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Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe
Monday, May 9th – Sunday, May 15th 2011
Weekly Media Review 2011-19

ZANU PF defies poll roadmap

ALL media recorded the ZANU PF politburo's decision to back the party's congress resolution for national elections to be held this year in defiance of counsel from both the MDC negotiators to the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and SADC's South African facilitation team.

The official media widely reported on this development. ZBC alone publicised ZANU PF reiterating its calls for early elections in 13 stories.

The government-controlled media passively reported a ZANU PF politburo meeting as having resolved to defy the SADC-facilitated efforts to hammer out a roadmap that will entail the holding of credible elections next year and stick by its congress resolutions to hold them this year, quoting party spokesman Rugare Gumbo.

ZTV (10/5, 6pm and 8pm) quoted Gumbo: ***"The party position is very clear, I don't know how many times I should repeat this. Elections are on this year and reforms are not fundamental if people want elections."***

The people who allegedly wanted the polls were not defined.

Neither did the official media analyse the practicability of ZANU PF's position, given the financial, political and other logistical problems facing the transitional government. Nor were they attentive to the potentially regressive effects of ZANU PF's early election demands on SADC's efforts to help the country's reconstruction exercise.

The government-controlled media also reported Gumbo describing reservations expressed by ZANU PF's chief negotiator, Patrick Chinamasa on the country's capacity to hold elections this year as ***"now water under the bridge"***, saying the party and Chinamasa had since ***"realigned"*** their positions (ZTV, 11/5, 8pm and *The Herald & Chronicle*, 12/5).

The Sunday Mail (15/5) buried Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono's opinion that early elections could severely affect Zimbabwe's economy in an interview with the paper over a wide range of issues.

But the paper gave prominence to an alleged **“plot”** by the US and Britain to block the holding of elections this year as they feared the MDC-T **“would lose dismally”** in the polls as the party **“has no cohesive or appealing policy that can be a rallying point for the voters”**.

No convincing evidence of this was given.

The private media were adamant that Zimbabwe was not yet ready for elections, saying holding them this year was likely to plunge the country into a June 2008 electoral crisis (SW Radio Africa, *The Zimbabwean* and *NewsDay*, 10, 12 & 16/5).

They quoted political commentators arguing that uncertainties over President Mugabe’s poor health and advanced age, and his party’s succession crisis had precipitated ZANU PF’s demands for an early election (*Daily News*, 13/5).

These media also viewed contradictory remarks within ZANU PF as evidence of deep-seated divisions within the party over how to proceed, and argued that the party’s demands could be counter-productive (SW Radio Africa, *The Zimbabwean* *NewsDay* and *The Daily News*, 10, 12 & 16/5).

The Daily News quoted an unnamed diplomat: **“The insistence on going it alone...appears blissfully oblivious to the fact that it is solely through the SADC sponsored GPA framework that President Mugabe has the legitimacy to be called head of state. If it falls away (GPA), then there is neither a president nor a prime minister that would be recognized by the region.”**

Constitutional reforms hit by new controversy

THE media reported a fresh fallout among coalition partners over what methods to use to collate information gathered in Zimbabwe’s on-off constitutional revision exercise.

The government narrowly portrayed the conflict as part of ongoing efforts by the MDC-T to disrupt the process and delay the holding of elections. This was reflected in all nine reports they carried on the topic.

This was despite these media quoting MDC-T Copac co-chair Douglas Mwonzora blaming ZANU PF for reneging on the agreed criteria to collate the views of Zimbabweans on the new constitution. They cited Mwonzora highlighting that while the Copac management committee had recommended the use of qualitative methods ZANU PF now insisted on the use of the quantitative approach, (*The Herald* and *Chronicle* 12/5).

The Herald and *Chronicle* (12/5) reported ZANU PF spokesperson Rugare Gumbo accusing the MDC-T of playing political games to delay elections because, ***“the three Copac co-chairpersons had agreed on everything regarding the handling of data collated from the people”***.

This agreed approach by Copac leaders was never clarified.

In a separate story, carried in the same editions of the official dailies, they just reported ZANU PF Copac co-chairperson Paul Mangwana criticising the two MDC formations for ***“disrupting”*** Copac meetings following ZANU PF’s insistence that ***“we use the quantitative method to collate the views because that is how you can determine the support of a view”***.

It was only after the parties had reportedly reached a compromise that *The Herald* (14/5) quoted Mangwana admitting: ***“As ZANU PF, it was never our intention to do quantitative alone, the argument was at what stage (to use it).”***

STATE MEDIA FAVOUR ZANU PF

THE media carried 45 stories on the political activities of the coalition parties.

Of these, 34 were in the official media and 11 published by the private media.

The public media carried 22 stories on ZANU PF activities, largely marketing the party’s anti-sanctions petition (eight stories) and the indigenization policy (12). The remaining two stories were general reports of the party’s activities.

These media’s coverage of MDC-T activities was entirely negative, depicting it as violent and an ideologically bankrupt puppet of the West in all 12 reports they carried on the party’s activities.

For example, following reports in the *Chronicle* (9/5) and *The Herald* (10/5) that more than 2,2million people had signed ZANU PF’s anti-sanctions petition, surpassing the two million signatures, an editorial in *The Herald* (11/5) gushed praise on the organizers of the campaign.

It presented the development as a wake-up call to the MDC leadership ***“that the train has left the station,”*** adding that by speaking against sanctions ***“Zimbabweans have also rejected destructive politics that seek to profit from the misery of the majority courtesy of protest votes.”***

Similarly, *The Sunday Mail* (15/5) comment boasted that even the, ***“fence-sitters who had previously doubted ZANU PF’s determination to push through indigenization are now privately conceding that there is no going back”***.

None of the MDC-T’s activities made positive reading in the public media.

For example, *The Herald* (14/5) reported that the MDC-T was unlikely to investigate recent intra-party violence as this might taint its image ahead of the SADC summit. The report quoted “analyst” Gabriel Chaibva saying, **“Violence is a culture deeply engraved in the MDC-T and there is historical evidence to this”**.

Earlier, ZTV (13/5, 8pm) reported MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai as having castigated public media journalists as **“shallow-minded”** for **“criticizing him and his party”** and for publishing **“views that do not tally with his own party”**.

The context in which the alleged attack was made was not given. The station merely cited unnamed observers accusing Tsvangirai of trying to muzzle the state media that had **“recently bravely exposed the wanton violence in his party as well as favouritism and tribalism...”**

The private media remained critical of ZANU PF’s rhetoric on the anti-sanctions crusade and indigenisation policy, which they said were being used to contaminate the real GPA issues (three).

The private media, which carried seven reports on MDC-T party activities, reported the continued failure by the party leadership to deal with issues of violence and factionalism. For instance, *the Financial Gazette* (12/5) reported that MDC-T was fast losing ground to ZANU PF as a result of widening factionalism within the party.

SADC summit defers GPA hearing

AS MMPZ went to print, media reports indicated that Zimbabwe had been removed from the agenda of the May 20 SADC meeting following a request from South African President and SADC mediator Jacob Zuma owing to pressing domestic issues.

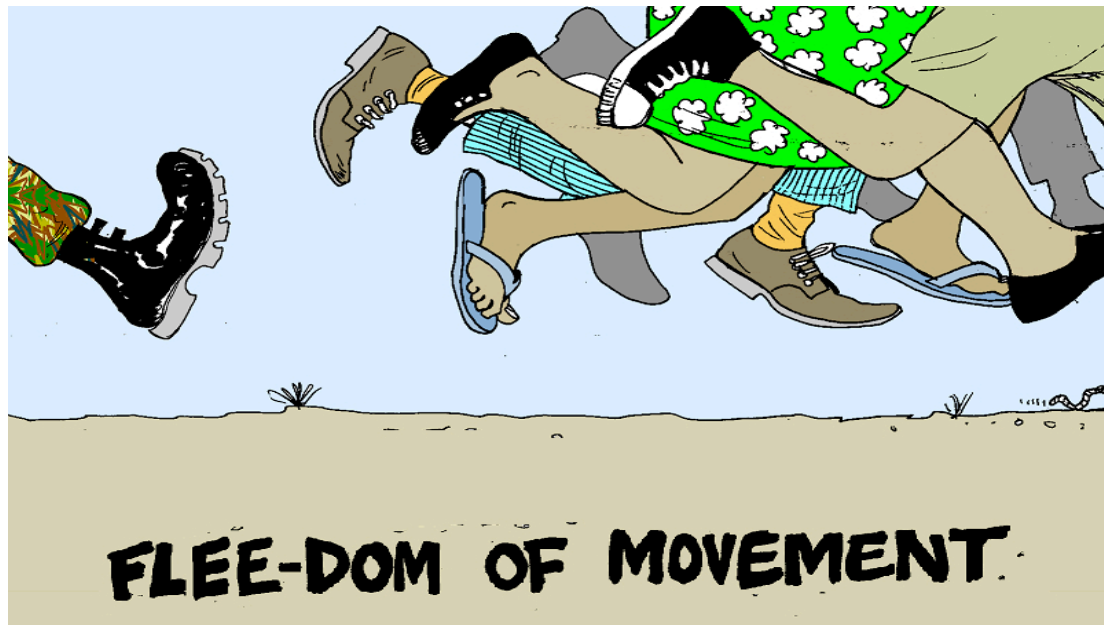
Studio 7 (16/5) reported official sources as saying a special summit to discuss problems in Zimbabwe’s power sharing government and the roadmap to elections had now been tentatively scheduled for June 11 in South Africa.

Prior to this, ZANU PF, its sympathisers and the official media had been involved in a campaign to pre-empt the SADC deliberations on the country’s power-sharing talks, championing ZANU PF’s stance as national policy (*The Herald* 16,17&18).

The party’s MDC partners, especially that led by Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, were presented as unreliable and lacking political integrity.

All nine reports the public media carried on the summit between 9 and 18 May advanced the ZANU agenda while reinforcing the MDC-T as a liar that was likely to be exposed for lying to the SADC Troika in Zambia last month over the cause of political violence in the country.

The private media generally viewed ZANU PF's calls for early elections as a way of dividing SADC ahead of the Summit. For example, *NewsDay* (13/5) quoted analyst Brian Ngwenya: ***"Certain elements in ZANU PF know that SADC is not united in its position on the Zimbabwe crisis. They are hoping to play the divisive card given the fissures that can easily be manipulated."***



Human rights violations

Election talk stokes tensions

ZANU PF's election talk seems to be stoking political temperatures in the country.

In the week the media carried 12 incidents of politically motivated violence and related rights abuses. Of these, five were related to ZANU PF's electoral campaign activities. The remainder stemmed from state security agents' attacks against the media, civic society organizations and ordinary people.

These included:

- Bulawayo riot police crushed a Women Of Zimbabwe Arise protest against power cuts in the city. Dozens of people were reportedly injured. (SW Radio 10/5);
- Detention of journalist Mzwandile Ndlovu, a member of the weekly 'Bulawayo Agenda' newsletter team, at Hwange police station facing charges over a story about national healing activities that took place in Victoria Falls last month. (SW Radio Africa 11/5)

- Chief Champion Rare of Kariba district lost his property after his bedroom was gutted by fire in a suspected case of politically motivated arson. *The Herald* (14/5)
- Coercion of villagers in Nyazura to attend ZANU PF rallies where they are allegedly instructed to support President Mugabe. Reportedly, those who resist are beaten up. *The Zimbabwean on Thursday* (12/5) and;
- Re-establishment of youth militia bases in Buhera where villagers are being mobilized by ZANU PF youths and soldiers to vote for ZANU PF's parliamentary candidate William Mutomba and President Mugabe. (*The Zimbabwean on Thursday* (12/5)

What they said

“No one is going to stop us from indigenizing any company, particularly those which supported the Ian Smith regime like Anglo American, which has exploited our resources all over the country. Even though the Indigenisation Act has certain loopholes, we are not going to stop the process,” Indigenisation minister, Saviour Kasukuwere (*The Zimbabwe Independent* 13/5).

“The very same people who have been attempting to resist the indigenisation of our industries and churches are behind these heinous acts. I understand that Britain and her Western allies are behind this campaign. However, let it be known that I will not tone down or be pushed out of the church by some unscrupulous elements who are bent on reversing the gains we have made as a country and as a church,” Anglican Church Bishop, Nolbert Kunonga commenting on the death threats he allegedly received over his position on homosexuals and sanctions. (*The Sunday Mail* 15/5)

“We have reached a fundamental disagreement and the matter must be referred back to the (Copac) management committee. An emergency management committee meeting must be called where they will advise on the way forward”, MDC-T Copac co-chair Douglas Mwonozora commenting on the party's disagreement with ZANU PF on what methods to use to collate information gathered in the constitution-making process.

Ends/

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