

C Ngwenya

Post-graduate Fellow,
Department of
Development Studies,
University of Venda.
E-mail: 68ngwenya@
gmail.com

RR Molapo

Associate Professor and
Head of Department,
Department of
Development Studies,
University of Venda.
E-mail: Richard.Molapo@
univen.ac.za

THE POLITICS AND HISTORY OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION (ZANU) IN ZAKA AND ZIMBABWE AFRICAN PEOPLE'S UNION (ZAPU)¹ IN THE BULILIMA DISTRICT

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Abstract

The armed struggle in Zimbabwe is a well-documented phenomenon. In their preoccupation with the general politics and history of the armed struggle, these studies have, however, neglected one of the most important aspects of the armed struggle: the difference in political and historical pursuance and execution of the war in the former rural Rhodesia between ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas, as having different levels of impact on rural peasants on the one hand, and attracting different forms of response from the Rhodesian Security Forces on the other. Due to these differences, this article claims as case studies of the districts of Rhodesia that both the political and historical developments within ZANLA operated areas in the Zaka District were different from those in the Bulilima District where ZIPRA guerrillas waged their armed struggle. It is argued that the way peasants in Zaka felt and experienced the armed conflict in the former Rhodesia was different from the way peasants in ZIPRA operated Bulilima experienced the same phenomenon.² Given that the Rhodesian security forces also responded to the political and historical development of the armed struggle in a particular district, it is suffice to note that the armed struggle in rural Rhodesia was a complicated phenomenon that had profound effects on Bulilima and Zaka peasants. The article concludes that, only through a district

- 1 Zimbabwe's guerrilla war was mainly waged by ZANU and ZAPU's armed wings. These were the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and the Zimbabwe People Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA). These two guerrilla armies infiltrated the former Rhodesia from different points. ZANLA used the eastern border with Mozambique; hence operating mainly in the eastern parts of the country, moving towards the centre, while ZIPRA's incursions were from the northern and western parts of the country, moving towards the central parts as well. It should also be noted that peasants also participated heavily in this guerrilla war in one form or the other.
- 2 There are studies on the impact of the guerrilla war on rural peasants, but not much has been done on the Bulilima and Zaka Districts from a comparative perspective.

focused comparative analysis of the effects of the armed struggle in the former Rhodesia, can such differences in experience and impact on peasants be identified and appreciated.

Keywords: Peasants; youth; guerrillas; Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO); Frontline States (FLS); security forces.

Sleutelwoorde: Kleinboere; jeug; guerrillas; Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO); Frontliniestate; veiligheidsmagte.

1. INTRODUCTION

ZANU and ZAPU were Zimbabwe's two main liberation movements that militarily challenged the former Rhodesian regime. Waging their guerrilla war from Mozambique (ZANLA) and Zambia (ZIPRA), the two guerrilla armies operated in different parts of the country. There were districts, however, where they both operated in; areas such as Gokwe, Silobela, Gwanda, Insiza and Beitbridge, among others (Moyo K 2017). ZANLA and ZIPRA were sponsored by China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) respectively. These were two communist countries with different beliefs on the conduct of guerrilla warfare. The Soviet Union, however, did not entirely subscribe to the guerrilla war due to its strong belief in conventional warfare. On the other hand, the Chinese Communist Party came to power by waging a guerrilla war and hence had vast experience in this kind of warfare.

ZANLA guerrillas pursued the Maoist strategy of peasant mobilization, while ZIPRA took a moderate approach in this respect. To ZIPRA, mass mobilisation was the domain of the party, ZAPU. In other words, ZIPRA did not involve themselves much in matters concerning the party, particularly those that had to do with peasants (Bhebe 1999; Ndebele 2017). Given this dichotomous approach to Zimbabwe's guerrilla war by ZANLA and ZIPRA, it suffices to point out that peasants within ZANLA operated areas did not experience the guerrilla war the way those in ZIPRA operated ones did. It is imperative at this point to acknowledge that not only the guerrillas and security forces shaped the daily lives of peasants in the Bulilima and Zaka Districts. Fighting on the side of the security forces, but from a semi-autonomous perspective, were Bishop Abel Muzorewa's *Madzakutsaku* forces and Ndabaningi Sithole's *Pfumo Revanhu*.³ In combination, these forces carried out counter-insurgency activities in the

3 Muzorewa and Sithole's forces were collectively known as the Auxiliary Forces and they were more or less under the directive of the security forces' Joint Operations Command (JOC). Muzorewa was the leader of the United African Council (a political movement), while Sithole was the leader of another ZANU faction, which was based in the former Rhodesia and later cooperated with the Smith regime for various reasons. Muzorewa, it should be remembered, came into prominence as the Prime Minister of the ill-fated

Bulilima and Zaka Districts. In doing so, they affected the peasants' way of life as they tended to rape and harass peasants at will (Sibanda 2017; Kawiro 2017).

While this was the case, the two liberation movements themselves experienced varied internal political turmoil that nearly derailed their guerrilla war against the Ian Douglas Smith regime (Bhebe 1999; Mlambo 2014). Added to this was the role of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and the Special Branch (SB) in fermenting disharmony, disunity and mistrust among exiled nationalist leaders of both ZANU and ZAPU (Flower 1987:105). The two parties' woes were compounded by the Frontline States (FLS) Presidents who pushed their own agendas on ZAPU and ZANU, thereby exacerbating an already volatile relationship between these two liberation movements. This was evidenced by the FLS Presidents' insistence that ZANU and ZAPU merge their guerrilla armies to form the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA).

While a detailed analysis of the FLS Presidents' roles in helping to liberate Zimbabwe is not the intention of this study, it is imperative at this juncture to outline who these presidents were and what inspired their involvement in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. The FLS was an alliance of the independent countries of Southern Africa which was established in the early 1970s under the auspices of the three Pan-Africanist leaders of Zambia (Kenneth Kaunda), Tanzania (Julius Mwalimo Nyerere) and Botswana (Sir Seretse Khama) (Sunday News s.a.). The alliance was formed to coordinate these three countries' responses to the white ruled states in Southern Africa in formulating a uniform policy towards white settler rule in Rhodesia, South Africa and South West Africa on the one hand, and the liberation movements on the other (Hikwa 2017; SAHistory s.a.). The FLS helped ZANU and ZAPU in a variety of ways. They provided these two liberation movements with invaluable material and logistical, diplomatic and political support in addition to offering their territories as sanctuary to ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas (Nleya 2017; Sunday News s.a.). Towards the end of 1975, Angola and Mozambique joined the FLS after receiving independence from Portugal.

As a block, the FLS began their engagement with ZANU and ZAPU in the early 1970s when they sought to unify these two liberation movements. Their belief was that one unified liberation movement would be better for the liberation of Rhodesia. It is within this context that the three FLS presidents pushed for the unification of ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas to form a single guerrilla army, ZIPA, in 1975 (Moyo T 2017). Tanzania provided the training facilities for this unified guerrilla army at Mgagao and Morogoro. However, this ill-conceived idea was still-born (Bhebe 1999). Despite this set-back, the FLS were very helpful to ZANU and ZAPU in a variety of ways. One of these was that ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas infiltrated the country from the hospitable environments of

Zimbabwe-Rhodesia from 1978 to 1979 with the ending of the guerrilla war after the Lancaster House Conference of 1979.

Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana or Tanzania (Nleya 2017). These countries became safe havens for organising insurgent excursions into Rhodesia (Sunday News s.a.).

Despite all these benefits, ZANU and ZAPU failed to work together. Even worse, each movement had its own internal problems, such as in-fighting, which resulted in splits. The political confusion that prevailed in ZAPU, for example, came to the fore in 1971 when James Chikerema (ZAPU's Vice and Acting President) and Jason Ziyaphapha Moyo clashed over personal differences, among other issues.⁴ This led to ZAPU's second split in 1971. As much as these internal squabbles derailed the movement's plans and efforts to fight against the Smith regime, it also led to the movement's reorganisation and re-strategisation (Ngwenya 2017). This saw ZAPU emerging as a unified and strategically positioned movement, able to wage the guerrilla war against the Smith regime. One of the movement's strategies was the formation of ZIPRA in 1971 to relaunch its armed struggle after the disastrous 1967 and 1968 Wankie and Sipolilo battles (Dube T 2017).

Similarly, ZANU faced its own internal conflicts that led to the death of several ZANLA guerrillas at the hands of the ZANLA Commander, Josiah Magamba Tongora (Sekuru M 2017; Kawiro 2017). To a certain extent, ZANU's internal problems were related to those of ZAPU. These were leadership related issues, based on either founded or unfounded allegations of favouritism, as well as those related to how the struggle should be executed (Chimhanga 2017). The VhaShandi group, for example, was against Tongogara's leadership and his war programme (Mbuya 2017; Sekuru C 2017). The VhaShandi was a group of young and educated ZANLA guerrillas, such as Rugare Gumpo and Nhari, among others. In protest against Tongogara's leadership, the VhaShandi guerrillas at some point withdrew from the war front in Rhodesia, and marched to Mozambique where they forcefully occupied training camps (Sekuru M 2017; Sekuru C 2017). In response, Tongogara raided the occupied camps and arrested all those suspected of being involved. All the captives were charged with treason and secretly murdered on Tongogara's instructions (Mbuya 2017). The consequence for this was that ZANLA's guerrilla war inside Rhodesia was thrown into disarray. It was back to square one for the movement as most guerrillas had withdrawn their services from the war front in protest against what

4 It must be remembered that ZAPU's second split was mainly centred on James Chikerema and Jason Ziyaphapha Moyo who accused each other of perpetuating tribalism/ethnicity and favouritism. The tensions between the two ZAPU leaders in exile eventually took a tribal split, with those of Shona origins breaking away to later form what was known as the FROLIZI, while others joined ZANU. The BaKalanga (JZ Moyo and George Silundika, *inter alia*) and the AmaNdebele (the likes of Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku, among others) remained in the movement (Ndebele 2017; Moyo N 2016; Sekuru M 2017).

they perceived to be the abandonment of the principles for which they joined the struggle (Mbuya 2017; Sekuru C 2017).

The political turmoil that characterised Zimbabwe's two main liberation movements was climaxed by the Rhodesian security forces' raids of both refuge and training camps in Angola, Zambia and Mozambique. The success of these raids calls into question ZANU and ZAPU's vigilance in protecting young children and women who mostly were the victims of these aerial bombardments.

This article is divided into four sections. The first is the detailed introductory section. The purpose of the detailed introduction is to understand some of the problems that influenced ZANU and ZAPU, as well as their armed wings, ZANLA and ZIPRA. Such infightings made it impossible for these two movements to reconcile their differences and to merge into a single movement that spearheaded the liberation struggle. Due to this, it is argued that ZANU and its ZANLA guerrillas in Zaka executed guerrilla war strategies that were, in general, different to those applied by ZIPRA in Bulilima. The reason was that the two liberation movements' guerrillas were the main insurgence forces operating in Zaka and Bulilima respectively (Sekuru M 2017; Sibanda 2017). The next section builds on the introduction, and presents a comprehensive discussion of the politics and history of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. The focus here is on ZANU and ZAPU as the main contenders in the Zaka and Bulilima Districts respectively. The purpose is to provide a historical background of the genesis and development of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle in the context of ZAPU and then ZANU.⁵ This section leads to an understanding of why ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas operated independently from one another. It relies heavily on secondary sources as most of the interviewees expressed their ignorance of the embryotic politics of ZAPU and ZANU. The last section deals with ZANLA and ZIPRA's guerrilla war against the security forces in the Zaka and Bulilima Districts. This is to show how communities in ZANLA operated areas experienced the guerrilla war, compared to the ZIPRA operated areas.

The study was done qualitatively due to its interpretivist inclination. Data was gathered from a number of participants where they live (Ivankova, Creswell and Plano 20017:265). The participants in this study were purposefully chosen due to their involvement in the liberation struggle, either as guerrilla operatives in Bulilima and Zaka, or as youths and peasants residing in these two districts during the liberation struggle. Two techniques to collect data from the participants were used; *vis.* semi-structured face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. To fully understand the participants' experiences, the research questions were designed in an open-ended manner. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the participants to provide a vivid, holistic and detailed narration of their lived experiences during the liberation struggle. This aided in

5 Note the use of the phrase "[...] then ZANU", which indicates that the movement was established while ZAPU already existed.

assessing and determining the extent to which ZANLA and ZIPRA's operations were different from each other, and how it affected youths and peasants in Zaka and Bulilima. Through stories told by the participants, the article managed to give a reconstruction of the liberation struggle as it unfolded in the Bulilima and Zaka Districts, complemented by data from secondary sources.

2. THE POLITICS AND HISTORY OF THE ZIMBABWE ARMED STRUGGLE

The Zimbabwe armed struggle was mainly waged by two liberation movements, ZANU and ZAPU (Moorcraft and McLaughlin 1982:14). These two each had a guerrilla army, ZANLA for ZANU and ZIPRA for ZAPU. General consensus amongst scholars, despite some differences, place the commencement of Zimbabwe's armed struggle at the early 1960s (see Bhebe 1999; Msindo 2012; Mlambo 2014; Kriger 1992; Moorcraft and McLaughlin 1982; Ranger 1968). Zimbabwe's road to independence was marked by conflicts and inconsistencies, particularly from the 1960s onwards. This being the case, Zimbabwean nationalism has its roots in the 1940s, although some trace it further back to the 1896/1897 Matabele and Mashona uprisings (Ranger 1968:210-245) and the fact that the Ndebele and Shona people lost their right to land ownership and, subsequently, became labourers for white settlers (Ranger 1968). The loss of the land became the central pillar of Zimbabwe nationalists' grievances. Although the 1896/97 Ndebele and Shona uprisings could not be seen as nationalistic in the true sense of the word, it, nonetheless, exhibited the unity between these two tribes. This unity manifested itself in the 1940s onwards when the seeds for Zimbabwean nationalism were sown.

Added to this were colonial laws that practically, directly and indirectly, squeezed Africans off what little land they were allocated to by firstly, the British South Africa Company (1898-1923), and by the successive settler governments' (Loney 1975:17-18). Forced to migrate to urban areas, farms and mines in search of wage labour (Loney 1975:56), Africans found themselves in a racially skewed economic set-up in the land of their ancestors. In a bid to fight for equality of work, workers in Southern Rhodesia emulated workers in South Africa who, in 1919, had formed the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) (Historybuff s.a.; Ranger 1968). A united front by the South African workers in major cities and towns was modelled in the form of the South African Traders and Labour Council (SATLC) of the 1930s (Historybuff s.a.; Baumhogger 1984). The above workers' unions heavily influenced the formation of similar workers' unions in Southern Rhodesia.

The Southern Rhodesia version of the Industrial Commercial Union (ICU) was not as coherent and effective as its South African counterpart (Ranger 1968:20; Mlambo 2014:145). Its strength and powers were undermined

by the ethnicity issues that seemed to divide the urban dwellers. The ICU's predicaments were further compounded by the Southern Rhodesian Government, which arrested and imprisoned its leaders on subversion charges (Ranger 1968; Mlambo 2014). The decline and the eventual fall of the ICU led to the formation of the first political organisation in Southern Rhodesia, the African National Congress (SRANC). As the name connotes, the ANC was the South African ANC's copy-cat. The SRANC was led by more educated men (Ranger 1968:145). Most of these were educated in South Africa's tertiary institutions and, hence, were heavily influenced by the South Africans in their political thinking. The Southern Rhodesia version of the ANC was politically toothless and ineffective. It was feeble in effort, structures and content (Baumhogger 1984:20). This led to its demise in 1957.

The ANC's failure led to the emergence of a more vibrant and militant political formation, the SRANC in 1957. Its vibrancy and militancy were a result of the involvement of the youth since the SRANC was a product of the merger of the defunct ANC and the City Youth League (CYL) (Baumhogger 1984). At this stage, the African grievances in Southern Rhodesia were numerous. It ranged from the loss of land and the racially driven Land and Agrarian Laws to exploitative labour laws (Stoneman and Cliffe 1989:12). In addition, the SRANC was formed in opposition to the formation of a federation of the three territories of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The formation cannot be ruled out from the political agitation that was taking place south of the Limpopo River. In other words, the Zimbabwean national struggle was part of a larger African nationalism led by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah (Baumhogger 1984:20). It should be noted, however, that Southern Rhodesia was deemed a settler colony and was very different from Ghana in the way colonial settlers perceived it. As such, leaders of the newly independent African states had no direct influence over how black people in Southern Rhodesia organised themselves politically. They mostly played a moral supportive role, particularly in the formative stages of the Zimbabwean liberation movements. It was within this context that Joshua Nkomo, the SRANC President, attended the first conference of the pan-African parties and liberation movements in Accra in 1958 (Baumhogger 1984). In this way, Zimbabwe's political movement developed links with other political movements in the region and in the rest of Africa.

The SRANC's radicalism soon attracted the attention of the authorities and it was banned in 1959 (Mlambo 2014:145). The banning of the SRANC led to the formation of yet another political party in Southern Rhodesia, the National Democratic Party (NDP), in 1960. The NDP was more radical compared to its predecessor. Its radicalism manifested itself in its confrontational tactics and open demands for majority rule under universal suffrage, or a one-man-one vote system (Mlambo 2014:145). The new party's influence and popularity among blacks were realised through riots, the destruction of property and loss of lives

(Baumhogger 1984:22; Mlambo 2014:145). For all its troubles, the NDP was outlawed in December 1961. The demise of the NDP led to the formation of the ZAPU ten days later (Mlambo 2014:147). Benefitting from the defunct NDP's large organisational space, ZAPU went ballistic. It became the country's mass movement. That is, ZAPU vigorously recruited for membership throughout the country. It spread its wings deep into the rural areas of, *inter alia*, the Bulilima District in Matabeleland and Sipolilo (now Guruve) in Mashonaland. In addition, ZAPU sent, for the first time in the history of Zimbabwe's liberation movements, young men to train as guerrillas in the Soviet Union (Ndebele 2017; Moyo K 2017). In a bid to force the settler government to negotiate with black nationalists, ZAPU members became involved in various violent mass demonstrations, in the process destroying government installations (Mlambo 2014). At this stage, ZAPU became militant. Its members were slowly engaging in terroristic activities, thereby bringing terror to both white and black civilians.

In all this, ZAPU's major aim was to force the white government to consider the black people's grievances. Instead of obtaining government cooperation, ZAPU was banned in 1963. To compound the nationalist movement's woes, the party split in the same year (Stoneman and Cliffe 1989:19). The splinter group immediately formed ZANU. Thus, the foundation for the Zimbabwe nationalist movement's chronic internal problems was laid in the said break up. The formation of ZANU indicated the lack of political unity among the nationalist movement's leadership (Stoneman and Cliffe 1989). In fact, the split took tribal lines and its effect was felt by ordinary township dwellers who bore the brunt of the two movements' animosity (Chung 2006:3). Youths from both sides fought endlessly in townships, burning houses, public transport, harassing people at will, and even banning workers from going to work. This played into the hands of the authorities who quickly rounded up most of the nationalist leaders who they confined in separate isolated places, such as Gonakudzingwa (ZAPU), while ZANU leaders were thrown in several prisons and detention centres, such as Sikombela and Wha Wha in the Midlands (Chung 2006:62-63). The arrests, and subsequent detention of the nationalist leaders, followed the banning of both ZAPU and the newly formed splinter movement, ZANU.

While the Zimbabwean nationalists displayed elements of disunity, thuggery and the propensity to attack each other at any given opportunity, the majority of the white settlers rallied behind the Rhodesian Front Party under Ian Smith. The unity and solidarity was displayed by the Rhodesian white community's failure to condemn Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 (Bond and Manyanya 2002:6). The UDI was a mixed bag of fortunes for the white settler community. Positively, it consolidated their political, economic and social strangle-hold in Southern Rhodesia and, negatively, it brought the guerrilla war to their farm compounds (Lan 1985:121).

Conversely, the UDI was a slap in the face of the black nationalists and their followers who had hoped that their pressure politics would bend the settlers into

giving them a one-man-one-vote political system that would lead to majority rule. Faced with an intransigent settler government, the banned ZAPU and ZANU had no options but to resort to an armed struggle (Wilmer 1973:2). Engaging the settler regime in this way was an indication that all else had failed to enfranchise Africans and to abandon repressive segregation and oppressive and racial laws that undermined black people in the country. It should be noted that the Smith regime directly contributed to the liberation moments embarking on a guerrilla war to end minority rule in Rhodesia.⁶ Nationalist leaders from both ZAPU and ZANU who evaded arrest, relocated to Zambia from where they organised and executed their guerrilla struggle (Ellert 1989:3). The Zambian President, Kaunda, offered the Zimbabwean nationalists facilities to open up bushy camps.⁷ The involvement of Zambia and other neighbouring independent states in the Zimbabwean conflict showed their solidarity with the country's liberation movements. The following sub-section discusses ZANU and ZAPU in exile.

3. ZANU AND ZAPU IN EXILE

Zimbabwe's liberation struggle developed links with neighbouring countries in the early 1960s when it became obvious that the settler government was not willing to grant black people their voting rights. Due to some of these nationalist leaders' connections with Presidents Kaunda and Nyerere, ZANU and ZAPU were able to establish themselves in Zambia and Tanzania. In the early 1970s, ZANU slowly established links with FRELIMO, whose bases were to the western parts of Mozambique, near its border with Rhodesia (Chung 2006). When Mozambique became independent in 1975, ZANU relocated from Zambia and established bases in Mozambique. It must be noted here that President Samora Machel had first offered ZAPU this opportunity and privilege, but the movement had declined to take up the offer.⁸ President Machel's offer to ZAPU first underlines the fact that ZANU was not then really recognised by the FLS, which strongly believed in the unity of these two movements. The FLS presidents were of the view that one united liberation movement was necessary to confront the

6 This was through indiscriminate arrests and detention of ZAPU and ZANU leadership. It led to several others escaping to Zambia where they organised party structures in exile. The resuscitation of these parties in Zambia meant that they were in a position to plan, initiate and execute the guerrilla war without much interference from the Smith regime.

7 "Bushy camps" is the term adopted by this article to mean refugee camps. This term was adopted in view of the fact that such camps were located deep in the forests of Zambia and, later, in Mozambique.

8 There are no tangible reasons given as to why ZAPU refused to operate from Mozambique, but speculation at that time was that ZAPU felt comfortable in Zambia; hence there were no reasons why it should also use Mozambique as one of its operational bases.

Rhodesian Government effectively, as opposed to two or more fragmented ones (Bhebe 1999).

Nonetheless, ZAPU's refusal to honour President Machel's offer was warmly taken by ZANU (Chung 2006). It is largely within this context that ZANU began to infiltrate its guerrillas from the eastern border of the country with Mozambique into Rhodesia towards the central areas, such as Zaka, among others. On the other hand, ZAPU infiltrated its ZIPRA guerrillas from two fronts, the northern and western parts of Rhodesia, or the Bulilima District. In fact, ZAPU and ZANU would not have managed an effective guerrilla war had it not been for the assistance of countries such as Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Mozambique and Angola (Maxey 1975:5). These countries played very prominent, but different roles in the liberation of Zimbabwe. Zambia, for example, was the first country to offer ZAPU and ZANU's exiled leaders sanctuary on its territory. Tanzania, on the other hand, offered training facilities for the leading liberation movements in Southern Africa, including ZAPU and ZANU.⁹ Botswana opened up transit camps for both ZAPU and ZANU refugees *en route* to Zambia and Mozambique. Mozambique and Angola, immediately after attaining independence from Portugal in 1975, housed both the bushy camps and training facilities of ZANU and its ZANLA guerrillas in Mozambique and ZIPRA training facilities in Angola (Bhebe 1999). In addition to opening up their facilities for ZANU and ZAPU, the FLS embarked on diplomatic endeavours to help solve the Zimbabwean conflict without much loss of life.

Key figures here were Presidents Kaunda (Zambia), Nyerere (Tanzania) and Machel (Mozambique). Their diplomatic efforts were complimented by the South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, and the United States Foreign Secretary, Henry Kissinger (Chung 2006:105). In all this, President Kamuzu Banda's Malawi distanced itself.¹⁰ Malawi's lack of involvement is disturbing in that, from 1953 to 1963, it was part of the tri-nation-federation that saw black people from these territories uniting to force the end of the said federation. Nonetheless, Malawi's attitude towards Zimbabwe's liberation movements was embarrassing to African nationalism, to say the least. It did not reflect the common understanding and purpose towards ending white dominance and supremacy in this region.

While Malawi played a neutral role, the FLS rallied behind the region's liberation movements. Some of their notable initiatives involved the formation of the ill-fated Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA).¹¹ The idea was to combine ZANLA

9 These included FRELIMO, MPLA, MK, SWAPO, ZANLA and ZIPRA. See Chung (2006) for more details.

10 There are very few studies on Malawi's non-committal to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. Based on its economic association with apartheid South Africa, Malawi's non-involvement could be explained by its dependence on white South Africa.

11 ZIPA was a brilliant idea of the three presidents of Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia, who advised and ensured that ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas combine to form one

and ZIPRA guerrillas so that they confront the Rhodesian security forces as a united guerrilla army. Another FLS initiative, in particular of President Kaunda in collaboration with Vorster, was the *détente* of 1974/1975 (Godwin and Hancock 1993:117). The *détente* initiative was beneficial to the two liberation movements if one considers that it led to the release of all political detainees who had been languishing in detention for more than ten years in 1974 (Godwin and Hancock 1993). As much as this noble exercise had the support of Britain, the United States, South Africa and the FLS, including Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania and Mozambique, *détente* embarrassingly failed. The release of detained liberation movements' leadership meant that the two movements emerged from the failed fiasco much stronger in terms of leadership and direction.

The regional body of independent Southern African countries was backed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU) in its endeavours to see the liberation of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. The OAU formed a Liberation Committee that dealt with the funding and the general assistance of liberation movements in Africa (Bhebe 1999:106). The formation of the OAU's Liberation Committee was the organisation's signature to its undertaking to help liberate the rest of Africa. The Committee urged ZAPU and ZANU to practically engage with the Smith regime militarily by calling for tangible evidence to this effect (Bhebe 1999:106). Urged by the OAU on one hand, and pressured by the FLS on the other, ZAPU and ZANU intensified their guerrilla war against the Smith regime.

Individually, ZAPU and ZANU formed alliances with liberation armies; ZAPU guerrillas with liberation armies, such as *Umkhonto we Sizwe's* (MK) guerrillas and ZANLA with FRELIMO guerrillas. The ZAPU/MK guerrilla alliance of 1967 and 1968 led to the famous Battles of Wankie and Sipolilo respectively (Gann and Henriksen 1981:49; Thomas 1996:14). The ZAPU/MK guerrilla alliance was formed mainly to liberate Zimbabwe so that the ANC could open bases along the Zimbabwe-South Africa border for the expeditious incursions into South Africa (Thomas 1996:14; Cherry 2011:41-42; Bopela and Luthuli 2005:52-53). To the ANC, the alliance enhanced cooperation between the liberation movements in Africa as it had already established cooperation with the MPLA of Angola and FRELIMO of Mozambique, in addition to the PAIGC in Guinea and the CLSTP in São Tomé (Thomas 1996:14). Given the unity among the liberation movements from different countries, the struggle to liberate the region and Africa as a whole was intensified.

ZANU and its guerrillas formed alliances with FRELIMO guerrillas and South Africa's Pan African Congress (PAC) and its Poqo guerrillas (Chung 2006; Martin and Johnson 1981:10). FRELIMO and ZANLA guerrillas actually

standing guerrilla army that would face the Rhodesian security forces. The initiative, however, failed because of long standing differences between ZAPU and ZANU. See Chung (2006); Preston (2004:65-83).

fought side by side during Mozambique's guerrilla war. In fact, both FRELIMO and ZANLA guerrillas crossed into Rhodesia, engaged the Rhodesian security forces, and then slipped back into Mozambique and engaged the Portuguese army there (Caute 1983:46). To a lesser extent, the FRELIMO/ZANLA alliance contributed to the liberation of Mozambique. Mozambique's independence meant that ZANU was officially allowed to open up training facilities and bushy camps for its multitudes of refugees from the eastern parts of Rhodesia. In addition, Mozambique's independence meant the opening up of a new front where ZANLA guerrillas infiltrated in great numbers into the country to politicise the masses against the Smith regime (Astrow 1983:46). This placed a lot of pressure on the regime as its resources became stretched.

While liberation movements in Zimbabwe created and established relationships with those from neighbouring countries, they dismally failed to do so with their sister parties at home. ZAPU and ZANU failed to unite or to cooperate in their fight against their common enemy, despite concerted efforts from the FLS and the OAU (Msindo 2012:54). The lack of unity and cooperation affected ZIPRA and ZANLA's operations in rural Rhodesia as they often clashed wherever and whenever they came across each other (Trethewan 2008:143). In fact, this was a trend in Southern Africa where liberation movements from the same country did not see eye to eye. This was evident between ZAPU and ZANU (Zimbabwe), the ANC and the PAC (South Africa) and the MPLA and UNITA (Angola).¹² While ZAPU and ZANU failed to unite and cooperate, their good relationships with other liberation movements from South Africa, Zambia, Angola, Tanzania, Mozambique and Namibia directly led to the cooperation of white regimes in Southern Africa.

The white regimes' cooperation in this region was the result of their misplaced belief that they were preventing the spread of communism. Within this context, there was strong military cooperation among Rhodesia, South Africa and the Portuguese territories of Mozambique and Angola (Maxey 1975:41). There were, for example, over 2 500 South African para-military police in Rhodesia whose camps were dotted along the Zambezi River (Moorcraft and McLaughlin 1982:20). This was the most advanced form of cooperation (Maxey 1975:42). The presence of the South African Police (SAP) contingent in Rhodesia should be seen in the light of the ZAPU/MK guerrilla cooperation.

In addition, the FLS assistance to ZAPU and ZANU provided an excuse for the Rhodesian security forces to carry out cross-border raids in Mozambique, Zambia and Angola. These cross-border raids devastated the economic infrastructure of the countries, particularly of Mozambique (Gann and Henriksen 1981:80). Thus, the Zimbabwe liberation struggle sucked in its neighbours as ZIPRA and ZANLA had training facilities there. They also infiltrated Rhodesia from Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia. Given that ZIPRA infiltrated the

12 See Mazrui and Tidy (1984) for a detailed discussion on these trajectories.

country from Botswana and Zambia, its areas of operation were different from those of the ZNLA which invaded the country from Mozambique. The next section looks at ZIPRA and ZANLA's guerrilla war in rural Bulilima and Zaka.

4. ZIPRA AND ZANLA'S CONDUCT OF THE GUERRILLA WAR IN BULILIMA AND ZAKA

ZIPRA guerrillas mainly operated in the south-western, western and northern parts of the country and in the Midlands. ZANLA guerrillas' operational areas were largely confined to the eastern, south-eastern and north-eastern parts of Rhodesia and the Midlands. The operational strategies of these two guerrilla armies were influenced by their ideological inclinations (Kriger 1992). The ZIPRA guerrillas, for example, were lavishly equipped, pampered and trained by the Soviets, and hence followed the Red Army's/Leninist principles of a guerrilla war (Gann and Henriksen 1981:104). Lenin's perspective on the guerrilla war was that guerrillas should concentrate on fighting the enemy forces as partisans. Any other issues outside the engagement of the enemy forces, was to be left to the party (Gann and Henriksen 1981). Thus, ZIPRA's *modus operandi* was totally different from that of the ZANLA guerrillas. Evans (1981:6) acknowledged that ZIPRA operations against the Rhodesian security forces differed from those of ZANLA both in size and nature. This affected peasants in ZIPRA's operational areas differently in comparison with those within ZANLA's areas of operation.

ZANLA guerrillas were sponsored and trained by Chinese instructors in collaboration with the Mozambican ones (Gann and Henriksen 1981:103). They heavily followed and adhered to the Maoist tenets of a guerrilla war. Following Chairman Mao's philosophy, ZANLA guerrillas flooded rural Mashonaland in large numbers where they created bases within rural communities (Kriger 1992). ZANLA guerrillas were thus always in touch with the masses and their mode of politicising the masses was through *pungwes*, the overnight vigils where peasants sang liberation war songs, denouncing the Smith regime (Shumba 2017). *Pungwes* were an every night phenomenon and every villager, the youth and anyone who happened to visit that particular community were to attend. Zhuwawo (2016) of Zaka said of *pungwes*, "They took a lot of our night time. The following day we could hardly do anything as we would be tired. *Pungwes* were just bad for everyone except the 'boys' (guerrillas)".

Given that youth and villagers spent sleepless nights under political indoctrination, it goes without saying that they found it hard to cope with their daily chores. The irony is that the same guerrillas who subjected peasants to *pungwes* needed food and other services from the same peasants daily. "We usually finished singing around 5–6 in the morning. Thereafter, we were expected to cook, wash and do other guerrilla errands such as patrolling

communities and moving war materials like landmines from one community to another”, elaborated Mazari (2016). This means that youth and villagers had no time to rest as they were required to care for ZANLA guerrillas after *pungwes*.

Meanwhile, in ZIPRA operated areas, there were no *pungwes*. Youth and villagers in the Bulilima District, for example, had less contact with guerrillas (Dube 2016). ZIPRA guerrillas kept to themselves, away from the villagers (Nleya 2017). By refraining from mixing with the villagers, ZIPRA gave them space to embark on their daily chores and nightly endeavours uninterrupted. “We organised ourselves as a party, independent of ZIPRA guerrillas. To be honest with you, we usually saw ZIPRA guerrillas from a distant. They never liked mixing with us for whatever reasons”, explained Gogo MaTshuma (2016). This way, the Bulilima villagers had less or limited contact with ZIPRA guerrillas. The Focus Group Discussion (2016a) also agreed that, as community members and youth during the liberation struggle, they experienced little or no interference from ZIPRA guerrillas. Guerrilla security forces contact with villagers were minimal. This led to less or limited violence by the security forces on villagers.

While this was the case in the Bulilima District and other ZIPRA operated areas, villagers in ZANLA operated districts suffocated under guerrilla politics. This meant that ZANLA guerrillas did not give the peasants breathing space to deal with their daily or nightly social issues (Focus Group Discussion 2016b). “We had no life outside ZANLA defined programmes. The ‘boys’ made it a point that we understood and appreciated that the Smith government was bad and cruel to black people. We were told that only ZANU would liberate us from the chains and yokes of the evil settler rule. In addition, we were monitored day and night by the ‘boys’ and their youth”, lamented Sekuru Gavi (2017). Given this form of treatment, there is no doubt that Bulilima villagers experienced Zimbabwe’s guerrilla war quite differently from the way Zaka villagers did. This was also evident in the different ways the Rhodesian security forces treated peasants in ZANLA operated areas and those in ZIPRA operated ones. For example, in most ZANLA operated areas, the Smith regime established Protected Villages (PVs). This was a concept copied from Britain’s counter-insurgency operations in Malaya against the Chinese Communist guerrillas (Flower 1987). In ZANLA operated areas, tens of thousands of villagers were uprooted from their communities to roughly arranged mass camps surrounded with barbed wire (Evans 1981). The PV project left many villagers poor as they lost their livestock, property and life-long savings. The Chiweshe community, for example, was uprooted and dumped in a place near Beit Bridge, more than a thousand kilometres from Chiweshe. In addition, being relocated to PVs meant that villagers lived under mass confinement. They were guarded twenty-four hours a day.

Narrating their ordeal under the PV system, Chogugudza (2017) said, "To be honest, PVs were a terrible experience to all those who were subjected to them. We had no freedom of movement, association and speech in PVs. We were required to report to the Guard Force personnel whenever we wanted to go outside the PV. We were counted like animals on a daily basis. The Guard Force sexually abused us females. They would just call you to their rooms or offices anytime of the day, whether married or unmarried, for their sexual entertainment. The whole issue was so terrifying, I tell you." This way, villagers who were subjected to PVs suffered in every aspect of life. They were humiliated, turned into sex toys for the enjoyment of those meant to protect them.

The PV system was launched in order to separate villagers from ZANLA guerrillas (Godwin and Hancock 1993:103). In other words, the authorities were "rescuing villagers" from ZANLA guerrillas' subversive influences and they deprived "terrorists" of sanctuaries close to urban areas (Godwin and Hancock 1993:104). This is an indication that ZANLA guerrillas were ideologically and practically attached to the masses. This created an uneasy situation for the authorities, hence the PVs. Such collective punishments were rare in ZIPRA operated areas. In response to a question on PVs, Ndlovu (2016) expressed his ignorance of the concept. "I never heard of the PVs during the guerrilla war. What were PVs? We did not experience such in this district (Bulilima). The Rhodesian soldiers did not collect or move whole communities to anywhere else here", declared Dumisani dismissively. Given that there were no PVs in ZIPRA operated areas in Bulilima, suffice to point out that the security forces treated villagers there differently from the way they did those in the Zaka District. N Moyo (2016) agreed thus, "The Smith soldiers moved around in their trucks. They did not bother us much as long as we answered their questions on the whereabouts of ZIPRA guerrillas. Similarly, ZIPRA guerrillas did not give us problems in terms of meetings and mixing with us. They kept away from us, preferring instead to stay in secluded areas such as kopjes and thickets."

ZIPRA guerrillas' ideological orientation was to leave peasants alone so that they can operate in peace. This was acknowledged by Mlalazi (2016) who pointed out that they rarely had meetings with ZIPRA guerrillas. Issues regarding ZIPRA guerrillas were handled by the party (ZAPU) structures. In this way, Bulilima villagers kept out of trouble as far as the security forces were concerned.

In contrast, those in Zaka, for example, had endless meetings with ZANLA guerrillas whose agendas covered a wide range of issues (Taruvinga 2016). The Focus Group Discussants also noted that this tendency often led to serious trouble as villagers were always caught in cross-fire when security forces arrived unexpectedly. Given the facts at hand, it was thus difficult living in Zaka's ZANLA operated areas, as opposed to Bulilima's ZIPRA operated ones. This was due to the two liberation armies' differences in the ideological

execution of Zimbabwe's guerrilla war. The Focus Group Discussion (2016a) in Bulilima pointed out that, as much as the guerrilla war devastated everyone in the countryside, ZIPRA guerrillas' conduct did not affect them in the context of security forces' retribution. They were of the opinion that ZIPRA guerrillas disliked mixing with the ordinary people and, therefore, there were less patrols by the security forces in their communities.

This clearly shows that the rural masses in ZIPRA operated Bulilima experienced, as well as participated in Zimbabwe's guerrilla war differently from those in ZANLA operated Zaka. Garfield Todd also acknowledged that ZIPRA guerrillas were much more dependent on themselves and did not infiltrate people as much as ZANLA did (Frederikse 1982:321). This view was also supported by Roselin Chazuza in an interview with Frederikse (1982:231) when she pointed out that ZIPRA guerrillas did their own errands, as opposed to ZANLA guerrillas who involved people in every aspect of their existence in the communities. ZANLA guerrillas' involvement of villagers in this way attracted the security forces' unwanted attention. Thus, villagers were collectively punished needlessly in ZANLA operated Zaka, as opposed to ZIPRA's Bulilima.

In addition, ZANLA guerrillas involved female youth in smuggling heavy ammunition, such as landmines, in forcing them to carry it in the form of pregnancy outfits (Rutendo 2017; Frederikse 1982:70). In this way, ZANLA guerrillas exposed female youth to death if caught by security forces. Such use of female youth was unheard of in Bulilima (Dube N 2016). Youth in the Bulilima District, for example, were assigned duties in terms of gender (Focus Group Discussions 2016a). Female youth cooked, washed and fetched water for ZIPRA guerrillas, while male ones smuggled guerrilla ammunitions from Botswana (Ndlovu 2016; Dube N 2016; Focus Group Discussions 2016a). Therefore, female youth were spared the danger of being caught with arms and ammunition by the security forces.

The fact is that there were vast differences in the way ZIPRA guerrillas on the one hand, and ZANLA guerrillas on the other, conducted their guerrilla war in the Bulilima and Zaka Districts. Given the evidence as provided by interviewees and from secondary sources, it can be concluded that villagers in the ZANLA Zaka experienced Zimbabwe's liberation war differently from those in ZIPRA operated Bulilima.

5. CONCLUSION

The country's liberation war was intensified by the FLS who supported it materially, financially and morally. The idea behind the support was to eradicate white supremacy and hegemony in the region. Thus, facilitating the ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrilla training, the FLS allowed the armed struggle in Rhodesia to intensify, particularly in the rural areas.

Zimbabwe's liberation struggle was a phenomenon which, for the most part, started in urban areas, but was entirely fought in the rural areas. The urban areas were the Smith regime's fortresses and, therefore, problematic for both ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas to infiltrate in large numbers which was necessary in order to make a significant impact. While there were some attempts by both ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas to take the war into towns and cities, these attempts failed. Fighting in rural Rhodesia was at times intense and consistent. This affected the peasants who bore the brunt of both the guerrilla activities, and those of the security forces. In Zaka, for example, peasants spent most of their night time in *pungwes*, singing revolutionary songs, while denouncing the Smith regime. During the day, they would be harassed by the security forces hunting for the "boys", as both sets of guerrillas were affectionately called by the youth. In Bulilima, however, peasants spent their evenings worrying about the arrival of the security forces more than by singing. ZIPRA guerrillas, in their war strategies against the Smith regime, did not hold all night vigils as was the case in Zaka. They utilised their evenings in individual privacy with female youth who doubled up as their lovers. This meant that female youth in Bulilima were more vulnerable to security forces' attacks if sellouts pinpointed the huts where some of these guerrillas were sleeping with their girlfriends. As much as there were marked differences between ZANLA and ZIPRA's operations in the Bulilima and Zaka Districts, generally, the war affected peasants from both districts similarly. That is, peasants provided support to the guerrillas, using their own resources and were in turn brutalised by the security forces.

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