

I did not steal panties: Mutsvangwa

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War Veterans minister Chris Mutsvangwa became a butt of jokes last week after Higher and Tertiary Education minister Jonathan Moyo claimed he was notorious for stealing female combatants' undergarments during the war for resale. The below-the-belt jibe was the climax of a bitter verbal war between the two ministers. On Friday Mutsvangwa (CM) spoke to senior reporter **Richard Chidza**(RC) about the claims and his fight with Moyo. Below are excerpts of the interview.

RC: Moyo claimed you stole women's underwear during the liberation struggle for resale. How true is this?

CM: How does one get to trade in textiles in a war zone where guns are blazing and bombs are exploding? And with what payment?

RC: What sparked the verbal war between you and Moyo... What is your reaction to Moyo's assertion that you are a post-liberation-war Rambo?

CM: The professor extols Rambo, the celluloid American war hero shooting to smithereens lesser human minions. This is a minister from a land that produced immortal modern warriors like the legendary General (Josiah Magama) Tongogara.

Clearly [he] is a stranger to the history of the country he waxes lyrical about and aspires to emerge as its tin-pot dictator. The scorn and irreverence of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde professor has paradoxically served to arouse the spirit of Chimurenga and he better pay heed.

RC: But what is it that Moyo has done wrong?

CM: America's prowess is in its business acumen, which is unchallenged globally. The professor spent all his formative years in this propitious environment of entrepreneurs, having played truant to the sharp end of the struggle, he could have honed skills and nurtured networks that help with a concrete agenda as enunciated by Zim-Asset. The cantankerous professor is absent from this utilitarian assignment.

No foreign direct investment (FDI) project carries his name. No rewarding links with reputable American enterprises.

Instead, he promotes clandestine liaison with regime change think tanks of the right wing like the Cato Institute and the politically intrusive Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

RC: You have been accused of pushing a Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa succession agenda. Is this your ultimate aim?

CM: My allegiance is solely with His Excellency the president [Robert Mugabe] and through him the presidium and politburo he appointed at the 6th national congress in 2014.

Mnangagwa's life-long service is fealty, is a matter of revolutionary legend. It is arrivist detractors and their jaundiced eyes who see schism between Mugabe and his self-chosen VP.

The VP has no political agenda other than his life-long mentor and political guru, the president. I knew His Excellency as far back as 1975.

Through him I got to know Mnangagwa who lauded his pioneer role in Zanla in the early 60s. Busybody professor is the architect of an imagined rift between His Excellency and his most trusted lieutenant.

RC: What is your relationship with ministers linked to the G40 group like Moyo, Saviour Kasukuwere and Patrick Zhuwao?

CM: I have a modus vivendi with both Kasukuwere and Zhuwao. I am impressed by their youthful energy and zeal.

I pray hard that it makes recourse to all the rich history of the party that has achieved so much. Jonathan Moyo is a different kettle of fish.

A war deserter with chameleonic modus operandi. He is the Gregory Rasputin ghost of Zimbabwe politics and governance.

The loquacious charlatan, long ago sold his soul to the right wing and sinister operatives who spearhead regime change agenda for Uncle Sam.

As a revolutionary cadre, my duty and my history of sacrifice precludes me from ever having any truck with such a mean life of compulsive treachery.

RC: You respect Kasukuwere even after your fall-out with him over some alleged unpalatable comments he made about war veterans last year?

CM: Kasukuwere still owes war veterans an apology from his drunkards and taxi drivers' slur.

RC: As war veterans chairman, have you tried to meet Mugabe over your fights with Moyo?

CM: Jonathan is too peripheral. [The] patron as recent as last Tuesday reiterated his support for business initiatives by war veterans. Specifically, he is keen to see the launch of the hospitals project we have partnered with a leading global civil contractor.

He can't wait to see his wartime comrades morph into successful entrepreneurs.

President Mugabe has implored us over the years, to even as far back in 1975, as green cadres, to learn from Zanla pioneers such as VP Mwangagwa. Over the years, at a personal level he has during the war and after independence called on my loyalty to serve in a variety of posts and missions.

We are equally American-educated having been lucky to survive the epic Chimurenga (II). It is noteworthy that we opted studies in Business and Informatics.

My tenure as ambassador spearheaded the Look East Policy by His Excellency the president and takes credit for bringing the multi-billion conglomerate China-Tobacco and its game-changing tobacco contract farming.

RC: Will war veterans still try to block Moyo from attending the Zanu PF politburo on Wednesday?

CM: A professor who defies His Excellency should have (the decency) to absent himself from His Excellency's politburo.