is reminiscent of the Frankfurt School theories that

viewed the cultural industries (including the mass media) as providing ideological legitimation of the existing capitalist societies and integrated the individual into the framework of the capitalist system. The mass media, they argue, do not provide neutral information or value-free entertainment, but are agents of manipulation and socialization (cf. Adorno 1991).

The rapid move towards the establishment of the federation, which Africans regarded as a way of perpetuating colonial rule, brought suspicion over the motives of the CABS. Indeed, broadcasting was used to sell proposals about the federation among Africans in the early 1950s. It can be concluded that broadcasting was regarded as a key link between the three territories. Following the formation of the Central African Federation (CAF) in 1953, a new broadcasting organisation was formed in 1958: the Federal Broadcasting Corporation (FBC), with its headquarters in Salisbury.

The Cold War and the Rise of African Nationalist Broadcasting

Two significant developments in the late 1940s and 1950s brought about an accelerated development of broadcasting in Southern Africa. First, the outbreak of the Cold War meant broadcasting to Africans became imperative, as various world powers battled to control the minds of the Africans. The British Colonial Office thus ensured that the Colonial Development and Welfare funds were made available for the setting up of broadcasting institutions in various colonies to “combat the growth of communist influence” through direct counter propaganda (Armour 1984:362). Technical staffs were seconded from the BBC, which played a key role in setting up these new broadcasting institutions. The colonial office envisaged broadcasting as “an instrument of advanced government” to improve communication between governments and governed and to enlighten and educate the masses as well as to entertain them” (ibid., pp. 359–60). With the invention of the ‘Saucepan Special’ – a cheap short-wave receiver that was affordable to Africans – the diffusion of radio became more rapid, enabling colonial authorities to reach a huge number of their subjects.

Second, the rise of African nationalism, particularly the emergence of nationalist broadcasts made

broadcasting an important tool for countering African nationalism. Following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), the Rhodesia Front (RF) government intensified the use of broadcasting for propaganda. The RF authorities adopted radical countermeasures, which included “periodic jamming of the nationalist shortwave frequencies, prohibition of all but FM receivers in the rural areas, regulation of battery sales, and prohibition of listening to any station but RBC in the rural settlement hamlets, or “keeps”, where an estimated 750,000 Africans had been moved” (Mosia et al. 1994:16). FM radio sets were subsidized, and thousands of them were distributed to chiefs to ensure that people listened to the RBC. The 1965 Emergency Regulations prohibiting turning on a radio in a public place “if it picks up broadcasts that might endanger public safety or interference with public order”. Anyone found guilty of “making it possible for others to hear an objectionable broadcast, or speech, statement, poem or song” could be jailed for up to two years and fined the equivalent of \$1,400 (Zaffiro 1984). Divide and rule strategies were also employed as part of RF broadcasting policy, fanning ethnic conflict between Ndebele and Shona in an attempt to weaken the liberation war effort. The RBC, for example, carried reports of ethnic rivalries, leadership wrangles, and even “bloody clashes between ZANLA (ZANU) and ZIPRA (ZAPU) units” (ibid.).

Early broadcasting to Africans in Rhodesia therefore served three main intertwined purposes: first as a building block for the federation, second, as a propaganda tool for manipulating the Africans in order to safeguard their loyalty to the colonial state, and third, as an administrative tool. This argument is also supported by Van der Veur (2002:83), where he writes that, “broadcasting systems in Africa grew out of the desire to maintain the established order, to enhance global prestige, and to influence international developments”. He further points out that key decisions regarding broadcasting were based on perceived administrative benefits, and on the wishes of the settler communities, rather than a response to needs of the indigenous population. Thus broadcasting was only cautiously extended to serve the native populations for specific perceived administrative advantages, and most importantly the maintenance of law and order. The same could be said of the development of the print

media on the continent, though less regulated than broadcasting in some places.

The interest of the censors was obviously to control nationalist politics and keep the natives in subordination by channelling the range of ideas that could reach them. By introducing FM and outlawing short-wave listening, the colonial administration in Rhodesia sought to limit the range of ideas to which the natives could expose themselves. The Broadcasting Act, 1957 provided for a state monopoly over all broadcasting in Rhodesia. Section 27 of this Act stated that no person other than the RBC could own or carry out broadcasting services in the country. The Act made broadcasting the responsibility of the state, through the Ministry of Information, and thus precluded the existence of independent broadcasters.

As Armour (1984) and Zaffiro (1984) note, the BBC model of a relatively autonomous public broadcaster insulated from pressures of party or government was widely exported to the colonies after World War II – including the Central African Federation of which Southern Rhodesia was a part. Thus prior to the introduction of the Federation, broadcasting policymakers in Rhodesia adopted BBC form and SABC substance to create their own version of a semi-public corporation (Zaffiro 1984:56). This relative autonomy came to an end with the coming to power of the Rhodesia Front party in 1962.

Laws Restricting Media Freedom before and after UDI

When the Rhodesian Front came to power, there was growing international and domestic pressure for granting independence to the majority Africans. For the regime, direct control of broadcasting became imperative, as it perceived the free flow of information as a threat to its survival. Starting in 1963, when the FBC Board was dissolved, the regime staffed the RBC with party loyalists, most of whose training and experience in broadcasting was dubious. Rigid control of broadcasting was seen as a way of countering resistance to the introduction of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), particularly from the press, which was perceived as anti-establishment. The RF also moved swiftly to take over control of Rhodesia Television (RTV), which had operated as a commercial company providing television programmes to the FBC.

The then Prime Minister Ian Smith argued that control of television was necessary for winning “the war for the minds of men”, emphasising that this would save it from falling into the hands of ‘communist sympathisers’. Despite these claims, it was apparent that the main objective of the RF was to prevent the expression of competing political views, both on air and in print (for a more detailed discussion, see Windrich 1981:32–56).

These structural changes at the RBC were matched with a similar reorganisation of the information department, which was packed with right-wing RF propagandists. The opposition (Rhodesia National Party) was denied equal access to broadcasting. Windrich gives an example of the Matobo and Avondale by-elections in May 1963 and September 1964 respectively, where the RF tactfully refused to have an inter-party radio or television discussion by withdrawing its own candidates (ibid.: 37). In practical terms, daily news production responsibility shifted from RBC staff to the new recruits in the Department of Information (Windrich 1981; Zaffiro 1984).

Following the declaration of UDI, the Rhodesian government went on to enact a series of restrictive laws that it enforced without hesitation until independence in 1980. Some of these laws were adopted unchanged by the Zanu PF government, and remained on the statute books for two decades. The most notorious of these was the Law and Order Maintenance Act, 1960 (generally known as LOMA), draconian legislation which provided for the prosecution of the media, journalists and individuals for making statements which might cause “fear, alarm or despondency”.¹ LOMA allowed the regime to detain offenders without trial, deport individuals deemed to be a security threat, and ban publications that did not support the RF point of view. Several hundred nationalists were executed under LOMA, and a number of publications, including *The African Daily News*, *Moto* magazine, *Umbowo*, *Zimbabwe News*, and the *Zimbabwe Review* were banned (see Windrich 1981; Saunders 1999). In effect, this turned Rhodesia into what former Chief Justice Robert Tredgold called a police state. The Smith Regime also introduced the Emergency

Powers in 1964, which provided it with a wide range of restrictive powers to clamp down on the media as well as individuals opposed to its cause. This Act also enabled the regime to create emergency laws as it deemed fit. The Emergency Powers (Censorship of Publications) Order of 1965 is an offspring of these Emergency Powers, and was extensively used to censor errant publications.

The Official Secrets Act, 1970 provided the regime with another tool to suppress unpleasant information about its policies and combat resistance from black nationalists and white liberals (Ndelo 2003:185). It prohibited “the disclosure, for any purpose prejudicial to the safety of interests of Rhodesia” and of any information which “might be useful to an enemy.” The wide scope of this legislation enabled the regime to proscribe any information that was not favourable to its cause – whether it was security related or not.

The Illusions of Change or Change with Continuity?

At independence, the new Zanu PF government took over a broadcasting system that had been created to serve minority interests. The first task was therefore to transform the RBC into an institution that served the needs of the majority. In April 1980, a BBC taskforce was thus commissioned to look into the future needs of broadcasting in an independent Zimbabwe. Its brief was to evaluate the existing transmission, training, management, editorial and financial aspects of ZBC and make recommendations on how public broadcasting services could be expanded to serve all parts of the country (Mano 1997; Rønning 2003). Most importantly, the BBC team’s report noted that broadcasting had been adversely affected by political interference both under the Rhodesia Front and UANC governments. The report, therefore, stressed the need to wrest broadcasting from partisan control, stating that, “the first requirement is for the broadcasting service to be independent of government and properly insulated from government, party, commercial or any other pressure” (cited in Mano 1997:45). It further recommended the need for technical upgrading and streamlining of management at the ZBC. The report also urged the ZBC to improve its programming in such a way that its service became responsive to the interests of its audiences and that it acted as a unifying, educational and informational force (Mano 1997; Rønning 2003).

1. The LOMA was only repealed in 2002, and was replaced by equally draconian legislation: the Public Order and Security Act, 2002.

Most of these recommendations were in fact implemented. The content of broadcasting on both TV and radio became more reflective of the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Zimbabwe. The management structure of the ZBC was also changed in light of the BBC team's recommendations. The new thrust of using media for nation building, socialist transformation and rural development necessitated that a developmental journalistic approach be adopted. Radio 4 and Radio 2 were deployed to serve this purpose. A second television channel, TV2, was introduced in 1986 to serve as a strictly educational and informative channel.¹ Thus it is fair to say that change did take place in terms of both structure and content. However, it is important to note that these changes did not tinker with the monopoly status of the ZBC. Further, government control of broadcasting through the Ministry of Information remained unchanged, and the ZBC remained both politically and financially dependent upon the government. As various scholars agree, the obsession of those in power to maintain tight control of broadcasting and to use it as a tool for perpetuating political dominance continued amid these changes (Rønning 2003; Saunders 1999; Zaffiro 2002). Thus, while the content of broadcasting changed, "the fundamental style of the institution was more or less the same, and has remained so ever since (...). Thus there exists a basic continuity between broadcasting before and after independence" (Rønning 2003:214). Notably, the broadcasting sector has not been opened up to allow citizens to discuss serious matters of social and political interest. Instead, there is an overdose of entertainment and patronizing programming meant to educate the people "on the right lines".² This intensified use of the media for propaganda is succinctly captured in a recent paper by Terence Ranger, in which he laments the emergence of 'patriotic history' in the state-controlled media in the weeks running up to the presidential election of February 2002:

1. However, TV2 ended up being a liability to the Corporation. Its lack of capacity to produce programmes turned it into a repeater station for programmes aired on TV1.
2. Conspicuous among these programmes are 'Nhaka Yedu' and 'National Ethos', which, according to *The Daily News* subjected the viewers to "unmitigated torture" through their cultural revivalism. The paper went on to describe the programmes as "a mix of myth and history to inculcate reverence in the ruling Zanu PF party, its militancy and triumph over colonialism" (*Daily News*, 21 May 2002).

But I don't think anyone could fail to notice how central to the Zanu PF campaign was a particular version of history. I spent four days watching Zimbabwe television which presented nothing but one 'historical' programme after another; the government press – the *Herald* and the *Chronicle* – ran innumerable historical articles (...). Television and newspapers insisted on an increasingly simple and monolithic history. (...) Television constantly repeated documentaries about the guerrilla war and about colonial brutalities (...). The *Herald* and the *Sunday Mail* regularly carried articles on slavery, the partition, colonial exploitation and the liberation struggle (...). (Ranger 2003:4)

While it is incontestable that Zimbabweans need to understand their liberation war history, what is worrying about the ruling party's new drive is the one-sidedness of the historical narrative, and the zeal that borders on doctrinaire. It can be argued that the post-independence government's decision to retain the colonial laws relating to broadcasting, public order, etc. was motivated by the desire to ensure that alternative centres of power do not emerge. As Alfred Nhema argues:

A system of control and cooptation of civil society not only dovetailed with the regime's goals of limiting the degree of political space in which groups in civil society could operate effectively; it also offered an enabling environment through which the regime could achieve its stated long-term objective of establishing a one-party state. (Nhema 2002:1)

Such goals also required the maintenance of a single voice on the national airwaves.

Broadcasting and Mass Mobilisation: Lessons from Liberation War Broadcasting

The ruling party's perception of broadcasting largely draws from the experience of effective use of radio broadcasting for mobilization during the war of liberation³ (see Mosia et al. 1994). The swift take-over of the ZBC at independence in 1980, and

3. Zimbabwean nationalists started to use broadcasting as early as 1958, using external services provided by the Nasser government of Egypt. In 1963, Radio Tanzania granted airtime to both ZANU's Voice of Zimbabwe (VOZ) and ZAPU's Voice of the Revolution (VOR). ZANU was also granted access to the new Ghana Broadcasting shortwave transmitter until the fall of Nkrumah in 1966. By 1967, both groups were also beaming from Zambia. After a bitter leadership wrangle within ZANU in Lusaka, which resulted in the emergence of Robert Mugabe and the subsequent order by President Kaunda to halt Zimbabwean broadcasts, ZANU received assistance from Mozambique's new Frelimo government and established the VOZ centre in Maputo (Mosia et al. 1994).

the staffing of the Corporation with former liberation fighters who were running the Voice of Zimbabwe (VOZ) illustrated this. As the newly appointed Deputy Director General of ZBC, Tirivafi Kangai, outlined:

At independence, the ZBC found itself in a hostile media environment, surrounded by institutions with long colonial experience. We had to penetrate and transform RBC/RTV to serve the people of Zimbabwe as a whole. Comrades were attached to RBC, to assist in preparations for independence celebrations. After independence they became regular employees. Along with this physical penetration there was also the political and ideological penetration. (Cited in Mosia et al. 1994:18.)

Nathan Shamuyarira, the new Minister of Information echoed these sentiments when he said that, “the comrades we’ve brought in from Maputo, who were running the VOZ, were put into key posts at ZBC, so they are in a position where they can direct policy” (ibid.). Thus for ZANU PF, post-independence broadcasting was expected to further extend the role that broadcasting played during the liberation struggle, namely to mobilise the masses to support its programmes. The coming of independence meant that broadcasting had to be used to consolidate that independence by promoting national unity and spreading the ideology of the ruling party. As Prime Minister Robert Mugabe in July 1981 clearly articulated:

In the final analysis, the mass media in any country is an instrument of the dominant social forces in that particular country (...). In independent Zimbabwe, the formerly oppressed masses have now become the dominant social force. The media should reflect their wishes, and help them consolidate their political gains as a result of achieving national independence. (Cited in Saunders 1991:1.)

In many ways, this has been the guiding philosophy of broadcasting after independence, although in practice it has been the ruling elite imposing their wishes on the said masses. Private or independent broadcasting was therefore seen as inimical to the attainment of these goals. Mugabe reiterated his stand against private broadcasting in 1983 when he said, “You don’t know what propaganda a non-state radio station might broadcast” (cited in Maja-Pearce 1995:123). However, by the mid-90s, Mugabe appeared to have softened regarding private broadcasting. When asked by journalists in November 1994, he could not rule out the possibil-

ity of establishing such broadcasting stations (ibid.) – this perhaps for the appeasement of IMF/WB, and to avoid contradicting the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP).

Broadcasting and the Post-Independence Elections

One way of assessing the government’s commitment to providing equal access to broadcasting is to look at ZBC’s coverage of national elections after 1980. As John Street (2001:16) clearly articulates, “It is assumed that, in a democracy, no one group or set of interests is systematically preferred over another and that the information available to citizens is accurate and impartial”. As such, the ZBC, as a public broadcaster is expected to give equal coverage to all contesting parties in national elections. In the absence of an agency that has executive powers to ensure that all contestants have equal access to the media, ZBC has from time to time imposed its set of requirements for allowing political parties access to broadcasting during campaigns (Moyo 1992b; Darnolf 1997). While these guidelines state the Corporation’s commitment to impartial coverage, in practice, the coverage has always been heavily skewed in favour of the ruling party. In the 1990 elections, for example, the ruling party not only violated the requirements of equal access, but also ethical standards of advertising by running intimidating radio and television adverts that likened voting for the opposition to choosing death (Moyo 1992b:74–75).¹ One of the ads featured a coffin being lowered into a grave, accompanied by a stern warning: “Aids kills. So does ZUM. Vote Zanu PF” (ibid.). The opposition was generally denied access to the electorate both in the state-owned media and in terms of holding political rallies in different parts of the country (ibid.).

Before the 1995 election campaign, the ZBC appointed an Election Coverage Committee (ECC) which decided that parties running in at least fifteen constituencies would receive at least thirty minutes of free air time on TV1, while parties with fewer candidates would receive only five minutes. However, the ZBC reserved the right to edit the party’s tape before airing it (Darnolf 1997:59). The contest

1. Members of opposition political parties, particularly the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), complained that the media was being used to advantage the ruling party (Moyo 1992b:74).

over access to broadcasting came to a head in 1999, when the ZBC refused to broadcast paid adverts from the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA).¹ The NCA took the ZBC to court on the basis that:

ZBC is a public broadcaster, and the sole broadcasting house in the country. It is funded mainly by the state, as well as by fees paid by the public. As a public broadcaster, it has a duty to reflect a broad spectrum of views across the nation, and not just those of the government and Zanu PF. (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 26 February 1999)

However, the NCA withdrew its legal challenge after ZBC promised to carry their adverts – a promise that it did not fully honour. As a result, the coverage of the debate running up to the 2000 referendum grossly favoured the ruling party's position to approve the state-sponsored draft constitution. However, despite the massive deployment of the state media to campaign for the adoption of the draft constitution, people rejected it with a 55% vote on the basis that it gave too much power to the Executive. In the Parliamentary election campaign that followed in the same year, ZBC is said to have devoted about 91% of its coverage to the ruling ZANU PF, and the remaining 9% to all the opposition parties (Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe 2000).² A similar pattern of unequal access was also maintained in the run-up to the Presidential election of 2002.

Structural Adjustment and the Emergence of Liberalisation Discourse

By the mid-1990s, the government was dropping hints that it was considering ending ZBC monopoly and opening up the airwaves to competition. This softening of position can be attributed to a combination of factors. First, the ZBC was going through a phase of heavy loss-making and gross mismanagement.³ The period 1991–1996 was particularly characterised by general instability at ZBC, with successive Ministers of Information hiring and firing new Director Generals and Boards of Govern-

ors at will, and sometimes leaving the Corporation to cruise without a substantive Director General. As a Parliamentary Committee report reveals:

Successive Ministers of Information have contributed immensely towards the instability of the Corporation in that they seem to enjoy intervening directly in the day-to-day running of the organisation when there is no Board of Governors. This leads to untold chaos. (Interim Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation Affairs 1999:3.)

Second, the adoption of the World Bank/IMF prescribed Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1990/91 required reduced government public spending, hence government was no longer keen to continue providing financial support to the Corporation – this despite the fact that government still expected ZBC to continue operating as its official mouthpiece. Such incompatible interests – the desire to commercialise the ZBC on the one hand and retain political control of the Corporation on the other contributed to the ambiguity of government policy towards broadcasting in those years. But most importantly, the adoption of these neo-liberal reforms led to a degree of political liberalisation, which saw, for example, the suspension of the Emergency Powers which had been in place since the liberation war era.

Third, there was, by the mid- to late 90s, increased agitation among students and the NGO community, fuelled by the apparent failure of the ESAP to deliver a better life for the people. The emergence of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in 1997, which was to later provide the basis for the rise of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), was also significant in the sense that this was the first time that civic organisations had come together to challenge the government on a single issue: constitutional reform. Further, within Southern Africa, there was increased pressure for plural broadcasting from civil society organisations, particularly from the Media Institute of Southern Africa – a regional organisation with branches in all the SADC countries. Its 1991 Windhoek Declaration on promoting media independence and diver-

1. The NCA, which grew out of a number of voluntary organizations, was formed in 1998 with the aim of creating a public arena for the discussion of issues relating to citizenship rights and initiating debate on constitutional reform.

2. Of the 558 election campaign stories that it carried between 11 April and 26 June, 500 of them (about 90%) favoured ZANU PF, or were critical of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe 2000:8).

3. According to a Parliamentary Committee Report, the Corporation had been posting financial losses since independence save for 1994 and 1995, when it realized a profit of \$1 million and \$10 million respectively (Interim Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation Affairs 1999:12–13).

sity through encouraging private players in the communications sector was adopted by all the SADC countries, including Zimbabwe. These pressures should also be viewed in the context of the winds of political liberalisation and democratisation that swept across the continent in the early 90s. Internally, there was growing resistance to the one-party state and demand for pluralism from various quarters, including academics, the students' union and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU).

Finally, there was also growing anger among ZBC viewers and listeners in response to poor programming. Angry 'Letters to the Editor' in various newspaper columns, plus the consumer boycott in poorly serviced parts of the country such as Mutare and Beit Bridge are testimony to this. One can also say that there was a gradual softening of government thinking vis-à-vis economic liberalisation policies in general, as reflected in a statement by the then Director of Information in the Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunications, Bornwell Chakaodza, at a MISA forum in 1997, where he stressed government's commitment to media law reforms:

The continued monopoly of ZBC on our airwaves can no longer be justified in a democracy like ours because one of the basic tenets of democracy in a country is the freedom of information and expression. Citizens have a right to be informed, to seek information, to communicate and associate on the basis of that freedom. The ZBC monopoly denies citizens that right in so far as it does not offer them the opportunity to enjoy the advantages of a wider net of programmes. (Chakaodza 1997:26)

In February 1997, the then Minister of Information, Joyce Mujuru announced to Parliament that, "the Cabinet has made a policy stance on the freeing of the airwaves," adding, "my ministry is now working to resolve the issues related to the coming in of other players into broadcasting. It is our wish that the exercise is undertaken during the first half of 1997" (*The Herald*, 20 February 1997).

In pursuit of this new commitment, that same year the government, with assistance from the British Council, engaged British consultant, Peter Ibbottson to assess the prospects of commercialising the ZBC ahead of the 'impending' liberalisation of the broadcasting sector. While some scholars have suggested that the Ibbottson Report was re-

sponsible for giving government the nudge to move towards opening up broadcasting (Mano 1997; Rønning and Kupe 2003), it is important to note that by 1997 the government had already expressed commitment to liberalise the airwaves – the sincerity of that promise notwithstanding.¹ In fact, the Ibbottson Report itself clearly states that, "The Minister of Information, Posts and Telecommunications (then Joyce Mujuru) has indicated a number of objectives which she wishes to achieve. These include: liberalising the market by ending ZBC monopoly of broadcasting and opening up opportunities for commercial companies to offer competitive service" (Ibbottson Report 1997:5). Thus, the purpose of the report was to outline steps that the government could adopt to speedily achieve its set objectives, which included ending ZBC monopoly and liberalising the market.

The Ibbottson Report recommended, among other things, that TV2 and Radio 4, which had developed into a heavy liability to the Corporation since their introduction, be earmarked for commercialisation and subsequent privatisation; that ZBC introduce Pay-TV services as a way of enhancing income generation; and that a Regulatory Authority be established to "make an early start in drawing up the detailed terms of the licences to broadcast" (Ibbottson Report 1997:5). These recommendations were the first test of government's commitment to liberalising the airwaves. Since ZBC did not have the necessary capital to start a Pay-TV project on its own, a tender was floated for a partnership in the project. However, the tender process was fraught with corruption, and in the end the project did not materialise.² This Pay-TV project was expected to achieve the following:

- generate over three billion Zimbabwe dollars in revenue per year

1. On 2 April 1996, the then Minister of Information, Posts and Telecommunications, David Karimanzira announced government's commitment to commercialise ZBC and open up the sector to competition: "We want the Corporation to commercialise as quickly as possible and we hope by amending the law, this would bring more players in broadcasting" (*The Herald*, 2 April 1996).

2. The company that won the tender, Comtel (Pvt.) Ltd. turned out to have no money to start the project. Without going back to tender, the project was re-awarded to the runner-up in the bid, Zim Win TV, which had a partnership with an American company, Pfluger Enterprises, in 1995.

- generate much needed foreign currency from more than 60,000 subscribers from other African countries
- provide an additional investment of US\$20 million into the economy in the form of a proposed TV manufacturing assembly plant with export capabilities
- provide affordable access to ordinary Zimbabweans compared to services from M-Net of South Africa, which was regarded as ‘elitist because of the exorbitant costs in obtaining the necessary equipment and programmes’ (Interim Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on ZBC Affairs 1999:9).

What is important to note, though, is that the proposed Pay-TV project was a far cry from what media freedom advocates had been clamouring for. Already, government intervention was assured through the ZBC shareholding, as well as the party loyalists who were bidding for the indigenous shareholding.

While the report recommended the complete privatisation of TV2 and Radio 4 by 1999, the government chose, instead, to lease TV2 to three private broadcasters, namely, LDM, Munhmutapa African Broadcasting Corporation (MABC) and Joy TV (a.k.a. Flame Lily Broadcasting). Leasing was preferred for the obvious reason that it would ensure that the government remained in control of TV2. This strong interventionist streak meant that the drive to introduce private/commercial broadcasting was never synonymous with deregulation – or even liberalisation. The fact that these private broadcasters did not have full licences, and were dependent on the goodwill of the ZBC and those who controlled it was in itself a hindrance to their freedom of operation.¹ The arrangement also gave

ZBC the unfair advantage of being both player and regulator in the same market. As indicated in the Parliamentary report, ZBC made unreasonably high charges for renting out airtime to its three tenants (\$4,542.89 per hour), when they earned far less than that. The result was that all three ended up owing ZBC huge sums of money (Interim Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on ZBC Affairs 1999).² The licence conditions for the three private broadcasters ensured that government influence extended beyond the confines of the state-owned ZBC. In terms of providing alternative voices in the true sense of the word, this was in many ways just a palliative, as the coverage of TV2 was limited to only a 70km radius of the capital Harare. Besides, the three broadcasters mostly carried entertainment. ZBC thus retained its monopoly of ‘national coverage’, which meant advertisers naturally preferred it to its new competitors.

What is clear from all this is that by the mid-90s, there was a softening of government position regarding broadcasting liberalisation, as evidenced by pronouncements from successive Ministers of Information on government’s plan to liberalise the airwaves, starting with David Karimanzira in 1996; government’s willingness to give an audience to civic organisations such as MISA; the drawing up of the Draft Communications Bill of 1997 which was widely debated by various civic groups; and the engagement of a consultancy team to advise on how to carry out the liberalisation process. It is also important to stress that the liberalisation discourse that came with ESAP was not critically interrogated in both the public and private press, largely because of a lack of basic analytical skills and understanding of its implications among journalists and even politicians. All the media and most politicians and civic organisations therefore uncritically accepted this neo-liberal discourse. Thus it can be argued that government commitment to opening up broadcasting was, at this point, more practical than rhetorical,

1. Although no specific rules were laid down regarding what the private stations could or could not broadcast, the contracts were drawn up in such a way that these broadcasters had to restrain themselves to avoid offending their ‘benefactors’. This meant avoiding local news content, as it was likely to be a source of conflict. MABC, which ventured into documentaries and interviews with people believed to hold anti-government sentiments, including then Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, and now MDC president, Morgan Tsvangirai, paid the price for their daring by being switched off air. Joy TV, on the other hand survived by avoiding carrying any local news. They even edited out local content from their re-broadcasts of BBC news.

2. LDM was first to withdraw, citing financial constraints; MABC was switched off air, allegedly for failing to pay their bills to ZBC, although it is argued that they had ruffled some feathers in government through some of their ‘political broadcasts’ (see Maqeda 2000); and Joy TV was briefly switched off for similar (financial) reasons but was brought back on air. As Maqeda argues, Joy TV enjoyed favourable treatment because people who were closely connected to power owned it – including James Makamba and the President’s nephew Leo Mugabe.

as most senior ruling party officials had bought into the liberalisation discourse.¹ The question, therefore, is, why was there a sudden change in government thinking regarding the whole issue of liberalisation after 2000?

Part of the answer to this question lies in the experience with a liberalised press, which has become a thorn in the sides of government. As one pro-government intellectual clearly articulates:

The most interesting thing about Zimbabwe is that the former Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunications allowed the liberalisation of print first, and that was an eye-opener. None of the new newspapers can boast of being consistent supporters of democracy. What they have consistently supported is the Rhodesian interests, the neo-Apartheid interests, the British interests and the American interests (...). So we have learned from that, that this is what liberalisation means (...). Why should we want a repeat of Basildon Peta on TV? Why should we want a repeat of Geoff Nyarota on TV?² We don't want that, and it's clear. They can cry tears of blood if they want, the evidence is clear: we don't think that liberalisation was such a good idea the way it was done, so we are saying let's liberalise on our terms, and not on anybody else's terms. That means anyone who is given a channel must be vetted thoroughly. We made a mistake, because we reached a stage where a majority of newspapers in Zimbabwe were anti-Zimbabwean. Under no circumstances should we allow that in broadcasting.³

The excessively cautious approach adopted in the opening up of broadcasting confirms these sentiments. Certainly, the 'independent' press in Zimbabwe, typical of a watchdog with newly found freedom, has to a great degree failed to temper its freedom with responsibility, and has been as Kasoma (2000:13) puts it, wildly "barking at, charging and biting everyone in sight, including those who have not provoked it." The international donor commu-

nity has made things worse by turning a blind eye to unethical practices and, instead, showering accolades on journalists and editors whom they touted as heroes for daring to challenge their hitherto sacred governments.⁴

Concluding that the government was not sincere with its promise to liberalise the airwaves, two private companies, the Munhumutapa African Broadcasting Corporation (MABC) and Capital Radio, separately challenged the ZBC monopoly in the High Court.⁵ It was Capital Radio's legal challenge that eventually led to the Supreme Court ruling which struck at the ZBC monopoly in September 2000. The government immediately responded by enforcing the Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) Act, which allows the President to enact emergency laws that are valid for a period of six months. The resultant legislation, the Presidential Powers (Temporary Measures) (Broadcasting) Regulations, 2000, far from feeding the euphoria that had surrounded the nullification of monopoly broadcasting, further tightened the conditions of entry into the sector. What is apparent in the manner in which the government responded to the legal vacuum created by the Supreme Court ruling is that the government was determined to regain lost control of the change process, and to ensure that whatever changes were made did not prejudice its stay in power. In a way, this control had been temporarily usurped by civil society – as evidenced by the various debates sponsored by MISA and others (to which government was invited) between 1997 and 2000.

Land Reform and the Re-Gearing of Media Policy

It (broadcasting spectrum) is finite, therefore it's a national resource, and whoever has access to it must use it in a way that coheres with the national interest. You cannot use a national resource to undermine the nation. But you have an obligation to use the national resource to further the national interest (...). Whether doing it for the benefit of Zanu PF amounts to pushing the na-

1. Hevian Dashwood (1996) advances the theory that there was, right from independence, a gradual 'embourgeoisement of the bureaucratic and political elites' within the ruling party which culminated in the shift from socialist transformation to market-based reforms. Extending this theory, the liberalization of the airwaves, therefore, presented an opportunity to members of the ruling elite for self-aggrandisement though acquiring broadcasting licences.

2. Basildon Peta was an investigative journalist with the *Financial Gazette*, and filed stories that were highly critical of government. He was fired from the *Gazette* after publishing falsehoods in a British newspaper, *The Independent*, where he exaggerated his suffering at the hands of the Zimbabwe police. Geoff Nyarota was the Editor of the *Daily News*, which was also highly critical of the government.

3. Pro-government intellectual, Interview, 26 August 2003.

4. Elsewhere, Kasoma (1995; 1997) takes a swipe at Africa's independent press, which, he argues, has exposed itself to criticism through unethical reporting and resorting to what he calls 'vendetta journalism'.

5. It is also important to note that the process of broadcasting policy reform closely followed developments in the telecommunications sector, where the legal battle by a private entrepreneur (Strive Masiyiwa) to get an operating license became a test case for aspiring private broadcasters in the country.

tional interest, that's a different matter but we start from the premise that when the Zimbabwean sovereignty is under assault, then necessarily it must muster all its resources.¹

A series of events that took place in 1999 and 2000 can be said to have a direct bearing on government's radical departure from the road towards liberalisation of the airwaves. The accelerated decline of the economy since the crash of the Zimbabwe dollar in 1997, which caused unprecedented restlessness within the body-politic; the launch of the *Daily News*, a hard-hitting anti-government newspaper in March 1999; the launch of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) – the first serious challenge to the ruling party since independence – in September 1999; the vote against the government-led constitutional referendum in February 2000; the farm occupations starting in earnest in February 2000; as well as the rise of Jonathan Moyo, a political scientist formerly highly critical of government policies, to head the Ministry of Information – all these led to a reawakening in the ruling party, leading to a renewed desire to tighten control not only of broadcasting, but of the media in general.

The mounting international pressure and incessant vilification of the Mugabe regime in the international media following the adoption of its controversial land reform has also provided further justification for tighter control of the flow of information. As a result, stringent measures have been put in place to bar foreign media from covering developments in the country.² Internally, the use of broadcasting as a tool for legitimising the land reform programme became imperative. The ZBC has thus been extensively used to mobilise the masses to rally behind the Third Chimurenga – as the land reform programme has come to be known.³ Educational programmes on the war of liberation, songs of liberation, and half-hourly jingles extolling the exploits of the Third Chimurenga became dominant on both ZBC radio and ZTV.

1. Senior Government Official, Interview, 22 July 2003.

2. Both BBC and CNN, for example, have been barred from reporting from Zimbabwe.

3. The First Chimurenga refers to the first resistance to colonial occupation in 1896/97, and the Second Chimurenga refers to the armed resistance to colonialism in the 1960s and 70s.

New Media Laws and the Restriction of Communicative Space

We believe that information is a strategic issue which is critical in maintaining a country's sovereignty and you cannot claim to be sovereign if you do not own the means of disseminating information (...). This is why we removed CNN from ZBC when we came in, in the year 2000 and we will never have it again as long as we are still around (...). We want to use the media to put across our national views and not those of the United States or Britain or the Voice of America. We wish to put across our views as the Voice of Zimbabwe. (Information Minister Jonathan Moyo, in *The Herald Online*, 8 April 2004.)

Despite claims to having 'liberalised' or 'liberated' the airwaves, the Zimbabwe government has an array of restrictive media laws that, in many ways, constrain the communicative space for its citizens. This section takes a closer look at these new media laws.

The Broadcasting Services Act

At face value, the Broadcasting Services Act, 2001 is an excellent document that opens up the broadcasting sector to competition – more so given that it has been touted as a hybrid of some of the most democratic broadcasting laws in the world.⁴ Its provisions for the establishment of a broadcasting authority responsible for regulation of frequencies and allocation of licences to new broadcasters; the setting up of a three-tier broadcasting system comprising public service, community and commercial broadcasting; and its emphasis on the promotion of national culture, national languages, local ownership and local production industry are a remarkable improvement from the previous colonial legislation. However, a closer look at the Act reveals that it in many ways impinges on the communicative rights of Zimbabwean citizens. The BSA contains several clauses that make it difficult for new players to enter the broadcasting market, which to some

4. On presenting the Broadcasting Services Bill to Parliament on 3 April 2001, the Minister of Information, Jonathan Moyo, argued that the principles contained in the Bill resembled those in broadcasting regimes of most democracies, notably those of the United States of America, Canada and Australia (Moyo 2001). In other separate remarks, the Act has been compared to the Swedish and British laws. More recently, the Swedish Embassy in Harare invited Zimbabwean journalists from both the public and private media for a tour of Sweden supposedly to disprove the claim that Zimbabwe's media laws are modelled on Swedish regulations (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 28 May 2004).

extent explains why three years after its introduction, not a single private broadcaster has been licensed.

Civic organisations have argued that the Act is an assault on citizens' communicative rights as it seeks to limit rather than expand the communicative space. First, the Act places excessive powers in the hands of the Minister of Information and Publicity, who is the ultimate licensing authority. The Civic Alliance for Social and Economic Progress (CASEP), for example, argued that the Act is "a recipe for continued state control of radio and television leading to the silencing not liberation and amplifying of the many unheard voices in our society" (*Daily News*, 7 April 2001). As stated under section 6, "Subject to this Act, the Minister shall be the licensing authority for the purpose of licensing any person to provide a broadcasting service or operate as a signal carrier in Zimbabwe." The Minister thus determines at his discretion who gets a licence; the terms and conditions attached to an issued licence; whether an issued licence should be amended, suspended or cancelled; when to take over a broadcasting station, among many other powers (Hondora 2002). According to the Act, the Minister of Information, in consultation with the President, appoints members of the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe (BAZ). The BAZ is therefore not independent, as the Minister has the discretion to appoint, terminate, or alter the conditions of service of its members. Such boundless powers are open to abuse, as the Minister can deny access to broadcasting to perceived 'enemies of the state'. The strategic relocation of the Department of Information (which replaced the Ministry of Information) to the President's Office is also evidence of the importance government attaches to the flows of information.

Second, the BSA seriously inhibits investment in the broadcasting sector by creating unrealistic licensing conditions, particularly for commercial broadcasting.¹ The prohibition of foreign shareholding, restriction of licensees from possessing both a broadcasting licence and a signal carrier licence, and the requirement that all licensees

1. The original Act stipulated that a commercial broadcasting license was valid for only two years, while a community broadcasting licence would be valid for only one year. This has since been amended to give commercial broadcasters ten-year renewable licenses.

should make available one hour per week to the government, for example, are some of the notable restrictive clauses that are not investment-friendly. Section 11 (5) states that:

A licensee shall make one hour cumulatively per week of its broadcasting time available for the purpose of *enabling the government of the day, at its request, to explain its policies* to the nation.

Interestingly, criticism of this Act has come from both inside and outside the ruling party. The Parliamentary Legal Committee that assessed the Broadcasting Services Bill in 2001 found several of its sections unconstitutional on the grounds of inconsistency with Section 20 of the Constitution, which provides for freedom of expression.² In its ruling on Capital Radio's constitutional challenge to a number of sections of the Act, the Supreme Court declared as unconstitutional the requirement that a minister of information, who is an interested party, be a licensing authority, as well as the requirement to have only one national radio and television station in addition to the public broadcaster (*Weekend Tribune*, 27–28 September 2003).

More recently, a new Zanu PF Member of Parliament, former journalist Kindness Paradza, in his inaugural speech called for the revision of the Broadcasting Services Act and the Access to Information Act, arguing that the two media laws were too restrictive and discouraged potential investment in the industry:

We need to come up with policies that will make it conducive for our people to invest in information communication technology, broadcasting services and the newspaper industry. Special attention should be paid to the BSA and AIPPA to check whether they do not restrict local investment in broadcasting services. A careful perusal and examination of these laws shows there is no other commercial sector in Zimbabwe that is required to adhere to such stringent conditions. (Quoted in *The Sunday Mail*, 25 April 2004.)

His remarks drew fire from the Department of Information, which described him as 'an ignorant novice parliamentarian' (*The Sunday Mail*, 2 May 2004). However, Paradza's sentiments echo the ar-

2. Section 20 (1) of the Constitution states that, "Except with his own consent or by way of parental discipline, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, that is to say, freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference, and freedom from interference with his correspondence."

gument presented by Justice Wilson Sandura in his dissenting judgement to the ruling that Capital Radio had no basis to challenge the prohibition of foreign funding in broadcasting, saying, “permitting foreign investment in private broadcasting would be more likely to create employment for Zimbabweans than total ban of such investment” (*Weekend Tribune*, 27–28 September 2003).

The Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe

One significant change that has come with the Broadcasting Services Act is the establishment of a regulatory authority, BAZ, whose function, among many others, is “to receive, evaluate and consider applications for the issue of any broadcasting licence or signal carrier licence for the purpose of advising the Minister on whether or not he should grant the licence” (BSA, Section 3 (2) (c)). As such, the BAZ does not have licensing powers, and simply serves as an advisory board to the Minister. What is apparent is that since its establishment in 2000, BAZ has lacked the requisite clarity as to what its mandate is. Asked why it was taking a long time to license new players, the first BAZ Chairman, Nhlanhla Masuku retorted: “Who do we issue licenses when people have not applied? People have only inquired from me as the chairman but not applied to the Authority” (*The Zimbabwe Mirror*, 12–18 January 2001). Yet by that time, the authority had not advertised any licences. Between 2000 and 2004, BAZ has on a number of occasions called for applications for broadcasting licences, but nothing has come of it.¹ The setback has been attributed to technical problems of drawing up the national frequency map, which many people have seen as a delaying tactic.²

In March 2004, BAZ advertised a licence for a second national free station to air radio and television services. Apart from giving a very short application deadline, the Authority requested an application fee of Z\$10 million, which is non-refundable, and a licence fee of US\$1 million. With such steep requirements, it is difficult to envisage new players

on Zimbabwe’s broadcasting scene soon. As MDC Secretary General and parliamentarian, Welshman Ncube pointed out:

... the government has only paid lip service to attempts to licence or introduce other players. The effect is that they created a regulatory authority which does nothing other than playing a delaying game so that for all practical purposes the philosophy has been, if we liberalize the airwaves the alternative voices which have been shut out from speaking on ZBC will not be shut out. And this government, have no doubt about it, will not create independent radio and television stations so long as there is political contest in this country. They are so scared of the alternative voice that they are denying the alternative voices access to information through violence and through laws and through the monopoly of the ZBC which is not a legal monopoly but a *de facto* monopoly. Make no mistake, if there is to be an independent radio station, they will make sure that it is controlled by ZANU PF or people who believe in the same ideology as ZANU PF so it will live by the ZBC code.³

The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Among the government’s legal arsenal against the media is also the misnamed Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), 2002, which senior Zanu PF official and head of the Parliamentary Legal Committee on Transport and Communications, Eddison Zvobgo, described in his adverse report on the Bill as “the most calculated and determined assault on our liberties.” The Act, among other things, provides for the licensing of all media and registration of all journalists with the government appointed Media and Information Commission (MIC). According to the Act, no one is allowed to own or run a media service unless it is registered with the MIC.⁴ Further, one has to be a Zimbabwean citizen to be eligible to register such a mass media service. Section 79 stipulates that no one shall be allowed to practise as a journalist unless he or she is accredited by the Commission. Non-citizens cannot be accredited, except for a limited period. This means that the Government appointed Commission can exercise its discretion to decide who may and may not be allowed to work

1. See for example, *The Herald*, 10 July 2001, ‘BAZ Flooded with Applications for Licences’; *The Herald*, 4 August 2001, ‘Broadcasting Authority Calls for Submissions’; and *The Herald*, 10 December 2001, ‘BAZ Invites Applications for Licences’.

2. See, for example, *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 5–11 June 2001, ‘State Dallies on Opening of Airwaves’.

3. Interview with Welshman Ncube, 23 July 2003.

4. According to AIPPA, a mass media service is broadly defined to include “any service or media consisting in the transmission of voice, visual, data or textual message to an unlimited number of persons, and includes an advertising agency, publisher, (...) a news agency or broadcasting licensee (...)”.

as a journalist in Zimbabwe. Section 39 also gives the Commission powers to establish a code of conduct which is binding for all journalists. Anyone who disobeys this code may have his or her name struck from the roll of journalists, or be suspended or made to pay a heavy fine.

The outspoken *Daily News*, which was strongly critical of the government since its launch in 1999, has, together with its newly launched sister paper, *The Daily News on Sunday*, since been closed down for failing to comply with the registration requirement whose constitutionality it was challenging in the courts. Other media organizations, including Independent Journalists Association of Zimbabwe (IJAZ) and MISA, have also challenged the constitutionality of AIPPA in the courts. More recently, another independent weekly newspaper, *The Business Tribune*, has been deregistered by the MIC for violating the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. In particular, the MIC alleged that the *Tribune* failed to sufficiently report ownership changes to the Commission in accordance with the Act.¹

The Public Order and Security Act

As indicated earlier, the Law and Order Maintenance Act, despite its notoriety as an undemocratic piece of legislation, remained on Zimbabwe's statute books for 22 years after independence, and it has been invoked from time to time to prosecute political activists, demonstrators, and the media. Its successor legislation, the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), 2002 has been widely perceived as equally draconian. The Act restricts freedom of expression, movement and assembly, and makes it a punishable offence for anyone to undermine or make "any abusive, indecent, obscene or false statement about or concerning the President or an acting President, whether in respect of his person or his office" (Section 16 (2)). Such an offence can attract a fine of up to \$20,000 or one-year's imprisonment or both. Further, one can be fined up to \$100,000 or imprisoned for up to five years – or liable to both such fine and imprisonment – for publishing or communicating false statements prejudicial to the state (Section 15). Several newspaper

editors and their journalists, activists and opposition politicians have been charged under this Act since its introduction in 2002.

The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (Commercialisation) Act

The ZBC Commercialisation Act, which provides for "the formation of successor companies to take over the functions, assets, liabilities and staff of ZBC", is perhaps the least discussed of the new media laws in Zimbabwe, not least because of lack of analytical expertise within civic organisations. Yet the Act does something that further distances the ZBC from the ideals articulated by civil society – notably that it be transformed into a true public service broadcaster.² Thus, instead of articulating 'public interest' and democratic citizenship ideas, the Act provides for the marketization of the commons and legalises the "silent theft" of the common wealth. Once again, the contradictory interests of commercialisation and state control are apparent where the Act in section 4(3) states that:

In the performance of their functions, the successor companies shall give priority to serving the needs of the State, to the extent that it is compatible with sound business practice to do so.

In their analysis of the Act, two Harare lawyers (Chibwe and Carr 2002) note that this provision seeks "to establish a state broadcaster rather than a 'public broadcaster' in the true sense." What further makes the position of ZBC ambiguous is the fact that there are no special obligations imposed upon it (such as a public service or public interest mandate) either under the Broadcasting Services Act or any other legislation (ibid.).

Broadcasting, National Sovereignty and National Culture

Claims have been made that Zimbabwe's new media laws are clones of laws from some of the world's established democracies. If they are indeed

1. See, for example, 'Shut Down', *The Daily Mirror*, 11 June 2004; 'MIC Deregisters Tribune Newspaper', *The Herald*, 11 June 2004.

2. The African Charter on Broadcasting drawn up by the Media Institute of Southern Africa provides that "All state and government controlled broadcasters should be transformed into public service broadcasters, that are accountable to all strata of the people as represented by an independent board, and that serve the overall public interest, avoiding one-sided reporting and programming in regard to religion, political belief, culture, race and gender" (see: <http://www.article19.org/docimages/1019.htm>). However, the problem with this Charter is that it is not binding for African governments.

replicas of some of those finest laws, what, then, is peculiar about the Zimbabwean case? Apart from raising questions about democratic citizenship and communicative space, these new laws also raise fundamental questions about the role of the state in communications and cultural policymaking within a global context. In this regard, the Zimbabwean attempt to restore ‘communication sovereignty’ – i.e. the state’s exercise of authority over flows of information inside its territory – by restricting ownership of broadcasting (and other media) to Zimbabwean citizens and putting in place stringent local content quotas (75%) is not in itself a bad thing, nor is it something unique to Zimbabwe. What is unique and worrisome about the Zimbabwean case is that the drive to establish communicative sovereignty is coloured by the self-interest of the ruling party whose desire is to perpetuate its stay in power. The undertones of media imperialism and conspiracy theories in the ruling party discourse mask an overriding desire to maintain a tight grip on the media. As Jonathan Moyo, the chief architect of these new media laws, wrote back in 1999, “No political party, whether in or out of power, is committed to democracy. In fact, even though they are necessary to its existence, all political parties are by definition enemies of democracy” (*Zimbabwe Mirror*, 9–15 April 1999).¹ Thus the discourse of national sovereignty has been extensively used to justify media laws that in many ways restrict rather than open up communicative spaces in Zimbabwe.

Another important question that arises from Zimbabwe’s new media laws is whether or not foreign investment and foreign donor funding is desirable, particularly in developing countries that lack resources to set up vibrant media systems. Undoubtedly, adopting liberalisation policies in the manner of ‘one size fits all’ can be highly problematic, particularly for African countries that face the danger of having their media systems swamped by foreign companies if they do not put in place suffi-

1. In the article in question, Moyo attacked the NCA for being opportunistic and questioned its legitimacy in trying to spearhead the constitutional reform process, thereby sidelining the ruling party. While acknowledging that, “Zanu PF’s reasons for supporting constitutional reform are self-serving in so far as they are motivated by a desperate desire to clean the constitutional mess that the ruling party itself created”, Moyo argued for a state-led reform process on the basis that Zanu PF was an elected government, whereas the NCA was ‘a non-elected’ and ‘non-representative’ organization.

cient limits to foreign ownership. The paradox, however, is that most African economies are weak, and hence lack a strong entrepreneurial class that can invest in capital intensive projects such as broadcasting. The result is that most countries that have opened up their broadcasting markets have a multiplicity of donor-funded community radio stations that often come with predetermined agendas. Developments in countries such as Uganda and Zambia have raised questions about the logic of liberalisation without democratisation, where a multiplicity of private and community stations has emerged but no real change has come about in terms of vibrant democratic debate on the airwaves. Further, donor support for media institutions in Africa is increasingly becoming a sensitive pursuit, which has often been perceived as undermining the sovereignty of the states in question.² Kimani Gecau (2003:217–218) points to the uneasy relationship between the African state and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), where the state is always wary of the potential of NGOs to undermine its legitimacy through their direct links with people in the delivery of services. However, it is also possible that restrictive regimes can use the argument of protecting national sovereignty to prevent their local media from accessing donor support. A more nuanced analysis of the influence of donor aid to African media is made by Francis Kasoma, whose neo-multiparty theory of the press posits that the philosophy, policy and performance of the press in Africa, and the rest of the donor aided countries that have embraced multipartyism, is in direct response to the pressures persistently exerted on it by the donor community, the government, the opposition parties, NGOs and other related forces (Kasoma 2000:8).

Concluding Remarks

From the foregoing discussion, several issues stand out in the late Zanu PF era that have striking parallels to the late colonial era in relation to tight control of the media. Notably, both regimes sought to restrict communicative space during periods of national crises such as the civil war in Rhodesia and

2. Zimbabwe’s now banned *Daily News* was largely perceived by the government as a Trojan horse. It was regarded as a foreign aided mouthpiece whose agenda was to destabilise the country.

the land reform in Zimbabwe. The exclusion of opposition or dissent of any kind from the state broadcaster; the appointment of party loyalists to the board of governors of the state broadcaster; the direct control of the Corporation from the department of information; the enactment of restrictive media laws; and the maintenance of state monopoly broadcasting are common features of both regimes.¹ Under both regimes, a relatively independent press existed which intermittently challenged the dominant voice of the state broadcaster. The experience with a liberalised press in the later years of the Zanu PF government has, in many ways, taught it to keep a tight grip on broadcasting. However, history has shown that wherever information flows are restricted, opposition forces always seek and find alternative means of communication. The grapevine (what is known in French as ‘radio trottoir’), underground newspapers and clandestine radio are some of the common ways of reacting to restrictive communicative environments. Three clandestine radio stations are currently beaming into Zimbabwe, namely Studio 7, which is hosted by the Voice of America and is believed to be using a booster from Botswana; SW Radio Africa, which is beaming from London, and VOP, which is believed to be beaming from the Netherlands.² An underground newsletter has intermittently appeared on the streets published by a group calling itself Zvakwana.³ Further, Zimbabweans in the cities continue to exchange volumes of information in the Emergency Taxis (ETs) on their way to and from work.

1. By drawing these parallels, this author does not seek to glorify the old order. Rather, the purpose is to show that Zimbabwe has not significantly moved away from those authoritarian tendencies in relation to media freedom as expected. However striking the parallels between the two eras may seem, the contexts are completely different, and despite the current restrictions, Zimbabweans today have much wider access to alternative sources of information than they had under the colonial era – thanks to the new information technologies.

2. However, no research has been done on the listenership, nature of broadcast content as well as the reach of these stations. Interestingly, some government officials have been interviewed on Studio 7.

3. Zvakwana is a Shona word meaning ‘It’s enough’. Zvakwana has no known offices, but it has a website (<http://www.zvakwana.org/>) where it posts anti-government messages. It has also used other unusual ways of spreading information such as distributing ‘revolutionary condoms’ and compiling a 14-track CD of anti-government songs (see, for example, ‘Police Hunt Zvakwana’, *Zimbabwe Independent*, 8 April 2004)

While significant strides have been made in terms of accommodating the languages and cultures of the majority Africans who had been largely excluded from broadcasting by the RF regime, the ruling party’s obsession with direct control of broadcasting, and the willingness to use it for propaganda purposes remains. Even as most countries in the region move away from state monopoly broadcasting to more plural broadcasting environments, Zimbabweans remain subjected to a single voice on their airwaves. And as the build up to the 2005 Parliamentary elections is underway, it is highly unlikely that any new independent broadcasters will be licensed in the near future. There are fears that even if a licence were to be issued, it would, in all likelihood, be to a ruling party loyalist.

Redefining the National Agenda Media and Identity – Challenges of Building a New Zimbabwe

Sarah Chiumbu

A hitherto less discussed dimension of the nowadays well-known and documented Zimbabwean crisis has been the drastic restructuring of the media and its impacts on expression and identity. This chapter will therefore explore the restructuring of the media in Zimbabwe and the concomitant radical redefinition of the national agenda. Since 2000, the state media in Zimbabwe have been “contested terrain” with Zanu-PF as the ruling party taking firm control. The redefining of the national agenda has in the main centred on twin discourses – identity politics and belonging. Land and sovereignty have been used to define the Zimbabwe collective national identity and have formed the basis of the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist rhetoric of Zanu-PF. Those who have not rallied behind this definition of national identity have been labelled in polite terms as “the others” and in more crude terms, “sell-outs”. The “national identity” project, principally engineered by the Department of Publicity and Information in the President’s Office is excluding many voices and perspectives from being heard. Therefore, the task of (re)defining the national agenda and national identity in a “new” Zimbabwe will pose great challenges as the country will need to produce new versions of nationhood and identity, no longer based on political loyalty and liberation war credentials as currently is the case.

Issues and Contexts

Zimbabwe’s political and economic terrain has changed dramatically since the formation of a formidable political opposition party – the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) – in 1999 and a strong social movement – the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) – the year before. These developments “marked a particular watershed in Zimbabwe’s post-independence history, precipitating dramatic shifts in the country’s political, eco-

nomic, social, cultural and spatial landscapes” (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:1). Although opposition to Zanu-PF hegemony had been mounting since the late 1980s, it reached a crescendo when the majority of Zimbabweans voted “No” to a government-sponsored draft constitution in a campaign led by the NCA and involving the MDC and trade unions. One can safely argue that this was the first time since independence that Zanu-PF faced such a determined challenge to its rule. Following this political defeat, the crisis in its present form started. President Mugabe blamed the minority white community and the MDC for the defeat. A few days after the referendum, President Mugabe said:

Their mobilising, actually coercing their labour force on the farms to support the one position opposed to government, has exposed them as not our friends, but enemies (...) we are now full of anger. Our entire community is angry (...). (Cited in Meredith 2002:175.)

With the “No” vote winning the day during the constitutional referendum and before the impending general elections in June 2000, Zanu-PF had to act resolutely to regain its credibility and legitimacy. The land question, unfinished business from the colonial period, provided a legitimate platform for the party to reclaim its political ground (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003; Meredith 2002). A few weeks after the referendum, a combination of war veterans, unemployed party youths and other members of Zanu-PF began a series of land occupations throughout the country using violence, harassment and intimidation. This violence spread beyond the farm areas to include widespread attacks on anyone suspected of supporting the opposition, the judiciary, the independent media, or any private business belonging mainly to whites or international conglomerates. This violence, which included beatings, torture, false arrests, rape, arson, intensified towards the general elections in June 2000. However,

despite this violence, the MDC went on to win 57 seats in Parliament. Zanu-PF won 62 seats of 150 and another small political party won 1 seat. The Zimbabwe constitution gives President Mugabe power to select 30 people to sit in Parliament and with the free 30 seats, Zanu-PF emerged the overall winner with 92 of the 150 seats.

A combination of the above has led to a crisis unprecedented in the country since independence in 1980. As a mixture of many variables it includes governance and democracy issues, corruption, accountability and economic disparities, resulting in violent actions, polarisation and economic upheaval. The human rights situation is of major concern. People are being beaten, abducted, assaulted, arrested, murdered, tortured, displaced and unlawfully detained for voicing dissent to the ruling party or supporting the opposition party. The private media are harassed and repressed and independent voices are silenced. State institutions such as the police, the army and the judiciary in many cases fail to uphold people's rights. The crisis has also an impact on the social fabric of society- increasing poverty has exacerbated the HIV and AIDS epidemic. According to recent statistics approximately 3,000 people are dying every week due to AIDS. This grim situation is characterised by triple digit inflation, unemployment at over 70%, while 80% of the people are living below the poverty datum line.

Redefining the National Agenda: Restructuring the Media

During this period, there has also been a deliberate transformation of state structures. The judiciary has been reorganized to undermine any challenges by the courts over the land and election issues. Zanu-PF restructured at provincial and local levels to ensure total loyalty to the party. The police and the army have been realigned. As significant has been the restructuring of the media. In July 2000, the operations of the media in the country came under the Department of Information and Publicity in the President's Office and the former Ministry of Information, Posts and Telecommunications was dissolved. Jonathan Moyo became the new Minister of Information. Through the new Department, the government has introduced stringent laws that impinge on democracy and freedom of expression. In April 2001, Parliament passed the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA). The Public Order and Security

Act (POSA) followed in January 2002 and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) in March the same year.

Public media institutions have also been restructured. Editors, producers, reporters and other personnel who had worked in the state media for years have been retrenched. Some were fired in a move seen by many as government's way of purging those who did not toe the line. The news agency, ZIANA, was changed to New Ziana with a complete new team. The newspapers under Zimpapers, *The Herald*, *The Chronicle* and *The Sunday Mail*, in particular, have gone through fundamental changes. However, the most radical changes have taken place at the national broadcaster, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC). On 30 November 2001, the ZBC launched its new mission and vision under what it called "Vision 30" whose major objective is to transform the ZBC into the "the first and permanent media choice for every Zimbabwean". The new mission of the station is to "provide world class quality programmes and services that reflect, develop, foster and respect the Zimbabwean national identity, character, cultural diversity, national aspirations and Zimbabwean and pan-African values". The Minister of Information and Publicity, Jonathan Moyo was quoted as saying:

We want to see a vibrant national public broadcaster that expresses not only our cultural identity and diversity, but also expresses our national point of view. And we will ensure that ZBC does this without making any apologies to anyone and without fearing and favouring anyone (...). It is very important and the recent experiences in terms of how our sovereignty, our values, our history have been attacked through the media must be a lesson to all of us. (*Daily News*, 21 May 2002)

Vision 30 thus formalised the 75% local content quota required under the BSA. In relation to local content, the sixth schedule, section 11(30), 2(1) of the BSA requires that "at least seventy-five per cent of its programming content (including repeats) in every week (...) consists of local television content material from Africa". The laws further states that a licensee must ensure that at least:

- 70% of its drama programming consists of Zimbabwean drama;
- 80% of its current affairs programmes consists of Zimbabwean current affairs;

- 70% of its social documentary programming consists of Zimbabwean social documentary programming;
- 70% of its knowledge-building programming consists of Zimbabwean informal knowledge-building programming;
- 80% of its educational programming consists of Zimbabwean educational programming; and
- 80% of its children’s programmes consists of Zimbabwean educational programming.

Almost immediately, many programmes not emanating from Zimbabwe were taken off air and in their place, documentaries about the liberation war and programmes on land filled the airwaves. The Minister of Information justified this by saying that “we have to use State resources to promote a culture that is truly Zimbabwean, a culture that identifies us as a people and promotes our values” (*Daily News*, 21 May 2000) in response to public criticism that the ZBC was abusing its public service mandate to promote the government’s philosophy. Using the local content quota as a basis, the Department of Information has been running a multi-pronged campaign in support of the land reform.

These three laws discussed above and the structural changes at the state media have given the ruling party broad powers of repression and control and have shrunk the political and democratic space for all forms of alternative and oppositional discourses. The government justifies these laws and terms the struggle for land as the *Third Chimurenga*¹ (the Third Revolution) and anyone who disagrees with the methods that government is using to get land is viewed as an enemy of the state and against nationalistic aspirations.

Media and National Identity

Identity is mainly about culture and value systems and as the mediators of culture, the media are believed to play a critical role in creating and sustaining a common culture (Smith 1980). However, the media themselves can also have the power to help preserve or undermine a cultural space or collective identity (Schlesinger 1993). This is why many

1. The word “Chimurenga” is normally associated with the Shona and Ndebele uprisings of 1893 against white settler rule (First Chimurenga) and with the liberation struggle in the 1960s and 1970s (Second Chimurenga).

nation-states consider the media as important to constructing and maintaining a collective identity. The media have thus been powerful sites for defining nationalism and national identity. African governments in particular have used the media for nation building, mainly immediately after independence. There was then a belief that in a new nation or a nation under “transformation”, the media need to contribute to the establishment of a national sentiment in order to build a “collective identity”. At independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean government embarked on a “nation-building” and “national integration” programme and the discourse of national unity and development dominated the public sphere during this period. As part of its Socialist rhetoric, the government saw the media as a tool to unify people and consolidate its power. Although there was no enunciated policy on the media, statements by government officials were often made about the role of the media in nation building and national unity. The first ZBC Director-General, Tirivafi John Kangai was emphatic that the media should be used to “mobilize the public for national development through formal and informal education” (quoted in Mano 1997:40). Thus the public service mandate of the media, especially the ZBC was perceived to promote development and national unity. The then Minister of Information and Tourism, Dr Nathan Shamuyarira outlined the government’s approach to public broadcasting as follows:

For the first time in this country the broadcasting media are becoming a mouth-piece for the people as a whole and not for any race and certainly not for any politician. Our main task is to reach the masses with the programmes and policies of the government and to get a feedback from the masses of their reactions to these policies and programmes. (*The Herald*, 13 June 1980)

Kangai’s and Shamuyarira’s statements were reinforced by President Robert Mugabe, the then Prime Minister, in a speech during the opening of the local languages ZBC Studio Complex in 1984. He expounded on what public broadcasting programming should achieve when he said:

The broadcasting services are the most decisive and effective means in changing the attitudes of the people, thereby transforming society from underdevelopment and a backward state, to a progressive and advanced one. Their proper utilization should enable a people to

realize their livelihood and fulfil their social and human relations. (*The Herald*, 6 May 1984)

Fast forward to 2000, and the same discourse of “national identity and unity” dominates the media, however with a difference. Unlike the earlier process the current “national identity project” is not at all inclusive and does not respect diversity and difference. Those who do not support government’s views and policies are labelled sell-outs and unpatriotic. Through the media, the state has institutionalised the process of “exclusion” and “selective nationhood”. The post-independent national project was inclusive in the sense that it recognised everyone regardless of race, colour, creed, gender and language (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003). This was manifested in President’s Mugabe’s policy of reconciliation.

Land, Media and Citizenship

Boundaries of nationhood and citizenship in Zimbabwe are being redefined in the context of the country’s crisis. Zanu-PF has painted the crisis as centred on land and the Western countries’ obstinacy towards the land reform. The party therefore sees its campaign for land redistribution as centred on fighting imperialism and retaining the country’s sovereignty. Through the media, the nation is constantly told that Zimbabwe is under threat from conspiratorial attacks from Western governments who are bent on recolonizing the country and reversing the government’s land reform programme. The state media have played a very central role in supporting and marketing what Brian Raftopoulos calls a “new brand of authoritarian nationalism”. The media have been marshalled to support the Third Chimurenga in full force and in the process redefine nationhood and citizenship. Through the state media, the government has invoked memories of the past as a way of legitimising its brand of national identity, national pride and values. History is narrowly defined to legitimise an intensely narrow and bigoted notion of what it means to be a patriotic Zimbabwean. Anyone who holds alternative views to the regime’s becomes a non-citizen: “The notion of ‘foreignness’, and of constructing literal enemies out of so-called strangers and intruders, has been critical to the regime’s strategic narrowing of national identity and belonging” (Hammar and Raftopoulos 2003:28). Whites have been branded

as racist and “enemies of the state”. ZTV reported on 9 September 2002 Dr Ignatius Chombo, Minister of Local Government and Housing, as saying:

The commercial farmers are an arrogant lot. The commercial farmers are a racist bunch that want privilege (sic) for themselves only. Time has come. We’ve told them in no uncertain terms that we are going to redistribute land and that the land reform is irreversible (...). (Quoted from the archives of the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe.)

On 3 May 2000, President Mugabe told his supporters that the whites had shown themselves to be “raw Rhodesians who have never changed” and as a punishment he would fully support the land invasions:

I will never order the war veterans to retreat from the farms they are on (...) What are we supposed to do? (...) Fold our arms and say “Ah, you are the ordained ones by the Almighty, by virtue of your white skin and by virtue of your being British, royal blood every one of you, we will not touch your land.” No. The end has come; land will now come to the people. (Quoted in Blair 2002:132.)

The MDC and its entire support base have also been declared enemies of the state and are constantly depicted as fronts for the protection of white interests. The MDC has thus become the target of the worst diatribes as articulated by the ruling party newspaper:

... their ties with ex-Rhodesian and Western powers who have been working against the realisation of our people’s aspirations and goals such as land reform is clear testimony that they are enemies of our revolution. To be more precise, they are puppets of these imperialists who want to re-colonise Zimbabwe. (Editorial in *The People’s Voice*, 19–25 September 2000.)

The residents of Harare, believed by Zanu-PF to be the support base of MDC, are also persecuted by the regime, assisted by the state media. On many occasions, the President has called the Harare urbanites “totemless” (Kamete 2003). In Zimbabwean terms, being “totemless” means having no home and no roots.

Rewriting History

We cannot find our history in books written by whites. What we need to do in order to free ourselves is to research and write our own history. (*President Robert Mugabe, ZTV 8pm News, 28 February 2002.*)

The last three years have witnessed the rewriting of Zimbabwean history and what British historian Terence Ranger (2003) has called the emergence of “patriotic history”. The state’s “national identity project” has zeroed in on a particular version of history and the media have been central to this. This is being done through the showing of documentaries about the liberation war and several cultural documentaries. Programmes such as “*Nbaka Yedu*” (Our Heritage), “*National Ethos*” or “*New Farmer*” have appeared on television. They interpret Zimbabwean history and national identity in a very shallow and microscopic way. ZBC shows one historical programme after another and the print media have written endless historical articles with the liberation war and land as central themes. This is captured well by Innocent Sithole in the *Financial Gazette* of February 14–20 2001 (quoted in Ranger 2003) when he writes:

The nation is daily bombarded with grim images of grotesquely mutilated and decomposing black bodies from the liberation war (...). [It is] an attempt to edit the nation’s collective memory in order to rewrite the history of the struggle for independence (...). By virtue of being the government of the day, Zanu-PF has access to and control over the recorded signs and symbols that denote and connote our history as a nation (...). Central to Zanu-PF’s election campaign is the political commodification of the legacy of the liberation war.

Ranger (2003) argues that within Zimbabwe, “patriotic history” has seemed intensely narrow, “dividing the nation up into revolutionaries and sell-outs”. As said before, the state-owned newspapers and the broadcaster have channelled story after story, which has attacked perceived government opponents as “traitors”, “enemies of the state” and “stooges” of imperialism. Zimbabwean history is now defined around land and sovereignty with nothing in between. This interpretation is also essentially racist. For example, Dr Vimbai Chivaura (*National Ethos*, 9 February 2002) described African history as the only history that is

... capable of being understood as the history of the world (...) because Africa is the cradle of civilisation. Whites did not have a history. By the time we had civi-

lisations whites were still in caves (...) the oldest excavations were found in Africa especially in South Africa and in geological times, you find that the centre of the universe was Africa (...). (Quoted in Jambaya and Gandhi 2003:4.)

On another occasion (*National Ethos*, 2 February 2002) he described African nationhood in terms of “blackness” when he referred to the African race as “the founding of the races” saying:

This is scientifically true and this is also religiously true. When you are talking about a nation concerning African people we are talking about things that bind us together as a people. And we are also talking about everybody whose blood flows in our veins (...). (Quoted in Jambaya and Gandhi 2003:4.)

This statement implicitly means that whites do not belong to Africa and by extension whites in Zimbabwe do not belong to the country. This theme has been pervasive in all narratives coming from the state media. The “white factor” was used in the fierce campaigns during the general election and presidential election in 2000 and 2002. The MDC, the perceived ally of white interests, is also not seen as part of Zimbabwe’s history in the making. For instance, ZTV 8pm news on 22 March 2003 reported President Mugabe addressing Zanu-PF supporters after the MDC had staged a two-day job stoppage on 18–19 March:

... we have said who are you? Stooges of the White man? You don’t have voices of your own. Yes, you wear our skins but below that skin you are White men. *Ganda raunaro chipfeko chedu vatema chamakapiva nemadzitateguru edu asi pfungwa dzenyu, seri kwaganda iroro ndedzēvachena.* (The black skin they have is just a gift from our ancestors but their thinking below their skins is White) (...) there is no room for violent people, no room for violent people in Zimbabwe. Let them go to Europe. Let them go where their masters are (...) and from now on, that message which we are sending to them will translate itself into greater vigour, greater vigilance and greater action by my government. We shall not treat them with soft gloves anymore. *Vavengi pakati pedu* (There are enemies within us). (Quoted from the archives of the Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe.)

The MDC, its leader Morgan Tsvangirai, and its supporters are thus seen as “escaping from history” while President Mugabe is represented as an all-embracing figure embodying Zimbabwean history and national values. Zimbabwean history is therefore Mugabe and Mugabe is Zimbabwean history!

The “Mugabe is history” notion has been most apparent in programmes around the National Youth Service introduced by government in 2001. The aim of the programme, according to government, is to enhance skills, patriotism and moral education in the youths. Further government rhetoric states that the national youth service was set up to defend the nation against imperialists and neo-colonialists and that the youth training “will prevent youths from becoming certified slaves of Western neo-colonialism (...). [It] will address the effects of the cultural nuclear bomb of imperialism that has deluded our youths of direction” (*The Herald*, 10 July 2002). A history manual for youths called “Inside the Third *Chimurenga*” is simplistic and ideologically narrow. A report by the Solidarity Peace Trust (2003:18) comments:

The manual is historically simplistic and racist, and glorifies recent Zanu-PF National Heroes, along with the land resettlement programme. It consists entirely of speeches made by President Mugabe since 2000, among them his address to Zanu-PF party congress, his speech after the 2000 election result, and funeral orations for deceased Zanu-PF heroes (...) the opposition MDC is repeatedly vilified in this compilation and referred to as imperialists and neo-colonialists (...) the MDC is said to be driven by the “repulsive ideology of return to white settler rule”(...).

Through this programme, the regime is creating ‘new history’ and silencing all alternative versions of history. New history books, with a patriotic viewpoint, are being distributed in schools. Most ominous, however, are government’s plans to introduce patriotic history in tertiary institutions. As Ranger (2003) reports, some headmasters and college lecturers were instructed by war veterans in patriotic history. War veterans are given first preference in Teachers Training Colleges and courses in journalism will be restricted to those who have undergone National Youth Service. The government has also announced that only those who have gone through national service will be accepted into colleges, universities and civil service.

The writing of “patriotic history” is also being done through advertisements, jingles and songs played on both radio and television. The first jingle to hit the airwaves was called “*Chave Chimurenga*” (It is now time for war). This was followed by other jingles – all centred on land and the liberation war. They are played both on radio and television every

30 minutes. Collectively, the jingles have run for 18 months non-stop. Music has also been used to support the government’s land reform policy. The music project is co-ordinated by the Department of Information and Publicity in the President’s Office and consists of a group of musicians who compose music with liberation war themes and music which carries Zanu-PF campaign messages. Songs such as *Hondo Ye Minda* (Struggle for land), *Zimbabwe ndeyeropa* (Zimbabwe came through bloodshed) and similar tunes dominate the music charts. The music project has also roped in young musicians who sing hip-hop music, some of it with “patriotic messages”.

Rethinking National Identity: Challenges of Building a New Zimbabwe

Building a new Zimbabwe in the post-Mugabe era will pose great challenges, not just in terms of reconstructing economic and political structures, but also in creating “new” spaces for rethinking issues around national identity and belonging. The government’s “national identity project” has seriously foreclosed critical debate and discussion on several issues. Government’s current control of the media and its reluctance to license new broadcasting players prevented many alternative views and voices from being heard. While the government has chosen to define Zimbabwean identity around the issues of land and the liberation struggle, it is significant to note that millions of Zimbabweans born in the 1970s and after independence do not identify with the liberation struggle or land for that matter. It is also worth noting that the discourse of sovereignty and national identity is at odds with the current wave of globalization and democratisation. We have to ask ourselves as Zimbabweans whether there are sufficient grounds to entrench concepts of “national identity” and “cultural identity” in a world that is fast becoming globalized and interdependent

At the moment, it is very difficult for people to debate freely on issues and develop counter-narratives to the regime because Zanu-PF controls most channels of expression. With the closure of *The Daily News* and the absence of independent and community broadcasting stations, Zanu-PF virtually commands all the media. It also controls freedom of choice and assembly through such legislation as POSA, which bans all forms of meetings and gath-

erings without police clearance. The only “spaces” for Zimbabweans to discuss issues freely without fear are weddings and funerals!

To envisage a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe requires seriously debating the issues outlined in this chapter. The crisis in Zimbabwe is not centred on governance alone; the country is also faced with a crisis of identity, belonging and nationhood. One policy challenge that will face the “new” Zimbabwe will be the (re)structuring of the Zimbabwean media. There is no denying that the regime has used the media as tools to perpetuate its repression. The state media have been hijacked and turned into party media. An important part of building a new Zimbabwe will therefore centre on the reform of media legislation and regulations. During the transformation period from the apartheid regime to democracy in South Africa, media reform was on top of the agenda. The restructuring of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was seen as a precondition for a successful transitional process.

Many at this moment in time share the feelings of Zichanaka Munyika, who wrote to the *Zimbabwe Independent*, that he is looking forward to a time “when Zanu-PF’s stranglehold on Zimbabwe will end and the history of this country will be debated freely by all shades of opinion for the benefit of our children” (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 14 February 2003).

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APPENDICES

RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE 53rd GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE (IPI) IN WARSAW/POLAND¹

Resolution on Zimbabwe

The IPI members meeting at their Annual General Assembly in Warsaw, Poland are deeply concerned at the continuing deterioration of the media situation in Zimbabwe as a result of government action. After the highly criticised closure at gunpoint of the independent daily, the Daily News, the government has issued threats against other independent publications, the Independent and the Standard, describing them as the “running dogs of imperialism”.

This was followed by the government’s Media and Information Committee (MIC) threatening to close a third newspaper, the independent weekly, the Tribune, on a technical breach of the MIC’s registration rules.

In addition, the government made threats against Zimbabwean journalists who act as correspondents for foreign newspapers. They were accused of sending “lying reports” about conditions in Zimbabwe to these papers. The state-owned Herald newspaper in the capital, Harare, issued threats that the government planned to take action against these journalists and a few days later Jonathan Moyo, the Minister of Information in the president’s office, declared that Zimbabwean jails had space for “lying” journalists.

In view of these serious developments further limiting the freedom of the Press, the IPI members decided unanimously that they have no option but to retain Zimbabwe’s name on the “watchlist” of nations that are seriously eroding media freedom.

For Zimbabwe to be removed from the “watchlist” a country must restore the media freedoms that it has sought to destroy.

Resolution on African Union’s NEPAD initiative

The IPI members meeting at their Annual General Assembly in Warsaw, Poland expressed their deep disappointment that the laudable African Union initiative, NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development), has signally failed to include the vital role of free and independent media as one of the criteria for assessing whether its member nations comply with the principles of good governance.

Under NEPAD, the African Union envisages applying a “peer review” mechanism for member nations who volunteer for assessment so that they may qualify for donor aid and trade preferences from the world’s Group of Eight richest nations and members of the European Union. Under NEPAD’s only good governance criteria are an efficient civil service, effective parliaments with accountability and an independent judiciary. No place for the media is envisaged under these criteria.

The IPI members believe that the exclusion from such a review of the essential requirement of a free and independent media to conduct a “watchdog” role over government is extremely serious and in consequence any “peer review” finding that a nation has complied with the good governance criteria will be flawed. IPI members believe that the failure to include such a requirement will encourage other African states that a free media is not an essential element of democracy.

In making this assertion IPI is aware that under separate criteria assessing a nation’s promotion of human rights, a need for media freedom is mentioned. However, this requirement is not specific to good governance. The only reference to journalism too is that it should be “responsible”, a term which is often used to limit media freedom. The IPI notes that a country that

1. <http://www.freemedia.at/resolutions2004.htm>

does not accord freedom to its news media would fail to qualify for membership of the European Union – an indication of the importance this group of nations attaches to the role of a free media.

IPI members unanimously call on the African Union urgently to rectify this omission and to insert in the good governance criteria, a requirement for free and independent media.

In addition, IPI urges the African Union to include as a requirement under both these sections an undertaking by governments to commit themselves to remove legislative restrictions on the media. They should also reaffirm the values and principles contained in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

PRESS RELEASE BY THE WORLD ASSOCIATION OF NEWSPAPERS (PARIS) JUNE 2, 2004

Istanbul

The Board of the World Association of Newspapers has called for the repeal of Zimbabwe's draconian press laws and for President Robert Mugabe to immediately cease all attempts to silence independent media.

"Laws exist to protect President Mugabe from criticism while he is able to make unrestrained attacks on his critics in the media and civil society," said the WAN Board in a resolution issued during the World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum, the global meetings of the world's press which drew more than 1,300 publishers, chief editors and other senior newspaper executives to Istanbul, Turkey.

The resolution said:

The Board of the World Association of Newspapers, meeting at the 57th World Newspaper Congress in Istanbul, Turkey, 30 May to 2 June 2004, deplores the continuing attacks against independent media in Zimbabwe.

Journalists are subject to persistent abuse and threats in state-controlled media, and are threatened with arrest under draconian media and security laws.

Laws exist to protect President Mugabe from criticism while he is able to make unrestrained attacks on his critics in the media and civil society.

Under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2002), a Media and Information Commission has been set up to license journalists and media organisations. The Commission's chairman has demonstrated his hostility to the independent media and regularly abuses private newspapers. At the same time, the law of criminal defamation is used to suppress critical voices in the media.

The independent media is finding it increasingly difficult to perform its role as a public watchdog given the hostility and lawlessness of ruling-party officials and the closure of democratic space.

The government has declined to license alternative radio or TV stations despite a court order to remove the state's broadcasting monopoly. Voters are unable to make an informed choice because they do not have access to a diversity of views.

The Board of WAN calls for the elimination of the repressive provisions of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, together with the Public Order and Security Act, and for these and other attempts to silence independent media to be ceased immediately.

The Paris-based WAN, the global organisation for the newspaper industry, defends and promotes press freedom world-wide. It represents 18,000 newspapers; its membership includes 72 national newspaper associations, individual newspaper executives in 102 countries, 13 news agencies and ten regional and world-wide press groups.

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