

POLICY STATEMENT No. 11

**The Prime Minister's**  
**Speech to**  
**Ecclesiastical**  
**Leaders**

APRIL 5, 1983

ZIMBABWE

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My object in speaking to you this afternoon is to share some thoughts with you on where we are and where we are going, as we see it in Government. It thus follows that I shall touch on a number of current problems we as a nation and a government face. I propose to speak frankly both because this is my style and because the times require no less.

A few months ago we launched this as our Second Year of National Transformation. We called on the entire nation to join the Government in the all-important endeavour to render our independence more meaningful by exerting maximum efforts towards the positive transformation of our socio-economic, cultural, scientific and technological circumstances.

We had earlier inaugurated our Three-year Transitional National Development Plan, which is deliberately designed to rehabilitate our economy in the wake of the recent liberation war and to lay the necessary foundation for the further development of our country in line with our socialist principles.

The transformation we seek is both structural and psychological in the broad sense. Structural: because institutions which were set up to serve the interests of a small racial minority must now be reorganized and revamped to cater for the needs and requirements of the entirety of our people, particularly the immense majority of peasants and workers.

We assert unequivocally that as a government of the people, no institution of a public character which does not operate in the service of the people is acceptable to us or can be allowed to operate in the same old way. Psychological: because the transformation of institutions, practices and ways of life presupposes the transformation mentalities, attitudes and values.

After nearly a century of colonial rule it is not given that all our people have reached the necessary degree of mental "re-tooling" that

would enable them to appreciate the basis of our call for a transformed Zimbabwe or, to play their full part in executing the tasks before us.

We in government have no illusions on this score. And hence, we have undertaken to communicate with all sections of our population on a continuing basis so that a meeting of the mind between government and the people can be achieved. Our democratic principles render this inter-charge inescapable; our commitment to national transformation makes it vital.

And when I talk of changing attitudes I include those of you who lead the churches, for recent events demonstrate quite clearly that you too need to reorient yourselves in our new Zimbabwe. I wish to return to this theme shortly.

Yet transformation is not itself a goal. It is not, and cannot be, its own justification. We see transformation as a process and a mechanism that, to the extent of its success, will enable our people to live better, richer, and more satisfying lives. We see transformation as a process whereby we move from the old world of social alienation, exploitation and poverty and all its attendant evils to the new world of co-operative work for the collective good, a world in which the concepts of human community, equality and freedom are not merely theoretical constructs in the minds of dreamers but, the daily living experience of the people.

It will thus be seen that our goal is the realization of the ideal of human brotherhood on this earth and in this land for whose liberation so many paid the supreme sacrifice so recently.

I should like also to touch briefly on our perspectives concerning matters of a more political character. Upon coming into office my government enunciated the policy of national reconciliation and unity. We felt that to build, or rather to rebuild Zimbabwe, we needed to put aside the animosities and conflicts of the past—for what would it help us to rekindle these—and to harness the energies, enthusiasm and resources of all our people towards common purpose and objectives.

In line with this policy we brought into the Cabinet and government generally representatives from ZAPU and the white community, even

though my party, with its majority in Parliament, could have governed alone. We also created a new national army on the basis of the integration of three previous antagonistic forces—ZANLA, ZIPRA and the former Rhodesian army. Furthermore, we encouraged our people to work together.

We launched various programmes of reconstruction and development to benefit all our people whatever their race, colour, tribe or creed. Our approach was, and remains, national. We want our people to unite because it is only on this basis that we can make progress in our country.

However, it soon became evident, following our independence, that whilst we sought national unity others sought disunity and even strife. Need I remind you of the 5 000 U.A.N.C. Auxiliaries who were dispatched to South Africa, following my party's electoral victory, to undergo further military training with a view to returning to this country to overthrow our popularly elected Government? Need I also recount the story of the treachery perpetrated by ZAPU when it cached away on farms owned by companies under its control hundreds of tonnes of the most sophisticated weaponry?

And what of the activities of some elements of our white community—plotters such as Walker and Stuttford and various gangs of saboteurs, including those killed by our army in the Sengwe area in August last year? The Republican Front, under the unchanging, unchangeable leadership of Ian Smith hankers after the Rhodesia of yesterday and views our independence as nothing but disaster. The list is long. The common thread in all of this has been the desperate attempt, often backed by South Africa, to destabilize our young republic with the ultimate object of overthrowing my government.

The current dissident and other lawless activities in certain parts of our country are a case in point. These clearly represent a deliberate and calculated attempt by organized ZAPU elements to torpedo our hard-won peace, derail our reconstruction and development programmes, and bring to nought the freedom and independence that took so much to gain.

These elements, who now see South Africa as their ally, have killed and maimed hundreds of innocent people, kidnapped innocent

Zimbabweans and foreign visitors to our country, burned thousands of dollars' worth of both government and private property and seriously threatened the completion of government projects designed to bring food, water, schools, health facilities and other benefits to the people.

And all this to what end? The answer, from the bandits themselves, is: To put so-called "Father Zimbabwe," that is Mr. Joshua Nkomo, into power. By their very actions the bandits have sworn that those who do not accept this preposterous demand, but instead support democratically elected government, must perish by the sword. At all events, this is the challenge they have thrown at us as a government.

**This is a situation no government and no sovereign state can tolerate. And so my government has responded by deploying units of our security forces in those areas of our country where the dissidents and bandits have unleashed their reign of terror and lawlessness.**

We shall proceed with ever increasing vigour to crush them. Let me reiterate in this regard that our consciences are very clear. In the circumstances in which a party, having lost the elections, was nonetheless brought into government, and its rights as a political party have been scrupulously respected by a Government that has faithfully adhered to a Constitution which represents an historic compromise accepted by all parties: in these circumstances, my Government has full moral—not to say political and constitutional—authority to wipe out the scourge that would debilitate and finally destroy our sovereignty and unitary nationhood.

It is thus shocking—indeed reprehensible—that others, with scarcely any real knowledge or adequate appreciation of the situation we face and with dubious credentials with respect to their role in our recent national liberation struggle, should presume to lecture us on the morality of the nation's anti-dissident campaign. This band of Jeremiahs has included reactionary foreign journalists, non-governmental organizations of doubtful status in our midst and sanctimonious prelates. The seven Catholic Bishops' pastoral statement sermonizing my government on the morality of our military operations in Matabeleland as they affected human rights and our policy of national reconciliation is the latest pronouncement

on the subject. The statement vehemently attacks the conduct of the security forces in the operations against dissidents and bandits.

My government takes the view that criticism which is objective, just, fair and constructive, is a necessary basic instrument in the evaluation of any process or situation with or without contradictions or negative influences, if that process or situation is to yield progress or the attainment of desired goals.

What I find extremely surprising is the fact that whereas those of our churchmen, voluntary organizations and other persons who have exercised their basic right of criticism have had the courage to criticise my government for alleged atrocities in some parts of Matabeleland, they have conspicuously maintained mute silence on the heinous acts and atrocities committed by ZAPU and its dissidents.

**Show me a single statement by the Church or cleric attacking ZAPU and its dissidents or just the dissidents themselves as violators of human rights and perpetrators of crime. In such circumstances, we in government are bound to ask ourselves the question why religious courage operates only in the one direction, that of criticizing the legitimate government, and grows cold in the other direction of condemning politically motivated lawless gangs.**

Secondly, when criticism is, by the very nature of its publicity, made more for the consumption of the international gallery than for our national consumption and consideration and further if that criticism is made in circumstances in which some of the critics admit that they have had external pressures to speak out, then one wonders whether such critics are their own masters or are mere megaphonic agents of their external manipulative masters. In those circumstances, their allegiance and loyalty to Zimbabwe become extremely questionable.

Thirdly, when these self-same critics allege in the full knowledge of our honest policies that my government is carrying out a tribal war against the Ndebeles and some of them actually proceed, as the seven Catholic Bishops have done, to enjoin us "to preserve the ethnic rights of the minorities within (our) borders," then one begins to doubt their sense of nationality and their commitment to the principle of the

nation rather than tribe, and whether they are for national unity rather than ethnic divisions.

On this subject, one should perhaps be permitted to ask what these rights are and of which ethnic minorities? And how have these ethnic rights been violated? Is the political view of the Church now that we recognize the various ethnic groupings as political entities to be accorded political rights on that score? Has the church now drawn a leaf from South Africa's apartheid book? If this represents a newly discovered political-cum-religious philosophy of the Catholic Church or the church in general, then let its adherents come out of their religious shell and canvass this antediluvian theory in contradistinction to my Party's and hence, government's political philosophy of the nation and not the tribe.

Fourthly, our critics accuse us of utter dishonesty and untruthfulness because our public utterances have, as they allege, sought to hide the atrocities that have taken place. No government worth its name can proceed to draw definite conclusions on any information or allegations, largely hearsay, before it has conducted, as we now are doing, its own investigations to establish the real truth. Not all our critics, including churchmen, are honest men, and false evidence or information does not necessarily acquire the quality of sacred truth merely because a bishop or minister of religion has presented it. So it is our duty, and a sacred one at that, to examine any evidence or information by carrying out practical investigations so as to arrive at the truth. Once this exercise has been completed, the government will reveal the facts as they have found them.

Fifthly, our critics, by accusing us of violating human rights through our military operations in parts of Matabeleland, have in fact cast doubt on our commitment to these rights. May I seize this opportunity of reminding them of our brief history. For many years, some of us, refusing to yield on matters of basic principle, were incarcerated for our total commitment to freedom and justice in circumstances in which many of our present critics were cringing in fear. And that is not all, for our unyielding dedication to those human rights also caused us to take to arms in a bitter protracted national struggle in which several leaders, commanders and thousands of our young men and women lost their lives.

Surely, these credentials give us better title than our "holier than thou" critics to sermonize others, including them, on what true commitment to human rights means. Indeed, it is because of that very commitment and the bitter sacrifices we made that we cannot, for a single moment, permit any Party or group of individuals or any single individual for that matter, to undermine our hard-earned rights by committing wanton murders, robberies, rapes and kidnappings aimed at reversing the results of a democratic election and usurping political power.

Accordingly, the struggle against political bandits and their collaborators will continue unabated until every corner of Matabeleland has been rid of every dissident element. If we are one with the church on this matter, as indeed we are at one with the majority of the nation, then at least we will feel united in the spirit to create true justice and peace.

Distinguished delegates, let me at this point briefly refer in an equally frank manner to my government's concept of our relations with the church. We have never interfered nor do we now propose to interfere with the religious work of the church. We leave that entirely to the various denominations. But, we as a government have gone further. We have recognized the good work the churches have carried out in the past and present—in education, health care and the care of the destitute, among other socially beneficial functions. Accordingly, this government has taken steps to increase its grants to mission schools while at the same time, it called on the missions to expand the facilities they provide for education and other social services.

My government has recently published the first volume of the Three-year Transitional National Development Plan. The second volume will be out soon. It is in the context of this plan that government would want to see greater efforts made by the church and voluntary organizations towards the greater transformation of our society. More educational health and social amenities are planned for. If the partnership between the State and the church can grow closer and more inputs, financial, human and technological, can be marshalled by both our parties, there will certainly be progress in the implementation of the plan.

As we have had occasion to inform you in the past, the plan is really the first systematic attempt by the government to build socialism and establish an egalitarian state. We appeal to you, therefore, to throw your full weight behind the plan.

Once again, we invite the church to attune itself to the realities of the new Zimbabwe. The church must transform, as all institutions in our society must transform. In specific terms, the church must always aspire to serve the interests of the people of Zimbabwe; it must, secondly maintain a correct relationship with the government of the day by, at least, seeking to understand always the basis of government policies and actions. Finally, the church must, in relating itself to our people and government, be seen to have the virtues of humility, honesty and objectivity. In short, the church of Zimbabwe, whatever the denomination, must abandon for ever the tendency or temptation to play marionette to foreign so-called parent churches whose interests and perspectives may, and often will, be at variance with the best interests of our people and country.

In as much the government itself does not accept being dictated to from foreign capitals, it cannot accept as authentic or legitimate the voice of a church that takes its cue and directions from foreign sources.

Let, me, however, conclude by repeating yet again that we value your contributions in the past. We wish to work with you even more closely today. We value thoughts and criticisms, provided always that they are based on careful study and are constructive. So let us work together as partners with many common aims and purposes. Our people can only stand to gain from this collaboration.



