

Robert Mugabe's 1980 candidature as depicted in the (South African) *Sunday Times*

ABSTRACT

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe has now been in power for three decades. He has acquired an almost universal image of being a dictator who has steadily governed the country to ruin. This article investigates the depiction of Robert Mugabe's candidature in the 1980 Zimbabwean (common roll) independence election campaign in the *Sunday Times*, then by far the largest South African newspaper. A content analysis of the coverage is followed by argumentation that brings the content of the coverage in line with the general culture of the newspaper. The *Sunday Times* employed mainly stereotypical images of Mugabe. For it, the Zimbabwean independence election campaign revolved respectively around a choice for Southern Africa between capitalism and Marxism and between the future of white and black power. Mugabe was depicted as an enemy both of capitalism and of continued white interests.

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Zimbabwe was born on 18 April 1980 after Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) – ZANU (PF) – party gained a landslide victory in the February 1980 (common roll) independence election in the former Rhodesia. Forty countries had dispatched almost eight hundred media representatives to cover this historic election (Boynton, 1980: 34). South African newspaper correspondents, too, were present to report on the events for their readers back home.

Mugabe has now been President of Zimbabwe for three decades, and still there are no real indications that he intends to step down.

His presidency has been highly controversial (see *Communicare's* special edition on Zimbabwe, Volume 29, September 2010). While Mugabe, generally, did use national resources prudently during the first ten years of his reign to build schools, roads, dams, hospitals and clinics, and build infrastructure to cater for marginalised black communities, his despotic instincts were soon evident in the crushing of Joshua Nkomo's Patriotic Front in the 1980s in which thousands of civilians were killed. In the 1990s, he initiated the confiscation of millions of hectares of previously white-owned land, which led to a mass exodus of commercially active white farmers. Throughout, Mugabe has promoted himself as the people's champion, who, in embarking on the third and final Chimurenga (revolution) of the black freedom struggle, will stand as a bulwark against recolonisation. His economic policies have been disastrous. Inflation is extremely high, and unemployment and poverty are rife. The Western World has turned its back on Zimbabwe. While Mugabe is generally regarded as an angry, cunning, old dictator, he still has significant support in Zimbabwe – even though this support may also be due to a fear factor in respect of him and his military cohorts.

Given the overall negative image that Robert Mugabe today has, what image did he portray when he first ran for the presidency? How was he depicted to South Africans? Or, more specifically, what did the *Sunday Times*, South Africa's largest newspaper at the time, have to say to its readers about Mugabe's candidature?

1. PURPOSE AND METHOD

This article investigates how the (South African) *Sunday Times* depicted Robert Mugabe's candidature during the 1980 (common roll) independence election campaign.

As noted above, the *Sunday Times* was then South Africa's largest newspaper. Sunday newspapers have an advantage over dailies in being able to view the preceding week's events in some detail while also placing them in a broader context. Because of temporal and spatial considerations, Sunday newspapers should thus be able to provide more comprehensive commentary on events such as election campaigns.

The term “common roll election” – as found in the (Rhodesian) Electoral Act of 1979 – is used in this article merely to distinguish the election for 80 members of Parliament from the one for the 20 seats reserved for whites, held on 14 February 1980. As agreed upon at Lancaster House, there was no roll for black voters (Southern Rhodesia elections 1980). The common roll election was held on 27, 28 and 29 February 1980.

For the purposes of the present article, a content analysis of the newspaper coverage is done. The population of the analysis comprises every headline, report, opinion article, editorial, cartoon, photograph and caption concerning Robert Mugabe in the Zimbabwean (common roll) election campaign, as found in the Late editions of the *Sunday Times* between 13 January 1980 and 24 February 1980.

So as to provide meaningful contextualisation, the said analysis is followed by argumentation that brings the content of the coverage in line with the general culture of the *Sunday Times* newspaper at that time.

The very act of interpreting a text (which, of course, is part and parcel of this research process) will always remain problematic. It would seem safe to say that readers or researchers will (cf. Iser, 1974: 274-294):

- Draw on their own existing factual knowledge regarding the subject matter.
- Group together all the different aspects of the text to form the consistency that they will always be desirous of achieving.
- In seeking consistency within a text, open themselves up to the meanings of the text, and may thus leave behind their own preconceptions about the subject matter.
- Have to take decisions about the meaning of a text from several possible and differing interpretations.

Subjectivity on the part of researchers is minimised, if they take into account that news items are written and/or aired within the confines of the established “news frame” – the politico-ideological, socio-economic and administrative boundaries within which the principles of journalistic practice are exercised at a given media institution (cf. Preston, 2009; Tuchman, 1978; Zelizer, 2004: 45-80).

Researchers thus have to appreciate the particular politico-ideological stance of the *Sunday Times* at the time.

2. A TYPIFICATION OF THE SUNDAY TIMES IN 1980

The *Sunday Times* had the largest newspaper circulation figure (461 980 during January-June 1980, as supplied by the Audit Bureau of Circulations) at the time, and with a readership of about 3 153 000 it had about a million readers more than its nearest rival (figures supplied by the 1979 All Media and Products Survey or AMPS). While *Sunday Times* readership covered all races in South Africa during the period of investigation, it was especially strong among wealthy white

readers, reaching nearly 56 per cent of white households earning more than R1500 a month (Anon, 1979).

The *Sunday Times* was part of the SAAN (South African Associated Newspapers – formed in 1955) stable, which, along with the Argus Company, espoused a liberal political stance (cf. McClurg, 1982: 29).

While it is almost impossible to reduce liberalism to a single theoretical position, the following are fundamental to the ideology (De Wet, 2007: 38):

- Belief in the supreme value of the individual (and thus not of the state)
- Belief that the individual has natural rights (rights that belong to all human beings by nature – such as the right to life), which exist independently of government, and which ought to be protected by and against government
- Recognition of the supreme value of an individual's freedom (which usually means that to which one has a right) together with the view that government must be so limited as to grant freedom to every citizen – perhaps even that government is justifiable only to the extent that it maximises freedom, or insofar as it protects the free individual from invasions of his/her rights

SAAN and the Argus Company were owned and controlled by Big (English) Business. In this regard, the Steyn Commission (SC) notes that in 1980, the Argus Company's shareholding was dominated, although split, by "companies such as Charter, Johannesburg Consolidated Investments and De Beers, which are Anglo American companies, and Central News Agency Investments Limited which had a direct financial link with the Argus Group (Mr L.E.A. Slater is the Chairman of the Argus Group and of CAN Investments Limited). It is possible that these shareholders have a mutual voting arrangement and therefore collectively control the affairs of the Argus Group, which in turn controls the affairs of the S.A.A.N. Group. It is a fair assumption that this Board also controls the affairs of the S.A.A.N. Group" (SC3, 1981: 1261). (Note that there was a cross-holding of shares in the Argus and SAAN companies.)

Critics of the South African Government at the time, most notably liberal Western commentators abroad, held that the English newspapers were a major force in opposing the Government's apartheid ideology (which was, in the main, supported by the major Afrikaans newspapers). Pollak's work (1981) is noteworthy in this regard. He attacks Afrikaners and the Afrikaans press alone and submits that "... more than any powerful force in the country (the English) newspapers stand almost alone between the Afrikaner government and totalitarian darkness".

Despite the different ideological affiliations separating the English and the Afrikaans press in South Africa, one must note that those papers catering for whites (including the *Sunday Times*) nevertheless remained within the framework of Western culture and white (political and economic) power – as opposed to black, coloured or Indian power (cf. Roelofse, 1983).

Regarding their relation to white power, Adam and Giliomee (1979: 237) state that both Afrikaans and English newspapers "... want[ed] to build more stable structures of domination without interfering with the substance of power and the distribution of wealth. In varying degrees both criticise[d] the executive's style of wielding power without wishing to transform the present order radically".

Both the English and Afrikaans press did not radically want to alter the economic status quo – one largely based on capitalist lines – in fact, the capitalist ideology (cf. Adam & Giliomee, 1979: 177-195; Chimutengwende, 1978; Nolutshungu, 1982). Capitalism presupposes private property in the means of production, a market economy, and division of labour. Adherents of capitalism often argue that the destruction of capitalism will lead to a transferral of power from the individual to the state and will thereby increase the power of the latter to a point where it is bound to be a form of despotism (Scruton, 1982). The argument is that, at the time, both the English and Afrikaans press were ideologically united in their concern for the continuation of capitalism and white power in South Africa.

External factors or the social circumstances predominant at a given time could also influence the content of media messages produced by journalists. We thus turn to the circumstances under which foreign correspondents (including those from the *Sunday Times*) had to operate during the election campaign in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.

It may be noted that foreign correspondents for the print media have a special interpretative or explanatory role to play in events, since foreign events are often so complex that most readers do not understand the facts about developments. While the corps of foreign correspondents often consult one another about events and in following up story leads, each has to bear his or her "market" in mind when filing reports (cf. Gans, 1980: 37; Graber, 1980: 250; Metykova, 2009; Willnat & Weaver, 2003). Political pressures on (foreign) correspondents may play a more important role in the initial selection of news than these would back home, because correspondents are more or less in the hands of the authorities in the countries from which they are reporting.

3. FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS IN ZIMBABWE-RHODESIA

In describing the circumstances under which foreign correspondents had to operate in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia during the said election campaign, one should note that the vigorous press censorship that had existed after both the Internal Settlement on 3 March 1978 and the internal elections (which saw Bishop Abel Muzorewa become Prime Minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia on 1 June 1979), though diminished was however not ended when the British Governor, Lord Soames, assumed office in mid-December 1979 (Southern Rhodesia elections, 1980:46).

Section 42 of the Emergency Powers Regulations of 1977 remained in force. This imposed penalties on persons who made statements likely to "cause alarm or despondency among the inhabitants of Rhodesia or some of them", and that – according to the Commonwealth Observer Group (Southern Rhodesia elections 1980: 47) – "effectively placed the control of all information concerning the Security Forces under the control of the Minister of Information".

The Commonwealth Observer Group (Southern Rhodesia elections, *ibid.*) lists the following provision of the Emergency Powers Regulations as having a profound effect on the ability of journalists to report events in Rhodesia current during the 1980 election campaign:

42A (1) No person shall, for the purpose of publishing news by radio, television or writing, communicate, publish or disseminate, whether within or outside Rhodesia, any information which relates or purports to relate directly or indirectly to –

- (a) any measure or act of description whatsoever of the Security Forces or the Government for the purpose of combating or suppressing terrorism or reducing the incidence thereof within Rhodesia;
- (b) the commission of any act of terrorism or sabotage.

The Commonwealth Observer Group (Southern Rhodesia elections, 1980: 48) suggests that, despite the Governor's presence, "restrictive legislation developed over a long period of years were kept intact and were available to the police, the Security Forces and the local administration to enforce as they saw fit throughout the election campaign".

With regard to media facilities, Sir John Boynton, the Election Commissioner of the 1980 Zimbabwean independence elections, contends that every effort was made to assist the media in covering the election. A press centre was established in central Salisbury and was operated jointly by the staff of the Governor's spokesperson and the Rhodesian Department of Information. About 800 persons connected to the media from forty countries were accredited and could thus use the facilities at the centre (Boynton, 1980:34).

The Election Commission arranged eight trips a day for the media to each of the provinces during the period 14 February 1980 to 2 March 1980. On all these trips the media were accompanied by members of the Rhodesian Department of Information and occasionally by members of the Governor's staff (Boynton, *ibid.*). Nevertheless, it has been contended that it was most difficult for foreign correspondents to obtain a balanced view of what blacks in the countryside and in the Tribal Trust Lands thought. This was the case as Rhodesian officials kept a tight rein on proceedings during interviews and blacks were reluctant to voice approval for Mugabe for fear of reprisals from security officials (cf. Frederikse, 1982: 284-285, 323).

4. MUGABE AMID IDEOLOGY AND STRUGGLE

Although nine political parties announced that they would contest the 80 seats on the common roll, it was soon clear (Cleary, 1980: 24) that the real contest in the election was between the *United African National Council* (UANC) led by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the *Patriotic Front* (PF) led by Joshua Nkomo, and Robert Mugabe's *Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front* (ZANU-PF).

Nkomo and Mugabe, who formed the Patriotic Front alliance in the war against the Smith and Muzorewa regimes, decided to fight the election as separate parties. While Muzorewa did not

entirely represent the Western values and capitalist lifestyle of White Rhodesians, he came closer to doing so than did any other major black leader – certainly more so than either Nkomo or Mugabe (Frederikse, 1982: 275). In short, Muzorewa was viewed by whites as a moderate black who would not substantially alter the (capitalist) *status quo* when assuming power.

Nkomo was viewed by Rhodesian whites as the “‘man in the middle’, potentially capable of breaking (an election) deadlock between Mugabe and Muzorewa, if – as most political analysts predicted – no one candidate polled an outright majority” (Frederikse, 1982: 290). Frederikse, (1982: 290-291) adds:

The hope persisted (among White Rhodesians) that ‘veteran nationalist’ Nkomo would be able to form a White-backed moderate coalition to keep the ‘avowed Marxist’ – Mugabe – out of power. Once again the campaign strategists side-tracked into useless plotting based on underlying assumptions about ideology ... As they had done in the previous year’s election, the advertisers launched a campaign extolling the virtues of the free enterprise system. The society at which they aimed this campaign was communally-based, and had little experience of the benefits of capitalism. It had difficulty in perceiving (Mugabe’s) ZANU-PF ideology as ‘foreign’ and hostile to its interests. Yet the campaign pressed on. ‘Communism’, ‘Marxism’ and ‘socialism’ became code words for Mugabe and his party. Even Ian Smith joined the desperate ‘anybody but Mugabe’ drive, with a grudging endorsement of Nkomo.

It seems that Robert Mugabe was viewed by Rhodesian whites as the real threat to their continued Western (capitalist) lifestyle.

This, of course, is not to suggest that the Zimbabwean common roll independence election campaign only revolved around the merits of capitalism and Marxism. Racism also played its part. The black/white issue had dominated Southern African politics since the start of decolonisation in Africa after the Second World War (cf. Davidson, 1978: 205ff.) and was also evident in Rhodesia. The thrust of the decolonisation movement was to establish “black majority rule” as opposed to “white minority rule”. Rhodesian whites had come to accept that the majority would rule, but they hoped to see an “acceptable” Black government – one acceptable to White interests. White prejudice against blacks in general and fear of what could physically happen to them under a hostile black government were predominant (cf. Cleary, 1980; cf. Frederikse, 1982). The election was therefore not all about a capitalist/Marxist conflict, but also entailed a white/black struggle – a struggle both for the physical survival of whites and for their quality of life.

On the eve of the Zimbabwean independence election, Muzorewa was regarded by Rhodesian whites as the black leader who least threatened their future in the country. They viewed Nkomo as an enemy but also paradoxically as a potential ally against the hated and feared Mugabe.

5. ANALYSIS AND COMMENT

An article written by Chris Freimond, entitled *Massive hero's welcome for Robert Mugabe is expected*, appeared at the top of page eight in the 27 January 1980 edition of the *Sunday Times*. A passport-type photograph of Mugabe with the caption, "Robert Mugabe: 'Liberator'", appeared alongside the article. The "massive hero's welcome" referred to in the headline describes in broad terms the theme of the article.

In the first paragraph, Mugabe is described as the "firebrand" of Rhodesian nationalism who "presided" over the escalation of the war. In the second and third paragraphs, Freimond writes that Mugabe's supporters will view him as a "hero" and the one who "liberated them from almost 90 years of White oppression", while noting in the fourth paragraph that "many predictions have him (Mugabe) winning the election". Freimond suggests, in paragraph five, that Mugabe "has adopted the mantle of the true liberating revolutionary, so attractive to both the peasant and intellectual in African society"; and somewhat paradoxically in paragraph six that "a tough fight faces the ZANU leader. His main rival for power is Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who scored an overwhelming success in the April Internal Settlement elections".

In paragraphs nine to twelve, Freimond writes:

In spite of years of propaganda to the contrary, it is undeniable that Mr Mugabe has considerable support inside Rhodesia.

It came as a tremendous shock to most Whites not only in Rhodesia, but also in South Africa, when ZANU supporters in their tens of thousands turned out to welcome home guerrilla commanders and pay their respects at a rally in memory of the former army leader Josiah Tongogara, killed in a road accident recently.

For years, Whites had been led to believe that the 'terrorists' were the enemies of the black people, whom they allegedly killed and tortured at every opportunity. It has been clearly shown that this was not the case ...

Freimond expressed in unequivocal terms how a considerable number of blacks apparently viewed Mugabe.

Another article by Freimond, entitled *Smith to sit with the rebels*, appeared directly below the above article. It raised the possibility of former Prime Minister Smith sitting in the same Parliament as two of his arch-enemies, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, after the elections.

Freimond reveals good insight as to the outcome of the common roll election. Paragraphs six and ten would seem to justify the point:

It is not inconceivable that Mr Smith and Mr Van der Byl, who for 14 years resisted the surrender of their White privilege, may find themselves part of a Mugabe-led African Marxist government ...

With a strong possibility that most of the Black seats will go to radical Mugabe and Nkomo followers, observers are already predicting some lively debates (in Parliament), to say the least.

On 10 February 1980 an article by Chris Freimond, entitled *Mission impossible – there is no way that Lord Soames can ensure fair and free elections the way things are in Rhodesia today*, appeared on the editorial page (p.14) of the *Sunday Times*.

In this article, filed from Salisbury, Freimond suggests that “only some-one totally out of touch would believe that free and fair elections could be held under the present circumstances”, arguing that “in the east, the war still rages – Lord Soames has admitted as much – while in the towns and tribal areas politically motivated violence is rife”.

In paragraph sixteen, with regard to the possible outcome of the election, Freimond suggests that the next government “could be Marxist – a prospect chilling to the Whites. Their fear and uncertainty are palpable”. He goes on to state, in paragraphs fifty seven to fifty nine, that:

White optimists – the few who remain – believe that a free enterprise-supporting coalition government will emerge to save them from Mr Mugabe’s Marxism.

Even if the ZANU-PF leader then skulks off into the bush to continue the war, they believe he will quickly be crushed and a measure of sanity will return to their land.

The pessimists – and some say they are in the majority – believe that a massive power struggle is in store between the Black leaders and that in the end the man with the most guns will rule.

Here Freimond makes it clear that white optimists view the outcome of the election in terms of, *inter alia*, a victory for either capitalism or Marxism, and that they will be “saved” only through capitalism (or “a free enterprise-supporting coalition government”).

A further report by Chris Freimond, entitled *13 people die as violence builds up in Rhodesia*, appeared at the foot of page three of the *Sunday Times* on 17 February 1980. The introduction concentrates on the theme of lawlessness in Rhodesia to which the previous issue also referred: “With the Rhodesia elections only nine days away, there is a situation of virtual uncontrolled lawlessness in nearly half the country.”

This is a good example of climate setting. The *Sunday Times* here set the climate by which readers would be able to evaluate possible outbreaks of violence after the election.

Freimond elaborates on this theme in paragraphs ten to thirteen:

Most of the threats and intimidation have been officially blamed on ZANLA terrorists loyal to Mr Robert Mugabe. But it is clear that other groups are also guilty ...

Daily reports from Salisbury's military headquarters allege widespread intimidation of people.

More than 50 black civilians have been murdered in the tribal areas since the start of the election campaign.

Since the start of the first phase of the ceasefire on December 22, nearly 400 people have died in the continuing conflict.

A cartoon by Linder appeared on the editorial page (p. 16) of the same issue, depicting five fish with their mouths agape in the sea. The smallest fish appears on the left while the largest fish – the “Russian bear fish” – is on the right.

Significantly, the largest of the four fish (barring the “Russian bear fish”) is represented as Mugabe and the “Nkomo, Muzorewa and Smith fish” (in that order) follow from right to left.

It seems clear that the *Sunday Times* was hereby seeking to depict Mugabe as the Rhodesian leader most closely aligned with Russia and that once the Soviet Union had “swallowed” Mugabe, it would go after the other leaders. This should not be difficult to follow in that Mugabe had already been stereotyped as a copybook Marxist by the Western media (cf. Frederikse, 1982).

However, it should be noted that it was actually Nkomo, not Mugabe, who was supported by the Soviet Union during the war against the Smith and Muzorewa governments (Martin & Johnson, 1981: 303-304; cf. Smith, Simpson & Davis, 1981).

On 24 February 1980, the *Sunday Times* carried two news items alongside each other at the top of page two. The report on the left – filed from Umtali by John Ryan and entitled *35 000 wait for Mugabe – in vain* – deals with Mugabe's campaign agenda during the last stages of the build-up to the election.

The introduction reads: “ZANU (PF) leader Robert Mugabe, the frontrunner in the Rhodesian election campaign, failed to appear at a party rally for the second time in a week yesterday.” The important point here is that the correspondent in the field, John Ryan, filed his last report on the election campaign for the *Sunday Times* indicating that Mugabe should be regarded as the frontrunner in the election.

Right next to this report there was an article by Fleur de Villiers entitled *Nkomo holds the key*. The introduction to her article reads: “South Africa is holding its breath as the minutes tick by to

this week's Rhodesian election." By this she means, as stated in paragraphs eight to eleven, that:

There is rising hope in certain (South African) Government quarters of a Muzorewa-Nkomo coalition that would effectively shut Robert Mugabe's forces out of government.

Latest South African estimates of the likely gains by the three main contenders are said to be: Mugabe: 32 seats Muzorewa: 30 seats Nkomo: 18 seats.

The Lancaster House constitution demands that the victor must command an absolute majority of the 80 black seats – a feat which is now regarded as impossible for any of the frontrunners. The future of Rhodesia will therefore depend on which way Joshua Nkomo, who commands the Matabele vote, will jump.

We now know that the "impossible feat" referred to by De Villiers – that one party would gain an absolute majority in the election – actually happened: Mugabe gained 57 of the 80 seats for blacks in Parliament.

More significant, however, is De Villiers' contention in paragraph two that the South African Government "was not anxious to be embroiled in a post-election conflict in Rhodesia", and that "the warlike noises that have been emanating from certain quarters in South Africa are discounted as an attempt to remind Bishop Muzorewa's opponents that he has a 'Big Brother' down south".

This reference to the South African Government being Muzorewa's "Big Brother" can be construed as indicating the similar ideological commitment of both Muzorewa and South Africa: that is, both were aligned to the free enterprise system, and Muzorewa is an ally of white South Africa.

The leading editorial on page eighteen, entitled *Why we must be vigilant – but cool*, deals directly with the Zimbabwean independence election. Three central arguments are conveyed in this editorial. Firstly, it is suggested that it was most doubtful that "free and fair elections" could take place in the territory and that widespread violence after the election could not be ruled out. The first two paragraphs read:

There is a feeling of foreboding in the land as we approach a period as critical as any in our region's history. On Wednesday, Rhodesians go to the polls for what Britain is pleased to call 'free and fair' elections – but which to all but the most myopic observers are beginning to look more like a prelude to cataclysm.

No-one outside of the strategic planning office of the Kremlin will rejoice at this prospect.

Secondly, it is argued that if a complete collapse of order in Zimbabwe should come about after the election, South Africa should not become militarily involved, despite its vested interest in seeing stability in Southern Africa. In this regard, paragraphs seven to ten state:

For South Africa the implications (of a total breakdown of order in Zimbabwe) are immense. It is here that the shockwaves of turmoil will be most powerfully felt. The whole region will be destabilised, foreign confidence in economic stability will be shaken and opportunities will be created for dangerous mischief-making by the Soviets ... In our view not a single SADF trooper should be allowed to cross the Limpopo – even for a humanitarian refugee evacuation effort – without an open invitation from a legally-constituted Salisbury Government supported publicly by Britain and the US. The lessons of Angola must not be forgotten – which is why the recent sabre-rattling in this country is so disquieting.

Finally, in the last two paragraphs, the editorial suggests that widespread violence may be averted after the election and that South Africa should be able to live more or less in peace even with a Mugabe government:

We should also not lose sight of happier possibilities. The doomsday forecasts may mercifully be proved wrong. Rhodesia's transition may be messy and imperfect, but a stable regime could yet be installed in Salisbury. It may be Black-led and radical and its rhetoric may fall harshly on many South African ears. But the reality of power can have a sobering effect even on revolutionaries and we should take care not to fall into the foolish South African habit of calling anyone who is Black and radically nationalist a communist.

A country that can live more or less in peace with a Machel could surely find a formula for sensible neighbourliness even with a Mugabe.

From these three arguments, one may deduce that the *Sunday Times* is particularly concerned that the transfer of power in Zimbabwe be peaceful and that South Africa should, in turn, live more or less in peace with an independent Zimbabwe. Such a scenario, the *Sunday Times* suggests, will help to keep out "mischief-making by the Soviets" in Southern Africa. In other words, the *Sunday Times* is, *inter alia*, persuasively arguing for political stability in Southern Africa so that, as stated in paragraph seven, "foreign confidence in economic stability" can be maintained. A whole way of life is at stake here; more specifically, the free enterprise system, which is being threatened by political instability that could, in turn, open the door to the Soviet Union – for communism.

In the same edition of the *Sunday Times*, a banner headline, entitled *Rhodesia: an assignment with disaster*, appeared across pages eighteen (editorial page) and nineteen (op-ed page). Two articles appeared below this headline: one on each of the said two pages.

The article by Peter Hawthorne on the op-ed page deals with his assessment that Rhodesia has now, prior to the election, "achieved the potential for pandemonium, anarchy and chaos". The article merits no discussion here as it merely considers what may happen to Zimbabwe if the different parties, dissatisfied with the election result, decide to settle the future of the country by force of arms.

In the article on the editorial page, Ken Owen argues, inter alia, that South Africa should be most careful not to intervene in Zimbabwe after the elections. In paragraph six he suggests that should South Africa intervene, it would most certainly enhance “the prestige of the most radical anti-South African faction in Rhodesia, and the prestige of the most moderate would plummet. Mugabe’s future would be assured, Muzorewa’s ruined – if it has not already been ruined by his past association with South Africa”.

Owen thus points out that Muzorewa’s association with (white) South Africa may already have “ruined” his chances of doing well in the (black) election – which proved more or less to have been the case. Owen’s contention here seems to point to the view that the historical conflict between whites and blacks in Southern Africa does influence the voters (black voters in this case) when they are faced to choose between parties and/or candidates in an election.

6. CONCLUSION: FINDINGS ON MUGABE’S IMAGE

The traits ascribed to Robert Mugabe by the *Sunday Times* illustrated by means of words (appearing in headlines, reports, articles, editorials and captions) were those of black “liberator”; revolutionary; rebel; bush fighter; one who practices terrorism; (leftist) radical; and frontrunner (in the election campaign). A cartoon also portrayed him as a “big Russian fish”.

Opinions held about Mugabe in the *Sunday Times* were that he was a devout Marxist, and that he was the candidate who posed a direct threat to especially white Rhodesians and the continuation of the capitalist *status quo* in that country.

The *Sunday Times* used mainly stereotypical images of Robert Mugabe. For it, the issues at stake in the Zimbabwean independence election campaign revolved around a choice for Southern Africa between capitalism and Marxism on the one hand, and between the future of white and black power on the other. Mugabe was viewed as an enemy of capitalism and thus of continued white interests.

Finally, questions may be asked with regard both to the accuracy of the newspaper’s predictions concerning Mugabe’s candidature and the conclusions of a probable nature. The *Sunday Times* got the weight of Robert Mugabe’s candidature right from the outset insofar as it predicted a Mugabe victory – albeit not the landslide victory it turned out to be – over his main rivals, Nkomo and Muzorewa. The fact that the size of Mugabe’s support was not conveyed more accurately is ascribable to the difficulties – as pointed out earlier – that foreign correspondents experienced in obtaining a balanced view of what blacks thought in the countryside and in the Tribal Trust Lands. Also, the main conclusions reached by the *Sunday Times* – that a Mugabe victory would be a chilling prospect for whites in Zimbabwe, and that despite Mugabe’s radical (communist) inclinations, the (white) South African Government should be able to live more or less in peace with a Mugabe Government – proved to have shown insight into the future.

That most Zimbabweans would suffer from a Mugabe victory in the decades to come was not contemplated. That would, to say the least, have stretched the imagination to the limits.

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