



SPEECH

BY

**THE PRESIDENT, HIS EXCELLENCY,
DR E.D. MNANGAGWA**

AT THE

**BURIAL OF THE LATE NATIONAL HERO MAJOR
GEN.(RTD) SYDNEY BHEBHE**

20 JUNE 2022

NATIONAL HEROES ACRE, HARARE

We are gathered here to lay to rest one of our veterans of the Liberation Struggle, a decorated senior officer of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces, a husband, father, son, brother, comrade, our national hero and a true Patriot, Major General (Rtd) Sydney Bhebhe, whose Chimurenga name was Yengani Dhlodhlo. He passed on last week here in Harare, on Monday 13th June 2022.

On behalf of the revolutionary ZANU PF Party Government and people of Zimbabwe and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to express my profound condolences to the bereaved Bhebhe family for their sad loss. May you all find solace in that the whole nation shares in your grief and mourns with you.

Our gathering here yet again, is testimony that our nation is fast losing cadres from a generation of freedom fighters who gallantly fought in our armed liberation struggle during the Second Chimurenga. The past four weeks have seen a dark cloud hovering over the nation as we have lost three decorated General Officers. In Major General (Rtd) Sydney Bhebhe, the nation has lost another dedicated revolutionary cadre who committed his life to serving

Zimbabwe and remained focused and steadfast, in the face of the neo-colonial machinations by our country's detractors.

He served his country with unflinching loyalty, always guided by the national interest and selfless patriotism. The late Major General Bhebhe was a humble, honest, reserved and unassuming man, yet an astute, fearless, and reliable military officer. He consistently and persistently fought for his country, before and after Independence, rising to the rank of Major General, in the Zimbabwe Defence Forces.

Fellow Mourners;

The late Major General was born on 30 December 1960 to Reverend Lika Makhuwa Bhebhe and Mrs Bongani Bhebhe in Mberengwa District, under Chief Mtevoidze in the Midlands Province. He did primary education in his home area and secondary education at Masase Secondary School from 1974 to 1977.

Riled by the racist and brutal Rhodesian system that condemned Africans to second class citizens in their own country, the late Major General, like many of his contemporaries, abandoned his studies and left to join the Liberation Struggle in Zambia via Botswana.

It is most disheartening to hear some of our misinformed and misguided young people, peddling the grossly false narrative that life under Ian Smith was better than that, after Independence. The onus is on the older generation to constantly explain to the youth of our country that Ian Smith, and those present day counter revolutionaries with similar inclinations, personify the plunder and pillage of our motherland. These groups of unrepentant supremacists seek to make Zimbabwe a country where Africans are dis-enfranchised and turned into puppets for their elitist economic benefits. Such colonial inspired capitalist domination, under whatever guise, will never be accepted in this country.

Lest we forget, the total independence, freedom, democracy and sovereignty we are enjoying as Zimbabwe, will never be sacrificed for any socio-political or economic

expediency. This is what the National Hero we are laying to rest and other thousands of veterans of our liberations struggle, fought for.

The racist excesses of the Rhodesian white settler regime were unbearable and fraught with the constant threat of death. It took strong willed cadres in the mould of our National Hero, Major General Sydney Bhebhe, to endure the arduous journey that finally brought about our independence and freedom. Us who remain, young and old alike, have a sacred responsibility to jealously guard and defend our motherland, Zimbabwe, not only in honour of the departed sons and daughter of the soil, but also as a sacrosanct obligation to the generations that will come after us.

Fellow Mourners;

On arrival in Zambia, the late Cde “Yengani Dhlodhlo” stayed briefly at Nampundwe Transit Camp until December 1977 when their group became the second to be flown to Angola for initial military training. The group trained at the Boma Training Camp under Brigadier General (Rtd) T. Nleya. Owing to his astuteness, mastery

of military concepts, dedication to duty and discipline, his Cuban and Soviet Specialist trainers selected our late National Hero to become one of the instructors at the same Training Camp. Thereafter, he undertook further military training in semi-conventional and conventional warfare, with the tutorship of Soviet Training Instructors.

During this time, the racist Rhodesian and South African soldiers bombed Boma Training Camp, resulting in the death of 190 cadres and injuries to over 500 others.

The late Major General Sydney Bhebhe was one of those that sustained serious injuries. He was evacuated to Luwena and later transferred to Luanda for further medical assistance due to the severity of his injuries. On discharge from hospital, he was taken to a Recuperation Centre that was located near the Atlantic Coast, also housing other injured freedom fighters from the region, including SWAPO cadres.

Upon his full recovery, the late departed Major General remained unwavering in his conviction to fight for the liberation and independence of his country. He, thus, returned to Boma Training Camp where he resumed

duties as Commissar and Instructor for the training units. He was part of the group of instructors that accompanied 1 800 trained fighters to Zambia on their way to the front.

On return from the assignment to Zambia, he was deployed to Malanje Camp, which comprised of other trainees from Umkhonto we-Sizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress, where he trained more recruits.

At Independence, the late General Officer was attested into the Zimbabwe National Army on 1 April 1980. He had a distinguished and illustrious career in the Zimbabwe Defence Forces serving in various general duty command appointments, in administration and as a Defence Attaché to Ethiopia.

Due to the selfless sacrifices, loyalty, patriotism and associated achievements, our late National Hero was awarded the Liberation Medal. Independence Medal; Ten Years' Service Medal; Long and Exemplary Service Medal; Mozambican Campaign Medal; Democratic Republic of Congo Campaign Medal and the Grand Officer of the Zimbabwe Order of Merit Award.

Fellow Zimbabweans;

The Independence and freedom we enjoy today came from the personal and collective sacrifice made by our brave sons and daughters of our beloved motherland, Zimbabwe. The remains of some of our liberation war heroes continue to lie in unmarked graves across the region. Such was the brutality of the colonial regime. We must never take the constitutionalism, democracy, independence and right to chart our own destiny for granted. These rights were paid for by the sacred blood of our fellow brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers and many comrades, many of whom never lived to see a free Zimbabwe.

As the nation continues to inter the cream of cadres that fought for our Independence, it is imperative that our scholars and academics prioritise recording and publishing the life experiences of this crop of freedom fighters, to enrich our written liberation war heritage, for future generations.

This history cannot be left to the authorship of those who seek to belittle our struggle and achievements. Efforts by various stakeholders, including the Museum of African Liberation, must be scaled up and accelerated towards documenting, archiving and exhibiting the true story of our Liberation Struggle.

Meanwhile, it is regrettable that Zimbabwe continues to attract unwarranted interest from our former colonisers who together with their supremacist proxies, mistakenly think that we are provinces of their countries. These meddlesome countries and their lobbyists, under various guises, preach democracy and good governance by day whilst sponsoring and instigating nefarious activities, violence and instability in our country by night.

This is part of their long held, brute strategies to reverse the gains we have made in consummating our Independence, self-determination, sovereignty, economic empowerment and total freedom of our people, which is now embodied in our country's development philosophy, **“ Nyika inovakwa, inotongwa, nevenevayo”/“ilizwe liyakwa, libuswengabanikazi”**.

The levels and intensity of falsehoods being peddled by some opposition political parties to whip their supporters into orgies of violence, hate and disharmony is now extremely worrisome and my Administration will not stand by and watch.

Zimbabwe is a peaceful country and this culture is alien to our society under the Second Republic. The law will take effect and its application will be without fear or favour. No one is above the law. I, thus, call upon our communities throughout the country to be vigilant against these destabilizing and hateful political parties.

Keep your eyes and ears wide open. Do not allow outsiders from your communities to come and disturb the peace and harmony in your areas. Violence has no place in the Zimbabwe we are building. We want peace, peace, peace, love and harmony.

Equally, let us as a people shun all forms of self-hate, as well as the peddling of falsehoods and misinformation. Together, we must entrench the values of love, honesty,

hard work and patriotism as we continue on the journey to guarantee our national development and prosperity, for all our people, no matter where they live.

What happened recently in the Nyatsime Township of Chitungwiza is deplorable and should never be repeated. The nation is now familiar with these shenanigans and incidences of staged violence, which are designed to tarnish the image of Zimbabwe, especially ahead of major International meetings.

This time, the destabilizing and violent theatrics by opposition elements are being done ahead of the CHOGM meeting in Rwanda.

Shame on you, if you are the leader of a political party which thrives on violence and the insecurity of our people, to be relevant. Shame –shame-shame on you!

The life and prosperity of every Zimbabwean is important and will be protected by my Government. Our security apparatus are on alert. We will not stand by and watch the

good image of our nation as well as the safety and security of our people being desecrated by rouge pseudo politicians who receive dirty money to torment their own African kith and kin. I call upon the nation at large, across all provinces, districts and wards to refuse to be used by self seeking charlatans, masquerading as politicians. **Rambai kushandiswa kuita** violence. Parents and guardians, please guide our youth accordingly. Violence does not pay.

As we head towards the 2023 Harmonised General Elections, let us entrench the democracy, good governance and constitutionalism prevailing in our country and never abuse it. Our political contestations must never degenerate into violence, No! Let us honour the departed heroes and heroines who selflessly fought for our beloved country by maintaining peace, unity, love and harmony.

Finally, to the late Major General Sydney Bhebhe, I say Go well Son of the Soil. Go well. *Cde Yengani Dhlodhlo.*

You fought with other Comrades and brought Independence and freedom to our nation. You played

your part. We shall remain forever grateful. Rest in eternal peace our National Hero.

**Siyakubonga. Hamba kahle Qhawe lama Qhawe.
Lalangokutula!**

**Famba zvakanaka, Gamba ramaGamba, Zorora
murugare!**

Those of us that remain will continue the fight for a united, peaceful and prosperous Zimbabwe.

Ngiyabonga,

Ndinotenda

God bless you all.

God bless Zimbabwe.

I thank you.