

The Threat of Change to Transformation

Written by Administrator

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Eddie Cross - Bulawayo, 10th December 2016

The real challenge in Zimbabwe today is not to achieve a change of leadership in the form of Robert Mugabe but how to totally transform the entire country. Twice this past week I watched Mugabe for an hour – in the first instance at the State of the Nation address on Tuesday and then on Thursday when he came to the House of Assembly to hear the presentation of the budget for 2017. On the first occasion I sat in the Speakers Gallery as there was no room in the main chamber.

On the second occasion I was sitting on the front bench of the Opposition and was no more than a few metres from the President. He is now a frail old man who has difficulty walking and climbing steps. He is clearly no longer physically capable of doing his job as Head of State. But like an aging matriarch in a herd of Elephants his close associates and family crowd around him and hold him up. The Mugabe era is over, all that remains is when and how.

However since he took power in 1980 he has spent his time and energy on one mission – and it was not the welfare of the people – it was how to take full control of the State and all significant organs of society. He even attempted to take control of the Anglican Church at one time – remember Kunonga? In doing so he carefully followed his role models who were neo Fascist East Germany and Castro's Cuba.

So effective has this been that today his Party and his acolytes control all aspects of life in this beleaguered country. The private sector is completely dominated by Zanu PF faithful, all State controlled enterprises and institutions have only Zanu PF people at the helm. The process is rigid and disciplined. When they needed a representative of the Urban Councils Association for a Board Member of the national road authority, ZINARA they simply ignored the recommendations of the Association which is dominated by MDC and appointed a Zanu PF Mayor from a small urban center.

If you are in any way associated with the opposition – especially the MDC T, you are completely locked out of any form of national activity and responsibility. Boards, tenders, mining rights, agricultural land and any concessions are all rigidly controlled and directed. Friendships with the opposition are frowned upon and being seen having a cup of coffee with someone like me is routinely reported up the line. At least half the staff in Parliament are security people and

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everything is watched and reported.

All telephone communications are scanned, especially foreign calls, recorded and analysed, all common meeting spots are watched and conversations recorded with sophisticated directional microphones. All my open e mails such as this one are routinely diverted to security agencies. Periodically I am followed by State Agents in teams. The security establishment is huge – perhaps 17 000 in the CIO on top of thousands of paid informers and watchers and there is a large Military intelligence service and a special unit in the Police aptly called PISI – Hyena. Our Head Office is under 24 hour surveillance – both from over the road and from a neighboring building owned by the Military.

Once I found a listening device in the ceiling above the podium at a meeting of the Party in the Townships. We brought it down and put it on the table so that they could hear what we were saying. When we got to the sensitive stuff we dropped it into a glass of water. After the meeting, while we were cleaning up, two CIO agents arrived and asked if they could have their “machine” back – we laughed at them and said, “talk to our lawyers”.

But it is no laughing matter – Itai Dzamara was picked up by a small team of men in unmarked cars more than a year ago – he vanished. We know he was taken to a center for interrogation established by the Rhodesians at Goromonzi and there he was beaten to death. The Diplomatic Community made this incident a bit of a cause célèbre – but we have recorded 5 800 abductions since 2000, that is one a day on average. This is a regime that practices terror as a deliberate tool of oppression and control. No one is spared – many high ranking figures in Zanu PF have been assassinated when they broke ranks with the regime on key issues.

After the 2008 defeat, Zanu PF ran a campaign to ask rural voters “how did you vote?” If the answer was for the MDC hands and arms were amputated. It was known as the “short arms campaign”. People do not forget that. In a country where perhaps 90 per cent of all young adults are unemployed, the offer of a place in the armed forces looks pretty good. The same applies to youth semi military training in Camps built for this purpose in remote areas. But their experiences are beyond imagination – rape as a reward and a punishment, beatings and indoctrination and a small monthly payment plus a uniform and the right to keep what you can steal from your victims.

Under this regime, persons close to the regime and known as loyalists are allowed to steal on a massive scale – all in plain sight but carefully recorded just in case you ever change your

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loyalties or your mind. So I sit in Parliament and I can mentally go through the Zanu PF Front bench and list their corruption and theft of State resources. Any attempt to bring anyone in the camp to book is met with vigorous defense and threats. Last week I raised the incident in Avondale where the Vice President came to a Police Station and forced the Police on duty to release "his friends"; two senior staff from ZINARA on charges of misappropriating \$1,4 million. I asked how could we ever hope to cure the epidemic of corruption if our so called leaders behaved like this in broad daylight? The VP was sitting in front of me and did not move or make any effort to defend himself.

From this brief description of what life in this Country has become, you will have some appreciation of just what a task faces us when we finally beat Zanu PF so massively that they cannot retain any semblance of power or influence. We will take over a regime where every Ministry, every Agency, every State Corporation, every Department, every Unit of the Armed forces are Zanu PF loyalists who owe their positions and their wealth to the Party. We have controlled every significant urban Council in the Country since 2000 yet we still do not control the senior staff who were employed before we took control.

We are going to have to deal with rampant universal corruption – both petty and national; we are going to have to completely reeducate our senior Civil Servants running into the thousands. We are going to have to review every Board and Committee, every Magistrate and Judge in our Courts of law. We are going to have to rewrite hundreds of acts of legislation and to even amend the National Constitution to establish the rule of law and enforce compliance.

The tragedy of all this is that it is not going to be the intellectuals or the academics, or the business leaders, or the middle class who will have fought for all these years in the pursuit of freedom and democracy. It will have been the poor and disadvantaged who have campaigned fearlessly, worked without reward and taken everything that this terror regime has thrown at them who will have done this. I am so proud to be one of them and to have had the privilege to fight in the trenches with them in the past 16 years.