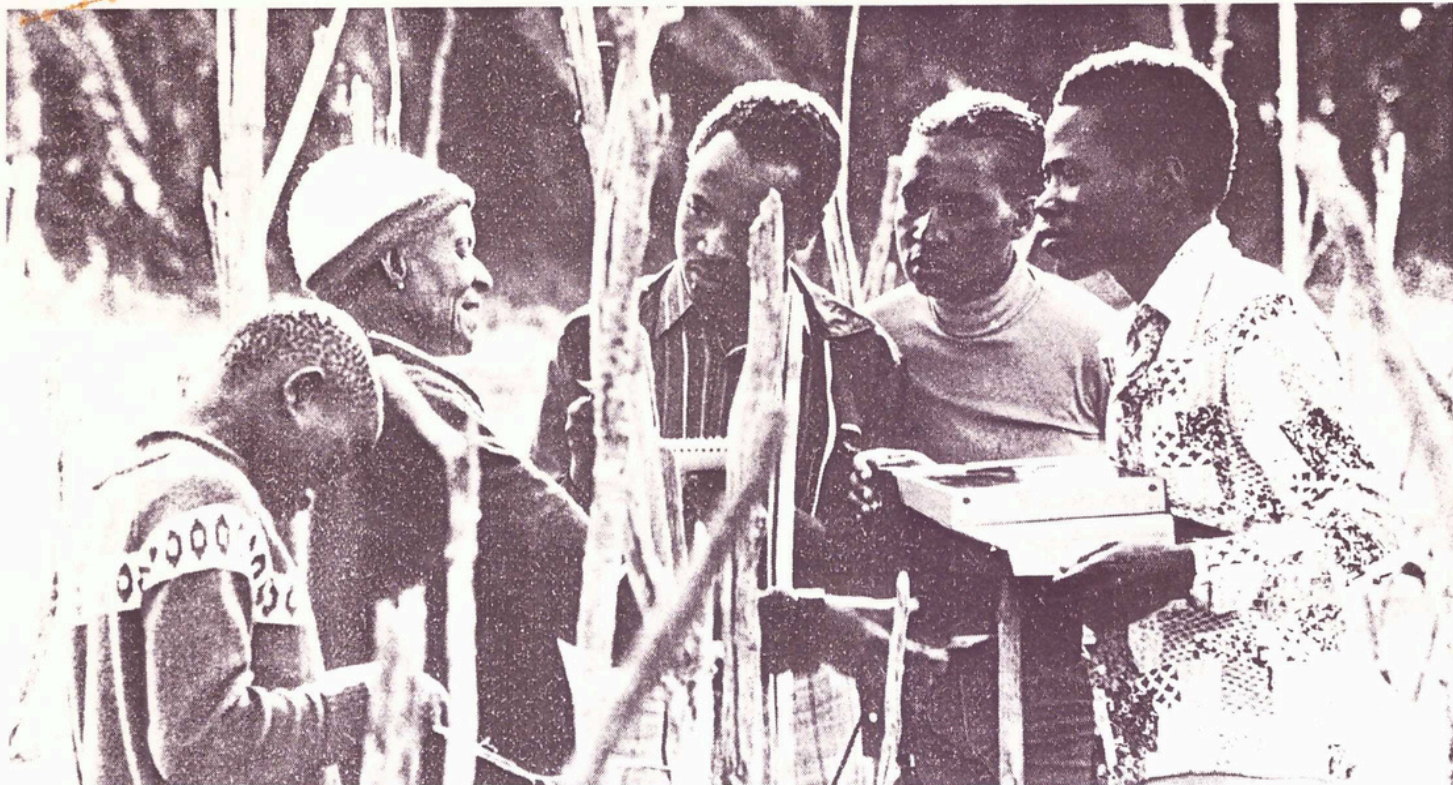




Radio ZIMCO with the village people in Chinamhora. Three students interviewed Mrs Chip Mutongerwa who, after the playback, exclaimed: 'I can die now, because my voice will still be heard.'

A new press, the old story



What news in the new press — still too much of the old?

From being slave to minority interests, the press in Zimbabwe has broadened its perspective to represent the majority of people. But has it changed completely? MOTO reports.

THE press in Zimbabwe has undergone a remarkable transformation. Suddenly, with independence, newspapers began to appear with news about Africans. And this in a country where they constitute 98 per cent of the population.

Another major change concerned the ownership and editorial direction of the press. This was achieved the following year, with a government takeover of the shares of the former Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company, a subsidiary of the Argus Press of South Africa. Along with this "Zimbabweanisation" of the press, African editors of the newspapers were appointed for the first time.

A unique aspect of this transformation was the creation of an autonomous body — the Mass Media Trust — which was to maintain an independent position between the government on the one hand and the newspapers on the other. By this means, the press would remain free of direct government control and answerable to a para-statal agency representative of the interests of the community.

In spite of these much needed changes, elements of continuity still remain. Foremost of these is the tradition of press support for the government of the day. While this was a pattern adhered to throughout the history of colonial Zimbabwe (except for a brief deviation

over UDI), the difference between the practice before and after independence is a fundamental one. That difference is between a press which supported governments representing only a minority of the population and one which now supports a government elected by universal suffrage and representative of the majority of the people.

Nevertheless, the degree to which the press supports, or ought to support, the government of the day has always been a matter of controversy.

Prior to UDI, the Establishment which ran the government as well as the press was generally in agreement on the political status quo. White minority rule was assumed to be assured and challenges to it from the black majority were always to be deplored. Differences occasionally arose over how this system might best be preserved or who was best qualified to do it. Such differences then passed for political controversy. But criticism on particulars could be readily tolerated by a government confident of retaining the support of the press.

This era of complacency came to an abrupt end with the advent of the Rhodesian Front. Since the press withdrew its support from a government committed to UDI, censorship was imposed to silence this opposition. However, once the dissenting elements were neutralised or otherwise disposed of,

The Herald

Incorporating The Nation

SALISBURY, MONDAY NOVEMBER 6 1978

THE RHODESIA HERALD, MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1972

Comment

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1972

The Rhodesia Herald



Recent weddings

The Herald, Wednesday May 18 1983



Comment

CABBAGES AND KINGS

The Carpenter PS

RECENT WEDDINGS

CABBAGES AND KINGS

The Herald

Incorporating The Nation

HARARE, SATURDAY MAY 28 1983

P.O. Box 396, Harare, Phone 104341

"Carried over from the former times is the tendency towards trivialisation and clinging to outworn relics of the past."

conformity was once more ensured and support for the government restored.

Since independence, the relationship between the press and the government has reverted to the pre-UDI pattern. The personnel of both are drawn from the same Establishment and they share common political aspirations. Just as it would have been inconceivable for the colonial press to challenge white minority rule, so it would now be inconceivable for the press to oppose a government reflecting the will of the majority.

While operating within the framework of this consensus, the press remains free to criticise the means by which the agreed goals are to be pursued.

This pattern can be seen in the letters column of the newspapers, where individuals are able to voice their objections to government policies or the personnel implementing them. It can also be seen in occasional editorials which call the government or its public servants to account for their shortcomings. One example of this practice was

the public protest against an immigration policy which was condemned as racist, sexist and xenophobic. The fact that some note was taken of these objections was a tribute to the role of the press in publicising the issue.

Another feature associated with the press support for the government of the day is the excessive reliance on ministerial pronouncements to fill up the news columns. One explanation for this tradition, which comes from the journalists themselves, is that it is much easier to reproduce the text of a Ministry of Information press statement (after correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation) than to write a story about its contents. It also saves them from having to search for other material with a genuine news value.

Also carried over from former times is the tendency towards trivialisation and clinging to outworn relics of the past. One has only to cite a column like "Cabbages & Kings", with interests relevant to white Rhodesia and English suburbia, to prove this.

But there are other examples as well, such as page after page taken up with brides of the day, the week, the year. Not to speak of a Saturday editorial page largely devoted to hints about fishing and medical advice from the Seventh Day Adventists. Even the povo's letters are excluded to make room for these regular weekly offerings.

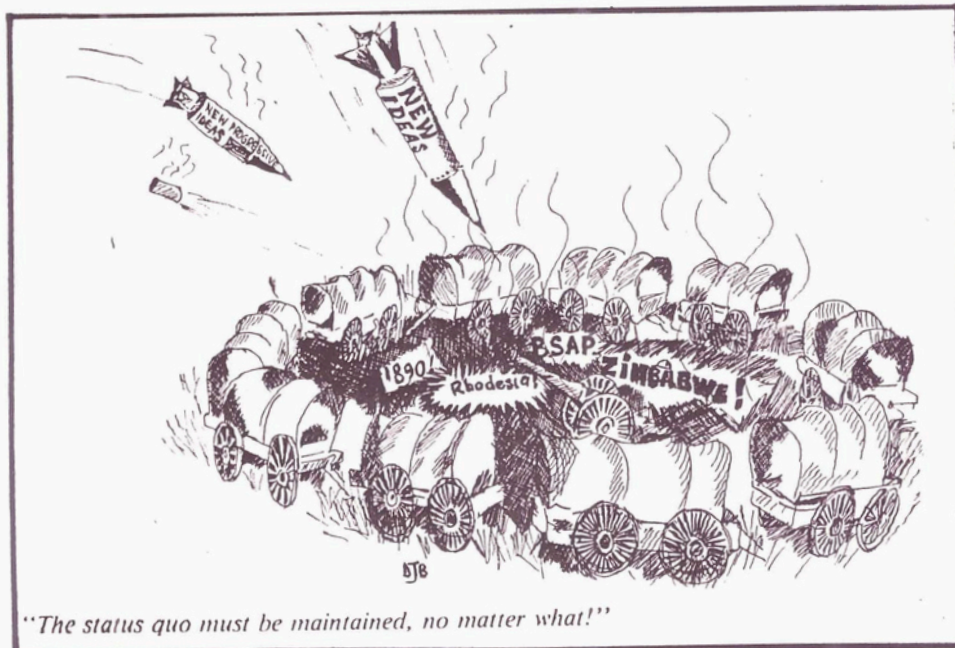
Much of this colonial mentality is also reflected in the so-called "critics" columns, still written by journalists of the past. Here trivialisation combines with Philistinism, the values fostered by white minority governments to lull their supporters into a false sense of security and well-being.

Now, however, when serious or controversial matters are debated on radio or TV, particularly if they relate to Marxism or liberation, they are dismissed by such critics as "dull", "boring" or "political". With such a wealth of talented African writers, it can only be deplored that they have not been recruited to appraise the same material from a far wider cultural experience.

Also from a past we could well do without is an excessive pre-occupation with secrecy and a tendency to discourage debate on matters of public concern. In a democratic society, the only information designated as secret is that relating to national defence and security. Anything else should be open to scrutiny by the public or the press.

But investigative journalism is virtually unknown in this country. This failing has been attributed to a combination of circumstances. One is the lack of trained journalists with a socialist or Third World perspective. An equally important deterrent is the reluctance of government agencies to disperse information. Even the most innocuous request is generally received with suspicion and mistrust.

While much of its secretiveness can be attributed to the mentality of public servants trained to conceal sanctions-busting during UDI, there is no justification for it now. And particularly distressing is the possibility that this mentality is being passed on to the post-independence generation of public servants.



vants who, ironically, were on the opposite side of the struggle.

This tendency towards concealment is also seen in official replies to the letters of enquiry which appear in the press. These replies frequently contain the advice that the complainant should have come around to the office for a private chat rather than airing his or her criticisms of officialdom in public, i.e., through the newspaper.

And finally, there is the age-old question of who the newspapers are for. In colonial Zimbabwe, there was no doubt that newspapers existed to reflect the interests and the political orientation of a small white minority. Competition from African-oriented or church-based publications was quite simply ruled out by the banning of them.

Now, however, our newspapers are meant to serve the interests of the majority of the population. But even this commendable objective raises as many questions as it answers. For the interests of a multi-racial and multi-cultural society are so diverse that it is impossible for any media to suit them all.

One suggestion to meet this dilemma is the expansion of the existing press to include more local or regional newspapers. In this way, the majority of the population, which is in fact the rural masses, could be brought into touch with the developments of concern to their own and other rural areas.

Such newspapers could also play an important role in providing reading or study material for the literacy programme. In addition, they could be linked up with the other

mass media which are envisaged for the culture houses of the future.

With this localisation of the press, a national newspaper would be able to concentrate its output on matters of national and international concern. Of course, there would still be differences of opinion on what subjects are or should be of national concern.

But the first consideration is that Zimbabwe is an African country and its press should reflect that reality. It is also a developing country and one committed to building a socialist society. Within this framework, its broad aims should be to inform, to educate and to entertain. And these aims should be directed to a reading public that will be ever increasing as literacy is gradually extended to the entire population. □

No easy walk for an independent editor

THE vital importance of the press in an independent Zimbabwe needs little emphasis. The new nation that is born at independence, after many years of colonial rule based on the self-preservation principles of "divide and rule", needs nurturing and consolidation.

What makes the task difficult and formidable is that the intangible, but invaluable, instruments of consolidation do not happen of themselves: they have to be created. And the process of creating them encompasses decades, as is exemplified by the histories of the established nations of the world.

I refer to such vital virtues as patriotism, national integration and cohesion, sensitivity to national interest, national development, national unity and national consciousness.

The press, together with other media, is almost an indispensable instrument in the important task of inculcating in the heads and hearts of all Zimbabweans the virtues that consolidate our independence. It means that the press must rise to the demands of the situation. It must mobilise the masses: it must play more than its traditional role of merely informing, educating and entertaining.

During the colonial days the press (white press) was used for almost the same objective — that of galvanising the white settlers who had converged here from various countries, various nationalities and spoke various languages. The *Rhodesia Herald*, the *Sunday Mail* and the *Bulawayo Chronicle* played an important role in this respect. They were designed exclusively for white readers and the black people read them incidentally and with the intention of eavesdropping on what the government and the whites were saying about them.

The content and the tone of the newspapers were hostile to African aspirations and ideas of equality and equal treatment. African nationalists and nationalism were pooh-poohed and ridiculed. The government policies of racial discrimination were either directly supported, or connived at or played down.

The new Zimbabwe press must do more than educate, inform and entertain. As veteran journalist, Willie Musarurwa, now editor of the *Sunday Mail*, points out in this article, no newspaper can afford to remain neutral in the pursuit of progress.



During the first Chimurenga war of 1896–98, the *Daily Sketch* which preceded the *Rhodesia Herald*, took a firmly hostile line against the African leaders of the war. When war leaders, Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi, were discovered and arrested, the *Daily Sketch* published a poem of jubilation and celebration and demanded their execution.

The African newspapers (*The Bantu Mirror*, *The African Weekly*, the *Daily News* and *The African Parade*) were used for the same colonial purposes of bolstering up and buttressing the colonial status quo. The papers were privately owned and yet they supported the Government as if they were publicly owned. Government ministers,

policies and statements featured regularly and prominently.

Only so-called African moderates were given publicity and projected. African nationalists of the Youth League were referred to in pejorative and satirical terms. They were "ignorant, unemployed and unemployable agitators".

When the *Daily News* changed ownership in 1963 and began supporting the cause of African majority rule, its days were numbered. It was banned on 31st August, 1964 — the same day that ZANU and ZAPU were banned.

I am saying this by way of trying to show that before independence the press in this country was used to consolidate the gains of colonial settlerism against the aspirations of the majority indigenous people who were kept divided by selectively projecting the unpleasant aspects of their history, as well as their tribal differences, while sweeping their many similarities and common factors under the carpet.

What should now be the role of the press in an independent Zimbabwe? The answer is not far to seek.

Its role is to play a full part in the building of the nation of Zimbabwe. This presupposes that there was no nation at the point of independence. Nothing could be more true. There were various disparate racial groupings — the whites, the Asians and the Coloureds on one side, and the blacks on the other.

The four groupings were deliberately, and as a matter of government policy, kept in separate water-tight racial compartments — in land ownership, residential areas, schools, hospitals, prisons and all spheres of life. The blacks were also kept apart by making them live in separate areas according to the so-called tribe. Such tribally divisive names as Mashonaland, Matabeleland, Manicaland, are still with us, proving the obstinacy and resilience of colonial influence.

After the bitter internecine war that we had, there are mutual suspicions and animosities. In such a situation the press has a greater role, and more onerous respon-

sibilities. It must recognise the national problems. It must be sensitive and responsive to the peculiar problems of nation-building and all the facts and factors required for the phenomenal task.

I call this sensitive journalism — the very opposite of sensational journalism. Defined positively, sensitive journalism refers to conscious, understanding, positive sympathetic journalism which is dedicated to the promotion and furtherance of peace, social and political integration. It is a delicate tight-rope.

It recognises the existence of centripetal and centrifugal forces and openly takes sides. It cannot be neutral between construction and destruction; between right and wrong; between vice and virtue.

In such a difficult situation, freedom of the press, as in all situations, is a prerequisite. What is freedom of the press? It is the right to freedom of a newspaper to collect and publish information, as well as to comment on that information and public affairs, without let or hindrance from any quarter, or without seeking prior permission from the government or the owning tycoon.

It means that freedom of the press reposes an enormous amount of power and responsibility on one man — the editor. He decides what people should, or should not read. By a process of news selection, omission and emphasis, he is able to influence opinion-formation in the society.

The exercise of such powers demands certain qualities of an editor. The following are some of them — broadmindedness, moral principles, a high sense of fairness, a broad basis of knowledge (knowing something about everything), impartiality, objectivity, courage of convictions, tolerance, a wide journalistic experience, a fair knowledge of

the country's history, culture, traditions, policies, economics, sociology and respect for other people's views whether one agrees with them, patriotism, consciousness and sensitivity to national interests, among others.

A highly developed sense of responsibility is an indispensability; without it, freedom becomes licence.

The question of the freedom of the press raises the crucial issue of who should own the press. Is it the government? Is it the people? Is it the tycoon? In whose owning hands is the press freer and more capable of playing a democratic role? I have no space to discuss the pros and cons of the issue ending up with a conclusion. But the need to democratise the press is a necessity in any democratic country. It is consonant with democracy.

In our situation, the government bought controlling shares from a foreign South African-based company. Instead of the government directly administering the newspapers, it decided upon a unique plan whereby it formed the Mass Media Trust and entrusted it with the duty to administer the newspapers.

This was in deference to the concept of freedom of the press. The idea was to cushion off the editors from the constricting influence of government ministers, so that they could be free to collect and publish news without let or hindrance, fear or favour. It is working splendidly. A free press is a boon to the country and Government.

It is almost axiomatic that an unfree press is worse than no press at all. It is not effective and does not help either the government or the people. It cheats both the government and the people, and invariably builds a fools' paradise for the former. A sycophantic press that showers government leaders with

undeserved, worshipful adulations is as good as Judas Iscariot. It eventually betrays those that it flatters and lulls them into a stupor of complacency and a false sense of infallibility and invulnerability. A government must be informed of what the people are thinking and vice versa. Suppression or banning of ideas is a futile exercise. Smith and company can bear witness.

And yet it must be stated that there is no absolute press freedom anywhere in the world. It is always relative and operates within an invisible framework prescribed by the country's social, political historical and religious order. It is culture-bound and varies from country to country.

It is tempered by sensitivity to national interest and the instinct of self-preservation. No journalist anywhere in the world will publish that which he knows to be harmful to his country, unless he has become a turn coat and traitor. Criticism may be violent but it is always in pursuit of national interest and is based on the fact that nobody (government ministers included) monopolises national interest, and always acts in the best interest of the nation.

Many people holding public posts have been known to use them for the promotion of self-interest and self-gain. Only a free press can attack and expose such corrupt practices. Like germs which are sensitive to sunshine, corruption is sensitive and averse to publicity. As Jeremy Bentham said: "In the darkness of secrecy, sinister interest and evil in every shape, have full swing. . . . The security of securities, is publicity." Nothing could be more cogent and truthful.

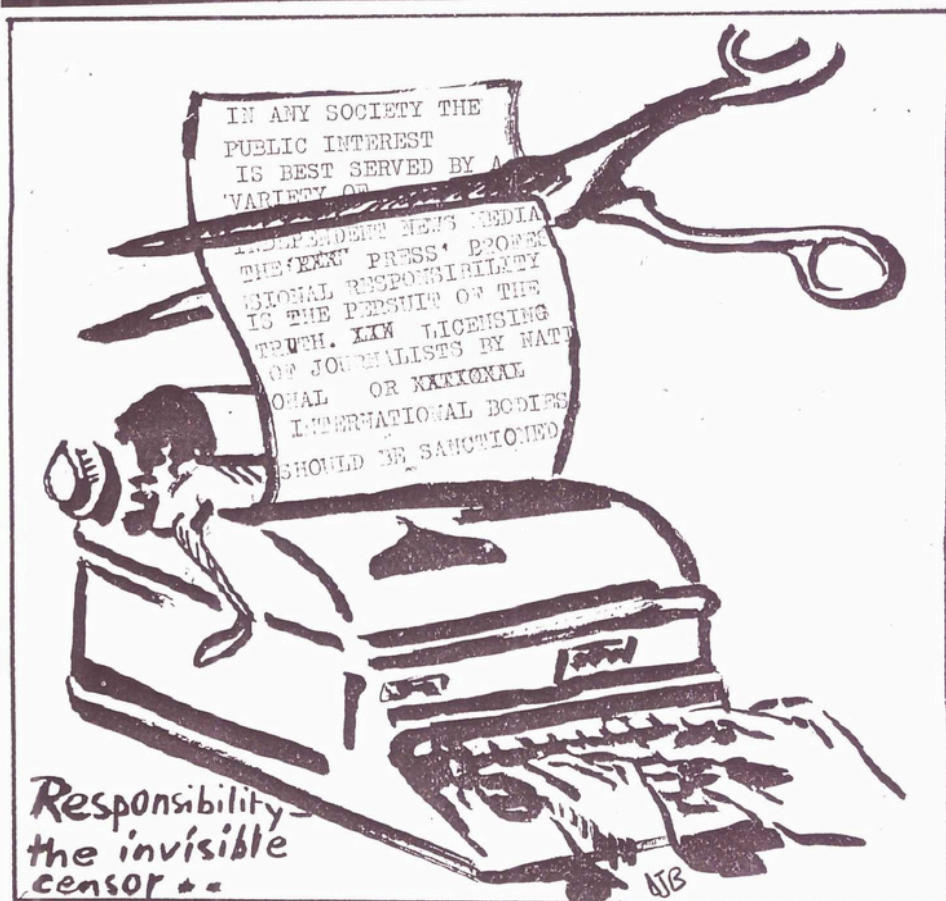
As to individual freedom, there are limits to press freedom. The law of libel protects citizens from being scandalised by irresponsible newspapers. It protects the good name of good people, but sometimes it protects the "good name" of bad people — criminals. Then there is the law of contempt of court. A newspaper may not publish irresponsible and maliciously critical reports about court and judicial officers; it may also not comment on court cases that are in process. This is regarded as *sub judice*.

Considerations of what is decent and the moral susceptibilities of the society also act as a restraint on freedom of the press. This comes within the realm of automatic censorship. There is no editor who publishes what he thinks is rubbish — obscenities, pornography, what is in bad taste, for example.

There are also considerations of what is subversive, of curfews, and states of emergency which prohibit the publication of certain news stories, as well as contents of classified government documents.

In spite of these limitations, there is a wide scope for journalists to carry out their public function of informing, educating and entertaining, as well as to investigate and expose scandals, rackets and other forms of corruption.

The performance of such needed public service demands forthrightness, integrity and an independence of mind on the part of journalists. Journalistic opportunism, expediency and stoogeism are vices which are capable of inflicting great harm to the government, the nation and the people. They are part of the corruption that the press is expected to expose and root out.



Fallacies of Africa under western eyes

I WOULD like to open with a quote from a person I interviewed in late 1980, because I thought he would have a unique and valuable perspective on media coverage of southern Africa. He's a black Zimbabwean, with extensive contacts in both the rural and urban areas, and yet he's in daily contact with the great metropolises: London, Moscow, New York, Beijing.

He's the telex operator at the Harare offices of the majority of foreign journalists operating from Zimbabwe.

"The reporters never could understand what the war was really like for the black people of this country. They just couldn't get the information, because they couldn't venture into the communal areas. Reporters just didn't know exactly what was happening out there, so to write a story about it — it was bound to be one-sided."

That certainly is a sweeping statement of the international news media, taking journalists to task for relying on government information, for not communicating with local blacks, and not being in touch with the rural areas, and so forth.

The governments of Zimbabwe and Mozambique have recently argued that foreign journalists should not attempt to cover Black Africa by making periodic forays from the White South. But there could be another side to this debate over where a correspondent should be based, and that concerns the particular niche that a journalist carves for him or herself in a community. I think that foreign journalists must recognize the limitations of our "niche" in African society — often, as whites enjoying a far higher standard of living than would be attainable in Britain or the U.S. — and then make a special effort to get beyond our immediate environment to gather news and people's views.

I'd like to quote from an exhaustive study of media coverage during the Zimbabwe war years conducted by an American academic, Beverly Hawk. She elicited the following comment from a reporter working for a U.S. newspaper.

"I tried to interview black farm workers in the countryside. I do not speak Shona. I had to rely on people as translators who may not have had the trust of the people. . . . But I admit that in addition to language, I probably lacked the proper metaphors. I remember I kept asking women at a kraal what kind of life they envisioned for their children in a free Zimbabwe. They kept saying "that he should live" or "he should marry". I was posing my questions within a Western frame of reference, i.e. politics, democracy, constitutions, parliaments, and the women answered me within the context of their own lives. It was a fascinating experience, but it would not serve to fill out a story."

I disagree with that reporter's conclusion. I think there is a great story, right there, in that gap between those journalistic assump-

American journalist Julie Frederikse recently spoke at a seminar of the Botswana Journalists Association in Gaborone. In an abridged version of her address, she here examines some of the pitfalls of Western media reporting.



tions and the experience of those peasants.

Another problem that we, as journalists, have in covering this region, is the tendency to cover events as opposed to trends. We tend to only highlight a few landmarks of a country; we rarely have the opportunity to convey to our readers, listeners or viewers a country's entire political, social and economic topography, so to speak. Our coverage is by definition very episodic, so I think it is another challenge to us to try and counteract the conventional "great-men-and-great-events" approach to the history that we are chronicling. We should not let our audience conclude that Africa is an exotic place rocked by cataclysmic events like coups and natural disasters, but instead try to document trends, movements, ideas and ideologies.

Another challenge to journalists covering southern Africa, I feel, is to get beyond the common practice of viewing the region's conflicts through the prism of East-West relations. This kind of global political analysis is certainly an important component

of a story, but it should not take over to such an extent that, for example, the Cuban presence in Angola as a bargaining chip in the Namibian settlement obscures all coverage of other pressing domestic problems in Angola such as the refugees or the drought.

We journalists tend to rely on a kind of journalistic shorthand, which often opens us to criticism for oversimplifying or sensationalizing our coverage. "The sparsely-populated, mineral-rich, South African-controlled territory" is unbeatable as a nine-word description of Namibia, but it doesn't begin to reveal the complex economic and political role of this country in southern Africa.

There's another kind of journalistic shorthand that's all too easy to fall into and that is the tendency, for reasons of time and space, to reduce complex socio-economic distinctions to what's more easily ascribed to "tribal" conflicts. I would bet that most people who try to follow events in Zimbabwe from abroad would tell you that the major

division in the country is between the Shona ZANU party and the Ndebele ZAPU party — but they probably don't know and probably couldn't explain how and why it is that the current acting head of ZAPU is a Shona and the President of Zimbabwe is an Ndebele.

In fact, it's interesting to note that the word "tribal" is so frequently applied to Africa, while the word "ethnic" is used to describe similar conflicts in European and American contexts. It's unfortunate that the word "tribal" is so overused, for it only serves to reinforce stereotypical images of Africans, and imparts irrelevant connotations of primitiveness.

Journalists also have to be careful of adopting the terminology of the government. During the Rhodesian war, Robert Mugabe was a "terrorist"; after he became Prime Minister, he was suddenly an ex-"guerilla" leader and a "pragmatist". To white South Africans, all attacks against the government are the work of "terrorists".

Should we allow our audience outside South Africa to conclude that the people who launch those attacks are the same sort of people as, say, the Baader-Meinhof gang?

As the Symbionese Liberation Army? Or an ex-mental patient who takes hostages at gunpoint? The motivations of the South African saboteur, the West German group and the American hostage-taker are totally different, yet our audience might well be learning to label them all "terrorists".

Another word that I think is mis-used by both governments and the media is "riot". Were the black schoolchildren of Soweto, who burned schools and beerhalls in 1976, engaged in the same kind of activity as the people in New York City who looted shops during a power failure during that same night?

The phrase "pre-emptive defensive strike" is one much used — and abused — by the military in many countries. Israelis use it to describe attacks into Lebanon and South Africans use it to describe raids into Angola. To parrot that phrase is to adopt not only the government's terminology, but its analysis, too.

I could go on and on about suspect words and phrases, but allow me just one more example. It's not mine, but comes from a columnist in *Post*, the now-banned black

newspaper in Soweto. The columnist said he was getting very tired — and increasingly suspicious — of phrases like "Soviet-trained", "Marxist-supported" and "Cuban-backed" to describe all the enemies of South Africa. He wondered why South Africa's friends — its police, soldiers and the forces of Western countries — were never described as "American-backed" or "capitalist-supported".

In summary, I think that most journalists would answer this kind of critique of our reporting by pointing to the financial constraints on coverage, to the commercial demands of what is, in most cases, the *business* of publishing and broadcasting, to the demands of editors, to transportation and communications problems, and the like. At the same time, I think that most of us want and need to hear such criticism, for an open debate of these issues is the best means of improving our reporting and the public's understanding.

• Julie Frederikse has covered southern Africa for National Public Radio, the non-commercial radio network in the United States, since 1979. □

Blurred focus on Zimbabwe's image

IN recent months the foreign press, far from being just reporters, have become the subject of news themselves.

Some foreign correspondents have been called enemies of the people. Others are under permanent suspicion.

The lack of investment and tourism, an image abroad of persistent tribal conflict, and descriptions of massacres and excesses associated with the most brutal dictatorships are all bumped in one large menacing package at their door.

Three hundred journalists and media people swarmed into Zimbabwe at the time of the Pearce Commission in 1972; at Independence there were probably double that

Foreign journalists have come under the national spotlight following adverse reports abroad about events in Matabeleland. A MOTO correspondent reports on the problems they face and the power they wield.

many. Now there remain 20 to 25 locally based correspondents, many of them doing travel, business or specialist reporting.

The wariness of the present government attitude to the press might be inherited from the time of the liberation struggle where hopelessly onesided reports filled the pages, screens and airwaves of the world media.

"Not one single western newspaper or broadcasting network ever had a permanent correspondent attached to either of the guerilla armies," says veteran newsman Richard Carver, in a media book called 'It ain't half racist, Mum' after a British TV series.

They were interested mainly in how far each black politician was backed by one or other of the superpowers, and what label fitted their politics.

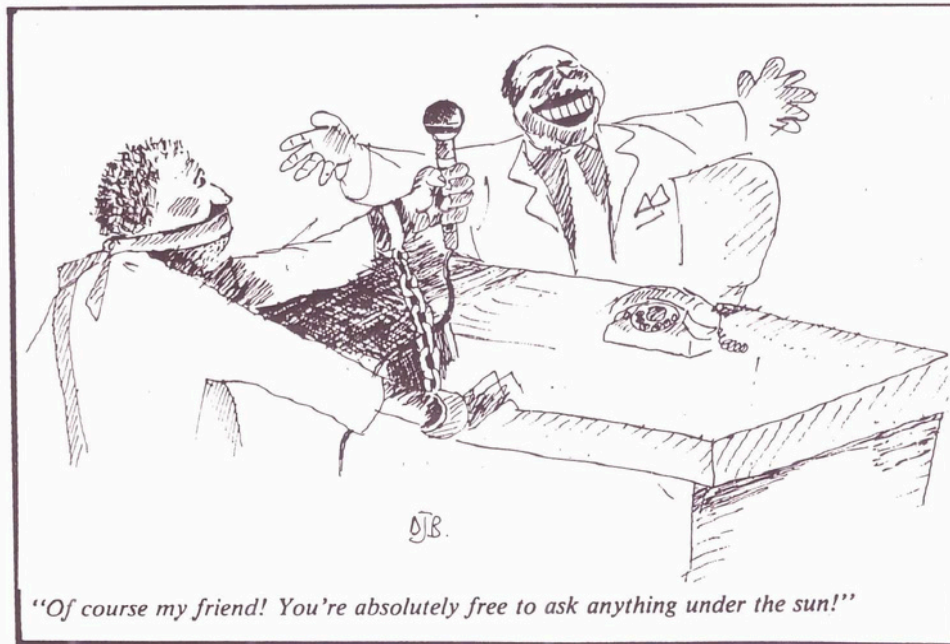
What they saw was not conducive to sympathetic coverage in their own terms: black, nationalist, militant and marxist.

Both then and now journalists have been charged with spreading "self-fulfilling prophecies of doom" and approaching coverage with a racist, value-bound bias.

"Before they can report on African politicians they must find out what tribes they belong to, or whether they are pro-cast or pro-west," says a local editor.

South African based reporters who live the high life in material luxury, and only make forays into unsophisticated African states for something "big", are specially denigrated.

Ministers have accused them of having dubious and reactionary sources from pre-independence times, and of using the gossip from the journalists' Quill Club and other bars as the basis for their reports.



"Of course my friend! You're absolutely free to ask anything under the sun!"

The yardstick for "success" of the government appears to be how far it has managed to defer to white interests in business and property.

A report headed 'The Plague of Tribal Enmity' in TIME earlier this year, says: "Mugabe now faces his biggest challenge yet — one that threatened to force more whites to flee the country while shaking international confidence in Zimbabwe's future. Says a businessman in the capital city of Harare, 'Its tough, tough, tough here.' ..."

Many foreign correspondents may have the same comment to make about their own position in the country, despite assurances from the Minister of Information, Dr Nathan Shamuyarira that there is no "witch hunt" among them.

They maintain, firstly, that they have to earn space in the international media, and depending on whether they write for British or American outlets, Zimbabwe as a news point is low on the world list of interest spots.

"In order of priorities for the US it is home news, Europe, Middle East, Far East, South America and then Africa, and that's how it comes across in the quantity of copy used," said one reporter.

"The US has its own problems of recession, international image, etc., and the media, which reflect national interests, sees Africa as a ground for superpower struggle, in civil wars, revolutions, dissidents, whatever."

Events in Matabeleland earlier this year put the foreign correspondents in a difficult and sensitive position under the national spotlight. They claim consistencies in government attacks on them.

"Last year after the abduction of the tourists in July, the government told us we should not be reporting the activities of the dissidents, because we were highlighting a criminal element."

"Then by February and March they were saying: why were we writing only of what the army was doing and ignoring the atrocities of the dissidents, who were previously called bandits?"

The picture of the malign, decadent 'journalist' sniffing out sensational hot-news stories comes straight from the movies, says another correspondent.

"There are times, months, when things are quiet. We ask to interview government people on policy issues for features, and it takes weeks to get a reply, never mind consent.

"There is a lack of information freely given, a need to retain a faultless facade, and a paranoia induced into the people so that it is difficult to get material for the "developmental journalism" that is held up to us as a model."

"Journalism is journalism," was the brief comment from one newsman. "Developmental journalism just means what is possible to write in certain countries. Either you are a journalist or an information officer."

One correspondent said it was typical that nobody ever wanted to put his name to what is said or written for fear of reprisal, "although people approach us to talk, hoping we will take the risk of publishing it."

Then there is the hierarchy of news. A succession of people might handle, adjust and cut his copy.

"We send the stuff on development and progress and it doesn't get used. I work with two other reporters and we send about fifteen pieces a week. Maybe two of these get used, and this is not every week," said a "stringer" who writes from several African countries.

A visiting foreign news editor from a large New York paper said she had never realised the depth of anti-US feeling until she came here, although she had taught developmental journalism in India for a year.

But she said it was increasingly difficult to justify giving space to third world development features or appeals "when all we get from this end is abuse".

Many third world governments find themselves frustrated and powerless in the face of an "information war", with few resources to combat it.

"When foreign correspondents come out here they stop being journalists and put on the garb of propagandists," said a recent *Herald* editorial, which then accused them of applying their own principles only in "civilised" countries.

"I can assure you that nothing has so strengthened our common resolve and determination to work towards a new world information order than the continual barrage

of misinformation directed against us," the Prime Minister Robert Mugabe retorted, after the first series of reports on bandit activities appeared in overseas papers.

Correspondents who have recently based themselves here out of sympathy for the government and its policies have observed that "criticism from the right is almost welcomed, but from the left it is seen as more sinister.

"Why does the government hit broadly sympathetic people but allow racists from pre-independence times to maintain their positions here?"

Some correspondents are critical of their colleagues' coverage but they close ranks when one is singled out for attack.

A senior Ministry of Information official whose usual duties have not appeared to include questioning locally based foreign correspondents, has recently been calling some in for a "ticking off" on aspects of their reports.

There is apprehension, a feeling that this is the first step to more severe restrictions.

Will the situation deteriorate to a point where the country loses its resident newsmen (who are more likely to have a better grasp of day-to-day events and trends), and become a haven for jet-setters with a heavy dose of the "coup-war-famine" syndrome? □

PANA — Africa's weapon in the information war

Africa's efforts to fight information dominance by the western media may finally succeed if the launching of the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) becomes a reality. Chen Chimutengwende reports.

THE Pan-African News Agency (PANA) which may finally be launched this year, has been an idea of the Organisation of African Unity since the founding of the organisation in 1963 in Addis Ababa. Turning the idea of PANA into reality has taken the OAU its whole life of 20 years.

The problems of PANA have been political, financial and technical. These have meant slow progress towards the creation of PANA. The idea of a continental news agency for Africa is a popular one. It is supported, at least verbally, by all African states.

The aims of PANA were re-stated in its Convention by the Conference of African Ministers of Information held in Addis Ababa 4-9 April, 1979. PANA aims

1. to promote the aims and objectives of the OAU for the consolidation of the independence, unity and solidarity of Africa;
2. to promote an effective exchange of political, economic, social and cultural information among member states;

3. to give more information about and assist in the liberation struggle of peoples against colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, racism, zionism and all other forms of exploitation and oppression;
4. to contribute towards the development of already established national news agencies and promote in Africa the establishment of national news agencies and multinational training institutes of information and if need be in collaboration with competent international organisations in the field;
5. to establish a Data Bank on Africa with a view to promoting the facilities of collection, processing and dissemination of adequate documentation; and
6. to correct the distorted picture of Africa, its countries and peoples resulting from partial and negative information published by foreign press agencies and portray its cultural values.

The political problems of PANA have not been over its stated aims. They were over the

HOW MUCH ONE WAY ?

Information and news flow mostly from developed (rich) to developing (poor) countries.

AGENCIES

Top five international agencies put out 33million words a day to 100-150 countries.

RADIO

Most transmitters are in rich countries. US has as many as all poor countries combined.

TV

Most entertainment series, current affairs programme made in rich countries.

BOOKS

83% world output is produced in rich countries.

ADVERTISING

7 of world's top 10 firms are US owned.

INFORMATICS

(data and information processing). Mainly in hands of rich states and transnational companies.

RICH

1 in 3 people get a newspaper

1 in 12 has a TV set

Every person has a radio

POOR

1 in 30 get a newspaper

1 in 500 has a TV set

In Africa 1 in 18 has a radio

question of whether or not a group of states could be able to manipulate and control it at the expense of others. For a long time there was no agreement on how it would be structured and practically operate without being manipulated. The question of political orientation in terms of ideology was another sensitive issue.

As a result of these unresolved issues, not enough member states of the OAU were prepared to financially commit themselves. The Third World commitment to the creation of a New World Information and Communication Order helped to highlight the need and urgency of establishing PANA.

PANA is an integral part of the proposed new world order of information and communication. It is part of the Third World strategy of becoming independent from the Western world's information agencies and sources.

In order to allay the fears of all OAU member states, numerous planning meetings leading to acceptable solutions have taken place during the past two decades.

PANA will be a development oriented news agency. It will receive material from all the national news agencies of paid-up member-states. It will translate it into the OAU languages; i.e. English, French, Arabic and Portuguese, and then without editing, re-transmit it to all members. Without being edited, the material from each country's news agency would be able to preserve its political orientation.

If a country sends material which is outright propaganda, most countries will not

find it usable. Each country will therefore have to be careful with its own material for it to have a good chance. Initially each country will send one thousand words to PANA and will receive 25,000 words or more depending on PANA's membership.

At PANA headquarters in Dakar, they will produce "PANA-Features" which will concentrate on development news and information. The emphasis on development will minimise political differences among the member-states of the OAU. Another bulletin which cannot easily cause controversy to be produced in Dakar will be on the activities of the OAU, its specialised agencies, other inter-African organisations and the UN.

Countries like Lesotho and Swaziland which may have paid their contributions to PANA but have no national news agencies of their own will be helped by PANA to set up news agencies which would send and receive material from PANA for national distribution.

Each of the four regions of Africa will have a regional centre to which all countries in the region will send their material. The regional centre then will transmit all the material to Dakar. The centre for Southern Africa is Lusaka, Central Africa has Kinshasa, East Africa has Khartoum, North Africa has Tripoli and West Africa has Lagos.

The Inter-Governmental Council of PANA decided in July 1981 on the utilisation of the telecommunication routes located solely in Africa. These will avoid South

Africa and Europe. The transmission will be through satellite link or microwave link or decametric waves link or specialised duplex telegraphic circuit by cable or sub-marine cable link. The existing links will be used until PANA has established its own.

PANA is run by the Director-General who is Cde Ch. U. Diallo of Senegal and his staff which is still being recruited. The salaries for the staff are between those of the OAU and UN. It was decided that they should be very high in order to attract and retain journalists of the highest calibre in Africa.

The Director-General and his staff operate under the Inter-Governmental council which has 14 members elected every two years. This operates under the Conference of OAU Ministers of Information.

So far, 22 states have fully paid their contributions and five paid part of their contributions. But Nigeria, Angola, Togo and Sudan paid substantial amounts more than what they were supposed to pay. In all, members contributed just over one million US dollars.

The PANA project has also received over five million US dollars from UNESCO, the Gulf States, Federal Republic of Germany, UNDP and ITU. Some more funds are being solicited from OAU member states and negotiations are going on with non-African governments and international organisations.

So much efforts and resources have now been put into the establishments of PANA that it is definitely going to be a reality. It will be launched any time from now.