THE CONSEQUENCES OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL ON THE WORK PRACTICES
OF ZIMBABWEAN JOURNALISTS. A CASE STUDY OF ZIMPAPERS, 1980-94.

BY

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Declaration.

I declare that this is my own unaided work except for the acknowledged supervision and referenced citations. It has not been submitted for any previous degree at any university.

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ABSTRACT.

From 1890 to 1980, Zimbabwe was under the control of an authoritarian and brutal colonial system that had no respect for the lives of black people. All the colonial institutions served the interests of the minority group by marginalising the majority, on racial lines. The role played by the print media was paramount in the maintenance of status quo, because it was co-opted into the consensus constructed by the successive colonial governments. The various publications produced by the South African owned Argus Group's subsidiary, the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing company, were propaganda sheets meant for the consumption of the minority whites.

After the victory of the Patriotic Front alliance in 1980 which ushered Zimbabwe into its democratic transition, there was need to change media policy in keeping with the changes heralded by the achievement of political independence. The buyout of the foreign owned Argus Group's shares and the launching of the Mass Media Trust by the state was meant to democratise the print media in Zimbabwe by distancing it from government control.

The study, therefore, seeks to give an historical investigation of the relationship between the post-independent government and the print media. The paper will highlight on the challenges that were faced by the Zimbabwean journalists within the broad classic issues of freedom of the press, freedom from intimidation and free access to information.
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ACRONYMS USED.
CCJP.............CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE & PEACE.
MISA.............MEDIA INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA.
MMT.............MASS MEDIA TRUST.
MOI.............MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.
NWICO.............NEW WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER.
RF.............RHODESIA FRONT.
RRP.............RHODESIA PRINTING AND PUBLISHING COMPANY.
SABC.............SOUTH AFRICAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION.
UDI.............UNILATERAL DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.
ZANU-PF...........ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION-PATRIOTIC FRONT.
ZAPU.............ZIMBABWE AFRICAN PEOPLE’S UNION.
ZCTU.............ZIMBABWE CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS.
ZBC.............ZIMBABWE BROADCASTING CORPORATION.
ZIANA.............ZIMBABWE INTER-AFRICA NEWS AGENCY.
ZUJ.............ZIMBABWE UNION OF JOURNALISTS.
INTRODUCTION.

The post-independence Zimbabwe media ownership are diversified. Both the broadcasting and major newspapers are organised more or less along the same lines as before independence. The post-independence government allowed both privately owned and party owned press to operate side by side with the mainstream press which is controlled by a public trust.

The broadcast media (radio and television) are under direct Government control. They are operated under a public parastatal with funding from treasury, licence fees sales and sell of advertisement space.

The mainstream public print media comprise of the Zimpapers publications. These are: The Herald, The Chronicle, The Sunday Mail, The Sunday News and Manica Post. The newspapers have their origins in the colonial days when they were owned and controlled by the South African Argus Group of companies. After independence the mainstream press was bought by government and they were placed under the jurisdiction of a public Trust, the Mass Media Trust, which was mandated to control the press on behalf of the people of Zimbabwe.

The privately owned or independent press include The Financial Gazette (owned by Modus Publications), Moto (owned by Mambo Press), Parade (under Thompson Publications) and Horizon (owned
by Horizon Trust). The independent press acts as an alternative voice to the government-controlled press.

Although the widely accepted functions of the press are to inform, educate and entertain, the wide range of the Zimbabwean media exhibit a wide variation in terms of their content and expression of views, sometimes to the extent of contradiction. Rusike (1990:22) argues that:

The political system determines what the media are used for, what control is imposed on them and who own them and [who has] the right to use them.

In line with Rusike’s assertion, my purpose in this study is to consider and explain the nature of the Zimbabwe print media in general, and the newspapers that fall under jurisdiction of the Mass Media Trust (MMT), in particular. The MMT’s practical performance will be scrutinised within the wider framework of its initial ideals and objectives of experimenting with an ‘autonomous’ public press institution. More particularly my concern will be to explore the issues of ownership, juridical control and supervision of the print media in the country. The single major question being: what social interests or articulated class fractions, represented in which concrete groups, are linked with the print media institutions? This will include a detailed reference to Government involvement and interference in the daily duties of media personnel.
The normative theories of the press will be used as a framework of analysis. However this does not mean that the other theories will be ignored, especially in view of the Zimbabwean media politics in which all types of media rhetoric and doctrines are used frequently, merely as window-dressing behind which the Government tries to redefine its socio-political and economic policies and to legitimate itself. Because of the contradictions within the public print media in Zimbabwe, the paper will be less formal in the manner of presentation. Instead of foregrounding the case study with the theoretical framework, the study will contextualise the historical experiences of the public print media journalists within the government’s programme of expanding, freeing and democratising Zimpapers. Thus the analysis of the Press theory in Zimbabwe, which is done at the end, is intentional and is meant to criticise the political identity and role of Zimpapers within the government’s professed policy of nation-building.

I shall also examine how senior Government officials invoke colonial legislations to cover their corrupt practices and to curb investigative journalism within Zimpapers, and interfere through allocative sanctions with the privately owned independent press.

An historical overview of the pre-independence print media will serve as a point of departure to portray a comprehensive transition to the current media scenario, and also as a gauge to
measure actual changes in media policy and media control in the period after 1980.

Presentation of Information: Division Of Chapters.

The argument in this paper is divided into five chapters that somehow interlink. The five chapters exclude the introduction and the conclusion. Chapter One is a historical overview of the pre-independence press. The chapter serves to highlight the authoritarian nature of the colonial government. Chapter Two focuses on the dilemma of the transitional period within the context of reconciliation and press indigenisation. The third chapter analyses the Mass Media Trust experiment with special emphasis on how its implementation and efforts to democratise mass media in Zimbabwe was undermined by the ruling elites' partisan interests. Chapter Four serves as the core of the study. The chapter gives a detailed analysis of how ZANU-PF, as the ruling party, employed different strategies to control and censor the press by victimising the journalists and editors, in both the public print media and the privately owned press. Chapter Five serves to contextualise the Zimbabwe print media within the normative theories of the press as propounded by Siebert (1956) and Mcquail (1993). At the same time it highlights the contradictory nature of the post-independence media policy within the wider context of the dependency disassociation paradigm.
Problems Encountered.
The study was carried out under very difficult conditions because of the repressive strategies that the ZANU-PF government has adopted of late against its critics. The deconstruction of the ZANU-PF myth of invincibility manifested itself in the form of open confrontation of the system from all sections of the Zimbabwean society.

Widespread student unrest, a successful legal suit against the government for rigging Parliamentary elections, the nullification of the local government elections nationally because of gross irregularities, the regional demonstration of gays against President Mugabe and the unceremonious expulsion of critical high ranking party members, all served to expose the corrupt and dictatorial nature of the Zimbabwean government. In response to the challenges from within and from outside, the ZANU-PF government engaged in a brutal campaign which resulted in the imprisonment of journalists (for revealing the President’s secret wedding with his secretary) indiscriminate detention of academics and opposition political leaders and police brutality against university students. This created tension and fear in the country, which in turn led to the writer to face a lot of obstacles during research.

First and foremost, because of financial scandals at the Department of Scholarship, the promised students grants and loans were never dispersed, hence restricting the writer’s mobility between the university and the areas of research.
Secondly, most media administrators and journalists evaded interviews with the writer, in fear of state victimisation. Some of the interviewees (E. Rusike - former Zimpapers MD, M. Ndubiwa - MMT trustee) asked the author to put the questions in writing, but they never responded to the questionnaire. As a result, the author had to depend on the few face-to-face interviews with journalists in Bulawayo Zimpapers offices, and an extensive use press clippings, and to rely on the interpretative reading of the publications themselves.
CHAPTER ONE.


In order to have a comprehensive study of the media in any country, one must understand first the society and its political system, for it is the social structure, the political and social processes which together constitute a framework for the media. A study of the Rhodesian press by different communications scholars has revealed that the colonial Government and the monopoly press coincided on all key issues. Actually, the leader of the colonising company, Cecil John Rhodes, had financial influence in the establishment of the press in Rhodesia. For example, Frederikse (1982) reveals that:

It was a newspaperman - the chairman of the Argus Company who coined Rhodesia's name. Cecil Rhodes himself had direct financial interests in that South African based publishing firm and its subsidiary, the Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Company [RPP] which maintained an effective monopoly from settlement until independence (Frederikse, 1982: 27).

W. D. Gale (1962) echoes this view when he analyses press development in late nineteenth century Rhodesia.

The RPP was an affiliate of the Argus Printing and Publishing Company of South Africa, the newspaper-based
company launched in 1896 with capital from Cecil Rhodes, and with a view of promoting Rhodes' political and financial ambitions in the Cape (Gale, 1962: 2).

The co-operation between the Government and media had significant consequences on the content and the recruitment of journalists and editors. The RPP's managerial priorities betrayed its deep roots in the norms of white Rhodesia: none of the senior editorial positions was ever opened for Africans, and more often than not these positions were filled via recruitment from the Argus Head Office in Johannesburg. Until the late 1960s, there had never been a Rhodesian-born editor of a major paper in the RPP group, let alone an African. The dearth of Africans in senior positions stood in spite of the availability of some black journalists with many years' experience (Saunders, 1991: 52-3). That senior management and editorial posts were reserved for whites was reflected even in the chain's cadet training schemes in which blacks were represented in token numbers and destined for lowly reporting tasks or worse (Saunders, 1991: 56).

The content of the Argus newspapers in Rhodesia proved beyond reasonable doubt that the papers were owned and controlled by South African companies whose interests they served and backed. The content also reflected that it was directed to the white readership locally. This was in spite of the fact that the white population represented a very tiny percentage of the predominantly black population in the country. The press took on
a distinctly white flavour because the news coming from the Rhodesian press was gathered, prepared and doctored by South African news agencies to highlight and emphasise issues that were important for their class and racial view of the world. Eric Louw, a South African critic of liberal media, argues that a newspaper can only represent the interests of its owners’ class and not those of the whole society.

A liberal capitalist press represents no-one but the owners of the press - that is, one segment of the population who have very specific interests (Louw, 1984: 35).


The Acts ultimately led to the denial of basic human rights to the majority of the people of this country, for it granted to the whites full political rights, economic opportunities and social privileges, while depriving blacks of the most fundamental civil liberties (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace Pamphlet, June 1976: 3).

To try to make themselves heard, blacks rose against this planned impoverishment, hence the period 1948-58 was marked by
growing urban and rural discontent which found expression in widespread demonstrations and urban strikes. Such reaction by blacks, was however, distorted by government propaganda through the press which throughout the period equated African Nationalism with communism and terrorism. It was against this background that the Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister, Sir Garfield Todd’s willingness to talk to the African Nationalists was perceived as a threat to the security of the whites and hence saw his removal from power by his party (Linden, 1980:47-8).

The 1950s also saw a marked deterioration in race relations which precipitated the introduction of a series of repressive legislation. These included: a. Unlawful Organisations Act, b. The Preventative Detention Act c. Public Amendment Act [all passed on 15.05.59] and d. The Law And Order Maintenance Act [1960] which gave sweeping powers to combat the liberation struggle (Auret, 1992:21).

Press Censorship And Political Repression Under UDI Period.

In the mid-1960s activities that served as a challenge and threat to white supremacy by African nationalist activists increased tremendously. The state resorted to authoritarian combative practices in order to try and put the situation under control. The print media was heavily censored by the state, especially after the declaration of Unilateral Independence by Ian Smith. 

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On the day Unilateral Declaration of Independence was declared in November 1965, Government censors moved into the offices of the RPP in Harare and Bulawayo and for more than two years assumed the authority of approving all final copies and galley sheets produced by the daily and weekly papers ... some resistance was offered by the Company for example, in response censored items were replaced by the editors with blank spaces, until this too was ruled unacceptable by the Government (Saunders, 1991:52).

The blank spaces visualised the vast censorship, than the alternative of closing down the paper (Jensen & Jensen, 1993:53). It must be emphasised that, generally, the reasons for censorship are always intended to conceal facts that might hurt those in power. In Rhodesia censorship was accompanied by brutality, and deportation for those who did not toe the line.

Most of those journalists who opposed the Rhodesia Front (RF) policies were booted out from their jobs or simply forced to resign as conditions became unbearable. Some of the most senior journalists were deported by Ian Smith's government. The most repressive period was the late 1960s which witnessed the likes of Malcolm Smith (The Herald), Eileen Haddon (Central Africa Examiner), Eugene Watson (African Daily News) and Frank Clements declared prohibited immigrants and deported by the government (Windrich, 1981:72).
A major factor in the consolidation of white civil society behind the Rhodesia Front [RF] was the regime’s expert manipulation of the public and private media, through take-over, banning, harassment and censure in both Government and civil Channels - after 15 years of UDI the press was typified by self-censorship and wide ranging inequalities (Saunders, 1991:50).

One of the veteran journalists, Willie Musarurwa, charged that all the editors, and even lower level editorial staff supported the Rhodesia Front throughout the 1970s, and that they had the blessing of the RPP, and its mother company, the Argus, which sent a circular from its headquarters in Johannesburg to the effect that the newspapers must oppose the nationalist struggle (The Chronicle, 17.12.81).

The Chief Executive Editor of one the leading independent newspapers in Zimbabwe, Trevor Ncube (1992), argued that:

The period of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (U.D.I.) from 1965-1980 is an interesting phase for everyone interested in press freedom. Ian Smith’s Rhodesia Front ran virtually a one-party state, with the press as a crucial supporting pillar in the maintenance of white minority rule over the black majority (in Rhodes Review, December 1992:43]
The Alternative Press in Rhodesia

In spite of the high handedness and authoritarian stance taken by the Government to control the media in order to sustain and strengthen its hegemonic control over the press, the African voices managed to find a loophole in the system. Some publications surfaced and managed to function as an alternative channel of information and communication for the disadvantaged black community. The Black press had its beginning with the launching of The Native Mirror (later The Bantu Mirror) by the RPP in Bulawayo in 1931 aimed at the black elite of entrepreneurs and the ‘educated’ as the leaders of the African community in the partnership experiment (Saunders, 1991:50). Ncube (1992: 44) revealed that:

There were papers directed at this (i.e. African) audience. Unfortunately, most of them were banned, perhaps for leading the natives too far too quickly. Those of importance were the Chapupa, which was started in 1958 and banned in 1962, and the Zimbabwe Sun which was banned in 1964 (in Rhodes Review, December 1992:44).

It must also be pointed out that there was no total agreement in the ranks of the whites who had interests in Rhodesia, especially on the issue of press control. For example, although the policy line of the Argus Group was that the RPP newspapers had to support the Rhodesia Front by opposing the nationalist struggle, there was no consensus when it came to the use of
censorship. As a result of the disagreements, an outspoken conflict between the South African Argus Company and the Rhodesian Government about the issue of censorship, because liberal forces in Argus argued that the policy line of the Government was too restrictive (Jensen & Jenset, 1993:54).

This liberal thinking in the ranks of whites saw the launching of The African Daily News by liberal brothers B.G. power and A.G. Power in 1956. The publication addressed a range of uncompromising black viewpoints on issues of national debate. It also managed to attract a large readership, which led to its banning when the Rhodesia Front came into power in 1964 (Saunders, 1991: 51). Moto, magazine which is published by the Catholic Publishing House (Mambo Press), had also a marked impact in the media politics of Rhodesia. It became a national newspaper in May 1960, published in English, Ndebele and Shona. From its inception, the publication was to print the views of the African people, and in particular those of the Nationalist leaders, while at the same time promoting the social teachings of the church. Moto’s editorial policy, which stressed that it was an African Christian newspaper, indicated the special responsibility it had assumed to be the voice for the African people to point out their needs, articulate their interests and voice their just grievances (Linden, 1980:70-1).

The publication acted as a communication link between the nationalist movements and their following. During the war, Moto became the most outspoken supporter of the liberation struggle.
In the early 1970s, the paper was a mouthpiece of all Rhodesians who were anti-settlement, anti-government and those who rejected the Pearson Commission. As a result, Moto did not escape the authoritarian wrath of the Rhodesian Government. Its editors were continually harassed by state agents. In 1969, Fr. Mike Traber was arrested charged with printing a subversive statement in contravention of section 49.2 of the Law and Order Maintenance Act, and he was subsequently found guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour, conditionally suspended for three years (Auret, 1992:18). Moto was banned on 12 November 1974 following the publication of Bishop Muzorewa’s praise for FRELIMO, which stressed that "the violent forces which possess this country are not only destroying this country today but the manhood of our people in Zimbabwe" (Ibid: 76). A week before elections (i.e. February 1980) Mambo Press publishing house was bombed.

This repressive treatment of the press by the Rhodesian Government served to highlight the political attitudes of those in power during the period and their beliefs in authoritarian principles and brutality. In his editorial comment, Bishop Lamont, editor of Moto before he was imprisoned, included the accusation that the Government in Rhodesia differed "not in essence but only in degree from the Nazi doctrine of racial superiority (Moto, 5 August 1972:1).

The contradictory nature of the mainstream press (which supported the status quo) and the independent press (which
aligned itself with the Nationalist liberation movements) is best summed up by the argument that the liberation war was not only fought in the bush, but in the news media:

It was not just a war of guns and bullets but a war of communication and information. ... a battle of convincing people in their minds and in their hearts to make them choose the 'right side' of the war (Jensen & Jenset 1993:55).

The short-lived Muzorewa government, which arose from the Internal Agreement of 1978 did not alter the media policy in Rhodesia. The editorial content of the press remained as intact as it was during the UDI years. In the six months that Muzorewa shared power with Ian Smith, the RPP newspapers continued to castigate the ZANU/ZAPU armed struggle as communist inspired. The dilemma of the press was to come when the ZANU/ZAPU alliance won the elections in 1980, ending nearly a century-long history of colonial rule in Rhodesia, which had dominated the media and used it for the benefit of the white minority at the expense of the majority black population. The contradictory relationship between the RPP press and the nationalist movements needed to be reconciled since the former guerilla movements had taken over political control of the country. How the print media fared during the first months of independence will be the subject of discussion in Chapter Two of this study.
CHAPTER TWO.

POST-INDEPENDENCE PRESS TRANSITION.

When Ian Smith lost power in the 1980 elections, Zimbabwe became independent, and this meant unprecedented social and political freedom for the majority of the people of Zimbabwe, but the print media remained in the hands of the South African controlled Argus Group. The Rhodesian subsidiary, the RPP, only changed its name to Zimbabwe Newspapers (1980) Ltd. Despite the change of name, the overall news coverage in 1980 remained much as it had been before. It was directed towards the interests and views of the white urban minority and its small allied fraction of middle class black moderates. The mainstream press continued to focus on white concerns in a way which did very little to curb white fears and accommodate black interests (Saunders, 1991:55). This one-sidedness can be attributed to the composition of the editorial and management staff which remained predominantly white even after independence in 1980. The dominance of whites in senior management level arose from the discriminatory nature of the Argus Cadet school’s training policy in the Southern African region. The segregator nature of the cadetship is best revealed by the veteran South African journalist, T. Mazwai, who argues that the recruitment system was so biased that in the 1970s, it was not surprising that in a class of fifteen, you could find fourteen young white matriculants and one old journalist who had been in the field for more than eight years (Agenda/Newsline, TV 1, 10.10.95).
Similarly, in Zimbabwe, the limited in-house Cadet training scheme in operation during the colonial days, meant that there were few black journalists who could be promoted into the upper echelons of the group from within the company, and even fewer who could be said to be attuned to the development-related concerns of the majority people of Zimbabwe.

The biased coverage of events by the Zimbabwean mainstream press immediately after independence, led the newly appointed Minister of Information, Dr. N. Shamuyarira, to complain that the press was the only remaining pillar of white power (The Chronicle, 10 06 80), while his colleague, the Minister of Finance, Senator Enos Nkala, accused the national dailies (The Herald and The Chronicle) and their sister weeklies (The Sunday Mail and The Sunday News) as having failed to be in step with the needs of the majority people of Zimbabwe (The Chronicle, 09 11 80). The then President, Professor C. Banana, was to echo the same sentiments before long, arguing that there was need for the press in Zimbabwe to rid itself of its colonial image and promote the good name of the country (The Herald, 20 12 80). The grievances of the black journalists in 1980 reflected the same feelings aired by the different Ministers. They accused the Union of Zimbabwean Journalists as being predominantly white in composition, and that it was meant to serve the interests of only white journalists at the expense of their black counterparts: which culminated in the formation of a breakaway union on 12 May 1980, with Godwin Matatu as its interim chairman (The Herald, 13 07 80).
It is very clear therefore that the general feeling of the majority of the people in Zimbabwe by the close of 1980, was that the press in Zimbabwe had to change to keep in step with the socio-political changes arising from national independence, because media are generally governed by the social and political systems within which they operate. The press is therefore an institution as any other institution. The rationale is that, in any social formation there exists a direct relationship between the nature of society and the quality of the press. The Managing Director of Zimpapers in 1980, Mr. F.G. Capon, saw this need for the press to change in order to match the fast changes of post-independence social and political process. When he was addressing the Commonwealth press Union in London, Mr. Capon argued that:

The press actions were expected to be in keeping with the very dramatic changes that (had) occurred in the country. This not only meant greater Africanisation of staff, but that decision-making positions should be occupied by some black Zimbabweans as soon as possible (The Chronicle, 10 06 80).

Although some Ministers like Joseph Culverwell, saw the need to launch a government newspaper as a counter to biased reporting in the Zimpapers dailies and weeklies, (The Herald, 10 07 80), the majority of them betrayed the government’s determination to establish a free and independent mass media (The Herald, 10 07 80). The Minister of Finance, Senator E. Nkala, for example,
told a ZANU-PF rally at Bulawayo’s White City stadium that the government did not want the newspapers to be run by Europeans who were anti-government. He publicly declared:

These newspapers must now come directly under the control of the government. We are now taking them and we will use black editors. We have been provoked beyond endurance by these imperialist and racialist newspapers (The Sunday News, 09 11 80).

The former Chief Executive Officer of Zimpapers, E. Rusike, summarises the general feeling of the majority of the people during throughout 1980 when he argues that:

There had been a revolution, people had died for liberation, for freedom. Political change would not be complete if the same people who ran The Rhodesian Herald during Smith’s time ran it in Mugabe’s time. Initially, some of the white editors went through what they thought was a readjustment of some sort, but it could never wash, not with the new government, not with the readers (Rusike, 1990:65).

During the first days in office, however, the Prime Minister - Robert Mugabe - continued to utter conciliatory statements assuring the white community that the government "will not impose any control on the country’s press" (The Herald, 23 05 80) and that it "had no intentions of seizing the press." (The
Chronicle, 16 11 80). On the political front, he maintained the same stance trying to convince the white community that his government was committed to the policy of reconciliation.

Those of us who have waged and won the struggle for freedom, non-racialism and democracy, must continue to be reconciled to those principles. Those of us who have lost the unjust struggle for racial dominance and undemocratic rule, must also be reconciled to the principles that have won the day. It is on this basis that White and Black can work together, and political opponents can accommodate each other. In those circumstances, bygones become bygones and the enemies of the past become allies in a common cause (in Auret, 1992:140).

Although the Prime Minister seemed to contradict his Ministers, this caution was very necessary in the light of the very low level of skilled black personnel at independence. It is very clear, therefore, that considerations underlying the restraint shown towards Zimpapers was the need in the first months of the new administration to maintain the appearance of tolerance of some of the institutions of white society in order to prevent a complete draining of human resources from the country (Saunders, 1991:56). The tolerance with Zimpapers' direct political challenge to the new government did not last long especially in the face of mounting destabilisation efforts by the South African press and even rising bad reportage by the British press. The state was to continually warn the print media to
contribute to the development process via education and supportive criticism of the government. The intolerance with Zimpapers in the high echelons of the Zimbabwean government was to be reflected in a barrage of attack from high ranking government ministers. The most stinging attack was to come from the veteran politician Dr. Eddison Zvobgo who charged that the Zimpapers publications were suffering under bourgeois domination, being run by pseudo-editorial professors who had not been in the war and were allowing Zimpapers to be used to mobilise sections of the public against the government (The Herald, 1980).

By mid-1981, when he was opening the Zimbabwe Information Services, a news agency, the Prime Minister’s speech hinted that the gradualist approach to media democratisation was beginning to wane. Robert Mugabe (1981) emphatical asserted that:

In the final analysis, the mass media in any country is an instrument of the dominant social forces in that particular country. In Zimbabwe, the formerly oppressed masses have now become the dominant social force. The media should reflect their wishes, and help them to consolidate their political gains as a result of achieving national independence (in The Herald, July 1, 1981).

Mugabe’s statement cannot be taken in isolation, but within the context of the provisions of the Zimbabwean Constitution adopted at independence in 1980 in which: the country’s Declaration Of
Rights guarantees freedom of expression, specifically freedom to hold opinions and receive and impart ideas and information without interference (Constitution of Zimbabwe [1980], Chapter 3, Section 20:22).

Zimbabwe's Declaration of Rights was noble and gave assurances that the country was joining other democracies. It is important to point out that one of the features of a democratic society is the extent to which press freedom prevails, hence creating conducive conditions for the press to act as a curb against abuses of power by public officials, at the same time ensuring greater accountability by such officials. A prominent media law lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe argues that:

A strong and vigorously free press is a vitally important component of the democratic process, because a free press will supply essential information which will enable people to make informed political decisions and to participate better in political and developmental processes (Feltoe, 1992:1).

By the end of 1980, it was very clear that there were glaring contradictions between what the new government, and the majority of the people of Zimbabwe expected from the press in terms of content, and the actual thrust of Zimpapers publications which remained basically biased in favour of the old order. Prime Minister Mugabe, however, continued to deny that the new government was planning to take over Zimpapers' controlling
shares from South Africa, as revealed by Senator Enos Nkala when addressing a ZANU-PF rally, arguing that Nkala had made his pronouncements not as a representative of government, but as an individual expressing his opinion. Surprisingly, it was not long before the then Managing Director of Zimpapers, Mr G Capon, revealed that there were some negotiations going on with the government (The Chronicle, 10 11 80). This was followed by a press statement by Argus Group Managing Director, H.W. Miller, who told a press conference in Johannesburg that his media giant was holding high level negotiations with the Zimbabwean government on the future of their subsidiary company, Zimpapers, in Zimbabwe (The Sunday Mail, 12 11 80). It was only then that Prime Minister Mugabe hinted to the existence of the behind-the-scenes discussions between the Government of Zimbabwe and the Argus consortium on the possibilities of Government acquiring controlling shares in Zimpapers [1980] Pvt. Ltd. However, in the same breath he argued that the government did not want any direct control of the press, although it had been worried by the press for a long time.

However, Government has been considering the establishment of a parastatal body which can go into any relationship with any existing press, or run its own newspapers (The Herald, 31 12 80).

It was not surprising, therefore, that in a few days’ time, the establishment of the Mass Media Trust, [MMT] was announced. This was supposed to herald the beginning of a new era in press
Ownership and press control in Zimbabwe. It was also meant to bring an end of nearly a century-long press domination by the British African media conglomerate.

By the process of decolonisation, foreign ownership of media and the foreign bias of media content and style was to be replaced by indigenous ownership, with new editorial priorities and better grasp of the Zimbabwean information needs (Saunders, 1991:57).

This was a theme to be uttered by the majority of the top ZANU-PF and government officials. When Dr. N. Shamuyarira, the Minister of Information, was addressing a seminar on Press Responsibility, organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, he explained the fundamental dual purpose of the press in Zimbabwe. The Minister asserted that the media in general and the press in particular, was supposed to act as a two-way link between the government and the general population.

The mass media in Zimbabwe should serve as a link between the masses and the Government by effecting meaningful and effective dialogue of the two sides. The masses must know the activities of the Government and the Government must be informed of the needs of its own people and their views so that its programmes are relevant. This two-way communication is essential if the nation is to develop (in Saunders, 1991:71).
In his general arguments in different forums, the Honourable Minister seemed to subscribe to the international struggle which was being waged by other Third World countries to extricate their communication policies from domination by Western technologically advanced countries. It is clear from the onset, therefore, that the ZANU–PF dominated government of national unity subscribed to the campaigns and principles of the New World Information and communication Order, which sought to increase access and participation on the part of locals. This would reduce the brainwashing effect of propaganda transmitted by the industrialised Western countries, as the Minister of Information explained.

We must decolonise and indigenise our mass media so that they serve the interests of the peoples of Africa and transform them. We must also decolonise the colonial mentality and purge it of the doses of imperialist propaganda. I am advocating the liberation of all our mass communications structures from foreign control. As long as this control remains, our people will continue to be brainwashed and they will continue to be manipulated by imperialists (The Herald, 07 12 80).

It can be deduced therefore that the establishment of the MMT in January 1981 was to ensure that the new post-independence press was to become mass oriented, nationally accessible and non-partisan in content. This was meant to empower the previously information hungry, and poverty stricken mass of rural dwellers:
hence lessen the negative impact of the previous communication policies, which created imbalances by catering for the urban few at the expense of the rural majority. The new situation called for a media policy that would not only decolonise the press, but also decentralise and democratise it by encouraging access and participation of the majority of the lower strata of society, the urban workers, the farm workers and rural peasants, who had been marginalised by colonial communications policies for more than a century. Such a policy would help to consolidate the democratic transformation of the society as a whole, and help in the integration of the masses in the decision-making process of their newly independent country.

The next section of this study (Chapter Three) will explain how the new Government of National Unity sought to free the print media from state control by establishing a Trust, to act as a buffer between the government and the press. The Chapter will also explain the contradictions that characterised the MMT's implementation, which subsequently resulted in ZANU-PF hijacking the public media for its sectorial and partisan interests by the end of the 1980s.
CHAPTER THREE.

11 MASS MEDIA TRUST EXPERIMENT.

The new government had to be very cautious in its indigenisation of the press, because the policy could be mistaken for nationalisation, given the government's avowed policy of trying to implement a process of socialist transformation in Zimbabwe at the time. This would provoke further the flight of white skills and capital, at this time anxious about the transition to black-led society. Different media paradigm options were considered, but given the socio-political and economic climate prevailing at the time, the government finally chose Trust ownership as a model of press indigenisation. This saw the setting up of the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust. The objectives of the M.M.T. can be understood when one refers to Section [b], Article [ii] and [iii] of the original document, the Deed of Donation and Trust Number M.A. 174/81, which was, and still is used by the government as a policy document to guide print media policy in Zimbabwe.

Section [b] of the document states that the objectives of the trust shall be:

[ii] to purchase the shareholding in Zimbabwe Newspapers [1980] Pvt. Ltd, held by the Argus Group and other South African resident shareholders and such further shareholding
in the said Company as it may be necessary or expedient to purchase from time to time.

[iii] to exercise all rights as shareholders of the said Companies and generally to facilitate the transmission from and reception by Zimbabwe and the publication and distribution of news and general information and comment within Zimbabwe that is as far as possible accurate and free from bias in the interests of the people of Zimbabwe (Deed of Donation and Trust Number M.A. 174/81, 1981:2-3).

The money for the purchase of the company was donated by Nigeria.

With the help of a US$5 million donation from Nigeria all South African shareholders [or 44% of all stock, 42% of which was held by Argus] were bought out by Government (Saunders: in MOTO, March 1991).

Press control and ownership was thus transferred from South Africa to Zimbabwe through the M.M.T. which was set up under the personal guidance of the then Minister of Information Dr. Nathan Shamuyarira. The M.M.T. was also given a mandate to form, organise and control an institution to be known as Zimbabwe Institute of Mass Communication, which was tasked with launching a journalist training programme aimed at blacks, and planning and implementing a new media policy in harmony with the
Government’s own designs for national development and transformation (Deed of Donation and Trust ... : 4).

In brief, the Mass Media Trust was to be an autonomous public institution charged with overseeing the editorial renewal and infrastructural expansion of Zimpapers and ZIANA, and the emplacement of a new national journalist training programme (Saunders, 1991:60). The MMT was thus seen as a unique experiment in the relationship between the state on one hand, and the press on the other. It was meant to distance the publicly owned Zimpapers and its editors away from government interference, by drawing a clear line of demarcation between the Ministry of Information (MOI) and the Trust. The Trust was supposed to hold its shares on behalf of the people of Zimbabwe, outside of government control. It was to act as an autonomous public Trust functioning independently of government. The task of hiring and firing Zimpapers workers was to fall in the hands of the Trust’s Board of Trustees, since it was supposed to be manned by Zimbabwean citizens of high personal integrity known for their independence of view and social commitment. Under the Trust’s constitution, the Board had absolute power on the control of the institution.

In his presentation to the annual Raymond Ackerman Freedom of the Press Lecture at Rhodes University, Trevor Ncube (1992), who is the Chief Executive Editor of The Financial Gazette, stated that:
The idea behind the Trust ownership, a novel idea on itself, was originally aimed at insulating the press from direct Government control. The Trust was supposed to act as a buffer between the Government and the press (in Rhodes Review, December 1992:45).

The Government heralded the M.M.T. as a 'unique experiment' combining political autonomy with national control or 'freedom with responsibility'. [Moto, March, 1990] In theory, the Trust consolidated the provision of the Zimbabwean Constitution which enshrines the rights of the citizens to freedom of speech and freedom of expression, within the broader framework of respect for other people's privacy.

Some critics, however, think that the freedom of the MMT was eroded by some vague clauses within the constitution of the Trust itself, which gave the Ministry of Information (later) the power to influence the decisions of the Trustees. The argument is that, there emerged a tripartite decision-making body - encompassing the Ministry Of Information, the Trust and senior Timpapers Management. In principle, the juridical authority remained in the hands of the Trust. Ideally, it was understood at the time that the Trustees could consult with the MOI on issues concerning policy formulation and adjustment, while maintaining its independence.

The MMT would be the leading partner in the arrangement - [the tripartite decision-making apparatus] - and that there
would be a smooth chain of command, flowing from the MMT Board of Trustees, through its representatives on the Zimpapers Board of Directors, into the decision-making process within the newspaper chain (Saunders, 1991:89).

In real terms the problems that confronted the implementation of the MMT led the government to take advantage of this relationship through the Ministry of Information.

The Government’s dream to keep the press free did not take long to face insurmountable challenges. The 1980s were difficult years for Zimbabwe, because of economic recession internationally and a severe drought locally. The recession also negatively affected the M.M.T, especially the Zimpapers’ commercial viability. At the same time, the hoped for international donor funding for the trust, did not materialise, most probably because of its close relationship with the Ministry of Information, which gave the Trust the image of a parastatal. This was compounded by the fact that the M.M.T. had a double burden in financing ZIANA and the Institute of Mass Communication, yet as a company it was to be run without any subsidy from the Government, since it was not a parastatal (Rusike, 1990: 66). It is suffice to mention that during the early 1980s, there was a lot of financial indisclipline within government and government related institutions. The MMT did not escape the negative effects caused by lack of financial accountability, as exemplified by the scandalous dealings within the top echelons of the Trust, which saw the successful
prosecution of the body’s Executive Secretary -Mr. M.A Marere for defrauding the Trust of more than US$22000 (The Herald, 17 01 85). This was just the tip of the iceberg, because those close to the MMT revealed that of the US$5 million which was donated by Nigeria, nearly US$1 million of it did not reach the Trust (Saunders, 1991: 79). As a result of lack of financial transparency the Trust slipped into debt, which affected the newspaper company’s daily operations.

The with its access to state treasury came to the rescue, by providing financial assistance. By 1986, of the more than 80% MMT revenue which came from donations and grants most of it came from Government with the MOI’s active involvement and endorsement (Saunders, 1991: 83). The financial support led to a situation whereby the Government gradually took more and more political control over the Trust through granting economic support (Jensen & Jenset, 1993:56). It is clear, therefore, that the MOI’s growing financial influence in the Trust seeped into the realm of the latter’s political role as a press guardian.

Another structural loophole through which the MOI managed to find its way into the heart of the Trust, was in the choice of the initial personnel who were appointed to the Board of Trustees. As has been mentioned, these were supposed to be people of high personal integrity, with independent views and high level sense of social commitment. However, those who finally picked become Trustees were questionable. First and foremost, they did not represent the majority grassroots people,
Ironically, the very group that the Trust was supposed to target. They were middle-class professionals who did not have any involvement with popular mass organisations, except that they were closely associated with top clique of ZANU-PF. The most striking example was the first Executive Secretary, Robert Mhondevu, who had been ZANU-PF representative in Sweden during the liberation war (Saunders, 1991:104). Secondly, none of them was a media professional: even the chairman of the Trust, Dr. Kadza (a very close friend of Dr. Shamuyarira) was a medical doctor who had no media experience.

Another problem was that there was no grassroots participation when the trust was established. Even consultation with other political parties in the Government of National Unity was not done, as evidenced by their complaints to the effect that the whole MMT exercise was done by ZANU-PF as a party, at its Central Committee level, outside Parliament. The ZAPU President, Dr. Joshua Nkomo, did not hide his surprise when the formation of the trust was made public.

The decision to buy the newspapers [and establish a Trust] had nothing to do with the Cabinet of which I am a member: it was probably a ZANU-PF Central Committee affair (The Herald, 08 01 81).

The ZAPU, as a second majority party in the Government of National Unity, and also ZANU-PF’s colleague in the armed struggle against Ian Smith’s government, released a press
statement condemning the secrecy that surrounded the formation of the Trust. The party argued that openness and transparency would have given a wider spectrum of the population to participate in the decision-making process.

The involvement of the people through trade unions, cooperatives, youth and women’s organisations, religious groups, political and other organisations in the media would have opened the way to democratise the media. Instead, [ZANU-PF] proposes a state-sponsored body of bureaucrats, which will be as isolated from the people as the Argus Company was. [The Chronicle, 06 01 81].

It is clear therefore, that from the onset the birth of the MMT was less a result of Government media policy enveloping themes like rural development through the expansion of media access, than a ZANU-PF decision to enhance the rather more sectional propagandistic intentions of the ruling party (Saunders, 1991:86).

The party, ZANU-PF, further found in-roads into the MMT and the Zimpapers by rapidly infiltrating the two bodies’ management positions with personnel sympathetic to the party. This was done through the influence of the MOI. Most of the appointments of blacks seemed to be in line with the policy of rapid indigenisation of press management, yet in actuality it was another way of consolidating ZANU-PF’s grip on the print media.
The appointment of Tommy Sithole to replace S. Tobertson from The Chronicle, and Farai Munyuki in the place of R. Drew in The Herald, saw ZANU-PF indirectly taking over the only two daily papers in the mainstream media. The two journalists were well known ZANU-PF members. The two weeklies [The Sunday Mail, and The Sunday News] were taken over by Veteran journalists, Willie Musarura and Bill Saidi respectively, but only after dissociating themselves with opposition party politics (The Chronicle, 12 02 82). The two journalists had been associated with ZAPU during the liberation war. Later when political conflicts arose between ZAPU and ZANU-PF, the two journalists were to be victimised because of their political unacceptability (Rusike, 1990:87).

The most important political appointee to infiltrate the supposedly autonomous Zimpapers was Elias Rusike, in July 1983. Rusike had been a high ranking member of ZANU-PF during the liberation war. He spent most of the late 1960s as the head of the party’s broadcast operations on Radio Tanzania, before being promoted to be a diplomatic representative in Malawi in 1968. He was later sent for studies in Britain by ZANU-PF and after independence he was appointed to the Public Service Commission (The Herald, 22 07 83). By the time he resigned from Zimpapers, Rusike still maintained his loyalty to ZANU-PF.

Some of us are so patriotic and so consistently in support of the President and Government that we would not allow ourselves to be used by outsiders (Rusike, 1990:93).
Most media scholars see the appointment of Rusike to Zimpapers as the beginning of the convergence of ruling party politics and conservative managerialism on the terrain of the press.

Rusike was made Zimpapers Chief Executive Officer on the personal recommendation of the Minister of Information Shamuyarira, and instructed to act as a hand-picked political crow bar of the ruling party within the newspaper chain. ... [his] quick rise at Zimpapers had little to do with previous research experience in media political economy, and more with the fact of his closeness to the ZANU-PF political hierarchy. ... he became ZANU-PF’s point of entry into Zimpapers because he acknowledged and accepted the demand that he go about his duties at Zimpapers as a team player on the side of the ruling party (Saunders, 1991:90).

Thus instead of becoming a watchdog, as initially intended, the Mass Media Trust became a protector of the ruling party’s political policies and was therefore controlled by the government. The former Managing Director of Zimpapers, Elias T. Rusike argues that:

The M.M.T. has been ineffective and Zimpapers has now come under the direct control of the MOI ... any pretence that the two are not controlled by government can no longer be sustained (Rusike, 1990:76).
He categorically asserts that the Trustee ownership of the press in Zimbabwe was hijacked by the ZANU-PF Government.

Zimpapers is now effectively under the daily control of the Ministry of Information ... Zimbabwe should now accept that Zimpapers are owned and controlled by government and now serve government interests (Rusike ... 80).

Rusike’s argument is buttressed by the reconstituted board of Zimpapers which include three hand-picked ZANU [PF] senior members. They are: a. Mrs. Sarah Katshingwe (Permanent Secretary in the MOI) b. David Zamchiya and c. Don Muvuti (both ZANU -PF Central Committee Members). Given such a situation, the crucial question to ask is: What effect did such Government control of the press have on the daily operations of the Zimbabwean journalists? The answer to such a question is not easy to get, because of lack of transparency in the mainstream press in Zimbabwe. However, the discussion in Chapter Four will serve to MOI’s influence in the MMT to muzzle and stifle the mainstream public press. This influence, it will be argued, has led to general fear in the midst of Zimpapers journalists, consequently leading to high level of frustration, self-censorship and a culture of speech journalism, which fails to address economic, political, social and cultural issues of national significance. It will be argued also that as a result of government tight control in Zimpapers, the public media has been used to serve the interests of a clique of urban elites, hence marginalising the majority masses by denying them access.
and participation in the decision-making process of post-independence Zimbabwe.
CHAPTER FOUR.

EFFECTS OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL ON JOURNALISTS.

The consequences for journalists, of Government control of the press in the period after 1980 were different depending on the professional calibre of individual journalists. The practical experience of journalists even after the launching of the MMT has been that those who adopted a less ZANU-PF partisan stance, by publishing stories that were considered humiliating to the government, have been victimised through the MOI's interference in the affairs of the Trust. Most of the victimisation took the form of the concerned journalists being fired from their work to silence them forever, or in some cases moving them into less damaging roles, through promotion to posts far removed from the editorial desk. Through such interference with the affairs of the MMT, the ZANU-PF government has continuously used the MOI to direct and control the mainstream national papers' editorial content. As a result, the editorial thrust of the Zimpapers press displayed blatant bias in favour of the ruling party throughout the period 1981-94. Consequently, this exclusion of other contending voices and viewpoints in the public press has negatively affected the democratisation process in Zimbabwe. The tight control of the public press has also created a pathetic breed of journalists whose role throughout the history of the MMT, has been to shower praises to the leaders of the ruling party. This was done by endlessly quoting the speeches of ZANU-
PF officials irrespective of the insignificance of the issues being addressed.

After resigning as Managing Director of Zimpapers, Elias Rusike was very critical about the tight control of the press exercised by government during his term of office, which ironically contravened the provisions laid down on his contract. He reveals that on appointment, he was told that he would report to the Chairman of Zimpapers board. But in practice he was continuously summoned to the MOI to explain why 'that' story was published and why the President's story did not go on the front page (Rusike, 1990:79). (N.B. See Fig. iii & iv in the appendix for the cartoonist's impression of the MOI's role in Zimbabwean politics in the late 1980s.)

\[ \text{Equally} \]

In the same vein he reveals that in his capacity firstly, as Chief Executive Officer and later as Managing Director, of Zimpapers he was continually subjected to harassment, abuse and threats if he failed to comply with directives from the MOI (Ibid:95).

Rusike’s revelations are interesting, especially coming from him, a man who professed to be a loyal member of both ZANU-PF and Mugabe’s government. As a long-time member of the party, Rusike had been appointed to the post of Managing Director to serve the authoritarian interests of the ZANU-PF government by "... submitting the media to those who hold power" (Mcquail, 1993:112). Rusike only becomes critical of the government after
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his acquisition of Modus Publications, but at the time of his appointment as Chief Executive Officer of Zimpapers, he set about doing the party's dirty work inside the company, by allowing ZANU-PF to effectively bypass any remaining formal obstacles presented by the press (Saunders, 1991: 90).

It is clear therefore that, although theoretically, the MMT is an independent public body, and the Zimpapers Company has its board and management, practically the MOI is in a position to employ, reward, and promote anyone seen as toeing the line. The same Ministry has the power to sack and punish those considered as not sympathetic to the views of ministers and ZANU-PF officials.

The happenings at Zimpapers in the 1980s serve as a good example of contradictions within media gate-keeping processes, especially with regard to relationships between the resulting signifying practices and the hegemonic ideology.

Situations do arise where journalists consciously refuse to accept the consensual discourse and associated signifying practices of the newsroom thereby situate themselves outside the hegemonic ideology... [they]... refuse to comply with consensual discourse (Tomaselli et al, 1987: 32).

As result of non-conformity, dissident journalists risk ostracism and discursive and material sanctions such as
exclusion, dismissal, victimisation or even bodily harm (Ibid: 32).

In Zimbabwe, those journalists who have tried to stand up to their professional ethics by engaging into critical and investigative journalism have been brutally dealt with. When Witness Mangwende was Minister of Information, he publicly stated that Zimbabwe "... could not afford investigative journalism because it would tear up the fragile social and political fabric of the new society" (Article 19, 19 February 1989:67).

**Government Pressure On Journalists.**

The first casualty of state victimisation of journalists government officials was Tendai Dumbutshena, a Zimbabwean journalist who was freelancing for the South African morning group of newspapers and the BBC. His only offence was to produce an article on the Cabinet reshuffle, a day before Prime Minister Mugabe was to announce the details. Dumbutshena was arrested in broad daylight, while he was drinking beer with fellow journalists at the Zimbabwe Press Club, on 9 January 1981, by the ZANU-PF ex-guerrilla commander Rex Nhongo (who became Commander of the Zimbabwe Army on completion of the integration exercise) who took him to an unknown place for several hours of aggressive interrogation (*The Chronicle*, 10 01 81). A bad precedence in the harassment of journalists had been set by a
high ranking member of ZANU-PF. More vicious forms of repression were to follow.

The Fifth Brigade And The Matebeleland News Black-Out.

Next to come on the firing line was not a freelance journalist, but an editor of one of Zimpapers publications (Manica Post) Mrs. Jean Maitland-Stuart. She used her editorial freedom to criticise the government for bringing into the country North Korean instructors to train an army brigade which was well known to be aligned to the ruling party (The Herald, 16 09 81). Before her dismissal, she was asked to appear before the Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe and Dr. Shamuyarira, who both accused her of adopting a South African line of reporting, against Zimbabwe’s socialist friends (The Herald, 17 09 81). A day after meeting the two leaders, she was ‘dismissed by the MMT’ and Dr. Shamuyarira responded by saying that he was ‘gratified by the decision taken by the MMT to sack the editor’, while the Member of Parliament for Mashonalnd West, Mr. Alex Mudzingwa urged the Minister to “kick this woman out of the country” (The Herald, 18 09 81).

The silencing of Mrs. Stuart had far-reaching consequences, which even at the time of writing, threaten the future stability of the Zimbabwean society. The North Korean instructors were used to train the F5 Brigade (established in August 1981 as military wing of the ZANU-PF party) which was then subsequently
used by the government to crush any political challenge by its opponents. A year after its formation the 5 Brigade was unleashed into the Ndebele dominated provinces of Matebeleland where the soldiers killed thousands of people, before they were withdrawn due to outcry from the international community.

When political disturbances broke out in Matebeleland in 1982, the government banned any reportage on the disturbances (*Southern African Report*, March 1991). It is logical therefore to argue that this news blackout had therefore started with the firing of Mrs. Stuart as editor, which was a frontal attack on the people of Zimbabwe’s rights to be informed. Because of lack of transparency and accountability on the part of all those involved in the military operations in the two provinces of Matebeleland, resulted in the security agents engaging in all forms of brutalities knowing very well that they were not going to be exposed, since the government had given them immunity from press scrutiny.

The government turned to colonial legislation, the *State of Emergency Powers*, and used the slogan ‘national unity’ to silence public debate on the handling of the disturbances and media coverage on security forces’ brutalities on unarmed peasants in the western part of the country. Two editors were removed from their posts because they were regarded as too independent in their views (*Article 19, World Report*: 67). Foreign journalists were accused of exaggerating the security situation in Matebeleland and were expelled or excluded from the
country for reporting human rights violations by the security forces (Moto, July 1985).

On 24 July 1982, a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed by Government in Matebeleland, which prevented all movement of vehicles, other than security forces vehicles, and restricted all people to within 50 metres of their homes: and on 13 09 82 the Minister of information announced that all curfew areas were closed to the press, and foreign correspondents were required to inform the Department of Information if their itinerary took them more than 40 km from Harare and Bulawayo (Auret, 1992:149). As a result, there was very little critical reporting on the political crisis by the government-controlled daily and weekly newspapers.

Thus it is clear that the government used its control of the media to put a news blackout in Matebeleland in the period 1982-86. The news blackout was gradually broken by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace [CCJP] which continued throughout the period to give out press statements informing the public that it had clear evidence of violations of human rights in Matebeleland by the 5 Brigade.

In February 1983, the CCJP reported that the 5 Brigade were 'dissident hunting' by waging a campaign of terror and intimidation against civilian population in the curfew areas; men, women and children were being beaten, maimed and killed, while their homes were looted and burned (Auret 1992: 152). The
nature and magnitude of the brutalities are best illustrated by what people in Ngezi and Tsholotsho experienced in 1983.

On 5 February at about 11 a.m. 5 children aged between 7 and 12 years were shot dead at a kraal in Ngezi Resettlement apparently while they were sitting eating sadza. The parents were in town and arrived home to find the children dead. The police arrived at the scene later that afternoon and informed the parents that the soldiers had reported shooting the children and were sorry about it (Ibid: 153).

At a village in the Silongwe line of Tsholotsho, a group of villagers were questioned about dissidents [on 10 June 1983] by the 5 Brigade soldiers and when they answered that they had not seen them, the adults were beaten with sticks until they could no longer stand on their feet, and they were then forced into a large hut, the thatched roof of the hut was then ignited, and 21 people were burnt to death (Auret/172 153). The most inhuman treatment of civilians was highlighted in a case involving a four-month-old child who was axed thrice and the mother was forced to eat its flesh, while a 11 year old girl had her vagina burnt with plastic before she was shot (Auret ... 158). All the information on brutality was brought to the attention of Prime Minister Mugabe and the public press. The 5 Brigade soldiers themselves proclaimed openly at rallies and at interrogation centres that their business was to kill, yet Zimpapers journalists failed to inform the public about such wrong doing
by the agents of the state. A delegation of the Catholic Bishops noted to Prime Minister Mugabe that:

public figures sought to hide the atrocities that had taken place, and singled out the mass media which had singularly failed to keep the people of Zimbabwe informed of the facts which were common knowledge, both in the areas concerned and outside them through the reports of reliable witnesses, the facts which pointed to a reign of terror caused by wanton killings, woundings, beatings, burnings and rapings (Ibid:152-3).

In March 1983, the CCJP had a meeting with Prime Minister Mugabe and his security Ministers, and the Commission presented the evidence of the army's brutality. In Mike Aurent's words, "the Prime Minister's reaction to the report was that of a man genuinely shocked and saddened, of a man who had to face the truth of what he had previously only suspected" (Ibid: 152).

Mugabe responded later by assuring the nation that a Commission of inquiry had been appointed to look into the allegations of atrocities by 5 Brigade (Sunday Mail, 22 05 83). It is however interesting to note that the findings of the Commission were never made public up to date. Instead, the government used Zimpapers publications to misinform those people who lived outside the affected areas, by claiming that the brutalities were committed by dissidents.
In spite of having been fully briefed of the atrocities by the CCJP, the Prime Minister publicly denied that there was any wrong doing by the security forces in the curfew areas of Matebeleland. In a cover-up exercise, two Senior Ministers and senior army officers were to accompany journalists to curfew areas, in the company of the governor of Matebeleland South Mark Dube (The Sunday News, 29 04 84).

All the top leaders of the delegation were well known for their hostility towards journalists who did not toe the ZANU-PF line. Army Commander Rex Nhongo had arrested journalist Tendai Dumbutshena in 1981 for reporting on the Cabinet reshuffle, while Senior Minister Maurice Nyagumbo was well known for his friendship with Tommy Sithole, who became an editor through ZANU-PF membership. Nyagumbo was to commit suicide in April 1989 after journalists revealed his involvement in the Willowgate car scandal. Governor Mark Dube was to be found guilty for assaulting and illegally detaining journalists in 1988. As for Enos Nkala, his hostility towards journalists dated back to 1980 and was to find its peak during the Willowgate scandal in 1988 when he was forced to resign as Minister of Defence by The Chronicle's revelation of his involvement in corrupt activities.

The tour of the curfew areas by journalists was also preceded by widespread castigation of the Catholic church in Matebeleland by Prime Minister Mugabe through the Zimpapers publications. He stressed that the church had to know that the affairs of the Government of Zimbabwe were not run according to the scriptures.
but according to policies of Government derived from the party. The Prime Minister criticised the church for not being objective when condemning the Government for allegedly planning to exterminate the Ndebeles in Matebeleland some church members had been influenced by a certain political party to pressure the Government by lying and accusing it of abusing human rights (The Chronicle, 18 04 84).

The Prime Minister was to be echoed by Minister Sydney Sekeramayi who told a rally in Jambesi that the Catholic bishops were in league with Satan and accused the Roman Catholic clergy for going about spreading lies that the Government was involved in an attempt to wipe out the Ndebele tribe under the cover of the curfew imposed to facilitate the hunt for dissidents (The Chronicle, 28 04 84).

When finally the tour of the curfew areas took place, the journalists were not allowed to use their private vehicles. Instead they were transported using an army bus which was in a convoy of army trucks full of soldiers, the same soldiers who were being accused of committing the massacres. The journalists were taken through a ‘shortcut road’ which left them stranded for several hours with their bus ‘bogged down’ in the Shashane river bed, several kilometres away from the venue of the interviews, and when they finally got to Kezi late in the afternoon, the interviews were conducted in public, in the presence of the soldiers, with eyewitnesses on a raised platform (The Chronicle, 11 05 84). The intimidatory manner in which the
exercise was undertaken was not lost to everybody including the Zimpapers journalists who were in the crew.

In his editorial, one of the editors of Zimpapers' weeklies, hinted to his awareness of the government's manipulative tactics, during the whole tour.

One could already foresee a situation where some of these journalists will say that conducted tours and the questioning of witnesses in the presence of army and other Government personnel could not have produced any genuine evidence (The Sunday News, 13 05 84).

It was however shocking to realise that some of the journalists in Zimpapers had succumbed to the manipulation by government, and hence were used as propaganda agents by ZANU-PF. The editorial comment of The Chronicle immediately after the staged tour of Matebeleland was testimony to the amount of control that the government had on the MMT newspapers. While the editor admitted that at one mission hospital, a doctor told journalists that he had treated more than 100 patients who had claimed that they were beaten by soldiers, his stance was that there had been no atrocities committed by the army in Matebeleland. He argued that:

After an intensive tour of the Matebeleland curfew area, a group of mainly foreign journalists have found absolutely nothing to give credence to the wild and unsubstantiated
allegations of atrocities committed by the security forces that have been recorded in controversial detail for the past few weeks. ... The Zimbabwean Government has nothing to hide and there are no grounds for an official investigation into army brutalities on this scale (The Chronicle, 12 05 84).

It is clear from the editor’s comment that due to government control of the media, there was complete absence of investigative journalism in the realm of Zimpapers journalists. This kind of reportage from the public papers was very tragic for Zimbabwe in the sense that while thousands of innocent civilians were subjected to the most inhuman torture and murder, the public press which was supposed to expose the wrong doing, remained loyal to the government by denying the existence of the army atrocities. Such manner of handling issues of importance to the public by journalists in Zimpapers was a mockery of MMT’s policy of trying to democratis access to information by reaching out to the rural areas in order to create a free flow of information between the masses and the government. The irresponsibility of Zimpapers journalists, which arises from the government’s tight control of the press, can easily be highlighted by a case that involved a Mr. Lot Mpofu from Bulawayo who was arrested in 1985.

Lot Mpofu had been detained and tortured at Stops Camp, in Bulawayo, and was at the camp when Minister Nkala arrived, asking whether any body had been tortured there. Mr. Mpofu
not only showed him the effects of torture but pointed out the man responsible, the head of the Central Investigation Organisation (CIO) in Bulawayo. Within a week, all those who had claimed to have been tortured were moved to Kami or Esigodini camps (Auret, 1992:215).

The tragedy of the situation was that Minister Nkala had visited the Bulawayo camp accompanied by journalists from Zimpapers, but they never reported such incidents in their papers, instead they continued to deny any existence of torture and murder coming from other sources. Mr. Mpofu was lucky in that he was sent to Chikurubi Maximum Prison, because most of those who were sent to Esigodini were never to be seen alive again. The rumour that was common was that if you were sent to Esigodini, which is about 40km from Bulawayo, you were certain to end up killed and thrown into disused mine shafts in the area. Because of the tight control that the government has on the public press, the rumour was never substantiated until some of the human bones were excavated by miners trying to reopen the old mines in October 1995. The government could not deny or agree that the bones belonged to the many victims of the 5 Brigade and CIO, because in the pockets of some of the tattered clothes excavated together with the bones there were post-independence coins [SABC news, 8p.m., 08 10 95]. The Zimpapers publications never carried a story on the discovery of the bones at Esigodini mines.

In the height of the Matebeleland disturbances, in 1986 Amnesty International complained to the government of Zimbabwe about its
human rights abuses. Surprisingly the then Minister of Home Affairs Enos Nkala alleged that Amnesty International had infiltrated churches in Zimbabwe and he promised to hammer the churches. Nkala, ordered the detention of the Director of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Nicholas Ndebele, for "... sending sensitive information about Zimbabwe to the Amnesty International" (Index on Censorship 9, 1989:20). The arrest and subsequent detention of Ndebele can only be understood in the context of the widespread campaign by government in the 1980s to silence any voice of criticism which was seen to deconstruct ZANU-PF's common sense.

The ZANU-PF government took it upon itself to define what the people of Zimbabwe had to read from newspapers by keeping tight control on information flow from Zimpapers. This was in line with the arguments put forward by a senior government information officer, Takawira Mangende, who argued for any newspapers to perform their duties fittingly, it was essential that the newspapers' personnel had to be recognised by those in authority (The Herald, 03 08 82). In Zimbabwe, 'those in authority' are senior ZANU-PF and government officials who are very sensitive to journalists' scrutiny. Although in theory most of them publicly preached the need for development journalism and constructive criticism of the government, in practice they wanted journalists to be subordinate to ZANU-PF in their daily operations. Such a situation has given rise to journalists who report uncritically and religiously on ZANU-PF activities and policies, no matter how disastrous they are to national
development. Throughout the period up to 1994, if journalists failed to fulfil the expected praises to the government and ZANU-PF severe measures would be taken against them through the MOI’s influence within Zimpapers. The dismissal from editorship of Willie Musarurwa, Henry Muradzikwa, and the ‘promotion’ of Geoff Nyarota and Bill Saidi serve to highlight how the government made an about turn in its policy of making information readily available to the public especially the rural masses, through the public owned Zimpapers.

**Musarurwa’s Dismissal From Zimpapers.**

Willie Musarurwa’s acceptance as editor of The Sunday Mail in the early 1980s had been on condition that he had left party politics. During the armed struggle for independence, he had been ZAPU’s Secretary for Information and Publicity, a background which made him vulnerable to victimisation during the ZANU-PF/ZAPU conflict which manifested itself in the form of political disturbances in Matebeleland.

As a journalist, Musarurwa refused to compromise his professionalism to serve the interests of the top government leadership, at the expense of the general public. He was well known for his criticism of ‘speech journalism’ and ‘sloganeering’, and always made it public that newspapers were meant to encourage public debates on issues of national importance, and not to suppress public opinion.
A puppet press that specialises in flattering government ministers and tells them lies is worse than no press. It is the arch-enemy of both the Government and the people. We perform our duties on sound moral principles. We are motivated by what is best for our country and by considerations of national interests (The Sunday Mail, 18 10 81).

Throughout his term as editor of The Sunday Mail, Musarurwa used his newspaper to generate debate on the government’s socialist programmes, and also to campaign for transparency on the part of those in public office. He defended the right of newspapers to offer critical comments on government leaders within the boundaries formed by the law, so as to attain good governance. His argument was that press freedom enabled newspapers to serve as a flexible link between the people and their government, and that this helped to empower the masses in their inalienable right to good government (Saunders, 1991: 117). At a time when most of Zimpapers publications were reporting favourably and religiously on the government’s socialist experiment and its successes, Musarurwa’s paper, The Sunday Mail, remained soberly non-partisan and continued to criticise the way the ZANU-PF government was trying to implement a one-party socialist system at a time when the majority of the people were complaining about rampant corruption and mismanagement of the economy by most senior ZANU-PF government officials.
When Musarurwa was castigated for criticising political leaders by the Director of Information, who even questioned the role of *The Sunday Mail*, Musarurwa remained bold and pointed to the Mr Nyoka (the Director) that his assumption that political leaders are infallible and that they are all motivated by and sensitive to national interests in what they do and say was a fallacy (*The Sunday Mail*, 18 10 81). He stood firm on his belief on press freedom by arguing that:

The role of the press is to reflect the people to the government and the government to the people, hence creating a constant feedback on government policies and how they are being accepted by the people... [it]... must mirror the fears and feelings of the people without fear or favour. Self-censorship destroys the quality of news in newspapers under Zimpapers (*The Sunday Mail*, 16 08 81).

By mid-1980s, Musarurwa's paper stated to scrutinise the strategies which were being used by some liberation movements who were resident in Zimbabwe. He criticised some of them, especially the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the South African Pan-African Congress, which he described as 'paralysis personified'. Because of his line of thinking, coupled with his background as ZAPU's information chief, Musarurwa was considered as an enemy by many government officials. The argument in the high corridors of power was that he was an embarrassment to government and therefore needed to be replaced by someone more in line with government thinking (Rusike, 1990:86).
Elias Rusike also acknowledges that at the time when he was hired by Zimpapers, one of the tasks assigned to him was to tame the editor of *The Sunday Mail*, and bring his reporting in line with government expectations. He says he was specifically asked by the relevant authorities to ensure that *The Sunday Mail* falls in line with the broad government approach to political and international issues (in Saunders, 1991:119).

Rusike failed in this task, because during the 1985 Parliamentary elections Musarurwa was very courageous to use *The Sunday Mail* to cover widespread corruption in high offices, and the use of members of the Youth Brigade and Women’s League by the ruling party to intimidate members of the opposition parties, and in some cases destroying their property. As a result, he was fired from Zimpapers immediately after the elections. His dismissal had nothing to do with his failure to perform his duties as a journalist, but more with his ideological differences with some top ZANU-PF political leaders.

It is logical therefore, to deduce that Musarurwa’s sacking from Zimpapers was a result of government’s tight control of the public mainstream press, and the political elite’s need to manipulate news reporting. Such kind of thinking is consolidated by Rusike’s revelations after his resignation from Zimpapers, that Musarurwa was dismissed as editor of *The Sunday Mail* on directives from government, although, as Managing Director, he had to write the actual letter of dismissing him. He sees
himself as having been used as the hatchet man, who had to do all the dirty work on behalf of the MOI. The actual letter of dismissal confirms Elias Rusike’s confession. Part of it read:

It has been decided by the Minister of Information, Post and Telecommunications, in consultation with Dr. Sadza and myself, that we can no longer have you as editor of The Sunday Mail... [We have concluded] that maybe there are fundamental political differences between you on the other hand and the major shareholder, which is the government, on the other (in Saunders ... 119).

Ironically, when Musarurwa died of sudden stroke, top government officials unanimously agreed that he be declared a national hero in recognition of his sterling contribution to national development through the media. President Mugabe himself summarised his life as a journalist by saying that Musarurwa was a principled man with strong and firm views (The Sunday Mail, 08/90). Many people wondered:

... whether or not the President knew the full story and circumstances surrounding Musarurwa’s dismissal from the editorship of The Sunday Mail. Was he given a selective version of how strongly Musarurwa felt on certain issues and not what positive contribution he made in the field of journalism? (Rusike, 1990:88).
Thus it is apparent that the MMT and Zimpapers were used to rubber-stamp the decisions already made by the MOI, hence clearly demonstrating that the Zimpapers publications were not autonomous but under direct government control. Democratisation of the media was therefore a dream, not a reality in Zimbabwe.

**Leo Hatugari and The Paweni Maize’s Scandal.**

Leo Hatugari (1995) revealed that it was frustrating to operate under tight control, especially for him because he had tasted freedom while working as editor of Moto. When he was appointed to edit The Manica Post he tried to use the paper to break the restrictive boundaries imposed by the government on news reporting, by being critical and investigative. He referred to the Paweni maize scandal, in which Mashata Paweni defrauded the government of more than Z$6 million, by forging invoices and overcharging the government for transporting drought relief maize in 1986. Leo argued that:

Kumbirai Kangai [a government minister] was implicated: money was given to him behind the scenes. I used The Manica Post to criticise the manner the issue was handled. Kangai was supposed to resign because in true democracies the Ministers are responsible for their actions. Personally I do not fear as long as I cover what is newsworthy and I have the full facts. You see, in The Manica Post I was happy because I had found my freedom again (Interview with Hatugari, 21 07 95).
Asked why he did not follow up on the Paweni scandal like what Nyarota did with the Willowgate car scandal, Hatugari narrated how he was hastily transferred from the Mutare paper and promoted to become chief assistant editor of the highest circulating paper The Sunday Mail. However he added that he did not regret his short stay in The Sunday Mail because he made his presence felt by being independent and assertive even after his transfer.

I used my critical experience gained in Moto and The Manica Post to teach the young Henry Muradzikwa true journalism, not yes-man journalism whereby journalists are turned into public relations practitioners for the powers that be, just for the love of money and power. So when the restructuring exercise after the Willowgate came, I was brought down here to assist in The Chronicle. You see, they have always made it a point that I am not in charge, in order to stifle my ideas and influence (Interview ... 21.07.95).

When the author asked him to comment on the effects of government control to young journalists, Leo argued that the negative effects are not on young journalists only, but that even the old ones: they all make self-censorship part of them. He said that was the reason why Zimbabwe had guided journalism which is afraid to probe things and put them into context (Interview with Hatugari, 21.07.95).
Henry Muradzikwa’s Removal from THE SUNDAY MAIL.

Muradzikwa thought it was the duty of the press to inform the public about the problems faced by people in their daily lives. He understood the role of the press in the same way as Willie Musarurwa did, that it had to encourage debate on issues of national importance.

In 1987, he used The Sunday Mail to inform the public about the plight of Zimbabwean students studying abroad, especially those in the Eastern Block countries. That foreign students were facing difficulties was not exaggeration, given that the Eastern Block countries were themselves experiencing internal political and economic problems arising from the fall of the Soviet Union and the Socialist experiment in its satellite states. Muradzikwa’s paper carried a story on the problems facing those students who were studying in Bulgaria, and the expulsion of more than fifteen others from Cuba, who were undertaking a teacher training course under the Zimbabwe-Cuba Teacher Training Programme (The Sunday Mail, 12 04 87). The inference of his editorial was that the students had been expelled because they were suffering from aids.

Muradzikwa’s expulsion from editorship was preceded by the serious castigation of The Sunday Mail by Prime Minister Mugabe, who described the paper as appearing to have been infiltrated by the enemy and hence proving to be quite reactionary: he appeared visibly angry and actually promised the Cuban Foreign Affairs
Minister, Isidoro Malmierca that he would get the holder of the
pen and deal with him personally (The Herald, 21 04 87). This
kind of thinking from the state leader seemed to suggest that in
order for journalists to be progressive they had to stop
addressing issues of national importance by censoring
themselves, ironically this would be moving the press to the
same repressive conditions of the colonial Rhodesia Front days.

Muradzikwa’s dismissal on 22 04 87, was followed by a press
statement from the Minister of Information, Dr. Shamuyarira, who
strongly warned all Zimpapers journalists, stating that they
could differ with certain speeches or acts of government, but
editors would have to support the broad policy objectives of the
ruling party in order to remain in charge of their respective
papers (The Chronicle, 08 06 87). Dr. Shamuyarira’s warning was
not only intimidatory, but a clear form of blackmail of
journalists by those in power. It also consolidated the general
argument that Zimpapers publications were not controlled by the
MMT, but by the ZANU-PF through the MOI; and that this control
served to cow down the journalists in their daily operations to
inform the public. In other words the journalists were supposed
to report the ZANU-PF way or face dismissal.

Muradzikwa was to resurface again after the Cuba issue had died
down. Ironically at a more senior level as manager of special
projects, a job that as editor he was not qualified to perform.
The government had, however succeeded in removing him from the
strategic position where he could have influenced the editorial
content of one of the highest circulating papers in Zimbabwe. His journalistic rights to gather and disseminate information had been compromised and the right of the public to have access to information on issues of national development and debate had been trampled upon. The same tactics used to get rid of Muradzikwa from editorship were employed to weaken the editor of the Bulawayo weekly paper, The Sunday News, Bill Saidi.

**Bill Saidi: A Politically Unacceptable Journalist.**

Bill Saidi's victimisation at Zimpapers was an outcome of his having been close to ZAPU during the armed struggle for independence, when he was working as a journalist in Zambia. He was one of the senior journalists in Zimpapers to meet a lot of frustrations at work due to political interference from the MOI. In recognition of Saidi's long and outstanding performance as a journalist, the Zimpapers management recommended that he be promoted to the post of Managing editor of The Herald, but the MOI objected. After his resignation from Zimpapers, Rusike reveals Saidi's plight as a journalist in Zimpapers.

We were told by the Minister that he was not politically acceptable and therefore we could not entrust him to edit The Herald. ... So the post of group features editor was created for him. But before long the department was abolished because the editor of The Herald, Tommy Sithole, refused to have anything to do with him. ... Saidi's title was then changed to that of group foreign editor, with
responsibility for foreign stories and features. Again, the editor of The Herald refused to have anything to do with him with the support of the Minister of Information. By the time I resigned from Zimpapers, Saidi was among those senior editors with a car and a fat salary and was being paid, while writing his own novels (Rusike, 1990:78).

Such treatment of journalists had an effect of destroying the quality of news from the public press. Saidi himself, when he was addressing a MISA seminar in Swaziland argued that, at independence, Zimpapers was taken by something publicised as an independent autonomous organisation called the Zimbabwe Mass Media Trust... [but] ...now all papers under Zimpapers are controlled by the MOI, and through 1981 to the 1985 elections, and the 1990 elections these papers propagated nothing but government information (MISA Magazine, 23).

Geoff Nyarota and the Willowgate Scandal: Elimination By Promotion.

In 1988 The Chronicle under the editorship of Geoff Nyarota, became one of the most popular and respected newspapers produced by Zimpapers. The respect for the paper came from its editorial content which criticised wrong doing and corruption in high public offices, at a time when most of Zimpapers publications like The Herald, were engaged in regurgitating Ministers’ speeches. As a result of high level of investigative reporting by The Chronicle team led by Nyarota, shocking scandalous car
dealings at the government controlled Willowvale Car Industry were revealed. The Willowgate Scandal, as it was later called, involved the direct sales of vehicles by Willowvale Motor Industries to individuals including Cabinet Ministers. Most of the executive luxury cars allocated to government officials were then resold by the concerned officials at more than treble the government controlled prices, at a time when there was serious shortage of cars in the national market. The general attitude of the senior government officials to the press, after the revelation of the scandal, is revealed in Enos Nkala’s [Minister of Defence] treatment of the journalists and the editor of The Chronicle. The Minister gave one of the journalists an ultimatum and ordered him to travel to his office (435+km away) within 24 hours, failure of which he threatened to use the army and the police to pick him for detention.

If by tomorrow you don’t come ... then you will come by other means. If you do not travel here I will teach each of you a lesson. I will use the army to pick you up; then you can ask your questions. I do not care. I have got that power. I will lock you up, along with your editor who gave you that information ... I am the acting Minister of Home Affairs and I am instructing the police to search your offices (The Chronicle, 14 12 88).

Such utterances by the Minister of Defence shows how far Zimbabwe had been derailed from its democratisation process. The army and the police are supposed to be used by society to
apprehend those who are involved in wrong-doing, those who are engaged in corrupt activities using their offices. Instead the very same people who were destroying the country’s economy through scandalous dealings were using the repressive state apparatus to silence public newspapers from informing the electorate about how those they elected were performing their duties.

Geoff Nyarota, who was the editor of The Chronicle at the time, confirmed that this kind of thinking, and using the police for selfish personal protection existed within government circles, when he disclosed to the Sandura Commission, that, he was summoned by the Chairman of the MMT to Harare for his own safety, who told him that his revelation of the scandals at Willowvale Motor Industries had caused strong reactions from government Ministers, who had argued that Nyarota "... be dismissed from work and subsequently be arrested" (The Chronicle, 27 01 89). That was not all, for Nkala revealed that all the government officials named by The Chronicle in the Willowgate scandal had met and were collectively looking at the possibility of bringing a defamation action against Nyarota (The Chronicle, 16 12 88).

The public’s response to the Willowgate scandal was proof that the electorate in Zimbabwe was not happy with the abuse of public office by individuals they chose to represent their interests. Following the threats to sue Nyarota, the majority of the people and civil organisations expressed their solidarity
with him and his newspaper to contest the law suit alluded to by Minister Nkala (The Chronicle, 17 12 88).

The representatives of civil society in Zimbabwe expressed their shock and dismay at the threats against the editor of The Chronicle. The workers’ organisation, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, (ZCTU) argued that corruption was never acceptable in any decent society.

The ZCTU is surprised by the irony that the people who should take full responsibility for the economic hardships which the common man is facing as a result of their laws and policies are using state machinery not to promote the needs and interests of the common man but to cushion themselves from the very same economic hardships (The Chronicle, 17 12 88).

The workers and the peasants had the right to know what their leaders were doing at a time when the government was asking them to tighten their belts for difficult times ahead, as a result of the International Monitory Fund prescribed Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, which resulted in widespread retrenchments and devaluation of the Zimbabwean currency.

The CCJP’s argument was that the people of Zimbabwe had a right to freedom of the press and access to information about issues of public concern, otherwise it would be very hard for them to know the truth from what people in authority said when some of
them were threatening those who were trying to get the truth (The Chronicle, 17 1 88).

The government’s response to the Willowgate scandal was shocking to the majority of the people of Zimbabwe who were keen to see corrupt officials brought to book. The Minister of Information, Witness Mangwende, accused The Chronicle journalists of trying to be both investigator, prosecutor and judge at the same time. His argument was that the reporting of the car racket had given the impression to the people that the government was corrupt (See Fig. ii in the Appendix for the effects of the Willowgate revelations) and therefore he promised to examine the structures of the MMT in an attempt to ensure that those organs that fall under it performed their duties as efficiently as possible (The Chronicle, 21 01 89). He was later very open in his threat when he argued that:

Zimbabwe cannot at this stage afford investigative reporting because it is sensational and violates individual privacy... We cannot afford the wholesale publication of inaccurate news items or those that will tear up the fragile social and political fabric of our new society. Investigative journalism is a new phenomenon being debated worldwide and was viewed with suspicion if not distrust because it entails journalists basing their stories on rumours (The Chronicle, 08 02 89).
Mangwende's statement did not only prove that he did not understand what investigative journalism entails, but also served to reveal the contradictions in his ministry towards the media, because barely five months had elapsed when he had told journalists about his government's commitment to support them in their difficult task of information gathering and dissemination in very unfavourable and threatening conditions. While he was presenting trophies for the Communicator of the Year Awards, where he pronounced:

The government upholds a free press. We should therefore protect that freedom so that our journalists can operate with professional competence and credibility. Information which they purvey is such a valuable commodity and we should do everything in our power to ensure its free flow and continued availability. We should protect our media from factors that threaten its existence... The courage and persistence of those journalists who seek to discover and reveal the truth to the public is to be appreciated and applauded by us all (The Chronicle, 17 12 88).

The state President's reaction to such embarrassing abuse of office by his senior government officials was to accuse The Chronicle journalists of having "...suffered from a little degree of overzealousness" (The Chronicle, 16 03 89). Ironically, it was not more than four months since the President had addressed a rally and told people not to engage in rumour-mongering but to rely on facts (The Chronicle, 17 12 88).
Nyarota and his team had not only mentioned the names of the officials involved in the scandal, but had published detailed facts of the circumstances surrounding each acquisition of the cars including places, dates and even times of the transactions.

However, in the face of the brutal assault on press freedom by government, Nyarota and his reporters received backing from the majority of the Parliamentarians who strongly objected to the intended restructuring of the MMT's structures mentioned by the Minister of Information. The exercise was seen as a ploy by the MOI to dismiss Nyarota from the editorship of The Chronicle as it happened with the editors who were sacked from The Sunday Mail. The Parliamentarians expressed their fears that Nyarota and his team were under threat for exposing the Willowgate scandal, with the majority of them calling on the Minister of Information to assure the House that The Chronicle editor and his deputy were not going to be fired from their jobs or victimised, and that people who are going about their duties as editors and journalists are not threatened by the mafia type tendencies from some government officials (The Chronicle, 05 02 89).

It was because of the outcry of the public, the civil society and most Parliamentarians that Geoff Nyarota was not fired from Zimpapers, but all the same, he was removed from the editorship of The Chronicle. He was 'promoted' to Zimpapers Head office where a Public Relations post was created specially for him.
deputy editor, Davison Maruziva, was also removed from the Bulawayo newspaper and he was transferred to work in Harare. Elias Rusike [1990: 87-8] states that [the government] has controlling shares in Zimpapers and, therefore, it is in a position to tell the Zimpapers board and management to sack, employ, and promote any one who is either considered not sympathetic to the views of certain ministers, as perceived by the MOI, or to reward those who are seen as following 'the correct line', again as interpreted from the MOI. On the Willowgate issue, he says:

The chairman of the MMT and Zimpapers, Dr. Sadza, and I were told in no uncertain terms [by the MOI] that either we removed Nyarota as editor of The Chronicle or the whole board of Zimpapers would be dissolved. In fact at several cabinet and central committee meetings there were demands for my dismissal as Chief Executive of Zimpapers. It was argued that I allowed the editors to publish damaging stories implicating ministers in the car scandal (Rusike... 78-9).

The transfer of Nyarota and Maruziva from The Chronicle and the subsequent 'promotion' of Nyarota to a non-editorial public relations post, was a sure sign that the highly publicised MMT experiment had failed to democratise the press in Zimbabwe. The editor's movement from the Bulawayo paper was a form of 'elimination by promotion', a process meant to silence and emasculate The Chronicle, which the Zimpapers chairman, Dr.
Sadza, had described as the best daily wanted by everybody in Zimbabwe (The Chronicle, 30 12 88).

Nyarota’s forced move to Zimpapers Head office led to lively and heated debates in Parliament, on the subject of press freedom. The debates served to explain that not all Parliamentarians supported the strict and tight control of news flow from the newspapers under the ‘autonomous’ MMT. Most of them argued that Nyarota’s transfer and subsequent ‘promotion’ was the aim of a few corrupt government officials to reduce Zimpapers publications into mere government propaganda sheets. Byron Hove, a senior MP, urged all members of Parliament to "... stand up and say loudly and clearly, that we the representatives of the people assembled here, don’t accept the transfer of the editor ...": while another MP, Lazarus Nzarayebani, impressed to his colleagues to realise that information was very vital for a developing nation like Zimbabwe (The Chronicle, 08 02 89).

The most scathing criticism came from the Zimbabwe Unity Movement President, Edgar Tekere, who accused the government of having set a naive and bad precedent. He actually begged the Minister of Information to withdraw Nyarota’s appointment, and called on everyone in the country to rise and help to save the life of Zimbabwe’s democracy which he said was in the intensive care unit (The Chronicle 05 02 89). Tekere’s attack was echoed by Bulawayo’s Makokoba MP, Sydney Malunga, who was always accused by ZANU-PF leaders as a destructive critic of government Malunga asserted that:
It appears to me that the government has resorted to sledge-hammer policy where they will pounce on any one they think is too vocal, where anybody, despite being constructive in his criticism will have to be silenced (The Chronicle, 09 02 89).

**Tommy Sithole: The Government’s Propaganda Chief.**

Compared to the investigative journalism displayed by Nyarota, a good example of an editor in Zimpapers, who has maintained himself in power by sacrificing the interests of the common citizens of Zimbabwe through blind loyalty to the leaders and misguided patriotism is Tommy Sithole of The Herald. Sithole has always made it his duty to use The Herald as a government propaganda sheet. The newspaper always carry Ministerial denials of stories that are reported in other papers, even in situations where the facts are evident to everybody.

When The Chronicle reported on the Willowgate Scandal, Sithole refused to publish any story that implicated government ministers and continued to argue that there was no scandal at Willowvale because what the ministers were doing was legitimate and legal: he repeatedly published stories to the effect that The Chronicle’s alleged car scandal at Willowvale Motor Industries was a figment of Nyarota’s own fertile imagination (Rusike, 1990:85).
Nyarota viewed Tommy Sithole’s timidity during the Willowgate scandal as an example of how some Zimpapers journalists always feel there is need to be externally grateful to those government officials walking in the corridors of power who made it possible for them to progress to the top professionally.

The editor of The Chronicle, Steven Mpfu (1995), agreed that in Zimpapers there are editors who betray the interests of the people for their own personal aggrandizement. His general perception was that there was no censorship or control on Zimpapers journalists from the government. Mpfu argued that only mature journalists can understand the intricacies of journalism, especially when dealing with politicians.

Yes the MMT oversees the operations of the publications under Zimpapers, but both the MMT and the MOI do not have any say editorially. The only problem has been that some Zimpapers editors have patronised with politician, hence ending up censoring themselves and giving doctored information to please the particular authorities. I know when politicians say you are ‘a responsible journalist’, they mean you are patronising with them. But when they blame you, then you must know that you are doing your duty of mirroring society and its problems (Interview with Mr. S. Mpfu 27 07 95).
Usually, those journalists who did not act responsibly as interpreted by politicians met various forms of punitive measures from the government.

**Gibbs Dube and Phillip Maseko: Assault and Detention.**

The silencing of journalists by senior government officials was sometimes done in a very combative and crude manner. A case in point is the one that involved the Governor of Matebeleland South, Mark Dube, who abused his office on 27 November 1988, by using the police in Esigodini to detain *The Chronicle* journalists after he had assaulted them, allegedly for trying to investigate some scandalous gold mining in Esigodini in which the governor was rumoured to be involved (*The Chronicle, 28 11 88*). Although the Zimpapers Head office condemned the incident as a brutal, unprovoked and premeditated attack and an example of jungle law which Zimbabwe should not tolerate from its leaders: ironically, some of the ZANU-PF leaders, like deputy Labour Minister, Brigadier Luke Mahlabla, condemned the attack, and justified it by arguing that "there had been a deliberately synchronised psychological operation which had been masterminded and emanated from writers from a particular school of thought which sought to undermine and question the integrity of the Government" (*The Chronicle, 30 11 88*). When Mr. Mark Dube appeared in court for assaulting journalists, he defended himself by saying he had kidnapped, assaulted and detained *The Chronicle* journalists, Gibbs Dube and Phillip Maseko, because the paper was anti-government, bent on destroying the ZANU-PF
leadership by character assassinating its leaders; The Chronicle always chose to differ with other newspapers on what should be given priority (The Chronicle, 16 09 89).

It is very clear therefore that by the end of the 1980s, the ZANU-PF elites had disillusioned the masses by not only pursuing their corrupt economic interests, ignoring the interests of the people they governed, but also by denying them access to essential information by brutalising those journalists and editors who tried to stick to the MMT's initial goals of democratising information access, by making the public Zimpapers press a mass oriented and mass accessible media.

A West African novelist, Wole Soyinka (1995), has repeatedly argued that the heroes of the anti-colonial struggle aspire to run the lives and control the thinking of the people they govern, and that they try to achieve this control through blackmail and suppression of all criticism and information designed to oppose the fallacy of their policies, and in some cases, the crimes of their league (The Financial Gazette, 19 01 95).

In Zimbabwe, the same crop of politicians, the heroes of the anti-colonial liberation struggle, have used the public media to entrench themselves and to legitimate the hegemonic project of a few ZANU-PF elites who manipulate Zimpapers journalists into feeding the public with doctored news. The majority of the journalists working under Zimpapers feel that their
professionalism is curtailed by the company's gate-keeping system which discourages critical and investigative journalism.

When the author asked one of the assistant editors of The Chronicle to comment on his experiences as a journalist with Zimpapers, the response was that during the first days of the MMT there was no control at all.

We knew our editorial guidelines and we were free to gallop as we saw fit. It was nice for journalists. But after about two years, we began to feel the pinch. We were told: "DO NOT BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU". You see such a statement is not straightforward or specific - it is very vague. So after writing a story we began to ask 'Will the government like it?' Such questions created more fear, and as result we were no longer guided by what people needed to read but by what the government wanted to hear. We started to operate in a straight jacket (Interview with Leo Hatugari, 21 07 95).

Journalists are therefore constrained by the structures and ownership of the organisations they work for. It is clear that because of such hostility shown by those with power and influence, journalists as situated interpreters plunge into all forms of censorship. Murdock (1982) argues that:

Because of the tremendous shared interests at the top, coverage is limited and certain questions never get
asked... [journalists] ... worry about the editing. They worry about being removed from choice beats, or being fired (Murdock, in Gurevich et al, 1982:141).

In most African countries, the general control system is not open and direct. Leaders usually pressurise journalists to be patriotic and responsible in their daily task of disseminating information. In some countries, there is even some belief that investigative journalism is not good for Africa at its present level of development. In some instances, investigative journalism is referred to as rumour-mongering, sensationalism and character-assassination. Most African governments use legislation to stifle and muzzle the press. In most cases, journalists are reprimanded and accused of forgetting that as indigenous citizens, they have an obligation to contribute to the development of their societies by engaging in responsible journalism.

Fred M’Membe, the Managing Director of the Zambian daily, Post, argues that such phrases as ‘constructive criticism’ and ‘destructive criticism’ were coined by those in power in order to reward journalists with blind loyalty and punish those who are considered as ‘malcontents’ (The Financial Gazette, 19 01 95). It must be emphasised that in most cases the phrase ‘constructive criticism’ is used by government officials to mean self-censorship on the part of journalists. In this context constructive criticism thus manifests itself in the press as unquestioned agreement with what the corrupt leaders say.
Consequently, flattery and over-exaggerated praise of politicians from the ruling clique become the dominant news in most newspapers. This is what the Nigerian Nobel Prize winner, Wole Soyinka, has described as the aspiration by many post-independence leaders in Africa to run the lives of their subjects by controlling their thinking through manipulation of information (The Financial Gazette, 19 01 95).

The chief assistant editor of The Chronicle, Mr. David Ncube (1995), also argued that post-independence governments all over Africa have failed to create conducive conditions for the media to operate freely. He said the most effective tactic used by government leaders to curb press freedom is by infiltrating the management structures of the media with ‘political appointees’ who will always remember where ‘their bread is buttered’.

All African governments are notorious for controlling the media in order to protect and articulate ruling party interests and policies. Here in our country this is done through appointment of editors who will always know who put them in power. Consequently this lead to self-censorship because as the editor performs his duties, he knows ‘big brother is watching over his shoulder’. Because of this fear or you can call it appreciation if you want, our newspapers are full of endless praises for the leaders, which you academics call dictated journalism (Interview with Mr. D. Ncube, 27.07.95).
A senior reporter with The Sunday News, also agreed that there is an 'invisible hand' which always guide what they write, and how they write it.

If the story is critical of government, or some powerful personality, then it is spiked. So without being reprimanded or rebuked by the editor, through spiking you begin to learn what is expected of you. With time you begin to lose the drive to write critical stories because you know it is useless (Interview with Ms. S.Ndlovu, 20 09 95).

The Chief Executive Editor of The Financial Gazette, Trevor Ncube (1992), argued that at Zimpapers there is a new breed of journalists who are content with taking down Minister’s speeches and "...reporting on them religiously and as faithfully as possible, and praise-singers become the norm rather than the exception" (in Rhodes Review, December 1992:45).

Trevor Ncube’s sentiments were also aired by the President of the Zimbabwe Union of Journalists, Kindness Paradza (1995), who said working for Zimpapers is tantamount to imprisoning yourself. He stated that he never knew it until he started working for Modus Publications. Paradza recollected that when he was doing his college attachment with The Herald in the early 1980s, they would be given prepared stories, if the ones they wrote were considered to be outside government policy line.
In Zimpapers you have one line of thinking. You are not initiative. Actually, you are not allowed to be critical. It is actually you as a journalist who cannot afford to be critical because you know you are a government agent. As for editors it is worse because most of them are afraid of even their own shadows. Government control is very negative because editors and journalists are inhibited from thinking and this stops development of journalism. At the present moment you cannot feel secure as a journalist unless you have political backing (Interview with Mr. K. Paradza, 20 09 95).

The effect on the Zimbabwe media has been that the government controlled media only provide a one-sided presentation of views and completely suppress opposing and critical views, to the extent of discrediting itself. The sentiments were also echoed by Helge Ronning (1989:16) who maintained that there is too much speech-journalism in Zimbabwe. He argued that there are times when if you asked any journalist in Zimbabwe to define news, he would say; "News is that which is said by a Minister or political leader."

The tight control of the public print media has thus resulted in high level of 'speech-journalism' or 'minister-said' reporting. This usually takes the form of the palpable obsession with political speeches by many Zimbabwean journalists, to the total exclusion of real news constituting events affecting the wider community. Usually, most Zimpapers publications carry uncritical
and uncommented summaries of speeches given by different ministers. Whenever ordinary people feature in the papers, it will be in connection with the visit of a celebrity. This form of self-censorship, which manifests itself in the form of status-seeking journalism has led to a situation whereby most people turn more and more to the privately owned independent press, which sometimes take a critical and uncompromising stance in reporting issues of significance to national development. However, the independent press has not managed to escape the control mechanism of the government. The control mechanisms used with regards to the privately owned press will be scrutinised in the next section of this chapter.

**Independent Press: A Challenging Voice.**

When the mainstream media fail to fulfil their role as sources of reliable information, people tend to resort to alternative sources. In Zimbabwe, the unreliability of newspapers under MMT as sources of information led people to depend more and more on publications like Moto, Parade, The Financial Gazette and later the Horizon. Ncube (1992) states that the factor that was:

Critical to the emergence of the independent press was the political decay and economic decline that came as a result of a sycophantic press that was content with singing praises and not truly reflecting the wishes, desires, problems and frustrations of the entire population. The public wanted these frustrations to be ventilated, a task
which was taken up by only a few independent newspapers and magazines (in Rhodes Review, December 1992:46).

These publications fall under private ownership and control. The government does not have any shares in them. The assumption is that the public is better informed by this independent press because it can read a variety of different viewpoints on public events. Government officials, however, are hostile to the strong political position that these papers have taken. Their aggressive treatment of sensitive political, economic and cultural issues have made the independent press to act as the voice of those people who are not in power. The government’s view of the independent press was clearly expressed by Victoria Chitepo (1990), who was Minister of Information who stated that the presence of private press proved that press freedom existed in Zimbabwe. In the same breath she argued that:

Unsavoury during the last two years or so have been the political reports and comments of three publications, namely Moto, Parade and The Financial Gazette. These three papers have allowed themselves to be turned into political platforms from where the government and the party are being unjustifiably attacked (in Jensen & Jenset:57).

Placing herself within the developmental theory, which ascribe to the principle that journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedoms in their information gathering and dissemination tasks (Mcquail, 1993:121), the
Honourable Minister claimed that the unlimited freedom of the private press is ultimately destructive. Taking the same stance, the Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, recently attacked the privately owned press and called it "...the yellow and gutter press with foreign funding ... (in Rhodes Review, December 1992:47).

**Government Pressure On Independent Press**

Of late the government has taken on a combative stance against the privately owned press. The legislative intimidation of journalists and the economic sanctions imposed on the private press by the government is meant to tame this sector of the press.

In a Cabinet meeting in July 1991, various strategies were tabled to tame the independent press. The most notable ones were:

* instructing the government-controlled parastatals to cease advertising in the independent press so as to undermine their financial viability.
* frustrate the operations of the independent press through foreign currency and newsprint allocations.
* making sure the independent press did not get enough telephone lines.
* making sure there was no hurry in putting newsprint on the Open General Import License system.
* the Attorney General’s office was also asked to invoke colonial legislation to force the independent press to toe the line, and to punish government officials who are in the habit of ‘leaking’ information to the press (in Rhodes Review, December 1992:47).

Some of the strategies outlined above were implemented without delay. When Nyarota was ‘promoted’ from editing The Chronicle to the non-dangerous post of Public Relations Officer at Zimpapers Head Quarters, he met a lot of frustrations under Tommy Sithole, the ZANU-PF’s propaganda chief at Zimpapers headquarters. In 1990, Nyarota was recruited to edit The Financial Gazette by Rusike, who also had resigned as ZANU-PF’s ‘hatchet-man’ at Zimpapers. However, it was not long before the government started to pressurise Rusike to get rid of Nyarota as editor. The ‘former government hatchet-man’ gave an order to Nyarota as an editor to the effect that:

Before any editorial is published in The Financial Gazette, I must have a look at it. ... I am also worried that some of our programmes are beginning to be adversely affected, especially raw materials and the acquisition of capital and replacement machinery (Moto, August 1991:4).

When Nyarota refused to accept Rusike’s interference, he was fired from his job. The publisher-editor of one of Modus Publications’ magazines, The Insider, argues that his company had come under government pressure to fire Nyarota if it wanted
approval for foreign exchange to import printing machinery worth Z$22 million (Index on Censorship, 17).

In October 1992, the editor of The Financial Gazette, Trevor Ncube, together with one of the paper’s journalists were called to appear before a parliamentary committee and where they were ordered to reveal the source of a leak from a Parliamentary Committee which investigated claims of corruption by senior government officials (Ronning, 1993, in Arntzen {ed}: 21). When they refused to reveal their source, the two journalists were to be charged with contempt of court under the Privileges Immunities And Power Of Parliament Act. On May 24, 1993 Geoffrey Nyarota [former editor of The Chronicle and The Financial Gazette respectively] was threatened with the same Act when he refused to reveal his sources during a libel case hearing (MISA Free Press, June 1993:2).

In April 1995, Mugabe expressed his hostility to the Horizon for revealing that he customarily married his former secretary [Grace Marufu] and that they had two children, Robert [6] and Bona [5]. The report disclosed that Marufu’s former husband, [an airforce officer] who had claimed that Robert Junior was his son had been posted to an embassy abroad to silence him (Moto, April 1995).

When The Financial Gazette, took up the story in May 1995, naming High Court judge Padington Garwe and Senior Minister Enos Chikore as having officiated at the wedding ceremony, the police
arrested The Financial Gazette proprietor Elias Rusike, the Chief Executive Editor, Trevor Ncube and his deputy editor Simba Makunike. They were all charged with criminal defamation. When the Senior Public prosecutor confessed that the arrests and detentions of the three senior journalists were illegal because the police had not followed procedures, and in any case they had insufficient evidence to proceed with defamation charges, the Attorney General instructed him to proceed with the charges (Mail & Guardian, May 19-25:30). After his release on bail, Ncube revealed that police interrogation focused on his sources in the wedding story (Ibid ... 30).

Legislative Obstacles.

The press in Zimbabwe is frequently faced with unnecessary obstacles, in terms of both archaic legislation and vague policy. Many of these laws and policies date back to Smith’s time and before, but unlike other pre-independence laws that were seen as archaic, they suit the government’s purpose and hence they still remain in the statute books.

Media scholars in Zimbabwe argue that there is need to reform the law which compels journalists to disclose their confidential journalistic sources. A media law lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, G. Feltoe argues that there is need to amend the law of defamation so as to give the press greater protection against defamation actions when reporting in the public interest about the activities of public figures.
Practising journalists also feel they need protection by the courts especially when they are forced to reveal their sources. A former The Chronicle journalist, now working for Modus Publications, Lincoln Nkala, stated that:

Unless Zimbabwean courts were seen to be prepared to lean over backwards to protect, in the public interest, a journalist’s source where the journalist had publicly uncovered corruption or some other form of iniquity on the part of those holding high office, whether in government or elsewhere, the courts will be guilty of a grave disservice to the Zimbabwean society and the principles of democracy on which the society was founded (The Daily Gazette, June 4, 1994).

Another highly restrictive piece of legislation, especially to journalists on the ground, is the Official Secrets Act. In Zimbabwe, civil servants are not allowed to give information to the press unless they get clearance from the higher authorities. The usual response to journalists looking for information is ‘no comment’, ‘submit your questions in writing’, or/and ‘direct questions in writing to the appropriate authority at Headquarters’. But even when journalists follow these procedures, they never receive any response in time.
In any country that claims to be a democracy, the press should be able to approach even the President when he is at any public function - they should be able to do so without hindrance from 'officious little bureaucrats and arrogant security officers or bodyguards. It is plainly absurd to restrict the free flow of information. Doing so tells us of one or two things: either the government has something to hide, or its Ministers and officials are so incompetent that they cannot speak to journalists without being forewarned, giving them time to think out suitable answers. Either way it is an admission of failure. This gives rise to a very secretive and corrupt system of governance, and lead to a situation whereby officials are able to cover their blunders and corrupt practices simply by refusing the press access to relevant information (Feltoe, 1993:13).

A case in point is that of a Cabinet Minister, Christopher Ushewokunze, a relative of President Robert Mugabe who was directly implicated in a Z$500 000 fraud involving a state-owned company, the Zimbabwe Development Corporation. When he died in a dubious car accident in 1994, he was declared a National hero. The state-controlled Press never reported the Minister’s involvement in the scandal which has taken more than three years to go to the courts. It came to light only in mid-June after legal sources alerted members of the foreign Press to the scandal (The Citizen, June 14, 1995:15).

As the mid-1990s approached, it became very apparent to every conscientised citizen in Zimbabwe that the post-independent
government was not only corrupt, but was also dictatorial and very repressive. The victimisation of journalists in both public and private print media was a sure indication that the ZANU-PF government had long foresaken its initial programme of expanding and democratising the media in order to empower the masses by making them have access to meaningful and usable information. The next chapter concludes the study by offering a critique of the Zimbabwean media policy within the context of the normative theories of the press as enunciated by S. Siebert (1956) and Dennis Mcquail (1993). The theorisation will be consolidated by a brief analysis of the dependency-disassociation paradigm of development in the context of the Zimbabwean government’s policy of liberating the mass media from imperialist domination.
CHAPTER FIVE.

THE ZIMBABWEAN PRESS THEORY.

An analysis of the pre-independence media performance has shown that although the press did not serve the interests of the majority of the people in the country, it had no contradictions in its role and relationship with the state. The RPP had its straight forward operational guidelines. It had to cover news and information for the benefit of the settler colonial administrators, farmers and businessmen. In order to adequately cater for the needs and interests of the settlers and to maintain the status quo of colonialism, the newspapers were published in the language of the colonialists.

The press theory followed was clearly authoritarian, with its strong belief that the media ought to be used by the state in the maintenance of the status quo. In this case it was achieved by limiting access and participation of blacks by use of discriminatory laws and policies. Any failure to abide by these discriminatory policies was met with high handedness and brutality which manifested itself in the form of press censorship and victimisation of journalists who did not conform.

In a nutshell, the performance of the colonial press fitted lock and key in the prescriptions of the authoritarian theory as propounded by Siebert (1956) and Mcquail (1993). Mcquail
(1993:111-112) points out that under the authoritarian theory, the press is subordinated to state power and the interests of the rulers. It is also deliberately and directly used as a vehicle and tool for state repression, while at the same time censorship is justified to make sure that journalists conform to their subordination to established authority.

The struggle for independence saw the emergence of journalist-nationalist-politicians who used libertarian theories in an attempt to free the media from the colonial government's authoritarian manipulation and abuse. At independence, most of these nationalist-journalists (eg. Nathan Shamuyarira, Justin Nyoka, Willie Musarurwa, Elias Rusike etc.) became political leaders and policy-makers in the new dispensation which sought to democratise the old colonial institutions in order to empower the majority of the people economically, politically and culturally.

As the previous chapters have shown, Shamuyarira became the first black Minister of Information, Justin Nyoka was appointed Director of Information, while Rusike took over as Managing Director of the government-controlled mainstream press (Zimpapers) which dominates Zimbabwean news circulation with its daily and weekly newspapers. Most others found their way into the top levels of the MOI and MMT management structures.
Theoretically, most of the post-independence leaders seemed to ascribe to the notion of freeing the media from urban elite monopoly in order to cater especially for the information hungry workers in the high density locations, and rural masses, who had been denied access and participation by the colonial government. The only way to achieve this was to radically change communications structures to adapt to the new needs and demands in terms of content and circulation.

In the previous chapters, an attempt was made to show that as Minister of Information, Shamuyarira continually tried to convince the public about the developmental thrust of the Zimbabwean press. His emphasis was that the newspapers under the MMT should be run principally to inform, entertain, educate and mobilise the public (The Herald, 15.01.81). The argument was that the newspapers were to conform to the government’s direction on economic and political issues of importance to Zimbabwe by encouraging and promoting nation-building and unity.

It is clear therefore that the post-independence government media policy was to be guided by the developmental theory which is centred on the notion that "media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy (McQuail 1993:121). The government’s argument was that this could be achieved if journalists were politically committed and loyal in playing a central role in the reconstruction of a new hegemony under the state’s
direction. The programme also involved mobilisation of all available talent, skill and expertise for national development, as evidenced by Nathan Shamuyarira’s argument:

The new mass media workers should actively project the new Zimbabwe in our papers and broadcasting services in order to instil a sense of unity of purpose and endeavour in all sections of our society. Also they must do this to create a sense of nationhood, a sense of oneness based on the socialist principles and politics as pronounced by the people’s government (The Herald, 30.01.82).

It is clear therefore that at independence, Zimbabwe had chosen the Developmental theory as the model that would help the people in their positive use of the mass communications in national development, cultural identity and in their opposition to foreign domination. This was also a commitment to the notion that journalists and other media workers had responsibilities as well as freedoms in their information gathering and dissemination tasks (Mcquail 1993:121). However, the problem was that the theory as put forward by public pronouncements by political leaders, and practise, as evidenced by the performance of the MMT, manifested a lot of disparities and contradictions.

In theory, the MMT was a sure case of the government’s commitment to the libertarian principle of press freedom, yet in practise, the Zimbabwean leaders made very little
modifications in the structure, utilisation, and orientation of the media to make them effective and meaningful instruments for development. Instead, the government opted to leave most colonial structures as they were, perhaps assuming that the system would gradually adapt and transmit values that were geared towards the economic development and political stability of the society it served (Boafo, 1992:105). Whenever the government was faced by serious economic, political or social crisis, it exercised excessive control over the media in the generally professed interests of nation-building, political unity and national consciousness. My argument in Chapter Four proved that sometimes the state used the issue of national security to abuse the State of Emergency powers to grossly violate human rights in some parts of the country.

It is clear therefore that the Zimbabwean government failed to utilise the power of the press to enhance and speed up the pace of development. Instead the notions of 'patriotism' and 'nation-building' were used as smoke-screens to initiate press controls which were designed to maintain political power and deny the masses access to information. My analysis in the previous chapters has been to the effect that state interference in the operations of the ZBC and the MMT through the institutionalisation of close collaboration between the ZANU-PF government and media, gave rise to a situation whereby the public print and the broadcast media became full fledged arms of the ruling party. As a result these public institutions
were increasingly used for partisan purposes of warding off political threats from opposition parties.

Any manifestations of disgruntlement, objections and resistance to state control among media personnel was met with punishment of journalists either through verbal threats, promotions or physical assaults. Such treatment of journalists has led to the denial of information to the majority citizens of Zimbabwe, because the tame editors consciously or unconsciously, censor their papers either as a form of survival or to please those powerful politicians in government who made their appointment to positions of influence possible. Consequently, the mass media has been monopolised by the influential ruling elites for their collective monologue, aimed at propagating their views and values and to perpetuate their interests and positions.

Professor Francis Kasoma, of the University of Zambia, and the Nigerian Nobel Peace prize laureate, Wole Soyinka, both argue that the betrayal of the ordinary people by their leaders, who aspire to run their lives and control their thinking, is prevalent throughout the countries of Africa.

Addressing media practitioners from Central and Southern African states, in Lusaka, Kassoma (1992) argued that the greatest enemy of press freedom in post-colonial Africa has been government high handedness, whereby those in power have simply not accorded the media practitioners meaningful leeway
to give the populace a voice in the media which they have largely owned and controlled (*The Daily Gazette*, 28.11.92). In a press conference in Paris, immediately after his disguised escape from the Abacha military regime, Soyinka (1995) pointed out that the African people’s dreams of peace and prosperity had been shattered by a power-crazed and rapacious leadership who can only obtain their egotistical goals by feathering their nests while ignoring the interests of the people they govern (*The Financial Gazette*, 19.01.95).

In the same way, the current mass communication scenario in Zimbabwe, has thus failed to address the information needs and aspirations of the majority workers and peasants. The media resources and structures still conform to the old colonial patterns, which are characterised by lopsidedness, lack of balance and extreme rural and urban dichotomy, with the majority (approximately 80%) of the population having limited, insignificant and sometimes no access to the mass media (Boafo 1992:108). Such use of the mass media has accentuated the polarisation of the Zimbabwean society, leading to the widened gap between the advantaged, information rich elites on one hand, and the underprivileged information poor majority citizens residing in crowded urban shacks and dispersed rural areas.

Because of the unidirectional nature of communication, which has closed any opportunities for reaction and feedback, due to the tight centralisation of the mass media, the content of the
press in Zimbabwe is abound in what Boafo (Ibid:109) describes as propaganda, demagogy, cheap entertainment, empty promises, and farfetched ideologies of dubious significance or relevance to individual or societal development.

A close analysis of the Zimbabwean press brings to light therefore that although the MMT was established to distance the press from government intervention, the developmental press theory which was adopted by the ZANU-PF government in its attempt to use the media in the democratisation process was opened to autocratic abuse. It was very easy for the ZANU-PF government to hijack the MMT experiment for its own authoritarian purposes, because the developmental press theory has the loophole of allowing state intervention for the purpose of realising developmental goals. Mcquail (1993:112) sums up some of the postulates of the developmental press theory thus:

* Media should accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with nationally established policy.
* Freedom of the media should be open to restriction according to: 1. economic priorities and 2. development needs of the country.
* In the interest of development ends, the state has the right to intervene, or restrict media operations, and devices of censorship, subsidy and direct control can be justified.
It is therefore clear that, like under the traditional Authoritarian and under the Russian Communist system, the developmental press theory justifies the notion that the interests of the people are theoretically identified with the interests of the state (Siebert, 1956:56). It is in this context that the libertarian calls for press freedom which assert that the government must distance itself from the press, are to the developmentalists and the authoritarians (whether traditional or Russian Communist), an attempt to interfere with the set objectives of the government to realise goals of political, economic and social progress.

This contradictory nature of the theories of the press gave the ZANU-PF government the power to abuse its authority in the name of development. Thus, although the government publicly subscribed to press freedom in the libertarian sense, and established the MMT to prove its commitment to press freedom by distancing the state from the media institutions. However, practically, it used its economic and political strength to intervene and control the press.

This was not surprising because ideologically, the ZANU-PF government professed to follow Scientific Socialism, adapted to local conditions. Since the press, as a social institution, takes on the forms and coloration of the social and political structures in which it operates, one can be allowed to argue that the press theory functional in Zimbabwe is developmental
merged with authoritarian, modelled in the Soviet Communist formula.

Rusike reveals that party ownership and control of newspapers was originally discussed when the MMT was launched and he states that a party newspaper and a government newspaper should play a complementary role to each other (Rusike, 1990: 80).

In the case of Zimbabwe, the problem is that ZANU-PF as a party, is synonymous with government. It is very difficult to draw a line of demarcation between the functions of the two, because ZANU-PF rules Zimbabwe as a one-party state. Many government assets, including finances, are openly abused for party purposes. The party owned papers serve the same ideological purpose with newspapers under Zimpapers. The personnel in Zimpapers easily find their way to the party papers, and similarly it is very easy for workers in the party papers to move to either ZIANA or Zimpapers. The closure of the Zimbabwe News in 1988 was testimony that the so-called party newspapers are in actuality an extension of the papers under Zimpapers. When Zimbabwe News was closed down by the party, most of the personnel were simply transferred to Zimpapers to start a vernacular (i.e. Shona/Ndebele) newspaper, Kwavedza-Umthunywa.

Under normal circumstances, the sole purpose of a party paper is to provide education for the people, especially the masses, and to provide a vehicle for political communication between
the party leadership and the followers. The reality of the situation in Zimbabwe is that the party leadership is the same government leadership that controls Zimpapers publications and makes them government propaganda sheets. Trevor Ncube's analysis of the ideological thrust of the party (ZANU-PF) papers sums up their content. He says they "... are more communist than Marx, Lenin, Mao and Castro put together. Luckily they are now a lonely voice of insanity in the wilderness and the party for which it purports to speak for has made an ideological volte-face" (in *Rhodes Review*, December 1992:47). (N.B. See the cartoon -Fig. for the failure of the ZANU-PF's Socialist experiment).

At the launching of *The People's Voice*, the editor of the paper, Mr. Charles Ndlovu, who is a ZANU PF Member of Parliament, Central Committee member and former deputy Minister of Information (also ZANU Chief Broadcaster during the liberation war) promised the people that the paper was going to be:

very bold, factual and fearless in its presentation and analysis of news and events of interest to the people of Zimbabwe. ... it would seek to explain the ruling party's principles and policies to the broad masses of the country, many of whom did not understand the party's political programmes (*The People's Voice*, July, 1990).
In the usual ZANU-PF socialist rhetoric, the editor proclaimed that:

‘Counter-revolutionaries’ who tell lies and create distortions in their ‘pernicious literature distributed in our streets will be analysed and exposed. ... the paper will criticise those leaders who make mistakes and expose those engaged in any corrupt practices. Corruption at any level will neither be tolerated nor covered under any circumstances (The People’s Voice, July 1990).

To any sober minded Zimbabwean, the editor’s statements are saturated with paradoxes and contradictions. The truth of the situation (at the time of the editor’s proclamations) was that the paper which is well known for distortions in Zimbabwe is The Herald, which is government controlled and ZANU-PF aligned. The paper is well known for its glossy portrayal of government and ZANU-PF leadership.

At the time of Ndhlovu’s pronouncements, ZANU-PF had just proved that corruption at the high echelons of the party and government was not supposed to be investigated. Top ZANU-PF members and high ranking government officials, ordered the firing of journalists and editors from The Chronicle, who had been involved in the revelation of scandalous dealings by top government officials at the Willowvale Motor Industries. Charles Ndhlovu himself (at the time of his speech) was appealing a conviction of fraud in the courts. Paradoxically,
he had embezzled thousands of dollars from the MOI where he was Deputy Minister. The term ‘counter-revolutionaries’ in the context of his speech, and in July 1990, is laughable political jargon because the government and party in which he was cabinet Minister and Central Committee member respectively, was denouncing its initial socialist policies and was at the time implementing an International Monitory Fund and World Bank prescribed economic reform programme meant to liberalise the economy.

Contradictions and paradoxes displayed in the media policies and practices of ZANU-PF’s party papers and government controlled Zimpapers, arise from the belief in the Soviet Communist theory of the press which is based on the assumptions that:

The press is supposed to belong to the people, whose representative, the PARTY, is where leaders place very high importance as a custodian of values and determiner of goals, and on the press as a transmission belt between the masses and the party (Siebert et al, 1956:132).

Although the government would like to deceive the people that the press in Zimbabwe is free from state control, therefore implying that the libertarian and developmental theories are applicable, the truth of the situation, as we saw in the previous chapters, is that the media is tightly controlled by the political structure of the party and its government. The
description of the Zambian press by Robert Moore (1992: 28) is also very appropriate for the Zimbabwean scenario.

Descriptions of the Soviet-communist theory and the Authoritarian theories are close to the truth: as a fully controlled organ of government, the media are kept close to the power elite. Truth is a top-down function ... Truth is what the government says is true. (The Party) ... is seen as the supreme body to the government and over all institutions in the land. Therefore, the political party, over the government, controls the government-controlled (and party-owned) media. A function of the press is to assist the ruling party in power.

This adherence to the Communist theory is reflected in the way the ZANU-PF government has tried to control the daily operations of the press, and its interference in the appointment of media personnel in the period 1980-1994.

In the Soviet system the Department of Propaganda and Agitation had full control on who and what kind of people were to be appointed to different management levels. The most important consideration in getting an editorial post was not the relevance of the academic qualifications one held, but the acceptability and reliability of one's political orientation. The Government and the Party, through the Department of Propaganda and Agitation issued a very large number of
directives as to what material had to appear in the press, and how it should be handled:

The content of the press ... would ... be hand-outs from leading figures in the party hierarchy and the government, public addresses and official documents (Siebert et al, 1956:132).

Chapter Three and Chapter Four highlighted similarities between the role played by the department of Propaganda and agitation in the Soviet Union and the functions of the MOI in Zimbabwe since independence.

Elias Rusike (1990:79) reveals that when he was CEO of Zimpapers he would be "summoned to the MOI to explain why that story was published and why the President's speech did not go onto the front page". He was given directives by junior civil servants telling him that "before any story on demonstrations was published it must be approved by the ministry" (Ibid... 80). When Zimpapers management recommended that Bill Saidi, a veteran journalist of outstanding reputation, be appointed to the post of Managing Editor of The Herald, they "were told by the minister that he was politically unacceptable and they could not entrust him to edit The Herald..." (Ibid ... 77), which is theoretically a public newspaper, but practically acts as a ZANU-PF mouth-piece. Willie Musarurwa was dismissed from the editorship of The Sunday Mail not that he was not performing his duties well, but because the MOI saw him as
"...an embarrassment to government and must therefore be replaced by someone more in line with government thinking (Ibid ... 86).

Like in the Soviet Union system, it is clear that, although theoretically, the MMT is an independent public body, and the Zimpapers Company has its board and management; practically the MOI is in a position to employ, reward, and promote anyone seen as toeing the line. The same Ministry has the power to sack and punish those journalists who are considered as not sympathetic to the views and aspirations of ZANU-PF officials and government ministers. These dictatorial tendencies by the state arose not only from the government’s contradictory and vacillatory tendencies in relation to the press theories, but also as a result of the paradigm of dependency disassociation development that the Zimbabwean government followed at independence.

Dependency Disassociation Paradigm of Development

The dependency theories which came to the fore in the 1970s, critiqued the modernisation paradigm of development. The general argument put forward by the theorists was that:

Economic exploitation (of the colonies by the capitalist countries) had left the colonies with a narrowly specialised export-oriented primary production structure managed by an elite which shared the cultural lifestyles
and tastes of the dominant classes in capitalist states. This elite continues to perpetuate the rule of ex-colonies: hence a kind of neo-imperialism still prevails (Kumar, in White et al, 1988).

The theorist thus agitated for a framework that defines and protects the self determination of every nation. The central argument is that the world order under the modernisation paradigm could not achieve contributive and distributive justice at the international level. The solution to the renewed imperialism was therefore sought by adopting a policy of disassociation politically, economically and culturally. This it was believed, will constitute a new world order.

In the paradigm of dependency disassociation, the protagonists are politicians united in a party, with the intention of forming a state on the basis of the nation. As a result, the party with its unifying symbols and culture, is very central in the move towards development, hence the assumption in this paradigm is that joining a political party is the only way one can get involved in the process of nation-building. The paradigm also encourages the formation of a strong central government in which virtually all major institutions become organically integrated into a single bureaucracy with different departments (White, 1994:4-5). Thus under the dependency disassociation paradigm, the mass media become a department of the state with its role in nation-building assigned by the ruling party.
Under normal circumstances, the dependency disassociation paradigm is ideal, but the problem in most developing countries is that corrupt governments have used the paradigm to justify the consolidation of power among the elites as if the majority of the people did not exist, through authoritarian and dictatorial practices.

In Zimbabwe, the paradigm has been used to cover up the highhandedness of the ZANU-PF government. The muzzling and gagging of the press through the victimisation of journalists by the state serve as a good examples of the abuse of the dependency disassociation paradigm. The news blackouts arising from autocratic press controls have found justification in that they were meant to achieve national integration and economic development, yet in actuality, they were designed to maintain political power and to deny access to information to the masses.
CONCLUSION.

Most governments fear the power of the press to the extent that they do everything in their power to utilise all possible autocratic controls at their disposal to gag and muzzle it in order to remain in power. The successive governments in colonial Zimbabwe used all possible means at their disposal, including direct censorship and deportation of journalists, to deny blacks access to information, in order to maintain the status quo.

When independence came in 1980, there were high hopes in all sectors of the population that the mass media were going to be used for the empowerment of all people of Zimbabwe. The formation of the Mass Media Trust, to be a buffer between the state and the media, further deceived people into believing that the days of press censorship were gone for ever.

The call by the new government to improve rural communication services, which all along had been marginalised by the racially biased colonial communication policies, seemed to herald a new phase of media democratisation in Zimbabwe. However, the MMT experiment failed dismally to bear the expected results. Instead of democratising the public print media, the Zimpapers press was used by the government to marginalise the rural masses even further by maintaining the colonial media structures as they had been. The mainstream
press failed not only to encourage debate on national issues, but also to help the newly independent nation to combat illiteracy, health problems, poverty and even to build political consciousness.

Even when the nation was faced with disasters, like the Matebeleland massacres (1982-85), the national droughts (1982, 1986, 1991-2 etc), University of Zimbabwe student unrests (1986-1995), rigging of national Parliamentary and local government elections (1995), the Zimpapers press failed to inform the people of what was happening. The same muzzling of the press and manipulation of news happened when the IMF prescribed Economic Structural Adjustment Programme was introduced. The government used the Zimpapers publications to assure the public that everything was under control even when workers were experiencing mass retrenchments, at a time when the cost of living was sky-rocketing. This misinformation of the population was achieved by the government’s use of tame, politically-appointed editors and journalists whose service to the nation has been nothing but to help a few elites to maintain and consolidate their power by limiting individual human rights.

The general norm in Zimpapers throughout the period 1980-94 was the tight control of information which sometimes took the combative and repressive form of victimising those journalists who failed to toe the ZANU-PF line of manipulating news. Robert C. Moore’s argument (1992) on the effects of
restricting information flow are very appropriate to post-independence Zimbabwe. He argues that:

The press, as an instrument of government filtering and restricting access to information by people, is an obvious reminder that other important and fundamental human rights and freedoms are possibly at risk (Moore, 1992:32).

The government’s commitment to the developmental theory of the press and the dependency disassociation paradigm of was becoming increasingly questionable by the 1990s, when the state’s control and use of the press for ‘nation-building and development’ was daily proving to be nothing but a conspiracy by the governing clique to deny access of information to the masses.

The various strategies used by the state to intimidate journalists who tried to adopt an independent manner of news reporting, destroyed not only the credibility of the ZANU-PF government, but also proved beyond reasonable doubt that the MMT experiment to democratise media was a dismal failure. The treatment of The Chronicle journalists during and after the Willowgate scandal, and the arrest of Elias Rusike and Trevor Ncube for reporting on President Mugabe’s secret marriage to his secretary served to show that press freedom in Zimbabwe was daily trampled upon. The government even went to the extent of invoking colonial legislation to harass and
terrorise pressmen. Because of this friction between government and the print media, through bitter experience, journalists have learnt the art of survival through acquiescence, sycophancy and self-censorship.

It is apparent therefore that in Zimbabwe, the politically appointed editors are the chief culprits in censoring Zimpapers publications. Because they are intimately tied to the political power structure, such editors are always ready to omit or tailor news items that might be considered to be embarrassing to the government or ZANU-PF officials. One most important point that need assertion is that such editors are not serving the interests of the of the nation, but of those few elites who sometimes prove to be very corrupt. What needs to be emphasised is that by shirking their professional responsibilities, the editors are betraying the majority of the people who are starved of information which is very necessary for them to participate in national debates and decision-making processes. On another level, it can be argued that, by singing praises to the government officials, the journalists are unwittingly undermining the efficacy of the government and worst of all, they are giving a bad name to the profession of journalism.

What the government leaders who control the public print media journalists forget is that good governance and a free press are inextricably linked. The press can be an effective weapon for exposing corruption and can ensure political morality if
it is allowed to operate freely, and this can be of immense contribution in the establishment of open, accountable, democratic and stable society (Ronning, 1993:7).
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'SAMSON' ... after the 'Willowgate haircut'

Source: MOTO, SEPTEMBER 1989

Fig. II
Zimbabwe’s political culture today