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Who is to Blame for the Burning Buses? Negotiating Media Control and Yugoslav-backed Development in Zambia's Postcolonial Press

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Abstract
This article examines the Zambian press during the Cold War, focusing on Zambia's cooperation with Socialist Yugoslavia and its impact on national media and development discourse. Drawing on Zambian newspapers and archival documents from Zambia, Yugoslavia and Britain, the article is structured in two interwoven sections. The first section investigates Zambia's postcolonial media sector under United National Independence Party (UNIP) rule, highlighting efforts to control the press alongside joint media development initiatives with Yugoslavia to lessen dependency on Western media outlets. The second section presents a case study of press coverage of a series of fires in Yugoslav-made buses, revealing a remarkable diversity of voices across state-owned and private newspapers in UNIP's one-party state. Both parts are closely entangled, illustrating how state-directed media policies and international partnerships were negotiated and contested by various actors in the public sphere. By treating the press as an active arena of Cold War East–South engagement rather than a passive record, the article offers an original contribution to Cold War East–South studies and enriches our understanding of media in postcolonial Africa.

Keywords: Zambia, Yugoslavia, Non-alignment, African Postcolonial Media, Public Transport

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Introduction

The pursuit of state sovereignty and development in Africa during the Cold War was measured mostly in political and material achievements. Often realized with the help of foreign assistance, the ability of African nationalist regimes to accomplish the goal of development after independence was reflected in feats such as diplomatic recognition, the capability of defence forces, the build-up of infrastructure and industry, and a rise in the living standards of the masses. James R. Brennan reminds us that "contemporaries also viewed news and information as necessary elements of development" (Brennan 2015: 335). Political influence over media was important domestically for shaping patriotic citizens and internationally for projecting a desired image of the newly established states abroad (Hunter 2018: 7).

This article provides a multifaceted exploration of the Zambian press, emphasising Zambia's entanglements with Socialist Yugoslavia in both the media and the transport sector. The appearance of Yugoslavia in Cold War southern Africa, a socialist country with no previous involvement in the region, aspiring to keep an equidistance from both Moscow and Washington, provoked the interest of the Zambian public, but also controversy among its political actors. Frustrated with Great Britain's indecisiveness in dealing with the internationally unrecognized, white-minority regime in neighbouring Rhodesia after 1965[1] and aiming for stronger state control over domestic economic development, Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda and the UNIP government embarked on a more socialist-inspired political course in 1968. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and Yugoslavia, as one of its founders and the most prominent European member, arose as the preferred channel for diplomacy and a source of developmental assistance. Zambia's non-aligned orientation was a deliberate choice of the UNIP leadership amidst fears that the pursuit of the Zambian version of African socialism could be seen as a more decisive move toward communism, thus provoking outside interference and political instability (Tordoff/ Molteno 1974: 203; Sun 2019: 363-64). The novel partnership between

[1] Between 1953 and 1963, the Central African Federation comprised Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia (which became Zambia in 1964) and Nyasaland (which became Malawi in 1964), with the federation's capital located in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. During this period, Northern Rhodesia's dependence on its southern neighbour in terms of industry, power generation, trade links and tertiary education intensified. Following the dissolution of the federation, both Malawi and Zambia gained independence under black majority rule. However, the white settlers in Rhodesia, led by Ian Smith, prolonged their grip on power by unilaterally declaring independence from Britain in 1965. Zambia considered Smith's white minority regime to be both hostile and illegitimate, and the country was practically in a state of emergency until Rhodesia became a country with black majority rule under the name of Zimbabwe in 1980. See Sklar 1974; Cohen 2017.

Zambia and Yugoslavia brought to the fore conflicting concepts of development, hitherto muted by the insistence on national unity in black-ruled Zambia since its independence in 1964. The contested nature becomes evident in the struggles over control between media entrepreneurs, editorial staff and politicians.

We argue that the two longest-standing daily newspapers, the *Times of Zambia* and the *Zambia Daily Mail*, are particularly well-suited to capture the complex and multifaceted views and voices in Zambia during the Cold War, influenced by a confluence of local, regional, national, and foreign interests that are difficult to untangle. Placing Yugoslav development assistance and Zambian media in the same analytical frame is fruitful not merely because such developmental projects were scrutinized by the press, but also because the non-aligned European partner was actively approached by the Zambian government to assist the establishment of sovereign national news production, while the Yugoslav embassy and companies were trying to influence local reporting. The article's originality lies in treating the press as an active stakeholder in Yugoslav–Zambian relations rather than a passive archive. News collaboration is not an auxiliary case or background to the sources, but the organizing frame of our analysis. Thus, the Zambian press is conceived as the arena in which Yugoslav–Zambian relations were negotiated and produced. Our research also aims to complicate debates surrounding press freedom in state-owned and private newspapers in the Zambian one-party state. Commenting on Zambian government's steady drive towards the nationalization of press in 1975, the International Press Institute[2] claimed that "press freedom has been erased" (International Press Institute, 1975, quoted in Kasoma 1986: 2). While we do not seek to downplay authoritarian tendencies and state repression, our research shows that the ruling UNIP party never managed to control the diversity of voices in the local press, nor could the powerful legacy of British liberal journalism or dependency on Western news agencies be reduced through media cooperation with non-aligned partners such as Yugoslavia.

The emergence of Yugoslavia as one of Zambia's main trading partners in the early 1970s (*Times of Zambia*, 07.02.1970a; Pettman 1974: 202-206) was based on a prehistory of good relations between the top UNIP cadres and the Yugoslav communists. When Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito visited Zambia in January 1970, the local press emphasized how the "fruits of friendship" between the two countries "date back to Zambia's pre-independence days when Yugoslavia gave considerable material and moral support to the United National Independence

[2] The International Press Institute was founded in New York City in 1950 with the mission of "promoting and protecting press freedom and improving journalistic practices" (International Press Institute 2025)

Party." (*Times of Zambia*, 29.01.1970). Connections of Zambian trade union representatives and their counterparts in Yugoslavia had been forged already in the late 1950s and were strengthened by study visits of black Zambians from what was then Northern Rhodesia to Socialist Yugoslavia (Harisch/Musić 2024). A UNIP delegation attended the founding meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade, Yugoslavia's capital, in 1961, witnessing a watershed diplomatic moment in the independent networking of developing states, as well as a media spectacle showcasing Afro-Asian solidarity to the world (Arhiv Jugoslavije, henceforth AJ, KPR, I-3-a, 128-1).

Socialist Yugoslavia used flexible positioning inside international organizations in terms of economic development categorization, well captured by its preferred self-description of a "slightly more developed developing country" (Spaskovska 2018: 334). Despite insistence on the still ongoing internal development, when presenting its image in the Global South, Yugoslavia had no qualms boasting about its modernization achievements and successful application of advanced technologies often obtained through free trade with the West (Stubbs 2023: 16). Yugoslavia was offering Zambia transfer of technology and know-how, allegedly with no political strings attached (*Politika*, 27.11.1974). The set of economic policies for advancing development, adopted by the NAM during the 1970s under the moniker New International Economic Order (NIEO), aimed at renegotiating the terms of trade with the Global North. NEIO also placed strong emphasis on 'self-reliance', implying decoupling from (neo)colonial centers and pursuing economic cooperation between developing countries (Stubbs 2025: 23-39; Aćimović/ Svetličič 1987: 39).

The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed major infrastructure projects engineered by Yugoslav experts and built by joint teams of Yugoslav and Zambian workers including the Kafue hydroelectric dam, buildings at the University of Zambia's Lusaka campus, the national stadium, roads, airports, military facilities, and the conference hall and residence for the 1970 Non-Aligned Summit in Lusaka (*Times of Zambia*, 07.02.1970a). The success of the Yugoslav construction industry was utilized by companies in other sectors, such as transport and automotive producers, to sell their products and services on the Zambian market. This booming cooperation entered a stall in the second half of the 1970s as Zambia started to face a crisis of development triggered by the fall in the price of copper, its main export product, on the world market (Woldring/ Chibaye 1984).

While the press and publishing in some African countries[3] have received considerable scholarly attention – e.g., South Africa (Limb 2012), Nigeria (Omu 1978; Barber 2016), Kenya and Tanzania (Brennan 2015; Hunter 2015; Roberts 2023) – there are few and mostly dated studies available for the case of postcolonial Zambia. Most of the scholarly analysis has focused on media such as radio and newspapers during Zambia's (late) colonial period (Atanasova 2023: 49; Chikokwero 2014; Kalusa 2013; Milford 2023; Heinze 2017[4]). The most comprehensive account on the Zambian postcolonial press is Francis Peter Kasoma's *The Press in Zambia* of 1986. Kasoma's monograph is extremely useful in grasping the relations between the newspapers and the Zambian government, providing an extensive analysis of editorials in the press and to what extent they were critical of government policy between the 1960s and mid-1980s. In a 2021 article, Peter Brooke examines the Zambian press and radio's coverage of the 1976 Soweto uprising in Apartheid South Africa. His work provides valuable insights into the enduring influence of foreign media agencies such as Reuters and its franchises (Brooke 2021: 591). Based on his analysis of the Soweto uprising coverage, Brooke concluded that "popular news culture in post-colonial Zambia was characterised by a significant degree of variety, choice, and cosmopolitan consumption" (Brooke 2021: 588). Our research aims to further engage the Zambian press by presenting it as a battleground for various actors, ideas and power struggles within the framework of East-South cooperation.

In terms of scholarship on Socialist Yugoslavia, the role of Yugoslav self-managed construction companies and experts in Third World countries, including Zambia, has already been examined (Sekulić, 2012, 2017, 2023; Spaskovska/Calori, 2021; Archer 2025). However, most of these studies have approached the subject from the perspective of the transmitter country, using Yugoslav sources and bearing in mind Yugoslav interests. When it comes to Yugoslav media policies in the Global South, authors have reconstructed Belgrade's efforts to set up an alternative network of news agencies in the spirit of 'self-reliance' (Crain 2011; Slaček-Brlek 2022), but there is still a noticeable lack of research on the challenges developing countries faced in establishing news item production within the frame of non-alignment.

In terms of methodology and primary sources, our article draws on Zambian daily newspapers as the core sources, archived in the National Archives of Zambia, as well as the University of Zambia's university library, both of which

[3] For a broader perspective but confined to African print cultures during the colonial era see the edited volume by Peterson/ Hunter/ Newell 2016.

[4] Heinze's work examines radio in colonial and postcolonial Zambia.

are in the country's capital, Lusaka. Our team of researchers examined most of the volumes of *The Times of Zambia* and the *Zambia Daily Mail* from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s, looking for articles related to Zambian cooperation with Yugoslavia, Yugoslav-Zambian joint venture companies, and Yugoslav specialists in Zambia. We discovered a total of 633 newspaper articles on Yugoslav–Zambian cooperation. The *Zambia Daily Mail* had 395 articles, while the *Times of Zambia* had 238. Reporting on bilateral relations was relatively prominent in both papers. However, unlike the reporting on Rhodesia, articles appeared mostly in the foreign affairs or economic sections rather than on the front page. The *Zambia Daily Mail* covered Yugoslav-Zambian cooperation more regularly and in greater detail, suggesting a slightly stronger editorial interest in Zambia's international engagements than the *Times of Zambia*. The debates raised in the newspapers are enriched by archival documents from Zambian, Yugoslav, and British archives.[5] By connecting the public debates to "behind the scenes" deliberations by domestic and foreign protagonists to influence and construct the Zambian public opinion, this approach further emphasizes the Zambian press as a key battleground of postcolonial African politics.

This article explores the intricacies of the press in the Zambian one-party state through two interconnected sections. The first part establishes the setting by examining the emergence and development of the Zambian daily press. It portrays Zambia's 'Humanist Revolution' in the media sector as an arena of shifting loyalties among party members, media entrepreneurs, expatriate managers, journalists with diverse training backgrounds, and non-aligned partners. It charts ownership shifts within the local press, the modus of UNIP interventions in editorial decisions, and the establishment of a national news agency, as well as Yugoslav initiatives within the Zambian media sector. Despite the Zambian state's attempts to become more self-reliant by running important media outlets, this section showcases the powerful legacy of British liberal views and habits in the local press. Focusing on Yugoslav–Zambian efforts in the media sector also demonstrates the clear limitations of non-aligned media cooperation. This nuanced exploration further advances our understanding of African postcolonial media and politics, contextualising South–East media linkages during the Cold War within the internal political struggles of the Zambian ruling party.

[5] In Zambia, we consulted the National Archives of Zambia (henceforth NAZ), Lusaka, Zambia, as well as the Archive of the United National Independence Party (henceforth UNIP Archive), online; for Yugoslav perspectives we consulted the Diplomatic Archives of Yugoslavia (henceforth DA), Belgrade, Serbia; A 'third view' was achieved through documents from the National Archives (henceforth TNA), Kew, United Kingdom.

The second part of the article provides a more detailed analysis of the variety of voices and disputes over control, using a case study of the daily press's coverage of Yugoslav-Zambian cooperation in the public transport sector. Through a series of newspaper reports, we examine the labour issues, procurement politics, mechanical failures, maintenance, and spare parts regimes, revealing a whole set of challenges that accompanied the transfer of technology. Following local reporting on Yugoslav actors, vehicles, and technology enables us to view the Zambian press as a battleground of different visions of a postcolonial future, but also a platform for propagating a new developmental consensus in years when the Zambian leadership was trying to diversify its foreign policy and reduce dependence on the United Kingdom as the former colonial power.

Together, the two sections offer fresh insights into the social and political divisions in Zambia's postcolonial society and the role of the press in a one-party state under President Kenneth Kaunda. By focusing on the contradictory interplay between the various stakeholders who influence the editorial decisions of two major daily newspapers and the Yugoslav developmental partnership, we will shed new light on the contested nature of postcolonial media in Zambia.

I. The Zambian Press: Between State, Party and Private Enterprise

The Zambian press underwent fundamental changes following the attainment of political independence in October 1964. The hitherto dominant South African capital in the local media, represented chiefly by the daily newspaper *Northern News*, "retreated hastily" from independent Zambia, selling its assets to the London and Rhodesia Mining and Land Company Limited (Lonrho) (Barton 1979: 126). Originally founded as a mining company in 1909, Lonrho had expanded into various businesses by the mid-1960s, including newspapers, under the unconventional management of the company's executive, Roland "Tiny" Rowland (Cohen 2014; Kasoma 1986: 82–83; Bourgault 1995: 161). Before purchasing the *Northern News*, Lonrho had also acquired the *Zambia Times*, the only other daily newspaper in the country. While *Zambia Times* was unprofitable at the time, in contrast to the *Northern News*, which mostly catered to the white settler community, Lonrho was interested in the paper due to its reputation among most black Zambians. In a strategic move to inherit the *Zambia Times*' good standing for his newspaper ventures, Rowland closed the *Zambia Times* but renamed the *Northern News* the *Times of Zambia*. Richard Hall, an acclaimed British-born journalist and supporter of African nationalism since the pre-independence years, was appointed editor-in-chief by Lonrho, and the first issue

of the *Times of Zambia* appeared in June 1965. Hall embarked on a policy of staff "Zambianisation", dismissing "colonial-minded" white journalists and appointing editors with "progressive" views (Kasoma 1986: 85). Under Hall's editorship, the *Times of Zambia* increased its circulation from 15,000 to 35,000 between 1965 and 1967, as independent Zambia's "oldest and most influential newspaper" (Kasoma 1986: 32).

The nationalist leadership of UNIP, which had won 55 out of 75 seats (ten seats reserved for the white settler minority) at the general election in 1964 (Mulford 1967), faced a contradictory media landscape in a newly independent country with *Times of Zambia* displaying a "schizophrenic approach to news" (Bourgault 1995: 162). The Lonrho corporation aimed for a close relationship with the UNIP government, not least Zambia's President and UNIP leader Kenneth Kaunda, employing white journalists sympathetic to the nationalist cause and slowly opening its gates to young, educated Africans (Kasoma 1986). At the same time, Zambia's main print media house was still in the ownership of British and white-settler capital, relying heavily on the Rhodesian-based and South-African-owned Inter-Africa News Agency (IANA) for its coverage of regional and world politics (Bourgault 1995: 161). A logical step toward more sovereignty of the media would have been the founding of a state-owned news agency. Yet, due to colonial policies, Zambia – like other African independent countries in Southern and Eastern Africa (Milford 2024: 228-29) – lacked sufficient home-grown African media managers, journalist staff, and expertise to make this step (Brooke 2021: 590).

To loosen its dependence on the benevolence of white-settler capital and expat professionals from the capitalist metropole, UNIP turned toward socialist and non-aligned Yugoslavia. The records of the Yugoslav Secretariat of Foreign Affairs show that the Zambian government approached Yugoslavs in early 1965 with a request for direct involvement in setting up a Zambian state news agency (DA 1965, 16.02.). Born out of the anti-fascist resistance during World War Two, the Yugoslav state news agency Tanjug grew to an internationally respectable media house by the mid-1960s, operating with a budget of USD 1.3 million and employing 485 full-time personnel (Slaček-Brlek 2022: 43). The first Summit of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, organized in Belgrade in 1961 managed to draw the attention of the world media, which were forced to recognize the organizational capabilities and political independence of the developing world (Turajlić 2023: 209). The Summit was also attended by UNIP observers as representatives of Northern Rhodesia's rising anticolonial movement at the time. In the years following the 1961 Non-aligned summit,

Yugoslavia was eager to link up Tanjug with the emerging news agencies in the Global South and "break up the monopoly of the agencies of the great powers" (Slaček-Brlek 2022: 45). In 1975 it went on to create the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool to strengthen the self-reliance and mutual exchange of non-aligned countries in the media sphere (Crain 2011). However, the Yugoslavs were also pragmatic and careful in building non-aligned networks in the face of former colonial powers, insisting on gradualism and realistic approaches.

The Yugoslav Secretariat of Foreign Affairs ruled out any significant involvement in establishing the Zambian state media in early 1965 due to financial limitations, but also scepticism regarding the political stability of the first postcolonial government and the general setbacks of the NAM in the mid-1960s. At a time when army mutinies in East Africa and the Congo crisis were demonstrating the fragility of postcolonial rule across the African continent, Yugoslav diplomats did not appear to be optimistic about Zambia's prospects. It advised Tanjug to consider dispatching media experts to Lusaka as part of the overall bilateral development assistance without making any firm promises of establishing a proper news agency to the UNIP leadership (DA 1965, 16.02.).

In April 1965, the Yugoslav embassy in Zambia confirmed the reserved stance regarding UNIP's ability to assert its power amidst entrenched (neo)colonial interests, warning that oppositional forces in Zambian society are "steering controversy" around the potential nationalization of the mining industry and the media (DA 1965, 29.04.). The embassy was probably referring to UNIP's autonomous efforts to establish a state-owned newspaper. Earlier that year, in February 1965, Zambian Minister of Information Peter Matoka argued that the government should avoid a situation in which all the newspapers would be owned by one foreign multinational company – Lonrho. President Kaunda then announced the establishment of a new newspaper: It should be "something with dignity, not designed to mislead the people, something to serve Zambia." (Speech of Kenneth Kaunda, 19.02.1965, quoted in Kasoma 1986: 110-11) The Zambian government was presented with the golden opportunity to realize the important goal of establishing a state-owned printed paper in May 1965 when the *Central African Mail*, founded in 1960 by Alexander Scott and Richard Hall, entered financial difficulties. The government purchased the *Central African Mail* for £40,000 (Kasoma 1986: 74, 111). It was first renamed *Zambia Mail*, and then *Zambia Daily Mail* in 1970 (Bourgault 1995: 162). Initially published weekly, then bi-weekly, by 1969, the paper had joined the *Times of Zambia* as one of the country's two daily newspapers. Its circulation was around 24,000 copies in the

late 1960s (Kasoma, 1986: 71). *Zambia Daily Mail* 1960s editorials emphasized the aim to provide "full and accurate coverage to the Government plans and policies...to explain these policies to the people and win support for them" (Kasoma 1986: 114). However, as the following analysis will demonstrate, this did not exclude criticism of the UNIP government, parastatal companies, and selected individuals.

Zambia's print media landscape thus gradually took shape in the second half of the 1960s, and it would endure in this form until the ultimate fall from power of Kenneth Kaunda and UNIP in 1991. It consisted of the state-owned Zambia *Daily Mail* and the more critically inclined *Times of Zambia*, with historians recognizing the Zambian state's steady push to increase control over *Times of Zambia* by influencing the appointments of its editors-in-chief and repeated efforts to acquire majority ownership (Kasoma 1986). Despite the initial doubt of its Yugoslav partners, UNIP managed to consolidate political power in the late 1960s and early 1970s, culminating in the declaration of a one-party state in early 1973 (Scott 1980; Larmer 2011). The ruling party expected the media to reflect its radicalized political orientation, promoting a national, African path to socialism and a non-aligned stance in foreign policy.

In 1967, President Kaunda set out the country's new political philosophy in the book *Humanism in Zambia* (Kaunda 1967). A year later, Kaunda's guide to the implementation of Humanism (Kaunda 1968) compared the aims of the pre-independence UNIP constitution with what had been achieved in the first three years of independent Zambia. One pre-independence objective was "to run and establish newsletters, newspapers or magazines *in order to advance the aims and objects of the Party*" (italics ours), a statement to which Kaunda (1968: 11) responded in italics, "*We have comprehensive plans afoot*"(italics in original). Among these plans was the state-owned news agency founded after "a crash course in news agency practice" by a local Reuters correspondent in 1969 under the name Zambia News Agency (ZANA) (Brooke 2021: 590). The Zambia Broadcasting Service and the state-owned *Zambia Daily Mail* were the main outlets to carry ZANA news (Brooke 2021: 590). The other goal was a stronger political influence over the foreign-owned commercial press. One year earlier, the "Mulungushi reforms" invited 26 foreign companies owning businesses in Zambia to sell at least 51 percent of their shares to the state (Johns 1980: 107). Kaunda also called for a change of ownership at *Times of Zambia*, but Lonrho did not acquiesce to state control of the paper at the time (Kasoma 1986: 98).

Instead of direct ownership, the government exercised considerable influence via Kaunda's interference and reprimands of the *Times of Zambia* editors-in-chief:

Richard Hall resigned in mid-1967, and was followed by Dunstan Kamana, a black Zambian. However, Kamana was even more outspoken and critical of the government, and was thus replaced in 1971 by Vernon Mwaanga, a UNIP cadre who had previously been Zambia's ambassador to Moscow and the United Nations in New York (Kasoma 1986: 94, 103). Mwaanga remembered in his memoirs that his appointment "was viewed by the staff of the newspaper [*Times of Zambia*] as an attempt by Kaunda to gag the newspaper and to purge the newspaper's trend towards a more independent line on national issues. In short, I was regarded as a stooge […]" (Mwaanga 2009: 265). Yet, the idea of free press persisted under one-party rule. Even Mwaanga, a loyal party cadre, felt that the ideas and voices published in newspapers should also come from the "bottom" of society. This was particularly important if UNIP was to remain a "people's party" (Mwaanga, 2009: 266).

Lonrho formally gave in to UNIP's pressure in June 1975 when the party-state entered a stage of concrete plans for the takeover of the *Times of Zambia*. This move was preceded by revealing discussions inside the highest UNIP fora. A memorandum had been prepared earlier that year by Sikota Wina[6], Chairman of the UNIP Central Committee's Elections, Publicity and Strategy Committee. Wina felt that Kaunda did not go far enough regarding the *Times of Zambia*, suggesting instead a "complete change of staff" and that the editor-in-chief did *not* need to be a trained journalist. Instead, the new staff should be "dedicated revolutionaries who completely accept the policies of the Party and who are capable of ensuring that these policies are translated day by day through the pages of these newspapers" (UNIP EAP121/2/12/3/10, p. 1). The ensuing comments from top functionaries traced in UNIP archival documents show that the interplay between the party-state and the privately-owned media in postcolonial Zambia was far from a linear path from free press to authoritarian control with no clear-cut roles in the process.

[6] Sikota Wina (1931-2022) was a key figure of Zambian late colonial and postcolonial politics and crucially shaped the country's mediascape. Born in Mongu, in Zambia's Western province, which borders Angola, he went to South Africa's University of Fort Hare for studies but was expelled due to his political activism. After his return to Northern Rhodesia, he worked in the colonial Information Department, where he came to understand the power of the media to transform audiences' thinking, as Ismay Milford has shown in tracing his anti-colonial activities (Milford 2023: 208-211). Between 1958 and 1961, Wina was editor of the short-lived magazine and later fortnightly newspaper *African Life* — "the first time ever that an African in Northern Rhodesia had published a newspaper" (Kasoma 1986: 66) — which acted as a "mouthpiece" for UNIP. Wina went on to hold key positions in the UNIP government during the 1960s and 1970s, serving as Minister of Information and Chairman of the UNIP Central Committee's Elections, Publicity and Strategy Committee, as well as Chairman of Zambia Publishing Company, publisher of the government-owned *Zambia Daily Mail*.

Lonrho's executive manager, the unconventional and eccentric Roland "Tiny" Rowland[7], was eager to maintain good relations with several UNIP leaders and President Kaunda himself by giving concessions over the editorial line throughout the observed years (Cronjé/Ling/Cronjé 1976: 120–127; Cohen 2016). The discussions inside the ruling party preceding the state takeover of *Times of Zambia* show that President Kaunda was already granted a de facto right to appoint editors-in-chief with *Times of Zambia* publishing texts at UNIP's "feasible and professionally sound requests". Wina's memorandum openly stated that the crucial problem with newspapers generally is not so much who owns them but who sits behind the editorial desk and "continuous orientation of staff" towards the party line. What comes across is that the "100 percent takeover" of *Times of Zambia*, as the UNIP internal documents framed it, was a formality and in many ways a desperate move provoked by UNIP's inability to exert total control over both the state- and privately-owned press (UNIP EAP121/2/12/3/10, pp. 1-2).

As will be demonstrated in the case study below, despite political appointments, the *Times of Zambia* editorial boards continued to espouse freedom of expression and openness toward voices from below. Kasoma (1986: 161–62) has traced similar dissident voices in the state-owned *Daily Mail*, which became increasingly critical of the Zambian government in editorials and articles from the late 1960s until the mid-1970s, exposing weaknesses in the state administration and among some UNIP leaders. Despite considerable political pressure, the *Daily Mail* published editorials insisted that "every Zambian has a right to have his views made public even if those views are not liked by some people" (Kasoma 1986: 168).

Yugoslav diplomatic sources confirm the limits of UNIP's control also over the newspapers' international coverage. In January 1970, Tanjug invited Naphy Nyalugwe, the chief editor of the newly established Zambian state agency ZANA, for a study visit to Yugoslavia, counting on increased positive coverage of Yugoslav development cooperation and of mutual trade in the local press. However, the hosts were taken aback when the 1 February issue of ZANA's weekly magazine *Zambia News* ran an article titled "More private enterprises in Socialist Yugoslavia". The Yugoslav embassy in Lusaka described it as a "sensationalist and shallow portrayal of current socio-political trends in Yugoslavia". The author mirrored the critical stance of the liberal Western press

[7] Andrew Cohen (2016: 32) has characterized Rowland as the "buccaneering chairman" of Lonrho. Rowland was unconventional in the sense that, in contrast to many other Western managing directors at the time, he was convinced that "the onset of African independence offered an opportunity to secure vast profits" (Cohen 2016: 33). Another aspect of Rowland's business approach was to forge close personal relationships with many African leaders.

towards communist Yugoslavia, addressing contentious issues such as strikes, unemployment, the expansion of the private sector, youth discontent, and the influence of technocratic elites in the workers' self-managed economy (DA 1970, 09.03.).

The challenges faced by the Zambian ruling party UNIP in attempting to control the media were clearly more profound than the issue of whether the media should be state- or privately-owned. The type of reporting mentioned above was a reminder of the entrenched position inside the party-state of individuals opposed to Kaunda's non-aligned and socialist postcolonial path. Despite political and ideological reorientation at the helm of UNIP in the late 1960s, Zambian newspapers were largely influenced by British managers, editors, and journalists, as well as by Zambian early-career journalists who had mostly been trained in Western journalistic traditions (Jenks 2020). As the Yugoslav embassy in Lusaka regrettably noted in 1974, most of the reporting on international relations was still based on Western news agencies, regardless of the establishment of the national news agency ZANA, Zambian media's formal allegiance to the state, and its non-aligned orientation in foreign policy (DA 1974, 15.04.). Researchers of Zambian media have also argued that most international news in Zambian newspapers was reported from a "Western viewpoint", with a focus on liberal British values (Kasoma 1986: 216; Bourgault 1995: 162).

The Yugoslav embassy evoked the machinations of the "pro-colonial forces" whenever a critical reporting on its developmental projects appeared in the press, noting that the *Times of Zambia* was owned by the multinational Lonrho, which probably launched "a planned attack on Yugoslavia at the moment of its great achievements in Zambia" (DA 1971, 24.02.). Yugoslavs often complained that the close bilateral relations between the two countries were not reflected in the local media due to Zambia's "pragmatism and balancing foreign relations" (DA 1974, 15.04). Consequently, they took a proactive approach to supply the editorial boards with materials especially during the visits of Yugoslav statesmen or the successful realization of infrastructural projects (*Daily Mail*, 29.11.1968). Indeed, Kasoma (1986: 165) noticed, the state-owned *Daily Mail* "often published full page propaganda material from Eastern block [sic!] countries", sometimes identifying it as an advertiser's announcement and sometimes publishing it as regular, unsigned articles.

The uneasy relation between the state and the private sector within the "Humanist revolution" conditioned the volatile nature of the Zambian press. After consulting the pages of Zambian newspapers, UNIP party documents, and

Yugoslav diplomatic assessments, we see that the situation was characterized by complex power struggles, continuous testing of the limits of what could be said, and widely differing ideas about the role of the press in Zambia. As our case study in the following sections demonstrates exceptionally well, these processes unfolded in both the state-owned *Daily Mail* and Lonrho-owned *Times of Zambia.* Both media outlets published contributions from a variety of sources, including the top UNIP leadership, lower-level party officials, international news agencies, foreign embassies, and contributions by up-to-date urban literate citizens who regularly followed the press reports. Despite the establishment of a one-party state under UNIP in 1973, we maintain that the Zambian daily press remains an exciting source for historians due to its continuing diversity of viewpoints and voices.

II. Yugoslav Buses Spark Debate

In a 1974 talk with a Yugoslav ambassador in Lusaka, Mark Chona, President Kaunda's Special Advisor for Political Affairs, revealed that Yugoslavia, with its technological achievements, "suits Zambia's needs as a starting base". The impression that Yugoslavia "wants to help genuinely" and "shows understanding for local needs" further underlined Yugoslavia as a preferred foreign partner in development cooperation, although Chona noted in the end, this was by no means a consensus inside the Zambian party-state, with many actors preferring capitalist entrepreneurship and more cutting-edge Western technologies (1974, 10.04/ PA-1974-157-417714). As the country was gradually being transformed into a one-party state in the early 1970s, the Yugoslav embassy was becoming aware that hostile attitudes toward Zambia's non-aligned orientation were not stemming only from the British-allied white expatriates but increasingly also from within UNIP. Yugoslav cooperation created rifts among the Zambian postcolonial elites, but, as we will show, it also opened space for the agency of actors positioned lower in the social hierarchy.

We take the expansion of the Zambian public transportation system as the case study to focus on the local reverberations of choosing a peripheral European country with a unique socialist system as a developmental partner. While transport remained in private hands during the early years of independence, this changed following the Mulungushi economic reforms of April 1968. The new parastatal organization, the United Bus Company of Zambia Limited (UBZ), was tasked by the UNIP government with meeting the growing demand for affordable, efficient, and accessible transport in urban and rural areas. The

number of buses increased from 232 in 1968/69 to 392 in 1971/72 and reached 612 in 1973/74. Likewise, the number of passengers carried by UBZ rose from 26 million in 1968/69 to 53 million in 1971/72 and peaked at 81 million in 1973/74 (UBZ Management Report 1980: 10). To diversify away from British Leyland buses, which held a monopoly during the colonial era, the state-owned transport company imported buses from several different foreign manufacturers, with an emphasis on the Yugoslav producer Fap Famos in the early 1970s (Musić 2019).

One hundred Fap Famos buses were due to arrive in Zambia in spring 1972, but a controversy started stirring in the Zambian press even before the first vehicles touched Zambian ground. A *Daily Mail* article from October 1971 offered the secretary of the National Road Safety Council, Davidson Phiri, a platform from which to voice sharp criticism. He argued that the left-hand drive Yugoslav buses would be "dangerous" in Zambia since drivers would find it difficult to overtake on Zambian roads given the right-hand driving rules and right-way traffic. Passengers would also have difficulty disembarking from the right-hand doors, he went on, "as they would be getting out into the middle of the road." (*Daily Mail*, 23.10.1971). It turned out that Phiri's comments were a clumsy attempt to turn public opinion against Yugoslav buses. In a *Daily Mail* article from March 1972, after customized, right-hand drive, Fap Famos buses had arrived, the government, represented by Zambia's Minister of Transport, triumphantly scorned those who had prematurely criticized UBZ's order from Yugoslavia, labelling them "mischief makers" (*Daily Mail*, 20.03.1972).

This early negative press of Yugoslav involvement in the transport sector shows that the state-owned *Daily Mail* was open to dissenting voices from the state administration. Yugoslav embassy documents show that the diplomatic staff suspected it was the British circles in Zambia influencing negative coverage in the press to discredit the image of Yugoslavia as a capable economic partner (DA 1976, 29.02.). Triangulation of the 1971 campaign against Yugoslav buses with British archival sources potentially gives some credence to Yugoslav suspicions. In 1970, British Leyland, actively supported by the UK's Foreign Office, sought to secure a contract for a commercial vehicle assembly plant in Zambia. The British were alarmed by a letter of the British Embassy in Belgrade reporting on Kaunda's visit to Yugoslavia in May 1970, which contained the "particularly disturbing suggestion that Yugoslav trucks may be assembled in Zambia." (TNA, K.H.M. Duke, British Embassy, Belgrade, 12.05.1970). Fap Famos was certainly perceived as a threat to Leyland's interests, which made negative publicity over Yugoslav vehicles very welcome, although we did not find any traces of direct British influence over the Zambian press in this case.

By early 1973, UBZ's fleet had grown to over 600 buses (*Daily Mail*, 18.01.1973). A new order for 80 Yugoslav long-distance buses was placed in 1973 (*Daily Mail*, 18.01.1973). However, between 1974 and 1977, the Yugoslav buses became increasingly unpopular with Zambian passengers as they started to catch fire on the road. The Zambian press reported several such incidents, but the one that attracted particular scrutiny took place in September 1976 when the bus driver ordered more than 70 passengers, who had gone to the airport to escort President Kaunda for an international visit, to leave the bus when he saw smoke coming from the front. According to the driver, "screaming women and children scampered out of the burning bus and dived into the nearby grass." (*Times of Zambia*, 29.09.1976a) The bus had burned down to its skeleton by the time the fire brigade arrived. On the same day, an official of the National Union of Transport and Allied Workers union warned that "Yugoslav buses spell death" and that the government had to step in to prevent potential casualties in the future (*Times of Zambia*, 29.09.1976b). Interestingly, the unionist did not call for breaking ties with the socialist partner from Europe but tried to use the incident to make the cooperation with Yugoslavia even more encompassing. He proposed the introduction of a training program led by UBZ and Yugoslav Fap Famos "so that many Zambians would maintain the buses effectively" (*Times of Zambia*, 29.09.1976b).


TIMES OF ZAMBIA, Wednesday, September 29, 1976

● THE UBZ bus that was gutted by fire near the National Council for Scientific Research offices in Lusaka yesterday. See story Page One.

Figure 1: "The UBZ bus that was gutted […]", *Times of Zambia*, 29.09.1976

If the early campaign against supposed left-handed driving vehicles had failed, proving to be empty sensationalism, this time the critics of Zambia's orientation toward communist countries had serious accusations about the potential misconstruction of Fap Famos buses. The UNIP delegation's road accident was already the fifteenth Yugoslav bus catching fire since 1975, and the public was convinced there was a systemic failure (*Times of Zambia*, 29.09.1976b). Following a request from Zambia's Minister of Transport, Fap Famos put together a team of technicians to investigate the cause of the fires. Echoing the trade union's call for better maintenance, Fap Famos's local representative argued in a *Daily Mail* article on 6 October that the fires were due to "various upkeep and repair faults on certain electrical installations" in UBZ's service, particularly "because wrong spare parts have been used on the buses." (*Daily Mail*, 06.10.1976)

If the Yugoslav embassy was discreet in accusations of the British, allegedly working behind the scenes to prevent the new socialist ties of their former colony, the local press was not sticking to diplomatic courtesy. The Zambian press reported on alleged frictions between Yugoslav and British mechanics in May 1974, when Fap Famos mechanics had arrived to UBZ workshops to help maintain the buses. The President of the National Union of Transport and Allied Workers, Jephat Fulilwa, openly supported the supposed grievances of Yugoslav mechanics against their British counterparts. After visiting the workshops in Lusaka and Kitwe, he argued that there was "no point in UBZ employing British engineers since the buses being used were Yugoslav-made." According to Fulilwa, UBZ should sack the two Britons, "or the company will make losses, given that the Yugoslavs are frustrated." The general manager of UBZ, Hosea Soko, felt challenged in his authority and responded to the union leader, saying that he did not "want to be told how to run UBZ" (*Times of Zambia*, 01.05.1974). The Yugoslav embassy viewed this type of publicity as "negative and unwanted", fearing it could give the impression that the Yugoslavs were "dictating what Zambians should do and whom to discharge". Yugoslav UBZ mechanics denied raising any open grievances against the British, leaving the embassy to conclude that "it is hard to say who stands behind this, but it seems someone is fighting over our backs" (DA 1974, 10.05).

While dozens of reports of burning Yugoslav buses in the Zambian press during 1976 clearly left Fap Famos in need of an explanation, a *Times of Zambia* article published on 1 October put forward the theory of Zambian trainee mechanics that the buses catching fire was an act of "international sabotage" carried out by "expatriate engineers". The trainees claimed that "some engineers from a certain

country were not happy with the way the Government was doing business with other countries." The Zambian trainees called for these expatriate engineers to be removed, also criticizing UBZ for its "poor training program for Zambian mechanics and drivers." (*Times of Zambia*, 1.10.1976). The nationality of the engineers was not openly stated, but most Zambians who could read between the lines would know that it must be that of the former colonial power, the UK. The Yugoslav embassy reported positively on this contribution noting that "it was the first article which does not bring into question the quality of our buses and points that the causes for bus burnings may be found elsewhere", adding that the trainees demanded an inquiry into allegations of sabotage and all the circumstances surrounding the case "instead of just screaming at Fap Famos" (DA 1976, 02.10.).

There are no indications that the embassy or Fap Famos lobbied the Zambian workers to spread these rumours. On the contrary, all the evidence shows the UBZ trainees acted autonomously, trying to use the media controversy for their own goals. As we have seen, even at the height of the bus burning incidents in 1976, the trade union did not join in the chorus of Fap Famos condemnation but tried to argue for more training to maintain the buses properly under the Yugoslav mentorship. The workers agreed with the UNIP leadership that, despite its shortcomings, Yugoslav technology was beneficial in enabling more autonomy in relation to the former colonial rulers, the British, as well as the skilling of the local workforce.

Yugoslavs were convinced the engine-burning incidents had primarily to do with unprofessional maintenance and lack of original spare parts, brushing away the possibility of an engineering mistake in the factories back home. Their solution to the crisis was to offer the Zambian government more credit to buy mobile repair units staffed by Yugoslav mechanics and sufficient spare parts from Yugoslav manufacturers (DA 1977, 23.04.). However, an additional layer of confusion was added by the Tanjug correspondent in Lusaka, Vuk Drašković[8], who did not follow the reasoning of his countrymen in Zambia. Driven by personal conflict with the director of Fap Famos in Zambia, Drašković wrote an internal report claiming that the company's top representative allegedly produced and sold bootleg spare parts to UBZ for private profit. These Tanjug reports rang the alarm back home, raising the entire affair to the discussion agenda of the Yugoslav federal government (DA 1976, 24.12.).

[8] Vuk Drašković would become a prominent Serbian nationalist dissident writer upon his return to Belgrade in the 1980s. In the 1990s Serbian multiparty system he was one of the main oppositional political figures.

In summary, the reasons behind the burning buses were reported very differently. The main accusation implicitly stated on the pages of the press (mostly *Times of Zambia*) was the engineering mistake of the Yugoslav manufacturer. Countering narratives went in different directions. Fap Famos (*Daily Mail*) representatives attributed the fires to poor maintenance, the use of incorrect or non-original spare parts, and inadequate UBZ servicing. Zambian trade union leaders (*Times of Zambia*) gave ground to both sides but placed particular emphasis on the need for training of UBZ mechanics. Another narrative, circulated by UBZ trainees via the *Times of Zambia*, alleged 'international sabotage' by expatriate (implicitly British) engineers who were hostile towards Zambia's socialist partnerships. This narrative followed reports of friction between Yugoslav and British staff in some of the workshops. A further allegation reported by Tanjug's Lusaka correspondent claimed that a Fap Famos representative had profited from selling counterfeit spare parts. Meanwhile, the Yugoslav embassy publicly avoided blaming Britain and proposed technical support in the form of mobile repair units and spare parts as the remedy.

The real reasons behind the spontaneous combustion of Yugoslav buses remain unclear, buried under the noise of speculations and public bickering. One thing we can conclude with certainty is that repair knowledge and spare parts management were not adequately considered by Fap Famos nor UBZ when deciding to start overseas business cooperation. The lack of precise maintenance arrangement of the imported vehicles opened the possibility for speculations and counterclaims. Parallel to the top stakeholders in this bilateral cooperation, such as politicians and businessmen, who tried to transfer the blame to one another, the UBZ mechanics, trainees, and trade unionists were able to seize the controversy to launch their own demands. The arrival of Yugoslav technology and staff was used to strengthen the offensive against the traditional (neo)colonial elites and push for more employment opportunities and training of African workers. On the other hand, the UBZ general manager's disapproval of trade union grievance was probably based on the insecurity that UBZ was still dependent on British expats, both among the mechanics and in upper management, despite the partnership with Yugoslavia and the considerable steps taken towards Zambianising the company.

Conclusion

Zambia's one-party state influence over the media unfolded as a negotiated, non-linear process. Lonrho's management of the *Times of Zambia* coincided with UNIP's establishment of the state-owned *Zambia Daily Mail* and ZANA, while attempts to engage with Yugoslavia through Tanjug only partially displaced the established hegemony of Western news flows. By analysing the daily press alongside diplomatic and party records, this article presented Zambia's 'Humanist Revolution' in the media sector as an arena of shifting alliances among party cadres, expatriate managers, journalists trained in different traditions, and non-aligned partners. Our nuanced investigation broadens our understanding of the relationship between postcolonial African media and politics. It demonstrates the variety of voices involved in negotiating Yugoslav transport technology, and the role of media linkages in Zambia's internal political struggles.

By weaving together the two sections, we have demonstrated that Yugoslav involvement in Zambian media and other sectors of the Zambian economy was most closely intertwined with the Zambian press reporting on the export of Yugoslav technology. Whenever critical reporting on its development projects appeared in the press, the Yugoslav embassy in Lusaka accused the "pro-colonial forces" of attempting to discredit the socialist state, noting that the multinational Lonrho owned the Times of Zambia. The Yugoslavs often complained that the close bilateral relations between the two countries were not reflected in the local media due to Zambia's cautious non-aligned approach. At the same time, they were careful not to take sides in the Zambian internal disputes, even when the actors appeared sympathetic to Yugoslavia's presence.

The case study of the Zambian press coverage of Yugoslav technical cooperation in the field of public transport shows how the reporting and opinion pieces avoided the tightly controlled narratives of UNIP's top leadership. Instead, newspapers provided a platform for various stakeholders to share their opinions on the suitability of Yugoslav vehicles and present demands for measures that they believed would solve the problem of Zambian public transport.

Based on our assessment of the Zambian government's close relations with socialist Yugoslavia in the first part of the article, one might have expected reporting on Yugoslavia's cooperation with Zambia to be more favourable in the state-owned Daily Mail and rather hostile in the Times of Zambia, which was owned by the London-based multinational company Lonrho. A key finding of our case study of Yugoslav buses and technology in Zambia's transport sector is

that both state- and privately-owned media outlets provided a variety of voices and perspectives. Building on the debates around press freedom inside the UNIP archives examined in the first part of the article, the case study showcases a more complex and informal method of government control over the media, regardless of ownership.

We have shown that the state-owned *Zambia Daily Mail* was more likely to provide the platform for the top UNIP leadership and mediate the safety issues associated with Yugoslav buses. However, the paper was also open to lower levels of state administration and UNIP bureaucracy, who were sceptical of technical cooperation with a communist country. *Daily Mail*'s readiness to include suggestions and coverage from UNIP and the Yugoslav embassy meant that the paper offered space for pro-government and non-aligned interests, especially around the mid-1970s when the government pressure increased. Despite its corporate ownership, the *Times of Zambia* was more likely to include grievances of UBZ mechanics, trainees, and trade unionists. The motivation for giving a voice to these actors is unclear but could be connected to a mix of adherence to the freedom of the press, a tendency toward sensationalist news, and facilitating oppositional sentiments to UNIP rule.

The underlying obstacle to political hegemony of the Zambian press were diverging views of the UNIP top party functionaries, state ministers and the president. Part of the leadership wanted to boost the "Humanist revolution" via the state sector while others wished for more private entrepreneurship. In international relations, radical politicians wanted to increase the role of socialist and non-aligned partners such as Yugoslavia, while others were apprehensive toward communist partners amidst the influence of British liberalism and the colonial intellectual legacy. Even though the party-state managed to influence the media decisively and appoint editorial staff of its own liking, the Zambian press continued to be a battleground for factional struggles inside the ruling party.

The analysis of UBZ's adoption of Yugoslav Fap Famos buses also shows that technology transfer was inseparable from local institutional capacity, maintenance regimes, and contested expertise. Initial concerns about left-hand drive were replaced by highly publicized bus fires (1975–76), Yugoslav claims about erroneous repairs and substitution of spare parts, Zambian trainees' counter-allegations of expatriate sabotage, as well as trade union-led demands for better maintenance training. Our inquiry based on multiple perspectives does not definitively resolve the cause of Fap Famos buses catching fire — and this uncertainty is key: procurement, maintenance, and training were political, and

the Zambian press became a battleground where UBZ managers, both Zambian and (British) expatriates, trade unionists, Yugoslav technicians, British stakeholders, and journalists struggled to allocate responsibility.

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