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The Political Significance of the Press and Public Radio (NBC) in Post-Colonial Namibia¹

by

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In the first part of my paper I introduce the Namibian press as a whole. I highlight the structure of the press, its orientation to material published and its political significance. I illustrate these points with examples from three specific newspapers. In the second section, accepting 'the freedom of the press' as a basic political right existing in Namibia, I discuss the actual political conditions under which the press operates there with reference to the relationship between the press and the state. Following this, I address the role of public radio (NBC); the structure of its programming, its development as an institution and its present significance within Namibia. In the fourth and concluding part I present a summary of the similarities and differences between these two media forms.

The comparative approach followed throughout the paper, namely contrasting the press with public radio resulted from my previous research. My report on the Namibian press is based largely on research conducted in Namibia in 1996 with Lorena Rizzo. At the time we followed the historical background, the origin and the direction of an actual debate through articles in the papers. The debate revolved around the building of a hydro-electric power plant at Epupa on the Kunene.² During this process various newspapers were systematically analysed dating from the time of independence (1990) until 1996.³ We also interviewed newspaper editors and reporters working in Windhoek and in northern Namibia. My examination of the Namibian press and the attempt to understand its political role within post-colonial Namibia, requires the positioning of the press within the wider Namibian media landscape. Consequently, this led to the discussion of another medium in the country, namely that of public radio. In 1998 additional interviews were conducted and additional information gathered, which further contributed towards this paper.

¹ Except for an update of circulation figures of the various newspapers, this version of the present paper, translated into English by Ursula Dentlinger Mussgnug, does not differ in content from the original one presented by the author at the workshop "Medien und Politische Kommunikation", Konferenz, Vereinigung der Afrikanisten in Deutschland (VAD), 8.-10. October 1998, Bayreuth, Germany. The central argument does, however, still apply at the time of publication.

² All interviews referred to were conducted with Lorena Rizzo. For the debate mentioned, see: Giorgio Miescher. "Epupa, Kaoko, Namibia. Analyse einer oeffentlichen Debatte im postkolonialen Namibia. Kontinuitaeten und Diskontinuitaeten kolonialer Konzeptionen." Unpublished M.A. Thesis.

³ Giorgio Miescher & Lorena Rizzo: "Epupa, Water, Energy, 'indigenous/tribal Peoples' and Chieftaincy. A Bibliography of Namibian Newspaper Articles 1990-1996 with special Reference to Kaoko". Basel, 1998.

1. The Namibian Press

The Media-landscape: Variety on a Small-scale

A brief overview of the Namibian media-landscape presents the following picture: There are three daily newspapers (*Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Republikein 2000*, *The Namibian*), two appearing twice a week (*New Era*, *Namib Times*) and two weekly newspaper (*Windhoek Observer*, *Namibia Economist*). In addition to these there are some isolated local papers appearing sporadically and having a minimal circulation. - In this paper I do not consider the free weekly publication *Plus*, with a circulation of approximately 8,000 copies, distributed largely in Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. - There is no magazine playing anything more than a marginal role either due to its circulation or its political significance. Hence, within the Namibian context 'the press' can be equated with 'newspapers'.⁴

The total circulation of all newspapers reaches about 60,000 copies, the Friday edition of the daily newspapers being more voluminous, and having a higher circulation.^{5:a} The circulation of the individual papers all range between 5,000 and 14,000 copies. The multilingualism of Namibia is reflected in its newspapers: Of the main newspapers three (*The Namibian*, *New Era*, *Windhoek Observer*) are published mostly in the official language, English. The *Namibia Economist* is available only in English. The *Republikein 2000* is written largely in Afrikaans; whereas the *Allgemeine Zeitung* appears only in German. *The Namib Times* is written in both English and Afrikaans. Furthermore, articles in *New Era* appear in most Namibian languages; similarly to *The Namibian* which may carry articles in Oshiwambo.^{5:b} No exact figures exist for the size of the readership, but as a rule it is assumed that there are on average four readers to each copy sold.⁶

It should be mentioned in this context, that three Windhoek papers can thus far be read on the Internet. These three are *The Namibian* (www.namibian.com.na), *Namibia Economist* (www.economist.com.na) and *Republikein 2000* (www.republikein.com.na).

A central characteristic of the Namibian media landscape is, therefore, its variety on a small scale: a relatively low circulation is shared by a relatively large number of newspapers, appearing in a variety of languages, some of which even carrying articles in

⁴ In his M.A. Thesis "The Alternative Press in Namibia 1960-1990 (Rhodes University, 1996) William Heuva describes the rather variable alternative press particularly prevalent during the 80s (mostly weekly and monthly periodicals), which lost in significance after independence.

^{5:a} Circulation figures are according to MISA, the Namibian Institute of Southern Africa, in S(outhern) A(frican) M(edia) D(irectory), Windhoek, 1999; which according to my information are slightly elevated: *Allgemeine Zeitung*: 5,500; *Republikein 2000*: 14,500; *The Namibian*: 10,000-11,000; *New Era*: 7000; *Windhoek Observer*: 11,000; *Namibia Economist*: 10,000; *Namib Times*: 5,500

^{5:b} *Allgemeine Zeitung*: German; *Republikein 2000*: Afrikaans, partly English; *Namibia Economist*: English; *The Namibian*: English, partially Oshiwambo; *New Era*: multilingual; *Windhoek Observer*: English, partially Afrikaans; *Namib Times*: English and Afrikaans

⁶ Only one systematic study of newspaper readers is known to me. It is an unpublished study done by NEPRU for *The Namibian*. It reports a ratio of 4,5:1 readers to one paper, whereby in individual cases this ratio can grow to 10:1. See: "A newspaper for the future. Readers have the say on *The Namibian*." In *The Namibian*, 3. March, 1995; 6-7

more than one language in each edition. This variety in their availability, however, is largely restricted to the capital, Windhoek, with the exception of a few other towns in central Namibia. In contrast, in the north of the country, the area of the largest population concentration, only *New Era* and occasionally *The Namibian* are for sale. Hence, the availability of newspapers reflects the socio-economic and structural discrepancies of the country, as they exist between the urban and rural areas, and between the north and the centre of the country. In essence, a Namibian press is, therefore, a Windhoek press. This principle is further reflected its organization: Most offices of these papers are located in Windhoek and it is there too that they are printed. The vast expanses of the country alone make a wide-spread supply and adequate reporting expensive and unrealistic in the light of the small circulation numbers. A few exceptions in this regard are *New Era*, which has a country-wide reportage - as well as a distribution network, while *The Namibian* at least has one office with a single journalist in northern Namibia (Oshakati) and recently acquired another one on the coast (Swakopmund/Walvis Bay); finally, the *Namib Times*, a regional paper, produced and sold at the coast. Otherwise the papers rely on sporadic contributions from freelance reporters or are required to send their Windhoek journalists away on reporting trips.

The variety of newspapers in the Namibian press-landscape described above is lately giving way to pressure. During the past two years alone one daily paper (*Windhoek Advertiser*) and one weekly newspaper (*Tempo*) have disappeared. Competition is strong and newspapers find themselves in the following dilemma: no increase in volume of circulation is possible within the restricted readership, and at the same time, revenue through advertising remains stagnant. Furthermore, widening the distribution to cover areas beyond Windhoek, presupposes increased expense not within the already meagre budget of publishers. Additional financial resources simply cannot be raised by the papers themselves; but will have to be acquired from a third party. Only *New Era* receives subsidies from the state, while the others - according to their own assertions - receive no such financial support.⁷

To make matters worse, evidence of the diminishing role of private contributions to the newspapers is visible in the partial withdrawal from the newspaper world of the Democratic Media Holding. This media concern, connected to the opposition, DTA, and headed by its former leader Dirk Mudge, held at least half market share and published three daily and one weekly paper in 1996. Now only two daily papers are still in the possession of the holding, namely *Republikein 2000* and *Allgemeine Zeitung*. According to the editor of the latter paper, Eberhard Hofmann, the publishers are forced to show a balanced budget.⁸

Profile of three Newspapers

After this general overview of the Namibian press, let us look at three newspapers in some depth. These are *Die Allgemeine Zeitung*, *The Namibian* and *New Era*. These three

⁷ *The Namibian* was strongly supported by the EU until independence, but must now support itself, according to the information of its publisher, Gwen Lister. Interview with Gwen Lister, 11.11.1996

⁸ Interview with Eberhard Hofmann, Windhoek 2.10.1996

papers make up between one third and one half of the total circulation of all daily and weekly papers and cover the major political positions. I start my discussion with the oldest and end it with the most recently established paper.

Allgemeine Zeitung:

As mentioned above, the *Allgemeine Zeitung* is owned by the Democratic Media Holding; but has editorial autonomy. The number of copies published daily amounts to between 4,000 and 5,500; to these are added between 8,000 and 14,000 copies of the monthly tourist-supplement.⁹ This supplement is included in the paper, but is also distributed free of charge to tourists.¹⁰ The *Allgemeine Zeitung* is financed from its sales and revenue from advertising. The Namibian readers of the paper are described as follows by its editor-in-chief, Eberhard Hofmann:

"I would say, that the *Allgemeine Zeitung* is read in almost every German-speaking household in Namibia. Not every household has subscribed to it, but it is read in most of them. The same applies to the distribution. The majority [of the copies] are sold [to German readers] in Windhoek, but then also in Swakopmund, Luderitzbucht, Helmeringhausen, Gobabis, Tsumeb, Grootfontein, Outjo; especially the [German] farmers order the paper."¹¹

According to Hofmann the aim of his newspaper is not only to report on general incidents in Namibia, but also to report on the social life of German-speaking Namibians. Since its readership is restricted to one specific and small language group - albeit an economically strong one - the possibility of raising the readership is minimal. To safeguard its readership, therefore, it tries to appeal politically to a potentially wide range of readers. Not surprising then, that Hofmann positions his paper in the political centre. He thereby distances himself both from the occasional German-national phases sporadically evident during the past eighty years of his paper's existence, as well as from its obvious anti-SWAPO orientation during the freedom struggle.¹² This placement in the political centre reflects a certain satisfaction with the presently ruling party. If there been fear of SWAPO before and immediately after independence and great concern about expropriation of land, this no longer is the case. Today it is greatly appreciated that the government did not radically alter the status quo.

"Looking at the political situation from the point of view of the newspaper, we appreciate the politics of reconciliation [of the government]. And that no - may we call it - ethnic

⁹ If not otherwise indicated these facts stem from Eberhard Hofmann; interview, Windhoek 2.10.1996; 9.10.1996 and 30.7. 1998

¹⁰ via tourist organizations in Namibia and the Namibian Bureau of Tourism, Frankfurt, Germany

¹¹ interview with Eberhard Hofmann, Windhoek 2.10.1996

¹² As Hofmann holds the position of editor-in-chief only since the beginning of 1996, it is possible for him to define his paper in this light. Hereby he distinguishes himself from his predecessor of 14 years standing, Hans Feddersen. This new policy of opening up the paper is being continued: In 1998 it parted ways with a staff-member strongly-founded in her colonial thinking, (Brigitte Weidlich), inviting Henning Melber, known for his pro-SWAPO orientation to become political commentator of the paper.

cleansing occurred after independence. The government had the power [to undertake] a kind of.....would have been capable of creating new conditions along this line. Surely, it could be deduced from the political slogans of the time, what one could have done. According to the model of Angola or Mozambique, how independence was realized there. This did not happen in Namibia, which is a situation to be paid tribute to, to be acknowledged. This is good politics, which directly follows the constitution.”¹³

Even though Hofmann avoids the term ‘opposition paper’ and stresses the autonomy of the editorship, by placing the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in the political centre, it is difficult for him to deny its connection with DTA. In spite of its new editor-in-chief the *Allgemeine Zeitung* is part of the colonial heritage of Namibia and in many respects the mouthpiece of the old ‘European’ elite. At the same time, though, it also represents a tradition of a civil society operating according to certain democratic rules, upheld by this specific language group and small elite within the Namibian population as a whole.¹⁴

The Namibian:

The circulation of the *The Namibian* ranges between 10,000 and 11,000 copies.¹⁵ It is published by “Free Press of Namibia”, a non-profit company, whose only function is the publication of this newspaper.¹⁶ It is financed by its advertisements and to a lesser extent by its sales.¹⁷ *The Namibian* was founded in 1985 as a “newspaper training subject”¹⁸ and was financed by the European Community. The purpose was, on the one hand, to train journalists, who would subsequently act as a voice to the previously voiceless men and women and, furthermore, to thereby support the independence process. Even though they were regularly intimidated and threatened by the administration, these newspaper people made full use of the legally provided scope and positioned themselves unambiguously on the side of SWAPO. Following independence *The Namibian* maintained this position and continued to be a platform and voice for the public in opposition to the powers-that-be and accordingly revised its relationship with the new party in power:

“After independence we had to review our role; and we continue to be independent and we thought we should also keep the new government on its toes and keep them accountable and transparent. Which is why we are in the forefront to sort of investigate, of reporting and keeping an eye on corruption and so, [even] now. So we feel our role has been the same prior to independence and [as] now, but you get a different view from the ruling party who will say: Yes, *The Namibian* was in favor of SWAPO prior to independence,

¹³ interview with Eberhard Hofmann, Windhoek, 2.10.1996

¹⁴ compare Andre du Pisani, “SWA/Namibia. The Politics of Continuity and Change.” Johannesburg, 1986.

¹⁵ See footnote 5:a for circulation figures in S(outh) A(frican) M(edial) D(irectory), 1999

¹⁶ see: “The Namibian. Ten Years of Independence Reporting. Still telling it like it is”, Windhoek, 1995; 26. This edition appeared on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the paper. It featured an overview of the newspaper’s history, opinions of prominent Namibians and some general articles on the Namibian press.

¹⁷ If not otherwise mentioned, information stems from an interview with Gwen Lister, Windhoek 11.11.1996

¹⁸ *ibid.*

after independence it turned against us. Which is not the case but we just feel it's very important to have a critical press in a emergent democracy."¹⁹

This new relationship to the now ruling party is reflected in its new motto; whereas formerly this had been "Bringing Africa South", it now reads "Telling It like It Is". Its readership, too, has since changed. Gwen Lister comments on this as follows:

"It is a national readership. Although primarily our support base has always been in northern Namibia, so the Namibian has always [had] a primarily black readership. It's only very recently, since independence, that it has become kind of acceptable to read the Namibian. Prior to independence, if a White would buy the paper, they [would] turn it inside out, so you couldn't see *The Namibian*, because even the name was equated with communism prior to independence.... But now, I mean, you will find, you have travelled a bit, you looked about the country, you looked at Windhoek, and you see it's read by white people now. I think mostly the whites read it now, because they want to know what the government is doing and so."²⁰

The Namibian had and continues to enjoy a good reputation, both within as well as outside Namibia. It is the most independent local paper with no connection to any particular political party or social group; in fact, it follows its own specific political and social principles. One of its editors, Jean Sutherland, outlines it as ... "a vigorous commitment to democracy, human rights and social justice".²¹

The range of reports covered by the paper has experienced a widening over the past years: Apart from the usual topics of "social and political inequality" more wide-ranging themes such as "ecology", "protection of minority rights" are increasingly dealt with. In fact, these are themes that are en vogue in the "international scene of the NGO", i.e. Non Government Organization. To what extent this change is due to it being the best-known Namibian paper accessible on the Internet, is a question that remains to be answered.

New Era:

New Era has a circulation of approximately 7,000 copies. At first a weekly paper, but since July 1996 it now appears twice weekly. It was founded by the government in 1991 and is, except for the income from advertisements, still financed by the government. The creation of a government-owned newspaper was justified by the Ministry of Information as follows:

"As a newly independent country, Namibia needs the contribution of its press to the task of unification of the country's different racial and ethnic groups into a comprehensive nation. It was, partly, against this background that the government decided to launch a

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Jean Sutherland, "The Struggle continues...", in: *The Namibian*. Ten Years of Independent Reporting. Still telling it like it is, "Windhoek, 1995;31

state-sponsored newspaper to act as a unifying factor in the nation, and help in the effort to improve the quality of print journalism in the country, besides meeting the need to bring government policy and other activities to the consciousness of all citizens.”²²

The founding of *New Era* resulted in critical commentaries from the rest of the press, who saw the new paper as an unfair competition in the fight for income flowing from advertising.²³ Loud criticism was expressed even in Parliament, directed mainly at an additional costly platform for one-sided presentation of SWAPO policy.²⁴ Feelings cooled down again after a while and criticism stopped being voiced openly. When it became known, however, that the discrepancy between copies printed and actual sales resulted in advantages for no one other than the waste-paper dealer, the paper was once again accused of squandering the people's taxes.²⁵ Since that last incident, it now appears as if the government-sponsored competition is grudgingly accepted.²⁶ The strength of the paper no doubt lies in its region-wide anchorage, with personnel stationed in most areas. These reporters not only present their special area to the Namibian readership in general, but also write articles of local interest to readers in their individual languages. In addition to this, it is its staff that organize the distribution of their paper in their specific areas.²⁷ In spite of their political connection to SWAPO, the editorship emphasizes its autonomy. James Sankwasa, one of the directors of *New Era*, says in this regard:

“There is not a single time in *New Era*'s history, where the President, the Minister of Information or the Prime Minister have come to the newspaper and said: write this story, don't write [that] one. We have an independent editorial. This is where we differ with other countries where newspapers are owned by the Government. Because their terms are dictated by Government, but here in Namibia the only thing we get from the Government is money.”²⁸

Sankwasa puts his ideas regarding the responsibility of his paper in even more definite terms:

“We have an independent editorial like any other newspaper although it's owned by the government. The reason is there also, a newspaper is an information institution and it's supposed to give [a] guidance. So the Government, where the Government is wrong, we must tell them they are wrong. Where they [think] they are right, we still must tell [them] may be here [you are wrong]). So, we play a watchdog role, not because we must defend them, no, if they are wrong they are wrong. If the Government is right, it is right. If it is wrong, it is wrong. That's where we stand.”²⁹

²² Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, no date; 15

²³ compare *Allgemeine Zeitung*; 4.6.1991, 8.7.1991, 11.7.1996; *The Namibian* 7.6.1991

²⁴ compare *Allgemeine Zeitung*; 8.7.1991; *The Namibian*, 19.7. 1991, 19.2.1992

²⁵ compare *The Namibian*, 11.1.1994

²⁶ compare *Allgemeine Zeitung*, article on the occasion of their 5th anniversary; 15.7.1996

²⁷ Hence Weich Mupya, stationed in Opuwo, not only reports on the Kunene region, but also drives some 300kms to Oshakati to fetch the latest edition of his paper there.

²⁸ interview with James Sankwasa, 4.10.1996

²⁹ *ibid*

New Era thus does not only report on the happenings on the political front, but certainly pursues some critical journalism as well. Yet it must be noted, that an article by *New Era* on a debate in Parliament, for instance, will clearly emphasize different points than an article covering the same debate in a paper aligned to the DTA. *New Era* does criticize the government, but these comments appear less in leading articles, and more in background analyses or in expressed opinions of interviewees. In our reading of the paper, *New Era* will wait in the case of politically sensitive issues, until they can be commented on. On the whole, the impression remains that the editorial approach is, in fact, determined by its political closeness to SWAPO and that a limit to its autonomy is set by its monetary dependence on the state.

2. The Role of the Press; its operational Limits and political Importance in Namibia

In the previous section I described the form and structure of the Namibian press in general and illustrated these with detailed examples from three papers. I now address the political limits under which the press operates. I also make an initial assessment of the political importance of these limitations.

Freedom of the Press:

Freedom of the press and other media is guaranteed by the Namibian constitution under Article 21.³⁰ The guarantee of this freedom does not simply exist in writing, but is widely exercised, particularly, by the printed press. In response to a question relating to this point, the editor-in-chief of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, commented as follows in October 1996:

“On the whole the freedom of the press has been upheld in Namibia following independence, this means, in regard to the printed press, the newspapers. Nobody has been taken to court by a minister, so far. The newspapers all report very freely.”³¹

Hofmann is not alone in this opinion. Other editors-in-chief and journalists have expressed similar views about the freedom of the press.³² This evaluation still applied in 1998, even though for the first time a newspaperman had been accused of neglect of court and given a four months’ sentence.³³

³⁰ Article 21.1(a): “All persons shall have the right to: freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media,” in: “The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia,” Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Windhoek, no date; 13

³¹ interview with Eberhard Hofmann, Windhoek, 2.10.1996

³² These assertions of newspaper-people are supported by the independent media-watch institute “Media Institute of Southern Africa” located in Windhoek; see also David Lush & David Nthengwe, “So this is Democracy? Report on Media Freedom in Southern Africa,” Windhoek, 1996. See also introduction to SAMD, 1999.

³³ This sentence was passed on Hannes Smith, the editor of the *Windhoek Observer*. He had claimed to possess some documents pertaining to the politically highly sensitive murder of Anton Lubowski,

In contrast to the newspapers, Hofmann attributes less freedom of expression to the state radio- and TV stations:

“The situation differs where the radio is concerned; because it is an institution subsidized by the government. Some cabinet members think, that because of state financing, they have the right to directly influence the radio, but the law defines this differently. In spite of this, though, it does happen in practice. For instance, the President returns from Cape Town and wants to address the nation after the 8 o'clock news. Then everybody falls over backwards. They have no choice in the matter.”³⁴

Pressure on the press can be exerted in more subtle form, as Hofmann's colleague from *The Namibian* describes:

“There is an awful lot of self-censorship on the part of journalists working in the various papers and so that is obviously a problem. But one cannot there accuse the government of actually directly interfering. [It is] The journalists themselves. It is a small society, it is really incestuous, a reporter working at the NBC (Namibia Broadcasting Corporation) will not do an article or a piece that is critical to SWAPO, because he or she may want a job in the government sooner or later. So, that kind of culture of fear and secrecy is very much still prevalent, so it's left to certain people all the time. I will find reporters from other newspapers who will phone me, they say: you do the story, because you're prepared to sort of take whatever comes.”³⁵

Gwen Lister sees the freedom of the press operating in Namibia in relative terms. According to her many newspaper-people practice a form of self-censorship. This, she believes, is due primarily to the structure of Namibian society. It is a small society with a small elite. These conditions create a certain mentality, which she calls ‘a culture of fear’, a mentality, which is a hindrance to direct discussion and open critique. But even graver than the problem of self-censorship, she considers to be the difficulty of information gathering:

“But what is more worrying that is that while we have press freedom we don't have freedom of information. And it's very difficult at times to get information out of government as I said [before], maybe a sort of heritage from the colonial era, also from the liberation movement days. But every thing is kind of secret and you know officials think, we can't tell them about this, this is confidential, that is secret. So we have a lot of problems in that regard, getting access to information.”³⁶

lawyer and member of SWAPO in 1989, a case that has remained unsolved. Upon the court's request to present these, Smith would or could not do so. His sentence produced reactions varying from criticism to public assertions, that he had been determined to become the first journalist to go to jail in Namibia. See: Statement for immediate release by the Media Institute of Southern Africa, Windhoek, 13., 15. And 20. February, 1998. Also *The Namibian*, 13.2.1998 or *New Era*, 6-8.3.1998

³⁴ interview with Eberhard Hofmann, Windhoek 2.10.1996

³⁵ interview with Gwen Lister, Windhoek 11.11.1997

³⁶ *ibid.*

Lister no doubt has good reasons for this opinion,³⁷ which does not mean, however, that other individuals may not have had different experiences. In contrast to her assertions, Christof Maletsky, journalist with *The Namibian*, describes his relationship with government representatives as absolutely cooperative.³⁸ Lister's comments raise the question of whether the government and administration actually welcome a public check on their activities or whether they put up with these only as far as they are unavoidable. An answer to this question is not easy to find, particularly since curbing the media is a phenomenon almost impossible to prove, and in Namibia itself differing interpretations of this phenomenon are held and with reason.³⁹

The Government and the Press or 'I would like to help the President'

The relationship between the government and the press is full of tension which often erupts into a public row. For instance, in 1995 the prime-minister, Geingob, accused the media of fighting a war of misinformation". This naturally led to strong reactions from newspaper people and resulted in sharply formulated leading articles.⁴⁰ Similarly, in an extensive interview published in *New Era* in December 1996, the state president Sam Nujoma expressed his opinion on the press. To the question of how he evaluated the media and the opposition parties as "public watchdogs" in Namibia, he answered as follows:⁴¹

"The press in this country is reactionary. It is an enemy press. It must be denounced. This is not a Namibian press. It is foreigners who are leading the press, here. They are either South African or have their own foreign tradition or culture. I am waiting for Namibians to take over the media and then they can talk about Namibia. The press is supposed to say things that are genuinely facing the Nation. The press here is blaming us for what colonialism did for over 100 year. So, you the members of the press, including *New Era*, you have to write things that are genuinely Namibian, things which are happening here, the reality so that people can read. We accept constructive criticism, but we can't be blamed for things which were caused by colonialism."⁴²

³⁷ So important does she consider this issue, that she wrote a column "The Freedom in Information Gathering" on the occasion of the World-press Day on the 3. May, 1998. See also *The Namibian*, 30.4.1998

³⁸ interview with Christoph Maletsky, Windhoek 4.10.1996

³⁹ The basic problems of working within the Namibian press as mentioned by Lister seem to me more central than the more structural difficulties of the press (for instance, the training of journalists) as mentioned by other authors. See Anna Eratus & Jutta Franz, "Media Training in Namibia", Windhoek, 1995

⁴⁰ For a detailed description of this event, see David Lush & David Nthengwe; (1996; 24-25). In the same publication many similar incidences are enumerated for 1995; 22-23. The same prime-minister, however, two years later characterized a stressful relationship between the government and the press as normal, without it necessarily becoming an antagonistic one. See: *New Era*, 6-9.12.1997.

⁴¹ In the original this question read: "Lastly, what is your assessment of the media and the opposition parties as public watchdogs in this country?" (*New Era*, 6-8 December, 1996: 9)

⁴² *New Era*, 6-8.12.1996; 9

How should one understand Nujoma's comments? Firstly, one is struck by the fact, that, even though the question related both to the media in general as well as the opposition parties, Nujoma immediately related the term 'public watch-dogs' to the printed press! Thus, he connects the term neither to the opposition parties, nor to radio or television. This evaluation is of no surprise regarding the parliamentary opposition, which is hardly recognized as an opponent or a competition by the government. One reason for this being, that their representatives enjoy little credibility due to their long cooperation with the South Africans; alternatively, they were forced into submission by having been given well paid government posts.⁴³ How far this similarly applies to the reporting by the state radio and television, is discussed elsewhere. In contrast, the printed press is definitely a pivotal medium when the occasion demands critical commentary on government actions. The newspapers do criticize. This opportunity is liberally made use of both in the editorial, as well as in publication of readers' letters. However, here too there is evidence of the 'culture of fear', as mentioned by Lister. An indication of this is, for instance, not only the high incidence of anonymous letters or those signed with pseudonyms, but also the observation that the president is seldom attacked directly.⁴⁴

Obviously direct criticism of the President or the policies he pursues is to be found, particularly in those papers close to the political opposition.⁴⁵ Yet more often criticism is cloaked in terms such as "I would like to help the President". In September 1996, for instance, the President was criticized for clearly not having acted constitutionally in appointing an ombudsman. Christof Maletsky, journalist at *The Namibian*, comments on this incident as follows:

"We didn't see it as a criticism [of] the president but to help the government. We are the watchdogs of the constitution and we are helping, we are there for the people, to be like linking the people with the government."⁴⁶

As can be concluded from the accusations contained in the President's statement, these finer details of circumspection in reporting elude the President. Despite the political orientation of individual newspapers, he uses the umbrella term 'enemy press' as referring to all newspapers. In my opinion, this reflects less a description of reality, but more of an inability to confront public debate, which should be a pre-condition for a democratic society.⁴⁷

⁴³ see: Joseph Diescho, "Government and Opposition in Post-Independence Namibia: Perceptions and Performance." Windhoek, 1996; 9-11

⁴⁴ Joseph Diescho (1996; 13) speaks in this regard of the "Perfect Man" syndrome. By this he means that "President Sam Nujoma, being the father of the nation, is not supposed to be criticized by 'good Namibian patriots'. Only the 'misguided' ones, who either have hidden agendas or represent the cause of the enemy, criticize the President.

⁴⁵ The boulevard paper, the *Windhoek Observer*, comes to mind here, in which specifically Hannes Smith rarely minces his words.

⁴⁶ interview with Christoph Maletsky, Windhoek, 4.10.1996

⁴⁷ At least those editors-in-chief known to me must be credited with an attempt at serious journalism, as well as an honest attempt to debate the problems of the country, even though this approach is not necessarily reflected in every single article published in their newspaper.

Addressing Nujoma's second accusation, namely that the press is controlled by foreigners, Lister writes as follows in a column in *The Namibian* :

"If the President uses the word 'foreigner' in the context of those not holding Namibian citizenship, then I believe he is overwhelming wrong to accuse 'foreigners' of leading the press here, because it is simply untrue. If he is using 'foreigner' as a reference to 'white' then his point may have more validity but he will still have to justify his definition in terms of the Constitution, which [he] will be hard put to do under the circumstances."⁴⁸

In the same column Lister appeals for a more careful use of the term 'foreigner'; and warns of the nationalistic rhetoric, which equates 'Namibian' with 'good' and 'foreign' with 'bad'. It is, in fact, surprising for a number of reasons, that Nujoma should choose the categories 'black' and 'white' to describe a social conflict. Firstly, this kind of rhetoric directly contradicts the socialistic principles of SWAPO held at least until independence. Furthermore, he directly places his argument into the Apartheid scenario. Looked at from this perspective, Nujoma's form of argumentation confirms Mamdani's thesis, which states that post-colonial political elites in Africa try to evade their own responsibility with the use of a racist ideology containing a 'black'-'white' dichotomy.⁴⁹ Moreover, the comments made in the quoted newspaper interview are not an isolated case.⁵⁰ Even though, in my opinion, Nujoma's position is certainly supportable in nature, it is not so in its reasoning: whoever tries to discredit a political opponent by means of racist concepts that are invariably linked to the Apartheid regime, and thereby raises concepts of ethnic separation - such a person loses all persuasiveness in post-colonial Namibia.

Nujoma's comments about the press can, however, also be explained in terms of the history of SWAPO and thus in terms of the freedom struggle. They illustrate the problems of a political leadership, whose nature was largely shaped by a situation of war. SWAPO, as a political party, does not yet know the tradition of lengthy negotiation-processes preceding democratic decision making. This shortfall it shares with the larger Namibian society. The recent history of Namibia was characterized by war and authoritarian rule. With the arrival of independence, however, the situation for SWAPO has changed fundamentally. During the struggle the enemy was known, the aim to be gained clearly defined and any internal conflicts were not necessarily solved democratically but dealt with for the sake of unity. Now, as constituting the government, it is confronted with high, and often diverse expectations on the part of its people. Consequently, after eight years of rule SWAPO increasingly has to accept having its performance assessed as a ruling party. In the light of this background, it becomes clear why the press has become the presidential target. After all, it is the press that precisely observes and comments on the government's

⁴⁸ *The Namibian*, 13.12.1996, p.6

⁴⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, "Citizen and Subject. Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism.", Kampala/Cape Town/London, 1996

⁵⁰ In a speech in June 1998 pertaining to a debate about a planned hydro-electric power plant at Epupa, Nujoma launched a strong attack against 'whites' in general and the 'Legal Assistance Centre' in particular. He accused them of fostering tribalistic thinking in Namibia. The said speech aroused a fierce controversy in the press. See, for instance, *The Namibian*, 26.6.1998, 3.7.1998, 10.7.1998, 17.7.1998

success and failure. As Maletsky formulates it, the press's role of go-between, poised between government and people, remains largely misunderstood. More so, since at least in the urban centres, the press provides a platform for the public to formulate their criticism.⁵¹

These repeated attacks on the press by government members confirm the assertions by press people, that they do, in fact, have an important role to play in the political decision-making process in the capital, Windhoek. Consequently, the press certainly is capable of exerting an influence on political agendas. Questioned on this James Sankwasa of *New Era* answered as follows:

"We have a very decisive role [to play]. Beat[ing] corruption, the media picks up corruption and may influence the government and the final official. Be[ing] in the political line we may influence. If a political leader is wrong, he is wrong. We may influence the government to make a decision."⁵²

Sankwasa's colleagues would probably agree with his statement; even though it remains questionable whether "being in the political line" carries that much weight. That their voices are at least heard,⁵³ is confirmed by the work of the Ministry of Information, which on a regular basis translates and distributes condensed versions of important newspaper articles to cabinet ministers.⁵⁴

A tentative Conclusion:

Firstly, the form of the Namibian press, consisting of a number of newspapers - with no magazines of any importance being represented - and a total number about 60,000 copies printed regularly, can be described as 'variety on a small scale'. The relatively large number of newspapers appear in different languages, in fact, some carrying multi-lingual articles in one copy. During the past few years their numbers have, however, diminished.

Secondly, access to the press media is restricted due to different socio-economic factors, such as a restricted distribution network, the lack of linguistic proficiency within the population⁵⁵ or even lack of money of potential readers.⁵⁶ Namibia's inequalities are

⁵¹ On this point, I thought it surprising that Diescho describes the weakness of the opposition parties, but does not credit the press with any notable role in the political opposition. He sees this role as taken up by foreign governments and organized business. 1996; 12 -13

⁵² interview with James Sankwasa, Windhoek 4.10.1996. The influence of the press, according to him, is due to the existence of the freedom of the press in Namibia. The particular influence enjoyed by *New Era* he relates to its reportage being affiliated to SWAPO, the ruling party.

⁵³ This was confirmed by private conversations with government officials.

⁵⁴ According to Eberhard Hofmann, who worked in the Department of Information until 1996, such translations were made available up to this date. Interview with Eberhard Hofmann, Windhoek 2.10.1996

⁵⁵ The rate of illiteracy in Namibia is about 25% . See SAMD, 1999.; whereas 60% of the population can speak English.

⁵⁶ James Sankwasa, one of the two directors of *New Era* points out, that one can tell by the drop in sales when school fees are due. As Namibians turn over each penny on such occasions, the sales of newspapers drop markedly. Interview with James Sankwasa, Windhoek, 4.10.1996

reflected in the distribution of its newspapers: The Namibian press is largely a press of Windhoek and thereby addresses a privileged part of the population.

Thirdly, on a formal level the press in Namibia is free. On an informal level, however, newspaper people are seen as showing a lack of civil courage; whereas they themselves mention problems with information gathering and a wide-spread rejection on the part of the government, which ultimately reflects a lack of tradition in public debate on behalf of the ruling party. Thus the relationship between the press and the government is considered to be one of tension, whereas the relationship between the press and private business is not.

Fourthly, the press plays a major role in certain sections of Namibian society. It is capable of participating in the shaping of the political agenda. Its importance lies in its check on government actions and in being a public platform where written week-long debates occur in the form of letters to the editor.

It is noticeable that in discussions about labour relations and the significance of the media in Namibia, the printed press is divorced from radio and television. This explicit dichotomy is intended both by the printed press themselves, as well as by the government. In the following part of this presentation I will pursue this dichotomy in an analysis of the structure and significance of public radio and then to a lesser extent also of television. Subsequently I will comment on their similarities and differences.

3. Public Radio (and Television) in Namibia:

Considered in total the Namibian population is not really one of newspaper readers.⁵⁷ One can assume an approximate figure of between 200,000 and 250,000 readers of Namibian papers. In fact, Namibia's mass medium is the radio.

Radio NBC and its political Function in Namibia:

The most popular radio station is the government sender NBC (Namibian Broadcasting Corporation), which - according to their own figures - is received by 90% of the 1,6 Mill inhabitants of Namibia.⁵⁸ Since 1994 NBC gets strong competition in the larger Windhoek area from a smaller, but growing number of private radio stations. In the majority of cases these are highly commercial stations, featuring a large musical and advertising component (for instance, Channel 7, Radio 99 or Radio Antenna, Radio Energy). An exception to these is 'Alternative Radio' Katutura Community Radio well known for its programming style, allowing listeners to help create their own programs.⁵⁹ Many more such

⁵⁷ Heuva in this regard mentions the lack of a "newspaper reading culture." 1996:138

⁵⁸ Information given by Ben Mulongeni, general director of NBC; interview with Ben Mulongeni, Asser L. Ntinda and Rector Mutelo, Windhoek 24.8.1998

⁵⁹ My attention was directed primarily to the NBC. Information on the setting up of different private radios can be found, for example, for Radio Energy in *Windhoek Advertiser*, 3.10.1996; for Katutura

'Community Radio' stations are being set up in other regions with strong financial support from international organizations.⁶⁰ In spite of this competition, NBC is the most important radio station; ultimately because of its overwhelming state financing.⁶¹

The programming structure of NBC is dual in nature: its main program is in English, yet it also transmits its 'language services'. These are programs in eight different languages. It is remarkable is that they are not produced only in Windhoek, but in six regional studios throughout the land.⁶² These 'language services' broadcast their own programs for up to ten hours a day. For special broadcasts, though, or at night they switch over into the main program.⁶³

This particular dual-language structure of its programs is a remnant of the South African colonial era. The politics of spatial and institutional segregation according to racial and ethnic criteria of the South African administration was reflected even in the program aired on state radio. When the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) in 1969 set up a regional subsidiary with its own FM-transmission station three so-called Bantu-radio stations were put on the air (namely, Radio Owambo, Radio Herero, Radio Nama/Damara).⁶⁴ The principle of 'one program, one ethnic group' was taken over by the SWABC (South West African Broadcasting Corporation) founded in 1979 by the state of SWA-Namibia (at the time not recognized internationally). Eight such different ethnic radio stations were run by the SWABC. The aim of these was to promote ethnic identities.⁶⁵ These ethnic stations were, however, incorporated into a pronounced hierarchical and centralist organization, which determined form and content of programs. The government kept strict control over SWABC. Any unacceptable reporting was cut short and could lead to potential dismissal of the reporter.⁶⁶

Following independence in 1990 direct state control of the radio was removed, at least officially. The radio station NBC was no longer to be the voice of the government ('state broadcaster'), but instead to be a public medium responsible and open to the society as a whole (a 'public broadcaster'). The first consequence of this change was the appointment

Community Radio in *Sister*, 20. July/Aug. 1995, for Radio Antenna in *Die Republikein* 21.4.1994, for Radio 99 in *Tempo*, 17.4.1994, for Channel 7 in *The Namibian* 1.12.1993. See also SAMD, 1999.

⁶⁰ Compare : Eehana Community Radio (in: *The Windhoek Advertiser*, 24.9.1997) and Hardap Community Radio (in: *New Era*, 10.7.1998)

⁶¹ According to information from NBC state sponsorship amounts to 71% of the total budget (radio and television) of 64 Million NamDollar. (statement for 1997 from: "NBC, Annual Report 1996-7". Windhoek, 1997)

⁶² These regions are: Katima Mulimo, Keetmannshoop, Otjiwarongo, Oshakati, Rundu, and with limitations Walvis Bay. Interview with Ben Mulongeni, Windhoek 24.8.1998

⁶³ For instance, for the early news broadcast at 7.00 a.m. or the popular chat-show between 9.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. compare *The Namibian*, 19.6.1996; *Advertiser*, 6.2.1996 or "NBC, annual report 1996-7": 18

⁶⁴ For a comparison of the radio in Namibia before 1990, see the annual reports of SWAUK/SWABC 1979-1989. A particularly good summary is to be found in the report on the occasion of its 10th anniversary in 1989.

⁶⁵ The structure of these 'language services' were only altered in 1987 to include the so-called 'national service', broadcast in the two official languages of the time, Afrikaans and English

⁶⁶ Compare Heuva (1996), 85-86 and *The Namibian*, 22.5.1987 and 4.9.1987

a council composed of independent individuals, responsible for determining guidelines for future programming.⁶⁷ This flattened out previous hierarchies.⁶⁸ The existing program structure with different language sections was not to be eliminated, but to be combined with politics of 'nation building'; the aim here being to act against the existing tribalistic and centrifugal forces.⁶⁹ The national service in existence since 1987 was now transformed into an actual main program in English, which the other language programs would switch into on a daily basis.

The radio is still considered by the government to be their main mass medium for the spreading of their policy, as expressed in a publication by the Ministry of Information:

“ At present, radio is the only communication medium in the country which has achieved a genuine mass audience; it's the main medium on which government relies to communicate its messages to the public especially to the rural dwellers.”⁷⁰

In other words, the NBC is the main means whereby the government communicates its policy. This is reflected in a certain sense of duty to the government (which also applies to the TV). Therefore, apart from the general aim of conveying information and entertainment, the NBC has an explicitly political task, which can be summarized with the concepts of “education”, ‘development’ and ‘nation building’.⁷¹

An important innovation to their programming following the colonial period was the introduction of ‘chat-shows’. In these the listeners are requested to express their personal opinions on issues not stipulated prior to the program. These programs are extremely popular and those individuals phoning in to them make use of the opportunity to address issues important to them.⁷² ‘Chat-shows’ are on the air daily during the week both during the main program, as well as during the individual language services.⁷³

The ‘chat-shows’ are often a source of controversy, which on occasion leads to the termination of a broadcast. The reasons may vary in nature, but they throw light on the freedom of expression, as well as the role played by the radio in Namibia. For instance, individuals or groups may be attacked in a discriminating fashion for their race or ethnic

⁶⁷ See: David Lush, “Under Fire.” In: MISA Free Press Dec/Jan 1994/95;16-17.

⁶⁸ Regarding this internal restructuring 1990/91 see Nahum Gorelick: “What is the role of institutional public broadcasting in the process of democratisation in Namibia?” , Windhoek, 1995;5-7

⁶⁹ See Nahum Gorelick, “The issue of Language on the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation Airwaves.” Paper presented for the Independent Broadcasting Authority, Windhoek 19.4.95

⁷⁰ Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, “Namibia’s Information Policy”, Windhoek, no date; 16.

⁷¹ See Former Director-General Nahum Gorelick, “What is the role of institutional public Broadcasting in the process of Democratisation in Namibia.”, Windhoek 1995a. These lines of argument were generally supported by Ben Mulongeni 1998 (Interview, Windhoek 24.8.1998).

⁷² By this the number of participants are once again limited since not all Namibians have access to a telephone. For these broadcast discussions in NBC, see the short essay of Wendi A. Haugh, “Conflicting Discourse of Identity in Post-Apartheid Namibia.”, in : Penn African Studies Newsletter Vol. II, 1997; 4-6

⁷³ In the main program twice daily for one hour (August 1998): during the morning between 9.00 and 10.00 ; and in the evening between 21.30 and 22.30. (Interview Ben Mulongeni, Windhoek 24.8.1998)

affiliation.⁷⁴ It also happens, however, that fellow-citizens are publicly attacked on personal grounds. For instance, before tens of thousands of listeners someone may be accused of infidelity and named.⁷⁵ This happens in spite of the regularity with which at the beginning of each program, participants are admonished that the limits of their freedom of speech should be adhered to and that, furthermore, no racist, tribalistic, sexist or any other discriminatory comments should be made during the course of the broadcast. Not only are personal facts aired during these programs, but information publicly shared that may produce dissatisfaction amongst individuals in public office, due to criticisms voiced against them or due to the line the public discussion of controversial issues may take. Nahum Gorelick, director-general of NBC between 1989 and 1995, comments as follows in this regard:

“However, having a divisive nature, these programs (chat-shows) are often the reason for criticism of the NBC concerning division rather than unity, one of the many dilemmas of state vs. public broadcasting. Used to government dictating them, and now under a government they chose, Namibians[are] inclined to accept the NBC as a state broadcaster rather than a public one. This puts the NBC in the difficult position of guarding its independence against government clamp downs on the one hand, but doing so much on its own, without the necessary support basis needed from the people.”⁷⁶

Hence, according to Gorelick the NBC strives towards independence, but this independence is jeopardized by the NBC's historical role of alignment with the government and consequently the potential intervention from that source. Furthermore, this newly acquired independence from the government is not yet fully recognized by the people and still lacks their support base.⁷⁷ Mulongeni, director-general since last year, also maintains that independence from the government is the central indicator of his paper's autonomy.⁷⁸

The TV broadcaster NBC:

Television was introduced in Namibia in 1981. The state transmitter was integrated into SWABC and is part of NBC today. Approximately 40% of the population have reception, which amounts to a total of about 250,000 viewers.⁷⁹ The majority of these has no alternative to NBC. Only a very small number can receive other programs via 'Pay-TV' or satellite.⁸⁰ NBC offers an entertainment program (including music and many soap-

⁷⁴ Lush enumerates a few examples (1994/95)

⁷⁵ *ibid*

⁷⁶ Nahum Gorelick (1995a); 21

⁷⁷ Gorelick's comment can be understood in that many Namibian radio listeners may ask themselves, why a radio station should suddenly be open to all people (including the opposition) after having been aligned with the government for decades.

⁷⁸ Interview with Ben Mulongeni, Windhoek 24.8.1998

⁷⁹ Figures from Hinrich Thoelken, "Freiheit die ich meine.", in Namibia Magazin, 1/96, p.29. Mulongeni mentions 45% potential listeners.

⁸⁰ Only Rehoboth has a private local TV-station (Reho-TV), broadcasting since 1992. Compare: Freepress 4/96

operas)⁸¹, sport broadcasts and a daily extensive news program. For airing of the latter, NBC relies on the support of the Southern African Broadcasting Association in Harare. This establishment collects news items from southern Africa and distributes them to the individual national stations. About 20% of all broadcasts are locally produced, the remaining 80% are purchased elsewhere. Even though the intention is to enlarge the number of locally produced programs, the following impediments thwart this attempt: Firstly, self-production is expensive. Secondly, a rather high standard is required to satisfy public taste, which may easily prefer a good American serial program above a Namibian one.⁸² In general, productions are broadcast in English, with exceptions of local programs such as 'Kalanami'. Apart from the intention to entertain and inform, television is used by the government to show itself largely to an audience of representatives of international organizations and foreign countries, many of whom have staff in Windhoek.⁸³ The only chance for viewers to influence the programming is offered by participating in the discussion in the weekly broadcast 'Talk of the Nation'. This program involves a discussion by a panel of any current event, after which viewers are invited to phone in with their questions. This well-moderated program has the handicap of having a duration of only 45 minutes. Sadly, it seems as though the allocated time is over, just as the discussions really get under way. Political reports are presented in the additional two programs 'Current Affairs' and 'Public Eye', albeit without public participation. On the whole, the number of broadcasts involving critical commentaries on local political issues is noticeably smaller than with Radio NBC.

Regarding television and radio in conjunction, one can argue that NBC has a strong basis in the country. In fact, Radio NBC is the actual mass medium in Namibia. Commercial private radio stations, putting largely music programs on the air, are concentrated in the larger Windhoek area. At present non-commercial 'Community Radio Stations' receive a strong support from international financiers, but Radio NBC remains the favourite mainly because it broadcasts a main program incorporating eight different language services. As an institution NBC is a product of colonial times, but was re-organized after independence and its social function redefined. What remained, however, was the demand by the government for it to continue its role as its personal medium. Amongst the employees of NBC there once existed a certain degree of uncertainty, as to how their new role was to be put into practice. The 'chat shows' play an important public role as a forum for discussion. Time and again the public expression of controversies leads to conflict. However, because of these daily broadcasts of 'chat-shows' the radio can influence the political agenda of the 'powers that be'. The reception area of television introduced by the state in 1981 is limited and so is private competition. NBC television plays an important role for the representation of Namibia to the international public. Only one in five

⁸¹ for instance, the American series, Bay-Watch

⁸² compare: Omari Jackson, "Broadcasting: NBC programming not really Namibian.", in: Namibia Review, June/July 1998, p.24-28

⁸³ This function of television was pointed out to me by Gwen Lister, who had been a member of the supervisory board of NBC for years. (interview Gwen Lister, Windhoek, 11.11.1996) This is not surprising, since the government, too, knows, that it is normal to inform oneself regarding a country with the aid of television.

programs is locally produced, amongst which are some background broadcasts on political issues. All in all the political importance of television is - at least on the surface - significantly smaller than the role played by the radio.

4. The Relationship between the Press and the NBC: Similarities and Differences

The relationship between these two entities is not without tension. The reasons for this are manifold, including aspects such as conflicting approaches towards the freedom of speech, differing material and structural conditions to be confronted by either medium, as well as different traditions out of which each medium has grown.

By press people in general the NBC is accused of not pursuing a kind of journalism, which is independent from the government. Support for this contention is found in the quoted interview with Nujoma referring to the function of control by the press, in which he makes a clear distinction between the press, on the one hand, and NBC, on the other. Both Hofmann of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* as well as Lister of *The Namibian* accuse their colleagues of an inability to assert themselves and of showing a lack of civil courage. The NBC and their management are aware of this criticism of partiality and self-censure levelled at them. The criticism of partiality towards the government is, however, rejected by Gorelick of the NBC⁸⁴ He admits a general climate of self-censorship at least for the beginning years:

“Many of those entering the NBC after independence came from the black majority of Namibians and are sympathetic towards the new government. Used to a censored media, both sides practice self-censorship. Some for idealistic reasons, others for fear of criticism from superiors or government officials.”⁸⁵

In fact, Mulongeni point blank denies Lister's criticism of the NBC being partial to the government.⁸⁶ He maintains that a supposed self-censorship in present-day Namibia, (as for example in the actions of the government or any superior) needs not be explained in terms of external circumstances. Rather he attributes this to a Namibian culture of conflict existing in its infancy only. Journalists, too, suffer from a lack of experience in this regard, for they cannot always cope effectively with criticism of their work and will immediately relate any critical comments of their work as an attack on their freedom of speech.

Competition between the two types of media is not only restricted to the question of quality of information, but also involves access to money, which in the last analysis makes financial survival possible. Here a major difference separates NBC from the written press: the latter having the use of the most minimal of infrastructure,⁸⁷ while, in contrast,

⁸⁴ Gorelick (1995a) does this based on the results of an opinion poll held in 1994, which showed that only 22% of those questioned supported this view.

⁸⁵ Gorelick (1995a), p.15-16

⁸⁶ Interview with Ben Mulongeni, Windhoek 24.8.1998

⁸⁷ At times there is no infra-structure at all. An example of this was the position of Oswald Shivute, the correspondent of *The Namibian* in the northern part of the country. During my last visit in September

NBC with its state support can rely on substantially bigger resources. One obvious effect of this being, though, that it has more parties to please and, therefore, experiences greater difficulties in presenting a clear line of approach.

The Namibian press is primarily the press of its capital, Windhoek. Themes discussed and the approaches followed in the first instance, reflect that part of Namibian society. The rest of the community is recognized and represented from the 'Windhoek perspective' only. In contrast, the radio has a far better structural basis; because it is capable of presenting local programs from its various regional studios. Such programs are an important enrichment in that they present a local perspective other than the one from the central region of the country.

The tensions between the NBC and the printed media can be related to their differing backgrounds, particularly the role they played during the years prior to independence. While the radio was then tightly integrated into the military power apparatus, the newspapers cast themselves - albeit differently defined - as part and parcel of a civil society.

One occasion on which these two differently based media complement each other is during the daily press review on the radio, broadcast both in the main program, as well as during the different language services. Although these were terminated at the beginning of the year, they had to be re-instated following overwhelming public protest.⁸⁸ In the course of the discussion relating to re-instatement of the press reviews, the varying concepts of the object of the NBC became clear: For Hofmann of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* it is the duty of public radio to impart to its listeners a report on the press, particularly since many inhabitants do not have the money to buy a newspaper. In contrast Mulongeni of the NBC considers it a privilege offered by NBC, but not a right to be demanded.

1998, he did not have access to a vehicle to do any research, which in the light of the great distances of the country and the few telephone connections is a severe handicap for a reporter.

⁸⁸ The cause for the termination was the complaint of a Namibian general, protesting against a statement read verbatim from a newspaper during one of the news broadcasts. He maintained that the citation was wrong. The termination of the broadcast was looked upon from differing points of view: For the press people and radio listeners it was clearly a case of censure, overruled by public protest. Mulongeni saw it as an interruption, serving the purpose of upgrading the press report. In particular, he meant to have the statements summarized, rather than quoted verbatim.