

# **ETHNIC- CLEANSING IN ZIMBABWE**



## **THE ORIGINS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ZIMAMOZA INSTITUTE**

## 1. Prologue

Zimbabwe is in the grip of a terror never before witnessed even in its colonial history.

Reflecting a sinister aura of satanic inspirations and a horrifying lust for blood, power and money, the terror is tearing apart the very moral fabric on which the country's stability and prosperity have been founded.

Orchestrated by a government that initially got into power on a wave of popular excitement as a liberation movement, but is now desperately trying to hold onto it by hook or by crook, in the face of popular disillusionment, the terror is leaving behind it a trail of devastation and misery that would take decades to clear, long after it had ceased.

Exhibiting chameleonic characteristics, the terror is taking on various forms in order to strike at its various victims.

Assuming the form of "culture", the terror is spreading hatred and intolerance among the people, pitting race against race, tribe against tribe, and neighbour against neighbour, in senseless violence.

In a manner reminiscent of George Orwell's "1984", it is isolating the country from the world community of nations, denying its subjects the right to be part of the world community, and to savour the intellectual and cultural heritage of the world.

Private newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, and even private schools, are not being tolerated as the government tries to influence what the people should read, see and hear; as well as how they should think, talk and regard themselves - all in the name of preserving "traditional culture" from what it calls "negative foreign influences".

Taking on the form of "a power that be ordained of God", the terror is proving to be "a power that be ordained of Satan", as it engages in activities which are incompatible with the noble and constructive responsibilities of government.

It is making laws that are causing the people great distress and suffering – destroying their livelihoods, denying them opportunities for advancement, stripping them bare of their humanity, and reducing them into mere things without voices, privileges or rights.

But, in its clever, though not smart, attempt to escape international scrutiny and condemnation, the government of Zimbabwe is resorting to trickery, hypocrisy, down-right lies, the concept of the sovereignty of the state, and every trick in the book.

One such trick is the spinning of a propaganda yarn to rationalise the terror as an inevitable historical process that seeks to rectify the injustices of colonialism, as well as a defensive strategy against what it claims to be "British aggression and conspiracy to re-colonise Zimbabwe".

Describing it as "the Third Chimurenga", it argues that the terror is the third and final phase of the war against British imperialism that began at the end of the nineteenth century when the native people revolted against white settlers in what it calls "the First Chimurenga". The war that culminated in the independence of the country in 1980, which it led, it regards as "the Second Chimurenga".

"The Third Chimurenga" is thus trumpeted as the final war to claim the country's wealth from the control of "foreigners".

It is against that background that the so-called "land reform programme" is being displayed to the world.

It is also against that background that all those opposed to it are branded "agents of British Imperialism" and ruthlessly dealt with – mob attacked, arrested, tortured or even killed.

But apparently feeling more and more besieged and seeing enemies everywhere, the government decided to unleash a new form of terror – the terror of ethnic cleansing.

## 2. Stripping of Citizenship

On 6<sup>th</sup> July 2001, the President of Zimbabwe, Comrade Robert Mugabe, signed into an Act an amendment to the constitution which should go down in the history of Africa as the first parliamentary Act to legalise ethnic cleansing.

Known as the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (2001) the Act effectively upheld his government's stripping of born and bred Zimbabweans of foreign ancestry of their Zimbabwean citizenship – a policy the government had started implementing a year earlier in 2000.

This development brought into the open the shocking realisation that the guns of “the Third Chimurenga”, which had hitherto been directed at Zimbabweans of European descent as part of the so-called land reform programme, had eventually been turned on those of mainly Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity – thereby revealing the unimaginably horrifying excesses a government could indulge in if allowed to do as it pleases with people's rights.

By its sheer barbarity, this new terror of ethnic cleansing makes a mockery of the government's liberation movement credentials and deserves to go down in the history of Africa as one of the worst cases of ethnic cleansing, alongside the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the expulsion of Ugandan Asians by Idi Amin in 1972, and the persecution and enslavement of African Sudanese by their ethnic Arabs compatriots.

In fact, the targeting of Zimbabweans of mainly Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity as the latest victims of “the Third Chimurenga” had actually started immediately after President Mugabe had verbally attacked them at a campaign rally he was addressing in the run-up to the 2000 parliamentary election, for allegedly supporting the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Speaking in his Zezuru dialect, he had accused them of forming the bulk of the urban population that supported the MDC, and ridiculed them as “a people without totems” – a term which loosely translated from its figurative Zezuru context, means “a people without roots”.

Just a few days after that, their persecution began – an unfortunate development that revealed that it was part of the government's scheme to destroy what it saw as “the breeding grounds of opposition politics” – urban constituencies.

For, apparently overwhelmed by a desperate desire for political survival and continuity in the face of fierce popular opposition from all the urban areas of the country – which manifested itself in serious rioting, job stayaways, high attendance of opposition party rallies, and a thumbs-down to its draft constitution in a national referendum which it held – the beleaguered government then decided to pursue a covert two-pronged policy which sought to undermine the participation of urbanites in the politics of the country on the one hand, and to reinforce their allegiance to President Mugabe on the other.

The first part of the covert policy, which could accurately be described as “the conspiracy for the rural orientation of urban dwellers”, is a complete deviation from the democratic principles it fought for as a liberation movement as it embraces one of the evils of colonialism it had sought to destroy – the divide and rule tactic that was based on separating natives on the basis of ethnicity.

During colonialism, natives were confined to tribal areas and were not allowed permanent residence in urban areas. They were only granted temporary residence as migrant labour. Upon retirement, they were expected to return to their tribal reservations.

It is this policy that the Zimbabwean government decided to retrieve from the colonial archives in its conspiracy to achieve its selfish ends.

The conspiracy involves the turning back of the wheels of social progress and modernisation, and the revival of tribal structures and values.

Traditional leaders were to be given renewed recognition and accorded special treatment as the main players and agents of the government in the implementation of the conspiracy.

Urban dwellers were to be identified with their ethnic origins and, on that basis, have their citizenship status re-classified. In short, every urban Zimbabwean had to be re-registered and classified under the traditional leader of the rural area where their forebears came from.

The second part of the two-pronged policy involves what could be described as “the mental conditioning of people’s allegiance to President Mugabe”.

This takes place during what is called “the restoration of citizenship” exercise where people who shall have completed the required formalities to have their citizenship restored are put through the humiliating experience of taking an oath of allegiance to the government of Zimbabwe in front of a big portrait of President Mugabe.

The impression this creates in the mind of the oath-taker is that he or she owes his or her citizenship to the grace of President Mugabe.

It is within that scheme of things that the stripping of Zimbabweans of mainly Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity of their citizenship is being undertaken.

Those of them whose passports had expired, and had made application to have them renewed, were shocked to be told that they were no longer citizens of Zimbabwe. They were told to go to the diplomatic missions of the countries of their fathers’ births and renounce their so-called “claim” to those countries’ citizenship. So senseless and cumbersome is the exercise that it is plain to see that it is just another ploy by the government to try and disenfranchise a section of the electorate it perceived to be supporting an opposition party.

There was commotion at the Registrar General’s office in Harare where thousands of people converged each day from all corners of the country as they rushed from office to office trying to gather some semblance of sense from the government’s intentions. Rumour had it that those who shall not have renounced their so-called ‘claim’ to a foreign citizenship by January 7, 2002 deadline, shall have ceased to be Zimbabweans and shall be forcibly removed from their homes and dumped outside the borders of the country.

The tragedy of it all was that the majority of them lived far away from Harare and on the fringes of the economy. Their plight was further exacerbated by the fact that the country’s economy had plunged to a level where the majority of the people were reduced to a hand-to-mouth existence, a condition in which only those who had a relative who managed to sneak into the United Kingdom could boast some form of wellbeing. Thus the financial burden thrust upon their shoulders by the Act was such that they had to sell some of their personal belongings to raise bus fares to Harare. But even after having done that, the time it took them to go through the so called ‘renunciation process’ meant that they ended up getting stranded in Harare as their money ran out.

A case in point is that of Mr. Enock Jonasi, an elderly, poor, illiterate villager from Gutu. He sacrificed everything he possessed to travel to Harare, as he could not bear the thought of losing the only home, friends and relatives who constituted the only world he had come to know in his life. He did not understand what the so-called “renunciation” of the so-called “claim” to a foreign citizenship was all about. He had been born in the 1920’s to a father who had emigrated from Mozambique. He had never possessed a passport in his life, let alone a birth certificate. The officer attending to him admitted that his case was difficult to deal with and expressed surprise at how Mr. Jonasi got caught up in it all, as he did not need a passport. His visit had been in vain and he had to return to Gutu. But he had no money for the journey. Since arriving in Harare he had been living “rough”, sleeping out in the open at a bus terminus, and raising money for food by begging in the streets.

Another case in point was that of a widowed grandmother from Kwekwe. Since the death of her husband and two adult children, she had managed to look after herself and her three orphaned grandchildren through cross border trading. When her passport expired she was referred to the Registrar General’s Office in Harare to have her citizenship status sorted out as her late father had been born in Zambia. Thus began her endless and fruitless trips between Kwekwe and Harare. The last time she was seen at the passport office in Harare she was in a desperate situation and was weeping. She had exhausted all her savings and could no longer sustain the continued expensive trips and lodgings for the purpose of trying

to renounce a claim to a foreign citizenship. She mourned that without her passport she would have no further income and that she would probably starve to death with her grandchildren.

However, despite the hardships and financial burdens the policy was imposing on the people, it became apparent that the Government of Zimbabwe was having a sadistic delight in it all. For it soon realized that only a fraction of its targeted numbers had renounced the so-called 'claim'. How it was going to catch the remaining millions in its web of wickedness became its pre-occupation.

It was only those who needed passports that it had initially caught. It then decided to extend its web of wickedness to catch those who needed identity cards.

It also realised that the whole exercise was not financially sustainable as it proved to be a drain on its already empty coffers. Coupled with that was another realisation that the ploy of disenfranchisement could no long be pursued in its original format as it had been exposed. It therefore had no choice but to find an honourable way out of the embarrassing situation.

Being desperately in need of money, it settled for a solution of a criminal nature that would ensure that its coffers were replenished.

In a typical case of a vampire sucking the blood of the sufferers, it decided to extort the amount of thirty thousand local dollars from each individual who needed a passport or an identity card under the pretext that it was the fee for the restoration of their lost citizenship.

Unfortunately, the new victims of this extended web were the most vulnerable and marginalised category of people in society – school leavers.

School leavers who needed identity cards before they could look for employment were, as in the case of passports, referred to Harare to have their citizenship status sorted out. But those who could afford the transport fare had to give up the effort upon learning of the cumbersome and expensive process of the renunciation of the so-called 'claim' to a foreign citizenship.

Such was the case with Tinashe Akimu. He had to travel all the way from the town of Karoi to secure an identity card so that he could look for work and provide for his widowed mother and siblings.

But he had to give up the effort. He said he was going to have to learn to survive without an identity card.

Those who could afford to stay in Harare for a while but were not able to raise the exorbitant sum demanded for the so-called 'renunciation process' had to settle for identity cards bearing the word 'alien', which meant that they had been declared stateless persons in their homeland, and could not vote or enjoy those rights and privileges reserved for citizens.

### **3. Formation of ZIMCRO**

The trauma and suffering caused by the Act has been so devastating that it has brought financial ruin, mental and physical breakdowns, and even death, especially to elderly victims of European descent. Some victims even found themselves in such difficult circumstances that they were compelled to commit criminal acts in order to overcome obstacles placed in their way by the Act, for to be denied a passport is to be denied the most basic of human rights – the right to travel.

For those of the victims who depended on cross border trading for their livelihood, it is tantamount to being condemned to a life of destitution and starvation.

For those who needed medical treatment outside the country, it is comparable to being sentenced to death.

For those who needed to go abroad to study, train or take up some employment opportunity, it means being denied the right to self-advancement.

For those who intended to attend a funeral of a beloved one, it means being treated worse than a prisoner.

The list goes on and on, but the most painful disadvantage to the victims has been their failure to join the current trek to the United Kingdom to escape the harsh economic conditions in the country.

For musicians like Mitchell Jambo, it has been the failure to go on a sponsored tour outside the country that they will live to mourn. The same situation prevailed among sports persons. The painful memories of lost opportunities will linger on and haunt them to their graves.

To be denied an identity card means to be denied the right to lead a normal life, to seek employment, to operate a bank account, to enter into any contractual obligation or even to attend to family obligations, such as sending one's child to school. The negative consequences even extend to burials and the settlement of deceased estates.

It was as a result of the seriousness of the Act in violating the humanity of its victims that the Zimbabwe Citizens' Rights Organisation (ZIMCRO) was formed in December 2000 by Zimbabweans of mainly Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity with the express aim of lobbying for the unconditional restoration of their inalienable birth-right to the citizenship of Zimbabwe.

The formation of ZIMCRO was also necessitated by the recognition that the ethnic nature of the problem demanded that the commitment, energy and courage needed to tackle it could only be provided by the victims themselves, who should play the role of being their own liberators, as opposed to delegating them to existing human rights organisations. The sheer numbers of the victims – estimated at five million plus – was seen as providing the much needed morale boost.

Its initial strategy in the carrying out of its task was to engage the Government of Zimbabwe in dialogue in a spirit of comradeship and patriotism. It was in that spirit that it wrote a letter to the Registrar General, Comrade Tobaiwa Mudede, in which it raised its grievances. Mr. Mudede responded by hosting the organization at a meeting at which he made assurances that the issue was being rectified. However, he advised it to consult with the Ministry of Justice Legal and Parliamentary Affairs on any future queries it might have.

After a number of weeks without any sign of positive developments, ZIMCRO then decided to write a letter to the Minister for Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Comrade Patrick Chinamasa (July 2002), alerting him to the suffering the renunciation of the so-called "claim" to a foreign citizenship was causing the people, and urging him to reverse the situation.

He never replied to the letter but, however, issued a very positive statement in the government's official newspaper The Herald, of September 18 2002. The statement was to the effect that the application of the citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (2001) had been suspended in as far as those who had been affected by it had parentage originating within the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Although ZIMCRO received the statement with some reservation because it excluded those of its members who were of European descent, it, nevertheless, welcomed it as a step in the right direction, and as a sign that the government was capable of accepting and rectifying its mistakes if engaged in meaningful dialogue.

It felt confident that with that kind of sensitiveness on the part of the government when approached with a grievance, it would be possible to convince it to review two cases concerning white Zimbabweans which it (ZIMCRO) had been sitting on.

One was of a male white Zimbabwean student who got stranded in Australia after his passport had expired. He had gone to the Zimbabwean diplomatic mission there to have it renewed but never got any assistance.

Another was of a white Zimbabwean girl from Chiredzi who wanted to go overseas to further her studies, but could not be given a Zimbabwean passport.

But lo and behold, ZIMCRO's confidence was soon to be proved misplaced. For a year after Comrade Chinamasa's statement, the ethnic victimization continued relentlessly.

Although ZIMCRO tried to be patient it was eventually forced to face reality by the persistent complaints of its members that the harassment at the Registrar General's office was actually worsening, as even children were now being denied birth certificates.

Finding it hard to believe the new allegations concerning birth certificates, and worried about the negative implications that it could have on the children's education and future, ZIMCRO chairperson, Mr. Mike Mwale, decided to write a letter (dated 23 July 2003) to the Permanent Secretary for Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Comrade David Mangota, whom he knew personally, appealing for his intervention. He also decided to highlight to him the negative impact the renunciation of the so-called "claim" to a foreign citizenship was having on his family's financial well being, hoping to get a sympathetic response from him.

But, to Mr. Mwale's surprise, when the response from Comrade Mangota arrived a week later, it turned out to be a bombshell.

Arrogance - perhaps born out of an overblown sense of self-importance engendered by a feeling of occupying a senior position in an all-powerful government - was all that the short letter conveyed!

It was not even addressed to Mr. Mwale, but was a copy of a letter addressed to Comrade Mudede. It said nothing about the issues Mr. Mwale had raised in his letter, except to ask Comrade Mudede to brief Mr. Mwale, whom it described as "a Malawian born in Zimbabwe", on his citizenship status.

Besides its briefness and evasiveness, the letter, however, was an indirect confirmation of the complaints raised by its members on birth certificates and the doubts they expressed about the futility of expecting anything good or sensible through dialogue with the government. With that realization, and always cautious not to act on the basis of rumours, ZIMCRO decided to confirm the allegation about birth certificates.

It was indeed with a sense of anger and betrayal that ZIMCRO came face to face with the facts.

The government had indeed spun its web of wickedness further again, but this time targeting children as its latest prey.

The requirement for the renunciation of the so-called "claim" to a foreign citizenship had indeed been extended to include the registration of a child's birth. A born and bred Zimbabwean man, whose father was born outside Zimbabwe, had to prove that he renounced the so-called "claim" to his father's country of birth's citizenship before his newly-born baby could be issued with a birth certificate.

Looked at through the eyes of the child, it means that the Registrar of Births could deny the child its right to a birth certificate simply because its father did not renounce the so-called "claim" to its grandfather's country of birth's citizenship.

Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle falling into their places, ZIMCRO began to see reality as it really was – that it had all along been taken for a ride by the government; that the assurances and public statements the government had been issuing about exempting SADC citizens had all been lies; that the government's sense of morality had become so corrupted by the absoluteness of the political power which it wields to the extent that it no longer had enough conscience to restrain itself even from adding children to the list of the victims of its evil machinations; and that it had become so deaf to the cries of innocent people that an alternative unilateral solution to their grievances had to be found.

However, ZIMCRO's hopes were rekindled when the Herald of 9 March 2004, reported that President Mugabe had finally assented to the law exempting all persons born in Zimbabwe but whose parents were from SADC countries from renouncing their "foreign citizenship" and still be recognized as Zimbabweans as required by section 9 of the Citizenship of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (2001).

Unfortunately, these hopes were soon to be shattered by another report that appeared in the Herald of 30 April 2004, which completely contradicted the story about the President's comments.

This time, it was the Minister of Home Affairs, Comrade Kembo Mohadi, who issued a statement to the effect that SADC citizens wishing to renounce any other citizenship should apply for restoration of Zimbabwean citizenship through the Registrar General's Office.

"The restoration of Zimbabwean citizenship and the renunciation of foreign citizenship would be done under the ... SADC Citizens Regulations, 2004", he declared,

adding that descendants of the people who came before April 18, 1980, also qualified under the law.

Not sure whom to believe between President Mugabe and Cde. Mohadi, ZIMCRO decided to look at the facts on the ground. And it was Cde. Mohadi who was right!

The ethnic cleansing policy was still in place. People were still being stripped of their citizenship and subjected to blackmail and extortion running into hundreds of millions of dollars by the government under the pretext that they were paying for the restoration of their lost citizenship.

The only thing that had changed was the wording on the renunciation and restoration forms, which betrayed the government's ploy to white-wash the issue by making it look innocent and well-intentioned, and creating the impression that it was now being conducted under the auspices of SADC.

The Minister's position was finally confirmed beyond doubt by a report in The Herald of 2 August 2004. Headlined, "New citizenship regulations gazetted", it stated that the government had gazetted new regulations that would require those born in the country but whose parents and forebears originated from countries within the region to fill in special renunciation forms to restore their Zimbabwean citizenship.

In January 2005 the government introduced new identity cards. The only logical conclusion ZIMCRO could draw from this latest development was that the government was relentless in its intentions to cast its web of wickedness further and further.

These developments forced ZIMCRO into accepting the fact that it had completely failed to dissuade the government to revoke the Act and to unconditionally restore citizenship to all those it had stripped.

With this admission of failure came the realisation that there was need for the organisation to change both its focus and strategy if it was to achieve its objective and see to it that the rights and dignity of its members should never be held to ransom ever again.

#### **4. Charting A New Path**

The need to change its focus and strategy led ZIMCRO to undertake an extensive and intensive consultative exercise within its constituency with the intention of re-evaluating its old focus and strategy and charting a new path based on practicable and effective policies.

As a result of the consultative exercise, ZIMCRO acquired a new insight into the problem.

It noted that it had committed one grave error that had set it on a wild goose chase under the misplaced strategy of trying to persuade the Zimbabwean government to revoke its ethnic cleansing Act – the error of overlooking the underlying realities that had encouraged it to adopt the Act in the first place. This had resulted in ZIMCRO dealing with the symptom, rather than the cause, of the disease.

With this new revelation, ZIMCRO came to recognise the reality that the illogical, unjust, and inhuman systematic persecution of born and bred Zimbabweans of mainly Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity by the Zimbabwean government underscored the political culture that exists in the country – the political culture of tribalism and ethnicity.

It noted that the political culture of Zimbabwe was tribal and ethnic driven as it allocated leadership roles, not on the basis of merit or any other democratic value, but on the basis of a person's tribe or ethnicity

In other words, political leaders occupied their positions on the basis not of their personal qualities, but of their ethnic origins.

It was almost like an unwritten law in Zimbabwe that ethnic Shona politicians regarded themselves as the natural leaders of the country. Perhaps this is because their ethnic group is seen as the first Bantu ethnic group to arrive in the land of the Bushman – the indigenous people of the southern African sub-region – and constitutes the largest ethnic group in the country.

This attitude expects Ndebele politicians to always play the second fiddle since their ethnic group arrived quite late and constitutes what could be called “the second majority”. For example, whenever a political movement is formed, it emerges that its leader would be ethnic Shona while his deputy would be Ndebele. Zimbabweans of other smaller ethnic groups are pushed to the margins of the political field.

So deep do these ethnic identities run that the notion of “the nation” is submerged under that of “the tribe”; and sometimes even cut across the tribe into “sub-tribes” and “clans”. For instance, a Zezuru would regard himself as Zezuru first and foremost and as a member of a particular clan second.

And so omnipresent is this culture of ethnicity that even a foreigner to the country such as the late Lonrho boss, Mr. Tiny Rowland, had to comment in 1980: “Joshua Nkomo has lost the elections because he is Ndebele”.

In such a highly ethnic-charged environment, ethnic rivalries and animosities are the order of the day as each ethnic group tries to assert its superiority and each individual tries to exploit ethnic advantages to gain an edge over competitors.

Discrimination and favouritism in the allocation of resources, jobs, services and opportunities, on the basis of tribalism and ethnocentrism, become the norm rather than the exception.

Accusations of unfair play by one ethnic group against another; and trading of verbal ethnic based insults, and even violence, become regular occurrences.

In Zimbabwe, these ethnic hostilities are reinforced by the traditional religion which is based on the belief that each tribe, clan or family has its own supernatural guide and protector in the form of its dead forebears known as “ancestral spirits”. Rituals, to which some occult experiences are attributed, and centring on the brewing of traditional beer, constitute the worshipping of these ancestral spirits.

The rural homestead, which is colloquially referred to as “roots”, is regarded as the abode of these spirits. and hence the place where these rituals are performed. As a result, every Zimbabwean is expected to have a rural home even if they have become urban residents. Not having a rural home means having lost one’s “roots”.

At the centre of this traditional religion is the “witchdoctor”, who is accorded a special status as a spirit medium who has the supernatural powers of communicating with the spirits of the dead,. His or her instructions to the living on how they should appease the spirits of their departed ones so as to receive their guidance and protection are so strictly observed that even murders are committed as a result.

Being an ethnic religion, the traditional religion not only promotes ethnic or sectional interests, but rejects other religions on the flimsy and superficial argument that they are alien. For instance, it does not tolerate Christianity because Jesus Chris was not of its ethnic group.

What this means is that there is no feeling of affinity between the people of different tribes; and hence the quest by each tribe to be independent from the hegemony of other tribes.

For some time now, the Ndebele have been complaining that the Shona have been carrying out a clandestine operation to culturally absorb them. They have been pointing their fingers at the dominance of the Shona language on the country’s only state-owned radio stations, and the influx of Shona teachers and other Shona-speaking civil servants into Matebeleland as evidence of this.

The Tonga are expressing alarm at the encroachment of Ndebele and Shona languages into their region. They are demanding that their region be re-named after their tribe’s name, as is the case with other regions, as a way of preserving their ethnic culture.

Tribal or ethnic insults are usually accompanied by the misplaced practice of constructing tribal or ethnic stereotypes; that is to say. the generalisation of a person’s behaviour on the basis of his or her tribe or ethnicity. For instance, if a Ndebele person has been caught stealing, the usual conclusion would be that “Ndebeles are thieves”.

Just as absurd are the tribal or ethnic verbal attacks and counter attacks. They are all underlined by a depressing intellectual senselessness to the point of being the chattering of

lunacy. One such an example is that of a ZANU (PF) government Minister who accused certain individuals within the then rival ZAPU as not being “real Ndebeles”.

But perhaps the most embarrassing manifestation of this cancerous evil of tribalism and ethnocentrism was when it tried to establish itself in one of the most sacred institutions of society – The Roman Catholic Church.

According to the Herald, some high officials of the church in Mashonaland tried to organise a protest against the appointment of Bishop Robert Ndlovu as the new Archbishop of Harare by Pope John Paul II on the grounds that he was Ndebele.

In it's main front page headline reading, “Rift hits Catholics”, of 12 July, 2004, The Herald minced no words in revealing that the protest was being fuelled by some ethnic Shona politicians, one of whom it quoted as having protested, “..... Furthermore, the Shona and Ndebele cultures.....are so different and so how is Archbishop Ndlovu going to relate to the congregation?”

Another disturbing incident involved a propagandist campaign the government had organised at the National Archives whose objective was to give some credibility to its “Third Chimurenga” terror.

One could not help detecting anti-Ndebele sentiments from the words and voice of the man narrating the history of The First Chimurenga.

“The Ndebeles came all the way from South Africa just to hand over this country to the British for lumps of sugar”, he told the visitors.

Naturally, the politicians appear comfortable with such an environment as they could exploit it to advance their selfish political ambitions. For whenever and wherever ethnic violence has erupted, it has always emerged that working behind the scenes has been the sinister hand of the politician.

In 1981, Ndebeles in Bulawayo launched an anti-Shona genocide in an effort to rid the city of Shona-speaking people. Moto, a now defunct Catholic weekly newspaper, led with the story under the heading, “Hell Breaks Loose in Bulawayo!”..

Crowds of Ndebele-speakers roamed the streets of Bulawayo killing anyone who spoke Ndebele with a Shona accent. They would greet their victims first to identify their accents before setting upon them with stones and clubs.

In one incident, a crowd came upon a man on a bicycle. Having identified the man's Shona accent, the leader of the crowd asked the man why he could not speak Ndebele properly. The fear-struck, trembling man mumbled something like he was in the process of learning the language. Pretending to have accepted the man's explanation, the leader told the man to thank his ancestral spirits as they had decided to spare his life. He, however, commanded the man to turn and go back where he was coming from. But when the man turned to cycle away, he was struck with a club at the back of his head and fell off his bicycle dead.

Some victims who had barricaded themselves in their houses had their doors broken down and dragged out into the streets where they were stoned to death. Such was the fate of one family which was said to have been completely wiped out – father, mother and children – in the township of Magwegwe.

In the township of Mpopoma, an off-duty Shona-speaking soldier was dragged out of the room he rented in a Ndebele family home and was stoned to death.

The streets of Bulawayo became so littered with dead bodies that playing children could be seen jumping over them. Such was the high number of the dead that railway wagons had to be used as make-shift mortuaries.

The whole ghastly incident was sparked by the tribal-based political rivalry between ZANU (PF) and ZAPU.

It all began at a political rally that ZANU (PF) was holding at White City Stadium. Apparently angered by the presence of their rival in their main territory, ZAPU officials decided to incite their youth wing to storm the rally with the express purpose of disrupting it.

As a result, there were skirmishes involving stone-throwing between the supporters of the two rival parties outside the stadium. The skirmishes eventually spread to nearby townships and by evening had engulfed the whole city and spilled into the camp where

some ZANLA and ZIPRA forces were living together as a symbol of unity between the two parties.

The violence almost escalated into a full-scale civil war when some radical officials of ZAPU started distributing arms to some of their former ZIPRA combatants who had been demobilised at independence. Peace was finally restored by the personal intervention of Dr Joshua Nkomo and the use of the army after some days. This, however, spawned a new problem for the ZANU (PF) government – the dissident problem – as some ZIPRA combatants started going back into the bush as armed rebels.

The government responded by unleashing death and destruction in Matebeleland in an episode now commonly referred to as “Gukurahundi”, and which has become a subject of interest to human rights organisations. And during that same Gukurahundi period, ZANU (PF) incited some of its members in Harare to evict some Ndebele-speaking residents from their homes. With promises that they would occupy the houses left behind by the Ndebeles, there was mayhem as the people ran amok in their excitement to take over the houses. Property worth millions of dollars, was destroyed and no compensation was given to the victims. As in Bulawayo, the anti-Ndebele violence also affected Ndebele-speaking Zimamosas and most notable was the Chongo family of the township of Highfields.. The family lost virtually everything to looting and vandalism.

Within that same period, In an isolated incident far away from the cities of Harare and Bulawayo, another tribe, the Shangaan, apparently encouraged by the existing climate of tribal-inspired attacks, attacked their Karanga neighbours in Chiredzi in an attempt to evict them from what they claimed was their tribal land. Subsequent investigations revealed that the local Member of Parliament was behind the incident.

It is within this context that ZIMRO began to view the disenfranchisement of Zimbabweans of mainly Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity; that it was yet another attempt by the politicians to play the game of tribalism and ethnocentrism to achieve their selfish interests. For, in order to safeguard its continued rule by preventing its perceived opponents from voting, the government saw it expedient to adopt and apply an ethnic perspective to the question of nationality. According to this ethnic theory of nationality, nationality and ethnicity are one and the same thing. It thus defines a Zimbabwean a person whose ethnic group occupies a region within Zimbabwe which is its ethnic territory.

By applying the ethnic theory and disenfranchising Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity the government also hoped to win the support of all the ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. Its gamble was based on the proposition that, taking into account the ethnic hostilities prevalent in the country, no ethnic group would oppose the persecution of another ethnic group by whoever. It therefore expected other ethnic groups to support it in that endeavour.

It indeed goes without saying that Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity are looked down upon by other ethnic groups. They are regarded as foreigners according to the definition of the ethnic theory of nationality. While sociologists may dismiss such ethnic prejudices as just another ethnocentrism typical of backward societies found especially in Africa, this could be rightly attributed to the menial tasks migrant labour used to perform when the-then white Southern Rhodesians were laying the country's industrial base. These prejudices are further reinforced by the economic superiority Zimbabwe achieved over Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, and the continuous dependence of the three countries on Zimbabwe's economy even for the most trivial of products and services

As a result, petty-nationalist-inspired and chauvinistic statements such as “Zambians are lazy people”, “Zambia is a filthy country”, “Malawians and Mozambicans are a backward people”, are frequently heard on the streets of Zimbabwe.

The fact that Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity were culturally absorbed and do not have their own history as an ethnic group exacerbates matters. That history books on Zimbabwe hardly mention their presence in the country reinforces the ethnic theory of nationality which the government is using to victimise them.

The danger posed by this ethnic theory of nationality was made apparent in a letter that appeared in the Bulawayo-based, government-owned daily called, "The Chronicle". The writer of the letter, calling upon the authorities not to give any food assistance to communities that had settled in Hwange, argued that they were not Zimbabweans but Malawians, Mozambicans and Zambians who failed to return to their countries of birth at their retirement from Hwange Colliery. The writer actually urged the government to let them starve to death.

That the letter was even allowed to see the light of day in The Chronicle reveals the fact that the government shared the writer's sentiments.

Moreover, monitors of the country's state media must have observed the same sentiments being peddled especially on what is called "Radio Zimbabwe".

And so common are these tribal and ethnic prejudices that even well-known musician, Lovemore Majaivana, mourned in one of his songs: "Isono sami yikuba nguMzwangendaba – by which he meant; "My only sin for all their hatred is that I am a Mzwangendaba" (a Nguni tribes person of Malawian descent).

It is interesting to note that Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity have also been among the victims of Shona-Ndebele clashes and of Gukurahundi.

A case in point is that of Charles Mwase. A former Zipra combatant who was one of the demobilised, Mwase went into civilian life as he joined Edgars Store in Bulawayo's city centre, with the hope of settling down and starting a family with his fiancée. Unfortunately, his hopes were crashed into pulp as the wheels of Gukurahundi rolled into the store in search of him. He was picked up by plain-clothed members of Mugabe's feared Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) who told him that they only wanted to have a brief talk with him. That was the last time Mwase was seen.

His mother, uMaMlilo, upon realising that his son was among the hundreds of former Zipra cadres who disappeared during Gukurahundi, has been weeping and praying for the return of his body: "I know they killed my son. That I accept. But all I want is that they bring his body so that I could bury him before I also die".

What is disturbing and frightening, as it portends a grim future for the country, is the emergence of this ethnocentrism within the opposition MDC – a party regarded as representing the aspirations of establishing a harmonious, modern and progressive Zimbabwe. Certain of its officials have been linked to statements demeaning Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity. Maybe that helps explain why the "ethnic cleansing" bill managed to sail through Parliament without even a single protest against it being heard from the opposition bench.

Perhaps even more disturbing and frightening is the fact that its leader, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai, is known to be a fanatical disciple of the cult of ethnic discrimination. This could be due to his awareness that he owes his leadership position to his ethnic origins than to anything else. His tribalism was revealed before a group of democracy activists who had gathered at the Kadoma Ranch Motel, in the town of Kadoma, to lay the ground for the establishment of the National Constitutional Assembly (the NCA) when voiced his anger and opposition to the-then liberal and progressive President Mugabe's appointment of the late Alderman Francis Aphiri as Zanu (PF)'s candidate for the first City of Masvingo election for an Executive Mayor,

Mr. Tsvangirai made it no secret that he actually spearheaded an ethnic-based campaign against Alderman Aphiri in which he warned the residents of Masvingo that if they voted for Alderman Aphiri, they would wake up one morning to find the words on the roadside signpost reading; "City of Masvingo Welcomes You" changed to read, "City of Lilongwe Welcomes You".

That is an indication of the extent some ethnic Shona politicians can go to foolishly display their intellectual deficiencies in their desperation to gain or hold onto political power by resorting to tribalism and ethnocentrism. Alderman Aphiri, though of Malawian ethnicity, is Karanga by cultural absorption, having been born and bred in Masvingo. Karangas are the dominant ethnic group in Masvingo.

It is indeed sad to note that by stripping Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity of their citizenship, President Mugabe performed a retrogressive act, climbed down the moral high ground, and sank to the intellectually low level of Mr Tsvangirai. For, in so doing, he cast aside his statesman's mantle, donned on that of a tribesman, thus cutting a pitifully shameful figure far removed from the moralistic one that had, about a decade ago, stood by the graveside of the former Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) Chairman, Mr. Nelson Chirwa, and delivered a heart-rending eulogy in which it appealed to its ethnic tribesmen to regard Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity with love and respect as their equals and compatriots.

Turning reason and justice on their heads, he post-humorously stripped the former migrant workers of the very citizenship his government had bestowed on them at the height of its popularity in 1985, in line with the dictates of reality and the constitution. This he did by stripping their descendants of their citizenship.

He completely ignored the fact that his government's naturalisation of the migrant workers had been merely a formality, as it had become apparent that they had become de facto Zimbabweans.

For they had come to the then Southern Rhodesia as young men to be exploited for their cheap labour, but with dreams of returning to their countries of birth richer than they had come.

They had spent the prime years of their lives oiling the country's wheels of industry and commerce with their blood, sweat and taxes; had become so culturally absorbed and assimilated into the local communities through inter-marriages and inter-dependence; had become so impoverished and so advanced in years and ailing, that it had become obvious that their dreams of ever returning would remain just dreams.

As they neared the end of their lives, their destinies diverged although they were all dogged with persistent poverty.

Some of them had perished in occupational accidents, especially in mining disasters, and left behind widows and children living in poverty

A good number of those lucky enough to reach retirement age established rural settlements around their former towns of work, where they were to die mainly from diseases acquired from the unhealthy conditions that constituted their work environment, and in poverty which their meagre monthly pension receipts could do little to ameliorate - amid allegations that they were ripped-off by their employers and pension funds.

The majority, however, remained in the urban areas, where they were to die, leaving behind their children to continue with their families' new trend of urban residency.

Though it was this particular group that President Mugabe had targeted with his ethnic cleansing Act, their common history saw to it that the policy could not be applied discriminately.

In a country where ethnicity defines a person's identity as well as dictates its political culture, President Mugabe could afford to do so with the help of a parliament, which, ironically, is not organised along ethnic lines.

Unfortunately, in his blind rage to destroy what he saw as his enemies, President Mugabe ignored the fact that by virtue of their fathers having become naturalised Zimbabweans, they, the children, had become full-blooded Zimbabweans by both birth and descent.

He refused to acknowledge the reality that they were Zimbabweans in every aspect of their characters and that they had fought beside him in the so-called "liberation war," fully conscious that their destinies were bound with that of Zimbabwe.

He also refused to acknowledge their patriotism in the form of marvellous contributions they made to the cultural advancement of the country, especially in the fields of music, literature, art and sports.

These observations made ZIMCRO more apprehensive of its members' safety and welfare, taking into account the country's reputation for and propensity to ethnic victimisations.

It also observed with a feeling of foreboding that the tribal tensions, which the Zimbabwe government was fuelling, had the potential of overflowing into and destabilising the whole southern African sub-region.

For instance, in the case of Mr. Mwale, who was described by Cde Mangota as “a Malawian born in Zimbabwe”, what would the implications be if the Malawian government decided to follow in the footsteps of the Zimbabwean government and declare Mr. Mwale’s father “a Mozambican born in Malawi”, since his grandfather emigrated from Mozambique to Malawi.

This observation raised another disturbing question as to what would become of those people who shall have been stripped of their citizenship because of either their conscientious objection to giving in to blackmail and extortion, or to harassment and humiliation, or because of their failure to raise the required money due to poverty.

Mr. Mwale’s case is typical of the migrant workers’ families who eventually settled in the rural areas. His father emigrated to the then Southern Rhodesia at the end of the Second World War on his return from India where he served as a war medic. A Catholic himself, he married a Ndebele woman, Yulitta Rosina Hlabangana, the daughter of a Brethren in Christ pastor and builder, and granddaughter of one of King Lobengula’s generals, who was part of the delegation that was sent to the United Kingdom by Lobengula. On his retirement, he retreated to the rural home he had established at Makwasha Village, Chief Masunda area, in Zvishavane, becoming a naturalised Zimbabwean on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1985, three years before he died on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1988.

Also very disturbing is the allegation that behind this so-called, “The Third Chimurenga”, is a Zezuru secret society that advocates Zezuru supremacy and the dispossession of “foreigners” of their money and properties under the pretext that the wealth belongs to the nation of Zimbabwe.

According to the allegation, the secret society performs rituals that border on paganism and conducts sermons that are laced with the poison of ethnocentrism, based on the belief that its members are the true custodians of Zimbabwe’s wealth and heritage.

The secret society is believed to be the mastermind behind the invasion of white-owned farms, the killings of white farmers, and the stripping of Zimbabweans of foreign ethnicity of their citizenship

It is also alleged to have infiltrated the country’s judicial system, thereby making it difficult for those who had been robbed of their rights and properties to win any redress from the courts. Those whites, and perhaps a few blacks, who could afford expensive lawsuits against the state, had been left exasperated and exhausted after having realised:

- (i) that the country’s legal system was highly vulnerable to political manipulation as could be testified by the failure of judges to adjudicate actions on their merit, but according to the interests of the Government of Zimbabwe;
- (ii) that justice was being compromised as some judges were among the beneficiaries of President Mugabe’s controversial land reform programme; and
- (iii) that the Government of Zimbabwe had the freedom to defy court rulings that happened to be not in its favour

Following its new insight into the causes of its members’ victimisation, ZIMCRO observed that its members were facing a very serious case of institutionalised discrimination on ethnic grounds, and that the only effective way of bringing about a permanent end to their plight and vulnerability lay in its capability to come up with mechanisms and strategies that would shield them from such discrimination and victimisation by fostering their ethnic unity and promoting their human and ethnic rights..

It further observed that in order to achieve that objective there was need for the organisation to re-orientate itself by adopting a name reflective of this new strategy and focus.

It was therefore agreed that the name of the Zimbabwe Citizens Rights Organisation (ZIMCRO) should be changed to that of The Zimbabwe Anti-Ethnic Discrimination Organisation (ZADO).

However, two months later, at a meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2004, the Executive Committee, having taken into account the following points

- (i) - that since Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity constituted over 90 per cent of all those stripped of their citizenship
- (ii) – that since Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity were the most socially, culturally and economically disadvantaged of all ethnic groups and are the most vulnerable to the cycle of poverty and homelessness; and
- (iii) – that since Zimbabweans of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity have been the most negatively affected by the controversial “land reform programme”, which has thrown those of them who were farm workers out of the farms where they worked and lived, thereby turning them into internally displaced persons or IPD’s decided that the organisation should instead focus on addressing their plight by uniting them into a single multi-ethnic group under the term ZIMAMOZA, which would stand for Zimbabwean of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian ethnicity (derived from the first two letters of Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia) and adopt the name “Zimamoza People’s Assembly”, or ZPA.

In line with the change, a new logo and motto were adopted.

The logo depicts ethnic symbols of resistance - a crossed spear and club against the background of a shield. Suspended at the point where the shield and club cross is the scales of justice. A map of Africa showing the countries of Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia is imprinted at the upper end of the shield, while at the bottom end of the shield are the abbreviations ZPA.

Below the emblem is the organisation’s self-explanatory motto, “Ethnic Consciousness for Human Dignity”

Once again, a year later on October 22, 2005, as some invited members felt that it gave the impression that the organisation was a political party. It was then unanimously agreed that the name should be changed to The Zimamoza Institute.

It was also agreed that in view of the fact that the Government of Zimbabwe has refused to reverse its ethnic-cleansing policy even at the insistence of the United Nations as recommended by the Tibaijuka Commission of Enquiry into human rights abuses in Zimbabwe, there was an urgent need to adopt resolutions that would form the rallying cry of the Institute and which it would seek to pursue relentlessly and see to it that Zimamozas would never again be subjected to such dehumanising victimisation..

The meeting then released its mission statement containing its resolutions.

## **5. Mission Statement of the Zimamoza Institute**

We, the descendants of the migrant workers who came mainly from Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia; whose blood, sweat and taxes oiled the economic development of Zimbabwe; and who eventually became naturalised Zimbabweans due to old age, destitution, infirmity or assimilation; having considered the causes of the ethnic prejudices, humiliation and victimisation to which we are being subjected in Zimbabwe, and which have culminated in our being stripped of our citizenship by the government of Zimbabwe, and thereby being rendered, “stateless persons”; and having reached the following conclusions:

- i. That we are Zimbabweans by both birth and descent, not by the grace of any particular individual, but by the Grace of God, creator of this very Earth of which Zimbabwe is a part, and whose inhabitants came to be where they geographically are today through migration;
- ii. That the stripping of a people of their citizenship demeans the sanctity of the concept of citizenship, thereby violating the fundamental principles which uphold the dignity of humanity, with the effect that the victims are induced with a feeling of inferiority and sub-servience to those who display the power to invest or divest them of their citizenship;

- iii. That the ethnic prejudices, humiliations and victimisation to which we are being subjected are an indication that in Zimbabwe, cultural absorption and assimilation do not work;
- iv. That our dignity as human beings can only be safeguarded by ourselves, the victims, through the promotion of our ethnic identity and the upholding of our ethnic rights as a minority group; and that if we, the victims, did not take it upon ourselves to uphold our rights and improve our lot, we shall eventually be turned into a slave class always at the mercy of the dominant tribes:

We hereby resolve to:

1 Take the Government of Zimbabwe and the Parliament of Zimbabwe – for having passed the Act which the Government used to carry out its ethnic-cleansing agenda – for crimes against humanity and crimes against children and for;

- i. the unconditional restoration of our Zimbabwean citizenship;
- ii. the financial compensation for the physical suffering, emotional trauma and material losses experienced by the victims as a direct or indirect result of their ethnic persecution;.
- iii. the refunding, with interest, of all those who gave in to blackmail and extortion and, as a result, were robbed of their money under the pretext that they were paying for the restoration of their lost citizenship;
- iv. the granting of birth certificates and educational assistance to children who have been affected by the ethnic-cleansing policy and as well as the establishment of shelters who have been internally displaced and are growing up in an environment not conducive to their proper socialisation into the modern world;

2 Demand the enshrinement of constitutional guarantees, such as the allocation of a fixed quota of parliamentary representation, to members of the Zimamoza Institute to ensure that minority rights are not abused.

3 Demand the inclusion of the history of Zimamozas in the national educational curriculum , alongside that of other tribes that have always been featured, so as to foster understanding and tolerance among the people in the country;

4 Take legal action against individuals or organisations that engage in deeds or speeches that are anti-Zimamoza. In pursuit of this resolution, the Zimamoza Institute therefore intends to:

- i. take the state-owned Bulawayo-based daily newspaper, The Chronicle, for the anti-Zimamoza sentiments it published in its Letter to the Editor column,
- ii. seek a public apology from the MDC leader, Mr Morgan Tsvangirai, for the anti-Zimamoza campaign he undertook in his bid to discredit President Mugabe's appointment of Alderman Francis Aphiri as Zanu(PF)'s candidate for the first Executive Mayor of the City of Masvingo elections. The Zimamoza Institute will inform Mr. Tsvangirai on the date and platform on which he shall deliver the apology. Failing that, the Institute will take legal action against him.

5 Institute investigations into allegations that the descendants of Zimamozas (the former migrant workers) were defrauded by their pension schemes at Shabanie Mine of Zvishavane and Hwange Colliery of Hwange.

6 Seek the assistance of the international community to enable us to carry out our resolutions from a position of strength by appealing to the United Nations to recognise Zimamozas as victims of ethnic cleansing and as "stateless persons" who should be accorded special status and protection that should include.

- i. providing them with United Nations travel documents to enable them to fulfil their travel engagements and requirements as free citizens of the world;
- ii. providing their children with birth certificates;
- iii. providing them with identity cards to enable them to carry on their civil duties and obligations as free citizens of the world;

The Zimamoza Institute is currently run by a 5-person  
Executive Committee which comprise of  
Mr. Michael Mwale - Chairperson  
Ms Evelyn Ngulube - Secretary  
Mr. Masawuko Maruwacha - Treasurer  
Ms Judith Maponga - Deputy Secretary  
Mr. Isaac Zulu - Member  
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