

History

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Struggle for Democratisation in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) 1972-1980

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Abstract

Christian Churches have played, and continue to play important roles in the histories of many African countries. In Southern Africa, the Catholic Church played an important role in the liberation struggles of many countries. This paper examines the contribution of the Catholic Church through the lens of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in the democratisation of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). It advances the proposition that the Church, through the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, played an important role in the internationalization of the Rhodesian crisis between 1972 and 1980. It argues first, that the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace performed a sterling job of breaking the enormous silence about the horrifying things that were taking place in Rhodesia through the preparation, publication and dissemination of objective information; second that the Commission succeeded in countering Rhodesian government's propaganda and psychological warfare campaign; third and finally that the Commission brought enough internal and external pressure to bear on the Rhodesian government to hasten its collapse.

Introduction

The struggle for freedom in Southern Africa was waged under enormous difficulties and assumed great significance nationally and internationally. In much of Southern Africa, no history of the struggle for democratisation will be complete without mention of the Catholic Church. Throughout the years of pain, suffering and the liberation war, the Catholic Church has been part of an unfolding landscape. In Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), the Catholic Church worked closely with the guerrillas in the liberation struggle against colonial rule, with the Church's wing of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, hereafter referred to as the Commission, becoming a vanguard for the rural and township in the struggle in all its complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty.

However, it is important to point out that the work of the Catholic Church, and that of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in particular, was received with mixed feelings across the Rhodesian society. These feelings ranged from glowing praises to dismissive judgements and attacks. Linden (1980:196) states that "it was truth rather than justice and peace that the Commission achieved and will be remembered for", while the Rhodesia Catholics Bishops' Conference, to which the Commission was answerable, felt that the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace was neither concerned with justice nor peace. "We fear that the Catholic Commission

for Justice and Peace belies its title; not being Catholic, since it is not concerned with Catholic teaching; having no connection with peace, since it is divisive rather than conciliatory” (Rhodesia Catholics Bishops Conference: Box 324)), wrote the Rhodesia Catholics Bishops’ Conference in a memorandum. The Rhodesian government was equally dismissive of the work of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, styling it a sinister organisation with sinister objectives, a cloak and dagger organisation which spends its time digging up atrocity stories. They considered it a “fifth column which on the face of it appears to stand for justice and so forth, but which in reality has much more sinister objectives” (Rhodesia House of Assembly Debates 1975:446-7).

This paper is concerned with the work of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, hereafter referred to as the Commission, in the struggle for independence in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) notwithstanding the divergence of opinion about its work. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace was formed in 1972 in response to the Pope Paul VI’s call to all Episcopal Conferences to form Justice and Peace Organizations world-wide in 1967, and in keeping with the Pope’s exhortation that ‘If you want Peace, work for Justice’. Its purpose was to make a positive contribution to justice and peace. To realise this, the Commission sought to,

inform people’s consciences on justice and peace issues as well as the injustices of the situation they lived in; investigate allegations of injustices and to take corrective action in its power; conduct research and publish or disseminate its findings objectively (Linden 1980: 188-9)

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace was able to achieve the above by acting as a human rights watchdog. Besides internationalizing the Rhodesian crisis, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace was also able to work towards justice and peace through its sterling efforts of countering and parrying the Rhodesian Government’s counter-insurgency, propaganda and psychological warfare campaign and by putting enough pressure to bear on the Rhodesian government. It also embarked on diplomatic initiatives that helped to bring about a solution to the Rhodesian crisis. Put together, these efforts helped to hasten the collapse of the Smith regime.

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace: Informing People’s Consciences and the Internationalisation of the Rhodesian Crisis, 1972-1980

One of the essential contributions of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace was the campaign against oppressive rule in Rhodesia, educating the oppressed people about their rights, providing financial and material assistance, as well as legal advice to those who needed it. It also prepared, published, and disseminated information on the inhumanity of Ian Smith’s government, thus internationalizing the Rhodesian crisis.

One of the important things the Commission was able to do was to make available simplified versions of Rhodesia’s complex legislation, informing people of their duties and rights. It did this by publishing booklets and pamphlets in English, Shona and Ndebele as practical legal guides to anyone in Rhodesia. Thus

as the Rhodesian war intensified, both the Rhodesian Security Forces and the African freedom fighters committed numerous atrocities. According to one former Chairman of the Commission, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace was the only organization within Rhodesia that could respond publicly to these atrocities. Thus in 1973, the Commission published a booklet entitled, *The Rights and Duties of a Citizen When Arrested*, explaining to people about the law as it applied to the investigation of crimes and what the citizens were supposed to do when arrested or when appearing as witnesses on crimes being investigated by the police. The booklet also explained the procedures of arrest, investigation, making statements to the police, searches by the police, finger print taking, and blood tests (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1973; 5-11), among others. In 1974, the Commission published another booklet, *The Rights and Duties of a Citizen When on Trial*, explaining again the complex procedures of trial, the citizen's rights and duties when facing trial in any court of law, and the powers of the judge and his prosecutors.

Then in 1974, the Commission compiled a dossier of atrocities allegedly committed by the Rhodesian Security Forces and took some of the cases to the High Court. The Rhodesian Government's was swift in its response. It responded by enacting a series of legislative acts meant to deal with the war situation. One such piece of legislation was the *Indemnity and Compensation Act* 1975 that gave protection retrospectively and in advance to acts of the officers of the state. The law effectively prevented any case to be heard and judged in a court of law in Rhodesia against anyone who was believed to have acted in 'good faith' and for purposes of, or, in connection with the suppression of terrorism (Statute Law of Rhodesia 1975; 446-7). Finding its way blocked by the *Indemnity and Compensation Act*, the Commission directed its efforts to the publication overseas, and dissemination of its numerous dossiers on wanton human rights violations in Rhodesia by the Security Forces. Some of the important overseas publications, through the Catholic Institute for International Relations, London, were *The Man in the Middle* (1975), *Civil War in Rhodesia* (1976), and *Rhodesia: The Propaganda War* (1977). While the Commission thoroughly investigated, documented and authenticated through lawyers the numerous cases of human rights violations by the Rhodesian Security Forces, it was never afforded the opportunity to place them before a court in order to confirm the veracity of its findings. Nonetheless, the publications helped to break the enormous silence about the horrifying things that were happening in Rhodesia. While there were other organizations that spoke against racism and violations of human rights within Rhodesia, the Commission was probably the only organization that published torture, assaults, rape, shootings and bombings of civilians and their property by members of the Rhodesian Security Forces and widely disseminated these both within and outside the country. In *Civil War in Rhodesia* (1976), a 95-page dossier, the Commission documented specific cases of torture, brutality and killings in the war zones, while in *Rhodesia: The Propaganda War* (1976), the Commission charged the Smith regime with brutality and hypocrisy and the Rhodesian Security Forces with cowardice and propaganda. This dossier received much publicity in Europe and Canada.

In the whole history of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, there is one case that helped to bring to the international community the dilemma that was

faced by the ordinary people. This case involved the trial in 1976 and subsequent deportation in 1977 of Bishop Donald Lamont, the Commission's President between 1974 and 1977. His deportation was both a response to his endless attacks on the Rhodesian government and his deliberate defiance of the law. The climax of the attacks on Government by the Commission came in 1976 in an open letter by Lamont, partly as a response to Security Forces' cross border attacks which left more than one thousand dead at two refugee camps in Mozambique (Meredith 1979:237; Runganga-Gumbo 1988:27), and partly as a response to the 1975 Indemnity and Compensation Act. His letter, written on 11 August 1976 read in part,

As a Catholic Bishop I cannot desist while civil discontent, racial tension and violence are so much in evidence and daily on the increase. Conscience compels me to state that your administration by its clearly racist and oppressive policies and its stubborn refusal to change is responsible for the injustices which have provoked the present disorder and it must in that measure be considered guilty of whatever misery or bloodshed may flow. Far from your policies defending Christianity and Western civilization, as you claim, they mock the law of Christ and make communism attractive to the people...In a state which claims to be democratic, people are restricted, and imprisoned without trial, tortured or tried in camera, put to death by secret hanging and justification for all this barbarity is sought by you in the name of Christianity and of Western civilization and for what you call the 'maintaining of Rhodesian standards'. Surely this is the final absurdity (Meredith 1979: 235-236).

This attack, together with another offence earlier committed by Lamont finally gave the Government the excuse to deport him. While it continued to launch attacks on 'guerrilla' camps within neighbouring countries, the Rhodesian government also adopted increasingly harsher measures to contain the guerrilla threat. Thousands of people were brought before the court and sentenced to long jail terms for assisting or for failing to report the presence of insurgents in their locality. Bishop Lamont was one of those charged. The facts of the case were that in 1976, an Irish Catholic missionary, Sister Vianney, working at Avila Mission was twice visited by guerrillas who demanded medicine and gave them. On both occasions she told Lamont who decided not to report to government and told the missionary staff to take no action. By so doing, Lamont violated Section 48B of the Law and Order Maintenance Act (1974) which required all people to report as soon as possible and reasonably practical and in any event within 72 hours, any information they had concerning the presence of 'terrorists'. However, Lamont wilfully and purposely defied the law knowing very well that this offence carried a possible death sentence. During his trial in court in September 1976, Lamont made a lengthy and unsworn statement, making it abundantly clear that he deliberately defied the law in order to focus international attention to the

dilemma facing priests and civilians living in the Rhodesian war zone. Moreover, he did not think that an oath was necessary since he was going to plead guilty (Lamont 1977:17). There were sixty people present at his trial on 22 September 1976, with only two defence witnesses, the Anglican Bishops of Matabeleland and Mashonaland who volunteered to speak, pointing out the insoluble dilemma of missionaries and civilians caught between conflicting demands of Security Forces on the one hand, and the guerrillas on the other hand. Both missionaries and civilians had been placed in a position where they had either to report guerrillas and face nationalist recriminations, or remain silent and risk criminal prosecution. This insoluble position and dilemma was well expressed by one villager who had this to say,

If we report to the police, the ‘terrorists’ kill us. If we do not report the police torture us. Even if we do report to the police, we are beaten all the same and accused of trying to lead soldiers into a trap. We just do not know what to do (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1975: 1).

At the trial, Lamont was represented by Lionel Weinstock of the South African bar, and present were judges Seams of the Supreme Court of Ireland representing the International Commission of Jurists and Bruce Summer of the United States Supreme Court, representing Amnesty International. The offence committed by Lamont carried a possible death sentence, but since the case was tried in a regional magistrate court, the maximum permissible punishment was 15 years imprisonment. Lamont was however sentenced to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour, but on appeal it was reduced to 4 years with three conditionally suspended. However, shortly afterwards, Lamont was stripped of his Rhodesian citizenship and on 23 March 1977 he was deported to London. While the Commission and the Church lost an important ally in the fight for justice, Lamont’s detractors’, including those in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church were overjoyed. In an interview with Granada Television in 1977, a self-confessed Selous Scout, Charles Gilroy had this to say, “One dead missionary is as good as 50 dead terrorists. Any Selous Scout would kill Lamont for \$50” (Rhodesia Catholics Bishops Conference 1977).

Lamont was not the only member of the Catholic Church that was brought before the court for supporting the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. Sister Janice McLaughlin barely lasted a year after joining the Commission as she was briefly remanded in custody before appearing before a regional magistrate’s court that immediately deported her in September 1977 after she publicly told the court that she supported the liberation struggle. The imprisonment and deportation of Sister Janice and other missionary personnel hardened the attitude of the Commission, and even made it popular. Robert Mugabe was on record as saying,

The Church in Rhodesia has consistently come under attack for supporting the just war we are waging... The Smith regime has grown desperate. They are panicking and anybody who supports us even from a distance has become a victim (Linden, 1980: 255-256).

Within a few weeks of the deportation of Sister Janice, more Catholic missionaries were deported. While the deportation of several of the Church radical clergy severely depleted the capacity of the Commission, it also served to bring to the fore the complexity of the Rhodesian crisis. But despite these deportations, the Commission never looked back. It went ahead to publish its third pamphlet abroad in 1977, entitled *Rhodesia: The Propaganda War*.

Thus while at the face of it the Commission seemed to represent the benign face of the white power bloc, as the news of its sterling work in human rights education and legal help, Africans came to see it as a major vehicle through which they can speak about their troubles. In the course of time, the Commission went out of tune with some members of the white community, both within and outside the Commission, who began to exert pressure on it in order to limit its scope of conduct. Thus while relations between the Church hierarchy and the Commission got 'poisoned', the international community came to see and to recognize the Commission as a human rights watchdog and as a force of reconciliation.

Countering Rhodesian Government's Counter-Insurgency, Propaganda and Psychological Warfare Campaign

As the war intensified, the Rhodesian government resorted to psychological and propaganda campaign against the freedom fighters, the sole purpose of which was to alienate them from the local African population as well as to adversely affect the support they were getting from the local missionaries and the international community. Such propaganda included the cataloguing of guerrilla atrocities in pamphlets and booklets, the screening of psychologically violent films in schools and village service centres, the public display of mutilated bodies of guerrillas, among many other tactics. For example, in 1974, the Rhodesian government published a catalogue of atrocities allegedly committed by the guerrillas entitled *Anatomy of Terror* whose preface was written in a characteristically lurid style, claiming that "outright torture has long been a weapon of the communist trained thugs....It is a sober thought that the people who perpetrate these crimes are financed and comforted by the international community and the World Council of Churches...." (Randolph: 1985:3). With the publication of *Anatomy of Terror*, the authorities hoped to show the calibre of men who were masquerading as liberators of a so-called oppressed community (Rhodesia Ministry of Information 1974: 1). The Rhodesian government also published another booklet in 1976 under the title *Harvest of Fear: A Diary of Terrorist Atrocities in Rhodesia*, for the same purposes. The regime also distributed leaflets to schools, protected villages, service centres etc in both Shona and Ndebele with an English version at the back of each which tried to convince the people that the liberation movements were not an authentic national force, but rather the tools of communist agents outside Rhodesia. It was all this naked propaganda and psychological warfare campaign by the Rhodesian government that the Commission sought to defuse.

Thus by publishing torture, assaults, rape, shootings and bombings of civilians by members of the Security Forces and by widely disseminating these both within and outside the country, the Commission was able to deal with Rhodesian Government propaganda that tended to paint the freedom fighters as the brutal mad dog 'communist

terrorists' who were responsible for the atrocities occurring in Rhodesia, while painting the Rhodesian Security Forces as the guardians of law and order. According to one Jesuit Father who worked at a remote mission station during the war, the Commission was able to destroy the myth that the Rhodesian Security Forces were fighting to protect all people in Rhodesia by also exposing those atrocities committed by the Rhodesian Security Forces. The following two are cases in point which were investigated and publicised by the Commission, among many others. The first case was that of Jackson Mandizvidza who allegedly died in the hands of the police in 1973. The facts of this case are that Jackson and others were arrested on 4th January 1973 in connection with a landmine explosion in the then Mzarabani Tribal Trust Land near Mandizvidza's village. Jackson was allegedly interrogated and tortured to death by the Rhodesian authorities at a camp near his home village. Then on the 12th January 1973, the family was advised that Jackson was dead but they were not told how and where, neither were they given his body for burial. To get more facts, the Commission appointed lawyers to handle the case. Initially, the family members had been told that they could not see Jackson's body and that it had been buried 'because he was a terrorist' (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1974), but when the Commission's lawyers pursued the case, they were given two contrasting versions. The first version was that Jackson collapsed and died in police custody, while the second claimed that Jackson had been taken in a helicopter by police and that when he turned his head to make an indication, he collapsed forward dead (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1975: 18).

The second case involved the indiscriminate shooting and bombing at a village called Karima, about 177 km north of the capital Salisbury, which took place on the night of 12th June 1975. It is alleged that the people of Karima village were called to a meeting at the headman's place by people who called themselves 'guerrillas', at which meeting the headman was allegedly accused of being a sell-out and was beaten in full view of his own people. A little later the headman was taken away and as the so-called 'guerrillas' walked away a grenade exploded at the place of the meeting. Suddenly the gathering came under a barrage of gunfire and twenty-one villagers were killed while fourteen were seriously injured. Nine of those killed were children with one woman losing a husband, all her four children, and a sister (McLoughlin 1985). Reporting the incident, a security forces communiqué said that on the night of 12th June 1975 a Security Force patrol was alerted by the sound of a man being clubbed at his 'kraal' and on approaching the scene to investigate, the patrol came under fire from a terrorist group and in the ensuing fight, twenty-one persons were killed. The communiqué also said that the victim of the 'terrorist' atrocity was a local headman who survived his vicious assault (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace 1975). Investigations by the Commission's lawyers showed that the official version of the Karima shooting incident was not true, pointing out that there were no casualties on either side as there was no fight. Those who survived the shooting incident and were interviewed by the Commission's lawyers pointed out that the whole thing was a trap set up by the Rhodesian Security Forces, and believed that the headman was implicated (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, 1976: 36). They strongly believe that the massacres were stage-managed as part of a propaganda war campaign to discredit the freedom

fighters. Of course, the Government flatly denied the allegations. The Karima incident led to an uproar in Parliament, with some parliamentarians demanding a Commission of Inquiry into the shooting incident. However, the motion was discharged from the order paper and was dismissed as a mark of total lack of patriotism, but not before stormy debates had taken place. The Commission challenged the Smith regime to the veracity of its claims and indicated its willingness to be prosecuted if its findings were proved false. However, the Commission was never allowed to present its findings.

Throughout the war period, the Commission dealt with numerous cases of massacre, torture, murder, shootings, bombings etc, all of which were denied by the Rhodesian Government, and in rare cases described as unfortunate. As the war intensified, the Rhodesian Government played its cards with desperate ferocity. Security Forces commanders became convinced that the only way to deal with the 'terrorist' threat was cross border attacks in Mozambique, Angola, Zambia and Botswana. These increased brutalities were met with equal force by the Commission which refused to be cowed into submission. By dwelling on the atrocities committed by the Rhodesian Security Forces, the Commission was not only able to counter Rhodesian propaganda and psychological warfare, but it was also able to show that it was not only the guerrillas who perpetrated atrocities, but also servants of the state. By destroying government propaganda, the Commission succeeded in giving the liberation movements a human face. According to Linden (1992: 25) the Commission proved more damaging in propaganda terms than any political party.

The Catholic Commission for Justice And Peace: Intensification of Pressure and Diplomatic Shuttling

While Lamont's deportation was a severe blow to the work of the Church and the Catholic Commission in particular as he was central to the witness of the teaching Church on the one hand, and to the internationalization of the Rhodesian crisis through his lobbying of the world for social justice and breaking through the growing claustrophobia of an isolated and illegal regime, the Commission continued with its intensification of internal and external pressure. To the extent that the Commission was able to depict the horrors of the situation, international pressure increased.

The pressure that was brought upon to bear on the Rhodesian Government by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace forced government to react with further repressive pieces of legislation and various other attempts to silence the Commission. Repressive legislation, restrictions, detentions, deportations, executions, collective punishments, curfews and no go areas were some of the desperate measures adopted by the Rhodesian government, together with the deployment of emergency powers instruments. The Rhodesian government continued to style the Commission a 'fifth column'. But despite all these attacks and pieces of legislation, the Commission was not cowed into submission. Instead, the Commission stepped up its pressure, and geared up its diplomatic lobbying and canvassing against the Smith regime, and called for an independent inquiry into the brutalities allegedly committed by the Security Forces. As usual, the Government simply brushed the Commission aside, dubbing it a 'fifth column'. This pressure exerted by the Commission led to further punitive measures by the Government. For example, from 1973 onwards, the Government

refused to grant permanent residence permits to missionaries. Instead, only two year permits non-renewable were being granted.

As already pointed out, it was the person of Lamont that had succeeded in internationalising the Rhodesian crisis and the thinking of the Catholic Church. The Commission did not only deplore the conduct of the Rhodesian Security Forces, but equally deplored that of the guerrillas. For example, at the Geneva Conference in 1976, the Commission circulated a memorandum in which it publicly deplored 'guerrilla' atrocities and denounced the practice by guerrillas of denying the burial of certain victims of war, stating that this had the effect of tarnishing the nationalist cause. This memorandum caused a rift between the Church and the nationalists, but it eventually yielded fruits in one way, bringing together the two liberation movements, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (ZAPU) at a meeting in Lusaka in 1978. It was at this meeting that the Commission put it across to the two movements that by all means necessary, they must avoid harming innocent civilians as this had the effect to tarnish the nationalist cause. This meeting was a turning point in Church-State relations in a number of respects. The meeting showed that the Catholic Church was in league with the African nationalists and that many of the past differences between listening and teaching, Commission and hierarchy were in temporary abeyance (Linden 1980: 279-280). From this meeting the Commission emerged as the voice and force for reconciliation with the nationalists now ready to deploy it as an alternative to the press and as a mouthpiece of the liberation.

The Commission also put its voice to the hollow 1978 Internal Settlement, pointing out that unless a real settlement is reached and the causes of war are removed, lasting peace and justice would not be achieved. It exerted enormous pressure that helped to make the Internal Settlement and the ugly hybrid Zimbabwe-Rhodesia unacceptable internationally. Instead, it called for an all party Conference, welcoming the British Government initiative to renegotiate a new constitution that would remove certain injustices of the Internal Settlement. The Commission met with each of the members of the Executive Council of the Transitional Government and sent a delegation to Lusaka that met with the leaders of the two liberation movements. In the same year, the Commission undertook numerous international visits and diplomatic initiatives. For example, in March, it sent a delegation to Rome to lobby the Pope John Paul VI about the escalating war in Rhodesia. The Pope then launched Vatican Diplomatic initiatives in all relevant countries in an effort to resolve the Rhodesian conflict peacefully. Another delegation of the Commission went to the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions in Spain as well as to Britain, France, Germany, Ireland, the USA, Poland and Belgium to lobby for a peaceful resolution to the Rhodesian crisis. The Commission also gave evidence to the House of Representatives Foreign Relations Committee in the USA, which was considering the issue as to whether official US observers should be sent to monitor the 1980 April elections. At the same time, the Commission's representatives Messers Mike Auret and John Deary and Brother Fidelis Mukonori took with them proposals for a diplomatic initiative which were presented to both the State Department in Washington and the Foreign Office in London.

It will not be an exaggeration to state that these initiatives made their own contribution to the development of a formula that was adopted at the 1979 Lusaka Commonwealth Conference, which directly led to the Lancaster House Conference in the same year that finally delivered peace. At the Lancaster House Talks, the Commission took the chance to do the lobbying and wooing through various diplomatic channels. Commission members met with leaders of the liberation movements and placed before them a paper entitled *Mounting Suffering*. The purpose of the paper was to remind leaders of the need to keep at heart the suffering of the people of Rhodesia in their deliberations. Reflecting on the Lancaster Agreement, the Commission (1982) noted, "In that the Lancaster House Agreement embraced a number of compromises of policy by the PF, we believe that our appeal, jointly with similar appeals from many others, was taken into account"...

The Commission was also actively involved in monitoring the elections of 1980 that ended the conflict. During the elections, and on several occasions, delegations from the Commission visited Government House to make representations on specific issues to the British Governor, Lord Soames, who was charged with supervising 'free and fair' elections. Within the limited scope available, the Commission provided office space, telephone, typing, and clerical services and research assistants to a number of observer groups. Out of a Press Corps of 600 journalists in the country to cover the elections, more than 400 visited the offices of the Commission which offered briefings for observer groups, the press and individual visitors (Fredrickse 1982: 283). The fact that so many observer groups swarmed the offices of the Commission and that many of them utilized facilities of the Commission is a clear testimony of the role it played in the transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. Thus the local and international pressure exerted by the Commission, among other diplomatic initiatives, finally led to the birth of the new Zimbabwe. The sterling work by the Commission was amply summed up in a speech by the then first Prime Minister of Zimbabwe at a seminar organised by the Commission in Gweru 1982. "Justice and Peace has emerged over the years as a Christian institution devoted to justice and fair play in our society.... It fought a resolute struggle for political justice, non-racism, equality, legality and humanity in general. The struggle has been won", (Plangger 1983: 254).

Conclusion

The role of the Catholic Church and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in particular in the liberation of Zimbabwe cannot therefore be underestimated. The Commission assumed the role of a human rights watchdog, informing peoples' consciences, simplifying complex legislation and giving legal representation. The Commission also succeeded in internationalizing the Rhodesian conflict and in giving a human face to ZANU and ZAPU hitherto misrepresented through systematic propaganda and psychological warfare waged by the Rhodesian government, thereby bringing great pressure to bear on the Smith regime. Its numerous diplomatic initiatives, lobbying and representation were also very key to the ending of the conflict, and so was its role in the monitoring of the elections that delivered a democratically elected government on 18 April 1980.

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