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Clare Short

One bad letter with long-lasting consequences

On 5 November 1997, Britain's then secretary of state for international development, Clare Short, wrote what has become one of the most defining landmarks in Zimbabwe's recent history - her letter to Zimbabwe's then minister of agriculture and land, Kumbirai Kanga, repudiating Britain's colonial responsibility for land reform in Zimbabwe. Below is Clare Short's letter in full.



Dear Minister, George Foulkes has reported to me on the meeting which you and Hon John Nkomo had with Tony Lloyd and him[self] during your recent visit. I know that President Mugabe also discussed the land issue with the prime minister briefly during their meeting. It may be helpful if I record where matters now rest on the issue. At the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting [in Edinburgh], Tony Blair said that he looked forward to developing a new basis for relations with Commonwealth countries founded upon our new government's policies, not on the past.

We will set out our agenda for international development in a White Paper to be published this week. The central thrust of this will be the development of partnerships with developing countries which are committed to eradicate poverty, and have their own proposals for achieving that, which we and other donors can support.

I very much hope that we will be able to develop such a relationship with Zimbabwe. I understand that you aim shortly to publish your own policies on economic management and poverty reduction. I hope that we can discuss them with you and identify areas where we are best able to help. I mentioned this in my letter of 31 August to Hon Herbert Murarwa. **I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish, and as you know, we were colonised, not colonisers.**

We do, however, recognise the very real issues you face over land reform. We believe that land reform could be an important component of a Zimbabwean programme

designed to eliminate poverty. We would be prepared to support a programme of land reform that was part of a poverty eradication strategy but not on any other basis. **I am told Britain provided a package of assistance for resettlement in the period immediately following independence. This was, I gather, carefully planned and implemented, and met most of its targets. Again, I am told there were discussions in 1989 and 1996 to explore the possibility of further assistance. However, that is all in the past.**

If we look to the present, a number of specific issues are unresolved, including the way in which land would be acquired and compensation paid. Clearly it would not help the poor of Zimbabwe if it was done in a way which undermined investor confidence.

Other questions that would need to be settled would be to ensure that the process was completely open and transparent, including the establishment of a proper land register. Individual schemes would have to be economically justified to ensure that the process helped the poor and for me the most important issue is that any programme must be planned as part of a programme to contribute to the goal of eliminating poverty. I would need to consider detailed proposals on these issues before confirming further British support for resettlement.

I am sure that a carefully worked out programme of land reform that was part of a programme of poverty eradication which we could support would also bring in other donors whose support would help ensure that a substantial land resettlement programme such as you clearly desire could be undertaken successfully. If is [sic] to do so, they too will need to be involved from the start.

It follows from this that a programme of rapid land acquisition as you now seem to envisage would be impossible for us to support. I know that many of Zimbabwe's friends share our concern about the damage which this might do to Zimbabwe's agricultural output and its prospects of attracting investment. ■NA

Zimbabwe

The police speak

Zimbabwe's deputy commissioner of police (operations), **Godwin T. Matanga**, explains to Baffour Ankomah why his officers beat up Morgan Tsvangirai and other opposition leaders on 11 March. "It was in self-defence, because Tsvangirai and his group were trying to overrun the Machipisa police station by force," says the deputy commissioner.

Baffour: So far we have heard only one side of the story about the beating up of Morgan Tsvangirai and the other MDC leaders. What really happened on the day, and why did your officers beat up the opposition leaders?

Deputy Commissioner Matanga: First, I would want to welcome you to police headquarters, and thank you for coming to listen to our side of the story. I would like to believe that the Ministry of Information has given you a broader picture of what is going on right now in the country, so I will confine myself to the specific issue you have raised.

There are quite a number of activities or events which occurred before and since 11 March. For example, in January and February this year, MDC activists had petrol-bombed cars, mini-vans, public buses, and had attacked police stations and officers and injured some of them. These are acts of terrorism which the police were trying to deal with before the events of 11 March occurred.

But of particular interest to you, from your question, is the day when the leader of the MDC "anti-Senate" faction, Morgan Tsvangirai, was arrested. *[Tsvangirai's faction was against entering candidates for last year's Senate election, which led to a split of the MDC into two, one faction – the "pro-Senate election" – is now headed by Prof Arthur Mutambara].*

On Sunday 11 March, at about 11am, the leaders of the two MDC factions were seen inciting people to attend a rally which

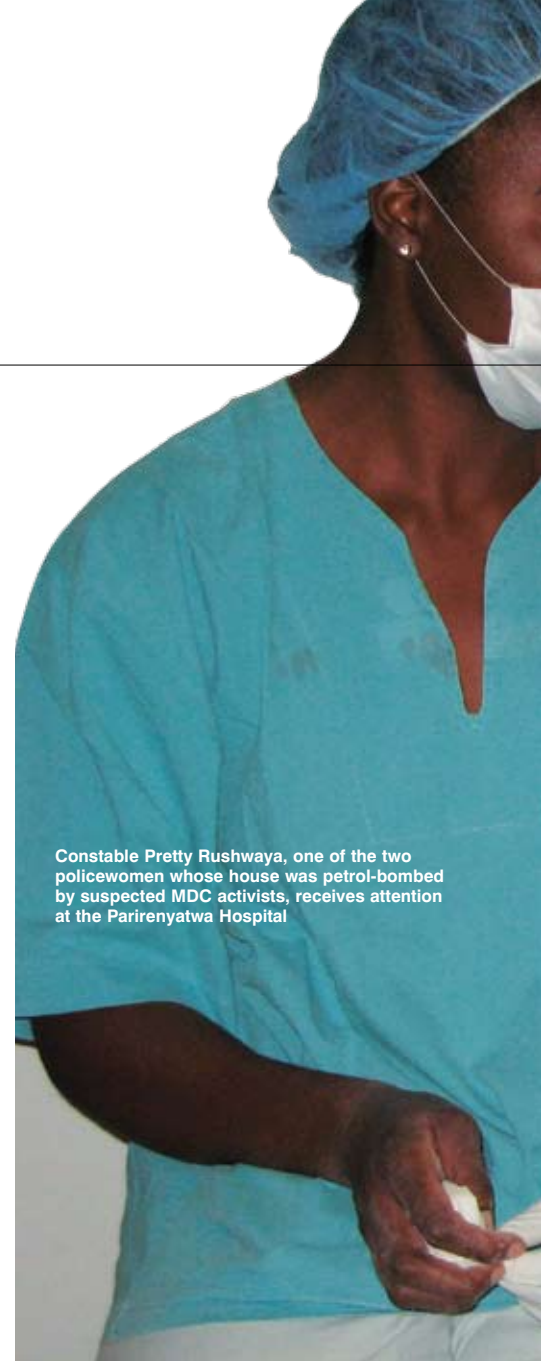
had been banned by the police. We then deployed our officers to make sure that peace and tranquillity prevailed, and that people were not going to be disturbed by anyone.

It was in the Highfield area of the capital, Harare. To be more specific, it was at the Michipisa police station where the officer in charge was patrolling and carrying on his responsibilities in the area with eight other officers in a pick-up truck, when they encountered a group of about 200 people. Unfortunately, there were five-year-old children in front of this big group and the police found it difficult to encounter this group because of the presence of these young children.

As a result of the MDC officials inciting people to attend a banned rally at Zimbabwe Grounds in Highfields, this group of 200 people became very rowdy against the police. They attacked our officers and severely injured two of them.

Thereafter, in reaction to this encounter, the leader of the MDC "pro-Senate" faction, Prof Arthur Mutambara, was arrested along with some of his members and they were detained at the Michipisa police station. Because Mutambara did not resist arrest and was not violent towards the police, he was not assaulted, nobody touched him.

From the intelligence we got that morning, Mr Tsvangirai was then phoned by one of his own members telling him that he was losing the limelight to Arthur Mutambara because Arthur had been arrested and was already in police cells, and that if he didn't



Constable Pretty Rushwaya, one of the two policewomen whose house was petrol-bombed by suspected MDC activists, receives attention at the Parirenyatwa Hospital

come, Arthur was going to take the glory and world attention from him.

So Mr Tsvangirai, not wanting to lose the limelight to Mutambara, then drove straight to the Machipisa police station. When he got to the main gate, he encountered the police officers manning the gate. There was a group of ordinary people and MDC supporters standing outside the gate when Mr Tsvangirai arrived and demanded the release of Mutambara and others.

The police openly told him not to get inside the station as the people outside were trying to overrun the station. Tsvangirai, defying the police admonitions, tried to force his way into the station. That's when he was beaten up by our officers.



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“MDC activists approached the police station from the back and threw some petrol bombs inside the house where three of our female officers were sleeping.”

A bit later, Mr Lovemore Madhuku (leader of the National Constitutional Assembly – NCA, which is allied to the opposition), also arrived and demanded the release of the same group led by Mutambara. Again, Madhuku was beaten up by the police. That’s what I can say about the arrest of Mr Tsvangirai.

Baffour: What happened to Sekai Hol-



land, one of the MDC female officials, and the others?

Matanga: She was in the group going around the area mobilising people to attend the banned rally. She was telling people to defy the police officers manning strategic points in the area. She was telling them to disregard the police presence and proceed to the Zimbabwe Grounds and attend the rally.

She incited the people who had gathered around Machipisa shopping centre, a large group of people, to come towards the police station and overrun it. It was at this stage that Morgan Tsvangirai arrived.

Tsvangirai was now at the gate, and Sekai Holland was still inciting people to attend

the rally. When our officers tried to stop her, she came out of her vehicle and insulted the officers. This is what prompted the officers to react against her and her group. They provoked our officers. Initially, they were told not to enter Highfield, but to make a U-turn and go back home. They reacted by insulting the police officers, calling them all sorts of names, denouncing the government and threatening to drive past the roadblock.

In the process of apprehending them, Sekai Holland was manhandled and she claims that she was beaten. But she wasn’t. She was only manhandled in the process of being forcibly taken out of their vehicle into the police vehicle, and taken away to the Machipisa police station.



Baffour: Did she resist arrest, and is it the norm that you beat up people you arrest?

Matanga: If it is the norm we would have beaten up Arthur Mutambara and the others who were first arrested. But Mutambara did not resist arrest and he was not violent. From the information I got from the ground, the first group did not resist arrest. It was when Tsvangirai arrived that the group became violent and wanted to overrun the police station.

And please let me say this clearly: It has been said that our authorities here, meaning the government, ordered our officers to beat these people up. This is not true! It was a spur-of-the-moment reaction, a spontaneous one, adopted by our officers to defend themselves. There was no pre-planning for beating any people up. We did not even know that Tsvangirai and his people would come to any police station and try to overrun it.

No, it was a spontaneous reaction by our officers on the scene in retaliation to the behaviour of Tsvangirai and his group. It was in self-defence, our officers were being overrun and they had to defend themselves.

Baffour: Did they retaliate because two of their colleagues had earlier been severely injured by this group of people?

Matanga: This incident happened well after the two officers had been injured. It happened because Mr Tsvangirai was trying to force himself into the police station.

Baffour: Can I clear this up: You say it is not the normal practice to beat up people you arrest? So why did your officers beat up Tsvangirai and his group *after* they were arrested?

Matanga: No, we don't beat up people we arrest. That's why Mutambara and his group were not beaten up when they were arrested.

But Tsvangirai and his group were violent towards our officers, they were trying to overrun the police station. I must tell you, from an aspiring president, I did not expect such behaviour from Tsvangirai.

Baffour: But Tsvangirai says he and his group were beaten up in police custody. They say, *after* you arrested them, you put them in your cells and your officers continued to beat them in the cells.

Matanga: That is not correct. The beating took place outside the police station, because they were trying to overrun the police station. And Tsvangirai was never detained in police cells.

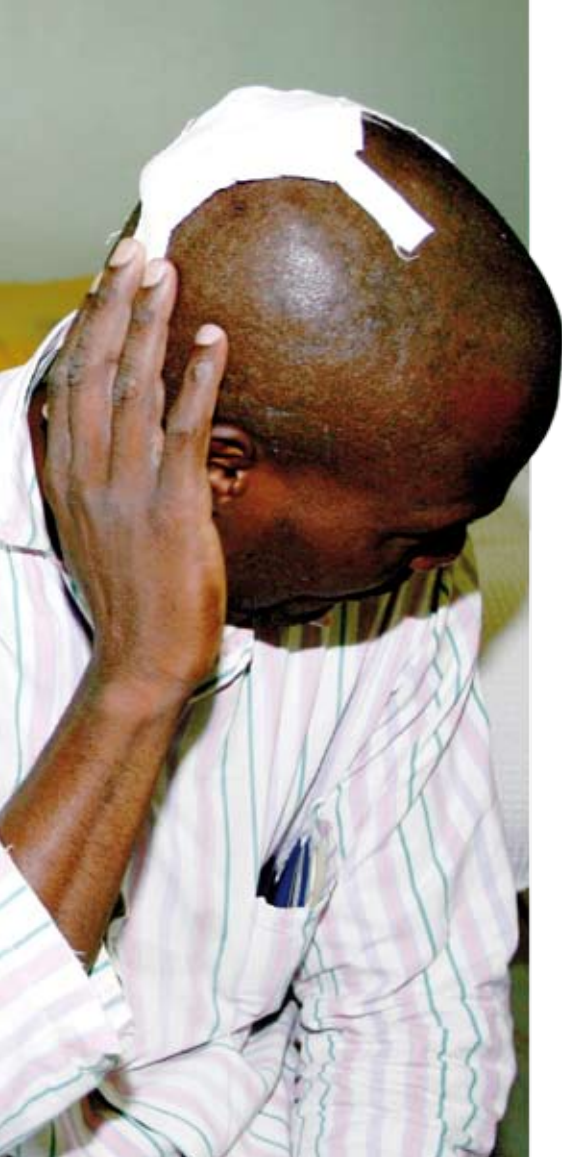
Baffour: Sure, he wasn't!?

Matanga: He was not!

Baffour: So why did he say, in his article to the British newspaper, *The Independent*, that your officers put him and his group in "cockroach infested cells" where they



Top: Sergeant Smart Makurumure (left) and Constable Never Ndowa, were the two police officers who were attacked by MDC supporters on 11 March hours before the general fracas at the Machipisa Police Station that saw Tsvangirai and other opposition leaders beaten up. (Inset) Deputy Commissioner Godwin Matanga is in charge of police operations nationwide



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“And please let me say this clearly: It has been said that our authorities here, meaning the government, ordered our officers to beat these people up. This is not true!”

continued to beat them up?

Matanga: [Laughs sarcastically]. No, no. That is not correct. He was not detained in police cells.

Baffour: Did you see his article in *The Independent*?

Matanga: Yes, I saw it, but it was not correct.

Baffour: So the beating took place outside?

Matanga: Yes, it was outside. And it was as a result of his own behaviour, trying to overrun the station.

Baffour: After this incident, and since 11 March, some of your officers have been petrol-bombed by people you say are MDC activists? How do you know that they are MDC activists, and not Zanu PF masquerading as MDC?

Matanga: Yes, we know conclusively that they are MDC activists. I will give you two copies of our report into these events. This is not manufactured information. This is the recording of events as they took place throughout the country.

Regarding the bombing of our officers at the Marimba police camp, it happened about 11.30pm on 12 March, a day after Tsvangirai's event. It is now confirmed that some MDC activists approached the police station from the back, having cut the security fence of the station. They got in, identified the house, and threw some petrol bombs inside the house where three of our female officers were sleeping.

It is now also confirmed that two of them – Constables Moyo and Rushwaya – were badly burned, they received 25% and 20% burns respectively and are now on admission at the Parirenyatwa Hospital. Neighbours had to rescue them because they were trapped inside by the fire. The third female constable – Makamba – was miraculously only slightly injured. I am reliably informed that if things go according to expectation, the two constables would be out of hospital in three months time.

These are acts of terrorism being perpetrated by MDC activists. In the course of our investigations, we have discovered explosives, detonators, pistols and the remains of petrol bombs picked up by our ballistic officers.

Baffour: So you are sure that they are MDC activists? But Tsvangirai has forever been saying that his people do not engage

in violence, rather they are the ones who are always sinned against by the police, the government, and Zanu PF activists.

Matanga: He would say that, wouldn't he? One of the leaders of the bombers who is now in custody, Piniel Denga, ran on the ticket of the MDC in a by-election. He ran for a parliamentary seat as an MDC candidate in Mashonaland East in the Marondera area, and he was defeated. So we have positive identification.

And why do I qualify these as acts of terrorism? I can assure you that on the first day there was a lot of confusion within police ranks regarding how these people were operating. They were not the normal criminals we had been arresting all along. These people had received training to carry out these acts of terrorism.

But two or three days inside the operation, we came up with some information that the main culprit was Piniel Denga. We subsequently arrested him with all this stuff – detonators, explosives, wires and the rest – in his flat, right in the central business area of Harare. We went into a specific flat and these things were picked up.

We then linked what we got from his flat with the stuff collected from the scene of the previous bombings. They had tried to bomb a night train bound for Bulawayo with 730 people in it. We tied up all these loose ends as a result of the discovery in his flat. In the process, we discovered that all the groups which were carrying out these acts of terrorism were actually getting their supplies from Piniel Denga. He was the point man, the main distributor who, after each act of violence, would make payments to the bombers.

We are informed that some of the bombers were paid in foreign currency. We now know that on the first day of the operations, some of them were paid US\$100 each, and some were given Z\$150,000 per head. Other payments were going to be made after each act of terrorism. Our investigations are still going on and we are still picking up these culprits.

Perhaps I should go back a little bit and

Right: The police call a press conference in Harare to announce the exhibits seized from members of the MDC's Democratic Resistance Committees (DRCs) who had been on an orgy of petrol-bombing and other violence since the beginning of February 2007



give you more context. Some few months ago, and this is now in the public domain, Tsvangirai and his people actually addressed rallies where they said they were in the process of forming up “democratic resistance committees” or DRCs in all districts throughout the country. We now know the members of these DRCs by name. Their modus operandi is simple: a DRC formed in Harare in the north would go up to Bulawayo in the southwest and commit these acts of terrorism and come back to Harare in order to avoid arrest by the police. In the same vein, a DRC established in Bulawayo will go to Mutare in the east and commit acts of terrorism and go back to Bulawayo.

Our investigations have so far clearly revealed that the majority of the members of the DRCs were staying in Harvest House, the headquarters of the MDC in downtown Harare. We took time to carry out that operation. We had made some checks on their houses and they were nowhere to be found.

Baffour: You are saying, Mr Commissioner, that these petrol bombers were actually sleeping inside the headquarters of the MDC?

Matanga: They were not only sleeping inside there, they spent all their time there, and would be deployed in the night by Piniel Denga to go and carry out these acts of terrorism. And this is very much confirmed information.

And when we finally stormed Harvest House on 28 March 2007, we arrested about 10 or 11 of them on the spot, the main DRC members, and they are in custody right now. Our investigations are still going on, we are still picking up some of them. We now have 35 of them in custody. The rest are at large, not sleeping in their homes.

Baffour: When you stormed Harvest House, it was reported worldwide that you had again arrested Morgan Tsvangirai. Why did you arrest him?

Matanga: We didn't arrest him. What actually happened was this: Mr Tsvangirai hap-

“In the course of our investigations, we have discovered explosives, detonators, pistols and the remains of petrol bombs picked up by our ballistic officers.”

pened to be in Harvest House when we stormed it. Unfortunately he had locked himself up in his office. There was a lot of resistance by the DRC members against our officers when they tried to open the doors. They didn't want us to know that Tsvangirai was in the building. In fact, after some time, Tsvangirai actually came out on his own. He unlocked his door and presented himself to the police. And he allowed our officers to carry out the arrests of the DRC members we had come for. We took them away, and Mr Tsvangirai was left behind at Harvest House. He was not arrested.

Baffour: So you didn't take him away. You are sure?

Matanga: Of course I am sure! He was not arrested.

Baffour: So why did the Western news agencies, the *BBC*, *CNN* and the others report that you had arrested him again and taken him away, on the same day that the SADC summit was beginning in Tanzania?

Matanga: Well, you are the journalist, you should know. All I can say is that Mr Tsvangirai was not arrested on that day. If he is an honest man, he will confirm that he was not arrested and taken away. You see, I am not a journalist, but from my understanding of these things, as our minister of information indicated on *CNN* the other day, this is all manufactured information against our country Zimbabwe, it's not the truth of what happened on that particular day.

Baffour: In your investigations, have you picked up any foreign links to these bombers. There have been press reports claiming that there are external links to what is happening. Is that true?

Matanga: What I can say for now is that from day one, some Western ambassadors accredited to Zimbabwe were actually moving around with Mr Tsvangirai's group. We



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actually have photos of them. They had been to Machipisa, Marlborough, Borrowdale, Avondale and Southerton police stations, and also at Avenues Clinic, in their CD-marked vehicles, bringing food to Tsvangirai and his people. The ambassadors themselves were carrying the food; they did not send their drivers, they themselves carried the food and brought them to Tsvangirai's group in the clinic and police cells.

So it was clear that they were actually behind the scenes, if not behind the whole thing. They also attended in full force the hearing in the Rotten Row magistrate's court in Harare [when Tsvangirai and his group were brought to court]. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to understand what that means.

Baffour: Have you interviewed Tsvangirai about why his party's headquarters was being used to harbour petrol bombers?

Matanga: On the day, to be fair, we didn't want to trouble the man. Our officers decided that they would come back to him when he was actually needed, for him to comment on why these people were being kept in Harvest House. We know where Tsvangirai lives. We didn't go to Harvest House to apprehend him. We were there to arrest the suspects we knew were hiding in the building. During our investigations if it becomes necessary that we should interview Mr Tsvangirai, we will do so. But on that day, there was no need to trouble him.

Regarding your earlier question of positive identification and how we were sure that these suspects were MDC activists, let me add that the arrests started off after the Zanu PF offices in Mbare, Harare, had been petrol-bombed. A group of about eight people perpetrated the act. There were some people living there and they tried to make a citizen's arrest, but the bombers ran away after scaling the fence wall.

In the process of scaling over the wall, one of the suspects, identified as Amos Musekiwa, an MDC DRC activist, dropped his cellphone, a Nokia 1100, and his slippers.



“One of the leaders of the bombers who is now in custody, Piniel Denga, ran on the ticket of the MDC in a by-election.”

The local people identified him with the help of the slippers and the cellphone which had a number of messages stored in it connected to the bombings. We are now in possession of some good information as a result of that cellphone.

Baffour: An impression has been created that Mutambara's faction of the MDC is not violent and that all the violence is coming from Tsvangirai's faction. Can you confirm it?

Matanga: We want to believe it, too. But of late, we have noted with a lot of interest that Mutambara and Tsvangirai are now holding or addressing rallies together, including the NCA leader, Lovemore Madhuku. So, even though they say Mutambara's pro-Senate faction is not violent, when they team up and hold a rally together and something happens, you can't say then his faction was innocent

and Tsvangirai's faction was responsible. At the end of the day, we would lump them together. So I can't say Mutambara's faction is not violent. They pretend not to be, but who knows?

Baffour: So, what is the whole aim of these bombings and what you call acts of terrorism – to get the government out of power?

Matanga: Our understanding, in the police force, is that Mr Tsvangirai has failed to make it through the normal democratic process, so maybe to please his masters, he wants to use violence to achieve what he couldn't get through the ballot box. Remember this is not the first time they are doing this – some time ago he advocated for a “final push” to kick out the government but never succeeded.

And this time around, he wants to attack the state security forces, and it is our belief that he wants us to over-react so the international community will condemn us and the government. But to the credit of our officers, we have not taken the bait and over-reacted, despite the provocations. We know that the current spate of MDC violence is clearly meant to undermine the authority of the government and at the same time blackmail it in the eyes of the international community.

Remember when Tsvangirai was beaten up by our officers on 11 March, it was clearly in self-defence. They used minimal force to defend themselves and their station which was being overrun by Tsvangirai and his group. It may have been too harsh on him, but we maintain that our officers used minimal force to defend themselves and their station.

Baffour: You make a good point when you say, the tactic is to provoke the police to elicit an over-reaction, which will then be condemned – and blamed for sure on President Mugabe by the international community, as they have blamed him for what happened on 11 March. And this is why your officers have to be very careful when they react to such situations.

Torn shirt: Police constable Never Chimusi in hospital after he and his colleagues were beaten up by MDC supporters on 11 March

Matanga: I agree with you. From what we've heard so far, it is quite clear that the MDC's Western sponsors had believed that because of the current economic difficulties, the police are frustrated and they would support Mr Tsvangirai in whatever he did. Yes, there are economic problems in the country, but our forces will not succumb to such a cheap ploy. We do have problems and the government is trying to address them. But despite the problems, we will carry on our duties as mandated by the constitution of Zimbabwe.

Baffour: According to the MDC, the police are quick to react when it is the MDC which is perceived to be in the wrong, and do nothing, or at best very little, when it is Zanu PF or the government sinning against the MDC.

Matanga: If you go back into our records, you will find that when people commit crimes – they could be Zanu PF, MDC or the government – we have arrested, and prosecuted, them. Let me give you one example. The other day we arrested a Zanu PF provincial official at the airport trying to smuggle diamonds out of the country, and he is right now in remand custody. So what are they talking about?

In fact during the elections, we arrested more Zanu PF members of parliament, not just ordinary Zanu PF members, and they were brought before the courts.

Baffour: So what do you say then to the allegation that the police are being used by the president and his government to perpetuate themselves in power?

Matanga: I think it is a chicken and egg situation. We are here to maintain law and order, and obviously the head of state is Mr Mugabe and one of his jobs as head of state is to see that law and order prevails. But I can say that we have received no directive from him to beat up or arrest anyone. Even our own home affairs minister under whom we directly serve, has not given us any such order. Our officers only arrest people when



“What I can say for now is that from day one, some Western ambassadors accredited to Zimbabwe were actually moving around with Mr Tsvangirai’s group. We actually have photos of them.”

they commit crimes.

Baffour: Talking about law and order, was the government justified to place a temporary ban on rallies in certain areas of the capital?

Matanga: Yes, under the Public Order and Security Act, there is a section which empowers our regulatory authorities – who happen to be our officers commanding the police districts in the country – to ban such rallies when they see fit. They are very much empowered to do so under the Act. They don't even need to ask permission from the commissioner of police, the home affairs

minister or the president. That's why you've heard that the officer in charge of Chitungwisa district had imposed a ban, and in Harare south, the officer there also imposed a ban. It was in reaction to the violence that had been going on in recent months.

Baffour: You mean the ban can be imposed locally by the commanding officers there?

Matanga: Yes. And of late, the officer in Chitungwisa has seen fit to lift the ban, and people are now allowed to hold rallies again. Interestingly, when he lifted the ban, Mutambara's faction of the MDC then decided to cancel a rally they had scheduled when the ban was in force. Interesting, isn't it? When there was a ban, they threatened to hold the rally come rain or shine. The police then lifted the ban, and they said “no, we are now not going to hold the rally after all”.

Baffour: So you are saying there was a justifiable fear by the police that these rallies might lead to violence?



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BBC eyewitness “We fought the police”

On Tuesday 13 March 2007, the *BBC* published the following eyewitness account on its website. According to the *BBC*, a 32-year-old man, John (“not his real name”) spoke to its correspondents from a secret location in the Zimbabwean capital, Harare, about the fracas that ensued between the police and the MDC leaders and their supporters on 11 March. Here are excerpts:



Frontline policing: A line-up of Zimbabwe's riot police gets ready for crowd control. On 11 March, as the *BBC* eyewitness testifies, the police were hugely outnumbered by the MDC supporters

There were about 60 of us from the area where I live and we joined up to head to where the rally was going to be held. The police were already there when we arrived and were trying to stop the rally from going ahead.

By the time Tsvangirai arrived, there were more than 1,000 of us youths, all singing. When he came, he just started lifting his arms and everyone was celebrating to see the leader alive. That was when the trouble started because he wanted to talk to us and they were trying to separate him from us.

The situation was getting heated – Tsvangirai and the police were arguing, and we were carrying on singing and shouting, louder and louder. All in all, there were only about 30 police and [we] were more than 1,000. We were too many for them.

They couldn't control what was happening. They started throwing tear gas. Some of them took Tsvangirai and the MDC officials that were with him and forced them in their vehicles. They drove away in two pick-ups and a white Toyota defender.

A lot of people started fleeing from the

tear gas but some of us stayed and sang, in defiance. We started fighting back. We threw stones at them, and when they began rushing towards us, we started fighting with them because we wanted our freedom and we wanted our leader to be released.

They knew they couldn't win and so started shooting at us. One of us was killed. They shot my friend Gift Tandare dead. When we realised that one of us had been killed, everything became worse. We went on the rampage and we did not even fear for our lives. There was a lot of action and as we threw punches, we cried in *Shona*: *Ngatirwirei rusununguko* (let's fight back for our freedom).

When they [the police] realised that someone had been shot, they tried to run from the scene. They had pick-ups but not all of them made it back in time before they drove off. About six or eight of them were left

“There was a lot of action and as we threw punches, we cried in Shona: *Ngatirwirei rusununguko* (let's fight back for our freedom).”

with us. As they ran, some of them dropped their batons so we picked up their discarded sticks and used them to beat their left-behind colleagues. The police were badly beaten.

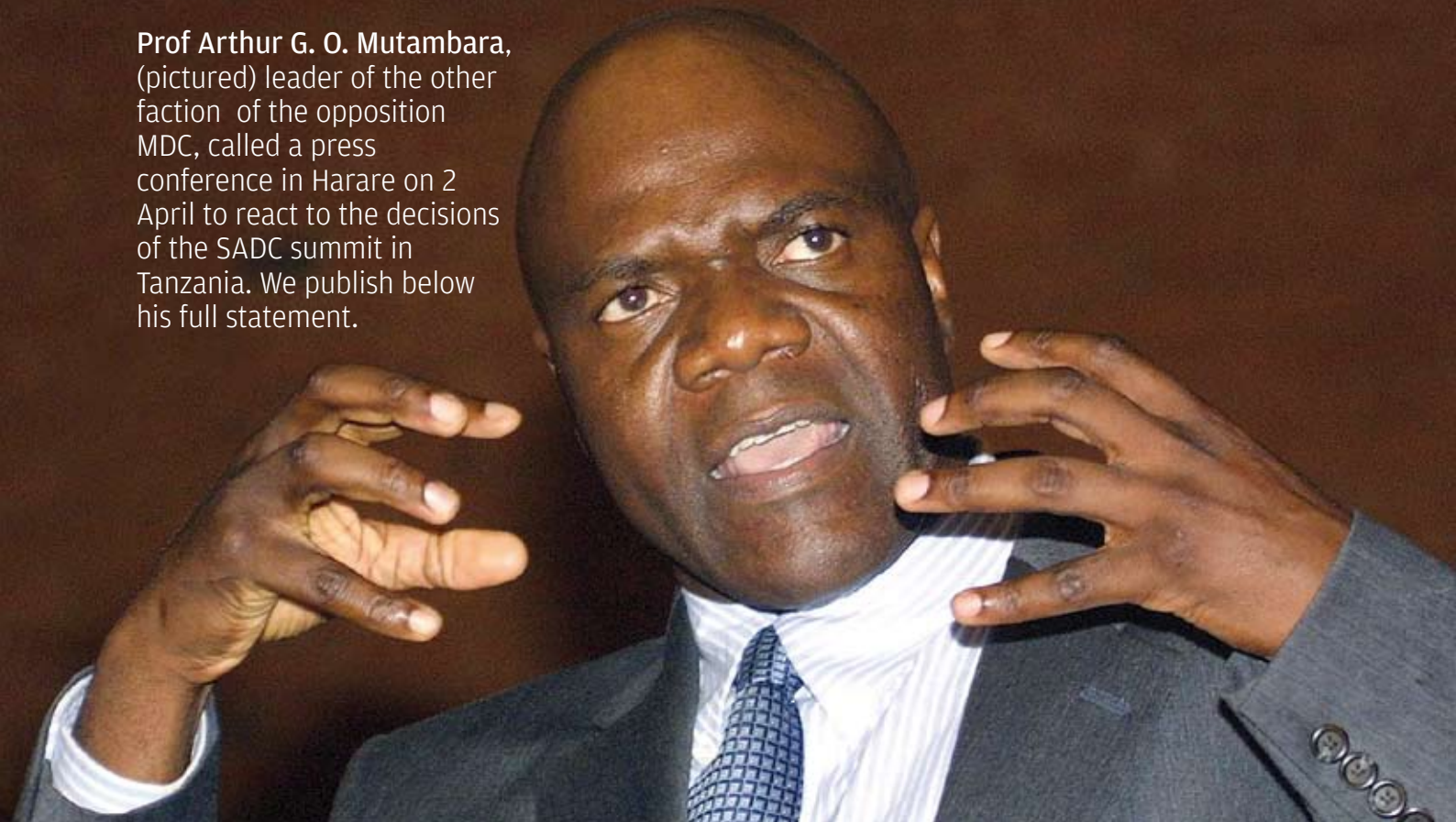
One of our youth leaders started calming the situation. He knew that if we carried on like we were – we were so angry – that we would kill them. If that happened, the trouble would be too bad. We left the police on the side of the road and ran away. It was about one o'clock in the afternoon. We were all told to disperse because we were afraid that more police were going to come.

They [police] say they did not expect trouble on Sunday, but they are the ones who started the trouble. They shot one of us.” ■NA

Arthur Mutambara

SADC summit 'is a victory for the people of Zimbabwe'

Prof Arthur G. O. Mutambara, (pictured) leader of the other faction of the opposition MDC, called a press conference in Harare on 2 April to react to the decisions of the SADC summit in Tanzania. We publish below his full statement.



The MDC National Executive Committee met on Saturday 31 March 2007, followed by the National Council on 1 April. The National Council considered the current national crisis. This press conference is pursuant to the discussions and resolutions of the National Council – the MDC's supreme decision-making organ in between congresses.

On the SADC summit in Tanzania: The MDC places a lot of significance in the decisions of the SADC heads of state's emergency summit. The fact that the regional body met specifically to discuss Zimbabwe is in itself an acknowledgement of the Zimbabwean crisis and an acceptance that the despot Robert Mugabe has failed to run the affairs of our nation.

More importantly, the SADC emergency

summit clearly recognised that the ongoing economic and political crisis is both unsustainable and a threat to regional stability. This is unprecedented.

The SADC position is further reinforced by the bold decision to appoint President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa as the mediator with a view to facilitating a resolution of the crisis through dialogue between Zanu PF and the democratic forces.

This is a triumph of regional sovereignty. This is a victory for the people of Zimbabwe, and Africans in general. The MDC applauds these resolutions of the SADC emergency summit and condemns the attempt by the dictatorship to underplay SADC efforts by declaring the summit a victory for the disastrous Mugabe policies that have brought suffering to the people.

Hell, no! It was neither a victory nor an excellent meeting for Robert Mugabe. It was a devastating blow to the ugly face of Zanu PF. There has been movement in attitudes and opinions among Africans with respect to Zimbabwe.

Africans no longer accept Mugabe's grandstanding as a liberation hero, freedom fighter, land revolutionary, anti-imperialist and champion of African rights. They now accept him for what he is. A despot who has become a negation of the values and principles of the liberation war, a dictator who brutalises Africans and denies them basic human rights and economic opportunities.

So what is it that the people of Zimbabwe want? It is our submission that at the core of the Zimbabwean crisis are issues of governance and legitimacy. Our country is



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ruled by a corrupt, incompetent, criminal, and brutal kleptocracy, which has retained power through fraudulent elections.

We do not want any further polls in our country under the current constitutional and electoral framework. We want a new people-driven democratic constitution, electoral law reforms and legislative changes that allow for the holding of free and fair elections.

Furthermore, we want this new democratic and electoral dispensation to take root in our country now, thus creating conditions conducive for free and fair elections. It is our demand that the first plebiscite under these conditions should be internationally supervised. We will respect any government that is produced by these processes.

Beyond resolving the challenge of illegitimacy, the people of Zimbabwe can then deal with issues of economic recovery, stabilisation, transformation and growth.

We want Zimbabwe to be a globally competitive economy in terms of GDP, per capita income, business growth, exports, FDI [foreign direct investment], worker conditions, wages, and entrepreneurship. Our vision is that of Zimbabwe as the leading African democracy, characterised by people-centred social development and economic growth.

How are we going to achieve what we want? In order to establish levelling of the political playing field in Zimbabwe, through the reforms we seek, there is need for a broad alliance of all democratic forces.

Civil society organisations and political parties must work together to restore democracy and freedom in Zimbabwe. Events of the past month have demonstrated the capacity of Zimbabweans to execute unity of action and purpose.

As a party, we resolve to continue with the spirit of cooperation in pursuit of the re-democratisation of Zimbabwe, beginning with the achievement of national consensus on a new constitution followed by agreement on a new electoral dispensation which will ensure that the next elections are palpably free and fair.

We will continue with our defiance

campaign to press the Zanu PF government towards an all-inclusive dialogue around the changes we seek. We will continue to defy POSA, AIPPA, and the illegitimate government of Robert Mugabe. [*POSA stands for "Public Order and Security Act", and AIPPA "Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act"*]. It is critical to maintain and leverage the momentum that has gathered against Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. All democratic forces must close ranks, carry out joint actions of defiance against unjust laws and the illegitimate regime, and also support each other in their independent institutional ini-

“The SADC emergency summit clearly recognised that the ongoing economic and political crisis is both unsustainable and a threat to regional stability. This is unprecedented.”

tiatives and actions.

It is in this context that the MDC unreservedly supports the national stayaway planned by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions on 3-4 April 2007. We fully endorse this revolutionary confrontation with the regime and call upon all Zimbabweans to rally behind the trade union movement to make the stayaway a success.

When the conditions for free and fair elections have been achieved, the MDC believes it is critical for the democratic forces to ensure that every vote counts against Zanu PF. It is essential that opposition parties do not compete against each other in elections.

There is need to galvanise and energise the entire national electorate by presenting a united front against Zanu PF. We believe in a single candidate philosophy and principle

in all elections (presidential, parliamentary, senate, council, etc).

Consequently, the MDC resolves to continue dialogue and seek agreement with other opposition parties in order to establish a possible election coalition framework and candidate selection methodology.

It is our submission that national interest should take precedence over narrow and selfish interests. The democratic forces should not allow Zanu PF to reinvent, regenerate, and succeed itself. If this happens, it will mean Zanu PF rule for another 20-30 years. This must be stopped by any means necessary.

The old adage has never been more applicable; united we stand, divided we fall. An all-inclusive and cohesive united front of *all* democratic forces is essential to give our country a fresh start. Our nation needs the injection of a new value system, a different political culture, and redemptive institutional frameworks. Our economy demands creative technocratic solutions and capacity that these Zanu PF morons are incapable of providing.

We will be masters of our destiny. We will not allow the dictator to determine the future of our country. We will step up to the plate and free ourselves. We will embark on an economic journey.

With our strength in natural resources, physical infrastructure, and human capital, Zimbabwe is destined for greatness. What we need is to stand up to the Zanu PF cowardly dictatorship which has turned our nation into an unashamedly criminal state.

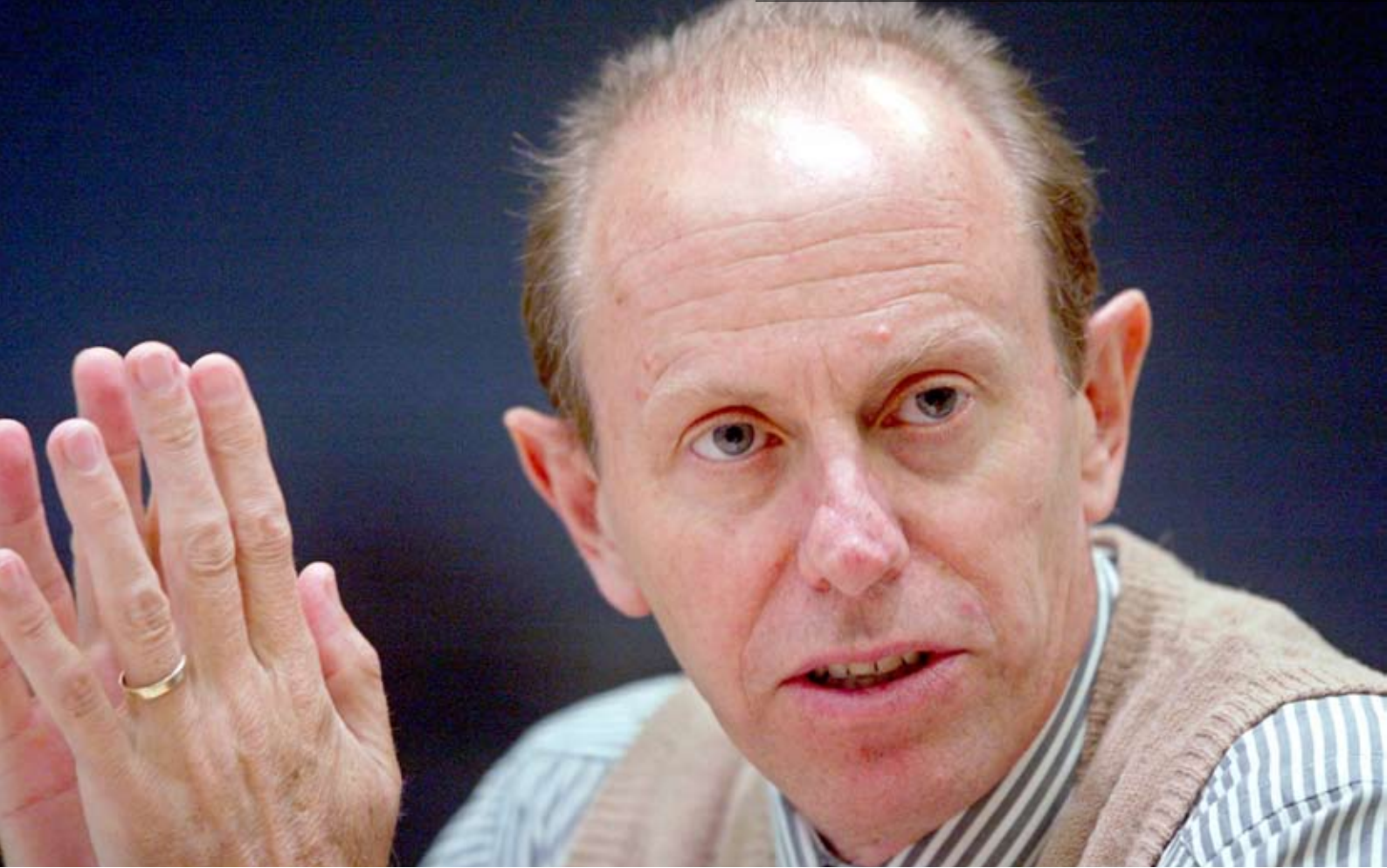
The transformation of the police into a criminal, sadistic, brutal force is worse than anything we ever saw under the [Ian] Smith regime. We will stand united as a people as we confront the regime in the process of reclaiming our sovereignty, freedoms, liberties and dignity.

It is our generational mandate. We will not be found wanting. We will defeat these Zanu PF morons and cowards. We owe it to ourselves, to future generations and to posterity to stand firm.

The struggle continues. ■ NA

David Coltart

'Why I cannot join Tsvangirai's faction'



Last year, **David Coltart** (pictured), a former Rhodesian police officer and now the MDC's white MP for Bulawayo South, wrote a piece for the website, *NewZimbabwe.com*, explaining why he could not join Morgan Tsvangirai's faction of the MDC. His major reason: Tsvangirai's faction has a propensity for violence and has not taken any action to discipline its members who had used violence in the past. In fact, it had rehired members who were expelled or suspended for using violence against fellow MDC members. Coltart's piece undermines Tsvangirai's recent claims that he doesn't "believe in violence" and has "on many occasions restrained [his] supporters from being violent".

Moments after Morgan Tsvangirai walked out of the national executive meeting on 12 October 2005 [at which the MDC split into two], I proposed that the remaining members of the management committee meet with him urgently to convey our continued support for him as MDC leader and our desire to accommodate his concerns.

During October, November and December [2005], I met with and wrote to MDC national executive members in both factions urging them to refrain from making the vitriolic statements that so badly exacerbated the tensions between the two camps.

For example, on 12 November, I met with Tsvangirai in Bulawayo and urged



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him to rein in those in his camp making divisive and inflammatory statements. On 19 November, I met with Gibson Sibanda, Gift Chimankire and Job Sikhala. I urged Sibanda, likewise, to rein in those in his camp and I challenged Chimankire and Sikhala regarding some of the statements made by them.

I repeatedly wrote and spoke to Eddie Cross during October, November and December about some of his newsletters which in my opinion exacerbated tensions between the two factions.

Believing that the unresolved intra-party violence was one of the main stumbling blocks to reconciliation, I put forward proposals to both Tsvangirai and Sibanda in November and December 2005 as to how that issue could be dealt with.

When it became apparent to me in January, for reasons I will elaborate on below, that those proposals would not be accepted, I accepted that reconciliation was unlikely. I, however, made a few further attempts to reconcile. I met Tsvangirai and a few leaders of his faction in Bulawayo on 27 January 2006 and urged those leaders who were responsible for making divisive statements to stop.

I met with other leaders in both factions in January and early February 2006, but by mid-February, it was clear that both factions were determined to go ahead with their respective congresses and that the holding of separate congresses would end any hope of reconciliation.

Accordingly, on 20 February, I wrote identical letters to both Tsvangirai and Sibanda advising them that I would attend neither of the congresses and would not seek office in either faction.

I offered to assist with others to mediate a settlement between the two factions. In doing so, I did not offer to arbitrate (in other words, I did not suggest that I be given any power to decide finally on the various contentious issues).

I concluded by recognising that both leaders would have to await their respective congresses and the election of respective

national executives before responding to my offer. I also said that once the mediation process was over, I would then have to decide on my own political future.

Both letters were hand delivered. On 29 March 2006, I received a letter from [Professor Arthur] Mutambara's faction accepting my offer to mediate. Having not heard from the Tsvangirai faction, I spoke and wrote to several national executive members of the Tsvangirai faction to ask them whether the issue had been discussed.

Eventually on 2 May 2006, I received a letter from Tendai Biti, in his capacity as secretary general of the Tsvangirai faction, rejecting my offer to mediate. I can but speculate why my offer was rejected.

“The sustained and long term use of violence in Zimbabwe lies at the very core of many of the problems our nation faces today. We are indeed afflicted by a very serious disease and need help.”

One of the reasons given by Tendai Biti was that I was not neutral, something I readily concede and indeed made mention of in my original letters to Tsvangirai and Sibanda. I pointed out that no one is genuinely neutral, and I am no different, but some have to at least try to mediate if litigation is to be avoided.

Other national executive members of the Tsvangirai faction I have spoken to, state that they found themselves in a Catch 22 situation. If they agreed to mediate, that would undermine their claim that there is in fact no division and therefore no need for an amicable divorce (with the corollary that the Mutambara faction is not a faction at all but just a small renegade breakaway group), and yet if they turned me down on those grounds

it would appear petty in the minds of MDC supporters who are generally distressed by the divisions and who would like the dispute to be resolved amicably.

Political violence

The reasons for the split in the MDC are numerous and complex. It has become a deeply emotive issue and many are so entrenched in their positions that they have stopped listening. Accordingly, it will serve no purpose to enumerate or analyse all the reasons for the split.

I will simply deal with what is for me personally the key issue, namely, our commitment to non-violence in waging this battle against tyranny. I reiterate that there are many other important issues involved but our approach to this particular issue is pivotal for me.

I have had the misfortune of experiencing two civil wars in Zimbabwe. As a teenager, I saw the horrors of war firsthand during the liberation struggle. As a young lawyer, I had to represent many victims of the Gukurahundi and my wife, a physiotherapist, had to treat many of the injured.

These experiences made me vow that I would do all in my power to prevent further conflict in Zimbabwe. Those experiences taught me to be very sceptical of elderly politicians who are very happy to sacrifice the lives of gullible and impressionable youths to achieve their own political ends.

Zimbabwe is afflicted with a disease akin to alcoholism, namely, endemic violence. For well over 150 years, leaders of this beautiful country bounded by the Zambezi and Limpopo have used violence to achieve their political objectives.

Violence was used by Lobengula to suppress the Shona. Violence was used to colonise and the threat of violence was used to maintain white minority rule. Violence was used to overthrow the white minority. And since independence, violence has been used to crush legitimate political opposition.

The use of violence has been compounded by another phenomenon – namely,



MDC leaders, including Arthur Mutambara (in beret) and Tendai Biti, leave Harare's Rotten Row Court on 13 March

“Young men often have a predisposition towards violence... What controls that predisposition is the manner in which it is handled by leaders.”

a culture of impunity. Those responsible for use of violence have never been brought to book. Not only is there a long history of violence being used successfully to achieve political objectives, but also those who have committed horrendous crimes have prospered through their actions.

As a result, the use of violence is now deeply imbedded in our national psyche. Political violence is accepted as the norm. [But] political violence is not the norm in democratic societies. It may be the norm in tyrannical states. It may have been used in the formative stages of democracies. But it is now anathema in democracies.

There is also no doubt that the use of violence inhibits economic development and creates a whole barrage of social problems, including domestic violence. The sustained and long term use of violence in Zimbabwe lies at the very core of many of the problems our nation faces today. We are indeed afflicted by a very serious disease and need help.

What then attracted me to the MDC was the commitment to breaking this cycle of violence by using non-violent means to achieve its political objectives. I was also impressed by its commitment to end impunity in Zimbabwe.

Whilst there has always been a vigorous debate within the MDC about whether tyranny could be ended solely through the use of non-violent methods, there was always a broad consensus that this was the only course open to us if we were to act in the long term national interest.

It goes without saying that there was a similar consensus regarding the intra-party operations of the MDC. For me this was a clear-cut battle between the MDC committed to non-violence and Zanu PF, a party that boasted of having “degrees in violence”.

Accordingly the attempt by some MDC youths to murder the MDC director of security, Peter Guhu, on 28 September 2004 in Harvest House [the MDC headquarters in downtown Harare] was deeply shocking because it breached a fundamental tenet of what we stood for.

Even worse were the subsequent revelations made at the enquiry into the Guhu incident that senior ranking MDC officials and employees were either involved or sympathetic to the youths.

No action was taken against any of those responsible for this violence and in that inaction we saw for the first time a culture of impunity developing within the MDC itself, which in some respects was the worst thing of all.

Young men often have a predisposition towards violence, that happens the world over and Zimbabwe is no different. What controls that predisposition is the manner in which it is handled by leaders. If it is not dealt with, a culture of impunity develops and violence perpetuates itself.

That is precisely what happened. Those responsible for the September 2004 violence were not immediately disciplined and it came as no surprise when the same youths were used to seriously assault the MDC staff members in mid-May 2005.

A further enquiry was held and its report was presented to the national council meeting held on 25 June 2005. It was resolved that one member of staff found responsible for directing the youths be expelled. The youths



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themselves had already been expelled in late May by the management committee and the expulsion of the youths was confirmed.

That was undoubtedly progress but regrettably it was clear from the evidence that other senior members of the MDC and staff members were also involved or sympathetic towards the youths.

Before a full debate about their fate could be held, the meeting was ended much to the dissatisfaction of many, including myself.

I was so concerned about their failure to get to the bottom of the violence that I prepared a statement that was tabled at the next meeting of the national executive, held on 15 July 2005. Parts of it bear repeating:

"The MDC's commitment to non-violence, demonstrated so powerfully in the last six years, has earned us deep respect from within Zimbabwe and internationally. It has ensured that we command the moral high ground. It has also been our most powerful weapon against Zanu PF as we have been determined not to fight them on ground they are familiar with.

"The attempted murder of the director of security last year and the assaults on loyal members of staff in May constitute the most serious assault on the credibility of the MDC since it was established in September 1999. These actions have already seriously undermined the credibility of the MDC.

"I believe that our commitment to non-violence is so fundamental that extraordinary measures need to be taken in dealing with this scourge. If we do not send out a clear and unequivocal message to Zimbabweans in general and in particular to our own members and staff that violence will not be tolerated, then we will simply reduce the standing of the MDC to that of our opposition, Zanu PF"

I reiterated my belief that the investigation had been incomplete and that further investigations and disciplinary action was needed. Regrettably, none of my recommendations were adopted.

The party accordingly lurched forward towards the Senate [election] issue with these very serious issues remaining unresolved and whilst, as I have stated above, there are many

different reasons for why the MDC split on 12 October 2005, few seem to appreciate the profound influence these issues had on the decision taken that day.

The situation was compounded by the fact that in the national executive meeting held on 12 October 2005, it emerged that some of the same people suspected of being behind the September 2004 and May 2005 violence (but not disciplined) were also organising teams to intimidate provincial committees to vote against participation in the Senate [elections].

For example, Manicaland, a province inclined against participation, came with a delegation instructed to vote for participation in direct reaction to the intimidatory tactics. To that extent, the vote to participate in the senatorial elections had very little to do with the elections per se and more to do with the philosophy of the MDC.

It was with this in mind that I suggested to Morgan Tsvangirai when I met him on 12 November that an independent commission of enquiry into violence be established.

I suggested that the Harare lawyer, Innocent Chagonda, and the retired judge, Washington Sansole, be appointed to investigate and report on all the allegations of intra-party violence, including allegations made by those in the so-called anti-Senate camp against those in the pro-Senate camp.

Tsvangirai promised to consider the suggestion. It was particularly poignant that on the very evening after I discussed the issue with Tsvangirai, a supporter of the Tsvangirai faction, Bekithemba Nyathi, was seriously injured by youths from the so-called pro-Senate faction. The incident made it all the more imperative that the issue be firmly addressed and that violence be completely rooted out.

I pursued the suggestion over the next few weeks and discussed it with Gibson Sibanda as well. On 8 December 2005, I received a call from Innocent Chagonda advising that he was phoning on behalf of Tsvangirai to advise that he (Chagonda) felt that he could not be on the commission but that Tsvangirai wanted me to chair it.

I replied in writing the same day and suggested the following terms be applied:

1. The commission shall investigate the circumstances, causes and participants of all intra-party violence afflicting the MDC throughout the country with effect from 1 October 2004 (I was under the impression then that Peter Guhu had been assaulted in October 2004) up until 31 December 2005.

2. The commission shall have the right to subpoena any witnesses and all members of the party shall cooperate with the commission, and if they do not cooperate, that action in itself will result in disciplinary action against the person concerned (we cannot have the situation that prevailed last year when a key witness refused to appear – obviously every person has the right to refuse in terms of Zimbabwe's laws but if they do so then they render themselves liable to party discipline).

3. The commission shall report on its findings to the national council and shall make recommendations to the national council.

4. The national council shall make the findings public within one week of the production of the report, failing which the commission shall have the right to make the same public.

5. In cases where the report finds that a member has been involved in violent acts directly or indirectly or has been responsible for organising the same, the national council shall immediately refer the case to the disciplinary committee and request the chairperson of the disciplinary committee to suspend the member in terms of Section 9 of the Disciplinary Code of Conduct pending the appearance of the member before the disciplinary committee.

6. The commission shall be comprised of (at your suggestion) myself as chair and (at your suggestion) Washington Sansole and Beatrice Mietwa, and if needs be, decisions regarding findings of fact and recommendations shall be by majority vote.

7. The commission shall endeavour to complete its work before the party's congress and any person found, prima facie, to be involved in violence shall be banned from contesting for office at the congress.

Police constables Noriet Tichareva and Never Chimusi narrate their ordeal at the hands of MDC supporters on 11 March



In the same letter, I advised that I had discussed the matter with Gibson Sibanda who had agreed to the suggestion in principle. I pointed out that the suggestion would only work if both factions supported the initiative and said that I hoped it could get under way early in the New Year.

Having not heard back from Innocent Chagonda, I wrote to him again on 8 January 2006, asking to hear from him urgently. A few days later, I was phoned by a senior national executive member in the Tsvangirai faction to say that my proposal was a “dead letter”. It was explained to me that Morgan Tsvangirai was no longer interested in pursuing the suggestion.

I subsequently had a private meeting with Tsvangirai on 12 January 2006 and it was clear in that meeting that he was not interested in pursuing the proposal any further.

It was also then clear to me that reconciliation was impossible and from that moment on, I changed tack and promoted the concept of an amicable divorce between the two factions.

The two factions’ congresses have now come and gone. I have, of course, hoped that irrespective of my efforts, the violence issue would be addressed by both factions.

I had hoped that the mediation process itself would yield an agreement that would prevent inter-factional violence. Accordingly, I have taken the rejection of the effort to mediate by the Tsvangirai faction as an indication that there is still no desire to tackle this disease.

In addition, I have become increasingly dismayed by the following:

1. The senior member of staff dismissed by the national council in its June 2005 meeting has been re-employed by the Tsvangirai faction.

2. The youths responsible for the violence in Harvest House in September 2004 and May 2005 [who were] expelled from the party by the management committee (and endorsed by the national council) have been re-employed by the Tsvangirai faction.

3. At least one of these youths was

“It appears to me that the Tsvangirai faction has shown no inclination to deal with this cancer. Indeed if anything, it would appear the only concern of leadership of that faction is not to be openly associated with violence.”

involved in the unlawful hijacking of a vehicle in the lawful possession of the Mutambara faction in March 2006. It appears as if no internal disciplinary action has been taken against this youth.

4. The senior members of the national executive and MPs implicated in the Harvest House violence were all elected to the national executive and some are on the new management committee of the Tsvangirai faction.

5. Senior members of staff implicated in the Harvest House violence have retained their positions.

6. Tsvangirai faction chairman of Harare Province, Morgan Femai, was quoted in the press as having told a rally in Mufakoze on 2 April 2006 that: “Before we remove Zanu PF, we will stamp them (the Mutambara faction) out.” No statement rebutting this policy has been issued by the leadership of the Tsvangirai faction.

7. The Tsvangirai faction’s winning candidate in Budiriro is one of the very people suspended by the MDC national council in June [2005] for two years on the accusation of being involved in the Harvest House violence.

8. The Budiriro by-election has been marked by violence and illegal activity,

including the tearing down of the Mutambara faction candidate’s posters.

Lip-service

In the last few weeks, leaders within the Tsvangirai faction, including Morgan Tsvangirai himself, have spoken about their commitment to non-violence. That is obviously a step in the right direction but mere statements do not impress me. Even Zanu PF leaders have spoken about their belief in non-violence recently. In this regard, the pledge that Martin Luther King drafted in 1963 is relevant.

All those involved in non-violent civil disobedience activities in Alabama were required to “refrain from the violence of the fist, tongue and heart”. It is the last injunction that is all important, for it is easy for leaders themselves not to be involved in violent activities and to convey the pretence of a commitment to non-violence in their speeches.

Zimbabwe’s history is littered with examples of leaders who have preached non-violence whilst at the same time have organised actions behind closed doors. This gets to the very nub of my concerns – for it appears to me that the Tsvangirai faction has shown no inclination



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whatsoever to deal with this cancer.

Indeed if anything, it would appear that the only concern of leadership of that faction is not to be openly associated with violence. All the evidence, as set out above, points to an inclination merely to pay lip-service to the principle of non-violence and to ensure that all those responsible for violent acts in the past are free to use similar tactics in the future.

In contrast, it seems to me that the Mutambara faction is prepared to root out the problem. It is willing to set up an independent enquiry to investigate and address all incidents of intra-party violence and was prepared to engage in mediation. It has not sought to protect the youths responsible for the assault on Bekithemba Nyathi, all of whom are now facing criminal charges.

From the evidence before me, it seems that the Mutambara faction has not pursued a violent or unlawful course since its congress. In stating this, I am not suggesting that the Mutambara faction is made up of saints. There is no such thing in politics. But it does appear to me that it is at least prepared to confront the problem.

Some may consider my concern about violence as trivial. Some have argued that because we are confronting an evil regime, fire must be used against fire. Others have argued that non-violent techniques were appropriate when [Mahatma] Gandhi tackled British colonialists in India and when Martin Luther King challenged racism in the USA, but that these techniques are wholly inappropriate in confronting a violent Zanu PF regime.

I have been criticised for being naïve or out of touch with reality. In any event, say others, the most important task is to remove the regime and the issue of violence can be addressed once the main task has been completed.

The same people argue that one should therefore back the faction that has the most support irrespective of the techniques they use. In essence, their argument is that the end justifies the means.

I beg to differ for a number of reasons.

Firstly, I think the failure to deal with violence within our own ranks now is of paramount importance for the future of Zimbabwe. If we perpetuate violence and impunity against ourselves, how will we ever address this problem nationally?

And if it is not addressed nationally, then are we not going to ensure that this cycle of violence and impunity is perpetuated?

Edmund Burke once wrote: "The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again, and a nation is not governed which is to be perpetually conquered."

If we are going to change Zimbabwe into a modern, successful, democratic state, we

"Zimbabwe's history is littered with examples of leaders who have preached non-violence whilst at the same time have organised actions behind closed doors."

simply have to break this cycle of violence now. We will find that if we do not stamp out violence in our ranks now, it will come back to haunt us.

If we do not prevent leaders with violent inclinations from gaining high office within the opposition, they will naturally assume influential positions in government and once they have done so, they will then have access to all the levers of national governmental power – a far more frightening prospect.

Given their nature, which is there for all to see, there is no doubt that they will continue to use the violent methods they employed in opposition, in government.

Ironically, that is precisely the Zimba-

bwean experience of the last 26 years but we do not appear to have learnt a thing.

Secondly, we must realise that we are a nation in denial regarding the extent of the problem. We are a bit like an alcoholic. We do not recognise this default mode of resorting to violence as a disease.

We have become so accustomed to violence being used as an acceptable political weapon that we have lost sight of the fact that the democratic world has moved on and that such methods are anathema elsewhere.

By a silent and insidious process of osmosis, we have absorbed this disease and tragically we do not understand the extent of the problem.

We are so consumed by the Zimbabwean catastrophe that we do not understand why we need to take bold and decisive measures to heal this affliction in our own ranks.

I have no doubt that our failure to nip this problem in the bud is the single biggest cause of the MDC split. If we do not deal with it now, then our political woes will continue.

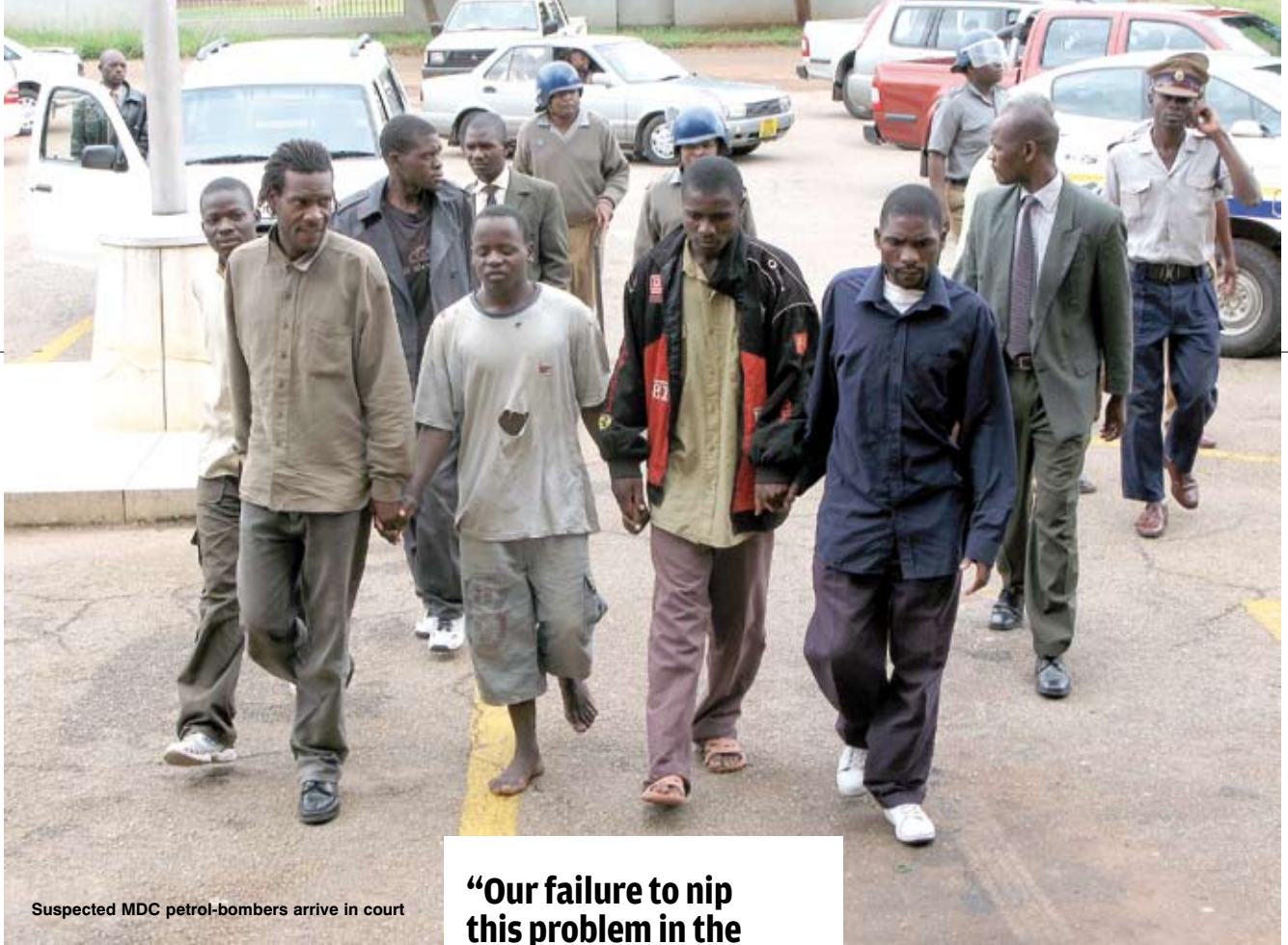
Thirdly, non-violent methods are the most effective in tackling this regime. It is wrong to think that non-violence and civil disobedience/mass action are incompatible or that anyone who believes in non-violence opposes mass action.

On the contrary, peaceful mass action is the very thing that the Zanu PF regime fears the most. But you cannot expect leaders with a predilection for violence to organise peaceful mass action successfully.

If youths are undisciplined and given free reign in dealing with internal party issues, then it is inevitable that they will use similar methods in confronting this regime.

However, if leaders have instilled discipline in their subordinates, they can have confidence that any demonstrations they lead will not degenerate into violence.

I suspect that one of the reasons Morgan Tsvangirai, and other MDC leaders from both factions for that matter, have not led protest marches yet is because they may have little



Suspected MDC petrol-bombers arrive in court

“Our failure to nip this problem in the bud is the single biggest cause of the MDC split. If we do not deal with it now, then our political woes will continue.”

confidence in the discipline of their followers.

The problem now is that these methods may have become deeply ingrained and in the 100 or so days left in this short winter of discontent, it will be difficult to change those ways.

Fourthly, the method most feared by the regime is non-violence for the simple reason that they have no answer to it. The regime’s claim to have “degrees in violence” is no idle boast. This is the very territory they are most comfortable in.

Their gratuitous acts of violence in the last six years have not just been designed to intimidate. They have also been designed to provoke the opposition into a physical fight. The regime desperately needs a pretext to use all the power at its disposal.

In addition, the regime desperately needs a scapegoat or a diversion because it has no answer to the economic problems it has created for itself. It simply does not wash with the public for these woes to be blamed on sanctions or drought. But if the nation were to descend into a bloodbath, it will have a wonderful diversion – which it will if mass action is not carefully organised by people who have a deep-rooted commitment to and understanding of non-violent techniques.

Leadership is ultimately about taking

responsibility for the welfare of others. Good leaders have a responsibility to ensure that the people who repose faith in them are not unnecessarily endangered.

If a political leader is privy to information that can harm his or her followers (which information those followers do not have), then that leader has a responsibility to warn those followers of the potential danger.

Leaders must not simply listen to what people at the grassroots are thinking and follow what they want to do willy-nilly.

Whilst leaders must obviously respect the goodwill and wishes of their supporters, if they know that the beliefs of their supporters are based on falsehoods, misconceptions or propaganda, leaders have an obligation to warn people.

Leaders cannot just act like lemmings and hurtle over the cliff with their support-

ers simply because the majority of people are doing that. If leaders know that an organisation their supporters have placed so much faith in has serious flaws, then they have a duty to warn people of those flaws.

If leaders do not, then they fail the very people whose welfare they are responsible for. *It is in this context that I have decided that I would do a disservice to the people who have elected me and put so much faith in me if I were to join a faction of the MDC which I fear does not appreciate the gravity of the problem caused by its failure to root out violence.*

I am not swayed by mere numbers; if I were, I would have joined Zanu PF a long time ago. I am not swayed by the undeniable fact that the Mutambara faction of the MDC has a mountain to climb if it is ever to rule Zimbabwe. What I am swayed by is the responsibility I have to the people who long for a new beginning and an end to the long and desolate nightmare of fascist rule.

Until leaders take a principled stand to break the cycle of violence and impunity in Zimbabwe, no meaningful and long term solutions will be found to the crisis Zimbabwe finds itself in today. ■ **NA**

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