

## BOOK REVIEWS

**The Mass Media in the Struggle for Zimbabwe: Censorship and Propaganda under Rhodesian Front Rule** By *E. Windrich*. Gwelo, Mambo Press, Mambo Occasional Papers, Socio-Economic Series 15, 1981, 112 pp., Z\$3.40.

**None But Ourselves: Masses vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe** By *J. Frederikse*. Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1982, 368 pp., Z\$8.95.

These two books have at least three things in common. Both are written by Americans who, from their particular historical legacy, have always had a — possibly exaggerated — awareness of the role of the Fourth Estate, as co-guarantor of democracy. Frederikse herself is a journalist, who is continuing to write in the interests of liberation in Southern Africa, and Windrich is a researcher who had published two books on Rhodesia (*The Rhodesian Problem: A Documentary Record 1923-1973*, London, Routledge, 1975 — which, incidentally, was banned in the country at the time — and *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, London, Croom Helm, 1978) before she was able to pursue her interests for a while within an independent Zimbabwe. Both books are about the part that the propaganda war played in the struggle for independence, and both are written from a viewpoint openly sympathetic to the liberation cause.

*The Mass Media in the Struggle for Zimbabwe* is a modest little book which seeks to document in some scholarly detail, replete with footnotes, the intrigues of the settler-controlled Ministry of Information and radio from the time that the Rhodesian Front came to power in 1962; it examines how the regime muzzled the few publications which supported the nationalists, while the Argus-owned press — which was hardly liberal — was increasingly constrained from without and within to support the captains of UDI. It does not contain any great revelations, but renders a useful service in drawing together material from a wide range of sources, including some confidential Rhodesian Government reports which are not readily accessible.

Although Windrich is not above employing sarcasm (such as when referring to the 'talents of Harvey Ward' on p. 41), she offers a reliable historical record of the personalities, events, and strategies involved, without entertaining any particular hypotheses to account for the course of events. One is therefore inclined to ask 'So What?' Were the Bensons, Wards and Van der Byls of Huggins's (and journalist Parker's) 'little White island' so notably and deviously clever? And is it really surprising, given the background, position and interests of the Whites, that they should have been 'duped' into believing in the Communist threat, the basic contentment of 'their' natives, and the nobility of their cause? Given the role that the grapevine plays in a relatively small and cohesive community such as the Rhodesians were, they knew more about certain realities such as the conduct and progress of the war than would have been apparent in the media. Other things, such as the true temper of Black opinion, most of them could not, or would not, recognize. Had the media been freer, or more critical, one could ask how different might the course of events have been over Rhodesia's last twenty years. One suspects that the media shapes less than it is shaped.

A similar shade of the mildly obsessive interest in the collective psychology of the White settler breed which can be detected in Windrich's work is also present

in Frederikse's book. Apart from the fact that with a hard cover and glossy paper it would have qualified for the coffee-table category, it is altogether a more interesting book. It consists of an extended scrap-book-type collection of photographs, cartoons, pamphlets, posters and newspapers, as well as substantial quotations from documents and personal interviews with people ranging from ex-fighters, ordinary and not-so-ordinary Black and White civilians, politicians, media personnel, intelligence and military personnel, to missionaries and government ministers. The selection of informants and sources is not necessarily representative. Some, like Fr Lewis's *Encounter*, receive more attention than their readership or influence probably warrant. Unlike the narrow focus of Windrich's book, however, *None But Ourselves* also includes material from the side of the liberation parties, such as the *Zimbabwe News*, the Voice of Zimbabwe radio which was beamed from Maputo, and numerous *chimurenga* (war of liberation) songs. But whereas the varied facets of the regime's propaganda effort receive much attention, very little, and only highly selective, use is made of educational and publicity material put out by the Patriotic Front in Lusaka and Maputo.

The general impression conveyed is that the regime was more or less totally successful in persuading Whites of the truth of its news and its claims, but totally unsuccessful with Blacks. Conversely, guerilla persuasion tactics are portrayed as having been more or less totally effective in the field, but too little attention is paid to their external propoganda activities to permit any assessment at all. Claims and counter-claims regarding particular incidents and 'atrocities' effectively illustrate the wide divergence of perspectives and interpretation. Some are left without comment, but in other instances the author supports the credibility of the liberation forces' version in explanatory paragraphs which are interspersed with the text. The selection and presentation of material, however, leave only limited room for nuance and qualification. Occasionally, the author falls into oversimplification or over-statement, such as in ascribing Todd's ousting in 1958 as Prime Minister to his 'daring contact with the nationalists' (p. 230). That came rather later.

All the same, *None But Ourselves* conveys a vivid and evocative picture of the war and of facets of the settler ethos in particular. Touches of the tragic, the pathetic, the bizarre, the barbaric, the delusional, the heroic and the sympathetic are all there. There are footnotes at the end, but the work makes no pretence of presenting a systematic or profound analysis. Yet the author has assembled a considerable amount of useful material — and indication of sources — for such analysis and reflection. It is not a chronicle like David Martin and Phyllis Johnson's *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981) with which it shares some of the same, or similar, sources. Together with David Caute's *Under the Skin* (Harmondsworth, Allen Lane, 1983), Frederikse offers the best portrayal we have to date of 'the death of White Rhodesia' (to use the subtitle of Caute's book).