

# Development News in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi

Alan A. Cooper

**DOES development communication flourish in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi? Have official controls, direct or indirect, brought about a clear development communication policy in these countries? This article provides some empirical research into the radio, television and print media and tentatively finds that, despite the recommendations of the New World Information Order that the media pursue a national development policy, there still exist some elements of a 'free Press', that the Western democratic concept of Press freedom is not yet dead.**

The debate over The New World Information Order continues with East and West assuming unshakeable positions on what constitutes equality, imbalance, shortcomings and restrictions in global mass communications.

The UNESCO General Conference of November 22, 1978, adopted "The Declaration of Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, the Promotion of Human Rights and to countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War".

Inter alia, the declaration set out to establish a "new equilibrium and greater reciprocity in the flow of information which will be conducive to the institution of a just and lasting peace and to the economic and political independence of the developing countries". It was necessary "to correct the inequalities in the flow of information to and from developing countries and between those countries".<sup>1</sup> Again the New World Information Order set out to redress the imbalance of news from developed countries to developing countries, to eradicate Western cultural



*DR ALAN COOPER is a former newspaper editor of several local and African newspapers. He is currently attached to the Political Studies Department of the University of Bophuthatswana.*

imperialism, perpetuated by the established and superior Western news agencies. Towards this end it was essential that Third World countries gain greater control of what was written about them. UNESCO, it was suggested, would act as a world arbiter of a new communications system to correct this imbalance. In the ensuing debate, UNESCO adopted the view that the media therefore should support the interests of countries rather than those of individuals. The media should become an instrument of the state. This stance has been vigorously combated by the free world's leading news organi-

sations who have resolved to resist any encroachment on Press freedom as the West understands it.

One of the issues in this broad controversy has been the role of the mass media in developing countries. Mustapha Masmoudi, Tunisia's permanent delegate to UNESCO and a proponent of The New World Information Order, has written, *inter alia*:

"In respect of developing countries, the aim must be:

- to define national communications policy as being necessary to each country's economic and social development and of a nature to motivate its citizens on behalf of such development".<sup>1A</sup>

From this comes the question – should developing countries control the media for this purpose or will development evolve best and most quickly where free media flourish?

Masmoudi's support for 'development communication' follows some 30 years of debate over what it constitutes. "As a concept it (development communication) originated in a developing country. As an academic discipline it evolved out of a conscious need in the developing countries of Asia to study how communication could be harnessed to promote national development," writes Vijay Menon. "Practically all developing countries have come to accept development communication as an instrument or policy and as an integral part of developmental planning," he adds.<sup>2</sup>

Yet its effectiveness is being questioned. Charles Okigbo points to its lack of success in encouraging development. "In the majority of (Third World) countries however, development fell short of expectations. The best that could be said was that some kinds of communication went with some kinds of development in some social situations".<sup>3</sup>

A survey of the mass media in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi in June and July 1986, indicated that development communication is not yet dead, though sickly as Okigbo suggests. Its effect on the regeneration of these countries is difficult to quantify, but those in charge of the mass media still consider emphasis on development an essential part of national policy, if not now the primary motivation. Their faith in development communication may waver at times but economic, political and socio-cultural considerations ensure its practice in varying degree.

This survey undertaken in June/July 1986, attempts to relate the quantity and quality of development communication in selected mass media to these considerations.

Measurements were made of development news

in the media of these three countries – the amount of space devoted to development news in the print media and the amount of time given in television and radio programmes. The aim was to determine in a given period how much the media authorities in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi took cognizance of New World Information Order's recommendation that their mass communication policy should emphasise development.

A second part of the survey was in the form of attitudinal questionnaires to selected media authorities to ascertain their views on the degree of development news that should flow out; and their attitudes to their control of the media, contrasting them with the Western democratic concept of a "free Press".

The survey did not attempt to ascertain the success or otherwise of development communications in these countries. The 'sender' and not the 'receiver' was the target.

## Categories of development communication

Communication is accepted to some extent as a catalyst for all programmes of socio-economic and political development in most Third World countries. For this content analysis these broad categories of development indicators were used:

- (a) *Economic indicators* such as income, expenditure, consumer pattern savings, investment, production, foreign trade, exports and imports, etc.
- (b) *Social indicators* such as health, food consumption, education, employment, housing, social welfare, entertainment, clothing, transport, etc.
- (c) *Institutional indicators* such as political attitudes and behaviour, economic relations such as land ownership, organisational change, production patterns such as industrialisation, etc.
- (d) *Development values* such as cultural identities, quality of life, equality, participation and need, etc.

## Choice of countries

These three countries were selected for research for their varying political, economic and social frameworks. The principal mass media were analysed.

### BOTSWANA

This land-locked, drought-stricken country is considered one of the few remaining Westminster-style democracies in Africa.

## Selected Mass Media and respondents

### (a) Government

- (i) *Botswana Daily News*, 24 000 circulation, published by the Department of Information. Managing Editor B. Ndaba.
- (ii) *Botswana Press Agency (BOPA)* forms part of the Southern African sub-regional news pool of PANA, the overall African news agency, which circulates official news from and to 49 members of the OAU. Mr. M. Moribama, Head.
- (iii) *Radio Botswana*. Government-run.

Spokesperson for both (ii) and (iii) was Mrs. Margaret Nasha, director of Information and Broadcasting.

### (b) Commercial – all weeklies.

- (i) *The Reporter*, 7 000 circulation. Editor, Patrick van Rensburg.
- (ii) *Botswana Guardian*. 14 000 circulation. Editor: Mr. K. Moesi.
- (iii) *Botswana Gazette*. 7 000 circulation. Editor, A.L. Osman.

Editors stressed their complete independence from Government control, directly or indirectly, but all three used official PANA news.

## ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe, under President Robert Mugabe, is a one-party state. Mugabe aims to create a Marxist-Leninist state.

## Selected Mass Media and respondents

### (a) Government

- (i) *Zimbabwe Broadcasting*. Controlled through the parastatal Mass Media Trust.
- (ii) *Zimbabwe Inter-African News Agency*. Part of PANA Newspool, it distributes official news to local media and to outside agencies. Its head is Comrade F. Munyuki.
- (iii) *Zimbabwe Government Information Department*. Its head is Comrade S. Sipya.

### (b) Commercial Press

- (i) *Harare Herald*. The leading daily newspaper in Zimbabwe, published from Harare. Circulation 107 000. Editor, Comrade Tommy Sithole.
- (ii) *Sunday Mail*, Harare. Circulation 135 000 weekly. Editor H.E. Muradzikwa.
- (iii) *The Chronicle*, Bulawayo. Circulation 45 000.
- (iv) *The Sunday News*, Bulawayo. Circulation 40 000.

- (v) *Manica Post*, Mutare. Circulation 8 000.

All five these newspapers are owned by Zimbabwe Newspapers which is controlled by the Government-directed Mass Media Trust.

### (c) Independent Press

- (i) *Financial Gazette*. Weekly 14 000. Managing Editor, C. Wilson, claims the Gazette is the only independent newspaper in Zimbabwe.
- (ii) *North Midlands Gazette*. Kadomo. A weekly published independently. Circulation 7 000.
- (iii) *International News Agencies*. Reuters and Associated Press.

## MALAWI

Malawi is a one-party state under executive President Hastings Kamuzu Banda.

## Selected Mass Media

### (a) Government

- (i) *Malawi Broadcasting Corporation*. The corporation has extensive radio services but no television.
- (ii) *Malawi News Agency*. It forms part of PANA.

### (b) Commercial Press

- (i) *Daily Times*. Malawi's only daily newspaper has a circulation of 12 000. It and its sister newspaper, the weekly *Malawi News* (circulation 24 000) are owned by the Blantyre Printing and Publishing Co. President Banda has a large personal interest in the company.

### (c) Independents

- (i) *Odini Magazine*. Published by Likuni Catholic Mission fortnightly. Circulation 12 000. Managing Editor Mr. R. Kalilombe.
- (ii) *Moni*. Circulation 50 000 weekly. Managing Editor Mr. R. N'gombe.

## Methodology

The survey was divided into two main sections.

### Section 1

Through questionnaires and interviews with government information officers, representatives of radio, TV and commercial print media in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi:

1. To ascertain local views about the New World Information Order and its recommendations.
2. To ascertain degrees of official control on media,

and in reverse to find out media views on Press controls.

3. To ascertain amount and content of development news used internally and externally.

## Section 2

- (a) Through quantitative analysis of development news in print media, both official and commercial, measuring in column inches the volume, position and category.
- (b) Through quantitative analysis of development news in official and commercial radio and TV services, measuring in seconds the volume, position and category, in main news bulletins.

Rotated sampling – selection of issues and content at regular intervals – was undertaken.

## Unit of analysis

*Print Media:* The news item – the material published under a single headline or crosshead.

*Radio/TV:* The material broadcast or screened following an introduction.

## Measurements

### Newspapers

1. Total column inches on Page 1.
2. Column inches of development news on Page 1.
3. Overall column inches of hard news including photos and graphics.
4. Total column inches of development news.
5. Total number of items on development news in issue.
6. Total number of photographs, drawings etc. in issue.
7. Total number of photographs, drawings etc. on development in issue.
8. Total space of editorials in column inches.
9. Total space of editorials on development in column inches.

### Radio and TV

The main news bulletins in English either on local radio or TV or both, daily for five days, were analysed.

The following were determined, timed or counted:

1. Time in seconds of bulletins.
2. Time in seconds of development news items.
3. Number of items in bulletins.
4. Number of development items in bulletins.

## Attitudinal survey

This survey was in three sections. The first contained

11 questions about general mass communications policy in particular countries and the second with eight questions about development news. Section III dealt with the allocation and use in words and radio minutes of development news in the media.

Questionnaires were completed by the media respondents either directly or through personal interviews.

## Section I – New World Information Order

*Question 1.* Do you agree or disagree that there is an imbalance of news between developing and developed countries as the N.W.I.O. claims?

*Questions 2/3.* Has your government accepted the recommendations in the New World Information Order that developing countries should adopt a communications policy necessary for economic and social development?

*Questions 4 – 8.* What steps could be taken by the government media, local commercial media and foreign news agencies to remedy this imbalance of news?

*Question 9.* Would government direction of local media in this respect be contrary to the Western concept of a free Press?

*Questions 10/11.* Is this Western concept of a free press outdated or unnecessary in a developing country?

## Section II – Development

*Question 1.* Should development in a developing country be along Western capitalist lines, conform with national aspirations, or be a combination of both?

*Question 2.* Does your branch of communications contribute significantly or moderately to development patterns?

*Questions 3/4.* Should there be more accent on development news and where – i.e. in respect of economic, social, institutional, non-material values?

*Question 5.* Should development news have utopian or practical goals?

*Questions 6/7.* Is development news bringing required changes in any of the categories of development listed above and is there any evidence of these?

## Section III – Measurements

*Questions 1/2.* Number and length in words of development stories distributed by official sources.

*Question 3.* On what subjects?

**Question 4.** To what destinations were they sent? – radio, TV, print media, local and foreign news agencies?

**Question 5.** Daily coverage given to development news on radio, TV, print media, news agencies (see diagrams).

A consensus of views is presented.

## **BOTSWANA**

### **Summary of respondents' replies to questionnaires**

Government and commercial media agreed there was an imbalance of news between the West and their country.

Government media authorities complained Botswana was "badly covered in the world Press because of a lack of bad news". Jointly controlled news agencies representing official and private media were suggested.

Government spokespersons favoured "encouragement" rather than "direct control" of local media to ensure better coverage of development. Commercial media opposed government direction of news but felt commercial media was also not completely "free".

The concept of Western Press freedom was generally queried. "Press Freedom in Botswana," said editor Patrick van Rensburg of *The Reporter*, "will have to be worked out between government, press owners, journalists and other public institutions in our conditions."

Government officials viewed development as being both on capitalist and "national" lines while commercial media favoured capitalist lines.

Officials felt they made a significant contribution to development. Commercial media were more modest. There should be more accent on development news in all categories but it must be newsworthy. Practical rather than utopian goals were favoured.

BOPA sent out 20 to 25 development stories daily (approximately 3000 words) on all subjects with emphasis on farming, industry, commerce and education. Destinations were radio and local print media.

Answers indicated that Botswana remains one of few countries in Africa with a relatively free, independent Press.

Government and private media have a relationship comparable with that found in other Western-type democracies, the former eager to acknowledge a "free Press" with few official controls and the latter equally eager to maintain its "freedom".

## **ZIMBABWE**

### **A summary of respondents' replies to the questionnaires**

Both official and commercial media agreed there was an imbalance of news between the West and developing countries. The Zimbabwe government has accepted the N.W.I.O. recommendations but has no deliberate information policy. Strong measures to redress the "unfavourable" imbalance of news were needed, said officials. Western media distorts news.

The Government should control media but encourage a greater coverage of development. The Mass Media Trust, a Government parastatal, is trying to sponsor a rural Press.

It is government policy that the Press should be free and not controlled but should be "responsible".

The Western concept of Press Freedom is out of touch with reality, said respondents. Editor of *The Financial Gazette*, Mr. C. Wilson, dissented. "Without Press freedom there can be no true information for the citizen and therefore no public debate on a government's actions." He emphasised the present government control of the local media through parastatals.

Development news should "conform to national aspirations with an attempt to infiltrate socialist doctrine".

Editors claimed significant developmental changes through publicity. There was complete agreement that there should be more accent on development news "but it must still be newsworthy".

Development news should have practical goals. Head of ZIANA New Agency, Comrade Munyuki, claimed "successes in agriculture copy had resulted in more peasant farmers staying on the land and not running to towns".

Government news agency, ZIANA, sent out 20 local development stories daily, approximately 4000 words. Subjects were education 40%, farming 30%, "political socialisation" 10%, welfare 10%. All stories were sent to radio, TV, print media and foreign news agencies.

Reuters filed about 3000 words daily on development in Zimbabwe to outside agencies out of a total of 30000 words and internally some 34000 words on external development out of a total of 131500. API Harare filed externally about 150 words of Zimbabwe development news daily and 450 words of foreign development news internally.

Answers indicated that the Zimbabwe Government has direct control of the radio and television

services and indirect control through parastatals' direction of the main commercial print media – except the independent Financial Gazette. Government media spokesmen, claiming the Press is “free”, also insisted local journalists should be “responsible”. They should be “conscientised” about Zimbabwean affairs. The Western concept of Press freedom was unnecessary in Zimbabwe.

## MALAWI

### A summary of respondents' replies to the questionnaires

Officials saw little or no imbalance of news between the West and developing countries.

The Malawi Government has accepted the recommendations of the N.W.I.O. Foreign news agencies should encourage correspondents to pay attention to positive rather than negative news. Mr. Gardiner of The Daily Times said “Western journalists are better off out of it. Give them an inch and stories in ignorance of the country's affairs will appear in the popular Press overseas ... they are preconditioned and not up to the job.”

Officials denied “direction” of local media. Western Press freedom was “unnecessary” in Malawi. “The developing countries have evolved their own concepts of freedom”. There should be official control of foreign news coming into Malawi – most of it is propaganda either from East or West.

Development policy should be a mix of Western capitalism and “collective” aspirations. Existing development policy had helped Malawi to become self-sufficient in food.

Respondents felt more development news in all categories could be provided in the media.

Development news should have practical goals necessary in a developing country. Development news was bringing changes in the economic, social, institutional and non-material categories.

No statistics were provided by the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, the Information Department, nor the Malawi News Agency. MANA supplies news to PANA, the overall African news agency.

From the answers, it was apparent that Government policy lays down a more pro-Western approach than say, Zimbabwe. While there was apparently little direct interference by the Government in the media, no criticism of president Banda nor his government was tolerated.

Development news was given high priority on radio and in the media and evidence of changes as a result was provided, particularly in agriculture and

politicisation.

## Quantitative analysis

### Radio and TV in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi

This combined diagram No. 1 shows 38% of the time in the main English newscasts over five days from Radio Botswana was devoted to development news – some 17 minutes 25 seconds out of 50 min. 50 secs. Out of 43 news items, 15 were devoted to development news – 35% (Diagram 2). All were locally-based news. Botswana TV was not analysed as its TV was in an experimental stage.

### Zimbabwe Television

Some 33% of peak hour news bulletins was devoted to development news – 39 min. 30 sec. out of 2 hrs. 26 mins. (Diagram 1). Thirty-five items out of 127 concerned development – 27% (Diagram 2).

### Radio Malawi

The main news bulletins were at 8 p.m. in English. Some 45% of news – 22 min. 15 secs. out of a total of 48 mins. concerned development with 24 out of 54 items – 44% (Diagrams 1 and 2). Malawi has no TV service.

RADIO AND TV  
LENGTH IN TIME OF DEVELOPMENT NEWS— 5 MAIN NEWSCASTS

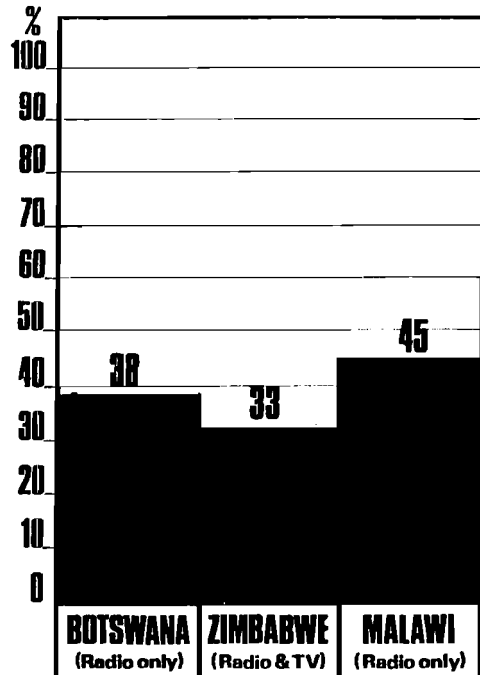


Diagram No. 1

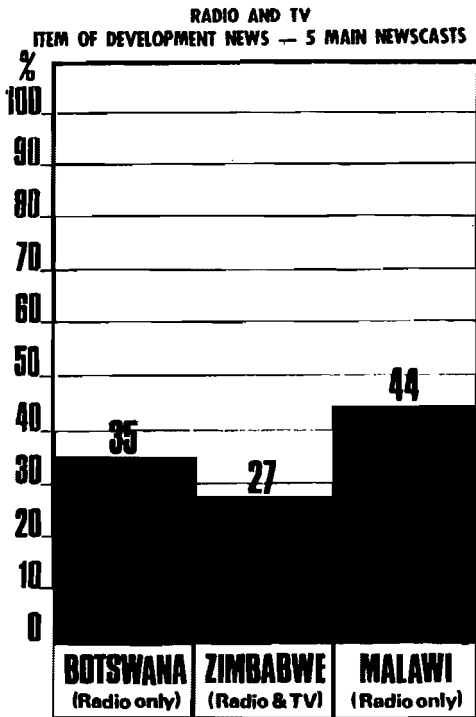


Diagram No. 2

## Print media in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi

Five issues of each publication were analysed. The diagrams give percentages for development news in length of column inches and number of items overall, pictures overall, with measurements for development editorials.

### BOTSWANA

(See Diagram 3 for abbreviations)

*Botswana Daily News (BN)*. As a government-run newspaper, the News concentrated heavily on development news with 65% of column inches on Page 1 – 264 col. ins. out of 405 and 73% overall – 1472 col. ins. from 1905 col. ins. (Diagrams 4 and 5). Some 103 news items in the five issues concerned development out of a total of 130 – 79% (Diagram 6). It emphasised development pictures – 80% (Diagram 7) and editorial (Diagram 8).

*Botswana Gazette (B GAZ)* gave considerable coverage to development news – 215 col. ins. out of 312 on Page 1 – 68% and 1134 col. ins. out of 2172

overall – 52% (Diagrams 4 and 5). Overall only 76 news items – 47% – out of 161 dealt with development (Diagram 6).

*Botswana Reporter (BR)* gave minority space to development news – 65 col. ins. out of 226 col. ins. on Page 1 – 28% and 1083 col. ins. out of 2531 overall – 42% (Diagrams 4 and 5). The number of development news items was correspondingly small – 51 out of 143 overall – 35% (Diagram 6).

*Botswana Guardian (B GUAR)* almost ignored development news. None were featured on Page 1 and only 561 col. ins. out of 2380 overall – 23% were given to the subject (Diagrams 4 and 5). Again 27 items out of 132 overall – 24% – concerned development (Diagram 6).

BN.....	Botswana Daily News
B GAZ.....	Botswana Gazette
B R.....	Botswana Reporter
B GUAR.....	Botswana Guardian
HH.....	Harare Herald
BC.....	Bulawayo Chronicle
SM.....	Sunday Mail
SN.....	Sunday News
MP.....	Manica Post
NMG.....	North Midlands Gazette
FG.....	Financial Gazette
MN.....	Malawi News
DT.....	Daily Times

Diagram No. 3

### ZIMBABWE

*Harare Herald (HH)* gave low priority to development news. On Page 1, development items measured 148 col. ins. out of 513 – 28%, and overall 1143 col. ins. out of 4444 – 25% (Diagrams 4 and 5). Overall development items numbered 92 out of 400 – 23%. Similarly it under-emphasised development in pictures and editorials.

*Bulawayo Chronicle (BC)* gave less priority to development news than The Herald. Despite its more rural readership this category of news measured 11% on Page 1 and 19% overall and 14% overall in the number of development items (Diagrams 4, 5 and 6). It, however, favoured development pictures on Page 1 and in its editorials (Diagrams 7 and 8).

*Sunday Mail, Harare (SM)*. A weekly, The Mail gave moderate space to in-depth development news and

pictures. 135 col. ins. out of 418 – 32% concerned development with 964 col. ins. out of 2974 overall – 32% (Diagrams 4 and 5).

*Sunday News (SN)* gave less space in column inches and in the number of items given to development but all five editorials concerned the subject (Diagrams 4, 5 and 8).

*Manica Post (MP)* favoured Page 1 for development in column inches – 62% with a more even 38% overall (Diagrams 4 and 5).

*North Midlands Gazette, Kadoma (NMG)*. Presumably because it is a “country” newspaper the Gazette displayed development news – mainly rural progress – on Page 1 – 85% and 32% overall in column inches and 33% in the number of news items (Diagrams 4, 5 and 6).

*Financial Gazette (FG)* showed impartiality to development and non-development news – approximately 50% to each section on Page 1 and overall both in column inches and number of items (Diagrams 4, 5 and 6).

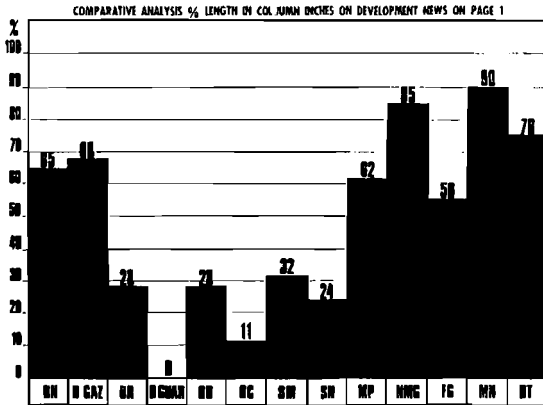


Diagram No. 4

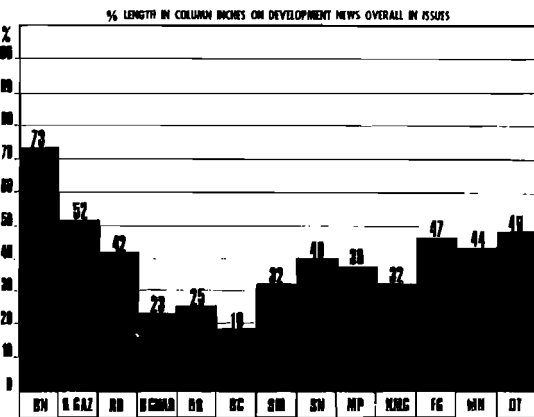


Diagram No. 5

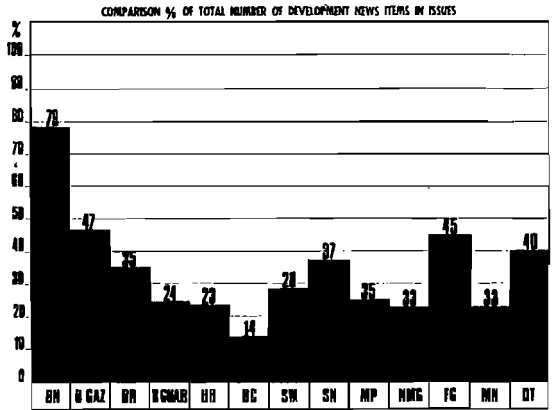


Diagram No. 6

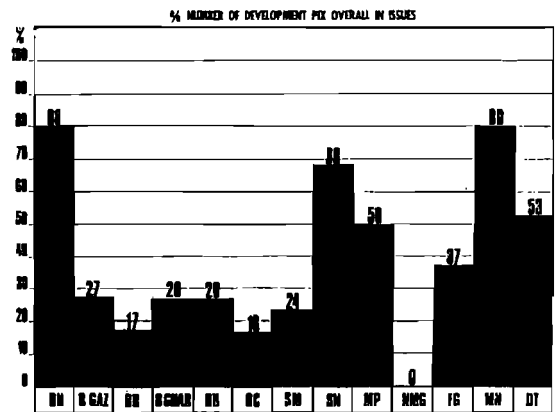


Diagram No. 7

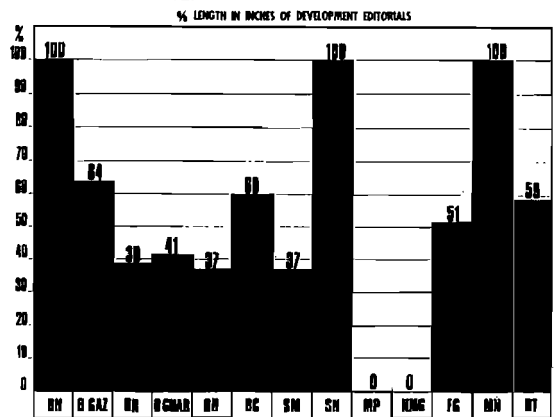


Diagram No. 8



## **MALAWI**

*Malawi News (MN)*. Of all print media analysed, gave the most emphasis to development. Its Page 1 presented 118 col. ins. out of 130 – 90% and overall 438 col. ins. out of 991 – 44%. Most pictures concerned development. Its editorials – 100% – were on development (Diagrams 4, 5, 7 and 8).

*Daily Times (DT)* emphasised development news. On Page 1, 195 col. ins. out of 254 – 76% and 1400 col. ins. out of 2858 – 49% were addressed to the subject (Diagrams 4, 5). Editorials were balanced at 59% (Diagram 8).

The magazines, the fortnightly *Odini* published by the Likuni Catholic Mission, devoted about half of its contents to social development in Malawi while the weekly magazine, *Moni*, followed suit.

## **Comparisons (Diagrams 4 – 8)**

The Botswana News, published by the Botswana Information Department, gave the most space and number of items overall to development, understandably as a direct-controlled government organ.

In Zimbabwe the leading newspapers, *The Harare Herald* and *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, lagged behind in development news compared to the local Sunday newspapers. There seemed no direction in this respect from the parastatal owners, *The Zimbabwe Newspapers*. In contrast the independent *Financial Gazette* surpassed its competitors.

The Malawi Press led Zimbabwe in overall content of development news, particularly *The Daily Times*.

## **Conclusion**

In all three countries, there appeared no broad communications policy in respect of the media. Rather development news was published on an ad hoc basis with perhaps the Malawi media showing a strong rural development news policy.

The official news agencies supplied local development news en masse to local print media but here the editors in all cases appeared still to have the right to use it or not, despite direct or indirect influences from government sources.

The volume of development news published compared to that of non-development news must be seen as a variable reflecting the 'newsworthy' importance or otherwise of either category to the 'commercial' newspaper "gate-keepers" – the editors, news editors, chief sub-editors, managers, directors,

and the degree of control.

This allocation of news may be examined against the degree of freedom of choice allowed to the "gate-keepers" in their local political environment. This can be related to the degree of democracy – if it can be determined quantitatively – practised in these countries. Botswana, a democracy according to the standards set for Western democracies, imposed no pressure on the commercial "gate-keepers" to highlight development news. Zimbabwe, moving to a Marxist-Leninist system, indirectly controlled the major media but did not impose complete checks on news selection, rather relying on the personal views of the gate-keepers to support the emerging independent state. The Malawi media, under the personal control of President Banda, was of all three more closely directed despite protestations to the contrary from the local gate-keepers. Yet in all cases official direction of news selection was not comprehensive.

While the Western concept of Press freedom was generally found 'unacceptable' or 'unsuitable' to local conditions, there was still found among the "gate-keepers", both official and commercial, a reluctance to publish purely propaganda sheets. Rather they wished to retain some editorial independence despite influences from various sources.

As long as this reluctance to become purely government mouthpieces continues, editors in these three countries will attempt to retain some attributes of the Western concept of Press freedom – particularly some freedom of choice in news selection.

Studies of world Press systems usually place them into three broad categories – Western democratic, Third World and totalitarian. Many sub-categories have been defined. The Third World media is often however treated en block as being under some form of direct or indirect government control. Little regard has been given to the heritage of Western Press freedom left to the post-colonial states, to the attitudes of those journalists who trained under colonial regimes and still endeavour to practise within the restrictions of their new political environments those principles of the freedom of the Press they were taught before independence.

This survey of the mass media in Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi therefore points to a further sub-category in the definition of Third World Press systems – that of a half-way house between a democratic Press system and a Third World-controlled system.

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