

ZANU PF rebels as SADC gets tough with coalition

SADC's public censure of the Zimbabwe coalition government's failure to implement the terms of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and the increasingly hostile political environment "**characterized by a resurgence of violence, arrests and intimidation**", was recognized as extraordinary news by the country's private media.

Although the print media were slow to report the details of a communiqué issued at a meeting of the regional grouping's Troika on Politics, Defence and Security in Zambia on Thursday evening (March 31st), they recognized the cautionary speech by Zambia's President Rupiah Banda at the meeting as a dramatic and unprecedented change in SADC's approach to dealing with Zimbabwe's political crisis.

The Troika's irritation appeared in the strongly worded communiqué after South African President and SADC facilitator Jacob Zuma presented the group with a damning report about the political situation in the country.

However, the government media either censored or buried the salient elements of this historic development, such as the background to the meeting, its resolutions and the implications of the Troika's decisions.

Their reports of the meeting initially focussed on trivia and then assumed a reactionary and one-sided perspective, echoing the ZANU PF arm of government's infuriated response to the Troika's resolutions.

For example, these media only reported on the communiqué in the context of President Mugabe's angry reaction to it while addressing his party's Central Committee meeting, saying:

"We will not brook any dictation from any source. We are a sovereign country. Even our neighbours cannot dictate to us. We will resist that...The facilitator...cannot prescribe anything..."

Subsequent reports, opinion pieces and editorials amplified Mugabe's annoyance with the Troika's resolutions and set the tone for a vicious propaganda offensive that threatened to ignite a diplomatic row between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

In its editorial comment, *The Sunday Mail* (3/4) discredited SADC as having been "**hijacked**" by imperialist forces and dismissed the integrity of President Zuma's facilitation on the grounds of his "**disaster-prone**" private and sexual life. It described the South African leader as "**a dishonest broker**" and portrayed him as an appendage of the West.

Another article by ZANU PF Politburo member Jonathan Moyo dismissed the Troika meeting as a “***circus***”, and a “***neo-colonial***” attempt to effect “***regime change***”.

The private media reported analysts welcoming SADC’s historic decision to flex its muscles over the Zimbabwe crisis, as the region had appeared to side with Mugabe in the past, sparking allegations of bias against the MDC-T (*The Standard* and *NewsDay*, 3 & 4/4).

They prominently reported the Troika’s demands that the inclusive government stop arbitrary arrests, political violence, intimidation and hate speech, and implement all the provisions of the GPA to “***create a conducive environment for peace, security and free political activity***”.

The private media also reported on the Troika’s resolve to send a team to “assist” the country implement its recommendations (*NewsDay*, *The Standard*, *The Zimbabwean* On Sunday Studio 7, Radio VoP, SW Radio Africa and *New Zimbabwe.com*, 1, 2, 3, & 5/4).

And they quoted political commentators warning Mugabe against ignoring the SADC recommendations or withdrawing Zimbabwe from the regional bloc, saying such action would result in international isolation or intervention (*The Standard* and *NewsDay*, 3 & 5/4).

State media blame ZANU PF defeat on conspiracies

THE loss of ZANU PF’s candidate for the Speaker of Parliament post, Simon Khaya Moyo, to his MDC-T rival Lovemore Moyo, by 93 votes to 105 generated immense media interest before SADC’s Troika grabbed the headlines.

All the media reported the result as having triggered a ZANU PF ‘witch-hunt’ because it showed that at least two of its MPs had apparently voted against their candidate.

Before the election the government media and ZANU PF attached great importance to the party’s chances of winning. But after Khaya Moyo’s defeat, they sought to downplay this development by reporting ZANU PF officials, such as Rugare Gumbo, dismissing Lovemore Moyo’s victory as a “***non-event***” (ZBC, 30/3, 8pm and *The Herald*, 31/3).

This position however, was not reconciled with follow-up stories in the official media reporting ZANU PF political commissar Webster Shamu summoning the party’s chief whip Joram Gumbo to explain what happened, or with President Mugabe’s grave concern over Khaya Moyo’s defeat (ZBC, 1/4, 8pm, *The Herald*, *NewsDay* and Radio VoP, 31/3 and 1, 3 & 4/4).

The official media diluted the gravity of ZANU PF’s loss and its political implications by introducing a number of “red herring” conspiracies:

For example, they drowned out MDC-T accusations that ZANU PF had tried to bribe some of their MPs to vote for Khaya Moyo with counter-accusations from ZANU PF (*The Herald*, 30/3).

In one especially absurd and unsubstantiated fairy tale, *The Herald* (1/4) quoted Tsholotsho North MP, Jonathan Moyo, one of two ZANU PF MPs accused of trying to entice the MDC-T MPs to vote for Khaya Moyo, claiming that an alleged British **“intelligence operative”**, Tim Cole, was behind MDC-T’s bribery claims. It did not explain how this was so - or that Mr Cole is Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy.

The state media also claimed that some MDC-T MPs had voted for the ZANU PF candidate as illustrated by *The Sunday Mail*’s front-page report, ***Rebels on the loose. 8 MDC-T MPs voted for SK Moyo. 10 ZANU PF MPs betray candidate***. No credible evidence to support this unlikely supposition was provided. Notably, the paper only emphasised the alleged rebellion in the MDC-T but did not provide the circumstances under which 10 ZANU PF MPs **“prevented their candidate from winning”**.

The private media presented Lovemore Moyo’s victory – including the ZANU PF votes he had received – as having rattled ZANU PF - leading to witch-hunts in the party; explored the political implications of the MDC-T victory and highlighted the party’s credible bribery allegations against ZANU PF.

Police dispute MDC-T claims

AS we went to Press *The Herald* (6/4) reported Police Commissioner-General Augustine Chihuri denying MDC-T’s charges of selective application of the law when granting permission for political gatherings, saying the party **“lacks maturity in its dealings”**.

Chihuri argued that from January 1 to March 25 this year, the ZRP had approved 94 percent (644) of the MDC-T’s 682 notifications to hold political gatherings. ZANU PF had 816 notifications, 788 (97 percent) of which were sanctioned; 94 percent (29) of the MDC-N’s 31 notifications were approved while other parties and organisations were allowed to hold 37 (97 percent) of their 38 planned gatherings. Chihuri’s statistics were not corroborated with those from the political parties.

The paper quoted Chihuri saying the **“few instances”** the MDC-T was stopped from holding their gatherings was when it wanted to hold meetings parallel to national events. Said Chihuri: **“Despite being in the inclusive government, the MDC-T does not only ignore national events, but even has the audacity to despise those events on the national calendar like Heroes’ Day.”**

The paper cited Chihuri warning: **“The ZRP will not brook any spurious, vexations and propaganda stunts targeted at portraying the organisation as partisan.”**

The report formed part of the 69 stories that the media carried on the campaign activities of Zimbabwe’s coalition parties.

Of these, 48 appeared on ZBC, while the remaining 21 featured in government papers. Fifty-three of the official media's stories reported favourably on ZANU PF's campaign activities. The remaining 16 largely discredited the MDC formations as confused, "**cry-babies**" devoid of any leadership credentials.

The private media carried 42 stories on the coalition parties' campaign activities. Of these 23 focused on ZANU PF activities, largely highlighting its alleged intimidation and coercion of Zimbabweans, especially those living in rural areas to attend its meetings and support its views (the *Zimbabwe Independent* and *ZimOnline*, 1/4).

The private media's reports on the MDC-T (16) publicised the factionalism characterising the party's provincial elections ahead of its national congress later this month, while the remaining three reports on the MDC-N dismissing government media reports that its new leader, Welshman Ncube, had been "**snubbed**" during the SADC Troika meeting in Zambia (*New Zimbabwe.com*, Radio VoP, *ZimOnline* and *The Standard*, 1 & 3/4).

Did you know?

THE government has amended regulations governing the implementation of its controversial Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act requiring non-indigenous mining businesses to sell 51 percent of their stake to indigenous Zimbabweans by September 24th, 2011. This applied to all businesses with a net asset value of \$500,000, but according to a *Government Gazette* (25/3) it now applies to all mining companies with a net asset value of just one US dollar, an alarming fact reported by the *Zimbabwe Independent* (1/4).

The Sunday Mail (3/4) misreported this news by putting the figure at US\$1 million.

VIOLENCE ATTRACTS SADC'S ATTENTION

THE current wave of political violence and the arrest and harassment of human rights activists and members of the MDC-T finally attracted strong condemnation from SADC.

The regional bloc, through its Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, issued a communiqué after its meeting in Zambia demanding "**an immediate end to violence, intimidation, hate speech, harassment, and any other form of action that contradicts the letter and spirit of the GPA**".

But President Mugabe and his party dismissed the SADC Troika's concerns, arguing that it had reached that position following a vigorous misinformation campaign by the MDC-T as a way of delaying national elections scheduled for later this year (ZTV, 1/4, 8pm and *The Herald*, 2/4).

The media recorded 12 fresh incidents of human rights violations this week.

They included:

- The arrest of MDC-T Matabeleland North provincial chairman, Sengezo Tshabangu, for holding an unsanctioned meeting, and 43 other party members in Zaka and Bulawayo mostly on public violence charges (SW Radio Africa (28/3).
- The charging of Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum director Abel Chikomo for not properly registering his organization (Radio VOP and Studio 7, 29/3 and 1/4), and
- The arrest of MDC-T activist, Oliver Chikumba, in Hwange, and the harassment of villagers in Chimanimani by ZANU PF officials and state security agents for refusing to sign ZANU PF's anti-sanctions petition (*The Zimbabwean On Sunday*, 3/4).

WHAT THEY SAID...

“If there is anything that we must learn from the upheavals going on in the northern part of our continent, it is that the legitimate expectations of the citizens of our countries cannot be taken for granted. We must, therefore, continue at SADC level to consolidate democracy through the establishment of institutions that uphold the tenets of good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law” – Zambian President and chairperson of the SADC Troika Rupiah Banda marking the official opening of the Troika's meeting (*ZimOnline*, 31/3 and *Zimbabwe Independent*, 1/4).

“Governments have their own channels of communication...Should the Zimbabwean government wish to understand our position on Libya or any other, they (should) contact the South African government through normal channels as they always do” – Statement from South African President Jacob Zuma's office rejecting assertions in Zimbabwe's official weekly, *The Sunday Mail*, that Pretoria supported Western military intervention in Libya to topple its leader Colonel Gaddafi (*ZimOnline*, 4/4).

“Tsvangirai complained to SADC about elections and violence...I asked them which country is free of that conflict. Zambia here, we are the same. In any third world or developing country, there are always conflicts, but you don't judge them on it” – President Mugabe brushing aside concerns over violence in Zimbabwe (*The Herald*, 2/4).

YOUR FEEDBACK

Can we get a donor out there to fund an independent TV channel on free to air satellite please? ZBC is killing us with fake news, *Bored*.

ZTV is being unfair. Instead of playing ZANU PF jingles only, they should also play MDC jingles. We are one people so lets unite in music. *Stressed, Glenview*.

We cannot afford to waste money. I for one cannot waste my money by paying for ZTV licenses. The programmes are done by biased people. *Jonas*.

Sms your comments on our dedicated cell phone number: 0774 432 509.

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