

Address by Morgan Tsvangirai at a meeting with MDC members of Parliament at Harvest House, Harare, Zimbabwe -- 18 December 2002

A relentless and vicious war is being waged by the rogue Mugabe regime against the entire Zimbabwe nation and society. Zimbabwe is now a nation where everything is in short supply except violence, misery, disease and death.

The shortage of fuel has reached levels, which can never be tolerated any further. The country is grinding to a halt. The regime is in an advanced state of decay and its total collapse is inevitable. The state of the nation and the facts on the ground speak for themselves, even Mugabe's patron Muammar Gaddafi has abandoned his bankrupt client. In the eyes of Gaddafi, Mugabe is no longer a puppet worthy of support.

This government since 1998 has known the affairs at Noczim. It does not make sense for this old man to start to blame his corrupt officials today. In fact, we understand the Libyans, while accepting to be paid in local currency, they are charging their fuel at the black market rate. So what is the advantage of such an arrangement?

In short, Mugabe must accept that he has failed. He must resign. Mugabe is aware that the end of his regime is near. As a temporary ruse to buy time Mugabe has now embarked on a new desperate diplomatic initiative to save his illegitimate regime from inevitable collapse. This will be his fourth diplomatic gamble. Immediately after the fraudulent March 2002 presidential election, three diplomatic initiatives emerged, all targeted at the resolution of the crisis of governance in Zimbabwe.

You will recall that presidents Bakili Muluzi of Malawi and Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique tried to put together what we saw as a "fishing expedition" to persuade us to recognise Mugabe's fraud. The two regarded our principled stand as the usual murmurings of opposition political parties in Africa. As a result, the initiative never took off the ground.

We noted that the most important aspect of this failed initiative was that it perceived any resolution of the crisis of governance in Zimbabwe as conceivable and achievable only if there was an unequivocal recognition by the MDC that the Mugabe regime was the government of the day. That we shall never accept.

You will further recall that South Africa and Nigeria then came up with a strategy, conceived in the shadow of the Commonwealth Troika Initiative. The strategy suffered because of critical strategic differences on the way forward. South Africa was interested in the management of the Zimbabwean crisis, not its resolution. Pretoria saw a government of national unity as a solution. This was in a bid to legitimise Mugabe at all costs.

In pursuit of this objective, over the past eight months, several high-ranking South Africa government and ANC officials have made public statements and embarked on diplomatic activities which, cumulatively are specifically intended to blunt the modest international pressure which seeks to make Mugabe account for his brutal misrule.

They have turned their so-called quiet diplomacy into noisy approval of the regime at any international meeting at which the Zimbabwe crisis comes under discussion.

They have routinely called for an end to the isolation of the illegitimate regime and the lifting of targeted sanctions against Mugabe and his cronies. In fact, South Africa has become part of the Zimbabwe problem because its actions are worsening the crisis. Pretoria's policy has effectively cast serious doubt on the role of President Thabo Mbeki as an honest broker in the rapidly deteriorating situation and the deepening humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe today.

The South African government has succumbed to Mugabe's blackmail and threats to plunge the region into a mess. To appease him, they have embarked on an international safari to campaign for Robert Mugabe's regime.

Pretoria is free to pursue its own agenda. But it must realise that Zimbabweans can never be fooled anymore. Open expressions of solidarity with Zanu PF and Mugabe will never resolve the crisis of governance in Zimbabwe today.

The paralysis displayed by the Obasanjo-Mbeki initiative was carried into and re-emerged in the subsequent deliberations and decisions of the Commonwealth Troika. These initiatives, however, lack a common focus because they were purely a reflection of a variegated understanding of the nature, magnitude and depth of the crisis facing this nation.

Mugabe and his embattled regime were unclear of the likely regional and international reaction to this grand theft or how to respond to possible hostility and further strangulation from within and beyond our borders.

The validation, it must be said, of the stolen election result by the observer missions of Nigeria and South Africa gave Mugabe some temporary breathing space. Remember, these two countries are key members of the Commonwealth Troika on Zimbabwe. Because of the depth of the crisis, the little oxygen offered to Mugabe soon ran out, making the resolution of the Zimbabwe crisis even more protracted.

No single regional and international strategy to engage or confront Mugabe dominated the stage since then. To a large extent these three initiatives cancelled each other or at least neutralised each other, giving the regime further ammunition to mount a repressive machinery against the people and to devise new strategies to crush the broad forces of democracy led by the MDC.

Now that the Troika is set to review its position on Zimbabwe in a few months time, we have begun to witness a number of unsettling developments with regards to the way forward. Mugabe is making overtures to all in a bid to sneak out of the current squeeze. In public, he attacks the British.

But, while we all queue for scarce commodities here, Mugabe is now getting his essential supplies and basic groceries including beef, bread and milk from London. Politically, he is sending signals to both Pretoria and Whitehall in a completely different tone and language.

At the same time, a cabal within Zanu PF, working with some businessmen, have hatched a plan to protect Mugabe and his regime, for political convenience, through a further militarisation of Zimbabwe. One Colonel Lionel Dyke and his business associates are being used to promote an agenda that seeks to legitimise the rogue regime. The names of Emmerson Mnangagwa and General Zvinvashe keep on coming up in this dirty plan which we are told was endorsed by ZANU PF, the British and the South Africans.

We are therefore confronted with this unholy and strange Triple Alliance designed to neutralise the sovereign wishes of the people of Zimbabwe.

The cutting edge of the diabolical onslaught is supposed to come in the form of a summit between Robert Mugabe and myself. I am reliably informed that Mugabe is prepared to meet with me somewhere outside the country to discuss his problems. I want to state clearly and unequivocally that such a summit will remain a 'pie in the sky' unless Mugabe stops the politicisation of food; opens up the country to free political activity; stops the brutalisation of political opponents and commits himself to a dialogue agenda which sets out the conditions for future discussions.

Let me state here that the Anglo-South African plan will fail to take off if it remains predicated on the desire to legitimise the illegitimate Mugabe regime. We will never be used to prop up this dying regime. We are told the cabal's plan includes a further silencing of critics in its final push to reform Zanu PF and engage in acts, which are dangerous to the integrity of the SADC region as a whole.

Let me state here that the ordinary people in Muzarabani, in Binga, in Gokwe, in Hwange and many other places countrywide, who are denied food daily, who are denied access to basic freedoms, who have had to contend with Zanu PF brutality, will never accept a position where their dreams and their wishes are sold out to a civil-military formation by selfish opportunists.

We have arrived at a critical moment in our history. Either we pull forward as a united people or the country slides further into disarray. Some say a strong leader is good for a nation's stability. Stability is a natural process arising from good governance and legitimacy. Forced stability is no stability at all. It is an illusion and people can see through it.

National leaders derive their strengths from the people, not from the military or foreign friends. The world is changing. Gone are the days when it was business as usual simply because of the presence of a strong dictator at the helm. Stability requires conditions beyond mere economic growth. It needs justice, equity, good governance, a culture of tolerance, a free Press and an unfettered access to generic freedoms.

As an oppressed people, we need to realise that we have a duty to liberate ourselves. We are on our own. We shall fight for the people's right to determine their destiny and to reclaim their sovereignty. There can never be any compromise on the fundamental issue of people's power, democracy and freedom. We know of the attempts to reform Zanu PF and present a re-arranged set of faces to the world in an effort to win international legitimacy through the back door.

If Mugabe is to step down today, nothing will change as long as the fundamentals that brought this country to where it is remain unresolved. We are ready to confront the Mugabe stooge at home and show him the way. The facts on the ground show that Zimbabwe's crisis of governance requires a comprehensive national approach that embraces the nation's diversity.

Any initiative on the way forward which fails to deal with the root cause of the crisis, which fails to tackle the burning question of legitimacy and which fails to accord free and fair electoral conditions a priority, is bound to fail. A lasting solution to the Zimbabwean problem lies in Zimbabwe. The people know that solution.

From the MDC, our position on the way forward remains clear and unwavering:

- ❖ Mugabe must accept immediate retirement.
- ❖ The MDC will support legislative and constitutional amendments through Parliament to facilitate the necessary changes for the management of the interim and transitional arrangements.
- ❖ A transitional authority will be set up and the composition must include representatives from key Zimbabwean organisations and political parties.
- ❖ This authority should hold office for a limited period and prepare for fresh presidential elections.
- ❖ During this time the transitional authority must work to rebuild trust and put in place a conducive climate for free political activity.
- ❖ Revisit the abandoned constitutional reform process.
- ❖ A priority will be to overcome the humanitarian crisis facing our country.

There are no short cuts to the restoration of legitimacy and the people's democratic rights.