



AFRICA/MALAWI - "The political turning point has taken place, now we are waiting for economic reforms," said Fr. Gamba

Lilongwe (Agenzia Fides) - "A moment that was very negative at a political and economical level comes to an end" says to Fides Fr. Piergiorgio Gamba, a Monfortan missionary who has been working in Malawi for 30 years, commenting on the state funeral being held today, on April 23, of President Bingu wa Mutharika who died on April 5. His position was taken by Vice President, Joyce Banda. Thousands of people are attending Bingu wa Mutharika's funeral, after which he will be buried in the imposing mausoleum built on his property, in the south of the Country. The marble building, was baptized "Mpumulo wa Bata" ("Rest in peace").

"Bingu wa Mutharika had built this mausoleum for his wife, a most worthy person who spent all for the poor," said Fr. Gamba. "That building, so massive and expensive, is one example of the politics of the late President." Fr. Gamba, who is in Italy where he received an honorary membership card as a journalist by the Association of Journalists of Lombardy, for his efforts in establishing the Malawian media (including television Luhtha TV), gives a short summary of Bingu wa Mutharika's Presidency. "Everyone gives him merit for the first 5 years of his government considered valid," said the missionary. "His policy of distributing seeds and fertilizers to 3 million farmers solved the food problem in Malawi. At the same time, however, this subsidy policy emptied the State coffers. In the end the people who could benefit from the subsidies were reduced to one million, which is still a very large number. In short, Bingu wa Mutharika had solved the food problem, but not permanently, even though everyone recognize the merit of having eliminated hunger in Malawi."

"The problems - continued Fr. Gamba - started after the first 5 years in power, when Bingu wa Mutharika's party won an absolute majority in Parliament and, in practice, had no opposition with which to confront. Bingu wa Mutharika embarked on such absurd political and economic projects, such as the construction of a new port on the south side of Lake Malawi, which was blocked by the new President."

With regards to the future of the Country, the missionary says: "The climate has changed, the atmosphere is different. The political transition took place peacefully, and this week the new government will be formed. The names of the new Ministers are promising. Hopefully now that the economic transition can proceed, reversing the failed policy of the last 2 years. This week we will see if the Kwana, the local currency will be devalued. Bingu wa Mutharika had imposed an artificial exchange rate of the Kwana. Consequently, the official market is locked, while a black market developed that has virtually been legalized. This situation must change," concludes the missionary. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 23/4/2012)