

**SADC**

**Hashim Mbita Project**

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**Southern African  
Liberation Struggles**

**Contemporaneous Documents**

**1960–1994**

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**edited by**

**Arnold J. Temu and Joel das N. Tembe**

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**Liberation War Countries  
(continued) & Frontline States**



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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
	Map of SADC Member States	
	Foreword	
	Contributors Introduction	
	<b>1.1</b> Interfacing with Personal Assistants to Former Presidents of Frontline States	
<b>2</b>	<b>LIBERATION WAR COUNTRIES</b>	
	<b>Angola</b>	
	<b>2.1</b> “Angola and the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa, 1949-1992” by Artur da Silva Júlio, Eduardo Ruas de Jesus Manuel, and Rosa da Cruz e Silva	
	<b>2.2</b> Angola – Personal Stories	
	<b>Mozambique</b>	
	<b>2.3</b> “Mozambique and the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa, 1960–1994” by Joel das Neves Tembe and Alda Romão Saúte Saíde	
	<b>2.4</b> Mozambique – Personal Stories	
<b>3</b>	<b>Namibia</b>	
	<b>3.1</b> “Namibia and the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa” by Bernard Ben Mulongeni and Victor L. Tonchi	
	<b>3.2</b> “The Namibian Liberation Struggle” by Jeremy Silvester, Martha Akawa and Napandulwe Shiweda	
	<b>3.3</b> Namibia – Personal Stories	
	<b>South Africa</b>	
	<b>3.4</b> “The South African Liberation Struggle” by Sifiso Ndlovu, Gregory Houston, and Bernard Magubane	
<b>4</b>	<b>4.1</b> South Africa – Personal Stories	
<b>5</b>	<b>Zimbabwe</b>	
	<b>5.1</b> “Zimbabwe’s War of Liberation” by Ngwabi Bhebe and Gerald Mazarire	1
	<b>5.2</b> Zimbabwe – Personal Stories	139
	<b>FRONTLINE STATES</b>	
	<b>Botswana</b>	
	<b>5.3</b> “Botswana’s Role in the Liberation of Southern Africa” by Thomas Tlou and Part Mgadla	267
	<b>5.4</b> Botswana – Personal Stories	359

**6 Tanzania**

- 6.1** “Tanzania and the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa, 1961 to 1994” by Arnold J. Temu, Neville Z. Reuben, and Sarah N. Seme
- 6.2** Tanzania – Personal Stories

**7 Zambia**

- 7.1** “Zambia’s Contribution to the Liberation of Southern Africa, 1960 to 2001” by Mutumba Mainga Bull and Lee Habasonda
- 7.2** Zambia – Personal Stories

**EXTENSION COUNTRIES****Lesotho**

- 7.3** “Fighting from ‘the Belly of the Beast’ Lesotho’s Contribution to the Liberation of South Africa” by Tefetso Henry Mothibe and Munyaradzi Mushonga
- 7.4** Lesotho – Personal Stories

**Malawi**

- 7.5** “Malawi and the Liberation Struggles in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, 1964-1980” by Kings M. Phiri
- 7.6** Malawi – Personal Stories

**Swaziland**

- 7.7** “Swaziland and the Liberation of Mozambique and South Africa, 1960-1994” by Bonginkosi Azariah Bhutana Sikhondze
- 7.8** Swaziland – Personal Stories

**8 COUNTRIES AND REGIONS OUTSIDE SADC**

- 8.1** “The Contributions of Anglophone West Africa to the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa: 1960-1994” by Muhammadu Mustapha Gwadabe
- 8.2** “Francophone Black Africa in the History of Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa” by Abraham Constant Ndinga Mbo
- 8.3** “The Contribution of North Africa in the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa” by Mahmoud Abul-Enein
- 8.4** “Against the Grain: Support Work for Southern African Liberation in Canada and the United States” by John S. Saul
- 8.5** “East Asian Support to the Southern African Liberation Struggle, 1960s to 1994” by Alicia Altorfer-Ong
- 8.6** “Cuba and the Caribbean’s collaboration with Africa and SADC” by Hedelberto López Blanch
- 8.7** “The German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa” by Hans-Georg Schleicher
- 8.8** “Nordic Support to the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa – Between Global Solidarity and National Self-Interest” by Hakan Thorn
- 8.9** “The Soviet Union and the Liberation of Southern Africa” by Vladimir Shubin
- 8.10** “Western Europe, Southern Africa, and Transnational Solidarity Networks, 1960-1994” by William Minter and Richard Hengeveld

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

- 9.1** The Contribution of the Commonwealth Towards the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa
- 9.2** “India, Yugoslavia, Indonesia & Sri Lanka under NAM: Contribution to the Southern Africa Liberation Struggle” by Suresh Kumar
- 9.3** “The Role of the Organization of African Unity in the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa” by Mohammed Omar Maundi
- 9.4** “UN Contributions to the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa” by E. Kisanga and Ulli Mwambulukutu



# Zimbabwe

**Independent on 11 November 1975**

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# 5.1

## **Zimbabwe's War of Liberation** **by Ngwabi Bhebe and Gerald Mazarire**

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Introduction .....	5
1960-1965 .....	11
1965-1970 .....	30
The Intensification of the Struggle after the UDI .....	35
1970-1975 .....	42
Developments in Rhodesia, 1971-1972.....	48
The Resumption of the War, 1972.....	52
Problems in ZANU, 1974-1975 .....	66
1975-1980 .....	75
The Situation in ZANU after Geneva .....	100
Abbreviations .....	137



# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

## Absences and the Dominant Narratives of the War:

The history of the Zimbabwean liberation is ambiguous. Any attempt to document it must contend with the fact that, although it is an academically over-researched subject, very few of the participants have made a conscious attempt to record their experiences collectively for posterity. This study undertakes such a task, which is now even more complicated by the fact that the history of liberation in Zimbabwe, as anywhere else in the region, is inexorably linked to contemporary debates about state making.<sup>2</sup> Unlike, for instance, the official Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) history of the struggle in Angola, no liberation movement in Zimbabwe has submitted to a definitive history of its role in this crucial episode. Studies so far carried out on the history of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, in fact, pale into insignificance when compared with the avalanche of individual and institutional works by former Rhodesian counter insurgents, who continue to churn out volumes about their side of the war. To date, the narratives of liberation movements and African participants in the war have been produced spontaneously, not according to a systematic system of collection, and have largely been captured by scholars, journalists, novelists, and other writers in this form. Biographical accounts remain by far the most dominant medium through which public liberation memories have been rendered. It has been argued that biographies, especially those produced by and/or about nationalist leaders in Zimbabwe, are by and large narratives of 'self and nation', going beyond simply being mere records to become statements legitimating the post-colonial state.<sup>3</sup> Certainly biographies, in the absence of collective histories and with the increasing loss, due to death and other causes, of the generation of participants of the war, easily become the arenas over which national and collective memories of the war are contested.<sup>4</sup>

In the past five years alone, these assertions can easily be confirmed. Three biographies on key figures in Zimbabwe's liberation war have appeared and in all instances attracted widespread national response. The first, a biography of Simon Muzenda, Zimbabwe's first Deputy Prime Minister and Vice President, was published just after his passing<sup>5</sup> and won the annual book fair prize of 2004. It became the basis of a memorial and of a museum exhibition of his life and times. In academic circles, it set tongues wagging and was taken by some as a narrow canonisation of ZANU-PF's hegemonic claim to the liberation history of the country. A culmination of a series of interviews

(1) The Research Team leaders were Ngwabi Bhebe and Gerald Mazarire.

(2) Mandaza, I. "Opening Remarks." Workshop on Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa: New Perspectives. Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, September 2008.

(3) Alexander, J. "Political Prisoners' Memoirs in Zimbabwe: Narratives of Self and Nation." *Cultural and Social History* 5.4 (2008): See p.395.

(4) Raftopolous, B. "Comments." Workshop on Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa: New Perspectives. Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, September 2008.

(5) Bhebe, Ngwabi. *Simon Vengayi Muzenda and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 2004.

with Simon Muzenda and other leading contemporaries in the struggle, the book has attracted attention for its ‘ethnic factor’ approach, which inevitably alienated a number of interest groups not necessarily subscribing to Muzenda’s take on the struggle. Two years later, an autobiography by Fay Chung emerged that was as defiant as the hostile introduction by the publisher.<sup>6</sup> Much noted for its description of life in the Mozambican camps and the welfare of women therein, this is one individual recollection which makes very bold judgements on events and personalities in the struggle using the author’s own ‘poetic justice’. It is Chung’s fairly authoritative and often photographic narrative that has excited commentary across the spectrum of her colleagues in the war. An occasion launching the book that was attended by H.E. Hashim Mbita is, in itself, illustrative. Wilfred Mhanda (Dzinashe Machingura) asked to be the discussant and criticized Chung’s judgmental tendencies, saying that they “took advantage of the dead and that the dead were not there to defend themselves” (referring to the impression given of the late Josiah Tongogara). Short of suggesting that the book was a collection of half-truths, assumptions, and personal prejudices, Mhanda chastised Chung for not seeking clarifications and corrections before going to print. It was on this occasion that Margaret Dongo, herself a former liberation fighter and MP, stood up to say that it was time Mhanda wrote his own story!

Lastly, in January 2007, Edgar Tekere published his ‘autobiography’.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to state whether it is indeed self-written, given the style of its production and presentation. It is stated that Tekere narrated his life and times to Ibbo Mandaza, who “edited” it, removing “unnecessarily provocative statements”. Mandaza also provides a scathing introduction, couched in his political inheritance theory, and spends some time on Muzenda’s biography (cited above), condemning its author, Ngwabi Bhebe, as an organic historian partaking in the creation of a party-centred, myth-making presentation of the liberation war. First, it should be stated that in its conceptual makeup, this book is presented in its entirety not as Tekere’s “lifetime of struggle”, but rather as those aspects of his life that are either an antithesis of or in competition with Robert Mugabe. This pre-occupation drowns Tekere’s life in his own book; where his life does surface, it is sanitised, censored, or justified with one excuse or another. Thus, even his own political party after independence, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), is summarised in three odd pages. Besides all this, it is one account that has had a tremendous impact, not least for what it says or does not, but for the public reaction to it.

A few ‘national’ outcomes resulted from the publication of the Tekere book. Within a week of its launch, the press was awash with commentaries across the spectrum of editorials, features, letters to editors, and opinion pieces, as was Zimbabwe’s burgeoning cyberspace of diaspora and local websites. Three weeks later, the ZANU

(6) Chung, Fay. *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories of Zimbabwe’s Liberation Struggle*. Harare: Nordic African Institute, Uppsala/Weaver, 2006. The introduction by Preben Kaarsholm equally presses a strong critique of ZANU PF in the post independence period.

(7) Tekere, Edgar. *Edgar Tekere: A Lifetime of Struggle*. Harare: SAPES Book, 2007.

PF youth tabled a motion, supported by the Women's League, to expel Tekere from the party and discipline those party members, including Ephraim Masawi, the Governor of Harare Province, who attended the launch and "failed to defend the President". As it turned out, of all these commentators, only Prof. Jonathan Moyo, whose review was published on [www.newzimbabwe.com](http://www.newzimbabwe.com), had actually read the book. For the first time, in a televised interview on the eve of his birthday, President Mugabe pointed emphatically to a personality conflict in Tekere's character. As Mugabe put it: "he wanted to be a military leader at the same time that he was a political leader...", in apparent reference to the underlying tension that runs through Tekere's narrative<sup>8</sup>.

These recent biographies demonstrate the Zimbabwean 'psyche' on the subject of the liberation war. It is a 'psyche' that is not only ripe to reflect on the war, but also hungry, and will consume any statement 'reading different' from the larger narratives it has been familiar with in the past twenty-eight years. It also raises a number of salient points on the authority to 'speak the war', let alone write it, since it turns out to be a widely contested area in modern Zimbabwe. There is a noticeable increase in the number of people intending to 'sit and write' their role in the struggle. Enos Nkala, a founding member of ZAPU and ZANU in the 1960s 'threatened' to write his own narrative and publish it "only after his death" exposing some "sell outs". John Nkomo, another founding member of ZAPU, will be writing a history that will put straight the record of the role played by Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) in the struggle. Indeed, President Mugabe has said that part of his time will now be dedicated to doing "some reading and writing".

One cannot deny that there is something about 'writing' with regard to the high profile personalities mentioned above, perhaps something to do with an elite disposition common around the world where biographies and memoirs of statesmen and women, film stars and celebrities, are big business in the publishing world. Zimbabwean liberation personalities have not fared badly in this respect; the most widely published being Ndabaningi Sithole with factual and fictional work approaching the level of an autobiography. This chapter refers to three of his works, *The Nationalist Struggle*, *Obed Mutezo*, and *Letters from the Salisbury Prison*.<sup>9</sup> Joshua Nkomo's *The Story of My Life*, Maurice Nyagumbo's *With the People*, Didymus Mutasa's *Rhodesian Black Behind Bars*, and Nathan Shamuyarira's *Crisis in Zimbabwe* are but examples of work by nationalists that have been available in the genre of these written histories.<sup>10</sup>

It has been equally common in our trips around the country to encounter former combatants who have either 'written' or are in the process of 'writing' their histories

(8) Mugabe, Robert. Interview of 18 February 2007.

(9) Sithole, Ndabaningi. *The Nationalist Struggle*; *Obed Mutezo: The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970; *Letters from the Salisbury Prison*. Nairobi: TransAfrica Publishers, 1976.

(10) Nkomo, Joshua. *The Story of My Life*. London: Methuen, 1984. Rpt. Harare: SAPES Books, 2001; Nyagumbo, Maurice. *With the People: An Autobiography from the Zimbabwean Struggle*. Salisbury: Graham Publishing, 1980; Mutasa, Didymus. *Rhodesian Black Behind Bars*. London: Mowbrays & Co. Ltd., 1974; Shamuyarira, Nathan. *Crisis in Rhodesia*. London: Deutsch, 1965.

in the struggle as well. We have on occasion collected these and typed them where the authors have been forthcoming. Two things emerge poignantly from the foregoing: First, consistent with the aims of this project, there is a growing feeling amongst a generation of Zimbabwean liberation war participants, still living, that time is fast running out for them, and that nobody will be left to tell their liberation story. Second, though subtle, there is the presumption that ‘writing’ is the best mode of preserving and publicising this history.

We have sought to confront these matters more forthrightly through a paradigm shift that respects all processes, of whatever persuasion, that seek to preserve the liberation heritage. The Hashim Mbita project has been presented to the wider public as an initiative that, although culminating in a written (and perhaps opinionated account), is first and foremost a collection exercise. We have in this regard been able to work collectively with three major stakeholders in the liberation heritage of the country: the National Archives of Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU PF) Information and Publicity Department, and the Mafela Trust. We shall dwell briefly on the nature of our relationship with each.

Firstly, the National Archives of Zimbabwe launched at the end of 2004 a project aptly titled “Capturing a Fading National Memory,” which was designed to complement its predominantly documentary archive of the liberation war. Mr. Ivan Murambiwa, the Director of the organisation, noted with some level of accuracy that none of the nationalists and liberation fighters (neither the living nor the passed on) have been keen to donate their materials to the National Archives. What they have in their collections are predominantly deposits by white liberals and a very few African nationalists such as Daniel Madzimbamuto. This oral history initiative of 2004 sought to retrieve as much as possible the memories of the ‘common man’ in the struggle, at the same time as it pursued and persuaded those surviving nationalists to give their testimonies. The Hashim Mbita team already participates at the Directorate level of this project and has cooperated through different forms of support in the ‘Capturing Project’ where interviews have been held with, for instance, Rtd. General Zvinavashe (Sheba Gava) and Comrade Emmerson Munangagwa. Moreover, joint initiatives have been held with mass interviews with peasants in Gutu Communal Lands. The project has also allowed the Hashim Mbita researchers access to interviews that the National Archives collected in Chiredzi and Tsholotsho in 2004. As the Mbita Project, we also jointly employed a number of University of Zimbabwe Department of History students. In addition, the Hashim Mbita project has a special team of Research Assistants drawn from junior staff in the History Department who do specific interviews and supervise the technical processes of transcription, video editing, and database management of the findings of the research project. Under these and other arrangements, the oral history section of the National Archives is our repository for back up material emanating from our own collection.

Secondly, the ZANU PF Department of Publicity, through Dr. Nathan Shamuyarira and his publicity Director Mr. Steven Chidawanyika welcomed our initiative warmly.

They, in turn, have been working with the National Archives and the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ) on the Zimbabwe Heritage Trust, a project doing similar work and coordinated by the syndicate of Southern African Political Parties based in Dar es Salaam and loosely connected to H.E. Hashim Mbita. We have been invited to sit in their meetings and share ideas. Our relationship as the Hashim Mbita project has been, however, distinct. Mr. Chidawanyika arranged interviews for us with colleagues within and outside the ZANU PF Headquarters. Our team of research assistants was deployed there to go through interview routines that were also captured on video. We converted the interviews into DVD format and made the copies available to the ZANU PF Publicity Department. It should be acknowledged that we are not professional photographers, nor is any member of our technical team, we used these as a means of maintaining a rapport with our interviewees and also found out that possession of a personal copy of one's interview (professionally done) was an important way of spreading the message that sharing one's experience is a lifetime investment in one's own archive. Frequently, interviewees became free and some even called us to arrange interviews with the result that our collection schedule increased everyday and our team was often overwhelmed. We may hasten to say that the ZANU PF Publicity Department has been undertaking its own 'history collection exercises' as is often indicated in their work plans. We have had occasion to look at these collections, which are usually no more than one word answer or paragraph length issues. We did not interfere with their process nor change it, but we asked them to spread the word regarding the Hashim Mbita Project as they went on these collection exercises. Meanwhile the majority of our very fascinating accounts have come from connections made at ZANU PF Headquarters; this was primarily because of the collegial network in place amongst old 'guerrilla friends', who half the time knew what happened to so and so and very often pulled out a notebook with his or her address and phone number and there we were! We thereby struck the next interview very easily and there was a knock on effect. The other effect was very much psychological; on more than one occasion former combatants refused to cooperate with us, demanding to know, 'Who are you?' With connections made through ZANU, we needed to just mention that we had been referred by so and so and it was fine. Normally, we simply found someone already waiting for us or calling us after they had made arrangements amongst themselves. ZANU PF also had a considerable archive and library which we have had occasion to tour. The Publicity Department had also, in principle, agreed that, as our relationship grew, we could access and scan their enormous photographic collection for the project.

Lastly, the Mafela Trust, an independent body that has been collecting the history and paraphernalia of former ZIPRA combatants, expressed a willingness to work with us. One formal meeting was held with them under the auspices of the Archives project, we were able to send our research assistants whom they took on their oral history collection exercises, and they gave some of the interviews in their own collections for our purpose. We drew on a few in this chapter. The trouble, however,

was that the Mafela histories, as with the ZANU collections, are very valuable, but often very brief.

This was the context we worked in, choosing to launch our own initiatives through contacts already in place. It may be important to mention that we greatly benefited from our broader identity as academics; through our networks in this realm, we were able to approach fellow academics who have conducted research on the subject to share their resources. The Aluka website<sup>11</sup> has come in handy in this regard and we draw constantly from material in its custody. We also draw upon interviews done by other academics with notable liberation people who have since died.

### **The Formative Years, 1890–1965**

The Zimbabwean struggle for independence has its origins in the long drawn out campaign against racially inspired injustices traceable to the initial pacification of the African groups in the country by the British South Africa Company (BSA) in the 1890s. It is easy to treat, as some historians of an earlier generation were keen to maintain, African response and indeed resistance to European colonisation as a continuum. Up to 1963, this response took the form of modern versions of the old imperial ideology of ‘equal rights for all civilised men’ and the ambiguous doctrine of ‘partnership’. In this period, the state sought to achieve the assent of African elites through provision of more and higher education for Africans, development of lease-hold and eventually free-hold schemes in the cities, and the creation by means of the Land Husbandry Act of a ‘prosperous peasantry’. During that period, chiefs were of little importance. There was a symbolic change in nomenclature from the Department of Native Affairs to the Department of Internal Affairs.

The crucial allies were seen as the African urban and rural middle classes, who were targeted by the Build A Nation campaigns, were offered the vote in heavily qualified franchises, were promised a very slow dismantling of urban segregation, and eventually were even to be offered the chance to acquire land in the areas hitherto reserved for Europeans by the repeal of the Land Apportionment Act. This ‘liberalism’ was accompanied by authoritarian control of the majority of Africans in town and in the countryside, and by repression of those who advocated the alternative ideals of a mass franchise and an African majority rule. Sir Edgar Whitehead’s ‘liberalism’ was accompanied by the Emergency of 1959, by show trials, by detention and restriction, and by the passage of coercive legislation like the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act.

By 1961, it had become clear that the ‘liberal’ paradigm had failed. The federation was breaking up. The most highly educated Africans had joined the nationalist movement and were leading the nationalist parties. Authoritarian and interventionist attempts to implement Land Husbandry and bring about a rural land tenure revolution were frustrated by widespread resistance. In the towns, Africans

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(11) [www.aluka.org](http://www.aluka.org).

with the most secure tenure were demanding the Municipal vote and the right to control Councils.

The Rhodesia Front government elected in 1963 targeted different African allies. Its ideology was ‘community development’ through which African ‘traditional’ communities in the rural areas and township communities around the cities could achieve a degree of self-government. This was an ideology which went with the revival of social and occupational segregation; a new legislative division of the land into white and black areas; a neo-traditional emphasis upon ‘authentic’ chiefs and African religious leaders; development of an inferior education ‘appropriate’ to Africans, etc. This cluster of ideas constituted ‘the Rhodesian Way’, which the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 was supposed to defend.

Each ideology gained some African supporters and the Rhodesian government throughout employed many policemen, soldiers, clerks, teachers etc. Africans in town and in the countryside adapted on a day to day basis to the pressures on influx control and rural social engineering, and to the realities of racial discrimination.<sup>12</sup> The National Archives of Zimbabwe has just released a set of files covering these years of community development which cover in great detail local forms of resistance instigated by ZAPU, featuring underground sabotage activities.<sup>13</sup> A number of activities in urban areas are referred to in the municipal records and reports of Bulawayo and Salisbury.<sup>14</sup> It has often been questioned whether urban and rural resistance had any connections and whether it was urban nationalism that spilled into the rural areas or vice versa. This ambiguity is still largely present in the various testimonies collected, but sometimes archival records of Police Criminal Investigation Department dockets and subsequent trials of rural and urban activists can be illuminating.<sup>15</sup>

## 1960-1965

### The Divisions in Nationalist Politics, 1961

Most of the interviews invariably begin with the onset of mass nationalism and its overlap with the beginning of the armed struggle. This is mainly due to the memory span at the disposal of the majority of the interviewees. A rare transcript of a narrative by Malachia M. Basvi Madimutsa recalls some internal dynamics within

(12) Gann, L.H. and M. Gelfand. *Huggins of Rhodesia. The Man and His Country*. Allen and Unwin, 1964.

(13) S3700/3/32/1-100. Ministry of Internal Affairs Reports and Correspondence 1963-1978. See also already available material on community development in the Community Delineation reports; National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) S.2929 are critical. Particularly revealing of neo-traditionalism is the Spirit Index for every medium, priest, holy place, and independent church leader, NAZ S.2376.

(14) McNamee, J.P. “Report on Native Urban Administration in Bulawayo.” Bulawayo: Government of Southern Rhodesia, 1948; Roger Howman. “Report of the Committee to Investigate Urban Conditions in Southern Rhodesia.” Salisbury: 1943; B.W. Gussman. *African Life in an Urban Area, Bulawayo, 1952-3*; Percy Ibbotson’ “Report of a Survey of Urban African conditions in Southern Rhodesia”. Salisbury: 1943.

(15) See for instance Rhodes House Collections: John Conradie Papers: Trials of John Conradie 1966-7, Ndabaningi Sithole, Sketchley Samkange, Michael Mawema, Leopold Takawira, Maurice Nyagumbo, John Mutasa, and Moven Mahachi. A lot more of these can be found in the Historical Manuscripts collection of NAZ under the Guy Clutton-Brock Papers.

the National Democratic Party (NDP) on the eve of its second Congress in 1961. As Madimutsa says:

When Leopold Takawira was appointed Interim Acting President of the NDP, there was a general dissatisfaction among Ndebeles who wanted the exiled Joshua Nkomo for the presidency. Their pressure brought them success when Nkomo was elected National President at the Party's First Congress at Drill Hall in Salisbury in 1960.

Leopold Takawira was posted to London to take up Nkomo's former post as NDP Chief Representative in London. When the Second NDP Congress was held in McDonald Hall in Bulawayo in 1961, there was a general feeling among the Shonas that Nkomo was not providing the kind of dynamic leadership the struggle required. Among the leading prospects for the national leadership was Leopold Takawira who was being sponsored by the Karanga faction of the Harare Youth Wing. This faction was led by Patrick Bvunzawabaya (Highfield Brach Youth Chairman), Patrick Nhariwa (Highfield Brach Youth Secretary), Claudius Danha (Treasurer), and George Mudukuti (Committee Member).<sup>16</sup>

Nkomo's own written account is cognizant and informed of all the conspiracy theories behind the split, not only when it simmered under the surface in the NDP, but also when the bubble burst in the subsequent political formation ZAPU. As Nkomo puts it:

....but the most important event by far was the inaugural meeting of the Organisation of African Unity, over which the Emperor Haile Selasie presided in Addis Ababa in May 1963. North Africans and those South of the Sahara, French-speakers and English-speakers, progressives and conservatives, came together to dedicate themselves to the future of our continent. Enthusiasm was high, and Kwame Nkrumah's vision of unity swept everyone along. The OAU has by no means fulfilled all the hopes we then placed in it, but it was and still is a noble idea. Ironically it was during that inaugural meeting, when all our minds should have been on the single purpose of liberating Africa, that the divisions within our movement first came into the open.

....At the Addis Ababa meeting I found out what [my Egyptian friend Mohammed Faiek]...meant, when Leopold Takawira and his friends launched their campaign against my leadership.<sup>17</sup>

In an interview with the *New African* editor Baffour Ankoma in 2002, Robert Mugabe, who was assumed to be part of the conspiracy against Nkomo's leadership, revealed his version of what led to the split:

**Mugabe:** When I came back, I didn't tell you the story why I didn't finish the four years in Ghana. When I came back, parties had been banned, and here in the then Southern Rhodesia, the African National Congress (ANC) had been banned, and people had been detained under the Detention Act in February 1959. I came back in 1960, about May, June. I found that the National Democratic Party (NDP) had been formed to replace the African National Congress. It was then just six months old. Then I started telling people, friends and relatives who had joined the NDP, they wanted me to tell the people, at political meetings and rallies, how Ghana was; how free the Ghanaians

(16) Malachia M. Basvi Madimutsa. "Problems Within the Nationalist Movement" Unpublished mimeo.

(17) Nkomo, Joshua. *The Story of My Life*. London: Methuen, 1984. pp.112-113.

were, and what the feeling was in a newly independent African state. So I went round and talked about how young people in Ghana who had only done Standard 7 were being raised up, being taught how to type, and the wonderful life there was in Ghana, the “Highlife” at the time and so on; you know, the very, very inspiring environment there was in Ghana. So I told them all that, and about Kwame Nkrumah. I told them also about Nkrumah’s own political ideology and his commitment that unless every inch of African soil was free, then Ghana would not regard itself as free. So I went round politicising people, using what I regarded as factual description of my experience in Ghana. And this was now in June, July 1960; and by then there was quite an amount of concern by the people about the leaders who had been arrested in February 1959 after the Detention Act had been applied. And there was now a movement to get them released. There were demonstrations, I remember the July, August demonstration of that year. I was instrumental, together with others, some of whom are now dead, and we urged the people to strike, to strike in order to demonstrate our desire to have those in prison released. The strike succeeded in Harare first, then it was re-echoed in Bulawayo, Gweru and Mutare, and people wanted their leaders released.

Of course the workers who joined the strike had their own grievances about their working conditions, pay and salaries. So we took all that together and bundled it up, and we said no, we wanted the leaders freed, and the workers must also be paid, but it was mainly political, we wanted the leaders who were still in detention to be freed.

On the NDP, Mugabe continues...

**Mugabe:** Finally, oh they got me, they got me. They got to know me too. But it took them a long time to know who this guy was. Not in 1960. We sailed through that year. But then in October, the NDP held its inaugural congress. They asked me to chair it in Goodwill Hall; it was a hall for coloured people; I don’t know whether it is still there. At that inaugural congress in October 1960, we had Nkomo elected in absentia as president. I was then the information and publicity secretary of the NDP and that was what I was to the very end of the party until it was banned. Of all the parties that had existed in colonial times, the NDP had the longest life. It went through the whole of 1960 and the whole of 1961, and was only banned in December 1961, just a week or so before Christmas. It was then that we immediately formed ZAPU, the Zimbabwe African People’s Union. At the time, Joshua Nkomo had returned towards the end of 1960 from Britain, and the ANC was banned. He had attended the All People’s Conference in Ghana, and from Accra he went to London. It was when he was in London, in February 1960, that the swoop was done here and in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and this was when the major nationalist parties were banned. So we made him president. When the NDP was banned in December, within a matter of 10 days we formed ZAPU. But we didn’t want to call it ZAPU initially. There was KANU in Kenya, and TANU in Tanzania, and here the name given was ZANU. And as publicity secretary, I said ZANU yes, it would give uniformity with what had happened elsewhere in the sub-region, but for me PU - the people’s thing - was what mattered, so why can’t we call it ZAPU. So ZAPU was my choice actually as publicity secretary, and I thought it would give a better ring and a better appeal to the people - the people’s union. So Nkomo said, “OK, you can have it your way”. So we called it ZAPU. **Baffour:** And Nkomo became leader.

**Mugabe:** Nkomo became leader, I was still publicity secretary.

**Baffour:** There are allegations that you unduly supplanted Nkomo and became leader.

**Mugabe:** No, if anyone was defending Nkomo, it was I. I was the last to leave ZAPU and only at a time when I felt things had gone too far. No, no, no, I was the whole way through against anyone who wanted division, who wanted us to remove Nkomo. No, not I. I feared that if we did that we would divide the people almost immediately and Matabeleland would go its way. So we sailed through that problem. ZAPU did not have as long a life as the NDP. It got banned in September 1962. It was formed just before Christmas 1961 and got banned nine months later. And we had planned that ZAPU would go beyond what the NDP had done. The NDP had been principally a people- mobilising party, getting the people to be much more conscious than during the ANC days. When the ANC was banned in 1959, not much work had been done and the people were, as it were, raw. But they became now much more mature. There were more politicisation, more conscientisation about their nationalism, and giving also a belief and a greater sense of confidence in them, and they wanted to do in Zimbabwe what others had done elsewhere, for example in Ghana, and after Ghana of course we had the other Francophone countries becoming free. You know Nigeria would not have independence for a start, they said they were not mature yet. They laughed at Ghana when Ghana wanted independence. They [Nigeria] wanted a kind of political tutelage for a year or two before their own independence. And so to get the people to have the confidence that they could actually overcome the European here [in Zimbabwe], the psychology that was required to re-orientate them was great. And so, we had people who actually when the native commissioner or district commissioner or policeman was saying any nonsense or was trying to challenge you at a political meeting, there were people who could actually box him, box him to give people the confidence. Or say rough things to him or dismiss him as nonsense. So people could now say: “Ah, can people do this to a white man?” And it took some time to get them now to have confidence in themselves. But confidence was coming. But ZAPU was banned nine months after it had been in existence. And at that point, we said we should not form another party. We should go underground, prepare our people now, send people to be trained abroad, and nobody had any experience how a guerrilla war could be waged. And we got detained after the banning. We got detained when David Whitehead was prime minister, and I was detained at my own place. The detention was very ridiculous and ludicrous all at the same time....

On the details of the ZAPU split, Mugabe’s version goes something like this:

....But James Chikerema and Nkomo came to us and said it was necessary, if we were going to embark on a guerrilla struggle, for them to visit Egypt and talk to Abdel Nasser; but along the way they would first talk to Julius Nyerere and if they could also go to Accra, they would talk to Kwame Nkrumah. We said fine, and they were given funds by our treasurer, and so they travelled. By the way, we in ZAPU had imposed on ourselves a restriction that we would not go to the United Nations to make appeals for financial help, because in the NDP we had tended to rely too much on outside help. Anyway, Chikerema had tremendous influence on Nkomo. He was the man we said should organise young men for guerrilla warfare. So they travelled to Tanganyika and then to Egypt. And when they got to Egypt, we heard they had gone on to London and to New York. We said why violate the restriction we made for ourselves not to go to the United Nations and make financial appeals? When they came back, we were

very disappointed that they had done this. They told us that they had had lots of arms from Nasser, and we said yes and so what? They said when things started happening here, it would be very serious; you just have to press a button here and there would be an explosion. We said, "Ah, press a button and...? Have we trained our guys yet?" The rest of us didn't want to know the numbers, but we wanted to know whether we were now at a stage where enough people could undertake these sabotage acts to mark the beginning of a guerrilla struggle. They said yes. Later we found that what they called arms were just about two truck loads. But how can you wage a guerrilla war with two truckloads of arms? You may be able to start something, yes, but you can't say because we have that you can fight an effective guerrilla war. They said - and this is Chikerema who had influenced Nkomo - that they had messages from Nkrumah, Nasser, Nyerere all to the effect that we should leave the country because there was going to be a very, very serious programme of guerrilla struggle. We said: "Ah, are we at that stage?" They said, yes. I said to Chikerema in front of Nkomo: "If we leave the country without real preparations, the people would say we have deserted. Are we that ready?" They said if we start things here, we will get arrested. I said no. And Jason Z. Moyo who was close to me, he was my best man at my wedding when I got married to Sally [his first wife from Ghana who died in 1992], he was the secretary for finance in the party, he also had said no. And Nkomo and Chikerema said: "OK you remain behind, perhaps you will change your mind, we are going, but give us your car." So my little car, an Opel Rekord, the only car I have bought in my life, which I bought when I was in Takoradi [Ghana], I asked Sally to come with it, to send it before she came here to Southern Rhodesia as it were. I said fine, "you can have it. I wanted to exchange notes with J.Z. Moyo, the two of us were quite keen in the NDP and also in ZAPU. So I talked to J.Z. Moyo and he too was against our leaving the country. But he said: "If we stayed behind and things didn't go well, then the rest of the people would accuse us of having obstructed the campaign. So let's go." I said fine, I will go with Sally. So we travelled from here to Bulawayo, then we joined J.Z. Moyo and we drove through the southern part of the country and crossed into Botswana. There was a river there, it was quite full, and we had to wade through the water with the car, but the car managed to pull through. When we arrived in Francistown [Botswana], the leader of the only party in town (not the same as the present party) accommodated us, while J.Z. Moyo arranged for a small plane to fly us to Tanzania. So on Good Friday, we left Francistown and landed on the border with Zambia for refuelling. We slept there actually, then we flew on to Tanzania and used a local flight to Dar es Salaam. When we were there, staying in the hotel, an arrangement was made for us to meet with President Nyerere. His secretary was Kambona. So we met Nyerere. Mind you, the background was that Nkrumah, Nyerere, and Nasser all wanted us to leave the country, so we could form a government in exile, and when things happened here in Southern Rhodesia, naturally, the leadership would be free from arrest. And now we are meeting Nyerere. But when the issue was put by Joshua Nkomo, it was put this way: "Mr. President, we are here to ask for support, we would want to form a government in exile, and we have decided that it wouldn't be safe for us to remain in Rhodesia, and so we want you to provide us with a room here, and secondly provide us with all the support, financial and material, that we might require for the purposes of waging a struggle." And Nyerere looked at us for a while. And he said: "Well, I know very little about guerrilla struggle and governments in exile. But the little I know is that before you can establish a government in exile, you sure must have a

square of control of your territory. You don't have that. There is no fighting that has taken place in your country. And there are no guns that have the range of firing bullets from here to your country. I would be very happy to provide you with a room, but we would be doing you a disservice if we allowed you to form a government in exile here. That's a matter we cannot do at the moment." So we were just listening. And we went to our hotel; it was called the Metropole, owned by Tiny Rowland. And I then went to Takawira, (he is late [dead] now), he was the chairman of the party external. And I said: "Ah, Mr. Takawira, did you hear how the conversation went? We had to ask for the first time for permission to live in this country, to be accommodated here, but I thought we had been told that the request for us to be outside our country came from Nkrumah, Nyerere, and Nasser. What is this? So we've not been told the truth. But why should this have happened?" We all concluded that it was Chikerema's own persuasion to Nkomo. That was the bone of departure between me and Joshua Nkomo.<sup>18</sup>

This rivalry filtered down to the party membership and Cephas Msipa recalls:

We fought each other on the split because we wanted to preserve unity of ZAPU. Ooh that was some kind of madness. I remember in 1963 I was travelling to Nigeria and

there was this big headline, 'Zimbabwe is engaged in some war of destruction'. That was what was happening in 1963-64. But again in a way people were guarding their unity. You know they did what was being initiated by those who formed ZANU PF and they were prepared to fight in order to remain united. But it was a vicious fight really, because people lost their lives, some were burnt alive, I saw it with my own eyes, friends became enemies, of course it was like when friends turn against each other....

what was interesting was that literally friends were prepared to kill friends. I know in my case Eddison Zvobgo was my friend, but in the name of ZANU PF he sent some people to destroy my house and my school which I was heading. And in fact we talked about it later and he said you know I gave them a drum of beer to drink so that they get drunk and I said you go now and stone. And when I went to look, I said you have not done enough, I gave them another drum the following day and they went. But I also organised the young youth, ZAPU youth and they literally destroyed his house completely. And he had to leave Mufakose (laughing). It was as bad as that. But the good thing about it was that we had time to go about it, and to say that was foolish, why did we do that. That's why some wouldn't see it happening again. Ooh petrol bombings you know, people learnt to make these petrol bombs and were using them, so many times to destroy life and property. You know it was bad and I hope we won't do it again.<sup>19</sup>

In other smaller towns, the situation was the same and ZANU seemed to be more on the offensive. Solomon Marembo recalled that Fort Victoria had the most vicious ZANU youths who took to drug abuse and did not hesitate to kill. They actually ferried droves of youths to Salisbury in buses to reinforce their less vigilant colleagues there. However, Fort Victoria was also a place with long established ZAPU structures and supporters who were determined to defend their party under the local leadership

(18) Mugabe, Robert. "No Remote Control Ever Again." Interview with Baffour Ankoma. *New African Magazine*. May 2002.

(19) Interview between Cephas Msipa and Ishmael Mazambani, (Gweru) 2008.

of Samuel Munodawafa. Marembo recalls that one of the people he recruited into the Fort Victoria Youth branch was Mark Dube who had come to Fort Victoria with Terry Maluleke as a trade unionists and he “immediately left trade unionism and joined ZANU and we recruited him to fight ZAPU and the rest of our enemies.”<sup>20</sup> Mark Dube was eventually arrested with the rest of the nationalist leadership and placed in a restriction camp, and thereafter left for the struggle in Zambia. He appears later in this chapter as a member of the ZANU High Command under the name of Joshua Misihairambwi.

### **Prison, Restriction, and its Narratives, 1962-1966**

As soon as the Rhodesian Front (RF) swept into power in 1962 it began to tighten the screws on African nationalism. By the end of 1964, most of the leaders of the African Nationalist parties had been thrown into prison and/or into a restriction camp. A number of them wrote about their experiences during or after their period of bondage. Although, as Jocelyn Alexander argues<sup>21</sup>, these prison narratives are both about self and nation, this is particularly the case for those written after the experiences in prison. All of them need to be read in the context of the *longue durée*, as part of a corpus of experiences reflecting the shaping of the struggle in Zimbabwe over time. The prison was a theatre of struggle among the prisoners themselves and between the prisoners and the state. It is also crucial to note in the pre-and post-independence period how prison became the rite of passage into radical Zimbabwean nationalism, the acid test for endurance against the violence of the state responsible for the making and unmaking of many a nationalist. But prison was not only for high profile nationalists; as the war escalated, it also became home for many ‘civilians running with terrorists’ an ambiguous term used by the Smith regime to describe those Africans caught up in the uneasy position of serving the demands of the guerrillas and satisfying the requirements of the Rhodesian Security Forces. We encounter most such narratives from the mid 1970s onwards, and this chapter features the special circumstances of the situation at the Gorge or ‘Mutimurefu’ Prison of Fort Victoria, which took so many of these war-time civilian prisoners that it warranted an attack by the guerrillas in an attempt to free its inmates. However, the first association between prison and Zimbabwe’s political struggle begins with those people who spearheaded the campaign for majority rule in the period just before the break up of the Central African Federation.

Zimbabwe’s longest serving political prisoner, Maurice Nyagumbo twice made an attempt to write his experiences and smuggle them out of prison, and, on both occasions, the Rhodesian authorities confiscated the manuscripts. The one that made it to the printers had actually been written entirely on toilet paper. Starting his long encounter with the Rhodesian prisons in February 1959, Nyagumbo was at

<sup>(20)</sup> Interview with Solomon Marembo by Prof. Bhebe, (Harare) 12 November 1999.

<sup>(21)</sup> Alexander, Joclyn. “Political Prisoners’ Memoirs in Zimbabwe: Narratives of Self and Nation.” *Cultural and Social History*. 5.4 (2008).

the time a member of the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress and had spearheaded a nationwide campaign to disrupt the functions of the Native Affairs Department. He was arrested at home in Makoni and driven to Salisbury to join other Congress stalwarts from across the country, including Henry Hamadziripi, Edson Sithole, James Chikerema, Daniel Madzimbamuto, George Nyandoro, Paul Mushonga, Moses Ayema, and Robert Marere. For this early generation of prisoners, the experience seemed like fun: they sang and chanted nationalist slogans in the face of their captors and took pride in challenging European prison officers and in converting the African warders to their cause. Maurice Nyagumbo makes the best illustration of a prisoner who knew his rights and he reminds his readers several times in his narrative that he used every opportunity to use violence to deal with European intransigence. In an encounter with the Chief Native Commissioner, S.E. Morris, at Marandellas Prison, he regrets that he "...had picked up a chair with which to hammer Morris's head but this was grabbed by the African warders before it landed on Morris. I felt so disappointed because I had spent a lot of time quarrelling with him instead of bashing his head."<sup>22</sup> Nyagumbo's story, like so many others of its kind, is also a record of the experiences of others and an internal reflection of the struggles outside prison. One of the key omissions in Zimbabwean studies of the nationalist struggle is the little known Zimbabwe Nationalist Party (ZNP) which, although not explicitly detailed in Nyagumbo's account, finds expression in it as an opposition movement to his own National Democratic Party (NDP).<sup>23</sup> While at the Lupane Restriction Camp, Nyagumbo took a swipe at the ZNP leadership for their lack of community responsibility, their love for women, and their attempts to disrupt local NDP meetings. The founding of a local NDP branch with an influential organising secretary, Welshman Mabhena, went a long way in "overrunning the already well established branches of the ZNP." When all the restrictees were moved from Lupane to Gokwe in May 1961, it seemed even the Rhodesian state was aware of the differences between them, so that it had to move the NDP group to Sengwe and the ZNP group to Bumbuzi. Again, in the simmering conflict over Nkomo's leadership of the NDP, a fight broke out at Marandellas prison between George Nyandoro and Kufakunesu Mhizha, leading the authorities to separate George Nyandoro and James Chikerema from the rest of the NDP prisoners and sending them to Salisbury Prison.

The political violence that followed the split of ZANU from ZAPU increased the justification for the Rhodesian government to embark on a massive clampdown on political activity between 1963 and 1964. The result was that nearly all nationalists across the country were in some form of confinement by the end of 1964; they also carried their differences with them. Tekere recalls that, after his arrest in 1964, he was first taken to Salisbury Prison and then transferred to Gwelo Prison where he

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(22) Nyagumbo, Maurice. *With the People*: See p.140.

(23) According to Nyagumbo, members of this Party in restriction at Lupane included Patrick Matimba, Philip Foya, Maurice Musarurwa, and Chikoya Dzwukamanja.

was joined by Joshua Nkomo, Josiah Chinamano, Daniel Madzimbamuto, and others from ZAPU. As Tekere recalls:

...Daniel Madzimbamuto wanted to kill us, accusing us of the murder of his brother, who had been killed during the in-fighting between ZANU and ZAPU. When he was killed, I and my group had been descending on other towns from Gweru to fight with ZAPU members. Nkomo took him into his cell for protection.<sup>24</sup>

Most ZANU activists were moved to WhaWha Restriction Centre near Gweru, while those belonging to ZAPU were sent to Gonakudzingwa. Later in June 1965, all the ZANU detainees were moved to Sikombela Camp near Kwekwe. Many have told their individual circumstances of arrest and how they were eventually sent to prison. Joshua Nkomo was picked up in Enkeldoorn at an 'ox roast' party in a military style operation that left his supporters crying, but, like the Biblical messiah, he promised them he would be back.<sup>25</sup> Simon Muzenda was arrested in Shabani and his supporters kept vigil at the prison, sixty women brought him food the following morning, forcing the police to shift his court hearing to Gweru.<sup>26</sup> Robert Mugabe, it is said, 'flew into prison' when he was arrested soon after a trip from Ghana. One can easily distinguish between the agency of each detainee expressed in the narratives relating to the restriction period (which are often triumphant and revolutionary) and the despair, immobility, and loneliness associated with the confinement of prison life after 1966. Nkomo starts off his life at Gonakudzingwa Restriction Camp reflecting on Godfrey Huggins's thoughts that Africans were part of the local fauna, which, like elephants, should be "herded into reserves for their own safety." Later he boasts how much ZAPU was able to convert this hostile environment into a place for political education for the masses living around Gonakudzingwa. His narrative also has its funny notes. For instance, he tells of when the police shoot the dogs guarding the restrictees, not for any shortcomings on the part of the dogs, but for the crime that they were responding to names the inmates had given them such as 'Smith' or 'Janet'. Spouses of detainees also provide key information about life in detention. Joana 'Mafuyana' Nkomo has retold her difficult encounters with Rhodesian authorities when trying to see her husband, Joshua Nkomo, at Gonakudzingwa. Not only did she need a permit to see him, she had to travel two days to Gonakudzingwa from Bulawayo, only to be restricted to at most a five hour visit in the presence of a police officer who recorded all their conversations. At one point she was not allowed to see him for two years. When permission was granted, Nkomo, Joseph Msika, and Lazarus Nkala had been moved from Gonakudzingwa to Buffalo Range Prison, which was inaccessible by train, so she had to organise with friends and hire a car with the wives

(24) Tekere. *A Lifetime of Struggle*. p.61.

(25) Nkomo. *The Story of My Life*. p.123.

(26) Interview with Simon Muzenda by Prof. Bhebe, 23 July 1984.

of the other two detainees. Even for such effort, the visit was not allowed to go beyond forty minutes.<sup>27</sup>

For the ZANU group, it was at Sikombela Restriction Camp that they came up with the “Sikombela Declaration” authorising Chitepo and the exiled wing of ZANU in Zambia to form a Revolutionary Council to carry out the armed struggle in earnest. Sikombela was also an interesting community in that the detainees had established a school, clinic, and other amenities for the local community. It was a place where personal relationships were also nurtured. One of the most illustrative accounts of the day-to-day activities has been given by the late Shona novelist, Mordikai Hamutyinei, who describes each character in the camp: Edson Sithole was nicknamed ‘Bhokisi’ (Box) for being a box of brains, Enos Nkala had the radio with the widest frequency, Moses Mvenge was good at climbing trees, Leopold Takawira was a keen, but not so good, soccer striker, while Simon Muzenda took to the stage on ‘Happy Night’ each Saturday to dance the traditional Mbakumba or Muchongovoyo dance.<sup>28</sup> He and Eddison Zvobgo not only had to build their own house, they also had to adapt to a diet of Zebra meat.<sup>29</sup>

Several different reasons are given for the end of the restriction periods. For Hamutyinei, it was a Christmas day binge that turned into a riot that inevitably required the police. For Mugabe, the coincidence between the Chinhoyi battle of April 1966 and the decision to move all ZANU detainees to Salisbury was all too obvious.<sup>30</sup> Thereafter, the whole ZANU Executive and thirty other ZANU detainees were taken to Salisbury Central Prison where they were treated like ordinary criminals, living in crowded communal cells and eating bad food. Several representations were made to the authorities to be accorded the treatment due to political prisoners, but to no avail. It was decided to stage a hunger strike which lasted for four days until the Prison Superintendent came in with forms for them complete, and, as Hamutyinei shows, this move was not a solution, but a move to divide the prisoners:

...in the evening we saw Paysley [the Prison Superintendent] bringing us some forms to fill. This meant that those with businesses back at home and those with the qualification of JC (Junior Certificate) and above would now eat the food that was taken by the Coloured prisoners. As ZANU we all refused this plan to divide us and Paysley pleaded with us to eat while he made arrangements that we all received proper food the following day.<sup>31</sup>

The ZANU prisoners tried to kill the boredom and gloom of prison life. They played soccer within the walls of the prison and played *tsoro* (a chess-like game), but still they had to adapt to a routine of being shut up in the cells from 4pm to 8am. The fatigue, boredom, and loneliness is best illustrated in a poem written by Eddison

(27) Testimony of Joannah Nkomo in I. Staunton. *Mothers of the Revolution*. Harare: Boabab Books, 1990: See pp. 228-229.

(28) Hamutyinei, M.A.. *Zvakanga Zvakaoma MuZimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984: See Chitsauko 3 and 4.

(29) Interview with Eddison Zvobgo by Prof. Bhebe, 28 August 1984.

(30) Smith, D. and C. Simpson. *Mugabe*. Salisbury: Pioneer Head, 1981: See p.56.

(31) Hamutyinei, Mordikai. *Zvakanga Zvakaoma MuZimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984: See p.49.

Zvobgo, where, in the confines of his cell, he has no one else to befriend, but a brick.<sup>32</sup> Most prisoners used this time to further their education and many got their degrees while in prison; Mugabe earned at least three and Edson Sithole earned a doctorate in law, while studying in their cells. We will return to the politics inside the prisons at different stages in the development of the struggle.

### **The Turn to Armed Struggle: ZAPU ‘Urban Sabotage’ and ZANU ‘Crocodile Gang’, 1963-1965**

It has been a fascination for us in our interviews to encounter contests between former ZIPRA and Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) combatants over who fired the first shots of war, contests that are reminiscent of the splits enunciated above. Dumiso Dabengwa’s *The Organiser* details some of the early sabotage work in Bulawayo that he spearheaded as a ZAPU youth leader, while some interviews in the Mafela Trust collections place the beginning of ZIPRA military action as early as 1963. This mainly took the form of urban sabotage. As one C. Mpofo recollects: “We were itching for direct engagements but we had to use rudimentary methods, while recruiting at the same time.”<sup>33</sup>

Such methods included the use of tins, nails, *sadza* (cornmeal mush), and detonators to make explosives to blow electric pylons such as those along the Khami road in Bulawayo. In 1963, Dumiso Dabengwa deployed some trained cadres in Salisbury armed with plastic time bombs to be placed in shops, hotels, and white residences at night. Some, like L. Mhlanga and Ethan Dube, recalled visiting nightclubs patronised by whites and planting plastic bombs. Mhlanga recollects that “in that same year we set Meikles Hotel on fire with more than thirteen cars burnt and many people injured.”<sup>34</sup> There were also sabotage activities in Mabvuku which led the Rhodesian intelligence to suspect the hand of Russian communists.<sup>35</sup> In February 1964, Moffat Hadebe led the foiled ‘Ezidube Attack’ near Kezi, during which all of his men were captured or killed in the Rhodesian ‘fire force’ interception.<sup>36</sup>

ZAPU also tried using some European and Asian collaborators, especially lecturers based at the Universities of Zambia and Rhodesia. In 1965, a group of such lecturers operating under Giovanni Arrighi was organised. It included John Conradie, John Reed, and Ivan Dixon, who conspired to bring in explosives and hand grenades and succeeded in smuggling them in amidst tight security at the Chirundu Border post, distributing them to ZAPU youth. They were indeed responsible for most of the explosions that went up in Salisbury during that time. But soon they were betrayed by a ZAPU colleague, leading to the arrest of all the lecturers. Arrighi and

(32) E. Zvobgo. “My Companion and Friend: A Bare Brick in My Prison Cell.” M. Kadhani (ed.). *And Now the Poets Speak*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

(33) Mafela Trust interview with C. Mpofo, 13 August 2007.

(34) Mafela Trust interview with L. Mhlanga, 12 August 2007.

(35) Mafela Trust interview with J.M. Ndlovu (Sentenced to death after the Mabvuku incident), (Bulawayo) 31 January 2007.

(36) Mafela Trust interview with M. Hadebe (commander of the 1st ZAPU unit to attack at Ezidube), 12 June 1999.

Reed were released after questioning and left the country immediately, but Conradie and Dixon remained because an arms cache was recovered at their house. Conradie was sentenced to twelve years.<sup>37</sup> Apart from these, ZAPU also had plenty of other sympathisers prepared to participate in the sabotage work. An interesting case was the multi-racial couple Patrick Matimba and his Dutch wife, Adriana van Hoorn, who, after being frustrated in their quest to stay together as a family in Rusape by the segregationist policies of the Rhodesian regime, retaliated by planting bombs that exploded in five different hotels in Salisbury. They were also able to cross the border before they were caught.<sup>38</sup>

Although their real reason for splitting from ZAPU was ostensibly to launch a more confrontational strategy, the founders of ZANU were only able to crystallise this position at their Congress held in Gwelo in 1964. It was attended by about a thousand delegates representing over 30 out of the 50 districts. With the Rhodesian Front Party keen on declaring independence from Britain, the major preoccupation of the Congress was to find means of empowering its Central Committee to come up with means and ways of combating the UDI. The result was ZANU's Five-Point Plan, which was kept a secret of the National Executive. Until now this plan remains a mystery, but parts of the first stages of the plan were published as a statement issued by the ZANU President, Ndabaningi Sithole, under the title the "Clarion Call to War" (19 June 1964). The statement warned of plans by the Smith regime to declare unilateral independence, and it gave the following instructions to African people:

Those who are working in towns, mines and farms, etc, should prepare to withdraw their monies from banks, building societies and post office savings banks and put aside and buy large stocks of food which should be stored in a safe place.

Those in the reserves should not sell any more of their cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and fowls. They should store large quantities of maize, groundnuts, corn, etc.

Every family should study the surroundings of his home and locality for strategy.

Everyone should be ready to act as soon as the final instructions come from the President.

When the Government declares unilateral independence, all Africans must stop paying dipping fees, cattle fees, dog fees and poll tax until an African Government is fully established in Zimbabwe.

Town residents must stop paying rents from the day unilateral independence is proclaimed.

Every man must have axes, bows and arrows and other instruments ready to oppose physically unilateral independence, and ACT as soon as unilateral independence is declared.

(37) Chung, Fay. *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*: See p.58; Ellert, H. *The Rhodesian Front War: Counter-insurgency and guerrilla warfare 1962-1980*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993: See p.22.

(38) Ibid. pp. 22-25. For the trials and tribulations faced by the Matimbas, see M. Mushonga. "The Black Peril: The Story of Patrick Matimba." Paper Presented to the Historical Dimensions of Human Rights and Democracy in Zimbabwe Seminar, University of Zimbabwe, April 1998.

All African parents must withdraw their children from school as soon as illegal independence is declared. The President of ZANU will declare a state of emergency in the party and the country when the time comes. That will be the time to act and whatever you are ordered to do. Zimbabwe is near –now you should lay down your lives, honour and fortunes to make it a reality. Long Live Zimbabwe.<sup>39</sup>

A covering statement from Robert Mugabe, Secretary General of ZANU, described the document as a clarion call to “military resistance.”<sup>40</sup>

It was under the auspices of the Five Point Plan that ZANU sent groups of volunteers for military training, and on their return they undertook acts of violence likely to send the message across to the Rhodesian Front that it should brace itself for war. One of the groups was known as the ‘Crocodile Gang’, which killed Petros Oberholtzer, the first European in Rhodesia to die in an act of war, in Melsetter in July 1964. This event has been the subject of much attention, featuring in three novels, Sithole’s *Obed Mutezo*, Peter Godwin’s *Mukiwa*, and Michael Raeburn’s *Black Fire*, all of which have been ably analysed by Professor Terence Ranger.<sup>41</sup> Professor Ngwabi Bhebe and other University of Zimbabwe History Department staff members interviewed the leader of the ‘gang’, Willie Ndongana, before his death, and he gave

a fascinating account of how he started his career as a ZANLA cadre. Recruited in Lusaka where he was working as a carpenter, Ndongana was originally a member of ZAPU, who went over to ZANU after the split of 1963. He recalled being part of the first thirty six volunteers to ZANU’s military wing that gathered after the congress of 1964 to be trained in China. When the trip to China did not materialise, most of the volunteers were disillusioned, leaving behind only nine of them, Ndongana himself, Rick Moto, Amos Kademonga, Master Mazvane, David Dhlamini, and Victor Mlambo. As he recalled:

Six out of nine men came first and stayed at Takawira’s house where Sithole also lived. We reached Harare on the 24th of June 1964, and we were greeted by the Secretary General R. Mugabe who was left in charge. Takawira was in prison, and Sithole had been arrested in Masvingo. At Mugabe’s office he asked how many men I had and I told him that altogether there were six of us. We told him that we wanted pistols but after he had asked if we had any training in handling such weapons and we said we had not, he said he would prefer we used knives and sticks. He said he would deploy us to whatever area we liked. I said I preferred an area with hills, mountains and caves and he said that he would send us to Manicaland. We left for Mutare on June 28th, 1964 under the name ‘Crocodile Group’.<sup>42</sup>

Ndongana and his group were not given the weapons, but money to travel to Umtali where Ndabaningi Sithole was undergoing his high-profile trial as leader of ZANU.

(39) Sithole, Ndabaningi. “Clarion Call to War.” In *Letters from the Salisbury Prison*. 19 June 1964.

(40) Sithole, Ndabaningi. *Obed Mutezo: The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970: See pp.138-140.

(41) Ranger, Terence. “Violence Variousy Remembered: The Killing of Pieter Oberholzer in July 1964.” *History in Africa*. 24 (1997).

(42) Interview with Comrade William Ndongana by Prof. Bhebe, (Harare) 12 July 1984.

Part of the money was used to purchase knives for the team, and as soon as they got to Mutare, they attended the court proceedings in order to seize any opportunity to talk to Sithole during the court breaks. They managed to get a few minutes with Sithole who linked them up with a local contact, one Shasha, who would in turn link them up with another contact, Obert Mutezo in Nyanyadzi. Mutezo's role was to identify 'targets' for the group to attack. Ndangana does not state why Nyanyadzi was chosen, but in his testimony he reveals that he hailed from the area. Their first attempt to attack the Nyanyadzi police station was foiled when Amos Kademonga was detected by an alert policeman who gave chase.<sup>43</sup> They split in various directions to meet at an agreed rendezvous, but again Amos arrived late which raised suspicion amongst his colleagues that he was 'selling out'. The following day they attacked a car belonging to a young African couple at Chikwizi River; they let them go after the man shouted "I am one of you!" After being released, the man went straight to the police station to report the matter. A police Land Rover returned to the spot and fired shots into the bush in the direction where the group had fled, but did not seek to pursue them. Ndangana goes on to narrate how they attacked a white man in his car and then fled pursuit by the police:

During the free periods we had had while waiting at the cave we had been writing bulletins introducing ourselves as the 'Crocodile Group on War Confrontation.' We wrote that we were going to kill all white men and that all white men who wanted to stay alive should leave the country, and warning Ian Smith to beware. So we left these bulletins at every place where we had done some action, leaving some bulletins at the Nyanyadzi Police station near the spot where the helicopter had been parked and also at Chikwizi River Bridge. When we ran away from the police, Amos ran for good so there were four of us left. We were later to learn that Ricky had been arrested at Mutare while staying at Mudzingwa's house. As Amos did not return, we thought that he would reveal our meeting place so we did not go back to the cave. We decided to go away from the area and go elsewhere. We walked across the hill throughout the night and reached Biriwiri Secondary School in the morning. From there we took the road to Melssetter until we had reached a place where the road turns and there was a bridge. This place was bushy, so we decided we would rest near a stream. When my friends had settled, I left them and went to a nearby shop to buy two loaves of bread which we shared between the four of us; I would use my sword for cutting the loaves into halves and we would sit down and eat.

We talked about making another attack that evening. It was a very bushy area and there was a large tree near where we camped and also a lot of stones on the ground. We rested; I went to buy food and more bread. At this time we had no contact with the *povo* [the people]. We wanted to rest for some time until our legs were strong before attacking again. We finally decided that we were ready for action on 4 July 1964.

We

wanted to act while it was still light so that we could be sure that we were attacking whites and not blacks. So we arranged some large stones across the road in order to

<sup>(43)</sup> Throughout the narrative, Kademonga is suspected to be a Rhodesian informer; one of their colleagues in the 'gang' was so convinced of this that he threatened to kill him. Towards the end of their campaign, he escapes from the group and he apparently gives away his friends to the police.

block the road, then heaped up more stones alongside the road with which to attack, and lay in waiting. Suddenly there was a Volkswagen Kombi driving towards us from the direction of Biriwiri Secondary School with parking lights on. The man drove until he was very near the bridge of stones we had built across the road and then stopped. When he saw us he shouted “Kaffirs”, that was it. We threw stones at him. He was sitting by the steering wheel close to us so almost all the stones fell onto him. Then his wife and child were sitting on the other side and did not get hit. He got out of the car to fight. He was ready to retaliate, but he was bleeding heavily, the sword was now in my hand and as he moved towards me I stabbed him in the stomach until the whole sword had sunk in. He staggered backwards and picked another stone, my friends had moved back a little.

The man staggered back to the car and his wife helped him in. They started the car but as it moved forward it hit the stones across the road, hit a rock and overturned after moving a distance of about 150metres. Now my friends ran to the car. The wife wanted to get the child out and I think the man was also trying to get out. The problem was that the kombi’s windows were high up so they were stuck. The man put his head out through the window and I stabbed him on the neck, he fell back inside on top of his wife and child. So all the stones we threw fell right on top of him and his wife and child were unhurt. We still had the two petrol bombs we had made at the cave; we therefore intended to blow the vehicle up. I lit the cloth at the top of the bottle with a match and threw the petrol bomb onto the kombi. There was a small flame but it soon blew out. The man was bleeding heavily this time and there was a lot of blood inside the car. We tried the second petrol bomb, but still there was not much of a blaze. I resorted to using the sword again but it was just the man who was getting stabbed.

Before long we saw a car approaching, so we decided to run, going backwards on the Umtali to Mhakwe road. We were certain that the white man was already dead. So we saw no use of going back to the scene, but instead headed towards Nyanyadzi, not realising that the police were on the alert. Apparently our meeting place in the cave had already been raided and Amos was in the hands of the police. At Nyanyadzi we went to Mrs. Kondo’s house. We got there at 8am. Here we found the children sleeping outside and they said that their mother was in the house. We knocked at the door and she asked who it was and I said ‘Ndangana’ and she came out quickly wearing only a petticoat, and told me that the police were in hot pursuit and I would soon be caught. She said that the police had been looking for me for the past two days; she thought I had moved out of the area already. She said that we had to leave, her husband was rather timid; she said the police had been coming and going so it was not safe for us to stay. Most of the men had been taken in by the police. She would have driven us out of the area, but there were roadblocks.<sup>44</sup>

After this act, the remainder of the group planned on leaving for Salisbury through Fort Victoria. The police were all over the area and set up roadblocks on all the roads leaving Nyanyadzi in search of the gang. David Dhlamini and Victor Mlambo decided to cross the border into Mozambique, leaving behind Ndangana and Master Mazvane to undertake the trip to Salisbury on their own. Dhlamini and Mlambo were later arrested, while Ndangana and his colleague made it to Salisbury and were smuggled

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(44) Interview with Comrade William Ndangana by Prof. Bhebe, (Harare) 12 July 1984.

across the Chirundu border in a container truck into Zambia. Zambia was still not safe for them either, but the ZANU officers there (amongst them Percy Ntini, Silas Mushonga, Chidavaenzi, and Josiah Tongogara) quickly arranged that the two be sent to Malawi. Even in Blantyre, the Rhodesian Special Branch was still in hot pursuit and local newspapers flashed Ndangana's face on the front page as a wanted man. Robert Mugabe, who had been tried in absentia while in Ghana, passed through Malawi to meet the ZANU recruits and brief them on the arrangements he had made for their military training there. This is how Ndangana, Noel Mukono, and seven others found their way out of Malawi in a plane provided by Kwame Nkrumah. They were flown to Half Assini military camp in Accra, while Mugabe flew back to Salisbury to be thrown into prison on arrival.

Emmerson Mnangagwa, who led the other ZANU sabotage group that blew up railway locomotives in Fort Victoria, gave his own account:

[In] 1962 when I was in Lusaka as a Youth Secretary for Lusaka constituency for UNIP [United National Independence Party of Zambia], and ZAPU had an office in Lusaka (there was no ZANU then) and a Mr. Nkiwane was ZAPU's representative then. So when the ZAPU officials came to UNIP Offices at Freedom House their contact person was myself. I was of Zimbabwe origin, but I was a party member of UNIP stationed at Freedom House. After ZAPU was banned, Willie Musarurwa came to Lusaka (I am only connecting on events that will lead to Muzenda). Musarurwa came and stayed in Lusaka. Wagoneka was then active in ZAPU in Lusaka. Nkiwane had moved as chairman of the province and Wagoneka had taken over. He introduced Musarurwa to me. Musarurwa recruited me into ZAPU, arguing that as a Zimbabwean I should leave UNIP and join ZAPU and go for military training. So after elections in 1962 in Zambia, I joined ZAPU and was sent for my military training at Iringa. When I got to Iringa, there were two groups – one from Mashonaland and another from Matebeleland.

...So after going to different places and countries for military training (Egypt and China), when I came back in 1964 (when ZANU had been formed), I was told that the legendary vaMuzenda was with ZANU. Then I knew that when I got back to Zimbabwe for military operations, I must look for vaMuzenda.

We were given 4 names. We were told to look for vaMuzenda, Thomas Maramba in Mvuma, Nhariwa and Solomon Marembo, and Marima who was in Bikita. We were told that those were the people we should contact first and they would link us up with others. We memorised those names. So we came to the country in 1964.

...As we were going to the townships, we spotted a stationary train and at that point we were really lusting for some action. We had our dynamite we had kept for the aircraft aborted sabotage. We had twelve sticks of them. Next to the train, there was a group of security guards warming themselves by the fireside. My friend asked me to crawl into the driver's cabin of the train while he stood guard ready to shoot should the security guard notice what was happening and tried any preventative action. So I crept inside the train, which was partially lit by outside yellow tower lights. I found someone sleeping inside, resting after fuelling the engine with coal. Because of the yellow tower lights the fellow looked like a white man. I beckoned my colleague and told him there was a white person having a nap and friend his excitement at the chance

of killing our first white victim. So he discouraged me from using a firearm, but to kill him with a knife. So I drew out my dagger and stood outside the fellow holding my dagger with my right hand ready to plunge it straight into his heart. As I was steeling myself for the act and counting down from 10 to 1 and just as I counted to 4, the fellow woke up. When he saw the big dagger ready to descend into his heart, he was so shaken that his bowls loosened and he soiled himself with this own excrement and urine. I also discovered that I had nearly killed a black man. So we left him alone and let him escape while we concentrated on blasting the train. We used twelve sticks. I fixed them; put all the necessary caps and fuses. To avoid being injured by bits and pieces of iron from the exploding train, we decided to take cover in one of the culverts underneath the railway lines. We then lit the fuses which ignited the explosives and blasted the goods train. That was the first serious act of war in that town.

In another interview, Mwangagwa retold the story of his arrest at a ZANU colleague's house after allegedly being sold out by Michael Mawema. He was sentenced to death, but was spared because of his age. Part of his duty while in prison, however, was to carry away for burial some of the prisoners who were hanged. He concentrated on his law degree, which was to prove useful in his role within his party when he later moved to Zambia in the 1970s.<sup>45</sup>

So far as ZAPU was concerned, the decision to adopt the policy of confrontation, and, by extension, the armed struggle was made well before the ZANU split of 1963, therefore putting paid one of the major reasons given by ZANU malcontents for leaving ZAPU. This is shown by ZAPU's commitment to send people for military training as early as 1962. According to Dumiso Dabengwa,

We actually left the country under the auspices of the PCC. We left under the direction of James Chikerema, who was head of the Special Affairs Department, who was answerable only to Nkomo, who was the president at that time. We got orders from Chikerema to leave the country and go out for better training. It is important to remember that in terms of military training under ZAPU, that had taken place long before the split in 1963. These had been people who had been trained, like Charles Chikerema; I think his group must have gone training with Mphoko Gordon Buche and others in China in 1962. I remember when they came back, some of them stayed outside the country in Zambia, while a few of them were brought in the country to come and teach us how to use bombs. So the military training under ZAPU started long before 1963.<sup>46</sup>

This was a continuation of a policy already adopted by the NDP which sent the first group of trainees to Ghana, amongst them Simon Khaya Moyo, Sihwa, and Nziramasanga. Two more groups left for China soon thereafter. Most of them were already involved in the sabotage operations of 1963 using explosives smuggled from Zaire and Zambia. By 1964, ZAPU's external wing was established in Zambia to augment work that had been started by Willie Musarurwa. It was led by James

(45) Interview between the "Capturing a Fading National Memory" team and Comrade E. Munangagwa, (Kwekwe) c. July 2006.

(46) Interview with Dumiso Dabengwa by Prof. Bhebe, (Bulawayo) 1 December 1989.

Chikerema and Jason Moyo, and the wing was able to coordinate training and fighting strategy more systematically. This time their attention was turned towards the socialist countries, particularly the Soviet Union where Akim Ndlovu, Dumiso Dabengwa, Ethan Dube, Edward Bhebe, Gideon Ngoshi, Joseph Nyandoro, Ambrose Mutinhiri, and Jabulani Ncube were sent in 1964. Others were sent to Bulgaria, China, and a few to North Korea. According to Mbulawa Moshe Noko, ZAPU was also offered training facilities in Egypt, and, in November 1964, Algeria followed suit, accepting a total of 120 recruits, 18 of whom would be trained as officers. In 1966, Cuba joined the fray of training ZIPRA cadres following an agreement reached at the Tri-Continental Conference. Thereafter, more centralised training facilities were established in Tanzania through an OAU scheme, involving instructors from various OAU member states. In the 1970s, Yugoslavia and Libya also joined, as did Ethiopia, which joined towards the end of Zimbabwe's liberation war. The offer from Vietnam could not be accepted since it came towards ceasefire.<sup>47</sup>

Akim Ndlovu gave us a glimpse of his training experience in the Soviet Union: I was one of a small group of six which trained in the Soviet Union. There were too many reasons why countries tended to train small groups for us. One reason was that

these countries could only train a reasonable number of people which they thought the party could reasonably and safely handle. Such countries had to take into account that such a party might not have a base where it could house and possibly handle its trained cadres. There was no point in training 2000 men for a party when it couldn't possibly handle them.

The second consideration was that these countries had not thought of seriously training freedom fighters together with their own freedom fighters. In many cases, the training of freedom fighters was a separate scheme from the general training of local armies. My personal experience fits well this description. We were not trained together with the Soviet Union recruits. We trained as a small group and we had a different programme of training and ours was a condensed training programme. It had to be condensed because, had it not been, it would have taken us two years to complete, but we did it in one year.

Our training was mainly staff and officer training, which included military training. In fact, it had all the subjects you can think of in military science. In other words, they gave us what they regard as fundamental in military training. The other aspect of our training was that of budget. The countries which gave us training facilities could not publicly allocate funds for our training because of their own and our own security. So, small sums of money had to be secretly set aside; therefore only limited numbers could be trained this way. Moreover these countries were training for many more countries which were fighting the liberation wars. If you were training this side of the bush you could safely guess there were other groups from other countries which were under going military training also on the other side of the bush. We were of course never mixed and so we never knew how many groups were involved.

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(47) Interview with Mbulawa Moshe Noko by Prof. Bhebe, (Nyabezi Communal Lands) 29 December 1989.

Our training equipped us for both guerrilla and regular warfare, so part of our syllabus dealt with guerrilla warfare and part of it with conventional warfare. Because the two cannot be divorced, they are complimentary. If you are trained in guerrilla warfare, you have to know that you are going to meet in the field an army which is trained in conventional warfare, so that you must know the later. You have to know the tactics and strategies, the equipment, movement, etc which are peculiar to conventional warfare. In as much as the conventional warfare personnel has to know guerrilla warfare because you can only fight something that you know.

By 1965, however, all those who had been sent for initial training were back, so that nearly 40 to 60 trained ZAPU combatants were ready for deployment. But first, they needed to deliberate on strategy:

[Some] wanted us to use the Castro method-viz, the whole group to go into the country and start carrying operations in the country and train people inside the country, so that we could enlarge our army that way. Others felt that no operations should be undertaken right away. Instead, we should send few people into the country to go and recruit more cadres in the country and bring them out for training. That process to be continued and maintained until we had a sizeable army after which we could then start the operations.

A third school of thought advocated for the setting up of a command system, have rear bases and headquarters in Zambia, which would send some people into the country, charged with the task of recruiting more cadres and where possible carry out limited operations. This view received more support than any other view and this was what we recommended to the leadership (James Chikerema, J.Z. Moyo, Edward Ndlovu, Silunduka and George Nyandoro, and later Jane Ngwenya). They accepted our recommendations and asked us to form our command structure, which we did.<sup>48</sup>

Akim Ndlovu became the first commander of this new set up, which was simply known as the Special Affairs Department. The hierarchy was still rudimentary, but had various offices such as Chief of Staff, Chief of Reconnaissance, and so on. They decided on a prompt programme of action to cross into Zimbabwe and launch operations. Dumiso Dabengwa, who was the Chief of Reconnaissance, set about identifying points along the Zambezi between Kazungula right up to Feira, suitable for infiltrating cadres into Zimbabwe. Initial assistance was obtained from Zambian fishermen, who supplied dugout canoes for a small fee. Through these, light ammunition and cadres were ferried across the Zambezi to carry out limited operations and to identify active members of the party. According to Dabengwa,

We crossed them at the rate of two people at a time. Their task was to recruit people and where possible carry out some limited operations. The armaments they got were very light armaments; in certain cases a chap had just a pistol with ammunition. In other cases, it was a small submachine gun with ammunition. This was for their defence in case during operations they met the enemy forces who would fire at them. Their

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(48) Interview with Dumiso Dabengwa by Prof. Bhebe, (Bulawayo) 1 December 1989.

mission was to get into the country, to get into certain points, to certain people whom we knew were still active members of the party; get to them and work with them on recruiting and sending people outside.<sup>49</sup>

By the summer of 1965, much of the groundwork had been done and so too had the number of recruits increased. ZAPU felt confident to send into the Mana Pools area two groups, which went in two separate ways via Chirundu and the area east of the Victoria Falls. Although relatively few in number (each group not exceeding a section or 8 men each), they had instructions to identify targets and launch surprise attacks and retreat into the wild bush. The Chirundu group was exposed to the enemy due to the unsuitability of the terrain of the Zambezi escarpment; they were also unable to make quick contact with the local population which was sparsely distributed in this area. A number of them were killed or captured, but a few made it back and established contact with the other group. The Falls group was successful in crossing and infiltrating the local population, but grew complacent and was exposed by local informers. They were also attacked and lost some men. ZAPU considered these operations a strategic failure, which forced them to rethink.

## 1965-1970

### ZAPU's New Strategy: 'The Castro Approach' of 1966

In 1966, a new strategy was proposed taking into account the previous mistakes. First, ZAPU refocused its energies on consolidating all its trained personnel and re-training all those trained abroad to adapt to the demands of the local war situation. After this, the cadres would be deployed according to the 'Castro Approach', i.e. deploying as many men as possible who would work quietly inside the country recruiting and carrying out local training. They would then only go into specific military action after reporting back to the Headquarters in Lusaka indicating their readiness to do so.<sup>50</sup>

The first part of the programme, according to Mbulawa Noko, was to take out of hiding those trained personnel in the various villages, farms, and private houses, and bring them together under one command structure to spell out an operational plan. The second part was a consideration influenced by the ongoing negotiations between ZAPU and the South African ANC to undertake joint military operations. Noko reveals:

We began to regroup our forces at Nkomo Camp, which was in a farm of one of the supporters called Matyenyika Ndlovu. He was roughly 25km from Lusaka. This is where our first big group was assembled and it was later mixed together for a thorough rehearsal with the ANC. This was the joint group which later on crossed into Zimbabwe

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<sup>(49)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(50)</sup> Ibid.

in 1967, through Wankie with the instructions that they were going to penetrate into the country as deep as possible, before they broke apart into smaller units and also to give the necessary cover for the ANC *Umkonto we Sizwe* as it proceeded to South Africa.<sup>51</sup>

The chapter returns to the ANC/ZAPU activities at a later stage, but first it should be emphasized that all these military activities were, in part, a product of the mutation and transformation of the nationalist struggle into a revolutionary armed struggle. It was also a bold reaction to the hardened position assumed by the Rhodesian Front symbolised by the UDI. The other implications of the UDI to the general socio-political situation obtaining in Rhodesia and how this in-turn influenced developments thereafter are also worth considering.

### **The UDI: International and Local Implications**

Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965 had serious international implications for indeed the key matter became its recognition. The legality of the matter rested with the mother country, Britain, whose immediate response, in tandem with the United Nations Security Council, was to declare sanctions, a total ban on trade with Rhodesia, and an oil embargo. The British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, hoped to end the rebellion "within months, if not weeks" through economic sanctions, rather than by military force. This failed to bring down the rebel regime as expected, but instead gave way to long drawn out negotiations on warships (*Tiger* 1966 and *Fearless* 1968) and emissaries shuttling on endless missions between London and Salisbury. In the end, this process succeeded in softening Britain's hard line stance, providing the Rhodesians with guarantees of military non-intervention, giving way to an increasing tendency by Britain to bend over backwards to appease the same rebels it was meant to contain.<sup>52</sup> Naturally the RF felt more confident to proceed with its plans than ever before, especially given that some of its sanctions-busting projects were paying dividends. The result was the 1969 Republican Constitution.

British policy largely shaped that of other western nations. The USA, which was nursing wounds from its nearly disastrous foreign policy in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, was keen to compensate for this on the domestic scene by improving race relations. In his speeches, the outspoken Afro-American activist, Malcolm X, linked American racism to the US support for white supremacist regimes in southern Africa. The connection was not helped by the fact that Malcolm X was assassinated a week after a speech he made in London advocating for the overthrow of Ian Smith.<sup>53</sup> If it imposed sanctions, the USA stood to lose nearly 20% of the high quality chrome ore that it imported from Rhodesia, which would mean a heavy reliance on Soviet chrome at the peak of the Cold War. According to Andrew DeRoche, President Lyndon Johnson developed no concrete plan towards Smith

(51) Interview with Mbulawa Moshe Noko by Prof. Bhebe, (Nyabezi Communal Lands) 29 December 1989.

(52) Moorcraft, P. *A Short Thousand Years: The End of Rhodesia's Rebellion*. Salisbury: Galaxie Press, 1979: See p.24.

(53) DeRoche, A. *Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe 1953-1998*. Asmara: Africa World Press, 2001: See p.104.

and the UDI except to follow behind and offer diplomatic support for British policy. This set the tone for future American policy towards Rhodesia, until the more active interventionism of the Kissinger years discussed below. Meanwhile, another economic factor made America even more anxious; the inclination of the Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda to participate fully in the sanctions against Rhodesia, which in practice would halt the flow of copper (if Smith's channels via South Africa were to be closed in retaliation) and raise the price of copper, which was badly needed in the USA. Such a price increase would force the American market to turn to aluminium, a move that would further distort the market price of copper, even in Zambia itself. After a threat by African leaders to sever ties with Britain and their self-evident act of walking out in protest when Harold Wilson addressed the UN General Assembly, the USA supported an oil embargo against Rhodesia by providing planes to airlift oil for Zambia until the country built a pipeline from Dar es Salaam to the Copperbelt in 1968.<sup>54</sup> These actions were designed to protect US interests in Zambian copper. From 1969, the policy went a step further when the new Nixon administration introduced exceptions to the ban on minerals that could be imported from Rhodesia; chief amongst these were petalite (a rare lithium-bearing mineral) and chrome, controlled by a US company, Union Carbide, with an 80% stake in Rhodesian chrome. The 1971 Byrd Amendment allowed for the importation into the USA of "any strategic mineral being imported from a communist country"<sup>55</sup>. This way the USA renewed its imports of chrome, nickel, and other materials from Rhodesia. Subsequent US policy towards Rhodesia was informed by other unfolding regional and international developments affecting US relations with other countries, in particular the 'Tar Baby' option which envisaged the longevity of white rule in southern Africa, while at the same time recognising nationalist aspirations for self-rule, and *détente* or ceasefire as it was being implemented by the USA towards the Soviet Union. Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State under the Gerald Ford administration, was to fully pursue this policy.<sup>56</sup>

In other western countries, several factors worked in favour of the African nationalist struggle in Rhodesia. In Germany, the Berlin Wall had gone up on 13 August 1961, dividing West Germany and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) along capitalist and socialist lines respectively. In its search for new friends and in its desire to secure a peace treaty between the allied powers of the second World War and the two German states, the GDR saw African liberation movements as important allies. It therefore set up a solidarity committee and went on to open an 'Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the GDR in the United Arab Republic' in Egypt to facilitate links with the liberation movements. Initial contacts were established with the ANC in Rhodesia and later its successor, the NDP, resulting in the first visit to the GDR by the NDP vice-president, Morton Malianga, in April

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(54) Ibid. pp. 124, 126, 128.

(55) Ibid. p.171.

(56) Moorcraft. *A Short Thousand Years*: See pp.38-39.

1961. With time, however, the growing conflict in the 'world revolutionary movement' between the USSR and the Eastern Block countries on the one hand and China on the other meant that the GDR's assistance became more directed to ZAPU, rather than to its splinter movement ZANU, which leaned toward China.<sup>57</sup>

In the Nordic countries, the response was quite varied. Sweden's official position on sanctions in general and support for Zimbabwean liberation movements in particular was dictated by the UN Declaration on Decolonisation of December 1960, which made the 'Rhodesian question' part of the larger independence process in Africa engendered by this declaration. More significantly, in May 1969, the Swedish Parliament endorsed a unilateral decision to support African liberation movements, and, the following month, ZANU became the first beneficiary in southern Africa of its humanitarian assistance.<sup>58</sup> With time its relationship with other movements grew enough to make Sweden the leading Nordic supporter of Zimbabwean liberation. Meanwhile, Norwegian support changed with successive governments. The Liberal- Conservative party, which ruled Norway from 1965 to 1971, showed as little interest in developments in Rhodesia as in those within Europe itself. It dragged its feet in implementing the sanctions. On its side was the far right socialist party, the *Anders Lange's* party formed in 1973 which subscribed to the *laissez-faire* view that trade should not be restricted in anyway, hence its sympathies for the Rhodesian regime. When Smith declared the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, Sweden and Finland immediately broke ties with the Rhodesian government, but Norway waited. It followed upon the US principle, which resulted in the unilateral lifting of sanctions on Rhodesian chrome in 1973. Under these circumstances, Norway maintained its honorary consulate in Salisbury. On the other side of the political spectrum, Finn Gunstavsén, representing the Socialist People's Party, was the single most important advocate for majority rule in Rhodesia.<sup>59</sup> More generally anti-imperialist opinions and direct anti-Rhodesian sentiments were expressed by specific individuals within the Norwegian government, all of which culminated in the UN/OAU conference on the African liberation struggle held in Oslo in 1973. At this conference the Norwegian government, for the first time, called for applications from the liberation movements for funds, although in practice Norway never ceased to stress the importance of finding peaceful solutions for Rhodesia. By 1974, the first tranche of money amounting to 200,000 Kronor was released to be shared equally between ZAPU and ZANU; by 1979, the figure had increased to nearly 8,000,000 Kronor.<sup>60</sup>

(57) Schleicher, H.G. and I. Schleicher. *Special Flights: The GDR and Liberation Movements in Southern Africa*. Harare: SAPES Books, 1998: See pp.92-95.

(58) Sellstrom, T. *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa, Volume II: Solidarity and Assistance 1970-1994*. See pp.153, 156.

(59) Lorenz, W. "Norway and 'Rhodesia': 1965-1980." L.T. Eriksen, ed. *Norway and National Liberation in Southern Africa*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000. See p.180.

(60) *Ibid.* p.183. Only one grant was made to the Muzorewa led ANC in 1977.

Finland was less ambivalent. In the years before 1973, the Finnish government did not seek to be involved with liberation movements in southern Africa. It had kept a low profile in its international policy since joining the UN in 1956. Instead, it was the Finnish civil society that took the lead in calling for action against human rights abuses in southern Africa. Finland fulfilled the trade embargo obligations determined by the UN, and passed a law forbidding trade with Rhodesia in 1967. It stood to lose nothing since its trade relations with Rhodesia were negligible anyway. Finland resolved to maintain a ‘do not disturb’ policy, which emphasised that Finland was not supposed to be involved in world politics, especially in matters that could jeopardise trading relations with other super powers. It therefore treated the Rhodesian question as an internal issue.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, when ZAPU sought support from Finland in 1972, the answer was that the Finnish government did not support violent activities. The Finnish government had not reached the decision of principle at the time and no aid to any liberation movement was authorised. ZANU and the ANC requested funds several times, but nothing materialised.<sup>62</sup>

### **The Rhodesian Response to International Sanctions, 1965-1970s**

The Rhodesians did not take these international developments lying down. Immediate and long term measures were taken promptly to ensure survival under the socio-political circumstances. As mentioned already, the British hoped to use sanctions to bring the Rhodesian rebels to book in a short while. Much of the responsibility for sanctions-busting was borne by the Rhodesian Air Force which often employed ‘devious means’ to overcome most of the challenges brought to bear.<sup>63</sup> By the early 1970s, sanctions-busting was a fully established part of local industrial growth in which the Rhodesian government invested a lot of resources. However, much credit should be given to Jack V. Malloch, the owner of a successful Rhodesian private airline company *Air Trans-Africa (Pvt) Ltd*, which began with only one aircraft, a *Douglas DC7 CF* built from cannibalising two such aircraft. Through its primary role as a sanctions-busting machine, Malloch went on to build up a fleet of six aircraft, amongst them, long range cargo planes. These, coupled with the fleet already in the possession of the Rhodesian Air Force, rendered sanctions ineffective even with the withdrawal of South African air support in the mid 1970s under increasing diplomatic pressure from the USA.

The Rhodesian Air Force adopted various guises so as to conceal the operations of Malloch’s aircraft. Due to the fact that the name *Air Trans-Africa* was already known outside Rhodesia, they used other names as alternatives. One was *Affretair* registered in Libreville, the capital of Gabon; the other was *Cargoman*, set up in

(61) Soiri, I. and P. Peltola. *Finland and National Liberation in Southern Africa*. Uppsala: Nodiska Afrkainstitutet, 1999. See p.135.

(62) *Ibid.* p.134.

(63) Cowderoy, D. and R.C. Nesbit. *War in the Air: Rhodesian Air Force 1935-1980*. Alberton: Galago Publishing Ltd, 1987: See p.85.

Muscat, a major town on the Arabian Gulf, with their offices in the suburb of Seeb. These networks were also extended to Oman, known to have little sympathies for southern African liberation movements after what they perceived as the takeover of Zanzibar by Tanzania.

With the assistance of Jack Malloch, the Rhodesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a low key diplomatic presence in Libreville and later on in Abidjan. This presence, according to Henrick Ellert, led to the Rhodesians getting orders for planeloads of beef, clothing, textiles, shoes, and fresh produce going through Libreville.<sup>64</sup> Rhodesian beef, rated far much higher than Scottish beef, was the major export, which was supported by various veterinary certificates issued in Swaziland, supplied through a contact in that country.<sup>65</sup> Other exports included oranges, grapefruit, and vegetables, some of which were grown on the estate at Mazoe, which was run by the British South Africa Company using the most modern techniques. A greater quantity of these fruits came from the new estates in Chiredzi in the Sabi Valley, where citrus was grown under irrigation on a large scale. The fruit was

stamped with the trade names 'Outspan' or 'Jaffa', depending on which name was more favoured in the country of destination. Willard's potato crisps were also exported to the Arab world. Tobacco, even though it was a major export, was transported by rail or road to South Africa and by sea to the wholesalers. This high quality Virginia blend was in demand by manufacturers throughout the world, particularly in Britain. Jack Malloch's fleet also provided large scale logistic support to the Biafrans during the Nigerian civil war. The Rhodesians capitalised on this opportunity to benefit from Nigerian petroleum products.<sup>66</sup>

## The Intensification of the Struggle after the UDI

### *The 1966 ZANLA Chinhoyi Battle*

The 'Chinhoyi Battle' in April 1966, involving seven Zanla freedom fighters killed in a pitched battle with Rhodesian forces near Sinoia, features prominently in Zimbabwe's popular memory of the war. Described by Martin and Johnson as the deepest penetration in this phase by any guerrilla group, the battle took place near the town of Sinoia on 28 April 1966.<sup>67</sup> The group had been infiltrated into the country as part of a gang of about 20. They were supposed to divide into three teams. According to Cowderoy and Nesbit, two of the teams were ordered to cut power lines and attack white farmers. The third was to attack and occupy the small town of Sinoia.<sup>68</sup> One of the first two teams killed a white farmer and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Viljoen.

(64) Ellert, H. *The Rhodesian Front War: Counter-insurgency and guerrilla warfare 1962-1980*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993: See p.163.

(65) Ibid.

(66) Ibid.

(67) Martin, D. and P. Johnson. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*. London: Monthly Review Press, 1981: See p.10.

(68) Cowderoy, D. and R.C. Nesbit. *War in the Air: Rhodesian Air Force 1935-1980*. Alberton RSA: Galago, 1987: See p.43.

Both of these teams attempted to blow up a number of electricity pylons without much success. Eventually an informer betrayed their presence to the BSAP and all the men were arrested.<sup>69</sup> The other group, consisting of Simon Chimbodza, Godwin Manyerere, Christopher Chatambudza, Nathan Charumuka, Ephraim Shenjere, David Guzuzu, and another one only identified as Peter, made a camp on a farm owned by Noel Edwards.<sup>70</sup> Two of the freedom fighters went into Chinhoyi village to contact a ZANU official. They made several such visits, but, in the end, their presence was betrayed by an undercover police man.<sup>71</sup>

It is interesting to note how the Rhodesians responded to this incursion as a purely police matter, which did warrant a military reaction. The Commissioner of Police did not even ask or consider asking for assistance from the army. He did, however, call on the Royal Rhodesian Air Force to assist. On 27 April 1966, four helicopters of 7-Squadron were called out to assist the police during the operation. Two were given immediate tasks, while the other two were put on standby. These were civilian versions of the Alouette III mounted with a MAG 7,62mm machinegun, the standard NATO gun manufactured in Belgium and firing 850 rounds per minute.<sup>72</sup> This superior firepower, coupled with the fact that the freedom fighters' plan had already been given away, made them an easy target for the Rhodesian police, who shot them to the last man.

The Chinhoyi battle, despite being a failure, overshadows all previous armed activities, including contacts by ZIPRA commandos with Rhodesian Forces in Nkayi Reserve the previous month.<sup>73</sup> It appears ZIPRA had begun well before 1965 to secretly deploy military personnel in the country. The battle's popularity is practically a product of Rhodesian publicity as much as ZANU took advantage of this to declare formal entry into the battlefield. However, the collections by Kees Maxey and the Fabian Bureau papers show evidence that, in July and August and later in September of the same year, ZAPU infiltrated four and six groups respectively through the northeast at Gonono, splitting at Mt. Darwin to go to Mtoko and Salisbury; all were intercepted and arrested, and their trials were well recorded in the Rhodesian Herald.<sup>74</sup>

### *The 1967 ZAPU/ANC 'Wankie/Spolilo Campaigns'*

As mentioned earlier, ZAPU's new strategy involved retraining and regrouping its forces in the context of its negotiations with the ANC of South Africa. The leaders of the two parties decided to pool their forces together to confront the alliance

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(69) *Ibid.*, p.43.

(70) Martin and Johnson, p.10.

(71) Ellert, H. *The Rhodesian Front War: Counter-insurgency and guerrilla warfare in 1962 -1980*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993: See p.11.

(72) This is the weapon that was to wreck havoc amongst the freedom fighters of the 1970s; it was popularly known as the 'NATO'.

(73) Keesing's Contemporary Archives 21421.

(74) Maxey, Kees. *The Fight for Zimbabwe: The Armed Conflict in Southern Rhodesia since UDI*. London: Rex Collings, 1975: See p.58, 60.

between South Africa, Rhodesia, and Portugal in Mozambique. Oliver Tambo and James Chikerema made it very clear that they shared common enemies, a situation which required liberation movements in southern Africa to form a joint front. Under the auspices of this alliance, ZAPU and the ANC launched two major campaigns into the Wankie and Spolilo areas in 1967. The details of this campaign have been well elaborated in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*.<sup>75</sup> Other scholars who have analysed these campaigns have described them as yet another lesson in strategic failure.<sup>76</sup> Naturally, those involved tend to blame each other for the shortcomings. The following account presents the ZAPU side of the story.

In 1967, our aim was to send a large group of men into the western part of the country, who would then split into smaller units of one section each and spread out into the western part of the country. As we were working on that strategy, the ANC came in and said look we are having problems sending our men through Botswana; they got intercepted, arrested, and turned back. Moreover, we are now aware that the South African forces are assisting the Rhodesians in tracking your own guerrillas and we don't see any reason why we should not send in our men through the fighting zone of Zimbabwe. If they get involved in any clashes, they will be clashing with the South African forces. Rather than clash with them in South Africa, they might first as well clash with them as they enter the Rhodesian territory. So they asked if they could send a unit of their men with our men with the purpose of going with our men right up to the South African Border, so that they could cross the Limpopo into their own country. In other words, they were asking for transit facilities. This was negotiated with the leadership and the leadership gave a green light. Comrade Chikerema said he didn't see any reason why they shouldn't be given a transit facility. We then worked out a programme and sent these men. It was a platoon, which is about 30 ANC men, and the rest were ZAPU guerrillas. ZAPU sent in about two platoons, that when they got to the Park they were to separate into small units with some spreading out into the Wankie Communal area, a group going through to the Lupane Area, another group would move with the ANC men and remain in Tsholotsho, and the last group, which was destined for Kezi and Gwanda, was going to proceed with the ANC and see them through right up to Limpopo and then come back to their operational areas. And they would choose to operate in Kezi, Gwanda, or Beitbridge: this was a matter of detail which they had the liberty to decide on.

The ZAPU unit was supposed, therefore, to be split into four: one group in Hwange Area, the 2nd group proceeding to Lupane, and the 3rd group in the Tsholotsho area, and the 4th group based in the Gwanda area, that is this group that was going to see the ANC platoon across the Limpopo. They would remain in their sections of about two each with about fifteen men in each area. The instructions from the headquarters to these men were again to recruit, to train locally or inside the country, and wherever possible they were to look for targets which were within their means of attack and the

(75) Ranilala, Rendani Moses et.al. "Chapter 12: The Wankie and Spolilo Campaigns." SADET. *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*. Pretoria: Zebra Press, 2004.

(76) Bhebe, N. *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo, 1999.

targets should be away from their bases, which they could hit and disappear and travel perhaps for two days to their bases, so that they didn't give the enemy the opportunity to start looking for them in the areas where the attack would have been made.

They had fared very well, until they started separating into these small units, when unfortunately some people became careless. For instance the ANC comrade said he is not prepared to move into Johannesburg, in South Africa, and he was going to the road, either to stop a car or do anything to secure that car in order to use it to travel to the border of Zimbabwe and South Africa. At this border he would abandon the car, cross the border. How he did this we don't know. But this particular comrade got a lift and his weapons so that they were not seen by the owners of this car, and managed to go as far as Bulawayo. In Bulawayo, he stole a motorcycle which he was going to use to travel to Plumtree border post. However the owner of the motor cycle raised the alarm by reporting the disappearance of his property to the police. The police started looking for the motorcycle and to set roadblocks on the roads leading to the border areas and the comrade was intercepted. He exchanged fire with the police, but was overwhelmed and captured by the Rhodesian police.

Some of the men became careless and left foot prints in the Wankie Game Reserve and the game ranchers spotted the footprints and immediately reported to the security forces. This led to an encounter in the national park. A big fight took place there. There were heavy loses on both sides. The enemy lost substantially, and we also sustained heavy losses. Most of our men then scattered out. A number of them led by J. Dube (he was one of the commanders) thought the situation was too much for them and decided to cross over to Botswana together with the ANC comrades and to stay there so that they could map out the fourth strategy of how to get back into the country. But in the process of doing that, they ran into the Botswana police, who stopped them. And our instruction to our own forces was that they should never have any confrontation with the Botswana police.

So when they were asked by the Botswana police to stop and surrender their weapons, they did so sheepishly as per instruction from the headquarters. They were arrested and had to spend some time in the Botswana prisons. Some of the men who escaped from the Wankie battle went into the communal areas, where they disappeared into the rural population and lay low for sometime after hiding their ammunition. Later on, they were able to communicate with us in Zambia.

At the beginning of 1968, our next strategy was to do a similar operation in the north eastern parts of the country. This time it was through the Mana Pools area. Again we had almost a similar contingent as the last one and still with a platoon of ANC friends who were in transit to the Limpopo. This operation was actually more successful than the Wankie one because we were more prepared for it. By way of preparation, our reconnaissance team plus a few of our comrades actually including those of the ANC crossed with the men and went to stay with the men for three months inside the country. We pushed through right up the Spolilo area. Lots of ammunition was taken in and lots of stores of food and clothing were taken in. The idea this time was that these men were going on a similar mission as that of the last group, but they had to recruit on a bigger scale and they had a better rear base created for them so that they should not rely only on the local population. But that they should have a stronger back of food, arms, etc. So we created a lot of ammunition dumps in the area, right from the Zambezi up to almost Spolilo Escarpment. We went on pushing in and it was going

to be a continuous exercise, in which we on the Zambian side would continue to send in supplies and we had already mapped out areas for storage. All the fighting people needed to do was to send back their men to come and get what had been put in the stores. It was going to be a continuous plan and it was well thought out.

Again the same mistakes as happened before were committed. The men had started spreading out into various areas where they had been instructed. For instance, there was a group supposed to go to the Kariba area, we had a group commanded for Bindura area, a group which was to go to Chinhoyi (including the Msengezi area), and we had a group which was to move in the Mazoe area where we thought there would be good targets.

The groups had started splitting up, so that the Bindura group had started moving to its areas and the Kariba group was in the process of moving to its area. But two comrades went into the Hunyani River and when they came back, they forgot to cover their footprints. The footprints were those of the famous eight, when you stepped on the ground it left a mark shaped almost like the figure 8. The game ranchers who were patrolling the area saw the footprints and they decided to follow the track of the prints. When they approached the base, they saw the terrible and massive weaponry. They saw anti-aircraft weapons, which were all trailed around the camp. So they went back and raised the alarm.

On that day, the Rhodesian television called upon every territorial member to report to base and the Rhodesians mounted all the arsenals they could lay their hands on. Gunships, helicopters, spatter planes, etc and the following day they prepared to attack when our men were completely unaware that they were spotted by the enemy. But when the commander of the base noticed the helicopter which kept on hovering around them, they realised that they had been spotted. At that stage he decided that spreading the men out would not be the most appropriate thing to do. He decided at any rate to send some smaller units away. He decided that the main unit, which was the strongest comprising of eighty men, remain at the base. They evacuated their shelters, which they had been using and did not destroy them, but left some smoking fire going on to give the impression that they were still inside the shelters. They retreated backwards, almost 5 km, having worked out that the enemy would mount his attack from the front. They took positions ready to defend the base. Towards afternoon the enemy came.

First the bombers came and they showered the camp with bombs. The shelters were destroyed to shreds while the trees around were cut into pieces, and they did not realise they were bombing empty shelters, which had been evacuated. Soon after that the ground forces came in to carry out some moping up operations, but as they came through and moved through the base, they soon realised that the base was empty. It was only then that they noticed the footprints which were left deliberately clearly marked so that they could pursue the freedom fighters to their well defended positions. As the enemy got nearer, the freedom fighters initiated the attack and fierce fighting ensued, during which our men accounted very well for themselves. We realised some substantial loses on the side of the enemy. When it got dusk, it was time to carry out a prepared plan of escape. The commander had already issued instructions on evacuation and how they would spread out into smaller groups. So the whole of that night they carried out that strategy and moved in smaller groups into various areas. But the enemy had launched almost the whole battalion and they were bombing the whole

of that area, with helicopters, with armoured vehicles, etc, so that a number of men fell into enemy ambushes. Some of them got captured, others got killed, but some of them managed to break through the enemy lines and to shelter among the rural people. They remained there for a long time and up to 1969, we were still getting communication from our men telling us that they were still sheltering with the rural people. They were telling us of their running out of ammunition and that they were staying low, so that if you want to contact us we are at such and such points. So the Spolilo operations were stretching into 1969. So those were our two experiences and big operations in the 1960s, which we carried out in conjunction with our ANC colleagues who were seeking routes through Zimbabwe to South Africa. At that stage, it was felt at the headquarters in Lusaka that our strategy needed reconsideration with a view to making corrections of our mistakes of army, to also look at our recruitment and personnel strength. It was at that stage, that differences began to arise within the leadership. J.Z. Moyo within the executive raised up some criticism about the way certain operations were carried out, and unfortunately Chikerema wouldn't listen to those criticisms and replied by taking decision to suspend all those who raised criticism against him.

We certainly did have that in our training. We were taught how to organise the masses in order to rally them in support of the liberation struggle. And this we did from the early stages of the war. Our men were only able to get assistance from the population, to be supplied food by the population, to be accorded safe conduct through out this movement, to be able to get information about enemy forces, and in certain places to be able to be accommodated by the population and made the people aware of the need and the necessity to assist the war effort. So we did politicise the masses. Of course, to a very large extent when we got to the people, we found that they had long been politicised.

We did not want and as ZAPU we avoided trying to bring the ideological question to the population. We decided to leave that to the political leadership. We thought that it would be wrong for us at that stage to start discussing seriously issues like socialism or ideological concepts of that nature with the population. All we did was to tell them about our appreciation of what socialist countries were doing, how they had organised their social-economic life, but without pushing it too hard on the people.

### **‘The Temporary Lull’ or Is It?**

Retired General Zvinvashe has complained about historians who have continuously perpetuated the erroneous view that after the ‘Chinhoyi’ and ‘Wankie and Spolilo’ battles, hostilities ceased. His view is that such a presentation of the struggle ignores, not only the many campaigns ZAPU and ZANU launched across the Zambezi into colonial Rhodesia during the late sixties up to 1970, but also pays very little attention to the enormous recruitment efforts the two parties mounted in both Zambia and Rhodesia in order to replenish their forces. Relating his own personal life in Zambia and his eventual entry into the struggle, Gen. Zvinvashe drew attention to the large population of people in Zambia at the time, who had moved there as a result of the Central African Federation and to evade the UDI. These formed the bulk of the first recruits normally press-ganged into the fledgling guerrilla armies. Report Mphoko, a member of the first ZIPRA High Command has availed an authoritative

account which details ‘Operation Chikuwa’, a strategy used to recruit in Zambia in the early 1960s:

When ZAPU was preparing for the major military offensives in Wankie, it was felt that personnel for reinforcements were not enough, and very few people were joining the liberation army. The command then decided on forced conscription of Zimbabwean nationals based in Zambia. The recruitment drive was code named ‘operation *chikuwa*’ (a Swahili word, ‘take’). The Operation was spread throughout the Zambian Copperbelt, Lusaka, Mubwa, and the Southern Provinces, led by selected commanders. My sector of operation was around Lusaka, including Kamwala, Mandevu, and Kafue. In my team there was an old district party organiser called Kenneth Nyamupingidze, who knew most Zimbabweans in Lusaka; because he once worked with Amos Ngwenya in the province, Moffat Sikhosana, who was an instructor in Morogoro training camp in Tanzania; and Mncedisi, a Morogoro graduate. Nyamupingidze pointed at a certain house in Mandevu belonging to a Mr. Kingstone. Operation Chikuwa was already the talk of town. When Nyamupingidze knocked the door, Kingstone responded in Nyanja ‘*Ni Ndani?*’....*Kulipe Kingstone Apa?*

We insisted that he should open the door. He then shouted ‘*Kawalala Kuno*’. Normally in Zambia, if a *Kawalala* cry is made, neighbours come in no time to mete out instant justice, but because they were aware of ‘Operation Chikuwa’, Kingstone could not be assisted.<sup>77</sup>

ZANU had secured a base in Zambia in 1965 at a farm, a few kilometres out of Lusaka, but also suffered a shortage of recruits. It frequently turned to the Zimbabweans in Zambia, who had settled to a successful peasant life in the Mumbwa area. There were very few volunteers and, like ZAPU, ZANU resorted to conscription or luring students to Zimbabwe with false promises of scholarships.<sup>78</sup> ZANU apparently capitalised on the ‘break up’ of ZIPRA after the ‘Wankie-Spolilo Campaign’ disaster, which saw the desertion of a number of recruits suspicious of the negligent leadership of the ‘old-style’ politicians in ZAPU.<sup>79</sup> In addition to this, there was a group of intelligentsia based at the University of Zambia who operated study groups under the auspices of ZANU, amongst them Dzingai Mutumbuka, Fay Chung, Simbi Mubako, and Sam Geza.

Returning to Gen. Zvinvashe’s assertion, the impression of a cessation of hostilities goes against the large number of trials of guerrillas intercepted by Rhodesian Forces in this period. *The Rhodesian Herald* carried reports of not less than fifteen cases of guerrilla groups between 1968 and 1969. In December 1969, ten trained ZANLA guerrillas infiltrated the Zambezi to undertake reconnaissance exercises, which they reported back after a month to Lusaka. By July 1970, some of these guerrillas were attached to the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), operating in the Tete Province, including amongst others Mayor Urimbo and Justin Chauke.<sup>80</sup>

(77) Mphoko, Phelekezela (Report). “The Joint Military Command: Mbeya Tanzania March 1972 and the Zimbabwe People’s Army, September 1975.” Unpublished mimeo.

(78) Josiah Tungamirai, a victim of this trick, describes his experience in detail in Makari, C. *Magamba eChimurenga: Josiah Tungamirai*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 2003. See Chapter 10.

(79) Chung, F. *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*. See p.78.

(80) Martin, D. and P. Johnson. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*. London: Monthly Review Press, 1981: See pp.26-27.

ZAPU delivered some very important military achievements in January 1970. On the 3rd of January, ZAPU freedom fighters attacked a patrol boat full of Rhodesian security forces in the Zambezi River.<sup>81</sup> Although the exact number of officers killed in this incident was unknown, the boat and some of the dead bodies were reportedly still floating on the river on 19th.<sup>82</sup> ZAPU forces once again ambushed a contingent of Rhodesian troops in the arid and rocky Makuti region, killing at least three and wounding several others. In a short while, ZAPU guerrillas raided a military camp and an airport in the Victoria Falls - Wankie area and killed 13 whites; eight of these were killed at the military camp and five at the airport.<sup>83</sup> The raids were conducted simultaneously. The airport raid also resulted in two helicopters and one light airplane being damaged. Pretoria again quickly reacted to Smith's calls for help and dispatched more military personnel to Rhodesia to help those already serving there. This time, Vorster flew 700 troops to Bulawayo, whence they were sent forward to the affected areas.

On January 21st, a contingent of ZAPU guerrillas ambushed a Rhodesian troop vehicle northwest of Bulawayo, killing seven.<sup>84</sup> Three days later, another Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR) truck was ambushed in the same area, killing four RF troops on board, including the platoon commander, A.J. Brading.<sup>85</sup> Many more members of this platoon were wounded and were left by some of their colleagues, who disappeared into the thick forests. More contacts were reported southwest of Salisbury on January 26th and at Kadoma on the 29th.<sup>86</sup>

Most of these activities have gone unrecorded, giving the impression that nothing was happening. Indeed James Chikerema was getting overconfident regarding this initial success, to the point of bringing film crews in the Zambezi to capture some of these activities on location. This action became the basis of the differences that brought about the ZAPU Crisis and the subsequent splits of 1971.

## 1970-1975

### The ZAPU Internal Crisis and FROLIZI, 1970-72

The internal crisis in ZAPU occurred in the wider context of the detention of most political leaders during the late 1960s and 1970s. Actual events leading to the crisis arose, as some allege, from the ANC/ZAPU alliance in which James Chikerema emerged not only isolated, but also answerable only unto himself, bypassing party protocol. Apparently, the source of the conflict appears to have emerged during the joint ZAPU/ANC campaigns when Chikerema invited a BBC television crew to film the freedom fighters while crossing the Zambezi River, a move which exposed them

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(81) *Zimbabwe Review*, Vol.2, No.3/4, 1970.

(82) *Ibid.*

(83) *Ibid.*

(84) *Ibid.*

(85) *Ibid.*

(86) *Ibid.*

to positive identification by the Smith regime. There have been strong suggestions that the emergent divisions were deeply tribal, culminating in three splinter factions: the 'Dengeze' group loyal to Jason Moyo, the 'Murehwa Society' loyal to James Chikerema, and the 'Soul Brothers', a non-aligned group. A group led by Walter Mthimkulu, Matsikidze Gutu, and Gershom Pangwana resolved to arrest the squabbling parties, resulting in mayhem that earned them the name *Mhondi* (killers). This group was disarmed by the Zambian police, and everybody was sent to Mboroma Camp, divided according to their specific groups. It was here that Chikerema also dissolved the existing party National Executive Committee, demoting J.Z. Moyo from Treasurer General to a farm manager. This sealed his fate as widespread opposition to his leadership of the party grew. As a result of this crisis, Report Mphokorecalls:

...all combat operations in Rhodesia were suspended. ZAPU was not allowed by the Zambian government, at the request of James Chikerema, to bring into Zambia its recruits from Botswana on transit up north for military training. Trained personnel from up north were not allowed entry into Zambia en route to Rhodesia. ZAPU was not allowed to handle or transport weapons of war on the Zambian soil.

The recruits who were already in Zambia were deported back to Rhodesia, including people like Nicholas Nkomo and others. On arrival in Rhodesia, the deportees were subjected to severe police and Special Branch interrogation under torture with offers and options made to them. In the group of recruits that were deported to Rhodesia were two trained guerrillas, who operated during the Wankie operations. They included Voil Kophotsha and Ngcobo. On arrival in Rhodesia, the two were immediately arrested, tried, and sentenced to death.

Chikerema, with the help of the Mtimkulu group, succeeded in arresting most of the members of the ZAPU Executive and throwing them into detention at Mboroma, where they were not allowed by the Zambian government to move to town except to hospital. By then, however, Chikerema was still not able to take full control of the weaponry located in various armouries known only to the imprisoned executive members. He enlisted the support of Elias Katambi, the Zambian Commissioner of Police, and launched a series of operations to recover these weapons both within Zambia and from the operational areas in Rhodesia, but was unsuccessful.<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, Chikerema had been involved in unity talks with ZANU. However, ZANU's Secretary for External Affairs issued a press statement announcing that his party had discontinued the talks until such a time as ZAPU had resolved its internal conflict. Nathan Shamuyarira and others then resigned from ZANU and, together with James Chikerema and Stanley Parirehwa, formed the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) on 1 October 1971. Other executive members included Godfrey Savanhu, Tshinga Dube, Lovemore Chihota, and George Nyandoro. Shelton Siwela, a Boston University graduate led the new party initially, but a few months later he and Godfrey Savanhu were 'ousted', leaving James Chikerema as president.<sup>88</sup>

(87) Mphoko. "The Joint Military Command." See p.17.

(88) Mngangwa, E.D. "The Formation of the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe: FROLIZI." C. Banana, ed. *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe 1890-1990*. Harare: College Press, 1989: See p.141.

FROLIZI aimed to offer an alternative unified movement committed to the execution of the armed struggle, devoid of all the squabbles that bedevilled the ZANU-ZAPU rivalry. Such a movement would pursue a revolutionary agenda nourished by a clearly defined socialist ideology, quite apart from what FROLIZI contemptuously considered to be the ‘reformist’ politics of ZAPU and ZANU.

For this reason, FROLIZI was never accepted by either ZANU or ZAPU, especially since it took advantage of the political differences of these two parties to champion a military role which the OAU and, to an extent, the Zambian government were very willing to support. ZAPU responded by forfeiting Chikerema and Nyandoro’s positions within its executive, whereas ZANU initially denounced FROLIZI as a “nepotistic group of cousins and relatives who are determined to sabotage the liberation struggle,” but later on stated its position simply as one questioning the need for a “third force”.<sup>89</sup> Frederick Shava offered a different theory for the formation of FROLIZI. He finds a curious coincidence in Chikerema’s problems in ZAPU and Shamuyarira’s failure to wrest the chairmanship of ZANU’s Dare from Chitepo in the elections of 1971. He submits:

It was during this [1972] Conference that our split came to the surface. Shamuyarira and Pareirewa led a group which wanted to unseat Chitepo from the Chairmanship of Dare. In ZAPU too there was a corresponding development of party split. Chikerema and George Nyandoro wanted to demote George Silundika and J.Z. Moyo. The idea was that if Shamuyarira led ZANU and Chikerema also gained a freehand in ZAPU, they now would bring the two factions together, and form a strong party.

.....Patrick Kombayi, who was Chairman of the [ZANU] Lusaka Province chaired the conference of 1972, when they tried to oust Chitepo. At this conference things worked out well for us. Shamuyarira contested the Chairmanship against Chitepo. But Shamuyarira only managed to get 13 votes and was thoroughly beaten by Chitepo, who got the overwhelming support of the conference. Shamuyarira lost and left the party with his few supporters to go and form FROLIZI with Siwela.

Chikerema and Nyandoro also failed to oust T.G. Silundika and J.Z. Moyo and also decided to quit from ZAPU. They joined hands with ZANU rebels to form FROLIZI which they thought would become a big party. But they avoided taking up the leadership and instead chose Siwela – a young fellow then in Ethiopia to lead FROLIZI. Siwela was a combatant. After a short time Shamuyarira realised his errors in all these. He was doing all these machinations when he was on sabbatical from the University of Dar es Salaam. He therefore used his sabbatical trying to wrestle power from Chitepo. When he discovered that FROLIZI had failed even to gain OAU and Liberation Committee recognition, he dismantled FROLIZI. He then wanted to come back to the party.<sup>90</sup>

Some accounts underplay FROLIZI’s military activities, yet, in its decidedly progressive outlook, the party had to create the necessary ‘revolutionary situation’ within the country as quickly as possible. The answer lay in recruiting cadres from

(89) Sithole, M. *Zimbabwe: Struggles within the Struggle*. Harare: Rujeko Publishers, 1979, Rpt. 1999: See pp.119-121.

(90) Interview with Frederick Shava by Prof. Bhebe, (ZANU PF HQ, Harare) 7 January 2003.

Rhodesian prisoners in Zambian jails who exchanged their freedom for enlistment in the FROLIZI ranks. Previous work by Tony Kirk (based on transcripts of their trials in 1973) has detailed the activities of some such twelve guerrilla members of FROLIZI who raided Rhodesia in 1972. They show the activities of a group led by one ‘Moses’, who was deputised by Amon Magiya Sibanda. It also had Christopher Gumborinotaya and a coloured man, Richard Erol Robinson. There was also a second group led by Hatidududzi Naison Guvamatanga and deputised by Charles Nkomo, which also had two coloured men, Thomas Zerf and Cecil Mutargh. Moses’s group was involved in a contact with a police reserve unit in Karoi in which he died, leaving his group scattered around the Mukwichi Tribal Trust Land (TTL), all of whom were caught or killed by Rhodesian troops. Guvamatanga’s group went through Mangula and Hartley, hijacking a car on the way and stealing from a petrol attendant in Gatooma, to Kwekwe, abandoning the car near Umvuma. They split near Charter and the two coloured men (Zerf and Mutargh) went to Salisbury to recruit, but were captured at home in Arcadia. Guvamatanga, Nkomo, and others went to Enkeldoorn and camped at a farm, where they were discovered after killing a white farmer; Nkomo was shot, but Guvamatanga and the other man escaped. Guvamatanga was later caught after making fresh entry into Rhodesia. The injured and amputated Nkomo was made to renounce FROLIZI in a radio broadcast. In the end, Zerf and Mutargh were sentenced to 25 years each in prison, Gumborinotaya was sentenced to 30 years, Guvamatanga received the death sentence, and Nkomo life in prison.<sup>91</sup> One of the key impacts of the FROLIZI arrests and the execution of Robinson, in particular, was the reaction it caused amongst the coloured community in Rhodesia at the time. According to Ibbo Mandaza, it was “electrifying” and led more coloured youth to regard the liberation struggle in a more positive light. This event, in particular, opened up negotiations between the coloured dominated National Association of Coloured People (NACP) and the emergent union of political parties under Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the African National Council (ANC), but more on this later.<sup>92</sup> Maurice Nyagumbo recalls meeting eight of the FROLIZI cadres at Salisbury Remand Prison before they were hanged and being “shocked by the bravery of these as they appeared absolutely unconcerned with the death they were now facing”.<sup>93</sup>

FROLIZI military activities certainly had an impact and were at one point described as “spectacular”, yet its greatest undoing was the formation in March 1972 of the ZAPU and ZANU Joint Military Command (JMC), co-chaired by Jason Moyo and Herbert Chitepo respectively, and their increasing recognition by the OAU Liberation Committee. There were also some internal contradictions within FROLIZI

(91) Kirk, Tony. “Politics and Violence in Rhodesia.” *African Affairs* vol.74, no.294 (1975) pp.3-38; David Lemon (*Never Quite a Soldier: A Rhodesian Policeman’s War 1971-1982*. Aberton: Galago, 1999.) gives an interesting account of the murder of the Wedza farmer, Andreas Joubert, and how Guvamatanga was spotted on a bus in Enkeldoorn by an alert police constable. His version, however, claims that Guvamatanga was killed “under a storm of Security Force gunfire” (49).

(92) Mandaza, I. *Race, Colour and Class in Southern Africa*. Harare: SAPES Books, 1997. p.746.

(93) Nyagumbo, M. *With the People*: See p.211.

that manifested themselves through the eventual takeover of the movement by the ‘old guard’, Chikerema and Nyandoro, who effectively replaced the youthful leadership of Shelton Siwela and Godfrey Savanhu.<sup>94</sup> Soon the party began to disintegrate: Shamuyarira rejoined ZANU with 23 others (even under the stringent conditions of re-entering ZANU) and Siwela left for further studies in the USA. From this point onwards, the OAU would have nothing to do with FROLIZI, which slowly degenerated into Chikerema’s personal project, so that by 1974 when the Unity Agreement was signed bringing together all the African liberation movements, Chikerema appended his signature for FROLIZI when it was already moribund. In addition, FROLIZI could not survive the disdain of the other two parties: Chitepo certainly considered it an ‘influenza’ and so many others, including some powerful voices in the OAU, saw it as an unnecessary third force, with a recycled leadership. If ZAPU and ZANU could achieve the necessary unity, the OAU would certainly consider it a more worthwhile venture, and when such a situation presented itself, the OAU turned its back on FROLIZI.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, President Julius Nyerere was pressing for a union between ZANU and FRELIMO, which came into being in 1973, and this, in turn, ended, according to Report Mphoko, the JMC. In practice however, the JMC never worked because it was a ‘face saver’; militarily it combined two movements at different stages in their capacity to execute the war. This was to be proven in the developments in northern Mozambique involving cooperation with FRELIMO, which had successfully opened up Tete Province as a liberated zone in 1970. Given its solid relationship with ZAPU as ‘authentic’ liberation movements recognized by the OAU, which had recently been cemented by a meeting in Khartoum guaranteeing Soviet support, FRELIMO was quick to offer ZAPU the first opportunity to launch its operations from its Tete base. Ravaged by its internal split ZAPU was “completely out of action until the formation of FROLIZI” and so it turned down the offer, arguing that they were not and could not be in full control of the area<sup>96</sup>. The offer was repeated in June 1972, but, still, it was not taken. Certainly, the leadership crisis of 1971 had a hand in this and slowly ZAPU lost its contacts with FRELIMO as a result.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, ZANU had been reorganising itself after the re-arrest of Nadabaningi Sithole on charges of plotting to kill Ian Smith in 1969. In April that same year, it held its first biennial conference and elected an eight member war council or *Dare ReChimurenga* (ZANU Revolutionary Council), chaired by Herbert Chitepo. By November, members of the Dare formally approached the FRELIMO High Command to operate from Tete, yet since FRELIMO was reserving this for its ideological ally, this request was not granted until ZAPU’s position in 1972. Even then, Samora Machel made it very clear that the offer was not being made to ZANU as an ally, but as a contribution to the pursuance of the struggle

(94) Sithole, M. *Zimbabwe: Struggles within the Struggle*. See p.125.

(95) White, Luise. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003: See p.17.

(96) Ibid.

(97) Sibanda, E.M. *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union 1961-87: A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*. Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2005: See p.163.

in Zimbabwe.<sup>98</sup> Former ZIPRA fighters offer a different explanation. They claim that ZIPRA already had an advanced cooperation programme in place with FRELIMO, and they were sending in cadres to assist FRELIMO with logistics and transportation of its personnel in the opening of the Tete corridor. Yet at this point, ZIPRA lost two of its specially trained field commanders, Robson Manyika and Rex Nhongo, who defected to ZANU.<sup>99</sup> Former ZIPRA commander, Akim Ndlovu, had this to say about the ZAPU-FRELIMO alliance:

There were several meetings leading to the cooperation between ZAPU, ANC (SA), and FRELIMO. First of all, the political leadership discussed and agreed that there was need for them to extend their cooperation to the military field. Then it was decided that the two military wings should meet and discuss joint military cooperation. We met: namely the late Samora Machel, Chissano... from our side it was myself, Dumiso Dabengwa, and from the ANC side it was Joe Modise and...Walter Mavuso. We met in Lusaka; this was soon after the death of Mondlane. On the FRELIMO side, it was during the Triumvirate of Uwah Simango, [Marcelino] Dos Santos, and Machel. We met with Machel and Chissano while Chikerema discussed with Dos Santos and Simango. So we discussed the question of Tete and we took a decision. The decision was that we had to send right away a consignment of weapons to Tete to assist our FRELIMO comrades. We sent a truck of weapons to Tete and it was driven by Killion Dube, one of our colleagues who come from Kezi. That was how the Tete Front was opened with the close assistance of ZAPU.

A further decision was taken to dispatch Comrade Manyika to Tete to go and work together with FRELIMO cadres, the aim being to understand the problems of that area and then follow up with prepared groups after he had reported back to us. On the basis of this report, we would be in a position to know how many people we would send, what type of people we would send in, with what equipment, what kind of operations, moving towards which direction. So Robson Manyika was sent out to Tete at the head of a small group to carry out this study. Manyika's mission was overtaken by the split. Robson himself defected to ZANU during the crisis. Then during the split, FRELIMO turned to ZANU and concluded the alliance with the latter.<sup>100</sup>

However, Henry Hamadziripi has a different version. He claims that FRELIMO's Eduardo Mondlane had long since invited ZANU to fight together with them. He states:

We [ZANU] had no weapons and the Russians had started supplying weapons to Africa e.g. Egypt, Algeria, former Portuguese colonies. Mondlane said that FRELIMO was prepared to share with us the weapons received so far. He made that pledge and indicated that he was prepared to work with me through and through. Then Nyerere promised that he was going to persuade Chitepo to leave his job in Tanzania and join us. Mondlane made it clear that Mozambique will not be free until Zimbabwe was free because historically we are one, citing the Kingdom of Munhumutapa as one

(98) Martin and Johnson. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*. See p.17.

(99) Sibanda. *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*. p.163.

(100) Interview with Comrade Akim Ndlovu by Prof. Bhebe, (Ndlovu Residence in Bulawayo) 29 December 1989.

vast empire which embraced both peoples...Mondlane then instructed top FRELIMO leadership to work together with us. That is why battles like Chinhoyi were fought using arms acquired from FRELIMO...101

This version has not been corroborated by anyone so far, but the arrangement was supposed to be based on Hamadziripi's personal friendship with Mondlane and a FRELIMO plan to use Zimbabwean guerrillas to open a front from Manica to Beira in the fashion of the ZAPU/ANC alliance. It probably failed to materialise with the death of Mondlane. However ZAPU continued to lose key personnel as it teetered on the brink of collapse during its crisis. Rex Nhongo also crossed to ZANU in March 1971, but after receiving training in Moscow and Bulgaria. He had begun consultations with Josiah Tongogara through the ZANU representative in Dar es Salaam, Godfrey Savanhu, nearly a year before, but it was decided that he stay with ZAPU until ZANU's negotiations with FRELIMO to operate in Tete were complete.<sup>102</sup> When Eliakim Sibanda interviewed Sibiya Mpfu, one of the ZIPRA cadres involved in the FRELIMO cooperation, Mpfu revealed that Robson Manyika had continued his operations in Tete giving the impression to FRELIMO that he was still with ZAPU when he had shifted his allegiance to ZANU already. In the process, he was privy to the tactical plan ZIPRA was proposing to open up Tete and sold the idea to ZANU, where he was already instrumental in establishing its army.<sup>103</sup>

## Developments in Rhodesia, 1971-1972

*The Pearce Commission, the ANC, and the Increasing Involvement of the Church*

The timing of the churches' participation in politics in general and in Zimbabwe's liberation war in particular is no coincidence. By 1964, political parties had been banned, political rallies outlawed, and all the political leaders thrown into prisons or forced into exile. Before then, most church denominations, such as the Dutch Reformed Church, were committed to keeping 'religion and politics apart'. African nationalists, on their part, were showing their disillusionment with the church by increasingly seeking to revive African traditional culture because of the failure of local churches to address the prevailing racial injustice. The developments of 1964, however, changed the situation, clergymen stepped in to fill this void and to carry on the work of the politicians from their pulpits. A number of them gathered around the Christian Council of Rhodesia (CCR), an organisation formed in 1964 as a forum of opinion with the ecumenical mission to facilitate dialogue between the churches and the government.<sup>104</sup> Although the evangelical denominations distanced themselves from it, the CCR became the most vociferous critic of the UDI, boldly challenging the declaration's claim that it was defending 'Christian Civilisation'. Ironically, there

(101) Interview with Henry Hamadziripi by Prof. Bhebe, (Harare) 14 November 1999.

(102) Marti and Johnson. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*: See p.87.

(103) Ibid.

(104) Skelton, K. *Bishop in Smith's Rhodesia*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985: See p.93.

were a number of casualties amongst those members of the Christian community who stood up openly against the UDI or the Smith regime's intolerant attitude toward the African majority. For criticising the UDI and the wanton detentions without trial of political activists, for example, Bishop Ralph Dodge and Rev. Robert Hughes of the United Methodist Church were deported in July 1964. According to Canaan Banana, by the time of its first meeting in Gwelo in November 1964, the CCR had become openly political, spearheading the campaign against not only the UDI, but also the Land Tenure Act.<sup>105</sup>

In September 1970, the World Council of Churches (WCC) announced that its battle to combat racism would include grants totalling USD\$143,000 to various liberation groups in southern Africa, and some funds went to the banned ZAPU and ZANU.<sup>106</sup> Some churches criticised this move, arguing that the world Christian body should not openly support violence, which was a misinterpretation since the aid was for social welfare, rather than the purchase of armaments. The WCC issue certainly divided the churches in Rhodesia. The CCR met in Salisbury on 11 November 1970 (the occasion of the 5th Anniversary of the UDI) to consider the WCC's decision. They voted 30 to 4 to support the "gesture of concern and compassion for the oppressed people of Rhodesia". The Salvation Army withdrew its membership from the Christian Council and the Presbyterian Church threatened to do the same; the Anglican Church became divided between its Bishop Paul Borrow, who proposed to withdraw, and the lay members of his church, including Peter M'kudu, who challenged him to withdraw in his personal capacity, but not on behalf of the African members. Rev. Canaan Banana of the Methodist Church UK resigned after his church decided against the WCC's gesture. Meanwhile, Christian Care, the social welfare arm of both Catholic and Protestant Churches, had quietly pursued work amongst detainees' families and assisted detainees with correspondence materials for their education. Its biggest venture became the Cold Comfort Farm project. In all this and perhaps up to the end of 1972, the Catholic Church was not as active as the Protestant churches in politics; in fact, the Catholic Bishop's Conference was "non-committal and the bishops and clergy were divided in their views".<sup>107</sup>

In 1971, the British once again launched an attempt to engage the Smith regime through consultations made by the British Commonwealth Secretary Sir Alec Douglas-Home with various groups with interest in the Rhodesian question. The result was the Smith-Home Proposals for a Settlement which amended the 1969 Constitution, making concessions on a qualified franchise that would allow Africans to vote with increasing numbers over time. This approach would be supported by a British capital injection of £50 million, but only after the proposals had been accepted by the Africans

(105) Banana, C.S. *Politics of Repression and Resistance: Face to Face with Combat Theology*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996: See pp.109-114.

(106) Muzorewa, Bishop Abel. *Rise Up and Walk: An Autobiography*. London: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1978: See p.87.

(107) McLaughlin, J. *On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*. Harare: Boabab Books, 1996: See p.20.

whose opinion was to be tested by a Royal Commission. The content of the proposals fell far short of the nationalist demands and did not offer much to Africans in terms of the principle of one man one vote. Now that most of the nationalist leadership was in detention, a front had to be formed as quickly as possible to make a united stand opposing the proposals. Ruth Chinamano, who had led a deputation of detainees to make representations to Sir Alec, consulted with the nationalist leadership still in detention and, together with her husband Josiah, Michael Mawema, Edson Sithole, and Cephas Msipa, approached Bishop Abel Muzorewa to become the leader of this new coalition, which was named the African National Council.<sup>108</sup> Bishop Muzorewa was considered neutral and dignified. His career was fairly high profile: having obtained a Masters degree in the USA, he returned to Rhodesia in 1963 during the eventful split within the nationalist movement. He became an active clergyman within his church to be elected its youngest Bishop in 1968. Muzorewa became involved in the campaign by the church to oppose the 1969 Rhodesian Republican Constitution and the subsequent implementation of the 1969 Land Tenure Act. He took his campaign to the pulpit and gained national fame for his ‘Dry Bones’ sermon, delivered in January 1970, in which he compared Rhodesia to Israel in its political bondage and exile during the time of Ezekiel. He was subsequently banned from entering the Tribal Trust Lands, a move that provoked widespread protests from men and women of his church who wore their uniforms and marched across the country waving placards in solidarity with their Bishop. In his own words, “The whole country was surprised and angered by it [the banning]. ‘Congratulations!’ many said. At first, that response puzzled me. Later I understood its meaning. If I was considered a threat by the regime, then I must be honoured as a leading Zimbabwean nationalist”.<sup>109</sup>

An ANC Executive Committee was quickly put into place, composed of Michael Mawema as National Organising Secretary, another neutral clergyman, Rev. Canaan Banana as Vice Chairman, Charlton Ngebetsha as Secretary General, and Edson Sithole doubling as Legal Advisor and Publicity Secretary. There was little or no time to conscientise the masses before the Commission began its public consultations in early January. Meanwhile, the Rhodesian government not only turned down all applications by the ANC to hold meetings in the TTLs, but they also began arresting members of the ANC Executive and throwing them into detention or restriction. The Chinamanos became the first victims of re-arrest. Amidst these goings on, Bishop Muzorewa provided the ANC’s evidence to the Royal Commission before taking his campaign to Britain itself and to the United Nations; the result was a resounding ‘No’ verdict which brought all the British efforts to nought.

(108) Mitchell, D. *Josiah Chinamano*. Harare: Longman, 1998: See p.30.

(109) Muzorewa, A. *Rise Up and Walk: An Autobiography*. London: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1978: See p.85.

## **The ‘Joint Military Command and Beyond’: ZANLA-ZIPRA Cooperation and Recovery on Separate Paths, 1972-1974**

In February 1972, ZAPU and ZANU presented to the OAU a fairly comprehensive Unity Plan Document, which spelt out the modalities of a union between ZAPU and ZANU, involving, among other things, common representations to International Conferences, joint recruitment and combat operations within Rhodesia, as well as operating joint accounts. Although this was exactly what the OAU had always wanted, the agreement was doomed from the start due to contradictions at the political and military levels. Chitepo and J.Z. Moyo wanted the unity arrangement to lead the OAU to de-recognize FROLIZI, nothing more. On the other hand, the structure of the military high command had emerged with some distortions which laid the groundwork for squabbles over seniority as is shown below:

### **STRUCTURE OF THE JOINT MILITARY COMMAND (JMC)**

Herbert Chitepo, Chairman (ZANU)

Jason Z. Moyo, Secretary (ZAPU)

### **MILITARY COMMAND**

Nikita Mangena, Chief of Staff (ZIPRA)

Robson Manyika, Political Commissar

(ZANLA) Josiah Tongogara, Chief of

Operations (ZANLA) Report Mphoko, Chief of

Logistics (ZIPRA) John Mataure, Chief of

P/Training (ZANLA)

Gordon Munyanyi, Chief of Intelligence (ZIPRA)

Ernest Kadungure, Financial Secretary (ZANLA)

### **DEPUTIES**

Lookout Masuku, D/Political Commissar (ZIPRA)

Charles Ngwenya, D/Chief Operations (ZIPRA)

William Ndangana, D/Chief Logistics (ZANLA)

Cephas Cele, D/Chief Personnel /Training (ZIPRA)

Webster Gwawuya, Deputy Intelligence (ZANLA)

Josiah Tongogara refused to acknowledge Mangena as his senior, although his new position in the JMC had elevated him within ZANLA ranks to replace his own seniors, such as Felix Santana, Benard Mutuma, and Noel Mukono. Report Mphoko is of the opinion that ZANU wanted the alliance for immediate limited purposes in its favour and that the Karanga section within it used the JMC to manoeuvre to key positions in ZANU. Once the JMC had secured the necessary recognition from the OAU and successfully overrode FROLIZI, it crumbled like a house of cards. The two parties were once more at each other's throats, ZANU making the outrageous demand that ZAPU should disband and join ZANU on the grounds that it had been

a “sick party” since its crisis. These and other differences forced the parties to go their separate ways.<sup>110</sup>

## The Resumption of the War, 1972

*‘ZANU Goes it Alone’: The Problematic Expansion Programme of 1973-1974*

Upon securing the agreement with FRELIMO, ZANU quickly geared up for immediate action. While on a visit to Sweden in October 1972, ZANU Chairman, Herbert Chitepo talked of “a new offensive” that would begin at the end of the year.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, by the end of 1972, ZANLA had begun moving fighters and equipment into Rhodesia, their main exit point being the Zambezi-Luangwa confluence where they had established a transit camp at Chifombo on the Zambia/Mozambique border. Initially, ZANLA operated in three sectors of Zambia/Rhodesia: Rubatsiro, Nehanda, and Chaminuka. The Rubatsiro sector was the northernmost sector, stretching from Chewori Safari area in the west to Mushumbi Pools in the east. It was jointly used by ZANLA and ZIPRA during the ill-fated JMC, and, even though they collaborated in some operations, they frequently turned against each other amidst the animosity of the ZAPU/ZANU rivalry. For this reason, Rubatsiro could never really count as a typical sector in the ZANLA sense of the word, at least, in so far as the meaning that term gradually assumed in the following three years. To this extent, Nehanda occupies a special place as a pioneering prototype ZANLA sector, where much of the initial practical experience of executing a guerrilla war was obtained and exported elsewhere. The Nehanda Sector included, but was not necessarily confined to, Guruve, Mana Pools, Rushinga, Bindura, Madziwa, Mt. Darwin, Muzarabani, Mazowe, Glendale, Mutoko, and Chesa. These boundaries could be as fluid as they were porous according to the accounts collected from former operatives.<sup>112</sup> Rex Nhongo was commander of this sector and his version of how he managed affairs in these early years is illustrative:

When we had divided ourselves into groups, we said we would not first of all strike but recruit at least 500 people. This was because at this time ZANU was not recognised by the OAU; it was more a friendship between Nyerere and Chitepo, this was how we stood with the OAU. At the first meeting at Chifombo, we refused to cross because of strategy problems. We resolved that we would recruit more trainees so that ZANU would be recognised by the OAU. What happened is that when the group of forty five and the group of fifteen left Tanzania, there were very few recruits left behind; therefore there was a problem for *Dare reChimurenga* to go to the OAU and say, we had some fighters when we did not have any. This is how the 21 men in Nehanda went about recruiting before fighting. We managed to recruit 350. This was the first group that we recruited that left for Rhodesia. We then recruited another 400. Before this group had left the country and were still in the Zambezi, we saw the enemy on surveillance,

(110) Mphoko. “The Joint Military Command.”

(111) Sellstrom, T. *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa*. See p.168.

(112) Interview with Zeripha Mudimu, (Centenary) 3 March 2008.

so we quickly struck a farm. I was not there myself. Jairos was the commander and political commissar of the seven men that made the first attack. They cut the telephone lines and planted landmines at the farm. When the police security forces came to investigate, they hit landmines; this is how they realised that we were not fighting. They thought that the freedom fighters from Chaminuka were in this area, but it was a different group.

I ordered that another group in Centenary plant landmines. They planted three, two were hit by army trucks and one by a civilian motorist; by now the whites realised that they were in a war situation. In 1972, we fought for four months and lost eight men and the morale among our men fell very low. They had seen that it was a matter of life and death. The problem was that some men wanted us to go back to Lusaka

and report that the going was tough, but I said that, as we sang, “*tinofa tichienda*—we shall die as we push forward the struggle,” we would go on and I persuaded the group to stay on. We suspended gun firing and concentrated on planting landmines.

Fortunately at this time, we were joined by more trained men from Tanzania. This group was made by George Rutanhire, former Deputy Minister of Sports, Youth, and Culture. We met them on the banks of the Zambezi and we crossed well. Then I had only six men left; their morale now improved; we sat down and arranged a fighting programme. We had learnt that if we used guns we would not win; therefore we had to keep recruiting to replace the men that died. We went on recruiting more men. The OAU by now also had recognised that ZANU was one of the strongest movements in Zimbabwe and that we were striving to get independence through the barrel of the gun. We received a lot of war material from the OAU and also started communicating with the people in Chaminuka. I still remember meeting with [Josiah] Tungamirai, [Dakarai] Badza, and Cephas [Tichatonga]. I was with [James] Bond and Ted Torana (He is at Parirenyatwa Hospital.); also present was Mayor Urimbo who was the provincial Political Commissar and his deputy [Joseph] Chimurenga. We wanted to report progress. The situation was still difficult. Mayor came from Chifombo. We held a meeting in the Zambezi Valley; some of our men were feeling the strain, and the enemy was on the offensive. Mayor, [Thomas] Nhari, and Badza went back to Zambia, but I decided that we would not go to Lusaka and leave the young men on their own, so I went back and I met three comrades who confirmed that the enemy was on surveillance. We decided that as the enemy knew, that we would move all our men further in towards Mubvurwa. We had been operating in the area near Concession. We wanted the enemy to go further towards the border in search of us, when we were actually inside the country. The problem we had encountered in Concession was that it was a farming area and most farm workers were immigrants from Malawi and it was difficult to convince them to give us food. In the new operational area, we had no food problems because the people understood what we were fighting for. We would buy maize and take it to the millers and occasionally for meat we would slaughter domesticated animals from the villagers’ paddocks so that my men would have some rest from running around. They started hitting the Centenary area again and the enemy thought they had closed us in, but we would attack and then spend two days and two nights walking back. If we attacked an area we would not stay, we would walk for 12 hours going back

so that they would start searching after we had left. This helped us a lot and the comrades realised that this was the way to stay alive. We continued doing this until the end of 1972.<sup>113</sup>

Most narratives of Nehanda emphasise this pioneering motif. It was a place of initial contact with peasants, where theoretical concepts were tested on the ground and where statements had to be made to the Smith regime of the growing intensity of the war. Most of 1972 was spent moving in war materials, establishing contacts with the locals and recruiting, in other words, commissariat work. In July, ZANLA cadres were in the vicinity of St. Albert's mission, the object being to get as far as Mavuradonha Mountain and use it as a cache. Apparently, the mountain had a huge cave, which was used in pre-colonial wars as a refuge, a *nhare* (stronghold). They loaded it with all the hardware, grenades, landmines, magazines etc., and it became a staging point for further inroads into the interior. Contrary to some assertions that in-the-field training of cadres was a phenomenon adopted by ZANLA in the later stages of the war, in the Nehanda sector, this policy was implemented during the initial political conscientisation of the masses. So, much like ZAPU's 'Castro Approach', Josiah Tungamirai recalls that in Dande they trained some groups of the *povo* with some of them getting to be able "to operate machine guns and to lay landmines as well as performing certain combat drills such as crawling".<sup>114</sup> In December 1972, Josiah Tungamirai, Patrick Mupunzarima, and Kefasi Chinodakufa arrived at Chiunye Business Centre near Mutoko and, upon entering a store with the intention to buy some provisions, they encountered African Rhodesian detectives who attempted to capture them. In a heroic feat in front of cheering *povo*, they overpowered them and took them away into the nearby bush, not to kill them, but to educate them on the objectives of Chimurenga (liberation war). The two men were later released, unharmed to convey the message to their colleagues.<sup>115</sup>

More significant scores were made in the Mt. Darwin area in early 1973 when ZANLA freedom fighters bombarded the administrative offices and attacked Gwervevende farm, killing four white men and capturing the manager, Jerry Hawksworth, in the Chesa Purchase Area. The freedom fighters took his car, loaded it with the corpses of the dead men, and drove it to Nyakasikana Township, where they burnt the car with the corpses in it. Jerry was taken to Mozambique and handed over to the ZANLA Chief of Defence, Josiah Tongogara, who later took him to Tanzania where he was released.<sup>116</sup> It is still not clear what really inspired early guerrilla groups to capture Rhodesian operatives and carry them back to Mozambique, and why it was a favourite exercise of the guerrilla forces led by Rex Nhongo. In an interview with one member of this group, Dennis Bhebe (Tsuro Muchenje) revealed that similar action was taken against an African District Assistant in the Chawarura area of

(113) Interview with Rex Nhongo by Prof. Bhebe, (Harare) 14 July 1984.

(114) Makari, C. *Magamba eChimurenga: Josiah Tungamirai*. See pp.91-92.

(115) *Ibid.* pp.84-88.

(116) *Ibid.* p.94. Interview with Paradzayi Manyani, (ZANU PF HQ, Harare) 13 February 2007.

Centenary in 1972. The unsuspecting DA was lured into a trap by a *chimbwido* (a young female liberation war collaborator), pretending to be in love with him, whereupon he was captured and marched to Mozambique by Nhongo and others. The young *chimbwido* joined them and went for training in Mozambique to become a fighter in her own right, adopting a Chimurenga (liberation war) name, Comrade Mationesa.<sup>117</sup> Beatar Chigwida (Comrade Theresa Sibanda) also recalls a case in 1972 where Rex Nhongo's group captured yet another white Rhodesian police officer known locally as 'Paraffin' and took him to a camp in Zambia, possibly Chifombo, where he was actually converted and adopted the *nom de guerre*, Vurayayi Mabhunu.<sup>118</sup>

ZANLA freedom fighters emphasised the *pungwe* (nightly politicisation rallies) as the chief means of persuading the masses to support the struggle, but they also worked through religious authorities and symbols that appealed to the locals. Spirit mediums interceded between the guerrillas and the people, particularly in Dande; some of the spirit mediums had had experience working with FRELIMO guerrillas in Mozambique. Sekuru Chipfeni, a local medium, for example, had established a relationship with a FRELIMO sector commander of Tete Province. The commander was one Joa Binda, who had told the medium that he was soon going to work with Zimbabwean guerrillas.<sup>119</sup> In the transit of weapons from Chifombo, guerrillas such as Dakarai Badza and Sarudzai Chinamaropa were led by this Sekuru Chipfeni right through their journey to Mukumbura. He was also instrumental in introducing them to other key mediums such as Chiodzamamera and Chidyamauyu. They all ended up at the ZANLA camp, Chifombo, where they were joined by Nyamhita, the Nehanda medium who was brought in from Dande by Rex Nhongo and Joseph Chimurenga on a stretcher bed in 1972. A mysterious woman, this medium was very old and frail, but performed miracles. She died later in 1973 and was buried in the pathway leading to Chifombo Camp, where she was revered as a saintly figure.<sup>120</sup> Later it became policy within ZANLA to incorporate spirit mediums in their training programmes and a camp (Pungwe 3) was established for them in Mozambique.

By and large, spirit mediums had various roles that they played in the emerging war, quite apart from their pivotal legacy in the First Chimurenga of 1896/1897. The 1970s war brought with it a new dispensation and the roles of the mediums changed with the new circumstances. David Lan has shown that Dande mediums shared their intimate knowledge of the countryside with freedom fighters, leading them along little known pathways away from the main roads patrolled by security forces; they showed them the best *nhare* wherein to hide their weapons; and they helped them interpret the meaning of signs displayed by animals in the bush.<sup>121</sup> More to the point, however, ZANLA's first famous attack in the Nehanda Sector was guided by the

(117) Interview with Dennis Bhebe by Charles Maripfonde, (Charlton Res Farm in Centenary) 25 February 2008.

(118) Interview with Theresa Sibanda by Charles Maripfonde, (Westberry Farm, Centenary) 22 February 2008.

(119) Tungamirai, J. "Recruitment to ZANLA: Building up a War Machine." N. Bhebe and T. Ranger, eds. *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*. Harare: UZP, 1995: See p.42.

(120) Makari, C. *Magamba eChimurenga*: See p.92-94.

(121) Lan, D. *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*. London: James Currey, 1985: See p.157.

spirit medium Chiwawa/Pondai. This attack on Altena Farm near Centenary took place on 21 December 1972. Chiwawa/Pondai was later arrested and sentenced to several years of hard labour for his role. This attack changed the Rhodesian attitude to the mediums. Whereas they had collected information about spirit mediums to legitimate claims to chieftainship by loyal followers, overnight they switched to using such information as a vital tool for counter insurgency.<sup>122</sup>

The developments in the Nehanda Sector and the growing number of recruits gave ZANLA the confidence to expand its operations. This expansion was part of a strategic plan conceived by Chitepo and Tongogara in November 1973 to open up new sectors and “attenuate the enemy forces by causing their deployment over the entire country”. This effort would be followed by a strong mobilisation drive targeting all sectors of African civilian society in order to have a “psychologically devastating effect on the morale of the whites”.<sup>123</sup> This strategy was a disaster in the long run for it was never firmly supported by a consistent supply of arms and other necessary logistical support to help stir it into motion. This situation affected mostly the Chaminuka sector where, according to Rex Nhongo, “some mistakes had been made,” resulting in the leakage of information to the enemy before they could launch any major operations.<sup>124</sup> At this stage the emphasis was still on recruitment and where it mattered any attack on enemy targets was to be followed by a long term withdrawal over long distances. Although this was an operational area falling under the command Kenneth Gwindingwi and his deputy Josiah Tungamirai the interviews collected recall the gallantry of Rex Nhongo and how he inspired most youth to join the struggle. Dennis Bhebe, who became one of the early recruits, remembers how eager he was to see Rex after hearing all the rumours about him:

...we could hear our parents talking about him (Rex Nhongo) and that is when I became eager to see him. However my father continuously warned me not to talk about these guerrilla fighters since it could get us into trouble. Every evening my father took sadza and disappeared into the dark.<sup>125</sup>

It was one thing to convince recruits and yet another to keep them going especially in the face of enemy attacks. A number of the people interviewed in Chaminuka also remember Comrade James Bond, who was attacked with a band of recruits near Nyakasikana village in Chesa TTL in 1973 but was able to withstand the pressure and repel the attack.<sup>126</sup> Another recruit, Lovemore Mheni (Stabern Chiweshe), recruited by Josiah Tungamirai, spent almost three weeks surviving on fruits of the forest. He recalls:

(122) Ibid. p.192. For an official view of the government’s impression of the role of spirit mediums in this war, see *The Rhodesian Herald*, 25 November 1971.

(123) Smith, D. and C. Simpson. *Mugabe*. Salisbury: Pioneer Head, 1981: See p.76.

(124) Interview with Rex Nhongo.

(125) Interview with Comrade Dennis Bhebe (Tsuru Muchenje) by Charles Maripfonde, (Charlton Res Farm, Centenary) 25 February 2008.

(126) Interview with Comrade Letia Kagodo by Charles Maripfonde, (Chiripiro Farm in Centenary) 26 February 2008.

We rarely ate, surviving on raw green *mealies* [maize] as well as crickets (*makurwe*) and so on... We could grind dried meat (*chimukuyu*) so as to produce powder to cook porridge and also, I still remember roasting tortoise shells for us to survive. Do you know that reeds (*murara*) can be cooked and served as relish? We did that... 127

At this stage, ZANLA suffered a number of setbacks; it lost so many fighters and the morale of the fighters was dampening. A number of them were suggesting to their leaders that they should withdraw back to Lusaka to tell the leadership that the going was tough. The leaders pressed on and decided to suspend the use of guns to concentrate on laying landmines. Fortunately some of the recruits who had been sent out for training were starting to come back. A group of 300 cadres trained in Tanzania and led by George Rutanhire arrived to boost the numbers and more action was to follow in 1973 as a result of these reinforcements both in Nehanda and Chaminuka.<sup>128</sup>

### **ZIPRA's Recovery Plan, 1971**

Meanwhile, ZAPU was also in the process of reorganisation amidst the smouldering ashes of the split of 1971. It set up a Revolutionary Council composed of all members of the party's executive and all members of the command structure of the military wing. It was under the auspices of the Revolutionary Council that a new army, the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) was formed.<sup>129</sup> The Revolutionary Council was composed of Jason Z. Moyo, George Silundika, and Edward Ndlovu, with Dumiso Dabengwa as overall Secretary. Its Chief Representatives were Stephen Nkomo, Ethan Dube, Maloa Noko, Amos Ngwenya, Akim Ndlovu, Sikwili Khohli Moyo, Saul Ndlovu, Lazarus Mpofu, and Aaron Ndlovu. The Revolutionary Council also constituted the ZAPU National Executive in exile. The ZIPRA High Command as of 1972 consisted of the following members:

Rogers Mangena (Alfred Nikita), Chief of Staff  
 Lookout Masuku (Mafela), Political Commissar  
 Charles Ngwenya (John Dube), Chief of Operations  
 Gordon Munyanyi, Chief of Intelligence  
 Phelekezela Mphoko (R. Mphoko), Chief of Logistics  
 Cephas Cele (King Tshaluza), Personnel and Training

### **'Operation Xoxoza,' 1972-1973**

Even after the Wankie/Sipolilo disaster and the Chikerema movie feat, ZAPU had continued infiltrating reconnaissance teams into northern Rhodesia. A number of them, including survivors of the Sipolilo campaign, had sought employment in local

(127) Interview with Comrade Lovemore Mheni by Charles Maripfonde, (Chiripiro Farm in Centenary) 26 February 2008.

(128) Details as related by some of the participants can be found in J. McLaughlin. *On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*. Harare: Boabab Books, 1996: See Chapter 4.

(129) Dabengwa, D. "ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation." N. Bhebe and T. Ranger, eds. *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*. See p.32.

farms where they sent back regular reports and were also involved in recruitment.<sup>130</sup> South African police were still camped along the Zambezi River between Kazungula, Victoria Falls, Chirundu, and Kanyemba to intercept Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) freedom fighters. ZAPU decided between 1970 and 1971 to send in heavily armed platoons to attack these South African troops and facilitate their own large scale deployment.<sup>131</sup> At this stage, in its recovery period (1972-1973), ZAPU certainly did not seek an aggressive plan. Instead, ZIPRA strategy was to carry out sabotage without fully engaging the enemy; the former ZIPRA Chief, Dumiso Dabengwa, elaborates this strategy as one involving a “continuous cycle of retreating, planting landmines, and hiding”. It was a strategy designed to give the newly formed ZIPRA space to breathe, that is retraining and reorganising its forces which had been idle since the 1971 crisis, to prepare them for more intensive operations planned by the Revolutionary Council.<sup>132</sup> This strategy started paying dividends in August 1972, when several landmines went up in the Mana Pools area. This area was a key target since it was a Rhodesian command centre controlling several military bases in the Zambezi valley and the Hurungwe District. ZAPU cadres were more dramatic; they did not make their presence a secret, often choosing to drop leaflets near or around any site of contact. From the 30 August 1972, several incidents of vehicles detonating landmines were reported, including some that claimed Rhodesian troops.<sup>133</sup>

These activities were consolidated in a much larger operation, code named “Operation *Xoxoza*” (*Xoxoza*, a siNdebele word meaning ‘to prod a river with a stick to determine its depth as one crosses’). According to Report Mphoko, it was an operation designed to ‘prod’ or test the Zambian attitude towards ZAPU after its crisis.<sup>134</sup> It was coordinated by three members of the ZIPRA High Command, John Dube, Gordon Munyanyi, and Report Mphoko, assisted by Maketo Ndebele, Roger Matshinini Ncube, and Mazinyane. It was officially put into action in 1973 and several isolated attacks were reported thereafter with ZIPRA making an effort to publicise its activities by claiming responsibility. ZIPRA leaflets were found near a landmine blast that killed Sidney Eskreet and injured his colleagues near Mana Pools in May 1973, and in the same month ZIPRA guerrillas shelled a pump house supplying water to the Chirundu Sugar Estate some 60 km west of Mana Pools.<sup>135</sup> In September, they had closed in on Hurungwe, striking a camp housing a platoon of nearly forty-two South African soldiers and killing all but two of them. The attack was carried out in the morning at 01:45 hours. At daybreak, the Rhodesian Air Force descended on the scene of the smoking camp to evacuate the dead in two French-built Allouite helicopters. At that time, the ZIPRA unit had already withdrawn, leaving ZAPU pamphlets strewn on the scene. Thereafter, Ian Smith was compelled to make a

(130) Sibanda. *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union*. See p.163.

(131) Ellert. *The Rhodesian Front War*. See p.28.

(132) Dabengwa, Dumiso. “ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation”: See p.32.

(133) *Zimbabwe Review*. 14 January 1973.

(134) Mphoko. “The Joint Military Command.” See p.20

(135) *Zimbabwe Review*. 14 January 1973.

flying consolation visit to the South African troops in the area on the 1st of October, four days after the incident, in the company of the Army Commander Lieutenant General G.I. Walls, the Commander of the Air Force, Air Marshall I.J. McLaren, and the Commissioner of Police, S.F.S. Bristow.<sup>136</sup> One major result of Operation Xoxoza, according to ZIPRA, was Ian Smith's closure of the Rhodesian-Zambian border, accusing Zambia of harbouring 'terrorists'. Although Rhodesia reopened their border shortly thereafter, Kaunda closed the Zambian border until the end of the war. More importantly for ZIPRA, however, Operation *Xoxoza* and the events leading to Chikerema's formation of FROLIZI, turned ZIPRA's fortunes in the eyes of President Kaunda and the Zambian government. Shortly after these developments, Kaunda called J.Z. Moyo to the State House to inform him that all restrictions that had been imposed on ZAPU were now lifted.<sup>137</sup>

After this decision, recalls Mbulawa Noko, large groups were no longer training in Tanzania under the OAU programme. Zambia started to train ZIPRA cadres in 1973 on a programme that was "entirely Zambian".<sup>138</sup>

### **The Immediate Rhodesian Response, 1972-1974**

These events of the early 1970s and the ZANLA attack on Altena had many other consequences. Firstly, the Rhodesians acknowledged the turn in the tempo of the war and responded by forming the Joint Operations Command (JOC) in December 1972. A large scale operation was launched covering the northern districts of Rhodesia, code named "Operation Hurricane". The areas covered by the operation stretched from Karoi to incorporate Muzarabani, Dotito, Mt. Darwin, Centenary, Madziva, Bindura, Chiweshe, Murewa, and Mutoko. A series of base camps were established in these areas as part of the Rhodesian strategy to deal with the guerrilla threat internally. Members of the Special Branch were deployed to coordinate the collection of intelligence on guerrilla movements and support.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, Rhodesian platoons patrolling this zone were increased from one to twenty four in the following twelve months.<sup>140</sup> In addition, the Rhodesian government, after noticing the 'support' that the guerrillas were being offered by the locals, invoked Chapter 29 of the Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA), providing for severe penalties for anyone "harbouring or failing to report terrorists", which included the death sentence or imprisonment for "lying" about the presence of "terrorists". Under the Emergency Powers (Collective) Fines Regulations published in 1973, the state imposed collective

(136) *Zimbabwe Review*. 6 Oct. 1973, Vol. 3, No. 1.

(137) Mphoko. "The Joint Military Command." See p.20.

(138) Interview with Mbulawa Moshe Noko by Prof. Bhebe, (Nyabezi Communal Lands) 29 December 1989.

(139) Ellert, H. *The Rhodesian Front War: Counter-insurgency and Guerrilla Warfare 1962-1980*: See p.49.

(140) Parker, J. *Assignment Selous Scouts: Inside Story of A Rhodesian Special Branch Officer*. Alberton, RSA: Galago Press, 2006: See p.25.

finances and confiscated property of all inhabitants of an area if the particular offenders who had rendered assistance to the guerrillas could not be identified.<sup>141</sup>

Operation Hurricane was carried out through various missions or operations and the first one was launched in early 1973, code named “Operation Overload Phase P”. This operation was a direct response to guerrilla activity and it provided for the creation of Collective Villages and later on Protected Villages (PVs). These exercises were preceded by a population census conducted by Rhodesian police in the Dande and Muzarabani Tribal Trust Lands. By the middle of 1973, thousands of local people had been forcibly driven into ‘detention centres’ at Msengezi Mission, Gutsa, Hoya, and Mukumbura. Nearly 50,000 people were resettled in the PVs.<sup>142</sup> In the second phase of “Operation Overload”, launched in 1974, another 240,000 were resettled.<sup>143</sup>

### **The ‘Political’ Mutation of the ANC, 1972-1974**

Following its success in achieving the ‘NO’ vote in 1972, the ANC manoeuvred to transform itself from a pressure group run by volunteers into a full fledged political party. This was a dangerous move, especially in the context of the increasing guerrilla activity since 1972, so it was imperative that the new party should not show any links with the exiled movements involved in the war, at the same time as it pushed for a national constitutional convention. Meanwhile, the Rhodesian government was wary of these plans and moved to pre-empt them by targeting leaders of the movement for arrest. This suppression by the government posed another challenge for the transformation of the ANC, and, in 1973, it lost two members of the executive, Michael Mawema and Eddison Zvobgo, who both left the country. The ANC resolved to follow a twofold path to liberation involving the intensification of the armed struggle, at the same time as leaving the door open for negotiations with the Smith regime. In 1973, Muzorewa embarked on a series of regional and international trips to solicit support, while at the same time pressing for a national constitutional convention back at home. Smith and the RF continued to insist that the Smith-Home proposals that had been rejected by the African majority in 1972 should constitute the basis of any further negotiations, but, by September 1973, they were loosening up. In July, Smith summoned Muzorewa to consider a new offer he was making which was no more than making available a further six parliamentary seats for Africans. Other nationalists frowned upon the whole deal, which was not helped by the Smith government’s continued persecution of ANC leaders amidst these consultations. The ANC Deputy President, Nason Ndhlovu, and the acting national organising secretary, John Chirisa, were thrown into detention at the time. These are the circumstances in which Eddison Zvobgo resigned his post as Director of the ANC’s External Mission in protest to become ZANU’s Secretary General. In his autobiography, Muzorewa argues

(141) Manungo, K.D.. *The Role Peasants Played in the Zimbabwe War of Liberation with Special Emphasis on Chiweshe District*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ohio University, 1991: See p.171.

(142) Flower, K. *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964 to 1981*. London and Harare: John Murray in Association with Quest Publishing, 1987: See p.122.

(143) Parker, J. *Assignment Selous Scouts*. See p.26.

that his mission to end the bloodshed caused by the war was misinterpreted by his nationalist colleagues and misrepresented by the Smith regime in a propaganda stunt to divide the nationalist movement. In any case the negotiations came to nought, and a modified version became the basis of the Anglo-American proposals that led to the Geneva conference. Meanwhile, for all his work in leading the nationalist movement inside Rhodesia, Muzorewa was awarded a United Nations Human Rights award in December 1974.<sup>144</sup> The ANC finally announced publicly that it rejected the Smith Proposals, arguing that the additional six seats would not alter the whites' two-thirds majority in parliament. However, soon after making this announcement, the publicity secretary, Dr. Edson Sithole, was thrown into prison. Amidst all these developments, the Frontline States emerged as the most formidable force determining the fate of the Zimbabwean nationalist struggle. It is crucial to understand what this coalition stood for before actually analysing their role in the events that unfolded after 1974.

### **The Frontline States Controversy, 1974**

The earliest countries to gain independence in central and southern Africa gathered around a solidarity coalition known as the Pan African Movement for East Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA). Of these, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zaire went a step further to provide rear bases for liberation movements in the region, and even beyond in such places as the Seychelles and the Comoros Islands.<sup>145</sup> These countries became known as the 'Mulungushi Club', who worked hand in glove with the OAU Liberation Committee to offer assistance to the various liberation movements waging their struggles in the region. Later, when Mobutu's Zaire fell by the wayside, Tanzania and Zambia remained to form the core that gave rise to the Frontline States. With the independence of Mozambique and Angola, this core was expanded to incorporate these newcomers and Botswana, as well as providing representation to the liberation movements still fighting for independence.

Two main views have dominated the interpretation of the role of the Frontline States in the liberation of Zimbabwe. The first and popular view perceives this coalition as primarily providing assistance to the Zimbabwean liberation movement at their economic and political peril. These sacrifices were made in three broad areas: provision of military bases and logistical support for the execution of the war, diplomatic support given to the Zimbabwean nationalists throughout the various negotiations they entered during and after the war, and lastly, keeping the nationalists united in their demands.<sup>146</sup> According to this view, the bonds cemented by this regional cooperation during the Zimbabwean liberation war laid a firm foundation for the formation of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference

(144) Muzorewa. *Rise up and Walk*. See pp.131-133.

(145) Temu, A. "Landmarks of a History of the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa: The Hashim Mbita Project." Dar es Salaam: Workshop to Launch the Hashim Mbita Project, 2006. p.1.

(146) Thompson, C.B. *Challenge to Imperialism: The Frontline States in the Liberation of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985: See pp.2-3.

(SADCC) after Zimbabwe's independence and continues to inspire the legacy of regional cooperation to this day.

The second argument departs from this view and seeks to define the idea of "frontlinestatism" as the "tendency for nations nearest a theatre of socio-political upheaval to want to get involved with the outcome".<sup>147</sup> In Africa, although the term was popularised in 1974, "frontlinestatism" was as old as the African struggle for independence as a whole. The general trend in Africa, however, was that in any given conflict some nations became "more frontline than others" either because of their proximity to the theatre of conflict or because of their desire to protect certain interests in the outcome of the conflict. According to the logic of this argument, each nation in the frontline of conflict supports the particular liberation movement most consistent and compatible with its interests. In the Angolan conflict, for instance, Congo sponsored the MPLA, Zaire sponsored the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), and Zambia sponsored UNITA, and these three constituted the cohort of Angola's Frontline States. In the case of Zimbabwe's liberation, this argument submits that Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda took the front seat in October 1974 when he was at the centre of the Anglo-American initiative and in contact with South Africa. By November, he had incorporated Tanzania, Botswana, and FRELIMO to constitute the initial "four frontline states". Angola was incorporated only after its 1975 civil war, and upon the insistence of Mozambique (since Kaunda begrudgingly accepted MPLA victory over UNITA). Tanzania, which was geopolitically far from the centre of conflict, is said to have been incorporated through the long term friendship and paternal relationship Kaunda had with Nyerere, the TANZAM, which in turn was nourished by the 'father-son' relationship between Nyerere and Samora Machel, fostered through Nyerere's role in the formation of FRELIMO and his support for Machel's ascendancy to power after the death of Eduardo Mondlane. Angola was more concerned with the liberation of Namibia in the desire to ward off the South African threat, while Botswana was militarily insignificant to voice anything in the coalition. This scenario left Kaunda with a free hand, not only to decide the course of liberation, but to anoint the leader of the process. This argument suggests that because of Kaunda's long standing personal friendship with Joshua Nkomo, he was much more prepared to see him as leader and ZAPU as the sole authentic liberation movement. Kaunda, it is argued, perceived Zimbabwe's liberation from Nkomo's point of view, which is why he was prepared to see only Nkomo negotiating with Smith, nobody else, and was much more hostile to the presence of movements other than ZAPU in Zambia.<sup>148</sup>

Although this second argument is developed by a scholar with ZANU sympathies, who subscribes to the structuralist 'struggles within the struggle' thesis along tribal lines, could this thesis explain the various contradictions within the Zimbabwean

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(147) Sithole, M. *Frontlinestatism and the Zimbabwe Question*. Salisbury: Ryanson House, 1978: See p.6.

(148) *Ibid.* See pp.12-13.

struggle? Indeed, by 1974, the Frontline States were not a coalition of like-minded people. They brought together diverse views of liberation: Zambia, Angola, and Mozambique had strong Soviet links with Marxist-Leninist leanings, while Tanzania was more attached to China and subscribed to more Maoist concepts of the struggle. The question for Zimbabwe remains: how were these ideological differences reconciled amongst these supporters in order that they chart the path to liberation for which the Frontline States have been credited?

### **Détente and the UANC, 1975**

Meanwhile, amidst these developments, the South African Prime Minister John Vorster and President Kenneth Kaunda went into talks to facilitate peace in Rhodesia under the emergent American policy of *détente*. What was in it for Vorster? One may ask. Ian Smith in his memoirs quotes Vorster seeking Zimbabwean nationalist and Frontline States approval for their recognition of his apartheid South Africa as it was. "I've got them eating out of my hands..." he reportedly bragged, "...They have promised that if I can help them solve the Rhodesian problem they will acknowledge South Africa as we are today."<sup>149</sup> Through their initiative and the cooperation of the Frontline States, all the detained nationalist leaders were released from prison to attend talks in Lusaka. Joshua Nkomo and Joseph Msika arrived from Gonakudzingwa representing ZAPU. ZANU, who had just deposed Ndabaningi Sithole as President of the organisation while at Que Que Prison, sent Robert Mugabe and Morton Malianga, but the Frontline States refused to recognise them and sent them back. Sithole was called in only to arrive after the meeting was over.<sup>150</sup> FROLIZI, which was nearly moribund, was represented by James Chikerema, and Bishop Muzorewa and his deputy Dr. Elliot Gabellah stood in for the ANC together with Edson Sithole who had also been released. The Lusaka meeting consisted primarily of instructions by the Frontline leaders for the various nationalist parties to form a unified front to negotiate with the Rhodesians. From the outset, the question of leadership was a thorny issue, dragging the talks on for more than a week. Initially Kaunda wanted Joshua Nkomo to lead the coalition and only him to be released and invited to the talks, but other Frontline leaders resisted this approach. He further pushed that Nkomo be retained as leader with Muzorewa as his deputy and Sithole as Secretary General, but ZANU fiercely opposed anything led by Nkomo and Sithole. In this way, they settled for Muzorewa as a neutral unifying figure. On the 7th of December, all the parties appended their signatures to a Declaration of Unity at Lusaka's state house, bringing about the United ANC. Side by side with these unity talks, the Frontline leaders were meeting representatives of the South African and Rhodesian governments to strike a deal to bring about ceasefire, facilitate the withdrawal of South African troops, and convene

(149) Smith, I.D. *The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith*. London: Blake Publishing, 1997: See p.166.

(150) For a detailed description of the circumstances leading to the overthrow of Sithole, see Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*. See pp.147-149.

a constitutional conference.<sup>151</sup> Smith had not intended the release of the detainees to be a permanent arrangement, nor did he expect that the negotiations should lead to immediate majority rule. The ANC and Julius Nyerere, however, pressed for these issues, respectively, as a precondition for negotiations. Smith initially released only about a third of the detainees and the rest in December. Talks with the UANC began in February 1975, but in March Ndabaningi Sithole was re-detained on allegations of plotting to assassinate members of the ANC executive. Practically all of the released leaders lived under the threat of re-detention and naturally the talks went nowhere and failed to stop the war, although Smith's propaganda machinery was already at work to give the impression to freedom fighters that the talks meant ceasefire.

Some of the freedom fighters certainly felt that *détente* was a betrayal by the politicians. In the spirit of *détente*, however, the South Africans had begun to withdraw their troops and arrange meetings with the freedom fighters. In one incident on 23 December 1975, such a meeting was arranged on the Mazoe Bridge where five South African policemen were persuaded to lay down their arms, but were all shot by the freedom fighters.<sup>152</sup> The detente initiative was to be tested at the Victoria Falls Bridge meeting, and again it is interesting to note the different accounts of why the talks failed. Ian Smith gives the impression that in all his negotiations with Kaunda and Vorster, he had been reassured that Victoria Falls would be a declaration of intent on both sides to negotiate, build the necessary mechanisms to discuss proposals for a settlement, and then set a date for a conference to ratify the proposals, preferably in Rhodesia. It was not the occasion to demand immediate majority rule.<sup>153</sup> The nationalists, on their side, demanded 'majority rule now', and, if there were to be any other talks, they demanded the release of all the remaining detainees and immunity from further arrests. Smith refused, and the meeting adjourned, never to be reconvened, and so ended the so-called 'Bridge Talks'. Developments after this meeting can, however, be confusing to the student of African nationalism, especially if it is accepted that two key leaders of the ANC, Bishop Muzorewa and Joshua Nkomo, not only started fighting to control the organisation, but also went into separate talks with Ian Smith.

### **The Struggle to Control the ANC, 1975**

The release of the nationalist leaders led to many new developments. First, the threat of re-detention compelled most of them to quickly leave the country; secondly, freedom in practice meant that they could contest the leadership of the UANC or each return to the business of their respective parties and resume their different agendas at the expense of this fragile unity. Each of the parties held different meetings and soon the factional bickering of the 1960s returned to Rhodesian townships as their followers fought each other and threw petrol bombs in 1975. The new power struggle pitted Joshua Nkomo against Abel Muzorewa as each sought control of the UANC.

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(151) Ibid. Chapter 12.

(152) Smith, I.D. *The Great Betrayal*. See p.166. (153) Ibid. pp.176-182.

Joshua Nkomo, who believed that he commanded the largest following, with ZAPU branches all over the country, pushed for a UANC congress to confirm his natural leadership of the liberation movement. Muzorewa resisted. The continued fighting irked the Frontline leaders, who summoned the UANC leadership to Dar es Salaam to admonish them. Here is Muzorewa's version:

In his bid for leadership Mr. Nkomo had claimed that he was the one who had been instrumental in forming the African National Council in December 1971. He said that he had instructed me to form the Council and that therefore I was obligated to him, or under his command. Both Mr. Josiah Chinamano of ZAPU and Dr. Edson Sithole of ZANU stood up to refute this claim. They pointed out that they were the ones who had approached me to head the ANC, and there was no mention that I was to be a provisional leader until Mr. Nkomo gained release from detention. I was relieved to hear that I was not in any way obligated to Mr. Nkomo, and that the Consultative Meeting confirmed that the leadership of the ANC would remain in my hands.<sup>154</sup>

Nkomo's reason for pushing for a congress, according to him, had much to do with the UANC's lack of an army. As he writes:

It was unfortunate that there was no single national army. But military unity could not come until we had a unified political direction, and that was the aim of the Lusaka agreement, to hold elections for the leadership of the nationalist movement. The agreement was that these elections should be held at a national congress bringing together all the parties making up the African National Council. But it was impossible to hold such a congress, since both Bishop Muzorewa and the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole had decided to leave the country. Rather than leave the national movement without any leadership, ZAPU decided to go ahead and hold its Congress on 26-27 September 1975. The congress elected a new leadership, and once again Zimbabwean nationalism had a genuine voice, the ANC Zimbabwe.<sup>155</sup>

Although this Nkomo faction could have been considered the ANC's 'internal wing', it was in essence a revival of ZAPU. The membership was itself conspicuously partisan with Nkomo as president, Josiah Chinamano vice president, Joseph Msika as General Secretary, Amon Jirira as Treasurer, Samuel Munodawafa as national chairman, and William Khona as National Vice-Chairman.

Muzorewa and his group responded by expelling Nkomo, Samuel Munodawafa, and Killion Bhebe from the ANC in order to "protect the integrity, unity and security of the ANC and the future of the people of Zimbabwe". They, in turn, planned the so-called Consultative Assembly of 26 October 1975 to be the "properly constituted annual congress of the ANC." In his own mind, Muzorewa thought that Nkomo was making all the moves to position himself as leader of any outcome of the negotiations which he had already engaged with Ian Smith. The ANC Publicity Secretary, Dr. Edson Sithole, in his public statements consistently reiterated the issue of this collusion of interest between the Nkomo faction of the UANC and the Smith regime. He was

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(154) Ibid. p.157.

(155) Nkomo, J. *The Story of My Life*. Harare: Sapes Books, 2001: See p.161.

abducted by Rhodesian Secret agents at the New Ambassador Hotel on 15 October 1975, soon after making an announcement that “officers of the state” were interfering with the preparations of the planned Muzorewa consultative assembly.<sup>156</sup> He was never to be seen again.

The major sticking point for the UANC was the absence of an army, yet it was not so much that such an army would be unachievable, more than it was really a question of who would control it. In July 1975, the Frontline States had pushed for the formation of the Zimbabwe Liberation Council (ZLC) composed of the armies of all the bickering factions. This would facilitate the intensification of the armed struggle, in the event that talks failed. The ZLC was stillborn. ZAPU members in exile refused to participate in it, and ZANU members Simon Muzenda, Michael Mawema, and others abandoned it soon thereafter, leaving James Chikerema effectively in control as Secretary General. The united army was supposed to be called the Zimbabwe Liberation Army (ZLA) with Bishop Muzorewa as ‘Commander-in Chief’. It will be recalled that, of all the signatories to the UANC pact, only ZAPU and ZANU had functioning armies and neither Chikerema nor Muzorewa could count on controlling both. It was under this illusion as ‘Commander in Chief’ that Muzorewa decided to go into exile in Mozambique, ostensibly to be close to the theatre of war and to come into contact with the trainees; there, he met with plenty of surprises.

## Problems in ZANU, 1974-1975

### *Nhari Rebellion*

Towards the end of December 1974, ZANU experienced an insurrection amongst its fighting forces in the frontline led by Thomas Nhari (Raphael Chinyanganya) and Dakarai Badza. They have both been variously linked to secret connections with the Rhodesian Special Branch who convinced them that independence was near and that they were being used to fight the war ‘and die’, while their leaders lived in luxury in Zambia and Mozambique. ZANU was not grounded in the front as a result of its new strategy. While Chitepo still wanted to push on with the offensive begun in 1973, his benefactors Kaunda and Nyerere were emphasising restraint in the context of *détente*. This position inevitably put a strain on the resources that ZANU could commit to the war effort. So, genuinely, its cadres were experiencing a number of operational problems with shortages in both ammunition and supplies. Others have tried to link the Nhari rebels with the frustrations of the Manyika under the perceived dominance of the Karanga in the *Dare reChimurenga* following the elections of 1973, where Manyika notables such as Simpson Mutambanengwe and Noel Mukono either lost key positions or were demoted.<sup>157</sup> More recent revelations, however, trace the rebellion to Cornelius Sanyanga, a Zimbabwean employee of Lonrho who connived with fifteen ZANLA commanders to get rid of radical elements within the ZANLA

(156) CCJP. *Civil War in Rhodesia*. Salisbury: CCJP, 1975. Rpt. Harare: CCJP, 1999. pp.56-60.

(157) Bhebe, N. *Simon Vengayi Muzenda*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 2004: See pp.177-179.

high command to pave the way for international investment in an independent Zimbabwe. Some pro-Russian commanders on their part were keen to eliminate their pro-Chinese seniors, hoping that Russian support and superior Russian weapons would accelerate the armed struggle.<sup>158</sup> The conspirators are said to have met with Rhodesian “colonels” to arrange for the transfer of power from “one army to another” without involving the politicians in Salisbury or Lusaka. The story of how the rebels proceeded to capture several members of the Dare has been well recorded in various texts of the Zimbabwean struggle. One person affected by the insurrection, Josiah Tungamirai, relates his experiences as follows:

On the 10th of December 1974, when Ian Smith was broadcasting his ceasefire in the radios, in Zambia in a township known as Kamwala, a serious misunderstanding took place between liberation fighters. Some comrades led by Nhari and Dakarai Badza turned against the party leadership. Tongogara’s wife and children, as well as some members of the Dare, were captured. What bothered me is that this took place when some leaders like Comrade Tongogara and Comrade Herbert Chitepo were away in Romania. Comrades Nhongo, Kangai, Mupunzarima, Gumbo, and Chauke were in China. They [Nhari and his colleagues] saw this as the best opportunity to rebel. These dissidents then took me and other remaining commanders and said, “Look comrades, these leaders of ours are living large and overspending; they are all old so we don’t need them anymore. They have failed to supply us with the weapons. We have now decided to go to Chifombo to capture that camp. We have seen that the war cannot proceed amidst this confusion.” I did not personally agree with what they were saying, so I challenged them with alternative views saying, “Comrades! Why would you want to destroy the revolution in such a bad way, why don’t you be gentlemen enough? If there are some leaders who you have lost confidence in, then call for their dismissal otherwise dismissing all of them would destroy our struggle and party.” I realised I was just wasting my time, nobody heard me, these dissidents never cared to listen to anyone supporting the current leadership. To them they wanted a total overhaul; everyone opposed to this was their enemy. Anything that was subversive to the party could not be tolerated. They remained adamant and they insisted that all of them, from Chitepo to the lowest rank should be dismissed. When they realised that I did not I agree with them they imprisoned me. Since I had become their prisoner, they could not waste their time talking to me. They tied me with some fibre ropes to the extent that I could not free myself. This frustrated me because they kept me as is done to any prisoner. Being a prisoner is painful, especially if you are imprisoned by your close one. The dissidents surrounded me. I was tied at my legs and wrists and made to walk like that for seven days on our way to Chifombo, a distance of approximately eighty kilometres. Whilst we were on the way, when we reached south of the Zambezi River, we met other armed comrades. From that group, thirty five were selected, including some who were amongst us and they were put on a firing squad and they all perished there. Up to now I don’t understand how I escaped this predicament. When others were being selected for the killing, I and others were left alive. When we got to Zambezi River they began to argue, with Badza saying, “Let us murder Josiah, *wafa-wafa* [death-

(158) White, Luise. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003. p.23.

trap] guys.” Nevertheless, they didn’t kill me as they had intended as other dissidents expected. Eventually we arrived at Tresela Camp, in Mukumbura area and we met some female guerrillas who had come from Chingwea [Nachingweya] in Tanzania. Most of the comrades, who supported Nhari, did that out of fear. What could they do after having seen the imprisonments, torture, and murder which was perpetrated by Nhari’s rebels? Even on our way, they ordered some comrades to surrender their arms. What else could they have done? It is the code of conduct for one to obey the commander’s orders without any objections. The likes of comrade Lovemore Chakadya and Peter Ngwenya were buried alive. These were destroyed and they perished. These dissidents were very ruthless. Up to now I don’t even know how I managed to escape the hands of these murderers, but I would like to think I was saved by God and the ancestral spirit of the Chifambausiku dynasty, which stood firm for me. Now what can we say? Comrades were beaten and they were burnt with some cigarettes and they were accused of supporting Tongogara. We arrived at Chifombo and we met Sheba ‘Fox’ Gava, who was the provincial Commander in this area. These dissidents arrived at the Chifombo Camp and they said, ‘Comrade Gava come and see. We have brought two white Rhodesian prisoners, let’s go and see them.’ When they got into the bush, Comrade Gava realised that he was now a bandit and the guns were aimed at his chest and they said, ‘We have taken over the control of this camp, where is Tongo?’ The man ran out of his mind and became short of words. What could he have done? His fellow comrades had turned against him.<sup>159</sup>

William Ndangana, who himself was a Manyika, pursues the tribal argument and believes he was a victim of the rebellion because he had refused to be part of the Nhari arrangement. They had incorporated him in their plan because Ndangana was Nda. He was also from the east and by proximity he ought to join the Manyika. His refusal was taken to be selling out. Here is his detailed account:

I knew them [the rebels] because they were always accusing me of lack of tribalism. I respect people who lack tribalism. They were all from Manicaland and tried to organise us along tribal lines. Chitepo even complained about these [tribalistic] characters. The other tribalist was Hamadziripi (a Karanga). He would befriend Mukono, particularly after the latter’s being voted out of Secretary for Defence. A lot of private meetings took place among these elements. When the rebels tried to overthrow the High Command, Hamadziripi and Mukono knew about it. What Hamadziripi did not know was that there was an element which was killing the Karanga and killing all sorts of people who had close relations and were collaborating with the Karanga. So there were a lot of killings. When the rebels had done this, they marched to Chifombo to terrorise the camp. From the camp they headed for Lusaka. They arrived in Lusaka in December 1974.

When they arrived, I was at the office and it was here that we had our records. My duty was that of Chief of Staff so that I supervised the whole administration. Dziso (General Staff), Pedzisai Mabhun, and Mbuya Tsitsi worked with me. Tongogara was also there and he was the Chief of Defence. When they came in I enquired for a report and Nhari showed me a very hostile attitude. I tried to enquire and he talked rubbish. I chucked him out. Hamadziripi tried to intervene but I insisted on the proper

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(159) Makari, C. *Magamba eChimurenga*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 2003: See pp.96-98.

protocol for him to have an interview with me. He asked for money and we gave him \$250 and K100. The rebels consisted of Nhari, Caesar, Molife, Cephass Tichatonga, Sam Chandawa, and Timothy Chiridza (driver). The three members of the General Staff were Nhari, Cephass, and Sam. They wanted to go back by a Land Rover by 11:30 am. Nhari now behaved normal. They left and we remained to work as usual. We worked normal hours. There were no hours of loafing. Often I used to go with Mayor Urimbo. Meanwhile the rebels drove for 40km by the Chipata road, made a u-turn and came back at night. By then they had already made some arrests at the camps. They had arrested Sheba Gava who commanded Chifombo. They had gone to the Zambia-Zimbabwe- Border (ZZB) and found that the commander, Rex Nhongo, was in China. They caught Cephass Ndanga who was the Deputy to Rex Nhongo. The Political Commissar was Peter Sheba. Ndanga and Gava were to be treated as enemies. They arrived back in Lusaka at 5:30 pm. They saw Chimurenga whose character was very strange and they wanted him to take them to the Chief of Operations. Chimurenga played diversionary tactics. He took them to his own house. The coup group then tried to find my house, but they could not find it until they walked on foot, asking for the house. They got there at 11 pm. I opened the door for the four. They told me they had problems with their car. The car was reported to be houses away. I repaired the car and asked them to come back into the house and sleep. They said John Mataure would give them the car if Ndangana allowed it. I went with them and got the car from Mataure. Chemist Ncube said, you have the car. Mataure pretended not to know the coup plot. They volunteered to take me back home. There was no respect for my rank. I was not taken to my house. Instead I was taken to a slaughter place. Then they pointed a pistol at me, forcing me to go to the forefront. We went to Chigowe's place. When we got to Chigowe's place they bashed his door. Just before we got to Chigowe, they tied up my hands. There was moonlight. Chigowe's wife came out naked and I prevented them from shooting her. Then we left for Chimurenga's house, where I and Sheba were arrested. We were called traitors and the others were called rebels. Then we went to Dabulamanzi's house. They wanted to shoot him, until I persuaded him to cooperate. They wanted to get to Chifombo during the night, but we had a tyre puncture. Nhari wanted to shoot me. We left the Land Rover with one of them. When we got to Chifombo, Badza was there and we were made to run to where Gava, Tungamirai, Teurai, and Loveness were tied up and were being beaten and tortured. Mationesa was abusing me. At 1:30 am, Badza came and he was respected by the rebels as the new chief. He said Ngangana is a stooge because I was under the Karanga dominance. They told me that they were going to put me on a firing squad with Tongogara, Hamadziripi, and others. We were then ordered to go out with Tandii, who was Badza's brother-in-law, Pfumo and Roy, at 3 am. We walked on foot carrying food supplies. We got to Kashiri, who had promoted himself camp commandant. They said they took an oath of success of the coup. When we got there, we found the northeast *povo* having been given a lot of cattle. We were guarded by women. Roy killed one comrade as he now practised summary justice. Three days before the rescue team, we witnessed the interrogation and beating to death of somebody.

After three days, Tungamirai and Chimurenga escaped. The guards were either beaten or killed on accusations of negligence. I saw the killing with my own eyes. When Badza heard of this, he gave orders that we, the remaining prisoners should be killed on the 12th of January 1975. Tongogara and Nhongo got a new group from Tanzania to

rescue us and it managed to defuse Chifombo. Elias Hondo led the rescue team. When they got the letter with the news of the rescue operation, Kashiri and Tandi never came to kill us. There was an exchange of fire between the rescue team and the rebels. I managed to break the ropes and ran away to the FRELIMO camp. I was barefooted and almost naked. I took a bath and they gave me clothes. I was extremely smelly. I was joined by Gava and others the following day. Kashiri, Tandi, and others were killed. We were very thin after having been underfed. When we got to Chifombo we joined Chitepo, Kangai, Hove, and the rest of the Dare. Chimurenga had not arrived. We held review meetings of the killings that had taken place. Mataure was reviewed for assisting the rebels and he was suspected.<sup>160</sup>

William Ndangana also gives details of how the ZANLA command system was restructured after the suppression of the Nhari rebellion as follows:

**RESTRUCTURING OF THE ZANLA HIGH COMMAND, 1975**

Chief of Defence: Josiah Tongogara

Chief of Operations: W.H. Ndangana

(Chief of Operations to work from ZMB at Chifombo.)

Political Commissar: M. Urimbo

Chief of Information and Secretary: C. Chigowe

Chief of Camp Commandant of All Camps: Robson Manyika

Provincial Commander BZB: J. Chimurenga

Provincial Commander ZZB: Rex Nhongo

Provincial Commander ZMB: Sheba Gava

Chief Logistics and Supply: J. Chauke

Deputy for Logistics: C. Dabulamanzi

Camps Political Commissar: Dzinashé Machingura

Military Attaché: Elias Hondo

Provincial Political Commissar: Cuthbert Chimedza

Provincial Political Commissar: Josiah Tungamirai

Provincial Political Commissar: D. Moyo

Camp Security and Intelligence: J.

Nyikadzinashé Provincial Security and

Intelligence: E. Seke

Provincial Security and Intelligence: Sarudzai Isaac Chinamaropa

Provincial Security and Intelligence: Patrick Mpunzarima

Rugare Gumbo confirms the links between the rebels and the Smith regime. When the rebellion took place, he had been away leading a ZANU delegation to China and on his return, he found that all the political leaders detained in Rhodesia had been released and some of them were at Mulungushi. One evening after a meeting with the former detainees, he was waylaid by the rebels driving a lorry, who had come to arrest him and Mukudzei Mudzi. They were distracted by John Mataure's car which sped past them (Mataure was apparently involved in the Nhari conspiracy). They headed

<sup>(160)</sup> Interview with William Ndangana by Prof. Bhebe, (Harare) 12 July 1984.

for Tongogara's house and there was pandemonium there until the Zambian police arrived. The police arrested everybody, including the captives Kangai and Mudzi.<sup>161</sup> Kangai had been abducted on his way from a meeting with Kaunda at State House and was thrown into the rebels' lorry, but they were all intercepted by the Zambian police. One of the rebels, believing that their mission had been foiled, attempted to kill everybody in the car with a hand grenade amidst pleas from all the prisoners and his colleagues. Meanwhile the police, according to Kangai, were

...firing randomly, threatening to fire at us and shouting hands up! Then I said to Mukudzi Mudzi, what have we done? We are now lumped together with the rebels. I then turned to the Zambian police and said, I think you are making a terrible mistake. There are two groups of people here – the people who have been kidnapped and the rebels who have kidnapped us. So I asked, why are you lumping us together? The police shouted back, you are talking too much, shut up. I insisted, we want you to understand our situation. In the end, one of them came forward and said to his friend, yes I think he has a point there.

While we were having these exchanges with the police, there was a Zambian riot squad which advanced towards us, firing at us. They were also shouting, "You people don't want independence, what are you doing you fools? You fight amongst yourselves, what are you doing?" And all this was accompanied by firing. It was most terrifying and I saw one of the female comrades urinating on herself. But I kept on saying, can you just give us a minute so that we can explain what is happening. I was with His Excellency President Kaunda, participating in the discussion at State House, and, as I got to one of the houses where we were staying, I was arrested by these people. And now you are lumping us together with our kidnappers.

Finally someone said fine, we will sort you out. He separated the captors from the captives. The rebels were put in one car and we were put in another car. By that time, it was at dawn between 4 and 5 am. We had been there for almost the whole night. In the morning, they let all those who had been kidnapped go and detained the rebels. We then continued with the meeting at the State house. But the rebels were released after being detained for only one day.<sup>162</sup>

When they were released, the rebels headed off to Chifombo where another group that had captured Josiah Tungamirai, Sheba Gava, and William Ndangana had gone. Meanwhile, Rex Nhongo, who had foreseen the possibility of a mutiny before he left with Gumbo and others on the mission to China, arrived on a flight a day later than Gumbo. Judging the attitudes of his colleagues in the front, he had withdrawn all the weapons back to Zambia. So when the trouble began, Nhongo took Cletos Chigowe with him to retrieve the weapons. They returned to Lusaka with all the weapons and quickly arranged for a group that was still undergoing training in Tanzania to come immediately to the rescue. It arrived, but on that night Nhongo had an accident and was hospitalised, leaving the rescue mission to Chifombo to be led by his deputy Patrick Mupunzarima. They stormed Chifombo and managed to secure the release

(161) Interview with Rugare Gumbo by Prof. Bhebe, (Masvingo) 04 May 2007.

(162) Interview with Kumbirai Kangai by Prof. Bhebe.

of Ndagana, Dauramanzi, and Gava.<sup>163</sup> However, the leaders of the rebellion were still at large and according to Nhongo it was agreed that they should call them in for a discussion to settle the matter at Kaswende. Nhari and his colleagues fell for the trick and were rounded up and arrested. There are varied accounts, however, of how the events unfolded. The following accounts are simply variants that have not been presented before. According to Luise White, a committee was set up to investigate the mutiny at the Chimurenga General Council of 22 January 1975. It was composed of Chitepo, Gumbo, and Kangai. Although the investigation was never completed, somehow Tongogara announced a list of those implicated, amongst them Noel Mukono, Mukudzei Mudzi, John Mataure, Simpson Mutambanengwe, Cornelius Sanyanga, Nelson Dziruni, Richard Hove and his wife, and Sekai Holland. Chitepo was named as a suspect for whom there was no evidence at the moment.<sup>164</sup> Of these, only Mataure was present and he spoke in his defence to no avail; he was executed together with Nhari at once. The rest left Zambia or sought police protection. Chitepo, who had promised the Zambian government that the rebels would not be executed, was found in the difficult position of being a suspect himself and having to sign the execution orders as Chairman of the Dare. He now lived in open fear for his life.<sup>165</sup> It is also alleged that all the political leaders were against the executions, but were in no position to oppose Tongogara who was determined to execute them all. Fay Chung believes Tongogara certainly wanted to eliminate potential rivals, and was successful, in this case, in having Mataure executed. Richard Hove, another potential rival was saved by his wife, who stripped naked in front of Kaunda and managed to get Kaunda to order her husband's release.<sup>166</sup>

All this was happening amidst the unity talks to establish the UANC as elaborated above and it has frequently been suggested that Kaunda's government had a hand in the Nhari rebellion judged by what they did or did not do to facilitate the mutiny or the release of the rebels. Zambia was already experiencing an economic crisis as a result of the sanctions imposed on Rhodesia, so it would "easily support any group that would weaken ZANU and ZANLA, including the Nhari group, because of ZANU's refusal to hand in its arms as part of the *détente* exercise."<sup>167</sup> This situation was not helped by the killing of Chitepo two months later.

### **The Chitepo Assassination of March 1975**

There has never been a subject as controversial in the struggle for Zimbabwe as the death of Herbert Chitepo, who was killed by a car bomb planted in the front wheel of his VW Beetle on 18 March 1975. To date, several theories have been developed about the reasons for his killing, the identity of his assailants, and the effects of his death on

(163) Interview between Dr. N. Shamuyarira and Rex Nhongo, 17 July 1984.

(164) White, Luise. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003. See pp.39-40.

(165) *Ibid.* p.40.

(166) Chung, F. *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*. See p.94.

(167) *Ibid.*

the future of the struggle. A survey of these theories has been done by Luise White. Here, we emphasise the testimonies of Chitepo's contemporaries. But first, we explore claims by those who openly admit to have killed Chitepo, the Rhodesians. According to Peter Stiff, the Rhodesian intelligence wanted Chitepo dead because "we believed his early demise would create just the right climate at the moment. Besides that, he is a dangerous and important member of ZANU."<sup>168</sup> Martin and Johnson submit that Chitepo had been a Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) target since 1969, when he was identified as the brains behind the review in military strategy and the conduct of the guerrilla war.<sup>169</sup> He had been opposed to talks and indeed to the whole *détente* exercise, arguing, "There will be no talks, no negotiations, no discussions involving our movement until Mr. Smith recognises the right to immediate majority rule. ...[T]he war goes on and it will continue until we have liberated every acre of our country."<sup>170</sup> Such an attitude cost him even the support of Nyerere and Kaunda, who called him a 'Black Napoleon'. Yet even though he posed so much danger to the Rhodesians, different accounts regarding the identity of two different Rhodesian assassins have since emerged, one implicating Chuck Hinde and the other Taffy Bryce.<sup>171</sup>

On the other hand, his own colleagues in ZANU have been implicated in his death, which was the reason why Kaunda arrested all the ZANU High Command and threw them into jail soon after Chitepo's funeral. There have been reports about Chitepo receiving several warnings that his colleagues were plotting to kill him. He seems also to have had several premonitions of the same murder, which he expressed in the many letters he wrote to President Kaunda, Kamuzu Banda, and others. Henry Hamadziripi recalls that on 31 October 1974, a mysterious fire gutted ZANU offices in Lusaka, and the main offices affected, it seemed, were those of Chitepo and Mukudzei Mudzi. The Zambian Police refused to investigate, but instead issued threats to Chitepo and Edson Sithole. There was increasing hostility towards Chitepo from both within Zambia and from Tanzania's Foreign Minister, John Malicheya. In light of this situation, the Dare actually decided that Chitepo should be accompanied wherever he went. It is not clear, however, whether the guards were meant to protect him or to guard him from escaping. Hamadziripi, who travelled to Addis Ababa with Chitepo to attend an OAU meeting a few days before his death, had this to say:

...before Chitepo passed away, we went to the OAU. I was in his company. We were in Nairobi and we met his friend he had trained with in London and he said, 'Ah! Believe my eyes?' We said, why? Then he replied 'You were supposed to have been killed, how come you have not been killed? They are after you!' I was shocked. I then asked what we were supposed to do then. He said the best was not to allow him to go back to Zambia or any of these neighbouring countries anymore. All the same,

(168) Stiff, Peter. *The Story of an SAS Assassin*. Alberton: Galago Publishing, 1985.

(169) Martin, D. and P. Johnson. *The Chitepo Assassination*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985: See p.38.

(170) *Ibid*, p.23.

(171) *Ibid*. p.124; Stiff, P. *See You in November*: See pp.125-127; Martin and Johnson. *The Chitepo Assassination*: See p.100.

we proceeded to the OAU Liberation Committee in Addis Ababa. We bought some clothes which we never used. On the way back, we parted as he took a plane to Arusha where his family was and I got back home. As soon as I arrived in Lusaka, I phoned his wife and urged her to keep her husband (Chitepo) for at least more than a week, but the wife said that at times *baba* [father] can be difficult and may not be able to keep him for that long. Then Chitepo demanded to speak to me and we talked. I told him that it was important to see his family and that I would come and pick him up. But then he convinced me and said, ‘Look, we have got a trip to Malawi on the 4th of March 1975 where we are going to see Banda’. Then I said, Okay you can come and pick me up.

Chitepo then came in the early hours of the 4th/5th March 1975. I had bought tickets for our trip to Malawi. Unfortunately, I think Chitepo had talked to some people in Lusaka that we were crossing into Malawi... The other purpose for our mission to Malawi was to go and buy enough food for forces who were said to be starving in Mozambique... I also bought a ticket for Chigowe. When we were about to leave the airport someone came to me and said I was wanted over a phone call. I think there was talk to the effect, ‘keep that man there’.

Then Chitepo said to me his last words, ‘We are going ahead’ and I said ‘To go ahead?’ We booked at Shirte Hotel. I was worried; he was worried. In seven days, Chitepo went back to Zambia. There were intentions of sending me to Rhodesia. Chitepo tried to talk to everyone that I should not be sent to Rhodesia.

We were detained in Malawi for 14 days. Finally Tiny Rowland prevailed, arguing that I could not be sent to Rhodesia. Tiny was a friend of mine. Then one morning around 3 or 4 am, someone came to knock at our place and told us that we were free to leave. We were asked whether we wanted to go to Tanzania or Zambia. I kept quiet because I was angry. On our way, I found Stanley Mau Mau tied up. He was going to be one of the people to go with me to Lusaka. Then we went to Lusaka and Chitepo had been killed that morning but I didn’t know.<sup>172</sup>

Hamadziripi’s account is interesting in its inconsistencies and secrets. First, it does not say explicitly who called him to say “Keep that man there.”; secondly, it is not honest on the reasons for his detention in Malawi. Both issues are controversial subjects in the story of the assassination of Chitepo. In the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Chitepo’s death, Hamadziripi was suspected of travelling with Chitepo in order to kill him and this was revealed in letters Chitepo wrote to President Banda while in Malawi, which resulted in the Malawian authorities detaining Hamadziripi and Chigowe for Chitepo’s protection. Later, when Chitepo returned to Lusaka, he requested the release of the two.<sup>173</sup>

It is not our object to solve the mystery of Chitepo’s death, but to examine its impact on the pursuit of the struggle on ZANU’s side. One of the immediate consequences of Chitepo’s death was that Kaunda ordered the arrest of nearly all members of the Dare and of ZANLA’s High Command, and appointed an international commission to investigate Chitepo’s death. The Commission submitted its report, implicating Chitepo’s colleagues, and the deposed ZANU leader Ndabaningi Sithole endorsed

(172) Interview with Henry Hamadziripi by Prof. Bhebe, (Harare) 14 November 1999.

(173) White, L. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo*: See pp.42-43.

its findings by issuing a statement that Chitepo was actually a victim of a Karanga coup. Sithole argued that the Karanga had manoeuvred from a minority in the early years of ZANU's formation to a majority in the High Command, where they were now bracing themselves for a full take over.<sup>174</sup> This assertion was not only refuted by ZANU's Eddison Zvobgo in a reply, but also exposed for its inconsistencies. Zvobgo counter-accused Sithole of having his tribe dominate instead the ANC-ZLC, whose agenda Sithole and the Frontline leaders were now promoting.<sup>175</sup>

## 1975-1980

### **The ANC-ZLC Fiasco and ZIPRA/ZANLA Clashes in Zambia and Tanzania, 1975-1976**

The feuding in the ANC political leadership spilled over to the guerrillas in the training camps in more explicit ways, especially following an attempt to place them together in one camp at Mboroma in Zambia. The ZANLA contingent at Mboroma had been largely brought in as rank and file detainees arrested after the Chitepo assassination. Mboroma was originally a ZIPRA camp, where they detained people whom they “regarded as accomplices of the Smith regime”.<sup>176</sup> At a later stage though, and in the interest of the ANC/ZLC programme, it was converted into a camp to start joint training of the Zimbabwe Liberation Army, an experiment that was also pursued concurrently in Tanzania in Morogoro and Iringa. FROLIZI and ANC guerrillas started trickling in to start the process in earnest. This attempt failed dismally, largely because of the ZANU situation. The ZLC leadership came into the camps to apprise the trainees of this new development, but the ZANLA cadres, now leaderless, interpreted the imprisonment of their leadership as a ploy to stop the war and negotiate with Smith, a practical move to hijack ZANLA's “efforts at pushing the war to the stage it had reached.”<sup>177</sup> Stabben Chiweshe (Champion Pfumo) was one of the ZANLA guerrillas at Mboroma who had this to say:

When we were arrested, we were sent to Mboroma, and the reason why we were detained at Mboroma was because of a plot by an enemy called Henry Kissinger, who was a senior enemy to most of Africa that was fighting for liberation. Whenever he intervened, people suffered, and that was the same with us. We were detained in the middle of the wilderness where you could only hear the sound of birds, nothing else. We stayed there for one week, and the detention camp was being filled bit by bit. Every time they caught one of us, she/he was brought to Mboroma... After the second week at Mboroma, we started to see members of James Chikerema's FROLIZI and also ZIPRA and the UANC and some soldiers from the Rhodesian Front. We were now five opposing factions detained at one place. We stayed there throughout 1975, which was the time of *détente*.

(174) Sithole, N. Statement on the Assassination of H. Chitepo and ZANU. Baumogher, ed. vol. 2 Doc. No 40. 10 May 1976.

(175) Zvobgo, E. ZANU's Reply to N. Sithole. Baumogher, ed. Vol.2 Doc. 41, c. June 1976.

(176) Nkomo, Joshua. *The Story of My Life*. London: Methuen, 1984. Rpt. Harare: SAPES Books, 2001: See p.174.

(177) Ibid.

The first incident arose out of the fact that the others, including the Zambians, were proposing that the war should stop, all the leaders in detention in Zambia to be released and brought to Mboroma. The whole group detained at Mboroma would then start the war afresh, with a new leadership. We in ZANU could see that we had only maybe one or two members of the High Command detained with us at Mboroma, and maybe three from the General Staff. But ZIPRA had many members of the High Command there and we knew that. They wanted to put in a leader from ZIPRA and the head of the new arrangement, and we in ZANU did not agree with that arrangement and we refused.<sup>178</sup>

The cadres clearly failed to get along and were suspicious of each other. Serious problems emerged from fairly petty things, such as cooking duties and surprisingly the same developments were registered in Tanzania. Champion Pfumo continues :

The problem was that our kitchen was the same, and we had cooking duties, one day ZANLA, the next day ZIPRA, and so forth. The ZANLA number at Mboroma was the biggest, and we were the only ones with female combatants there, all the others had men, very strong giants. It seemed as if they had selected only very strong men from the other parties so that they would cause chaos at Mboroma. ZANLA had men, children, old men and women, girls and boys. After we had refused the leadership arrangement proposed by ZIPRA, one day our meat was poisoned...

Two days after the poisoning, there was a fight. We were fighting with sticks, stoning each other. It was a ferocious fight. The main bone of contention was that some of the other people were trying to force us to renounce the armed struggle, and we in ZANLA did not agree with that, and ZIPRA saying they believed in talks. The clash ended only after we in ZANLA were moved to another camp about 5km away from the main camp at Mboroma. We had many recruits who had just come from Rhodesia, others who had stayed in Zambia for a long time, others who had trained, but everyone was itching to go and fight the Rhodesians. We then decided that we could not just pass our days seated and started to teach other politics. We had a full program for the whole day. If it had been a university, many people would have graduated from there. Many actually learnt more than they would have learnt in training in the normal camps....

One day, the leaders of all the parties whose people were detained at Mboroma came: Sithole for ZANU, Nkomo for ZAPU, Muzorewa for UANC, Chikerema for FROLIZI. Rhodesia was represented, but I don't know the person. They came to the main camp where the food was stored. The Zambian regiments also stayed in the main camp. When the leaders came, they said that they had agreed to go back to Zimbabwe and talk to Smith and transfer leadership of the country without further fighting. The parties would remain separate, but Muzorewa would lead the country when we went back to Zimbabwe. ZANU refused. We said the time to talk had long gone, we were here to fight. Sithole, Nkomo, Chikerema, and Muzorewa talked and tried to persuade us, but we refused then and there at that parade. The Rhodesian Front rep said nothing. They then left the camp and met with our leaders at the camp, including Webster Gwaya and Simon Muzenda, who were also under arrest. Muzenda was the only one allowed out of the camp to talk on our behalf. When those five leaders went back, we remained.

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(178) Interview with Staben Chiweshe (Champion Pfumo) by Charles Mariponde, (Mt. Darwin) 12 May 2008.

Two days later, some of our comrades went to the main camp to collect our food. The ZIPRAs and others had already disagreed and had their own mini-camps in the Mboroma Camp. We were the only group that had vehicles and our guys drove the vehicles to the main camp, with one driver called Murehwa. Our logistics officer, who was a woman, was then kidnapped by the ZIPRAs at the main camp. Murehwa then beat a hasty retreat and came to report what had happened. We then decided to go and fight. We filled our two Bedfords and went to the main camp. The ZIPRAs and their Zambian guards were already lying in ambush, knowing that we were coming. They started firing upon us, using the guns they had captured from us when we were arrested. Many of us died. Then a whirlwind came and those who were firing at us and we could not see each other at all. Those firing at us thought that they had destroyed us, that with their AK47s and NATO they had massacred us. When they stopped firing they found out we were alive and actually taking our injured and dead comrades and putting them into our vehicles. Their very first shot had caused the death of their commander who was sitting in a tent with our captured Logistics Officer.

Those fighting us then started running away. We lost eight of our comrades to the firing and others died later in hospital. Some of us we sent to Lusaka Hospital. Muzenda came to see the injured and the dead. Sithole, who was still in Lusaka, came and was only inspecting the legs and feet of the dead, who were covered, maybe two corpses, and then said he would come back to see them when I return from London where I am going to see my child who is having some stomach problems. That is when people turned against Sithole, after he had turned against his guerrillas. Our problem with him was that he had talked to the Rhodesians and wanted the war to stop, which we refused, and this also led to the shootout at Mboroma that led to the death of some of us. He refused to attend to those who had been injured or killed. That was because we had refused his proposal to stop the war against the Rhodesians. A message was then sent to Rex Nkhomo and others, who then responded by declaring that Sithole was no longer the leader of ZANU. Some of us had even gone from Mboroma to Tanzania to go and express their displeasure with Sithole's leadership.

Sithole was called in to come and see the comrades who had been killed and oversee their burial. He came, he saw, but quickly gave the excuse that he had to go and see his sick daughter in America.<sup>179</sup>

Developments in Tanzania were much more serious, however. Probably after getting wind of the situation in Zambia, tensions rose amongst ZIPRA and ZANLA cadres in training camps in Morogoro and Iringa. On May 16, 1976, seven cadres were killed at Morogoro training camp during a dispute over cooking duties as well. At Iringa, worse was to come, instructors and their trainees clashed over the use of partisan slogans and different approaches in the training programmes on the 6th of June. Some of the ZANU trainees took advantage of being armed with automatic rifles that were being used for training and fired indiscriminately at their unarmed ZIPRA colleagues, killing seven and seriously wounding nearly 70. About 50 ZIPRA recruits

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(179) Interview with Comrade Oscar Mdluli (David Ngozi) by Charles Mariponde, (Nembire, Mt. Darwin) 28 February 2008.

went missing and nine of them were discovered some days later. Forty-one were still missing one month and nineteen days after the incident.<sup>180</sup>

Meanwhile, the ANC leadership started touring the camps in a bid to enforce unity. Willie Deveteve, ex-ZANLA Field Commander, remembers an occasion at Mgagao training camp in May 1975 when,

... the leaders for the ANC came and they were led by Muzorewa, followed by Ndabaningi Sithole, Joshua Nkomo, and Chikerema. They were accompanied by Col. Mbita. We told them that we did not want to discuss anything until the ZANU leadership was released. Comrade Sithole told us that this was impossible, but we told them that they were not going to leave the place. They later on agreed... We discussed a lot of things, but what surprised us is that Nkomo came with J.Z. Moyo in good faith, Chikerema came with Nyandoro, but Sithole came with Noel Mukono who had been associated with the Nhari rebellion. He had been expelled out of the party and how did he return? We were suspicious and convinced that Sithole was up to no good. We realised that the party was no longer in good form. When Sithole and others got to Zambia, [they] issued [a statement] that the release of Manyika was not possible till the Zambians finish their investigations. There were some allegations that they killed Chitepo. The Lusaka group called some of the members of Mgagao for a meeting. We sent the likes of the late Mundembe, Donald Pashai, Dzinashe Machingura, James Nyikadzinashe, and Peter Mlambo. On arrival they were shocked to hear that a new leader has been chosen and he was to be Kenneth Gwindingwi. He came from the same place with Sithole. Our group was surprised to know that Kenneth, a young guy, has been appointed whilst elders like Rex Nhongo were there. They denied the move and they came out of Lusaka after long disagreements. When they returned, they told us about the results of the meeting and the fact that Sithole had chosen to visit his child in America than to go and see comrades who had been shot by the Zambians. People started to question the viability of the revolution, now that Sithole was turning to be a tribalist. He had destroyed our command structure. Thus when the Mgagao document was signed, people opted to write to the OAU asking for a new leadership.<sup>181</sup>

The turn of events certainly did not work in Sithole's favour, and Sithole himself did not help matters by placing so much faith in the ZLC and trying to prove that the imprisoned ZANU leadership was now irrelevant to the struggle. He assumed, wrongly, like Muzorewa, that he had the fighters behind him. They made this clear to him by denouncing his leadership in a statement to the OAU dubbed the 'Mgagao Declaration'. Both Deveteve and Alex Mudavanhu confirm that there was some communication between Mgagao inmates and the ZANU leadership in prison, especially through Robson Manyika. The declaration was synchronised with efforts by the imprisoned leadership to locate Robert Mugabe in Mozambique and impress

(180) "ZANLA-ZIPRA Clashes in Tanzania." Document 126: Report by the ANC/Nkomo on Massacres of ANC Cadres 30 August 1976. In Goswin Baumhogger, ed. *The Struggle for Independence: Documents on the Recent Development of Zimbabwe (1975 -1990)*. Hamburg: Institut für Afrika-Kunde, 1984.

(181) Interview with Willie Deveteve by Gerald C. Mazarire, (Harare) 12 February 2007.

upon him to take up the mandate to lead the party and continue the struggle. They wrote to him:

In line with our party policy and party procedure, we decided that you as the number two man in the party would automatically take over the leadership of the party until the party congress was convened. We communicated this decision to the Comrades at Mgagao and they in turn made the famous Mgagao statement denouncing ANC-ZLC and calling upon you to lead the ANC. We also started an extensive campaign to inform all our members and organs of our decision and urged them to openly and publicly support the stand taken by the Comrades at Mgagao. The response of our party members and ordinary Zimbabweans has been overwhelming.

Because of lack of communication with you it was difficult for us to make a formal statement to the world of our decision until we got to know your stand. Now that we know your position we are in a position to make a formal declaration calling upon you to immediately take over the party leadership... The burden and responsibility of leading our party and revolution now rests on YOU. Should we be released by our captors we shall be glad to join you in the field. Let us stress again that our decision to have you as our party leader was reached after exhaustive consultations and takes into account the views of most of the rank and file members of the party.<sup>182</sup>

### **Mozambican Independence and the Growing Number of Recruits, 1975**

Many young people had crossed the border into Mozambique following its independence, but this was also partly because ZANU launched an intensive recruitment exercise within Rhodesia spearheaded by those leaders who were still in the country. Maurice Nyagumbo, who had been released from prison during détente, was instrumental in the recruitment exercise for most of 1975, resulting in his re-arrest.<sup>183</sup> Machel welcomed the recruits and placed them in former FRELIMO camps at Tembwe, Nyadzonya, and Chibawawa. Richard Hove recalls that following the events at Mboroma, Machel summoned all the UANC leaders to Mozambique, including Muzenda, Silundika, Jason Moyo, Chikerema, Sithole, George Nyandoro, and Hove. While there, they met Robert Mugabe, Edgar Tekere, and Rex Nhongo (who had escaped arrest in Zambia). First, Machel asked them what party they belonged to, and all, save for the ZANU group, claimed to be ANC. Machel rebuked them all for spending too much time on internecine infighting instead of on fighting the enemy. He would arrange for them to go and tour the camps and see for themselves how the recruits were eager to fight for their country, while their leaders expended their energy on leadership squabbles.<sup>184</sup> The tour was quickly arranged and the delegation was able to see the large numbers of recruits, most of them school children, and their plight. Three days later, Rex Nhongo travelled to Maputo to explain to Machel that ZANLA was ready to fight since they had more than 2000 trained cadres in

(182) Excerpt from a Letter by J.M. Tongogara, K. Kangai, R.N. Gumbo to R. Mugabe (24 Jan 1976). Doc.35 in Goswin Baumhogger. *The Struggle for Independence: Documents on the Recent Development of Zimbabwe (1975-1990)*. Vol. II, Doc. 1-249 (December 1974 –January 1977).

(183) Nyagumbo, M. *With the People*: See p.226.

(184) Interview with Richard Hove by Prof. Bhebe, (Hove's Farm) 16 November 2002.

Mgagao and those stranded in Mboroma on standby. Samora was agreeable as long as this arrangement had Nyerere's approval. Nyerere, who was still taken aback by the reality of the Mgagao Declaration, would only buy the ZANLA case under the unity arrangement of the ANC. But, realising the leadership complications implicit in the Sithole deposition and in the army-less Muzorewa and Chikerema, he and Samora eventually decided that they could achieve unity through the fighting forces instead,

and this is how the idea of the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) was proposed.

### **ZIPA or the 'Third Force', 1975-1976**

The confusion caused by the arrests of ZANU leaders scarred the liberation movement and worked against the unity of the various movements envisaged by the Frontline States. The imminent collapse of the UANC meant that the Zimbabwe Liberation Army would never come to be. It was best, therefore, for the Frontline States to attempt to unify the fighters themselves, without the political leadership, and ensure the continuity of the war. This task was left to the Liberation Committee, which came up with the idea of the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA). To implement this approach, it was necessary to contain Muzorewa and other pretenders, ending the delusion that there would ever be a ZLA. Muzorewa and Sithole were in Mozambique, but were not allowed to access the guerrilla camps presumably because of the Mgagao Declaration, but perhaps not to be allowed to interfere with the new ZIPA project. There are three main theories advanced for the formation of ZIPA. The first depicts it as a 'third force', the brainchild of Julius Nyerere (then Chairman of the Frontline States) and which was only answerable to the Executive Secretary of the OAU Liberation Committee, Colonel Hashim Mbita, who was also a Tanzanian, in order to influence the outcome of the war in Zimbabwe.<sup>185</sup> The second sees it as an inevitable product of the collapse of *détente* talks at Victoria Falls.<sup>186</sup> The third submits that ZIPA was an independent 'ideologically' inspired initiative of the guerrillas themselves to achieve unity of the liberation movements through their armies.

The ZIPA High Command was as follows:  
 Rex Nhongo, (ZANLA) Army Commander  
 John Dube, (ZIPRA) Deputy  
 Nikita Mangena, (ZIPRA) Political Commissar  
 Dzinashe Machingura, (ZANLA) Deputy  
 Elias Hondo, (ZANLA) Director of Operations  
 Gordon Munyanyi, (ZIPRA) Director of Security and Intelligence  
 James Nyikadzino, (ZANLA) Deputy  
 Webster Gwauya, (ZANLA) Director of Political  
 Affairs David Moyana, (ZIPRA) Deputy  
 Report Mpoko, (ZIPRA) Director of Logistics and Supplies  
 Edward Kaguri, (ZANLA) Deputy

(185) Sithole, M. *Frontlinestatism and the Zimbabwe Question*. p.23.

(186) Smith, D. and C. Simpson. *Mugabe*. Salisbury: Pioneer Head, 1981. p.82.

Ambrose Mutinhiri, (ZIPRA) Director of Training and Personnel  
 Parker Chipoyera, (ZANLA) Deputy  
 Dr. Mudzingwa, (ZIPRA) Director of Medical Services  
 Tiyayi Pfeferere, (ZANLA) Deputy

The ZIPA project certainly worked in ZANU's favour, and, in any case, ZANU wanted ZIPA for its own reorganization after their situation in Zambia. First, Sithole's immediate reaction to the Mgagao Declaration was to freeze all ZANU accounts, making it difficult to feed the thousands of recruits in the camps as well as to run other party operations. The Liberation Committee was still processing the requisite funds for ZIPA from Addis Ababa, and, in the interim, ZANU had to make do with borrowing Tanzanian money. However, in a gesture of support to the ZIPA project, the Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo donated \$6,000,000 in cash, which Nhongo brought back in a suitcase. This money, together with the subsequent full financial support from the Liberation Committee, came in handy.<sup>187</sup> Secondly, ZANU took advantage of Machel's offer to move its administration and forces permanently to Mozambique, where, in the process of warming up to the ZIPA project, it successfully reorganized itself. Back in Mozambique, ZIPA established its headquarters and a farm at Chimoio, and established base camps that received the thousands of refugees coming from inside Rhodesia. Chimoio was divided into sub-bases: namely Takawira 1 and 2 for male residents and a training ground; Parirenyatwa, the camp clinic; Chindunduma, a school complex; Zvidozvevanhu, the garage; Mbuya Nehanda, for female residents; Chitepo, for trained females; Percy Ntini, a rehabilitation centre for those wounded at the front (in the war); Chaminuka, for security; and Mudzingadzi, mainly for agriculture. By the end of 1976, there were nearly 11,000 people living at Chimoio, including refugee children. The ZANLA leaders of ZIPA did not make it a secret that these were their recruits and it systematically established firm control of the camps, while working out an operational programme of cooperation with ZIPRA. This new offensive divided the operational areas into the three provinces of Tete, Manica, and Gaza. ZIPA, however, continued to operate like two separate armies as

Nhongo explained:

We put Tete under ZANLA because we had started fighting there. We therefore had a lot of influence and did not want ZAPU to take over. We again took Manica; it was ours. And left Gaza to ZAPU because we were sure of the support we would get there. This was 1976.<sup>188</sup>

Initially Manica was experiencing problems under its provincial commander, Morrison Nyathi, who failed to register any progress partly because of his methods of operation and relations with the local population. Little did anyone know that he was already a paid Rhodesian agent. The ZIPA high command back in Mgagao suspected this and sent in Freddie Matanga on a 60 day mission to crack open the front in a

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(187) Interview with Rex Nhongo.

(188) Ibid.

move that undermined Nyathi. Matanga, by far the most committed Marxist-Leninist theoretician interviewed, had this to say:

...suddenly early April [1975], Comrade Rex Nhongo summoned me to a small room; I was uncomfortable since I had never spoken to him directly. Heavy questions were rushing through my mind wondering about the agenda of the meeting. Parker Chipoyera was there, so was Ambrose Mutinhiri, Dzinashe Machingura, and someone by the name Hondo, the top brass of ZIPA. They asked me to sit down and quickly they went through their papers. Manicaland had been opened early in 1975 while FRELIMO was settling down and they had allowed some cadres to pass through to Gaza and Manyika. A reasonable time had passed. They said they had a special (mission) assignment for me in 60 days. They told me I had to go to Manyika, which had Morris Nyathi or Sectorial Commander for the Tangwena sector and Agri Chaminuka 'Ngoroyemoto', as special instructor even to the civilians. Nyathi had been a former Rhodesian soldier. There were also other high ranking combatants in the Manica operational area, such as Mandebvu, Modern Kasiyapfumbi.... In the midst of all the members of the General Staff, I was now being sent on a mission into the Tangwena sector, a portion of Manica Province, to crack it. In sixty days, they said I had to crack Manicaland with a team of men, open it, and get to Rusape town, Nyazura and report back on the 59th day. They did not give me time to question. We went out to a parade of well armed 100 men, with new AKs, rocket launchers, RPG2's, RPG7, and Mortars. I was introduced to the men, and all this to me was a paradox. The soldiers

I was to command had trained with me in the same barracks, grounds, and offices. Suddenly some of them who were senior to me were told that, here is Comrade Freddie Matanga; he will lead you into a mission, and, moreover, there was Agri Chaminuka 'Ngoroyemoto', the Sectorial Security, who happened to be there as an officer waiting to take his reinforcements. I was responsible to them. But then Ngoroyemoto was told that he would not lead the mission, it was for Freddie Matanga. In the field, they were required to follow me and not the provincial commander, Morris Nyathi, who was waiting at Kapungure Border Post. We had no knowledge of the area. After the briefing, I was taken to the office with Agri Chaminuka. I raised the question to Comrade Rex and I pleaded with Parker Chipoyera because he seemed to understand him better. I said, you have given me a mission that cannot be rejected, but I am observing that there are high ranking officers. But I am not an officer. Yet I am supposed to be leading forces into the field which already has men deployed on the ground so that I would have to pass through places with the deployed general commanders and others and to conduct my campaign in the territory they have already occupied. I asked how we were going to relate and who was going to command who. They laughed me off and said that I would be informed and be required to report within a specified time. We boarded our truck in the evening and we found Nyathi there. He had not heard the news of the awkward situation of a junior officer supervising him. It was a rare situation to have an ordinary soldier taking charge of officers and soldiers. They went in with Agri Chaminuka and briefed each other. Morris Nyathi was out. I had a special AK with a folding butt and magazine and my commander's pistol. He said, so you are Freddie Matanga. I looked stupid to him. He questioned if I was in charge of these men, how are you going to go about your mission? But I explained I was told the mission was mine and that I had a destination. I had learnt something from the soft-spoken Akim Mudende. I said, I was not joining them to have dinner, but to have some logistics.

Morris Nyathi quickly dismantled the group, rearmed them in a Hitler fashion, and selected some 60 fighters and left me with 40. He then rearranged and swapped them and their weapons around and left me with sniper rifles. My own AK he took saying, 'the commander's AK is mine.' I said as long as you know that it can fire effectively to kill, then it's fine. The shape does not matter. He gave them very awkward guns. Quickly he commanded the 60 men to some other bases and commanded Agri Chaminuka to yet another base. He left me to fend for myself. Agri Chaminuka offered to help me find my way from Pungwe down to Mandeya. Little did anybody in this world know that Nyathi had sealed a deal with the Rhodesians to hand over those 60 men to them. I proceeded with my men and kept persuading the 401 officers I met together with Mandeya and others to part with and give me some experienced fighters. Comrade Rex Nhongo's assertion was right in that many of these men already deployed in the field were roaming around the border eating, dressing smart. They were moving into a militarized zone, flirting with girls on the Mozambican and Zimbabwean border. They had established homes with girls enjoying themselves and Comrade Mujuru said nothing is moving, so I was to open a new front. The interesting thing was that none decided to join me. I ignored their undisclosed feelings, so I stuck to the principle. I went and found interested people, junior officers, such as Kasiyapfumbi and Modern, who agreed to join me and wanted to explain things to me, but they had not even reached Ruda. Around Mandeya and the Zindi, which side they had just reached; it was pathetic....

We attacked the Nyazura Service Station and the BBC picked the story that terrorists attacked the service station. The freedom fighters, the BBC was calling us freedom fighters, but the Rhodesian forces were calling us terrorists. It was now an independent Mozambique we were operating from. They reported that a guard lit a fire and the

service station was slightly damaged. The BBC talked about *veld* fires and they were not consistent. On the 50th day, we were in Chiduku and on the 51st we had covered Makoni, Tangwena, Zindi. The war was not difficult, it required people to think. If you want to win a war, put it into simplicity, like the hide and seek play of children... It was mid-May, I went to report that mission accomplished and I returned under unusual circumstances. 189

Meanwhile, Nyathi had taken the sixty men he had requisitioned from Matanga and handed them over to the Rhodesians, and continued to operate as if he was still on the side of the guerrillas in order to hunt down and punish Matanga. When Matanga returned to Mandeya, a local headman remarked:

"Ah boss, didn't you go with others?" And I replied, "Where?" He said, "Didn't you hear that Nyathi rebelled against others and some are already dead! He was looking for you; he even reached here accompanied by whites." So we went on to Chimoio. We were briefed by our leaders about it, and I said, "Oh God, I had lost 60 men."190

Operationally, ZIPA had a number of other disagreements. According to Martin and Johnson, some commanders argued that an offensive in the Gaza Province could bring the South Africans, who had only completed the withdrawal of their

(189) Interview with Rtd. Brigadier Benjamin Mabenge (Cde. Freddie Matanga) by Gerald Mazarire, (UZ Linguistics Audio Laboratory) 7 February 2007.

(190) Ibid.

paramilitary police in early August 1975, back into Rhodesia on a larger scale. ZIPRA commanders wanted Gaza to be exclusively theirs in order to give them access to Matabeleland, where most of the ZIPRA freedom fighters came from. The ZANLA commanders in Mozambique refused, insisting that joint forces must operate on all three fronts. “We said we were not regionalists,” Nhongo said, “and Samora said if that is your plan you can go back to Zambia.” Martin and Johnson further posit that there were other problems with respect to ZIPRA’s commitment to deploy its forces and resources. Thus, although ZANLA and ZIPRA had agreed to commit all their trained cadres to the new offensive from Mozambique, less than 200 from ZIPRA were sent to the joint force, and, of these, only about 100 crossed into Rhodesia. ZANLA deployed nearly 422 of its Mgagao graduates. It is also alleged that ZIPRA guerrillas arrived without arms and had to be armed by ZANLA with weapons from FRELIMO, and, while ZANLA committed all its transport to the joint force, ZIPRA sent no vehicles. ZIPRA strategy, the ZANLA commanders insist, was to commit as few guerrillas as possible, while holding the bulk of their force in Zambia in anticipation of opening a new front from there if Nkomo failed to negotiate a settlement with Smith.<sup>191</sup> Dumiso Dabengwa and Cephas Cele revealed in two separate interviews that ZIPRA commanders issued instructions to their cadres that, when they entered Rhodesia, they should desert, get recruits, and then leave the country with them for Botswana.<sup>192</sup> ZANU leaders, in turn, did not know what would happen to them if the Nkomo-Smith negotiations were successful. Mugabe’s first memorandum to ZANU and the only one he wrote from Quilimane was evidently anti-Nkomo and reflected this ZIPA tension. He wrote:

It has been necessary for us to allow a small ZAPU army to join our forces so that the possibility of a second army disappears. But the requirement from us is that they divorce themselves completely from Nkomo’s counter-revolutionary approach. There is therefore a joint military front between ZANU and ZAPU, but only at the fighting level and no other...there should not be any mix up on the matter, there is nothing more than a joint military front with ZAPU in which we have the majority of forces.<sup>193</sup>

More disagreements occurred, resulting in the withdrawal of ZIPRA to Zambia. Samora, who was also not happy with Nkomo’s negotiations with Smith, urged ZANU to fight on.

However, in its relatively short life span, ZIPA effectively made strides that changed the direction of the war. Amongst other things, the ZANLA section of ZIPA are credited with moving the war in a direction that in effect rendered *détente* inspired negotiations useless and created the first so-called ‘liberated zones’. A combination of

these factors spurred the Americans back into action (unwilling as they were to see the Angolan and Mozambican scenario repeated in Rhodesia), and they dispatched

(191) Martin, D. and P. Johnson. *Struggle for Zimbabwe*. London: Monthly Review Press, 1981: See p.222-223.

(192) Interview with Dumiso Dabengwa and Cephas Cele by Prof. Bhebe, (Bulawayo) 29 December 1989.

(193) Smith and Simpson. *Mugabe*: See p.87.

Henry Kissinger on his shuttle diplomacy. This effectively arm twisted Smith into conceding majority rule sooner than he thought and paved the way for the Geneva Conference of 1976.<sup>194</sup>

ZIPA cadres, composed of a generation of youthful volunteers to the war, were also an educated lot (most of whom had reached university level) who mixed their military roles with an ideological purpose. They were concerned with setting up a 'new society' where the army, through its fighting, would articulate the objectives of the party to the masses and educate them on how this could be achieved so that in the 'liberated zones' such a society could actually begin to function. David Moore fits them in the 'second wave' of recruits to Zimbabwe's liberation movements who spotted this highly educated background. They were distinct from the 'first wave' made up of press-ganged exiles in Zambia, who were led by original nationalists, or the 'third wave' recruits consisting of youthful voluntary high school leavers.<sup>195</sup> There is no doubt, ZIPA guerrillas were the first groups to be seen in the operational areas outside Nehanda and Chaminuka sectors. In most instances they are recalled by the people with nostalgia, as original, disciplined forces, distinguishable by their learned approach to things, their command of the English language, and the informed political lectures they gave to the masses. Mordekai Hamutyinei encountered a group led by Sekuru Mamwutsa at Mugodhi near Alheit Mission in Gutu TTL. They were equipped with radios and spoke in excellent English. "What surprised me" remarked Hamutyineyi after being briefly interrogated by the guerrillas, "was that the replies he [Comrade Mwamutsa] gave me were in deep, sophisticated English that I could easily tell he had been to University."<sup>196</sup>

Yet the large number of recruits crossing the border into Mozambique at this stage hardly knew the politics of the struggle and none, in the interviews that we have conducted, can positively identify themselves as ZIPA. The former recruits provide interesting accounts of this transit and eventual life in the camps. Quite contrary to the *chikuwa* abductions of 1960s Zambia, these are adventurous stories of young men and women voluntarily skipping the border after some 'inspiration', 'peer work' at school, or a characteristic brush with the injustices of the Smith regime. Rtd. Major Alex Mudavanhu (Feya Muchabvuma) was a ZANU branch member in a Hippo Valley mill, who organised fellow workers to strike before being trailed by the Rhodesian Special Branch. Young Steven Chidawanyika (Muchaneta Zuvarabuda) used his pocket money to cross into Mozambique on his school holiday.

Many provide touching accounts of arduous journeys to the training camps in Mozambique. For instance, James Munyuki gave an account of how he travelled into Mozambique via Gonarezhou. He noted:

(194) Moore, David. "Democracy, Violence and Identity in Zimbabwe's War of National Liberation: Reactions from the Realms of Dissent." *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. vol 29, no. 3 (1995): See p.382.

(195) Moore, David. "The Zimbabwe People's Army: Strategic Innovation or More of the Same?" N. Bhebe and T.O. Ranger, eds. *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation Army*. Harare: UZP, 1995: See p.75.

(196) Hamutyineyi, M.A. *Zvakanga Zvakaoma MuZimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984: See p.59.

During that time, comrades (the trained ones) were crossing from Mozambique through Gonarezhou National Park. We were eight. We started the journey. By the time we reached Runde River, it was flooded. We started to quarrel among ourselves in regard to where to sleep; it was already dark. Some were suggesting that we sleep in the trees. I said, “No, I can’t because we might fall in the midst of sleep”. You should take into consideration that we were all young. Finally we concluded that we sleep in the valley. This was the only safe and hidden place.

The following morning, we continued with our journey and reached Mupapa. To our disadvantage, this area was infested with Shangaan speaking people. Language problem became a major deterrent factor because no one was able to comprehend and speak Shangaan. People during this time were well-informed about sell outs, so most of the people were refusing to give us information regarding the direction. One lady came to our rescue after carefully identifying that we were school children. I explained to her, that we were sent by Mr. Chigomo. She said, “You, where do you come from? I replied, “I am from Gutu.” She explained that she was from the same area. She gained confidence and gave us the direction. We were advised, however, that we should not use the road as this would jeopardize our mission. The whites during that time could just shoot at anybody they suspect to be a guerrilla. That road was a usual route of the whites; we started to be frightened.

We began to feel hungry at that time. We were advised that the shops were nearer by road. We bought our mugs and 2kg of sugar in anticipation for preparing our cool water. We were hiding in the forest. There was no reason for us to carry everything with us, so we returned most of the goods in the shop and continued with our journey. By the time we reached the home we were supposed to meet the comrades, we were very lucky that the comrades also arrived that night. They were from Mozambique. They said to us, “You are lucky because we had just come to see a certain businessman who is being reported to be collaborating with the enemy, but we are returning to Mozambique this same night.” We underwent a thorough search from these comrades until they were contented that we were just innocent but committed and dedicated school children. Remember, we were carrying our results with us. We were taken to the shop of that business, we started to loot things and they began to harass the businessman. He was interrogated intensively. He confessed that there was nothing he did so because the whites would just come to have their refreshments there. So it was all impossible and strenuous for him to chase them away. We took our things and went to Mozambique that same night.<sup>197</sup>

Most of the freedom fighters who went into Mozambique at this time give the impression that they were being ‘welcomed’ by FRELIMO cadres, simply because, until the ZIPA project fell through, the administration of the camps fell directly under FRELIMO. An account by Lotus Gumbo of his experiences in early 1976 echoed this perception. As he recalled:

We crossed Pungwe River and when we were in Mozambique just across the border of Zimbabwe, we were left in the hands of a FRELIMO military contingent, a group that liberated Mozambique. Comrade Paris Checherere had the chance to discuss with the FRELIMO, instructing them that he had brought us to Mapai which was the

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(197) Interview with James Munyuki, (Gutu) 08 May 2007.

first base in Mozambique. From there on we were supposed to go straight to Chimoio, where he was supposed to first go and see the General Commander who was Josiah Tongogara [sic; Perhaps Nhongo, as Tongogara was still in prison in Zambia]. We stayed with FRELIMOs for two days, and on the third day, we were taken from Mapai to Doroi, another base in Mozambique.<sup>198</sup>

Feya Muchabvuma trudged from Mt. Selinda to Espungabera with a group of friends to find yet another FRELIMO base to receive them for onward transmission to the ZANLA camps. Meanwhile they had to adapt to a diet of tree bark to save themselves from starvation and dehydration. In the camps, it seemed, their purpose was to wait with rather forlorn hope to go for actual training. Pardon Humanikwa (Comrade Brown Patiripakashata) said:

I will tell you honestly, amongst us there were some who had developed skills that if they put their ear to the ground they would tell you off hand that it was a Dodge or Scania truck coming and whether it is loaded with food or not.

Then came the time to call those who were due for training, we went by the order of our coming into camp.... But I learnt that the system had loopholes, which I took advantage of to evade the misery of camp life. A Comrade in charge will call out your name for instance 'Comrade Hondo!' and you had to respond '*Icho*', then you jump

into the lorry. If someone said '*Icho*' before you, they took him instead. I learnt this and I told myself the next calling I shall just be the first to answer, not caring whether the owner was there. So he called 'Comrade...', and before he even finished I had said '*Icho*' and I was in. That is why I was trained when I was so young and I went straight into the transport department.<sup>199</sup>

The majority of the stories, even at this early stage of the camps, are concerned with survival issues, hunger, and the various strategies of dealing with it. As Feya Muchabvuma recollected:

There was so much hunger in the camps. I benefited because I joined the choir, which was often called to sing for the 'chefs' and after singing we were always rewarded with food. I was comparatively healthier than the average recruit and when people were chosen for training I was selected for that reason.<sup>200</sup>

Comrade Akwias Akwino describes the situation at Nyadzonya with greater detail: In 1976, people were over five hundred at Nyadzonya. Food shortages began to bite. It came to a time when people were just given beans and water. One could receive soup and six beans which was the ration for the day. This led to some people to be nicknamed Comrade Beans Six. This was a name, which came out of this experience. A person was given six beans and small morsel of sadza in order for everyone to get a share. We ended up going to bushes to hunt for wild animals like what it used to be in the past, where people could live on meat from animals. We caught these animals by

(198) Interview with Comrade Lotus Gumbo, (Masvingo) 04 May 2007.

(199) Interview with Pardon Humanikwa (Comrade Brown Patiripakashata), 14 February 2007.

(200) Interview with Feya Muchabvuma.

making a circle, holding each other, and when the animal tried to escape, one person could hold any part of that animal so that it would not escape! We ate the meat without cooking it or drying it together with the skin. [sic]

There were some diseases, which were caused by shortage of food; there was also malaria, adult malnutrition. One could count the number of bones on somebody, because they would have been so skinny. So we ended up in the bush eating tree roots which were called *nyau*, supplementing with tree barks (*makavi*). We even caught a tortoise, but it was not easy to bring it into the camp. We used a tactic of wrapping the

tortoise with the grass which we were supposed to use for thatching. At the security they just asked us the number of people who had gone out and we told them that we were fifty and also the number of those who had returned, but they did not notice that I was holding a tortoise except other guys who had seen me wrapping it with grass. Then we went into the camp and boiled our water and boiled the tortoise. We waited until it got dark for us to cook our tortoise such that it was not going to draw the attention of many people. Then we fried our meat and we really made a good feast that day. All this was done in order for us to survive in these harsh conditions in camps.<sup>201</sup>

### **The Nyadzonya Attack, 9 August 1976**

ZIPA operations, as mentioned earlier, were immediately felt by the Rhodesian regime, which realized that the whole eastern and south-eastern sections of the country were now vulnerable to attack. It responded by launching a military operation, code-named “Operation Small Bang”, in February 1976, which began with a premature raid on a transit camp jointly used by FRELIMO and ZANLA to infiltrate Rhodesia through Sengwe TTL. Later on in August 1976, Rhodesian reconnaissance revealed the existence of Nyadzonya, the main ZANLA training camp, which they believed to be the source of logistics and personnel operating in this eastern area, or the “Thrasher Zone”, according to their operational classification. Already, they had to their advantage some ‘turned’ guerrillas, such as the former provincial commander and member of the ZANLA general staff, Morrison Nyathi, who well knew the structure and routines at Nyadzonya. The narratives above provide the circumstances of Nyathi’s turning. To the Rhodesians, his purpose was to apprise them of the daily routines of Nyadzonya, and, perhaps out of his own humiliation, demotion, and desire for revenge, Nyathi was well disposed to make available this information.

Nyadzonya was attacked on the morning of 9 August 1976 at parade time, around 08:00 hours. Rhodesian pseudo groups drove a column of vehicles into the base at 08:10 hours, disguised as high ranking FRELIMO cadres and attempted to address the parade, while the rest took strategic positions within the camp. While still trying to deploy, one of the security personnel at Nyadzonya gave an alarm for everyone to take cover after he identified white men in the back of one truck, and the shooting began. There was a sudden scramble to escape, and, as they attempted to flee, they were mowed down by machine gun fire. Most of those who could not swim drowned

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(201) Interview with Akwias Akwino, (Harare) 14 May 2007.

in the Nyadzonya River to the east, southeast, and to the south. It is estimated that almost 200 people lost their lives in the river.<sup>202</sup>

According to oral histories collected in the rehabilitation exercise of Nyadzonya by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, Nyathi supervised the attack and the indiscriminate shooting continued for about 45 minutes. Instinctively, most took up the prone position, while some attempted to crawl away later. Nyathi instructed the Scouts to fire at even those that were lying down to ensure their death. Then they mopped up the area and finished off those that were in critical condition. Later, Morrison Nyathi ordered all those injured, to stand with their hands raised, and surrender. About 300 did so. They were ordered to pick up the bodies of the girls and heap them in one of the small barracks. This barrack was burnt. Of the 300 comrades, there were four girls. One of them, Netsai Muhondo, was recognised by Nyathi as the girl who used to supply food to Nyathi and other comrades before Nyathi became a traitor inside Rhodesia. The four were ordered to find their own way to safety, if they could walk.

The rest were ordered to sit down and radio contact with Salisbury was made. The message was: "We have killed about 5,000 terrorists at Nyadzonya, and we have destroyed the whole camp; we have also captured about 800. What must we do?"

The reply came swiftly, 'Kill them all'. Seven enemy forces with light machine guns and sub-machine guns lined up before the comrades. From this group, they picked out six people: one former member of the special branch in Rhodesia, one former soldier in the Rhodesian Army, and three others who were considered fit and strong.<sup>203</sup>

They were asked questions like, 'Where is Nhongo?', 'Who is your commander?', 'Who knows the way to the farm (Chimoio)?'

Nyathi ordered the squad to fire. As they fired the first shot, one comrade raced on the parade and shouted the slogan, '*Pamberi nehondo!*' ('Forward with the war!'). He was shot instantly.<sup>204</sup> The total number of those who were shot dead during that incident totalled 525 (including 5 FRELIMO officials). The camp suffered about

1890 casualties and 319 were sent to different hospitals; 26 were sent to Chimoio Camp, 100 to Chimoio Hospital. 122 were sent to the local clinic, and Beira Hospital received 71 patients.<sup>205</sup>

Comrade Mariyo's testimony also provides much insight into the events leading to the Nyadzonya massacres. He gives a different account for the reasons for Nyathi's bitterness with ZANU. He states:

So what happened is that I saw Nyathi before he came with the whites. He was someone well-respected in the front; he was actually a commander. But because he came to Mozambique and lacked discipline, he was summoned to appear before the parade and was beaten. There were many of those who were summoned because of

(202) NMMZ Report, Nyadzonya Massacre. Unpublished Report 2006.

(203) Makari, C. *Magamba eChimurenga*: See p.130.

(204) Ibid. p.130.

(205) NMMZ Report, Nyadzonya Massacre.

their indiscipline they commit on the front and others in Mozambique. ...So it was not only Nyathi who was beaten, the likes of Charlie were also beaten, and some trained personnel. They were all beaten and embarrassed in front of the people and were reduced to expected levels. But after the beating, one was supposed to sit up and clamour '*pamberi ne ZANU*' and '*pasi nevatengesi.*' That was what was done, and it was a sign of acknowledging the wrong-doing and that nobody had victimised you... Nyathi was later given his duties to go back to Zimbabwe since now he was operating in the front. He was someone with his position, but I do not know what his position was. I would like to say things I know...206

Nyathi and his Rhodesian accomplices chose a day on which they would catch the Nyadzonya occupants unawares, and the 9th of August was ideal, especially that everybody was recovering from the excitement of celebrating the anniversary of ZANU's formation the day before. The arrival of the convoy of vehicles was welcomed in the usual fashion that FRELIMO vehicles were welcomed when bringing in food or collecting people for training as noted before. Mariyo continues:

So we just heard the sound of the moving vehicles and we just felt happy. We heard people very happy, people who were near the Nyadzonya River where our barracks were situated. It was a distance from where we were holding the competition [for the anniversary celebrations]. So people started running going there. So we were being trained by Comrade Teddy in our side, '*matoto.*' George Serima was *chef ku 'Matoto,*' but we had also the likes of Garfield who, however, died on this day, and then also another guy called Nujoma. Teddy is the one who was leading us in the running that day. When we had just gone back, that is when the guns started being fired. We dived onto the ground. We then lay; it was gun firing through and through. We then crawled to behind the barracks, and started running towards the Nyadzonya River, where we were to cross through.

When we got to the river, we saw comrades who were there bathing and some clothing themselves. They were the women comrades. We told them that things were not okay. They asked us what was happening, and we replied that we did not even know. Where we had come from it was just smoke, the barracks were burning on fire and guns being shot. We then crossed the river and, having travelled some distance, that is when I realised I was bleeding. I wondered; I did not even know that I was shot. I only just noticed it later because of the bleeding. The wound was not deep, but I realised that I was wounded, though better than my colleagues who had been severely wounded.

Then people asked what had happened? And others, the survivors, who were nearby said, ah, it's Nyathi, who came and said 'The comrades have turned against each other.' And started firing bullets. He had some whites in armoured cars. So you find out that many people died, simply because people who were on the open ground were crowded there and many people had gone there running. These people were not armed, while those had guns, the machine guns which fired bullets. People terribly died there.

So we walked, and met other comrades who had been severely injured. We helped carry them and arrived at Pungwe River. *Eeh*, Pungwe River has fast flowing water and it's wide. When we were thinking how to cross the river, that is when we heard the sound of the bridge being destroyed. The explosion was because Nyathi and others had set the deal to ensure that there would be no reinforcement from the comrades to come and help the fighting. So people wondered what had happened; we did not know that it was the bridge that had exploded. We were thinking how to cross the river. So what happened there was that there came the *povo* from Mozambique with 'zvimwadhiya' [canoes]. I remember the two old men who came there. One *chimwadhiya* could only carry four people, three of us and the owner of the *chimwadhiya*. So it could carry two injured comrades, one uninjured, and the owner. But at the time we were thinking how to cross, some comrades would not listen, and thought they could swim and cross. They got into the water and none crossed, they all drowned. So we stopped each other because we realised that we would perish. The water was forceful, it was not a joke. So those old men crossed us the river, two injured and one uninjured, until we all crossed.<sup>207</sup>

Tendai Nhamo says the Nyadzonya massacre was one of the most painful and traumatic experiences of the liberation struggle. She adds,

What pained me most about the liberation struggle was the massacre of untrained children at Nyadzonya. To make matters worse, the attack was unleashed at innocent children who literally knew nothing about military operations. There was this comrade who turned into a sell-out and his name was Nyathi. Like many others, he left the country for Mozambique to train as a liberation fighter. I even stayed with Nyathi and we trained together. However, Nyathi was promoted into a member of the General Staff and was in charge of the camp. To be frank, Nyathi had some intention to wipe out all the children of the struggle because the Rhodesians had employed him. Nobody amongst us knew that Nyathi was a sell-out. This later came to our realisation when one morning Nyathi blew the emergency whistles, announcing that he had turned against the cause of the liberation struggle. Soon after the emergency whistle, some helicopters came and started dropping some bombs on the people and a lot of people died as a result of this attack. Nyathi disappeared into one of the helicopters and left with the Rhodesians.<sup>208</sup>

A number of scholars believe the Nyadzonya massacre, in particular, and other new counter-insurgency measures introduced around this time by the Rhodesians were responding to the military successes registered by ZIPA in the field. David Moore attributes this success to the strategic innovations of the ZIPA commanders who were far better trained than the ZANU old guard commanders like Rex Nhongo, who had led the struggle before *détente* and the imprisonment of the ZANU high command.<sup>209</sup> The ZIPA commanders' strategy, however, was based on the unity of the liberation forces, which was not possible on the one hand because of the clashes

(207) Interview with Comrade Mariyo, (Kwekwe) 04 May 2008.

(208) Interview with Tendai Nhamo, (Centenary) 3 March 2008.

(209) Moore, D. "The Zimbabwe People's Army: Strategic Innovation or More of the Same?" Bhebe and Ranger, eds. *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*. Harare: UZP, 1995: See pp.79-80.

they had amongst themselves in the joint camps and the operational areas shared with ZIPRA, and the reluctance of the political leadership to have such cooperation in the first place.

Apart from the other operational setbacks already outlined, ZIPA activities brought about political developments which were not favourable for its survival. As the Nkomo-Smith negotiations crumbled, Smith began making overtures to “moderate” nationalists who would accept his “standards” and “guarantees” in order to concede majority rule. Muzorewa had just returned from exile to another roaring welcome from his supporters, but he was more or less meaningless in the military equation. So too was Sithole, who had turned to Uganda to forge a military project supported by Idi Amin to train what eventually became the Pfumo Revanhu. Sithole and Muzorewa easily became the ‘moderates’ that Smith was looking for and they eventually became an integral part of his Internal Settlement of 1978. Nkomo, on the other hand, formed a political alliance, the Patriotic Front, with Robert Mugabe, who was emerging as the new leader of ZANU after the developments registering the ouster of Sithole and his rejection by the majority of ZANLA guerrillas. This alliance was necessary for political expediency, given that the Kissinger-British proposals were opening the way to the Geneva conference.

Mugabe did not believe Geneva was necessary, but used his participation there to secure the release of ZANU leaders in prison in Zambia as a pre-condition. Meanwhile ZIPA thinking was not only overtaken by these events, but also by the restoration of loyalty to the ZANU old guard by its commander Rex Nhongo. Nhongo remembers being summoned by Machel to be asked who would lead the ZANU delegation to Geneva. He replied that it was going to be its Secretary General, the little known Robert Mugabe who was ‘confined’ in Quelimane. Machel reluctantly accepted the decision after consultations with Nyerere and he asked ZANU to make a statement to that effect. “I asked Dzinashe Machingura to make the statement while I left for Dar es Salaam,” says Nhongo. He goes further:

When I listened to BBC radio from Dar, I heard him denouncing the Secretary General [Mugabe]. In Zambia, pressmen wanted me to confirm Dzinashe Machingura’s statement. I told them I had nothing to say; they had to ask Mugabe. The press published that there were contradictions within the party, that we were divided. We approached Kaunda and told him that we would not go to Geneva without our men who were in jail in Lusaka. The British pressurized Kaunda and told him to release the men so that the Zimbabwean issue would be over. They were released. Samora called Hamadziripi, Kangai, and myself to Maputo. We went to Maputo and Samora advised us to take the Geneva talks seriously. The men, who were refusing to work with the new leadership, refused to go to Geneva, and I told Tongogara, who was out of prison, that I would let them go to Geneva while I remained in Maputo with the commanders who I knew well. If I went, I knew there would be a mutiny and the leaders would not have been allowed to return. They left for Geneva. Samora wanted to know why I had not gone and told me to leave for Geneva that day. I said that it was not possible and I told him why; he understood and wanted to know my suggestions. I requested that he

intimidate the commanders by giving them the ultimatum that if they did not go to Geneva, he would arrest them. He told me to go and fetch them. When I brought them to him, he started scolding them, then he said there was a plane waiting for them at the airport; some wanted to excuse themselves by saying that they had nothing to wear. Samora asked me if I did not have any money and I replied that I had 20,000 pounds and I would buy some clothes for them out there. I had already arranged this with Samora without their knowledge. I selected eight men that would go with me with the knowledge that if I went with these eight men, not much would go wrong in our absence. We left for Geneva and all of us stayed in the same hotel as ZANU...210

Nhongo did not make it a secret that he would readily hand back the ZANLA military leadership to Tongogara, yet the ZIPA commanders, Machingura, Webster Gwauya, and Pfefperere were hostile to a Mugabe-Tongogara arrangement. Forcing them onto the plane to Geneva did not make things any better, and on arrival they made statements to the effect that they had been “kidnapped to Geneva”. Amongst themselves, they started making overtures to Henry Hamadziripi, the former trade unionist member of the ZANU central committee recently released from Kaunda’s prison. There is no obvious reason why the Marxist ZIPA commanders would warm up to Hamadziripi save for his sympathies for a proletarian revolution as a former representative of the workers. However, they were not alone in this choice; Nkomo had paid Hamadziripi a number of visits while he was in prison in Lusaka and had consultations with the British suggesting that Hamadziripi was the right candidate to lead the ZANU delegation to the Geneva talks. In this spirit, Nkomo was convinced that majority rule would emerge from Geneva and he would reward Hamadziripi with a high ministerial post if he became Prime Minister of an independent Zimbabwe.211

Under these circumstances therefore, although Mugabe went to Geneva as Secretary General of ZANU, his leadership was unconfirmed and his position precarious. Fay Chung alerts us that, apart from the ZIPA-Hamadziripi threat, Mugabe faced two other contenders to ZANU’s top post. Patrick Kombayi, the Zimbabwean businessman of Zambia who had committed his personal resources and time to keep the military struggle going in the previous year, genuinely felt he was entitled to be the new ZANU leader. So too was Joseph Taderera, a former university professor who had undergone military training in Tanzania and had been instrumental in the crafting of the Mgagao declaration, who now wanted the post purely out of ambition.212 The advantage Mugabe had in the end was that he was able to win over most of the disparate interest groups within ZANU to his side, from intellectuals and professionals like Eddison Zvobgo, Simbi Mubako, Dzingai Mutumbuka, Fay Chung, Emmerson Munangagwa, Sydney Sekeramayi, and Hebert Ushewokunze, to militarists like Tongogara and Nhongo, as well the prison group from Zambia. He readmitted Nathan Shamuyarira, his old friend of FROLIZI fame, and had some like

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(210) Interview with Rex Nhongo.

(211) Interview with Henry Hamadziripi.

(212) Chung, Fay. *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*: See pp.162-163.

Canaan Banana, of Muzorewa's ANC, who crossed the floor to his side during the conference.

*The Geneva Conference, October- December 1976*

Kissinger had moved in quickly to secure a settlement in southern Africa following developments in Mozambique and Angola; the USA worried about the threat of a communist take-over in southern Africa if the trend continued and Zimbabwe came under the control of radical blacks of the fashion of Samora Machel. Vorster was interested in a quick solution to the Rhodesian question, as discussed above. There was no better point for Kissinger to strike a deal than the post-Nyadzonya scenario, when South Africa responded to the raid angrily by blocking the flow of Rhodesian goods in and out of South Africa, cutting out money and supplies (ammunition, spare parts, and fuel) and withdrawing its helicopters and pilots seconded to Rhodesia.<sup>213</sup> In two weeks, the damage had been done and Smith was willing to negotiate. After reassurances from Vorster, Kissinger arrived in the region on 13 September 1976 by way of Dar es Salaam to sell his settlement proposals to all the parties concerned. The Kissinger plan was straightforward, but misunderstood by all sides concerned. In summary, it provided for majority rule in two years time, while an interim government composed of half black and half white members took charge until the elections. Britain would chair a constitutional conference at an agreed venue and work around the modalities of legislation that would enable and legalise majority rule. Although Smith was agreeable to the point of making his historic national announcement accepting the principle of majority rule, he, however, assumed that he was bargaining with Kissinger and not with the African nationalists. For him and the Rhodesian Front, it was simply a means of regaining the support of the 'Free World', lifting sanctions, and gathering enough momentum to wipe out the 'terrorists' once and for good. On the other hand, Kissinger sold his ideas to the Frontline leaders and by extension, to the Zimbabwean nationalists, only as the basis for discussion and negotiations not as a cut and dried deal. These are the circumstances in which all the parties left for the Geneva conference.

The conference began on 28 October 1976, three days after the scheduled date because the Patriotic Front had requested a three week delay to formulate their negotiating strategy. It was chaired by Ivor Richard, the British Ambassador to the UN, who in the eyes of the Zimbabwean nationalists was not a respectable candidate, and a sign of the British lack of commitment to the whole affair. Under these and other objections, the meeting dragged on until Christmas, when it adjourned never to be re-convened.

The sticking points were obvious and explicit even in the opening statements of the various parties; the Patriotic Front did not mince its words. As Joshua Nkomo began:

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(213) Steadman, S.J. *Peace-Making in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe 1974-1980*. Boulder: Lynne Reiner, 1991: See p.95.

We must at this conference, close and seal the chapter of British colonialism. We regard this conference as strictly between Zimbabweans of whatever colour and race, on the one hand, and the colonisers, the UK government, on the other. The simple and straight forward issue before the conference is the transfer of power from the coloniser, the UK government, to the people of Zimbabwe through the process of decolonisation. We are emphasising the clear fact that Britain never ceased to be the coloniser of Rhodesia and must now therefore actively take steps to march out of Zimbabwe through the normal process of decolonisation...214

Robert Mugabe was no less uncompromising:

...the object of this conference is not to negotiate the principle of the transfer of power, but rather to work out the modalities of that transfer...We... hold as strongly today as we have always done in the past, that it is the responsibility of Britain as a colonial power and of no one else, to grant us our right to self-determination...215

He demanded a precise date for independence within a year, the disbandment of the Rhodesian army, and its replacement by a joint army of the Patriotic Front in the interim period. Muzorewa, who believed something would certainly come out of Geneva, pushed for elections on the basis of one man, one vote so that ministries emerging out of elections would be distributed proportionately to the votes received.<sup>216</sup> Smith found all these demands untenable and inconsistent with what he had envisaged. He left barely five days into the conference on the pretext that he had a country to run.<sup>217</sup> In fact, he was going back to effect the integral part of his strategy, to take advantage of the resumption of supply connections with South Africa to intensify operations into Mozambique and escalate the conflict in a way that would inevitably drag South Africa into the war on the side of the Rhodesians.

In the meantime, Ivor Richard continued his consultations well into January 1977, shuttling between the Frontline leaders, Vorster, and Britain. The Frontline leaders collectively agreed that only a settlement involving the Patriotic Front was acceptable, and this move alienated Muzorewa, Sithole, and the Rhodesians and provided the grounds for the latter to seek a settlement back home with these "moderate blacks". In this way, the Geneva conference fizzled out. Meanwhile, the theatre of operations back at the front saw some interesting developments on the ground for both ZIPRA and ZANLA.

### **ZIPRA Operations after ZIPA, 1976**

After the failure of the ZIPA project, ZIPRA decided to withdraw its troops from Mozambique in July 1976. They were totally convinced that ZIPA served ZANU

(214) Geneva Conference: Opening Statement by Joshua Nkomo, 29 October 1976. In G. Baumhogger. *The Struggle for Independence: Documents on the Recent Development of Zimbabwe (1975-80) vol. II*. Hamburg: Institut für Afrika-Kunde, 1984.

(215) Geneva Conference: Opening Statement by Robert G. Mugabe, 29 October 1976. In Baumhogger, ed. *The Struggle for Independence*.

(216) Geneva conference: Opening statement by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, 29 October 1976.

(217) Nzombe, S. "Negotiations with the British." Banana, ed. *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe 1890-1990*. Harare: College Press, 1989: See p.178

interests, rather than their own. Back in Tanzania, Nyerere blamed the failure of the joint training programme on ZAPU and wanted them out of Tanzania. He went so far as to arrest some of the ZIPRA commanders, such as Sam Moyo and others. ZIPRA withdrew under very difficult circumstances to regroup once more in Zambia. Richard Mataure gave a very revealing account of this episode. He submitted that the re-organisation did not take long, however, as by 6 August 1976, they had re-launched new operations in Kanyemba TTL, which led to the death of Rhodesian Defence Regiment soldiers operating there and the capture of arms and ammunition.<sup>218</sup> Soon thereafter, ZIPRA fully deployed in what it termed the 'Northern Front' with a section sent to each of the following areas: Feira, Mushika/Kazangarare, Chirundu, Kariba/ Nyamomba, Sinazongwe, Chipepo, Livingstone, and Kabanga. Later in the year, they were reinforced by the groups coming back from the Tanzanian training camps, including a group of 137 cadres from Morogoro known as the 'bouncers' who were deployed in November 1976. They boosted the strength of the various sections in the northern front so that they now had the strength of a platoon each, whose operational area still stretched from Feira in the east to Kazungula. This group of reinforcements gave strength to the army until early 1977, when yet another group of 800 joined them. The ZIPRA war effort easily intensified under these circumstances as shown by the number of reported encounters with the enemy before the end of 1976. On 10 October 1976, ZIPRA forces attacked three boats at Deka Fishing Camp in the Wankie District along the Zambezi River, which were allegedly attempting to lay an ambush on a suspected crossing point.<sup>219</sup> More activity was reported in Kamativi in the following weeks in attacks on tourist spots within Victoria Falls. By December, they had taken their campaign to the towns, attacking Rhodesian police patrols in Pumula Township and the Forestville suburb in Bulawayo.<sup>220</sup>

*ZIPRA's New Strategy and the Opening of the Botswana/Southern Front, August 1976*

The growth in the number of ZIPRA trained personnel deployed in the field necessitated another change in strategy. The initial strategy, which had been to deploy small forces to carry out minor operations, had to change because of the increasing numbers.

The new strategy, from the beginning of 1977 onwards, involved getting the forces to stay in the operational zones for far longer periods. Such a strategy required an efficient logistical back up. ZIPRA would need to stop relying on chains of supply from Zambia, and start relying on the local population for food, clothing, and cover. One problem was gaining the local population's approval of such new demands; the other was how to achieve such long term deployment within Rhodesia in the post-Geneva atmosphere, when Smith was stepping up efforts to deal with guerrilla

(218) Interview with Richard Mataure by Prof. Bhebe, (University of Zimbabwe) 4 January 1990.

(219) *Zimbabwe Review*. Vol. 6, 1976, p.17.

(220) *Ibid.*

activity. Although ZIPRA continued to receive more trained cadres from the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Libya that built its strength in the field to nearly 3,000 by mid 1977, these were stretched over the new fronts that ZIPRA opened under the new strategy. In the same year, it opened the Botswana/ Southern front, which until then had been handled by a skeleton force led by Nyamupingidza Babron Sibona, George Moyo, and others. The new strategy certainly required more manpower and forced ZIPRA to embark on a huge recruitment campaign, sometimes employing unorthodox methods such as press-ganging school children, as transpired at Manama High School on 30 January 1977.<sup>221</sup> Three brothers with a detailed recollection of ZIPRA's recruitment programme in the Southern Front gave an illuminating account. The first brother, a student at Manama at the time of the abduction, recalls how three ZIPRA guerrillas had arrived some days before to announce that they would take the students with them. He is one of the few to give an account of how he volunteered to go, while others like Miss Mabuwa paint a picture where everybody, including teachers, was forced to go with the guerrillas.<sup>222</sup> The second brother even demonstrates attempts by ZIPRA to pursue the 'Castro Approach' of training the recruits within Zimbabwe. He says:

Dube [guerrilla leader] told us that the journey to Botswana would be far much longer than the one from Masase. He said that we therefore required to do some exercises in order to toughen and harden our muscles and general physic...We camped at Nhamande and we were not aware that the reason was that we were waiting for further recruits from Bulawayo and Salisbury. So the exercises were also meant to keep us occupied. After two or three weeks, another group of three boys joined us. After that, we were joined by a lot more people, with a large number coming from Chingechuru and Nyororo. When they joined us, we continued our exercises. Once the group got large, all secrecy vanished concerning our exercises. We would do our trotting from Nhamande for a long distance right up to Ndoni village, the Masvayamwando, round to Rushumbe. We actually disregarded all security precautions: "it was forgotten". We did that for about a week. In fact, the last two days before we left for Botswana, we actually carried out exercises through the villages in full view of the villagers. One of the reasons was of course to boost the morale of the villagers, who were keenly supporting us and to impress them with our progress in physical fitness. The Nyororo fellows were already trained. While we were there, there was also a group of trained guerrillas from Zambia to reinforce those who were already there to a vital recruiting base and local supporting population. They brought their weapons and ammunitions to other logistics. The new group came with the view of trying to convert Nhamande into a training centre, so that they were now attempting to train people within the country. This nearly delayed us. Dube was out on the day. So when he came back, he found that we had been introduced to short march, skirmishing, a bit of judo, etc. Dube discontinued all that, arguing that all that was necessary was that we should be groomed to be fit for the journey and not to train us into full fledged guerrillas.

(221) Bhebe, Ngwabi. *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999: See pp.244-248.

(222) Interview with Ms. Mabuwa by Prof. Bhebe; In an informal interview, Air Vice Marshall Elson Moyo challenged the Research Team to let the public know that some students of Manama like himself volunteered to go to war, (Harare) 30 June 2008.

So for two days we did not do any exercises. I then talked to Dube and expressed my concern that our group had grown rather too large to the extent of easily being spotted and wiped out by the enemy. I talked to him on Sunday and the following Tuesday we left for Botswana. We left at 5pm and went through the farms, Chiraramakura, Zhoupembe. We stopped at Zhoupembe overnight, after crossing the tarred road and we slept. In the morning, we walked a short distance up to Muzingwane River, where we again rested, just below Makado. There were about 40 of us and we spent the whole day there. We were again joined by a sizeable group from the Venda communities. Our group tended to grow because the local boys either voluntarily joined us or we forced them to do so in fear of the fact that they might go and report us. Among the Venda, we were really very well fed by the local villagers. They cooked a lot of *sadza* and slaughtered goats for us. They actually bade us farewell nicely. But when we left this place, we did not find another place to feed us in a similar manner. We went for a long time without food. This was a second day and by this time we were avoiding villages. We had an advance guard which travelled 25m to 30m ahead of everybody. It was supposed to communicate with the rest of the group by means of signals. Whenever we crossed a road it had to be bridged by four people, two on either side of it. These signalled for the rest of the people to cross when the area was clear. We could have attacked the crossing cars, but that was not our purpose. We were interested in getting to Zambia for training. So that is how we crossed what we called danger zones such as rivers and roads. As we left Mzingwane, there was a jet which over flew us at a very low altitude, so much so that we believed it had spotted us. We also tried to recruit the local Venda people so that they would act as our guides. We did not mind the age of such guides, even small boys. Besides Dube was a local fellow so that he knew the area generally well. He also knew the supporters of the liberation struggle.<sup>223</sup>

### **Expansion of the Training Programme in Zambia, 1974-1979**

As more recruits poured in from Rhodesia, ZIPRA needed to transform its facilities to accommodate this large influx. The Nkomo Camp, mentioned above, conducted the first retraining exercise for already trained guerrillas before they were deployed in the new exercise of 1974. In 1977, ZIPRA opened other camps such as C.G.T.1,

C.G.T. II, C.T.T., and Koimba for men, and Mkushi Camp for women.<sup>224</sup> Nampundwe served as a reception camp throughout the war. That was where people were sorted out according to age, gender, and physical fitness. Younger boys, mainly under the age of 16, were separated and, at first, had a school established for them in April 1977 within that camp. <sup>225</sup> As shall be shown shortly, these camps were bombed by the Rhodesians in 1978 and 1979, forcing ZIPRA to establish new camps such as Victory Camp, just outside Lusaka. It was here that a school was set up for the young girls. Later on, J.Z. Moyo No. 1, 2, and 3 were established further from the reach of enemy attack. By 1979, these ZIPRA camps had well over 20,000 people in them, as well as

(223) Interview with the Bhebe brothers by Prof. Bhebe, (Bulawayo) 25 September 1987.

(224) Ibid. p.105.

(225) Bhebe, N. *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999: See p.18.

training facilities such as a technical college at Kafue and a rehabilitation centre for those who were disabled in action.<sup>226</sup>

An insight into the nature of life in these camps and the training programme was given by Miss Mabuwa, who lived both at Nampundwe and at the Mkushi Girls Camp. Arriving there as one of the students abducted from Manama school, she was barely 16 years old and she remembered being surprised by the large numbers of other young people already there. She was quickly issued with an oversized camouflage uniform and together with her colleagues joined into the daily fatigue routines. “We hardly slept,” she says,

...when the whistle was blown for us to wake up for exercises. If one was slow or did not wake up as required, he or she was beaten thoroughly. We were told that the camp [Nampundwe] was designed to harden us and to develop violence in us. We stayed a few days at Nampundwe, but to me it seemed like we lived there for a year. I think what helped us most was the international attention that was focused on us as the Manama group. We were always on the news. When we listened to Radio Zambia, we would hear blatant lies. They would announce that the Manama school children are well looked after and they are already back to school.

After some days, we were again transported elsewhere. All the girls from Manama were taken away. We were taken to a new camp, where there was some tap water and the conditions were a little better than in our previous camp. We were the first to live at Victory Camp. We were told arrangements were being made for our education in the camp. We were told some were going to take up professional courses at the camp, but when we looked at the facilities available it was obvious that no meaningful course could be pursued in that place.<sup>227</sup>

The selection process for those to undergo specialised training targeted older and fitter people within the camp, yet because she was young, she had to join the rest of the recruits in local training at Mkushi near Ndola. She became part of the first and biggest group of girls to undergo military training. Earlier on, only a handful of women (about five) had been able to undergo military training, and these did so alongside the men at Morogoro in Tanzania. These women “were exceedingly tough” says Mabuwa, and they became the first contingent of training instructors at Mkushi. The camp became fully established in 1978 and a more systematic training programme was put in place with more instructors who had just come from training in Somalia. The curriculum included Topography, Map Reading, Combat and Tactics, Military Engineering, Arms, Physical Training, and Drilling. Mkushi produced more than two battalions of female combatants, numbering over a thousand. Mabuwa rose through the ranks to become a platoon commander and has told more stories of people she trained than can be quoted here.

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(226) Ibid. p.105.

(227) Interview with Ms. Mabuwa by Prof. Bhebe.

## The Situation in ZANU after Geneva

### Containing ZIPA and Regaining the Camps

Rex Nhongo's testimony, quoted earlier concerning a simmering mutiny against the old ZANU leadership, provides the background to a post-Geneva re-organisation inside ZANU. Forcing the ZIPA leaders to attend the conference was an important tactical move that not only immobilised them, but left them with no choice except falling into line, being pulled in by the ZANU dragnet towards Mugabe. Soon Machingura and his colleagues were to join the ZANU secretariat, led by Edgar Tekere, at the Swiss Royal Hotel and get more and more involved in fund raising activities to sustain the ZANU delegation in its prolonged stay in Geneva as the talks dragged on. Meanwhile the ZANU leadership held on to their air tickets.<sup>228</sup> Back home, they did not hold any tactical advantage either; they were now divided amongst themselves on the issue of supporting Mugabe, with one group loyal to Sam Geza as the Secretary General, and that led by Machingura being against Mugabe. They had also totally lost Machel's support, and Nhongo, their overall commander, who had long felt undermined by their ideological radicalism, had thrown in his lot with Mugabe and Tongogara. According to Richard Hove, the ZANU old guard not only emerged stronger and consolidated from Geneva, but it was also better organised than the Vashandi (workers) thought. The latter overestimated the support they had from the guerrilla rank and file, and, in his opinion, Hove thinks the ZIPA version of Marxist-Leninism was often misunderstood and did not appeal to the common soldiers.<sup>229</sup> Deceived by appearances that ZANU leadership would seek a settlement on ZIPA's terms, they were invited to a mini-conference in Maputo to discuss the 'leadership' issue, whereupon they were all arrested by Mozambican authorities and thrown into prison.

It still remained for ZANU to retake the camps. David Moore surmises that this was only possible with the purging of those commanders loyal to ZIPA, which was carried out in the Tongogara style of witch hunts and kangaroo courts, which were always called to order by the whistle and publicly conducted at parades to reassert leadership control. For Nhongo, the issue was not necessarily the camps, where he had always held overall command, but the front, which needed to be restructured: "sending new commanders and recalling others back, especially those that had created bad names

for themselves... This strengthened our efforts at the front."<sup>230</sup>

### The ZANLA Offensive Escalates, 1977-1978

ZANU's new programme sought to bring back order in its political and military structures, while at the same time building up on the gains made by ZIPA between 1975 and the end of 1976. In restructuring the new high command, it intended to

(228) See Chung, F. *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*. See Chapter 9.

(229) Interview with Richard Hove by Prof. Bhebe, (Hove's Farm) 16 November 2002.

(230) Interview with Rex Nhongo.

intensify the war further inside Rhodesia, crack open new fronts, and make a case to the international community of who was actually in control of the situation in Rhodesia after Geneva. First, at its Chimoio Congress, ZANU confirmed Robert Mugabe as the President of the party and by the same token he became Commander in Chief of ZANLA; Tongogara and Nhongo took up their positions as Chief of Defence and Chief of Operations respectively. Specific portfolios in security and intelligence, medicine, and training were reorganised, as was the appointment of new field commanders as follows:

**NEW ZANLA STRUCTURE:**

Commander in Chief, Robert Mugabe

Chief of Defence, Josiah Tongogara

Chief of Operations, Rex Nhongo

Security and Intelligence, Sheba

Gava Deputy, Patrick Mupunzarima

Army Commissar, Mayor Urimbo

Deputy, Joseph Muparuri

Medicine, J. Ziso

Logistics and Supplies, Justin Chauke

Deputy, Charles Dauramanzi

Personnel, Josiah Tungamirayi

Deputy (Training), Joshua Misihairambwi

Field Commanders, Tonderayi Nyika, Rex Tichafa, and Anderson Mhuru

Retired General Zvinavashe reiterated that the Chimoio Congress should be seen as an important step in the transition from the control of the armed struggle by the military and the re-integration of the party leadership through the formation of a new central committee. In 1976, he says there was no party at all; it was just the military commanders running the show.<sup>231</sup> It was at Chimoio that the decision to enlarge the army and escalate the offensive was taken. This was to be achieved systematically by appointing those that were formerly 'secretaries' to the posts of Field Commanders and enlarging the number of sectors in each operational province. These were also placed under sector commanders who reported to the field commanders. Overtime, it was possible to interchange them. In 1978, there were more than six Field Commanders including, apart from those listed above, Edzai Mabhunhu, Bornwell Masawi, Tinzwei Goronga, Perence Shiri, and Freddie Matanga. It is not the object of this chapter to trace the careers of each, but certainly their names would appear more frequently in the combat stories of 1977 to 1978.

This chapter incorporates stories provided by the Field Commanders themselves in ZANLA Operational Zones or those working directly under them. One interesting story came from Amos Sigauke, a former aide to Bornwell Masawi, the Provincial

<sup>(231)</sup> Interview between Rtd. Gen. Zvinavashe, Gerald Mazarire, and the 'Capturing a Fading National Memory' Team, (Gutu) 16 August 2007.

Commander of the Tete Province between 1977 and 1978. Although extolling his virtues as a good soldier, the aide saw many shortcomings in his superior and read much into his tactical errors. Frequently some commanders did little more than visit the field occasionally to get a feel of the war by asking for an ambush to be organised for them and participate in it as a sport. Common guerrillas often ridiculed their commanders' lack of field experience or their complacency. A wide ranging interview regarding the day to day experience with a commander is worth quoting at length:

We operated in the Nyambire, Dande, Berechigango, and Pfunyangwo areas for a long time. We sometimes went back to Mozambique. Later I was assigned to assist Bornwell Masawi, a Provincial Commander. Later, Comrade Tungamirai asked who had assigned such a young boy like me while he was carrying out his inspection, but my deputy said I was highly competent.

As a person who travelled with the Provincial Commanders, I had to patrol the whole area, but I requested to be transferred because I had my own personal differences with the commander Bornwell Masawi. He harassed me to an extent that we never got along with each other.

He came with a man possessed with an ancestral spirit (*svikiro*) and he claimed that the time for independence was around the corner, and he wanted to cleanse the area. I was the unit commander and I felt that my soldiers will not fight because they would prefer to just wait for independence. It was sort of demoralizing. To me it did not make sense. We walked together with the *svikiro* and the commander, including the unit. The old man was following behind and we crossed Ruya River and he called

us back to eat, but I thought we had to cross the border in time so I objected. But he, as the commander, had his way. We went back, to the old man. But after eating, we discovered that the Ruya River had flooded, but it had not rained, maybe it had rained up the river. The *svikiro* said that the ancestors had barred us from crossing, so we were not supposed to cross. We had to make canoes from tree bark to send our war materials across the river. But at that moment I did not blame anyone; but when we got to the front, towards Easter in 1978 or 77, I am not sure. It rained on that day and we had to leave our material with the local people so that we could collect it on our way back. Bornwell Masawi (Provincial Commander) had a blanket, which the Swedish government had given us. It was now heavy and wet and I had to give it to the locals, to keep it, but Bornwell Masawi refused to leave it and declared that it had to be carried. I did not want to carry it and I told my Deputy that. The other comrades had to carry it, yet they were carrying heavy materials whilst Bonwell Masawi and

the *svikiro* carried nothing. The blanket got heavy and we had to leave it without the knowledge of Bornwell Masawi. When we camped to sleep, since we shared the same place of sleeping, Bornwell Masawi asked for his blanket and I told him that we had left it. I tried to explain, but he insisted that I had disobeyed him by refusing to take orders. In another incident, the locals gave us traditional beer and I went with it to him, but he said that I must drink it first. I sipped the beer, and he responded by saying that I drink beer and if it wasn't for him we would have drank all the beer contrary to combat regulations, which outlawed such behaviour. But he drank the beer himself. On another occasion, we were sleeping and it was getting cold and there was a small drizzle, but he had no blankets. He woke up and stood arms akimbo. I reacted by taking my gun and loading it, asking whom the person was. Of course I knew it was him. He said we

were supposed to sleep with the locals, but I told him it was impossible. He claimed that I wanted to shoot him, but I told him that it was dangerous to wake up and stand in front of a soldier who is asleep because one can get shot thinking that it is an enemy. I told him that we were not going to sleep with the locals. He also asked me about my security, since I had not posted anyone to guard us and I told him that we do not guard the area since the area was more peaceful than in Mozambique, where people spent the whole night on guard. I also told him that the locals promised to guard the area whilst we were asleep. Moreover we were told to rest at night. He asked me where I got those principles, arguing that, "You are a unit which travel with the Provincial Commander! Yet you do not guard the area?" I told him that I had never been attacked at night. He called for Mapepa, a sectorial commander and senior to me, and he told him the story, but I stepped aside.

They called me and I knew that they had been talking about me. Mapepa asked me about the blanket and the gun incident. He said that I was even drinking beer. He announced to me that I had been demoted, and I was to hold no position. He said that I had to surrender the gun, I but disagreed with him, saying that demotion was not a problem, but surrendering the gun was not possible. We had been told that you should not give the gun to anybody, but you were supposed to die with it. I was with other guys, whom I used to hang around with in the unit. We were told that if we do not surrender, we will be arrested. We were beaten and that was my first time to be beaten on the front. We went as far as Mabvuku and we wanted to track a guy who had gone away with a gun and we had to find him to arrest him and take away the gun. The guys who replaced our position were coming from Mozambique and they were trained in Tanzania. Masawi told them that we were the ones supposed to carry heavy material. I admit that I used to smoke (drugs/marijuana) with Topse (my second in command who was also demoted). We used to smoke marijuana and we felt nothing when we carried the material. It used to pain him and he regretted at some point.

We got to Chikwaka and we wanted to address the public. We had to cross a small river, but it was flooded. Bornface, the one who had replaced me, took out a barbed wire and crossed and he tied it so that we could cross. Bornwell was wearing jeans and the current was too much for him to hold on, and then he had to let go. At times you could wish if he could get drowned. He was rescued by the guy who was near him, though he could have died at that point. I looked at him and I grinned, and it offended him so much. When we were just leaving the bank of the river, we realized that there was another river in front since it was a sort of an island. They went back before us to cross the bank. The helicopter came, whilst they were crossing. Topse ran away with others, but I remained behind. I could not follow on such a spot. Seeing that there was nobody on the riverbank, the helicopters followed the terrain. When we were about to go, we realized that from a group of 17, we were now 6. We became united once again, since we were not so few. ...Bornwell did not like me because he thought I had grinned at him.

On our way to Chesa, we were poisoned by the white soldiers. They poisoned the grass and we were affected by the poison to such an extent that some could not walk. Bornwell asked me whether we should go back or continue, considering the state of others. I answered him that since I was no longer the commander, I could not be answerable. He said since I was once the commander, I could have a say. He became silent, realizing that I was right. We returned to Chesa with others who had swollen

legs, but I was still okay. We reunited with the others and another group to boost our numbers. Bornwell was a hard nut and short-tempered man. That could be the reason why we always had some differences. He insisted that we go and camp at one woman named Mai Chimbwido, but I told him that the soldiers had been reported to be there. We had been told of their presence, but he insisted because he wanted to play with the woman there. It was an area on a mountain and we had to climb it, I heard the sound of a gun banging against a stone. I was sure because there is a difference between the sound of a stone banging against a stone and that one of a gun. I loosened the gun that I had, a motor.<sup>232</sup>

Other commanders were entirely the opposite, demonstrating on the spot appreciation of specific military situations, making prompt decisions, and implementing them in a way that brought in results. Adaptation was important and so was innovation. Two cases are worth quoting from Freddie Matanga's testimony. First, the decision to deal with the practical military situation obtaining at Vila Salazar:

Vilar Salazar was a flash point - a border post town on the Rhodesian border with Mozambique. Both officers from the FRELIMO Comrades had seen it as a danger, but I interpreted it differently. The Rhodesian soldiers would broadcast news over a transmitter (micro) from the Maputo Broadcasting and they would trigger their artillery thereafter; the situation would continue for 15 to 20 days. We knew they were going to fire. It was a heavy exchange; at 12:30 they would shout from the bunkers (saying *Camarada, Camarada*, it's lunch time, we work with time, it's time to rest) and they stop firing and begin playing cards etc. In turn we had to have our lunch quickly. After lunch they would start firing; it continued like this for days. I questioned why the enemy behaved in this way. We could use the B10 until they expired in 13 to 18 hours, putting sacks and pouring water until it was a complete write off.

We also would use the B16, but it required special approval because it could carry nuclear war material and the operation was a high risk and the smoke would move for kilometres. Sometimes it was instructed to fire once because the cost of rockets was about USD\$2000. This weapon could send the enemies away and they would rest for days. This could help facilitate our rest; it was a ploy to starve us and concentrate on wasting your firearms, so I never concentrated on Vilar Salazar. They never crossed into Mozambique, and we fired back to facilitate exhaustion of our firearms. I chose to ignore Vilar Salazar. It involved firing without casualties; I put my mind into the advance in the company of Victor Rungani, John Zongororo. And the general was kind enough (Rex Nhongo); he gave me officers when necessary, to rest and under guard we moved on.<sup>233</sup>

In the second place, there was the flexibility that these 'men on the spot' needed to display in the field so that they did not become slaves to cartographic descriptions on paper such as 'Manica' or 'Gaza' Provinces, which had little meaning on the ground. Matanga explains:

(232) Interview with Amos Sigauke (Comrade Vasco Mudiwa) by Gerald Mazarire, (Harare) 23 February 2007.

(233) Interview with Rtd. Brigadier Benjamin Mabenge (Comrade Freddie Matanga) by Gerald Mazarire, (UZ Linguistics Audio Laboratory) 7 February 2007.

We looked at the situation, the whole of Gaza Province within the northern side of the Sabi, which we could not access because of the river; we had handed over to Tonderai Nyika for his access in Musikavanhu. We, in turn, incorporated his men on our side of the Sabi. Ultimately, we only remained with sector two which included Mberengwa, Zvishavane, Shurugwi, Berejena, Buchwa to Gweru, and the southern side, Beitbridge, Maranda 1 and 2, where Stoppa Chiridza was in charge, and Juru, Shumba. Carlos was in sector two; visibly on the map, sector two cannot be seen...234

It is thus difficult to account for the various peculiarities of each province, sector, or detachment and its operations. At that stage, we put together the collective memories of combatants and civilians in zones where ZANLA operated during the period under analysis to describe a 'war situation' as it emerged. Once again, this description is based on impressions as rendered by the people interviewed and the evidence may be overwhelming in some areas and thin in others. The initial emphasis here is on the combat experiences as rendered by those directly involved.

### **The Military Situation in the New Operational Provinces: Manica and Gaza, 1977-1978**

Tangwena, which was the northernmost sector in ZANLA's Manica operational province, opened during the ZIPA era. It was named after Chief Tangwena, who had fought a heroic battle against the Rhodesian state, resisting the eviction of his people from their lands. Chief Tangwena was now in the camps in Mozambique, after having assisted Robert Mugabe and Edgar Tekere to cross the border. The Tangwena sector covered Nyanga, Penhalonga, Watsomba, Gandanzara, Old Murapa, Vhumbunu, and the famous Zindid detachment. It also stretched into Mandeya, Makoni, Wedza, Chiduku, and surrounding areas. Testimonies collected regarding this area seem to emphasise, not only the increased infiltration by ZANLA groups, but also the rise of Rhodesian pseudo operations. On 1 April 1977, Rhodesian Selous Scouts pretending to be guerrillas shot and killed Basil Nyabadza, leader of the St. Francis African Independent Church in Makoni.<sup>235</sup> Nyabadza was a well known supporter of ZANLA freedom fighters, who used his vehicle to ferry goods and provisions for the guerrillas. He owned a small shop at Makoni, which was a distributing point. Earlier in 1975, he had been imprisoned for six months for a similar offence. Despite these attempts to stop local support, guerrilla numbers swelled in this sector throughout 1977. A group incorporating Comrades Mariyo, Mhiripiri Shungu, Black Africa Masango, and Dhuzu Bonde entered Hwedza around June 1977, and were involved in contacts with Rhodesian troops in Gangare, Bhingi, Chitida, Pasina, Chidhenge, Zenda 1, Zenda II, Chigondo, Garabha, Bhasvi, Mukurumure, Chinonga, and Chisasike. Their supply line stretched from Chiduku, and groups moved back and forth through Ruda

(234) Ibid.

(235) Hastings, A. *St. Francis African Church Makoni: Story of the Foundation and Development of an Independent Zimbabwean Community*. Leeds: Unpublished Manuscript, 2003: See p.57; See also T.O. Ranger. *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*. London: James Currey, 1985: See p.271.

and Mount Kambudzi. According to Comrade Mariyo, it was in the desire to intercept this line, that the Rhodesians set up Ruda Camp and the Grand Reef Air Force base.<sup>236</sup> Many former operatives in this sector remember encounters with enemy forces that targeted their supply lines. Pardon Humanikwa, for example, retold how they ended up having to split groups destined for the Tangwena sector as soon as they crossed Nyanga. Humanikwa described one encounter with Rhodesian forces soon after his group had split at Mount Jenya. This was a ‘fire force’ attack with three helicopters on full assault. The leader of Humanikwa’s group, Tension Chipoko, successfully brought down one of the helicopters with a motor bomb, but the Rhodesians were reinforced with a ground force and a mounted infantry. By some stroke of luck, he says, this contact attracted the attention of their colleagues with whom they had just split; these colleagues returned to reinforce them and turned the tide of the battle in the guerillas’ favour. As is often the case with these collected freedom fighter stories, the narrative ends with the achievement of “all the helicopters were downed”.<sup>237</sup> They pursued the ground force and, according to Comrade Mariyo,...

When they were about to cross Nyatende River, I’m not sure of the name, we met the Rhodesian forces, who were using motorbikes which had tubeless tyres. They were very persistent, those people; maybe they were thinking that we had no bullets, but they had realized that all their helicopters had been gunned down. These ones were now running away from danger and they had nothing to defend themselves with as they were fired at by the other guys. We did not kill them; we caught them alive and they became captives who accompanied us on our advance to Mt. Jenya. The helicopters were now flying at a distance away from us since they were now afraid of coming closer. We had gunned down five helicopters and one spotter plane and this was the largest now of planes to be gunned down at the same time and same place in Tangwena sector area. On our way up Mt. Jenya, we met baboons and they ran away, a sign showing that the mountain was safe and there were no enemies. We camped on the mountain and other boys from St. Killens, which is part of Gandanzara, also came after having heard what had happened. We had a parade that night so that it could be seen who was there and who was not; those who had been injured and those who had died during the battle. The number of those who died was very low; they were not more than five people, but their guns were recovered by other comrades, who, however, failed to carry the bodies of the deceased with them. The commanders had also come and they started dividing people into sections and told them to disperse quickly.<sup>238</sup>

Zindi Detachment was another interesting theatre of operations in Tangwena, as noted earlier in the testimonies of Steven Chidavanyika. It became one of the earliest liberated zones where guerillas were becoming even more adventurous, ambushing convoys on the Nyanga main road at will.<sup>239</sup> The guerillas operating in the Zindi

(236) Interview with Comrade Mariyo, (Kwekwe) 04 May 2008.

(237) As shall be seen in the experiences of the guerillas collected in the various sectors, almost all the battles end up with a helicopter being shot down; Our independent count of these claims from just the interviews collected for this report adds up to over 100 helicopters, something well beyond the Rhodesian fleet.

(238) Interview with Comrade Mariyo, (Kwekwe) 04 May 2008.

(239) Interview with Cde Stephen Chidavanyika, (Harare) 6 February 2007.

Detachment believed strongly that their success was a result of the support they were being offered by the spirit mediums, such as Sekuru Sakureba. They maintained very high moral values, safeguarded by taboos and prohibitions against the use of charms, herbs, and the consultation of diviners. They believed any transgressor was always burdened with bad luck, such as injury or more than frequent engagements with the enemy. The only salvation was confession and Sakureba often came in for the exorcism.<sup>240</sup>

The Munhumutapa sector was immediately south of Tangwena and incorporated Zimunya, Chitakatira, Bazeley Bridge, Manjengwa, Mukuni, Makarara, Dorowa, Marabada, Mupati, and the surrounding areas. Amongst others, we interviewed Comrade Wrong Kays Kays who operated in the Zimunya-Jindu-Bocha areas from 1977 and was involved in a number of battles that resulted in the capture of his colleagues.<sup>241</sup> Interestingly, a number of female platoons entered Munhumutapa sector, bringing in supplies and ammunition from Mozambique and one of the female combatants, Comrade Pfumo Rinobaya, remembered how in October 1977 her platoon was ambushed at Ndorwe Mountain where she and a friend, Comrade Choice, were the only survivors.<sup>242</sup> The mountainous terrain of the eastern highlands offered a number of advantages to guerrilla warfare and a certain Comrade Mutekeri gave a number of testimonies about how they evaded or surprised the enemy in the misty environs of the Gandamasunga Mountain range. They also knew that under these conditions the Rhodesians could not count on any aircraft support.<sup>243</sup> Perhaps the most widely celebrated ZANLA military score in the Munhumutapa Sector was the attack on the Grand Reef Airbase on 17 December 1977. Grand Reef had become Rhodesia's biggest forward base, which had probably been used in the air raids on Chimoio and Tembwe a few days before as described below. It was not known whether the Grand Reef attack was a ZANLA retaliatory move, but they successfully killed 22 Rhodesian pilots during the night attack, after which they destroyed all the electricity pylons supplying the base. Another attack was made the same day at a military base near the town of Umtali using mortar bombs which hit a canteen packed with soldiers. The Smith regime described these two incidents as "the boldest guerrilla operation so far."<sup>244</sup> In a communiqué issued after the Grand Reef attack, ZANLA claimed:

On December 17, our forces launched a successful attack on the Grand Reef military base west of Umtali. This base is a centre for attacks against our people in the semi-liberated zones in the east of the country and for aggression against the People's Republic of Mozambique. It is thus of great strategic military importance to the enemy.

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(240) Ibid.

(241) Interview with Comrade Wrong Kays Kays by Charles Mariponde, (Vhuka Farm in Centenary) 22 March 2008.

(242) Interview with Comrade Pfumo Rinobaya (Ephraim Katsanza), (Chinyani Farm in Centenary) 18 March 2008.

(243) Ibid.

(244) *The Daily News*. "ZIPA Strikes at Vital Airbase." Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 22 December 1977.

The attack carried by a company of our comrades with artillery and light weapons was preceded by careful reconnaissance... A Zipa [sic] artillery unit opened fire first and a few minutes later the enemy returned fire. However, the enemy force which numbered 500 were taken by surprise and were unable to put up effective resistance. Our comrades were able to continue shelling for half an hour. An estimated 400 enemy soldiers were immobilized and will play no further part in the military oppression of our people or in the criminal aggression against neighbouring states...245

Further in the south, the Musikavanhu sector covered Chipinge, Chimanimani, Marange, Bocha, Birchenough Bridge, and stretched into Enkeldoorn and Umvuma. Parts of it could also have embraced detachments in Zaka, Gutu, and Bikita. However, in considering the demarcations of Musikavanhu, we need to take into account the rearrangements by the field commanders as elaborated by Freddie Matanga earlier on, for there were indeed some overlaps with the northern sectors of Gaza Province. Inevitably, this affected the coordination and deployment of troops on either side of the Save River. Davis Hlazo was one of the ZANLA guerrillas who operated in Musikavanhu after August 1976 with such people as Eugenia Mudzimu and Mashukushe Zvidzai. Hlazo says he was deployed in Chipinge under special circumstances, that is, after ZANLA had realized that the many Shona speaking cadres who were being deployed in the Shangani-speaking areas of Chikomedzi and Gezani were experiencing difficulties. It thus introduced a policy of deploying a small number of people in their home areas and this is how Hlazo ended up operating back at his home in Chipinge.<sup>246</sup>

They established a supply post at Chikwekweti and under the command of Augustine Mhare they masterminded an attack on Rhodesian forces based in Chipinge Town in 1977. Later on, they were joined by a special group of female cadres who were trained at Sungamberi in Tanzania. They brought in supplies from Mozambique, but were easily incorporated to augment the fighting platoons. Their distinguishing mark, according to Hlazo, was that they were extremely light-skinned. Some, like Varasi, Sarah Mbovhani, and Tikazulu, participated in a battle with his group and miraculously evaded capture by the Rhodesian forces.<sup>247</sup>

The Gaza Province provides a cartographic challenge given the changes already highlighted, and it is important to view it in the larger picture. As a province, it stretched from Espungabera down to the Limpopo Valley and was initially divided into four operational sectors up until 1976, when Sector 1 was joined with Musikavanhu. Sector 4 was combined with Sector 3 and this effectively left two sectors, the first stretching from the border with Musikavanhu all the way to the Chiredzi River and the second going from Chiredzi to Beitbridge and further north as far as Filabusi. Sector 1 has been recorded as the hottest of ZANLA's operational zones, which claimed nearly 20% of the Rhodesian Selous Scouts in one detachment (the Nyajena

(245) *The Daily News*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 6 January 1978.

(246) Interview with Davis Hlazo, (Masvingo) 23 June 2008.

(247) *Ibid.*

Detachment) alone.<sup>248</sup> In the new ZANLA offensive, Charles Munyoro was the initial provincial commander, and was assisted by Sector Commanders Watson Juru, Hector Muridzo, and Metsi Rimwe. Later changes and restructuring brought other legends like Nylon Masambaasiyana, Willie Deveteve, Fast Move, and Mike Goromigo, among others. Deveteve recounts his early baptism by fire during his first days in the operational zones:

We got into an area which was known as Sector 2 in Chiredzi and we were accompanied by Provincial Commander Charles Munyoro. We met Chief Masvenure, to the south of Chiredzi. The Sectorial Commander said that any new comer was supposed to be baptized with a gun. So I was given two sections and we were accompanied by Detachment Commander Zulu. We were assigned to check on the Binya road, where whites used to travel so much. When we got there in the afternoon around 3 pm, we laid an ambush and when the whites came we fired at them. This was the beginning and the whites had to send helicopters and we fought a terrible war which culminated in the evening. Another group was firing. The group that laid the ambush had gone with Henry Muchena and they fought on the other side. They realized that a new force was operating in the area. We fired at the enemy fiercely and the Rhodesians responded by sending armoured vehicles. So we followed what we had been taught, that if you see an enemy advancing, you retreat. We retreated, but they thought they were pushing us into Mozambique.<sup>249</sup>

Under the guise of this ‘retreat’ Deveteve’s group successfully deployed in Mberengwa and Chivi where they launched a full fledged war. For many people in this area, the beginning of the war was marked not only by the assembling of people at mass meetings or *pungwes*, but by the explosion of landmines and pitched engagements between the guerrillas and the Rhodesian forces.<sup>250</sup> Metsi Rimwe was in charge of this sector, which was predominantly Shangani or Venda speaking, a factor that posed some operational difficulties for the mostly Shona speaking combatants of ZANLA. Comrade Bushu, who also saw some action in this sector, confirmed this point, and reiterated that it was also a transit zone which could not be avoided, since most ZANLA groups destined for deployment in the entire Gaza Province used the Mapayi road and then parted somewhere near Gezani.<sup>251</sup> He also noted that in some cases they had to employ the services of translators. Metsi Rimwe was, however, a good Venda speaker. The Rhodesians attempted to create a local tracking army composed of mostly Shangaan speaking men to capitalise on the communication difficulties that were being experienced and win over the Shangaan masses.<sup>252</sup> This effort did not achieve much and many cadres like Akwias Aquino testify to the hospitality they continued to receive from the Shangaan/Hlengwe people during their operations.<sup>253</sup> With time, ZANLA was augmented by FRELIMO groups who

(248) Parker, J. *Assignment Selous Scouts*: See p.187.

(249) Interview with Willie Deveteve.

(250) Interview with Dembai Madambi by Taguma Mazarire, (Masvingo) 7 April 2008.

(251) Interview with Comrade Bushu, (Kwekwe) 20 May 2008.

(252) Parker, J. *Assignment Selous Scout*: See p.70.

(253) Interview with Comrade Akwias Akwino, (Harare) 14 May 2007.

were deployed sometime in 1978 into each sector of the Gaza Province.<sup>254</sup> According to Freddie Matanga:

Sometime we received 200 FRELIMO men. It raised suspicion over our consideration policies that we were implementing on the edges of Rutenga, Cold Storage Area, Mupapa, and South East and East of Mberengwa. We were offered the privilege of talking about it with the personal staff of the president of Mozambique. We stayed with them for three to four days and I chose that they should go to what was formerly Sector 3 and 4. Although they loved their jeans and radios, the officers were simply sober and driven by social, psychological motivations. FRELIMO officers went as far as Zvishavane, Mberengwa, Shurugwi, Buchwa, and Berejena.<sup>255</sup>

Gaza contained all the crucial strategic links with South Africa, Rhodesia's last sanctions-busting ally, and areas which were very important to the Rhodesian government. Such areas included the Rutenga-Bietbridge railway line, the Somabula- Rutenga railway, roads, and other bridges in that sector. In 1977, Willie Deveteve was specifically sent into the Gaza Province with a group of engineers on a mission to sabotage these vital communication links. Towards the beginning of 1978, they had penetrated as far as Mataga, where they bombarded yet another airbase in an event witnessed by their provincial commander, Freddie Matanga, who had this to say:

We invited some of the detachment commanders from Sector 3 and Stoppa Chiridza provided purely mature cadres. On the 9th of April, we set up the attack at 2:15 am and shot the first bullet at 2:50 am. We called the D.A.s with red ribbon hats, some were soldiers. There was a part somewhere we did our calculation before leaving Shayishayi; we wanted 300mm bombs (mortar), and 250 mm, and about 50mm m90, about 27 recoilless rifles, and shells for AK 47, RPG7. Mataga was a neighbour to Nyala, a mini airbase, but they could not come to rescue during the battle. Cattle broke out of the kraals, eating up people's crops. Some of the men fell from the beds because bombardment was intense. You could not even imagine it. After that attack, Nyala Airbase could not offer Mataga Camp a rescue. The most they did was to fire into the sky to scare us. I think this was one of the best attacks. Colonel Shumba (Willie Deveteve), Watson Juru, Trevor Mbudzana, and Colonel Rungani were to be on a stand by to learn from these veterans. The whole class went through without any casualties, which is rare in a war. There was heavy machine guns fire, but it was quickly put up. Something that made my mind bleed was the loss of Tsana, who was a mortar and machine gun specialist and could control it at all cost and levels. The withdrawal order was given, but one of the novices could not understand what was happening, possibly out of confusion. He pulled off his position trying to adjust his gun; the inexperienced soldier discharged about 11 rounds straight into the officer's back. We tried to save him, but in vain, so we buried him at Mataga<sup>256</sup>.

The largest number of interviews collected for this project concern Gaza, even if the interviews were collected outside Gaza itself. After considering the effect of this ZANLA offensive on the direction of the war in general, discussion of the Gaza

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(254) Ibid.

(255) Interview with Comrade Freddie Matanga.

(256) Interview with Freddie Matanga.

Province will focus on how non-combatants viewed the situation, in addition to charting the military situation, as done for other sectors.

### **The Chimoio and Tembwe Attacks, 24 and 27 November 1977**

As the ZANU war escalated, the Rhodesians decided to strike deep into Mozambique to destroy the sources of the guerrilla operations in Rhodesia. The Chimoio headquarters were an obvious target and it was a matter of time before they hit them. The Rhodesians struck on 24 November 1977, after nearly a year of surveillance and intelligence work. Less than 100 kilometres from the Rhodesian border, Chimoio was a complex of camps with virtually all the branches of the ZANLA administration and more than 11,000 residents.

Like Nyadzonya the previous year, Chimoio was attacked in the morning, around 08:00 hrs, a predictable time for ZANLA parades. Although attempts at retaliation from those sections of the camp equipped with anti-air weaponry such as all the Takawira bases, ZANLA's lack of preparedness for such an attack was shocking, allowing the Rhodesians to launch another assault the next day.<sup>257</sup> Aggripah Mutambara believes that the main objective of the attacks was to bomb the freedom fighters' armoury, which the Rhodesians could not locate precisely and their concentration on this target allowed people to escape from such bases as Nehanda, Kaguvi, Parerenyatwa, and Chitepo College.<sup>258</sup> We have collected several interviews from several survivors of the attack and they show remarkable variations in the details and circumstances of the attack. Dickson Dzora remembers that Sekuru Chipfeni, the spirit medium of Nehanda Sector fame, who was now resident at Chimoio, had forewarned the ZANU leadership of the impending attack, but was ignored.<sup>259</sup> Both Dzora and Theresa Chigombe testify to the intransigence of the Camp Commander Patrick Mupunzarima to some such premonitions coming even from the cadres in the camp. As Chingombe recalls,

a certain comrade, whose name was Aaron, woke up, saying that we were not supposed to go for the morning assembly because he had dreamt of a bird which was coming from the Rhodesian side, and he said that he dreamt of the bird destroying the people who were in the camp. By that time, Patrick Mupunzarima was the camp commander and he punished Comrade Aaron for saying out his dream. Aaron was beaten and Mupunzarima was arguing that they did not recognize his capacity as a spirit medium; instead he argued that he recognized the medium of Sekuru Chiodza. Aaron was severely beaten, but he insisted that his dream was going to come to pass. Comrade Makasha was another leader at Chimoio and he could not understand it at all. The following day, we were all summoned for the morning assembly and all of a sudden

(257) Mutambara, A. *Chimoio Attack: Rhodesian Genocide*. Harare: Dept. of Information and Publicity, ZANU PF, 2008: See p.52.

(258) *Ibid.* p.53.

(259) Interview with Dickson Dzora, (Harare) 15 February 2007.

a spotter plane flew over us and Aaron shouted that the plane was the one he dreamt of and everybody ignored him. When people were still trying to figure out what was going on, the planes came and started dropping some bombs.<sup>260</sup>

James Munyuki confirms this narrative, and argues that a few days earlier there was even evidence of strangers in the camps who had ‘sophisticated radios’; these people also poisoned the food reserves undetected, so that some of the survivors of the attack actually died of poisoned food.<sup>261</sup>

The length of the operation differs from interviewee to interviewee, and depends on which base the person was stationed at the time of the attack. While it is generally agreed that the attack lasted two days, some like Comrade Gumbo, who was at Parirenyatwa base, believe it lasted only 20 minutes.<sup>262</sup> Tonderai Tichatonga, who was at Takawira II, believes it did not take more than ten minutes of indiscriminate bombing to destroy this base. And he goes on to say, “That is when we saw that there were Dakotas above us dropping the ground force all over, about a kilometre around the camp. When we tried to escape to Mudzingadzi by crossing the river, we discovered that we were encircled by the paratroopers. So you could survive the bombing and find yourself facing the paratroopers, who could snipe you. So you had to fight your way out of the cordon.”<sup>263</sup> Letia Kagodo saw some of the assault teams seeking and shooting them in cold blood.<sup>264</sup> Several attempts to rescue the survivors were foiled or ambushed by the Rhodesians, who roamed the camp for the next two days. Arrangements were made to take the wounded to the main hospital in Chimoio Town and a temporary base was set up at Siyalopi.<sup>265</sup> An ambulance involved in the work and bearing the Red Cross sign was attacked and the occupants killed in cold blood. One of the camp medics, Elizabeth Dumbarimwe, who survived the attack, recounts that it was not only those people injured in the attack who she had to worry about, but also those “*vadhuwende*” (patients) already in the camp hospitals, who could not assist themselves in this emergency:

We were situated near the river, west of the main camp. The set-up strategy was that patients had to be further from the entry point. The rationale was that the enemy would come through the usual entry point, so we were furthest from the entry points; we were near the river, so that we could wash the utensils we used, and also use the water if comrades spoiled their linen. We heard some shooting and knew that there was fighting in the main camp. We had been trained to think quick when there was shooting, so that we could decide if this was training or fighting. We knew immediately that this was a war. When the shooting started, we knew from the sound that these were not the ordinary rifles we knew, so those patients who could run we asked them to flee; those who couldn’t, we had to carry. We were lucky to be adjacent to the shallow

(260) Interview with Theresa Chigombe, (Mt. Darwin) 25 February 2008.

(261) Interview with James Munyuki, (Chatsworth) 08 May 2007.

(262) Interview with Comrade Gumbo, (Masvingo) 04 May 2007.

(263) Interview with Tonderai Tichatonga, (Gweru) 12 May 2008.

(264) Interview with Letia Kagodo, (Centenary) 26 February 2008.

(265) Interview with Ackim Hunda, (Harare) 08 May 2007.

zone of the river and it was thus easy to cross it. Ninety-five patients crossed the river, and we had been taught the ethics that as a medical officer you could not abandon patients, because we were bound by the blood of liberation.

For the next week Chimoio was a sorry sight with corpses strewn all over so that less conventional means of burying the dead were to be used, including bulldozing the dead people into mass graves.<sup>266</sup>

The second phase of the Rhodesian operation turned on Tembwe Camp in the Chifunde District of Tete Province nearly 72 hours later. The attack took three days and, according to Refias Joseph Maraire, who was also a witness of the attack, “ZANLA reinforcement forces came late. The Rhodesian forces were very harsh and cruel to the wounded and sick defenceless people, sometimes burning or cutting them with bayonets.”<sup>267</sup> Although the precise circumstances under which ZANLA opened Tembwe Camp are not clear, it was divided into two camps which were about 5 km apart. Tembwe 1 was a refugee camp and Tembwe 2 was a training camp, housing a total of 5,000 residents. Nearly 1,500 perished in the attack.

Amos Sigauke, who arrived as part of the ZANLA rescue team, recalls the situation at Tembwe:

We arrived in Mozambique at the time when Tembwe was bombed. The day after the bombing, we were assigned to go and assess the situation at that bombed area. We were given a Land Cruiser by the Provincial Commander, and when we arrived the Rhodesian soldiers were still checking on the area from their helicopters. The day when it was bombed, it rained and this meant that the bodies decomposed faster. We arrived at around 4 pm, which was the safest time to travel. We entered the camp and it was traumatizing to see decomposing bodies and some bombs which had not detonated. They had dropped some bombs, which could explode after some time so as to disturb any rescuing team. We had to dig some trenches to bury the bodies and sometimes we buried people in pits, which were used to dump rubbish at the camp. We carried the bodies with our bare hands and you could see worms dropping from the bodies. It was traumatizing. We had to stop the operation and continued the next day because we were afraid of stepping on landmines if we operated at night.<sup>268</sup>

Yeukai Magamba, who was one of the trainees at Tembwe 2, gives the following account of how they were attacked:

When Tembwe Base 2 was attacked, we were at the parade because every morning we would assemble and get our duties for the day. The enemy had done a reconnaissance of the camp routine, had observed everything such that we just saw the whole sky above us full of jets. They started by bombing the armoury where we kept our weapons, then bombed the place where we were assembled, then the hospital, and the kitchen. We had been trained as medical staff that in the event of an attack every one of us was supposed to run away with at least a patient; you were not supposed to run away without a patient. If you ran away without a patient, you would be labelled a sell-out. I ran out with one patient called Brokujacha, who was injured in both ankles. While

(266) Interview with Toko Mpofu, (Centenary) 04 March 2008.

(267) Interview with Refias Joseph Maraire, (Harare) 09 May 2007.

(268) Interview with Amos Sigauke, (Harare) 23 February 2007.

evacuating a patient you would be holding your gun. While I was crawling with my patient a bomb was dropped near us, but we escaped unhurt because we took cover under a big *musasa* tree. The gunner in the helicopter then saw us and fired upon us, hitting the tree and also my leg, but I didn't realize I had been hit. I continued to crawl with the injured comrade, then removed his camouflage to use it as a bandage on his injury because I had seen that he was bleeding excessively. It was then that I discovered that I had been injured and took out a bandage to cover my injury. I moved around with a full kit. The fighting lasted for more than four hours. One doctor, Chenai, who came from the same area as me, died right before my eyes. I and the injured Broku then dragged her near the river bank and covered her with humus. The ground force also came to finish off the injured. I survived by covering myself with humus, but comrade Broku smeared himself with blood. When the Rhodesian forces came over, they were stabbing everyone to check if they were dead. When they stabbed Broku, they were commenting that he was a dead terrorist. You don't breathe in such a time, and we survived because of that... The helicopters were then shot away by the reinforcements from FRELIMO, and some fell within the camp. After the enemy planes had gone, there was a lot of rain.<sup>269</sup>

Some of the people, like Maidei Nyika, who witnessed the Tembwe attack, described the attack as one of the most traumatic they had ever witnessed. She notes, "We were attacked in the morning when we were about to dismiss from the parade that was held in the morning... We were alerted about the attack, but nobody took these warnings seriously as many believed that the spirit medium was being insane. Moreover the attack came whilst we least expected it."<sup>270</sup>

Another witness to the Tembwe attack, Alfred Mumvuri, blamed the attack on one J.D. John Dube whom he described as a sell-out. He argues, "There was a man by the name J.D. John Dube, whom we thought shared the same nationalistic motives of liberating the country, but this was actually opposite as he turned out to be a sell-out, because he worked in liaison with the Rhodesians."<sup>271</sup>

### **The Special Political Circumstances of 1977**

While all this was taking place, the international political climate also reached an important turning point. Between February and March 1977, Russian President Nikolai Podgorny and Cuban Leader Fidel Castro visited southern Africa in a move to strengthen ties with the independent countries and offer further assistance to those still waging their struggles. Henry Kissinger's quest for a Rhodesian solution since 1974 had been an attempt to spruce up Gerald Ford's foreign policy in his re-election bid. Stemming the communist tide in southern Africa was an important aspect of it. He lost the election to Jimmy Carter at the end of 1976 and this at once threatened the flow of events. Jimmy Carter's foreign policy placed an emphasis on human rights and maintaining good relations with developing countries. His way of dealing with

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(269) Interview with Yeukai Magamba, (Mt. Darwin) 20 July 2008.

(270) Interview with Maidei Nyika, (Centenary) 27 February 2008.

(271) Interview with Alfred Mumvuri, (Kwekwe) 20 June 2008.

the communist threat was to make a good impression on the developing countries to discourage them from looking up to the Soviet Union's communist policies as the best example of approaching global and economic issues. In this sense, it differed markedly from the Ford-Kissinger option of accepting 'moderate blacks' in power in southern Africa and working through South Africa. Carter, through his Secretary of State Cyril Vance, wanted a government 'acceptable to Africans', but, like Ford and Kissinger before him, he wanted the British to take the lead in fostering such a settlement in Rhodesia. Similarly, he also believed in working through the Frontline leaders and South Africa, but was not prepared to countenance the domestic situation of apartheid in South Africa itself. As soon as he entered office in early 1977, Carter wrote to the Frontline presidents reaffirming his commitment to a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia and took firm action in seeking to repeal the Byrd Amendment allowing the USA to continue importing Rhodesian chrome.<sup>272</sup> Vance worked with the new British Foreign Secretary, David Owen, to continue a new wave of the so-called Anglo-American initiatives based on a set of proposals that would provide for an independence constitution, ceasefire arrangements, and a transitional government. The key defining features of the proposals were 20% white representation in the national legislature, a presidential system of government, an eight year guarantee of protected representation for whites, compensation for property appropriated, and a six month period under a British governor to supervise elections.

Part of the problem of working through the Frontline leaders was that they all believed that the proposals would work if they recognized only the Patriotic Front as the legitimate representatives of the Zimbabwean people. This attitude had already alienated Muzorewa and Sithole and other groups that had emerged since Geneva, including a new coalition of African chiefs called the Zimbabwe United People's Organisation (ZUPO) led by Jeremiah Chirau. Ian Smith had sounded Muzorewa while in Geneva to consider the possibility of reaching an internal arrangement inside Rhodesia, excluding the Patriotic Front, if the talks failed. He continued his overtures when Muzorewa returned from his self-imposed exile, and from 24 November 1977 their negotiations started in earnest. After three months of protracted negotiations, an agreement was reached over a settlement which differed from the Anglo-American deal in reserving 28 seats for whites instead of 20 and giving a ten year grace period instead of eight.<sup>273</sup> Meanwhile, for most of 1977, Owen and Vance were involved in several trips across the sub-region, but failed to sell their proposals to the Patriotic Front, especially on the grounds of security arrangements during the transition and ceasefire periods. Two meetings held with the Patriotic Front in Malta failed to break the impasse and there was a high likelihood thereafter that the USA and Britain would give it all up and recognise the internal developments within Rhodesia. Inside Zambia, the economy was teetering on the brink of collapse, and with an impending

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(272) Steadman. *Peacemaking in Civil War*. See p.128.

(273) Muzorewa. *Rise Up and Walk*, Appendix D. See pp.278-282.

election in December, Kaunda was forced to reopen his border with Rhodesia and to persuade Nkomo to begin a new set of talks with Smith. Smith, on his part, had been advised by his security chiefs that the military situation was deteriorating by the day and the only way he could stop the war was by dividing the Patriotic Front through securing a deal with Nkomo.<sup>274</sup> In August 1977, Smith and Nkomo reached a deal to install Nkomo as head of the transitional government, but Nkomo insisted that Robert Mugabe should be part of the deal. In the end, both Nkomo and Kaunda failed to sell their arrangements with Smith to Nyerere and Mugabe, and this put more cracks in the Patriotic Front coalition. The Smith-Nkomo talks ended when ZIPRA guerrillas brought down a Rhodesian civilian aircraft in a situation described below.

### **Some Internal Dynamics in ZAPU, 1977**

At the end of 1977, ZAPU experienced some internal setbacks inside Zambia, when J.Z. Moyo was not only assassinated by a parcel bomb, but also some tensions developed amongst cadres within the camps along tribal lines. Some witnesses are of the opinion that there were internal attempts by some Ndebele hardliners to do away with Nikita Mangena as head of the ZIPRA army. Mangena, who had always advocated for unity of the Zimbabwean fighting forces and had been Deputy Commander of the ill-fated ZIPA, was still not averse to cooperation with ZANU where their operations overlapped in the field. “It was rumoured,” one ZIPRA combatant told us, “that when at one time Mangena was touring the operational areas inside the country, he met ZANLA combatants and exchanged ammunition with them as a sign of comradeship, and Mangena did not deny the rumour. He in fact said that he had done it as a gesture to show that they were united. I think that is when he became hated by the Ndebele elements, who did not want to be united with the Shona. From then onwards, he was labelled a sell-out. At that point there were a lot of misunderstandings.”<sup>275</sup>

Mangena seemed to have been trying to deal with what were indeed embarrassing cases where ZIPRA and ZANLA, in pursuit of their expansion programmes, not only overlapped, but, instead of cooperating to fight a common enemy, exchanged fire. In Silobela, one Gandiwa told the story of how,

Some ZANLA forces came from the east through Dabuka in 1977. When they arrived, they called everybody to a meeting to politicise us. Some people came, but others didn't, thinking that they were Selous Scouts. They genuinely claimed that they had come to fight a joint war with their ZIPRA counterparts. They asked where they were and wrote a letter to be passed on to the ZIPRAs. The *Mujibhas* [male runners for ZANLA guerrillas] who carried the letter were told that, ‘We don't mix with *vana 'sadza nehuku*'. They can fight their war from the east and we will fight from the western end.’ What angered the ZANLAs was that they found some ZIPRAs beating up the *povo* at a beer party, arguing that they were supporters of the ‘*sadza nehukus*’. About ninety ZANLAs assembled with their weapons and sought to demonstrate to the ZIPRAs that they outnumbered them and had more weapons. They ambushed

(274) Flower. *Serving Secretly*: See p.209.

(275) Interview with Ms. Mabuwa, (Harare) 11 September 1987.

about seven ZIPRAs at Nguruve's homestead, after which Nguruve committed suicide. That's when the whole thing started, and we started hunting each other. More ZANLAs started pouring in, sometimes numbering as many as 500; so too did the ZIPRAs, who started searching for ZANLA in the area called Jongola.<sup>276</sup>

More incidents were reported in Spolilo, where local ZANLA and ZIPRA commanders tried to deal with the animosity against each other by exchanging platoons. Apparently this never worked and proved to be an impediment rather than a solution.<sup>277</sup> The effort at cooperation was also confirmed in Chingoyo and Mahoho areas by one ZANLA cadre, Claude Masweto, who operated in the Mt. Darwin and Dande areas.<sup>278</sup> Mangena is said to have seen unity as inevitable and encouraged that this be practiced back in the camps. The tension continued to rise until Pinda, one of the Shona camp commanders loyal to Mangena, was ambushed by fellow ZIPRA cadres on his way from Mkushi Camp. Tribal violence erupted, forcing most people to flee from the camps and hide in nearby bushes. The ZAPU leadership led by Nkomo and Msika came to quell the tension, but in a few months time, Mangena's car detonated a landmine and he was killed. The Rhodesians claimed responsibility, although suspicions continued that it was an internal job.<sup>279</sup>

In 1978, Mangena was replaced by his deputy, Lookout Masuku, who proceeded with a new plan of appointing resident commanders in the two fronts that ZIPRA was operating internally. Rodwell Nyika took control of the northern front and Carlson Mudzingwa went to the southern front. It also became necessary to restructure the High Command following Mangena's death. This was done simply through retiring into the diplomatic service the older experienced commanders such as Cephas Cele, Sam Moyo, Elliot Masengo, and Gordon Munyanyi. This allowed the younger generation to take over under the following structure:

ZIPRA HIGH COMMAND, 1978:  
 Secretary for Defence, Akim Ndlovu  
 Army Commander, Lookout Masuku  
 Deputy Army Commander, Ambrose Mutinhiri  
 Chief of Staff, Major Gen Maseko  
 Military Intelligence, Ananias Gwenzi  
 Personnel, Sigoge  
 Training, Tondhlana  
 Operations, Mike Grey  
 National Security, Sekuru Patrick  
 Commissariat, Gedi Ndlovu

(276) Interview with Mr. Gandiwa by K. Shamuyashe, (Amaveni, Kwekwe) 21 July 2008.

(277) Tshuma, T. "Conflict in Matabeleland and the Midlands Provinces: A Study of Evolving Power Struggles and the Creation, Operation and Demise of Super ZAPU (1980-1984)". Unpublished BA Honours Dissertation. Harare: University of Zimbabwe, June 2006. pp.11, 13.

(278) Interview with Claude Masweto (alias Maworesa MuZimbabwe), (Rusape) 4 May 2008.

(279) Ibid.

### **Cuban and Russian Advisors, 1978**

The change of the High Command in 1978 also coincided with the coming of Russian and Cuban military advisors, a move much feared by the USA and South Africa. The Russians believed ZIPRA should deploy smaller groups to strike targets in the country and come back to Zambia. Yet ZIPRA had perfected the ‘Castro Approach’ with a well established infrastructure inside the country that enabled cadres to live off the land. The Cubans much preferred this strategy and concentrated on strategic innovation, leaving the Russians to assist with military equipment and other operational issues. The Russians introduced the Karate Communication Systems or Russian High Frequency radios with a range of well over 1000km. They were deployed in all the platoons and enabled them to communicate with Lusaka Headquarters across the border using a six-cell battery radio facility of less than 3kgs. These radios were further supplemented by the more sophisticated ‘non-voice’ 3-9-3s communication system with a better power capacity.<sup>280</sup>

Such circumstances allowed improved strength which gave ZIPRA the confidence to launch a much bigger offensive over a wide area. Todd Mpsisi commanded this improved offensive over Kariba, code-named Kariba I, Kariba II, Kariba III, Chirundu I, and Chirundu II. The area also covered Makuti, Elephant Walk, and the Zimbabwean side opposite Livingstone. Part of the strategy was also to derail trains rolling stock between Wankie and Victoria Falls. Kaunda quickly stopped this disruption, arguing that the trains also carried Zairian beef and copper that was being exported via Durban. In addition, Zambia was having to import grain through this railway system because of the ongoing drought. If ZIPRA continued its attacks, it meant that Zambia would not be able to feed the thousands of refugees in the camps. ZIPRA then applied its newly acquired Russian military hardware to an even more ambitious project, downing of Rhodesian civilian planes with heat-seeking missiles.

### **‘A Tit-for Tat Game’: ZIPRA’s Downing of Rhodesian Civilian Aircraft and Rhodesian Retaliatory Raids, September 1978-April 1979**

On 3 September 1978, ZIPRA guerrillas shot down an Air Rhodesia Vickers Viscount four engine turboprop, a passenger plane with fifty-two passengers and four crewmen that had just flown out of the Kariba Airport and was bound for Salisbury. The plane was shot out of the sky using a Russian-made SAM-7, surface-to-air, Strella rocket, and the plane hit the ground about 60km south-east of Kariba in Hurungwe communal lands, where there were several ZIPRA platoons deployed.<sup>281</sup> According to the *Daily News* of Dar es Salaam, the search pilot said that it appeared that the Viscount’s pilot had apparently tried to land on a 400-yard patch of broken ground, but had hit the ground and careered into a gully. Ten survivors of the crash were then mowed down

(280) Interview with Richard Mataure by Prof. Bhebe, (University of Zimbabwe) 4 January 1990.

(281) “Guerrilla murdered air crash survivors.” *The Daily Nation*. Nairobi, Kenya. 5 September 1978.

by ZIPRA guerrillas and eight other survivors were then evacuated from the crash scene by helicopter to Kariba. 282

Joshua Nkomo told Lusaka radio in an interview that the plane had been shot out of the sky because the Rhodesians had been ferrying military personnel and equipment from Salisbury and Victoria Falls using the Viscounts and ZIPRA had no reason to believe this was a different mission.<sup>283</sup> He also said the Rhodesians could

not complain because this was “a military zone,” according to *The Daily Nation*.<sup>284</sup> Nkomo also denied that his fighters had killed any survivors and emphasized that his forces would not attack any civilian targets, and said that it was unfortunate if any civilians were killed in the plane attack. Nkomo also wondered why the western media showed concern only for the white civilians when about thirty to forty Africans were killed every day by the Rhodesian security forces. According to Radio Lusaka, Nkomo asked why “the same press ignored the barbarity perpetuated by the notorious Selous Scouts and fascist forces on Africans.”<sup>285</sup> When asked by the BBC about the killing of the surviving civilians, Nkomo attracted international outrage when he let out a chuckle. However, according to him in his autobiography, “They asked me what weapons the plane had been brought down with. Clearly I could not say it was a SAM-7: it was a secret that we had such things. To turn the question aside, I answered that we had brought it down by throwing stones, and, as I said so, I laughed a bit. I was not laughing at the deaths of all those civilians, but at the evasive answer. The laugh was remembered, rather than my regret at the unnecessary deaths.”<sup>286</sup>

A week later, according to the Zambians, Rhodesian Premier Ian Smith was planning revenge for the shooting down of the Viscount. *The Zambian Daily Mail* said that Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, said that the Zambian government had reliable information that the “racist regime” was planning to attack Zambia.<sup>287</sup>

### **The Rhodesian Attack on Mkushi Girls Camp, 1978**

Less than a month after the downing of the Viscount, the Rhodesians retaliated with a raid on ZIPRA camps in Zambia on 19 October 1978 in an operation code-named “Operation Gatling.” It was a coordinated attack on Mkushi Freedom Camp, CGT 1, 2, 3, and CTT camps. Like the ZANLA attacks before, these raids were carefully planned after informed reconnaissance. The interviews provided little information on the nature of the raids at other camps, but they did provide narratives from survivors of Mkushi. They all confirm that the ZIPRA defence structure was a sham. Only the thirteen instructors at Mkushi were armed with small arms and they offered virtually no resistance to the Rhodesian Air Force and ground troops. According to the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe rehabilitation report for

(282) “Plane crash kills 52 in Rhodesia.” *The Daily News*. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. 5 September 1978.

(283) Radio Lusaka broadcast, 5 September 1978 (SWB-ME 5911, B 3-4).

(284) “Guerrilla murdered air crash survivors.” *The Daily Nation*. Nairobi, Kenya. 5 September 1978.

(285) Radio Lusaka broadcast.

(286) Joshua Nkomo.

(287) “Smith poised to attack Zambia” (extract). *Zambia Daily Mail*. Lusaka, Zambia. 8 September 1978.

Mkushi, the reasons for these poor defence mechanisms were that ZIPRA had never been attacked in its rear bases before, so it relied on very basic state of alert training drills that put everyone on standby in their foxhole to await further orders. This drill would normally be practiced at sunrise, sunset, and when aircraft over flew the area or when vehicles drove into the camp. This was a ZIPRA standing operational procedure that applied to all training camps.<sup>288</sup> Mr. Lovemore Mandima, the NMMZ Curator of Militaria responsible for the rehabilitation exercise of former freedom fighter camps, confirmed that a substantial number of casualties found at Mkushi were killed *in situ*, that is, in foxholes, some were killed in bunkers that had been prepared during defensive training exercises.<sup>289</sup>

Rhodesian troops occupied the camp complex for about six days, having laid an ambush further up the road. The first casualty of that ambush was Alick Nkata, a senior Zambian news producer, who wanted to cover the events of the attack. He was mistaken for a ZAPU/ZIPRA official and was killed as he drove through to the camp. This incident was followed by a joint ZIPRA and Zambian Army and Police contingent, which drove in to investigate. Fourteen police officers, fifteen Zambian army troops, and an undisclosed number of ZIPRA personnel were also killed. Casualty figures for Mkushi have been estimated at over 1000 girls and women and a few male instructors. Charity Ndiweni (comrade Monica Mguni) was one of the instructors who survived the attack and she related her ordeal thus:

I was the Brigade Instructor of the C Coy. During that process, there was a bombardment of the camp by Smith's Rhodesian forces. Some of the cadres of my brigade were out of the camp to the first base situated 2 km from the main camp, and there remained only fifty of us, the commanders and one brigade which had come from V.C. Camp. The bombardment occurred in the morning when I first heard from a communiqué that he had received a message concerning the bombardment of M.C., and he encouraged us to be vigilant as commanders. It was about 10:45 am when I had taken my brigade to the kitchen to have our food (we used to combine breakfast and lunch making it one thing), when I heard the noise of the aeroplanes. I looked through the window and saw three aeroplanes printed in the midst "ZAMBIAN AIRWAYS" coming towards our base. I was shocked by the noise and the speed of these aeroplanes. They started dropping bombs. I tried to shoot one of the planes with my Semenov gun, but it was too late, comrade. The war had started. I shouted to my company to take cover, but it was too late. The situation was serious because the aeroplanes were dropping bombs. We ran towards the nearby river, trying to hide ourselves. The plane came after us because they had seen us when we went into a cave-like feature on the river. We were lucky because they missed us. All of us had been covered with smoke and were suffocating. We spent the whole day in that cave and at about 4:00 pm, a certain Rhodesian soldier came and stood in front of the cave. They had captured one of our commanders called Jane Ndlovu, and she called, "Comrades! Comrades! Come out and surrender yourselves, please!" We remained in the cave, but some of the cadres

(288) NMMZ Rehabilitation Report: Mkushi Camp, Zambia n.d. Unpublished source.

(289) Interview with Mr. Lovemore Mandima, Curator of Militaria, NMMZ, (Heroes Acre, Harare) 28 October 2008.

surrendered themselves, and all who surrendered themselves to the Rhodesian soldiers were shot down, dead. They threw another grenade on the mouth of the cave because they had seen a movement inside the cave. I remained in the cave with my gun because I said to myself, if I surrender to the soldiers “*sengithengisile ilizwe lami!*” (I would have sold my country!). After a few minutes I then heard one of the soldiers calling, “Let’s go Jimmy! They are all dead! Let’s go!” I didn’t know that one of my legs was outside the cave as I had been busy saving my colleagues. A white soldier fired three shots upon my leg and he went away. I said to myself, “I-ii, I’m shot! I-ii, I’m shot!” I took off my bra and started to bandage the bleeding leg. I found that my leg was not broken although I had been shot. I then came out of the cave, heading towards the river, but I was groaning due to pain. At the river there was a Venda guy who was our cook and he said, “You Charity, surrender yourself to the white men and you will be saved!” He had told the soldiers that he had nothing he knew, except that he was a cook, and he told them to ask me since I was the commander. I wrestled with him and found my way out, and I jumped into the river and started swimming across it. At the other side of the river there was a napalm chemical which had been thrown by these whites and it was coming towards me. I jumped the flame and took cover with one of the trees. They bombed where I was, but they missed me. Since I was bleeding, I think that is what made them to leave me because they thought I was dead. They left me like that and it was about 5:55 pm. Later on, I heard voices of other cadres as they were heading towards the direction where I was and I took some leaves and made a signal as the crying of a guinea-fowl (that was our password). The other comrades responded and they came and we met. They started crying saying, “Our commander is shot! Oh, our commander is shot!” I then saw that some of the comrades had been shot in the buttocks and some had been maimed, no longer having some of their limbs. They then carried me, since I could not walk due to my leg which had been shot, to the local hospital which was about 15 km away from Mkushi Training Camp. We were admitted into that hospital and at the hospital there was a certain lady who pretended to be a nurse. She could come and asked what had actually happened to us as if she was sympathising. What astonished me is that she did not give us the medication prescribed by the doctor. I then reported her to the head doctor and she was interrogated, and they later found out that she was an informer to the Rhodesian soldiers. In fact, they found a walkie-talkie underneath her clothes and she was fired...290

Another female instructor interviewed gave an account which confirmed Mguni’s story with a vivid description of her encounter with Rhodesian ground force assault teams as follows:

I crossed the river with a man called Ntatshana who was also an instructor. When I looked back, I saw huge objects dropping. When I enquired from Ntantshana what those things were, he said they were paratroopers, which had the infantry personnel which were coming to assault the camp. It was 11 o’clock but there were so many paratroopers dropped that they formed a dark cloud which obstructed the sunlight

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(290) Interview with Charity Ndiweni (comrade Monica Mguni) by Charles Maripfonde, (Harare, ZANU PF H.Q.) 14 April 2008.

so that it looked like nightfall. To me the paratroopers and planes simply looked like a huge flock of birds. The attackers actually spent many days in the camp just butchering our people.

In the east, there was a Zambian camp. So I left the camp and went to hide near an ant heap. One paratrooper dropped just a short distance from us. We were able to see him. We identified him as an *Aborigine* who had painted himself black by way of camouflage and had a beret. The moment he dropped, he started shooting in every direction. After that he took off his parachute. But then one of the girls screamed loudly, and the enemy soldier went for her with bayonet and savagely stabbed her to death, and then moved away in the opposite direction from our ant heap and we immediately knew that we had survived.

We never tried to leave our hiding place, but we just remained hidden in this place. After walking a short distance, the soldier sat down to have his meal. We watched him through his meal. All the time we thought he might just see us and finish us off. But he didn't. When he finished he went to join his comrades. We stayed at our hiding place until night fall and emptied my magazine. Then we left. A short distance later, we bumped into the hiding place of Ntatshana. So we joined him and started walking in the eastern direction away from the enemy, heading for the Zambian camps. But no sooner had we walked for a short while, than we got lost and found ourselves back into the middle of the danger zone. The Rhodesian soldiers had even lit up the place. Ntatshana wanted to open fire into the soldiers, but we held him back. In fact Ntatshana was thoroughly confused, because a little later we came across a dead body and he wanted to carry it with him, saying he wanted to go and show Joshua Nkomo. We again prevented him from committing such foolishness. Later we came across a pile of dead bodies with only one person still alive. She turned out to be Charity, a girl I knew. Among the dead ones were several of my friends and schoolmates from Manama such as Virginia. Charity had been shot in the face. We carried her. I tore one of my pants which we used to bandage her to stop the bleeding. She said she could feel that there was a bullet lodged in her head. She could not walk. We could not walk. We walked for a whole night until we got to the Zambian camp at dawn. When we got there, we found the Zambian soldiers getting into their trucks, saying they were going to look for survivors. They wanted all the survivors to go back with them and I refused to accompany them back. But no sooner had they disappeared towards the camp then one of them was back at full speed, running away from the Rhodesians and his pants completely torn until it looked like a skirt. In his gasps he murmured that all the Zambian soldiers who had gone to look for survivors had been mowed down in one fell swoop. In fact, the Rhodesian soldiers had laid landmines around the camp and also booby-trapped the dead bodies, so that even those who tried to bury them were in danger of losing their lives. In the end, many of these people were not buried, but left simply to rot away. Fortunately Ntatshana survived and was captured. After the war, we found him at home. The few of us survived and gathered at Mkushi police camp. We were less than hundred survivors. Mowed down were the first trained group and the one which we were training. Altogether I don't think 500 survived the massacre. From the police camp, we were taken to Lusaka. The injured were admitted to hospitals. From Lusaka we were taken to Mr. Milner's farm. Then we were removed for our safety to Solwezi at the Zambian border with Zaire.<sup>291</sup>

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(291) Interview with Ms. Mabuwa.

Joshua Nkomo also described how the Rhodesian sweep teams identified Jane Gumbo, the commander of the Mkushi Camp and ordered her to fire upon her own pupils. When she refused, she was herself shot. He also confirms the presence of mercenaries in the Rhodesian teams who mass executed ninety-one girls lined up together in a move that angered the black troops under their command. These black troops ended up helping large numbers of girls to escape, and came close to mutinying against their orders.<sup>292</sup> Two months later, Mulungushi Camp was raided under similar circumstances on 22 December 1978, killing nearly thirty-three ZIPRA soldiers.

### **The Second Viscount and the Aftermath, 1979**

ZIPRA responded to the attacks on its camps by bringing down yet another Viscount flying from Kariba on 12 February 1979. All fifty-nine passengers on board were killed. In an interview, Joshua Nkomo stated that the airline was shot down believing that the commander of the Rhodesian forces, Lt. Gen. Peter Walls, and twenty-one other senior army officers were aboard the aircraft on a tour of Rhodesian bases along the border.<sup>293</sup> *The Zambia Daily Mail* confirmed that Walls was in the second plane which left Kariba twenty minutes later and that even when it took off, it evaded attack by changing its flight route.<sup>294</sup> The event received widespread international condemnation, including some harsh words from Jimmy Carter and the newly elected British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Nkomo challenged them to also condemn the Rhodesian killing of thousands of African refugees and trainees in the camps.<sup>295</sup> The Rhodesians responded by attacking Nampundwe Camp again on the afternoon of 23 February 1979, as well as another newly established camp at Chunga.<sup>296</sup> In April, an operation code-named “Operation Liquid” was put in place to attack Mulungushi again. There is no doubt that all these efforts were designed to avenge the loss of the Viscount and its passengers and in order to boost the fast dwindling morale of Rhodesian whites. Their reconnaissance had shown that Mulungushi had not been abandoned after the 22 December 1978 attack, but was reinforced with anti-aircraft defence systems and now contained well over 9,000 people.<sup>297</sup> On 11 April 1979, an attack was attempted on the camp, but it failed due to tactical errors caused by a breakdown in communication, resulting in Rhodesian planes bombing off target.<sup>298</sup>

### **ZIPRA’s ‘Turning Point’, 1978**

In 1978 ZIPRA recalled all its commanders in the field to a Conference in Lusaka with the rest of its High Command. This conference discussed the developments in the field and noted that the Rhodesian forces had lost full control of the country. It

(292) Nkomo, J. *The Story of My Life*.

(293) “We shot down rebel plane” (extract). *The Zambia Daily Mail*. Lusaka, 15 February 1979.

(294) “Rebels probe plane crash.” *The Zambia Daily Mail*. Lusaka, 14 February 1979.

(295) Ibid.

(296) Radio Salisbury, 23 February 1979, (SWB-ME 6052, B 4). Radio Salisbury, 26 February 1979 (SWB-ME 6054 B 10).

(297) Stiff, P. *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*: See pp.677-681.

(298) Ibid.

was, therefore, a ripe moment for a change of strategy to one which became known as the ‘Turning Point’. Central to this strategy was the consolidation of the ‘liberated zones’ and the implementation of a strategy to defend them. This would be achieved by transforming the guerrillas in the zones into regular fighting units that would be augmented by battalions of specialised forces that ZIPRA had been training all along. The sophisticated weaponry that ZIPRA had acquired would be used to introduce “mobile warfare” to enable ZIPRA to “seize power” militarily from the weakened Rhodesian Forces.<sup>299</sup> Richard Mataure added that the new strategy was designed to take care of Smith’s pre-emptive bombings on ZIPRA camps in Zambia and Muzorewa’s propaganda “that he had all the people behind him as he had been calling on our people in Zambia to come back and that their refusal was indicative of the commitment to the overthrow of his government by violence.”<sup>300</sup> Mataure went on to say,

We felt that it was unwise to leave too many of our people in Zambia, where they were exposed to frequent air raids, and so started working on plans to have more of our people come home, where they were not only safer but where they could swell the numbers of our operational units. This boosted our strength in the country even further.<sup>301</sup>

All of ZIPRA’s specialised units trained in Ethiopia, Libya, and Angola were in waiting at Mlungushi and Solwezi in Zambia, while its deployed strength now stood at somewhere close to 8000 inside Rhodesia. ZIPRA control was confirmed in such areas as Zowa, Chenjiri, Tsholotsho, Lupane, Nkayi, Lower Gweru, Filabusi, Gwanda, and parts of Belingwe. It had also intensified its urban attacks, spearheaded by Todd Mpsisi. This situation on its own, says Mataure, demanded that a new strategy be put in place. ZIPRA decided at that point to bring in regular brigades, ‘battalion by battalion’, as follows:

Chirundu: One of the areas we chose as a crossing point was Chirundu because it was easier to cross where the river was narrowest and to cross our tanks. So Madyiwa (now Colonel Khumalo)’s battalion was stationed at Ngwenyama, while the 2nd battalion was getting on the other side of Mana Pools, now commanded by the overall northern front commander, Rodwell Nyika. Quiet unfortunately this was the time when the talks were going on at Lancaster House. So, while they were talking with us in London, the Rhodesians went on fighting us. So, Madyiwa’s battalion was attacking the RLI [Rhodesian Light Infantry] and the Rhodesian Air Force. At the same time, inside the country, the guerrillas were becoming more and more organised. Each region had in its presence a member of the Revolutionary Council like the regional commanders.

(299) Brickhill, J. “Daring to Storm the Heavens: The Military Strategy of ZAPU 1976-1979.” Bhebe, N. and T. Ranger, eds. *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1995: See pp.55-58.

(300) Interview with Richard Mataure by Prof. Bhebe.

(301) Interview with Richard Mataure by Prof. Bhebe.

Administrative reorganisation: I was one of the members of the RC [Revolutionary Council] in the country in the Hurungwe District; there was Mabuku in Plumtree; there was Gedi Ndlovu in Lupane; there was Todlana in Tsholotsho; Carlson Mudzingwa on the southern front in the Belingwe-Beitbridge areas.

Also Botswana was used. We were now using our Scania trucks, distributed by Swedes to transport our ammunition through Kazungula down to Francistown to be distributed through the western border into the southern front, through Pantamatenga, Plumtree, Beitbridge, and Belingwe. This was the way ammunition was sent into the country, but we are talking of heavy loads here. This, therefore, meant we had to enlarge logistical units, first by making sure that each and every frontal section of operation had its own logistical unit. 302

Administration of the liberated zones would have been difficult without the full cooperation of the people. As part of this new strategy, it was decided to rekindle the old ZAPU infrastructure inside the country that had been lying low since the banning of the party in the early 1960s. Mataure goes on to explain,

When this infrastructure realised that the liberation forces were getting on top of the situation, it regained confidence and resurfaced. It resurfaced all the way from Dande, Chipuriro, Kazangarare, Vuti west, Vuti east, Urungwe, the Magunji areas, the Zvimba areas, the Mashayangombe, the Bhebes from Chitomborizi, his brother in the Mangombe areas. All these prominent ZAPU district officials resurfaced and now resurrected the party machinery for administrative purposes.

With the help of the people, we felt as if the whole northern front was totally liberated. Our forces were now striking at targets in Harare, conducting their operations from the Zvimba Tribal Trust Land, the Musengezi African Purchase Area, the Mhondoro areas. But, by this time, we also rapidly moved into the ceasefire period. Our strength in the country had risen to about 12,000 men. Soon we went into the assembly points and the exercise was complete.303

### *The Contested Attack on the Salisbury Fuel Tanks, 11 December 1978*

It may be necessary to end this section on the ‘tit-for-tat’ situation between ZIPRA and the Rhodesian forces by including an attack that occurred during this period, which was claimed by both ZIPRA and ZANLA. As mentioned earlier, part of the ZANLA approach to the war was to eventually reach and control the towns and that, for them, it was just a matter of time before they did it. Similarly, ZIPRA had long begun launching attacks in urban areas and, as will be shown below, urban warfare would be an integral part of their ‘Turning Point’ strategy. On 11 December 1978, the Salisbury Fuel Tanks went up in flames after a mortar attack by guerrillas. Mugabe issued a statement from Maputo the following day, stating that “the blowing up of the fuel centre in Salisbury by our ZANLA forces comes as part of our operational strategy for Salisbury.”<sup>304</sup> Later at a news conference in Lusaka, Nkomo concluded his statement by remarking, “...in this connection, let me say something here concerning

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(302) Ibid.

(303) Ibid.

(304) Mugabe, R. Press Statement. Maputo. 12 December 1978.

ZIPRA's devastating action against the regime's oil storages in Salisbury on the night of December 12."<sup>305</sup> This chapter may not solve the puzzle, but an interview with William Mkumbuzi, a former ZANLA guerrilla who participated in the attack, does provide some illumination, as follows:

After our selection, we had rehearsals for the operation in Salisbury at Chigari. Everything necessary for the execution of that operation we would get in the front, but we had to cross the border with our own guns. We stayed at Chigari for three weeks. We were left at Border Base at Tete near Nyamapanda. From the Border Base, we had a letter authorizing us to carry folding boats. Nyamapanda was semi-liberated and the *povo* was helping us. We selected women who would help us in the front. We took *Mai* Muhwati and *Mai* Hwiza from Mutoko. Mrs. Hwiza's husband was working in Harare and we wanted him to help us. It was August 1978 when we crossed the border. In Domboshava area, we assisted comrades there in their operations. We arrived in Domboshava in October. At first, Kuvhiringidza and Damage Bombs went to do reconnaissance. The second reconnaissance was done by me and Damage Bombs, so that we could plan where we were going to stay. We were then rejoined with Mrs. Muhwati and Mrs. Hwiza. These women now fully understood the war. Their children were now grown up. When we returned from the second reconnaissance, we found Comrade Take-Time. We were telling the *povo* if they saw something unusual, it was us fighting against the whites. We would inform them before and after an attack. That day Take-Time had illicit sex with some *chimbwidos* and was arrested together with his group. We went ahead with our plan, and we requested the drivers ferrying fresh farm produce to Mbare Musika so that we could conceal our guns beneath the farm produce from Domboshawa, and we pretended to be purveyors of tomatoes up to Mbare. We then offloaded the tomatoes and proceeded to the houses where Mrs. Muhwati and Mrs. Hwiza were staying, in Beatrice Cottages in National, Mbare. Some of us went to stay with Mrs. Hwiza, some with Mrs. Muhwati. The houses were conjoined. We decided to mobilise people, some going to Glen Norah, some to Mabvuku. We networked with *mujibhas*. We had *Zimbabwe News* newsletters that we distributed within the city. After about two weeks, we heard that the Rhodesians now knew about us. The *mujibhas* told us that the whites knew that we were in National, but did not know where exactly. Musika, then we took *Pfumo* taxi. We took all the comrades and we then went to Warren Hills to attack the Shell Tanks. We hit them from Lytton Road, which joins Kambuzuma and the city. We used the M90 bazooka when we hit the diesel tanks. We were supposed to escape through Domboshawa, but it was impossible so we had to take the Chinhoyi road up to 53km from Harare. We had ripped off the communication radios in the taxis. One taxi driver tried to resist, but then quickly realized we had a serious aim. We then left the taxi drivers and told them to tell their bosses that they had been hijacked. They then escaped through the Mazowe road.<sup>306</sup>

(305) Nkomo, J. Statement at a News Conference. 19 December 1978. In Baumhogger, *The Struggle for Independence*; see also "Salisbury is burning." *The Daily News*. Dar es Salaam, 13 December 1978, which claims, rather absurdly, that the attack was launched by ZIPA.

(306) Interview with William Mkumbuzi, (Gweru) 16 June 2008.

### **Towards the ‘Year of the People’s Storm’: ZANLA Confronts the Rhodesian Internal Settlement, 1978-1979**

In his New Year’s message, the ZANU leader Robert Mugabe declared 1978 “the year of the people”, meaning that power would be placed in the hands of the people through the intensification of the armed struggle.<sup>307</sup> In its planning, ZANLA, like ZIPRA, envisaged conventional warfare as the means through which the final annihilation of the enemy forces was to be achieved. In the following year, “the year of the people’s storm”, ZANLA troops would literally “storm the towns from the countryside.”<sup>308</sup> Pursuant to these aims ZANU also began moving large numbers of troops with heavy weaponry into the country. In March 1978, a group of 445 ZANLA cadres entered the country via Zimunya led by Josiah Tungamirayi. This group also had a contingent of 50 female fighters, two of whom were members of the ZANLA General Staff, i.e. Comrade Catherine and Comrade Mazvionesa. They became the first group to fight in larger ‘companies’ of 32 cadres each, instead of in the ordinary ZANLA platoons. This was a modification designed to enable them to fight bigger battles and campaigns using heavy weaponry such as artillery, anti-air, and recoilless rifles. Under this operation, the first major attack on a Rhodesian city was launched on Umtali, using mortar bombs and recoilless artillery and forcing a retreat of Rhodesian forces that enabled ZANLA to move more troops inside the country. Side by side with the increased military offensive, emphasis was placed on political education of the masses regarding the meaning of the Internal Settlement, to which the offensive was responding.

ZANLA had also been recovering from an internal disturbance following an attempted coup by a group in the high command linked to the vashandi of the ZIPA days. This group was initially led by those members of the Dare who had been imprisoned in Zambia, including Henry Hamadziripi, Crispin Mandizvidza, Rugare Gumbo, Cletos Chigowe, Mukudzei Mudzi, Kumbirai Kangai, and Zivavarwe Muparuri, although some of them, such as Kangai, dropped out. Some of these people still believed that the current leadership of ZANU was interested simply in the transfer of power and had no capacity to initiate a socialist revolution. They took advantage of the departure of the leadership for the first Malta Conference held between 30 January and 1 February 1978, and were successful in arresting Edgar Tekere and Hebert Ushewokunze and kept them tied in the bush on the edge of a precipice. The rebellion was quashed by a contingent led by Morgan Mhaka and Sobuza Gula- Ndebele. They successfully arrested the conspirators and brought them to trial. There have been many narratives of how they were saved from execution. For a while they were kept in pit prisons. Later, Samora Machel requested that they be moved to a Mozambican prison in Beira; they were only released just before Independence.<sup>309</sup>

(307) “Towards Conventional War: Smith’s Ides of March, 1978: Interview with Josiah Tungamirayi.” *The Zimbabwe News*. 1978: See p.32.

(308) “The Military Situation is Excellent: Interview with Josiah Tongogara.” *The Zimbabwe News*. 1979.p.40.

(309) Tekere. *A Lifetime of Struggle*: See pp.99-104.

The offensive of March 1978 was by and large meant to show that ZANLA had not been disturbed by the rebellion and it was timed to dismantle whatever would emerge from the so-called Internal Settlement of 3 March 1978. The rebellion had facilitated the formation of an interim government to function until elections to be held in February 1979. By then, it was hoped both Muzorewa and Sithole would have persuaded all the Patriotic Front guerrillas to surrender. Meanwhile the two had used this opportunity to form their own internal armies, the Auxiliaries or ‘*dzakutsakus*’ loyal to Muzorewa and the ‘*Pfumo reVanhu*’ loyal to Sithole. In practice, these were young African men forcibly recruited and hastily trained and armed to serve the purpose of augmenting the fast dwindling numbers of the Rhodesian Forces. Under an operation, code-named “Operation Favour,” the Rhodesians came up with a secret military plan designed to facilitate the much awaited surrender of the Patriotic Front guerrillas. The plan provided for the retreat of regular troops from operational areas and their replacement by pseudo-operations units such as the Selous Scouts supported by these Auxiliaries. When this plan failed to bring in any guerrillas, a second and more aggressive phase of Operation Favour was implemented which involved the large scale training of the Auxiliaries at Special Branch establishments known as ‘Mujibha Farms.’<sup>310</sup> Interviewees in the Masvingo Province have related their experiences on such ‘Mujibha Farms’ at Maybrook Farm, ‘KwaMabhurugu’ near Mashava, and ‘Tentergate’ Farm near Great Zimbabwe. Here, young men were captured and trained on a three month or less crash course and deployed as and when the need arose.<sup>311</sup>

Sometimes ZANLA became a victim of its own successes and grew complacent in the liberated zones at the expense of the locals. A tragic event occurred on 14 May 1978, when a group of drunken guerrillas failed to heed intelligence reports of an impending attack and insisted on continuing a *pungwe* in the middle of the night at Kamungoma Farm in the Dewure Purchase areas of Gutu. The resultant attack claimed 105 African civilians and was described internationally as a massacre.<sup>312</sup> ZANU’s Publicity Secretary, Eddison Zvobgo, described this attack as a deliberate move by Ndabaningi Sithole and the Defence Minister of the Internal Settlement Government, Kadzviti, to punish all those not supporting their deal. He warned,

ZANLA forces will continue holding mass meetings in the liberated areas, irrespective of the massacres. The peasants butchered in Gutu and throughout Zimbabwe will be avenged. We call upon the gang of four (Muzorewa, Sithole, Smith, and Chirau) to think again.<sup>313</sup>

(310) Wood, J.R.T. *The War Diaries of Major Andre Dennison*. Gibraltar: Ashanti Publishing, 1989.

(311) Mazarire, G.C. “Where Civil Blood Made Soldiers Hands Unclean: Rethinking War Time Coercion in Chivi, South Central Zimbabwe 1976-80.” *Journal of African Conflict and Development*. vol. 1 no. 1. (2000): See p.57; see also Ellert, *Rhodesian Front War*, p.180.

(312) Hamutyinei, Mordikai. *Zvakanga Zvakaoma MuZimbabwe*. Chapter 11.

(313) “ZANU Statement on Gutu Massacres.” *The Zimbabwe News*. 16 May 1978, p.35.

A peculiarity in the interviews covering this period of the Internal Settlement government is the emphasis on the mass imprisonment of African civilians accused of assisting guerrillas; this trend was widespread across the country. Tinos Murimi Gabarinocheka was arrested for spearheading, as local ZANU Branch Chairman of the Gozho base in Mapanzure (Masvingo), a *kumagumbwa* (witch hunt). He ordered people to go to a diviner to identify a *muroyi* (witch) with the intention of sending the culprit for disciplining by the ‘comrades’ based at Muchakata. The person was identified, but escaped on his way and reported the matter to the police. Murimi was arrested together with his wife under the Witchcraft Suppression Act, yet in reality the government wanted him for his role in conspiring with guerrillas. He says he was close to all the guerrillas in the Nyajena Detachment, especially Kamba, Nylon, Chadyiwachapera, Muhambi, Champion, Tendai Mabvazuwa, Shumba Chibayamabhunu, and others.<sup>314</sup>

An elderly gentleman interviewed at Munongo village in Charumbira, Mupunga Matemera, who was confined at Mutimurefu Prison for assisting guerrillas confirms the connection between ZANLA guerrillas and some prisoners. This resulted in a foiled attempt to storm the prison in 1979. He says,

Guerrillas arrived disguised as visitors. They asked for me, Matemera, and pretended they had brought me some groceries. Comrade Tendai handed me the parcel which contained among other things, a loaf of bread and within this bread was a letter stuffed inside, which informed us that they were coming to attack Mutimurefu. So on a Friday evening, they attacked... We were sleeping on the other side. The line they hit had well over 19 cells and the attack claimed a prison warden and three others. This was a hit and run exercise and the guerrillas disappeared....<sup>315</sup>

Robbie Matambo, interviewed in Gweru, was also an inmate at Mutimurefu Prison when it was stormed by guerrillas. His account is more vivid. He recalls it as ‘Gorge Range Prison’, as it was known those days [because it is close to the Mutirikwe River gorge], and he had just been transferred there from Zimuto Camp Prison, where he had been kept after he was captured as a *mujibha* in a battle near Charumbira. According to his testimony, sometime in October 1979, guerrillas approached some prison wardens on patrol at the Mutimurefu Prison. One of them, on realizing that they were, in fact, armed guerrillas, opened fire. The guerrillas returned fire and shot him at once; his colleagues were spared as the guerrillas wanted to go straight to the Chief Warden, Mr. Ford’s house. Ford and his wife fired at the guerrillas with automatic rifles, expelling the guerrillas. From that time onwards, inmates were not allowed to sing liberation war songs, and thereafter life became nasty in prison!<sup>316</sup> Although not describing the storming of the prison in particular, Robbie’s testimony

<sup>(314)</sup> Interview with Tinos Murimi Gabarinocheka by Taguma Mazarire, (Gozho, Mapanzure Communal Lands) 24 June 2008.

<sup>(315)</sup> Interview with Mupunga Matemera by Taguma Mazarire, (Chingweme Homestead, Charumbira Communal Lands) 27 June 2008.

<sup>(316)</sup> Interview with Robbie Matambo by Ishmael Mazambani, (Kwekwe) 16 April 2008.

is rich regarding the other trials and tribulations faced by political prisoners in Rhodesian jails. He explained,

We were close to 1000 political detainees who had to put on red regalia while other prisoners were around 500. When Gorge Range Prison was full, people were transferred to Hwahwa Prison, Chikurubi Maximum, and so on. So we had some of our predecessors, incoming prisoners of war at Fort Victoria Prison, Gorge Range Prison, while others who had been captured earlier on were transferred to Hwahwa and Chikurubi Maximum Prison.... We did nothing else but just sit.<sup>317</sup>

Robbie had a dramatic entry into prison, being a senior *mujibha* involved in sabotage activity, blocking convoys, barricading roads, and assisting guerrillas in the Muchakata and Morgenster areas. He was instrumental in the reconnaissance work that led to the attack on the Great Zimbabwe Hotel. He also had been trained by local guerrillas in handling G3 rifles. Robbie became part of an operation to attack a network of ‘*Mujibha* Farms’ established near Fort Victoria, among them Sikato and Tentergate Farms. In one such operation, his luck ran out and he was captured by the Auxiliary forces who took him to Tentergate itself. Here, they not only made efforts to convert him and his colleagues to the Rhodesian cause, but also forced them to reveal guerrilla hide outs and bases. Later he was transferred to Zimuto Camp, where they stayed in crowded cells and overnight they would hear loud screams by captured girls (*chimbwidos*) as they were being raped by the (Special Forces) Auxiliaries. During the day, they were forced to sing songs in support of the Auxiliaries. Zimuto was a holding camp and so many inhuman activities took place, including torture. It was after failing to glean any information from them that they were sent to Mutimurefu for indefinite detention without trial. There, they met less systematic brutality, except from individual wardens, he says, but they also encountered some Auxiliaries in prison, who were imprisoned for resigning from their army. “I remember one fellow we knew, and we took our revenge on him.”<sup>318</sup>

In Chirumhanzu, Maud Muzenda retold how people were beaten to death in police cells. As a nurse at Mvuma Hospital, she witnessed the death of a young school boy from Holy Cross Mission who had been badly tortured by the police. The Rhodesian also went a step further:

Sometimes people were also thrown into a pit called mbidzi. It was a big pit into which people were thrown and tortured so that they would confess. It was very deep. After throwing people into the pit, the authorities left them there for some time. They only pulled them out, if they were ready to confess. If they refused, they would be left to die in the pit.<sup>319</sup>

This situation was also prevalent in some ZIPRA operated areas, where general looting and lawlessness was a defining feature of the poorly trained Auxiliaries that surfaced in 1978. They often used their positions as armed men and their access to

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(317) Ibid.

(318) Ibid.

(319) Muzenda, Maud. “Maudy Muzenda: Mvuma.” Staunton, I. ed. *Mothers of the Revolution*: See p.65.

the authorities as means of settling scores with the local people by facilitating their imprisonment. A former boarding master at Manama High School, Wilson Chivalo Mboyi, remained at the school after it was closed following the abductions of 1977. His job was to care for the school property after the school had been turned into a camp for Rhodesian Auxiliaries. Bent on stealing the school property, the Auxiliaries ordered the arrest of Mboyi and two other mission nurses on trumped up charges of assisting guerrillas. They tortured the nurses and forced them to implicate Mboyi in the charges levelled against him. They all spent four and a half months at Grey Prison in Bulawayo without trial in 1978 and later transferred to Khami Maximum Prison where they were released in 1979. In his mind, he knew the reason why he was arrested:

I still think I was arrested so that I could be taken away from the mission to give a chance to the Auxiliaries to steal mission and my personal property. In the end, I suffered a huge loss personally. They took possession of my wife's scooter and completely damaged it. My car was also taken over and was used to transport women for the soldiers from the hospital and other neighbouring places. At the end, they abandoned it and thieves came and put a finish to its destruction by removing its various parts. Beds, tables, chairs of the school were taken by the soldiers to nearby military camps such as Kafusi, Hwale, and you can still see some of the school things in those camps even today...320

Meanwhile, ZANLA used its swelling forces, not only to move towards the towns, but to take bold steps to sabotage the elections inside Rhodesia scheduled for early 1979. For example, in Chivi, Muzorewa and Zindoga began their campaign late in March. Guerrillas had issued strict instructions to the locals to boycott both their rallies and the elections themselves. However, on 26 March, Rhodesian forces raided the villages and succeeded in dragging some 350 people to the venue at Chibi Office. The same was also true of Sithole's rally in the following week, where military vehicles ferried nearly the same number of people.<sup>321</sup> The guerrillas intensified their ambushes, but from the 15th of April, the polling stations were already established and guarded. A mobile polling station was also put in place and the Rhodesian forces took steps to ensure a large voter turn out by driving all the villagers from Mafenga to Sese into confinement around a polling station established at Ngomahuru. A ZANLA group led by Comrade Nylon Masambaasiyana attacked the camp and freed the people.<sup>322</sup> In the end, the security forces only succeeded in coercing 23.3% of the registered voters in Chivi to the polls.<sup>323</sup> Of these votes, Chirau's ZUPO and spoil papers both claimed over 10% of the votes in the district.<sup>324</sup> A journalist for *The Sunday Telegraph*, who observed the election in Chivi, failed to understand the reasons behind this poor turn out, seeing it as: "A lack of understanding about the election itself. Despite a widespread publicity campaign, the trickle of people filing through

(320) Interview with Wilson Chivalo Mboyi by Prof. Bhebe, (Gwanda) 6 June 1987.

(321) Wood, J.R.T. *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*: See pp.315, 318

(322) Interviews with Venesiya Chifove and Elias Manyatera by Gerald Mazarire, 12 August 1998.

(323) Wood, J.R.T. *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*: See p.321.

(324) Rich, T. "The Muzorewa Election: A Preliminary analysis of electoral response." Unpublished Seminar Paper. Harare, University of Zimbabwe, Department of History, 1980. p.12.

the Chibi polling station seemed to have little idea of what they were doing or why they were doing it...”<sup>325</sup>

The journalist had acknowledged that the Chivi people had been adequately politicized not to accept the Internal Settlement. However, for its part, guerrilla intimidation contributed much to this low turn out. As Tony Rich puts it, whatever the reasons given by the voters, it appeared the ZANLA forces exercised sufficient control to influence the poll as they wished.<sup>326</sup> According to the interviews collected in Chivi, the guerrillas had encouraged everybody to establish outpost homes where they spent the day hiding, only to come back home at night; those who were caught and forced to cast their votes were instructed to spoil their ballot papers and probably accounted for the large numbers of spoilt papers.<sup>327</sup> For an unknown reason the Auxiliaries were withdrawn from active operation in Chivi in May 1979, which left the district largely in the hands of ZANLA.<sup>328</sup>

### **Lancaster House Talks, Ceasefire, and the Road to Independence, 1979**

Muzorewa won the bogus elections in April at nearly the same time that the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher assumed office in Britain and for once it seemed highly likely that they would recognise Muzorewa and lift sanctions. Their representative sent to observe the elections had described them as ‘free and fair’, but Margaret Thatcher in the end did not recognise Muzorewa and chose instead to persevere with the option of a settlement that would include the Patriotic Front. This baffled many, especially coming from a Conservative government, but several theories have been thrown about to explain the move. The first centres around the pressure exerted by the African members of the Commonwealth, in particular Nigeria, which had a large stake in British trade and went so far as to threaten the viability of the British oil company BP-Shell within Nigeria if the Rhodesian question was not solved.<sup>329</sup> The second suggests that Kaunda, who was due to host the Commonwealth meeting in Lusaka in August that year, was exerting pressure. He was, more than anybody else, desperate to bring an end to the war, given its impact on the economy of his country. Indeed, during the Lancaster talks, the Rhodesians bombed targets in Zambia, including vital bridges. The third theory indicates that, with dwindling American interest in the whole matter, Thatcher feared the further internationalisation of the conflict posed by the growing interest Cuba was showing in participating more directly in the war.<sup>330</sup>

If changing the Conservatives’ view of Muzorewa’s government was one thing, it was another, altogether, to bring the feuding parties to the negotiating table. Muzorewa still basked in his sweet victory and would not let anyone take it away.

(325) *The Sunday Telegraph*. 22 April 1979.

(326) Rich, T. “The Muzorewa Election.” p.12

(327) Interview with Constantine Vengesayi by Gerald Mazarire, (Jaka, Chivi) 27 July 1998.

(328) Wood, J.R.T. *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*: See p.332.

(329) Stiff, P. *Cry Zimbabwe: Independence –Twenty Years On*. Alberton, RSA: Galago Pub., 2000: See p.18.

(330) Steadman. *Peace-Making During Civil War*: See p.168.

He did not think a further meeting was necessary, and, as he kept saying throughout the Lancaster Talks, a government was already in existence. He had the support of the Rhodesian military, but not that of his fellow Internal Settlement colleagues such as Ndabaningi Sithole, who thought he had stolen the election. Smith, though not in charge, still controlled the greater part of the Rhodesian delegation and he counted on the intransigence of the Patriotic Front to frustrate the British enough to leave them with no option but to recognise Muzorewa. In the meantime, the Rhodesians would use every opportunity presented by the diversion caused by the conference to escalate the war. On their part, both ZAPU and ZANU believed their military victory was certain. Dumiso Dabengwa believes Lancaster was called to pre-empt ZIPRA's massive final victory using arms it had brought in to Lusaka through the assistance of East Germany (German Democratic Republic); these arms amounted to 512 tons of weaponry moved from Angola into Zambia between March and May 1979.<sup>331</sup> For these reasons, the conference dragged on for 102 days and a conclusion was reached entirely because of the hard-handed manner in which the Chairman Lord Carrington dealt with the delegates. His trump card continued to be the threat to recognise the Muzorewa government if the Patriotic Front did not tow the line.

The Patriotic Front contested the constitutional provisions they regarded as racist (such as seats reserved for 20 whites), against restrictions on constitutional changes, the retention of the Rhodesian forces, the restriction placed on the ability of the new government to redistribute land that had been taken from the Africans over the previous 90 years, the length of time given for a ceasefire to take effect, and the location of forces during the ceasefire.<sup>332</sup> The impasse on the land question was solved by an unwritten Anglo-American guarantee to provide funds to compensate for all the land appropriated.

The implementation of the Lancaster Agreement depended on successful ceasefire arrangements. The ceasefire agreement was formally signed by all the parties on 21 December 1979, and in it all parties committed themselves to accept the authority of the Governor to facilitate the transitional process ultimately leading to the elections.<sup>333</sup> A Ceasefire Commission was established in which the commanders of the Rhodesian forces and the Patriotic Front forces were represented under the chairmanship of the Governor's Military Advisor. This commission also included representatives of Commonwealth forces from Australia, New Zealand, Kenya, and Fiji.<sup>334</sup> The ceasefire arrangement required Rhodesian forces to move into their barracks and stay under the authority of monitoring teams deployed throughout their command structure. The Patriotic Front forces were to assemble via rendezvous points to assembly places from which they would be monitored and they were to carry their arms and equipment, but under the authority of their commanders.

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(331) Schleicher, H.G. and I. Schleicher. *Special Flights*: See p.82.

(332) Martin, D. and P. Johnson. *Struggle for Zimbabwe*. London: Monthly Review Press, 1981: See p.316.

(333) Nzombe, S. "Negotiations with the British." Banana, ed. *Turmoil and Tenacity*. See p.190.

(334) Ibid. p.193.

There were twenty-four designated rendezvous points close to Rhodesia's borders in which both ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas were to assemble, and then they would be directed to eighteen assembly points within Rhodesia where they were to remain until after the election.<sup>335</sup> On the other hand, the Monitoring Force was to be in direct communication with both sides to enable each side to be informed of the other's movements to avoid misunderstanding. The two forces were not to have bases in close proximity. The maintenance of law and order was left in the hands of the Rhodesian police, acting under the Governor's authority and supervision; any transgressions to the ceasefire arrangements were to be dealt with by the Commission.

However, these arrangements did not pre-empt the outbreak of conflict or misunderstandings between the former belligerents and many such cases were reported, including situations involving the exchange of fire. Many Patriotic Front guerrillas did not enter into the assembly points out of sheer mistrust, and ZANLA in particular had issued out orders behind the scenes to its cadres not to go in en masse.<sup>336</sup> Instead, *mujibhas* such as Tricos Elvis Mahumire were sent in to assess the safety of these 'killing bags' as the guerrillas feared. Mahumire explains,

At first the issue of Assembly Points was not clear to the extent that some of the comrades like Madison Toasted Tichatonga and the other one known as Mike refused to go. We stayed with them at our home. They sent Dickson and I to verify whether the situation was favourable in the assembly points... Eventually those comrades went to join others and we remained at our own homes, but we got the message that everything went on smoothly in those so-called Assembly Points...<sup>337</sup>

There were several loopholes in the implementation plan which certainly did little to allay the fears of the Patriotic Front. For instance, the South African troops delayed their withdrawal from Rhodesia and Britain did not exert pressure on them to do so either. There were reported cases of retaliation by these forces as an editorial of the *Zambian Daily Mail* put it:

As things stand now, we are far from peace in Rhodesia. In fact, the whole situation looks as though the Patriotic Front have been shepherded to their death by the British government. Lord Soames had been appointed to lay ground for the peaceful settlement of the Rhodesian political impasse, but he is jeopardizing it. At this rate, it will not be long before those assembly points become battle zones and gas chambers...<sup>338</sup>

Even though there were external forces and observers who had been deployed in various centres of the country, there is ample evidence which shows that the security forces continued to violate the cease fire agreement by acts of wanton retribution against the guerrillas in Assembly Points. On 12 January 1980, *The Guardian* reported:

(335) Parker, J. *Assignment Selous Scouts*: See p.269.

(336) Interview with Maidei Mapepa by Walter Mafuta, (Harare) 13 May 2008.

(337) Interview with Tricos Elvis Mahumire by T. Mazarire, (Chivi) 6 March 2008.

(338) Editorial. *Zambian Daily Mail*. Lusaka, 9 January 1980.

Rhodesian security forces have killed seven Patriotic Front guerrillas who refused to lay down their weapons before being taken to an assembly area. British sources said that it was an inevitable incident. The shootings, which occurred on Thursday near Lupane, 190 miles southwest of Salisbury, were the first in which insurgents have been killed during the cease fire... According to British officials, the guerrillas became aggressive and refused to hand over their weapons. After they refused to, the police opened fire, killing one of them. British officials said that Rhodesian troops were called in to support the police and another six guerrillas were killed. The remaining ten scattered into the bush... The shootings came amid continuing violence across Rhodesia; most of it allegedly the work of dissident elements of the other wing of the Patriotic Front, Mr. Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA)... Of the 20,860 guerrillas who had gathered in assembly areas by yesterday, 15,240 have been identified as members of ZANLA...339

As a result of such violence, many guerrillas failed to meet the deadline of being in assembly points by midnight of 4 January 1980. Patriotic Front commanders Rex Nhongo and Dumiso Dabengwa had to issue an ultimatum and travel to all provinces calling upon the freedom fighters to go to the nearest rendezvous points. Most people interviewed recalled in general that they went through particular assembly points, though they did not provide detailed stories regarding the assembly points. Tobias Chikanya is a typical case amongst many who stated:

In Assembly Points there were a lot of people, especially in the whole province of Gaza. In the Gaza Province we were put into companies, and my company was put in Chasu Assembly Point. Others were put into Takawira, Chaminuka, Mavhonde, and many others since they were many, and we were given money and food rations as stipends whilst we were in these assembly points. All the three parties were mixed together in these Assembly Points, that is, ex-ZANLA combatants, ex-ZIPRA combatants, and the Rhodesian Forces, even at Independence...340

Although it is not the intention, in the interest of the brevity of this chapter, to go into the integration of the various pre-independence contending forces into what became the powerful and highly disciplined Zimbabwe National Army, it is essential to point out that previous researchers, the National Archives project, the Mafela Trust, and the current Hashim Mbita project have collected memories relating to this exercise. We have collected memories of those that were integrated, those that carried out the exercise, the politicians who superintended the exercise, and the combatants who were demobilized at the consummation of the struggle marked by the hoisting of the Zimbabwe National Flag and the lowering of the British flag on 18 April 1980.

Clearly, the chapter, its analysis and narrative, both of which are based on a selection of retrieved memories, together with published and unpublished sources, shows that the Hashim Mbita project has come in to build on a steadily growing body of material, which posterity can confidently draw upon to get a good picture of how Zimbabweans liberated themselves from colonial rule. The memories we

(339) *The Guardian* (London). "Rhodesian Forces Kill 7." 12 January 1980.

(340) Interview with Tobias Chikanya by T. Mazarire, (Masvingo) 3 September 2007.

have collected touch on every aspect of our struggle. On the side of the liberation movement, we have tried to cover consistent revolutionaries, the so-called ‘dissidents’, ‘rebels’, ‘renegades’, ‘detractors’, in other words oppositional elements of every shade, as they were all part and parcel of the complexities of our struggle. In the country itself and the operational areas themselves, we have accommodated the views of those that sought peaceful accommodation or settlement with the colonialists; we have collected memories of liberation war collaborators, memories of those caught between cross fire, memories of political and war prisoners, and all these efforts of the Hashim Mbita Project complement efforts of other individual researchers, organisations, and institutions, such as the National Archives, ZANU-PF’s Information and Publicity Department, ZIPRA’s Mafela Trust, the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe, as well as the ongoing research by history students in our universities. In fact, as we have shown in this chapter, when it comes to the writing of the history of our struggle, no relevant source is untouchable. Indeed we draw upon even the memories of our erstwhile enemies, the Rhodesian colonialists and their military and other security agents. In short, the Hashim Mbita Project Archive, which we are building, compliments and vastly expands the store of memories of our struggles for independence, which we are proud to bequeath to posterity.

## Abbreviations

ANC:	African National Congress (South Africa); African National Council (Rhodesia)
BSA Company:	British South Africa
Company CCR:	Christian Council of Rhodesia
CIO:	Central Intelligence Organization
CV:	Collective Villages
FNLA:	National Front for the Liberation of Angola
FRELIMO:	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
FROLIZI:	Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe
JC:	Junior Certificate
JOC:	Rhodesian Joint Operations Command
JMC:	Joint Military Command (ZANU and ZAPU)
KANU:	Kenya African National Union
LOMA:	Law and Order Maintenance Act (Rhodesia)
MK:	Umkhonto we Sizwe (military wing of the South African ANC)
MPLA:	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NACP:	National Association of Coloured People
NDP:	National Democratic Party
NMMZ:	National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe
OAU:	Organisation of African Unity
PAFMECSA:	Pan African Movement for East Central and Southern Africa
PVs:	Protected Villages
RAR:	Rhodesian African Rifles
RF:	Rhodesian Front
RLI:	Rhodesian Light Infantry
SADCC:	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
TANU:	Tanganyika African National Union
TANZAM:	Tanzania and Zambia
TTL:	Tribal Trust Land
UANC:	United ANC
UDI:	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (1965)
UNIP:	United National Independence Party (Zambia)
UNITA:	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
WCC:	World Council of Churches
ZANLA:	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (military wing of ZANU)
ZANU PF:	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZAPU:	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZIPA:	Zimbabwe People's Army
ZIPRA:	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (military wing of ZAPU)
ZLA:	Zimbabwe Liberation Army

ZLC: Zimbabwe Liberation Council  
ZNP: Zimbabwe Nationalist Party  
ZUM: Zimbabwe Unity Movement  
ZUPO: Zimbabwe United People's Organisation

# 5.2

# Zimbabwe

## Personal Stories

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Chatimba, Johannes —141  
Chimurenga, Shepherd—147  
Mabandla, Nicholas —154  
Mahere, Mark—163  
Mariyo, Timothy —168  
Matete, Sabina R.—186  
Msipa, Cephas—190  
Musiba, Murairo Chikonye—212  
Ndlovu, Dereck—215  
Shoko, Abias Pelice—  
218 Zvevamwe,  
London—220  
Chamunorwa, Abel—224

Chingoo, Mai—227  
Chingoo, Sekuru—230  
Dumbarimwe, Elizabeth—233 Hondo,  
Rangarirai—240 Hondoyedzomba,  
Brighton—246 Jumbi, Gibbs —251  
Kakweza, George —253  
Matoyi, Evelyn —255  
Mugumiri, Freddie Chikona—258  
Munetsi, Nolbert —260  
Vadzvanyiriri, Disperse—262



## Chatimba, Johannes

[Gutu – Chikwanda]

*Johannes Chatimba was born in 1962, and grew up in Gutu; he was working as a tractor driver in Jeri when the liberation struggle started.*

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My name is Johannes Chatimba. I was born in Gutu and I also grew up here and after that I went and worked in the farms. After that I started working at Pepia, from Pepia to Jeri. I started tractor-driving at Jeri farm that is when the war started. After realising that the war was getting tense I relocated to the rural areas where I started to hear of the freedom fighters. I walked and walked with the comrades up to a time when Mr Musata from our village was reported to the soldiers but after that the comrades came disguised as soldiers. They rounded all of us and started insulting us in disguise, so that the povo would think that they were true soldiers. Their aim was to get to know the people who leaked the information to the soldiers. They told the povo that they had done a great job in capturing the *mujibha* because all the comrades were going to be in trouble.

The issue was, on that particular day the povo started insulting us saying that we were being sent by the comrades or freedom fighters to come and take their goats and chicken; Prato was a Selous Scout, *mudzakutsaku*. They then lied to them that we had been sent by Prato to collect a radio and they got into the granary and took the radio and they gave it to the freedom fighters. They asked them to let us go together so that he would have a chance to see his children, and they agreed. The aim was to take him to what was called *butchery*, where all the sell-outs, including witches were killed. So we went there together and we passed through his young brothers' place, shouting at him that he supported comrades, they were dogs but his young brother kept silent

and he did not say anything, because he realised that his brother was going to die so it was his last day on earth.

After that we started walking together, after that we arrived at a dark cave and inside the cave there were soldiers inside. When we arrived at the cave we started to get in to the cave and he realised that there was something wrong. So as he would try to push back the comrades would push him forward into the cave. We did not beat him but he was beaten by the comrades because of that radio which was found in his possession. He was finally taken out and we were sent to Mupfudze, meaning pungwe, at his homestead. Women and men came at Machona's place for the pungwe. The comrades then took Mr Machona to his home under severe security or guard. His entire beard was removed, bleeding. He was tied at his bed; but I am thankful that he saved his wife, because he told them that the money he got from his son was for himself, and he did not give his wife a single cent. So he was tied alone in the hut and the hut was set on fire and burnt. People were adding wood to the fire up to the time when he died. That was when we ran away from Mapanda and went to Jichidza with the likes of Silas, Tongai Mabhunu and Tamazanda; that was the group I was working

with up to the time when we came into contact with white soldiers at Jichidza. They were under the first battalion.

We were covered by the granary and they shot the granary and it fell down covering or burying us and they came and opened the roof of the granary and they could not see us. They thought that maybe we had escaped, but we were behind the granary. So as they passed through in a single file, Tongai started from the south while Silas using the northern side and Tamazanda was from behind or from the centre; they started firing on the whites; all of the whites died and we ran away.

We went from Nyajena and there was also a contact in Nyajena. Three helicopters were destroyed and after that we went to Zano. After Zano we proceeded to Ndanga, Mupfugudo. At Mupfugudo there was a contact from early in the morning to 8pm; many soldiers, more than 300 died. Not even a single one managed to escape because they had assembled for the lunch hour and they were all relaxed. 17 helicopters came and all of them were shot down. We then proceeded to Bvukururu. There was also a contact because many people died. Helicopters tried to bomb the people and comrades, but many soldiers died because they had come with diesel drums. The tank was placed in a mountain so that the helicopters would get or easily get fuel, but the tank was also destroyed.

I was also injured on my back that day. We then proceeded to Gumbu, up to Zaka Jerera. We had another contact there. It was difficult; we tried our best and proceeded to Bilata up to Mutikizizi. We always clashed, up to the time when all freedom fighters went to the keeps that year. I came from Jichidza where my mother's sister was staying, back here to Gutu, Makore.

When I was walking with the comrades, I had a gun belonging to a certain comrade who was killed during the war, so I used that gun to fight, but I was not trained before I was given the gun. We were trained by walking with them. What happened was, freedom fighters were given money but we got nothing and I was ill during that registration time. We were trained in Jichidza, and during training we were asked to fire at trees, jumping, scrolling. That was the training we got so that they could see if we were strong, and also so that they could see if we quickly sweat or quickly got tired like someone with TB.

We were seven mujibhas, but I have forgotten some of them. I had no pseudonym. As mujibha, walking was if you have been sent and you decide to do your own things; I was beaten six times. I was sent to buy *mbanje* and I decided to smoke one ball. I didn't know I was being followed. I smoked up to when I finished and I then went back. So they told me that they saw me smoking, and I was beaten. If you had been sent you were not allowed to smoke it because if it was too far, they only gave you one hour and you had to run fast and come back.

The smoking was motivating. Those days we were used to seeing blood so smoking would give use courage. There was no maybe in the event that you saw soldiers, you would go to an extent that you see soldiers you would go to an extent of trying to take

the gun by force from the comrade so that you fire or shoot the soldier as a result of courage.

He was born in 1962 and was about 25 years when the comrades arrived. At first it was difficult because they would come even at my house. They would go to an extent of asking any mother my whereabouts or even knocking at my door. They even published our names those days by Prato. When his father died they published our names, the helicopters would shout our names, Johannes, Miriro meaning Matasva, S Magomo and Peter. They would spend the whole day in the aeroplane shouting and saying we want these people to come to the open or to surrender themselves. That is when we stayed in the cave for two months. The cave had four stages. You could see rapoko of the old people in the cave, there was also a well inside.

When we were in the cave we survived because we were given mealie-meal by our parents and we would cook sadza. We did not see anything wrong. We finally got out of the cave after two months and it was also after we have realised that the helicopters had gone. So I just got out of the cave and I was taken by my mother and we went to

her young sister's place in Jichidza. As soon as I arrived the next day a *pungwe* was called and we were told that people were fighting because we wanted independence. I was working in the farms and I can say that I had grievances, just like at Bepira, Chikwati, brother. I worked there for 17 cents per day. It was painful. Even up to today, just imagine getting 17 cents, how much do you earn at the end of the month? So I was working for free. As you know that a white man is cruel you could hear him saying, 'eeh, scavenger' referring to you. Pete was very cruel to an extent that if you were close he could kill you. As someone who worked in the farms, I wanted to revenge. That gave me courage because they were cruel.

As *mujibha* we would go to collect bullets at Chipungabeira in Mozambique. I went to Mozambique six times. At Chipungabeira, I can say, we used to meet soldiers on our way back. We would find them waiting for us at the crossing point. I survived because we were twelve and two were killed and some of us escaped because we knew how to swim. We swam down the river. That was our main problem we would encounter anytime. We would pass through Devuli Ranch. There were lions in Devuli Ranch but God guided us along the way.

Ancestral spirits were very important. Even God played a crucial role. He guided us. As I see it in the contact at Bvukururu ancestral spirits played a very crucial role in that battle because we were just surprised on a *pungwe*. Soldiers had come and they surrounded the base but all the freedom fighters and the *mujibhas* managed to escape. That is when one of our comrades died and that is also when I was shot on my back. Up to the end of the war when all comrades were asked to go to the keeps and that was the time when I was ill. I had pains all over my body maybe it was because of heavy duties I used to do such as carrying of bullets each and every time. So I think that caused my illness up to when people were in the keeps for registration; I was very ill that time. It took me five years to recover.

During the Jerera battle we fought against soldiers and unfortunately some soldiers were coming from the back; so when I tried to take cover I was cut by a wire but I managed to escape up to the time I was treated by my colleagues.

The farm owners would beat us if we misbehaved. I grew up in the farms so what I encountered in the farms made me to think of joining the war, especially Baranz with his cruelty. Baranz was very cruel during those days. It was fortunate that he was ill but Baranz I wanted to kill him straight. He would shoot people in his farms. He was very cruel to an extent that if he saw or sees children with birds or with young birds he would tell them to go and put them back. When arriving at the tree he would tell them to climb on the tree so when coming down he would ask them to jump from the top of the tree. Baranz was very cruel and even if the cows strayed in his farm he would take them for free. Baranz was very cruel and I am surprised he is still alive.

During the war I never thought of taking cattle from his farm. I don't think people took his cattle because there were soldiers in his farm. So they tried three times but it was dangerous, but frankly speaking (laughing), Baranz, I am not happy. When I went to Chisagwa Township he did not even try to stop but he rather increased speed because he knows me and I once fought him. I beat him.

I was left with him and he was told not to be very much serious with us. So during that time it was the time of harvesting and I was driving a tractor carrying maize cobs to the cement so after that I parked my tractor and started to walk slowly as people were busy throwing maize cobs in the trailer. So we started to track people as they harvested maize cobs and he picked a maize behind a certain woman who had a baby on her back and he shouted, 'Bulat shityasiya barwe.' He threw the maize cob and it hit the baby on the head and the baby died and he started laughing.

I just got off the tractor and asked him what he did, look, the baby has died. So you also need to die. We started to fight, he is strong and I eventually fought him hard and he ran away. When our boss came he asked us why we fought with him and we told him that he killed the baby and they started fighting. Surely I don't want to see Baranz.

When I was given the guns it was different, because you would just send them. What I saw is that mujibha played a very important role especially spying and giving communication, they played a crucial role. I think comrades played a big role but the mujibha played a very big role. I think the government should compensate these people even a little.

Relationship with *chimbwidos* was there because as you know, women and men, they would indulge. The law was there but they failed, we failed. We were told that we were not supposed to sleep or have sex with the *chimbwidos*, but we would do otherwise. Yes, it was a burning issue because if you indulged in sex you always met difficult problems. You know, at first comrades, that is what you got or could hear from

the whites that they were fighting with baboons because comrades were given juju in order to disappear but they failed as a result of indulging in sex with *chimbwidos*; that is how I saw it because I witnessed that.

At first we could not understand about comrades disappearing because if you look or if you could look behind and find that there was no one so we could say they could mysteriously disappear; but we later realised that it was not disappearance as people thought but if you see them going this road and you look back so when you try to find or locate them you would fail because they would decide to use different or another road. That is what they used to do. It was good. I don't know now.

On that aspect during that time of keeps (assembly Points) there was no-one I managed to see; others were now operating on the other side and only three remained behind with me but when others were taken to go for training in Mozambique. I don't know about the *mujibhas* who benefited in 1980 or what happened because I eventually fell ill and I went to Jichidza.

Chivi area was very difficult because it is in a plain (flat land) so in case of a contact you would see that it was difficult to hide or to take cover. Mountains are spaced so that's why we did not operate in Chivi for a long time because we favoured the Nyajena side because of its terrain.

The only advice I can give is don't hand back the country to the whites so if you think of all the experiences, the torture, the beatings, it was difficult so they have to think afresh. At the base or pungwe, ah, we would call the *mujibha* and doing that we would be reading from a book, for example, *mujibha*, who is your mother and he would say, eeh, we heard that your mother is a witch, so that name will be written in the book and we will leave the book with the chairman so the next group would come and to the killings you see, that's how we would do. So during operations, in the event that there is a group ahead of us as soon as we arrive at the area, we would ask for the book and then kill. Some people were just killed without committing any crime; it was unavoidable.

*Vatengesi* would be tied both hands and put on fire just like as if you are roasting maize cobs. This was done in front of the people or the *povo* would be even be singing, and clapping hands. Other methods were beatings, using plastics and cutting using knives. The knives were sometimes used by the *mujibhas* and the comrades. Sometimes if they were women we would tighten their dress to an extent that she would say everything and with anger we would eventually kill them. The *povo* would just say freedom fighters are cruel but some would say we are now free because no- one would love to see a witch and a sell-out. Most of those who were killed just died for no apparent reason. They were just killed, sometimes because of enmity between people in the villages. So those are some of the reasons you saw just after the war that some freedom fighters who were just killing some people for no apparent reasons ended up mentally disturbed even up to now some are still mentally disturbed. That is why you see that after they were given those \$50,000 gratuities some were buying cabbages for cattle instead of seeking treatment, you see, it's one of the issues at stake. There is no respect for those who were *mujibas* and later comrades; we are getting by because no-one even knows your name, they see us as useless. I remember the war and the way I toiled to get even a small piece of land. It pains me a lot but if I continue

thinking I will come to realise that human beings, by their very nature are greedy and selfish because if I have a close look I can see that not all freedom fighters got land. It is because our minds are selfish. The big chefs will always take all the benefits so you end up saying, aah, I am not alone. I will just leave it like that.

After the war, during the days when all freedom fighters were asked to go to the assembly points, not all of them went but some were left because if I remember some even killed one white man called Chimuka. But those were the whites I was talking

about, there was Chimuka and Borrence, those were the people who were supposed to die but only Chimuka died. Some *kutovhumuka*, were there because we passed and stepped through a lot of blood, because the blood of a human being is very important. A human blood is different from that of an animal so people must remember that, because not all freedom fighters were given money they should have given all the

freedom fighters money but the other problem was I was ill so I did not get anything, even a piece of land. It was useless because they had left me from the beginning, it was useless. There are the likes of Mirio Matasva, he is there that one, Ane Ndingariro. He once told me that it was better if they called us to join the army, it was better and I said no, my friend, let us just wait and see what will take place but Ane Shungu and he is very angry, I tell you.

We also thank you for talking to us about this. Signing off I am Chatimba.

## Chimurenga, Shepherd

[PFUKWA, Midlands State University]

*Shepherd Chimurenga grew up in the Eastern Highlands and went to school at St. Augustine. He joined the liberation struggle in 1975, and crossed the border into Villa Manyika, Mozambique in 1976. He was trained in Chimoio and went into the Department of Information and Publicity where material for funding the war was prepared. There after he went to the front with the other guerrillas in operation. After cease-fire he completed his education to doctorate level and has been working with universities.*

My name from the liberation struggle was Shepherd Chimurenga. I grew up in the Eastern Highlands. I went to school at St. Augustine and went into the liberation struggle in 1975. I had completed my O Level. I did my secondary education in Rhodesia and going to O-Level was quite an achievement on its own, because there was a lot of bottleneaking. It is then that I felt the oppression and oppressive system in Rhodesia. There was political awareness that was growing in us because we were exposed to a lot of literature of different struggles. We also read of the Marxist-Leninist ideas. Like generations of the time we were inspired by independence from Zambia, Mozambique, radicalism in Algeria and Zambia that was filtering into Rhodesia, inspiring the youth of that time.

Narration of war biographies and memories of the struggle is never a pleasant experience for the narrator. Especially for someone who was directly involved in it. It is like reminding somebody of an old toothache. It is reminding somebody of the traumas they experienced because indeed it was traumatic in many, many ways. These memories are difficult at times to manage. That in preamble will be my experience, so there may be a lot of gaps in my narration, not by choice.

The effects of the north-eastern campaign, were being felt all over, and war materials and soldiers were being seen all over the place, in the southern and eastern parts of Zimbabwe. When I was in Form 4 the war had spread to many parts of the country, including the north-east. I crossed the border in September 1976, went into Villa Manyika. It was a small camp, but by then there was a flood of educated people from schools. It was an uncontrollable deluge. We moved to transit camps in Manica, into Chimoio then moved to Doroi. Doroi was a vast hellhole that could not manage the numbers that were coming in. This was where the trauma started; that was where the suffering began. It was the beginning story of the liberation war, the story of pain, of suffering and agony. There was nothing glorifying about Doroi.

Doroi was built by the Nyadzonia tragedy, led by Nyathi who was responsible for Nyadzonia; so when coming from Doroi you could see traumatised faces out of that. It was a vast closed ball, disease was rampant, and food supply was erratic. I was lucky to have stayed there for only three months, September to December 1976. I don't regret leaving it because the reports that I heard about Doroi of 1977, 1978, and 1979 were terrible. I am related the late Shingirayi Wirimayi, the radio personality, because

he was one of those personalities I went into the struggle with. Anyway, I left Doroi on a small mission of joining the department of information and publicity, which we never did, because I disappeared into the ranks and went into training at Chimoio.

Chimoio was more organised as a military camp, whereas Doroi was a proper refugee camp; so you should get that distinction from the narratives that you get. If it is a narrative that ends with Doroi, it was purely a refugee camp, there were no military structures, people were civilians, people were refugees. The few who could make it were taken lightly. Most stayed there, most suffered there. My current publications indicates part of that. At Chimoio I went into the Department of Information and Publicity where they prepared material for funding the war. I went into a camp near Chitepo College of Politics. There I was educated; I worked with people like the late Lovemore Mazibisa, Mhizha Mhunga, I think Irene Zindi was also there. It was a place near the clinic called Parirenyatwa and I still have a mental liking of the whole place; and if required I wouldn't mind drawing a mental image of Chimoio. I have a very clear image. I was struck by malaria, I remember that very well. Memories are either very much to celebration of time or you know, brushes with death. I was struck by malaria for four days and what saved me was, there was a medic who attended to me. There was inadequate medication by standards of the bush. He bought medication everyday.

If I had been struck by malaria at Doroi I could have been dead. So I have memories of that place. What saved me at Chimoio was my proximity to the clinic, the availability medication and the care that I received because of the small number of patients. After recovering from malaria I went into military training. The camp commander was General Chiwenga. General Zimhondi was then the General Commander for Manica Province. I trained with people like Major Chidawanyika; I trained with various people. I was emaciated because of the illness, but I managed to go through. What motivated me was the goals of the liberation. If I had been pressured by anybody to go to the struggle I think I would have given up; but I hung on because I was driven into the revolution by my own will, by my own desire to liberate an oppressed people. I knew we belonged to the generation where we were the youth. We had the physical strength and stamina. That was clear in my mind and it became my source of strength, even operating where there was little muscle and more brain. This was a question of brains and brawn.

I went through the training; it was rigorous, it was painful, very difficult. Again food supplies were inadequate. At that time I want to compare it with the training in our armies, which is indeed rigorous and I have a lot of respect for it. We had inadequate shelter, clothing, and food; we were under war situation even doing training. There was a danger of being attacked. The barracks was nothing but a shack of grass. The only decent meal was the supper that you could take. We did our three months training, then as bamboo pole, after the training we drafted a second phase. The more physically fit ones were sent to Anti-aircraft training, heavy artillery training. These are things like recoilless rifles, 82mm mortar, 60mm mortars. These are heavy

weapons usually used in mechanised units of an army. For guerrillas they have to be carried over the shoulder. Imagine carrying such equipment through the bush, all these are tactics of guerrillas using heavy machinery. They had to go through this training so everybody who was not physically fit was eliminated. So I was sidelined because of that. However we went into a more exciting and advanced training and engineering. We went into explosives landmines and dynamiting. Generally, we did a lot of things. One had to have O-Level Maths and good English to understand how to do some of those things.

In our Engineering training I was impressed by the instructor Ishepe Chibende, may his soul rest in peace; he died defusing a landmine. You will pick up that story from others who witnessed his death because it is said they recovered nothing except a few parts of his lower part so it was a tragedy. He inspired me. I grasped what he taught. One of the instructors who assisted him borrowed my book and never returned it. Another instructor was Black Savage, I remember interviewing him for my own doctoral studies. After training I was inducted in a team of forty hefty, freshly trained commandos. So there I was, with two engineers attached to this commando unit, dwarfed by these huge commandos.

Our mission was to blast Mutare-Harare Railway line. I don't know how this was decided, but it started in August 1977, after seven months in the rear. How I got my first gun is a story for another day; I will save that for another day. I never went back to the rear until ceasefire. Stories of that period can fill volumes. I have a lot of written material that is awaiting publication. One publisher has turned down my stories but I will forgive her, mainly because her ideologies, her values, and obviously her sympathies lie with Rhodesia. I forgive her. So on our first mission we moved in up Honde River and crossed north of Mutare near Watsomba. I crossed into the south of Kriste Mambo and moved on, north of Rusape. Our first operation was at Matinhidza; a gang of terrorists blasted the railway line near Matinhidza. This is in the military archives. I missed the second operation in Headlands, which was three weeks later.

When we got to the last villages in the reserves near Rusape, into Rusape, we were broken into units so I was attached to experienced guerrilla and one of them is Action Moyo, who was the local commander. He is now deceased. When new guerrillas were brought to the front they carried a lot of war material. Remember even a single bullet was brought by a bag. There was no any kind of mechanisation that you could talk of, so this is part of the trauma. The ammunition box, called *cache* in Portuguese weighed about 30kgs. This guy called Frazer collapsed at a training session, I remember this. He was very fit and he excelled in training, but he just broke down during training. Some of us managed to endure; we were broken into smaller units, drafted into units of about twenty other guerrillas, led by this Action Moyo.

Most guerrillas in the Makoni District know him. Owen Gazi, was sectional commander, he died near Nyazura after our operations. Augustine Mhere, led at provincial level. It was Action who led us for the operation at Matinhidza; 20 metres

were destroyed, but it never really paralysed the railway communications. That force of our presence, the ability to penetrate to that point, I think, was what mattered; because it was the first time an advance force of guerrillas had gone that far. Obviously within the Tangwena Sector, other units by-passed south of Rusape near Nyazura, moved into Chidoko, into Hwedza I remember our reinforcements in 1977 pushed as far as Hwedza. In 1978, groups pushed as far as Svosve Detachment and Chihota. In other words we were heading close to Mhondoro and into Seke. I remained in Makoni District near Rusape. That was when I had most of my landmines in those farms. So in brief that was one of the operations.

The second one was at Headlands. I missed that one because I had been moved into another advanced unit; but we had to take a guerrilla who had been sent to the rear, that was no fun. That was how I missed it. The third one, was in August/September 1978, I guess near Bradley Siding, about 20km north of Matinhidza; and again it's on record. This time there were two engineers who worked on that one. We had a team of young guerrillas fresh from Tanzania, they were better trained. Chingoya did wonders to guerrillas; they were more disciplined than Mozambican trained troops because they had more time.

The Tanzanians did a good job, even up to today I have a lot of respect for Tanzanian-trained troops, and Tanzanian army for all it did in training ZANLA. You could even pick it up in their language, these were support units. We operated in units that lay adjacent to the Inyanga-Rusape Road. In 1975 I was drafted into a unit of nine guerrillas. It was a very cohesive unit; an advance unit which did its operations in the farms between Rusape and Inyanga around Kriste Mambo. We attacked farms and we opened up new spaces in new territory. It was the real cutting edge of the operations; and when we went to the rear it was just for supplies.

In mid 1978, I later moved into a host of farms north east of Rusape, under Action Moyo. He was the brains behind the abduction of a Johannes Martin, a farmer who was abducted near Headlands in June 1978. This abduction caused ripples that were felt in the whole detachment from Headlands as far as Mutare South, as far as Inyanga, and as far as the border to the east. All that area, the follow-up search of Johannes caused a lot of casualties. Lives of guerrillas were lost and a lot of civilian lives were lost. The unit I was in escaped the attacks because we were in the frontline, in the farms. So when they went to search in the reserves they set things upside down, upsetting all the units. Action and his unit on a reconnaissance mission went to the farm in broad daylight, and talked to the workers. For some reason the farmer appeared, because he was leaving the farm because of the war, and he saw these guys. They did not shoot him or talk to him; they realised what they had to do. If they let the guy go, they were doomed! So Action was in a dilemma; it was either he shot the white man, or captured him. They decided to capture him. They drove that afternoon to Ipsheni Mission east of Rusape and then on foot crossed into the communal lands, I am told, at about 7.30, he walked into a group of comrades that were camping there. Everybody went haywire about it. They asked him why he had

captured him. Why he had brought the *murungu there*. He said he had no option but to capture him. That same night he was marched another 30-40km by another unit, as far as St. Barbara's Mission, between the Inyanga-Mutare road, towards the border. He spent the night near Watsomba, and the next night he crossed Honde River over the border. In other words in two nights he was in Mozambique. Action was sent back and was given other groups that continued with him. The white man narrates his story in *Hopes on Tomorrow* by Thomas Wodden Woods. He really walked.

The follow-up set the whole sector upside down. As they hunted for this white man, the flow of our operations was disrupted. As a result Action was summoned to Chimoio because he had caused so much suffering. He was dressed down for having caused the mayhem. He was respected because he was bold and he was cheerful. He was the same guy who led us through the Matinhidza. It's only that the events were not recorded. He never lived to tell his story. His name is there. He was summoned to the rear. When he came back he was promoted to senior commander and it is in this state that I see him.

Unfortunately that is when you see indiscipline creeping in. I don't hesitate to mention it. They had different ways of expressing themselves but Tanzanian troops were disciplined. So what happened was, when Action came in as a Section Commander, he was in command of younger troops in search of action; and when Action was tired of action, he should be given rest. People operated for 30 months without rest. That takes a heavy toll on the dynamic faculties of the mind; and this kind of strain, in hindsight, was what caused trouble with the guerrillas. We saw Action going back to the farms and fighting again. We operated in the farms in 1979, as we went towards ceasefire. I was moved back into the centre of the detachment in the villages, in the communal lands. I set a few landmines there at the end of my engineering work. It was a kind of stalemate where Rhodesians could do much to recover the space they had lost. We could engage the *Pfumo Revanhu Dzakutsaku* in broad daylight. The enemy was the regular Rhodesian forces. The *Madzakutsaku* were not trained compared to us, as they were a militia. We could easily run over them. The ceasefire found me in that state of stalemate.

Another interesting point is that when people went to Lancaster, the war actually intensified to its highest point of madness. So even when the negotiations were going on at Lancaster, people were dying at the front. This is where I get the sense of loss, where some of the people who should be around with us passed away. Operation Dingo was Chimoio. Ceasefire saw me going to the Assembly camp. I had a harrowing experience because we delayed our movement, so had to pass through Rusape. We lost comrades like Hidden, the detachment commander of Bonda, because the Rhodesians were still in control. I remember all the questions that I was asked like, 'Did you lay any landmines?' by my interrogator; I played an ignoramus, given my innocent boyish face and I was only 21. So I said that I didn't, and the interpreter looked at me naively and dismissed me. Hidden disappeared at Rusape.

After the assembly point at Dzapasi I never really bothered to go to the ranks. Instead I opted to go back to school, and I don't regret that decision. I went back to complete my A-Levels in a year, went and did my first degree, did some secondary school teaching, went back to UZ for a second degree, then worked in universities and I boast of a doctoral degree. It is not an honorary doctoral degree; it is a doctoral degree in *chimurenga*, so that on its own is unique.

I used my experience; I brought in data collected from my contacts then and now. It is ethnography material. My experience in war was an ethnographic exercise and I stand to benefit from the Hashim Mbita project as well, as in the doctoral way. I would want to hear more voices of more people who took part in the struggle. Where are the women? The traumas that keep on coming back even up to today, are the result of a past that has not been fully settled.

For your own information you wouldn't believe it, but I was never attacked by the enemy. I spent 30 months in the front, for some reason. Some of the traumas that I saw were people emerging from struggles. One was a young refugee at Doroi who escaped from Nyadzonja. He was seriously injured. You could see that he was not mentally balanced. I don't think he had ever been educated. He never understood me as an educated someone but you could see in hindsight I saw the face of trauma in what he did. People could say he was mentally not balanced. He could not be trained in any military course, he was called Drenter.

The scars of Nyadzonja are vast, that is why Morris Nyathi was never forgiven. Another one of my memories is the loss of Chebhende, the military instructor who trained me. I am told only the lower limbs were buried. I had memories of this because I remember carrying a rifle of one person who taught me to defuse a landmine. Things went wrong and the guy was blasted. It was a dangerous course. I defuse one landmine and actually had to work another one. That was a painful experience to lose a comrade in such a way. In the last year of the war, a few months before the end of the war indiscipline became rampant, I think I was at cross purposes with some of my commanders, they were aware of my solid education, when they were not. I had a way of managing the younger, the more disciplined, rank and file. I think I witnessed a few traumas there.

I wouldn't want to call the nature of the indiscipline among the guerrillas, illicit relations with women, but rape. I don't think the chimbwidos were willing. You don't negotiate with someone with a gun. Let's drop the word rape, but there were a lot of illicit relations. Some of the live evidence that I saw were pregnancies, venereal diseases among guerrillas and because of that people involved became sedentary. Yet guerrilla operations require you to be mobile, you don't want to stay two or three days on the same spot. You must be constantly on the move; guerrillas are highly mobile people. But because of illicit relations with civilians, it demanded them stay in a place for days in order to serve their needs. Of course there was a lot of misunderstanding. You will find it difficult to collect a history of abuse of women because nobody wants to talk about them, even the victims. I had several enemies; men as well as

women. This is where I have a bone of contention. This research and material that we have at hand, one of our sources of reference is Irene Stanton; I think she has done something. These people are not Zimbabwean, Irene is Zimbabwean but with a wrong colour. The authorities are western authors on violence against women.

With all the codes of conduct guerrillas went to be involved with women because rules are meant to be broken. Eight Points of Attention, *Nzira dzemasoja dzekuzvibata nadzo*. It was a song, but you must understand the extenuating circumstances of a struggle. They sang that song because the conditions of an armed struggle are far from normal. These people never led a normal life; they never had life. You are totally

outside. This is where the problem of ultimate sacrifice is misunderstood by people in the struggle; at some point it had a devastating effect. There was a lot of drug taking and alcohol consumption. I remember in the unit I was in the commanders drank whisky, if available, every night. If there was beer in the community, guerrillas drank it. It was not because of enjoying it. It was a tonic for a mind that was under stress. Mjana was common. The thing that served some people was that they understood that those were drugs, and they had to be very careful, especially under the war. Let us not look at the abuse of intoxicants as a pleasure, but as a way of coping with stressful times. When you are constantly dicing with death twenty-four hours a day, is far from normal. You should respect war heroes.

In the attack at which Action died, the guerrillas were drunk. I have heard a lot of tragedies about that. The only solution was that after many years of operation some guerrillas were moved to the rear. New units were brought. People liked the operation at the front than in the rear probably because home is best. Even some of those who were injured wanted to go to the front.

What I have narrated is just a snippet of the whole canvas of the liberation struggle.

## Mabandla, Nicholas

[Zhombe, 14 May 2008]

*Nicholas Mabandla, whose war name was Temel Nkomo, was born in 1956 in Silobela. He joined the liberation struggle at an age of 21 years, and became a ZIPRA activist after experiencing the oppression by the minority white regime.*

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My name is Nicholas Mabandla, I was born in 1956 in Silobela, then we moved to Zhombe in 1958. I attended school but later stopped as there wasn't enough money and in those years the elders were not really concerned with education. My father did not want me to go to work, but wanted me to herd his cattle, so he did not allow me to get an ID. I told him that I needed some money for my upkeep and that I needed to earn my own money rather than depend on what he offered me. I later got an ID and set off to look for work; I worked in Bulawayo but most of the jobs were contracts. I analysed the situation and found that it was oppression; and through discussion with others we discovered that the whites could beat you up or fire you any time. When WNLA (Wits Native Labours Association-popularly known as WENELA) was initiated in 1974, I went to work there; we worked for whites and the oppression was similar to that in Zimbabwe.

I was lucky because my boss wasn't cruel and he treated both blacks and whites the same. I was a First Aid practitioner, so I only attended to the injured, but because of the temperature in the mine, I couldn't stay awake for more than 20 minutes when I was alone. I started work at 7pm and knocked off at 7am. I remember one day at work, it was about 10pm, some whites came and one of them woke me up by kicking my feet and asked me why I was sleeping at work. He asked me who gave me the permission to sleep and I told him that my boss did. He tried to punch me but I blocked him twice, and because I and my companion exchanged shifts, we had knobkerries in our office, which we used as sticks or handles for stretcher beds. I took one and hit him with it in the stomach twice, after seeing that he kept advancing at me. He then rushed out, and I chased him and left him outside my office; then I secured the door with wire just in case he came back, and I continued to sleep.

Upon reaching outside the shaft, he took my work card and left a message that I report to the mine captain. I was taken there by a policeman from our mine. I had heard from the other workers that the mine captain used to beat up blacks in his office; so when we got there I refused to enter his office and since the guard was also a Rhodesian I told him to leave, although he had been told to force me to go in. The white man whom I had beaten up was also in the office. He asked me what I had done and I told him that the white man had beaten me and I had 'returned the favour'. He asked me if I was allowed to sleep at work and I told him that my boss knew that I slept at work, and that if he came to check on me he first phoned me, as he knew that I would be sleeping, if there wasn't any injury to attend to. They phoned my boss and when he came he found me outside, and before talking to the others, he asked me

what I had done, and I told him. Then on talking to the other whites -they talked in Afrikaans so I couldn't understand the whole conversation – but what I heard was that he asked the white I had beaten up that when he was checking on me who was checking his subordinates and he told me to beat him again if he ever came to me as I wasn't under his department. I was told to leave and went back to the compound. But one day after some weeks the white I had beaten up came to me drunk. He had forgotten his light, so he wanted to borrow mine, and I told him that if I was found without one I would be fired, but if he was found without one they would simply warn him not to do so again. I also reminded him that we had a fight before, so how was I to know if he was serious. He continued nagging me until I lent the light to him; on the following day he gave me 54 rand to thank me. We ended up being friends and he brought some food which we shared.

After completing my contract, I returned to Rhodesia. When I got home I realised that what I had initially run away from was worse because the oppression was now drastic. I remember one day when we were going to WENELA our IDs were taken so we had to get new ones on arrival. I had got mine and was leaving home for Bulawayo, when we encountered a roadblock just after Nkayi, near Inyathi and one soldier told us to get down from the bus. As I was still new from South Africa I did not know the situation at home and as I was wearing my Boston hat from South Africa with a big rim and feather and was on the seat that was on top of the bus wheels, which elevated me. Upon entering the bus this soldier ordered all of us with our IDs that we drop off the bus. He happened to be a former classmate of mine and when he got to me he didn't look at me in the face, but just took my ID and made me step aside. I didn't want to take my eyes off him because I feared that he wanted to shoot me, as I moved, while I was not looking,. Then I turned and came back to where he was and he called

his accomplice to come and take a look at a *mujibha*. His friend told him to leave me, and I got on the bus. When we had gone for some distance, the people began to sing. I was lucky I was not shot, because they had shot three people the previous day. I asked them how the soldiers had identified me, and I was told that my hat betrayed me; I began scolding the other passengers for not telling me that before I got into trouble, and then saying I was lucky.

When I got to Bulawayo I intended to go back home early, but I decided not to as I wanted to meet the soldier who had nearly got me killed, when I had my own gun. That was why I decided to join the struggle and I never returned home. I renewed my contract with WENELA, but I worked for only a month, and received the previous contract's bonus. We had talked to one Indian who used to transport people who wanted to join the war. His car carried six people; three of us had not received their bonuses so we left them behind. When I joined the struggle I was 21, but I was with another young boy who was only 17. We went and waited for the car at a town called Caltonville, and because we had money we did our shopping for clothes. When he

came he said he wanted to collect his '*sandwich*' and by this he meant his girlfriend. So when he came we started off at six and we arrived at eleven. Upon reaching the border

there were two roads and the one we wanted to take had a light and his girlfriend suggested that we use the other one, because the light meant that there were soldiers on patrol. So we followed the other road, and when he dropped us, we crossed the border at around eleven in the night. There were two cars that were approaching each other in the clear space at the border, so we decided to go where these cars would pass each other, and as soon as they passed, we crossed. We moved on, and we saw someone wearing white and we took cover; this was the first time we practised taking cover. From there we came to a large farm with grass so tall that someone moving in it could not be seen. In the farm we looked for a road and tried to hear out where we could detect car sounds because we feared that we would come to a river and because we were far from a road, have difficulty in crossing. We detected the car sounds and walked by the roadside for about a kilometre and came to a river and we crossed. We however, didn't know that we were still in South Africa. At about four in the morning, we ate our food and agreed to walk on, even though it was down and we were tired. We heard some sound like a car coming and we hid but some of us hid in the railway line that was near where we were. It proved to be not a car but a train! One boy whom we were with said he was inside between the rails; we told him to get away from there but he argued that the train would not overrun him. We moved on and came to the border. Although it was the Botswana border, when we saw the police my heart missed a beat once, and I told my colleagues that we should not show ourselves to the police as it was dangerous, and they agreed. We approached one woman and she told us that we were looking at the border into Botswana we were still on the South African side; so she directed us and we followed her directions and crossed into Botswana.

In Botswana we arrived at a farm and we met a person at about one o'clock in the night. We had bought press button knives in South Africa, so we opened them and asked him how far the nearest police station was, and he directed us to the one at the border, but we told him we did not want to go to that one, and he said we could reach there at five in the morning. We went back to the road. A police car passed us and we tried to stop it but it moved on. We tried about thrice before they stopped and asked us where we were going. We were wearing black T-shirts written 'Black is Beautiful' and black berets so they asked us if we represented the Black Power, but we said we did not. The police refused to ferry us, so we walked on until we came to a shopping place where we boarded a car, of which the wife of the owner was Ndebele, so she understood our situation.

We arrived at Lobatse, the nearest station at one o'clock the following morning by car. While we were there we were told to wait for others before being taken to the shopping mall to change our money as we had rands rather than pulas to buy food. We boarded buses to another station of which the soldier whom we had waited for paid. In the bus I saw one white being pushed in the queue by a black and wished this could be done in Zimbabwe as well. We arrived in Gaborone and we were taken to a place where we could rest. The room we were made to sleep in, had one blanket while there were five of us. It was on Friday and we were told to wait for others. On Saturday

more Zimbabweans came from WENELA but there was still one blanket. On Sunday they took our documents and gave us money to board the train; on the train one Tswana tried to steal our bags and we beat him up.

We arrived in Francistown and we were taken to a refugee camp. There we met a girl who had arrived with two hungry children, and we gave them bread and powdered milk. We were told not to have sex with the women at the refugee camp. I saw one old man who looked very young, but it was the war and you could only tell his age by his beard. People were overcrowded at this camp. Though women and men stayed together, the difference was in the places where they slept.

The problem was how to get to Zambia We were told that we had to dress smartly and look as if we were visiting, because Smith was aware of the influx of people into Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia to join the struggle, and he was trying to stop that. We boarded a plane and flew to Zambia. In Zambia, looking at the car that was supposed to carry us, I thought that probably it was going to be towed by another car, because it did not appear that it could move at all. To my surprise it moved through the bush for some time, and we noticed figures emerging from the ground as we moved towards the camp. The freedom fighters had dug holes in the ground as a security measure, as we were still far from the camp. When we arrived at Nampulu, the camp, we could see that the situation had changed; we were greeted by painful exercises and we were given new names. I was called Temel Nkomo. We were taken to Lusaka for check up, to find out if we had any diseases; when returning our car broke down and we delayed. When we arrived at the camp, we found that it had been bombed and we had to stay in the bush until we were able to move to a new camp. In the new camp we found Zimbabweans who had been trained by Zambians and they started to train us. We were not given any uniforms.

Training was once stopped because of shortage of food. I recall at this base we started walking at about 12 and would be in groups of four and you would carry a 90kg bag of maize, until you exchanged it with another group that would have left at six and they would carry it. One day in the afternoon after we had come from collecting our maize and we had not eaten for 3 days, our instructor told us that the enemy was coming and that we were to get out of the base. I and my section agreed. Some people were disgruntled because they thought now that the food was cooked, the instructors wanted to eat the food by themselves. We got out of the camp and got to where we

kept our *mahewu* which we brewed from the *sadza* that was left over. Since we were about to eat I suggested that we drink and finish the brew and as I put back the paper which we had been keeping in a hole under a fallen tree; I thought it should not be seen by the whites. As I bent to cover the paper, planes filled the sky and I managed to lie under the log. The place was near the river, and we could not hear the sound, but we could see before hearing. The planes came with one in the front, and others flying one on top and one at the bottom; after the one in front signalled they began to scatter and drop bombs. I watched as they dropped bombs from under the log. One of our guys with the anti-aircraft, fired as the plane in front signalled, probably giving a sign

to the others to fire, and he shot the plane in front. Unfortunately where it dropped there were many people so some people were killed and injured in the process. When the other planes saw where the firing had come from, they shot at the anti-air and cut its barrel and killed the shooters on the spot. His companions were at the river bathing and when one heard the bombings he rushes back without even a shirt on and when he got there he replaced the barrel that had been cut and pushed aside his dead companion and began shooting at the planes.

We mostly used the Zeck U and Zuck and this time the Zeck U was the one which had had its barrel cut off and this comrade who had come was shooting them from a distance, when they had passed. As he shot one, and it fell down two others would bomb it so that you could not see where it was made. When they came to drop the bombs, the comrade shot the other planes so that at times the three planes fell together. He gunned them so much that out of the 17 planes only about 8 or 7 returned, as the rest were gunned down. After the bombardments it then became dark before sunset, and there was terrible smoke from various gases. I saw bones sticking out from a tree due to the bombs. They used bombs that once they exploded would dig a hole that a house could fit into. We set off to try and see those who were hurt, but because there was nowhere we could take them to, it became difficult.

The following morning we started rescuing the injured and discovered that more people than we had expected had actually perished. We carried a blanket between every four of us, and we placed the injured on it, but once they died we left them. The enemy had a sketch map of our bases but luckily we had changed the places like Logistics, Medical Centre, Armoury and Kitchen. They had bombed places which they thought were significant according to their sketch and as we moved in the area we found a stomach and a hair stuck to a tree, then we realized that it was a splinter which had nailed them to a tree. Later we decided to get away from there as we thought there would be other bombings but we met the Zambians carrying our commanders to the camp, and they told us not to leave as they were coming back to ferry us by car to the new base. As we hid along the road three planes came and they bombarded the camp, but did not kill many people as they had gone out. So we took off, knowing that there was nothing to wait for because the path was already marked, indicating that the people had started to move to the new camp long before us.

At this new camp there were three of us from the same family. After the attack I met one of my brothers, and he was bandaged around the stomach and on one of his hands; he did not speak to me but gave me a signal to carry on. He had been hurt maybe because when we were told to move, perhaps their company did not do so forthwith. I began to look for the other brother who I found not hurt. We were then made to go to another base which did not have any big trees but only small shrubs. People coming from a bombardment were such hot heads, that we refused to stay there for long thinking that we would be sold out again.

We moved to another base where we were selected to go to Angola for training. En route to Angola a helicopter flew above our cars and we asked the Zambian escorting

us about the origin of chopper; he first thought it was theirs, but later realised it was not. We became suspicious and stopped the convoy and looked for cover while the Zambian sought refuge at a home nearby; and yet he was supposed to be our bodyguard. When it did not return we got back and carried on with our journey.

We arrived at Makanje the following morning. At Makanje there was only rice and no any mealie-meal; so this was hard because we were used to eating sadza. The training was tough, as no-one treated you like an egg; we were told that if we were treated like that the whites were not going to treat us like that. So the training was difficult and harsh, but for our benefit. After we finished our training we had problems that led to the death of others because it wasn't only the gun that killed freedom fighters. During training if not a single person died, then it was not seen as effective. I did training in Regular warfare, which was for large ammunition; after our training, Josiah Chinamano came to inspect the pass-out parade, but he did not let us finish all that we wanted him to see, because he had seen enough. We were then ready to be deployed; I passed through Lusaka, Zambia, and I was assigned to a group of 70 people to operate in Hwange. We used dinghies to cross the Zambezi, and then we slept at a place that was some distance from the border. At about four o'clock in the morning we woke up and realised that we were near a white camp and we fought with them. As we left the Zambezi into Zimbabwe there were so many gorges that it was going uphill.

Fortunately we did not come across any whites on the way. We met a group of three comrades with about 200 people; they said that they wanted to help them across, but I asked them how they were going to resist if attacked, and they said they could. We offered to accompany them and while on the way a spotter plane came and I suggested that the people should remove any red or white clothes that they were wearing and that since we were near a swampy opening they should run for their lives. We and the comrades got into the surrounding opening to defend them, and the whites' attention was diverted to us; therefore the civilians had a chance of survive. The spotter plane was being followed by a helicopter. As you know a chopper can only fire while it is tilted, and it uses one side, and once they saw us, they started shooting, so due to the shooting some impala were frightened and began to run. The whites had the belief that we change into animals, so they shot at the impala, avoiding us; and we aimed at the propeller because once it was shot the chopper would fall. Unfortunately one comrade was shot in the arm but the bone was not affected. We continued shooting in that directions and so we were saved by this. We continued in our quest to get to Hwange. On the way we encountered some whites but because we knew some guerrillas in the region had strategies to take them down we avoided them until we reached Hwange.

We had been taught to liaise with the elders; and we learnt that In Hwange there was one white man who had killed many guerrillas at his homestead, after pretending to give them hospitable welcome. So we wanted to find out how he had been doing that, and to punish him for doing that. We headed for his farm and we found him

there. Upon seeing us he received us like a friend, and told us he was happy to see us fight for our country. He asked us what meat we wanted and we told him that we wanted a female impala. At that time he was at a place where he was irrigating beans; he got into his car and went to hunt for the impala about a kilometre away where there was a small hill. We had binoculars and we observed the hill; our binoculars came into contact with binoculars being used by some whites who were at the hill. They had touched each other, so we lowered ours. We realised that they were coming down to attack us and that this had been the cause of the deaths of our comrades, before us.

When the white farmer returned we told him to roast and prepare the meat and that we were going for a bath at his dam at the west of his farmhouse; the whites were in the north. We moved and laid an ambush, and the ancestors guided us, such that the whites fell into our ambush. We designated our marksman to shoot the person in front with just one shot. The area had guinea fowls so we imitated their sound, as a signal; when we heard the signal, our sniper shot the white man who was in front, in the chest. Death is painful, because the white jumped to the sky when he was shot, and as he fell to the ground, his colleagues returned fire. They fired recklessly, and when they realised that we were not firing back, they stopped to inspect their dead colleague, and removed some grenades from his body, as they could explode. After doing that, they began firing again, but we did not fire until they stopped; we waited until they moved three steps towards us, then we began to fire at them.

All in all they were nine, but only one survived. We took their radio, and we could overhear them mobilising reinforcements to come and attack us. We went back to the white farm owner who thought we had died. When we asked him about our other colleagues he said he hadn't killed any. We searched the house and discovered that

he kept his *NATO* with full ammunition under the wooden tiles of the floor. We requested for his radio, and although he declined having one at first, he later gave it to us. We told the farm workers that they were to leave, because if they were caught by the whites they would tell the truth, or even lies; and we went with the farm owner. We were seven, and three went with the white in the bush while we walked on the road. Then we saw a car approaching us; we stood in the middle of the road, aiming a bazooka at it, and we realised it was the white man's wife. Upon seeing us she failed to control the car and raised her hands leading the car to stop at the roadside. We took all the supplies that we wanted from the car. We took the white husband and wife, and left the car there. We walked for about two and half hours and then started to question them on the number of comrades they had killed and they denied having done so. So we began to beat them up and one of suggested that we leave the white woman to go; as she was moving away, he shot her in the back.

The husband wanted us to kill him too, but we refused to, because we needed him. We moved on and lit a fire. I didn't know that one comrade had got plastic bags from the farm and he began to drop the plastic on the white man's head. We tortured

him so much that he said he had killed 13 guerrillas and he wanted us to get killed through the same way. We told him to go, but shot him afterwards.

We operated in Hwange and when there was an order for people to go for advanced training in Angola, in 1979, I was among the group that went there, and I was in Angola, right up to independence in 1981. We had no transport from Angola to Bulawayo so we came back late. News had spread that I had died, because I had come back late from the war; although I had sent word home that I was alive, it got there late. When I went to war I left behind a wife and two children; no other children were born after I had gone to join the war.

I boarded a bus to our home on a Friday and I arrived at around 12 midnight, knocked but there was a delay in response, and then my mother answered. When I told her it was me, she was scared as she had heard that I had died but I told her I was alive and everyone was woken up and we celebrated my return and some even cried because if you become too happy you end up crying. I told them about my experience. Unfortunately my wife had gone away because she had heard that I had died, so I sent for her and we were reunited again. I returned back to Llewellyn Barracks where we had been integrated into the national army. I worked at Inkomo barracks, and I was deployed at Nyazura, guiding the 5th Brigade as they trained.

Before going to Mozambique we were graded ZIPRA and ZANLA; ZANLA were left on parade and they were told about the assignment to go to Mozambique, and they went, leaving us, ZIPRA, behind. On their return we asked them how things were where they were coming from, and they told us that things were bad, because the RENAMO was killing them. We told them that it was nice because they had selected to go and get killed; leaving us behind as they thought it was going to be easy. Due to the deaths they also integrated ZIPRA to go to Mozambique although at first they had left us behind.

There were many deaths when crossing the Zambezi, as some were killed by the whites, but some were killed by the crocodiles and hippos. As for the crocodiles we threw grenades into their mouths, and there were some local people who transported people across. Nampundu was a male only camp so there weren't any instances of rape. At Francistown women had their own camp, but you know that there were temptations when one stayed for long without having intercourse. So there were rare cases of rape, possibly when people went out for food, because the security was tight. We believed in seeking help from ancestors and mediums. As we operated in areas we were not familiar with, we consulted the mediums of the area and were told the norms of the places, and we believed them. There were too many cases of being sold out to mention. I remember we once came to one homestead. There were four of us who used to drink beer, and three of us who did not. There was a local brew and they put *Mziligozini* in it, which paralysed the limbs, and whoever drank it became so drunk that they did not know what was happening. Those four drank the beer, and on realising what had happened we knew that we had been sold out, and that the enemy was bound to attack any moment. We carried our colleagues and placed

them some distance from each other and took their guns away from them and hid them before moving for about 15km and laying an ambush for the whites in case they came our way and it was just three of us. We waited and the cars came and upon arrival we managed to disturb them so that they couldn't get to where we had left our comrades and we fled away going back to our comrades. We made them drink milk, and then we disciplined the people. We didn't want to kill sell-outs because we would not achieve anything by killing them. We just asked them how they would feel had it been their sons who had been sold out. So we just beat them up. We encountered a lot of sell-outs. There were seven of us from my family in the struggle; three were at the same camp. My father was victimised because of having sons who had joined the struggle. I remember he had a misunderstanding with his young brother and he joined Smith's forces in order to kill my father. One day he was coming with soldiers to our homestead, but he did not get there because of a breakdown. On the next occasion when he was coming to our home in Zhombe with some soldiers to kill my father for having children who were guerrillas, their car trampled on a landmine and exploded. He was killed in the incident; and because he was the one who knew our home, the mission was abandoned. So you can see, God and the ancestors work sometimes. My father had four wives and we were many children. After that, there was no one in our family who was victimised because of our whereabouts, in the course of war.

I and my section did not conduct any *pungwes* because of our experience; we met many civilians we realised the risk associated with them coming face to face with the enemy. We just gathered up the people and told them what we wanted them to know, and left them. It was not always that we were in battle, but there were jovial moments when we roamed about without our guns, but with pistols and grenades. I remember one day we went to the stores and people were drinking; you would think there was no war. There was a misunderstanding about women and people started to throw bottles at each other; we fired a gunshot in the air and everyone lay down, and we then took their paper money after having cut the phone cable there. We did this so as not to be identified because people would follow us thinking that we were ordinary people. We had not gone there to cause havoc, but that came by accident. When leaving we hijacked a car to flee from the scene of the controversy, and the owner drove us till the fuel ran dry. We gave him the money we had taken from the store for fuel to refill his car. There are so many stories that we might talk till tomorrow.

Thank you.

## Mahere, Mark

[Mkoba, Gweru; 25 March 2008]

*Mark Mahere, right. I was born in 1965 in Makomoin Rusape. He joined the liberation struggle just after Grade 7, and went to Mozambique in August 1975. In Feb 1976 he left Mozambique and went to Tanzania for training at Mgagao, where he was trained up to the end of that year. He came back to Zimbabwe in 1977 as an active member in the liberation struggle.*

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My name is Mark Mahere, right. I was born in 1965 in Makomo in Rusape. That area was called Tanda Tribal Trust Lands in Mahere Village, under headman Makumbo. I grew up when Rhodesia was still under white colonial rule. I remember in 1968 or 1969, when I was just a small boy, I remember there was ZAPU, ZAPU for the old people. During that time we were not conscious of what was happening, I went to Chikanda School and Gogoma School for primary education I did not go for secondary education but I joined the war just after Grade 7, in August 1975. I joined the liberation struggle not because I had met a comrade, but I went to the war because I did not like what was happening in Mt Darwin.

News of the war started infiltrating the area; and that was when we heard about the war. I was motivated and I thought of joining the army and becoming a soldier. So when I heard about the comrades I thought of joining the comrades so that I would become a comrade. Why I wanted to fight the Rhodesian Army was because my father was arrested in 1972. He was working at a farm and he was just working for free without any pay. He would just work so that he would be given a cow by the farm owner, so he was just working for a cow. After a long time he was then given his cow by the farm owner so we were very happy that at last our father had managed to get a cow so we decided to go and collect that cow from the farm passing through other farms up to our area. As we were busy opening farm gates in order to let the cow pass through we saw white police officers approaching us; they just came and told us that we were guilty because we were walking through farms without permission. My father was arrested and taken, and we heard that he was in prison, but we did not know where exactly. He spent almost three months in prison, but we had the cow with us. I was very confused and touched by the fact these people had just arrested my father for no good reason. That gave me the spirit of revenging and of fighting them. My father used to tell us about his past experience. We used to ask him how come he had ended in the area we were now staying, and he told us that he migrated or relocated from Mutungagore. I always asked him how and why he ended up there and he told us that they were forced to relocate by the whites. He used to recall that, saying that was our area of origin, and it was a good place because the soils were very fertile. Water was not a problem but in this area there is no water. So all those factors motivated me and it got into my blood stream that I needed to fight. We also used to hear news from Mozambique that the Mozambicans were fighting for freedom. There was Radio Moscow, which was broadcasting that some Zimbabwean sons were

already in Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania and China, being trained to fight the white man back home. I joined the war and went to Mozambique in 1975, before Mozambique was independent. Mozambique finally got its independence in 1975, if I can still remember.

From home I went via Bulawayo using the train, I arrived in Bulawayo and went to Mpopoma. In Mpopoma I met a certain guy who was a Mozambican and he listened to Radio Mozambique everyday and we always heard that there was training taking place in Mozambique. I did not stay for a month and I returned home to Rusape. I had my uncle who was in Mutare; he was working at a certain white man, so during that time he was in Chipinge. That was the time I got a chance to go. There was this company which was doing borehole drilling. I talked to them and they agreed that they would take me to Chipinge. That was my first time to see areas such as Birchenough and Chipinge itself. On the following morning we went to the border where my uncle was staying. He became suspicious and he told me that the area was not good for me to get a job so I had to go to Mutare and get a job there and I said it was okay. I went back to Mutare and got a job at a certain company, Waltro Company, which was specialising in making furniture. At the end of the week I got my salary and I bought my things.

When I was in Chipinge I had a chance to meet a guy who was from Mozambique and he told me that when I finally make up my mind he would go with me and he actually gave me all the information. So when the time came he took me to Mozambique via Beira. When we arrived in Mozambique he told us that he was going

to leave us in the hands of the *camarada*. So after some distance we arrived at his homestead and he told us that it was his home and that I was going to stay with him until *camaradas* came. So during that time, that was when news started circulating that Mozambique had attained independent.

The *camaradas* came took us and we walked away together; they were armed but we were not. They told us that Mozambique was now free and independent. When we started mixing with the *camaradas*, that was when they started to tell us about independence. When I came from Rhodesia I did not have any contact with the comrades and that was when questions started to be asked about why we wanted to fight with Smith, because I only knew Smith by then. So they also asked me who was supposed to become the president; and the only person we knew was Tongogara and Sithole. We went into Mozambique and trained along the way to Chimoio and then in Manica town. We stayed in Manica up to the end of 1975; we were then moved from Manica to Nyadzonja, if you know Nyadzonja. I stayed in that area.

In February 1976, we went for training and there were so many Zimbabweans at Nyadzonja. We built our own houses using poles, dagga and thatched grass. As there were so many of us, we ended up roasting *munhondo* beads or seeds and eating plant roots because of hunger. We also caught wild animals with our hands. It was very difficult and in the event that we caught a wild animal we would then surrender it to

the leaders. We were advised not to eat everything we got. We later realised that it was good practice, because most of our comrades had died as a result of that.

There was also the problem of sell-outs and spies in the camp. I witnessed a certain incident when a certain guy used his jean jacket to communicate with Rhodesian forces back home. There was also someone who used snuff containers to put *chefu* or poison. At Nyadzonia people were stranded as a result of overpopulation and hunger, to the extent that am surprised when people say there is hunger in this country now. We witnessed hunger and starvation at Nyadzonia. I believe in self-reliance, not in aid and assistance; so we ended up having gardens and growing vegetables. We roasted maize and up to fifteen people had to smoke a single cigarette. In Feb 1976 I left Nyadzonia to Tanzania for training at Mgagao, where I stayed up to the end of the year. I met Ambassador Mbita, whom you are talking about at Mgagao; he was a Lieutenant by then, maybe he is now a brigadier, I don't know. He was working for OAU trying to unite ZANLA and ZIPRA. All the unity you see these days did not start recently; the old guys knew all about unity. They started advocating unity a long time ago.

I remember, when we finished training and we were preparing to come back home, in January 1977, we were more than 700 ZANLA forces trained at Mgagao from Mozambique to Tanzania. We used a boat called Mapinduzi, it ferried us from Beira to Tanzania. We spent almost a week on the boat. So towards the end of our training ZIPRA were being trained in its training camp, and ZANLA were doing the same. So Ambassador Mbita played a big role during the Nyerere leadership. J Chissano was a Foreign Minister of Mozambique; Benjamin Mkapa who ended up as the President of Tanzania, was the Foreign Minister, if I am not mistaken; I know that towards the end of our training they came and tried to unite ZIPRA and ZANLA. About 800 ZIPRA cadres came to join us at the Mgagao camp, so we planned to come to the operational zone together. It was successful in one way or the other, though it failed. On the other hand we managed to stay together in the camp, though we failed to come together in the front finally.

In Mozambique the same project was implemented and it was successful. 15 ZANLA and 15 ZIPRA were to form a battalion or a platoon. That happened after a long time, but I am trying to explain to you so that you may realise that unity started long ago; it did not start in recent days. After the training at Mgagao I was selected to remain behind as a trainer at Mgagao. Do you know some of the people who trained me? I know this leader, today he is still alive. When I arrived at Mgagao there was this instructor Chaitezvi, he was the Camp PC responsible for country affairs and the leader of the army; General Chiwenga, we used to call him Huggin Kambeu, retired Chimombe, I remember Amon. Perence Shiri who is the Air force Commander, was one of our instructors. There are many, I cannot remember all the comrades. I just know him as Perence Shiri. He never changed his name at training unless if he changed when he came back but at training he used Perence Shiri. There is also, Edwin Munyaradzi, he was Camp Security responsible for the security of

the camp. There was Comrade Zheppy, he was specialising in landmines; we had Goronga, Chibage. I think he is now doing Youth Service training. He was one of my instructors of terrain training. I was trained in guerrilla warfare. The instructors I mentioned were helping or assisting the Chinese instructors. The locals assisted the foreign instructors with language. At Mgagao Camp there was a Chinese camp for instructors; on the other side there was Tanzanian Defence Forces, but they were not a part of our instructors. So I can say that those were some of the things which transpired during training.

I can safely say we arrived in the country, January 1977, we passed through Chimoio before it was attacked on our way back home. Sorry for taking you back after remaining at Mgagao I once told you that I was chosen to be the instructor but I had a passion for going back home to fight the white soldiers. I believe up to this time we were the best trained ZANLA forces because that base had the most trained forces I want to believe up to now that we are one of the best trained forces, in spite of all the problems we encountered during training such as hunger, starvation and death. The Chinese also told us to remember that the former colonisers were also training counter-revolutionaries and the enemy was never going to accept defeat; they were going to use another method that was different from the gun, like economic warfare, mainly targeting re-colonisation so that the country would be a neo-colony.

We would say we were independent but in actual fact we would not be independent. So what we see these days, I think is an economic welfare, *changamire*, is it not true? In Rhodesia I operated in Gaza province along the Limpopo River in Changani, Venda, Basutho; that was along the South African border. We relaxed and played in the Limpopo River. In Beitbridge along Gwanda, that was where we mixed with the ZIPRA forces. Sometimes we fired at or fought against each other. ZIPRA patrolled in large numbers, or in big groups. Our provinces were in sectors and I was in Sector 4, we had leaders such as Rex Tichafa, some died, for example, Chiweshe, Stopper Chiridza, they are many; some are alive but many are dead.

We got food from the people around the area, I talked to the Venda, Changani and Sotho; most of us were not used to the languages, but we were in good books with those people. We managed to quickly recruit the local people and taught them the elementary knowledge of firearms, then we worked together; they helped us to understand the local language and other things. We taught the parents mainly. There were different training bases because there were many of us in Zambia and Mozambique and we did not have enough clothes. It was mainly the masses who provided us with everything, like food, clothes, even needles. You know, the masses were responsible for the war because we depended on the masses and compared them to fish and water. The Chinese used to teach us about unity with the mass. So we got all the information we wanted from the mass, all the secrets. In Gaza transportation was by donkeys, so the masses helped us to carry weapons and other things using their donkeys.

During the war for liberation the main problem we encountered, was with those people who were not cooperative. Sometimes the '*povo*' would spy against us. The other problem was of diseases because medicine was very in short supply. We had a few doctors in the struggle, who assisted us. Also in Beitbridge we had problems of keeps towards the end of the war 1975; our masses were now in protected villages and we faced the problem of lack of information and food. In this area there are no rivers, and there was a problem of getting safe water; the only boreholes there had been poisoned by the whites. The other problem was the people in Beitbridge were not good farmers and we ended up educating them that they had to farm so that they could get food. We walked for long distance, and that was a problem but lucky enough we had been trained. I remember 1978 there was a heavy downpour, and because we were sleeping in the bush, heavy rains disturbed us a lot. Another challenge was the helicopters which sometimes chased us, but that was the war. These were some of the problems we encountered.

The first battle we fought when we reached the front was against the Selous Scouts, not the white soldiers. They were captured by our forces; that was our first battle. I will not forget that battle, because it is the only battle where I got injured. It was a battle to remember. Our masses did not know that the people they were showing us had been captured by soldiers so they got in the mass. It was our first battle; a section was composed of ten to fifteen people, with a section commander, section PC, and security. The command will be at the centre as I indicated to you. We always had parades before we departed or got into the battlefield.

Thanks.

# Mariyo, Timothy

**Comrade Timothy Mariyo**  
[Kwekwe, 4 May 2008]

*Timothy Mariyo, was born in Mutare, Manyika Province on 11th June 1959. His father worked as a driver who travelled a lot. He went to school near the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border where he could see the movements of FRELIMO. He also had school mates from Mozambique. He joined the Zimbabwe freedom fighters in Mozambique*

My name is Timothy Mariyo; I am from Manyika in Mutasa District. I was born on 11th June 1959 in Mutare. I did my primary education at Elly Mission in Penhalonga. My father was working at the mine called Independence Mine. For Grade 3 I transferred to my rural school called St. George in Mutasa again. My father was a driver at Independence Mine. However with time my father changed and got employed at Mikiri (Meikle) or what was called Mountain Home, which was a wattle company. There he was also a driver; he drove those trucks called tipper. He could travel about 10-11km from their workplace to collect what they termed mottle at the Zimbabwe- Mozambique border. He travelled nearly on a daily basis and he could tell us how they were working with the whites.

So I did my Grade 3–5 at St. George. St. George is near St Augustine Mission at Tsambe. When we were there, around Grade 7 we could see *makamaradha*, FRELIMO. It used to get into our place. We also had schoolmates from Mozambique since it was near Mozambique. By then they were still waging their war in Mozambique, the war was not yet over. I then proceeded for form one at St. Augustine. When I was in Form 1, in fact

the first person to tell me that there was war was my mother because she used to talk of the late Dr Joshua Nkomo. I could hear them saying, they should give him his country. So I developed the interest to know the situation about the country. My mother would tell me that the likes of Joshua Nkomo are fighting for the blacks to rule themselves, look at what your father says about how the whites ill-treat them.

Moreover we could also see the treatment ourselves. Some parents could not send their children to school, while some had to brew beer, *kachasu*, for selling. The money they were given was not enough. They worked from 6am to 6pm, but the pay was not enough to buy anything. The whites did not want us to go fishing; they could fire bullets at us. So whilst at St Augustine we met some children who were older than

us, and who by then understood the politics better and they told us what was going around the country. In my view, when we were at St. Augustine we had just the same perception, because as ZJCs we were influenced by the Form Fours and there were some *camarades* who sometimes came and inspired us that to win back the country, we had to fight.

One day I decided to go and join the freedom fighters. I told my mother's young sister but she discouraged me, pointing out the fact that I was young. But I remained bold, at first she refused, as well as the second time. It was on the third time that she

appreciated my move; but she still said I was young, and what I was talking about was for mature persons. So one day we agreed with my friend to go ahead. In fact one of our classmates was a son of a businessman who was called Pswarayi. The others were called Charles Madhumbe, George Nyamunokora and Misheck Nyamunokora. Those were the people I teamed up with and crossed the border, since it was just nearby. We just went along, playing our paper ball. In an hour's time we were already on the border. When we arrived at the border we met the *camaraders* and it was in the month of June. It was 2 June, because the independence celebrations for Mozambique were held on the 5 June, and I was there. So the *camaraders* took us and asked us why we had decided to join them. They did not suspect anything bad about us, since we were very young men. We told them that we had decided to join our brothers and sisters there.

We walked together and slept in another household. The following day we were ferried by a motor vehicle to Manica, it was called Villa Manica. So at Villa Manica we saw that there were comrades there; they were not too many, they were around twenty. We were five, so we became twenty-five. We stayed in the camp of the *camaraders*. Whilst there, that was when the independence ceremony for Mozambique was held on the 5 June. We attended the ceremony and celebrated with them. We admired that. They told us a lot about how they fought against the Portuguese. From there we were carried to a place which was called Villa Peree, which is Chimoio today.

We arrived at the Zhunda base, where we met many comrades. There were many comrades including mature ones. There were many women, and we realised that for sure we had joined our fellow countrymen. There were some we could identify, but some we could not. We used to think that to join and train as a freedom fighter was easy, but when we were there, we realised that the living conditions were difficult. Still

this base belonged to the *camaraders*. It was a camp and we lived in the barracks which were there. When sleeping some would be on top and others on the bottom, even in schools in boarding schools I think that is what happens. We were troubled by things like, food problems, lack of bathing soap; the blankets and clothes we used could not be washed and so there were a lot of lice and diseases were rampant. There were some people who were sent to Tanzania for military training, but only the mature ones were selected. By then we were still young, we were in the 'toto' where the young lived, because of our size and youth. We moved from there to Nyadzonia.

But before that, that's when President Robert Mugabe came there, Cde Tekere and the late Chief Tangwena. Most of us did not know them, only a few knew them. The one whom we knew very well was Father Zimbabwe, the late Josh; that was the one we used to hear of. We had not heard much about the others. I think the problem during that time was that there were no radios, because of suppression; I do not know, may be whites did not want people to know what was happening. So when Comrade Mugabe, Tekere and Tangwena arrived there, they just arrived and entered in the crowd and could not say anything. With time, I think after a day or two, there were

some people who were observant, and they said there were some important people who were there, but did not know them or their identity.

So some people asked them who they were and that is when they said, “I am Mugabe, the other Tekere and Tangwena”. And people said, aah, ‘mashefu’, and then people came to know that they were superiors. Some of us thought that they did not belong there; in fact they as superiors should have gone elsewhere. You know, the quality of leadership; if they were other people they could have arrived and showed off for people to recognize them. But they did not do that, they arrived so humbly and joined the others. I just wanted to comment on such an arrival; that was so good.

Then we were carried from Zunda to Nyadzonia. I can say I and other comrades were the first people to reach Nyadzonia. There were *camaraders* who were there but they were very few. Then we started from scratch to establish the base. We started doing concurrent activities, building houses, and the barracks using tree logs. Some were cutting down trees, some cutting grass, some building and that is how we

worked. Some made plank beds, and others made grass mattresses for the people to sleep in comfort. Like I mentioned earlier on, I was in ‘*matoto*’ where the young men were confined. So many things happened there. Motor vehicles came and carried the superiors and the mature men for training. But there were other soldiers had already been trained who were there including Cakeston, Everisto, Dzamatsama, Tsuru, and

Comrade Charlie Saudi (the late), Gutura, Bombadharu, they were there. Some I have mentioned are now late but they were the *mashefu* at Nyadzonia. That is when I started to realise that life had changed. What I used to think and what I was seeing on the ground were different. Hunger haunted us, because we could go for two to three weeks without sadza. Sometimes we were given emergency porridge, the one

that was already prepared and we just had two spoons. In fact even the spoons were not there, so we ate using two fingers. We felt better for a short while, but within no time, in fact, in about two minute’s time we could felt the hunger again. So since we were in large numbers, things could not be sufficient. Diseases troubled us, they were in different forms, the women were often affected by what we termed hiccups, or ma- a, what do we called it, I have forgotten, but the most rampant was the hiccups, and even the hurricanes. The hiccups, could be heard when someone walking and made sounds like barking, but could not walk normal steps. It took a long time to reach their destination. There were no medicines, food was not there, of course there were clothes, but some got and others did not.

We saw the mature guys go for training and we wondered when we would also go. We stayed there, our barracks were on the downside and the barracks for the mature on the top. There was also a hospital there. We got water from Nyadzonia River, and prepared our food in the kitchen. Sometimes food was brought in trucks in 50kg mealie-meal, and we celebrated ‘*kuti vakomana isadza here iri?*’ because when it came, it was us who started to eat. We went there and joined the line and we were given our sadza. So what would happen is that the relish we could get was bakayawa (a type of fish) with a lot of salt or dried meat. A lot of salt was put in the relish so that

a little of it could exhaust the big portion of sadza. So some people could eat sadza with salt, and those who exhausted the piece of meat or fish, but at the same time had lots of sadza, could exchange sadza for salt. Some clever ones got a lot of sadza, some went for sadza twice, but it was a serious offence and if caught one was beaten. We stayed for quite a long time there.

In 1976 another man called Kanengoni came, he was sent by the DA of Buhera who was called Kanengoni. He came with five snuff bottles (*nenhekwe dzake*). Of the five, four were poisoned and one was not. So when this man arrived at Nyadzonia he said he had arrived at Buhera searching for a job, and that is when he met the DA. He was

asked if he wanted a job, and he was offered the job which the DA required someone brave but with lots of money and was given part of the amount. He said he asked what the job was and was told that they wanted to send him to Mozambique and poison the food, then when he got back they would have given him the remaining amount. The man agreed and he was carried to Forbes Border Post, and he arrived like a genuine comrade wanting to fight for his country like the others. The man was received by the camaraders, so when he arrived at Nyadzonia, there were some people who saw him

and went together into the camp, and they realised that he had his '*fodya*' because he used to '*puta*' some of that which was genuine. By then there was not any security mechanism whereby people arriving went to the security and got searched. There was some security, but not strong enough so that the enemy infiltrated. That is what happened there, the guy arrived and got into the camp and he joined the company of the elders, for the compounds differed. There were A, B, C, D and seniors, who were the first to reach there and had the experience. The companies could alternate and rotate when it comes to fetching wood, and people could just throw the firewood at the kitchen.

The kitchen was not protected by fence, so the *guzinyero* could cook; they are the people we called cook' today. The kitchen was called *guzinyo*. So this man could study the whole situation, he realised that the *guzinyero* relaxed at some point, and they rotated according to the company. The advantage was that when your company was on duty you could feed yourself well on that particular day. So the man studied all this and had his poison hidden. So one day his company went to fetch firewood, and he thought he could now have the chance. He also went to collect firewood and brought

his load. He came back and saw the *guzinyeros* relaxing. He then took his first *nhekwe* with poison, for he had already collected them from where he had hidden them in the forest. So he successfully poisoned the first three pots, but on the fourth he was burnt by steam and the *nhekwe* fell inside the pot. So as usual at night we went for our meal and ate and went to our barracks to sleep. Within no time we heard the emergency signal. So when we heard the emergency signal we had to respond to it; even when

suffering from diarrhoea you could sacrifice or even mess up. It was better to miss a parade than not to respond to emergency, because emergency was very important. So we were told that we had eaten poison; some were vomiting and so on. When we got there some people were already preparing salted milk to enable some comrades

to vomit. So people took the milk and vomited but some could not; there were some who even died.

I did not vomit; even after I drank the salted milk I could not, so I had to put my fingers into the mouth in order to vomit. The poison could not be cleared. So people asked what had happened. What really happened was discovered by one comrade who had seen that *nhekwe* in his plate, because the superiors were the last to eat. That is when they became suspicious that something had happened. The following day we were called to a parade to expose the person who was responsible for the poisoning. So there was this myth that if a bullet was fired in the air it would turn and drop on the person responsible. Charles was the person to fire the gun. That person who had poisoned us was afraid that the bullet would drop on him and be identified, so he panicked and quickly confessed that he was the one responsible. He was arrested and asked to explain how he had done it. He was taken away, but we did not know where he was taken to. Some comrades who developed stomach aches were taken to Chimoio for treatment.

So it was not a matter of being clever. In my life I had never known that the gun kills, and it was my first time to hear the sound of firing guns. And I do not think I will not forgive that because I do not know if my mother, father and grandfather saw it. So what happened is that I saw Nyathi before he came with the whites. He came and said he was one of the survivors, but not because he was clever, but those who died made the others survive; because the bullets which shot the others were the ones which protected them so that they did not die. He was someone well-respected on the front, because he actually led the comrades. But because when he came to Mozambique he lacked discipline, he was summoned to appear before the parade and he was beaten as punishment. There were many of those who were summoned because of their indiscipline on the front, and others in Mozambique. There were many things which were not encouraged in the war. Discipline was very important; it was a reflection that people knew what they were doing, because wherever people were, control was very important. So if one lacks discipline he/she was supposed to be punished accordingly. So it was not only Nyathi who was beaten; the likes of Charlie were also beaten, and some of them were trained personnel. They were all beaten and embarrassed in front

of people, and they were reduced to the expected levels. But after the beating one was supposed to sit up and clamour '*pamberi ne ZANU*' and '*pasi nevatengesi*.' That was what was done, and it was a sign of acknowledging the wrong-doing and that nobody had victimised you. What came to be known as '*chirenje*' happened many times, even in the camp.

*Chirenje* was an illegal practice by some soldiers who could steal clothes or shoes of the other fellows for barter trade with the communities in Mozambique. We would give them trousers and they could prepare chicken and sadza for us, and one would know that it's okay. Those who smoked were given tobacco. It was barter trade, money was not very important; some were given beer like '*vhinyu*', or something like that. But when such things were exposed the culprits were beaten and locked up, where

they spent a number of days to show others the consequences of indiscipline, so that other people would not do the same. People were forced into such practices because of insufficient food.

There were activities we did in the camp before we went for training, because we were young. We were trained to march, as it instilled discipline in us. We called it *ku'fora*. We were taught politics, and the philosophy of ZANU. Each and every one of us went to Mozambique, but some of them did not know of their mission there, so

they went with the idea that when they came back they were going to kill the white person who was troubling them, or they were going to fight the neighbour who was their enemy; but that was not to be the case. ZANU's mission was not to hate the skin of the whites, instead we wanted to eradicate the system which they were using. So, we were engaged in political orientation under the trees. We were taught why we had gone there, the aim and the focus of the ZANU Party. They told us the aim of the party, when it was formed, where we came from and where we were heading to; everything. Our personal aims of retaliating against the enemies at home were all brushed aside; we were all told to focus on one enemy. For political orientation, we all gathered in one place and the political commissars sensitized and taught us. Those who had talents sang national songs. As I said, we went to war in different groups; there were some who went as thugs who were going to Mozambique to run away from crimes. Some were school children; you know, some children from school did not have much on other minds. There were others who had the experience which we did not have because we were still very young. So when all these different groups met, there was need for political orientation, for them to have the same objective.

Reverting to Nyathi's story; Nyathi was later assigned to go back to Zimbabwe since he was operating in the front. He was someone with a big position, but I do not know what his position was. I like to say things I know. So after he returned home, that was when he came with the whites. It was on the 9th August when they arrived, because on the 8th August we had activities we were doing in celebrating the day ZANU was formed. There were various competitions including marching and playing soccer. We really enjoyed and even forgot that we were in war. So on the 9th August 1976 we had to continue with the activities we had not completed and we were preparing for that. We were expecting our team called 'matoto' to win against 'madhara', in the marching competition. We wanted to show the skills we had learnt. We had not undergone military training but we had done some drills which we displayed on that day.

What usually happened in was that motor vehicles came to collect people for training. People were happy to go for training, because it meant that they were graduating from one life into another. Everyone wished to get trained such that s/he could go back home to fight the enemy. So there was the tendency that when motor vehicles came everybody ran to the vehicles, regardless of whether one was going or not. Some thought the vehicles had brought mealie-meal, or came to take people for training.

So the day it happened, that day for Nyathi, we were in our marching competition and we started hearing the noise of the moving vehicles. We just heard the sound of moving vehicles and we were happy. We heard people the people who were near the Nyadzonja River where our barracks were situated, cheering. The barracks were a distance from where we were holding the competition, and people started running to get there. There were already other people at the competition who were preparing to display their skills as well. So it became more like a mass target, because the people went there in large numbers; and we also wanted to go there. We were being trained by Cde Teddy on our 'matoto' side, and George Serima was the chief of ku'Matoto,' but we had also the likes of Garfield who however died on that day, and another guy called Mujoma, whom we called Sam. He was very smart, and he had a complexion like that of the boys from South Africa, the Sotho guys who are handsome. Then Teddy is the one who was leading us in the running that day, and he said that we should not get out of the track. Those who had gone out of the track went back. So I think he was the person who made us survive; there we talk of discipline. When we were back on track he said, where were you going? You should remain in the track. As soon as we went back, that was when the guns started being fired. We then said asked what was happening. We slept on the ground. We then heard it was gun firing through and through; we then crawled to towards the back of the barracks, and started running towards the Nyadzonja River, where we were to cross over.

When we got to the river we saw comrades who were there bathing and some clothing themselves; they were women comrades. We told them that things were not okay. They asked us what was happening, and we replied that we did not even know. Where we had come from it was just smoke, the barracks were on fire and there were guns being shot. We crossed the river and having travelled some distance, that was when I realised I was bleeding. I was surprised because I did not even know that I had been shot. I only noticed it later because of the bleeding. The wound was not deep, but I realised that I had been wounded, though my condition was better than my colleagues' who had been severely wounded. Then people askew started asking what had happened? The survivors, who were nearby said, it was Nyathi, who came and said, 'The comrades have turned against each other.' and started firing bullets. He was with some whites in armoured cars. We later discovered that many people had died, simply because people were crowded in the open ground and many of them had gone there running. Our people were not armed while those who came with Nyathi had machine guns which fired many bullets.

So we walked on, and met other comrades who had been severely injured. We helped to carry them and arrived at Pungwe River. Pungwe River has fast flowing water and it is wide. When we were thinking of how to cross the river, that was when we heard the sound of the bridge being destroyed. The bridge was destroyed because Nyathi and company had to ensure that there would be no reinforcement from other comrades to come and help in the fighting. People wondered what had happened and we did not know that it was the bridge that had exploded, and we were still

thinking of how to cross the river. So what happened there was that there came the *povo* from Mozambique with ‘*zvimwadhiya*’. I remember the two old men who came there. One *chimwadhiya* could only carry four people, three of us and the owner of the *chimwadhiya*. So it could carry two injured comrades, one uninjured and the owner. But at the same time, some comrades did not listen, and thought they could swim across; none reached the other side, they all drowned. So we had to stop the others because we realised that we could all perish. The water was forceful, it was not a joke. So those old men helped us to cross the river, two injured and one uninjured until we all crossed.

Having crossed we travelled in the night. I do not know where the *camaraders* were coming from, wanting to go in the other direction, where we were coming from. So when they heard our footsteps, they asked themselves what it was. They thought, maybe it was the enemy. That was their own thinking. Some wanted to shoot in the air, but others advised that if they fired in the air, the other side might fire back thinking

that it was a fight that had started. So what happened was that the *camaraders* fired shots in the air, and with what we had experienced where we were running away from, we made a u-turn, and started going back to where we were coming from. We were in full speed; I collided with a tree, a big tree, and fell down but got up and continued running.

They started shouting that they were the *camaraders*. We went back to see that they were really the *camaraders*. They asked us what had happened. Those who had witnessed because they were near told them what they had seen, because some of us were far when it happened, and we only heard guns being fired. So we had to go separate ways, we went in opposite directions. They gave us directions, on how to reach the place where we were to wait to be collected, by the, to go where we were going.

We travelled during the night, in darkness, until we found where to sleep. There were no houses, we just found where we said, “Guys, let’s sleep”. We mixed, women, men, young girls, the big boys and the elderly; we slept like, a man followed by a woman and alternated through and through in a line. In the morning we had to travel

to the tarred road. On the way, we passed through the *povo* fields where people had just finished harvesting so we obtained some mealies left accidentally in the field; we could feed on that because we had nothing else to eat. When we reached the appointed place, we were ferried to Masengere base by vehicles. Masengere was in Chimoio and we stayed there for a few weeks. Life was just the same as where we had come from with the war and the hunger. We also got some harvest residues from the field when we went to fetch firewood.

Collecting harvest residues was not allowed, but because of hunger we were forced to do it. It was not supposed to be known at the base that one had collected the harvest residue because he could be punished for that. The way they used to discipline was that when caught, one could be given strokes equivalent to your crime. I remember when we were at Nyadzonia the prisoners could wear distinctive clothes. They came

in groups of about five, wearing something like *zvimburchisi* and did not have their trousers on. They were beaten to the extent that if one did not mess up the pants, he was not released. They were beaten until they told the comrade that they had now messed up. The comrade and the person showed to everyone that there it was. So it was a way of ensuring that discipline prevailed, because where there is war there should be maximum discipline.

Then having stayed at Masengere, we then moved to Doroi. Doroi was a farm, and someone called Caetano stayed there. We started to build a base at Doroi. The situation at Doroi was just the same as in previous camps, there was hunger, no houses, there were diseases, and no clothes to wear. I need not repeat because I told you previously how the situation was. So while we were at Doroi, we could not go for military training due to our young age, because only the mature ones were selected to go for training. It was difficult for one to go for training, but we already had political orientation in our heads. What was left was to have military training. It was difficult, and some had come back home without being, some could hide from going for training since cowards were always there. Some did not want, they knew that once trained, when back from training they were to be sent back home to fight. Others did not want to go and fight so they pretended to be sick. Such things were there. So various intakes took place but still one did not go.

One day they commanders asked for able bodied people to go for manoeuvre exercises. A group of young boys just decided to go, and we mixed ourselves with the grown ups. Then we travelled, we walked a long distance. When we arrived at the railway line, we saw a motor vehicle already waiting. We did not know that the vehicles were waiting to carry us to go for training. So the idea was that they wanted to see people who were strong, who could travel to this point, and considered for military training. So those who were left behind thinking that it was for the manoeuvre were left out of the training just like that. When we got there we found ourselves in the group of mature people. Some tried to say that we were too young, but others said that we were young men, and we had come from Zunda and Nyadzonja together. Personally I had a large body and I was tall, which was to my advantage, so I found myself in the crowd. So that is the way we went to Beira. We arrived at Beira and got into a ship and went for training in Tanzania.

When we got there we settled and stayed at Farm 4 in Nachingwea where we were trained. I did artillery, some Mortar 2, Mortar 60 and 12,7 anti-air and others. After training we were supposed to come back again by sea, but a security discovery was made, and it was recommended that we should not return by sea. We were told that, it was suspected that there were submarines to attack us, and we could all perish, so we were flown by plane to Mozambique. When we got to Mozambique, I knew I had the opportunity to go to Zimbabwe to fight. Some of us came and stayed at Mubhanana, but I did not know where the others were posted to.

I managed to be in the group which was supposed to go to the front; we were driven to this mountain called Tsetsera. When looking at it we saw as if it was a 90

degree elevation; the mountain was so high that if someone reached the top he could see most of Zimbabwe, especially the Bocha side. So that is the point from which we entered Zimbabwe. We entered through Tsetsera into Bocha, but we were destined for Hwedza. We left some of the group in Bocha, in Zimunya, but the others, including myself, were asked to go to Hwedza. We went through Muzhambe, and arrived in Hwedza. We were given reception by the comrades who were there and whom I had worked with before, including Soweto, Major Edmore now in 3 Brigade, this Makuriya, I last knew him as a Captain; I don't know his position now. We called him Knox Chapera. Then there was comrade Masunga, who was a Lieutenant-Colonel at Air Defence, but is now retired. There was also Blaster, who has also retired but we worked together in Air Defence. Others were Masara, Mabasahondo, Matsika, they are so many. There was Mannex Mulongosi, Periperi Shungu, some are late, with whom we met in these battles in Hwedza. We also had Mike Nyambuya, who was our Sectoral MO of Tangwena Sector. When I got to Hwedza, there was what we called Tangwena Sector in Manyika Province, but it was Hwedza Detachment.

Our commanders in Manyika Province were Cde Dominic Chiningi (now General Constantine Chiwenga), then Tonderai Nyika, who was the provincial commander. At the sectoral level we had Cde Mike Mutare (Mike Nyambuya) and also Comrade Mahovhorosi (late now, he died on the way to Mozambique with their reports). When I got to Hwedza in 1977, it was when I came to know how to use the gun, when faced with the enemy; when we were still recruits or new in the field, like this, we panicked. During the first battle I panicked, because we conducted surprise attacks and ambushes; and the same was done to us. Sometimes the enemy surprised us at our bases. They came with planes and others came using ground forces, or things like that. In the third battle I knew what to do; I knew how to fire the shots. It was barrel to barrel and was now different with the front style. So we could see that it was really war. All in all, I encountered fifteen battles; both those that involved us attacking the enemy and those which the enemy attacked us. While I was in Hwedza, I worked very well with another person who was doing logistics in the detachment, called Mhiripiri Shungu. He loved working and walking with me. I worked well with him, but at some point I had to leave him when I entered into another section of Comrade Masanga Black Africa. I also worked with the sections of Liberty Gavadya (late now), then Dhuze Bonde (also late) and Master Blaster. We changed sections every now and again.

Whilst in Hwedza, we operated in areas like Zhombe in the African Purchase Areas, those small farms. From there we could enter Gangare, Bhangi, Chitida, Pasina, Chidhenge, Zenda 1, Zenda II, Chigondo, Garabha, Bhasvi, Mukurumure in Chinonga, Chisasike from there to Shava, Gonese, Musami, Rocha and other areas. I knew the whole of Hwedza, even the Kraalhead, I knew them all. In 1979 we went to Chiduku when sent to collect supplies. I passed through Chiduku and entered that side of Ruda and entered into Kambudzi, and went down, collected the supplies and came back. The supplies included bullets, rockets, the telescopes which were put on

the smart semi-automatic rifle, and all the other materials we used. We covered the distance I am talking about from Hwedza to Mozambique, by foot; sometimes we had letters written to us by the chiefs, that by such and such a date we should be back, so we did exactly as stated.

People like Chimbwidos and Mujibhas worked very hard during the war. The mujibhas carried letters; they were the ones who did all the security work, to see where the whites had their bases and the type of weapons they had. Their work was tough; the girls involved did the cooking. At times the whites arrived while they were cooking and burnt them in their houses. So such things were difficult. I experienced the war and I really knew what it meant, and we knew our aim. When we entered into other areas not entered before by other comrades, we saw the kraal head and chiefs and introduce ourselves, as soon as we arrived there and explained why we came and the reasons for our mission. Sometimes they started with resistance but with time, it was swift. As it were we talked politics and explained the mission of the party; we listened to their grievances, worked together and things went on well.

Anyway, there were sell-outs, of course. In any revolution sell-outs and things like that are always there. In 1979 we were asked to go to Chihota, and the comrades who went to Chihota or Sadza area in Charter came through our hands, since we knew the area. We led them to cross Save, and came back; we knew the area well, the crossing points, the shallow areas and the deep ones where people could drown.

When we were asked to leave for Chihota, I sweated, because in Hwedza we could go for about six months without encountering the enemy. We were in sort of a semi-liberated zone, the whites were afraid to come there. They knew that if they came to Hwedza, bullets would be fired; and we had set landmines in the area had roadblocks. That was how we worked. So the enemy took about six months without exchanging gunshots; so we tended to relax. That is why you could see people panicking when ambushed. But still at times they came and disturbed us and went back. Chihota where I was going to, was an area where comrades had not been to. The people there did not know what a comrade was, so we had to start afresh. We also knew that at night we could actually see the lights in Salisbury. So Chihota was going to be difficult. So on the very day that we were told we were going, a letter was written to us, which was received by the Attachment Logistics officer, with whom we worked. It instructed us that by the following day we were supposed to leave for Chihota. In two or three days time, we were supposed to report to Chihota with a letter which we had to give the Attachment Commander called Prosper. At one point we resisted and we said it was a difficult area, '*kunehondo mbishi*.' But we could do nothing except to go; so we said to ourselves, "Guys, let's go." When we crossed Save, I met another young man I grew up with. He was called Big Azemba. He was *gonna poshito*, he was an assistant to another comrade called Serious (now late). He was an Attachment Commander. At one point we worked together in Hwedza but was later transferred to Mhondoro. But he only took a few days in Mhondoro and he passed away. So this young man was there, and for someone who had come from an area without hot war, things were

really tough for him and he ran away. I met him in Charter and I asked Big, what had happened? And he said he was no longer going back because things were tight. I told him that was the war. I asked him what had happened, and he told me. And I told him that we were going to Chihota and Mhondoro. I think you know they are just the same. He then joined another section with other comrades.

Our Section was received by other comrades who we had met, and they guided us to another area, where others did the same until we entered Hwedza, and from there we entered Chimbwanda, the farms in Chihota. When we reached Chimbwanda, we were received by comrades who were there. They called us Comrades and said to me, "Young man, that is the real war you have entered; this is where we are." Some of them I had met before in Hwedza; there was Culture, the late Culture, he died in that zone. I liked that guy so much, because when I arrived in Hwedza he was one of the people I met first. They had about six months in the front and those were the people who taught us how to operate. Since we had not been in the area, we had to listen to them. We had just spent two days in Chihota, and he told us that while we were there we should always stay prepared because no hot sadza is eaten here. In Chihota there were no bushes like in Hwedza, so we practiced daily basing, staying in the villages. We could allocate and distribute ourselves in different households in a given village and we stayed there. We got away from there at night; we slept in the contours. We took two days and we were already entrenched in an attack. It was very hot; it was not a joke. We could not eat hot sadza. Chihota was difficult, and there was no terrain, there was nowhere to take cover. The trees were so small, so we operated in areas like Chimbwanda, Landas, that side of Mahusekwa, in Mudzimurema, Jirisa and other areas I have now forgotten; you know, it has been a long time. But the areas are the exact areas which we operated in. At the bases in the night, some people who had not seen comrades came, and we talked to them about the aims of the party. Some went back to Harare and came with others, so that they could see comrades as well. We talked to them, and they brought us clothes and other things we needed but we did not have. They brought shoes and they gave us money; but we were not allowed to handle money, so we surrendered it to the chiefs. I do not know where the chiefs surrender the money; I do not know if it was in Mozambique if it was confiscated, I do not know. But what we knew was that we had to give to the chiefs and it was taken to Mozambique. We were left with the clothes and we shared with other sections. In Chihota the war was the more serious compared with Hwedza, because in Hwedza we could lay ambush where there was good cover. We could also do our operations while being hidden, and we were not exposed.

In Chihota we were easily seen and people were there. A lot of things happened, you know, during the war. The other thing I saw, I was told by another old man in Gandanzara, who was called Sakureba, who was a spirit medium, *vaisvikirwa nemudzimu*. Personally I started smoking when I was very young, and I travelled with *nhekwe*. We woke up in the morning and asked the spirit mediums to lead and protect us. At night we went after sunset, to thank them for protecting us the whole

day, and asked to be protected the following day. But some of the chiefs did not like that, especially Mahovhorosi and Matipa; they took away everything we used in connection to that and burnt them. So what happened was that we could pass through and consult Sekuru Sakureba when we were going or coming from Matidzi. He guided us; told us the path to adhere to. They emphasized things like not to commit adultery and other unnecessary things. We were told not to do such things even when we came from Mozambique. We were told the aim of our fighting, so they emphasized that it was a reminder for us not to forget about them. But the issue which was heavily emphasised was women; they emphasized that we should not ‘play’ with women and not to get drunk, not to loot people’s things and all such bad things that would derail the progress of the party. So there was that Eight Points of Attention we used to sing, which goes like, “Kune nzira dzemasoja dzekuzvibata nadzo.” They were guidelines which guided us and helped us not to go out of track. One controlled himself and came back on track on his/her own, and we reminded each other as well. So Sekuru Sakureba used to tell us many things about the proceedings of the war; he told us that we were going to win the war and repossess our country, if we followed what the mediums of the country required you to do. Those were the things we did.

During the struggle there were temptations, especially to us young men who were handsome, you know. We could see that when we were there in Hwedza, some *chimbwidos* tempted us to the point that one defied the rules and regulations. Some comrades did that, so the *chimbwidos* thought that all comrades did that. Adultery was something that caused some people to die. Personally I never did that; I saw beautiful women, very beautiful *chimbwidos* who loved me so much. They played around with me asking me to tell them when I started being involved in the struggle, what happened? This also involved being friendly to each other at the bases, may be discussing after eating. Personally I never entertained that. Of course the girls brought in blankets and prepared where to sleep for us, but I never got involved. There were some chiefs we knew very well that they were interested in women; but I am telling you, it cost people’s lives. You might think I am joking but it really happened. I still remember of one comrade who was burnt in a house. We were at the base and whites arrived at the other house where sadza was prepared and saw the girls not there. They had gone with sadza to the base. This comrade had come to this house from the base to see his girlfriend. So they locked themselves in a house and by then the whites were following everything. So the whites set the house on fire and they could not escape from the house. We later heard that the comrade was set on fire in the house. We were at Makanga base near Ruzawe in Hwedza. So such practises like entertaining girls caused problems. It was not good because some comrades even reached the extent of fighting for the girls, and had to be reminded that it was bad.

Some dated many *chimbwidos* and these women got angry about it, and poisoned the comrade. The girl poisoned some eggs she brought and one got carried away to believe that the lady loved him so much, without knowing that the food was poisoned. I remember that this happened to another comrade and he went mad. So

I avoided such things. I never involved myself in such practises. Up till now I do not like women. I made my choice of the one I married, and I knew that she is the woman I love and up to this day, that is the woman I have. So I am saying in Chihota the environment was different from that of Hwedza, because it was a new area to us, and there were also girls who were beautiful and with ginger (verve, passion), who were smart, coming from Harare. So some tried to lure us, some were even introduced to us by mothers, that this is my child (daughter), assuming that we were interested in women. But we told them that, we were just concentrating on the war and nothing else. So in Chihota there were those issues. When we got into battles, the battles could not end quickly because we ran after each other for long distances; the land was bare so each side could see where the other was. So we stayed for about two to three weeks and that was when the ceasefire was proclaimed; when we were still in Chihota.

I asked myself what that meant. Some told me that there was a Lancaster House Conference, and people were talking about ceasefire; they agreed that the war should stop. While we were in another township at Randamu, we got the Herald newspaper. In fact we did not buy it, but we were just given by povo. Going through the paper, we got the news that Cde Josiah Tongogara had died. It caused us pain; we asked ourselves why it had happened and how? It was so painful to us because he was the person who inspired us and made us brave all the way. We heard that he had died because of a car accident, but we could not believe that. It pained us so much. All the comrades found the news painful, and had bad moments in the front, but all the same we heard of the ceasefire. We however continued to question ourselves, for the war was just over, why had that happened? We wished he was with us to see the liberation. But that is what happens in war, not everyone lives to see the liberation; some die and some are injured. So there was a real ceasefire. We then went to Mahusekwa where the buses were. The buses came and carried us to Dzapasi and to Chiururwi where we had to settle first. But later there was problem with water, and we had to move to Rout Dam in Buhera, where there was this river; from there I went to Bulawayo at Entumbane.

While we were in Entumbane, things were not okay, because there was a war which broke out, and we moved to Gozhwari. Then from Gozhwari some people were transferred to Chipinge, in Chibuwe. I did not go to Tongogara, but we went to Llewellyn, for integration. From Llewellyn we went to Mbalabala, to 4 Infantry Battalion which was in Zaka, in Mutamba. I did not stay long in Mutamba; I was posted to Air Defence here in Redcliff because Smith did not have air defence. That is where I worked from 1981 until I retired in 2000. I retired on medical grounds. I have some medals; that of liberation I have got it, that of DRC, that of Mozambique, and also of Angola.

I have also got a silver medal for my long service. I think I have got six of them. The way I see things is that, when we joined the army, or when we got to the APT surrendering the weapons; when we had our country, I think we fought for the people, all the Zimbabweans, in general. We said we had brought independence for

the country, and the country was ours. When we joined the army and police, we were told that we were now apolitical, meaning that we were no longer active in politics. So that was when the others got into the picture; some of those we fought during the war, penetrated into the structures of ZANU (PF), and we were no longer there. Having now retired from the army we are now being asked to start from below ranks or low ranks. Anyway, it is not bad; that is what the party likes for us to start from low levels. But to be honest it is fair. People, whom we taught politics under trees, taught them the aims of the party and the mission of ZANU PF. Those people, whom we educated, are the ones who are in actual fact leading us, but I have got this vast experience. I told you the route I travelled from Mozambique going for training, involvement on the front, mobilisation of the povo, up until people came to understand what they were fighting for and where they were going. But now that we have retired from the army, you realised. If you look at the chiefs; he is Brigadier, when he retires he is absorbed into the Politburo. Some are members of parliament, some Deputy Ministers and others Ministers, but on our level, we even have our colonels who have retired but now they are destitute. They have not been given any place just for him or her to have.

In other countries such things do not happen, even if you go to America, there is no person who rules the country without having been a soldier, they know what that means. But in Zimbabwe it is different; but we are saying at our level, because if you ascend or raise yourself to higher level, what about at the middle? Whom do you think will be left? Look at it, the problems we now have, the country is now going; it is going because of the people who assumed positions in these structures. Eeh, I heard other people saying that if you want to make money join ZANU PF. There is now another system. Some ask me, is it still the ZANU PF people used to know? Is this the ZANU we knew? This is because people knew the aim of the party from the grassroots from long back. But what is happening is that people no longer understand it. The party is manifested and infiltrated by criminals. People who are hungry and greedy. I am now referring to what is happening these days; we are done with the war. We have the country now. If you look at it, someone stands in front of the people asking them to vote him into power and says, he was going to do this and that for them. There is nothing like that; that is lying to people. You could be promising people things which they do not want! Instead you should tell them that that you would like them to work with you, and ask them what they would like you to do for them.

About the elections. In the last elections, we saw the MDC gaining majority of seats in parliament. Those who were elected by the people to represent them in parliament could not go back to the people. They were afraid the people were going to ask them where they had been, because some of them had abandoned the people who had elected them; they forgot about them; they forgot the war veterans; they forgot the mujibhas and the chimbwidos. If you forget these people you also forget the party. You see that they are now left exposed alone, because they are just greedy, at the expense of the majority. When it comes to the war we are facing, it is difficult. It requires involving the people in all things that are being done. Again, it is important that the

people are told the truth, because they can see what is happening. They keep records; they know today this was said, tomorrow something else was said, but nothing is being done. They have created a problem for the party, and ZANU PF appears to be shaking because some of the people who entered into the system have been infiltrated by the enemy because of greed and they no longer have followers. People track all these things, that is why the NGOs are giving people food, but Member of Parliament never went there. NGOs are now gaining mileage, they are working for the opposition; they give them food and promise to give more, saying ZANU PF does not do anything for the people. So, that way certainly we are defeated. This time, we should look forward and evaluate where we came from and where we are heading, because the party is for the people.

Cde President has remained alone, if you look in 2000 when we got involved in the land issue, these people said that it was not possible. But if you look now, they are the very people with large farms, with centre pivots, and beautiful houses. They allocated the good areas to themselves, and we were given those places that were underutilised, and were not used by the whites. We got there and started clearing the land; at that time they argued that it was not good. We left some whites with some farms and co-existed. But these people were sitting in the comforts of their offices and viewing from afar. They argued that it was not good, it was anarchy, and that we were causing havoc in the country. But now this time around, they are now the very people who are well-settled because they went to confiscate all the things, like the beautiful houses, good farms and everything, doing whatever they wanted. They are seen going to GMB to collect food, saying it is for their workers. But there are some elderly, in fact, who go to the GMB to fight to get even a 5kg to survive. Those are the people we fought for, they just want 5kg to survive but they cannot find it, because other people come and collect all the grains claiming that it is their own workers. So we ask them if it meant they were no longer farming, while they have got the centre pivot, with farms of 30 to 300ha. Why were they not farming? They should farm. The maize these people claim is for their workers, finds its way to the black market, and is sold to the ordinary people. People track everything, and end up saying it is ZANU PF which is causing all this. They do not say that these are actions of certain individuals. We have

so many culprits in ZANU PF who are greedy. If we go there and advise them that what they are doing is bad, they say that we are *wapanduka*.

They use this word, because they know how that word pains me. If I am referred to as mupanduka, I start thinking a lot. I ask myself what the others are thinking by saying that. That is why even if the opposition comes with huge sums of money, while I am this poor, I will just tell them go away and to take their money with them. This is because, first, we have the objectives of the party, and secondly, we have the agreements we made with the dead, who died fighting for the country. They said, "Comrades, I am dying but you continue with the struggle." So I cannot sell them out today! What shall I say I am doing? It is impossible! it is better for me to die poor, knowing however that ZANU PF is in order. If you go to rural and other areas, you

feel for those who say they were once the freedom fighters. They have torn trousers, no shoes and nothing. Instead of people to sympathising with such people, they are told they fought for nothing! What did you fight for when they are suffering like that? However, it is wrong, you are shouting at people who endured for quite a long time, so that we are now saying we have freedom. This is because of us freedom fighters, we delivered what we wanted, that was the freedom; liberation. That was a great achievement. What else did you want? To see me with a flashy car then you would appreciate that I fought the struggle? No, it is not like that but what I am saying is that we must be recognised for the job we did. If you go to Kenya right now, there were whites who were given farms in recognition for what they did during the Second World War. But here in Zimbabwe it will never happen; if you say you are a war veteran, even the help you wanted will never be given to you. I do not know the crime we committed. Was it a crime to go to Mozambique? Was it the crime of liberating the people? What is it? Even in the party, when we go to ZANU PF, that is where our father and mother is; so we will never get out of ZANU PF.

Some got out, but not us, we were born there, that is where our mother and father are. We will never opt out of the party; but they try by all means to victimise us and tell us painful words, to frustrate us and to stop us from reaching where they are doing the deals which tarnish the party. There is something that these young ones of today do; they go near the chiefs who they know are very powerful, and they lie that the war veterans are saying this and that; this is to ‘feed the chief with poison’. That chief will never realise that they are lying and all what they need is money. If another party was formed they will shift to that party, because they know very well that if the war veterans work closer to the chief, they will tell him the truth. They will tell the chef the truth about what they discussed, and these young ones do not want that. Even when we have genuine problems and we want them to reach the president they are blocked, they do not reach there. Even today they are going and telling him that things are okay! Now look at what happened in the elections; they lied to him that things were okay on the ground. We used to tell him, “Chief, the ground is not level.” This is because we know what the people want. We are the political commissars; we get information exactly as it is but in terms of politics no political commissar can stand there more than a war veteran, because we actually drank that; politics is our food. So people must stop lying. If they want the truth they should travel and get the truth, and not what they are doing now. People must respect the party, because if you do not respect the party it means you are not respecting the people. The party is for the people, nobody can say they possess the title deeds of ZANU PF. I have never seen that person; but they are going around lying that they are pro-ZANU PF while they are not, and doing things that tarnish the party. The fact that people voted for the MDC does not mean that they do not love ZANU PF. There are members of ZANU PF going out of the party, condemning what others are doing, and what they see. Only the president alone stood his ground and by the truth; all the others are being bribed by the British. Some are given money and others do espionage.

In other areas if you do espionage, you are hanged by the neck, but here in Zimbabwe they are forgiven, and things are just allowed to go on; but sometimes they reaches extremes. Personally I am not happy with what is happening. Surely people who fought in the struggle are being insulted. What we need is only recognition. What the young people are saying that takes back the country to where it was tied, is wrong. A country cannot be treated like that; like a goat. It is very difficult. The children no longer have guidance; I don't know who is causing that. I think what I want to say is so much that we can spend five days or so in this discussion. Other issues I leave out. But briefly, in terms of my own history of going to war I explained to you. I was called Comrade Tafirenyika Aleck. Tafirenyika is my liberation war name. In Hwedza or in any corner of the country they know I am Cde Tafirenyika; those were the people I worked with in Hwedza, and the povo in Chihota. And the comrades I mentioned, some are still alive today and some are dead. But I think we should keep the spirit that gave us back the country going.

I wish you many years; please you should keep and guard jealously the country. Okay.

## Matete, Sabina R.

**Comrade Sabina R. Matete**  
[Kwekwe, 13 May 2008]

*Sabina Matete, whose war name was Fungai Hondo, was born in 1963 in Mutoko. She had her primary education at Kagande. She joined the freedom fighters early in life, when she was fourteen years, and had her military training in Romania. After independence, in 1981, she was employed in the Zimbabwe Armed Forces, where she was a Medical Officer.*

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I am called Sabina Matete. I was born in 1963 in Mutoko. In 1972 I attended my primary education at Kagande Primary School. My liberation war name is Fungai Hondo. I did my education at Kagande, it was a keep. We could be searched to find out if we had not something, then we would enter the school. In 1973, the whites came and forced people to dig contours, and could do whatever they liked with us. In 1976 I ran away to Harare when the situation was tight.

I stayed in Mabelreign with my sister. The white man she worked for did not want to see her staying with anyone there. One day he came to the servants' quarters, where we stayed, and asked what we were doing there. We had to run away jumping over the 'durawall' and stayed outside till he left; my sister called me and said we should sleep over that night and go away early in the morning. So we had to go back to the rural

areas in Mutoko, but when I got there things were even worse.

One day the Rhodesian soldiers came to our place. I was there with my friends Rhoda and Meila preparing the sweet potato beds. They asked us what we were doing. We replied that we were working so that we could earn money to pay for our fees. The other soldiers left but one remained standing. He loved one of us. And I told her to tell him that she loved him. I reminded her what the comrades had taught us. They had taught us that we should accept them so that we could get information from them. So Rhoda did likewise, she told him that she loved him, and that we were her younger sisters. We then left for home. I then requested him to hold the gun. He had FN 1976, and he gave it to me. We then asked him to go to our place, and when we got home we entered into the house. I then instructed Rhoda to cook for him. I also asked Meila to go and call the people because we now had the opportunity to get this guard pinned down.

After some time I realised that he was becoming suspicious. I had to run away from the house holding the gun. It was not easy for him to get hold of me. By the time he attempted to catch me, people arrived and had the opportunity to get hold of him. He was captured and we went with him to the comrades at the base. The comrades asked for the people who had planned and captured the guard. The comrades were surprised to hear that it was Moila and I. We told them that we did exactly what they had trained us to do. That guard force was severely beaten to the extent that he promised not to go back to work for Smith, instead he asked the comrades to take him. However he guard force was tried, but he fled at night and went back to his

camp. The comrades came and told us to wake up quickly and follow them. They thought he had not gone very far, but unfortunately he was already at his base by then. We tracked him down the road from the house, but when we were just approaching their base, gun shots were fired in our direction, so we fled and went back to the mountains. We were surprised that the man was already there.

From the top of the mountain we saw that a red flag had been raised at our home. They had already beaten my sister, whom they found at home, with the back of the gun until she was unconscious. Within no time helicopters came and my sister was tied to the plane and the whites went away saying they have killed a *gandanga*. I told my friends that it was not safe to go back home, so we should go and join the liberation struggle instead. We travelled from Kagande, where we were, to Chikekete in Murehwa, Maramba-Pfungwe; we found the comrades in Chikekete. They were surprised and asked us what had happened. We told them that people back home had been killed, so we could not go back home, and instead we should go with them. The comrades told us that the group which they wanted to go with was already fully staffed, so we should wait for another group from Uzumba; once that group arrives then could join them.

It took two weeks for the group to arrive. During the day we would go into the villages and pretend to be ordinary villagers, then at night we would go back to the base. We practised this till the people we were waiting for arrived. We then proceeded with the journey towards Masarakufa. When we got at Masarakufa clothes and shoes were bought for us from a local businessman. The comrades said they suspected that the clothes had been poisoned and instructed us that we should not wear them. It was decided that the clothes had to remain behind, and they should be boiled in salted water and would be given to the next group.

We then proceeded to the border where we met the whites; the comrades and these whites started shouting at each other. The whites then proceeded with their patrolling. When this was happening we were hiding. After that we were sent to find out how far the whites had travelled, and the route was cleared. So the comrades later came back and said they had cleared the route and that we could proceed. They had to do that because there were these '*bacons*' that were set and could explode if we set foot on. Our group was huge and we crossed. Just after we had crossed, the soldiers arrived and started shouting at us again, saying that a lot of *chimbwidos* had crossed the border. They said that the war was never going to end soon.

We then arrived at Shangara base and later moved to Katumba. I fell sick, and the comrades suggested that they should take me to Shangara hospital, since they were now proceeding into the interior. So I was left at Shangara for treatment. I spent two days there guarded by the Camaradas. From there I was taken in an ambulance to Zambia at Bahariyawo where injured people were kept. I stayed at Bahariyawo for two months. Comrade Makasha later suggested that since I was no longer sick I was supposed to be taken to Tembwe. When I reached there, people were on training, but I had to be kept with the security, and be certified that we were not sell-outs. I

explained to them that we were not being sent by the enemy; but we had come to join the liberation fighters.

We were allowed to stay and started training; but we were later removed from training under that group because we were still young. I was 14 years old. I was then taken by Comrade Makasha and became his assistant. The issue that young people should not be trained, but instead should go back to school persisted. The motor vehicles came to collect us, and took us to Mavhudzi School, in 1978. We stayed there, but towards the end of 1978, were taken for training. We started training in Samakweze in Inyanga, in 1979 until the time the country was liberated in February 1981; that was when we were declared to have completed training.

When returning home and I went through Mutare. When we arrived in Mutare we were instructed to go to an assembly point, and we were sent to Chitungwiza assembly point. We stayed there in Chitungwiza. Later we got attested into the Zimbabwe National Army. We worked in the army; I was a Corporal employed as a medical officer. By then there was what was called European Scale. We were paid less compared to the whites. So some blacks thought of giving themselves English names, hoping to get more money because the whites by then earned more money than blacks. In the National Army whites were given heat allowance; if we went anywhere, whites were given the heat allowance, but we were not given this heat allowance. Among the issues that pain me, is that people want this country to be colonised again by whites, considering the effort we made for its liberation.

I would therefore like to remind the youth of today that this country can never be colonised by the whites once again. This is because a lot of people died in Chimoio, Nyadzonza, Tembwe and Mavhudzi, that is in all the bases we stayed in. They died for this country so that we could liberate and govern ourselves. So we strongly dispute the idea of giving back the country to the whites. We urge the youth that they should hear from the elders who eye witnessed the war, so that they can appreciate what happened and hence rally behind President Robert; he is our leader and it is he who elected him into power. We should allow him to lead because we have not yet accomplished the bigger aims; we are still under the rule of the whites. That is all I have to say.

As a lady in the liberation struggle, the major problems I faced were from the *Kamaradas* at *Shangara*. You know since I was the only lady at that camp I was always afraid that they would rape me. There were no sell-out issues at *Shangara*. There was not anything of that sort because *Shangara* was a camp for the *Kamaradas* only.

What happened in the keeps was that we could be taken into the keeps by the mabhunu, and the comrades would also come and cut off the keep and let us out and ask us to go back. So you would find out that the whole night would be spent walking up and down. So these were the major problems we faced. School were actually erected in the keeps, we could just get out of the homes and enter schools. We could no longer study freely in an environment infested with soldiers because once we saw them we were afraid that they have come to collect us. Of course there were rape cases and they were so common. The Das intimidated us so that we were not able to report

the cases. Children of our ages were commonly raped. There were cases where girls were abused by both the Das and the comrades; this was especially perpetrated by the sell-outs. Comrades were not involved in rape cases and abuses. Not the comrades, they could not do that. Maybe they did that in Mozambique; the chefs could just say let's go. As girls we could not go to school; we spent most of the time nursing babies. I can say people effectively got education. People were taught all languages including Ndebele, Shangani. Those who passed were even sent to places like Libya.

The young girls did not get pregnant, but instead the grown-up ladies were the ones who were impregnated.

During our training we had three companies for women; Company A, Company B and Company C. The problems we faced included shortage of food and clothes. There was nothing like sanitary pads and cotton wool during the war, sometimes we just used leaves. Girls in the camps during the liberation struggle could not undergo menstrual cycle periods. It is true. We only started in 1981, that is when we started. But during the war we could not, personally I started when I got here after the war.

There was this friend of mine who died in 2003. She was raped by the DA after we had refused to tell them where the comrades had hidden; the comrades were just besides the road. The whites were just passing along the road when the comrades shot them. We were captured and the Das went to the keep with us. My friend was taken and raped, until she started bleeding. We were trained to pretend being in love with the enemy, and of course it was risky, but we had no option but to do what we were asked to do by the enemy.

I would like to tell the youth in Zimbabwe that during the liberation struggle we worked without being paid at the end of the month. We did not even know when the war would end; we also did not have the mind to return home, even when things became extremely difficult. Many people died because of the war. So the youth must not take the liberation war as something cheap. They pain us so much when they say, "It is better you go and tie the country where you untied it from." It is not good to say such words. Instead they should work hard to protect the heritage, that is their land. They should not value money than their country. Does it mean that without money they would sell the country? They forget that we fought for no pay. They should therefore sacrifice their lives like we did.

I thank you.

## Msipa, Cephas

*Cephas George Msipa was born on the 7th July 1931, in Zvishavane district under Chief Masunda. He had his primary and secondary education in Dadaya Mission from 1944 to 1953. He taught in several schools in the rural areas before moving to Kwekwe in 1955 to teach in the first government school in the area. This is where he met Joshua Nkomo in the same year and later, in 1957, became his contact in political issues. In 1980, he became the Deputy Minister of Youth, Sports and Recreation, and after about a year he became the Deputy Minister of Manpower Planning Development. In 1992, he became the Minister of Water Resources and Development. He was the Minister of State Responsible for Indigenisation from 1995 to 2000. In 2000 he was appointed the Governor and Resident Minister of Midlands Province. He also worked in the private sector and in parastatals as the chairman of several boards*

My name is Cephas George Msipa. I was born on the 7th July 1931, being the first born in a family of ten children consisting of seven boys and three girls. I was born in Zvishavane district under Chief Masunda. Eeh, for my early education I went to a primary school called Skuzer School. I was not there for long because the school went to about Standard 2. So for my Standard 2 I went to Dadaya Mission which was owned and run by the Church of Christ New Zealand; that is where I did my primary and secondary education. I was at Dadaya from 1944 to 1953; with a break of one year in 1950, when I did some, teaching. I started teaching before being trained.

After that I taught at various schools, first at Mzimbane, we had trained to teach what was called higher primary. So I went to open Standard 4. I was at a school called Mzimbane in Zvishavane for a year before I transferred to Skuzer for another year. I felt I should move out of the rural areas, so I came to Kwekwe, where I was one of the first teachers to open the first government school in Kwekwe in 1955; the school was called Amaveni School. So, until about 1954, the government at that time was not taking a very keen interest in African education. It was all left to missions; that is why up to 1954 there was no government school in Kwekwe. It was while I was there, in 1955, that I got to know Dr Joshua Nkomo. He was selling some books when he came there and we had a long chat with him. Somehow he recognised me, because after the formation of the ANC in 1957, he visited me and asked me to be his contact as far as politics was concerned.

I became very active in politics although I was a teacher. Teachers were not allowed, to deal with politics; it was specifically stated that they were not allowed to take an active part in politics, so I could not hold any position, but still I played a leading role for the people in Kwekwe, as their leader. In 1957 I decided to, put my name forward as a member of the Advisory Board, while I was still a teacher there. Africans there were not allowed to be councillors. Instead we were called Advisory Board members. I stood for election. I was the youngest member by then, at 26 years, and I won; being perhaps the most educated at the time, they made me their Chairman. So I was the Chairman of the Advisory Board in Kwekwe from 1955 to 1958, two years.

While in Kwekwe, I also did a number of things. For instance, I was the reporter for the Daily News. Cde Nathan Shamuyarira was my editor. In fact at one point he wanted me to join him, as assistant editor; that was in 1957, but I could not do it because in that same year I was promoted to be the Deputy Headmaster. So the fact that I was the Deputy Headmaster looked more attractive. I also formed a football club while in Kwekwe called Springbox, which trained quite a number of people, some of whom ended in the national team. I was proud of that, people like Richard Chiminya and others came from my team in Kwekwe.

I was very active in Kwekwe, as I said, but in 1959 I was transferred to Mbare, Harare, to head a small school called Shingirai. It was part of Shingirai Kindergarten. I was there for a year. In those years, schools in Mbare were meant for whites and master and not for blacks. So at the end of 1959, my headmaster told me that he had been promoted to be an Inspector. And I said to him, what about myself? And he said he did not know. And I told him, tell them that if I do not get promoted I am leaving, because I cannot stand the idea of being under another white man again. Fortunately, the following year I was appointed the Headmaster; that was in 1960, of Mhofu School. It was while at Mhofu that I Cde Mugabe joined me. He was coming from Ghana, where he was teaching and he had no accommodation when he came from Ghana. And somehow, I was staying with his homeboy, so he joined us. We were still bachelors then. We were together in my house for some time, something like six months. That was when the NDP was formed, and the party offered, or asked him to take the position of Publicity Secretary of the NDP. We used to spend every evening discussing politics with Cde Mugabe and we became very close ever since. Because of that relationship, we developed a very close relationship and some understanding because every evening we discussed politics.

It was at that time that he impressed me as somebody with a clear vision of what he thought Zimbabwe should be, and I got more and more informed. In fact in that same year I became an election agent for Dr Ian Polly, a white man who resigned from the, Dominion Party, because he was opposed to detention without trial, and he decided to stand as an independent candidate in Highfield. I offered to be his election agent because I admired his courage, despite the fact that he was standing against blacks. I was happy that he won the election. Dr Polly won, so that was that.

The teachers elected me as their president in 1961, because of my interest in their welfare. I was now the Headmaster at Tendai School, the first Headmaster in Mufakose Township; I was the first Headmaster there. I took a very keen interest in teachers' welfare despite the fact that I was a Headmaster of a government school. This perhaps impressed the teachers and they appointed me as their president. I was president from 1961 to 1964. In 1964 the government blacklisted me from teaching. The Secretary of Education said to me, as long as the Rhodesian Front is in power, I was not going to be allowed to teach. So the teachers then met, you know the Teachers' Association, it was called RATA (Rhodesian African Teachers Association). They met and said that they did know that their president could not teach. Because the constitution of our

association said the president shall be a serving teacher, I was disqualified because I was no longer a teacher, and they appointed me as a full time Secretary-General of the Teachers Association. So, from the 1st Jan 1965 I was the Secretary General of the African Teachers Association, and I remained in that position until immediately after UDI when I was arrested and then detained. I was arrested in December 1965; I think it was three days after UDI.

What happened was that, I was, called by the Police; the Deputy Commissioner of Police called me and accused me of being involved in some political activity and warned me that if I did not stop I would be arrested. He also offered me something. He said, "Look, if you can agree to inform us of the activities of the people in Zambia, and If you do not want to be arrested, all will need to do is to inform us when these people are coming." They knew that I was connected to Chikerema and Nyandoro. I knew what they were doing. In fact they had sent a message to me that they were going to send some boys to fight, and asked me to organise to receive them and to deploy them. I think I must have been taped because they got that, and they said that they knew what we were planning with Chikerema. I said to them, that they could forget! In fact, I took off. I felt offended and told them that it was an insult for them to think that a man of my stature could be an informer. I then, told them of my anger, and that I was angry with them.

So they gave me ten days, they said that they were giving me ten days to think about it. I thought it was just a threat, but on the tenth day I realised they meant business, when I was in the cells. They came to arrest me; they arrested me in my office in Harare and took me to various cells waiting to send me to Gonakudzingwa. So I eventually ended up at Gonakudzingwa. I was there for a short while because I decided to run away from Gonakudzingwa with the others, of course. We organised that we would run away. The reason being that we wanted to test the legality of our arrest, because we had been arrested on the 11th of November, after UDI. So we had discussed with friends like Didmus Mutasa, and we said we should make it a test case because the British had said that anything done after 11th November was illegal, therefore because we were arrested around the 15th November, our arrest was illegal. Somehow we managed to escape from Gonakudzingwa and we got to Harare, we were four. One was arrested in Mvuma so he did not get to Harare. Three of us got to Harare. When we got there we were told that, there was no way they could stop us from being arrested. So we had two choices. One was to leave the country and go and join the others in Zambia, or something like Beit, and that if that was our choice they could facilitate our movement. The second choice was that we go underground.

They then said, as far as the second choice was concerned, as sure as fate you will be arrested because you cannot be underground forever.

So I said in my case I had no choice but to go underground. Yes, I was aware that eventually they would catch up and arrest me, but I said when I left Gonakudzingwa, this is what I promised the young chaps who helped me to escape so I am quite prepared to take the process to its logical end, to be arrested and go to court and prove

that my arrest was illegal. The other two, I can understand were university students, preferred to leave the country, and one, Byron Hove, managed to do it; unfortunately, Hebert Musikavanhu was arrested when he was just about to cross into Zambia, so he could not make it.

The fourth chap, Shakespeare Makoni, was the one arrested in Mvuma. He had left us earlier in a truck. And his truck was stopped and they searched it and found him and he was he was one of the persons they were looking for; they had discovered that the four of us had escaped from Gonakudzingwa and so they were looking for us and so they were happy to get hold of Makoni.

There were several camps at Gonakudzingwa. I was in camp number six, so we were restricted in our camps, you know. In camp 1 we had people like Dr Joshua Nkomo, Josiah Chinamano, Joseph Msika, and many others. I think people like John Nkomo, Dr Sikhanyiso Ndlovu were also there; there were hundreds of us who were detained there under harsh conditions. You know, I was a headmaster, and when I got there I found conditions hard but I was able to put up with the conditions, and I surprised many people. They thought I would cry, because when it was my turn to cook, I was cooking. We were in groups of six, and so we arranged, who was cooking on that or on the following day. It was extremely hot in that part of the country, along the border with Mozambique.

But I was able to put up with those conditions. I knew that was the price we had to pay. Like I said, when I escaped from Gonakudzingwa, it was not to run away from the hardships but to test the legality of my detention, and also the sincerity of the British. By their saying that it was illegal, if I was arrested what were they going to do. So really that was the reason for leaving.

So that was interesting, I got arrested after 10 weeks. I was working at a farm which was run by Cde Didymus Mutasa, 10km from Harare. I remained there but the police, CIDs and the Special Branch did not recognise me because I was putting on overalls, working in the garden. They came looking for me talking to Mutasa, asking him about me and Mutasa pretended to know nothing about me. So every morning I was working in the garden with my overall. One of the people working in the garden, I do not know if it was Cold Comfort, informed them and eventually they arrested me. I do not know how they got to know about it. I do not know, but it was a long period, 10 weeks. It was even stressful because every time you hear a car coming, you think it's coming for you.

So I got arrested and because I had run away from Gonakudzingwa I was taken to Masvingo, it was called Fort Victoria then. I went there and spent a few days in the cells, in remand prison. While I was there I fell ill and I had to undergo an operation for appendicitis. I do not know who told my wife and sister that I was in hospital, so they drove all the way from Harare to come and see me in hospital. I had some leg irons on me. So can you imagine, the operation was painful, the leg irons were also painful. So my wife and sister came all the way from Harare to see me, but they could only see me through the window.

They said, “He is there.” And all I did was to wave my hands and say, “I am ok.” You know, each time I think about it I feel bitter. Even the nurses were telling the guards, “But really do you think this man could run away after this operation?” And their answer was that those were the orders, that they were told that I should have some leg-irons after the operation. But of course, what they did not know was that they were really promoting my cause, because some people were saying, “Why is that man in leg-irons, why?” Others thought that I was a murderer, that was why they had to take those precautions, but eventually, they got to know the truth and I became a hero, you know.

People were coming to me to ask, as their leader, why I was arrested; what was the future, and so on and so on. Anyway, eventually I got well, went to court, was tried and fortunately the magistrate found me not guilty. He said, yes, in terms of the law, and according to what the British government had said, he was arrested on the 11th therefore he has no case to answer. So that was in early 1966, and from there I was then transferred to Gweru Prison, and I remained here from 1966 up to the end of 1970, that is when I got released.

We were quite a number of us who were detained at Gweru Prison. Some were old and so on. And I remember some who were detained with us, were taken for trial, found guilty and were hanged. It was quite a painful time when you know that somebody you have been with is hanged, because he has been found to have recruited people to join the liberation struggle and to cross to Zambia. You know, people were hanged for that! I know Robert Bhebhe is one of them. He was very close to me, it was very bad, and I felt very bad and angry about it, that they could hang him for that. While in prison again, we were classified into Class 1, Class 2 and Class 3. Class 1 were whites, could get good food, good bedding and so on. Class 2 were coloureds, they got food which was slightly better than our food, much better, but slightly lower than that of the whites. In our case, it was sadza and beans, sadza and beans and vegetables all the time. There was no tea, and no bread. I remember in my case, they said if you want to sleep on a bed you should apply and have a doctor who should certify that while you were outside you slept on a bed, and that you ate rice and bread. We said, no way, we would not apply; we will not do such a thing. So for the five years we were just sleeping on the floor, and eating what was meant for blacks, and that was like anybody else. Anyway, eventually, I got released from detention, I think, I did other things. I had to look for work. I worked for the people who make bread; I joined Lobels.

While I was in detention I organised classes for the inmates. We had classes ranging from Grade 1 up to Degree level, and I was in charge. Mind you, I was the Secretary of Education of ZAPU, PF ZAPU. So I organised classes for people like Chigudu, the now Governor for Manicaland. He was a student and also a teacher. He taught those classes below his, and at the same time took up his A Level studies. So we kept ourselves busy. I was able to do a degree and majored in Political Science, Public Administration and did another degree in Public Relations. Fortunately I completed all those by the

year I left detention. When I was released I joined Lobels for a short while, because I met Aleck Banda who was Minister in Dr Kamuzu Banda's government. I knew him when he was a school boy in Kwekwe, and we had a long chat. I told him that, if his President did not want to be involved in the armed struggle by giving us arms and so on, why does he not promote dialogue between our leaders and the Smith regime so that the situation could be sorted out. He asked me, if I was prepared to meet Dr Banda, and I said, yes, I was. He went to Malawi, and the next thing I got was an invitation to go and meet Dr Banda. I went there, took with me Prof George Kahari, because I was told that I could bring a friend to accompany me. I had a long meeting with Dr Banda, lasting over an hour, and he said that he had some contact with the South African government and with the Smith regime. So I asked him why he does not play a part to bring about some discussions to resolve our problem.

So he undertook to do that. That same year, when the Malawi Congress Party was holding its conference, he invited me again. And this time he said, bring two more people. So I invited Prof. George Kaharie and Michael Mawema,... I took with me those people with their wives and we were well looked after by Dr Banda. We were the guests of Dr Banda. We were even introduced at the banquet, as special guests of the President. When we came back, the management at Lobels decided they did not want me. They said I was dangerous. So they sacked me, and I lost my job for being a guest of Dr Banda. They said they thought I was no longer involved in politics, that is why they had employed me; but it seemed I was still in politics, and they said, they were sorry but they could not have me as their employee. So I was given my week's pay and I left Lobels. Before long I got a job with Edgar Whitehead. The Managing Director felt sorry for me, and thought I should be employed; but they did not know what to do with me or what job to give me. They were afraid to give me a management job because they thought the whites would not approve it.

I was educated and had a lot of experience which they could use. But eventually I got employed as a Public Relations Officer; that was one of the jobs given to blacks during that time. The idea was for me to promote their fabrics in the rural areas. I am very pleased I took that job because I was able to promote areas like Gokwe. I used to visit all shows, agricultural shows, rural agricultural shows throughout the country. Eventually, when I was a Minister I could tell what areas were dry; what crops were growing in which areas, and so on. I gained a lot of experience, and so it was good, in a way.

My experience at David Whitehead was helpful in many ways. When in 1974, because of the Detente exercise, these people were released, my Managing Director was keen to meet all of them as they came out. So I was able to introduce them; Mugabe, Ndabaningi Sithole and Joshua Nkomo, they all met my Managing Director. In between we had the Pearce Commission, and I think it is also important to talk about it. I had been released, Chinamano had been released, Michael Mawema was out, Edson Sithole was out; so when the British announced that they had appointed the

Pearce Commission to find out the views of the African people on Smith's proposals, the four of us met, two from PF ZAPU and two from ZANU.

We said we should not just sit back and let these people do what they liked, and so we consulted our leaders who were in detention in various areas. So eventually we agreed to form an organisation that would oppose the acceptance of Smith's proposals. There were four of us, and when Edson Zvobgo was released he also joined us. We ended up being five and our strategy was to bring in ministers of religious groups, and workers' representatives, but we were going to play a secretive role. We were not to be seen in the forefront, because the authorities were going to say that the people who had just come from detention were causing trouble. We could then be easily arrested, and the world would be given that as the reason why they were arresting us. But if we brought in the people of colour, they would find it difficult to justify their arrest and detention. That was when we brought them in; I was personally tasked to approach Bishop Muzorewa to ask him to lead us. So I went to see him. We had a list of people like Bishop Muzorewa, Rev. Canaan Banana and many others; some of them are late now. We also included trade unionists like Plenius Sithole and others. We approached them, and I remember some of them saying that politics were deceiving, if they joined and led the ANC. It was called ANC deliberately, because we wanted people to think that the African National Congress had been resurrected. But this ANC was African National Council.

When I approached him, Muzorewa asked for a week after I had said, "Look, we are only asking you to lead in the rejection of the Pearce proposals. After that we shall not need your services at all. All we want is for you to lead us on this particular point." He then said to me, "Give me a week, I need to pray." After a week I went and he agreed. We launched the movement and it spread like *veldfire*, and when the team, the Pearce Commission eventually came into the country and visited various areas, it was a 'NO NO NO' Report to the proposals. We were happy that we achieved what we wanted to achieve. I must say PF ZAPU and ZANU PF worked in unity. We did not even worry about who holds what position, we were only interested in achieving that goal. We did it very effectively; we used ZANU PF and PF ZAPU structures, and the whole population and all people united and rejected the Pearce Proposals. That was a landmark that involved Bishop Muzorewa. I thought I should include that.

After some time, my Managing Director was keen to meet Bishop Muzorewa, when he had broken from the other people, you know, there was a short time when it seemed we were going to work together but we then broke away because, at that time my Director said he wanted to see him, so I introduced them. My Director introduced Muzorewa to Ian Smith, and hence his Government of National Unity. In a way I felt guilty that I introduced Bishop Muzorewa to Mr John Hills who was my Director, who then introduced him to Smith and eventually there was this Government of National Unity.

What was interesting was that after that they asked me if David Whitehead people, were still involved in politics, and if we still supported Mugabe and Nkomo? I told

them that as far as they were concerned that was the government which we were supporting, and I asked them what they had to say. They told me that I had to decide whether I wanted to continue supporting them, or I was going to support the new arrangement. Which meant if I supported Muzorewa then I would continue to work them. I said no, there was no way I could support Muzorewa because as far as I was concerned, it was just a step in the right direction but it was not complete. Of course I was working with Chief Jeremiah Chirau; I said it was not complete, and it could only be complete when Nkomo and Mugabe were involved in whatever we had gone into. If those people were not involved we would continue. So as far as I was concerned, I was still with Nkomo and Mugabe. So we parted company.

So fortunately Hebert Munangatire started a newspaper called Zimbabwe Times. And he asked me to be the Assistant Editor of that paper. But eventually I was really running the paper because he was not there most of the time, so I was editing this paper from 1976 to 1978 when I got arrested again after the downing of the Viscount in Kariba. I was arrested and detained at Whawha here. So I was in prison from 1978 to 1979. I was only released because Dr Nkomo wanted me to join the Lancaster House conference.

I had been told in 1970 when I was released that if something happened politically you will be arrested (he laughed). It was clear that if there is some robbery, for none will touch anything political, you are in trouble. I did not even ask, but I knew why I was being arrested. They just came in the middle of the night and took me. For three days my family did not know where I was, and yet I was at Norton. I too did not know where I was, because they drove me to various places that night, merely to confuse me. And eventually I ended up at Norton but I did not know I was at Norton because it took me some days before I asked one policeman where I was. I was told I was at Norton, so that was that.

By the way, in 1965, when I was first arrested, my detention order stated, it was written, "You are likely to cause trouble politically", something like that. That was the crime I committed, to be likely to do that. And at that time I asked, "You people, when am I likely to do this, and really you can arrest me for something that did not even happen, because likely means that it may happen or it may not happen." Anyway, I was told that, they thought that was likely to happen. When they talk of the rule of law, I sometimes wonder because to them that was the rule of law when someone could be arrested for something that was likely to happen, which may not happen anyway. So that was that.

I ended up in the Lancaster House Conference, and I attended halfway because Dr Nkomo asked me to come back and, prepare for the elections. He was quite convinced that a settlement would be reached, so he said, go and prepare for the elections. And what was also interesting, Smith came back, about the same day with me, and one day for the first time, I got a telephone call to say, Mr Smith wanted to see me. So I went there and he asked me, if I was communicating with Dr. Nkomo, and I said I was. He asked what the Patriotic Front was still doing in London. He said, "As you know I have

surrendered, Muzorewa is finished, so they are going to run the country; why are they wasting time talking about the land? Do they not know what being in government means? They will make laws concerning the land, so why are they asking the British to make the laws for them, instead of coming here?"

He told me to tell them. So I phoned Nkomo and told him what Smith had said. I said to Nkomo, "Smith says he agreed with you, when we take over, we will make laws concerning land. So why are you going into detail with the British?" That is what Smith is saying. Nkomo said, "'That man might have something up his sleeves! Why is he saying that?" I said, "No, to me it makes sense what he is saying." I am saying this because after this, he had a few problems at his farm and he called me to go and sort them out, so he was saying, "What is this?" So I said, "Mr Smith, do you remember what you said to me?" He asked what he had said, and I told him, "You said when we come back we will be free to make laws, and this is what Mugabe is doing." He said, "Not in the way he is doing." We came back and I was the spokesperson for the Patriotic Front for some time, telling people what happened in London. Eventually the agreement was reached, and we came back.

When Nkomo was coming back he asked me if I could organise to receive him. In 1975 PF ZAPU said they had done everything possible to talk to these people, but they were not willing to listen. So they were in a war situation; they were living in this country to prosecute the armed struggle. But then, Nkomo asked me to remain in the country to look after the party. He said, "Look, you will remain behind, we know you will be arrested from time to time, but we think it's necessary for you to remain behind, and you are the man who we think can do this effectively." So this was my base; while others had their bases in Zambia and Mozambique, my base was here. So when Nkomo was coming back I had a problem, I had asked some chaps in Harare who had more than one house if they could accommodate him. They had agreed, then when the day was nearing they apologised and said their family had refused for fear that their house could be destroyed. So I went to hotels and asked them if they could accommodate Nkomo when he arrived, and they said they could not. So I phoned Nkomo and told him that I had a problem, of finding accommodation for him. He asked me, if I did not have a house. I was staying in Lonchivar, I told him so; he said, he was coming to stay with me.

I said, it is only a three bed-roomed house, my family, and you. He said, he was coming and, he came and I accommodated him. When I showed him his bedroom, he said, what about his secretary and nurse? And I said, you know, I will give you the second bedroom. And he said, what about his security and people like Simon Khaya Moyo? And I said, you know, if I give you the third bedroom, I will have no bedroom for myself, He said, that was my problem, but I must have these people with me. So it created problems for me and my wife. Fortunately my wife was quite understanding, so we ended up staying in the servants' quarters because Nkomo had taken the whole house.

Then when people were coming as refugees they came to my house, so at some point I would have 600 to 700 people there. The toilet blocked and everything, you know, it was really a mess. But we managed, it was like a receiving camp, everybody as they arrived, we sent them to Bulawayo or wherever. That was how we cleared them. I was on the committee that received the freedom fighters from Mozambique. It was the first group from Mozambique, that I accompanied to the University to show them where they were to stay; and the second group was from Zambia, so I did the same. And you know, I have never seen so many people at the airport as on the day that our freedom fighters arrived, like, sand in the sea.

Literally there were thousands, but there was no violence, there was no incident. The police wanted to stop people from going to the airport, I remember they confronted me and threatened to shoot me, and I said, look, I am not going to stop these young people from going to the airport, they are going to meet their brothers. You are not going to stop, if you say you are going to shoot, and I said you should start with me. There was a confrontation. Fortunately at that time the BBC were there so they could not shoot me in the presence of the cameras, and so on. And people came from everywhere in Mbare, Highfield, they were just running to the airport.

It was the South African Embassy which phoned me and said, "Your people have won." When I asked him, "Why?" He said, "The massive crowd have come to the airport, which made their message very clear. So we know who is going to rule this country. I have already told my government in South Africa that they can forget about Smith, it is the Patriotic Front which is going to run the country." So that is what happened on arrival of ZIPRA and ZANLA forces.

I was a teacher and I could not have a post, but everybody knew that I was their member, I was part of them. And even in Mufakose I was in charge of the youth, but I had no official post as such.

It is interesting that you ask me about the 1963 break –up, because, we had been talking with Cde. Mugabe about the need for a change of leadership, so, once they broke away, Cde Mugabe came to see me. In a way he knew my views about the change of leadership. Personally I was for Dr. Parirenyatwa, but then in 1963, he was no more. So he said to me, "Sekuru, we have decided to get rid of Nkomo." I asked him, "If you get rid of Nkomo, who are you going to have in his place?" He said, "Ndabaningi Sithole." I told him I was sorry, I was not joining him and I was remaining with Dr Joshua Nkomo, because there was no way I could accept the leadership of Ndabaningi Sithole. Mugabe was disappointed. Anyway, we said that should not affect our relationship, we were to remain friends; he went there and I remained here. The whole idea was that there were people who were saying that Nkomo was no decisive enough; they wanted somebody more decisive, somebody who could say, "We are going to do this."

They thought Nkomo was moderate; and was just a man of peace when there was need for violence; he was not very keen to act violently. He still preferred some peaceful resolutions of the problem when the situation demanded that we go for

violent means to take over the country. That was what some people were saying; and well, in a way, although I was not impressed. That was why I said, if he was having Ndabaningi Sithole I was not going with him, because I knew Ndabaningi Sithole, in my view, was the kind of man who always wanted to be the leader. He was Sir Garfield's right hand man. In 1947, he tried to remove Sir Garfield Todd. He had come to parliament and Sithole remained active as Headmaster, and incited us to go on strike, because, in my view he wanted to take over as Principal of Dadaya High School, but to me he made the wrong impression. Later on he was invited to conduct devotions as guest of honour at a Teachers' Association meeting in Mutare, and he agreed to stand as president, and took over as President from CD Mhlanga. So, to me, those two events left the impression that he was not a man to be trusted. Imagine you are invited, and you end up taking the position of the man who invited you. You are, Deputy Principal, and you end up wanting to take over. So those two events made him unsuitable; that is why I said, they had chosen a wrong man and I could not join them.

Well, in a way there was an element of tribalism in the breakaway of ZANU from ZAPU, because there were those people who looked at Nkomo as Ndebele, especially those who wanted him to remain. They were saying if we remove Nkomo, we will cause a division between the Ndebele and the Shonas. That debate had been going on for a long time. So he was there as a unifying force, and the idea was that Nkomo will remain president so that the Ndebele remain in the party. You remove him; the Ndebele will feel that you have removed them from the party. So to that extent there was some kind of tribalism. Of course there were some within the party, and not everybody, who felt that the Ndebele were a minority and why would Nkomo lead, and these were really a minority. In the early 1950s Nkomo was the man of the people, the whole country was solid behind Nkomo and so the majority of the people did not think tribally, it was those who harboured ambitions for leadership who were using tribalism as a tool to get to the top. But as you know people like Josiah Chinamano, Willie Musarurwa, Dany Madzimbamuto, even James Chikerema, and Nyandoro, who at the time the break-away occurred, remained with Nkomo. So that sort of, showed that it was not completely based on tribalism. Of course on the ZANU side there were very few Ndebele, the most prominent being Enos Nkala, who really did not hide his dislike for Nkomo as a person. So far as Nkala is concerned, it was almost personal, he hated Nkomo, but I do not know for what reason. I think that was the position, really.

So, they were, on balance, when you look at the line-ups of the two parties it was tribal in a way, you cannot deny that. This again was reflected in the results of the results of the 1980 first elections. In the Midlands, PF ZAPU had almost half-half with ZANU. Then in the Matabeleland, except for one, all the seats went to PF ZAPU. In the Mashonaland, it was one or two seats that went to PF ZAPU and the rest went to ZANU.

I think tribalism or ethnicity is an important political factor in African politics. We can try to say no. However, the truth of the matter is like I am showing you. As the results were coming out in 1980, Dr Nkomo sent someone to call me. He was alone, and he said, "How can you leave me when things are going bad like this?" I told him that we did not think the results would be as disastrous as they are turning out to be. He asked me the question I still remember: "Is this how the people thank me for all the sacrifices I made?" He was in tears. I could not answer the question. He asked me "Do you know how much I have sacrificed for this country? Is this how they thank me?" I told him that in politics there are many factors that come into play, the people knew of the sacrifices he had made; they knew what contributions he had made, but when it came to elections, there were other factors. So he should not think that people did not know. He belonged to a wrong tribe.

I think somehow people see some protection in their tribes, and that is what happens during elections. As I told you, when I did my degree I majored in Political Science and Administration, and yes, tribalism in politics is a very important factor, you cannot ignore it. You saw what happened in Kenya recently, it is all but tribalism. We can try to ignore it, but the fact is that it has some bearing on the people generally, when it comes to an election.

You know, Nkomo was a man of peace, and that is why I supported him, because I also believed in peaceful negotiations. We were talking earlier, on the role I played in the unity between ZANU and PF ZAPU. Cde Canaan Banana, who was Reverend and President then approached me. In fact it was interesting; Clifford Slayer, who was an aide to Dr Rev Banana, phoned me when I was attending a meeting in Triangle on a Thursday morning, and he told me that the President wanted to see me urgently. So I told him, "I am Sorry I am In Triangle just now and there is no way I could see him today." He said it was very urgent. And I said, "Tell him I will see him tomorrow when I come to Harare. I cannot drive, I have just arrived from Harare to Triangle now, and I cannot come there. I have come for a Board Meeting." I was Board Member for Triangle Company.

The following day, Friday, I went to see him, and he said, look, I have been trying very hard to bring Nkomo and Mugabe together, and I have not succeeded. I have tried using several people but they have failed. I have been advised, but I won't say who advised me that you are my last hope; if you cannot do it, no one will. So I asked what the problem was and he told me that Dr Nkomo was keen to meet Prime Minister Mugabe, but Mugabe was saying he could only meet him if he agreed to unite. If he does not agree, he was not meeting him. The President then asked me if I could do something about that. I thought that was queer, but anyway I said I was going to try, because there were certain conditions which were spelt out to me. So I phoned Nkomo, and I asked him if I could go to see him and he said I could go.

I went there, and I can remember it very well. I felt at home. He was not feeling well that day. I told him I had gone to see him about unity; that I had been sent by President Banana to talk to him so that ZANU and ZAPU could come together

and be one party again. He told me that those people were not serious and he made some accusations that they were threatening him. He said that Nkala had made a threatening statement that day; threatening to arrest Nkomo. He asked me if I had read the Herald; and when I said yes, he said what Nkala did. I told him that Nkala did not know what we were doing, and he should know, no one knew except him, Reverend Banana and Prime Minister Mugabe; those were the people who knew what we were trying to do. The rest of the people did not know. I said, that was why I said we needed to unite. Knowing what he had done, I did not think that was the kind of thing that should be said about him. So we went on talking about that, talking about various things; it was not an easy thing. We talked about the leadership, the composition of the top leadership, and so on.

This went on for weeks; it did not take one day. Eventually I was almost giving up because we were not making progress, particularly on the name. Can I go to Bulawayo and say we are now ZANU PF? Then I sent my report to Rev Banana, that today we reached this far, and agreed on this point and not that point, and went on and on like that. Of course I also negotiated with some other people whom I knew could convince Nkomo, telling them exactly what Nkomo was denying. These people went and talked to him, but without saying that they knew Nkomo was negotiating with Msipa. That was the strategy we used. He had friends like Willie Musarurwa and Ariston Chambati; these were the people I used, and they could talk to Nkomo, just like stories. They could perhaps say, "Mr Nkomo, do you not think that if we get united it would help?" Nkomo said what he thought, and they came back and informed me. It went on, and eventually I used some tactics which worked in a way. I explained to him how much he had suffered for this country, what could have been if he had to be where we were, and why he deserved a better status than he had by then. He said, as long as you are the leader of the opposition you will never get the recognition you deserve. I said, he must know in African politics, everyone in the opposition is an enemy, so he will continue to be regarded as an enemy, and so he will be treated badly. Do not be surprised, but of course I emphasised the importance of PF ZAPU and ZANU in bringing prosperity to the country, and in developing the country. I said we needed to work together as we worked together to free this country; we had to continue working together to develop this country. That, I think, impressed him, because he ended up asking me to go and asked me if I had been talking to some chaps in ZAPU leadership. I said I had not. We agreed that this should be kept confidential, and he then suggested some three people who he said I should go and speak to individually not as a group. He told me that when I go back, he would be able to tell me the way forward.

So I went and spoke to the three people; they were all from Matabeleland. They were Welshman Mabhena, former governor of Matabeleland North; the late Sydney Malunga, and Nassa Ndhlovu, those three. What was interesting to me and what surprised me was that the answer was the same, as if they had met to discuss about it. They all said whatever Nkomo decides they would go along with it, because he

was their leader. They all said he knew what was right for PF ZAPU and the people of Matabeleland. So I went back to Nkomo and told him what they had said, and he asked me, "Are you sure?" I asked him, "Well, have I ever told you a lie?" He said, "No". I told him that it was a very important issue, and I was not going to mislead him, and that was what they said. So it was entirely up to him. He said to me, that it was okay for me to go and tell Banana that he had agreed. So I went and told Rev Banana; I was very happy because it was a very big achievement on my part. Rev Banana passed on this good message to Prime Minister Cde Mugabe. Mugabe's reaction was to ask Rev. Banana if he had asked Nkomo himself, and how did he know if Msipa was giving the correct information or not. Why did he not get it from Nkomo himself? So Banana came back to me and asked me to arrange for him to meet Nkomo, and I did that. So my job was completed after organising the meeting between Nkomo and Banana. After the signing of the Unity Accord, Nkomo called me one day and said, "Hey wena mfana, I want to thank you for what you did. When you started to talk to me I never thought that this thing would work. What can I do for you to show your appreciation?" So I told him fact that he accepted my advice was a way of thanking me, and I will remain appreciative of what he did because to me it was a big achievement. So I could go down in history as having brought about the unity. Of course it was not easy because I remember Cde Mugabe one day saying to me, "You are talking of unity in the midst of all this violence; does it make any sense?" So I said, "But how do you end violence? You have got to talk at some point or other." He said, "Anyway, you are right; Go ahead and see." So that is what I can say about.

The Unity Accord, to a great extent brought the people of Mashonaland and Matabeleland together, people who had fought for this country, ZIPRA and ZANLA. It brought the leadership, that is, Nkomo, Mugabe and their lieutenants, together. So really, it meant that instead of using our energy to fight each other as was in the early 1980s, we really directed our energies to building our country together. I think it was a good thing.

Well, the present difference is, of course taking a new dimension in a way. This is so because there are ideological differences, whereas ZANU and ZAPU had no differences in ideology. Perhaps the differences were more on personalities, as to which person should lead the country, is it Nkomo, is it Mugabe? In a way you could reduce it to that level, but presently, when you look at the MDC and our party, there are certain differences. It appears that some of the people, and I said it appears, think they can still rely on the western countries to achieve what they want. This is what I do not understand, when people like the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown talks of regime change. Why is he interested and why does he want to use our brothers to bring regime change? When Gordon Brown writes to Tsvangirai to tell him what he is doing, I say what is this all about? Because these are the people we fought against in order to be free to manage our country in the way we like as Africans. Of course I am for democracy; I want people to be free to form their parties, as long as it is a genuine African party, I have no problem with that. When we are divided, there is also

a tendency to spend your energies on things that do not really bring about prosperity to the country; there is also the danger of engaging in violence, as it happened in the 1980s. So we try to avoid that. While we are saying let us remain united, but we should not prevent freedom of association and freedom of speech in the name of unity. Let us unite, let us have what we consider to be national interests. As long as we have national interests, we can differ on other issues, how we reach there, how to achieve national interest, I have no problem with that. So really unity with diversity is what I am talking about.

The differences between ZAPU and ZANU in the 1960s, especially in the high density suburbs, resulted in a lot of violence between ZANU and ZAPU. That was a terrible time; I think it was some kind of madness. I remember in 1963 I was travelling to Brazil, and I passed through Lagos, Nigeria, and there was this big headline, **“ZIMBABWE IS ENGAGED IN SOME WAR OF DESTRUCTION.”** That was what was happening in 1963/1964. But again, in a way the people were guarding their unity. They did what was being initiated by those who formed ZANU PF, and they were prepared to fight in order to remain united. But it was a vicious fight, really, because people lost their lives; some were burnt alive and I saw it with my own eyes; friends became enemies. Of course it was like when friends turn against each other. That kind of enmity can be vicious, that was how it was. What was interesting was that, literally, friends were prepared to kill friends.

I know in my case Edson Zvobgo was my friend but the in the name of ZANU he sent some people to destroy my house and my school which I was heading. In fact we talked about it later and he said, “I gave them a drum of beer to drink so that they got drunk, and I told them to go and stone. When I went to look, I told them that they had not done enough, I gave them another drum the following day and they went to do what they did.” But I also organised the ZAPU Youth and they literally destroyed his house completely, and he had to leave Mufakose. It was as bad as that. But the good thing about it was that we had time to talk about it, and to say, that was foolish, and even question why we did that. That was why some individuals never wants to see it happening again. People learnt to make the petrol bombs and were using them so many times to destroy life and property. It was bad and I hope we won't do it again.

Well, I must say, on the ZAPU side there were those who felt that we should allow ZANU to succeed; they should be allowed to succeed. As I said, that fight was a way of safeguarding our unity jealously. So really, it was commitment on unity, and the only way was to beat up all those who were supporting this breaking-away group. But ZANU too was determined to get away, they were not prepared to accept the comeback to PF ZAPU. So that was the thing. The leadership was to blame in a way, because ZAPU were saying, do not allow these people to succeed; ZANU was saying, don't be cowed, continue to organise. They challenged the people. In a way the leadership was to blame.

The effects of the violence on children was really bad, because I know a number of children who got burnt and injured, and grew up with terrible scars as a result of

the petrol bombs. It traumatised them and I think it was not good for these children when they saw these running battles. In fact, at one time the whites brought barbed wire around the whole of Highfields, and surrounded all of Highfields, and kept all of us there. They realised they had to let us go but we were using one way to get out of Highfield. They were saying that they were doing that to protect us against each other. They were, I think in a way, watching us killing each other, literally watching us doing that, it was indeed a terrible time.

I think during that time, we stopped the fight against the whites, which was unfortunate because it was like we had forgotten what we wanted to achieve. We decided to settle our own differences first. We did not care about the whites. In a way they liked it, when they detained us at Gonakudzingwa and so on, the excuse they gave was we were killing each other, and they wanted to stop this killing! In a way, it was a period of madness; but as I said, all in the name of guarding our unity.

Well, I think although Dr, Banda did not report to me, you saw that as time went on, the South Africans were bearing more and more on Smith to talk, which resulted in the meetings. For instance, in 1974, there were the Zambezi River talks. I think that is the role he played. I told him, "Look, you do not have to support us with weapons, but you can support us by encouraging these people to talk to Nkomo and Mugabe." We had, a long discussion lasting over 70 minutes, and I think I was quite pleased with him. I said told him that some people were thinking that he was not supporting us; but there were so many ways of supporting us, one of which was to get those people to think seriously and talk to us. He assured me he was going to do that, and I think he did that. I did not follow him to ask him what he had done. You cannot do that to a Head of State.

I said, first I met Muzorewa to ask him to lead the African national Council in order to reject Smith's proposals. At that time he impressed me as a very devoted Christian, because he even asked me to give him time to pray. He was also worried about being involved, and the effect it would have on his church. He said he had people belonging to different political parties, and he did not want to be seen to be leading a party. So he only agreed when we said it was only temporary and it was not even a political party, but just a movement to reject what we thought was not in the interest of the people of Zimbabwe. It was on those grounds that he agreed.

When I introduced him to Smith, through Mr. John Hills who was my Director, I did not think he would go to the extent of an agreement which would involve a government of national unity. I just wanted to give him the opportunity to speak to Mr Smith and tell him as others have said, that in order to bring about a settlement, you need all parties to come together. I thought it was an opportunity to impress on that. By the way, even as early as 1978 I was tasked by my party to talk to him about the importance of going to an all-party conference; the one which took place in 1979. He was not keen, and I met him for 3 hours; and he was saying, "You Msipa, I do not know what kind of man you are. You are the one who introduced me to politics, now you want me to get out of politics." I said, "No-no, I am not saying get out; all I am

saying is that let's go to this All-party conference, and whatever agreement we make together with Nkomo, Mugabe, then we can come and fight for votes from the people. If you win, good luck to you. If Mugabe wins, that's it, if Nkomo wins, that will be it. That is what we are saying; no-one is saying get out." I reminded him that in any case, when we asked him to lead us, it was meant to be temporary, but he could still continue.

He then made a stupid step, because he asked me, "Are you aware that there are people who are willing to die for me?" I answered him that was a shocking question, coming from a bishop like him. He said, "Do you want me to wait until all those who are willing to die for you have died?" I said, "Are you aware that Mugabe has more people willing to die for him than you? Are you aware that Nkomo has more people who are willing to die for him than you? And Smith has more people willing to die for him? I said are you not aware that you have the least number of people willing to die? but anyway, as a bishop you should be praying for the war to end, not for the war to continue until final victory which means many more people were going to die. He did not realise this blunder, and he said, "Well, okay, let's pray." Then then asked me to give him a week and he was going to tell me whether he was going to the All- Party Conference or not. I agreed to him a week. Within that week I was arrested and detained. I do not know whether he was behind it or it was just Zindoga and Anderson who did their own things, without a clear link to him. While I was waiting to be called I got arrested, so I did not have time to say, are you coming? Anyway, eventually he went to the Lancaster House Conference, and that was his doom.

At some point I came back and if you look at the papers I was described as the spokesperson of the Patriotic Front. I think they were those in ZANLA or ZANU who wanted us to stand for elections as one, that is, ZANU and ZAPU. There was also a strong group which thought the election could be used to decide as to who should be the president of the party, of the country, is it Nkomo or Mugabe? Of course eventually it was Nkala who announced that we should stand separately. He made it very clear. I was advocating for telling everybody, yes, we would come and stand as one, as the Patriotic Front. I knew that there were people who were opposed to that, and so I was not surprised when Nkala announced that ZANU was going to stand separately. So I think that was the position. People felt that there was need to use the election as a way of determining who should lead the country.

The Lancaster House Conference involved the fighters and the leaders. The delegations included ZANLA and ZIPRA forces. So you cannot say they regarded the agreement as a sell-out; of course in any organisation there are extremists who felt that the battle should be fought to its logical conclusion, and ZANLA and ZIPRA were no exception. We were winning anyway, so there was no need to talk but, the majority, I think, agreed that by talking we saved lives. We also reached some respectable agreement and that is what we did. I think Frontline States were behind the talks; our leaders were behind the talks; and I think generally we did not think it was a sell-out because in any negotiation, there is some give and take. What was

important was that we got a constitution which brought about majority rule; that brought about sovereignty to the people of Zimbabwe. That was all that we wanted, and I think no-one can convince me that the Lancaster House Conference did not produce that.

It is all history now. There was some fight, which involved ZIPRA and ZANLA, and in a way brought about some misunderstanding between PF ZAPU and ZANU. This resulted in the creation of what was known as 'dissidents' in Matabeleland after some fight at Entumbane and other places in Bulawayo. It resulted in some dissidents operating in Matabeleland and Midlands. When we took over in 1980, the government that was formed was a government of national unity that included ZANU PF and PF ZAPU. Because of the misunderstandings and killings which I have referred to, the President and Prime Minister Mugabe, relieved Nkomo and others of their positions in government, that was in 1982. But some of us remained in government. When I was asked to remain I asked under what name? And they said ZANU, of course. And I said, as long as you understand that I am in the government representing ZAPU, I have no problem, so I remained in government.

In 1980, I started as the Deputy Minister of Youth, Sports and Recreation. After about a year I became the Deputy Minister of Manpower Planning Development. I was in charge of compiling our manpower base. I think that was an important exercise because I was leading the team that we wanted to find out what was the manpower position throughout the country; in the private sector and the public sector, so we could plan for our future requirements. Then in 1992, I became the Minister of Water Resources and Development. One of the projects I introduced was the piped water schemes. At that time, in 1992, there was a very serious drought and I was tasked by the Cabinet to come up with a ten year dam construction programme. I was given two weeks to do it. I am glad I did it. My only disappointment is that some of the dams, although they were accepted as what was supposed to be done in 10 years, 28 years later those dams are not yet complete. That is my disappointment. But there are a number of dams that were done; the good thing was that during that time I had a lot of friends. The Dutch, for instance, decided to give us money to build dams; their minister came here to see what we were doing with their money, and they were very happy and said that they were going to give us more. Examples of dams that were built include Hwedza dam. Towards the end of 1984, after the killing of a senator in Beitbridge, Cde Nkomo and I, who had remained in the government, were also asked to resign. It was all part of this fight between ZANU and ZAPU or ZANLA and ZIPRA. But I think it was between them. So we were accused of being accomplices in a way, although personally I had nothing to do with it. But we left the government and of course I went into the private sector.

But the government appointed me to head parastatals, such as the Grain Marketing Board. In fact at one point I was the Chairman of the GMB, Cotton Marketing Board, and Dairy Marketing Board. So I was happy to play that part; I remained in those positions for ten years. During the 1992 drought I was in charge of the GMB and

I was responsible for the importation of grains. It was the worst drought in living memory. We had to import everything to feed our people and we did it successfully. I was out of parliament from 1985 to 1995. Then the people of Zvishavane called me back and said they wanted me back, so I went back and I was the Minister of State Responsible for Indigenisation from 1995 to 2000. In 2000 I was appointed the Governor and Resident Minister of Midlands province. That was the part I played in government.

President Mugabe was a nice man, very simple and down to earth. My brother was our cook, but cooked for us; he was not selective when it came to food like other people do when they have been out of the country. It was clear he came back from Ghana with a mission, and the mission was to liberate the country; I tried to interest in finding getting a job, but he just smiled and said nothing. He did not say he was not looking for work, but you could see, his main interest was to get involved in the liberation of the country. He came back with that zeal, determination and commitment to liberate the country; to get into the struggle and join others into really liberating the country. So when people like Nkala came to see him and asked him to accept the position of Publicity and Information Secretary of the newly formed NDP, he saw it as an opportunity to get deeply involved in the liberation of the country. I really liked him for we understood each other; we never had any point of disagreement.

He can be very kind. We were staying in Canaan in Highfield. One day I bought a car, but I did not know how to drive, the following day, on Friday, I decided to go to Harare Hospital, we were bachelors by then. I wanted to go and impress the girls that I had a car. So when he came he asked, “Where is sekuru Msipa?” He was told that I had gone to Harare Hospital, and followed me there. He came to me and said, “But why did you do this to me? See the trouble you have put me in? I had to come all the way here just because of you.” He drove me back and it was nice. I always remember that. The point I am making is that he cares about others; I found him to be a caring person. When we meet, the two of us talk about it, yes we do.

Being close to the people who went to form ZANU and also being close to Dr Nkomo, created problems for me. In 1984 I was elected Secretary-General of PF ZAPU, and before that I was the Secretary for Education. This meant I was number three from Nkomo, he being president, Msika, and me being the Secretary-General. That was being high indeed. So people were asking how, I could be the Secretary General of ZAPU, while I was ZANU. So it created problems for me because the ZANU people knew that I was ZAPU, but the ZAPU felt that I was too close to ZANU, so I could not be trusted that much. However, I maintained my position. Personally I do not stop talking to people because they belong to different parties. There is a lot to talk about in life, not just politics. There are other things; like I said, Mugabe was

my ‘*muzukuru*’ despite the political differences. That is why in 1974 when he was released, the first place he came to was my house to say, “Sekuru, I have been released. Can you take me to various places?” So I drove him to see his friends, and I knew all those were ZANU people, but I was helping my friend to see his friends.

There are many lessons, but the main thing is commitment and your convictions. If you think what you are doing is the right thing you should stick to it to the logical end. I was a Headmaster by that time. Headmasters were comfortable but to me that was not the case. I was convinced Zimbabwe was to be free. As a young person I had met people like Benjamin Burombo, who left an impression on my life. He was not educated but he used to tour the whole country. He was a man who came from Bulawayo, and was visiting Kwekwe and everywhere. When he was in ZVishavane, he stayed with my father, and he went to various places to address people against what the whites were doing to take their land. He brought to my attention the evils of the white minority regime early, by taking away land from its owners and people. They were talking to my father throughout the night, and I was listening. Sir Garfield Todd also influenced me during the Second World War; he lectured to us about how evil Hitler was. He showed us that Hitler wanted to dominate the world, and almost every day he told us how far the war was, who was winning and who was losing; he made a point of telling us at the Assembly.

In a way, he was in a way telling us that people had the right to rule themselves. So in many ways he played a role, because he was really showing that if Hitler succeeds we would have been dominated by one person and that was why there was the Second World War. Then the way the whites treated us was such that any self-respecting person could not have just sat back and do nothing. We were being treated like third class citizens; I told you that when we were in detention we were treated like third- class citizens in the land of our birth. Going back to the lessons, the lessons are clear that when people are united they can achieve their goals. We freed ourselves because there was unity of purpose; not only those who were carrying guns, but all the people in the country fought. It is wrong for people to think that only those who carried guns fought. There were people who sheltered the fighters, dangerous it, but they managed to shelter the freedom fighters and feed them, when it was dangerous to do so. So the people of Zimbabwe taught the world that you cannot subjugate the people all the time; people will eventually rise and claim what is theirs. That was the lesson the world learnt. All we did was to ask the rest of the world to help us. We fought inside and outside and with our blood we were able to liberate ourselves.

I am saying history repeats itself and people do not seem to learn much from history. That is why we I am saying, if we learn from history we shall not be repeating the same mistakes we made, we shall avoid them. But we repeat them because we do not learn much from history. That is unfortunate, but it depends. In 1963, when ZAPU was in the driving seat, ZANU were on the receiving end, and were dissidents, of course. That was what we regarded them as. In the early 1980s the tables were turned, ZAPU was on the receiving end, and the late Zvobgo used to say, "We are doing what you were doing in 1963, so what's the matter? We are doing exactly what you were doing to us. You used to beat us, so we are now also beating you." But the good thing is that we were able to talk to each other again and came together. That is the lesson we learnt. We discovered that what we were doing was not working. We

had to come together and work together for the good of the nation, hence the Unity Accord of 1987.

Somehow ZIPRA's contribution in the liberation of Zimbabwe is underrated or under-estimated, but it was immense. There are even some distortions, in my view, about who started this war of liberation. For instance, there was a fight in the Hwange area, which involved ZIPRA and the ANC of South Africa; way back they were together fighting the Smith regime. At one point the whole of Mashonaland west was under the control of ZIPRA, spreading to Matabeleland. Of course their terrain was more difficult than the Mozambican one.

But I think, when you look at the downing of the plane, that as you know, was the work of ZIPRA. That really frightened the whites, and it made them think. It was a big, dramatic act and they wondered how they could travel when the skies were no longer free. I think to sum it all, it was a joint operation, ZANLA and ZIPRA to free this country. If the Smith regime was facing ZANLA alone, the war could have taken much longer. They were over-extended because they were guarding the Zambian border as well as the Mozambican border. So really it was a joint effort; we should not really start to say who killed how many people, what is important is that we all fought to liberate this country and it was because we fought side by side, from various angles, that we were able to achieve what we achieved. That is how I look at it. May be not be as many young people died as they crossed the Zambezi from Zambia into the country; many thousands died in Mozambique and also died as they crossed into the country; and they also died in the country under the banner of ZANLA. But when you put everything together, they can all rightly claim to have liberated us from the yoke of colonialism.

I suffered for this country, but I know others suffered more than myself, and I am appreciative of the fact that 28 years later I am still alive. I had the opportunity to work for my country. I made a small contribution, but all the same I am happy that I made that contribution. I have seen some fulfilment of my dreams, such as indigenisation, whose policy I was fortunate to formulate. I saw blacks owning banks, owning means of transport. I saw all that. And now I see blacks owning their land. My only wish is that we could improve on productivity on the land such that we will shame our detractors, by regaining our position as the bread-basket of Zimbabwe. As the Chairman of the Agricultural Marketing Authority, one of my role was to market our farm produce, like maize and soya beans; in fact, we had surplus of that. Mr Gumbo talks of mass production, now that we have the land, weather-permitting we should go for mass production. I think I played my role, now it's time for the young people of this country. My generation played a role by liberating this country. Now we must hand over the button to the next generation who must take this country to greater heights. This is a great country with plenty of resources, and we should plan how to make the resources for the prosperity of the people. We should not waste time on things that do not bring happiness to the people of Zimbabwe. And of course we

must continue to guard our sovereignty jealously, and continue to maintain peace for the development of this country.

Thank you.

## Musiba, Murairo Chikonye

[Chikwanda, Gutu]

*Murairo, Chikonye Musiba was born in 1957, in Gutu. He participated as a mujibha during the liberation struggle. His task was to do a survey of the area if there was an enemy and provided information such that the comrades knew how to come and attack.*

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I am Murairo. I was born in 1957 here in Gutu. During the liberation struggle I participated as *mujibha*. Our task was to do a survey of the area, if there was an enemy, and provided the comrades with information so that they could know how to attack the enemy. One day we were caught by Muzorewa's soldiers, called the auxiliaries. After being arrested they took us to their camps and used us to perform various tasks; we were also beaten severely. Later we were taken from there to Joko in Masvingo, and after that to jail. If one went through Joko and then to jail you knew that you had survived. At Joko people were severely beaten, so people were very grateful to survive. During the interrogation they asked about the duties we did as *mujibhas*. So if we were asked whether we knew the comrades and we denied knowing them we were severely beaten. One was required to tell the truth and name the comrades, if he knew them. After that we were taken to jail, but we could not be taken to court. People were detained in jails for long periods. We were released from the jails after the liberation war had been won and people were now going to the assembly points.

We were caught by the auxiliaries when the comrades had sent us to Murairwa to collect items like tobacco and other things they wanted. The auxiliaries knew that we were the *mujibhas*. So they travelled with us from Murehwa to near Gutu; we slept in the bush until we got there. People caught included Happy Vhemba, David Vhemba, Saul Chikonye and Murairo Chikava. There were four of us. Later another guy was also caught and joined us. We were not beaten along the way but we were later beaten in their camp at Mhazha. They beat us and started probing statements from us. When caught it was difficult to deny that we did not know the comrades, because they asked us where we grew up, because the comrades operated in our area. Certainly we had to tell them to save our lives.

In the camps, we were forced to work, like in feeding the pigs or cattle, guarded by the soldiers. We slept in a hole; there was a hole which was dug there which looked like a deep well and got down the hole using a ladder, and then they removed the ladder before we went to sleep. In the event of any rain we were soaked by the rains. The hole was not closed, and we had no blankets; we just slept.

In the event that we wanted to use the toilet, there was nothing to do; after someone entered the hole he could not do anything. I do not remember how many of us were in the hole because we met other people there, and we could not sleep because the space was very small.

When the auxiliaries captured people, they tried to force them to enrol, but people refused. However, there were some who were enrolled as auxiliaries, but in our group

nobody accepted the offer. At some point they asked us to join them, but we refused. After we refused we were beaten, and threatened to be sent to jail forever.

There were no such instances of people being shot when the camps were attacked, but the comrades sometimes attacked if they thought of attacking, and people were severely beaten to the extent that some were disabled. You see this tree trunk? They could use it to beat us. Some girls were captured, but they were taken as wives by the auxiliaries. We found them living in their houses. They slept with them. The girls were isolated from us.

Okay, when we came from Mamhazha, we went straight to Joko in Masvingo. From there, on the second day we proceeded to the Central, in Masvingo. We stayed in jail for quite a long period there. From there they said we were going for Martial law at Mutimurefu and others were taken to Chikurubi. When we got there, we just stayed there and we were given some food. We were given sadza, vegetables and meat, just once a day. In the morning we were given tea in the morning, with a slice of sadza.

We were given small whites shorts and wore red shirts drawn a white spear on its back. I did not know what it meant exactly. In most cases red clothes are given to people considered as criminals, so we were considered as criminals. We were not allowed to mix with other prisoners, we had different cells. There were neither mattresses nor blankets. There were lice, but in our camp there were no people who contracted diseases and died. But in other camps that happened. We were not frequently beaten, except on some occasions by the soldiers who guarded us. We were only given newspapers to use in toilets, and not to read. When we were sick we were taken to hospitals. We had toilets inside, so in case of diarrhoea there was no problem. Some prison guards were ruthless, they could just assault indiscriminately.

My parents knew when I was captured but they could not do anything about it, except visiting us. The fears that one day the authorities would wake up and kill us always haunted us. When we were released, the people did not take us as criminals; they could not do that. The community received us well and treated us very well. People were happy with us.

Before I was arrested I can recall that there were two people who were shot dead at Murayiro by the soldiers. The soldiers just came and rounded up people who were around. We were then surprised to see two men being shot. When such things happened it was painful because people were unjustly punished for no meaningful reasons. We were not involved in crossfire when the comrades and the Rhodesian forces were fighting each other. The tasks the *mujibhas* executed were difficult because, for instance, it was not easy to access the white areas to assess the weapons they had or how they were positioned. All the same, the comrades wanted the information and failure to do so could result in being beaten. Looking at the relationship between the comrades and the *chimbwidos*, of course some were impregnated. But it all depends, some were not abused, but some comrades did abuse the *chimbwidos*.

The war is not something to play about. You can only like it before it erupts but thereafter you never want to hear about it. The war does not take sides, anyone can

die anytime. The youths say they want war because they do not know what it is. War is very bad. If they need war they should only be happy about it when one is in possession of his/her own gun. Considering the work I did, I was not meaningfully rewarded, and it is very painful. But however the government later remembered us as the war detainees and they give us money; it is not enough, but at least it relieved us a bit, considering the pain we went through during the liberation struggle. So we were just happy that they gave us those few cents.

It is painful today when I see the whites whom we fought and who caused a lot of suffering to us, especially considering that they caused some permanent injuries. We are angry about, it but because of law we cannot retaliate. To me, injuries are the scars of the wounds caused to us because of the beatings.

Thank you.

## Ndlovu, Dereck

[Mabhidu, Kwekwe]

*Dereck Ndlovu from the ZAPU Ex-Political Prisoners and Detainees organization, was born in 1928 and grew up in Zhombe*

My name is Dereck Ndlovu and I was born in 1928 and grew up in Zhombe up to 1939 when the Second World War began. I also wished to go but I could not because I was still young. I worked for the whites and at one point went to Zambia with the whites whom I was working for and experienced life there. As a result of that experience, when I came back to Zimbabwe in 1960, I began to be politically active as an organiser and mobiliser for NDP in my area, that is, Tombankala, Zhombe. Based on the differences that I had noted in Zambia, and the hardships that Rhodesians at that time succumbed to, many people joined NDP due to my activism.

In 1964 ZAPU was banned and I was arrested and given a year's restriction at Gonakudzingwa; after my return home I stayed for 21 days and got re-arrested and got restricted for five years at Gonakudzingwa. In 1967 I escaped from Gonakudzingwa with the intention to run away to possibly Zambia, but got arrested at Villa Salazar and stayed at a prison there before being relocated to Khami. While at Khami I received news that my wife was no more and hence I wrote a letter to the Minister of Law and Order Maintenance requesting to go and attend the burial of my wife but he refused. Therefore I stayed in detention until I was released in 1971, and it was then that I remarried. We stayed until the joining of ZAPU and ZANU, but we were beaten so much that as I am seated here, I have wounds and bruises from the liberation struggle, which are permanent. There are many encounters with the whites that are painful to me, but all I can say, in short, is that this country was hard won.

What led to my being arrested for the first time was that I was the organiser in my area, encouraging people into politics. I revealed my experiences about the injustices practised by the whites. When I got arrested, the white CIDs came to my homestead and stated that when they heard about me they thought that I was probably educated, but to their surprise my head was nothing more than just a fingernail; and surely I was not educated at all, and it was Taylor, a white CID working at Kwekwe, who said that. When I told him that you did not need to be educated to realise the injustices being practised by his counterparts, he told me to shut up and swore at me. He said that due to the fact that I underestimated the whites, he was arresting me; he then handcuffed me and put me into the car.

Life was so difficult at Gonakudzingwa, such that when I escaped, I spent a week in the bush, with lions. I intended to flee to Zambia, where I had heard life and politics was easier. When I saw lions going in a particular direction I changed course and went in the opposite direction. I ended up in Mozambique, in a town called Villa Salazaar, after moving backwards whilst fleeing from lions. I climbed a tree and slept

there, as they roamed about. It was due to this that I was picked up by an ambush which had been set up, and was sent to Villa Salazaar prison.

I was relocated to Khami and they stated that it was lighter at Gonakudzingwa, but at Khami it would be much harder. At Khami it was tougher as we were placed at what they called Penal Block, which had a passage and had women adjacent to each other and there was no space or room for anything else. The rooms there were small and there was a single toilet bucket for everyone, which sometimes, when it was full was not emptied or replaced. That, I can say was one of the problems that I encountered during my stay in prison.

When I first embarked on politics, we did have women in politics, even at Gonakudzingwa although they were few I can remember Mrs Chinamano, three from Gwanda, and from Gweru there was one maMguni; so all in all at Gonakudzingwa there was a total of six women in number.

During the struggle we credited spirit mediums so much that even in prison there were some people who were known to be possessed; and those who were given time to move around the prisons saying whatever they had to say to the people. These people represented the culture sect.

I was harassed a lot, for instance after my release, the whites came to my homestead twice a week looking and checking if I was still there, and they thought that perhaps I entertained guerrillas. In fact I was beaten up on uncountable occasions. It should be noted that at this time there were sell-outs from our area, because people feared that once the guerrillas came they would suffer for their actions. I remember one day gunshots were heard from behind my house and these guns were guerrilla gunshots. So the whites came and asked me what type of gunshots had I heard and I told them that I did not know and they beat me up because I had failed to identify the gunshot

sounds and that I had referred to the whites as *mabhunu*. They mentioned that I can call them whites, and beat me up for that.

The union of ZIPRA and ZANLA to form PF was such that, say from my area, and the whole of Matabeleland, it was the ZIPRA boys who operated in this area; in the other provinces ZANLA operated there. So the union came after realisation that both military wings had actively participated in bringing about independence. The elections which were won by Mugabe necessitated the union, so that the role of either ZIPRA or ZANLA should not undermined the struggle; as we saw some elements of ZIPRA resisting in the bush. With time we told them to admit to unity b it meant equality; at least we saw it in that way.

Well, when we were leaving for Gonakudzingwa and when we were still at Kwekwe prison we were kept indoors for four days without being let out. We boarded the plane with two others from Harare and in Masvingo we were joined by the others namely Madhandara and Nyakunhuwa; at Chiredzi we relocated into cars, and upon arrival there we were greeted by others with drums and music who had been arrested before us and we were conscripted into Camp 3. This camp was for new recruits and here we were given pots to cook for ourselves and the firewood was sometimes gathered

for us although sometimes we went into the forest under the supervision of armed guards to collect our own firewood. When I was relocated to Khami I was not allowed to mix with other prisoners as they feared that I might spread evil to them. There I was met by two whites who shifted me to a new cell which had replaced Ingutsheni, which was a prison for mad people but Khami was between medium and maximum security. It is here that we were ill-treated and they would come asking us how we felt or whether we were now ready to surrender but none of us surrendered. There was ill-treatment because we shared our cells with mad people and the sanitation as I mentioned was deplorable.

I also need to add that during my years after release, up to 1980 we used to hide our mealie-meal in a hole which we covered on top and our pots sometimes stayed in the bush, in preparation for any attacks, when we could run to the bush for refuge. I think that is all I can recall.

## Shoko, Abias Pelice

*Abias Pelice Shoko, whose war name is Shoko Zvombo, was born in Pelile area. In 1977 he left and joined the war with a group of about 100 others with the intention of crossing the border and entering Mozambique. He was trained in Mozambique and in Bucharest and later came back to work in Air Defence where he is still working.*

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My name is Abias Pelice Shoko. I was born in chief Mudavanhu's area under headman Pelile's area. I left and joined the war on 26 August 1977 under the companionship of comrades who operated in our area; I was 24 years old. As youths life had become difficult in Rhodesia and we used to be gathered up by the whites at Hombami which was their base and we used to be beaten up as they asked us where we left the comrades. So this forced me to go to war than continue to be oppressed by the whites. Others would just go to war.

We were a group of 100 and rested at Maranda area. We saw planes when we were near Chikombedzi and all the other people ran into the river Mwenezi and sought refuge there while I and another guy remained behind. We later joined the others after we had crossed the Mwenezi River. We stayed in Masuku's area for almost a month because we were told that the border was not crossable due to the enemy's activities, as there were booby traps at the border, as well as landmines to deter people from crossing into Mozambique.

We once thought of finding cattle to use as guinea pigs to detonate booby traps but we couldn't get them and by the time we crossed there were fifty of us. I am not sure if the others perished from our attack. One comrade joined us later in Mozambique and told us that he had gone back home after we had been attacked. We were transported to the railway and to Mabaraji area near the Limpopo River after having crossed there; from there we went to a base called Shaishai, still near the Limpopo and the ocean. This time we were commanded by Cde Marikunaka. We stayed there and most comrades who came from South Africa's WENELA used to pass through there. We then went to Pungwe III near the Malawian border.

We began our training and from there we went to Mudzingaidzi, where I first met comrade Mugabe when he told us to go ahead with training. We went to Masengere with Comrade Hamunyari as our commander. We then went to Doroï Base 12 where those who had been trained stayed. And from there we went to Sofala Province, where we stayed for a long while, awaiting deployment back home. Hunger was the most eminent problems as we were given sadza and powdered milk which was not enough. We ended up having to eat leather as long as you put salt on them.

We had women but they trained separately and lived separately at different bases. We were treated equally and though there were diseases like hiccups which affected women, they would be affected by this disease and would spread it to their colleagues and as they walked they would act as if they saw something scary and hence this disease was contagious to women only, not men.

When we were near the Manica border, as we were about to come back, fifteen of us including myself, were called out and we went back to Sofala and got photographed. We arrived at Dodo Railway and went to Beira where we got on a plane to Egypt, but en route we passed through Kenya. We crossed the Red Sea to Bulgaria and to Bucharest where there was a base where Zimbabweans were trained. There I met others like Comrade Shungu and Ropa; and for field artillery, Colonel Chinyadzwa and Magocha. These had come before us and could speak Romanian. We stayed there till independence. One day in August Banana came and we thought we had finished the war but there I also met Cde Joshua Misihairambwi, the late, and the President was Cde Mugabe; Banana told us that we were to undergo further training of defending the country rather than taking it, and he told us that the training had been extended but he did not know when it would end.

In February 1981, that was when we finished training and we came to assembly points at Chitungwiza and then Tongogara. We then formed the Air Defence and I am still working there up to now. The accounts are too many that I can't finish them. At Chimoio II we used to follow and believe in ancestors not like what they now do. We were told to leave in the morning and as we left the place was bombed by Smith and that is when we went to Pungwe III. In brief that was my account.

## Zvevamwe, London

[Gweru, 10 April 2008]

*Comrade London Zvavamwe was born on 1st of April 1958 in Chivi. He grew up in Gokwe, and joined the liberation struggle in Zambia at Mambishi Training Centre. He was deployed in the northern front where he operated until 1979.*

I am comrade London Zvavamwe I was born in 1958 on the 1st of April in Chivi. I grew up in Gokwe. I left the country in 1976 and went to Mutengwani. We were a group of about 22 boys and we left school, because Smith had proclaimed that all school leavers should go to the national call-up. There was this radio, Voice of Zimbabwe at Time Service Radio Zimbabwe. We used to listen with some schoolmates; most of us were in form three. I joined the first group of the liberation struggle in Zambia at Mambishi Training Centre.

It just happened that one Sunday we decided to join the liberation struggle; and instead of going to the service we stayed in the dormitories. At night we prepared our beds as if we were sleeping in them, so that when the other people came in from the service they would think we were asleep; by then we would have gone. So we utilised that opportunity and left the country. We went through Botswana and arrived in Francistown, at Jere; and that was where a Transit camp for people going to the war was situated. Tickets were prepared for us and we flew to Lusaka. And then we joined others in Mambishi Training Centre.

Basically I can say there are several issues which inspired me to join the liberation struggle. Firstly we were not comfortable with the presence of the Rhodesian soldiers always roaming in our school, as if they wanted to protect us; also there was the issue that all school leavers were supposed to go for call-up. We said, "No call-up to fight our own brothers. It is impossible!" So I decided to join the liberation fighters.

When we arrived in Zambia, we had to change our names. We could no longer use our home names; those who had Ids had to surrender them at the first camp, which was called Nyamupindu. We were then given Chimurenga names. My pseudo-name was London Zvevamwe, which actually meant that London should hear from us, and it was not for them to tell us what to do. I can say we were quite a big number of us in Zambia. There were companies A to H, and we were around 800. We were trained in guerrilla warfare, hit and run tactics; then there was training in terrain

features, to be able to use the terrain, to the extent that people believed that '*vakomana vanonyangarika*.' Actually we were trained how to manoeuvre the terrain to an extent that the soldiers said we had disappeared, but it was not '*kunyangarika*.' We were trained by instructors like, Sigoge, who was the commander then, Cephas, Doug, and even the Army Commander V. P. Sibanda, he was my instructor.

War in the northern front, spanned from Villa Kazungula, which is Livingstone to Kanyemba; all that was in the Northern Front. But I am not at liberty to disclose the detailed battles; it is more classified information to me. Really war in the Northern

Front was not easy. The first obstacle was the Zambezi River itself. At times the enemy ambushed us at a crossing point when we were in dinghies, because we used the dinghy to cross the river. The enemy would hit that tube while we were in the middle of the river crossing. Sometimes in the units we belonged to there were sell-outs, who communicated with the Rhodesian forces that there would be people at a certain crossing point, crossing into the then Rhodesia. Besides being ambushed at the crossing point, we were also attacked by hippos in the river, and a lot of property and people would be lost that way. People who could not swim drowned, so in most cases we had to put on life jackets in the case that there would be need to swim across the river. Basically that was the first obstacle. From there, if all went on well, the second obstacles would be thickets. We took four to five days before reaching the populated areas. So for those days we had to manoeuvre in the game reserves, which were full of animals including the rhino, 'bhejani'. That was the most notorious animal because at times it could attack you; buffalos were also notorious. The lions were not a big deal; it was like they respected us. The rhinoceros and the buffalo were so notorious that we ended up firing bullets at them. That was the second obstacle. In the reserves we reached some points where we had to climb mountains, especially the Zambezi Escarpment. That was another obstacle; that at one point when crossing the Devil's Gorge it took us the whole day climbing, because we had to carry a lot of materials including guns and food. Unlike the Rhodesian forces that relied on planes we had to use our backs. The after that we had to cook our food, eat and sleep. The following morning we had to climb down; climbing down was a bit easier, and it took half a day. Then the fourth obstacle was hostile masses. In the beginning the *povo* could not understand the purpose of the liberation struggle and so they could sell-out. So before we politicised the peasants, we could not rely on them; but as time went on, having politicised them, they got to understand and appreciate our efforts. At the end of the day we were the fish and they were our water.

I came from Zambia back into Rhodesia at end of 1976, around Christmas. I was then deployed in the northern front and operated there until 1979. I can say the guerrilla warfare was very difficult to comprehend; it was difficult because you can't harness guerrilla warfare as it was hit and run. They had protected bases in the northern front. So we had to quickly arrange the exit way, because within no time the helicopters arrived and surrounded us.

We did not use *pungwes* in the northern front, we could only mobilise the masses house to house, and they brought food to a central place, but we had no *pungwes* in the northern front. The Northern front was the one that had predominantly ZIPRA forces, though at times they could meet with ZANLA forces and execute joint operations. ZIPA was the combination of the two forces. But what I am saying is that in the northern front if we needed reinforcements, we could group together with ZANLA and as a joint venture, attack the camp we found necessary to attack. It was not necessarily difficult to come together, because we were in good working relations; we never faced that problem. Of course women were trained, but very few got to the

front. They probably brought the supplies like the bullets, explosives and landmines, but were not necessarily fighting on day to day basis. On our side there was no such set-up.

Muzorewa is one of the leaders who caused other people to suffer because he entered into the agreement with Smith, which was a treasonous; such that, the Rhodesian African Rifles, who were Smith's soldiers, ended up with *Pfumo Revanhu*,

who were called *Dzakutsaku*, were poorly trained and had such poor and inefficient weapons that the majority of them fell by the wayside. ZIPRA was from Kazungula, from Livingstone to Feira which border Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi and Mozambique. From there onwards, as we proceeded further eastwards, that was where the ZANLA forces operated. The ZIPRA forces came from Livingstone Stretch to Lupane, Gwanda, Beitbridge and across Mberengwa. ZANLA also went either side and we could meet around Beitbridge. The mission of the liberation struggle was to dismantle the discriminatory rule of the time, in which the whites did not want to hear of one man one vote. So we had to resort to an armed struggle to attain that right of one man one vote to be able to choose the kind of leadership we wanted. The battles I was involved in were many, but as I said, I am not at liberty to outline them because I am not comfortable with that. I am not at liberty, like I mentioned earlier on that while in joint operations with ZANLA we attacked big camps and garrisons like Livingstone and some garrisons like Kariba, Chirundu and Kanyemba. All these garrisons were subjected to our firepower.

We travelled mainly on foot and we could carry our food with us, but we could get supplementary food in the bush. In later stages we had to rely on supplies from the peasants. On clothing, we had our own uniforms and with time we had jeans supplied from businesses, they were bought and brought to us in the front. The Rhodesian forces could poison water points, because water was one of the of the obstacles in the game reserves. We first observed the water to find out if the microorganisms found in water were there before drinking. When we could not find them, it implied that the water had been poisoned. They also poisoned canned beef. So they used all kinds of dirty tactics. I have scars from the liberation struggle; not only physical scars but also

the mental scars; that was the first injury subjected to *mwana wevhu*. Then on scars, there was this battle from which I was affected by splinters. They used grenades and some of the splinters pierced me on my right side; on the very day I was injured by the splinters, I was also hit in my ribs, and as we speak, it is still deformed. I would say, we should keep on keeping on with the revolution, because revolution is not an event, it is a process. So since it is a process, I urge all the youth to harness themselves, tighten their belts and then continue in our revolutionary way until the whole of Africa is liberated, until the whole world, and each and everyone goes back to his or her own position, as God created the world and put boundaries.

Rumours that there is probably more history about the ZANLA than the ZIPRA are not true. It's only publicity that is biased on one side, but it's not true. Since it was a protracted war, no-one could say he was fighting better than the others because it

was not a race as such, or otherwise. But it is a fact that AK47 or the bazooka could be used the same way across the board; so I think it was more of publicity than anything else.

Towards 1980 we were in the front, and that was when we were enjoying the war, as we had started establishing the liberated zones, which was a no-go area for the enemy. We were in the process of infiltrating the urban centres and we were about to start urban guerrilla warfare. Then we heard about the Lancaster Agreement issue that our leaders had agreed upon. We were kind of suspicious in the initial days, and some did not even go to the assembly points, because they failed to understand the situation. But at the end of the day we assembled at the assembly points, after our nationalist leaders pleaded with us. Assembly points were scattered throughout the country.

There were no keeps in the northern front. We only heard about them around Mt. Darwin area, but from Veira to Livingstone there were no keeps. Thank you.

## Chamunorwa, Abel

### **Abel Chamunorwa's war name is Teverai Chimurenga.**

I was born in 1958 in the Nyumbu area of Chivi district. I went to Chirogwe School, then proceeded to Hippo Valley, where my father worked, and I completed my studies (there) at Gaba School in 1977. When I finished school, I had a friend called Manasa Rukono. In December, we left Hippo Valley intending to go and join the Chimurenga (struggle). We would hear about the war from the village. I had actually visited the village sometime in 1976, where we were given an orientation about the struggle one evening at a pungwe at the Machingura base. The comrades who were at the pungwe included Teverai Chimurenga, whose name I later adopted when we got to Mozambique.

The three of us, with my friends, wanted to go (and join) the struggle, but we could not find anyone to go with us. But there was teacher Chigome who helped people to cross (to Mozambique). Then one of us said he had a sister who lived in the Save River area. So we went to Chiredzi, and we got into a roadblock on our way to the Chitsva Keep, where our friend's sister was married. At the roadblock we produced our identity papers and we said we were students, and that we were on our way to look for Form 1 places at Hippo Valley. We were allowed to proceed. Our plan was to get help from our friend's brother-in-law to cross the Save River. We spent one night and then we were helped to cross the river. The brother-in-law advised us to keep walking straight ahead. After walking for a while, we saw a row of (Rhodesian) soldiers with guns, and we lay on the ground, taking cover.

The soldiers passed and we proceeded. We got to a homestead where there was a woman. She asked us where we were going and we told her that we wanted to go to Mozambique. Then she said that we would be shot by the soldiers. We were already in the Mahenye area, in Chipinge. We continued walking, then we saw a man who was walking, carrying a hammer. We told him that we wanted to go to Mozambique, and he said we were almost there, it was a short distance away. When we got to the border we were taken to Sangadhara, whom I think was the village head. Then he called the Mozambican soldiers. The militia came first, and they asked us where we had come from. We said we had come from Rhodesia. It was already sunset, so they took us to a house. There we met an elderly man who used to work in Hippo Valley Section 12, who knew each other with one of my friends. He then said (to the militia) that he knew us and that he used to work with my friend's father.

The following morning we were taken to a (Mozambican) comrades' base, where we spent two days being interrogated, being asked about who we had come with. That place we arrived at was called Machazi. We were then taken to a police camp, where (the police) were told that we wanted to go for training, and we were asked to confirm. We were then taken to Chipungabeira, where we saw others who had come from Zimbabwe, who were waiting to be moved further. We were put in that group and were questioned by the (Zimbabwean) comrades. The fighters would make us do the toi-toi drills. By then it was 1978. We were then taken to the Goigoi base, then to Musengezi, until we arrived at Chibhawawa or Toronga. This is where the refugee camp was. We could actually walk about in the afternoons and evenings, and there was even a river where we would wash ourselves. Then we were put in a battalion

called Parirenyatwa.

There were many problems at Chibhawawa. Food would come once a week, and we would only eat twice per week. There were many diseases and infections, such as jiggers known as matekenya which would burrow into your feet and buttocks. We would remove the bugs when we went to wash at the Budzi river. Then there were the ticks called zvifesani which would infect your leg, and get deeper and deeper until your leg would almost get torn apart.

When there would be no food we would go into the Mozambican communities to look for logs to build our shelters, then the people would give us work to do in their fields, then they would give us food, after which we would go back to do our work in the camp. While there at Chibawawa, in 1978 we received the information that we would be going for (military) training. Then vehicles arrived with comrades who had come to tell us that we were going to go for training in (countries such as) Romania (and) Yugoslavia. We were taken away in groups.

We arrived at a camp called Samakweza, and we were put in groups. My friend and I were put in the group that was going to Libya. We were then taken to Beira, from where we proceeded to Libya. We arrived in Tripoli and were taken to a military base where we would stay in tents. Our instructors were comrades Simbi, Hamunyari and Magorira, who were from Pakistan and could speak English. The ZIPRA trainees also had their own separate camp.

We started training on infantry warfare, regular warfare, and also on how to use big guns, AK47, bazooka, as well as the LMG (Light Machine Gun), and we even had the guns which our enemy used. We trained for a full year. We did not even stop training after the ceasefire was agreed on, because we were worried that the Rhodesians could renege on the agreement. We returned to (Zimbabwe) in 1980, in phases, going to assembly points.

Our first training was basic infantry training. It was about small arms, such as LMG, 60mm mortar, AK47. You would start with small arms, then field craft, ambushes, patrols, phases of war. As for ambushes, we were taught how to work out the direction from which the enemy was coming and where he was going. And how you would lay your ambush at a suitable point, where you could fire your guns and attack the enemy with maximum effect.

After theory we would then go to positions and lay the ambushes. Small arms were for you to shoot the enemy in close contact or during an assault, getting closer to the enemy, giving you accuracy. As for drills, we would do foot drills, marching without guns. We would also learn about position of attention, salute on the march, for celebrations, while marching past the superiors, while saluting, saluting while holding your guns. Holding means stopping and saluting. We also did bayonet fighting drills. (In a battle) if you end up too close to the enemy you may not be able to fire your gun, so we were taught other ways of hitting the enemy effectively.

After the small arms, we learnt about anti-tank attack (and) anti-air. I personally focused on anti-tank training, which was the training programme called "classical warfare". We were taught how to destroy the enemy's planes, as well as the tanks. Others did anti-air rifles. The instructor I liked most was comrade Magorira. He helped us to quickly grasp what we were being taught, especially foot drills and arms drills. There was also another Libyan who would entertain us with samba (music) during training. The one I liked most when it came to training on how to strip the rifle was Comrade George. He was so good at dismantling the gun that you would learn

quickly.

The day we were told that we were going back home we were so excited, but we were also anxious because we were going into assembly points. We thought we were going to form our own army. We were also worried about how we were going to be put together with the ZIPRA forces, who were fighting together with us. Long back, there was one university; long back, there was no black person who could vote or be a president.

## Chingoo, Mai

[Nembiri]

My name is Mrs Chingoo. I live in Nembiri. The war was hot here in Chikwira. My husband was shot by the soldiers in 1976 when he was taking food to the comrades. He was taken away in a vehicle by the soldiers. My husband was hurt on his leg, while two others died on the spot. So in (Mount) Darwin they took us to the witnesses houses. They (the soldiers) shared our property while we were watching. We didn't sleep, as they kept calling us wives of terrorists, ordering us to go outside in the rain. It was in February, and it was raining. We were ordered outside until sunrise.

The following morning they took us again and asked us to show them our people's dead bodies. We showed them. They then took us to a house where they interrogated us, saying that we were wives of terrorists. They asked us the names of the people who had died. They then took us to a house where dead bodies were kept in coffins, awaiting burial. Back here in the village they put us in keeps the week after we came from the prison in Mt Darwin. They put us in keeps while the rains were pouring. They ordered us to destroy our houses because the terrorists would stay in the houses. So we moved into the keep and built new houses. But food would still be smuggled out of the keeps (to feed the comrade) while the soldiers were guarding us. We didn't even care about the soldiers or DA's. The comrades would also even get into the keep.

We were determined and we were prepared to die because what we wanted was to liberate our country. We lived in the keep from 1976 to 1980. We would sweep around the fences while the DA's guarded us. We were given (identity) cards. When you would go out of the keep, you would leave your card at the gate and pick it up when you come back. If you lose the card, you would be thoroughly beaten. But we never gave up. We would smuggle food out of the keep and take it (to the comrades) because we wanted our independency. We would wrap buns in a cloth, then wrap the clothe around the waist, then wear a coat and walk out. Before the keep had been fenced, we would carry sadza (in containers) on our heads, covering it with leaves so that the soldiers in helicopters would not see the sadza.

There were people like Topedza who had cars. We would load sacks in the car, then cover them with cow manure. On the way out of the keep we would say it was manure and yet beneath there would be mealie meal and sadza. We would also smuggle cooking oil from Harare and hide it, then use it to cook the relish. So our keep was very good at feeding the comrades. In 1976 we were all surrounded and ordered (by the soldiers) to go there at Guradzimu. They said they were going to teach us a lesson. Jets flew in from Harare and they were circulating above us. We could not take anything out, not even a teaspoon. Mr Chidengu was shot all over. His wife was shot while she was in the house. That is the battle that was fought at headman Chibaya's place. Some (survivors) were later taken to Bindura for treatment, but God refused/ forsook us on that occasion.

In 1973 I got into yet another keep in St Albert, where people really suffered. We would be forced by the soldiers to clear human excrement with bare hands. People were beaten badly, then got released later. But the war never stopped. In 1974 they moved people from Chiweshe to Muzarabani, but we remained resolute. That's the year they changed identity cards from paper ones to the (metal ones) with pictures. We were taken back to the keep, but we never gave up, because people were united. We would all keep secrets, we were against the white man.

We initially voted for Muzorewa, but the war intensified. Muzorewa was hiding ahead of (behind) Smith. The war was fought so well that all of us regretted why we didn't go and join the struggle. We then voted again after getting explanations about the way things were. We voted for the cockerel (Zanu PF) in 1980. We heard on the radio that whoever won should not say bad things to the others. The cockerel won and we celebrated. We didn't sleep. It was independency. Here in Mt Darwin we saw the war, the battle which my husband was shot, and the one at headman Chibaya's place. Aah, I feel sad because Mrs Chibaya ran away, but she was shot in the house. That's where one comrade was killed, at Chikwira, a tough battle it was.

Another battle was fought there at Siyamachira, and another one at Chamboko, and at Maripfonde. I saw with my own eyes Michael Maripfonde's house being destroyed, people being forced into Maripfonde's house, being beaten in there. I was on my way to see my husband who was in Bindura. These battles were fought because people had realised that our country had been taken away by force, and they said let's see if we can't take it back. The white man was sitting pretty, while we were here, a rocky area where you can not grow crops. Here in the rural areas, we were not allowed to sell our crop at the GMB (Grain Marketing Board), our children could only study up to Standard 6, without further education. We got to understand about the war after the comrades explained to us and we realised that this country was ours, it was snatched away from us, so we must fight.

Our problem was that of sell-outs, because you would have to make sure that around you there was no one whom you didn't know. You would not take food (to the comrades) before someone had looked around, checking whether there were people watching. Muzorewa's militia (Dzakutsaku) and the Selous Scouts worked together with the whites. The Dzakutsaku came, and they were called Muzorewa's soldiers. They wore brown uniforms. Their slogan was: "Dzakutsaku ehe, huru yadzo dzakutsaku." (Dzakutsaku ehe, the big gesture of them all, dzakutsaku.).

The Chimurenga songs were such that even those who were not understanding (about the war) would end up knowledgeable through the singing. If you would sing,

"Nehondo nyika taitora" (We take this country through the war). Or the song that goes:

"Zimbabwe ndeyeropa baba Zimbabwe  
Zimbabwe ndeyeropa ramadzibaba  
Nyika yeropa remadzibaba"

(Zimbabwe is the land of our fathers' blood)

Even a person who would not understand (the objectives of) the war would end up knowing that our country was our fathers' country, it belonged to Chaminuka, Mbuya Nehanda, Kaguvi, so the war had to be fought.

The spirit mediums, being the voices of the ancestors, would usually advise the comrades on how to conduct themselves, giving them the traditional laws that they had to follow, so that they would not misbehave. They would also give them the assurance that things would eventually end well and that they should remain determined. In the time of the war we were forbidden to work in the fields on Fridays. In the Hwata area they were forbidden to grow round nuts. We were not allowed to wear red clothes. The comrades were forbidden to have love affairs, and had to focus on the war. Those who broke the laws and fell pregnant perished. Any female collaborator who broke the laws was taken to be a sell-out, for example if you would not deliver food to the comrades on time, or if you would not even deliver the food at all. They would say you didn't do your duty because you were busy planning other things (against the struggle). So you would be taken to a base where you would be put on trial and if you didn't have satisfactory explanations you would be beaten thoroughly in front of the people. If you were late to bring sadza to the comrades they would order you to eat and finish all the sadza, no matter the quantity. Many sell-outs had their lips cut, many actually died. The comrades would ask the sell-out to go with them, and he would be excited to follow believing that he was being taken for training, not knowing that they were going to kill him.

People should not take a war lightly, because it is dangerous, it has no production because you will be full of fear in whatever you will be doing.

The comrades used guns and landmines. The enemy used aeroplanes to bomb, but the comrades won. Do you think it was possible to use bombs to attack someone who was walking on foot, even when the (Rhodesian soldiers had) help from the whites who were brought in from South Africa and ended up dying here?

The objectives of the war were met because now we have land, schools are everywhere, we have clinics, we can now till the land, people are selling their farm produce, which we were not allowed to do because we were said to be baboons. We didn't want another war. But others were injured (in the war) and never got any compensation. Like my husband there, who is not getting anything, yet he lost his leg in the war. We joined the ZLWCA but we are not getting any money. We attend the meetings and we pay the required subscriptions.

The first comrades we worked with were George Rutanhire, Matambanadzo, Tonderai Kufa, Chingwa, Farirai Hondo, Teddy Marikiti. These are the ones we were with (in the struggle.) Bid Tamai's name was changed to Muronda. We would cook for them and our husbands would take the food to them. My first son, Njodzi, was given his father's name by his grandfather.

## Chingoo, Sekuru

### [Nembiri]

I am Sekuru Chingoo. The war started in 1972 on 25 December. I started seeing helicopters, not knowing what was happening. The soldiers were fighting on their own, then they realised that they were not going to win the war without the support of the people, then they came to us. The soldiers would move during the day, and the comrades would move at night, each side hunting the other in the forests. The soldiers were once ambushed at Maripfonde and they were thoroughly beaten. That was in 1973, when I was working at a garage at St Alberts. I met the soldiers in the evening, their long line of vehicles with punctured tyres. In 1974 there was the second battle at Nembiri, where all the people of Marara Nyakutsongwa area were put in keeps.

Yes, in 1973 there was a time we spent a whole week being asked if we knew terrorists, and how they looked like. Many were beaten, such as Muchageza, Mutinhima. We abandoned our livestock in the bush, but we came back and found our crops (still) in the fields because it was in the month of March. Our livestock were devoured by wild animals right in our homesteads.

In 1975 there was no battle which was fought, but in 1976, on 2 February, that's when I was shot on the leg when I was on my way to give the comrades food in Nyamufutagomo (mountain/river). I was taken to Mt Darwin hospital where my leg was amputated, then I went to Bindura where I spend three months. Others were arrested in Maripfonde. All from Kadonje, (the likes of) Dhiziriyo Simuka, participated in the war, carrying guns. I remained in our area, working as a collaborator, being the head of the bases, going that far where the comrades would stay, bringing them food in the bases..

In 1977 we were then put in a keep at Chikwira, in Keep One. We could not get to the bases, it was in the middle of the arrival of ammunition that came from the east, arriving in the Nembire mountain. The ammunition was removed from there and was taken behind the mountain. After that, still in 1977, a battle was fought right in the keep.

The soldiers and the comrades fired guns at each other. The comrades had entered the keep looking for food. But the comrades did not fire back because they were worried about harming civilians. From Nembiri to Mafusire we worked with many people, united as one people. We would also go around, hiding/burying bullets, especially at the battle in the keep. But after ceasefire, we met with the comrades and we gave them (the) bullets. After the war, we had a party at Wilson Maripfonde's house, we had (won our) independence.

In the war we worked with Rex Nhongo, Matambanadzo, Kambunda, Jet. These are some of those that worked from village to village. In Maripfonde there were the likes of Tonderai. At Nembire there were the likes of Matambanadzo, Pfumvu, Jet. We would know that on this particular day the comrades would be at which place, and (we would know) when they would be coming back. But we were not allowed to accept a group of comrades if there wasn't a single comrade that you knew. You had to know certain comrades. Being a collaborator, you would be send to certain places, but you had to assess whether you would be able to get there (safely), and if you couldn't you would tell the comrades that it was not safe for you to go there, because you could die

or other people would think that you were a sell-out. You could be asked to bring sadza (food) during the day, which is the time the soldiers would be patrolling. So you would know what to do. So these are some of the challenges that we would meet during the war. It was not a problem for us to meet with the comrades when we were in the keeps because there were some people who would get out of the keeps and meet with the comrades. We stayed in the keep from 1976 to 1979, and got out, going back to our homes around 1980. At that time we were united with the collaborators. There were times when the collaborators would be sent to the shops to buy such things as tobacco. They had to know how to bring the parcel and who to give so that he would then take it (out of the keep) to the comrades.

There could be young people who would make balls using rugs, then put the goods inside the ball, then kick the ball (outside). So you would not tell anyone. Word would spread as if people had phones. Night rallies were rarely held in this area. The rallies were held during the day in 1977, and young people were taken to Mozambique for training. Wilson Maripfonde, Gonzo and many others had rallies during the day in the bases. Some ended up dying when the soldiers laid an ambush in Chikwira mountain, in the Sekeramayi area. One lady was shot and the comrades took her away. We sang traditional songs in support of the struggle and some of these songs were sung after the ceasefire. We sang "*Maruza imi, vapembepfumi*" (You have lost you plunderers).

We sang when they (the soldiers) lost. We fought because they never thought that we would win because we were walking on foot while they would fly in aeroplanes and drive in vehicles, using dogs, horses, motor cycles. But we won because of the strength of our ancestors' spirits. Spirit mediums led the war, because in each group of comrades there would always be one wearing spirit mediums' regalia, which means there was someone who would guide them as they walked or fought. There were also some creatures, such as birds like eagles, which would help. When you would see an animal running from a certain direction you would know that there was danger where it was coming from. You would then go in the direction that the animal would be going. This means that the animals were guided by ancestral spirits. The spirit mediums that I know are Nehanda and Chaminuka.

All the civilians were now knowledgeable about the war, including even women. As such, if those people were still around it wouldn't even be necessary to have elections because people were united, with one goal. Even the headmen were united together with us. Those who would betray the struggle would be beaten, then shot dead. Some would be shot while people were watching, and others would be taken into the bush and shot there. A collaborator who would make a mistake would be given to a commander who would discipline him. He would first be given a warning, but would be beaten if the fault was excessive. The comrades used bazookas and anti-air (in the war).

In 1976 we took sadza to the comrades at Nyafuta, but the sadza was not enough because the numbers of the comrades had increased. So we cooked (more sadza) and took the sadza to the comrades. We didn't know that we had been sold out. We didn't make it to the comrades' base because the soldiers had laid an ambush. That's when I was shot on the leg. Two of my colleagues, Petros Chibaya and Petros Nyamachira, died on the spot.

The people called “Mapuruvheya” or “Madzakutsaku” were blacks who were working under the government of Smith. They were sell-outs, some were DAs and policemen. They would harm people under the guise that they were comrades. We expected the enemy to be white. But once you are a sell-out you are also an enemy. All Smith’s soldiers were enemies because they did not want us to progress with the war. Life in the keep was hard because if a battle happened outside, we would spend the whole day locked up in the keep, without getting out until the following day. Grinding mills were closed and people had to use mortar and pestle to grind maize for cooking sadza. We fought the war because our children who had completed Form 2 could not get jobs, and at work we would be beaten by the white man, which pained us in our hearts because we were being treated like slaves in our own country.

After the war, the objectives were fulfilled, but other objectives cannot be fulfilled because they take time.

People should know that war is painful, we should avoid it because it kills.

## Dumbarimwe, Elizabeth

My name is Elizabeth Dumbarimwe, born in Chimanimani. That's where my father lived, but we moved from there to Bikita. I was born in Musikavanhu, because that's my origin. My father moved to Bikita because he was pursuing his business interests. He reared pigs, so he needed inputs for him to be able to rear the pigs, so that he would be able to send us to school. But he was also a small trader, running small scale businesses. I did my primary school in Mutare. I did Sub A to Standard 1, then I was transferred, (and) it was still in the Smith regime. Then the Grades system was introduced, so I started Grade 3, after I had done Sub A and Sub B, and I went up to Grade 7. I then went to St Augustine Mission, which was an Anglican Mission School in Penhalonga, where I started Form 1. When I was in Form 3 I had an English teacher called Stanlous Chigwedere, who was a prominent civil servant. I can say I was politicised in my classroom because our teacher was politically oriented. When we were studying that book called *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell, our discussions would end up being political.

I am sure you understand that George Orwell's book has political connotations. So from there, that's how it started. We got more and more interested in what it (the book) was talking about, wanting to know what he was really talking about. I can say that's when I began to see the basis of political orientation. What really touched me was that there were some characters that were mistreated, being given labels such as "Stupid". Other characters were being pushed, but others were able to stand their ground. But what I can say about *Animal Farm* is that it gave me a picture of the dynamics of life, that you find in life that there is a saying which says that 'there are animals which are more equal than others.'

That gave us the scenario that was in our country. Young as we were, we started opening our brains, we became more politically mature. We started being politically mature in the sense that we noticed the discrepancies between the blacks and the whites. For example, I remembered that my uncle, my father's older brother, was arrested because he had been found with a beer bottle. He was arrested and stayed in prison (for some time), which was something which got into my mind as to why a person could be arrested for a simple thing like a beer bottle. But I couldn't see the crime behind that. Then I started linking things with what I saw and heard at school, then I began to realise that there was something wrong somewhere. Then with the discussions which we used to have with the English teacher, Mr Chigwedere, it continued to make us more politically enthusiastic, making us understand what was really going on. From there he was able to give us (more) in small doses suitable for our level so that we would understand the situation.

These discussions were done in the classroom, with us asking questions continuously. This led us to form a smaller group which was even more interested, and we would ask questions during break, lunch hour, (and) study time, wanting to know more. We would give our own experiences, the way things were in our home areas. So that's how we were able to see what was happening around us. As we were at a tender age, we could see what was happening, but we could not see the meaning behind it. Later on he (our teacher) started explaining that there was a struggle going on, explaining bit by bit until we realised that this was the situation on the ground. That is why there was this talk about people who were said to be

leaving the country. I had not heard about students leaving school to go out of the country. But we later heard that at schools like Marist Brothers some students had disappeared. The information that we were being given was that the students had been taken by terrorists. But then, speaking with our teacher, we then discovered that these people were not terrorists but were freedom fighters and were fighting to liberate us, (fighting) to end the experiences that we were seeing. There was a deep racial division between the blacks and whites. It was also then that we learnt that we didn't have the right to vote. Then we decided to find ways of seeing these people (freedom fighters) so that we could talk to them.

That was our interest but then our teacher told us that the only way you could talk with them was to go to them. But we wondered how we could get to them, imagining the set up of a mission school and a boarding school for that matter. Girls had their own separate residences, female teachers also had their own separate residencies. Interactions (between boys, girls and teachers) were only during school lessons. But he (our teacher) said there was a way we could see these people and talk with them. We left (school) as a group of 16, that is 13 boys and 3 girls. We left in broad daylight. I don't know where we got the courage and the instructions. (We had) this guy, who is now in the army, called Daniel Muchongoma. He had all the instructions on how we would go about it, and the directions we had to follow. (We were told that if asked) we would say we were going to Muchena primary school. There was a soccer match at the school, so we would say we were going to support the Muchena school team. But this had never happened before. We left school without carrying any extra clothes or provisions. We were just told to wear warm clothes because we could come back (to school) late.

So we were instructed to wear shoes and jerseys that would keep us warm. The shoes had to be flat because we were going to "run about, cheering up". We left around 3.30, using a path near Muchena. After passing Muchena, we took a route which led us to Nyafaru. I think this was the late Chief Reikai Tangwena's place. When we got there, we went to the homesteads where we were supposed to go. The guy (leader) knew exactly where we were supposed to go. Because he was in Form 4, he knew that if we got to this particular place we would see which person, and the person who would take us to the next stage.

We were very fortunate because no helicopter followed us, or any security forces, until we got to the place we were supposed to be left, so that Chief Reikai Tangwena would then fetch us. In the evening, around 6.30, that's when we saw a very elderly person who came to talk to us, saying "Greetings my children." He then said we had to follow all the instructions that he was going to give us, so that we would be able to see the people that we said we wanted to see. He was with three other men of varying ages. So we walked for some distance, then Chief Tangwena disappeared. We didn't see where he went. We continued walking with the three other men, until they helped us cross the border.

We crossed the border at night. The men knew which path we had to use. They gave us instructions, and warned us to be careful about what were called booby traps, as well as what were called landmines. We didn't know what these were. So we had to follow the way they walked and stepped, until we crossed the border. And they said we were now in Mozambique. We were surprised that we were already that far. We did not know how the (school) soccer match ended. We were given more explanations on how things were. They said from there, they were going to take us to the people who could answer the

questions we were asking (at school).

Chief Tangwena was a very humble man (from what we saw) in that short period we were together with him. What came into my mind was that he was down to earth on dressing, talking. He appeared as a fatherly figure to me. He was very welcoming, you wouldn't even feel scared. He would say "Feel free to talk with me because I can give you all the information that you want". Before he disappeared, he took bananas from a nearby banana tree and gave us, and said he would catch up with us soon, but he didn't follow. Before we got to the border, we saw him again when we were being given instructions on how to walk. He had some very sweet oranges, and he gave us two each.

In Mozambique, we were handed over to a certain villager who spoke ChiManyika. He walked with us until we got to a small base of the (Mozambican) comrades, and he left us there. I went in September 1975, from St Augustine, where I was doing Form 3. I started Form 1 in 1973. We were told that these were (Mozambican) comrades, who were our friends, but whom we could not talk with a lot about our issues. They were friends of the people whom we wanted to meet and talk with.

After staying there for about three days we walked until we got close to Manica, there in Mozambique. We were then told that we would be given time to rest since we were young. Some of us had swollen legs, others were tired because we were not used to this. We rested for three days, then we saw a vehicle coming and we were told board the car together with the comrades.

That's when we began to ask ourselves where the difference was between soldiers and (Mozambican) comrades, only to find out later that it was one and the same thing. (Those) comrades were the Mozambican soldiers who fought for independence under FRELIMO. That's when we got to know that there was something called FRELIMO, and that there was Samora Moises Machel, and that Mozambique had gained independence.

We stayed well with the comrades. They made us do what were called drills, and that's when we started realising that there was something military about that environment. We were given food and clothes, and would be asked to wash our clothes. Some of our friends were beginning to wonder what would happen with school now that we were in the war. But they (comrades) said we would be given explanations. So we stayed for the three days, then we were collected by a vehicle, and we were told that the people who had come to pick us were the (Zimbabwean) comrades, so we were going to their base. That's when we saw the (Zimbabwean) comrades in reality for the first time. Among the people who came to pick us, I noticed one person whom I knew who had been a senior at my former school, who was called Comrade Zororo Duri, or Willard. When I saw him we realised that this was well arranged so that some of the school going people like us would feel comforted. They told us about the purpose of the war. These were the first people to explain to us that our country was called Zimbabwe.

We were then taken to Chimoio, where we stayed at a certain small base for a while, then we were taken to a hospital because some of us had blisters. The blisters were caused by the walking. That's where we first met a female comrade, who was called Comrade Mbune, who was actually a member of the General Staff. She started talking with us girls. Comrade Duri also spoke with the boys. They explained to us how things were. We stayed there for a long time. I remember another comrade who was at this base who was called Comrade Grey, but now he is called Comrade Maronga. He is one of those whom we later started talking with. That's when we realised that this was a countrywide thing.

We were then told that we were going to leave for a training base in Chimoio. We arrived there and we were put in different sections. We were then told that we were going to be given names that each one would use. I chose the name Kudzai Takauyanetsoka, because I appreciated that we had come on foot, and we went through a lot of pain. Our shoes were torn, and clothes were tattered because of walking in forests. I was with Comrade Victoria Mamvura, who gave herself the name Vickie, and Thelma Mangwende, who gave herself the name Praise Nehanda, because by then we knew that there was Nehanda, because we had been given some orientation. There are also the boys, the likes of Daniel. We all changed our names. Vic Rufaro also gave herself that name because she was happy to arrive in Mozambique, as the journey was long and dangerous.

When we were at the base, we saw others whom we had been at school with, such as Mutsvangwa, Matarutse, Casper Tarumbwa.....it was a big group. But the living standards were critical. We got to Chimoio when there was not enough food, which was very difficult for us because we were used to having enough food in boarding school. It was rather difficult in the first days, but we adjusted quickly. One of my friends cried at some stage because it was difficult. But comrades Duri and Mutsvangwa placated us, talking to us about the war situation. We were then put in groups, being taught about why we were fighting the war, why we were in Mozambique and about the rewards we would be given after the war. There were different levels, depending on when you came. We stayed in barracks, in thatched pole houses. We were given duties to sweep. The beds were made of poles, while the mattresses were made of grass. The living standards were different from those at home. We were given provisions such as blankets, but they were not enough and we had to be content with sharing. Even soap, you had to share. There was a genuine spirit of comradeship, so much that even ladies could exchange underwear. We learnt that we had to be there for each other.

Before training, I was sent to the medical department. Responsibilities were given depending on your skills. The supervisor at the medical department was Columbus, but the department was under Sydney Sekeramayi, Herbert Ushewokunze and Muchemwa. There, the Mozambicans called us “maforomera”. We were taught how to treat soldiers coming from battles. It was basic, but actually helpful. You were supposed to treat wounds and clean them, to avoid infection. We were also taught about the drugs and injections that we had to administer on the patients. That’s when we got to know about antibiotics. Comrades would actually be healed. We also treated malaria.

I was the first to master the skills because I was a fast learner. The others were sent to the political department. If you were good at cooking, you would be sent to the Home Economics department, depending on your talent. We then went for training in Mapinduzi, where the training was rough. There, there were people like Keith Nyika, Joshua Ras or Mark Dube, who would supervise us. That group had a mixture of boys and girls. I remember comrade Beauty Zivai, who was a very cool (female) trainer and a role model. She could do things like crawling, doing it in a way to encourage you to do it better than her. The training was hard, but we were determined. I remember there were some obstacles that we had to find ways to overcome them, so that you would learn how to work your way out in the event that you were trapped in the enemy’s territory.

So you needed to find a way to go through. It is amazing how we managed this at our age. That’s when you realise that some of the things that happened in the war were hard. You would be told to climb a fence right up to its top, and yet you were

very short and young. There would be fire or a pit on the other side of the fence, so you could not afford to fall. It was not a small fire. In some cases you had to jump. You were supposed to be resilient. Then there was the crawling, whereby you had to crawl while at the same time you would be firing at the enemy. You had to know how to crawl on your elbows, which was something we were not used to. Our elbows were hurt, but they had to heal because you were supposed to do the exercise again the following day. Thighs were bruised, but you had to carry on. But we managed to complete the training. So I would say these were the difficulties, because you would be hurt, but you had to continue with the training.

I remember my friend called Lucky who liked reggae music, who was a funny character. When we still had wooden (dummy) guns, he would hold the gun (like a guitar) and sing reggae music, entertaining people, keeping the spirits high during the difficult times of food shortages. After training, we were deployed. I did my training with Margareth Dongo. We went to stay at Nyadzonja, where we were with the likes of Comrade Ziso. Then we were moved back to Chimoio, and it got bombed (soon after). We were near the river, where the gates were, on the Western side. The strategy was to keep patients at the furthest side from the gate, the rationale being that if the enemy attacks he would enter through the entry point. So we were the furthest from the entry point, on the Eastern side, near the river so that we could wash the things that we used, or wash blankets if a (sick) comrade had spoiled them. We heard gun fire. We had been told that in the event of gun fire, we had to make a quick decision whether it was an attack or training. But because the training camp was far, we knew that this was an attack.

As the guns were being fired, we immediately knew that these were not the ordinary rifles that we knew. So the patients who were still able to run were the first to flee. We carried those who could not run. We consistently checked how far the soldiers had advanced. We were fortunate because the river was shallow at the point where we were, which was the strategy (to place patients there) to make it easy to cross. Ninety five patients managed to cross. The ethics were that, as a medical officer, you would not leave patients behind because they were close to you.

I survived, but others died. It was Nyathi who had sold out. He was one of the leaders, but had turned against the struggle. They had long range guns, so we could tell that something was happening as they were firing. A plane had also flown past, so we knew that the enemy had come. You were supposed to have your life-line, which was your medical kit. The shots got to where we were because they were using long range guns. One of us called Comrade Togara, who was my homeboy from Macicaland, was shot and he lost a lot of blood and died.

When we left Chimoio, our priority were the patients. We were taken to a base called Mabhanana. That's where the patients were, with FRELIMO soldiers. Then we were given our own small base which was secure. We were put in a farmhouse, because this was a banana plantation. We treated the comrades who had been injured, getting medical supplies from the FRELIMO soldiers. At Chimoio there were people who died of cerebral malaria, and others who died because of vomiting blood.

We would see them die, young as we were. It was something I had never seen or done before. But this made us brave, knowing that people die in a war, whether by food poisoning, sickness, malaria, diarrhoea. It was educating us towards maturity because the situations were beyond our age. After the Chimoio attack, we were taken to Tete where there had been an outbreak. We were taken to a place called

Tariao. We were on transit, on way to Tembwe base. I think it was five days after we got into Tembwe base when the base was attacked. That was the second attack that happened whe we were about to go and wash. Our training insisted that you always had to be alert, and know where your clothes, shoes, kit were every time. So because we had been trained, this was not a difficult situation for us. Planes bombed near where we were, but we took our clothes and kits, and we would let our medic know where we would be.

The attacks at Chimoio and Tembwe were another experience. When the enemy struck, he struck big. He was not teasing, but really meant to kill. So we would see comrades with ripped tummies, with their intestines in the open. We had to learn. You had to be able to assess how to save life. You would see a comrade whose remains would only be ribs. You would see that there was no hope of life, but you would still try to help. You had to improvise. If you were wearing a skirt, you just had to tear it and use it (as a bandage) to stop loss of blood, so as to save the life of a comrade.

This was the life in the war that we saw.

## Hondo, Rangarirai

### [Rusape]

In 1977 my father sent me to the village to check how things were at our homestead. In less than ten minutes after my arrival at the homestead, I saw people moving up and down. I didn't know what these young men were doing, and, as they were young, I thought that they were my friends. I didn't know they were at a different level.

At sunset, they called me and I followed them. I asked them where we were going, and they asked if I didn't know that there was a war going on in the area. They said I was not going to lazy around like we did in Harare. What happened that day was unbelievable. I was taken to a place they called GP, where sadza was cooked for the freedom fighters.

After they had eaten, around 3am, the whites (Rhodesian soldiers) came to the place. There was a serious battle. Eight girls died, here in Tandi, near that mountain called Machinery, in headman Makarutse's area. The fighting was fierce, eight girls died, and one comrade. I don't know how many soldiers died. As for me, I just found myself in Rusape. I don't know what happened. I just came to only to realise that my hands and legs were tied together. I spend ninety days in prison, carrying dead bodies. Some of the people would have been dead for a week. There was a big park behind the prison where the bodies were put. Sometimes we were ordered to stay in that park so that we would see how bad the war was. If you were not strong you would miss home, because the situation really needed you to be strong. When the bodies were rotting, that's when we would then be ordered to carry them and bury them. I got arrested because I was caught in that contact, that's why I was put in jail.

When I was released, the comrades refused to let me go back home. So I joined them and moved around with them wherever they were going. I started moving with them. Things were bad for me because I didn't have a gun, while the person I was moving around with had a gun. I was moving without anything at all. I slowly got used to it as time progressed.

It was when we were in Chiendambuya that I was given a gun, after a long struggle. They said it was dangerous because if we would encounter the soldiers I would not be able to defend myself. The comrades had guns and could defend themselves, but I couldn't do anything without a gun.

We fought the white man until the end of the war, until we were told to go to assembly points. What I will never forget about war is that you can go for even up to three days without eating anything.

You could get to a place and as people were dishing food for you, you hear gunfire, and you leave the food, (because) you can't even carry it. Then you get to another place and you cook, but when you are just about to eat, the soldiers arrive and you run away. It could go on and on like that for many days. It needed resilience. We remained resilient until we got into the assembly points.

Some of us we never went for training in Mozambique, we got our training in the battles. You would get your instructions in the middle of a contact, while fighting. When the commander orders you to withdraw, you had to follow the instructions immediately, because if you didn't you would be left there alone. You had to learn fast because if you didn't you could be shot and get injured, or even die. People who were trained in the battlefield like me were more brave than those trained in places like East Africa and China because it was difficult to get training in a raging battle, and you would still be able to master the skills. You needed to be strong, that's why we are still around up to now.

In most cases, when you got to a place, you would start by asking the elders, then they would show you the spirit medium of that area, who would appraise you on the situation, as well as guide you as to traditional processes that had to be followed. You would be told if you made mistakes, and if you didn't follow the medium's instructions, things would not go well for you because the ancestors would be angry. You were also not able to use a medium from a different area in another area. Each area had its own medium who knew what was supposed to be done in that particular area, so you had to follow all his instructions. You had to ask the elders of the area, who would then show you the medium, then you ask him. So those who skipped these procedures would actually pull our progress backwards, and you could tell if some of you had not followed the instructions, especially when someone sleeps with a woman (which was not permitted). If someone breached the instructions, and was found out, he would be tried and punished.

One of the numerous problems that we encountered was that we would meet some people who did not like us, who would then go and sell us out to the whites. This was a major problem because you could be confident that you were safe in a hideout, not knowing that you had already been sold out. Then you would suddenly realise as you were moving that the enemy was waiting ahead of you. Then you won't have anywhere to go. A spirit would then come up from among yourselves, or from the elders in the community, who would advise you on what to do. Once you follow the instructions, you would find yourselves moving out of danger. So I can say we fought this war with the help of our ancestral spirits.

In the war, we moved during the night, while the collaborators from the particular area moved during the day. The collaborators were usually people who had not yet been trained. If a collaborator would meet the soldiers he had nothing with which to fight them. The collaborators also gave us information and supplied us with the provisions that we needed, and so did other reliable elders. In most areas that we operated in, there were DAs, Auxiliary (forces), support unit, blacks stayed in separate quarters. But the camp helped white in their operations.

I did most of my operations in Tandi and Chiendambuya. When we moved at night we knew that if we encounter the white men it would be a proper fight, because they would not be able to use planes, so we would move knowing that if we encounter them it would be a ground force battle, without any air power. We would fight to the bitter end because we were determined. There were no wild animals that attacked

freedom fighters. One day I woke up in the morning to realise that my head was resting on a very big snake, but it didn't do anything to me. So there were so many other things that were part of the war. We were no longer afraid because we were also as good as wild animals. As for food, we ate very well, because sometimes if you requested for specific food, the people in the community would do their best to find it for you. It also depended on the situation, because when things were volatile, you would only eat in the evening, but when it was relatively stable you would eat whenever you wanted. So the situation determined everything.

In the war, the major drawback was that our enemy had air power, while we didn't have, and only depended on our feet. We were satisfied with our weapons. The challenge was that the enemy had motor vehicles and air power, but we were not worried much because we were determined to fight the war. I joined the war when I was young, when I was a bachelor, so I had no child to worry about. The only people I would think about, now and then, were my parents, and not everyone else.

When I was sent to the village, coming from Harare, I was supposed to come back and write my ZJC examinations, so my circumstances were messed up because I did not write my examinations because the war caught me. So that was the end of my education, I never went back to school until this present day, which is another problem. Once you got into the war there was no going back, because it was also getting interesting, and we did not want the war to end because it was now interesting.

There were some people who did not want us to win the war, who hated us. If we would get clothes, or if they gave us clothes themselves, they would put poison on the clothes. When you put on the clothes you would then develop rash. Some of the food, if you would give it to a dog first, the dog would fall sick and die (because of poison). So these are some of the problems that we met. So it took us time to trust people most of the time. But we needed the people, but sometimes some of the things that they did made it difficult to understand them. Sell-outs were plenty, there was no village without a sell-out. Wherever you would go you would hear that there were two or three sell-outs. So when we found a sell-out we killed him so that things go on well. On the other hand if a sell-out found out that you were on your way, he knew that things were going to be bad. So most sell-outs survived by running away.

The whites put landmines in their farms. So we had war collaborators who would pretend to be farm workers, who would then spot the landmines and remove them. They would tell us the safe areas so that we wouldn't get injured by the landmines, because a landmine could break your legs if you stepped on it.

So we had different types of collaborators, with some of them working for the whites. They would know where the landmines were laid or were removed, pretending to be workers for the whites.

If one of us was injured, we would make a stretcher bed using poles and reeds, tied together by fibre from bark, so it took a lot of time finding trees with bark that had fibre. We would then carry the comrade and leave him at a safe home where we were sure that he would get treatment until he heals. Medicine could also be found, among us some were trained in health.

As regards water and food, when people brought it to us, we would ask them to eat or drink it first. If it was poisoned, then they would die first. Most of the time what was very painful was the death of your comrades, because if you were nine and four die, you would begin to wonder if you were going to win the war since you were getting finished, getting fewer. But because of the good leadership that we had, and

the backing of the ancestors, we would get replacements quickly.

After the war ended, the people who are now enjoying are not the ones who fought, which is one of the things that are painful. They were giving each other land, because if you look around you will notice that most of those who fought in the war do not have land. The small pieces of land that we have are not befitting of war veterans, while crooks have vast tracts of land. What is also painful is that you are just dumped on the land without being given any farming implements. So what do you do? The government sourced tractors, cattle, seeds, fertilisers, but these things are given to those who already have plenty. So how does that help us who do not have anything? Those people who remained behind, working and amassing wealth, while we were fighting Smith, are the ones benefitting. I don't have anything, where do I expect to get something? Everything I had was destroyed during the war. After the war, I am being denied resources.

I am harvesting tobacco, I need a cart which I can use with my oxen (to carry the tobacco). I don't even have cattle. Some of us were war collaborators who ended up fighting, so we were not given the war veterans identity cards. Collaborators never got any compensation, we are just paupers. Right now the (party) youths in towns who never fought in the war are being given fertilisers and seeds.

All we are just asking for is for them (government) to pay school fees for our children. If they could give us projects that we will run and raise money for us to pay school fees for our children. Is it right that I didn't go to school, and then my children won't go to school as well? Farming inputs are being taken by those at the top, those with big bellies. Everything gets finished there at the top. If programmes are meant to benefit everyone, they should benefit all of us.

Our lives are harder now after the war because you can't even get a job because you didn't go to school. And those who were injured (in the war) cannot take care of themselves without any meaningful support. If your shoes are worn out you can't even afford to replace them because things are difficult.

So if only they could help us by solving this problem of farming inputs being stolen from the GMB, then we would be left with the single problem of sanctions. It's time those with big bellies should respect us so that we survive, because our suffering is too much.

We have an association that we formed, that is called ZILIWAKWA. If only it could be managed well, with members being vetted, and we would also be given allowances like those that were given to the war veterans. Even running projects is better. But we don't have any resources. No one is noticing us because we are graders that were used to make the road. After the road is done, the grader is not allowed to move on the road. If only they could just try to see us as human beings.

When we came back from the war, we found our homesteads burnt. Some of us don't even know where our relatives are. They were harassed and tortured as punishment for the fact that we had gone to join the war. So we came back only to find that homesteads had been destroyed and our parents had fled and were living in other places. These are the other problems that we met. Even up to now we are still struggling to find out where some of our relatives are. Which is why you find that some relatives are in Mozambique, some in Zambia. It's another problem to rebuild homes. Even if new homes were to be built for us, a lot of time has passed, it has been a long time.

The way people were beaten and the manner in which others died, it took a long time

for the pain to end. Sometimes you would just find yourself suddenly startled, for no apparent reason. It was painful. Your mate would be killed when he was right by your side. They could tie someone on a Land Rover and drag him all the way to Rest Camp. If he would be still alive by the time they get there, they would continue to torture him. It was really traumatic to witness that, because the person being dragged would be screaming in pain. On the other hand, if you were a sell-out and the comrades caught you, they would not let you go free, because if a sell-out was given the opportunity, you would know that the soldiers would bomb you that very same evening. So we would kill the sell-out.

If the whites catch you, knowing that you had something to do with the war, they would take you to the Auxiliary Forces or DA, where you would be punished so badly that you would remain loyal to them. It was those people that they used to get information about the freedom fighters. If someone would be caught we would immediately change all our strategies. We would change our movement and way of living, adopting new strategies which the caught person didn't know about.

The killing of civilians and their placement in keeps was so painful to us because it was as good as having our numbers reduced. If we had been 10, it meant we would have been reduced to 9. We would be short because civilians helped us immensely. There was nothing easy in the war, everything was tough. It was only that everyone was committed. The civilians were our strength because they provided us with clothes, food, morale. So it was like a fish in water. Without the civilians we would have been like a cat in a sack.

We would spend the whole day sleeping, resting in the base. In the evening that's when we would patrol and move. But in 1978 – 1979, if it was drizzling and cloudy, we would move during the day, because the situation was now bad. We could even move when there was lightning, because lightning was not a bother compared to the white man. We never worried that there was lightning because I had never heard that there was a collaborator who had been struck by lightning.

There is nowhere we could find any vehicle to use during the war, even a car, because you would never know the person who would have given you a ride, or the person who could have send him to help you. It was much safer to walk than using a car. So I never got in a car from the day I joined the struggle right up to the end. During the first days, the legs would get swollen because of the walking, but eventually you got used to it. Your feet would also develop blisters between the toes, for example, after it had rained, and water remained on your feet. But you would end up used to it.

What we want is the upkeep of our families. It's the A2 farmers who are getting loans, fertilizers, seeds, while we A1 farmers are not getting anything. If they could arrange that in each province, the Member of Parliament be a war veteran, and the deputy be war collaborator, our concerns would be heard. The problem is that we have been dumped, we are graders.

## Hondoyedzomba, Brighton

### [Mt Darwin]

My name is Nicholas or Brighton Hondoyedzomba. I remember in 1972, in the harvest season, when we were in Chiweshe, at Chigede, when I was learning at Gunguwo Primary school. We started seeing a convoy of vehicles which were travelling very fast in the direction of Centenary. A few days later we heard that some murderers had been spotted in the area where those vehicles were rushing to. But I didn't understand what murderers were since I was still young. As time went on, in that same year, rumours started circulating, about people who would disappear, people who stayed in forests. Some said they were killers, others said they were murderers.

Then in 1973 that's when we heard that there was a war in the country. Towards the end of 1973, one day, at sunset, we heard that we were wanted at Jeranyama. We went there and we were told that there were boys in the area. We wondered what kind of people these boys were.

In front, there was one guy who had a gun slung on his shoulder. Then we suddenly heard him shouting the slogan. "Forward with the struggle." Some people responded to the slogan, and we joined them. "Forward with liberating the country! Down with the enemy!" The guy went on to explain his aim, his objective of liberating ourselves through the struggle, so that we would have good lives. We had to have the right to vote and to have wealth. So on that first day, those boys then just disappeared, and we returned to our homes. From then on, we knew that things were not well and it was our first time to see someone called a soldier, wearing military fatigues. (Army) Vehicles were now moving up and down, and we would hear guns being fired. We were still young. We were usually sent to buy tobacco at the shops. By 1974 we could see that the situation was bad because schools were closed, grinding mills and shops were closed. We were taking turns to pound maize using mortar and pestle, for us to be able to cook sadza.

Our duty was to keep watching the road, checking on the movement of the soldiers. We also had to know the difference between soldiers and freedom fighters. One day, during the afternoon, while I was home, I suddenly saw someone running through our homestead and I asked others if they had seen the person and I was told to keep quiet because it was not allowed to talk about those people. After a short while, we heard guns being fired in the mountain in the Nzvimbo area, at Gonhi. A little later, we saw helicopters circulating around the area. The gunfire was frightening.

In that same year, 1974, we then saw lorries coming, and we were all carried, being removed from our homes into keeps. When we were in the keeps, no one would get out if guns were fired. No one would take cattle out of their kraals, and if cattle strayed into the gardens, no one would stop them from eating the plants in the gardens. We, the young ones, once in a while, went to play with our home made balls outside, and sometimes got information that the freedom fighters wanted food. We would put the food in the balls and take it outside through the gate, where the DA (District Assistants) would be guarding. We were still young, we would kick the ball, passing to each other, kicking it past the DA, taking the ball outside. Then we would get there, and the freedom fighters would then eat the food in plates which were kept outside.

Then they would ask us how things were in the keeps. In 1976 we had chief

Chiweshe Makope. One day we heard gunfire. The following morning we heard that the fence was cut and chief Chiweshe was killed. The chief passed information on the movement of the freedom fighters to the police at Chombira police camp, and that is why he was killed. For a whole week, no one could leave the keep. Every now and then, the keep gate would be opened. Things really got bad in 1978. The main reason for this was that our senior war collaborators were caught. Some of them were forced to work as DA's, guarding the keep, and others were put in the (Rhodesian) auxiliary forces. These boys knew all the bases that were used by the freedom fighters, and they knew all the movements of the freedom fighters.

From that time, some groups started moving around, masquerading as comrades. They even got into the keep, and we could even spend time with them. Then they would come back the following day dressed in military gear, then demanded to know the people were had been with the day before. We would deny, and then they would beat us heavily. I was also beaten, but others were beaten more extensively. They felt pity for me because I had a small stature, so I looked like a very young boy.

We were later told that some of these people were not genuine comrades, although they acted like comrades, carried the same type of guns, and used the same slogans. So the problem was how to distinguish genuine comrades from the fake ones. That's when the freedom fighters taught us to be wary about Selous Scouts, who included former collaborators who had joined the Rhodesian Security forces. It was now even difficult for the freedom fighters to eat food.

In 1979 we suddenly heard that there was a ceasefire, but from mid-1978, we never imagined the possibility of a ceasefire because the war was really bad. It was difficult to understand the way the comrades were now moving, on the other hand the security forces would come masquerading as comrades, then come back dressed as soldiers and ask us about the movement of the comrades. Those of us who tried to protect the comrades were punished, but those who told the truth were not harmed. So this was like selling out. Most of the time if you said the truth you would be forgiven, but if you lied you would be beaten. We have some boys who left to go and join the struggle who have not come back up to now.

In 1980 we celebrated the end of the year and Mugabe's victory after the elections. We returned to our homes only to find that they were now ruins. There some people whose lips were cut because they were sellouts. The freedom fighter I met properly for the first time was called Tears Chimurenga. He was light skinned, slim, tall and moved with a gun which he nicknamed "Vhala ngebhechu." The gun was short and could folded. He would fold the gun and put it under his arm pit, then wear a jacket, and you would not notice that he was a fighter. He could actually move around with others and you wouldn't be able to tell that he was a fighter. There were freedom fighters I worked closely with, who would also come to our home. There was a guy (fighter) who made a big mark in the Chikombero farming area who was called Kid Mawrongwrong, and another one, Solomon Ngoni. As for the female fighters, the one who was well known was Teurai Ropa Nhongo, but I never met her. In our area, before we were put in the keep, we never met female fighters. Most of them were male. Then later on came the likes of Vhuu, who came from the direction of Chidewu and Chigwida. There so many of them, freedom fighters.

The freedom fighters used bazookas, AK47, landmines and big guns called anti-aircraft. On one occasion I actually helped to move an anti-aircraft from Chombira to Naruya. It would be dismantled into many small parts, which means it would require many people to move it. One person could not carry it. They said that that gun was used for shooting down planes. It was always protected by other smaller guns because it was the weapon for final destruction. They also used grenades. We would study the behaviour of the enemy, because he was someone who did not have any interest in liberating the country, and would go and tell Smith and his people about the comrades' activities. Those whose aim was to disrupt the smooth progress of the war were the enemies, and they had the same agenda with the whites.

Some whites who helped us were our friends. The enemy used 303 (rifles), which had wooden parts, which were (the guns) used by the DA's. Later on they were using G3 (rifles). These are the guns that we saw. It was in the air that the comrades faced a lot of problems because (the enemy) used a small plane called Arumanya, which was V shaped at its end. It was used for surveillance, then it would alert other faster jets if it spots the comrades. But the plane which caused a lot of problems in the war was called "Chikopokopo", which had no wheels. It could land on top of trees or on rocks. Its wings could clear tree branches, leaving the space so open that even if you would have been hiding you would have to come out in the open. The type of gun in that plane was very powerful. It was not possible to hit the plane. The plane was said to have come from South Africa. It was a complex plane.

If a collaborator made a mistake, he could be disciplined by the comrades. We the collaborators could also discipline each other. Sometimes you could be beaten, or be send on an errand a long distance away, or be given a heavy task. You would be ordered to come back in a very short space of time from the errand. And you had to come back with evidence that you got to the place where you would have been send. These were the types of punishment that were given. A sellout was punished extensively. Some would have their lips cut, leaving the teeth in the open

Some females would have a burning log put in their dresses, while others were burnt using plastic paper. The other time at Matsororo, a girl had her hands tied at the back. The hands got swollen and she fell down. Usually the punishment was administered because the girl would have had a love affair with a DA or a soldier. They knew the comrades' activities and they would tell the soldiers. The soldiers or DA's would then bomb the comrades. Some of them

(sellouts) would actually be killed. But in some cases some people would lie to the comrades because of hatred between them and someone else, (to get revenge). So the comrades started to investigate first, before punishing the accused, and they realised that they were killing innocent people.

In the Chehasha area, the soldiers would call the person who would have made a report and the accused, and both of them would be questioned until the truth was established. That new system was very good because some people died for nothing. At the beginning wrong-doers would be beaten (by the comrades) while the public watched, especially those who were disciplined and left alive. But those who were disciplined and were later killed, everything was done in private. Disciplining people in public was meant to discourage people from making mistakes.

Most of us supported the people that had guns because we had not been taught properly about the war. We the civilians were in a difficult position because the comrades would come and tell us about their objectives, then the soldiers would also come and tell us their objectives. We could not refuse to listen to any of them because they all had guns, and the power of the gun ruled. Most people just had to respect the power of the gun. It was only after the war had ended that we remembered that their aim was for us to get schools, land, and comfortable lives. Life in the keep was difficult. It was so crowded, even rats do not live like that. Toilets were a big problem. You would relieve yourself in a paper, then dig a hole and cover the excrement. Water was a problem. You had to walk during daylight, walking in a single file to fetch water at the river in buckets. No one would go out to wash at Chipfuriro river. They made us suffer. Children fell sick and died because of stomach problems. They kept excrement in plastic papers and throw it away the following morning.

The advisors, the spirit mediums, such as Chipfeni, (and) Chidyamauyu, would give the freedom fighters laws, like those forbidding sex in the struggle, emphasizing that the laws had to be adhered to. Those who needed advice would also ask the ancestors (through the mediums). In most cases, the comrades who broke the laws perished. I personally never met them (the mediums), but we would hear that they were in the Dande area, and we would be told about them by the comrades who would have gone to consult them.

If you would sleep with a woman who was not your wife and then go into a battle you would die. But those who fell in love and got married did the correct thing. There was a guy (freedom fighter) whose first appearance in this area was at Chetsoro mountain. He was called Rex Nhongo and he moved around with an axe on his shoulder. I hear that his home area is Buhera. (Then) Teurai Ropa comes from around here, in Dotito, in Mt Darwin. She is from the Kambaza family. But imagine that besides the long distance between these areas, these two got married during the struggle. It was said that if you agree between yourselves, you could get married in the absence of your parents, and the ancestors were able to guide you. Those who agreed to marry were fine, but those who engaged in pre-marital sex were breaking the law.

The songs (that we sang) taught us lessons, while some entertained us, and the others helped to sooth our minds. The songs that taught lessons were like the one which said “Musaite zveupombwe muhondo yechimurenga; Musaite zveupombwe muhondo yechimurenga.” [ “Don’t fornicate in the chimurenga struggle”. ] It was an educational song, which is still relevant today when you look at the HIV/Aids situation. Some of the songs made the situation exciting. They raised the morale, so much that even though we were facing death, we would forget about dying. Songs which raise the morale were like the one which said, “Comrade kana pane mhiko yawakanganisa; Comrade unoshingirira muhondo, unoshinga.” [Comrade if you make a mistake, comrade remain resolute in the

struggle, and you will achieve.”] Such songs would strengthen you, lifting you to a higher level.

The all night rallies were there, and that is where people were educated at night, at the bases, about the war and the laws. We had these rallies at night so that the enemy would not notice and also because the civilians had to attend to their chores during the day. The collaborators were the ones who would keep watch during these gatherings. We would have passwords that we would use when getting to the rallies, so that the others would know that you were not an enemy. If someone would miss the password, then you would know that he was an enemy. The word “comrade” means my close buddy in the struggle. Your ideas and the ways you went about were the same. You were inseparable, and would rely on each other in difficult times.

Most people of my age we couldn’t go far with our education. I studied at Cyrene Mission, but the school got closed because of the war, and I moved to St Phillips, at Magwenya, in Guruve. And that school also got closed, and I moved to Hwedza, to St Annes, at Goto. That school was also closed, and I moved to Howard Institute, in Chiweshe. The school was also closed and the situation was difficult for me. I went back to school after the war.

We are not seeing any of the things that we agreed on during the struggle. Life is harder than it was during the colonial time. We should be united because war kills. People should talk to each so that we remove the rotten elements, because things are now difficult.



## Jumbi, Gibbs

[17 March 2008]

**Gibbs Jumbi, squadron leader in the Airforce of Zimbabwe, went by the war name of Joe Tichagarika. His operation area was Uzumba.**

My Chimurenga name is Joe Tichagarika. I joined the liberation struggle in 1978. My home area is Mutoko. We were taken by the comrades to the Pfungwe area, near the border with Mozambique. We were a group of young boys. We did our internal training there in Pfungwe, in the forest, for two months. We were 18 in our group, and all of us completed the training.

The first reason why I joined the Chimurenga struggle was the white men's repression. Secondly, the land, the Zimbabwean soil. My aim was to liberate the country of Zimbabwe. The Rhodesian soldiers harassed us, especially we, young boys. They would arrest and beat us, asking us where the freedom fighters were. It was prestigious to be a comrade, it was prestigious to hold a gun, we grew up admiring this.

There were many problems at the Pfungwe training base: it was difficult to find water, it was difficult to find food, but we took it as part of the war lessons. Physical training was done in the mornings: running, press-ups, and lifting logs. In the afternoons we had political orientation sessions which were led by the political commissars. These were the two main lines of the training. We learnt how to use the gun, how to assemble and de-assemble it. The third phase (of the training), in the third month we did practical training. We would travel long distances with our guns, doing operations, but still under training. We did route marches and compass reading.

We then left Pfungwe, which was a liberated zone, and I went to operate in Uzumba-Maramba-Pfungwe, in Detachment D, Section 3. I operated there from May to December 1979. Uzumba was hot. I remember the battle at Kangara. A few comrades and many enemy soldiers died. We lost a number of our youths, but a good number of us managed to escape.

We mostly ambushed the enemy after getting information and studying the Rhodesian soldiers' movement. We laid a couple of ambushes. One (ambush) was at Marove, another one at Nhakiwa. We would also ambush vehicles. We would select a suitable terrain near a mountain which was close to the road, and lay our ambush. As the vehicles were passing, getting into what we called "the killing bag", we would then hit the leading and rear vehicles, so that the convoy would be trapped, and we hit them hard.

The whites also had places where their guard forces stayed. These are some of the places that we attacked. We hit the guard forces based at Mashambanhava. You would not be able to know how much damage you would have inflicted because they would be in a wall, and you just threw a grenade inside. At Kangara, the enemy came unexpectedly.

I was very good at laying landmines, which was one of the best operational methods. A bull was killed by a landmine in Uzumba. The landmines came from Mozambique; we were given by other countries. The boys in the border area around Mutoko took the landmines that would have been laid by the white men at the border to trap the comrades. Then the ZANLA engineers would take the

landmines and give them to us, and we would then lay them in the roads.

During the training at Pfungwe we never had any problems with diseases. We would take some of the minor ailments as part of the military training process. There were no girls at Pfungwe. Some girls had come at Kangara, and so (the soldiers) wanted to capture the girls. After that incident, the girls were ordered to go back to the rear because of the problem they had caused.

There was high morale in the front. We were given clothes by the civilians. Clothes would come from Harare, to us, the comrades. We wore farmer's shoes, boots, tennis shoes. The civilians helped (a lot). The battle at Kangara lasted the whole day. In the front, we operated in sections, with each section having 7 – 8 people. Two sections made a platoon.

In Uzumba, the civilians worked with the comrades. The youth would do surveillance patrols. The girls, the female collaborators, cooked food and washed clothes for the comrades. The parents sourced the food. In the evenings, people gathered for the all night rallies, where people were given lessons about the struggle. People gathered and had fun, singing and dancing at the all night rallies.

ZIPRA and ZANLA clashed whenever they would meet. ZANLA operated from Mozambique, and ZIPRA from Zambia. Their encounters could cause serious problems. But I never experienced this. We just left for war with the comrades. We got our training as we were moving around with the comrades.

My love for my country and my participation in the liberation struggle is what made me get into the Air Force of Zimbabwe.

## Kakweza, George

[25 March and 25 July 2008]

**George Kakweza, also known as Comrade Bvuma Zvipere, operated in the areas of Mutoko and Chihota.**

My name is George Kakweza. I was born in 1961 in Mutoko, at All Souls Mission. I joined the struggle in 1976. I went to Mozambique and proceeded to Tanzania for my military training. In 1977 I came back from Tanzania and went to Chihota, in the Mahusekwa area, in the Tangwena Sector. That's where I operated in during the war, until the end of the liberation struggle.

I met many problems in Tanzania, in the training camp: food was a problem; jiggers barrowed through our feet, causing wounds. Clothes were difficult to get. We survived on donations. But we persevered because we had an objective.

Life in the front was better (because) we were within the people and we would get support. At the rear, food was such a problem that we would go for days and weeks without eating anything. But in the front, food was provided by our parents (the civilians). The women stayed in the liberated zones where the enemy did not come often. The female freedom fighters would remain in Chihota. In Chihota we actually lived in houses. We would only move at night because there were no forests, and it was difficult to move during the day. There were laws to be followed in the struggle: fornication was not allowed; you could not take things from civilians; we had to return all things captured from the enemy; we had to speak respectfully to the civilians.

We taught the people about the activities of the comrades, (and) we would tell them about the aim and expectations of the struggle. We were the first (fighters) to get into the Chihota area. It took a long time for the people to understand the objectives of the comrades. Also because of our young age, I was 18, so people could not accept that we were comrades. We were young, but people eventually understood us after our explanations. But it was not everyone who agreed; others remained adamant.

We used force to get help from the people. We would get to people's homes and ask for clothes, saying that some of our comrades needed clothes, and people would give us the clothes. In other places we would find food and clothes ready for us by the time we got there. My Chimurenga war name was Bvuma Zvipere. We were not given names, we were told to choose our own names and then stop using our real names.

Clashes would occur between the ZIPRA and ZANLA forces. I never encountered these clashes, but in 1980 and 1981 these two forces fought in the Intumbane assembly point.

The battle I will never forget is the one we fought in Chihota in headman Wazeza's area. The Rhodesian soldiers came to us on horses, and they had dogs. We thought of fighting them. We were surrounded. We fought and we managed to down one Dakota (plane). They had planes as well as vehicles. We were few of us. The whites were many. I and the other comrade we were with, called Dewas Magamba, ran to the dam and we hid. Guns were fired but we remained hiding in the water. Although I fought many other battles, I won't forget this one, it pained me. Three comrades were hurt and one was captured. About twelve collaborators were killed.

What made me go to the struggle was the repression that was there. In Mutoko

there was only one school. The chances of going to school were limited. Only three students would be selected from the primary school to go for secondary school studies at All Souls. In Mutoko, there were baboons and our fields were in mountainous areas, and yet the white farmers had good land. We had problems in moving around, we were suffering. That was what inspired me to go and join the struggle so that we would liberate the country. And also there were keeps at the time I was going to school, and we would be locked up in the keeps, and be let out on limited occasions. We could go for two weeks without attending school because we would be locked up in the keep.

Parents would be harassed, being interrogated when you went to join the struggle. Parents would lie that their child had gone to work in the farms. There were some people who were close to the white men and they would go and tell them that so-and-so had gone to join the Chimurenga struggle. Parents would be harassed, even getting arrested. In Tanzania I was taught tactics by the Chinese. Others were taught medicine and many other things. My experience in the liberation struggle led me to join the army. I thought of going back to school, but others suggested that we join the army.

## Matoyi, Evelyn

My name is Mrs Mazanhi. I was born in Chidza, in Zaka, in the Nyakunhuwa area. Evelyn Matoyi is my maiden name. I was born on 5 June, 1959. I did Grade 1 to Grade 6 at Chivigwi Primary School. I met the comrades in 1976. We started off hearing rumours that there were some freedom fighters, and eventually we got to meet them. There were the likes of comrade Chando, Muchena, Dick and Zimwaya. Then they sweet-talked us into joining the struggle. We were five girls and two boys. One of the boys who was studying at Jersey said he would show us the way.

We told the comrades that we wanted to go on our own. The (bad) things the whites were doing in areas like Jerera and Zaka made us go to the struggle. They harassed people, and we realised that we were oppressed. If you were a girl, you were not allowed to go far with education. They said all that you needed was the ability to read letters. We left for the struggle at the time schools were opening, with that (Jersey boy) pretending to be going back to school. I lied to the people at home that I was going to Zaka. We got into a bus and left, but comrade Zimwaya had said that one of us was going to be caught.

We got to Dewure and were searched. We all got back into the bus and proceeded to Birchenough where we met a convoy (of vehicles) escorting a soldier who had been shot by the comrades. There was a very tough roadblock at Birchenough, and we were all ordered out of the bus. I was never asked anything. But Newman had wounds on his hand, and the soldiers said he was a terrorist, and we had to leave him there, with the soldiers pointing a gun at his chest. We proceeded and arrived in Chipinge in the evening, and we slept there.

In 1976 the DA's were a menace, asking people to produce their identity papers. We didn't know and were not worried about the dangers of war, because at the time we left our home area, there was no war. We wrote letters back home to say that we were gone, and people should not bother to look for us. Then there was a fire, and a certain man advised us to move away because we could be accused of having started the fire. We then got into a bus headed for Jersey, the six of us. We divided ourselves into twos, and we started walking (through) the tea estates. We met people who would ask us where we came from, and some boys thought they had found girls. We got to a dry stream, and we crossed. We continued walking in the grass, but we no longer knew where we were going because that boy only knew how to get as far as the school. We walked through the night. Towards dusk, we crossed a fence, and walked for another 2 to 3 km, then crossed a very high security fence.

Each one of us made a slogan the moment he/she crossed the fence, thinking that the whites would not shoot you if you were in another country. As we were walking, the people in the villages ran away from us. We then agreed to put ourselves in groups. (The people who were running away from us) they were actually going to report us to the headman. Then some (Mozambican) comrades came to us, asking what we wanted. He said that we were lucky because there had just been a heavy battle a few days before. They then took us to the chairman's house, and we were given food. We were then taken to another homestead where we slept. The following morning we were taken to the (Mozambican) comrades' base and we were interrogated, being asked why we had come. We spent two days there.

We were taken to another (Mozambican) comrades' base, then we were later taken to the (Zimbabwean) comrades base called Goigoi. We stayed there for a long time, then we were moved to Muchenedzi. We were then carried to Chibhawawa, at Toronga, a place which was frightening. You could easily see that this was war, because some people were like skeletons because of starvation. Others had wounds which were scary, while some girls would bark like dogs, while others crawled. Our arrival place was the security area, where there was no food, except some type of beans.

I was given the beans and my tummy got bloated after eating them, and was advised not to eat them. So I would be given rice, which was a preserve for the chiefs, and I was removed from security to the general area where others were. I had no option but to eat the beans. My stomach got so bloated, like a pregnant woman, but I just had to eat the beans because there was no option. With time I got into the leadership, starting from section, to company, and I was taken to the security department, watching over offences and supervising the entrance. I was then taken back to company together with Comrade Letwin, staying at her house, working as her assistant. She then moved with me to Tembwe, where I was taken by comrade Makasha, and I got my opportunity to get into training in 1978.

The training was tough and painful. Food was scarce. We were beaten, and we thought the likes of comrade Shingi were cruel, yet they wanted us to be strong. If an emergence whistle was blown, you had to leave everything, including food. They did that so that we would be quick in whatever we were doing. Comrade Shingi was hated by people because he was cheeky. He would scare you. He was so frightening that you could even confess to a crime you would have not committed. Since I was staying with a high ranking officer, I had enough food at home, and I would even steal some of the food to give to others. I also got favours (because I was staying with a senior). We separated in 1979, and I moved to Nehanda, then later came back to Zimbabwe, at Goromonzi, in Base 1. I then moved to Base 2, then got married and moved to the village. My husband's parents said I shouldn't go back and live in a (military) camp.

There were many diseases. When I was in the security department I was in charge of the detained people. Up to now I am afraid of one of them because we beat him so badly. He was a Rhodesian agent. We had gone on patrol and we found him at the base when we came back. We asked him which area he was operating in, and he said he was operating in Gutu, using a NATO (gun) and a walkie-talkie. I got so angry, I thought of my relatives who had been killed in Gutu.

He then said that he had been sent, and that he was number three from Chirau, which meant he had a top post in the (Rhodesian) system. He had been sent to assess the base. He was someone who did not care about people being killed. I really got angry.

Another one was found with a small walkie-talkie that was fastened on his collar. That made you angry.

Up to now, I like singing the song that says:

“ We buried many many people  
 Because of the love of our country  
 Which was taken from us by the colonisers  
 Nehanda bless the family of Zimbabwe”

That song touches me as I remember the many people who remained (died), especially the part that says:

“ When I remember the relatives that we buried  
Tears roll down  
When I look at the situation  
Nehanda bless the family of Zimbabwe”

When you remember that we were together with so-and-so (who died), then (you think of) the others you don't know about, and those who perished at Nyadzonia who I never saw. What about those who died at Chimoio and at Tembwe, and here back home? How do their spirits feel about sellouts? Many were buried unceremoniously, just making sure that at least they had been buried.

## Mugumiri, Freddie Chikona

[26 March 2008]

### **Freddie Chikona Mugumiri played the role of Mujibha, in the operating area of Mhondoro-Mubayira.**

I was born in Mhondoro, in the Mugariri area. [Editor, please check correct spelling] We just met the comrades, and they said we were going to be mujibhas (collaborators). We were trained on how to carry out surveillances and how to move information. Sithole's people and ZIPRA were not wanted in our area, Mhondoro. As a collaborator, you were not allowed to be a sellout, you had to keep secrets in your heart. I was different from many others who were sent by Smith's soldiers to go and spy on the comrades. I was given a very high position, being responsible for keeping the comrades' plans. When food was required, I ran around and organised. Even beer, at the beginning they were not drinking, but as time went on they were drinking. You were not allowed to wear a watch. I had six girls under me who were responsible for cooking. There were many boys I sent on errands, arranging their duty rosters. I collected clothes from people, and take them to the comrades.

The time we were growing up there was Chikurubi (prison). During the war, Smith's soldiers looked for me, saying I was blocking people from attending meetings. Muzorewa and Smith's people wanted to kill me. I ran away and I was living in the forest while they were vigorously looking for me.

During the time of the war, the women who fought the war were very few. Women got in the struggle around 1979, towards the end of the war. The day we were given guns was a tough day. Three hundred whites had come from South Africa. (The battle) started at 6 in the morning, until 6 in the evening. Many whites died. We carried guns and put them in a cave at Mubaira. We were beaten up by the white soldiers. They came in about seven Puma trucks, and we had planted landmines. The comrades shot the drivers of the trucks.

The leaders of the comrades in Mhondoro were Takemore, Takesure, Trymore, (and) Everest. Takemore was the one who would go to Mozambique to collect bullets. My war name was Chikonan'ombe because I was capable of thinking much better than everyone else. My parents and relatives were harassed, that's why they wanted to kill me. We didn't want it (the country) to be called Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, we wanted it to be called Zimbabwe. In Mhondoro I never encountered any diseases.

Blacks worked in a very bad way in the white men's farms. There was no tea time. You would start at 3pm and work until 6am. That time, most of them (workers) were from Malawi and Mozambique, so they did not care about earning more money.

Towards the end (of the war) the comrades were sleeping with the female collaborators. They would just leave their guns. I say we should not have another war because many people will die, especially the young ones. I remember when I was sent to carry out a surveillance on some whites who were drinking beer. I got at the beer outlet and bought my Shake-Shake (opaque beer) at Chikwaka. Meanwhile, I was counting the number of the whites, and I noticed that they were many. I went and told the comrades, and we went and destroyed the whites. We took them by surprise and we wiped all of them out. After that, we took their ammunition.

What made me interested in being a mujibha (collaborator) was the realisation that

I had no freedom, and I had to fight to liberate ourselves. The whites would only beat or shoot young men whom they suspected to be collaborators or helpers of the comrades. You could only get identity papers when you were 18 and above. The curfew regulations were that no one was not allowed to move after 6pm. Anyone who would move after 6pm would be shot, being labelled a comrade.

Some were told lies in 1979 that the war had ended and they went to Harare, and all those who went were imprisoned by Smith's soldiers.

## Munetsi, Nolbert

[Senga, Gweru]

I was born on 18 July 1956 at Chiduku, in Rusape. My father worked at De Cock's farm, who was a member of the Rhodesian Front. My mother worked in that white man's kitchen, so I got to know the people who would visit the house, such as Douglas Smith. De Cock was the Minister of Information. After some time, my father left the job and we went to the village. I got the chance to study at Chiduku Primary School, where I started Sub A in 1966. In 1968 I was in Standard 1, and my teacher was John Chimuka, who came from Rukweza, in Rusape. On the Country Affairs section of the General Paper the teacher talked about Mbuya Nehanda and Kaguvi, and how they were hanged (by the whites). He also talked about Selous, who was a hunter, and about Rhodes, and how the country was colonised.

When he talked about these things, he would be so angry, and that kept me wondering why. He would also talk about his elder brothers who had gone to Zambia, where there were political activities going on. In that same year, 1966, there were talks on radio about political issues. You could only hear about these radio broadcasts from those who were well up (who had radios). It would be said that there had been a fight in Sinoia, where there were some terrorists. When I was in Standard 4 I was now aware, and could even read the African Times newspapers that were brought by Smith and his people. You would see (in the newspapers) chiefs being installed by those whites who used to come to De Cock's house. When I would go home, my brother who had gone to St Annes Secondary School in Hwedza, would meet with his friends, who included Moven Mahachi who was once Minister of defence (after independence), who came from Devedzo, in Rusape. They discussed political issues.

I could understand spoken English since I had grown up playing with a white man's child. I then heard about the Internal Settlement, and I would ask my teacher about it. I completed Grade 7 in 1973, and I passed with high marks. But Our education system was different from that of the whites. Then I went to St Annes Secondary School in 1974 to do Form 1. The Pearce Commission reached as far as we were, and we were told to vote 'NO'. I didn't understand about this, but we would just say 'NO'. Older people moved around wearing bangles. Everyone voted 'NO'. It's purpose (the commission) was to find the opinion of the Africans about the political situation. The outcome was 'NO'. Then we saw people moving around, the likes of Muzorewa, Canaan Banana, Elliot Gabela, Silas Mundawarara, people we knew as church leaders, but were now meeting with people.

In 1975 politics had now entered our heads. There was a teacher who taught us Latin who was called Christopher Nyangoni. He was harassed by the (Rhodesian) soldiers, and would sometimes be taken to Hwedza camp. Then there was another one who taught us Biology who was called Mr Mudzindiko, who would also be taken, with us not knowing what was happening. We could not get out because we were in boarding school. Our principal did not want to hear anyone talking politics. It was only when we would ask why the teachers had been taken that we would know what would have happened. Then there was another one who taught us History, who is the one who properly opened my mind, who was called Takawira Muronda. That one was arrested and never came back. It was said that the government had arrested him. Word said that there were some terrorists that were moving around, so probably he talked with them, and that was why he had

been arrested.

In March we heard on radio that Herbert Chitepo had died. He came from Manicaland, and I knew about him. The person who talked a lot about him was Edgar Tekere. After his father would have finished his church service, he (Edgar) would then speak about his real position, saying that it was through the Bible that our land was taken (from us). Moven Mahachi's younger brother had remained at school, but he would go to play at Didymus Mutasa's place, a farm called Cold Comfort, where he would also work some times. That is there where his brother, Moven Mahachi was now staying. He then asked me if I knew that people were going to Mozambique. His brother, Moven, was actually the one moving people (to Mozambique). We started to discuss, and continued talking in the evening while indoors, drinking beer. They said that the previous evening some freedom fighters, Edzai Hondo and others, had actually been around. We became interested, and we said we wanted to see those boys. One day, on a Friday, we got naughty and sneaked (out of school), going for a beer drink at Michael's shop. We found the freedom fighters there, drinking beer. They started putting fear in us, asking us where the soldiers were and accusing us of being sell-outs, demanding to know what we had come for, and ordering us back to school because that place where we were was not school. Then they said we could no longer go back, because if we would go back we would go and report to Hwedza Camp.

## Vadzvanyiriri, Disperse

### [Rusape]

My (war) name was Disperse Vadzvanyiriri. I came from Chikore. I did my primary education at Nyangozi. After that I went for my secondary studies at St Peters Kubatana, in Glen Norah, where I did Form 1 and Form 2. In 1975, when I went to the village, where my father was headman, I met the comrades. He (my father) was called Headman Danga, an area which was in Chikore. So the comrades usually came to our homestead. So when I arrived from school, I was told that there were some boys who were there. Then I asked who the boys were. They had not come to fight, but to talk, explaining that they were sons of the soil. The first one whose name I caught was called Joboringo. Then there was also Mbudziyadhura, (and) John Kurambakupetwa, and these are some of the comrades I saw and caught there names.

This made me interested in being in these people's company, since they were people who had come in our area, and their first port of call had been in my father's village. That made me interested in joining the struggle. Then there was a song of theirs that grabbed my heart, a song that they played on a cassette player and they would sing along. The song was about the war. The song said, "Mhoroi mhoroi mose aye, aye makadini aye, nerufaro, tonosangana muZimbabwe." (Hallo everyone; how are you; we will meet in Zimbabwe.) I could not work out what that Zimbabwe was, since we were in Rhodesia. So these are the things that made me interested in going where others had gone. That group of comrades immediately took four of us with them, saying because they were moving ammunition into the country. So they would bring ammunition and stockpile it at the border. So we moved with the others from Chikore and got into Nyanga. From there we went to what was called Fombe, at Nyakomba, which was a base for the (Mozambican) comrades. They had just got there independence. A stayed there for a while, then moved to Nyama, where a big pig had just been killed. From there I went to a place that was called Guru.

I went to Guru Sector in 1975, and in all those movements we didn't have any (Zimbabwean) comrades with us as we had left them at Nyakomba. We were now moving with the (Mozambican) comrades. And so these comrades told us to remain at Guru. There at Guru, it didn't take long before the (Mozambican) comrades told me that I was under arrest. I couldn't understand why I was arrested and what the objective was. They said we had run away from Smith in Rhodesia, what was our aim in coming to their country? So we were put into a place that was called Chipidigu, which was full of maggots. We ate sadza cooked with maize chaff, and we were fed by the Mozambican comrades because we were said to be prisoners.

We stayed there from 1975 to 1976. Around May 1976, that's when we were ordered to head cattle. As I was heading cattle, I got to be taught how to use a gun. They took me as one of the FRELIMO fighters. They first trained me on a gun that they called Peperure, and then on to Mugiyadhori, Motor 60, RPK, M90, and RPG 7. All that happened when we were at Guru. It really troubled me that now I was working with the Mozambican comrades. Then they also told me to guard the gate. While I was there I started seeing Zimbabwean comrades. The one who came first was the Chief of Operations, Comrade Rex Nhongo, and another one who later sold out, called Hambakwe, as well as, Zino, Sheba Gava, and Josiah Tungamirai. They

were passing through, on their way to Tembwe. So I managed to talk with them, and they realised that I spoke Shona, although I was in Mozambique. They then asked what we were doing at that place. We told them our whole story and they said we were lost. They then said they would talk with us when they got back from Tete. When they came back, we managed to talk with them because we were manning the gate, about seven of us. We stayed at that place until 1976. In October of that year, those same men came back. This time they were also with Nhonho, Gutsa, Ndoda, Hambakwe, Hamadziripi, Dzingai Mutumbuka, and Mayor Urimbo. They were able to come to us and we would discuss. Eventually they asked us to go with them, and we left in their (Land) Cruiser.

They actually took us away without telling the (Mozambican) authorities, and we left with all our guns, leaving the gate with no one guarding it. We got to Chimoio where I immediately went for training. After three weeks of training, I was moved to the firing (division), after which I was told to join those who had been deployed to Mt Darwin. I joined that group in 1976 and we went to Mt Darwin, to Centenary, where there were keeps, from Keep 1 to Keep 11. The keeps made it extremely difficult for us to find food, because we could only get food from the people in the area in which we were operating.

We walked all the way from Chimoio. We walked to the border, then left stocks of ammunition there, then walk back to Chimoio to collect more. We got to Nyakomba and left our the ammunition, and then walked back to the border to collect more. We then got to Mutoko, and did the same. Our backs were the only means of transport that we had for moving ammunition to the front. So you could carry a cache with 150 bullets, a rifle, and an RPG rocket launcher. So if you managed to carry four items, you would have done a great job because you would also be carrying your personal AK47 rifle. The gun which I couldn't carry was a rifle, because I was still short, and it would make it difficult for me to walk. So I actually used the rifle called AK Kafodin Bud. I was at the rank of PC. So I was responsible for talking with the civilians. Even though I was young (small), people had to consult me. While in Mt Darwin, I used the name Short Mutoto, and not Disperse. I gave myself the name Disperse when we were in another (different) area. The reason why I gave myself the name Short Mutoto was because I was short, I had left school at the age of 19. So I got into the struggle when I was still very young. I operated in Centenary through 1976, and my first battle was on 17 November 1976, and that is when I first realised that in a war you could shoot or you could be shot and die.

That battle shook me because the person who was by my side was the first to be shot, and I realised that he had actually died. I took his gun and I covered his blood. From that day, I was never afraid, the experience made me strong. I said to myself that what had happened to my colleague would also happen to me. I stayed with that (his) gun in Section 11 where we were. Another three of our group members were hit, and eight of us remained alive. We really struggled to get food in keep One because the battle started at 6 o'clock (in the Morning) and went on until 8 to 10 pm, with the (Rhodesian soldiers using) searchlights. We eventually managed to hide in some place.

At 3am they (soldiers) came back with their searchlights. We went for two days fighting with them. What was interesting was that we (most of us) were not seriously wounded. Two members of our group who had been seriously injured died later. So I was in Mt Darwin 1976-1977, then I moved to Nyanga in 1977. While there (in Mt Darwin), I operated in Rushinga, Rusambo, Gwangwawa, Marymount, and Mukumbura. While in Nyanga I operated in Gotekote, Katerere, Sanhani, and Nyakomba.

In 1977 my leg was injured after palm bombs had been dropped on me. That happened in headman Nyatowa's area, and I almost got captured there. That was in

November. In that area there are many mun'ando trees. The whites surrounded me, but I didn't move in the direction they expected. Suddenly there were some heavy winds which forced the helicopter to leave me, and then I just found myself in a ditch.

It was only then that I remembered that I was injured, and I looked at my leg, and for sure, I was injured, and the side of my trousers had been damaged by acid. So I had to move back to the rear. What we called the rear was Mozambique. Zimbabwe was the front. When I went back to the rear, I was staying at Chimoio. Then Chimoio got bombed in 1977 and we moved to Doroi, at Base 12. In 1978 a mission came to select people who had to go to Romania for training, and I went for that training. I went to Bucharest, and from there I went to a place called Fragash. My wish was to train in airforce, but because I didn't have much self-control, I failed the test. So I ended up training in counter intelligence, which got me into some (good) experience in 1978.

I then became an instructor, training Zimbabweans who were coming in 1978. From 1980- 81 I was in China, and I came back to Zimbabwe in 1982. I stayed in Chitungwiza, in Zengeza 4, then I was moved to Chipinge, at Tongogara. Then I went through the integration process, to enable me to join the national army, at Inkomo. After that I got into the Zimbabwe Intelligence Corps at Brinz Barracks.

I later got involved in the war against Matsanga, helping the Mozambicans. So these are some of the things that I managed to do when I came back from the (liberation) war. At the moment I am working at the War Veterans Office in Rusape, where I am responsible for building constructions. I was also involved in the land redistribution exercise in the year 2000. I managed to get an 83 hectare plot. I am a small scale farmer, doing the best I can, because problems are encountered every now and then.

There were many problems in the liberation struggle. When I joined in 1975, I got imprisoned soon after. It was a problem for me from the onset. I was bitten by lies in that jail, which was called Chikapidigu.

When we got there with my friends we encountered jiggers. Women also had hiccups problems, which even affected the way they moved. Some of them (women) developed wounds that were difficult to understand. If you saw the wounds you would really feel pity for the women. So in the struggle the problems were caused by Smith. He could deploy poison through the ammunition (that his soldiers used).



# **Botswana**

**Independent on 30 September 1966**

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# 5.3

## **Botswana's Role in the Liberation of Southern Africa**

**by Thomas Tlou and Part Mgadla, Research Team  
Leaders**

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Introduction .....	271
The Refugees .....	276
The Freedom Fighters .....	296
The Role of the Army and the Police.....	315
The Role of Women .....	321
Selected Experiences of Liberation Struggle Activists .....	330
The Role of the Botswana Government .....	338
Conclusion .....	355
Abbreviations .....	356



## Introduction 1

A common misperception is that Botswana played a minor role at best in the liberation struggles of southern Africa. In part, this view derives from the fact that Botswana, as a country, did not adopt, but some think should have, a militant stance against the oppressive regimes that almost completely surrounded it—South Africa, Rhodesia, and South West Africa. During the struggle, Botswana also suffered criticism because it did not allow liberation movements to establish military bases within its borders and because it prohibited guerrillas (we prefer the term “freedom fighters”) to operate freely within its territory. And it is also true that freedom fighters who violated Botswana’s laws or created security risks were sometimes incarcerated or deported to other countries to the north.

The account which follows provides abundant information to demonstrate that, contrary to perceptions based on such a limited yardstick, Botswana found numerous ways other than militancy to play a significant role in support of the liberation struggles of southern Africa, and at no little risk to the country and its people. For the most part, support for liberation was carried on actively, though largely out of view, by legions of sympathisers, by persons in positions of high authority as well as by ordinary citizens in towns and villages, young and old, men and women, and persons of all backgrounds, religions, and skin colour. And with its non-racial democratic constitution and respect for equal protection under the law, Botswana stood out as a beacon of the future for persons living under white racist regimes across all its borders. Throughout the liberation struggles, Botswana was a major refugee destination in the region. Botswana’s support to the thousands who fled from oppression into its sanctuary is one of the unsung stories of the liberation struggle.

Botswana, now thought of as wealthy because of its diamonds, was anything but rich through most of this period. When it achieved independence in 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest nations in the world, not to mention the poorest in the region. Until the early 1980s, it lacked resources, and what Botswana gave to the refugees who streamed into its country was a generous act of sharing the little it had.

Starting in 2006 and continuing through 2008, oral testimonies were collected by eight of the eleven-member research team based at the University of Botswana. Working with research assistants (university graduates awaiting employment and graduate teachers), they located informants, carried out interviews, and produced typed transcripts and translations. In order to provide a holistic picture of Botswana’s role in the liberation struggle of southern Africa, the oral project required that its team members and their assistants fan out among the eight districts of the country.<sup>2</sup>

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(1) The Research Team Leaders for Botswana were Thomas Tlou and Part Mgadla, and the team included G.B. Barei, M.M.M. Bolaane, L. Mafela, C.J. Makgala, B.T. Mokopagosi, M.G. Molomo, W.G. Morapedi, R.F. Morton, and C.G. Ntau.

(2) Apportioned as follows: T. Tlou (eastern part of Central District), P. Mgadla (Southern District), M. Molomo (Central District), L. Mafela (Gaborone), W. Morapedi (North East District), M. Bolaane (North West District), C.G. Ntau (Kgalagadi District), and G. Barei (South East District).

Interviews were carried out with two hundred individuals across the nation. In addition, three researchers carried out archival work at the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS), Gaborone. Their notes and reports were used to supplement information from the oral testimonies.

Interviews covered both urban and rural areas. They included people of all categories—ordinary citizens, activists (local and foreign), government officials, politicians, chiefs, soldiers (and ex-soldiers), women, teachers, pastors, former refugees, and Batswana who became freedom fighters in one of the liberation movements.

The research team chose to carry out “open ended” interviews, rather than use questionnaire-type interviews (as often used by social scientists). Those interviewed were encouraged to narrate their testimonies with as little interference as possible from the interviewer, save where clarification was needed. After the narration, questions were asked of the informant. Both individual and group interviews were conducted as necessary, with preference for the former. Those individuals who demanded pointed questions to save them time were given structured questions, rather than expected to engage in “free talking.” Such questions ranged from seeking information about why Botswana supported the liberation struggle to relations with the liberation movements, the freedom fighters, refugees, and how Botswana dealt with attempts by the surrounding settler regimes to destabilise the country. Even those asking for questions ahead of time were given the latitude to express their opinions and experiences, without having to follow the pattern of structured questions. The type of interview in which individuals were given the latitude to speak freely about their experiences generated the most useful and interesting information. And it is these experiences that constitute an important component of the content in this chapter.

In support of the oral testimonies of those who played a role in the liberation struggle, and as a way of complimenting Botswana’s role in the liberation struggle, the team delegated three of its researchers to gather documentary information from the Botswana National Archives and Records Services (BNARS).<sup>3</sup> The team identified

128 files (mostly from the Office of the President collection) and 586 newspaper articles, 380 of which were from the government newspaper, *The Botswana Daily News*. Archival and official published information form an integral part of the content of this chapter. Published literature on the liberation struggle in the region, with particular reference to Botswana, was used to supplement the oral and archival record.

The research, to a significant extent, has focused on communities along the borders between Botswana and the white minority ruled countries of South West Africa, South Africa, and Rhodesia, because those fleeing from oppression entered Botswana through the border areas, and freedom fighters also generally infiltrated their countries through those areas. Those interviewed were predominantly men, as women in some instances tended to shy away from being interviewed, if not preferring to remain anonymous.

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(3) The archival team: R.F. Morton, B.T. Mokopakgosi, and C.J. Makgala.

## Background

In contrast with Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, which achieved independence through armed struggle against determined white-minority regimes, Botswana won its independence largely through the agitation of popular political parties. The relatively few white settlers in Botswana (between 1885 and 1966 known as the Bechuanaland Protectorate) were concentrated in the eastern part of the territory where most of the Batswana (people of Botswana) also lived. Fairly narrow strips of land known as “Blocks” (Lobatse, Gaborones, Tuli) were restricted to white ownership, as was the Tati area in north-eastern Botswana. The vast majority of Batswana lived in one of the many “native reserves.” In addition to a small white farming population, whites living in Botswana were traders, missionaries, and government officials. Arid and as-yet unproved in minerals, Botswana offered little return for foreign investment, which kept economic development at a low level. Such differences in the nature of colonial experience help to explain why the decolonisation process in Botswana differed significantly from that of its neighbours. Further, the Protectorate’s African subjects benefited from a relative lack of ethnic conflict, due largely to the dominance of Tswana political organisation and culture, which reduced internal rivalries during the nationalist period.

After World War II, Africans throughout the continent demanded freedom, but in southern Africa, the march to independence was delayed by white settler resistance to African majority rule. Whereas by the late 1960s, most African colonies were independent, of the countries now composing southern Africa only Tanzania (1961), Zambia (1963), Botswana (1966), Lesotho (1966), and Swaziland (1968) had freed themselves of colonial rule; meanwhile the wars to liberate South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, and South West Africa were well underway.

When Botswana’s political activists created parties calling for an end to colonial rule, Britain had accepted that its African colonies would have to be granted independence. In the late 1940s, Britain introduced legislative councils (LEGCOs) in its other territories as a transitional step allowing the colonised to participate in making laws for the country and to prepare themselves for self-government. But in Zambia, Lesotho, Swaziland, and in Botswana, such efforts to prepare for independence were delayed by Britain which hoped to buy time and to merge them with the white-ruled states.

In Bechuanaland, Britain delayed creating a LEGCO to appease apartheid South Africa, which still held the long-standing desire to annex the Protectorate (along the lines that South Africa governed South West Africa under the old mandate system). Eventually, in 1960, Britain established a LEGCO, but determined its representation through election that were racially and communally based to maintain the domination of the governance of the Protectorate by colonial officials, white settlers, traditional rulers, and other royals. It was the same year that Prime Minister Harold Macmillan gave his “wind of change” speech in 1960 before the South African Parliament which gave impetus to the march toward independence in Botswana and elsewhere.

A year before the inauguration of the LEGCO, Leetile Raditladi had formed a protectorate-wide political party, the Bechuanaland Protectorate Federal Party (BPFPP). But the BPFPP called only for reform of colonial structures, remained silent about independence, and soon collapsed. However, among the prominent political activists and members of the educated elite who had joined the BPFPP, were those who later formed the mass political parties that called for independence.

The first pure nationalist party to emerge was the Bechuanaland (later Botswana) People's Party (BPP). Credit for its formation belongs largely to Motsamai Mpho. Deported from South Africa in 1960 for his ANC activities, Mpho led the drafting of the BPP constitution and helped launch the party in 1960. Educationist K.T. Motsete served as president, lay preacher and WWII veteran Philip Matante, as vice president, and Mpho, as secretary general. The party grew rapidly, especially in the trading town of Francistown in the northeast, where there was much discontent against land alienation by the Tati Company. It appealed to the emerging sector of urban workers in Francistown and in townships along the railway line, and to many landless peasants in the northeast. The BPP aggressively called for an end to white racism, the scrapping of communal representation in the JAC (Joint Advisory Council) and LEGCO, and immediate national self-determination and independence through "one man/one vote" elections.

The BPP faced serious limitations. It failed to mobilise support in other parts of the country, particularly in rural areas, and remained essentially a regional party. The BPP also suffered from feuding among its leaders, and in 1963 the party split, with Matante emerging as the leader of the dominant faction. By this time, it had already been overtaken by its rival, the Bechuanaland (later Botswana) Democratic Party.

The BDP, which led Botswana to independence, was founded by Seretse Khama. The highly educated, wealthy grandson of the legendary Khama III, and heir to the throne of the largest Batswana group (the Bangwato), Seretse rejected his royal entitlement and entered nationalist politics instead. He was troubled by BPP radicalism, which he felt weakened Botswana's opportunity to create a united nation that would embrace all the people of Botswana, regardless of race. In November 1961, he urged the African members of LEGCO to form a new political party in opposition to the BPP. Like Matante, Khama called for independence through "one man/one vote" elections. However, whereas Matante wanted immediate independence, Seretse argued for an orderly transition to independence through a negotiated constitution.

Deliberate moves towards independence began in 1963. That year, Peter Fawcus, the forward-looking Resident Commissioner, began multilateral consultations with representatives of all political parties, traditional rulers, and the white settler community. Fawcus then introduced internal self-government, not through the LEGCO as originally envisaged, but through a new democratic constitution, by agreeing to a fully elected, non-racial legislature. A few Europeans opposed these reforms, but they were easily eclipsed. The "Fawcus Plan" changed the nature of the

political struggle, placing Botswana's future in the hands of the politicians who won the election that followed.

In early 1964, Fawcus announced that the Protectorate's first "one man/one vote" elections would be held in March 1965. In preparation, the BDP launched a massive countrywide campaign to publicise both itself and the new dispensation embraced in the "Fawcus Plan." The party broadcast its policies and information about its

leaders in a monthly newspaper, *Therisanyo* (consultation), headed by Quett Masire. Masire also travelled throughout the country to spread the party message and recruit members. BDP popularity was enhanced by Khama's stature and charisma.

The BDP prepared well for the elections, fielding candidates in all 31 constituencies, and, with the other parties seriously weakened, it won a landslide victory with 28 of the 31 seats. The remaining three went to Matante's BPP. This sent his BPP rival Motsete to oblivion, his lasting contribution being the composition of the national anthem.

In 1965, self-government began with Seretse Khama as Prime Minister. Botswana became independent on 30 September 1966, with Seretse Khama as Botswana's President and Quett Masire as the Vice President. The BDP has ruled the country since then, maintaining a large majority in each election, held every five years. The leader of the BPP, Philip Matante, became leader of the opposition in Parliament.

Under the leadership of Seretse Khama, who died in 1980, and his successor Quett Masire (president from 1980-1998), Botswana became one of the most stable nations on the continent, after its large deposits of diamonds were exploited with mines in Orapa (1967), Lethlakane (1977), and most importantly, one of its most prosperous, Jwaneng (1982). Its diamond revenues enabled Botswana to enjoy a steadily high rate of economic growth, and to raise an increasing proportion of its people out of poverty. Independent Botswana also became an important centre for anti-apartheid activity, and it served as a critical transit point for activists fleeing Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa. For many, it became a place of refuge and for not a few, a permanent home. Botswana's geographical location played a significant role in its foreign policy and its approach in assisting the liberation struggle. At independence, the country was surrounded by Southern Rhodesia, South Africa, and South West Africa, all ruled by white racist minority regimes, opposed to sharing power with the black majority. In dealing with these regimes, Botswana adopted "tight rope diplomacy," by supporting the liberation struggle and simultaneously avoiding, as far as possible, attacks from the racist regimes. Despite its cautious approach, Botswana was attacked from time to time.<sup>4</sup>

As a poor, landlocked country, Botswana depended entirely on the transport and communications systems of Rhodesia and South Africa; and its economy, in particular its food supply, was heavily dependent on South Africa. Botswana's only link with independent African countries to the north was a narrow ferry crossing at

(4) Interviews with Festus G. Mogae, Botswana President (1998-2008), (Gaborone) November 2008; Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

Kazungula, facing Zambia, where the Chobe River flows into the Zambezi. Botswana had no choice but to face up to these constraints as a result of its support for the liberation struggle.<sup>5</sup> Given these limitations, Botswana nevertheless found a number of ways to support the liberation struggle, especially by giving refugees a safe haven and catering for their welfare, providing diplomatic, political, and material support to the oppressed, and by working assiduously with the other “Frontline States” to help the liberation movements in prosecuting the struggle.

## The Refugees

Prior to Botswana’s independence in 1966, persons unable to tolerate the surrounding oppressive, race-based minority regimes were already coming into the country from South Africa, South West Africa, and (Southern) Rhodesia in search of refuge. Some came alone, others with entire families. They were made to feel welcome, and they were given the freedom to put their talents to use. Among these were persons such as Bessie Head, whose novels and stories about Botswana helped develop its literary tradition; Patrick Van Rensburg, who established schools and launched the brigade’s movement; and Leonard Ngcongco, one of the pioneers in establishing Botswana’s history in the literature. Along with many others, these three arrived in the early 1960s following the South African crackdown on political protest. Others who arrived in or passed through Botswana in the early 1960s included Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Samora Machel, Samuel Nujoma, Robert Mugabe, Jayson Moyo, Joe Slovo, Ruth First, and J.B. Marks. Mandela had been spotted in Lobatse in January 1962, with the plan to charter a plane to Tanganyika.<sup>6</sup> Robert Mugabe and Jayson Moyo arrived in Francistown in April 1963<sup>7</sup> and were subsequently airlifted to Zambia, as were Joe Slovo and J.B. Marks two months later.<sup>8</sup> The administration knew about Mandela’s presence in Lobatse, but did not inform the South African police as to his whereabouts. This period also experienced a significant influx of South African agents into the country, especially in places such as Lobatse in the south.

With each phase of resistance to white minority rule, such as the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in Rhodesia (1965), Soweto (1976), and the United Democratic Front (UDF) campaigns of the 1980s, refugees poured into Botswana in search of sanctuary. Even the anti-colonial war in Angola contributed to Botswana’s refugee population. In 1967 and 1969, more than 4,000 Hambukushu

(5) Tlou, Thomas and A. Campbell. *History of Botswana*. Gaborone: Macmillan, 1997: See pp.380-381; Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

(6) BNARS OP33/2: Immigration to BP: Refugees, September 1961 - April 1962. Secret Report of the Special Branch Office, Lobatse, 15 January 1962.

(7) BNARS OP33/7: Immigration into BP: Refugees, May - August 1963: Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, Mafikeng, 7 June 1963.

(8) Ibid. Commissioner of Police to Government Secretary, Gaborone, 19 April 1963.

fleeing the Portuguese campaign against Angola's freedom fighters entered Botswana at Molembo.<sup>9</sup>

As a member of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Botswana recognised and supported liberation movements recognised by the OAU, especially by giving safe haven to refugees of these movements. For its own part, throughout the liberation struggle, Botswana maintained an unequivocal open door policy towards *genuine* refugees (as opposed to agents of minority regimes claiming refugee status to carry

out their spying activities). Botswana was a major gateway and conduit for those wishing to go to countries to the north, for the purpose of joining one of the liberation movements with their headquarters there. At the same time, Botswana prohibited the use of its territory to launch attacks against the racist regimes. As a poor country with a minuscule police force and without even an army before 1977, for Botswana to do otherwise would have opened it to reprisals from those regimes, reprisals from which it was incapable of defending itself. Although this policy was misunderstood initially by the liberation movements, and even by some African states, gradually they came to understand Botswana's position. The Frontline States, formed in 1974 for advancing the liberation struggle, supported Botswana's policy.<sup>10</sup>

Among refugees, nevertheless, Botswana's position remained controversial in the early years. Most of those interviewed stated that Botswana, given its precarious geopolitical situation, supported the liberation struggle. A few voices, however, held the view that Botswana did not do enough, because they did not allow freedom fighters to launch attacks from its territory; in other words, Botswana should have allowed liberation movements to establish military bases in its territory. Eventually, Botswana's no-attack policy was appreciated by the liberation movements and others, who earlier had been critical of Botswana's policy. Informant O.K. Menyato supported the government's policy:

We assessed our situation and realised that offering our country as a base or spring board for attacks would have been a great adventure... Ours was a principled position that despite our precarious geopolitical situation, we supported the struggle and suffered incursions but could not retaliate.<sup>11</sup>

Botswana's policy was formed some years after the Protectorate had been dealing with refugees on its own. In the 1960s, especially after the Sharpeville massacre, many South Africans fled to the Bechuanaland Protectorate, and officials avoided making refugees too comfortable as they might fail to travel on to havens in the north. Protectorate officials also were leery of offending apartheid South Africa. Many of these refugees were members of such liberation movements as the African

(9) Morton, F., J. Ramsay, and P. Mgadla. *The Historical Dictionary of Botswana*. Fourth Edition. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2008: See p.285.

(10) Interviews with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006; Festus G. Mogae, Former President (Gaborone), November 2008; Godfrey Tyolo, (Mahalapye) June 2007; Tlou and Campbell. *History of Botswana*. See p.381.

(11) Interview with O.K. Menyato, (Mahalapye) June 2007.

National Congress (ANC), the Pan African Congress (PAC), the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), among others. Officials airlifted them to Zambia when the South African government protested their presence in the Protectorate and continued transporting refugees by air in spite of South African threats to shoot down the planes carrying them. Indeed, on one occasion in Francistown, saboteurs bombed the aeroplane which was to transport refugees to Zambia. It is suspected that this was the work of the South African regime.<sup>12</sup> To its credit, the Protectorate administration did not return these people to South Africa. Professionals such as teachers and nurses found employment in the country. Many became Botswana citizens and helped in the development of the country, which had a serious scarcity of trained human resources, at independence.

The refugee influx discussed below is organised according to the regions where they arrived, and represent persons coming from Rhodesia, Mozambique, South Africa, South West Africa, and Angola.

### **Eastern and North Eastern Botswana**

In the early 1960s, refugees from the south western part of then Southern Rhodesia began trickling into the Protectorate. Most were Babirwa or "Basotho" as they are called in Zimbabwe, who are ethnically related to the Babirwa of eastern Botswana. They told of increasing oppression by the Rhodesian regime. They settled among their relatives in the Bobirwa area in such villages as Semolale, Gobojango, and Mabolwe. As war intensified following the UDI, many more fled into Bobirwa, including whole families; others were taken there by ZAPU freedom fighters. While some could find their way to Gobojango and Mabolwe, others were guided by herdsmen at cattle posts or by freedom fighters who had crossed into Zimbabwe to recruit some followers. Generally, they all travelled at night to avoid detection by Rhodesian forces, and many who had abandoned their homes and property arrived in Botswana in a sorry state. In the northeast the same pattern occurred. Refugees crossed into such border villages as Maitengwe, where they were welcomed by the Bakalanga of that area, who are ethnically related to the Kalanga of northwest Zimbabwe. Guided by herdsmen and other Batswana to the villages inside the border, they were hosted by the people of Maitengwe and hidden from pursuing Rhodesian forces.<sup>13</sup>

### **Recollections from Bobirwa**

When refugees arrived in one of the Bobirwa villages, they reported to the local kgosi. Chiefs and village families received many refugees into their care by offering them

(12) BNARS OP 33/2: Immigration to BP: Refugees, September 1961 - April 1962; Secret Report of the Special Branch offices, Lobatse, 15 January 1962; OP 33/7: Immigration into BP: Refugees, May - August 1963; Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, Mafeking, 7 June 1963 and Commissioner of Police to Government, Secretary, Gaborone, 19 April 1963; Interview with Festus G. Mogae, Former President, (Gaborone) November 2008.

(13) Interviews with Obed Itani Chilume, (Tutume) May 2007; Join Ngala, (Mabolwe) May 2007.

temporary board and lodging. In fact many villagers supplied food and clothing and other necessities when they were able to do so. They cared for the sick as best as they could until they were moved to health facilities in Bobonong and Selebi-Phikwe. Some families requested permission to live with members of their families who had also come from Zimbabwe. At Zimbabwe's independence, they could choose either to return home or remain and become Botswana citizens. Not all who entered Botswana were refugees. A case in point is that of a Bobonong secondary school teacher, in 1978, who was exposed by the Manama Mission students, who knew him to be a policeman in Rhodesia. The students demanded his dismissal and he left the school to return to Rhodesia.<sup>14</sup>

Refugees arriving in Gobojango were directed to the home of Motsumi Mogorosi; and those who reached Mabolwe, to Join Ngala's. Mogorosi and Ngala played a major role in assisting refugees and freedom fighters. They were known to Zimbabwean Basotho through their relatives. They had enough resources to care for those who came to them, as they were comparatively well off; they also took enormous risks in placing themselves and their families in situations that endangered their lives. It did not take long before the Rhodesian forces heard about Mogorosi and Ngala, and laid their own plans to eliminate them, because among the refugees there were spies sent to determine the layout of their homesteads and then to report back.<sup>15</sup>

The villagers at Gobojango and Mabolwe were always on the lookout for spies posing as refugees. When strangers entered their villages on the quiet, asking around as to the whereabouts of Motsumi Mogorosi and Join Ngala, suspicious villagers sent warnings to these men, so that they had time that night to get out of their homes and go into hiding. Such precautions, however determined, failed to prevent the inevitable. In 1978, a dramatic incident occurred when a group of Rhodesian soldiers entered Ngala's village, approached his house and shot into it. Ngala miraculously escaped by slipping into neighbouring Semolale, where he had secreted himself on previous occasions. Nearby was a Botswana Defence Force (BDF) camp, where, after hearing the sound of gunfire, the soldiers immediately went into action. As villagers fled to the bush and streams nearby, BDF soldiers arrived. The Rhodesians fled immediately. Meanwhile the gunfire had alerted ZAPU freedom fighters in the area, who quickly located Ngala's attackers and laid an ambush.

In eastern Botswana, people still recall the time when a Rhodesian policeman entered Botswana with a group of refugees, then disappeared to return to Rhodesia. The freedom fighters soon learned of this. When the Rhodesian stopped to sleep at a cattle post, he aroused the suspicions of the herdsman, who alerted the freedom fighters who were nearby. They captured and shot him. The matter was reported to the police who collected the body. Such incidents did not deter the people of Gobojango

(14) Interviews with Calvin Thunamo Sekwababe, (Bobonong) January 2008; Keitseng Morake, (Bobonong) January 2008; Motsumi Mogorosi, (Gobojango) May 2007.

(15) Interviews with Join Ngala, (Mabolwe) May 2007; William Maziba Mathora, ( Mabolwe) May 2007; Kgosi Mmirwa Malema, (Bobonong) January 2008.

and Mabolwe from continuing to help refugees and freedom fighters. They provided valuable aid until the end of the war.

The role of the people of Gobojango and Mabolwe was strengthened after the BDF established a camp near Mabolwe, brought food supplies to the refugees, and transported them to Selebi-Phikwe and elsewhere. A police station was established, too, at the border village of Semolale. It was around this time that the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Botswana Red Cross supplemented government efforts in transporting and feeding refugees.<sup>16</sup> These measures eased matters for the villagers, who, until then, had been the refugees' only source of board, lodging, and transport. Caring for the refugees was a collective effort. Men and women collaborated and shared the responsibility, with women doing most of the cooking, tending to the sick and preparing sleeping arrangements, while men fetched fire wood using donkey carts or trucks (the few who had them), kept the local chief informed, and organised transport for those needing to proceed further into Botswana. All this was done free of charge.<sup>17</sup>

The villagers of Gobojango and Mabolwe, like other commoners in other parts of Botswana, contributed significantly to the war effort. Many examples of selfless care can be provided. In 1977, Makgabane Mosogwane, a Gobojango school teacher, noticed a very young girl who was scantily-dressed, among an influx of refugees, and took pity on her. Ms. Mosogwane asked the chief to give her permission to have the girl live with her rather than send her to Bobonong along with the other refugees. She bought her clothing and enrolled her at the primary school where she taught. When independence came in 1980, she returned to Zimbabwe, by then having advanced to standard three.<sup>18</sup>

In the eastern part of the country, the transportation of refugees created what might be called a "freedom trail," which started from Gobojango and Mabolwe, passed through Bobonong to Selebi-Phikwe, and reached the refugee camp in Francistown. For those wishing to join a liberation movement, the journey continued to Zambia. Later, when the Dukwi refugee camp was established, the Selebi-Phikwe and Francistown camps were either closed or left to serve as transit points to Dukwi. In the early days, virtually all transport from Gobojango and Mabolwe was provided by volunteer tractor and truck owners in those villages, such as Motsumi Mogorosi, William Maziba Mathora, Busang Ngala, Join Ngala, and Koma, the village chief. The burden of transporting the refugees from the border villages to Bobonong fell on these men because the police in Bobonong had very few trucks. At times, these village transporters fetched those who were too weary or sick to walk to the villages from the border.

(16) Interviews with Motsumi Mogorosi, (Gobojango) May 2007; Join Ngala, (Mabolwe) May 2007; James Molobe and Michael, (Maitengwe) May 2007; Mmirwa Malema, (Bobonong) January 2008.

(17) Interviews with Motsumi Mogorosi, (Gobojango) May 2007; Join Ngala, (Mabolwe) May 2007.

(18) Interview with Mrs Makgabane Mosogwane, (Gobojango) May 2007.

In 1977, a large group was brought into Bobirwa by freedom fighters. They consisted of 400 students with their teachers from Manama Mission, a Lutheran Church primary school, not far from the border, together with nurses from the nearby mission hospital. Most came willingly, but later a few of them said they were coerced. The Rhodesian government alleged that the students were held by the government of Botswana against their will. The Botswana government arranged a meeting between the students and those parents who had travelled to Botswana to try to persuade their children to return to Rhodesia. Most students refused to go back. The meeting, which was well covered by the international media, confirmed that most students refused to go back and had not been coerced into coming to Botswana. Canon Burgess Carr, Secretary General of the All Africa Council of Churches, who had flown from Nairobi, confirmed the students' statements.<sup>19</sup> Tsholofelo Morake witnessed the meeting and recalls that only a handful of students agreed and went back to Rhodesia with their parents, but all the others flatly refused.<sup>20</sup> The villages of Gobojango and Mabolwe cared for them and hid them when a Rhodesian plane flew low over the place where they were gathered. After circling a few times, the plane flew away. No harm resulted. In 1978, another group of 418 students from Tegwani Mission in Rhodesia, with their teachers and headmaster, were found by Botswana Police at Ramokgwebana border village in the northeast and were taken to Francistown. After a few days, 364 returned to Rhodesia.<sup>21</sup>

Eastern Botswana was also the main area from which freedom fighters attacked the Rhodesian regime. They stashed large amounts of war materials in the hills and mountains in Bobirwa area. Ngala recalls that when the war ended, the leaders of the guerrillas in his area told him that ZAPU required them to bring all the armaments they had amassed to the border where arrangements were made to collect them.

One of the important figures to enter Botswana via Bobirwa was FRELIMO's (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) Samora Machel, together with his companions from Mozambique. They entered at Lentswe-le-Moriti village, where the village elders arranged for the group to travel to Lobatse and stay with the Kgaboesele family. Lentswe-le-Moriti resident Moatshe Dintwe recalled how this was done.

We arranged for Moses (the name we knew Samora by, then) and the others and got them a ride on a truck that was transporting cattle to Palapye. From there the cattle were transferred onto the train to the Lobatse BMC. We hid them under sacks and blankets in the truck, on the journey to Palapye. There, I was able to put them on the train. It was easy for me to do this because it was my job to arrange for the transportation of the cattle, and I was also able to give them a little bit of money when I parted with them at Palapye.<sup>22</sup>

(19) *Daily News*. 8, 11, 14 and 16 February and 3 March 1977.

(20) Interview with Tsholofelo Morake, (Gaborone) 2008.

(21) *Daily News*. 16 February, 3 March, and 3 April 1977; Interviews with Kapaletswe Sekwababe, (Bobonong) January 2008; Join Ngala, (Mabolwe) May 2007; Tsholofelo Morake, (Gaborone) October 2008.

(22) Interview with Moatshe Gabi Dintwe, (Gaborone) June 2008.

In the northeast, James Molobe of Maitengwe transported refugees in his own truck to the village *kgotla*. As the war intensified around Maitengwe and other north-eastern villages, the lives of the villagers and their property were lost, and the people were kidnapped for interrogation about the alleged operations of the guerrillas in Botswana. Many people abandoned their arable lands and cattle posts in the border areas and relocated deeper in the country. Livestock which strayed into Rhodesia was never recovered.<sup>23</sup>

### South African Refugees

The long border that Botswana shared with South Africa stretches more than 1,700 kilometres from Lentswe-le-Moriti in the east to Union's End in the west (where it merges with the Namibian border). Much of the eastern half of this border is marked by the Limpopo and Madikwe rivers, and much of the western half by the Molopo River. On the South African side, only a few towns existed, much of the territory characterised by thick thorn bush. The several road passageways connected Botswana's small towns and centres to counterparts in South Africa, including Lobatse-Mafikeng, Gaborone-Zeerust/Rustenburg, Mahalapye/Palapye-Mokopane (Potgietersrust). The rural villages of Mochudi, Tlokweng, and Ramotswa were also linked to rural settlements in the South African reserves across the border. The Rhodesian railway entered Botswana from South Africa at Ramatlabama, south of Lobatse. For the most part, refugees from South Africa found their way into Botswana by avoiding the rail and using the road passageways, though after 1976, as South African police and army units actively patrolled these roads, refugees, made up increasingly of young men and women seeking to enlist in the ANC and other organisations in exile, resorted to the thick bush to escape South Africa.

When Botswana villagers crossed into South Africa to shop, they were often harassed at the border posts. They were asked by the South Africans if there were freedom fighters in Botswana. The villagers suspected that either white farmers on farms adjacent to these villages, or some of their Batswana workers, or even some villagers, were informers for the South African and Rhodesian governments.

The incursions of Rhodesian and South African undercover agents into Botswana were a constant threat, not just in the Eastern part, but in other parts of the country as well. For example, in Lobatse, a town in the south of the country, South African agents abducted an innocent person, who was later released after intervention by Botswana police. It is alleged that among the South African police, who collaborated with the Botswana police to fight crime along the common border, there were spies. When their cover was blown by the Botswana police they disappeared.

As in Bobirwa and the Bukalanga areas, local villagers helped these refugees to cross. Villagers sheltered and fed them until they could proceed inland and make their way north to Zambia. Those known to be on South Africa's "hit list" were shuttled

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(23) Interviews with Obed Itani Chilume. (Tutume) May 2007; Motlatsi Molapisi, (Francistown) May 2007.

north quickly, as it was not easy to protect them. Among those who assisted those in flight was Gladstone Phatudi, a South African who was a headmaster at a primary school at Good Hope in the Barolong Farms area (just north of the Molopo River along the Ramatlabama-Lobatse road), and who had come to Botswana himself as a refugee. Phatudi helped these South Africans cross into Botswana at night, then in the following days transported them to Lobatse after dark and handed them over to Fish Keitseng who ran an ANC underground operation, transporting refugees from Botswana to Zambia.<sup>24</sup>

Fish Keitseng was among those private citizens in Botswana who provided vital service to refugees; in Keitseng's case, it was particularly those fleeing South Africa as members of the ANC. Keitseng, who became an ANC member during his years in South Africa, served as their undercover representative in the Bechuanaland Protectorate.<sup>25</sup> He also extended his hand to ordinary refugees. On 22 May 1964, twenty youth entered the country after being promised an opportunity of studying abroad; eleven were illiterate. These youngsters came from the Zeerust area, which, five years earlier, had been the scene of an uprising caused by extension of pass laws to women. It was obvious to Keitseng that they had been recruited for military training. Keitseng assisted them to get to Kazungula and cross into Zambia. The Protectorate authorities knew about this passage, but they did not interfere.<sup>26</sup>

In these early years, the Protectorate administration also assisted refugees to make their way north. For example, in December 1961, nineteen nurses suddenly appeared in Lobatse. Through the efforts of the ANC, they had been recruited from all over South Africa, including Johannesburg and Durban, to work for the Tanganyika government. When they reached the Bechuanaland Protectorate, they discovered that no arrangements had been made for their transit to Tanganyika. The administration could easily have sent them back to South Africa, but instead they offered the nurses an unused house in Lobatse while officials made travel arrangements. On 17 January 1962, the nurses were airlifted out of the Protectorate.<sup>27</sup>

Klaas Motshidisi, one of the key people in rendering assistance to the refugees, captures succinctly how he and colleagues in the Botswana People's Party assisted the liberation struggle:

It was individuals more than the state that helped the freedom fighters. We made personal sacrifices by accommodating them in our homes. As individuals, we suffered; I was declared a prohibited immigrant by the South African State in 1966. When Samora Machel arrived in Lobatse, the Kgaboesele family accommodated him. They literally moved out of their house to accommodate them. When Nelson Mandela returned from

(24) Interviews with Gladstone Phatudi, (Good Hope) June 2007; Kgosi Letlamoreng, (Good Hope) June 2007; Victor Kowa, (Gaborone) February 2007.

(25) Morton, B., J. Ramsay, and F. Keitseng. *Comrade Fish: Memories of a Mtswana in the ANC Underground*. Gaborone: Pula Press, 1999.

(26) BNARS, OP 33/2: Commissioner of Police to Chief Secretary, 22 May 1964.

(27) BNARS, OP 33/6: Commissioner of Police to Government Secretary (secret), 7 December 1961; Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 14 December 1961.

military training, he landed in Francistown and Fish Keitseng stayed with him. Our people provided the rungs of a ladder for these people to rise to prominence in their own countries. Joe Modise, as one of the commanders of Mkhonto we Sizwe, would tell us when their people would be passing through Botswana. Fish Keitseng coordinated the southern part of Botswana and I [Klaas Motshidisi] handled the central part of the country, the Tuli Block area. From the south they were transferred to Palapye, where I and others, including Mpho and Matante, would assist their passage to the north.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Soweto Uprising (16 June 1976)**

In 1972, the period of rising student politicisation and activism began. At Turfloop (then the University of the North) and on other university campuses, students in such organisations as the Black Consciousness Movement led a number of students to cross the border into Botswana, some hoping for a chance to further their education, others to join the liberation movement in the north. After Soweto erupted, students in their hundreds crossed the border into Botswana to seek political asylum or to be ferried north to join the liberation movements. Most of the Soweto refugees were primary or secondary school students with no qualifications and thus unemployable. Moreover, it was often difficult to know who was a genuine refugee and who was a spy of the South African government. Added to this difficulty, Botswana was under the pressure exerted by the South African government whereby James Kruger, the South African Minister of Justice, gave the students and the Botswana government an ultimatum that students had to return to South Africa within one week.

The Botswana government reiterated its policy of assistance to victims of oppression and asserted that no amount of threats would make it change its policy towards refugees.<sup>29</sup> Botswana took care of these new refugees to the best of its ability. Many were enrolled in Botswana secondary schools such as Lotsane near Palapye and Molefi in Mochudi. According to one informant, the Soweto group was the most difficult to control.<sup>30</sup> Most of them were urban youth who loathed the rural Dukwi settlement. When persuasion failed, the government rounded them up and took them to Dukwi. They criticised the government, alleging that they had been ill-treated.

### **Ghanzi and Ngamiland**

Assistance to freedom fighters and refugees entering from South West Africa and Angola long predates Botswana's independence. Since the early 20th century, when refugees from the Nama-Herero uprising against the Germans fled into Ngamiland and Ghanzi, north-western Botswana had provided a refuge from German and South African oppression. In the 1960s, when a new influx of refugees arrived, they came already having relatives to welcome them. According to Gaerolwe Kwerepe,

(28) Interview with Klaas Motshidisi, (Palapye) June 2007.

(29) Diseko, N.J. "The Origins and Development of the South African Students Movement 1968 – 1972." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18.1 (March 1992): pp.40-62; Interview with Potlako Molefhe, (Gaborone) October 2008; "Refuges: Ultimatum answered," *Daily News*, 17 November 1976.

(30) BNARS, OP 27/15: D.T. Mophuting for Commissioner of Police to Permanent Secretary, Office of the President, 17 September 1979; Interview with Azarhah Moagi, (Ramotswa) June 2007.

refugees arriving in his own village were ethnic Herero and Mbanderu, some with grandparents who had fled the German wars long before.<sup>31</sup> Gaditshwane Mmutla of Gumare compared the bond of people across the Botswana-Namibia border with southern Botswana's Barolong people, who had relatives across the border in the Mafeking area of South Africa, and with the Bakalanga of Maitengwe and Jackalas No. 1 and Jackalas No. 2, who had relatives in Zimbabwe.<sup>32</sup> Relatives in various villages of Ngamiland accommodated them for a while. Local people donated food and clothes, especially in villages along the border.

In contrast to other parts of pre-independence Botswana, Protectorate officials in the northwest were hostile to the freedom fighters and were keen to catch those crossing into the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Nevertheless, Botswana continued to support their fellow Africans secretly. Some Ngamiland individuals recalled assisting refugees and freedom fighters in the 1960s at the time they were forming the Botswana People's Party. Kwerepe (a BDP member) recalled the message of Motsamai Mpho (of the BPP) that the people of Ngamiland should help those running away from their countries and seeking political asylum in the Protectorate.

One of the political

activists in Ngamiland, L.M. Setlhoko, narrated an incident where he and some of his colleagues in Maun hid an ANC member in a goat *kraal* to avoid him being caught by the authorities. Given the level of secrecy in handling freedom fighters in the early 1960s, those interviewed told of cases where freedom fighters spent the night at their homes and left the following day in the early hours without even bidding farewell to

those who accommodated them.<sup>33</sup>

Incidents are recalled when the colonial Police Mobile Unit waited at a secret place known as Samxu in Xhusa near Mababe to catch those accompanying freedom fighters/refugees to Kazungula in route to Zambia. One of the founding members of the then Bechuanaland Independence Party (BIP) branch in Ngamiland, Gaditshwane Mmutla, was among those caught. Mmutla regarded this as harassment by the Bechuanaland Protectorate Police. He narrated how in the early 1960s the police followed them around and maintained surveillance of their houses on suspicion that they were assisting freedom fighters. Such efforts failed to deter Mmutla and others. In Mmutla's words, "we first engaged in Botswana politics; we wanted to strengthen our own political party in the country, but not forgetting our fellow brothers who were oppressed in Namibia, South Africa and Rhodesia. So we helped them to go to countries north of Botswana where they were going to train as freedom fighters."<sup>34</sup>

After independence, the situation improved. Upon refugees arriving in Shakawe or Gumare or another of the villages, the chief was notified. He then welcomed them at the *kgotla* and assigned individuals to accommodate them. Those interviewed are quick to say that Botswana assisting freedom fighters and refugees were unconcerned

(31) Interview with Gaerolwe Kwerepe, (Maun) September 2008.

(32) Interviews with Gaditshwane Mmutla, (Gumare) November 2007; Sekgwa Motswai, (Gumare) September 2007.

(33) Interviews with L.M. Setlhoko, (Maun) September 2007; Sekgwa Motswai, (Gumare) September 2007.

(34) Interview with Gaditshwane Mmutla, (Maun) June 2007.

whether they were ANC, SWAPO, SWANU, ZANU, or ZAPU.<sup>35</sup> They were aware of possible attacks from the white regime forces, but supported President Seretse Khama's policy of not allowing Botswana to be used for launching attacks, while accommodating refugees in spite of threats.

People of Ngamiland assisted with petrol for the cars transporting freedom fighters across to Zambia. According to Mmutla, some of the vehicles were donated to Motsamai Mpho by the OAU Liberation Committee through the Pan-Africanist efforts of Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere. Though donated for Mpho's political movement, his members used them to transport freedom fighters when the need arose.

### **Sam Nujoma and SWAPO**

South Africa had ruled the territory of Namibia (former South West Africa) under a League of Nations mandate ("Class C") since 1920. When it became clear after World War II that South Africa was intent on imposing the apartheid system there, its occupation was declared illegal by the UN. In August 1966, SWAPO initiated military action to liberate the country and, during the 1960s, small-scale guerrilla warfare continued in South West Africa between SWAPO and South African security forces. In 1967, the South African government tried to break SWAPO's political organisation by putting thirty-seven prominent SWAPO members on trial in Pretoria for treason. One of the co-founders of SWAPO, Herman Andimba Toivo ya Toivo, was among those sentenced to twenty years imprisonment on Robben Island under South Africa's anti-terrorism legislation (Terrorism Act No. 83 of 1967).<sup>36</sup> With Toivo in prison, Sam Nujoma, who had established SWAPO headquarters and guerrilla training bases in Tanzania, assumed the presidency of SWAPO, led the armed resistance, and launched the Namibian war of independence. Meanwhile the enforcement of apartheid continued and several SWAPO leaders, including Sam Nujoma were forced to flee the country.<sup>37</sup> Nujoma escaped by travelling via Botswana, Tanzania, and Ghana to reach the United Nations, where he presented their case to the United Nations Security Council.<sup>38</sup>

Several individuals in Ngamiland remembered clearly the events above and their meeting with key political liberation struggle activists, including Nujoma. Ngamiland elders talked about how they helped Nujoma after he arrived in Ngamiland soon after he had assumed SWAPO leadership. The Maun elders and political veterans Mpho and Mmutla are among the Botswana politicians who were in contact with Nujoma. Mmutla remembered how he and others were summoned to Mamuno and other villages near the Namibian border to receive political activists crossing into

(35) Interview with L.M. Sethoko, (Maun) September 2007.

(36) Toivo served 16 years, most of it alongside Nelson Mandela.

(37) Like Toivo, Nujoma is considered one of the fathers of the Namibian independence struggle. They both formed SWAPO in 1960. See [http://africanhistory.about.com/cs/biography/p/bio\\_toivo.htm](http://africanhistory.about.com/cs/biography/p/bio_toivo.htm). Accessed 17 December 2008.

(38) *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), entry Nujoma, Sam; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam\\_Nujoma](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Nujoma). Accessed 17 December 2008.

Botswana. Mmutla and his colleagues found petrol, and drove long distances on bumpy gravel roads in order to fetch the fleeing Namibians and bring them to Maun. They also travelled to Ghanzi and on to Makunda, a village next to Charles Hill in the Ghanzi District, where they met refugees and SWAPO members coming on foot from the Mamuno border post. In general, freedom fighters crossing into the Ghanzi district from Namibia travelled in small groups of four or five while refugees arrived in groups of ten or more people.

The Sam Nujoma case is worth highlighting as it was mentioned several times by those interviewed in Ngamiland.<sup>39</sup> When “secret” word reached Maun that Nujoma was at the border, Mmutla travelled with Daniel Munamava to Makunda to pick him up. Munamava, a Botswana citizen who was the SWAPO party chairman of the Ngamiland region at the time, coordinated SWAPO activities in Ngamiland and Ghanzi, and linked people in Botswana with their counterparts in South West Africa. Some of the Botswana ethnic Ova Herero/ Mbanderu like Daniel Munamava and Edwin Kwatheri, who also had relatives in Namibia, were actively involved in SWAPO politics and helped coordinate the cross border movements of the freedom fighters and refugees. At the time that Sam Nujoma entered Botswana, the country was undergoing a transitional process to independence, and the Police administration’s mindset might have still been very conservative and Sam Nujoma’s presence was likely to be perceived as a problem in the country<sup>40</sup> According to Mmutla, as soon as the Special Branch heard that Nujoma had entered Botswana, they searched for him all over the Ghanzi district. Through their own local intelligence, Mmutla, Munamava, and Kwatheri were alerted that the police were looking for them and Nujoma.

Advance warning allowed Mmutla and his team to avoid arrest. Rather than stay on the road, they spent a night at a cattle post called Motswere, in the vicinity of Makunda, which the police failed to locate and therefore could not determine the whereabouts of Mmutla. The police tried in vain to track them down from Makunda, through to the Kuke gate (today the border area between the Ghanzi district and Ngamiland). From Kuke to Maun, Munamava and Kwatheri rode on horses away from the main road. Their purpose was to keep Mmutla and Nujoma, who were travelling on the main road by car, informed about the whereabouts of the Special Branch whom they suspected were still after them. As lookouts, Munamava and Kwatheri helped Mmutla and Nujoma to avoid meeting the police.<sup>41</sup>

Refugees who crossed at the Mamuno border were transported to Ngamiland by Botswana political activists often at their own costs. Some stayed with trusted families in Sehithwa. In some cases, refugee groups of teenagers were kept in the Maun prison for their protection. Freedom fighters were accommodated at Mmutla’s house for security reasons. Nujoma stayed in Maun for two weeks. They gave him a hiding

(39) For example, interview with L.M. Setlhoko, (Maun) September 2007.

(40) Members of the Special Branch were thought to be operating just as they had in the colonial period.

(41) Interview with Gaditshwane Mmutla, (Maun) November 2007.

place, which those interviewed did not disclose. One of the individuals narrated the kind of conversations they had with Nujoma during his brief stay:

We enjoyed discussions with him. We were new in politics and we liked to hear a lot about politics of liberation struggle. Nujoma told us about problems experienced by blacks in his country and that such problems affected Africa as a whole. We also talked about how we wanted African countries to be liberated. We heard about Nelson Mandela and Robben Island through Nujoma. We talked about Pan African legends such as Nkrumah, Nyerere and Kaunda, who were great men of the nationalist movement. There were newspapers like the *Contact* and *New Age* which we enjoyed reading with Nujoma.<sup>42</sup>

Another prominent person to enter Botswana at Ghanzi, where she was assisted in the transit north to join her husband, was Mrs Theopaulina Nujoma. She was assisted by Lesedi Mothibamele, a police officer in Ghanzi. Years later, when Mothibamele travelled to independent Namibia on official business, he was treated as a celebrity. Mothibamele narrates the story:

I was in Namibia when I was leading the Salaries Commission delegation for Members of Parliament. So, as I was talking to the late Speaker of Parliament, I mentioned her [Mrs Nujoma], and you know that night there was a big party and I was one of the celebrities. Some of them were remembering and saying “You were the police officer in Ghanzi,” and I said ‘Yes, yes,’ and we were really recalling those days.<sup>43</sup>

It is clear from the interview with some residents of Ngamiland that some liberation movement leaders coming from South West Africa had foreknowledge of key contacts in Maun, such as Mpho, Setlhoko, and Mmutla. By the time they arrived in Ngamiland, they already had developed a sense of trust in these individuals, that they would guarantee them security in their homes. However, during the course of the interview, Baditshwane Mmutla was quick to note that when the Rhodesian war of liberation intensified along the Botswana border in the 1970s, some Batswana became suspicious that some freedom fighters were something else.<sup>44</sup>

### **Northern Botswana: Chobe**

The eastern portion of the narrow Caprivi Strip (part of South West Africa), which separates Botswana from Angola, was an avenue of sorts for refugees from South West Africa, Angola, and Rhodesia. The eastern border between the Caprivi and Botswana is formed by the Kwando River, which originates in Angola, and flows south into the Linyanti swamps, before turning northeast and becoming the Chobe River, the wide tributary that joins the mighty Zambezi at Kazungula after passing the ferry point of Kasane. The people of the Chobe district living near the Caprivi are ethnic Basubiya and Bayeyi among others, who, as often is the case near Botswana’s borders, have relatives on the other side. Thus, in addition to freedom fighters attached to

(42) Interview with Gaditshwane Mmutla, (Maun) November 2007.

(43) Interview with Lesedi Mothibamele, (Hukuntsi) July 2007.

(44) Interview with Gaditshwane Mmutla, (Maun) November 2007.

SWAPO and ZAPU, the refugees who entered Botswana in these areas were fleeing the violence of the liberation wars in South West Africa, Angola, and Rhodesia.

In the 1970s, as the war against the Smith regime in Rhodesia intensified, many Zimbabwean villagers along the border crossed into the Chobe district as refugees. And, as in other parts of the country, it was the ordinary people in Chobe, in such places as Kasane, Kazungula, Lesoma, Pandamatenga, and some cattle posts, who provided food, water, and tobacco to refugees and armed groups, some of whom were their relatives. When refugees were moved to Francistown, those who had relatives in the Chobe were received by family members. According to Kadimo Lopang, who was once a builder for the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, and, since 1973, the Kasane Customary Court President, some individuals never returned to Namibia after Independence.<sup>45</sup> E.B. Maplanka, who trained as a paramilitary cadre in 1975 before joining the Police Mobile Unit (PMU), which in 1977 was reconstituted as the Botswana Defence Force, stated that, when refugees were transported to Dukwi during the 1978 – 1982 period, some were resettled in the villages of Etsha 6, in Ngamiland. They were mostly Angolans who ended up taking Botswana citizenship, some marrying Batswana. “Their children cannot speak any other language except Setswana,” affirmed Maplanka.<sup>46</sup>

Some were sent to the Dukwi refugee camp by the Botswana government. Refugees rarely stayed in the villages for long because of the proximity to the border, where their enemies were active. Villagers highlight the significant role of the police in attending to the refugees, using government resources to transport them immediately to Dukwi. Refugees, some of whom were coming with children, were reported to the police and were given tents. Fumbani Sefako affirmed that they even reported their own relatives to the police, so that they could be transported to the safety of Francistown and Dukwi.<sup>47</sup>

Although the bulk of the interviews centred on the experiences of the Zimbabwe war, some of those interviewed recalled events along the Caprivi border. Some recalled that refugees from Namibia who crossed into Botswana via Kasane included teachers, school children, and ordinary Caprivians; they crossed the Chobe River at night using

*mekoro* (dugout canoes) and in the morning the villagers assembled at the *kgotla* where they were welcomed by the *kgosi* and senior government officials, such as the District Commissioner.<sup>48</sup> They were accommodated in tents and given food before

being transported to Francistown. Those interviewed recalled incidents involving collaborators who tried blending themselves in among refugees crossing from the Caprivi. For instance, Lopang Kadimo described the time when several Basubiya, who were agents for the South African military regime, crossed at Mpalila, pretending to be visiting relatives. Such agents followed genuine refugees into Botswana in order to

(45) Interview with Lopang Kadimo, (Kasane) June 2007.

(46) Interview with E.B. Maplanka, (Maun) September 2007.

(47) Interview with Fumbani Sefako, (Pandamatenga) July 2007.

(48) Interviews with Luckson Sankwasa, (Kasane) December 2007; Lopang Kadimo, (Kasane) June 2007.

find the hiding places of SWAPO's military operatives, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). The Basubiya agents then crossed back to inform the white soldiers about PLAN activities inside Botswana. Kadimo recalled another incident in which these collaborators killed a refugee.<sup>49</sup> Joseph Munisola, formerly of the Northwest District Council, also reports that some Basubiya from the Caprivi served as South African informers. Other informers were whites owning safari companies. White soldiers slipped over in civilian clothing and pitched up for a beer at the Chobe Safari Lodge, where they were informed about freedom fighter activities inside Botswana. Munisola knows the name of one of these local white informers for the South African Defence Force, who was working for a company called Hunters Africa. A rumour went around the villages that this particular individual was killed by the BDF after they followed him in the bush.<sup>50</sup>

### **Refugee Settlements**

By late 1973, the Botswana Council of Churches and the Botswana Government combined to form the Botswana Council for Refugees (BCR), as a way of providing refugees with humanitarian assistance.<sup>51</sup> Additional funding was obtained from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). These efforts helped to support refugee camps in Selebi Phikwe in eastern Botswana and in Francistown in north-eastern Botswana. However, the steady, heavy influx of refugees put even greater demand on these camps, and underlined the need for a larger facility. In 1978, a major refugee settlement was established at Dukwi, two hours north-north-east of Francistown along the Francistown-Nata road, as a result of the efforts of the LWF. At its peak, the camp hosted more than 45,000 people from all over southern Africa. Most of them were from Zimbabwe and South Africa.

### **Dukwi**

Initially Dukwi catered primarily for refugees from Rhodesia, whose numbers rose to about 23,000 in 1979.<sup>52</sup> They came in such large numbers that there was nowhere else where they could be safely settled. Refugees from South Africa, Namibia, Angola, and other countries were also settled there. Located far from urban centres and from the borders with neighbouring countries, Dukwi's location provided some security from attacks by the racist regimes from which the refugees had fled. Dukwi was equipped with basic amenities that catered to families as well as individuals, including primary schools, a clinic, a fresh water supply, food, clothing, and other supplies. Refugees who found jobs in the towns, attended school or were able to stay with relatives, were not taken to Dukwi.

(49) Interview with Lopang Kadimo, (Kasane) June 2007.

(50) Interview with Joseph M. Munisola, (Kasane) December 2007.

(51) Dale, R. *Botswana's Search for Autonomy in Southern Africa*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995: See p.39.

(52) Tlou and Campbell. *History of Botswana*. See p.381.

The Dukwi settlers were allocated land to grow crops and establish small enterprises with the assistance of the UNHCR, the BCR, the LWF, and others. Some successful settlers sold their produce in the nearby villages, in Francistown, and in Tutume, using transport provided by the UNHCR. In general the refugees from Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Angola adapted to living at Dukwi quite well. However, many South African refugees, coming as they did, from urban areas, disliked Dukwi's rural setting.

As a burgeoning settlement, some of Dukwi's residents appear to have had a share of troubles with law officials. Former Dukwi Station Commandant Kangangwani Bathami describes the scene:

I would not say crime was high in the camp. However, there were cases of assault and others, but these cases were not alarming. Zimbabweans were leading in the crimes reported, followed by South African refugees, and then Angolans...53

As to their general behaviour and attitude, Dukwi refugees are recalled to have lived relatively peacefully there, and accepted the goodwill of the Botswana government, the UNCHR, LWF, and BCR. Order was also strengthened by the method and structure put in place for distributing food and other supplies. Dukwi resident and ex-refugee Stephen Tlou elaborates as follows:

The refugees resided in different zones, but these zones were meant to monitor reception of food rations. Different zones received their rations on different days to avoid overcrowding. Food rations were received on a monthly basis and family size was taken into consideration when this food was distributed. Clothes were usually given out after much longer intervals, something like every six months. Each zone had a leader. If a refugee was leaving the camp, they had to notify the zone leader.54

Life in the refugee camp could be taxing, requiring resourcefulness on the part of the refugees to take steps to cater for their own entertainment and social welfare. Stephen Tlou again explains:

Refugees had different methods of trying to ease the stress of the struggle. There were various forms of entertainment within the Camp, like movies, music bands, and sports. There was even a very famous team, which was known as Bubezi, which means lion. The refugees also went to church with Batswana...55

Another long-time Dukwi resident indicates that:

Refugees were allowed to practice their culture. During Dukwi Day celebrations, we came together and displayed our culture through music and artefacts. We, the Angolans, presented our traditional dance known as Shinganje. The Zairians presented Kwasakwa.56

(53) Interview with Kangangwani Bathami, (Dukwi) July 2008.

(54) Interview with Stephen Tlou, (Dukwi) June 2008.

(55) Ibid.

(56) Interview with Alvaru Pinto, (Dukwi) July 2008.

While many nationalities acquiesced to the rules and way of Dukwi life, South African refugees generally got into trouble with the Botswana authorities, or generally were restless. As one resident put it:

The SA refugees were not happy to be at the camp at all. The difference between them and other refugees is that they were still too involved in the struggle; always singing and chanting. Most of the time they were lamenting the type of life in the camp. They wanted relocation to countries such as America and Australia in order to be exposed to various opportunities such as good jobs and scholarships.<sup>57</sup>

Apparently Dukwi became intolerable for some South African refugees, who decided to relocate to other countries rather than remain. Among them was Dithole Thebe:

I went to Botswana and lived in Botswana until the Botswana government decided to send us to Dukwi. I left Dukwi to go to Kenya after living in Botswana for seven years. I returned to Botswana after my studies in Kenya and moved to Zimbabwe where I stayed for six years. I later, in 1991, came to the US...<sup>58</sup>

Many South African refugees may have fallen afoul of authority, but others abided by the rules, and, together with refugees from other countries, they set up enterprises with the support of one of the refugee offices in Botswana.<sup>59</sup> According to Stephen Tlou,

South African refugees kept rabbits, pigs, and chickens. Others were involved in gardening and field crops. Refugees were agriculturally empowered and sometimes students from other parts of Botswana toured the camp to gain agricultural insights.

As a result, they were able to raise money by selling these commodities to the Dukwi community and the neighbouring villages and well beyond. An ex-South African refugee recalls that:

Everyone was familiar with my orchard and I had customers in and around the Camp. I could even sell as far as Francistown and Gweta. Of course transport was always arranged by the BCR (Botswana Council for Refugees)... Batswana who worked in the Camp had my flowers in their compounds...<sup>60</sup>

South Africans took advantage of educational opportunities at Dukwi, depending on their age, and educational level. Siana Mothusi Slash, an ex-refugee who still lives there, mentioned that “when I arrived at Dukwi Refugee Camp, I was doing Standard

3. Our class was populated by Zimbabweans, Angolans, and a few South Africans and Zambians... ”<sup>61</sup>

Another informant, John Manamela recalls that “some South Africans were well learned men who were teachers and offered assistance to the refugee students...<sup>62</sup>

(57) Interview with Billy Moahi, (Dukwi) June 2008.

(58) Dithole Thebe to Lily Mafela, e-mail, 12 November 2007.

(59) Interview with Stephen Tlou, (Dukwi) June 2008.

(60) Interview with John Manamela, (Dukwi) June 2008.

(61) Interview with Siana Mothusi Slash, (Dukwi) June 2008.

(62) Interview with John Manamela, (Dukwi) June 2008.

Kangangwani Bathami, former Station Commander of the Dukwi Police Station who currently lives amongst the refugees at Dukwi, had good things to say about the early residents:

Refugees taught us to be self-reliant and make use of extra space in our yards. Having a garden at the back yard has become a norm to Batswana who came into contact with the refugees. Batswana were motivated by the refugees to do small scale business.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, it would appear that some South African refugees were also able to integrate well into, and became valuable members of the Dukwi society.

The assistance given by the Botswana government and some Batswana to the Zimbabweans facing hardships and repression back home was expressed in a moving and lengthy letter written by one Zebedia Mabandhla Silongomah, who had stayed in Botswana before moving to Zambia in 1973. The letter was addressed to the Minister of External Affairs and is quoted in full here without any editing:

In the name of God, Peace and Africa, I salute thee.

'Your Excellency' as I sleep in the hospital bed, only God the Almighty knows my really 'true-wholeheartedly feeling, about Botswana, as a young developing country in Africa and the world. Without your government of Botswana today, I writer 'Zebedia Mabandhla Silongomah', would be completely dead and forgotten, but due to the kindness of your government here I am today, though still in pains, alive and able to put a pen to paper.

Your Excellency I find it to be very hard as a human being and Christian to sit and forget about Botswana. Tears roll down my cheeks, when I remember the state of health I was in when I arrived in Botswana to apply for asylum and medical attention.

Your Excellency having been in a 'Private Concentration Camp' nine months in Rhodesia, where I and some unfortunate people were tortured to the degree of 'Electric shocks' (sic), without proper toilet or bathing facilities, being starved heavily, I find it to be a complete blow, if I can not raise poor voice, poor as I am to say my true and

wholeheartedly deep thanks to the Government of the Republic of Botswana.

Having escaped from a Private Concentration Camp in Rhodesia, on the 11h November 1972 (Rhodesia's seventh illegal Independence Anniversary), I arrived at Francistown Police Station on 13th Nov. 1972. Dirty as I was, with rags on, without shoes, unable even to eat, the fresh torture wounds, the Policemen on duty did their best to keep me comfortable by giving me food and encouraged me to eat and gave me a place to sleep.

The following morning they handed me over to the CID's office. From there I was driven to the Special Branch for an interview and Finger printing. They had to carry me and put me on the seat in the car, as I couldn't walk anymore with swollen legs. After the interview they drove me to the state prison. At the state prison they helped me out of the car, and explained to the prison authorities, who gave me food and a place to sleep. The following morning, due to my health conditions, the Special Branch men drove me to Jubilee Government Hospital where I was admitted. Due to my health conditions, wherever I went, from the Police-Special Branch-State Prison up to Jubilee Government Hospital, I was the centre of attraction, as sad faces of people

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(63) Interview with Kangangwani Bathami, (Dukwi) July 2008.

looked at me, and although I couldn't hear the language, I could see and hear that they felt pity for me, and on the 22nd November 1972, I appeared before the Refugee Advisory Board.

Your Excellency, the doctors and nurses at Jubilee Government Hospital were really wonderful. With wounds, chest pains, unable to eat so much, and unable to sleep even after [taking] sleeping drugs, they never gave up, but continued showing me true love, kindness, mutual respect and understanding. While in Jubilee Hospital, the Rhodesian Police held one of my sisters for two weeks, torturing her to say about my whereabouts, till she died the third week in police hands. This was a blow to me and a dark Christmas when I [re]collected of this incident (sic) but the nurses and ministers of religion gave me courageous words and advice.

On the 26th January 1973, I was transferred to Lobatse Mental Hospital for mental observation and treatment and care. There again, I was showered with blessings of love by the doctor and staff. While at Lobatse Mental Hospital I had to be transferred to Athlone Government Hospital, due to chest pains and vomiting blood. The doctors and nurses were all the same, wonderful to me. It was at Athlone that I met and fell in love with two orphan babies, Boitumelo Montsherwane and Moses Pileng, and started sharing my refugee allowances which surprised most nurses, but I told them as an orphan I was like them. I still write to Athlone to know the conditions of those orphans. The news of my mother's death became another blow while I was at Athlone, but my aunt came from Rhodesia, and explained how tough the situation was. Immediately I started thinking more of those orphans and spent most of my time with them as I had realized I was already an orphan for sure and all. My father died while under detention at Gonakudzingwa Restriction Camp' as he was a staunch and strong member of ZAPU in 1969. I am the only boy and last born in my family of what was five girls and one boy, and now only four girls remain...

Your Excellency, your people of Botswana are really too precious to be forgotten. As a I left Botswana on the 5th April 1973, for Zambia where I am undergoing further treatment since the 7th April 1973 when I was admitted at University Teaching Hospital until my transfer to this hospital where I write from, my heart is still in Botswana.

Your Excellency I believe I am quite fit now, though the doctors say I need rest, and I pray that my dream comes true, and one day, I will still come back to Botswana to work as a volunteer, in return for what the people of Botswana did for me. In Botswana that's where I first saw the really and true meaning of 'Unity-Progress and Peace in All Humanism'.

I still write back to Athlone Hospital as to be informed about those orphans, and I gather there are all fine, having received the latest letter on the 2nd July 1973... Sorry for the length of the letter, I hope you forgive me, and one day, when Rhodesia is free I will write a book of 'Love'.

Your worship, I still will come back as a volunteer worker in Botswana. Long Live President Khama, the Government and People of Botswana. Keiitumetsi (sic) Botswana.<sup>64</sup>

After Zimbabwean independence in 1980, and thousands left Dukwi to return to their homes, South African refugees, who were neither in school nor gainfully employed,

(64) BNARS, OP 27/44 (also OP 26/4/1): Zebedia Mabandhla Silongomahto, Botswana Minister for External Affairs – "Experience of a Zimbabwean Refugee and Feeling about Botswana, 1973."

were sent there to Dukwi. The Zimbabweans had settled well in Dukwi. In contrast, for the South Africans, Dukwi became a source of bitterness towards the Botswana government, which some government officials still remember with consternation. As one ex-refugee put it:

The average Motswana was receptive and civil. In Dukwi for instance, those on the lower rung of society interacted with us freely and saw us as fellow human beings; whereas the technocrats saw us as something indescribable. The ordinary urban folk were most hospitable and accepted us as their kith and kin. The political heavy weights, particularly after the passing of the founding President, were vitriolic.<sup>65</sup>

Bitterness was even more pronounced when the government declared some refugees prohibited immigrants and used the Botswana Defence Force to force others to move to Dukwi. In 1981, the hostility of the South Africans at Dukwi led the Minister of Public Service and Information, Daniel Kwelagobe, to go there and address the South Africans. "It is disgusting," he lectured them, "to note that some of you look down upon us and the humble facilities that we offer." He told them that the Zimbabwean refugees who occupied Dukwi until 1980 made the best use of the settlement, tilling the land, which the South Africans generally refused to do because they claimed they came from urban areas.<sup>66</sup>

The South Africans' attitudes differed markedly from those who came from Angola, Zimbabwe, and other countries and found Dukwi suitable for settling down and beginning arable farming. After their countries gained independence, some of the Angolan refugees remained and established permanent homes in Dukwi village, as they regarded Botswana to be more stable than their home country.<sup>67</sup>

### **Etsha**

Brief mention is appropriate here of another refugee settlement in the Okavango region that seldom has been recognised as playing a role in Botswana's treatment of refugees, even in the standard works on Botswana's recent history. During the liberation struggle against the Portuguese in Angola, some refugees entered the Northwest District of Botswana, but a much larger influx came during the civil war between the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).<sup>68</sup> With the help of the World Council of Churches (WCC), they settled at Etsha and built a school for their children. The Northwest District Council provided teachers. They were an industrious community that produced its own food. Many Angolans chose not to return to Angola and about 2,000 of them took up Botswana citizenship.<sup>69</sup>

(65) Mphotseng Kgokong to Lily Mafela, e-mail communication, 31 March 2007.

(66) BNARS, OP 27/14: Confidential: "Criminal activities of Refugees with attached copy of Kwelagobe's speech." 20 January 1981.

(67) Interview with Esther Liti, (Dukwi) June 2008.

(68) Interview with Mompoti Merafhe, (Gaborone) September 2006.

(69) Interview with Matshwenyego Louis Fisher, (Gaborone) November 2008; *Daily News*, 30 April 1971, 28 June 1974, 16 October 1974.

## The Freedom Fighters

Let us be reminded that throughout most of the liberation period, Botswana was in a precarious geo-political position, surrounded as it was by oppressive regimes bent on maintaining white settler domination of the black majority and resentful of Botswana's non-racial policies. Though politically independent, Botswana's economy depended entirely on these regimes, especially South Africa's.<sup>70</sup> Until 1977, Botswana had no army, and for years thereafter, it was too weak to stand up against the sophisticated military power of these regimes. Therefore it had no choice but to tread cautiously in dealing with Rhodesia and South Africa, lest it endangered its trade links, risked its own people's starvation, and invited a military invasion.<sup>71</sup> Its support for the liberation struggle and freedom fighters was bound to be less pronounced than what was offered by its independent allies to the north. Rather its support for liberation was pragmatic and as subtle as possible. It welcomed members of the liberation movements, along with refugees and all those claiming to have run away from oppression. Botswana's approach to backing the liberation struggle had the support and understanding of the liberation movements, the OAU, and such international organizations as the Commonwealth, the UN and many independent African states.

Botswana's major challenge was dealing with freedom fighters of the various liberation movements, whose purpose was to launch attacks against the oppressive regimes. For example, Botswana faced the dilemma of coping with the joint armed ZAPU's Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and the ANC's Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), which attempted to move their cadres through Botswana to South Africa and to use Botswana as a rear base for guerrillas running from the Rhodesian security forces, while Botswana was plagued in turn by South African security forces along its border areas assisting Ian Smith's regime.<sup>72</sup> Though the Botswana government wanted to assist freedom fighters, they had limited resources to do so, and at the same time they expected guerrillas entering its territory to comply with Botswana's immigration and security laws. Botswana's policy also made it distinctly clear to the liberation movements and freedom fighters alike, that Botswana could not, and should not, be used as a military base, "a launching pad" as it were, against any country at any time. Botswana's insistence on compliance with its laws gained it the condemnation of the guerrillas, even more so when they alleged that the Botswana government arrested freedom fighters, intending to hand them over to

(70) Rwelamira, M. *Refugees in a Chess Game: Reflections on Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland Refugee Policies*. Uppsala: Nordick Africa Institute, 1990: See p.38.

(71) Mgadla, P.T. "A Good Measure of Sacrifice: Botswana Government's Policies During the Liberation Struggle of Southern Africa, 1965-1980." *Journal of Social Dynamics* 34.1 (2008), pp.5-16; Molomo, M.G. "Botswana's Role in the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa." Paper presented at the Hashim Mbita Workshop, Faculty of Humanities, University of Botswana (June 2008): See p.1.

(72) See R.M. Ralinala, et al. "The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns." *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, vol. I (1960-1970). Ed. B. Magubane. Cape Town: SADET, 2004: pp.479-540; Mokopakgosi, B.T. "The University of Botswana and the Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa (1973-1980)." *Social Dynamics* 34.1 (2008): pp.33-45.

the governments of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. Botswana had as its top priority the safety and security of its citizens by denying South Africa and Rhodesia any grounds for mounting attacks against Botswana, since it could not defend itself against these militarily stronger regimes.

For taking this uncompromising position, Botswana was criticised by some members of the liberation movements and leaders of their armies. They accused Botswana of not providing enough support, prohibiting freedom fighters from operating freely, arresting freedom fighters found in possession of arms and ammunition, and imprisoning or deporting guerrillas by virtue of their military activities.

Such allegations were not without foundation. Many *were* arrested and imprisoned, only later to be declared prohibited immigrants and deported to such countries as Zambia and Tanzania. One such case involved ZAPU and ANC guerrillas who had entered Wankie Game Reserve in Rhodesia from Zambia and then crossed into Botswana when their encounter with Rhodesian security forces became intense. Botswana police arrested them. Among those detained was MK leader Chris Hani. They were later deported to Zambia.

Arresting freedom fighters in violation of Botswana's laws appears to have been an attempt also to persuade South Africa and Rhodesia that Botswana was not allowing its territory to be used for attacks against them. To some freedom fighters and liberation organisations, however, this was viewed as assisting the white-ruled states. Their conviction was strengthened by the fact that leading officers of Botswana's police force were white; some suspected that these officers were providing intelligence to Rhodesia and South Africa. Secret communication between Presidents Seretse Khama and Kenneth Kaunda shows that Khama was worried about the stability of his new state.<sup>73</sup>

The foregoing criticisms levelled against Botswana notwithstanding, it is known that freedom fighters operated from, and through, Botswana. Freedom fighters crossed in and out of virtually every district and between Botswana and its neighbouring countries. Freedom fighters were given sanctuary by Botswana citizens. The government of Botswana and its citizens also facilitated passages for freedom fighters for further training in other, "safer" countries, such as Zambia, Tanzania, and Algeria. A sample of Botswana's experiences with the freedom fighters around Botswana will help illustrate the extent, or the lack, of Botswana's role in dealing with the freedom fighters.

### **The North East District**

During the liberation struggle, particularly in the 1970s, increasing numbers of people from south-western Zimbabwe crossed the nearby border into north-eastern Botswana. Apart from ordinary folk fleeing the violence in their areas, refugees

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(73) BNARS, OP27/3: Khama to Kaunda (top secret), 5 September 1967.

included freedom fighters on clandestine logistical and military missions. Botswana fed them and helped by giving passage to freedom fighters destined for military training in other countries, and upon return from military training they were guided and helped by Botswana citizens in re-entering Zimbabwe. Even the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), on its daily patrols, provided transport and other logistical necessities to the Zimbabwean freedom fighters it encountered.<sup>74</sup> After crossing back into Zimbabwe, the freedom fighters at times ran into fierce fighting with Rhodesian security forces and were forced to return to Botswana, where some of the wounded received medical treatment.<sup>75</sup>

Some Botswana actually participated as combatants on the side of the liberation struggle. Meshack Mathumo is one such example. Mathumo developed an interest in Rhodesian politics and then joined the liberation struggle. He received training in Zambia and in Tanzania, along with cadres of SWAPO, FRELIMO, and the ANC, including Chris Hani. After his training, Mathumo entered ZAPU's counter-intelligence unit as a spy. He returned via Zambia, flying from Livingstone to Francistown, where he was arrested on arrival, as was the case with informers or spies within the ranks of the freedom fighters. A lawyer and the Francistown District commissioner intervened, however, and he was released.<sup>76</sup> His residence was placed under surveillance, but Mathumo continued working for the liberation struggle. Covertly, he visited such places as Siviya and Nata making what he termed "connections."

Fleeing border clashes with Rhodesian forces in places like Wankie and Victoria Falls, freedom fighters ended up in places like Nata and Manxotae. Another Motswana called Choba used to hide freedom fighters in his cattle *kraal*, and then open the *kraal* for the cattle to cover freedom fighters' footprints. He also gave the Rhodesian forces wrong directions regarding the whereabouts of the guerrillas.<sup>77</sup>

Other examples of private citizens assisting the struggle abound. A Motswana mechanic (code name "Mbokodo," or "Stone") in Nata kept arms and ammunition for guerrillas in his backyard and fed them. Such activity at his home was not conspicuous because a lot of car owners frequented his place and his backyard was more or less a scrap yard, littered with old cars. Mbokodo was not only the caretaker of the guerrillas' arms cache, but was also the conduit through whom they operated. Botswana truck drivers also played a crucial role by ferrying arms and ammunition from Zambia to Botswana. Together with the welders in Zambia, they cut open oil drums, emptied the oil, packed them with arms and ammunition, inserted a seal inside covering the stash, then filled the top with oil or water before resealing the lid. Vehicles were also designed in such a way that they could be welded with metal sheets at the bottom

(74) Interview with Motlatsi Molapisi, (Francistown) May 2007.

(75) Interviews with Michael Mugwai, (Maitengwe) May 2007; James Molobe, (Maitengwe) May 2007.

(76) Interview with Meshack Mathumo, (Francistown) June 2007. Mathumo's mother ran a restaurant in Francistown and provided freedom fighters with fat cakes.

(77) Ibid.

for stashing with weapons. Batswana Zionist followers of John Mashowe (otherwise known as Vapostori) also hid freedom fighters. Other Batswana ran taxi operations sponsored by ZAPU to raise the necessary funds. Some sympathetic members of the Botswana police force also assisted guerrillas or just ignored their activities.<sup>78</sup>

According to Mr Habano of Gumare, killings and abductions by the Rhodesian security forces were rife in this area, especially along the Ramokgwebana River, which forms part of the border. Many died in the Bukulanga area, and Habano lamented the fact that few newspapers existed at the time and full coverage of what was taking place in the North East was impossible.<sup>79</sup> Habano cited the killing of a man he knew very well and who used to grow vegetables along the Ramokgwebana. He also cited the abductions of some young herd boys from some villages in the North East. Others, according to Habano, died at Pobepobe between Matsiloje and Senyawwe.

Government officials working in this area frequently encountered freedom fighters coming from as far away as Zambia. The guerrillas alerted immigration and veterinary officers about their operations, and, before they launched their attacks on the Rhodesian security forces, told them where to hide to avoid being caught in the crossfire. Habano also described the bombings in Francistown, where he lived before being deployed to the border villages. At the time, freedom fighters lived in Bluetown township awaiting transportation to Zambia. Their intelligence must have been efficient and they kept a step ahead of the enemy, because the house where they stayed was bombed twice, but both times the bombs went off, they were not in.<sup>80</sup>

Habano also recalled the bombing of the Mophane Club by Rhodesian forces. He claimed that some of the white residents of Francistown and those who owned Tati ranches around Francistown were Rhodesian agents and were responsible for setting up the bombs. Habano alleged that some Batswana were also agents of the Smith regime and were specially selected for planting bombs. As Habano put it, “as Batswana, they knew a lot about their local environment, Bluetown, and it was easy for them to set up those bombs targeting houses where freedom fighters were accommodated.”<sup>81</sup> Habano furnished no names.

### **Eastern Botswana**

The people of eastern Botswana, in the Bobirwa sub-district, are the Babirwa, who are ethnically related to the Babirwa, known there as Basotho, of south-western Zimbabwe. Many families in this area have strong kinship ties in both countries. Ethnicity played an important part in this area during the liberation war in Zimbabwe. Many of Joshua Nkomo’s ZIPRA fighters were Basotho and found ready acceptance among the Babirwa of Botswana.

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(78) Ibid.

(79) Interview with Mr Habano, (Gumare) August 2008.

(80) Ibid.

(81) Ibid.

Geography also played its part. Bobirwa was suited to freedom fighters because of its rugged hills and mountains, especially near the Shashe River, which formed the border between Botswana and Zimbabwe. In such terrain, freedom fighters were able to hide from the enemy, stash war materials in the caves, and prepare for periodic forays into Rhodesia. Moreover, only rudimentary development had taken place in the area. Its gravel roads were poorly maintained, its streams and rivers had no bridges, and the people lacked clinics, health centres, telecommunications, and police stations. Only Booming, the headquarters of the sub-district, had any facilities. For guerrilla fighters, the underdeveloped state of this area enabled them to operate fairly freely, with little surveillance from the Botswana law enforcement agencies. The Tswana settlement pattern lent freedom fighters another advantage. Typically Batswana kept their cattle located far from the village in grazing areas called “cattle posts.” Freedom fighters gained easy access to these cattle posts, often using them as hiding places. Herdsmen assisted them with milk, alerted them to enemy movements, and directed them to their destinations.

Join Ngala regards eastern Botswana as a major area from where the freedom fighters attacked the Rhodesian regime. He points to their enormous stash of war materials, uncovered after the war in the hills and mountains of Bobirwa. At the end of the war, guerrilla leaders in this area told him that ZAPU required them to bring all the armaments they had amassed to the border so that arrangements could be made to collect them. They requested Ngala, Motsumi Mogorosi, Mathora, and other truck owners to assist with transport. Over four nights, truck loads were carted secretly to the border. Join and his colleagues had known for some time that the guerrillas hid weapons in the hills, but until this point they were unaware that ZIPRA had so many weapons and of so many different kinds.

Young men used Bobirwa as a “freedom trail” to reach Zambia and Tanzania for military training and as their path of return to Zimbabwe. Some used Bobirwa as a base to shuttle the cadres. Freedom fighter Joel Sijie lived with his relative, Molapisi Masilo, in Gobojango. Sijie was the liaison between ZAPU officials in Francistown and guerrillas who came into the area. Periodically, he slipped into Zimbabwe to recruit new cadres and to determine places suitable for arms caches.<sup>82</sup> Sijie kept Botswana officials in the dark, because of their policy of prohibiting arms from entering its territory. His task was made easier, because in this remote area very few policemen were on hand to patrol the place.

Villagers could be counted on to feed freedom fighters at their homes, if not at their arable lands and cattle posts. They warned them about enemy movements when possible. Motsumi Mogorosi and Join Ngala assisted the guerrillas a great deal, particularly when they had been injured in encounters with the enemy, by having

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(82) Interviews with Mmirwa Malema, (Bobonong) January 2008; Kapaletswe Sekwababe, (Bobonong) January 2008; Motsumi Mogorosi, (Gobojango) May 2007; Join Ngala, (Mabolwe) May 2007; William Maziba Mathora, (Mabolwe) May 2007.

them transported to Bobonong for medical care. They also had rooms in their homes where, from time to time, they hid freedom fighters.

The guerrillas operated in small groups, in Kezi, Mberengwa, and Beit Bridge areas. As they passed through, they kept Ngala informed about their encounters with the Rhodesian forces. On one occasion they reported ambushing a convoy of fifteen trucks, and, on another, of annihilating a convoy of mounted soldiers near Manama mission.<sup>83</sup> They told the Batswana that they were fighting so that they could be free and rule themselves like the Batswana did.

Generally, the villagers felt that the freedom fighters protected them as much as possible from attacks and harassment by the Rhodesian forces, especially before the Botswana Defence Force was formed in 1977. For their part, the villagers fed and hid the guerrillas, alerted them about Rhodesian troop movements, cared for their wounded, and got them medical care. Benjamin Mogorosi remembers transporting two badly wounded guerrillas to Bobonong hospital; they had been transported from inside Rhodesia to the border by donkey.<sup>84</sup> Villagers, such as William Maziba Mathora, transported their weapons to the Rhodesian border.<sup>85</sup> James Maruatona, former MP for the area, hid ZIPRA weapons on his farm near Francistown, at the request of his friend, ZAPU Chief of Intelligence Dumiso Dabengwa.<sup>86</sup>

Maruatona happened to be one of the most important inside backers of the South African liberation struggle. He had studied in South Africa in the 1950s and had friends in the ANC. In the 1960s, he obtained travel documents for South Africans passing through Rhodesia to Zambia. He obtained them from Isaac Gontse, Maruatona's friend who worked at the District Commissioner's office in Francistown. Maruatona lived with MK commander Joe Modise, who was based in Francistown in order to identify areas that South African guerrillas could use to infiltrate South Africa.<sup>87</sup>

The few freedom fighters who became renegades invariably posed difficulties for these villagers. A case is told of one known only as Robert who abandoned the others and came to live in Gobojango, where he fell in love with Motsumi's concubine, and then threatened to kill Motsumi. ZIPRA administered swift justice. They arrested Robert and took him away. Later, the villagers learned that he had been executed.<sup>88</sup>

### Central District

The Central District, which was some distance from the border, was less of a "hot spot" than those areas, but it played its role in the liberation struggle. It received and facilitated the movement of either refugees or freedom fighters. The main Gaborone-

(83) Interview with Join Ngala, (Mabolwe) May 2007.

(84) Interview with Benjamin Mogorosi, (Gobojango) May 2007.

(85) Interview with William Mathora, (Bobonong) May 2007.

(86) Interview with James Maruatona, (Bobonong) January 2008.

(87) Ibid.

(88) Interviews with Annah Samuel, (Gobojango) May 2007; Ohaletse Mogorosi, (Gobojango) May 2007; Benjamin Mogorosi, (Gobojango) May 2007; William Maziba Mathora, (Mabolwe) May 2007; James Maruatona, (Bobonong) January 2008.

Francistown road, primarily dirt, passed through this district, paralleled by the Rhodesian railway, connecting South Africa and Rhodesia; the train was operated by the Rhodesian Railway Company with headquarters in Salisbury. Mahalapye and Palapye were the main stops for travellers by car and by rail. Serowe, the capital of the district, lay west of Palapye, on the edge of the Kalahari. All the roads were dirt and travel by automobile during the rainy season was virtually impossible.

This area played an important role as a through point in moving refugees north for training as freedom fighters. “African statesmen the likes of Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Samora Machel, among others, either stayed in Botswana or were given passage by train as freedom fighters.”<sup>89</sup> Palapye resident Klaas Motshidisi, former member of the BPP and later of the Botswana National Front, was among those individuals who provided the middle link in moving freedom fighters to Zambia and beyond. “Fish Keitseng, in Lobatse, coordinated the southern part of Botswana,” recalled Motshidisi, “and I handled the central part of the country, including the Tuli Block. From the south they were transferred to [me in] Palapye while others who included Mpho and Matante [in Francistown], assisted their passage to the north.”<sup>90</sup> Motshidisi mentioned that when Nelson Mandela was going for military training in Algeria he stayed with Fish Keitseng, who hid and provided him with accommodation before Mandela moved north up the chain. MK commander Joe Modise kept Motshidisi and others informed when the cadres of the ANC were passing through Botswana so that they could be provided with the necessary logistics and support. Palapye resident Kgosi Ntebele concurred with Motshidisi and adds that providing for freedom fighters did not always make them popular: “We were often accused of harbouring criminals and terrorists, but we explained that we were helping these people because they were persecuted in their own countries.”<sup>91</sup>

Another central district Motswana, Emmanuel Ontumetse, described how some of the people from his country, the Ovaherero, had escaped German, and, subsequently, South African oppression and found refuge in different areas of Botswana, the central district included. A substantial population of Ovaherero resided in Mahalapye. When SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma landed in Francistown, Ontumetse helped him by borrowing Matante’s car and driving Nujoma to Palapye and on to Mahalapye, where Ontumetse helped Nujoma make contact with his people. On the way back on the gravelly, corrugated road, the car overturned and Nujoma sustained injuries. With Ontumetse’s help, a sympathetic Afrikaner offered them a lift back to Mahalapye, where Nujoma was treated and discharged. They then took the train to Francistown with Ontumetse getting off at Palapye. Ontumetse had facilitated and helped Nujoma

(89) Interview with Godfrey Tyolo, (Mahalapye) 14 June, 2007. For details of some of the destinations of the trainees see BNARS, 0P33/7: Immigration into BP. Refugees August 1963 -September 1964: F. R. Marten (British Embassy) to PM Vorster.

(90) Interview with Klaas Motshidisi, (Palapye) 19 June 2007.

(91) Interview with Raditanka Ntebele, (Palapye) 19 June 2007.

achieve his mission, and later Nujoma secured scholarships for Ovaherero youth in Mahalapye to further their studies.<sup>92</sup>

At the same time, residents of the Central District were sympathetic to Botswana's laws, which prohibited its territory from being used as a springboard for guerrilla activities. "The Botswana government arrested the freedom fighters for entering the country through ungazetted points and carrying arms illegally through the country," remarked one Mahalapye resident. "They were disarmed and then set free."<sup>93</sup> They also supported Botswana's position of condemning the oppressive settler systems in the region, while not interfering in their affairs. As O.K. Menyatso remarked, "We assessed our situation and realized that offering our country as a base or springboard for attacks would have been a great [mis]adventure. Ours was a principled position that, despite our precarious geo-political position, we supported the struggle and suffered incursions, but could not retaliate."<sup>94</sup>

### **The South East District**

The south-eastern region of Botswana shares a border with South Africa. It contains two large villages, Mochudi and Ramotswa, and the town of Lobatse. Mochudi is the capital of the Bakgatla ethnic group with the satellite villages of Sikwane, Malolwane, Mabalane, Mathubudukwane, Morwa, and Bokaa. The first four of these are known as the "river villages" and are positioned along the Madikwe River, which forms the border with South Africa. Bakgatla have kinship ties with those Bakgatla living in the Rustenburg district of South Africa, but also located on the South African side opposite the "river villages" were cattle and game farms owned by the Boers.

Ramotswa, capital of the ethnic Balete, is situated immediately next to the South African border, which is delineated by the Ngotwane River. Inside South Africa, the Balete have their distant cousins, the Bahurutshe, located some distance from the border at Dinokana, Mokgola, and Lekubu. The intervening countryside is predominantly Boer-owned farmland. Prior to the liberation struggle, people frequently moved back and forth across these borders, and, even during the struggle, movement continued.

Lobatse is a rail town close to the South African border with several related groups residing in it and across the border. Among the town dwellers are Barolong, Balete, and Bangwaketse, while their cousins, the Bahurutshe and the Barolong, live on the South African side, with kinship ties on either side of the border a common feature. Lobatse, too, was the base of ANC operative Fish Keitseng, already mentioned. Klaas Motshidisi cited another Lobatse resident, Motswana Kgaboesele, who accommodated FRELIMO leader Samora Machel. The Kgaboesele family literally moved out of their house to accommodate Machel.<sup>95</sup>

(92) Interview with Emmanuel Ontumetse, (Serowe) June 2007.

(93) Interview with Tshepo Moleko, (Mahalapye) June 2007.

(94) Interview with O.K. Menyatso, (Mahalapye) June 2007.

(95) Interview with Klaas Motshidisi, (Palapye) June 2007.

During the 1960s and 1970s, an influx of South African refugees poured into south-east Botswana. Some went on for training in other countries to become freedom fighters. Meanwhile, south-eastern Botswana became an important base for their operations for penetrating South Africa. Mosielele Moatshe claimed that the Botswana government was aware of some covert activities against South Africa, which were undertaken by freedom fighters, but denied any knowledge.<sup>96</sup> Another informant asserts that prominent officials turned a blind eye to activities aimed at attacking South Africa.<sup>97</sup> South Africa itself, which had good intelligence within the country and the region, often reminded Botswana of constant alleged guerrilla activities within its boundaries. In fact, South Africa accused Botswana of providing sanctuary to freedom fighters and that it had the right to launch pre-emptive strikes if Botswana was unable to contain guerrilla or freedom fighter presence and activity within its territory.

Mr Chand of Sikwane, a Motswana of Asian origin, became an ANC operative during the liberation struggle.<sup>98</sup> Chand owned a business in the village, and freedom fighters going into and coming from South Africa passed through his place. Sikwane was among the many covert routes used by freedom fighters for their operations. Freedom fighters from Zambia or South Africa came to Chand, who provided them with money, food, and also transport to their point of entry or departure. Chand facilitated the MK route connecting the north with the south and vice-versa. Eventually Chand's role was exposed by South African intelligence and Chand's fate was sealed. He and his family met violent deaths. A squad of commandoes came to his homestead in the dead of night, killed his dogs and night watchmen, planted bombs around the house, and detonated them. The whole family, six in all, perished.<sup>99</sup> Other Botswana met a similar fate for their involvement or association with freedom fighters or even refugees. For example, Andries Ntunyane Moatshe was murdered by agents of the South African regime for transporting ANC refugees into and out of South Africa.

Freedom fighters, in general, just like refugees, were placed in protective custody, cautioned to uphold the movement's integrity while in Botswana territory, during and after their operations before returning to Zambia. Protective custody was a punitive measure, as much as it demonstrated to the South African regime that Botswana was serious about preventing guerrillas from using its territory. However, freedom fighters temporarily placed in custody were soon released, because of an understanding between the leaders of the liberation movements and the Botswana government. Without Botswana, their operations could not succeed, so it was necessary to be cautious that their activities did not come to light.

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(96) Interview with Mosielele Moatshe, (Malolwane) June 2007.

(97) Interview with David Aphiri, (Mochudi) June 2007.

(98) Interview with Archie Aphiri, (Mochudi) June 2007.

(99) Interview with Mosielele Moatshe, (Malolwane) June 2007.

## Southern District

The Southern District includes such major villages as Moshupa (home of the ethnic Bakgatla ba ga Mmanaana), Kanye (Bangwaketse), and Good Hope (Barolong). Moshupa and Kanye are somewhat distant from the South African border, though Good Hope is located near to the border crossing at Ramatlabama, and the Barolong have historic ties to the Barolong of the Mafikeng and other areas of the Northern Cape. As with the other border areas, people with kinship ties moved back and forth frequently. During the liberation struggle, Good Hope and its precincts were important points of entry for freedom fighters and refugees. The people of the southern district sympathised, knowing their relatives and neighbours were being oppressed and had no opportunity for a fair political settlement in South Africa.<sup>100</sup> It would have been un-African to stand by and watch while the neighbours were attacked and their house burnt. "If you don't help in putting out the fire of the house of your neighbour," they remarked, "the next house that burns might be yours."<sup>101</sup> In spite of prohibitions on guerrilla operations, Botswana in these areas secretly supported them. They were their brothers and sisters and thought of themselves as one people.<sup>102</sup>

Barolong gave freedom fighters accommodation and food, hid them, facilitated their movement north, and helped them pass through on route back to South Africa.<sup>103</sup> They did so with the connivance of government police and soldiers. Former BDF Major General Pule Motang confirmed that "Botswana had its own intelligence, the Special Branch which interrogated these freedom fighters, gave them protection, and eventually gave them help to reach Zambia and Tanzania. If the South African regime asked the Botswana government if it had seen such people, the answer was that we have not seen them."<sup>104</sup> Government officials, along with many others, were fully aware of the presence of the freedom fighters, but understood that their overt presence would have endangered the safety and security of Botswana citizens. As former permanent secretary Nathaniel Mmono stated, "We were aware that members of the liberation movements passed through this country and, in order to avoid attacks we could not contain, we protected them and urged them to move on to other countries that were not so close to South Africa. That would make the enemy not to attack us. We, however, gave them assistance as they went through Botswana."<sup>105</sup>

There were limits to which officials were prepared to go. Botswana discouraged carrying and using weapons within its borders, in order to deprive the enemy of an excuse to attack Botswana, Mmono added. Major General Pule Motang recalled that if the freedom fighters were seen in possession of arms, they were arrested, later

(100) Interviews with Nathaniel Mmono, (Barolong Farms) July 2007; Gladstone Phatudi, (Barolong Farms) July 2007. Mmono was Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Lands; Phatudi was a former headmaster and political activist during the liberation struggle.

(101) Ibid.

(102) Interviews with M. Sekgororoane, (Good Hope) July 2007; Seepapitso IV, (Gaborone) February 2008.

(103) Interview with Lotlamoreng II, (Good Hope) June 2007.

(104) Interview with Pule Motang, (Good Hope) June 2007.

(105) Interview with Nathaniel Mmono, (Hebron) July 2007.

released, and urged to return to the country of their training, usually Zambia or Tanzania. “I remember,” said Motang, “that once we arrested some in Francistown because they were in possession of arms and ammunition and we sent them back to where they came from. Chris Hani, one of the top military commanders of MK of the ANC was one of those who were once arrested and put in prison because he was carrying weapons of war. He was later released and helped to return...to Zambia.”<sup>106</sup> In the Southern District, various individuals became very active in the liberation struggle, sacrificing their time and risking their lives. Messrs. Mmono and Phatudi confirmed that ordinary people acting on their own hid freedom fighters in their houses during the day until they could move on during the night.<sup>107</sup> Mr Phatudi himself was among those who helped the liberation struggle in various ways. His experiences will be articulated later in this chapter. Some helped freedom fighters bury their arms. According to the *kgosi* of Good Hope, villagers recently unearthed a cache of weapons buried sometime in the 1980s.

### **Kgalagardi and Ghanzi Districts**

These two districts, the Kgalagardi facing the northern cape of South Africa and south-eastern Namibia and the Ghanzi facing eastern Namibia, represent the most barren parts of Botswana and the mostly thinly populated. Their difficult terrain, remoteness, and poor communication networks made political activity extremely difficult. Of the two districts, Ghanzi was a fairly busy transit point for refugees, whereas Kgalagardi was too remote from the sources of refugees and too barren a place to make it attractive as a base or transit area. Little activity was reported in Kgalagardi during the struggle. The little evidence available demonstrates that the people in this area were committed to the cause of the liberation struggle, providing accommodation, protection, and transportation. Even here pro-liberation activists could be found operating against the odds.

One such case was the refugee Phillip Ratlhagane. An educated man, Ratlhagane was employed by the Kgalagardi District Council as a planning officer and became a popular figure among the residents of Tsabong. He became close to the Mothelesi family<sup>108</sup> and married a Motswana woman. Although allocated a government house, Ratlhagane lived with other people in various households, his strategy to avoid detection by the South African intelligence. Eventually, however, South African authorities learned of his whereabouts. Thanks to Dick Selebalo, a black South African policeman, Ratlhagane got wind of the danger. Selebalo warned his relatives on the Botswana side of the border that the South Africans were tracking Ralhagane, and he was able to escape to Gaborone by using a council vehicle to get through some very treacherous roads.<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile South African commandos had crossed

(106) Interview with Pule Motang, (Good Hope) June 2007.

(107) Interviews with Nathaniel Mmono, (Hebron) July 2007; Gladstone Phatudi, (Hebron) July 2007.

(108) Interviews with Hilda Mothelesi, (Tsabong) June 2007; David Toto, (Tsabong) June 2007.

(109) Interview with Ditira Gaowetswe, (Tsabong) June 2007.

over and sought an audience with the chief. They claimed they were looking for a “black sheep” that had crossed the border and was rumoured to be among “some sheep” on the Botswana side. A local policeman, a Mr Chabanga, was assigned to the commandos to help them locate the “sheep” only for them to disclose that the “sheep” they were looking for was a guerrilla.<sup>110</sup> Selebalo’s warning had been on the mark: the “black sheep” the commandos were looking for was Ratlhagale. This episode shows that the people of Tsabong and their local administration, the Kgalagardi District Council, supported freedom fighters. Apart from giving Ratlhagale employment, they understood his cause and protected him from his enemies.

In the Ghanzi area, most refugees entered Botswana via Karakubis, seventy kilometres east of the South West African border on the road to Ghanzi. SWAPO’s Sam Nujoma and his wife passed through here. As per normal procedure, they were taken to the Karakubis chief, and then to the police at Tshootsha (Kalkfontein), where arrangements were made to move them to Francistown for transit north. The *kgosi* at Karakubis, Tlhophane Botshake, played a significant role in facilitating the movement of the Namibian freedom fighters. He protected them, arranged transport away from the Namibian authorities to Tshootsha, Ghanzi, and other safer havens.<sup>111</sup> *Kgosi* Botshake used his own vehicle to ferry them and made other personal sacrifices that endangered him and Karakubis residents. His experiences with the liberation struggle are discussed later in this chapter.

The white farmers of the so-called Ghanzi Farms, all Botswana citizens, included a few who provided logistical support for freedom fighters. Cecil Kriel of D’Kar owned a helicopter which he used to transport freedom fighters, gave them money, and helped with other necessities.<sup>112</sup> Another white farmer, Mrs Keith Thomas, also helped the freedom fighters almost by chance when they broke into her house. She provided them with what they requested, including transportation.<sup>113</sup> Her encounter with the freedom fighters is provided later in this chapter.

### **The North West District**

The North West District (Ngamiland), bordering northeast Namibia and its Caprivi Strip along the northern border, is inhabited by many ethnic groups, including the dominant Batswana with their capital at Maun. Others are the Bayeyi of the western Okavango Delta, and in the areas between the Delta and South West Africa are found the Hambukushu, Ovaherero, and Basarwa (San, Bushmen). Kinship connects some people of this district to Namibia. The Ovaherero, who escaped German oppressive rule in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, are found on both sides of the border in significant numbers.<sup>114</sup> The many distinct groups of Basarwa, who constitute the

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(110) Interview with Ms. Kedimotse, (Tsabong) June 2007.

(111) Interview with Tlhophane Botshake, (Karakubis) October 2008.

(112) Ibid.

(113) Interview with Mrs Keith Thomas, (Tsabong) June 2007.

(114) Interview with Gaerolwe Mesho Kwerepe, (Maun) September 2007.

region's oldest inhabitants, extend their activities into Namibia. A few Batswana are also found in Namibia. Namibian freedom fighters and refugees entering Botswana for the first time may have been crossing into unfamiliar territory, but they were familiar to people there because of kinship, cultural, and language ties. Many years prior to Botswana's independence, Bechuanaland Protectorate colonial authorities arrested freedom fighters and refugees and handed them over to South West African authorities. During those years, therefore, Ngamiland residents' support for their fellow Africans was clandestine. Relatives in border areas provided shelter, food, and clothes. Some of those interviewed testified that they protected an MK member by hiding him in a cattle *kraal*. Protectorate authorities used the police to place under surveillance and arrest those found assisting freedom fighters to move through the area, on route to Zambia. Such attempts failed to deter people in Ngamiland from stepping forward. "We wanted to help them to go to countries north of Botswana where they were going to train as freedom fighters,"<sup>115</sup> said Gaditshwane Mmutla, who recalled how they helped a young freedom fighter from Mozambique move northwards for military training.<sup>116</sup> (For more of Mmutla's experiences see "Selected Experiences" below.)

After Botswana's independence, the attitude of the authorities changed for the better. Freedom fighters and refugees arriving in a village reported to the *kgosi*, who welcomed them at the *kgotla*. Here they were then assigned trusted individuals who took them to such villages as Shakawe and Gumare for accommodation.<sup>117</sup> President Seretse Khama issued a statement to the effect that, although Botswana could not

be used as a spring board for launching attacks against its neighbours, the people of Botswana were expected to assist those fleeing from oppression. Ngamiland residents aided the freedom fighters in key ways. They bought petrol for their transport, drove them to Zambia in their own cars, or, like BPP's Motsamai Mpho, used party vehicles for this purpose.

As South Africa stubbornly refused to end its illegal occupation of South West Africa, guerrilla warfare intensified between SWAPO's PLAN units and South African security forces. SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma set up a guerrilla training camp in Tanzania, then used Lusaka as his headquarters to coordinate armed resistance against South Africa's presence in Namibia. He used Ngamiland to engineer his own flight to Zambia and subsequently to Tanzania. Elders of the district talked about how they helped Nujoma: when he reached Makunda at the border, they picked him up and helped him to reach Karakubis.<sup>118</sup> In Maun, he was hidden for two weeks while awaiting an opportune time to proceed. Other freedom fighters entering Ngamiland via Ghanzimedivingroupsof five, four, or fewertomakedetectionof theirmovements difficult. Networks of committed individuals inside Ngamiland coordinated their

(115) Interview with Gaditshwane Mmutla, (Maun) November 2007.

(116) Ibid.

(117) Interview with L.M. Setlhoko, (Maun) September 2007.

(118) Ibid.

movements and established a route that refugees and freedom fighters followed to reach safety. Gaditshwane Mmutla accommodated freedom fighters in his own house. Generally, freedom fighters in this, as in other districts, were regarded as an upright and disciplined lot who interacted well with people. A strong bond grew between the Namibian freedom fighters and the “team” in the district.

However, it was always the case that a few lacked the necessary discipline and over-indulged in alcohol, harassed women, or adopted an attitude of superiority toward the locals. The war also brought spies and impostors pretending to be freedom fighters, while working for the enemy. Their presence made it difficult for the ‘team’ to

distinguish between genuine freedom fighters and *bompimpi* (sellouts).<sup>119</sup>

The Basarwa of Ngamiland added their own dimension to the liberation struggle. Many served the interests of the enemy rather than identifying with the struggle. There was a case of being “doubly oppressed” by Europeans and Africans on both sides of the border. Basarwa were recruited into the South African Defence Force (SADF), ostensibly as trackers to locate PLAN fighters.<sup>120</sup> Some of the Ju/’hoansi situated along the Molembo border joined the Omega battalion, a significantly large group of San soldiers in the SADF.<sup>121</sup> In short, they were citizens of Botswana employed by a foreign army to track freedom fighters. Basarwa residents of Gudikwa and Beetsa testified that Basarwa in these villages served in the South African army.<sup>122</sup> Remarkably, some Basarwa SADF veterans are now in the employ of the BDF at the Maun Second Brigade Camp.

### Chobe District

The lightly populated Chobe District, which shares borders with Namibia’s Caprivi Strip, north-western Zimbabwe, and a snippet of Zambia, has only a few small villages—Kasane (Chobe headquarters), Kazungula, Lesoma, and Pandamatenga. Its central feature is the two massive game reserves (Chobe, Moremi). Chobe’s people are mainly the ethnic Basubiya (also Bekuhane). Some Amandebele live on either side of the Zimbabwean-Botswana border, as do the few Basarwa. The Chobe District experienced a great deal of movement before the liberation struggle, due to kinship ties, but, during the struggle, the area was even busier, especially because of an increase in Amandebele relatives arriving from the Zimbabwean side. Along with refugees, freedom fighters made the area a hive of activity.

Chobe and particularly Kasane were important crossing points for freedom fighters involved in the Namibian and Zimbabwean struggles; just as many used Mpalila when entering from the Caprivi. Some had Basubiya relatives to give them accommodation, protection, and food. Nevertheless, Zimbabwean freedom fighters

(119) Interview with Gaditshwane Mmutla, (Maun) November 2007.

(120) Interview with Sekgwa Motswai, (Maun) September 2007.

(121) Parker, L. *First People: The San of Africa*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 2002: See p.21.

(122) Bolaane, M. “The Impact of Game Reserve Policy on the River Basarwa/Bushmen of-Botswana.” *Social Policy and Administration: An International Journal of Policy and Research* 38.4 (2004): pp.400-415.

created fear and tension in the border villages. Their attempts to gain refuge in Botswana and their secret crossing back into Zimbabwe attracted Rhodesian security forces. Many villagers, civil servants included, feared for their lives, as they had no protection should Rhodesian forces decide to invade the area. Mrs Fumbani Sefako of Pandamatenga saw freedom fighters being looked for by white soldiers at the border.<sup>123</sup> Her experiences with the freedom fighters are discussed later in the chapter. The north-eastern border area of the Chobe district was infested with Rhodesian security forces and freedom fighters alike, when the war in Rhodesia spilled into Botswana. The first freedom fighters, known locally as *magandanga*, first entered the region in 1967. They were first to be seen in the Pandamatenga area, carrying guns, but wearing no uniform.<sup>124</sup> They moved into the agricultural lands (*masimo*), where the Batswana peasants provided them with food and shelter. From 1970 onwards, their appearance and character had changed. As Chiziyo observed, “These ones were now in uniform and they were friendly people. These are the ones who were called guerrillas” because of their hit and run tactics.<sup>125</sup>

Though Botswana emphasised that its territory was not to be used as a military base, some freedom fighters ignored this law. They built make-shift bases inside Botswana in the thick bush. Lopang Kadimo and other individuals noted that despite the prohibition, local communities, and the police for that matter, knew of these rudimentary military bases and their whereabouts, but kept quiet.<sup>126</sup> One such camp was set up at Sebuyu on the outskirts of Pandamatenga. Rhodesian forces carrying out intense searches in the villages, during the day and in the night, failed to induce the villagers into divulging any clue that might point in the direction of the freedom fighters. They supported the freedom fighters, even to the point of volunteering to take their injured to the hospital in Kasane for treatment. The police were strongly sympathetic. Some freedom fighters reported directly to the police station in Kasane upon arrival as did refugees and were transferred secretly to guerrilla camps. According to Lopang Kadimo, the police visited these guerrilla camps at night in order to provide them with food and other necessities.<sup>127</sup>

Freedom fighters were very subtle in their interaction with people and tactical in their operations. For instance, they found part time jobs even in white-owned businesses and at night contacted fellow “comrades” to provide them with food and vital information. For example, during the day, a man known as Mkhwananzi was a builder, but, at night, he was in touch with freedom fighters. Somehow his role as an intelligence agent was uncovered and Rhodesian forces shot at him while he was driving in his car. Mkhwananzi survived and continued with his espionage activities on behalf of the “comrades in arms.”<sup>128</sup>

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(123) Interview with Fumbani Sefako, (Pandamatenga) July 2007.

(124) Interview with Kaki Chiziyo, (Pandamatenga) December 2007.

(125) Ibid.

(126) Interview with Lopang Kadimo, (Kasane) June 2007.

(127) Ibid.

(128) Ibid.

Just as in other areas, South African informers came in pretending to be refugees, bent on gathering information about guerrilla activity; similarly, they crossed back with information for the South Africans by pretending they were visiting relatives in the Caprivi. Some of these collaborators were later exposed and secretly killed by freedom fighters.<sup>129</sup> Some Basubiya working for white-owned Safari companies also served as Boer informers, just as their employers were informers for their counterparts in Namibia and Zimbabwe. White plain clothes policemen patrolled the border and secretly crossed rivers into the Botswana side of the border.<sup>130</sup> Those interviewed recalled many acts of espionage.

The extreme danger present in the Chobe District was epitomized by the “Lesoma incident.” In 1978 at Lesoma, fifteen BDF soldiers and two civilian guides were responding to reports that Rhodesian forces were in the area. The report was accurate, but the BDF unit were not prepared for the ambush set for them. Rhodesian security forces massacred the entire contingent, save a few. The Lesoma incident was the first of its kind, and it left deep scars in the minds and hearts of many Batswana.<sup>131</sup> The Rhodesian soldiers were apparently aware that the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) soldiers interacted with freedom fighters from that country and were intent on punishing the BDF for the position it appeared to take in relation to the freedom fighters.

The death of the fifteen soldiers at Lesoma is regarded as an enormous sacrifice, not just on the part of the BDF, but on the part of the nation at large. A monument in commemoration of the fifteen soldiers was erected in Lesoma. Batswana in other parts of Botswana were to suffer the same fate, through bombs, shootings, and kidnappings, all for supporting the freedom fighters.

## Gaborone

Gaborone became the nation’s capital just prior to independence. Almost throughout all the pre-independence period, the Protectorate had been administered from the Imperial Reserve in Mafikeng, across the border in South Africa. In 1964, Gaborone was built from scratch in preparation for independence and for years it remained a tiny town. In 1974, it had only 18,000 inhabitants and not until 1986 was it gazetted a city. Gaborone was located on freehold land adjacent to the ethnic Batlokwa, Bakgatla, Bakwena, and Balete. The primary reason it was located here, as one might expect in this drought-prone country, had to do with the potential water supply, and a large dam was built to harness the Ngotwane River for supplying the new capital. Gaborone also sat astride the main railway line. Nevertheless, Gaborone was situated perilously close to the South African border (a mere 20 kilometres away), and more than once its vulnerability was apparent when nearby South African forces crossed the border to attack residents in the city. Yet, Gaborone was also easily accessible to refugees,

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(129) Ibid.

(130) Interview with Joseph M. Munisola, (Kasane) December 2007.

(131) Interview with Esther Katukula, (Lesoma) July 2007.

and it became an important jumping off point for freedom fighters, especially those of the MK, penetrating the South African border to carry out their anti-apartheid campaign.

As the capital, Gaborone was also the site of the nation's international community. Embassies and high commissions from around the world were posted there (including those of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China), as were the UNHCR headquarters and the offices of government and religious NGOs, such as the LWF and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), which supported refugees in the country and organised scholarships abroad for members of liberation movements. Though small, Gaborone was an international, cosmopolitan centre, unique in the region and one that carried on, without fuss, Botswana's non-racial ideal in full view of the white racist regimes on its borders. Gaborone attracted citizens from around the country who came there for employment, higher education, government positions, and its lively cultural scene. In Gaborone, ordinary folks, diplomats, government officials, refugees, professionals, professors, freedom fighters, and persons of all hues (Africans, Europeans, Indians, and many admixtures thereof) worked and socialised together on a routine basis.

In the 1970s, Gaborone became, covertly, a freedom-fighter base. This was especially so for South African freedom fighters, particularly the ANC and the PAC. The former created cells inside Botswana to facilitate their cadres' movement in and out of South Africa, to cache and smuggle arms and explosives, train MK operatives, and to launch cross border operations.

The Botswana government became aware of these operations through its police intelligence and through citizens associated with members of the liberation movements, who themselves were suspected of helping to smuggle arms.<sup>132</sup> Yet, police were unaware of the covert ANC cell structure and could not produce the evidence with which to accuse ANC higher ups in Lusaka that their cadres were violating Botswana's laws with regard to freedom fighter activity.

When operatives became known, the Botswana government had everything to gain by working quietly with the ANC to evacuate them. In all likelihood, they were probably known to the South African intelligence already. South Africa frequently threatened Botswana about the presence of cadres in Gaborone. When Botswana arrested these cadres and deported them northwards, it did so for their own safety. The ANC often saw it differently. They interpreted deportations as evidence that Botswana was communicating with South Africa. As a result, the ANC in Lusaka and its operatives in Gaborone and elsewhere in the country kept the Botswana government in the dark, thereby endangering Botswana's security.<sup>133</sup> Botswana naturally disliked being victimized by South Africa for the acts the ANC had not

(132) E.g., BNARS, OP 27/1: Secret Communication, n.d. May/June 1982 re torture of Felix Ngwenya.

(133) BNARS, OP 13/96: Confidential debriefing before President Masire by John Melamu, Botswana High Commissioner to Lusaka, 16 October 1981, Melamu stating that ANC leaders seldom contacted him except to request visas. The same was the case with the PAC.

consulted it about. As President Masire said to the ANC's Oliver Tambo at one of their meetings, "[Botswana] was in an unenviable position of having a dual obligation to the people, on the one hand, and the liberation struggle, on the other."<sup>134</sup> Botswana was repeatedly in conflict with South Africa, which accused it of harbouring "terrorists" and threatened action against it. South Africa's bullying led to Botswana's appeal to the ANC in Lusaka to avoid putting Botswana at risk. Apologies and praises for Botswana's role in the struggle were then followed by a quiet period before the ANC guerrilla activities resumed operations.<sup>135</sup>

Among the active ANC cells in Gaborone was a cultural organisation front headed by Wally Serote. Known as the MEDU Art Ensemble, it became an important component of the ANC's poster propaganda campaigns in aid of the ANC surrogate United Democratic Front (UDF)'s resistance to apartheid and attempts to make South Africa ungovernable. Given official ANC status, MEDU injected art, music, drama, literature, and other forms of culture into the anti-apartheid struggle. MEDU artist Thami Mnye, a trained freedom fighter, designed the ANC logo, and with a silkscreen technique created a team to generate political posters for distribution among UDF supporters, helping to mobilise protest inside South Africa.<sup>136</sup>

By 1982, MEDU had become an MK conduit, led by Mnye and Tim Williams, operating from separate cells. The volume of freedom fighters entering South Africa through Botswana increased at this time because South Africa had closed the Mozambican and Swaziland routes. By 1985, the South African intelligence had discovered the real meaning of MEDU and started issuing threats to attack ANC locations in and around Gaborone. The Botswana police warned MEDU members of the looming threat and encouraged them to leave the country. On the 14th of June of that year, a well coordinated South African commando unit entered Gaborone at night and attacked what it claimed were ANC targets. Fourteen people lost their lives, including Mnye, MEDU treasurer Mike Hamlyn, and some Botswana citizens.<sup>137</sup>

MEDU was a popular cultural organisation that joined political and armed struggles. Political activists and freedom fighters in the organisation used it to further their ideals. Arms were ferried, missions carried out, intelligence gathered, and logistical plans clandestinely implemented under the banner of this organisation. It was an important base located in the heart of the capital town of Botswana.

Some citizens of Gaborone who were interviewed also had something to say about their relations and or encounters with freedom fighters. They either knew about, or

(134) BNARS, OP 27/1: Record of Discussions, 27 May 1981.

(135) Masire, Q.K.J. *Very Brave or Very Foolish? Memoirs of an African Democrat*. Gaborone: MacMillan Botswana, 2006: See pp.269-272.

(136) For details on MEDU, see Elizabeth Morton, *South African Cultural Exiles in Botswana: MEDU Art Ensemble 1976-1985*. University of Botswana: M.A. Thesis, 1997; E. Morton and F. Morton, "Gaborone and the ANC Struggle for a Free South Africa: The MEDU Art Ensemble 1978-1985," paper presented to the University of Botswana History seminar, November 2007 (submitted for publication).

(137) Michael Hamlyn was a South African refugee studying at the University of Botswana. In his honour, the university established the Michael Hamlyn prize for the best second-year science student.

assisted freedom fighters in their missions to and from South Africa. Victor “Two Minutes” Kowa, a Motswana liberation activist and resident of Gaborone, described how Batswana and the government facilitated the movement of what were considered soft and easy “targets.” It was necessary to get them out of the country as quickly as possible, usually to the north. Among these targets were prominent personalities of the liberation armies or of the liberation movements. They tended to be on the top hit list of South Africa or Rhodesia. Kowa noted, “They had to move on as soon as possible; [otherwise] they would either be killed [or]... endanger the lives and security of ordinary citizens. Botswana did not possess enough resources to protect them.”<sup>138</sup> Those who waged war against the settler regimes and used guerrilla tactics carried out these activities through the neighbouring countries, whereas military training took place far to the rear in such places as Zambia, Tanzania, Algeria, and, later, as far away as China and the Soviet Union. As part of their training, cadres were taught to evade detection by blending in, and interacting well, with the communities in which they lived.

Botswana supported both freedom fighters and refugees, though it was not always easy to distinguish between the two. Sasara George, former First Secretary of Botswana to the High Commission in Zambia, Lusaka, and later Botswana Ambassador to Brussels observed that “most of the leadership of the liberation movements understood and appreciated Botswana’s position. Without Botswana, they had nowhere to go. In fact, major battles were fought from Botswana against South Africa and Namibia.”<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, the leaders of freedom fighters worked closely with Botswana’s police intelligence, and the government entered into many alliances and understandings with the top leadership of ZANLA, ZIPRA, and MK. The normal procedure was for them to inform the Botswana government of their intentions and movements, and sometimes they would be escorted to their destinations. The Botswana intelligence also warned the freedom fighters’ leadership of looming dangers emanating from the enemy. In short, a *modus operandi* of sorts existed between Botswana’s intelligence and the freedom fighters.<sup>140</sup>

Former Botswana President Festus Mogae echoed the sentiments of other Batswana regarding freedom fighters. He recalled that South Africa made all kinds of accusations against Botswana regarding the presence of freedom fighters in Gaborone and in Botswana in general. “They claimed that ten percent of those who came were, in fact, ‘terrorists.’ We denied knowledge of that... South Africans charged that we sent people to train in countries to the north (e.g. USSR etc.) as guerrillas. We denied that. All we did was to facilitate their passage northwards and did not know what they did once they arrived at their destinations.”<sup>141</sup> The former President also noted that the South Africans later carried on dastardly acts by blowing up Batswana homes, claiming

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(138) Interview with Victor Kowa, (Gaborone) February 2007.

(139) Interview with Sasara George, (Gaborone) February 2007.

(140) Ibid.

(141) Interview with His Excellency Former President Festus Mogae, (Gaborone) November 2008.

that they were hideouts for freedom fighters. The Rhodesians, too, attacked the BDF inside Botswana and attacked Francistown in the belief that Botswana was hiding freedom fighters. “They painted their trucks the same colour as BDF trucks and made uniforms similar to that of the BDF so that they would not be easily detected. At times they kidnapped our people.”<sup>142</sup> (His Excellency’s observations regarding Botswana and the freedom fighters are fully articulated later in this chapter.)

Botswana had little choice, no matter how sympathetic to the struggle, of disengaging itself from arresting freedom fighters involved in subversive activities for release and immediate transport to other countries.<sup>143</sup> Such moves were meant to demonstrate to the South Africans that Botswana was serious in not allowing its territory to be used for launching attacks on its neighbours. And to reinforce this claim, sometimes the Botswana government displayed arms caches wrested from freedom fighters. Though it may have appeased the South African government, Botswana’s public display of its policy rarely gained the support of the freedom fighters and their liberation activists.<sup>144</sup>

## The Role of the Army and the Police

At independence, Botswana lacked a military force and had a minuscule police force at best, and that was unarmed. An extremely poor country for more than a decade after independence, it faced an immense task of nation-building. In addition, Botswana was faced with the immediate task of defending itself from incursions from white- racist regimes on its borders, and dealing with spies and other ne’er-dowells coming into the country, while at the same time supporting as best it could the liberation struggle. The closest the country had to a military force was the police’s quasi-military Paramilitary Mobile Unit (PMU), but it was incapable of dealing with the threats and efforts of the minority regimes (particularly the Rhodesians) to destabilise Botswana. Thus in 1977, the BDF was formed, drawing most of its soldiers and officers from the PMU. Ex-PMU commander (and founding BDF commander) Lt. General Merafhe narrated some of the early challenges.

The Police Mobile Unit (PMU) was set up way back in 1967... but by 1968 it was becoming clearly obvious that we needed a Force – a paramilitary force that could deal with matters of internal disturbances and also provide minimum military resistance to people who were obviously posing a threat. We could read what was coming our way in terms of hostilities that were beginning to heighten within our region. It was becoming obvious because the spirit of liberation was certainly gaining momentum and there were more and more people from neighbouring countries who were under these oppressive regimes who were coming into Botswana. There was temptation of the white regime to follow freedom fighters into Botswana and it became obvious that we really had to do something to ensure that there was a paramilitary force that

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(142) Ibid.

(143) Interview with Simon Hirschfield, (Gaborone) April 2008.

(144) Interview with Rampholo Molefe, (Gaborone) June 2008.

could deal with this problem. It became clearly obvious that we needed a fully fledged Defence Force to be able to handle these problems that were emerging as a result of the increase in the activities of the liberation struggle within the region.<sup>145</sup>

### **The Botswana Defence Force**

Unlike Zambia and Tanzania, whose armies participated in the training of the freedom fighters, the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) did not provide such training, in keeping with the national policy of not allowing guerrilla bases. The BDF's main responsibilities were defending the territorial integrity of the country, protecting its people, and ensuring safety was provided to refugees and those in transit to join the liberation forces based in Zambia and elsewhere. As the BDF's first commander, Lt. General Mompoti Merafhe, put it:

The only thing we were a bit careful about was not to be seen to be supporting the liberation fighters openly because if that had happened, we could have opened ourselves to attacks by these regimes, a full scale war we wouldn't have been able to [with]stand. So we felt that we had to be careful in the manner in which we dealt with these people who were in transit through Botswana back to South Africa and Rhodesia to prosecute the armed liberation struggle. Fortunately, in Namibia they were coming in from Angola through that route... So we had a policy of turning a blind eye, but we had to be very careful.<sup>146</sup>

According to Lt. General Tebogo Masire, the BDF

...played a role in that it protected Botswana citizens from aggression by the minority regimes. Both citizens and non citizens were protected by the BDF, especially in the volatile areas like Francistown and the North East. The BDF was also protecting refugees and guerrillas that were running away from Rhodesian security forces. BDF would encounter freedom fighters, disarm them and send them to refugee camps, and government would then arrange for their transit to Zambia, so we were protecting them in that sense.<sup>147</sup>

Liberation movements were in contact with the BDF's Military Intelligence unit, which gathered information about the struggle and the state of security in the country in order to protect Botswana's territorial integrity, Botswana citizens, and refugees. Before he became BDF commander, Lt. General Matshwenyego Louis Fisher headed this unit.<sup>148</sup> Army intelligence personnel kept in touch with representatives of the liberation movements. And when the BDF found arms caches, they asked these representatives to remove them.<sup>149</sup>

The BDF was soon drawn into conflicts with its troublesome neighbours. General Merafhe related the following:

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(145) Interview with Mompoti Merafhe, (Gaborone) October 2006.

(146) Interview with Mompoti Merafe, (Gaborone) October 2006.

(147) Interview with Tebogo Masire, (Gaborone) October 2008.

(148) Interview with Matshwenyego Louis Fisher, (Gaborone) November 2008.

(149) Interview with Tebogo Masire, (Gaborone) October 2008.

These are two main incidents because they are prominent by virtue of them having received a lot of publicity, but there were a lot of skirmishes. Let me take for instance our border with Rhodesia: there were skirmishes, almost regularly between members of the BDF and the Rhodesians and we killed some of their people, but we didn't want to climb on our roof tops, boasting about the fact that we killed Rhodesian soldiers. If we were to boast about it, we would have opened possibility for attacks because they were a much stronger force than we were. But our chaps were not intimidated in terms of confronting members of the Rhodesian armed forces. Therefore, I think they played a very credible part because the Rhodesian soldiers knew that they could not really come to Botswana without sacrificing their own lives which is what is called deterrent in army language. So I think our force, as young as it was, played a very important role in terms of providing protection to our people along the border who were being harassed, ever so often, by the marauding forces of Ian Smith. The Lesoma Incident was a terrible incident in the sense that the Rhodesians were accusing us of harbouring terrorists and then mounted some attacks against us. They decided that they were going to lay an ambush against our chaps in order to punish us. In fact what happened that day was that a number of freedom fighters had entered Botswana in the Kasane area, and the Rhodesian soldiers crossed into Botswana following guerrillas. We got wind of the presence of Rhodesians in our country and sent our small troop there to apprehend this group of Zimbabwean fighters in order to interrogate and make them aware that their cross border activities were not welcomed in the country. The Rhodesians decided to lay an ambush for our people, and that's when soldiers were shot and killed. I was actually one of the first people to arrive at the scene of the ambush.<sup>150</sup>

The BDF lost fifteen soldiers at Lesoma near the Rhodesian border.

Another incident involving the BDF and Rhodesian forces arose from Botswana's protection of the border at Kazungula, which was the only link between Botswana and Zambia, and indeed with the rest of independent Africa. The ferry at Kazungula carried people, goods, and vehicles across the Zambezi. Most refugees used it to enter Zambia though some were flown from Francistown. In other words, Kazungula and its ferry were the "life line." Not surprisingly, from time to time Rhodesian soldiers sabotaged the ferry, and on one such occasion, BDF soldiers went to investigate. A shootout ensued between them and the Rhodesians, who had been hiding a few meters from the crossing point. One of our soldiers was killed in that skirmish. So the Rhodesians were literally pointing guns at the crossing point whenever they wished to do so. General Merafhe determined to remove this menace. He instructed Lt. General Ian Khama to cross into Zimbabwe with some soldiers to drive the Rhodesians away and destroy their hide out. After a shootout, during which the BDF lost one of its soldiers, the Rhodesians withdrew.<sup>151</sup>

Botswana, as General Merafhe states, was under constant pressure from the white minority regimes: "The idea was to intimidate us into complete submission so that we should completely detach ourselves from any form of support to the liberation

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(150) Ibid.

(151) Ibid.

struggle.”<sup>152</sup> To its credit, Botswana resisted such pressure and continued to support the liberation struggle as best as it could. South Africa wanted Botswana to have diplomatic relations with it and to sign a non-aggression treaty along the lines of the Nkomati accord (with Mozambique). Botswana rejected both.<sup>153</sup>

Other examples can be provided to demonstrate how the BDF defended Botswana and its people.

In May 1978, a Motswana in the north east was abducted by armed black Rhodesian troops. After receiving this report, a BDF unit set out to apprehend them. They soon caught up with them. Upon being challenged, the Rhodesians fled, and the BDF opened fire. The BDF killed one Rhodesian soldier and wounded another. The rest escaped to Rhodesia.<sup>154</sup> On another occasion in the same year, in the Tuli Block area on the Botswana/ Rhodesian border, three suspects wearing military uniforms were apprehended by the BDF patrol under Sergeant Ompatile Tswaipe. They suspected their prisoners of ferrying Rhodesian soldiers across the Shashe River into Botswana. The three were a British tourist, a farm manager, and the manager of a nearby game farm.<sup>155</sup> A scuffle ensued as the three suspects attempted to escape. They were shot dead. Tswaipe was arrested and tried in the High Court with Chief Justice Robert Hayfron-Benjamin presiding. The students at the University of Botswana demonstrated in support of Tswaipe. For lack of sufficient evidence of any wrongdoing, Tswaipe was acquitted.<sup>156</sup> In another incident, in April 1979, the BDF foiled an attempt by Rhodesians in two troop carriers to attack the Dukwi refugee settlement. After an exchange of fire, the Rhodesians retreated. Some BDF soldiers sustained minor injuries.<sup>157</sup> Another incident occurred when the BDF foiled another Rhodesian attempt to set up an ambush. When the BDF approached, the Rhodesians fled, leaving behind some of their weapons, including a Russian anti-tank rocket, similar to the one used at Lesoma.<sup>158</sup>

In order to deal with Rhodesian incursions and to reassure the people of Botswana, especially in troubled border areas, the BDF set up army camps in strategic areas along the border in the northern, north-eastern, and eastern parts of the country. Small though it was, the BDF dispensed its mandate admirably. The Rhodesians could not just “walk into Botswana” at will, without fearing a confrontation.

### **The Role of the Police**

The Police assisted the liberation struggle in many ways, directly and indirectly. They exposed undercover agents pretending to be refugees, arrested spies for the

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(152) Ibid.

(153) Interviews with Mompoti Merafhe, (Gaborone) October 2006; Matshwenyego Louis Fisher, (Gaborone) November 2008.

(154) *Daily News*. 10 May 1978.

(155) *Daily News*. 3 April 1978.

(156) *Daily News*. 14 November 1978.

(157) *Daily News*. 24 April 1979.

(158) *Daily News*. 27 August 1979.

white minority regimes, and vetted refugees. Botswana's police shared with the BDF the mission to safeguard the people, including those along the borders and at other trouble spots. All the branches of the police force had the responsibility for state security and the maintenance of law and order. The Special Branch (SB) had special responsibility for state security. At the time, Botswana did not have a National Security Intelligence Service. So the SB performed this service, namely to monitor the safety of the nation.<sup>159</sup>

The police were in the forefront in dealing with refugees. In the early 1960s, especially after the Sharpeville Massacre, many refugees from South Africa entered Botswana. Many were young people desiring to go to Zambia to join the liberation struggle. The police's role was to register them for security reasons and arrange for them to go to Zambia. Others in this refugee group were educated professionals such as teachers, doctors, and others who found employment in Botswana and contributed to the development of the country. Many of them took up Botswana citizenship. These early refugees were not troublesome like the refugees who came in the 1970s, and so no special camps were established for them. They either settled among the Botswana, especially in urban areas, or continued on to Zambia.<sup>160</sup>

The police experienced many problems with the South Africans who came in later years. "While refugees from Rhodesia were cooperative in many ways, we started to see a different kind of behaviour exhibited by South African refugees. They were generally looking down upon Botswana," asserts former Police Commissioner Simon Hirschfeld.<sup>161</sup> The huge number of refugees, particularly those of school-going age, led the government around 1978 to consider establishing a school for them at Mosetsana Montle in Kweneng. However, the plan was abandoned and Dukwi Refugee Settlement was established in the Central District (see Dukwi above).

### **Vetting of Refugees**

One of the most onerous tasks carried out by the police was determining who among the constant stream of asylum seekers entering Botswana were legitimate refugees. Former Special Branch Head Adolph Hirschfeld describes the vetting process the police developed to meet this challenge:

Hundreds of applications for asylum were submitted. It was the duty of the SB to determine, in accordance with UN conventions on refugees, who were genuine refugees and who were not. It was a mammoth task requiring all sorts of information. Occasionally we relied on other refugees and the leaders of the liberation movements. This information, if available, would be analysed for authenticity and used to supplement our own information. Such information would be treated with great caution. At times leaders or representatives of liberation movements would report that one or some of

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(159) Interviews with Calvin Sekwababe, Head of Criminal Investigation Division, (Gaborone) January 2008; Adolph Hirschfeld, former Head of Special Branch, (Gaborone) December 2008; Simon Hirschfeld, former Commissioner of Police, (Gaborone) May 2008.

(160) Interview with Simon Hirschfeld, (Gaborone) May 2008.

(161) Interview with Adolph Hirschfeld, (Gaborone) December 2008.

the would-be refugees were, in fact, undercover agents. If indeed we too determined that such information was correct we sent such individuals north, to Zambia, so that the liberation movements would deal with such persons. Indeed, an undercover agent could be a hindrance to the liberation struggle. So in exposing such persons, the SB was assisting the liberation struggle. We did our best to protect the refugees and the representatives of the liberation movements in Botswana. We always warned them if we had information about anything that could harm them. We had limited resources to work with. So we advised the refugees and the representatives of liberation movements to also rely on themselves for their own security.

In the vetting process, we found that only very few applicants were not genuine refugees. In such cases we handed them over to the UNHCR to deal with them. Such individuals usually joined genuine refugees to come here to search for opportunities for work and establish some small businesses. Some of them eventually returned to their countries. As for the genuine refugees, they were taken to Dukwi refugee settlement for their own security and care. We ensured that Dukwi always had adequate security. It was never attacked by the racist regimes.<sup>162</sup>

Hirschfeld referred to what he termed “hot potato” cases, that is, wanted persons fleeing South Africa.

There were two of them, a white and a black person. The SB got to know at short notice that they were being flown in a private plane which flew very low to avoid being detected on the South African radar. They landed in the country and we fetched them. The South Africans were desperately looking for them. We quickly processed UN passports for them and arranged for them to be flown to Zambia. In fact all such persons who the racist regimes wanted to capture were enabled to transit to the north expeditiously for their own and our protection.<sup>163</sup>

Another case involved forty six ANC followers in Lesotho for whom the Nordic countries chartered a plane to fly them over South Africa to Zambia. The South Africans somehow managed to tamper with the plane so that it would have to land in South Africa. However, when the experienced pilots encountered problems, they flew into Botswana and landed without knowing where they were.

We had been alerted that there was such a plane. When we approached the plane, the passengers wanted to dash to the bush as they thought they had landed in South Africa. We had to shout to them not to worry as they were in Botswana. We hurriedly took them to a secluded restaurant for dinner and then put them up at the nearby Police College for the night. They left for Lusaka the following day.<sup>164</sup>

Hirschfeld related stories about the opposite challenge of dealing with persons working for the South Africans.

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(162) Ibid.

(163) Ibid.

(164) Ibid.

In those days, Botswana was infiltrated by undercover agents (spies). So, one of the SB's tasks was to also infiltrate the South African intelligence system. At one point, I managed to befriend a South African agent pretending that I was a South African who was in Botswana on business. I was able to get some information from him about what he was doing in Botswana. He had come to gather information about the liberation movements here. He then gave me some information to pass on to the South African police in South Africa. I was able to use this information to warn the representatives of the liberation movements to avoid capture or death by moving away from where they lived.

In doing our work we had excellent relations with the intelligence persons of the liberation movements. We often exchanged information on security matters. When leaders of liberation movements such as Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki visited Botswana to consult with the government, they usually came with their security person. The SB had the opportunity to exchange views with them on matters pertaining to security.<sup>165</sup>

Hirschfeld also stated that people along the borders, such as near Maitengwe, were generally security conscious because they were raided often by the Rhodesian agents. On one occasion, a certain villager (an old man) shot and killed a white man. It is suspected that the man was a Selous Scout – an elite hit squad of the Rhodesian army.<sup>166</sup> In summary, Hirschfeld asserted that in protecting the refugees, the representatives of the liberation movements and those in transit through Botswana to the north to join liberation forces, the SB was contributing to the struggle, especially in sharing information with the liberation movements and warning them of impending dangers. On occasion the police arrested undercover agents and other undesirable elements.

For example, B.R. Beyleveld, formerly of the South African Defence Force, was arrested by Botswana police in the train, in Francistown, on his way to Rhodesia. He was charged with preparing to give assistance to the Rhodesian army, thereby posing a threat to the security and sovereignty of Botswana. He was wearing a South African army uniform and had documents including an application to join the notorious Selous Scouts. He was tried in the High Court and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment.<sup>167</sup> Many other incidents can be cited to demonstrate that the Botswana Police played a vital role in exposing undercover agents who were a danger to both Botswana and the liberation movements.

## The Role of Women

The liberation struggle, in general, and that of southern Africa in particular, were hardly the prerogative of men. In fact, all liberation movements fighting against the settler regimes— FRELIMO, PLAN, MK, ZANLA, ZIPRA, MPLA, UNITA— had women in at least some of their combat units. While it must be admitted that only

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(165) Ibid.

(166) Ibid.

(167) *Daily News*. 30 November 1977; 31 January 1978, 2 February 1978; 15 February 1978; 20 February 1978.

a few women were involved in physical combat, many played a critical role, in other ways, in assuring the success of the struggle. In Botswana, women were among the unsung heroes that played a supporting role for liberation. They accommodated and fed refugees and freedom fighters, facilitated their education, carried out their errands, and supported them economically, socially, morally, and even emotionally. Such organizations as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Botswana Council of Women (BCW) played a significant role in making education possible for refugees. They were headed largely by Botswana women such as Mrs Phumela Vanqa, Mrs Molefe, with the assistance of Mrs Brigalia Bam, a refugee herself, who coordinated the women's division of the World Council of Churches (WCC).<sup>168</sup> Working with other Botswana citizens, they helped young ladies find accommodation, food, clothing, and opportunities to further their education. Mrs Vanqa and her colleagues also provided parental care to young refugees. As Mrs Vanqa recollected,

In the 1970's, the YWCA was requested to do something for young people who were flooding in. The situation was worse in the case of girls due to issues of personal hygiene, and we had to provide specific necessities in this regard. We soon had to open a Day Care Centre as some of the girls started having babies. They needed mothering which was provided by ladies such as Mrs Molefe and Mrs Esther Mosinyi.<sup>169</sup>

The young women refugees were helped to enrol in such secretarial programs as typing and book-keeping.<sup>170</sup> Mrs Vanqa and her team were among those that also helped young men further their education by getting them admitted into Botswana secondary schools or helping them to secure scholarships overseas, and also helped them reach other countries for military training.

Women helped the liberation struggle in other ways. Mrs Tsholofelo Morake, a senior financial officer at Jubilee Hospital in Francistown, described how the nurses at the hospital used to treat injured freedom fighters.

We were then living in Francistown. I was working at the hospital as a senior officer. Occasionally, injured freedom fighters and others came for treatment at the hospital. Some had lost limbs. We lived in constant fear of attacks by the Rhodesians. I recall the occasion when our soldiers were ambushed by the Rhodesians at Lesoma resulting in many people being killed. We were told at the hospital to be ready to attend to the injured. There was total mobilization of staff doctors, nurses, and all other workers in readiness for the injured. However, the hospital did not receive the injured, as they were taken elsewhere. We were ready to assist. Although we were afraid that Rhodesians might attack us, our patriotism and desire to help the injured made us ignore the fact that we might be attacked. This was war and we rose to the occasion.

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(168) Thato Bereng to Lily Mafela, e-mail, 30 March 2007. Mrs Bam is currently chairperson of the South African Independent Electoral Commission.

(169) Interview with Phumela Vanqa, (Gaborone) February 2007.

(170) Tshidi Moroka to Lily Mafela, e-mail, 18 June 2007.

We were sympathetic to the people of Zimbabwe who were fighting for freedom. So we assisted the freedom fighters as best as we could, with the hope that they would defeat their oppressors.<sup>171</sup>

Other women accommodated, fed, and did errands for the members of liberation movements, and in some instances they assisted without knowing they were carrying out special missions. A Motswana woman who agreed to be interviewed on condition of anonymity (Anonymous Woman #1) was a member of a family with relatives in South Africa, whom she visited during her school holidays. As a working person, she accommodated and fed some refugees from South Africa, and, in some instances, supported them financially.<sup>172</sup> She became so close and helpful to them that she, naturally, became emotionally attached to one and ended up with a child. Because of this intimate association, she found herself accommodating other refugees.

I know I played an important role in the struggle besides accommodating refugees. As a Motswana who had a passport and who frequented South Africa to visit relatives, I was sent to deliver letters in the process, which on hindsight, I think was a very dangerous thing to do. It was only afterwards that I realised that what I was doing could have landed me in big trouble. Of course I carried the letters in good faith and did not have the slightest idea that what I was carrying had anything to do with the liberation struggle. There were times also that I had to carry important messages across the border. These messages were to be delivered to certain families in Johannesburg

- Soweto. And so were the letters, which came from different refugees throughout the country.<sup>173</sup>

Anonymous Woman #1 described the kind of messages she delivered as “...very important ones because I remember that I was sent to deliver a message to someone in Soweto and tell them that *matsela a tsile* (the cloths have come). I think whoever received the message knew what the message meant even though I had no idea what the message meant. I think, on hindsight that it meant that weapons of some sort had arrived, weapons perhaps in the form of guns ammunition or grenades”<sup>174</sup> Anonymous Woman #1 also described how she accommodated many refugees including those who came to Botswana to visit their children or relatives. She came to know many of them well. She still keeps in contact with some of these ex-refugees, who visit her whenever they are in Botswana. Anonymous Woman #1 felt that she had made a significant contribution to the liberation struggle.

Lentle More is another woman who played an important role in the liberation struggle. Ms. More talked freely about her experiences in the 1980s. At the time she worked as a receptionist at the President Hotel in Gaborone, and she lived with a number of refugees.<sup>175</sup> The President Hotel, which was frequented by people from all walks of life, became an important social gathering spot for refugees, too. Ms. More

(171) Interview with Tsholofelo Morake, (Gaborone) October 2008.

(172) Interview with Anonymous Woman #1, (Gaborone) October 2008.

(173) Ibid.

(174) Ibid.

(175) Interview with Lentle More, (Gaborone) October 2008.

often helped refugees by using the telephone facilities at the hotel to make calls to South Africa on their behalf, doing so without the permission of management. She and her friends gave food and drink to some refugees and gave them money from their own personal funds. “Whenever there were social gatherings we invited them,” she said, “and sometimes we invited them to our homes. They were easy going and found comfort in our homes, particularly my home.”<sup>176</sup> The refugees Ms. More helped included members of the South African Student Organisation (SASO), the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), the ANC, and the PAC. Others came with families, some with young children. Ms. More struck a rapport with many and became a confidante of the liberation movement to the extent that, as with Anonymous Woman #1, she was sent on occasional errands. Her story is so interesting that paraphrasing tends to dilute its significance. Here are her words:

At one point I and my sister called Mma Segola and my brother went to Johannesburg. While there we decided to visit a friend in one of the local townships. This particular friend asked us if we would give her cousin a ride to Botswana. We happily agreed. When we asked specifically where in Botswana she will be going, we were told that she was visiting a cousin of hers who was a refugee. This refugee man was a priest by the name of Morris Ngakale. I also knew Morris as he frequented the President Hotel. Our host did not elaborate beyond this. The following day we went to get her and when she came out, she did so with a baggage of nice suit cases and was dressed very nicely. We came with her all the way until we crossed the border. She was not saying much during the journey. We crossed the border in the evening and unknown to us she was using a passport that did not belong to her. She would have landed us into trouble of unimagined proportions, but with the Grace of God, the police did not recognise her. They did not realise that the passport she was using was not hers. Meanwhile she came to be known as a “prominent official” who organised students to cross the border for either educational or military purposes or both. We realized later through other people that she was wanted by the South African Police. Her photograph was said to have been circulating in several South African newspapers.<sup>177</sup>

Ms. More went on to describe how the cousin, Morris, never showed up at the President Hotel as was expected, and, after a week of waiting for the “cousin”, it became obvious that the girl was stranded. “She didn’t know me, and I didn’t know her, the only thing I knew was that her aunt had requested us to give her a ride to Botswana.”

I then told her that it is now over five days and this cousin had not showed up at the President Hotel. I could tell from her face that she was petrified of the news, and she still had not divulged to me that she was a refugee. I asked her if I should ask my husband to accommodate her for the time being while hoping that “cousin” would show up. Suddenly she was bright in the face at this suggestion. This was the beginning of my stay with her. I was buying her food, clothes, and shoes, and from this a bond emerged and we became one. By this time she had told me that she was a refugee, but had still not told me about herself and the story of the passport.

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(176) Ibid.

(177) Ibid.

Despite food rations offered to refugees by the government, she refused to register. She therefore shared the food bought at Lentle's house.

We stayed together like that for two years and I was treating her like a member of my family in every sense. She was waiting to go to school somewhere abroad. But many people from South Africa used to come by the house to see her and I just took it that they were her former school mates as the majority of them were of her age. Even her parents from South Africa when they came to Botswana they came to visit my house. She then told me of her two sisters that they were both in exile in Zambia. There were many student organizations then, but she said she belonged to the ANC. We stayed together while she was organizing her papers to go to school abroad. One day a cousin of mine said this girl was wanted in the papers of South Africa. That is when she told me that she crossed the border without using her own passport. I was not worried by those reports because most refugees at the time were almost always on the wanted list of the South African Police.

It now came to a point where her arrangements for further studies abroad were finalized. She left to go to school in New York, USA. She went to school, finished, and worked there. She began to send me money and other stuff every month from there. She has been doing so ever since, she sends me stuff from America. As we speak, this lady is now the South African Consular General in Los Angeles, USA. Her younger sisters have now returned from exile and they are now in South Africa. Both of them look after me because I used to look after their parents and sister. Even her cousins and relatives who were refugees, whenever they came to Botswana, they came to the house called "Lentle House." My house was ever so full of refugees, but as they came, I gave them food and generally provided them with what they needed.<sup>178</sup>

Ms. More concluded by explaining how her house was used by both freedom fighters and refugees, including some that were eventually killed in the 14 June 1985 raid. She continues:

A refugee called Thami [Mnyele], one of the officials of the ANC, once came into my house during what was called "stay away." That is when their intelligence had told them that that particular night it was not safe to stay where they were. I found him in my bedroom sleeping with a gun beside him. He was also friends with the most wanted Kous Segola. That is when I feared for my children in the event of him being traced. But he immediately left, explaining that it was stay away.<sup>179</sup>

Lentle knows she has helped the people of South Africa: "I feel proud that I have played a part in their eventual emancipation, all because of Janet Ndlovu, the present South African Consular General in Los Angeles, USA."<sup>180</sup> "Lentle's House" was so well known that even former president Thabo Mbeki used to visit there on his missions to Gaborone.

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(178) Ibid.

(179) Ibid.

(180) Ibid.

Another anonymous woman (Anonymous Woman #2) recounted in her interview her role in the liberation struggle. Her interest in politics was influenced largely by the environment within which she grew up, which, along with simple humanity, sparked her interest in the liberation struggle and led her to play a role.

I grew up under that political environment; I grew up in Francistown and it used to be a politicized area with Pan Africanism, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. Our homestead was neighbours with that of Phillip Matante, the Pan Africanist and leader of the Botswana People's Party. In our area in White City, Francistown there were many refugees who lived there and belonged to the PAC and the ANC like *bo Rre* Seperepere, *Rre* Ndlovu and many others that I can easily name. We lived not very far from the famous "White House", the house that has housed many refugees, some of whom are now important personalities in their countries of origin. We grew up playing with these people's children and we came to know that their parents came here because they were oppressed in their own countries. We therefore had to accommodate some of these people.<sup>181</sup>

Anonymous Woman #2 became involved with the liberation struggle, in part, because she was married to a South African refugee, but mainly because the idea of liberation had always been part of her growing up and because it flowed from her sense of *botho* (humanity) in wanting to help other people. Her contribution to the liberation struggle began when she joined the media fraternity. Journalism naturally inclined her to be a courier of information: "Whenever there was critical information which might be helpful to the community in which I lived, including the community of refugees, I transmitted it to the relevant direction." Unsurprisingly, therefore, she easily, almost naturally, associated with the refugees when she came to pursue her career in Gaborone. The community of refugees she associated with was called Isandhlwana Revolutionary Movement (IRM) under the auspices of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), which prided itself on being neither ANC nor PAC.<sup>182</sup> The BCM was led by such personalities as Steve Biko, Onkgopotse Tiro, Harry Nengwekhulu, and others.

It was in this community that Anonymous Woman #2 found a husband. She described the IRM as a community of literate people, professionals, teachers, and medical doctors. Some, such as her husband, though trained in the medical field, taught in local secondary schools. As a media person, Anonymous Woman #2 was instrumental in the founding of the Isandhlwana newspaper. Typed on stencils, the newspaper was circulated among members. She still has the typewriter and the stencils in her house.<sup>183</sup> Anonymous Woman #2 gathered information on educational opportunities and scholarships as well as news related to the liberation struggle, and distributed it among refugees. As a journalist she often travelled overseas, and she says, "I carried literature from overseas to share with comrades. They used to give me

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(181) Interview with Anonymous Woman #2, (Gaborone) November 2008.

(182) Ibid.

(183) Ibid.

a list of books to buy when I was overseas and I used to use my own money to buy such books. We still have some of these books and we are keeping them for posterity. This would be Isandhlwana history. We are looking at possibilities of publishing a book with a colleague about our lives in this community of refugees.”<sup>184</sup>

Her house, too, became an important destination. “My house was one of the transit areas,” she recalled, “because I used to accommodate the little girls who came as refugees. My husband and I had to run around and report them to the police for protection before we facilitated their movement northward. During the raids by the South African commandos, it was uncomfortable because one was not sure whether one’s house would be bombed or not, since I was helping the refugees so much.” So many young male refugees went in and out of it so frequently that it was beginning to be thought of as a base for military training. To fend off South African agents, “my house was patrolled and protected by the BDF, but I didn’t even know it until I heard about it from other people. The government knew who was involved with the liberation movements and gave them due protection.<sup>185</sup>

The fact was that the house of Anonymous Woman #2 was being used as a base. She was aware that arms and ammunitions passed through Botswana and that some weapons were even kept in her house. She knew this made matters dangerous, but, as she explains, “I was saved by the fact that I worked for the government.” She also recalls that her husband left teaching to dedicate his life to the liberation struggle. He joined the taxi industry because this trade, though not paying much, served a good purpose in the liberation struggle. “The arms that were in our house,” she added,

we transported them easily as we were running public transport. We transported them through a taxi. We used to go through roadblocks with them because the police hardly ever searched taxis. The arms were transported to certain areas in the lands [*masimo*] close to the borders in such areas as Tlhareselele (Borolong) where there are Basotho residents. Sometimes my husband undertook reconnaissance missions to these areas before the transportation and deployment of arms could take place. Even my brothers and sisters whom I lived with in the house never knew that there were guns in the house because we were very discreet.<sup>186</sup>

The support given by women to the liberation struggle was not limited to black women only. Even some white women, finding themselves in difficult situations with the freedom fighters of the liberation struggle, had no choice but to lend support to the struggle. One such case, involving a white woman farmer in Ghanzi and PLAN freedom fighters, has been mentioned briefly above and deserves elaboration here: Three well armed men in army gear walked into the farm house of Mrs Keith Thomas and politely requested food.<sup>187</sup> Alone, Mrs Thomas had little choice but to show them to the pantry and told them to help themselves. She recounted her experience:

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(184) Ibid.

(185) Ibid.

(186) Ibid.

(187) Interview with Mrs Keith Thomas, (Tsabong) June 2008.

Three guys walking into your house with rifles and you don't know where they were coming from except that they said they were coming from Namibia. They came with a *bakkie* [pick-up truck]; I looked out through the window and saw that it was a Botswana registered *bakkie*. But anyway, they came in. I sat there. There was enough time when I had to go to the bedroom and get the rifle and unlock the thing, what was I going to do with guys with AK 47, what is it going to help with a rifle, they will kill me. I sat there with nothing to do. I told them, this is the key, you may take whatever you want. They took everything, and came back and said "Do you have any meat?" I told him "yes," in the deep freezer. "Can we have some?" he asked. I said take whatever you want and go! He went, I believe to Xanagas. They left the vehicle at a hotel in Gobabis with a note saying "Thank you for lending us your vehicle, we needed it for the cause, we appreciate it.188

Women in other districts of Botswana have also shared their experiences regarding the liberation struggle. In the Chobe area, where in those years she was employed in Pandamatenga by the Colonial Development Corporation, Fumbani Sefako recalls seeing the freedom fighters coming in from Zimbabwe and the Rhodesian soldiers who were tracing them.

Freedom fighters used to cross into our villages and attack white soldiers that side in Rhodesia. And then cross over here in Pandamatenga. The white soldiers then followed them up to the border near Pandamatenga. Normally the freedom fighters travelled at night and the white soldiers followed them up to the border. They would follow them up all the way from Matetsi to Pandamatenga.189

Freedom fighters attempted to weaken the commercial sector of the white farmers by forcibly removing black workers from their farms. Black workers, having no alternative sources of employment, often returned to the white farms.

Mrs Sefako knew about secret freedom fighter camps, such as Sebuyu. People living in the area of these bases suffered at the hands of Rhodesian forces, which harassed them while looking for freedom fighters. Nevertheless, villagers did not assist the Rhodesians. They also did not report the presence of camps to the Botswana police and the BDF.

We did not report the freedom fighters, because they had relatives here and we knew some of their parents. Most of them had relatives, especially among the Ndebele and they used to visit fellow Ndebele at that place called Botebele. Also, freedom fighters were soldiers fighting for freedom and some of them had warned us about sellouts. They also told us that in Rhodesia they tortured fellow blacks who betrayed them. This is why we did not inform the police or BDF about their presence in the village.190

Sefako recalled instances where a black man known only as "White" was tortured by the freedom fighters for not disclosing the whereabouts of the Rhodesian security forces.

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(188) Ibid.

(189) Interview with Fumbani Sefako, (Pandamatenga) July 2007.

(190) Ibid.

It's like he knew where the white soldiers were hiding. They wanted to find out where the white soldiers were hiding and he was refusing to tell them. They lit a big fire and roasted him. Initially, he was refusing to give them the information, but later gave up and told them where they were, by the border.<sup>191</sup>

Women in the Chobe District, including the areas of Pandamatenga and Lesoma, were very helpful to the freedom fighters. They cooked and fed guerrillas in their homes and supplied them with fresh drinking water. Freedom fighters were allowed to hide in their fields (*masimo*), confident that the women working there would not tell anyone of their whereabouts. Esther Katukula, whose husband befriended guerrillas, stated that she used to cook for them on their frequent visits to Katukula's homestead during which they had long cordial conversations with her husband. Mma Katukula's story runs thus:

My husband was amongst those who interacted well with the guerrillas. If he was alive, he would give you good stories. He used to say these were good people and people of God. He requested that whenever we see them in the compound, we should give them food if we have some. Children in the village, including ours, got used to seeing guerrillas at the pool where they used to fetch water; they would go into the bush heading towards Pandamatenga. We learnt not to report their presence to the BDF. Freedom fighters always told us whenever we see anyone dressed in army uniform, whether it was a white or black soldier we should not tell him where they were. They even requested that if anyone asked whose foot prints were at my place I should not talk about guerrillas. They used to say that they did not know all their enemies. They wanted to meet their enemies without being followed. They told us that they did not trust some black people who were used by the white soldiers as collaborators.<sup>192</sup>

Some women developed personal relationships with freedom fighters. Mrs Katukula tells of a Pandamatenga woman named Monica, who fell in love with Mkhwananzi, a ZIPRA intelligence agent working inside the Botswana border. After the war, Monica went with him to Zimbabwe, where they live. Another woman known as Dolly, who is a daughter of Katukula's uncle, also had a relationship with one of the freedom fighters. She too went with him to Zimbabwe where they were married and lived happily together. Some former freedom fighters still cross the border to come and visit the families that supported them during the liberation struggle.<sup>193</sup>

Mrs Katukula gave a vivid picture of the Lesoma incident (see above). Her story is lengthy and has been somewhat abridged.

The day I came to know about the freedom fighters was the time when sixteen soldiers of the BDF were killed. When this incident happened, I was not well. My husband woke me up because he wanted us to go to the lands. We then heard gunshots from inside Zimbabwe and I told my husband that those were the gunshots of the freedom fighters. We retraced our steps back home and when we got there we found people running in all directions in panic because they were afraid of gunshots. Some told us that there

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(191) Ibid.

(192) Interview with Esther Katukula, (Lesoma) July 2007.

(193) Ibid.

was a group of freedom fighters who crossed the border and that they had passed through the village carrying weapons. The headman of Lesoma, Jameson, sent his sons to go and call the BDF for patrol. Since I was sick that day I went into the house to rest. In a matter of minutes my husband entered the house and told me that we should run away because there may be a fight between white Rhodesian soldiers and the guerrillas. He took our child Sipiwe by hand and instructed me to run as fast as possible ahead of them, but they had to leave me behind because I was sick. Villagers ran into the bush. Some drove cattle from Lesoma into the bush heading towards Kasane. I was left alone that day and when I woke up and walked into the kitchen to drink water I saw this young man dressed in army uniform carrying a gun and a small bag. He was speaking Ndebele and told me that my people had run away. He asked me why I did not run away with them and I told him I was not feeling well. He gave me two tablets to help ease my pains. This young man begged me not to tell anyone where he was hiding. He was referring to anyone who would come to our place wearing uniform which looked similar to his. He disappeared for a while, and came back and asked how I was. I told him that I was now feeling better and he left. While sitting alone in the compound, I suddenly saw a flying machine. It was flying below tree level and I was able to see male white faces inside the helicopter... At around five o'clock in the evening I heard loud gun gunshots and I saw smoke from the other side of the village and we heard that they had bombed and killed Botswana soldiers.<sup>194</sup>

Maria Mbakani gave a similar version. The BDF unit searched the area to disarm freedom fighters, but some had managed to escape with their weapons. When the BDF got into their trucks to return to base, they were suddenly attacked by the Rhodesian soldiers. Gunshots were heard and there was smoke all over Lesoma village. Her son Uwe Simon was caught in the cross fire while he and some soldiers were attempting to run into the village.<sup>195</sup>

The rich accounts of these women reveal their direct involvement in the struggle as providers of accommodation, food, clothing, education, protection, and courier missions to freedom fighters. Their recollections of events they witnessed also testify that women were active in and deeply committed to the liberation struggle. Though they did not wield guns, these and many other women in Botswana supported the liberation struggle in many important ways.

## **Selected Experiences of Liberation Struggle Activists**

As the extended reminiscences of women demonstrate, any overview of Botswana's role in the liberation struggle can be enhanced considerably by quoting the words of those who were present at the time and played their own, individually important, roles. This section is dedicated to bringing into view more of these recollections, not only for the information they provide, but for the appreciation the reader can

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(194) Ibid.

(195) Interview with Maria Mbakani, (Lesoma) July 2007.

gain of the selfless acts of many heretofore unnoticed participants. The individuals below have not attempted to trumpet their place in history, rather they were found by our research team. They were fully cooperative, generous with their time, and open about their past. What follows, is a small but sincere means of recognising these contributors to freedom in southern Africa. Some of it is in summary form, some in their own words.

### **Okgetheng Mogorosi**

In Gobojango, eastern Botswana, a Motswana by the name of Okgetheng Mogorosi participated in the liberation struggle as a ZIPRA cadre in the 1970s. He had left school after completing his junior certificate. This qualification enabled him to manage the general dealer shops of his uncle, Motsumi Mogorosi. He also learnt how to drive, and during the influx of refugees into Gobojango, he transported many to Bobonong using his uncle's trucks. He was interested in helping refugees because he was quite aware that they were fleeing from the oppressive regime of Ian Smith. In addition, many of them were his Zimbabwean relatives.

ZAPU officials in Francistown often visited Gobojango. One of them, Joel Sejie, lived in Gobojango with his relatives. It is through these men that Mogorosi learnt more about the struggle for freedom in Zimbabwe. These men also told the villagers to watch out for spies from Rhodesia who, more often than not, tried to abduct them with a view to soliciting information about freedom fighters and refugees. He was taught how to detect harmful objects like small bombs which could be placed in their houses and how to detonate them.

Mogorosi decided to leave Gobojango after discovering a bomb under his bed (it was defused). When Mogorosi discovered that his life was in danger, he put aside the advice of his family to stay with his uncle in Gaborone, and followed his real passion, going to Zambia and joining the liberation forces. He went to Francistown, where ZAPU officials, who already knew him, made the necessary arrangements, and soon he was on his way to Lusaka with a group of new recruits.

He did his initial training at a ZIPRA camp in rural Zambia. His instructors were ZAPU senior officers that had trained in Cuba, Algeria, the Soviet Union, and other places. Rigorous training followed at Morogoro, Tanzania, where he met other cadres from the liberation movements—ZANU, SWAPO, ANC, PAC. After he and others returned to Zambia, their mission became to infiltrate Rhodesia by crossing the Zambezi in rubber boats. The main objective initially was to teach the peasantry about the struggle and to identify targets for subsequent sabotage and attacks against the enemy.

On one occasion, while returning from one of their missions, they were ambushed by Rhodesian forces. Mogorosi was terribly injured, and two of his colleagues were killed. To this day he bears the scars of his injuries on his wrists and eyebrow. After recuperating, he entered an officer cadet course at a military training college in Zambia, where he met twelve other cadets from the Botswana

Police Mobile Unit (later Botswana Defence Force). He was then sent to the Soviet Union to be trained in communications. Zimbabwe became independent soon after his return, whereupon he returned to his home in Gobojango. He knew only a few other Batswana who fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe. All were motivated by the desire to see black people liberated. 196

### **Klaas Motshidisi**

A retired civil servant and politician, now resident at Palapye, Klaas Motshidisi recounted how, as one of the anchor people, he played his part in coordinating the liberation struggle from the south of the country to the north.

It was more individuals than the state that helped freedom fighters. We made personal sacrifices by accommodating them in our homes. As individuals we suffered; I was declared a prohibited immigrant by the South African State in 1966. When Samora Machel arrived in Lobatse, the Kgaboesele people accommodated him. They literally moved out of their house to accommodate them. When Nelson Mandela returned from military training he landed in Francistown and Fish Keitseng stayed with him. Our people provided the rungs of a ladder for these people to rise to prominence in their own countries. Joe Modise, as one of the commanders of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, would tell us when their people would be passing through Botswana. Fish Keitseng coordinated the southern part of Botswana and I handled the central part of the country, which included the Tuli block area. From the south the freedom fighters and refugees were transferred to Palapye where I and others, including Mpho and Matante would assist their passage to the north. 197

### **Simon Tladi**

Simon Tladi was a resident of Morwa village in Kgatleng District. In 1951 he migrated to Cape Town for work and stayed in Nyanga East. A Motswana who stayed with him was Kenneth Nkhwa, now a former Member of Parliament for the North East constituency. In 1957, after years of dealing with racism at work and in the streets, Tladi became politically active and joined the ANC. After the 1959 split, Tladi joined the PAC.

In March 1960, Tladi joined the nation-wide passbook strike. It became violent, and many people were killed, while others were detained. Tladi was among the strike leaders and became a wanted man. In June he escaped by returning to his home country, still the Bechuanaland Protectorate. After settling in, he joined ANC activists Fish Keitseng and Motsamai Mpho, among others, in forming the Bechuanaland People's Party. Though a PAC member, Tladi shared with the others the desire to promote political independence and freedom from colonial and white minority rule. Alongside Tladi's involvement in local politics, came his participation in the liberation struggle. Tladi worked closely with Keitseng in helping other ANC members fleeing to Botswana from South Africa, including Nelson Mandela and

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(196) Interview with Okgetheng Mogorosi, (Gobojango) May 2007.

(197) Interview with Klaas Motshidisi, (Palapye) June 2007.

Thabo Mbeki.<sup>198</sup> Tladi met Mandela in Lobatse at Keitseng's. Freedom fighters recruited by Mandela went for training abroad by passing through Botswana. When the ANC bought a Land Rover for Keitseng to transport recruits from the Pitsane, Lobatse, and Ramotswa borders, Keitseng could not drive, but Tladi had a driver's license and became Keitseng's driver. He transported recruits from South Africa for further training in the northern countries. He drove from the border, always at night, all the way to Francistown, on to Kazungula, took the ferry, then on to Lusaka to deliver his charges. Tladi worked closely with a man called Rantao, an uncle to the late Botswana National Front (BNF) leader Paul Rantao. Rantao was the ANC's main recruiting agent in South Africa. One daring mission he recalls was when he transported Harold Wolfe and Arthur Goldreich, two ardent apartheid critics who had escaped from a South African jail. Tladi and Keitseng collected them from the Lobatse border and drove them the entire night all the way to Francistown. Arriving at sunrise, the two refugees were put in prison for their protection and later released for onward transportation. Tladi also recalls helping refugees from Namibia, including a Dr Abrahams.<sup>199</sup>

### **Gladstone Phatudi**

Born of Botswana parents in Mafikeng, Mr Phatudi played an important role in the liberation struggle in the Southern District. He was educated in Mafikeng, trained as a teacher and later took up employment as a court interpreter. He used to interpret cases involving the ANC members. Subsequently, he became an ANC informer. The Boers quickly discovered his secret and decided to eliminate him. He got wind of the plan and avoided the South African police by crossing the border into Botswana, where he settled among the Barolong of Good Hope and became headmaster of a local primary school. It is here that he became active in dealing with freedom fighters and refugees from South Africa.

I was one of the people who were in the forefront in helping escapees and freedom fighters to cross into or from Botswana into South Africa. At night I used to go to the border fence to meet the refugees, and at other times I used to go there to show the freedom fighters where to cross safely into South Africa without being detected by the Boers. I also kept them for a couple of days in my house, and I helped identify places where they could bury their weapons while they were still on surveillance missions. My code name was "Ntloko" and when that name was mentioned I knew it was a freedom fighter because nobody else knew that name, but the freedom fighters. On their way back from South Africa, I also accommodated these freedom fighters for a couple of days before I facilitated their move back to Zambia. They used to tell me their successes and failures and how ordinary people hid them from being seen by the Boers.<sup>200</sup>

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(198) Interview with Simon Tladi, (Morwa) June 2007.

(199) Ibid.

(200) Interview with Gladstone Phatudi, (Hebron Good Hope) June 2007.

### **Kgosi-kgolo ya Bangwaketse, Kgosi Seepapitso IV**

The Paramount Chief of the Bangwaketse in the Southern District also played a role. Being related to ANC legend Dr James S. Moroka through his maternal grandmother, *Kgosi* Seepapitso frequented Thaba Nchu in the Orange Free State where Dr Moroka lived. Moroka was the treasurer of the ANC and for a time its President General. Seepapitso recalls,

I used to be sent on errands by my uncle, errands of the ANC. I was once sent secretly to give Nelson Mandela some letters. Mandela was then hiding in the Orange Free State as he was wanted by the Boers, but that particular errand saved Mandela from arrest as the letter was warning him to move to another hiding place. Mandela has still not forgotten Seepapitso and every time he sees me, he thanks me for delivering the letter that saved his life. I also helped Thabo Mbeki locate his brother, Jama, who was a lawyer in Selibe-Phikwe.<sup>201</sup>

The chief described other times when he helped liberation comrades cross the border into South Africa to undertake their missions. He was supposed to deliver one group of freedom fighters at the border with South Africa by driving them in his truck to a village called Rakhuna near the Ramatlabama border post. They got out and Seepapitso continued to Ramatlabama and entered South Africa. Meanwhile his ex-passengers sneaked across the border to a place where the chief collected them and drove on. “I left them at an undisclosed place to do what they had come to do.” The truck he used to pass through the immigration point was carrying hidden weapons and grenades, along with letters for delivery in South Africa.<sup>202</sup>

### **Kgosi Tlhophane Botshake**

Karakubis *kgosi* Tlhophane Botshake accommodated and transported Namibian freedom fighters to safe places such as Tsootsha and Ghanzi. Karakubis was a receiving point, but only 70 km from the Namibian border. All strangers in the village were expected to report to him. He questioned them to determine whether they were refugees or freedom fighters, before sending them to the police station at Tsootsha. Transport was scarce then, and the chief often used his own vehicle to transport them inland. In doing so, he endured immense personal sacrifices including endangering his own life. South West African authorities knew him to be a freedom fighter conduit and made him a prime target, particularly when he considered crossing the border to visit his Namibian relatives. But black Namibian security officers alerted him to his imminent arrest should he cross the border.<sup>203</sup> Subsequently, some of his people turned their backs on him and accused him of being a Namibian, but investigations proved otherwise, and he continued assisting refugees and freedom fighters. Along with other Batswana, he dedicated his life to assisting those who were oppressed by the neighbouring settler regimes.

(201) Interview with Seepapitso IV, (Gaborone) February 2008.

(202) Ibid.

(203) Interview with Tlhophane Botshake, (Karakubis) October 2008.

### **Gaditshwane Mmutla**

A former policeman, resident of Ngamiland, and member of the Botswana Independence Party (BIP), Mmutla assisted SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma when he entered the North West District. But the story Mmutla remembers most vividly is that of a young man from Mozambique destined for training in the north, who sought his assistance. The young man was in poor health and fatigued from extensive travel when he reached Maun. He had been advised that the easiest way to the north was through Botswana. He had come via Swaziland and South Africa, though how he reached Maun was something of a mystery.

Mmutla helped the young man by transporting him from Maun to Francistown, a journey that in those days took five or six days by lorry on a gravel road. A driver was identified to drive the young man at night. Mmutla used the good offices of his party to transport him, process his transit papers, and gain accommodation in Francistown.<sup>204</sup>

### **Lopang Kadimo**

Lopang Kadimo of the Chobe area witnessed freedom fighters from Rhodesia coming over to the Botswana side with frequent regularity. They visited such villages as Pandamatenga and Lesoma, pretending they were visiting Amandebele and Vhananzwa relatives. He recalled the skirmishes that often took place between freedom fighters and the Rhodesian security forces. At one time guerrillas at a camp near the Kazungula ferry exchanged fierce fire with the white Rhodesians, who completely routed the camp.<sup>205</sup> The exchange spread panic among the peasants as bullets flew over their homesteads and explosives went off close by.

Lopang recalled an incident when the Rhodesian security forces crossed through Kazungula at night and threatened villagers with torture or death unless they revealed the freedom fighters' whereabouts. The villagers, who the Rhodesian security forces thought were assisting freedom fighters, were killed. In the small village of Sebuyo, Smith's soldiers shot several of the inhabitants to death; most notable among the dead was Chibariso. The latter was an innocent person carrying an ordinary hunting gun and mistaken for a freedom fighter.<sup>206</sup>

### **Kesegofetse Morake**

Mr Morake, a farmer and a resident of Palapye (Topisi), is a retired livestock inspector who used to work in the Kasane-Nata areas during the liberation struggle days. In the course of his duties he met freedom fighters who often looked hungry and somewhat desperate. He shared with them whatever he had. He also helped them with transport and carried their equipment. In the course of time, they shared their experiences with him. Mr Morake had this to say about the freedom fighters he encountered:

(204) Interview with Gaditshwane Mmutla, (Maun) November 2007.

(205) Interview with Lobang Kadimo, (Kasane) July 2007.

(206) Ibid.

I gave them transport free of charge from Nata to Maitengwe, from where they made incursions into Rhodesia. I really felt pity for them and sympathized with their cause. At times I would spend the night with them at the residence of my cousin called Mangazha Moremi. He worked at the quarantine in Maitengwe as a fence foreman. Moremi gave them shelter and food. I met different groups of guerrillas. They warned me not to tell whoever I met about them. Never tell them you saw freedom fighters. On several occasions, I met Rhodesian soldiers who asked if I saw a group of people moving together. I denied ever seeing them. The guerrillas came to know me and my car. Those I had never met before would tell me they had known about me from those I had met before. They came to like and trust me. I too liked them for I knew about their cause.<sup>207</sup>

By and large, Morake found freedom fighters a likeable lot. All they wanted was occasional help to carry heavy weapons. He became so close to some freedom fighters that they revealed to him some details about their incursions inside Rhodesia.

They used to tell me what they did after reaching Rhodesia. They used to lay land mines in areas frequented by Rhodesians. They would then return to Botswana leaving one of them who would later report whether the land mines had worked. On one occasion, I met some guerrillas who hurriedly departed, warning me about the possibility of meeting Rhodesians. Indeed, soon I met the Rhodesians who enquired about the guerrillas. I denied seeing them. Later when I went to Maitengwe from Kasane I was told there was fighting between Rhodesians and guerrillas, and many Rhodesian soldiers died. I actually saw the damaged Rhodesian car where the fighting had taken place.<sup>208</sup>

The relationship between Morake, his cousin Moremi, and the freedom fighters became cordial. At Moremi's place, they were always guaranteed shelter and food. They regarded Moremi's place as their place, and planned missions from his house. Moremi, in turn, provided them with surveillance information.

### **Victor Kowa**

Victor "Two Minutes" Kowa, a Motswana who was educated in South Africa, where he played soccer in their top clubs, returned to Gaborone in the late 1970s, and worked for the Eagles Insurance Company, while playing for Centre Chiefs, a Mochudi soccer club. He became a liberation struggle activist by virtue of the fact that he had gone to school with some ANC freedom fighters-to-be. He housed some of the top MK commanders and assisted them on their way to and from South Africa.

In 1985, during the raid of Gaborone by the South African Defence Force, I was accommodating a very senior commander of the MK, in fact the highest commander in the country. He was in charge of a caravan in Mogoditshane, which had all the weaponry belonging to the MK. When the Boers were planning to attack Gaborone, this MK commander knew that they were coming as they had spies within the South African Defence Force. There was also another South African who claimed to be a

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(207) Interview with Kesegofetse Morake, (Topisi) November 2008.

(208) Ibid.

refugee and was friends with the commander who was staying with me. He played golf and apparently was an informer on the South African pay roll. He also knew about the caravan which had an arms cache belonging to the ANC. He tipped the SADF which came to eliminate those that were guarding the caravan and took all the arms away. Before they attacked, the South Africans rehearsed during the day by driving around and identifying their targets.

The commander tipped all refugees not to be in their houses that night and those that did not take heed of his advice were killed. The South African newspapers later showed a picture of another MK commander who was staying with me and described him as the most highly wanted man by the South African regime. The Botswana government quickly whisked him away to Lusaka and warned me of the consequences of harbouring such people. However, I continued to house freedom fighters both on their way to or from South Africa. They used to tell me of their missions, including the one of blowing up the oil refinery in South Africa.<sup>209</sup>

### **His Excellency Festus Mogae, Former President of Botswana**

Former President Festus Mogae (1998-2008) was serving in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in the early years of the struggle, rising to Permanent Secretary in 1975. Thereafter he served as president of the Bank of Botswana (1980- 1982) and Permanent Secretary to President Quett Masire (1982-1989). Here are the views of this top government insider concerning the liberation struggle:

In the earlier days, the liberation movements such as the ANC wanted us to allow their freedom fighters to transit through Botswana to attack South Africa. We constantly reminded them of our policy of not allowing attacks to be launched from our country, pointing out that if that were to be allowed, then both we and the ANC cadres would be wiped out. After the Nkomati Accord between South Africa and Mozambique, the ANC renewed the request to open up Botswana for guerrillas to transit to South Africa. We refused, explaining our policy as we had done before. We then quietly told the ANC that Botswana was a huge country and that we would not be looking for them. They had the responsibility to avoid being seen by us. In other words they could pass through Botswana, but avoid being seen and arrested.

Despite our vulnerable position, we supported the struggle. We tried not to give South Africa a pretext to attack us. We explained to our African colleagues why we could not open up the country for freedom fighters. Eventually they understood our position. The relations with the liberation movements were good. Whenever there were differences, we discussed them amicably. Our security people worked closely with the ANC security, exchanging information on matters of mutual interest. Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki visited us periodically to exchange views on matters of mutual interest. We told them what we were able to do and what we were unable to do in the liberation struggle. On the whole, they appreciated our position. There were those who argued we should establish bases for liberation movements. We said to do so would be to open both the freedom fighters and Botswana to attacks. We would be sitting ducks.

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(209) Interview with Victor Kowa, (Gaborone) February 2007.

If freedom fighters were caught in Botswana, they would be arrested, put on trial, sentenced, and then sent back to Zambia and Tanzania. They did not serve their sentences because we supported the struggle. The arrests and trials were meant to demonstrate to South Africa that we did not allow attacks on our neighbours from our country.<sup>210</sup>

The foregoing testimonies demonstrate how some Botswana citizens took close interest in the liberation struggle, some risking their lives by working closely with and aiding freedom fighters. Their punishment by the settler regimes could be brutal, their residences and cars bombed, while some risked abduction if found to have collaborated with the freedom fighters or refugees. The citizens of Botswana took these risks because they supported the cause pursued by their kith and kin, as well as by complete strangers, bringing about an end to oppression in the countries that surrounded them. They were acutely aware of the fact that, although they lived in an independent country that respected its laws, they could not be entirely free for as long as their brothers and sisters continued to live under oppression. Moreover, their efforts were complimented by the actions of their government, which, although it forbade military operations within its borders, tacitly supported the struggle.

Up to this point, the focus of Botswana's role in the liberation struggle has emphasized the relationship between the government and its citizens on the one hand, and freedom fighters and refugees on the other. Yet, freedom fighters operating clandestinely in the different parts of Botswana did not act in isolation. Their organisations, with headquarters operating in exile in Zambia and other countries, depended on Botswana's cooperation to carry out their objectives, and so it is appropriate to turn to the relationship between liberation movements and the Government of Botswana, to appreciate this additional level of support that Botswana provided.

## The Role of the Botswana Government

### Government Relations with Liberation Movements

Members of literally all the liberation movements of southern Africa came to or passed through Botswana. Apart from Lesotho and Swaziland, Botswana was the only independent country in the tip of southern Africa. Whether these organisations originated in South Africa (ANC, PAC, BCM, SASO, AZAPO, UM, SAYRICO), Zimbabwe (ZANU, ZAPU, UANC), Namibia (SWAPO, SWANU, CANU),

Mozambique (FRELIMO), or Angola (MPLA, UNITA, FNLA), at least some of their members found their way to Botswana. In response, the Botswana government welcomed all and gave them sanctuary.

The presence of so many liberation movements in Botswana created its own challenges. Liberation organisations competed with one other, and vied for recognition

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(210) Interview with His Excellency Festus Mogae, former President of the Republic of Botswana, (Phakalane, Gaborone) 5 November, 2008.

from the Botswana government and international organizations such as the OAU and the United Nations. Each claimed to be the sole and authentic representative of their country's people. These movements often differed in their ideologies and strategies, each arguing that theirs was the sounder, and their representatives inside Botswana vied for preferential attention.

In 1977, for example, the PAC solicited funds from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), proposing to build what it termed the "Azania Institute," to be located in Gaborone. The PAC claimed they had the backing of Nigeria in this undertaking. The institution would accept students of all persuasions, Batswana included. A representative of the PAC, Elias L. Ntloedibe, officially approached the government on the issue.<sup>211</sup> The government declined, arguing that the Institute would endanger the security and safety of the Batswana, as it would be located on South Africa's doorstep and provide an easy target for attack. Further, Botswana had already taken steps to accommodate South Africans of school-going age in its own schools.<sup>212</sup> Had it materialized, the "Azania Institute" would have given the PAC a major victory over the ANC.

Sometimes representatives of the liberation movements discredited each other before the government in a bid to win recognition over the other. Instead Botswana made every effort to treat them on an equal footing, while urging each movement to bury its differences with the others and fight for a common goal.<sup>213</sup> For instance, some liberation movements complained that the government favoured the ANC by forcing refugees to go for military training at ANC camps at the expense of the other liberation movements. The government response was that, if such were the case, Botswana would have very few refugees. As Secretary for External Affairs, Charles Tibone put it in his stinging rebuttal: "The bickering that goes on between the ANC and other South African movements is an internal South African matter. There is no reason why Botswana should be dragged into it."<sup>214</sup> Tibone stated that Botswana was more interested in unity among liberation movements than in divisive utterances, which were designed to score points. These sentiments were echoed years later by former civil servant Nathaniel Mmono:

The Botswana government urged the movements to unite regardless of ideology and fight a common enemy. The differences among liberation movements put the government of Botswana in a difficult position. Some liberation movements tended to think of themselves rather than the cause. Other movements even had the temerity to accuse Botswana of not being supportive enough.<sup>215</sup>

The Botswana government often found itself in the role of an arbiter. In March 1976, a serious conflict arose in Francistown between two factions of the United African

(211) BNARS, OP 27 47: L.M. Mpotokwane to the President, 16 February 1977.

(212) Ibid.

(213) Interviews with Seepapitso IV, (Gaborone) February 2008; Pule Motang, (Good Hope) June 2007.

(214) BNARS, OP 27/47: CM Tibone to District Commission, Lobatse, 13 December 1976.

(215) Interviews with Nathaniel Mmono, (Hebron) June 2007; Kenneth Nkhwa, (Gulubane) May 2007; Lotlamoreng II, (Good Hope) June 2007; and Motlatsi Molapisi, (Francistown) May 2007.

National Council (UANC): Oliver Sawunyama led the Muzorewa faction against Joshua Nkomo's faction. On the surface the disagreement appeared to centre on the payment of utility bills, but underneath it reflected differences in the parties' beliefs and strategies. Both representatives condemned each other and wrote to the government for arbitration. Sawunyama accused Nkomo's faction of failing to pay telephone and water bills after the latter had moved their office to another building in town that it had secured through the help of the government. In a strongly worded letter to Sawunyama's faction, Mr Lebang Mpotokwane wrote: "I am afraid your attitude may lead to friction [between your organisations]. But as I once informed both of you the government will not tolerate any incident involving your two organizations."<sup>216</sup> Clearly the government was not prepared to support one faction over the other and thereby undermine the struggle.

In the case of Zimbabwe, the liberation movements were routinely invited to attend summit meetings of the heads of the Frontline States, which urged that they cooperate and unite, resulting in the ZANU-ZAPU pact, later to be known as the Patriotic Front.<sup>217</sup> The Muzorewa faction was left out when its proposal for conducting elections prior to a transitional government met opposition from the Botswana government. The Botswana government made it clear, however, that its support for the Patriotic Front did not exclude support of other liberation movements.<sup>218</sup>

Namibian liberation movements in Botswana also had their share of differences and competed for recognition from the Botswana government. The situation was compounded by the fact that the OAU recognized SWAPO, rather than SWANU, as the authentic movement for representing the Namibian people. Here, Botswana was obliged as an OAU member to prefer one movement over the other. SWAPO also campaigned for a unitary state, rather than a fragmented constellation of states favoured by SWANU, which resembled the Bantustan system installed under apartheid South Africa.<sup>219</sup> Botswana's position regarding Namibian independence and its liberation movements was articulated in 1978 by Botswana's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Dr Thomas Tlou, before the UN General Assembly. Tlou proclaimed "Botswana's unswerving support for the struggle of the Namibian people led by SWAPO, their authentic vanguard movement."<sup>220</sup>

SWAPO itself did not regard SWANU as a serious liberation movement and ruled out any possibility of cooperation, much less union. Such was reflected when SWAPO's Administrative Secretary Moses Garoeb met Botswana's representative Cecil Manyeula in Lusaka. Garoeb made it absolutely clear that the question of unity

(216) BNARS, OP 26/46: L.M. Mpotokwane to J.D. Richardson, 29 January 1976.

(217) *Daily News*. "Frontline Heads Boost Nkomo/ Mugabe Pact," 11 January 1977.

(218) *Ibid.* "No support for Bishop's Plans."

(219) *Daily News*. "We want a Unitary State of Namibia." (Botswana Foreign Minister Archibald Mogwe), 3 December 1975.

(220) *Daily News*. "Our Unswerving Support for the Namibian Struggle." 14 June 1978.

between SWAPO and SWANU was out.<sup>221</sup> SWAPO also ruled out any negotiations with the South African regime, when SWANU appeared susceptible. SWANU activists were allegedly more interested in obtaining university education, than in soiling their hands or risking their lives through guerrilla warfare.<sup>222</sup> The Botswana government tried its best to unite these two, and SWANU denied that it lacked commitment to the armed struggle. Members of SWAPO and SWANU, after all, were the same kith and kin fighting for a common cause; unity should far outweigh the differences between them. In summary, though Botswana supported SWAPO, it urged it to unite with its counterpart for the sake of the Namibian people and for the cause of the struggle.

Botswana's reconciliatory approach was supported by its own citizens. As *kgosi* Lotlamoreng II describes it, "The government treated them [liberation movements] equally and encouraged unity. The goal was liberation and not support for one movement over the other." Gladstone Phatudi noted that in spite of conflicts within and among the liberation movements, the Botswana government acted as an arbiter and counselled the liberation movements to unite and fight for a common goal.<sup>223</sup>

Botswana's support for these movements was costly, in human and monetary terms, but steadfast and broadly based. Thousands of refugees connected with these liberation movements poured into Botswana, leaving the Botswana government with the responsibility of, among others, finding them housing, placing them in government schools, setting up shelters and camps for their provision and safety, and finding planes and other means of forwarding freedom fighters to Lusaka and beyond.<sup>224</sup> The government made every effort to involve the liberation movements locally and to involve other independent African states, in these and other matters. An open door policy throughout these years gave all members of these organisations the opportunity to present their views to the government and seek their support.

Perhaps Botswana government's relationship with the liberation movements is best reflected in its support for the OAU's Liberation Committee based in Dar es Salaam. Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, Botswana's former Permanent Representative to the United Nations, had this to say:

We attended meetings of the Liberation Committee in Dar es Salaam. We supported it not only by attending meetings; we also supported it financially, secretly and people don't even realize that not only did we contribute, although we did so after some time because we were afraid that our contributions would be so public that South Africa would be annoyed, and we would be harmed, but eventually we paid our dues.<sup>225</sup>

To escape the scrutiny of its nemesis, South Africa, the Botswana government opened a secret account in Addis Ababa. "Something people don't know," Legwaila related,

(221) BNARS, OP 27/46: Cecil I. Manyeula to Secretary of External Affairs (Office of the President), 9 October 1975.

(222) Ibid.

(223) Interviews with Lotlamoreng II, (Good Hope) June 2007; Gladstone Phatudi, (Hebron) June 2007; Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August, 2006.

(224) Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

(225) Ibid.

is that we had decided earlier that in lieu of contributing this money directly to the Liberation Committee, which would leave our contribution public because it was going to appear in the records of the Liberation Committee, we decided to open an account in Addis Ababa so that we could use the money in that account to support the liberation movements.<sup>226</sup>

By and large the relationship between the liberation movements and the Botswana government was cordial. After all, some of the leadership of the liberation movements were former school mates of President Seretse Khama and of some of his cabinet ministers, while others such as Joshua Nkomo were in school in South Africa at almost the same time. Oliver Tambo of the ANC and Robert Mugabe ZANU attended Fort Hare at the same time as President Khama. The leaders of these movements clearly understood the position of Botswana, and they needed Botswana for their movements to survive. The relations between the two, therefore, were not as tense as some might wish to believe, although there were occasions when the government was called upon to quell tensions among the liberation movements. In spite of factionalism within the liberation movements, the Botswana government maintained its position as arbiter and involved all its representatives in southern African summits as a means of uniting them.<sup>227</sup> The Frontline States, whose role is discussed elsewhere in this chapter, were tireless in making attempts to unify the movements. It was obvious that the defeat of colonialism needed unity and not division. The united liberation movements, particularly of Zimbabwe were a result of the efforts made by Botswana and the Frontline States. Besides dealing with the liberation movements, the Botswana government also had to deal with acts of destabilization by the settler regimes.

### **Botswana and Acts of Destabilization by the Settler Regimes**

The liberation struggle in southern Africa was beleaguered by deliberate acts of destabilization meted out by the oppressive regimes. The settler regimes were bent on intimidating neighbouring states and frightening them away from harbouring “terrorists” and refugees. In all sorts of ways—economic, diplomatic, military—settler regimes perpetrated crimes and assaults on their neighbours without compunction, and often on the slightest pretext. Among others, Botswana bore the brunt of these acts of destabilization, often barbaric. Destabilisation was meant to discourage, if not end, guerrilla activity and make the local populace and their governments pay a steep price for lending any kind of support to the liberation struggle. In Botswana, acts of destabilization took the form of cross-border attacks, bombings, abductions, and assassinations.<sup>228</sup>

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(226) Ibid.

(227) Interview with Samuel Mpuchane, (Gaborone) March 2008. Mr Mpuchane, former Permanent Secretary to the President, is now a businessman.

(228) Dale, R. “Not Always So Placid a Place: Botswana Under Attack.” *African Affairs* 86 (1987): pp.73-91; *idem*. “The Politics of National Security in Botswana: 1900-1990.” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 12.1 (1993): pp.40-56; Interview with Mr Cedric Bapela, (Gaborone) March 2008. Bapela is a former refugee, liberation

Rhodesian and South African armies took out their wrath regarding Botswana's assistance to liberation movements by terrorising peasants in border areas.<sup>229</sup> The UN and other international organisations condemned these acts of aggression, though Britain and the United States abstained from doing so because of their economic and other ties to the Rhodesian and South African regimes. In 1977, Vice President Masire noted that since independence, Rhodesian forces had violated the country's sovereignty thirty one times.<sup>230</sup> In response, the Botswana government was forced to divert its somewhat limited resources to invest in the security of its country. In 1977, the small Police Mobile Unit was supplanted by the small but new Botswana Defence Force for deployment along the Rhodesia-Botswana border.

Rhodesian refugees in and around villages on the Botswana-Zimbabwean border were under constant harassment by the Rhodesian security forces. The infamous Selous Scouts also kidnapped refugees.<sup>231</sup> The Botswana government strongly condemned the abductions, but they continued.<sup>232</sup> Such acts of terror affected innocent citizens who were often shot and/or abducted by Rhodesian soldiers. Two North East District residents (Abel Maphane and Jota Bango), for example, were abducted by Rhodesian intelligence officers.<sup>233</sup> Villagers faced difficulties in carrying out their daily routine along the border. Fields were abandoned for long periods; children and teachers, alike, feared going to school. Due to the Rhodesian crisis, tourist numbers in Chobe and Kasane declined drastically and led to retrenchments.<sup>234</sup>

On numerous occasions, the Rhodesian army crossed into Botswana and staged attacks on BDF camps and carried out ambushes against the soldiers; the Lesoma incident being the worst.<sup>235</sup> Rhodesians also attacked public places. In Francistown they bombed the Mophane Night Club, seriously injuring eighteen women and twenty-four men, two of whom later died. The Rhodesians claimed that refugees and freedom fighters frequented the place. The Botswana government condemned it as an act of cowardice and barbarism, while messages of solidarity and condolences came from all corners of the world.<sup>236</sup> Despite widespread condemnation, Rhodesian attacks increased. Shortly after bombing the Mophane Night Club, they attacked the BDF

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activist, and SASO Chairperson. For South Africa's regional destabilisation campaign, see J. Hanlon, Beggar *Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

(229) In addition to the many such incidents already cited in this chapter, see in the *Daily News*: "Gun Fire at Kazungula," 25 November 1974; "PMU Returns fire in Kazungula incident," 16 October 1975; "Rebel Forces Murder Motswana near Matselole," 23 November 1976; "Rhodesian Troops Shoot Woman," 21 January 1977; "Rhodesian shoot at Batswana," 21 February 1977.

(230) *Daily News*. "Mogwe to attend UN debate on Rhodesian Aggression." 5 January 1977; "UN Resolution Condemn Smith over Botswana." 19 January 1977.

(231) *Daily News*. "Four Rhodesians are Snatched." 25 March 1974; "Rhodesian Refugee Abducted." 16 October 1974; "Dube was taken to Rhodesia." 17 October 1974; "Smith's Men Abduct Ten Men from Here." 8 October 1976.

(232) *Daily News*. "Government Demands Return of Dube from Rhodesia." 18 October 1974.

(233) *Daily News*. "Rhodesia Admits Abducting Batswana." 1 March 1977.

(234) *Daily News*. "Rhodesian War Evokes Kasane Employment Cut." 28 March 1977.

(235) See above.

(236) *Daily News*. "Grenade Blast Toll Now Two." 10 May 1977; Interview with Motlatsi Molapisi, (Francistown) May 2007; "Messages of Sorrow Pour into Botswana." May 1977.

camp at Kazungula. Some of the Rhodesians turned to banditry, robbing motorists and shops at gun point.<sup>237</sup> The Rhodesians also used letter and parcel bombs to eliminate refugees and freedom fighters. One of their victims was Botswana's ZANU representative, Dick Moyo (Joseph Chikara was his real name). Moyo was among the few ZANLA members of the ZANU high command who had escaped detention in Zambia after the death of Herbert Chitepo.<sup>238</sup> Another leader assassinated in this way was ZAPU Vice President J.Z. Moyo, soon after arriving at his Lusaka office from Geneva in January 1977. The parcel was addressed to him in handwriting he recognized and sent from someone he knew in Botswana. Rhodesian Special Branch members celebrated the success of the attack and boasted that they had listened in on a phone call mentioning the parcel, intercepted it in the post, and inserted their explosive device.<sup>239</sup>

Rhodesian forces used all types of intimidation against the villagers near the Rhodesian border. The villagers of Jackalas No. 2 complained that the Rhodesian security forces frequently entered the area and audaciously patrolled the border on the Botswana side.<sup>240</sup> Near Matsiloje, in the North East District, they found amusement in firing over the heads of children fetching water from the river. In August 1975, the Rhodesian soldiers entered near Bosoli and threatened local Batswana over the alleged presence of freedom fighters.<sup>241</sup> Numerous such acts of intimidation and threats along the lengthy border were carried out without cessation, because the border area lacked sufficient soldiers and policemen to superintend it.

South Africa also carried out attacks on Botswana. It did so through the support of Rhodesian security forces and by launching its own attacks on the southern part and from South West Africa on Botswana's northwest. South Africa justified itself by accusing Botswana of harbouring guerrillas. South African Minister of Justice, Police, and Prisons James T. Kruger believed that guerrillas trained in Botswana crossed over into South Africa for subversive activities. The Botswana government denied these claims, even inviting Kruger to identify the military camps purported to exist in the country.<sup>242</sup> Botswana's assertions did little to discourage South Africa. In 1976, reports from Kasane in the Chobe District indicated that six South African soldiers from Caprivi drove their speedboat in the Chobe River in violation of Botswana's territorial waters. Kasane villagers washing laundry at the river were terrified, and the local District Commissioner described the river violation as provocative.<sup>243</sup> South Africans soon drove their boat again into Botswana waters,

(237) *Daily News*. "Armed Rebels Rob US Motorist." 17 June 1977.

(238) Celliers, J.K. *Counter Insurgency in Rhodesia*. London: Croom Helm, 1985: See p.203.

(239) *Ibid*.

(240) BNARS, OP 19/19: M.S. Merafe to Permanent Secretary to the President, 20 August 1975.

(241) BNARS, OP 19/19: S. Hirschfeld to Permanent Secretary to the President, 12 November 1975.

(242) *Daily News*. "Kruger also Welcome to Investigate Such Bases in Botswana." 4 October, 1977; *Daily News*.

"Kruger Asked to Identify Bases in Botswana." 6 October 1977.

(243) BNARS, OP 21/11/1: A.B. Masalila to Permanent Secretary to the President, 9 July 1976: Interview with Sasara George, (Gaborone) February 2007. George is the former First Secretary, Botswana High Commission, Lusaka.

reaching the southern bank of the Chobe River. They disembarked, walked to the Chobe Safari Lodge, sat at the cocktail bar, and started taking photographs of the customers. Some Botswana citizen customers shouted and threw empty beer cans at them and told them to go away.<sup>244</sup>

People living in Botswana and travelling in South Africa faced all sorts of insults and harassment. University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland (UBLS) student Lithebe Maine and three of his friends (also UBLS students) were stopped by South African police near Zeerust. When searching their luggage, the police found a book by Kwame Nkrumah. It belonged to Victor Mtetwa, a Swati, who was a political science major.<sup>245</sup> Maine and his friends were taken to an isolated police station, interrogated, and told that Nkrumah's book was banned in South Africa. They were assaulted, asked for information about refugees, and threatened to be shot if they did not give information about Joe Matthews in Gaborone, Jama Mbeki, a private attorney in Selebi-Phikwe, and the "terrorist" activities of the South African Student Organization (SASO). The police threatened to shoot them if they did not cooperate. They pressured Maine to agree to work for the South Africans by providing information about refugees. When he refused, he was beaten.<sup>246</sup>

South African soldiers routinely engaged in acts of intimidation that bordered on barbarism. In 1977, six South African soldiers crossed the Limpopo River and entered the Tuli Block. At the farm of a Mr Koetzee, who was absent, they came upon an old man, his wife, and their pregnant daughter. The man and his wife were Koetzee's Batswana farm workers. Three of the soldiers assaulted the old man, then dragged his wife to the river, and took turns raping her.<sup>247</sup> They then left and crossed the river back to South Africa. Following Botswana's appeal, the culprits were later court-marshalled, but given a very light sentence.

South Africa was also involved in abductions and assassinations. On 13 June 1979, South African soldiers kidnapped two Batswana at Ramotlabaki in the Kgatleng District at gunpoint and forced them back into South Africa. The two, Molokonye Rapelana and Mokohe Motlhaje, had been herding cattle near the border inside Botswana.<sup>248</sup> The Botswana government intervened in order to get them released. Another kidnap victim was Joseph Sephoka. In April 1982, this Botswana citizen was fishing in the Limpopo River at Pontdrif with his wife, Margaret Tlou Kelapile, and daughter, Alita Sephoka. Ms. Sephoka and her father were employees at the Tuli Lodge. Three white South Africans approached Sephoka, grabbed him, and dragged him across the river into South Africa. The incident was reported to the police, who approached their South African counterparts at Pontdrif, but the South Africans denied knowledge of Joseph Sephoka's whereabouts. Five days later, Joseph

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(244) Ibid.

(245) BNARS, OP 19/19: Simon Hirschfeld to Permanent Secretary to the President, Easter 1976.

(246) Ibid.

(247) BNARS, OP 28/13: Statement by Sergeant Ramodiwa, October 1977.

(248) BNARS, OP 28/13: I.I. Zebe to Permanent Secretary to the President, 19 June 1979.

was found at the Limpopo camp. He confirmed that he had been forcibly abducted from Botswana to South Africa where he had been tortured, assaulted, shocked with electric gadgets, and pressured to join the South African army as an informer.<sup>249</sup>

Politically active South African refugees faced even greater dangers. The South Africans plotted to silence the most outspoken by dealing them gruesome fates. Abram Onkgopotse Tiro, former student of Turfloop University (University of the North) and president of its Student Representative Council (SRC), escaped to Gaborone after he learned that the South African police wanted to arrest him. Tiro had given a stinging speech at a Turfloop graduation, lambasting apartheid and its policies, and calling on the graduating students to become the vanguards of the liberation. In Botswana, Tiro taught at St. Josephs, a Catholic secondary school at Kgale Siding, five miles south of Gaborone. Here Tiro received a parcel purporting to have been mailed from Geneva, Switzerland. The parcel contained a bomb, which killed Tiro instantly when he opened it. Many bombings, in letters, cars, and houses, claimed the lives of Botswana and South African citizens alike.

Alongside Rhodesia's Lesoma massacre stands South Africa's most outrageous attack on Botswana; its 1985 raid on Gaborone targeting South African refugees. On the night of June 14 1985, a well coordinated South African commando unit crossed the border, entered Gaborone, and bombed houses that were at the time or had previously been occupied by South African refugees. A total of twelve South African refugees and two Batswana were killed.<sup>250</sup> Botswana's reaction to the attack was to appeal to the international community to condemn South Africa, reminding the world that it had no capability to retaliate. The Minister of External Affairs, Dr Gaositwe Chiepe, accused South Africa of violating Botswana territory and killing Batswana civilians. In turn, South African Foreign Minister Roelof Frederik "Pik" Botha accused Botswana of harbouring ANC guerrillas and condemned it for doing nothing to stop these activities. Both the local and international public reactions were anti-South African.

At the memorial service for those who died in the raid, Botswana's voice was principled and not submissive, contrary to South Africa's expectations. Botswana made it clear that no amount of violence meted out to the oppressed people in South Africa or to its neighbours for that matter, would extinguish the quest for freedom. South Africa had declared war on its own people and was fighting a losing battle. It would crumble, as had Rhodesia, and other oppressive regimes in the region and in the continent. In the words of former President Quett Masire, "We tried to make sure

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(249) BNARS, OP 28/13: Commissioner of Police to Permanent Secretary to the President, 30 April 1985.

(250) Those killed included Mr Cecil George Pahle, Mrs Lindie Pahle, Mr Thamsanqa (Thami) Harry Mnyele, Mr Ahmed Mohammed Geer, Mrs Eunice Patricia Kobole, Mr Michael Frank Hamlyn, Mr Bassic Amos Zondi, Mr Themba Machobane, and Mr Dick Mitsweni. The twelve included eight South Africans, two Batswana, one Dutch national, and a six-year-old Mosotho boy. The details of the raid and the names of all those killed can be found in the *Daily News*, 21 June 1985.

there was an international uproar so that South Africa would know that if they did worse to us the uproar would be much greater.”<sup>251</sup>

South Africa continued with its attacks on Botswana, nevertheless. In the early morning of 19 May 1986, South Africa launched another attack on the Gaborone suburb of Mogoditshane, where the BDF headquarters is located. Using helicopter gunships and fighter jets, they shot at private houses, which they claimed accommodated ANC refugees and freedom fighters. They also fired at the BDF barracks, scattered anti-ANC leaflets, and then flew back to South Africa. One civilian died and several others were injured.<sup>252</sup>

Another attack came on 11 December 1987. In this night raid, several houses in Gaborone and its precincts were bombed, and four innocent people were killed in the process. South Africa's acts were meant to thwart what it perceived as communist operations on its door step, and were also an attempt to get Botswana to cower. Yet this raid, as with all the others, elicited the opposite reaction and made South Africa increasingly unpopular in the world. And, just as important, South Africa's policy of intimidation and bullying failed to diminish the determination of the liberation movements and its supporters all over Botswana and elsewhere, or even to end protests in South Africa itself.

### **Botswana and the Frontline States (FLS)**

In the mid 1960s, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda and Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere met regularly to exchange views and devise strategies for addressing issues affecting the region. Both of their countries were feeling the effects of increasing numbers of refugees from South Africa, Rhodesia, Angola, Mozambique, and South West Africa. They wanted to harmonise their approach to the refugee question and come up with measures for dealing with southern Africa's oppressive minority regimes. Through Kaunda's efforts, President Seretse Khama participated in these discussions and soon became an indispensable partner. After joining the FLS in 1974, Khama became a moderating voice when differences of opinion threatened to frustrate discussions or cause a stalemate.<sup>253</sup>

Soon after Angola and Mozambique gained their independence in 1974, they too joined the FLS, and, following de-colonisation and the end of apartheid, so did Zimbabwe (1980), Namibia (1990), and South Africa (1994). Lesotho, Malawi, and Swaziland did not become members of the FLS. Malawi was excluded because of its close and cordial relations with apartheid South Africa, with whom Malawi maintained full diplomatic relations. Lesotho and Swaziland were excluded for two reasons. First, Kaunda and Nyerere did not trust their prime ministers. Second, their

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(251) Masire. *Very Brave or Very Foolish?*: See pp.270-271.

(252) Dale, R. *Botswana's Search for Autonomy in Southern Africa*: See pp.56-59.

(253) Masire. *Very Brave or Very Foolish?*: See pp.274-275.

geographical position would make them vulnerable to South African searches for vital documents after FLS meetings.<sup>254</sup>

Initially some misgivings arose as to Khama's FLS participation. Some regarded him as a conservative with little or nothing in common ideologically with the more radical and revolutionary Kaunda and Nyerere. Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, former Botswana Ambassador to the United Nations and one time Senior Private Secretary and Political Assistant to Sir Seretse Khama, put it succinctly:

Well, you know, a lot of people have asked how Botswana became a member of the Frontline States. I think the reason why they are asking is because, if you look at President Kaunda and President Nyerere – the two who started the Frontline States fraternity – I think you realise that there was nothing in common ideologically, between them, and Seretse Khama. Therefore, no one expected Seretse Khama to be welcomed to that fraternity. Additionally, Seretse Khama was geographically too close to South Africa. In other words, what we mean by the Frontline States is their proximity to South Africa, and therefore I am sure a person like President Nyerere would have thought that if Seretse Khama joined the Frontline States, that was tantamount to saying to South Africa, "You can go to hell. I am going to join the very same people who have been agitating against apartheid."<sup>255</sup>

But Kaunda and Nyerere fully welcomed Seretse into their group. As Legwaila explained, "It turned out that, according to Nyerere, that was indeed a Godsend because you had somebody [Seretse] who became a moderating influence in the Frontline States fraternity."<sup>256</sup>

Despite different ideological orientations, the FLS presidents remained united throughout the turbulent period of the armed struggle. They managed to do this because the "ideology" they did share, their guiding principle as it were, was "freedom" for southern Africa. Moreover, their meetings were characterised by a great sense of humour, which drew them much closer together. Khama's "personal qualities of patience and good humour," as Legwaila listed them, "discretion when required, and honest talking when needed, were to be put to the test in keeping the frontline brotherhood together." Of course, the brilliance and sharp wit of FLS chairman

*Mwalimu* Nyerere brought exceptional guidance to these deliberations as well.

For example, Khama played up the humour of his being a "wicked capitalist" and a soft-hearted liberal amongst avowed socialists of a different ilk. Khama arrived in a small plane to attend one of their meetings, and, after the pilot parked it alongside the hulking presidential aircraft, Khama quipped: "I do enjoy meeting all you socialists. By the way, I notice that I am the only one to come in a hired plane." He then distributed oranges from his Seleka farm among them, saying "Look what this capitalist has brought you all, this time." When Seretse was addressed in jest as "chief," as he often

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(254) Ibid.

(255) Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

(256) Ibid.

was because of his royal birth, Khama was apt to counter by drawing attention to Nyerere's lesser known aristocratic origins by addressing him as "headman."<sup>257</sup>

Similarly, Kaunda teased Khama over his fondness for *phane* (a type of silk-worm harvested from *Mophane* trees in northern Botswana; when dried, regarded as a local delicacy). Khama often stuffed his pockets with *phane*, occasionally picking one at a time to chew as a snack. On occasion when Khama dug into his pockets,

Kaunda was apt to shout "Seretse, have you dropped your worms?" or "Seretse, pick up your worms!" Such teasing in a good humoured manner helped to keep these presidential meetings on an even keel, important at times when considerable stress and fatigue might otherwise have prompted bickering.<sup>258</sup> Kaunda and Khama had been friends for over a decade, and once they came to know Khama, Nyerere and Machel became his close friends, too, in spite of their initial wariness of him because of their ideological orientation.<sup>259</sup>

Of course, differences among the FLS presidents were bound to arise over certain issues, but they agreed to differ or reconcile their differences. For example, on the question of Angola, Kaunda and Khama did not see eye to eye with Machel and Nyerere. When the MPLA declared itself the government of an independent People's Republic of Angola on 11 November 1975, the other liberation movements, FNLA and UNITA, did not accept it. Kaunda, who had just developed fairly good relations with UNITA, insisted that there should be a government of national unity until elections could be held. Seretse supported Kaunda at an OAU special meeting in Addis Ababa in January 1976. Machel and Nyerere supported immediate recognition of the MPLA. Khama held little truck with the essentially undemocratic notion that any party could be declared the "sole and authentic" representative of an entire people without elections. However, South Africa's invasion of Angola in support of UNITA complicated matters. On the university campuses in Botswana and Zambia, students demonstrated in support of the MPLA and against the South African invasion. Khama and Kaunda eventually recognised the MPLA government.<sup>260</sup>

The main tasks before the Frontline States were to devise strategies for dealing with white racist regimes and to assist those movements struggling to liberate their countries. Movement leaders were invited to FLS meetings so that all could review progress of the struggle or otherwise and tender advice as necessary. The Frontline States worked assiduously to unite liberation movements so that they could mount effective struggles against their oppressors. They also provided them with diplomatic and material support.

On the diplomatic front, FLS governments worked in concert to persuade Great Britain, the United States of America, and European countries to support the

(257) Parsons, N. et al. *Seretse Khama 1921-1980*. Gaborone: The Botswana Society/Macmillan BOLESWA, 1995: See p.319; Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

(258) Ibid.

(259) Parsons. *Seretse Khama*. See pp.319-320; Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

(260) Parsons. *Seretse Khama*: See p.325.

oppressed people of southern Africa. They kept up their diplomatic campaign through representations in such fora as the UN, the Commonwealth, and many others. One-time Permanent Secretary for External Affairs Lebang Mpotokwane captures in his testimony the role played by the FLS:

The Frontline States attended to the struggle in southern Africa. The Frontline States were facing the problems of white minority racist regimes more than other countries. There was a need for these countries to work together in order to find a solution. The countries exchanged views about what needed to be done. They discussed ways of influencing policy by other countries and international organizations against the minority ruled white racist states. The Frontline States worked in concert to influence major powers such as Britain, the United States, and other European countries. They also tried to unify liberation movements so that they would be stronger. Botswana's role in the FLS was that she agreed with other countries, but she always made it very clear what she could afford. There were certain things that other Frontline States could afford in dealing with Rhodesia and South Africa that Botswana could not. Botswana was very realistic in her policy towards the powerful settler states and the other Frontline States understood our position. In principle, Botswana agreed with the other member states.<sup>261</sup>

At the first FLS meeting Khama attended in 1974 in Lusaka, the three presidents (Khama, Kaunda, and Nyerere) persuaded the Zimbabwean parties to unite as the United African National Council (UANC), headed by Bishop Abel Muzorewa. Joseph Legwaila describes what took place:

It was a dramatic meeting, in the sense that Mwalimu [Nyerere] had to send his Private Secretary, accompanied by Mark Chona, the Special Assistant to President Kaunda, to go to Salisbury to liberate, for a very short period of time, the leaders of ZANU

– to make sure that they could attend the meeting in Lusaka, and [Joshua] Nkomo had to be brought from the detention camp, to attend that meeting. Then, of course, Mwalimu discovered that what was brought from Salisbury was [Robert] Mugabe, instead of [Ndabaningi] Sithole. President Nyerere believed that the leader of ZANU was Ndabaningi Sithole, not Robert Mugabe. The two – that is, the Private Secretary to President Nyerere and the Special Assistant to President Kaunda, Mark Chona – had to go back to bring Sithole, and Sithole was brought during the night. Finally, the parties agreed to unite under Bishop [Abel] Muzorewa.

The idea was that they would unite and go back to Salisbury to organise a Congress to elect a leader to replace Muzorewa. Of course, if they elected Muzorewa, that would have been their prerogative. And, unfortunately, that Congress never took place, because some of the people who had gone to Lusaka, instead of staying in Salisbury, some like Robert Mugabe, for instance, took off for the border with Mozambique and went into Mozambique, to prosecute the liberation struggle from Mozambique.<sup>262</sup>

The Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Smith, tried to buy off Nkomo by holding separate talks with him in 1975, while Muzorewa's UANC began splitting into

(261) Interviews with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006; Lebang Mpotokwane, (Gaborone) August 2006; Gaositwe K.T. Chiepe, (Gaborone) August 2006; Archibald Mogwe, (Gaborone) September 2006.

(262) Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

factions. When Nkomo came to brief Seretse about the talks with Smith, Seretse disapproved of this approach as it would weaken the struggle. In March 1976, Nkomo abandoned the talks when Smith asserted that white power would have to be guaranteed in any settlement.

Attempts to solve the Rhodesian problem through negotiations collapsed when the liberation movements failed to unite, and Ian Smith remained recalcitrant, declaring that there would be no majority rule in Rhodesia during his life time. This caused Khama to state, when asked if it was worthwhile continuing the dialogue with Smith, that:

The British tried a long time ago – “Tiger” and “Fearless”, “the Pearce Commission” and what have you. Nkomo tried – I do not think Smith has ever budged from his position. He has said “No” to majority rule in his life time, in a thousand years. So it doesn’t matter how patient you are, how much goodwill you have, nor how much you shun bloodshed, you must at some stage get fed up.<sup>263</sup>

In April 1976, American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger came to the region to consult with the FLS and the white minority governments about a negotiated settlement. Kissinger’s reason for sudden concern in southern Africa was his fear for Western interests following the arrival of Cuban troops in Angola and the inflow of Soviet arms there that began in March 1976. Archie Mogwe, Khama’s indefatigable Minister for External Affairs, dismissed Kissinger’s mission as “Much Ado About Nothing.” Kissinger’s failure to consult with the liberation movements ensured the demise of his mission.<sup>264</sup>

The failure of the liberation movements to implement what was agreed to in Lusaka, namely to form a united front, did not discourage the FLS from pressing the Zimbabwean parties to unite. Legwaila described how they were preoccupied for days with this issue. In the end, FLS efforts paid off when Nkomo’s ZAPU and Mugabe’s ZANU formed what became the Patriotic Front and prosecuted the struggle more effectively (The parties retained their original names and became ZANU-PF and ZAPU-PF.). In February 1976, the FLS met at Quelimane in Mozambique and threw unqualified support behind the Zimbabwean Patriotic Front in resuming the armed struggle against the Smith regime. The presidents were pleased about the PF’s formation, hoping it might avoid the fractiousness that afflicted relations among the Angolan liberation movements.<sup>265</sup>

The FLS persuaded Britain to hold talks with the Zimbabwean liberation movements to reach agreement on the independence of Zimbabwe. Smith and PF leaders attended the talks at Lancaster House in London, where Botswana was represented by Archibald Mogwe and Joseph Legwaila. The Lancaster House Agreement, which was

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(263) Parsons et al. *Seretse Khama*. See p.327.

(264) Ibid, See pp.327-28; Masire, *Very Brave or Very Foolish?*: See p.283; Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

(265) Masire. *Very Brave or Very Foolish?*: See p. 283; Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

concluded on 21 December 1979, led to a constitution, elections, and independence in 1980.<sup>266</sup> Commenting on this development, Seretse Khama said that peace in Rhodesia also meant peace for Botswana. “It will also contribute to the momentum towards peace in the rest of Southern Africa.”<sup>267</sup> On 28 December 1979, the Office of the President announced that with immediate effect the country would lift sanctions against Rhodesia in the spirit of the Agreement.<sup>268</sup> In January 1980, the first batch of Zimbabwean refugees were repatriated to return home and register for the country’s first ever truly democratic elections in which all racial groups participated. The government made available twenty-three of its five-ton and twelve-ton trucks to transport refugees to Zimbabwe.<sup>269</sup> At Plumtree in Rhodesia, thirty-four Botswana truck drivers were arrested by the local authorities, but released after a few days following a demand from the Botswana government.<sup>270</sup> This was seen as an attempt by the Rhodesian government to deprive the refugees of the opportunity to register for the election, and thereby deny victory to the Patriotic Front. The elections were held and won by ZANU-PF of Robert Mugabe who assumed power in an independent Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980. Three months later, Seretse Khama died of cancer, his passing away representing a great loss to Botswana, while seeming to provide finality to the Zimbabwean liberation struggle.

Apart from Zimbabwe, the FLS were deeply involved in bringing about the liberation of Namibia and ending apartheid in South Africa. At their meetings, they invited Sam Nujoma, Oliver Tambo, and others to discuss the situation in their countries. They worked assiduously in the United Nations and elsewhere to drum up support for the SWAPO and the ANC. In Namibia’s case, competing liberation movements was much less of a problem than it had been for Zimbabwe. SWAPO was the dominant liberation movement. The FLS did not think much of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) backed by the South African government, and SWANU which, though it had a few backers in Botswana, was not an effective liberation movement. Botswana released its Ambassador to the United Nations, Joseph Legwaila, to be the Deputy to the Special Representative of the UN in Namibia, Marti Ahtisaari of Finland (the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize winner). Legwaila was also dispatched to South Africa to observe the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) and Multi Party Negotiation Process talks at Kempton Park, which resulted in the emergence of a democratic South Africa in 1994.

### **Botswana and the Formation of SADC**

The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), formed in 1980, and renamed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in 1992,

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(266) Ibid.

(267) *Daily News*. 28 December 1979.

(268) *Daily News*. 28 December 1979.

(269) *Daily News*. 18 January 1980; 23 January 1980.

(270) *Daily News*. 28 January 1980.

was a creation of the Frontline States. The Commonwealth Secretariat approached the FLS through Seretse Khama with this idea of forming an economic grouping as a wing of the FLS. Khama's envoy Joseph Legwaila later recalled SADCC's genesis:

I was sent to Dar es Salaam to broach this idea to President *Mwalimu* [Julius] Nyerere, and I went there with the Minister of External Affairs, Mr [Archibald] Mogwe; and President Nyerere said well, since he was the Chairman of the Frontline States, and in any case, Tanzania was not a contiguous country to South Africa; and then, of course, the other reason he gave was that Seretse Khama, so far as the Western world is concerned, was more popular than he was. Thus when Seretse Khama goes out to ask for assistance on behalf of an economic wing of the Frontline States, the international community would be more forthcoming than if he – *Mwalimu* – were to go there and ask for assistance. And, therefore, we came back and informed our President, who agreed to initiate what today we call SADC, and again it was I, and Minister Mogwe, who went around selling the idea to all the Presidents of the Frontline States. And, therefore, SADC is a child of the Frontline States.

This is because of the solidarity that the Frontline States felt, and that is why it was easy for them to agree to an economic wing of the Frontline States. Because even that economic wing of the Frontline States could have been problematic because there are those who felt that we should also invite the Soviet Union, for instance; the GDR, and knowing Botswana, we thought that those would be invited simply to occupy space, because they were not known to give aid, I mean financial aid. All they used to give were weapons for the liberation struggle.

And then, of course, eventually we said, "Well, let's invite whoever needs to be invited," and we agreed that we invite the East and the West to participate in the first meeting of SADC. But I think the long and short of the story is that SADC is a child of the solidarity that we, in the Frontline States, felt towards each other.<sup>271</sup>

In his memoirs, Sir Ketumile Masire states that SADCC was almost high-jacked by Professor Adebayo Adedeji of Nigeria, who was working at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa. At that time he was advising Zambia on some economic matters. Adedeji came up with the idea of a Preferential Trade Area (PTA) for Eastern and Southern Africa. Professor Adedeji drafted a PTA constitution, which he intended to table at SADCC's first meeting in Arusha, Tanzania. At the same time, a SADCC draft constitution was also drawn up with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat.<sup>272</sup>

Before the Arusha meeting, when SADCC was formally launched in Lusaka in April 1980, members faced the question of what to do with the PTA draft constitution. In other words, which document would be presented to the heads of state at the Arusha summit? Masire, who chaired the preparatory meeting of ministers, handled the two documents diplomatically. "I began the meeting," he recounts, "by saying that we had two drafts, and since this was a SADCC meeting we would start with the SADCC draft and add whatever was appropriate from Professor Adedeji's draft. That was

(271) Interview with Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, (Gaborone) August 2006.

(272) Masire. *Very Brave or Very Foolish?*: See pp.276-277.

how we proceeded.”<sup>273</sup> The draft SADCC constitution was adopted, and President Seretse Khama was elected SADCC founding Chairman, a position that Botswana held for many years. The SADCC headquarters were established in Gaborone, where Botswana officials (principally Lebang Mpotokwane and Kenneth Matambo) did the preparatory work until an Executive Secretary was appointed.

While Malawi, Lesotho, and Swaziland were excluded from the Frontline States group, at Botswana’s insistence, they were invited into SADCC. As Masire put it, “we felt that if we were to have regional cooperation for economic development, it was logical to include all the countries in the region.”<sup>274</sup> Khama sent Masire to invite these countries to join SADCC, and they agreed. Other states—the Democratic Republic of Congo, Seychelles, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa—were admitted later. In his memoir, Masire noted Botswana’s expectations for SADCC:

Some thought SADCC was a way of opposing South Africa, but it was more a case of protecting ourselves from South Africa. We could see a role of SADCC even beyond a new political dispensation in South Africa... It was not just a question of dealing with South Africa as a pariah. We also needed to coordinate development in the region even after apartheid. It was a matter often discussed by Seretse and Nyerere.<sup>275</sup>

In summary, the main aims of SADCC were:

- to reduce economic dependence on South Africa in particular, but also on other countries outside the SADCC area;
- to promote trade between SADCC countries, and thus foster regional integration;
- to unite SADCC countries in getting foreign aid for development projects, and
- to develop joint projects that would benefit SADCC countries.<sup>276</sup>

On 17 August 1992 at their meeting in Windhoek, SADCC heads of state signed the treaty that created the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to replace the SADCC. This move reflected the maturity of the organisation and its strengthened commitment to regional cooperation. Some of the objectives of SADC are:

- achieve development and economic growth, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of the people of Southern Africa;
- develop common political values, systems and institutions;
- promote and defend peace and security;
- promote development, through collective self-reliance and interdependence of member states;
- promote productive employment and use of the resources of the region;
- protect the environment; and
- promote links among the people of the region.<sup>277</sup>

(273) Masire. *Very Brave or Very Foolish?*: See p.277.

(274) Ibid.

(275) Ibid.

(276) Tlou, T. and A. Campbell. *History of Botswana*: See p.386.

(277) Ibid. See p.388.

Perhaps SADC's greatest achievement has been to bring together the states in the region to discuss matters of mutual interest. By jointly planning their development, SADC has created a sense of togetherness. Gradually the people of the region are realising that they share a common history, destiny, and goals, while they face similar problems. Their future binds them together as does their joint advantage in solving problems through cooperation and self-reliance. In that spirit, Botswana has participated, together with other SADC countries in finding solutions to crises in Lesotho, Mozambique, Somalia, and now more recently in Darfur and Zimbabwe.

Other activities aimed at enhancing regional integration include promoting trade among the SADC countries and creating cultural and academic exchanges. Clearly Botswana benefits from such activities. Achieving full regional integration is necessarily a slow process that depends on, among other factors, the political will of SADC member states and the political and economic stability of the region. Nevertheless, a commendable beginning has been made towards viable regional integration. It is worth noting that there is overwhelming support for regional integration on the part of those interviewed who are knowledgeable about SADC affairs.

## Conclusion

Contrary to views held by some, the information provided by oral testimonies, the main source for this study, supplemented by documentary evidence, conclusively demonstrates that Botswana played a significant role in the liberation struggles in southern Africa. Despite its precarious geopolitical situation arising from its being almost entirely surrounded by racist white minority regimes, it rendered assistance, to the best of its ability, to those fleeing oppression, by offering them a safe haven as refugees, and to those who wished to join liberation movements, by facilitating their passage to the north to such countries as Zambia and Tanzania.

Assistance, both covert and overt, that enabled the struggle to be executed purposefully, was tendered to the liberation movements. Despite its limited resources and heavy economic dependence on apartheid South Africa, Botswana maintained a principled stance against racial discrimination and exploitation of the black majority in white-minority-ruled countries.

Botswana paid a heavy price in the process as the racist white minority regimes launched attacks against it and actively sought its destabilisation. However, the country continued its support for the liberation cause to the end.

Together with other Frontline States, Botswana played a major role in assisting the liberation movements to prosecute the struggle to its logical conclusion. The Frontline States tendered advice to the liberation movements, and mobilised material, political, diplomatic, and other forms of support to the liberation movements.

## Abbreviations

ANC:	African National Congress (South Africa)
AZAPO:	Azanian People's Organisation
BCR:	Botswana Council for Refugees
BCM:	Black Consciousness Movement (South Africa)
BCW:	Botswana Council of Women
BDF:	Botswana Defence Force
BDP:	Bechuanaland (later Botswana) Democratic Party
BIP:	Botswana Independence Party
BNARS:	Botswana National Archives and Records Services
BNF:	Botswana National Front
BFPF:	Bechuanaland Protectorate Federal Party
BPP:	Bechuanaland (later Botswana) People's Party
CANU:	Caprivi African National Union (Namibia)
CODESA:	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
DTA:	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (Namibia)
FLS:	Frontline States
FNLA:	National Liberation Front of Angola
FRELIMO:	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
IRM:	Isandhlwana Revolutionary Movement
JAC:	Joint Advisory Council
LEGCO:	Legislative Council
LWF:	Lutheran World Federation
MK:	Spear of the Nation ( <i>Umkhonto we Sizwe</i> , military wing of the ANC)
MPLA:	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
OAU:	Organisation of African Unity
OP:	Office of the President Series (BNARS)
PAC:	Pan African Congress (South Africa)
PF:	Patriotic Front, the alliance of ZANU and ZAPU (Zimbabwe)
PLAN:	People's Liberation Army of Namibia (military wing of SWAPO)
PMU:	Botswana Police Mobile Unit, formerly Paramilitary Mobile Unit
PTA:	Preferential Trade Area
SADC:	Southern African Development Community, formerly the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC)
SADF:	South African Defence Force
SASO:	South African Student Organisation
SAYRCO:	South African Youth Revolutionary Council (South Africa)
SB:	Special Branch (for the BDF)
SIDA:	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRC:	Student Representative Council
SWANU:	South African Youth Revolutionary Council (Namibia)
SWAPO:	South West Africa People's Organisation (Namibia)

UANC:	United African National Council (Zimbabwe)
UBLS:	University of Botswana, Lesotho, and
Swaziland UDF:	United Democratic Front
UDI:	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (1965 Rhodesia)
UM:	Unity Movement (South Africa)
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNITA:	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
WCC:	World Council of Churches
YWCA:	Young Women's Christian Association
ZANLA:	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (military wing of ZANU)
ZANU:	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU:	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZIPRA:	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZAPU)



# 5.4

## Botswana

### Personal Stories

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- Badirwang, Mogomotsi —361  
Bapela, Cedric—363  
Bapela, Ledric —365  
Bathami, Kangangwani—367  
Bereng, Thato—369  
Chilume, Obed Itani —374  
Chiziyo, Kaki —376  
Diane, Munyani Kgosana—381  
Dintwe, Moatshe Gobby—384  
Gaborone, Monare—388 Gaborone,  
Elijah —392  
George, Sasara —394  
Habano, Taolo Goyamang —397  
Kadimo, Lopang N.—399  
Katukula, Esther —402  
Kgokong, Mpotseng—405  
Kgosientsho, Lerayang —406  
Kowa, Victor—410  
Kwerepe, Gaerobwe Mesho —412  
Legwaila, Joseph —419  
Liti, Ester—425  
Lotlamoreng, Kgosi of the Barolong—427  
Malema, Kgosi Mmirwa —429  
Manamela, John —431  
Maplanka, Edward Barakanye —433  
Masire, Tebogo—438  
Mathora, William Maziba —442  
Mathumo, Meshack —444  
Maruatona, James —447  
Mbakani, Maria —450  
Mbayi, (Mr) —452  
Merafhe, Mompati—454  
Mfanamajaha, Friday Mufisa (The Late)—462  
Mgadla, Nono —464  
Minyoi, Lloyd Mutakela—466  
Mmantsho, Mme—469  
Mmutla, Gaditshwane —471  
Moahi, Billy—477  
Mogae, Festus G.—479  
Mogorosi, Benjamin —483  
Mogorosi, Okgetheng Legong —485  
Molapisi, Motlatsi —489  
Molefhe, Patlako—491  
Morake, Kesegofetse—492  
More, Mme Lentle—494  
Moroka, Tshidi —498  
Mosetlhe, John —501  
Mosogwane, Makgabane —503  
Motang, Pule —505  
Motswai, Sekgwa—507  
Mpho Motsamai —509  
Munisola, Joseph M. —514  
Muyoba, Akanyang —516  
Muyonda, Gaufiwe—518  
Ngonga, Edward —521  
Ngala, Join —523  
Ngonga, Lucas —527  
Nkhwa, Kenneth Moesi —529  
Phatudi, Gladstone —531  
Pinto, Alvaru —533  
Ramsden Ronald—535  
Sankwasa, Luckson—539

- Sarah, Mma—542  
Seepapitso, Kgosi —543  
Sefako, Fumbani —545  
Sekgororoane —549  
Sekhambo, Mma —551  
Sekwababe, Calvin Thunamo—555  
Sekwababe, Kapaletswe —556  
Serote, Thibedi —557  
Sethoko, Lethogile Modumo —561  
Setshwaelo, Ntombi —565
- Sisingi, Adriano—567  
Slash, Siana Mothusi —569  
Thupane, Shirley —574  
Tlou, Stephen —576  
Tsholofelo Morake, Mrs —578  
Vanqa, Mrs—580  
Vanqa, Themba —582  
White, Songai —583  
Willet, Sheila—585  
Woman (2) - Anonymous —588

## Badirwang, Mogomotsi

[Gobojango Village]

*Mogomotsi Badirwang, was born in and also resides in Gobojango village as a pastoral and agricultural farmer. He tells about his experiences during the liberation struggle, mainly with Rhodesian refugees.*

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I Mogomotsi Badirwang, was born in Gobojango and also resides in this village as a pastoral and agricultural farmer.

The following is what I can recall from the history of the liberation war in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. The war in Rhodesia, waged by Ian Smith, started during the 1970s. It was an internal conflict in Zimbabwe. The ruling strong party, “Smith Regime was struggling to control the power to rule. I remember the time when the Rhodesian blacks crossed into Botswana in large numbers. Some of these people were injured or sick when they arrived at our village, fleeing the atrocities of this cruel regime. They arrived at our cattle post in Moshalalwe, along the Shashe River, which is also on the border with Zimbabwe. We quickly made transport available, like donkey cart or bicycle, and sometimes we actually escorted them to the main village, Gobojango, where the police or government officials were located. This was an underground activity with the blessing of the late President Seretse Khama, who gave us permission to do so, as the community of the surrounding villages. The golden rule was to assist all these people fleeing and to make them surrender them to the Government Authorities so that they can be transported in vehicles to Zambia and other destinations. As time went by, we also encountered some frightening incidents. In 1975 or 1976, Mr Join Ngala, a prominent farmer, who helped a lot of refugees by giving them food and shelter was attacked during the night. This came about because some of the spies who had infiltrated the refugees and returned to Rhodesia during the night, went to call Smith’s soldiers directed them to Mr Ngala’s home. On arrival they set some huts on fire, fired at random, destroying his house, tractors and other property with arms of war and grenades.

In spite of these attacks, Batswana continued to give more support to their neighbours, who were fleeing through their country, in large numbers, to their destinations. As the war escalated, these freedom fighters sought refuge from the front line as casualties. We took them to our cattle posts along the border and had them treated. They had their own medical men and we transported those who were badly wounded to bigger hospitals in Bobonong or Selibe Phikwe.

During the mid 1970s, Mr Join Ngala’s house that was attacked during the night, was an arrival point for most of the refugees. Some spies who returned to Rhodesia, informed the Smith regime of this activity so that the regime soldiers attacked Mr Ngala’s house using machine guns, destroying property and burning his houses although no one was killed.

In spite of all these threats, we continued to help our neighbours with our motto of “Boipelego”, meaning self-reliance; and we were advised to be secretive or to perform what we were doing as an underground activity, when helping the freedom fighters with the support of the government.

I recall one day, a certain white man accompanied by two white women landed at the Gobojango Airstrip. He then moved around the village at random and the people got suspicious. This case was reported to the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), and when they arrived, this white man refused to stop when he was ordered to do so. Warning shots were fired and this spy was finally captured without any resistance.

What I can remember is that since our cattle post is within the border we interacted a lot with the freedom fighters, who actually had their daily meals from us, and proceeded with their work inside Zimbabwe.

Our participation in the Liberation of Zimbabwe was done for a genuine cause, but even after independence we encounter some problems with our neighbours. The Zimbabweans are still scrambling, not all is well in their country. What is annoying is that, when they cross over to Botswana they steal our domestic animals, donkeys, goats, sheep, cattle; they also do housebreaking and robberies. This is a reflection of an unstable country, hunger, poverty resulting in lawlessness.

This is totally undesirable because we are not happy to lose our belongings in this manner. Before we used to trade with our neighbours, go to the hospital in Mpilo, Bulawayo, Manama and so on, but because of this friction, things are not smooth any more. Zimbabwe is our neighbour; we are one tribe with the Babirwa on the other side; we have all these villages of Mabolwe, Semolale, Gobojango and Bobonong, but this inter-border crime disturbs our relations.

## Bapela, Cedric

[Bontleng]

*Cedric Bapela came to Botswana as a refugee from South Africa in 1981. He was a freedom fighter and was involved in the liberation struggle, to escape the Boers. He is now staying in Bontleng as a former refugee.*

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I was one of the refugees, and my name is Cedric Bapela. I came to Botswana in 1981, because of the political set up, I don't know what to say but the political turmoil, Boers arresting and killing people, and then we flee, while fighting for freedom. I was involved directly in the struggle. We were fighting for freedom of the black man; exploitation from the Boers and freedom.

Coming to Botswana was a better choice because of the tribal setup and relations, as I am a Mopedi. I was to associate with either Botswana or Lesotho but I chose Botswana because I couldn't be in two places at the same time. Again Lesotho is a landlocked country, so when trapped up in Lesotho it was not easy to flee; you were likely to be killed as it later happened to some of our members who went there. The language in Botswana was also similar to ours.

the reception you got from Batswana was mixed; some were ready to accommodate us while others were not, and those who sympathised with us were always supporting us with a variety of things when ever in need.

We just told ourselves that we were in a foreign country so things will not always be simple and we had to be strong acting as a unity. When I came here I had just finished my matrix and was ready for tertiary education but things were not that easy. After sometime I did accounting at the University of Botswana, and later acquired other qualifications.

When I came here I was 20 years old and I came alone without my parents to take care of me; we were just a group of students. When we arrived here some students from the June 16 uprising were already here. We were still students and this house used to accommodate refugee students like Kgotso Seatlholo, who was our president during the Soweto uprising. We had powerful ladies too, those who held high positions in our organisation, some of us stayed in Tlokweng. Like I was saying they held powerful positions which meant they had responsibility to carry. But since we were in a foreign country it was difficult to notice any significant role and say this is what they were doing but they were important to the struggle.

There were many challenges did they face in Botswana, like having to stay away from parents and family in a foreign country or not knowing what was going to happen the following day, at such a young age. The women survived the challenges as they were our sisters and partners in the struggle, so we had to be there offering protection for each other always.

We came to Botswana as political advocates belonging to the Soweto Student's Representative Council and the South African Revolutionary Council.

Botswana government's policy on refugees then was that of non-interference with other states; they encouraged refugees to stay in Botswana at Dukwi where they were kept safely and provided with basic needs. As refugees we were not happy with the government policy; we expected the government to do more, like coming up with other policies to ensure our safety in Botswana.

I stayed in Dukwi for some time until I came to Gaborone to study. I stayed in Dukwi in 1981. I came to Gaborone to study with the help of the African American Institute. I don't know the Government policy on refugees at the moment because my status as a refugee ceased when we attained independence in South Africa, that was 14 years ago.

When I first came here my behaviour was bad; at the age of 20 in a foreign country alone, we had to get used to the political climate of a foreign country. We were thrown in the deeper end, with the sharks waiting to eat you. Having left our political enemies at home, we held the responsibilities of adults, at very young age. The behaviour of Botswana towards refugees never changed at all. I don't know why it never changed, but in life people are always like that, there are those who love you and those who hate you. There were sexual relationships between Botswana and the refugees; some of them are still married couples as we speak, it was natural love with no discrimination. Sometimes we had to protect refugee women from Botswana men because we were coming from the same pot and we could not bring them that far just to let them be played around by Botswana men. It was just protection; it was not like we were against their relationships though.

The general challenges that we faced in Botswana as refugees were like growing up without parents; there was shortage of food and clothing was sub-standard as they were donations from the Botswana Council of Refugees which was second hand.

Those who had come without having graduated from secondary schools were able to go to schools like St. Joseph College and other schools, which were available. The students were able to adjust well to the new school environment because there was less hostility in Botswana schools. As refugees we were not happy at all about the role played by the Botswana Government to help us, because of the way we were handled and reprimanded; coming from Soweto our culture was different.

We did not have a political office in Botswana. This house was our office, and it was not a secret, the Boers just came and took pictures of it and when some of us went to South Africa we were confronted but no action was taken against us.

The liberation struggle sharpened my mind; I grew strong politically and was able to face challenges at an early age. I always go back home; our political asylum ended in 1994. I have my passport and I am a South African staying in Botswana. I am married; I met my wife five years ago and we have a kid. I am still staying in this house because I bought it from the owner of this house.

## Bapela, Ledric

*Mr Ledric Bapela arrived in Botswana in 1981 as a refugee from South Africa, because of the politics of that time. He joined the University of Botswana and had to concentrate in school at the same time he was working for the liberation struggle. He got married to a Batswana and is now working in Botswana as a South African. He tells of his experiences in Botswana during the liberation struggle.*

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We had another house in Lobatse which was bought directly by Obasanjo in 1976. Our boys were staying there and happened to be arrested in South Africa with some guns. I was summoned to Muyaluka's office from the University where I was a student. I used to get permits for our boys to stay in Lobatse; the permits came from Modimakwane in the office of the President. The case had a potential of exposing Botswana as a potential base for terrorists and terrorist training. The guy was sentenced to 6 years in Robben Island.

We had people who backed us and our students' organization; people like Kwelagobe, Magang, former minister, Rre Setlhoboko, who were sympathetic to our cause. They used to call us and tell us through their intelligence, the movements and intentions of the Boers and we used to survive that way. Now I am no more a refugee, but a South African working in Botswana and married in Botswana. Botswana is now my home.

We are part of the people and community and the community is part of us. This house is a symbol of the struggle, because most of the refugees stayed there. We were friends with the people. Since 1976 we had been coming here, so for some twenty odd years, we were part and parcel of the people of Botswana. We respect Batswana for that. My life was an experience in Botswana. I arrived in Botswana in 1981 that was 27 years ago. Last year I was invited to address a gathering of the 60th anniversary of Steve Biko at the South African High Commission as a special guest. The High Commissioner asked me to help because I was there during the liberation struggle.

We were part of the grassroots. We had the issue of Tiro; a tombstone was put on his grave. Tiro was later exhumed and buried in his home country.

I came to Botswana as I said in August, 1981 because of the politics of the time. I was supposed to have initially gone to India for a scholarship, organized by Fatima Meiah, a sociology lecturer at the University of Natal. But I left for Botswana by train and got off at Mafeking railway station. In the evening I took a bus, got off in the middle of nowhere and walked through the bush. I knew that I was near the Botswana border. I rested during the day and walked at night. I crossed into Botswana at Pitsane next to Rakhuna and I was alone. Then I started marching towards Lobatse and arrived around three on the same day. I was walking parallel to the road so that I could get my bearings. Then all of a sudden someone emerged in front of me and he was very dirty with torn clothes. I greeted him and he said you know what, the Boers are patrolling here. He told me that he wanted to cross to Botswana but couldn't and he wanted to go back because of the Boers. The guy was right because the Boers missed us by

a whisker. I had to retreat back into South Africa before I could press on with my journey. I re-crossed into Botswana at 12 midnight. I slept for 3 nights in the bush. I had bought two loaves of brown bread and raw eggs. My suitcase with clothes and a blanket was a pain, yet necessary. I got a lift at Rakhuna.

I had crossed at the “famous” steps at Rakhuna where so many had crossed. The lift of a truck dropped me in Lobatse. I immediately asked for a police station where I told them that I wanted to be arrested because I had entered the country illegally. They did not arrest me but I was taken to the Special Branch. I was in Lobatse for 5 days while the Special Branch were still verifying where I was a genuine refugee or not. They took my finger prints. I was then brought to Gaborone. The Special Branch told me that the Boers were looking for me because of politics. They told Special Branch to hold me until they came to get me. In the evening I was told to get into the train to Francistown and then Dukwi. I later came here to stay in this refugee house because I wanted to go to the University of Botswana. Six months later I was in Lobatse carrying some papers about the guy who was arrested in South Africa. Then I was admitted at the University of Botswana. I had to concentrate in school at the same time that I was working for the liberation struggle. It was a hectic time. I had already passed my matric and had been admitted at the University of the North. There were informers in our organization and once they were detected we brought them here and tortured them. We had so many within us and outside. We were harsh. In 1982 one of our guys was kidnapped, Peter Lengene. He was a member of Central Logistics Unit. Barney Mokgatlhe, got a car from Avis. Guys used to come and delivered hand grenades. Peter left with the others including George Khoza and Kazibu. Peter was given the car to go and collect the grenades only to learn that there was nothing inside the grenades. Peter was kidnapped. We now wanted to kidnap the kidnapers because we knew them, the three guys who went with Peter Lengene. We kidnapped Kazibu and he admitted that he was part of the kidnapers. Kgotso who was arrested from here was refusing to come with information for the Boers and eventually was sentenced in Robbin Island.

The Boers decided to kidnap at random here, hoping that somebody would talk. That is why Peter Lengene was kidnapped. Kazibu was working with the Boers. We tortured him the whole night until he started to sing. We had kidnapped the kidnapper. Later there was a court case, and other people were given 6 years imprisonment, we were given six to eighteen months in prison for torturing Kazibu in 1982. They took Peter from here to Gaborone Sun and bought him beer and made him drunk, before going to “collect” the grenades at Kazibu’s house, where there was a white guy waiting. They beat Peter Lengene and bundled him in the Avis car and crossed the border illegally. Peter Lengene is now dead, killed by the ‘guys’ five years ago. But he had sold some of my guys who were later released and given scholarship to study abroad such as in Cyprus, then Germany. Kazibu is still in Germany, Khoza and Litswalo were taken to South Africa. Lengene later worked for the Boers as a spy at the Rustenburg spy centre.

## Bathami, Kangangwani

[Dukwi; July 2008]

*Kangangwani Bathami was born in 1947 and is a former Station Commander at the Dukwi Police Station, where he interacted with refugees for a period of time.*

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I was transferred to Dukwi refugee camp in 1990; that is when I came into contact with the refugees. The station commander's house was divided from the refugees' houses by a road: we were neighbours with the refugees. There was no distance between us.

The refugees were just fine like the people I once interacted with (Batswana). I saw them attending church with Batswana. Our Police football team (Stone Breakers) was made up refugees and police officers; and these are examples of how closely knit we were with refugees. There was no xenophobia because some refugees were even married to Batswana.

The refugees were socially up-right people, they very much respected authority. A leader in the camp meant more to them. I remember one of my junior officers impregnated a refugee's daughter. The father of the girl brought the pregnant girl to my house and left her there. I tried to tell him the police officers were not my children but he could not take it; to him being a Station Commander was synonymous to being a father of all officers. Hence he left his daughter with me simply because a police officer had impregnated her. I stayed with the girl for some days until all arrangements were made for the officer's parents to come and address the issue of pregnancy with the girl's parents.

Regarding authority in the camp, I would say the Settlement Commandant was held with high regard in the camp. He was an overseer in the camp or a government representative. The will of the government was executed through the Settlement Commandant. We also had the UN office and Office of the President operating directly under the UN. The Police, District Commissioner, Prisons, Health and Botswana Defence Force (BDF), were all operating under the Office of the President in the camp. There was the Botswana Council for Refugees under which the Coordinator operated. The Coordinator was the personnel responsible for the general welfare of the refugees such as food, clothes and their grievances. We also had Zone leaders within refugee areas of residence. The Zone leader was responsible for monitoring and reporting presence of refugees in his zone. Sometimes grievances were channelled through the zone leader.

The Botswana Christian Council and the Red Cross Society were some of the organizations within the camp. They were largely responsible for offering supplementary aid and counselling to help refugees cope with their lives.

Culture within the camp was a fusion. The refugees were allowed to practice their culture but it was evident they had assimilated some of the things Batswana did. That is why they could easily identify with Batswana. For example during funerals, some refugees conducted their burials like Batswana did.

I would not say crime was high in the camp. There were cases of assault, theft and others, but these cases were not alarming. Zimbabweans were leading in crimes reported, followed by South African refugees and then Angolans.

South African refugees were evidently not happy to live in the camp. Other refugees had settled in, but South African grievances were endless. The refugees' complaints in general however were directed at the quality of food and their restricted freedom of movement. I cannot rule out the possibility of some refugees escaping from the camp. They could have done that at night but I don't recall any case presented before the police of escaping. But I do not rule out the possibility. I came in 1990 and maybe before that there were cases of trying to escape. In such extreme cases that is when the BDF could be called in to intervene.

The refugees lived on handouts of the UNICEF and agricultural products. They were allocated land for gardening and some were involved in poultry and other animal production. Their products were sold in and out of the camp, even as far as Gweta. UNICEF arranged free transport for refugees to carry their produce to the market.

Challenges that the refugees faced were mostly poor quality of food, learning Setswana in school, restricted movement, and lack of jobs and shortage of farming equipment.

The Botswana government policy on refugees was that since refugees had been given asylum in Botswana, they should not participate in Botswana politics. They were also not allowed to re-start their countries' politics here in Botswana. The refugees adhered to these policies without any problem.

In 1994 most South African refugees could not go back home. Some were possibly criminals of war and feared going back home, some even married Batswana and stayed. Refugees taught us to be self-reliant and make use of extra space in our yards.

Having a garden at the back yard had become a norm to Batswana who came into contact with the refugees. Batswana were motivated by the refugees to do small scale business.

## Bereng, Thato

*Thato Bereng is an ex-refugee from South Africa who was in Botswana but has now gone back to South Africa. In this text she explains of her life as a refugee and some of the relationships she observed between the refugee and host communities.*

I'd say the first jolt for us as South Africans was encountering the distinctions within the larger Africanness that we had politically envisioned our struggle within. Basically there were distinctions socially and culturally that we had not encountered nor imagined. Those differences were on both sides, that is on the side of how we perceived and experienced the host populations as well as how we ourselves were, as South Africans. This 'cultural shock' applied across gender lines.

Adjustments to me seemed equally difficult for both genders. Socio-economically the women of Women of Azania (WAZA) were at an advantage compared to the male youths given the monthly house allowance allocated to their house or home by the World Council of Churches(WCC) -Brigalia arrangement. At a more personal and intimate level I am not certain whether this is an indicator or sufficiently notable disaggregant that where female refugees had male-female relationships invariably if not all the time, these were with South African fellow exiles or South Africans. With males, there were a number of Batswana homes whereas 'the adults of the refugee community' we went to 'bega molato' or responsibility for pregnancy on behalf of the boys' parents, who were in South African. In some cases they would follow up, in others they did not. I cannot conclusively say that the Botswana Act, passed regarding the non-citizenship of the offspring of a non-Motswana with a Motswana did not automatically become citizens even though born in Botswana, was because of this latter situation. Basically I am saying, the different cultural or political outlook was to me manifested by these relationships whilst cemented by the government policies as in the above Act.

On the accommodation aspect, the struggle to house the male refugees was more pronounced. Members of the Relief Committee graciously availed their 'servant's quarters' to both genders. Most of the male refugees lived in an old farm-house in Broadhurst, where there were several houses with Zimbabweans and I think, Namibians. Male refugees also got themselves other houses in the townships, as well as in Tlokweg and Mogoditshane. Others lived with three of the 1974/1975 adults in Mochudi, where they taught at the local school. According to the refugees, the reception they received from Chief Lenchwe's was quite sympathetic.

To me at first there was a stand-apart curiosity from the population. The almost daily government pronouncements injected other perceptual attitudes. There is no attempt here to deny the cultural, political, or dispositional differences between South African refugees and their host community; it is rather how the differences were handled that largely made refugees feel rejected. It is one thing to be different, it is another matter for the difference to be seen as negative, less-than-human, intruders, or interlopers.

In interacting even with the YWCA committee members, sometimes there were emotional debates on their expectations of refugee WAZA girls; their adolescence seemed to be eclipsed by the fact that ‘they were adult enough to tackle a whole government’ (meaning their political uprisings) and should thus behave like adults. Interestingly these utterances were made by YWCA committee members, expatriate South Africans married to Botswana.

What was peculiar was that the South Africa expatriate members married to Botswana, who were with us in the Soweto Students Relief Committee, had a different attitude; they recognized the youthfulness involved, like any mother would, without rationalizing social blunders.

There was such interaction and networking to varying degrees between different refugee houses or homes with some of the ‘older’ refugees like in Gaborone, Lobatse, Mahalapye and Francistown. Without going deep into such interaction, there was largely a generational chasm between the pre-1976/1974 refugees and ourselves, which would be greater, less pronounced or absent depending on the personal or political attitudes of the ‘older’ refugees involved.

Seemingly from official and other reports the Botswana government had never had refugees of our age-group who thus needed to be integrated into the school and other systems. This seemed to define and operationalize the interaction referred to below. For those of us who were at university level there were interventions by some high profile Botswana citizens with support from the UNDP for scholarships. The Botswana citizens’ intervention was what worked the most. On their advice we formed and registered the Soweto Students’ Relief Committee as an advocacy group made up of ‘expatriate/refugee’ South African professionals (lecturers), African lecturers from Ghana, Uganda, Zimbabwe and ourselves. It was through this committee that advocacy was done on immigration or deportation matters, health or illness matters, arrests for ‘petty’ transgressions, representation to the UNHCR for resources like blankets, mediation in major conflicts, agreements with scholarship agencies, and so on. It was through this same committee that the World Council of Churches’ Women’s Division coordinator Ms Brigalia Bam, afforded the refugee girls a house or home through the NGO *ya bo* Mrs Oliphant, the YWCA. The home was subsequently named Women of Azania or WAZA. I am reliably told after our hasty departure from Botswana, at different times, the house was opened to other countries’ refugee women.

On the education front, after the first group, *ya rona*, other refugee university ‘drop-outs’ subsequently benefited from political relations image struck with the UNDP, IUEF and similar agencies by the Botswana government. For high school level ‘drop-outs’, integration into the education system, was quite tricky and difficult. At first we were informed that Botswana could only afford to take two students per ‘rural’ school to avoid undesirable effects of a South Africa refugee sub-culture from affecting host schools. The people who were at this level can best comment on how it was for them. I do not know whether the two-to-a-school practice continued or changed.

The one major difference between South African refugees and those from other countries was their age. The avalanche came after the 1976 uprisings and these were children of high school level, and those who had been outside the school system but were of around the same age, basically. Programmes were along gender lines, even though agents met with all refugees' representatives when introducing programs. Here I am specifically thinking of a programme by an African American Social Worker, called Ruth, who ran a programme for refugee girls. As time passed and the 'liberation' programme seemed like a mirage, the education option was now conceded to, hence their attendance at local and subsequently other institutions. Another angle was that the Botswana government was under pressure from the South African government and from South African's exiled liberation movements to 'do something' about the rising numbers of refugees in Botswana.

For some like us, it was university level, for the rest who left at high school level, it was that same level. There were very few refugees, male and female, whose first goal was furthering education. I repeat they were there, but they were very few. The anger, the pain and furthering the political goal of bringing down the apartheid government and dispossession was the burning goal, both with males and females.

The younger refugees who stayed long after we had left Botswana said interpersonal relations with the hosts were congenial, with some developing into long lasting friendships till the present time. Those that made us feel like people were from the small group of members of the Soweto Students Relief Committee.

Discussion groups which encompassed the political and the social helped us cope, as did the important and vital role of the Botswana members of the Soweto Students Relief Committee. Their houses were our outlets for real homes, their families were our 'visits' to family life and their acceptance helped close out some of the hostility. Mostly, social networks were with South African expatriates, local or those abroad. The 1976 group over time, had more of these locally, I understand. During my stay, 1974 till 1978, it was more of 'urban-peri-urban-semirural' grouping than ethnic. There were more urban-originating refugees than those from peri or semirural areas. It was quite a revelation of how big South Africa is, for us to find some refugees who could only speak their own language, as different from those who were urban and thus multilingual.

Difficulty of settlement was deducible from all that which has been said above. Settlement was always precarious as indicated by the 'one-way-passage' granted to refugees who would leave for Nigeria or the States and be refused re-entry. Some were put back on the planes they alighted from, wherever that plane was going. After the 1974 group, much later some of the 1976 group apparently came back to Botswana, they were accepted back and they lived there.

The 1974 and 1976 groups were largely BCM and SSRC, the loosely named Tsietsi Mashinini-Khotso Seatlholo group. The authorities interacted with these groups with what I now see as 'bewilderment' because they did not have any 'official' agreements with us the older ones, or with the younger group. With ANC and PAC groups there

were obviously some agreements with their leaders, and thus control over followers or members of both. There are South African refugees who stayed on after 1994 but we've since lost contact in the last few years.

Smith's soldiers were aware of this relationship we had with Zimbabwean freedom fighters; the white soldiers followed freedom fighters in villages like Senyawe, Tsesebe, Mapoka and other villages close to the border in the North East District. That happened a lot, and that area was called "hot pursuit". They followed freedom fighters there. They would even ask for those who helped freedom fighters and started shooting everywhere and scaring people. They kidnapped some people and I even know of some people whom they ended up killing. They killed one gentleman who used to grow vegetables around the Ramokgwebana River (North East). Some small boys and other herd boys were also kidnapped.

Of course, a lot of people died in some of these villages along the border. It is only that newspapers were not in circulation at that time and the few we had were not giving wide coverage on such events. There were only a few of them in circulation; therefore, a lot of people in the country were not aware that many people died in Bokalaka area during the liberation war.

The government then started border patrol. There was the BDF but before its establishment there was what we called Police Mobile Unit (PMU). PMU was there before the establishment of the BDF in 1977 to patrol the border. In the Bokalaka region (North east) the Veterinary kraals were closer to the border because they were located at an area that had good grazing land. Right next to Ramokgwebana River, at the border was the Veterinary kraal. So the BDF would notify or inform the Veterinary employees about the presence of Smith's soldiers along the border. Whenever we received such information from our soldiers we had to run away far from the border for safety. There were incidents where the BDF clashed with Smith's soldiers; they met at Pobe-pobe and in Masunga. Pobe-pobe is an area between Matsiloje and Senyawe. One day on our arrival at Pobe-pobe we were told about the incident where there were five exchanges between our soldiers and the Rhodesian soldiers. We also heard that the Ian Smith soldiers were seen by our soldiers in Masunga but we did not meet them.

I am not sure how Botswana as a country helped, but I think the local people are the ones who played a major role in helping freedom fighters. The local people are the ones who helped freedom fighters. For example in the Bokalaka region, in the North East, those people who were affected by cross border incidents were those who helped freedom fighters. Once a freedom fighter was injured they used their own cars to take them to the hospital. They played a part in the transporting of freedom fighters from Francistown to Kasane. They crossed the border with them using "mokoro" or canoe, leading them to Livingstone because at that time the army patrol was not as effective as it is nowadays.

Most freedom fighters from Ngamiland were SWAPO activists from Namibia and some from Angola. We did not know their entry points into Botswana but we only

heard that freedom fighters had passed there. I remember one time when we were at the veterinary camp, and we heard that they had passed along Seronga, and other villages. We were camping close to the border, and at some instances we only found their treks but we never knew when they passed through Ngamiland. Some of them passed to Zambia through Shakawe and other villages along the border; that was their route, even for those who were returning back home to Namibia or Angola, used that same route.

Villages along the Botswana-Namibia border are Nxaunxau, Kaudwane, Dobe and Mohembo. Freedom fighters passed through these villages going back to Namibia to join SWAPO, which then sent them out for military training in other countries. Sam Nujoma of course stayed in Maun. But I didn't see him in person.

I seem to know a lot of incidents which happened in the North-east as compared to Ngamiland because I was posted for work in North-east immediately after completing my studies. Those who trained in Swaziland were sent out to the border area to report on livestock cross-border incidents. We met a lot of Zimbabweans, South Africans and people from other countries. When I was in Lesotho and Swaziland I met refugees who were transported by planes directly to Dar-es-Salaam. They were from refugee camps. It was when I was in Swaziland that I became revolutionized; I became exposed to the liberation struggle politics while still training in that country. We schooled with a lot of those involved in the liberation struggle. I even schooled with some of the current Ministers in South Africa. On Fridays after class some of them went to Johannesburg and bombed some locations; and on Mondays we attended classes with them. Some of them became our friends and they often told us what they were going through because of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Thanks a lot mma.

## Chilume, Obed Itani

[Tutume; May 2007]

*Obed Itani Chilume, is 75 years, he is a businessman and farmer, as well as a former MP for nkange. He hails from marapong ward in tutume village. He recalls what happened during the Liberation Struggle, and says that there were some batswana who wanted to fight in the liberation war, and did so; after independence they became members of the Zimbabwe Army.*

When refugees arrived in Botswana they were given good reception. Even school kids escaped from Zimbabwe to Botswana, running away from the Smith regime. There were those who arrived with injuries such as broken legs and they were taken to hospital and given medical treatment here. People in this area were close to the border and they understood what was happening. The fighting between the freedom fighters and Rhodesian forces was close to them; and people here had relatives in Zimbabwe. Batswana took the refugees to the police who transported them to refugee camps; Batswana also provided fleeing refugees with food. Some Batswana wanted to fight in the war of liberation and they joined the liberation forces and died there. A son of Mrs Khupe joined the liberation forces and later became a member of the Zimbabwean army after independence.

Batswana helped in the liberation struggle because some people in Zimbabwe were Bakalanga with relatives here. We sympathized with those who had injuries and were in pain. Smith's forces followed people into Botswana and some Batswana at Maintengwe had to flee and relocate to Tutume. Some were accused of harbouring freedom fighters and placed were in the wanted list by Smith's forces. They were forced to abandon their shops and homes because of these threats, this happened to Mr Mojanaga.

Some Batswana along the border who were accused of feeding Magandanga (freedom fighters) were forced to flee deeper into the country. The Botswana government took care of refugees and protected them at centres, such as the Dukwi Refugee Camp. Some Batswana were killed in their homes for allegedly feeding Magandanga.

Freedom fighters hid their guns whenever they crossed into Botswana. They wanted to hide and fight from here. The senior and proper leaders of the liberation movement understood Botswana's position of not allowing the country to be used as a stepping stone to attack her neighbours, but ordinary people and fighters did not understand this position. They wanted to be allowed to stage the liberation war from here, and they accused Botswana of being in collusion with Smith's forces. The liberation struggle affected Batswana because they were never free; people lived under threats and fear. Grazing close to the border was disrupted and the fields were abandoned. There was also the loss of lives, as ordinary people were killed by Rhodesian forces. Some cattle and other livestock strayed into Zimbabwe and were lost because people were afraid of crossing over to search for them.

Botswana's foreign policy was not to allow herself to be used to attack her neighbours because that would have given those neighbours the excuse to attack her. This was to avoid reprisal. The Frontline States (FLS) understood the Botswana position. The North East borders Mataberland and that is why the Botswana in this area supported Nkomo's forces. There are Bakalanga and also the Ndebeles in Zimbabwe. The Botswana government did not tolerate misunderstandings and conflicts between different liberation movements because it believed they were fighting for a common cause, which was to defeat the Smith regime. The government mediated in such conflicts because it wanted Zimbabweans to concentrate on the struggle for freedom. The economy of Botswana was dependent on Rhodesia and South Africa, where the country obtained many goods, including cheap foodstuffs. Botswana continued to trade with the two countries because she was a small country. She would have suffered more than Zimbabwe and South Africa, in the event the economic links were severed. Other countries, even those in the OAU and FLS understood Botswana's position. She had to trade with those countries whilst still opposing their oppressive policies and denying freedom to the majority. After their independence, these countries realized Botswana sacrificed for their struggle for independence and they expressed their appreciation in conferences and other fora. Botswana knew that their brothers also deserved to be free just like themselves, hence they made the sacrifices they did.

## Chiziyo, Kaki

[Pandamatenga; December 2007]

*Kaki Chiziyo was born in 1956 in Pandamatenga. He attended Kasane primary school from 1965 to 1972 and joined the Botswana Defence Force in 1976. He did his training in Gaborone and was posted to Francistown.*

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My name is Kaki Chiziyo. I was born here in Pandamatenga, ko matlotleng kwa, at the old village site. I was born in 1956. My father was working in Kasane at the lodges, and so I attended Kasane primary school from 1965 to 1972 and this was the last time I went to school. I did not do well at school and when I realized life was becoming difficult I joined the Botswana Defence Force in 1976. I did my training in Gaborone and was posted to Francistown. I joined the army when it was formed and had spent 30 years in service. I retired from the BDF at the end of 2006 and I had to retire because I had reached the maximum years that one must work in the army. I was ready to retire and the package is good for someone who started right at the beginning with BDF.

When I joined the army things were bad in Zimbabwe and Namibia, but I had to join the BDF. I was in love with the army. I liked the jungle and using the gun. Honestly I liked the army. Many guys refused to join the army because of the death of the 16 soldiers at Lesoma. Currently I am doing something different. You know I have just built a bar and I hope it will generate more money.

I do understand the topic for this interview is about the role that Botswana played during the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa., but I think I should first let you know how things were in Pandamatenga before I joined the BDF. There were people called freedom fighters who used to move around Pandamatenga.

The first people who used to come to Pandamatenga were not in uniform, but they had guns. These people were called “Magandanga”. They came at around 1967. People used to give them food and they were mostly seen at the lands (masimo). They did not force people to give them food.

These were soldiers from Zimbabwe. They were difficult to understand. We never knew whether they were fighting for the liberation of Zimbabwe or they were another group of Zimbabweans who were fighting each other. Then in 1970 there was a group of other soldiers who used to come to Pandamatenga from Zimbabwe. These ones were now in uniform and they were friendly people. These are the ones who were called “guerrillas”. I really don’t know what differentiated “Magandanga” from the guerrillas because I have never had a chance to talk to “Magandanga”. I was young by then.

I talked to the guerrillas when I was in the BDF. I met them several times in the bush. These were the freedom fighters who were fighting the regime forces of Smith. They were called guerrillas because of the tactics they used when fighting. Their tactic was ‘hit and run’ or ‘hide’, just like the real guerrillas.

Botswana did support the struggle. Botswana was used as a transit route for refugees from Namibia and South Africa going to Tanzania. This was the route for young men who were going to train as soldiers in Tanzania. Most of the people who went to Tanzania used Botswana, and Kazungula was their exit and entry point into Botswana. The refugees were also coming here and we the soldiers escorted them to Dukwi and Francistown. We protected these refugees.

When I joined the army, these people used to cross into Botswana and that was in 1977. These guys used the Chobe route because it was much safer. There were guys from Namibia and these ones came in large numbers. There were also a few from Zimbabwe. At one time some of these people from Namibia came to Kazungula claiming to be a football team going to play in Zambia and they never came back. We as soldiers knew the strategies they were using to avoid being noticed by impipis (spies) of the white regime forces. They knew that if they told anyone where they were going they could be caught easily. Kazungula was infested with impipis of the white soldiers and some of them were blacks whom we didn't know. This is why the white Rhodesian soldiers blew the pontoon in 1978.

Kazungula was the entry point for guerrillas that were going to fight in Zimbabwe. They crossed the Zambezi and entered Botswana. I really don't know how they crossed but we are told they used traditional canoes (mekoro). They could not use the pontoon because they carried weapons when coming from Tanzania. Some of them hid the weapons in the big trucks from Zambia and they got into the pontoon wearing plain clothes. These guys were clever and they were well trained.

Those who crossed the Zambezi River into Botswana were mostly guys from Zimbabwe. They used a certain area at Kazungula which was bushy and crossed into Botswana. Then they entered Zimbabwe coming from Botswana. We could see them but we did not trouble them. I don't know how the Namibian guerrillas got into Namibia but I think they used other routes not Kazungula.

I was a junior soldier by then. I don't know what sort of agreement existed between governments of Zambia and Botswana. But I suspect that this was something they agreed on because even we soldiers at the forefront were instructed not to trouble them. We relied on orders from the foreman. In most cases we were told to let them cross into Botswana. It was a secret and we pretended not to see them when they were crossing the border into Botswana. We were told about crossing of the border by freedom fighters who were coming from Zambia, so that they could enter Rhodesia; and we allowed them to do so because they were not dangerous to us. What we knew was that they were going to fight the regime forces in Rhodesia.

There was the issue of disarming guerrillas who were seen with weapons of war in this country. The BDF policy was there but it was difficult practically because these were soldiers crossing into Rhodesia for a struggle. At times BDF needed to act humanly towards these guys. They were going to fight and how would one expect them to fight this war if they did not have weapons when crossing into Rhodesia? After all they were not staying long in Botswana. There were cases where we disarmed

guerrillas especially when we found them in small numbers. They were not allowed to come into the country with weapons. They sometimes refused to hand over their weapons; and we left them when they refused to listen to us. We were flexible; we could leave them because this policy was difficult to implement. They sometimes ran away with their weapons.

It was difficult to handle them because the guerrillas were in large numbers and we were only a small army. These guys never troubled us and they used to help us a lot whenever we had problems with the white soldiers. They would warn us not to take certain directions or routes to avoid an ambush by white soldiers. They were very useful. We would be betraying them if we had to constantly disarm them, while they were ready to assist us when it was tough.

I remember, it was in the year 1978. We were patrolling from Kazungula to Pandamatenga, using a land rover and all of a sudden we met white soldiers and they started to harass us. They were along the Botswana border. They crossed into Rhodesia and started shooting at us and we also shot at them. After some few minutes of cross fire they ran further into the bush in Rhodesia. We heard some gun shots from some direction and guerrillas came running towards us. They told us that they were monitoring the movements of those white soldiers and laid an ambush in Rhodesia. They told us that they had killed them. They were very important to us even though we sometimes disarmed some of them. We met some of them in the bush after the Lesoma incident and they told us that they had killed the white soldiers who killed the Botswana soldiers, and we were very happy.

Their policy of not allowing freedom fighters to use Botswana as a base for attacking Smith forces was okay for the protection of our people and their property. Had the regime forces known that Botswana was hiding refugees and guerrillas, we would have been in trouble. They would have come in full force and attacked us. You also know how sophisticated the Smith 'boys' were. Maybe could have tried them on the ground but not in the air because they had fighter jets and helicopters. Now with the guerrillas I personally think the best thing the government should have done was to let them come with their weapons here because without the guns they could not manage in their war against the white soldiers. Mind you the white soldiers were just along the border. It was really difficult for them to leave their weapons at the border and enter Botswana.

I met the guerrillas several times. One day when while on leave I met some of them in the bush. I was looking after cattle. They told me they really did not like the idea of handing over their weapons to the BDF and they seemed to like the secret that Botswana government had, regarding the stay of guerrillas here and the harbouring of refugees and not revealing that freedom fighters were in Botswana. They used to say it was good practice because when it was 'hot' in their country they knew they had a place to run to and avoid being caught by the white soldiers. But they did not like the idea of leaving their weapons behind and that is why they insisted on entering Botswana with weapons.

The white soldiers realized that Botswana was supporting the struggle but not showing it. Things changed in 1976 and 1977. There were several cases of shootings from the side of the white soldiers in Rhodesia. They used to fire at our camps and we sometimes shot back. I also heard that there was an instance where BDF soldiers fought white soldiers at Kazungula but I was not around at the time. One day the white soldiers shot at customs offices, but no people were injured. They also laid a bomb and blasted the pontoon and this time some people were injured. I am not sure if there were people who died because it happened in 1978 and I was not around at the time.

The worst problem which we faced was the day when 16 soldiers were massacred in Lesoma. The BDF were informed about white soldiers and guerrillas in Lesoma and they went there. According to what I heard the soldiers were attacked before they got off their vehicles to search for the guerrillas who were in the nearby bush. These guerrillas were seen by the villagers and they reported them to the BDF. What we heard was that the BDF were in their three land rovers and on their arrival at the 'highland' they were attacked and one of the freedom fighters was transported to Francistown and died there. The white soldiers used bayonets to kill the BDF soldiers who were still alive. During the day of the massacre my crew was in Francistown. The ambush happened in the afternoon. When this incident happened we were immediately ordered by Rre Malesu to leave Francistown for Kasane. We left Francistown in the evening and were in Kasane in the morning at around four. It was one of the days that Botswana lost many soldiers. The road was not tarred and this was why we took so long to reach Kasane. The old man Malesu, who was in charge of the northern part of Botswana, including areas from Chobe, Maun, Shakawe, and Gantsi, was angry and he wanted us to take the white soldiers head on.

We went straight to Kazungula border and found some of our guys there. They were ready for anything. It was painful to lose some guys that we knew very well. We met with the commander there, and early, around six in the morning we started to plant big guns from Kazungula border offices to Lesoma. Some of our guys went straight to where the ambush was done and they found some guys dead there. One guy I knew very well who died there was Mathe, and he was a junior soldier. We could see the Rhodesian white along the border in Zimbabwe. Malesu wanted us to go for a fight with the white soldiers but we were stopped by the Authority in Gaborone.

We were ready to fight, and you should know that they were now having two enemies. It was us and the freedom fighters. Maybe in the air they were going to destroy us but on the ground we were ready to take them on.

It was obvious the freedom fighters were going to help us because they were the guys who used to warn us about the white soldier ambushes. They were going to assist us because they were being helped by our government using Botswana land to cross over to Rhodesia. Kazungula was where they used to run to after they had attacked white soldiers in Rhodesia and this is where they could rest without fear that they could be attacked while sleeping, but not in their own country.

The white soldiers at the border were rude and liked firing at our camp. They even blasted the pontoon. When they shot at us we also shot back. We dug trenches just by the border and fired from there. It was difficult during those days because you could die at any time.

Namibian side was not that active and we used to patrol there. Those ones in Namibia liked using helicopters, aero planes and fighter jets when they were patrolling their borders. They had a tendency of crossing into Botswana and crossing back into Namibia. There was only one incident when they shot at the BDF camp which was at Ngoma, and the BDF soldiers shot back and destroyed one building which was used by the white soldiers. This time I was not around but I heard what happened there.

There were no freedom fighters crossing the Namibian side of the border. Those who used to be seen by villagers here were the refugees. I think the type of vegetation inside Namibia made it difficult for guerrillas to fight well from that side. The area from Kasane to Parakarungu is open and there are swamps along Caprivi Strip. The white soldiers had strong bases along the border. They had a camp at Mpalila and Ngoma and had boats which they used to patrol in the river. They really controlled the Caprivi Strip and guerrillas had no chance of crossing over.

It was difficult to control the guerrillas because they liked traveling at night and we did not have enough equipment to operate at night. Sometimes we used to let them enter the country with weapons because these guys helped us a lot when we were on patrols. We were not making it look obvious that BDF was allowing them to cross over with weapons. It was a secret, because if they were seen by white soldiers they were going to follow them and we were going to be in trouble, because they were going to attack us.

When we found refugees from Namibia, we first informed them that we were Botswana Defence soldiers and were not harmful. We then transported them to Kasane and then handed them to the police. If there were political refugees among them, they were immediately taken to Francistown. We, being soldiers, escorted them all the way to Francistown protecting them. The others, who were not political refugees, were later taken to Francistown as well because that was the safest place and there was a refugee camp there. There was no refugee camp in Kasane. There were only tents to accommodate refugees and it was not safe to keep refugees in Kasane because Kasane is on the border, and the white soldiers were also near and could follow these refugees and kill them. The political refugees had to be transported immediately because they were wanted dead or alive by the white soldiers.

I can't remember the names of the political refugees that were escorted from Kasane, but I remember escorting one guy from Namibia who was a politician. What he said was that the white soldiers caught them in Caprivi at Linyanti and he managed to escape at night and ended up in Kasane.

Thank you mma.

## Diane, Munyani Kgosana

[Kazungula]

*Munyani Diane was born in June 22, 1935 and went to school in Kazungula. As a young man he worked in hunting Safaris. In his entire life he has been a hunter. He is also a pastor in the Apostolic Church in Kazungula; and in 2004, he became Assistant Headman.*

My name is Munyani Diane. I was born in June 22, 1935. I went to school here in Kazungula but I can't remember when that was because I never completed school. I think I went up to grade three. I did not complete school because those days we paid for education and my parents were not able to pay for me. Also during those days our parents never saw the importance of education. Things were not expensive and we had cattle and goats. Life was not that expensive like nowadays I have never had a permanent job. I worked in hunting Safaris, but these were just contract jobs, and I was a young man by then. In my entire life I was a hunter, and we used to hunt wildlife for people who raffled for game animals. Those were the days when the government could give us such animals. They were raffled for, and lucky people were given permission to hunt. I was one of the people who hunted animals for people and they gave me meat or money. I am also a pastor in the Apostolic Church in Kazungula. In 2004 I was elected to be the Assistant to the Headman here in Kazungula. I am kgosana in Kazungula.

I was in Kazungula when the whites "baga Smith" [Smith's soldiers] were troubling people in Zimbabwe. We used to run from here and go to Kasane.

Freedom fighters used to come to Kazungula. They came to us when they were in need of food. They did not come to ask for food regularly and they came in small numbers. They could come in groups of two or three and go to different places or yards to ask for food. You could hear people around the village saying "kana" the freedom fighters were here asking for food. They could ask for maize meal or ask people to cook for them. They never troubled people; their main job was fighting the White soldiers in Zimbabwe.

Starting from here in Kazungula up to cattle post 256, these freedom fighters had camps. Those were the days when I was a hunter. Those were the days when we could raffle for animals. We used to meet them in the bush. Sometimes we gave them game meat after we have killed game and they were happy. They used to say "people from Botswana are good people". I met freedom fighters several times. They never stayed in the village but in the bush. This was very important because they could sometimes meet with our soldiers and find themselves ambushed. Those freedom fighters used to inform our soldiers regarding what the White Rhodesian soldiers were planning. They came into the village at night, and they only came to the village when they were hungry. They could eat saza/ papa (maize meal porridge) without relish (meat or vegetables). They would just eat it like that and go away.

They did not leave us with much information really, because they knew they were safe in our homes. In the evening or at night they crossed over to Zimbabwe that is where they fought the regime forces till they forced them to move from the border area. The white soldiers moved to Victoria Falls. Whenever the white regime soldiers were walking along the border, freedom fighters tried hard to move them away from the border.

What troubled people in Kazungula was fear of guns, especially when the guerrillas started fighting the whites. They could fight from six in the evening till morning. You could hear sounds of bombs and big guns. During such instances we could not sleep and I remember one day people took blankets and headed towards Kasane, only to return in the company of BDF. They were warned by BDF that it was not safe to travel at night because if the white soldiers found them along the road they could kill them. Sometimes our BDF soldiers were involved in this fighting at the border. They used to tell us not leave our houses because they had spotted white regime forces. We lived in fear along the border. The White Rhodesian soldiers used to come to the border, and we could see them walking, running or even shooting. They could shoot in the village but luckily nobody was injured. I can't remember very well when this happened because it has been a long time, but It was in the 1970's, during the days when Zimbabweans were in trouble, and we used to pray a lot here.

When the freedom fighters saw us carrying guns they did not shoot at us because we were black like them and just ordinary hunters not wearing any form of uniform. I once found a freedom fighter hiding in the bush. According to his story, they had crossed the Zambezi at Katongola in Zambia; this is where freedom fighters used to cross into Botswana. According to this guy, they washed their clothes in the river, and while still drying them, the White regime soldiers patrolling along the river found them and they attacked them. The five freedom fighters had to run away. The one that we spoke to, had to run into Botswana, but somehow he thought he was still in Rhodesia, because and he and the others had not worked out where the border was.

We were shooting guinea fowls in the evening, and we found this particular freedom fighter in the bush, about 50 kms from Kazungula. He heard the gun shot and followed us where we were. He was walking barefooted and slept in the bush. He saw our tracks along the migration routes that were used by elephants. At first when he saw us he thought that he was still in Zimbabwe. What helped us was the dog. If we were not accompanied by a dog he could have probably killed us. He said he spent two days in the bush and luckily it was raining and he could drink water in the bush. He followed our tracks and found our vehicle where we were hunting and he hid under a bushy tree. The dog we had was barking and initially we did not see what it was barking at. I think the training they went through was strict that if you hear a dog barking then you should know there may be some ordinary people around. He just came to the car and hid by a tree. When we were done with hunting I took my three boys and headed to a pond to get water and in a short while we came back to our hunting spot. When I was about to get into the vehicle, I heard somebody

say “Salibonani” (hello in Ndebele) and I immediately realized that he must have been one of the Nkomo (ZAPU leader) boys. I went closer to him and asked him if he is a son of Nkomo [freedom fighter] and he said “yes”. I told him that he was in Botswana. He jumped up three times happy and said this is the country he wanted to be in. We spent the whole week with him in the bush. Those days guerrillas had their foreman called Mkhwanazi who stayed in Kazungula at one of the freedom fighters camps. Mkhwanazi was the boss of the freedom fighters, and he stayed in Kazungula just by the river side. The freedom fighters had a camp near the river. All those freedom fighters who had problems reported to him at that camp. They used to visit my place regularly.

We spent a week with him and we gave him some of our clothes. We then took him away to a certain man called Lameck to take him to Kazungula. Lameck took this man to Mkhwanazi the boss of the freedom fighters, and told him what happened.

There is this another day when freedom fighters found me at Pandamatenga, just near the camps. I had killed a Zebra. There were four of them and were hungry. I gave them cooked meat and they ate. When they finished eating I cut a big piece of meat and gave them to take to their secret camp. They were even talking about killing a baboon to eat it but we told them that baboons were not eaten in Botswana. They spent most of their time in the bush. One day when we were with their foreman Mkhwanazi, we found some freedom fighters at 14 (cattle post) just near that tall tower on your way to Pandamatenga. They were carrying blankets full of bullets and were heavy. We loaded these blankets into a vehicle. They were relocating to 256 (another cattle post). This was a government vehicle, but we had to use it to help. We dropped them at 256 and we drove off to Pandamatenga.

It was proper for Botswana to support the struggle because our relationship with people from these countries was ok. All our food came from Zimbabwe and Zambia. Even now we are relying on these countries for food and other things. The problem we are now facing is that people from Zambia and Zimbabwe are now coming here to steal.

Ke lebogile monkane. Thanks mate.

## Dintwe, Moatshe Gobby

[Gaborone; June 2008]

*Mr Moatshe Gobby Dintwe, was born in Mochudi in 1941; he started being involved in the struggle, through his uncle, when he was 8 years old. In 1965 he became a teacher and later he was more involved with transporting and assisting freedom fighters, mainly from Mozambique. He and his uncle became friends with Samora Machel, whom they knew as Moses.*

I was born in 1941 in Mochudi, and I came to know about the liberation struggle when I was 8 yrs. That was during the days of colonial rule when they ruled through churches; its rulers were district commissioners who were assisted by pastors. When there was a church involved, maybe London, one was assisted more as compared to when one came from a different church. In 1948 African Advisory Council took a decision with the European Advisory Council to work together to help governments. They looked at people who were seen as nuisance to the government. It was found that Roman Catholic was a big church, which grew fast, but with many blacks. Whites were not interested in it, so there was suspicion that it was a political organization.

In 1948 they started punishing people. I had an uncle who was a teacher; he was a chief's son. His name was John Dintwa and he taught Mma Chiepe Koma, but he was a drunkard; so when he was drunk he became brave. Later he taught at Serowe, and that gave him a chance to further his studies at Fort Hare, where he found other southern Africans finishing their studies, including Seretse, Mandela, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Mugabe and Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Those were the people who wanted to know what the future held for Africa. They came up with ways they were going to change Africa, because they had read, they had left the masses at home. John was later called to Mafikeng because he was seen as rebellious; he met with the High Commissioner and was warned and withdrawn from school.

He was seen as a ring leader and he was taken to Rhodesia to be a teacher, teaching English. There he was monitored, because he could only speak English, the masses spoke mostly Shona and Ndebele. When Seretse and Mandela graduated in 1947, Kgosi Tshekedi called John to attend Seretse's graduation in South Africa and translate for the people. One was chosen to give a poem, the other the main speech. Seretse gave the main speech. Mandela knew that if he was to give a speech he would be chased out of the country. Seretse told the people that they were looking forward to developing Africa as a whole, and this angered Tshekedi who told him that he wanted him to talk about his people back home not Africa, Seretse told him that Africa was changing and they had to change too.

When Seretse got to where he was teaching-he went to Uganda where he attended Makerere University. He was given a chance to finish his BA and he taught at Makerere University. He did a degree in Education so that he could teach. His job was to link

his boys with people from other countries, like Nyerere, Kenyatta, Banda, and chiefs' sons. Chiefs' sons later denounced bogosi and pursued educational careers.

When Seretse arrived from England he had problems because he was married to a white lady, people were saying that why didn't he marry ladies at home others were jealous of him, others said he was going to sell their land as the whites did, and their old friendship came to an end. Seretse now started with new classmates many of whom were English like Dr Herman Goldbom.

Seretse could only go to Zambia with ease, and Botswana later bought its own plane for transport. He used it to attend meetings, it was called Chobe. Seretse then reunited with old friends to link with Nyerere and Banda. He asked them what they thought about Africa, they later agreed to unite. In the meantime, Members of Parliament in Botswana consulted with their people to avoid going where the President could be killed on his trips without people's knowledge. In 1958 people questioned as to why Seretse always went out but the other people never came to Botswana. Later Kaunda promised to come, and on 18 June 1968, he made his first visit to Botswana. With Seretse and the others, they formed the Frontlines States, which grew to include Lesotho and Swaziland. These latter two had a contact with Botswana through the common university. Whenever they applied for permits in South Africa, they said they were attending university issues, not politics. In Botswana they used the Chobe plane with Khama, and later left it in Zambia to get an international airline to Tanzania, where meetings were being held. That is why most coordinators had to be in Tanzania, as that is where most things started, including the Frontline States.

Leaders of the liberation struggle came to Botswana in 1960, but some refugees were already in the country. I became aware of refugees who were my age mates, coming from Mozambique, passing through our area, like Moses Machel, he changed names to Samora Machel. We became aware of this when he told Seretse on his first visit to Botswana that people were given money to look for freedom fighters or refugees. There were different groups, so those who had struggled against white rule were on the refugees' side, but those who did not were against refugees. We accepted refugees, our government was slow to give us information, but we used to hide them, most of them were harmless.

When Samora Machel and his group arrived in Lentswe-le- Moriti in their cars, there were already road blocks at about 50km; when they were about 10km away, they left their cars and went thru the bush for about 60km. They had to travel fast so that people could not see them. Boers saw their footsteps and later trekked them with dogs and donkeys. They stopped at Ratho and were given food. Ratho people came and told us, and we told them to hide them. They were seven including one who seemed to be the leader, and they were tired with blisters. We took them away at sunset, but the Boers were already near and they later tortured the people who had hid them until they told them the truth. We had to go through caves, where it was dangerous. We saw a big snake, we knew that because it produced sparks at its tail; but

we were able to go through the cave safely. However, the Boers were not so lucky, as it attacked them and their dogs, until now we have not heard about them.

We later arranged for Moses, the name we knew him by, and the others to get a ride on a truck that was transporting cattle to Palapye. We hid them under sacks and blankets in the truck, on the journey to Palapye. From there the cattle were transferred onto the train to the Lobatse BMC. There, I was able to put them on the train. It was easy for me to do this because it was my job to arrange for the transportation of the cattle, and I was also able to give them a little bit of money when I parted with them at Palapye.

We didn't know him as Samora we knew him as Moses so when I heard that Samora was coming to Botswana. I was not interested. Apparently, Samora told Seretse that he knew two people, Gobi Dintwe of Lentswelemoriti and Kgaboesele of Lobatse who he wished to be reunited with. Police were sent to me and told me about Samora Machel; I went with them, when I arrived I saw people coming towards us and I noticed Moses as he noticed me too; we ran towards each other until police stopped us because of protocol. He asked me about Kgaboesele, who happened to be my uncle to whom I had sent Machel and his people by lorry from Lentswe-le-Moriti, and it was arranged to tell him to come to the BMC the following day. He too was surprised at seeing Samora Machel.

I came to Gaborone in 1965, when I became a teacher because there was a shortage of teachers. Most of the refugees came from Soweto, so most Batswana who were here were from schools in GSS; they were in groups like tshabantsa, middle class, and us labourers, I was hired by a Boer to look after his Zebras Investments, which housed 3 companies. I was paid more than MPs around 1965. Batswana didn't treat refugees' well because they were educated, loved by girls though some were bad like Sten Khubeka, some pretended to be refugees whilst they were not they were spies for the Boers; they were informants who just disappeared later. Some schooled at UBLS; when Khubeka graduated he started politics and was arrested and taken to jail where he joined other politicians.

Many of the refugees who came later were just kids; they did not care and they easily got used to any environment. But people were ill-treating them, those who came first were able to accommodate them in large numbers. Using Radio Bantu, Botswana used to talk about them so people were able to know about them and even give them food. Organizations such as the Botswana Council for Refugees came later because others used to stay with local people, some stayed at Moruti Motswasele's place. I even had to make way for some. Spiritual churches also helped with food, but they could not stay long; they could stay for only a week. Most of the refugees had children; the girls from South Africa ended up getting married to fellow refugees. To us Seretse told us that a person was important; he wanted Rhodesia, Namibia and Angola to get independence, and we could sanction South Africa. We didn't know if that was a formal refugee policy.

Leaders' view on refugees did not change overtime because Seretse became angry towards people who called themselves refugees, only to burn Mr Nzalgwa's house. That incident was an eye opener to us; it took five years to state where refugees stayed, attackers like Dekorkor who came to attack had maps, which was a surprise because maps could not be made in a day. We had to be careful with strangers.

The raids in 1985 changed people's attitudes, because they started living in fear. The refugees I knew already had their residences; girl friends were friends with others. Then there were people like George Phahle and his wife, who were later killed at Tsholofelo, our government was able to cater for them. I didn't hear of ordinary people chasing away refugees.

In my knowledge, Khuna Mmusi, our land did not have many educated people, especially police. We had many Basotho, Rhodesia, Marotsi; most teachers came from Lesotho. The African Advisory Council took up the task of attracting people who were educated, and most people were recruited. Makeba who was a singer, Abel Mmusi was a teacher at Lentswele Moriti with a Master's Degree, and was one of the people who convinced me to go back to school.

## Gaborone, Monare

[Tlokweng]

*Chief Monare Gaborone is a Batlokwa Chief and during the struggle he worked as a veterinary officer at Mamuno, and later as an immigration officer in Air Botswana.*

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I become a chief during the 1970's after serving in the national service for a long time. Seretse Khama then told me that it was time for me to come and serve my people. That was when I retired from the government. I worked as a veterinary officer at Mamuno border near Namibia.

One day when I was still in the national service, in the veterinary department at Mamuno, a place near Namibia, I was patrolling the Botswana Namibia Border and I saw many people who were running towards Botswana; some of them were hungry. I took them to our base at Mamuno, where they were taken to Gantsi, on their way to Gaborone. I asked them questions as to why they were fleeing from their country, and they told me that they were fighting for freedom. They said they wanted their land back from the Boers, who had taken it by force. They came through the desert with no transportation.

They were both males and females, but not all of them were carrying children. Just imagine having to flee with ten children! Most of them were left behind with their grandparents who also could not travel. At some point I came across Sam Nujoma's deputy president who was also among the people who came to Botswana as refugees. On that day we were patrolling the border using a South African van because vehicle could not traverse the terrain, and fortunately we took them all to Mamuno. Sometimes we travelled with the South Africans so that they could help us when we had break downs along their side of the Border. In Gaborone they were kept in police stations and at times at the prison, but not as prisoners. It was just to keep them safe to give them accommodation and to feed them.

There was a man who operated a transport van between Gobabese and Ncojane. That man was such a snake! He was once paid to transport refugees from Gantsi to Gaborone but he decided to inform the North West Police about the planned transportation. He decided to schedule the journey a couple of days ahead so that the Boer police could meet him on his way to Gaborone, where they took the refugees and went with them to Namibia; he later went to Gantsi and pretended they were taken from him by force. Apparently, the Boers had a break down on their way to meet him, so he pretended to have a break down as a way of buying time to allow the Boers from South Africa to reach him. Fortunately the UN instructed them to bring the refugees back unharmed, and luckily they were returned safely. The transporter was a white man who was just doing business between Gantsi and Gaborone.

One of the captured people happened to be a great friend of our former president Sir Seretse Khama; they went to school together abroad and he later became a medical officer in Botswana. That was almost the end of my stay on that side, as I was

transferred to Francistown where I was dealing with international transportation of cattle to Rhodesia, that's when I later knew about Dukwi Camp passing through it going north. I was transferred to the north and later had to come back home. I also had a brief stay in the department of local government here in Tlokweng.

The refugees were accepted by Batswana; even some used to stay in my house. The whole village was willing to accommodate them and stay with them. I gave some of them this house of mine to stay in. I still keep in touch with some of them; we invite each other for functions. I even owe them a return journey.

Staying with a stranger in my house was dangerous to my life and that of family members, but what could we do? Those people came here looking for help and we had to accommodate them; where could they go if we rejected them? I gave them my bedroom to sleep in. Even on bedroom was used as an armoury for keeping their guns. People loved them they used to sing their traditional songs and people would come here to cheer them; everyone was enjoying themselves.

Personally as a chief I encouraged inter marriages to take place; why not? They were in love and I could not prevent that from happening. Those who were able to bear children did just that and we were happy for them.

You are right about the dangers of leaving behind fatherless children or even diseases, but I was not much into that. In fact there were children here in Tlokweng who were born from such parents, and luckily some of them still keep in touch. There is one boy here who was born that way, and can always visit his family members back home in South Africa. The father of one boy went to America, but also comes back to check on his relatives. To earn a living they used to work for us, doing every job available for them; even this house was built by them. There was one man who was very good in building houses and we paid him to earn a living. Some who were teachers were able to take up part time jobs in evening schools. Others used to go with us to the lands or do any job that they found us doing in the village and they were always given something in reward.

Those who were in Tlokweng were coming mostly from Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa, and I lived with all of them here in my house. Those who were coming from South Africa were mostly from the Riff, not in Tswana villages but some of those in my house who later became my relatives were coming from Tswana villages. They were mostly from the ANC. Some went for further studies and later came back. Even the Brother to President Thabo Mbeki was here, he became a teacher and later joined Ian Kirby's Law Firm. One day at night I received a call from them asking if I could offer him protection, I told them to meet me under the Tlokweng Bridge near village. I brought him here and later a plane was arranged for him to go overseas. Some stayed in Botswana for a long time, but others stayed for only a short time because arrangements had already been made for them up north in Zambia. Zambia was used as a transit route. I also came into contact with them when I was working as an immigration officer for Air Botswana.

There were lessons learnt from the liberation struggle; I learnt about friendship. It taught me friendship, working together with different people. Dishonesty also, some of them were very dishonest. If you go to the *kgotla* you will find a house which used to accommodate some young boys from south Africa, among them there was a very dishonest boy who used to disappear for a very long time, just to reappear weeks later; he even had a baby with one of the village girls. His name was Buti. That boy was a sell-out, he told South African Police about his friends who were staying in Botswana. He lied to me, saying he went to visit his uncle in Serowe, but when I enquired about it I found out that he was lying. I told him to stop doing that, and I even told the ANC to remove him because the police were going to kill him and even his friends. It was also not difficult to rule my people with them. Some of them even decided to stay behind and we did not have any problem with it.

It was not our duty to meet as the *Dikgosi* to discuss refugees in Botswana, but I used to meet one arch bishop of the Anglican Church who used to work with refugees. Botswana government helped a lot. If it was not for us, they could have lost their lives; we gave them protection, food and clothing.

The UN agencies also worked with the Botswana government to help them with whatever they needed, like medication, clothing, and scholarships, as it happened to Mbeki's brother.

Some of the refugees acknowledge what the Botswana government was doing to help them, but others were ungrateful, since they felt that the Botswana Government could have retaliated to the Boers; but we did not have the resources to do that and again we are a peaceful country.

The coming of the refugees did not affect Botswana's development policies that much, but some countries were reluctant to help Botswana because they felt they were helping criminals.

Regarding the South African Police bombings, I told you that there were some among them, even some local people who leaked information to the South African Police. One lady who was married to a white guy was also responsible for that.

They were paid to leak information; even before they asked for it, they were given money so that they disclosed crucial information. On the day of the bombings, police went straight to the places where refugees were staying and that means they had information. At some hide out places refugees were lucky to survive because they were not sleeping in their houses that night.

There was no reaction from the Botswana government to the Bombings, but I hear there was a meeting at the border to discuss among other issues that bombings.

I don't really know much about the ANC and the offices of the other parties here in Botswana, but you must know that they were operating in secret so that people did not get to know about them.

Some people in the village accuse Esaack Solly of having worked with South African Police to give crucial information and blame him for the Bombings. I agree with them because that evening there was a white man at Solly's Oasis Motel, who

was happy and talking good about the bombings, yet the owner did not report him. But that man was later killed in South Africa since he was only in Botswana using a permit.

You see that certificate? It comes from South Africa, and this boy used to play with refugees. He said this, pointing to his son who is in his early 30s.

## Gaborone, Elijah

[Tlokweg]

*Elijah Gaborone was an ordinary man in the society, who was in Tlokweg during the liberation struggle. He explains his experiences as a young man during the liberation struggle.*

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When refugees were staying in our village, we were still young and did not understand much what was going on, but we know that there were once people who were staying here as refugees.

They came from South Africa from Vokazenzele and Orlando; they came running away from the Boers who were killing them in large numbers so they decided to come to Botswana to become refugees. Some of them were school children who were challenging the white man's rule, by going on strike. They were they both male and female and some of them were coming with children. When they first arrived here we just accepted them with both hands, since they told us that they were fleeing away from the white men who wanted to end their lives and they had to cross the border into Botswana.

They came to Botswana instead of other neighbouring countries because of the peace and tranquillity that prevails in our country; ever since we gained independence they had never heard of any troubles, so they hoped to find good life in Botswana. Their stay here depended on a number of factors. Those who were just here stayed for a long time but the others who were on their way to the north stayed until it was safe for them to travel. Others stayed for two to three years, and when they had to go back home they told us. Those who went back to South Africa, do come back to see us; it is only that most of those who come here come as visitors, to visit those who stayed behind when the others went back.

They were the opposition; some were school children like those who were coming from Orlando who were always on strike. They were just school children speaking with one voice. These people were not guilty they were just fighting for freedom; they were just rejecting the white minority rule in South Africa. The way we lived here in Botswana we were just a peaceful nation and we expected them to be the same when they arrived here. I don't remember anything which was meant to target the refugees. Of course they had to behave since they were not in their country, when you enter other people's country you have to be careful of what you do.

When they first arrive in Botswana they were supposed to report to the chief who took them to the government officials. Some were allowed to stay with people, but with the knowledge of the chief. The chief had to tell the government officials that there were some people who needed protection. The first group of people came from the Transvaal, at Meloreng. Boers were killing them and they decided to seek protection in Botswana. There were others who were spreading all over; you know when you flee you don't really choose where to go but those who knew about Botswana decided to come here, as I said earlier.

Bahurutshi were among the first people to come here and unlike others they wanted citizenship in Botswana so that they could stay here for good. They did not get what they wanted because of lack of land in our area. Our Chief told them that it was not like he was rejecting them, but rather it was because there was nowhere to allocate them. They were too many; some are still staying in Kweneng, where they went looking for land. They ended up in Molepolole, where they got citizenship and even now they are still there as part of Botswana.

There was no discrimination of any form shown towards the Bahurutshi; they stayed here peacefully with us. Even where they stayed is still visible. Yes there was no problem with intermarriages between the refugees and Botswana. The only problem was with those from the Transvaal because the Boers used to come here looking for them and that was a danger to people married to them. That was the only problem because even when we went to work in the mines we did not encounter any problems. I don't know much about the form of help the refugees got from the Botswana government, because the chiefs were the ones who were dealing with it. They were nice people, not like these Matebele (current Zimbabweans staying in Botswana), we see in our country nowadays who pretend to be refugees but later kill you. When they arrived we used to take them to the chief who decided whether to take them and stay with them before handing them to the government. That was meant to see if really they were refugees, as some could just come pretending to be refugees whereas they were crooks. But some of them were later killed by the Boers. I don't know exactly when that happened, but it was some time back, they came to kill school children who were from South Africa and were rebelling against the Boers. They just came looking for them. Who knows? Maybe someone told them.

When the refugees were killed, our government just instructed its people not to fight, because the Boers were not fighting our people. There was a lot of cruelty. They did not try to take them back; they just came and killed them in Botswana and left them to die. One was staying by the *kgotla* and he was killed there. When he heard

them coming, he tried to run away but before he could jump the fence they killed him.

I lived with them, and they attacked the refugees anytime at night; one of them was killed at the town, but we don't know how they got to know about him or where he was staying.

The refugees did not try to fight back. How could they when they knew that the Boers were using big fighting guns? Again they were not staying in one area where they could be able to fight back as a group.

Their coming helped us as Botswana a lot, I remember one guy who was a traditional doctor called Sello, he was practicing in Botswana and people were visiting him for consultation. Another one of them is a mechanic, and he still stays somewhere at Masetlheng.

## George, Sasara

[Phakalane]

*Mr Sasara George is the Deputy Permanent Secretary and former 1st Secretary of Botswana Embassy in Lusaka; and later Botswana Ambassador in Brussels.*

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Botswana supported the liberation struggle because it was part and parcel of the Southern African region. The struggle of the people of Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe was the struggle of Botswana as a country. Botswana was not truly independent as long as some of its neighbours were still under oppression.

When Botswana was invited to be one of the Frontline States it agreed. That was a critical moment for Botswana and its subsequent role in the liberation struggle.

For international politics you need your neighbours in order to survive. Botswana joined these states, what the settler regimes perceived as joining the enemies of the status quo. Botswana made lots of sacrifices especially human sacrifice. Botswana hosted the refugees in their own homes as there were no refugee camps initially. They could not just be left in the open, as they would be sitting targets for the enemy. They were hiding among the Batswana, and they sacrificed their lives by taking that risk.

The Botswana government sacrificed a lot by taking “a-not-see attitude” regarding the droves of people that came into the country. Some of these people were sent to school, others served in our schools, and others were given employment by the Botswana government. In terms of resources, the upkeep for some of these people was coming from the Botswana government, employment in the civil service, employment in schools and other non-governmental organizations.

The attitude of the Batswana towards the liberation movement was positive. Batswana were willing to go an extra mile to help their brothers. People sacrificed, some died trying to help the liberation struggle because in a liberation struggle death is inevitable. Batswana used their own means to support them; even up to today the friendship and personal relationship is still there.

It was difficult for Botswana to distinguish between a real refugee and a spy. Many refugees lost their lives, as they were killed by South Africans. Botswana had a limited capacity in as far as intelligence was concerned, and could not effectively distinguish genuine refugees from spies. The refugees were Namibians, South Africans and Zimbabweans who were more relatives than alien people. Refugee camps in Zambia were bombed by settler regimes. My neighbour in Lusaka, Dumiso Dahengwa, was nearly kidnapped as the Rhodesians came to raid his house but he had been tipped and was not in the house.

Most of the leadership of the liberation movements understood Botswana’s position. Without Botswana they had no way to go. In fact, major battles against South Africa and Namibia were fought from Botswana. When their top leadership escaped they came through Botswana. The government recognized both PAC and ANC; in fact we recognized all of them. We encouraged all of them to unite because we knew

the dangers of supporting one liberation movement over the other. Botswana played its role.

We never recognized SWANU though. SWANU posed a problem because the person who joined it was the Vice President of SWAPO, Muyongo. When he left them he passed through here; in fact he is a Motswana from Caprivi. We recognized both ZAPU and ZANU. Botswana helped sponsor their people for scholarships. Sometimes the liberation movements tried to be difficult, as they did in Dukwi in 1976, almost wanting to control the government of Botswana. Some movements were stronger than our government at the time because of the armaments they had. The government admonished them and told them to behave or face the consequences. Nkomo, Mugabe, Nujoma and Oliver Thambo were leaders that were very good people. They met with Presidents and joked about the past.

In order to monitor and control guerrilla freedom fighters, Botswana made alliances with the top leadership of ZANLA, ZIPRA, and MK. They told the Botswana government their intentions and movements, and the government actually escorted them. They worked closely with our intelligence.

Botswana tried to resolve conflicts and factionalism in the liberation movements but it was difficult. Botswana brought Chissano and Dlakama together here in Botswana. Botswana was instrumental in the signing of the agreement between FRELIMO and RENAMO; ZAPU and ZANU agreements, Botswana was there negotiating in long meetings, in Lusaka, Tanzania and here. After the liberation, people knew the role Botswana has played. Others were disappointed because they wanted Botswana to commit political suicide. The majority however were aware of the sacrifices Botswana made to their liberations. Relations with other SADC countries are quite cordial.

We did not have the capacity to confront the wars of destabilization, but we made lots of noises in the international arena. We reused the profile of the negative attitude of the oppressive regimes. South Africa used to fly over Botswana in acts of intimidation and over Zambia as well. They told the Zambian soldiers to stay put, because they were looking for their own enemies. They went drove to the State House and demolished Nkomo's house near the state house. We were promoting peace, but not war as the settler regimes were doing.

In 1977, Freedom fighters shot down a plane over the Zambezi because it was suspected that it was loaded with weapons that would be used to destroy guerrilla bases in Zambia. The Rhodesians retaliated by shooting down a big truck from Zambia in a ferry and it sunk together with the ferry. The Rhodesians suspected that it was carrying weapons to be used by freedom fighters.

Botswana is a small country that is land-locked. Botswana made sure that it was in its interest to make sure that the region was integrated. Economically Botswana would benefit from the integration, as it would access the markets of the region easily. What we have learnt from the liberation struggle to do what we can to the current situation, is working together as leadership of the region. Southern Africa was

liberated because the leadership of these countries worked together, and the region should strive to work together for development.

Frontline States contributed to the liberation struggle. Nyerere admired Seretse pragmatic position and how he managed to be in Frontline States in spite of the precarious position of Botswana in the region. Seretse was vocal about apartheid and that it should be contained. Initially Frontline States was composed of countries, Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania. Frontline States understood the position of Botswana in respect of the liberation. Mugabe came through Botswana, stayed in Tlokweng at Kgosi Monare's house, Nujoma, Tambo, Machel, Mandela, all passed through this country – so Botswana contributed to the liberation struggle in many respects.

Botswana used to have a lot of refugees. We eventually built Dukwi refugee camp. We used to have South Africans, Zimbabweans, Namibians and others from other countries, like Angola. If somebody came with arms, they were arrested and put in protective custody. If they were going to proceed, they were released silently. Steve Tshwete, former Minister of Sports in South Africa was once arrested here and put in protective custody, but he was later released quietly.

## Habano, Taolo Goyamang

[Kgosing Ward]

*Taolo Goyamang Habano was born on the 2 March 1949 and schooled in his village up to class six. He completed his junior certificate and went to complete his education in Lesotho and came back to train in agriculture, in Botswana. He got a diploma in Agriculture, in Swaziland and started working in Francistown, where he started meeting with freedom fighters and people talking about Smith's soldiers crossing into Botswana. Bluetown, the place where he was staying, was also where freedom fighters were staying on their arrival, on transit to Zambia. So he was in the position to interact with the freedom fighters who came to Botswana during the liberation struggle.*

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My name is Taolo Goyamang Habano. I was born on 2 March 1949. I started school here in Gumare but then it was only Standard Four. I then went to Shaka we to complete my schooling up to Standard Six. Then of course we were nearing independence and after independence the education system changed, that was around 1967. I then went to Swaneng Hill in Serowe to complete my Junior Certificate up to Form 2, and mind you, we were paying school fees. The school was then run by Missionaries. After completing Form 2, I came back to Gumare where I spent a couple of years before I was sent to school in Lesotho. But before that I was taken to Cape Town, under the department which was responsible for BOLESWA citizens. I did not spend a long time in Cape Town, but I then heard that the capital was now being moved from Mafikeng to Botswana, and I came back to Gumare. There was an Agriculture school based in Mahalapye and I applied; I was admitted and started training there. I finished the training in 1972.

I started working at Chobe; at that time there was an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in the Western Province of Zambia. I worked there for about 8 months. At the time, as you may know, Chobe was under Ngamiland district administration; even though I worked there, my base was still Ngamiland. That was around 1973 and 1974. Around 1975 I was sent out for training in an Agricultural College for a Diploma course, in Swaziland. When I finished my course I was posted to Francistown for work. This is where I met people talking about Smith's soldiers crossing into Botswana. I was staying in the area called Bluetown, in Francistown, and close to where I was staying was a place where freedom fighters were staying upon their arrival, on transit to Zambia. While I was staying at Bluetown, the place was bombed twice. The freedom fighters who stayed there on transit to Zambia were very intelligent people, in the manner they were carrying out their activities. When Francistown was bombed, no one was hurt because when the 'Boers' were bombing, none of the freedom fighters was at their Bluetown home; and I don't know who might have warned them to escape early. The Mophane Camp in Francistown was also bombed, but I'm not sure of the exact time. I think it was in the mid 1970s, and they normally did the bombing during weekends.

The bombs were set by an Ian Smith agency. There were whites in Francistown; some of those who owned Tati ranches were Smith's agents, who were sometimes using Batswana agents. The Batswana agents were sent out into the country to set those bombs. This was because as Batswana, they knew a lot about their local environment, Bluetown, and it was easy for them to set those bombs targeting houses where freedom fighters were accommodated. The United Nations Refugee Committee was renting the accommodation. They did that in many locations not only in Botswana.

I also worked in the North East and part of the Central district. I was covering Bobirwa, Tuli Block, Ramokgwebana, Maitengwe, Nshakashogwe, Sebina, and Mathangwane, some of Tonota North and up to Kasane in the Chobe.

We often met freedom fighters in the villages closer to the border. In most cases we met them in Maitengwe and Matsiloje near the border with Rhodesia. You know what? They were operating in shifts, some coming into Botswana, while others going back secretly into Rhodesia. Once we met them they were willing to discuss some issues about their activities. They often told us that they were taking food supply, water and other things to the guerrillas. They travelled and passed through Nata to Kazungula and Kasane on their way to Zambia. After about two months we would see them coming back from Zambia into Botswana with new weapons. Since they knew us, and were used to meeting us, they would tell us when they were going to attack their enemies in Rhodesia. Sometimes when we were on duty close to the border they warned us about the time so that we should move away from the border to avoid to be affected by the exchange of fire. That, mind you, was done secretly so that Smith's soldiers should not know that we worked with freedom fighters, because if they knew that, it would have been dangerous to our country. We would have been their targets.

## Kadimo, Lopang N.

[Kasane; June 2007]

*Lopang Kadimo was born at Kachikau in 1922. He went to school at Kachikau primary school and only went up to grade four. He worked in the Department of Wildlife and National Parks right here in Kasane, as a builder. From 1973- 1988 he became the court president.*

My name is Lopang Kadimo. I was born at Kachikau in 1922. I started my school at Kachikau primary school and only went up to grade four. I worked in the Department of Wildlife and National Parks right here in Kasane. I was in the building team which repaired Wild life officers' houses. I am not sure when I started working in this department but I retired from this department in 1973 and became the Court President in Kasane from 1973 – 1998. I decided to become a court president because it was paying better wages than being in the building work, where I spent most of my time in the bush. I preferred staying in the village where I could to be with my family. I was a married man and I needed to be with my children. I had to retire from court presidency because I was old. I am now taking care of my cattle at 256.

Oh you mean during the war between SWAPO and the Boers. Yes, refugees crossed into Botswana and were treated well. Sometimes they crossed into our area using traditional canoes. There were teachers, school children and older people from the Caprivi. They would cross the river at night and we found them in the morning at the old kgotla. They were welcomed here at our kgotla. The District Commissioner who was around at the time arranged tents and he communicated with others in Gaborone as to where these people should be taken to. Some were taken to Francistown. Just on that one, some of the people from Caprivi Strip had relatives here. As you may know this land here in Kasane is occupied by Basubiya and on the other side in Caprivi are Basubiya. We are relatives with people in the Caprivi. Those who crossed the border during the war found their relatives here. Villagers here used to take them to their houses. When refugees were to be sent out to Francistown, relatives would first identify those to whom they were related. They stayed with them right here in Kasane. I know many refugees who did not return to Namibia after problems were resolved.

These refugees came in at the time when I was the Court President but I can't remember the exact year; you can check the date in the government records because there are people who were taken by the government to Francistown. Many refugees crossed from Namibia several times and were taken to Francistown.

It was not easy to detect who the freedom fighters were. Those who knew these people were the police and other government top officers. As for us we never knew who was indeed a freedom fighter. Some of them were just ordinary people and others even asked for employment from white people around here, working in Safaris, building houses. There is this other one who was shot along Pandamatenga Lesoma road, at a place called Nineteen (19). He was shot by the white soldiers. We stayed with him and he was a builder. He is the one who used to buy food from Kasane

for the freedom fighters. He used to leave us in the evening and went to the camps where the freedom fighters were staying. The freedom fighters had camps just along the main road and he delivered food to them. In the morning and afternoon he was a builder and at night he delivered food to freedom fighters. Freedom fighters used to come but they never troubled people. They never spent long hours with ordinary people. They just came like visitors who were troubled in Zimbabwe. Those who knew them are the police, because that was where they used to go and report about their presence to officials. It was during this time that we came to realize that the man known as a builder around Kasane was an intelligence of freedom fighters when the Boers bombed the vehicle he was driving at 256. He was called Mkhwanazi, I don't know if this was his real name but this is the name which was common amongst us here. They shot him but they were not able to kill him. He used to leave in the evening to inform his "boys" (freedom fighters) about what was going on to assist them to plan ahead.

Those were the days when the road was not tarred between Kasane and Francistown. When the freedom fighters entered this country, government officials and BDF took them to the police station, and they easily identified them. Sometimes government officials would meet freedom fighters when traveling along the Kasane-Francistown road and give them food. Refugees were taken to Francistown but the freedom fighters were returned to their camps inside Botswana and although secretly located, people knew where these camps were. That was also the government officials' secret. We at the customary court were aware that the police knew what was happening within the liberation struggle activities. That was a government secret. They were aware that freedom fighters used to come to villages such as Pandamatenga and Lesoma. As you know people in Pandamatenga and Lesoma are Ndebeles and Nanzwas. The freedom fighters were coming to their tribes' men and this is where they got food supplies. Some relationships even started among freedom fighters and women in Lesoma and Pandamatenga.

The regime forces knew very well that freedom fighters were hiding here. They were aware of the activities of the freedom fighters. Politicians such as Luckson Sankwasa never entered Zimbabwe. They could be killed. The problem we faced is that they started to fight. Do you see that Camp by the Ferry? They demolished it. Those were the bullets from the white soldiers. We used to hear bullets flying over our huts. They were searching for freedom fighters. They even used to trouble people at the Kazungula border. People never wanted to come and work here because it was tough. The white soldiers were fighting and our BDF soldiers fought them at Kazungula border.

Honestly, I think it was good to support the struggle because we were helping our relatives and fellow black people so that they could get independence. That is why the government took care of the refugees and let the freedom fighters stay here. Some people died because of the war of Liberation. When you get into a war you know you can die. If the white soldiers did not know that freedom fighters were staying here

they would not have crossed into Botswana. If our soldiers did not want them, they should have prevented them from staying here; allowing them to stay means there was an agreement with the liberation movement. I don't think it was wrong to give them support. They were soldiers.

When the refugees were still in Kasane by the old kgotla, there were people who were *impimpis*. They once came and killed a person who was a refugee somewhere here. It was still bushy. These were ethnically Basubiya. They used to come here, crossing at Mpalila. They came here pretending to be visitors who were coming to check their relatives, and yet they were coming to see where refugees and freedom fighters were hiding. Then they went back to Namibia and informed the white soldiers about how the situation was.

*Ee kana Masubiya a ga lona.* [Yes, these were your Subiya people, they were divided into two]. Some were on the SWAPO side; others were supporting the white regime forces and were the spies. Whites were sending them here to come and search for freedom fighters and refugees. The spies were coming here for those who ran away from Namibia. Even the one they killed was from Namibia. He was killed by other Namibians just by the river on the side of Botswana.

We were very much affected by the struggles, life was not good here. People knew that freedom fighters came in and some with their weapons because many freedom fighters were caught in the National Park having killed wild animals. They used to kill animals but no action was taken. They were just left to go. That was a government secret.

Thank you son.

## Katukula, Esther

[Lesoma Village; July 2007]

*Esther Katukula was born in 1940 in Lesoma. She never went to school and has never worked anywhere. She got married to Mr Jameson Katukula in 1960 and have been doing subsistence farming. She tells of her experiences at Lesoma, which is on the border, during the liberation struggle*

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My name is Esther Katukula. I was born in 1940 right here in Lesoma. I have never gone to school and have never worked anywhere. I got married to Mr Jameson Katukula in 1960 and we have doing subsistence farming since I got married to this man. I stayed with him from 1960 and he passed away in 1989.

Those things like guerrilla wars were only known by men. Women were always home and afraid of the bullets shot across the border from Zimbabwe. Our men are the ones who used to meet these guerrillas when they were looking after cattle or when fetching firewood.

What I remember is that freedom fighters used to come here at my place asking for water or they would come when they were hungry to ask for food. I was married and my husband is the one who interacted with those guys.

My husband is the one who used to talk to the guerrillas and I did not talk to them. They only greeted and would ask where my husband was. I never knew what they were talking about. Men in the past never wanted to share what they were discussing with women. There was a man who used to visit my husband he was called Mkhwanazi. This is the man who used to buy food for the guerrillas.

The day I came to know about freedom fighters was the time when sixteen Botswana Defence Force soldiers were killed. When this incident happened I was not well. But my husband woke me up in the morning and said we should go to the field [*tshimo*]. We heard gun shots inside Zimbabwe and I told my husband those gun shots must be

coming from the guerrillas. I feared they might be fighting and my husband agreed that we immediately return back to our home. When we arrived home we saw people running to different directions in panic and they told us they were afraid of the gun shots. Some told my husband that there was a group of freedom fighters who crossed the border and have passed through the village carrying weapons. The Headman of Lesoma Jameson sent his sons to go and call the BDF for patrol. Since I was not feeling well that day I went into my house to rest. In a matter of minutes my husband entered the house and told me that we should run away because there might be a fight between white Rhodesian soldiers and guerrillas. He took our child Sephiwe by hand and instructed me to run fast ahead of them, but they had to leave me behind as I was sick. Villagers ran into the bush. Some drove cattle from Lesoma into the bush heading towards Kasane. I was left alone that day and when I woke up and walked into the kitchen to drink water I saw this young man dressed in army uniform carrying

a gun and a small bag.<sup>1</sup> He was speaking Ndebele and told me that my people have run away. He asked me why I did not follow others and run away too and I told him I was not feeling well. He gave me two tablets to help ease my pains. This young man begged me not to tell anyone (especially those in uniforms) where he was hiding. He was referring to anyone who would come to our place wearing uniform which looked similar to his. He disappeared for a while and came back and asked how I was feeling. I told him I was now feeling better and he left. While sitting in my compound alone, suddenly I saw a flying machine (helicopter). Since the helicopter was just below the tree level, I saw some white male faces inside the helicopter. People ran away from the village when this helicopter came. At around five o'clock in the evening I heard loud gun shots and I saw smoke from the other side of the village and we heard that they (whites) had bombed and killed Botswana soldiers.

The following day, and I think that was two days after the death of the BDF soldiers, my cousin Chekecheke came with his children to our home to check on my condition. Since I was not feeling well and was a bit affected by the smoke from the cars that were bombed, Chekecheke suggested we sleep outside the house in the compound. The whole village smelled of smoke that day. In the middle of the night I heard footsteps and woke up. When I looked at the road leading to the water stream, I saw five people carrying guns. Then I woke up my husband who also saw them and said they were not guerrillas, but Smith's soldiers. In the morning the Botswana police came to Lesoma. But I'm not sure whether they were able to track them down in the village.

The police came to Lesoma to find out why the Headman (Jameson) reported the presence of freedom fighters. They were saying that if the freedom fighters were not reported then the BDF soldiers would not have been killed. There was no punishment against the headman.

Some of the freedom fighters spoke Ndebele and were our tribesmen. They came to the village to ask for food and water, but they never spent many days here; sometimes they were here just for a few minutes, and then went to their hiding camp in the bush. Towards the end of the war of liberation in Zimbabwe, one of my uncle's daughters in Zimbabwe called Dolly got married to a freedom fighter.

The other day I visited some of my relatives in Bulawayo. I had a problem with transport money and my relatives organized a fund raising function in which they collected enough money to put me on the train. Some of the former freedom fighters do visit the village even today. A certain James Mathe once came here and asked me if Jameson and Mkheswa (my husband) were still alive. When I asked him who he was he told me that he was a former freedom fighter. He told me that they used to move

around Lesoma village, and were even invited at our '*masimo*' where we gave them freshly produced corn from the field. He talked about how I used to be afraid of guns, whenever they were around our house visiting my husband.

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(1) Traditional a home is a set of houses within a compound, some serving as bedrooms and a one serving as a kitchen where cooking is done and it is at this place that water, utensils are kept.

Sometimes they used to fetch water at a certain pool but they never troubled people. My husband was amongst those that interacted well with these guerrillas. If he was alive, he would give you good stories. He used to say “These are very good people, they are people of God”. He requested that whenever we see them in the compound we must give them food, if we have some. Children in the village, including ours, got used to seeing guerrillas at the pool where they used to fetch water and after collecting water, they would go into the bush heading towards Pandamatenga. We learnt not to report their presence to BDF. The freedom fighters always told us that whenever we see anyone dressed in an army uniform, whether it was a white or black soldier, we should not tell him where they were. They even requested that if anyone asked whose foot prints were at my place I should not talk about guerrillas. They used to say that they did not know all their enemies. They wanted to meet their enemies without being followed. They told us they did not trust some black people who were used by the white soldiers as collaborators, who were paid to give information to the white soldiers about the whereabouts of the guerrillas.

The worst problem faced by this village was the death of the sixteen (16) soldiers, because among these soldiers there was one young man from Lesoma who was sent out by the headman to call the soldiers. He also died there.

Thank you and have a safe journey to Kasane.

## Kgokong, Mpotseng

*Mpotseng Kgokong is a South African ex-refugee, who had to go to Botswana during the liberation struggle.*

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After 1976 in particular, there was a readiness to assist South Africans and this made it quite easy to access schooling, particularly in Europe, North America, East and West Africa. But South Africans had always been lucky because of the good disposition of the community of nations towards us as an oppressed lot. As far as I know, refugees were treated as such without regard to gender. There was nothing that we did not expect.

The average Motswana was receptive and civil. In Dukwe for instance, those on the lower rung of society interacted with us freely and saw us as fellow human beings; whereas the technocrats saw us as something indescribable. The ordinary urban folk were most hospitable and accepted us as their kith and kin. The political heavy weights, particularly after the passing of the founding President, were vitriolic.

There was interaction with earlier (pre-1976) migrants and South African refugees and interpersonal relationships with the hosts were good. We related well with other groups like the Angolans, Namibians and Zimbabweans, in the circumstances. As political beings, we realized that here and there we would have problems, at times emanating from our disparate cultural or political backgrounds or perceptions. The human body is an amazing thing. We adapted to the circumstances because we were on a journey that we had undertaken consciously. The social networks were also good, although the numbers from the various groupings vacillated.

There were no differences in acceptance by Batswana of Botswana of Batswana refugees from South Africa, and those of other ethnic groups, and I speak as a Motswana. We had access to education; although this was mostly in foreign countries, i.e. outside our country of first asylum. Botswana did place some of us in some of the local schools, including tertiary institutions. As you may well know, the Dukwe Refugee camp had a facility and refugees were encouraged to register locally. Political Education lessons were a life saver in our case. In terms of other means of survival, self-reliance was the thing.

There was nothing we did not expect in the settlement or passage. We took some of the hardships in our stride as we were expected to. Botswana was always willing and ready to get people to resettle in other countries.

A lot of the UNHCR people were not inclined to treat refugees along political affiliation. This can't be said about the middle layer Special Branch officers who did not hide who their preferred refugees were. There were South African refugees who stayed on in Botswana after 1994, and the attitudes are so different now.

## Kgosientsho, Lerayang

[Kazungula]

*Lerayang Kgosientsho, grew up in Kazungula and worked for a Company which was transporting cattle from Botswana to Zambia.*

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My name is Lerayang Kgosientsho. I was born a long time ago at a place I don't know. I grew up here in Kazungula but I am told my parents and others came from that side of Ngamiland. We stayed in Kachikau when I was a boy. I have never attended school and have never worked a permanent job. The only company I worked for was that Company which was transporting cattle from Botswana to Zambia. I was born in 1918 and about a place I don't want to lie because my parents never told me. We came to Kazungula from Kachikau. My parents were following some of their relatives who were here in Kazungula.

I am too old to remember when I worked for the cattle company, my child. I will try to remember but it is a long time. It was during the time when there was copper mining in Zambia. These cattle were bought from people around Botswana particularly in Ngamiland. I and some other guys received the cattle at Nata and we drove them to Kazungula. We sometimes used to receive these cattle at a place called 256. This is where these cattle rested and grazed for some days before being driven to Kazungula border. The cattle were being bought by the mining company to feed miners. The cattle crossed the Zambezi River on the pontoon. The pontoon has been here for a long time. They keep on bringing new models. We drove the cattle to the border and then they were driven into the pontoon. The Zambian government controls the pontoons. The other one was blasted by the Boers during the guerrillas wars. This was not a long time ago. It was in the 1970's. About whether people died I don't know. The only thing I heard was that people were injured.

I was employed to look after their cattle and driving them to the pontoon. I did not retire from that job. I stopped working because the company stopped buying cattle from Botswana. I don't know whether the mines were not doing well or not. I worked in timber industry around Kasane in 1984, but it was after a long time from the time I stopped working in the cattle company. This is where I worked for 3 years but I was getting old. I decided to retire and looked after my cattle. I am now a pensioner.

Those refugees or freedom fighters were coming to Kazungula. Those who came here were freedom fighters from Zimbabwe. They liked coming to Kazungula to ask for water and food and we supplied them with some. They used to ask for food and then went back to where they used to hide in the bush. They came to my place several times to ask for food and water. The freedom fighters never selected yards from which to ask for food and water. They asked from every yard they entered. They hid in the bush inside Botswana, and in the evening they crossed to Zimbabwe to fight the white regime soldiers.

The river is used as the border here in Chobe. You know that. The white regime soldiers were checking movement along the river and the freedom fighters were afraid that they could be seen and be shot by the Boers. They preferred here because it was a bit bushy. The freedom fighters stayed in Botswana and crossed to Zimbabwe in the evening. They moved around Lesoma and Kazungula. They were many and in most cases they never wanted to be seen by people while carrying guns. When they saw people like us who headed cattle they hid their guns. The other time they found me at 256. When I was still working for the cattle company; this was a stopover where we used to spend two or three days so that cattle could drink water, graze and relax. We slept with them there and I was with this other guy from Parakarungu. Early in the morning they woke up and cooked food. In the evening they crossed into Zimbabwe and came back in the morning. There were many freedom fighters in Botswana along the Kasane–Francistown Road. We stayed with them at 256, and they liked following the white soldiers in the evening and early in the morning they crossed back into Botswana. When the white soldiers came following them, they would find that they had already crossed back into Botswana.

The place 256 is not far from the border. It is close when the white soldiers came to the border and found that Freedom Fighters had crossed into Botswana they would shoot haphazardly in case they hit them in the bush. They never crossed in Botswana walking. They used to come with helicopters but they never saw the freedom fighters. The freedom fighters hid themselves in the bush and they never moved in large numbers during the day. The only people they saw during the day were us, herd boys and the cattle and they never troubled us. When ever freedom fighters discovered that white soldiers were following them they dispersed and moved into Botswana crossing the road which goes to Francistown only to meet later as a group. They knew the white soldiers would not follow them into Botswana because white soldiers knew it was illegal to cross into another country unauthorized. The white soldiers were also afraid of our soldiers.

What the freedom fighters at 256 were saying was that Boers wanted to be the only ones in power. Blacks also wanted to have a share in the government of Zimbabwe.

256 is in the bush but along the Francistown–Kasane Road. What was happening was that when freedom fighters saw vehicles coming they stopped them and asked for food. They once stopped us in the middle of that open area at 256 when we were driving from Kasane going to Francistown. One freedom fighter came from the bush. He stopped the vehicle and asked for water, and then another one came also, and we poured water into their water bottles. They drank first and then we poured more water into the water bottles. They then proceeded into the bush and we went to Francistown. Sometimes they got water from water ponds because it used to rain well during the rainy season. As you are aware 256 has several water points and they were lucky to arrive and find water there.

It was a good thing that the Botswana government was secretly supporting the liberation struggle because those freedom fighters were black people. If they came

here running there was no way we could tell them to return back to their enemies; we had to protect them. Even though they were not allowed to come and fight from here I found it was necessary for Botswana to help them. However we did not allow white soldiers to enter Botswana. Freedom fighters helped us in stopping them from attacking us. They knew they were not fighting us but their enemies, the white soldiers. The freedom fighters used to attack the white soldiers at night and we could hear sounds of guns and bombs from a distance. Early in the morning, around four, they crossed into Botswana after launching an attack. There was a camp in Rhodesia which belonged to white soldiers. Freedom fighters were strategic. They used to come to Kazungula in ordinary clothes and without guns. In the evening they followed the white soldiers at that Camp. They fought them at night, killed them and crossed back into Botswana. As you know when someone attacks you at night you can't see; and when you try to run they shoot you.

There was a lot of fighting at the place where there is a Botswana Defence Force (BDF) camp now. The Botswana Defence Force used to fight white soldiers at the border. The regime forces were the ones who used to shoot. They blasted the pontoon and people died there, the one which is being used for transport. The white soldiers attacked, fighting BDF, and our soldiers had to protect themselves by shooting back. Zambian forces were also on the other side fighting the white soldiers when attacked. The freedom fighters, BDF and Zambian forces were one common force fighting the white soldiers. The freedom fighters never went to the battle field during the day; they always fought their battle at night. The fighting really happened at Kazungula border. I am not sure whether some soldiers died there but there are rumours that some white soldiers died. Maybe they were killed by our soldiers.

I believe our soldiers at some point fought with the white soldiers because we heard gun shots at the border. BDF used to come to the village and told us not to get out of the huts if fighting was on at night. They were saying they might mistake us to be the white soldiers and shoot at us. They were also saying if we were to run away the white soldiers might think we were refugees or freedom fighters from Zimbabwe and shoot at us. Our soldiers knew what was happening at the border well. During the day they allowed us to carry on with our daily activities but at night there was no movement at all; they stopped us from moving around. In most cases they started fighting with the enemy around five in the evening, and machine guns would be heard until morning. When the fighting was going on, some of the BDF soldiers came to the village and announced that we should not move out of our houses because they might shoot at us, thinking we were white soldiers. They told us not to move anywhere even if the gun sounds were heard close to our houses.

No one got injured in Kazungula; and no one got injured during the fighting at the border. The only area where bullets reached was at that old immigration office which is now used by the BDF as a camp. That camp was shot several times. The only place where people died in large numbers was at Lesoma when the fifteen (15) soldiers were killed. One boy from Lesoma was also killed there. He was one of the

boys who were sent by the Headman to go and call the Botswana soldiers from their Kazungula base.

The policy of Botswana not allowing freedom fighters to use Botswana as a base for attacking the regime forces was not that effective. Freedom fighters entered the country with guns, especially at night. They knew the BDF were not supposed to see these guns and so when they came here they hid them in the bush. When they were in the bush, they carried them openly. But they never entered the village carrying guns. The ones I often met at 256 used to carry guns because they were in the bush. Here in Kazungula they never came with weapons. After fighting they hid their weapons in the bush and came to meet villagers looking innocent. At night they went back to prepare to launch attacks. Towards the end of the war they left some guns in the bush. One day, some guys who were fetching firewood found a gun in the bush with 11 bullets. They came to tell me and we informed the police. We went there in the company of the police to collect the gun. This shows that when these freedom fighters went back to Zimbabwe, many guns were left in the bush and maybe burnt by veld fires.

In some cases we heard that freedom fighters were caught by police and sent to Francistown. I don't know what these freedom fighters would have done. I am saying this because freedom fighters had their representatives in the Chobe District especially here in Kasane and Kazungula. There was the leader of the freedom fighters called Mkhwanazi. He was a Ndebele and the police knew him. They never took him to Francistown. The freedom fighters had a camp by the river side here in Kazungula just on your way to the Brigade. I think the police knew this camp but pretended they didn't know about its existence. There was no way that we would have gone to report freedom fighters who did not give us problems. They were fighting for their land and we had to support them. They were black like us. Some of these freedom fighters had relatives in Botswana, why report them?

Mkhwanazi was the one who bought food for freedom fighters and distributed to them at their different stations. The police knew him because when ever there was a freedom fighter found lost in the bush, he was the one who was called to identify or prove whether the soldier was Zimbabwean or not. These representatives had vehicles and drove from Kasane to Pandamatenga giving the freedom fighters the things they needed. More information about how Mkhwanazi operated can be obtained from one of the police officers who once worked in Kasane.

Kazungula was an area of freedom fighters only. The borders here were busy, and there was a lot of fighting so the refugees could not enter Botswana from Zimbabwe, because the white soldiers were patrolling the borders day and night. If there were refugees who came here then I never knew them. The only refugees who entered Botswana were from Namibia but we never helped any here in Kazungula. They were helped in Kasane.

Thank you Rra.

## Kowa, Victor

[Phakalane; February 2007]

*Victor Kowa is a Botswana citizen but he was formerly an activist in the liberation struggle.*

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Botswana had to practice what they were preaching, their democracy, they had to try to sow it to the rest of the world and the neighbouring countries that they were truly independent. We were aware that Botswana's position militarily could not stand against South Africa or Rhodesia and therefore they had to try to be as smart as possible. Botswana did not want to damage its name; it had to continue to cooperate with South Africa. South Africa liked this position because it demonstrated for them that although they were always condemned, they nonetheless were dealing with black independent countries in Africa.

From what I know Botswana was supporting the liberation struggle because they were supporting the liberation here. Those that they felt were easy target for South Africa they had to ask them to move further on to at least Zambia because Botswana did not have resources to protect those people. There were people in the Special Branch who were on the pay roll of the South African regime. I know because I accommodated these freedom fighters. When they caught these freedom fighters they gave them about two months to leave for Zambia; meanwhile they took their diaries and contacted the South African regime to inform them about their intentions and information. When the MKs arrived in Gaborone and were caught by the Special Branch, they were reported to their seniors in the government, and then the MKs would be given a chance to do what they wanted to do within a month. Then they arrested them, took their diaries and informed the South African intelligence, but after they had sent them back to Zambia. This was to save Botswana in the face of the international world, that Botswana was supporting the liberation and was against the apartheid regime. However, some members of the Special Branch were double agents; providing South African Intelligence with information and at the same time appearing to aid and support the liberation struggle.

Financially Botswana had to keep on transporting these refugees and freedom fighters. Botswana had to use their financial resources to fly them out of Botswana. If they were refugees, they were accommodated at Dukwi and that had financial implications. In 1985 during the raid, I was accommodating a very senior guy of the MK, the highest commander. He was the guy in charge of the Caravan in Mogoditshane which had all the weaponry. When the Boers were preparing to come and attack Gaborone, this MK guy knew that they were coming. MK had moles within the South African Defence Force, so they were communicated in their lingo, and he knew that they were coming. There was also another guy who claimed to be a refugee and was playing golf. He was close to the guy that was staying at my place. He also knew me but did not know where I was staying. He also knew about the caravan in Mogoditshane. Before the raid, the South Africans came before hand

and disarmed the MK guys at the caravan in Mogoditshane, and it was made public to the Batswana; it was well described in local newspapers. Before they attacked at night they rehearsed what they were going to do during the day; they drove around. This guy was now with a schoolmate of mine who is now Deputy Commissioner of the police in the South African Police. He warned other refugees not to be in their houses that night, but when some did not listen like George Phahle, they were killed. The South African newspapers later showed the picture of the MK guy, who it said was highly wanted by the South African regime. Botswana government immediately whisked the MK guy to Lusaka. When they raided, most of the MK guys were not killed. The golf guy is the one who made sure that the weapons in Mogoditshane were discovered and confiscated by the Botswana Police, and then the South African raid began. The Botswana government advised him to leave and he went to Holland, flew back to South Africa and was a South African operative around the Carlton Centre in Johannesburg. The aim was to blow the Carlton Centre by the MK.

Botswana supported the liberation struggle. They liked these South African refugees but later when their houses were being blown out, cars bombed, they kicked these refugees out of their houses for their safety but I did continue until the bitter end.

Rhodesia was aware of that was happening in Botswana and so was South Africa. South Africa however did not have any good evidence to attack Botswana. In fact Botswana used to invite the South Africans to come and identify the terrorist bases. Even the African National Congress guys had to look at the positive and negative side of Botswana. When Botswana Defence Force met these MK guys they were scared because of the type of weapons they were carrying. Botswana did not have a preference over liberation movements, it accepted them equally.

Botswana monitored and controlled guerrilla activity by making a close follow up; if they saw a new face they allowed him to stay for a month or so.

In dealing with wars of destabilization, Botswana appealed to the United Nations and the international community, which condemned the two giants.

The refugees were taken to Dukwi after realizing that there was no accommodation, and staying in houses was risky as they could be bombed.

## Kwerepe, Gaerobwe Mesho

[Maun; September 2008]

*Gaerolwe Mesho Kwerepe was born in Maun on the 25th April 1929. He looked after cattle and goats before going to school, and went to school full time in 1942. He left school in 1950, after having done standard six Batawana National School. In 1951 he joined the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENELA) and worked as a messenger until he was promoted to be a translator after having learnt “fanakaloo”, a vernacular used at the South African mines. I mastered it and served well as a translator for WENELA. He also worked at several other posts before getting involved in active politics.*

My name is Gaerolwe Mesho Kwerepe. I was born in Maun on the 25th of April 1929. I looked after cattle and goats before going to school. When I started going to school, it didn't last long because we were told to go and look after livestock. I then went back to school in 1942 and completed standard six in 1950, at our school Batawana National School. In 1951 I joined the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WENELA) as a messenger. I worked as a messenger until I was promoted to be a translator after having learnt “fanakaloo”, a vernacular used at the South African mines. I mastered it and served well as a translator for WENELA, and worked as a translator for the WENELA representatives especially the whites. They were responsible for mine labour recruits, and had a problem of communication with these people. WENELA recruited labour for the mines; mine workers were sold to the South African mines by WENELA and when they got there they stayed for 9 months. WENELA didn't have a mine; it was only selling labourers to the mines. I worked there for a long time and they were happy with my services. I was paid about 3.10 pounds per month, which is equivalent to P7.20 now, but I was doing a responsible job. I was also responsible for the papers of the ‘repatriates’ and I was responsible for making sure these people got their salaries, which was called ‘backpays’.

My employers were very impressed by the service I provided to their company. They wanted me to go and work in South Africa, but I couldn't go there because I was the bread winner in the family; I was staying with my mother, grandmother and my aunt and that was why I could not go to another country. They therefore paid me for three months and then I had to quit WENELA and started work at the Batawana Tribal Office. I was employed there because I had experience in typing, office work and filling. I also worked as an Assistant Treasurer.

I thought of going to school, but there was no good secondary education in our country. Botswana by then was poor and I was also having financial problems. I then tried my best to go to America and ended up in Cape Town because I was caught by the authorities there. People there saw that I was a stranger and brought me back to Botswana. They left me at Mafikeng, which was the Imperial Reserve and Offices of the then Bechuanaland Protectorate headquarters.

I then came back home in 1954 and the veterinary office employed me. I became the so called “Learner Cattle Guard” and I didn’t know what I was supposed to be learning about livestock diseases. I worked there because I understood diagnosing cattle diseases and their western medicines. Then there came a white man who didn’t know how to write and he was given the post of Stock Inspector. He didn’t like me, he was jealous of me because the District Commissioner (DC) knew me well. The DC knew me from the time I was still a student, because he was the Chairman of the school committee of Batawana National School. I also knew one pastor, Reverend Neil, from England, who always told this white man about my abilities. I was working with him in the same office. Whenever people needed help while we were together he referred them to me. This increased the hatred that the other white man had for me. He was a racist, so one day he told me that I thought I was a white person, because I was working in an office, but I was just a “learner cattle guard”.

From there I worked at the Botswana Trading Association (BTA), which was owned by the Greeks of Deacons. I worked there for a few months, before I was promoted to be a manager, and then transferred to Tsau to manage the business. These Greeks were from Cyprus and they didn’t know English. My responsibility was to buy cattle from villagers. The predominately cattle owners, Herero speaking people, mostly dominated Tsau at the time. I had to learn the Herero language, and I mastered it; up till now I speak it very fluently. Initially local people were reluctant to sell their cattle to me but since I had worked at WENELA before, where I was recruiting people for mines, I knew how to make them take interest in what I was doing. Gradually I became friends with many potential sellers, and I bought many cattle for the company. I worked with the Greeks for some time, and I had to do my own business on the side. My own business was located about 16km south of Tsau. These Greeks heard that I was running my own business of buying leather and selling it to Francistown at a profit, and they chased me away from their company. People who were jealous of seeing me doing well had told the Greeks about my business, so one morning they sent someone to assess everything in the shop and that very person ended up taking over my position; so I left that job to run my own business. I operated butchery in Shakawe, but I didn’t like Shakawe, because I was interested in cattle rearing. I came back and concentrated in Makakume, which is 16km south of Tsau.

While I was there active politics started, although I wasn’t interested in joining them, I believed in Bechuanaland Democratic Party (BDP). In 1961-2, Philip Matante, Motsamai Mpho and Kgalemeng Motsete came to see me and talked about politics. We were not educated into politics at the time. In 1957, we heard that some Namibian refugees had just arrived in Ngamiland. By then Namibia was under South Africa white rule and was called South West Africa. So I developed interest in those people who were seeking independence. When the Bechuanaland Peoples Party (BPP) representatives Matante, Motsete and Mpho, the Secretary General of their party, discussed some of these issues, I developed some interest in politics. These

guys wanted to take us by storm, telling people in Ngamiland that they were going to bring independence to our country and that they were going to chase the white man away because they were eating a meal 6 times a day, while cheating Batswana.

The message from these politicians was that they didn't want white people in our country. I felt their politics was not right for me. It sounded like they didn't like white people. Of course I listened to what they were saying but I never took them seriously. Then after the BPP representatives politicking then came Mr Tshoko and Mr Xhebere from BDP. Both are late. I told them I was joining BDP because I developed interest in that line of politics. By then I was talkative and I started moving up and down, informing people that we should be independent. Though I had some little doubt as to whether we were going to make it, but then I thought we should be independent. In 1964 I went to Xaxa, which is 9 km from Namibia, and most of the inhabitants there are Bushmen (Basarwa). When I was there I addressed meetings and they were interested in what I had to say, because they liked smoking tobacco which I brought for them; they also knew me since we were trading together when I was still working for the Greeks. I told them that we were establishing a party and they listened. Then one of them who had been working at the mines at Bayford said he knew what I was talking about. I went there to the Basarwa settlement wooing them into BDP politics

using a donkey for transport and I took with me a water bag, *dikgobe tsa kabu*, milk, and I had a gun. It is 164 km from Tsau, with no village in between at all. I went there to sell the message of my political party.

After some time, it was clear that some people in the region wanted me to be a Member of Parliament but I refused and Mr Morris Mohapa was elected to be a Member of the Parliament and he died shortly. Since I was not interested to be a Member of Parliament, I assisted and organized everything in order for Mohapa to be a Member of the Parliament. But after his death, the President of Botswana sent some people to me asking me to take over the position. He convinced me to be a Member of Parliament, but I told him I could not manage because I was running my own business and I had livestock to look after. I told him was not interested in joining politics. I also told him that I was not good in English since I only did primary education and learnt it through a few paid jobs.

When we joined the parliament, everyone was tested whether they were fluent in English or not. We were sent to the District Commissioner, Grand. He took me and tested me as to whether I can write or speak English. He dictated and I was writing, then we started conversing, a dialogue. He then wrote me a certificate and told them that I was fluent in English. They then appointed me to be a member of parliament in 1965. On the 1st of March on Saturday we voted and on the 28th of March on Monday the parliament, the Botswana National Assembly at Lobatse was officially opened. All the Members of Parliament were 35; 31 elected and 4 specially elected. I was a member of parliament since then, till 1994, and Jacob Nkate the Minister of Education took control of North-West district.

Most of the people who came to Maun were from Namibia which was known as South West Africa under South Africa and the policies of apartheid prevailed. We supported these people carefully not to be caught unaware. We decided to support them but other people said we have manoeuvred our independence. It is wrong to say that, it was just handing over to Botswana. Britain protected us because we were in a danger and our forefathers had a vision. The chiefs went to England to seek for protection; they were afraid because the Germans defeated Baherero and after the defeat they fled to Bechuanaland which was under the British and they came as refugees in 1904. We were receiving refugees and we were already expecting them. There was Mzilikazi from the south, he passed through Botswana and killed a lot of people you know history tells us that. Paul Kruger's Boers were already in the Transvaal and they fought with Mzilikazi and I think you know that these Boers were also eager to take our country. That's when we went to seek protection from England and the protection came with Sir Charles Warren in May 1885.

We then experienced few injustices such as education, our education was limited, it was segregated, it was inferior education. So we didn't like these inequalities. When we got our independence since in Botswana there was no education by then, we tried to avoid all these. We tried to uplift our education that is when we collaborated with Lesotho and Swaziland and came up with one university. When Lesotho chased us away, we made sure that we built our own university and the President came up with the principle "motho le motho kgomo" and we managed. I personally, in the North- West, donated 8 bulls, but others donated 2 bulls. Former councillor Mr Morapedi also donated 8 bulls. That was when diamond and copper were also discovered, which improved our economy. We sold our cattle to white farmers but they gave us the price for each bull, that was unjust and we knew that there was nowhere to sell them except to the white farmers. We also practiced battering at times; we exchanged a cattle for clothes. We did that because we were suffering, as our cattle could not be sold to the market; only white farmers were allowed. We then had a committee to help us to sell our cattle in Kazungula which sold them to the Zambian Coal Storage in 1964.

When helping freedom fighters, we encountered a lot of problems. What we wanted to do was to keep these people safe while in Botswana. Even the local people donated food and at times we gave them money. For example, from my home village there are Baherero, of which their grandchildren are the ones who fled the 1904 wars. That is why we accepted them and gave them food and money. We made sure that they stayed safely in Botswana before they transited to their destinations. Some stayed in Maun for some days before heading to Zambia, and some even stayed for some months. I don't have a proper figure of how many freedom fighters passed through Maun. I remember that the largest group comprised of 57 people and others came in groups of 4, 5, 10 and so on, but 57 is the only figure I remember of freedom fighters, that passed through Maun. Most of them went to Zambia and Tanzania. Those ones they didn't stay in Botswana.

By then the Boers were under Malan and we knew they could attack us, but they were also afraid to attack us because we were under the protection of Britain; it should be clear that they were afraid of the British not us. The British did not refuse us to help freedom fighters. What we did was that we did not allow them to launch their attacks from Botswana. We only gave them food and we did not give them military weapons. We only gave them food. That is why I am saying those who really helped them are the Zambians. What we did here was to give them protection and food so that they live and transit or proceed to their destinations. Those who stayed here stayed with their relatives. That's why the Dukwi Refugee Camp was built. Most of the refugees were from Namibia and they had relatives here. We have a lot of refugees from Namibia in this region. Those that you know, the Angolans, came recently and they didn't stay here.

The local people were told that the freedom fighters should be helped. There was no one who was against them being helped. I did not hear anyone complaining as to why we were helping them. Everyone accepted that these people came from their country to seek political refugee and they should be helped.

Political refugees did not threaten anyone; they stayed with their relatives and they did not destroy anything. The police were protecting the local people and the refugees as well. When they saw any refugees they caught them and kept them in camps, they treated them with care until they proceeded to their destinations. They asked them where they were coming from and where they were going. Our law allowed these people to be helped because we were also involved in the struggle.

The government did not donate money in order for these people to be helped, but they were helped by the community and the government only gave them food. But at the end we really helped. In this region the Boers did not trek freedom fighters to Botswana. That only happened along the Rhodesian border. In this region they only guarded the border. There were no cases of fire exchange. They nearly shot me, especially those who were patrolling along the border. I was using a party car which was having a sticker written Botswana Democratic Party. I realized they wanted to shoot me and I stopped the car and went out of the car without fear and they had their guns pointed at me. I told them that I am using a party car I am just in my country; you can come and see it. The one who was supposed to order them to shoot was a bit far and when I talked to them they seemed not to understand English but at last they dropped their guns. We were on our side and they were patrolling on their side, but they wanted to shoot because they thought we were freedom fighters hence helping to transport others. We were only three. They once shot Mr Henry's car a former member of parliament of Gantsi because they thought he was helping to transport freedom fighters. Of course he was helping them. They crossed the border because they knew he was helping freedom fighters. The government of Botswana did not take any action after that because the Boers shot the car and ran away. I did not raise the issue at the parliament concerning these people because they didn't do anything. They wanted me to go and stay with them so that I can give them information. I told

them that it is a crime to do that because I didn't have the right to stay or cross the border. I just said that and they replied in Afrikaans and I didn't understand what they were saying.

Here we didn't have people spying among the refugees like in Gaborone. They did not take a long time here except those who were staying with their parents. Because most people who ran away from Namibia were Mbandero and they had relatives who stayed in Botswana and when they arrived they stayed with them.

Most of those who did not go back acquired the citizenship of Botswana; they did come back and stayed for a long time. We can also say Botswana helped freedom fighters by giving them protection and food.

We had cooperated with them but we were only advising them. We advised SWAPO and SWANO. That is why their first President thanked Botswana for its help during their struggle. We never gave them guns; we only advised them on how they can handle the struggle. Freedom fighters only passed through Botswana they did not stay long. They didn't have any activities here; they used Botswana as a transit route to Zambia. We helped them to cross the border with their cars at times. Freedom fighters are refugees, and there was no committee comprised of members of political parties to deal with them. When freedom fighters arrived, it was announced that freedom fighters have arrived and people went to help them. The government built a refugee camp and when they returned from Tanzania and Zambia they stayed at Dukwi Refugee Camp.

The Rhodesians are the ones who were fighting or attacking villages along the border because their people ran into Botswana. You know they killed our soldiers at Kazungula. Botswana had to seek for protection and Britain was tired of helping Botswana, then Britain, asked Botswana to join South Africa and Rhodesia.

Organizations like OAU and UN donated funds for these freedom fighters to be helped after our independence because our independence was smooth and there was not any struggle; we cooperated well with Britain and the right word is "neelano". Then Princess Marina came and took their flag and left ours; that is when we took our independence. heads of departments for different department were left behind for example people heading agriculture, education and health. These heads of departments were responsible for teaching Botswana how to operate those departments. Since they assigned us we never quarrelled with them.

The chiefs helped by going to Britain and asking for protection. They knew where they were going and what they were going to do. They did not know English but they had pastors to help them in translation. They were fore-seers. Then Britain protected us by giving or sending governors and soldiers to help us. The principle was that refugees should be helped, they shouldn't be threatened and we should help them at all costs. Especially the Baherero, they came to their relatives. I don't have any idea about churches which helped refugees

Sam Nujoma stayed here for some days before he went to Tanzania. He did not stay long here and he was caught at Gantsi, and his wife was even seen in that gang, and

they were helped by Lesedi Mothibamele who was then a member of the Police Force but later became a member of parliament. He was the Officer Commander at Gantsi. He kept them safely and gave them food and even accommodated them at his place. They passed through Maun. They came here before they went to Kazungula and they went through Livingstone. Coming here they used their leaders' cars and others had their own cars those from SWAPO and SWANO. In fact Sam Nujoma was not the leader then, he was the leader of the party after they met and discussed few things and they saw that he should lead the country. It is just like that.

The government wanted these people to be helped. The government wanted them to be given accommodation. But it should be clear that the government didn't publicly announce that they are helping freedom fighters. The community was told to help them with anything at their disposal but should not give them military weapons. The government helped them by allowing them to cross or pass through Botswana to other countries or to their destinations without having to suffer first. They were only asked questions about their whereabouts and also to investigate whether they had committed crime or not.

It was interesting to meet freedom fighters. They told us their feelings about the struggle. Therefore, we were able to give them anything they wanted especially food and money. We liked what they were doing. We were competing; when you found them you gave them P50 or P100 or even popping out a bull for relish.

The government has built the Dukwi refugee camp to cater for both refugees and those who run away from their governments. But nowadays there are no freedom fighters. They are all free except those who are caught committing crime or who are threatened by their countrymen like Mugabe. If they are caught in Botswana they are only sent back to Zimbabwe because they are dangerous, they are thieves and they are starving. They come here without anything and when they starve they are forced to steal.

## Legwaila, Joseph

[Gaborone; August 2006]

*Mr Legwaila served as Senior Private Secretary, and Political Assistant to the President of the Republic of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama from 1974 to 1980. He became the Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations from 1980 to 2002; Then, while he was still the Ambassador, he was appointed Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Namibia from 1989 to 1990. Later from 1992 to 1994 he was appointed the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the OAU in South Africa.*

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Well, you know, a lot of people have asked how Botswana became a member of the Frontline States. I think the reason why they are asking is because, if you look at President Kaunda and President Nyerere, the two who started the Frontline States fraternity, I think you realise there was nothing in common ideologically, between them, and Seretse Khama. Therefore no one expected Seretse Khama to be welcomed to that fraternity. Additionally, Seretse Khama was geographically too close to South Africa. In other words, what we meant by the Frontline States was its proximity to South Africa; and therefore I am sure a person like President Nyerere would have thought that if Seretse Khama joined the frontline states, that was tantamount to saying to South Africa, "You can go to hell. I am going to join the very same people who have been agitating against apartheid." So Nyerere and Kaunda welcomed Seretse to their group.

In fact, I am told that there were some of their officials, who thought that it was not good or wise to have Seretse become a member of the Frontline fraternity, because of his ideological orientation. I think the view was that Seretse Khama was conservative, as compared to Nyerere and Kaunda, who were considered radical and revolutionary. Therefore, they thought Seretse Khama was going to dilute their revolutionary credentials. Nevertheless, Seretse Khama became a member, and according to Mwalimu, as it turned out, that was indeed a God-send he became a moderating influence in the Frontline States fraternity.

There is no doubt that Botswana contributed a great deal to the liberation of Southern Africa. First, I talk about the cost, in terms of time, energy and money, because we had to hire planes to fly to the capitals of Tanzania and Zambia, and later on, to the capitals of an enlarged Frontline States group, which included Mozambique and Angola.

Of course, the meetings never took place in Gaborone because some of the members did not want to risk coming so close to the border with South Africa. The first meeting attended by Seretse was in December 1974, in Lusaka; that was the meeting where the three Presidents, President Seretse Khama, President Kaunda and President Nyerere, united the Zimbabwean parties, under Bishop Abel Muzorewa, to form what was called the United African National Congress (UANC), headed by Bishop Muzorewa.

It was a dramatic meeting, in the sense that Mwalimu had to send his Private Secretary, accompanied by Mark Chona, the Special Assistant to President Kaunda, to go to Salisbury to liberate, for a very short period of time, the leaders of ZANU, to make sure that they could attend the meeting in Lusaka; Nkomo had to be brought from a detention camp, to attend that meeting.

Then of course, Mwalimu discovered that who was brought from Salisbury was Mugabe, instead of Sithole. President Nyerere believed that the leader of ZANU was Ndabaningi Sithole and not Robert Mugabe, and so the Private Secretary to President Nyerere and the Special Assistant to President Kaunda, Mark Chona, had to go back, to bring Sithole. Sithole was brought to Lusaka during the night and finally, the parties agreed to unite under Bishop Muzorewa.

The idea was that they would unite, and go back to Salisbury to organise a Congress to elect a leader to replace Muzorewa, but if they elected Muzorewa, that would have been their prerogative. Unfortunately, that Congress never took place, because some of the people who had gone to Lusaka, instead of staying in Salisbury, went elsewhere; some like President Mugabe, for instance, took off for the border with Mozambique and went into Mozambique, to prosecute the liberation struggle from Mozambique.

Now, the other thing, which we must not lose sight of, was the fact that the liberation struggle was a liberation struggle for freedom in the totality of Southern Africa. So, it wasn't a liberation struggle in Rhodesia alone. So, the other question which the Frontline States Presidents had to deal with was the question of apartheid, in South Africa. In other words, they supported the liberation struggle waged by the ANC and the PAC, in South Africa, so that every meeting of the Frontline states took place in the presence of the leaders of all the liberation movements, and that included SWAPO.

All the countries that were still under colonial rule shared something in common, as they were all oppressed by foreign powers, and all of them wanted to be free. The Frontline States was a focal point for them. These leaders were a conduit for them to communicate their message to the rest of the world; that was to persuade the colonial powers to give up, because freedom fighters were not going to lay down their weapons in the struggle against apartheid and colonialism.

Botswana suffered a great deal and that suffering was a great contribution to the liberation struggle because not only were we the 'home away from home' for the refugees, but even for those people who left their countries to join the armies of the liberation movement, we welcomed them, which was a very dangerous thing for us. We welcomed them, not to wage war from our country; although they sometimes did, against our wishes. We allowed them to pass through here and went for training, or went to join their armies wherever they were encamped. That was the reason why, eventually, we were treated as if we were actually, physically, participating in the war against South Africa, and Rhodesia, and we were bombed. Francistown was attacked by the Rhodesians; our soldiers were killed, as you know, in 1977 at Lesoma. We were also attacked more than twice, here in Gaborone. This is a contribution

which the leaders of South Africa, and of Zimbabwe, have recognised; just this week, on Monday 28 August 2006, President Mugabe praised Botswana, for what we did during the liberation struggle.

When I was in New York, I was once asked, to nominate people for a Nobel Prize, and I nominated the Presidents of the Frontline States. Of course, they did not get the Nobel Prize, but I did so, because I bear witness to what they did, for Southern Africa, and for the suffering their countries went through. If you consider what Zambia went through! Zambia was almost brought to its knees; not only because of the bombing by Smith, but also because of the presence of the freedom fighters on the soil of Zambia. It was the same with Angola, and as I have already mentioned my own country, and Mozambique. All these countries suffered a lot, for the liberation of their neighbours. It is right to wonder why Botswana, a country that is so exposed geographically, so close to and so dependent on South Africa for access to the sea, for the exportation of goods and services, supported the liberation struggle. We were, and still are, a member of the Customs Union. There was so much that we shared with South Africa, which meant, that we had to walk a tight rope in our foreign policy, to make sure that we were not destroyed by South Africa. Botswana did walk a tight rope, but Seretse Khama was a man of principles; a man who realised that his country would never enjoy peace, so long as South Africa was not free; so long as Southern Rhodesia was not free; so long as Namibia was not free; so long as any country that had not been decolonised, around Botswana, was not free, because we were surrounded by white minority regimes who did not like what was going on in Botswana.

What was going on in Botswana was democracy and non-racialism; a black person could marry a white person and a white person could marry a black person; this was not a good example to the white minority regimes, because not only were they minority regimes, they were also racist regimes. I am reading a book on Seretse by Ruth, and that says exactly what type of problems we faced, as a newly independent country, where non-racialism was practiced. I think that is all I can say, in explaining why by joining the frontline states, we endangered ourselves. We joined the Frontline States simply because we wanted to associate ourselves with those who were seeking the liberation of our continent; and we were also being mindful of the fact that as long as there was no freedom in our neighbouring countries, we were not going to be free ourselves.

Kwame Nkrumah once said, that the freedom of Ghana, alone, was not enough freedom as long as the rest of Africa remained in chains. That was also our stance in Botswana. Seretse Khama's belief was that everybody around us must be free, in order for us to enjoy our freedom.

Botswana supported the Liberation Committee in its prosecution of the struggle. We attended all the meetings of the Liberation Committee, in Dar es Salaam. We supported it, not only by attending the meetings; but we also supported it financially. That was done secretly and people did not even realise that we were making our financial contributions, because we were afraid that our contributions would be made

public, and South Africa would be annoyed, and harm us; but eventually we paid our dues and our arrears to the Liberation Committee. Another thing that people don't know is that we had decided earlier on, that in lieu of contributing this money directly to the Liberation Committee, which would have made our contribution public, because it was going to appear in the records of the liberation Committee, to open an account in Addis Ababa, so that we could use the money in that account to support the liberation movements.

Those are things we could not have publicised because of the danger that we would have faced if we did that. So I think it is important for people to know that our contribution was not only in terms of hiring aeroplanes, going to meetings of the Frontline States; I, and others, being sent by our President to Geneva, to London; and all over, to attend the meetings of the Frontline States. We did far more than that, and I think it is important for people to know.

What I can say is that I am not aware of how the BDF treated freedom fighters, if they encountered them in the bush. All I know is that there was a law in my country that we were not going to allow the freedom fighters to operate from Botswana. There were many cases where we arrested freedom fighters and tried them publicly, in a Court of Law. Some of us thought that they should be tried secretly. They were tried, but that didn't mean that we had stopped being sympathetic to their cause. We were still sympathetic to their cause. Botswana is a very big country and I would not be surprised if the freedom fighters used our country to cross into South Africa. How else could they get to South Africa, from Zambia, from Zimbabwe; and from many other countries? The problem arose when the freedom fighters showed their presence, with their arms, in Botswana., because that amounted to really saying to the Government of Botswana, "To hell with your law forbidding us to operate from here." I don't think if you heard that some freedom fighters had crossed from Mathathane, into South Africa, you would call Tambo and accuse him of violating our laws. As long as they were not seen, Botswana would not bother. I think that was the understanding.

I am sure some people will think that I am treating our history carelessly, but I am of the opinion that the freedom fighters secretly used our country. As I say, it is empty, most of it, and therefore what we didn't see, we didn't worry about.

You know, a lot of individuals in Botswana contributed immensely to the liberation of South Africa; liberation of Southern Rhodesia and the liberation of Namibia. They did that by accommodating the refugees when they crossed the border into our country or by hiding the freedom fighters, to make sure that they were not captured by the Boers. I will not be surprised if there were some of my countrymen, and women, who even crossed the border to go and fight for freedom, with our neighbours. One of our countrymen, Michael Dingake, had to spend 15 years in Robben Island, although he did not go inside South Africa to fight, but he was fighting for the liberation of South Africa, from Botswana; from wherever he was. So, there are so many unsung heroes, and heroines, in the country, if only we knew who they were, who did far much more than the 'Call of Duty'; and that is the reason why they suffered so much. A lot of

people were killed, whose crime was simply to associate themselves with the freedom fighters; in terms of giving them food, and in terms of giving them accommodation. Therefore, we must always remember that it was not simply the Government which assisted the liberation movement. Maybe the ordinary Botswana people assisted the liberation movement even more than the Government, because their people were not protected, and were not accommodated by the Government. They did not come here to live in Government houses. They came here to live in the houses of ordinary people, and when the Boers came here to bomb, they did not bomb Government houses. They bombed a house belonging to your grandmother, for example, who was housing an ANC person; therefore, that is what must be recognised by our neighbours.

Another thing is that, people must remember that many of our people went to school in South Africa; and while they were in South Africa, they came into contact with the ANC, and they went to school with ANC people. Some of them went to school with PAC people, and when they came back, they continued to be members of those movements. Just like Sobhuza, King of Swaziland; he died an ANC member and I am sure Seretse Khama, until he became the President of the Republic of Botswana, he was still in the ANC; as well as many others like Motsamai Mpho and the rest. There were people who were sympathetic to the ANC, the ANC having been their party; some were sympathetic to the PAC, the PAC having been their party; and therefore, even they have contributed immensely, to the liberation of South Africa.

I think the greatest lesson we learnt, is the lesson of solidarity with our neighbours. This was actually translated in the actions of the Frontline States; not only here, but in New York, and the OAU, because we were considered a very good group to be associated with, because we were in the forefront of the liberation of Southern Africa, and therefore, we were so attractive...And, because we were attractive, we ourselves discovered that our solidarity was very important, for ourselves.

As I said earlier, Botswana had nothing in common ideologically with other Frontline States. We were on the conservative side, but people forgot that we were conservative when we were a member of the Frontline States. They thought we were as radical as the rest. And then, of course, one good thing is that we were doing this for our own neighbourhood. One of the greatest lessons was that, when your neighbour's house catches fire, remember that if you do not help your neighbour extinguish a fire, that fire will leap and consume your own house. We are now reaping the benefits of regional cooperation, as a result of our contribution to the liberation struggle. Mandela visited us because he knows the sacrifice that we made for the freedom of his country.

Another lesson, which I think most people have forgotten, is that, SADC was born out of the Frontline States; it was a creation of the Frontline States because it is the Frontline States who were approached by the Commonwealth with the idea of forming an economic grouping, as a wing of the Frontline States.

I remember I was sent to Dar es Salaam with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rre Mogwe, to broach this idea to President Mwalimu Nyerere. President Nyerere

agreed to the idea, since he was the Chairman of the Frontline States, and in any case, Tanzania was not a contiguous country to South Africa. The other reason he gave was that far as the Western world was concerned, Seretse Khama was more popular than he was. Thus when Seretse Khama went out to ask for assistance on behalf of an economic wing of the Frontline States, the international community would be more forthcoming than if, he, Mwalimu, were to go there and ask for assistance. We came back and informed our President, who agreed to initiate what today we call SADC. Again it was I, and Minister Mogwe, who went around selling the idea to all the Presidents of the Frontline States. Therefore, SADC is a child of the Frontline States. This was brought about by the solidarity that the Frontline States felt. This was also the reason why it was easy for them to agree to an economic wing of the Frontline States. That economic wing of the Frontline States could have been problematic because there were those who felt that we should also invite the Soviet Union and GDR to the first meeting. Botswana thought that those, if invited would simply be occupying space, because they were not known for giving financial aid; all that they used to give was weapons, for the liberation movements. Eventually we agreed to invite whoever that needed to be invited, and we invited the East and the West to participate in the first meeting of SADC. But I think the long and short of the story is that SADC is a child of the solidarity that we, in the Frontline States, felt towards each other.

Thank You.

## Liti, Ester

[Dukwi; June 2008]

*Ester Liti was born in 1978 and ran away from Angola in 1978 with her husband. She settled in Botswana in 1981 as a refugee. Now she has acquired Botswana citizenship and continues to live in the country without the refugee status.*

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I ran from war in Angola in 1978 with my husband and settled in Namibia. We had one child in Namibia, but we could not stay in Namibia because there was a war against the Boers. So we proceeded into Botswana and settled in the camp in 1981. All other children of mine were born in Botswana. On arrival we were accommodated in tents, but at roughly the same time, some Zimbabwean refugees were repatriated and we occupied the houses that they had been using.

There were various organizations which made life easier for us in the camp. The LWF is such an example. I do not know what LWF stood for, everyone just called it LWF. Through such organizations my child managed to go to crèche and later started schooling at Dukwi primary school. All my children attended school. I did not deny them that right; they also participated in school activities and we allowed them to go on school trips such as tours and music competitions.

The family lived on farming. We were given land and seeds to plough and other tools to use in our gardens. Women worked equally as men on these gardens. There was nothing men could do alone because all the life was centred around these gardens. Apart from these gardens we lived on monthly rations that were supplied to us.

Life in the camp was good except that there was too much dependence on government and other organizations within the camp such as UNICEF and BCR. However relations with Batswana were very good; they were very tolerant and understanding. I attended the Old Apostolic Church with Batswana; they treated me and my family well. My children also played with Batswana children. We were just like a family with Batswana. They were also willing to understand our situation, we narrated stories of how we ran from war and they sympathized with us.

Of course I used the church as a coping mechanism. I could everything as normal and that is why I took Angola and its troubles out of my mind. There was no better solace than God.

The only conflict that I can remember was between Angolans and Zimbabweans, but it ended. It did not persist for long. It only lasted for that one day. I cannot certainly say what year it was. It was not significant. Generally relations among refugees were good.

We learnt Setswana from interacting with Batswana, but largely we got it from our children who were schooling. Since they were young they grasped the language better than we did.

Life in the camp was very much better than It is now. We were supplied with everything and now we are poor because we are expected to fend for ourselves. We

have no jobs and life is hard. The government built us two roomed houses and left us because we are now Batswana and not refugees. I don't feel discriminated here in Newstands. The only problem is that we are struggling to make ends meet as a family. We did not go back to Angola because it could have made no difference. I also believe that Botswana is more stable. Going back home would have meant starting life afresh but here in Dukwi it is continuing with life, although I must admit, it is a challenge to survive.

## Lotlamoreng, Kgosi of the Barolong

[Good Hope; June 2007]

*Kgosi Lotlamoreng is relating his experiences of how Botswana as a country and her people helped the refugees and freedom fighters, mainly from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, by giving them shelter, food and other needs, and by accommodating them in their homes as well as building them camps,*

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Botswana supported the liberation struggle because they were supporting their African brothers because as Africans we are one people. The liberation that was wanted in South Africa was not for South Africa alone, it was for us as well as the entire region of Southern Africa. It was important therefore that Botswana support other Africans that wanted liberation by then. We helped them in different ways. We gave them accommodation, shelter. Many South Africans that ran away from that country were actually hiding here. Even those that passed to go to other countries, they passed through this country and we protected them. We gave them that help.

We did not help the liberation struggle with money. We gave them protection. We sacrificed our lives, as we were being bombed constantly by the South African regime in places like Gaborone, Tlokweng and even Francistown. We gave them protection and showed them the way to Zambia and other countries beyond.

I have said Botswana and South Africans are one people; oppression that was in South Africa also affected us, as well as the people in other countries in the region.

Botswana was independent and its internal policies did not change save for developments which could have been undertaken but funds diverted to cater for the army, the food and accommodation for the refugees. Relations with South Africa affected Botswana because our economy was dependent on theirs and during sanctions on South Africa we could not export some of our products through that country.

The government treated the various liberation movements equally and encouraged unity. The goal was liberation not support of one movement over the other. Botswana did not want to make the presence of freedom fighters public nor did it want to talk about their presence in the country. The presence of liberation struggle figures such as Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Thabo Mbeki, and Samora Machel were kept secret, and only released long after they had passed through the country. "I have heard that some weapons used in the liberation struggle were recently unearthed in our district, I am yet to verify the validity of that rumour.

Botswana resolved conflicts and factionalism in the liberation movement because the Government was interested in unity and nothing more. The other countries came to respect us for the role we played in the liberation struggle. Botswana was known for its peace, stability, and democracy; besides, we relate well with the SADC countries. Botswana was not interested in war but peace. Despite acts of destabilization we maintained our peace and democracy, and we continued to help the refugees.

We have started to realize that we are all Africans and we are one people. We are proud to be in the SADC region. We are benefitting from trading freely with each other in the region.

Lessons learn by Botswana from the phase of political struggle that can be applied to the current phase of economic transformation is that we have to respect human rights. We are all equal and we should not despise other people. Our leaders should listen to the people.

All international organizations supported Botswana and the Frontline States. Other independent countries also supported the Frontline States.

We gave the refugees accommodation, shelter and food. We helped the refugees by building them refugee camps in Selibe Phikwe, Francistown and Dukwi. We even accommodated them in our private homes.

## Malema, Kgosi Mmirwa

[Bobonong; January 2008]

*Kgosi Mmirwa Malema, 70, lived on the border with Rhodesia during the influx of refugees into Botswana. He explains his experiences and what he witnessed during that time.*

I can recall the period of the liberation war in the 1970s, although I may not recall everything. We received many refugees from Rhodesia such as teachers, nurses, school children, and others; it was a whole mixture of people. Some had swollen legs, and were hardly able to walk. One incident I can recall was that of an aeroplane which had come into Botswana territory in search of Manama Mission school children at Semolale/Gobajango. The villagers had scattered into the bush. There were freedom fighters in the area ready to shoot it down, but the plane flew away.

Another incident I can recall was that, the Land Board members, including myself, had put up for the night at Semolale. That night a Rhodesian plane flew over the village and lit up the village with flashlights. I fled to Bobonong in my car. This is how dangerous the situation was. The refugees who had fled to Botswana told us of the cruelty inflicted upon the people by the Rhodesian soldiers, such as killings and amputation of limbs; villages were left in ruins. When the refugees came to Bobonong, they came to the kgotla and from there they were taken to Selebi-Phikwe and onward to Dukwi Refugee camp by the police.

Our people were receptive and empathised with these people. They gave them food and shelter. Many of them were related to us. They were Babirwa like us. However, we did not discriminate against the non- Babirwa. We assisted all the refugees equally.

In those days there was no police camp at Semolale and the army base had not yet been established, so we sent transport from Bobonong to fetch the refugees. People in the border villages who had cars transported them free of charge to Bobonong. Some actually walked to Bobonong amidst great difficulties. Examples of those who helped are Motsumi Mogorosi and Join Ngala. One of those who helped most by giving shelter, food and protection to them was Join Ngala. Many knew him as he had once schooled in Zimbabwe and lived there for sometime. This is why the Rhodesian soldiers sought to capture or kill him. In fact at one point they nearly killed him and he had to flee from his home in Mabolwe to Semolale.

There were also me who spied for the Rhodesians, and hence they knew about Ngala. I do not have much information about the spies, but I am suspicious they were there.

Another aspect of the struggle was that when freedom fighters were injured in the war with Rhodesian soldiers, they were taken to Selebi- Phikwe hospital for treatment and thereafter they went wherever they wished to go.

Concerning refugees, some of those with relatives in Bobirwa were allowed to settle in the villages with relatives. At the end of the war, some returned to Zimbabwe, others

became citizens of Botswana. So, ethnicity helped to get some refugees assimilated into Botswana.

One of the benefits for supporting the struggle is that Botswana became well-known internationally, as a peace loving country. This raised our stature.

## Manamela, John

[Dukwi; June 2008]

*John Manamela is 52 years old and a former refugee who arrived from South Africa in the 1970. He lived in other parts of Botswana before he finally settled in the Dukwi Refugee Camp.*

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I arrived in Dukwi refugee camp in 1980. However I left South Africa during the 1970s and settled in some parts of Botswana like Gaborone and Francistown, before coming to the camp.

On arrival I was given a plot where I started operating an orchard. I never had any prior knowledge to this agricultural feat; I did it out of interest because I used to see fruit trees in South Africa, and I was interested in plants. In the camp we had a man we called Mr Mmusi, he was then an Agricultural Demonstrator. He saw to it that we had land and distributed seeds to refugees. However, I got seedlings from a store or governmental nursery called Impala in Francistown for my fruit trees. The refugees were mostly supplied with vegetable seeds. I had a range of fruits in my orchard, like paw-paws, oranges and guavas, for example; I also had a range of flowers that I was selling.

Everyone was familiar with my orchard and I had customers in and around the camp. I could even sell as far as Francistown and Gweta. Of course transport was always arranged by Botswana Council for Refugees (BCR). Batswana who worked in the camp had my flowers in their compounds.

I also lived on my skills; I'm a builder. I built the restaurant that was run by refugees, as well as the poultry houses for refugee chicken projects and the community hall at the camp. The projects I have just mentioned were sponsored by what we called LWF. I cannot remember well what it stands for but it was a Lutheran organ.

Some of the South Africans were well learned men; the ones who were teachers offered their service by teaching refugee students. The BCR was also another organ that came to our aid in the camp; it helped refugees cope with their situation by counselling them where necessary. It also addressed all refugee queries and needs, such as scholarships. Those who wanted to further their education did so through the guidance and organization by the BCR.

When the other refugees went back to South Africa I did not go back because I had found happiness in Botswana. I married here and all my children are here so I did not want to go back where I would start life anew. Batswana accepted us and I have never had any problem because they were so good to us. Some did not go home for fear of being killed; these were mostly the criminals who were wanted for gross violation of human rights, and so they could not go back.

I had to vacate my orchard for new refugees, but I've now started a new one in Newstands where we have relocated. I cannot say that I had lost much by not returning to South Africa, because by then I did not have anything much. I am happy in Botswana. The only difference is that I am no longer considered a refugee, and I

have to fend for myself and my family. In the camp we used to get food supplies and clothes sometimes, but at present I am doing everything for myself; and I think we are managing.

## Maplanka, Edward Barakanye

[Maun; September 2007]

*Barakanye Edward Maplanka was born in Maun 1953. He went to school in Ngamiland in Moremi Primary School as well as Thamalakane, obtained first class, and then went to Gaborone. In 1975 he joined the Police at Police College where he trained as a Para-military at the Police Mobile Unit (PMU.) In 1977 when the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) was formed he was one of those who managed to move from the Police to the BDF, where he worked for 31 years, until his retirement in August 2005.*

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My name is Barakanye Edward Maplanka. I was born in Maun in 1953. So to start with I started schooling in Ngamiland in Moremi Primary School as well as Thamalakane; as you can see those schools are close to one another, so I finished my standard seven in 1973 and obtained first class. I then went to Gaborone when I was about 21-22 years. In 1975 I joined the Police at Police College where I trained as a Para-military at the Police Mobile Unit (PMU), because you understand that at Police College you are taught law and at PMU we were taught how to handle guns. In 1977 when the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) was formed I was one of those who managed to move from the Police to the BDF. I have worked with the BDF for 31 years until when I retired at my own will, on the 31st of August, 2005; that is when I left the force. After retiring I have stayed in Maun for 3 years now.

Botswana played a role because the struggle was for Africans that was a struggle for Africans; when we say Africans we are referring to Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique. I can also list Malawi and those countries that today form the Southern African Development Committee (SADC). There was that feeling that the struggle must be supported by these countries, because they would cooperate as African states to liberate their brothers and sisters. I can refer you to such organizations like Organization of African Unity (OAU) which brought together African states, and which also assisted in the liberation struggle of Southern Africa. I can say they are one family.

Botswana was threatened in many ways because the African people who were fighting for their own survival were sometimes forced to run from their own countries into Botswana, which meant their enemies had to follow them into Botswana. Following them into Botswana posed a threat, sometimes there were attacks on Botswana by the white regimes; the Lesoma incident was an example.

As we are talking about Ngamiland, most of the freedom fighters were from Namibia; thousands of Namibians are still here even now, and this started during the liberation period.

Botswana, including the BDF supported these people because they ran to us. Therefore, if your relative is afraid of some sort of crisis from their own country you help him; you give him water to drink, but also if you accept him, you must know how you can help him overcome. This was what happened to freedom fighters and

refugees. We accepted them, knowing that some had lost their families, others had lost their friends and left school. You know that during wartime people were scattered all over and others ran for good and never returned. It was very difficult during the liberation war. When they came here we realized that they had to be helped. There were United Nations (UN) Offices here for refugees; whenever they came they were interviewed to see if they were those who ran away while at school, so that they could be taken to schools here.

We caught some refugees and freedom fighters for having crossed the border into Botswana. Of course, if we met people who were from war, crossing the border illegally, we caught them and asked them some questions, because some of them might have been soldiers working for the white regimes. We had to ask all of them questions to establish how they came about to cross into our country at ungazetted areas. We also established why they crossed the border into Botswana and what motivated the move.

The people of Botswana were very cooperative. Like for instance, although we are talking about Ngamiland, if you take the case of Bokalaka where I worked for 14 years, based in Francistown; that is where many freedom fighters were crossing the border into Botswana. We even met them in villages along the border. It was dangerous because they were armed when crossing into Botswana, and people in the villages near the border had to be worried. They wanted guarantee of their security; they wanted to see the BDF in patrol so that they could get help when they needed it. We used to ask them to tell us if they saw some people they suspected to be freedom fighters in the village, and then we had to go there to see those freedom fighters. This is the cooperation I am referring to. The people reported to us had to confirm to us (BDF) if indeed they were freedom fighters. We knew they were dangerous because they carried dangerous weapons and they did not hide that their aim was to fight the government of Ian Smith.

We took their guns and kept them at the BDF camp. If people had been allowed to cross into Botswana with guns, even though we were not fighting the regime governments running the countries they were coming from, those white regimes would still put the blame on the government of Botswana. They would still come up with an excuse to attack us, claiming we were helping freedom fighters. We knew that it was illegal to cross into another country with military weapons; therefore these guns were taken by the BDF. We travelled with freedom fighters towards the border to assess their problem because they were Africans like us and we understood what they were fighting for and that they were ill-treated by the system where they were coming from. Arrangements were made to take them to other countries where they were supposed to go for training, but we did not want them to fight their governments from our country. That is how we helped.

This is the danger about these people that I am talking of; I can't deny that we met Smith's soldiers. But you should know that when soldiers meet in the bush or along the border they shoot each other, like you may know that it was always announced

on the radio, especially by the late radio Botswana Rebaone Mookodi who knew how dramatize, calculating our [BDF] shootings with Smiths soldiers. He used to report about the attack and that Smith soldiers have exchanged fire with our soldiers at the border.

There were many incidents where we exchanged fire with Smith's soldiers. I can't go through all of them as to where we met and what happened but the history is there. The only incident I can refer you to is that of Lesoma in 1978 because it was a large scale event. There were so many small incidents which happened.

When we are talking about the Boers, we are talking about Boers of Smith, South Africa, and those from Namibia; they were all the same and they did what the Boers did, they cooperated. So we patrolled our side of the border up to Shakawe and when we met we exchanged fire. It was in December 1981, and nobody died. I am the one who was there at the time and I was the leader of the troop. It was around 10 o'clock during the night when we started exchanging fire. I can't tell you a lot of things as to what happened but no one got injured. Not meaning that I was alone but the tip was mine I was the one in charge.

There were no cases of misunderstandings with the local community. As you know, if you are running away into another country asking for drinking water, *kana mokopi o tshwaanetse a ikise ko tlase*. Not meaning that there were no cases of people who were not well behaved; it could happen as human beings, a human being is always a human being.

Incidents where white soldiers came and threatened villagers, while looking for freedom fighters happened a lot in Bokalaka area. That is why we had to run there whenever we were told Boers from Rhodesia got into Botswana, in villages like Jackalas1 or 2. We rushed there only to be told that they were there and had already gone. But since it was war time, white regime soldiers trekked the freedom fighters; they trekked them until they found where they ended, like having crossed the border into Botswana. Then the Smith soldiers threatened our people, abused and accused them of harbouring guerrillas. Therefore the villagers reported them to us and we went the border area to see what was happening; but by the time we arrived they had disappeared from the village and had quickly ran back to Rhodesia. You can see that there was tension because we were forced to patrol our border to stop them from crossing into Botswana.

We were able to patrol the border because when our army was first established, we were few in numbers, but during that time we were tough and strong. Everyone was interested in joining the army; more so because it was formed when there was tension between the Boers and the Blacks. So, if you join under such circumstances it is not like joining the army during peace time, when you are not likely to gain war experience know how it is to be at war. Therefore, we managed to divide ourselves and patrolled the borders. We used everything we had at our disposal in order to protect our people this on side. Now you can see how tough it was; that is why I am saying

soldiers during that time were very strong. We don't want to mention their names because some of them are highly respected people.

We never looked down upon ourselves; whenever we heard that there were some attacks while we were in Gaborone, we were always eager to be taken where it was happening as soon as possible. We were deeply in love with the army. Being a soldier was in our minds all the time, to the extent that if you were at the border and had come back to base without having met with the Smith soldiers, you felt like you were not being a real soldier. It felt like you didn't go to work.

When freedom fighters crossed the border into Botswana they had relatives in Botswana, all borders. . Just like you in the Balalaika, people there have relatives in Zimbabwe. Therefore, everywhere even around Shakawe they had relatives; those from Namibia had relatives in Botswana and some of them are Bahererro and Bambukushu who are citizens of this country. When people are relatives they are relatives; but please note that even before the wars, they visited each other. Therefore, during war times if a relative is coming to your place, you help him as much as you can. First, you will give him first aid if he is found with dangerous wounds. These are things that you might have to do if you find that someone has been injured.

First aid in the army is the first priority because you are taught that being in the army is a risk; during wars you fight and you can get wounded or something worse can happen to you. Therefore, each and every soldier must know how to apply first aid. You know that the Red Cross Organization deals with first aid. You know that if you arrive somewhere and you find someone injured in an accident, having been taught first aid you have to apply what is called first aid help. As an army, we did assist a lot.

We examined how the freedom fighters were injured and applied first aid because we had to save their lives, whether they were illegal immigrants or not. We had to help them, but we could not ask them many questions while they were injured or seriously wounded.

The relationship between Botswana and those white ruled regimes was very sour. Our first President, Sir Seretse Khama was someone who time and again wanted dialogue with these countries. But these countries were challenging us, like you saw them following their people here and bombing our country. However, we had to stick to the dialogue until, like in Zimbabwe where there was the Lancaster House, if I remember well, these Lancaster House talks finally brought peace to Zimbabwe.

Some freedom fighters destroyed or stole property. They were a dangerous lot; especially if we are talking about guerrillas, we are talking about someone who was fighting for the freedom of his country without staying there but operating from another country across the border; fighting from the bush not even staying in a village, so where can food come from? This is why some stole from villagers. They were hungry, and at the same time staying in the bush made some of them to be wild and being military men, fighting all the time, obviously if they arrived at a village unexpected, villagers had to run away. Sometimes those who were hungry arrived at

a local café and took food for themselves without asking or paying for it. Like in the case of Bokalaka we found them having harassed the whole village and took away food for feeding themselves in the bush. Some villagers got tired of helping freedom fighters, and this is why villagers started reporting their presence to us. There was fear in villages along the border. But initially they used to accommodate freedom fighters without reporting them to authorities. They realized that some of them attacked a nearby town in Rhodesia stealing items such as jewellery and watches from shops and when they crossed back to Botswana they wanted to give Botswana some of the valuable items for safe keeping; so some people were not comfortable to assist in that manner. The local people also reported that when they gave freedom fighters accommodation, some of them launched their attacks from Botswana. After launching attacks against the Smith regime, they ran and came back to Botswana. Therefore, Botswana households became the hiding place for such characters. We caught some of them; we even exchanged fire with them some time. Some of the freedom fighters were crooks at the same time. Sometimes we expected them to fight us when we met them. Our main aim was to catch them because they came into the country as dangerous people; they were armed and they were also abusing our people because we had such information about them. So such people could fight you whenever you met them.

Organizations such as OAU and UN were helping refugees, by taking them to schools in Tanzania, Zambia, and Botswana. Those on transit from Ngamiland stayed in Maun for some days before they were taken to Francistown or where they were heading to up north. In 1978-1982 some were taken to Dukwi. Some of them decided to remain behind and ended up taking Botswana citizenship. Some Angolans married Botswana here. Their children cannot speak any language except Setswana. They are Botswana.

Chiefs were helping freedom fighters because they are the owners of the villages and when people arrive, they were reported to them. The chief were supposed to know about the arrival of these people and their presence in the village. He assigned people to pitch tents for them for accommodation. The chief represented the local government. In Ngamiland, when refugees arrived, they were taken to the kgotla. Nobody took them to his house or let them settle before reporting their presence to the chief.

The liberation struggle was for African countries: Southern African people who were fighting for freedom. Given my own personal experience I consider the liberation struggle educational. I am also proud to have witnessed that period in history. Since we were ruled by a democratically elected government, we had directions as to where we were going and what we were doing, but not our neighbours in South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Given our role in the struggle, at the end we saw Namibia, Zimbabwe and finally South Africa being liberated. At the end of the day we were proud of our role in their freedom.

## Masire, Tebogo

[Gaborone; October 2008]

*Lt. General Tebogo Masire is the Commander of The Botswana Defence Force, Sir Seretse Khama Barracks, Mogoditshwane.*

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Botswana was a member of many international bodies such as the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement. All these organizations were in support of the liberation of all the countries in Southern Africa. So Botswana, just like these organizations also supported the liberation struggle. Botswana was in a precarious position geographically because she was in the middle of it, that is, unlike other countries that were far from the struggle, geographically. The moral attitude of our leaders then prompted Botswana to support the struggle despite its geo-political position.

Support for the struggle was mainly in providing assistance to refugees and in assisting the liberation struggle leadership to make contact with their people in their own countries. The constraints we faced as a country were of course the threats that we received from the minority regimes, and the occasional attacks that we did suffer. I must also highlight here that our government was very strategic; it did not condemn especially South Africa, that was the power house, out right. It manoeuvred its strategy in such a way that it would not be openly seen as supporting the liberation struggle. Botswana could give assistance, but it made it clear to the liberation movement leaders that Botswana could not be used as a springboard or launching pad for attacks on settler regime countries. Botswana's argument to South Africa was that Botswana could not sit idly and look at people suffer when they are in the country. But at the same time, Botswana made it quite clear to South Africa that it will not be used for attacking other countries. Botswana was saying to South Africa that these issues could be resolved without violence. Botswana was not condoning violence. At the same we were saying to the liberation movements, they could stay in our country provided they did not use our hospitality for violent purposes.

The financial sacrifice made by Botswana was in the aspect of supporting refugees, and also in the later stages, in starting a defence force; as you know, we did not have an army at independence because of expenses as our country was still poor. Ultimately however, we were forced to go to such expenses because of security reasons. Initially the finance was for supporting refugees, but eventually a lot of money was needed to support the Defence Force. Material wise, we were also setting up refugee camps, which we had to maintain and the ultimate price was the human lives that were lost because of attacks from both South Africa and Rhodesia.

Botswana were very supportive. As you are aware, many refugees from South Africa and Southern Rhodesia came here and were accommodated in people's homes, Botswana homes. People went out of their way to accommodate them and help them where they could, and some even contributed money, and in that sense

Batswana were very supportive. The refugees were allowed to pursue their studies in our schools and those that were skilled were given employment by the Batswana. But overall Batswana were very supportive.

I don't know whether the internal policies were affected as much. We did not have to craft any new laws or set up any new structures and so as far as internal policies were concerned, I don't think much happened, except that there was a development in the creation of a department which was in contact with the United Nations.

As far as Botswana's international relations were concerned, Botswana was put on a high pedestal because everybody appreciated the gusto- that how can such a small country, weak and with limited resources stand up so strongly and so loudly and not fear anything against such powerful regimes. I think that put Botswana on the world map. All the international organizations, OAU, Commonwealth, UN, and the Frontline States supported Botswana.

Each liberation movement had its own representative here; almost all of them would have wanted us to be more involved, but the leadership of the liberation struggle appreciated Botswana's position. Some may have had different views, but by and large the leadership, very much understood Botswana's position. Of course, within the liberation movement itself there were differences. There were those that held the view that Botswana was a sell-out, and that Botswana was favouring one movement over the other. For example ZANU thought that we favoured Nkomo's ZAPU over ZANU. Also with the South African liberation movements, the ANC thought we were pro PAC. Even today our relations with Zimbabwe are cordial, but there are those who still believe that Botswana was anti the present ruling party, during the days of the liberation struggle. Others thought that Botswana should not, even after independence of the former settler colonies be given the prominence that is equivalent to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Monitoring guerrillas and freedom fighter activities was basically the responsibility of the Special Branch. They were tracking who was coming into the country and who was not. The liberation movements had representatives here and they normally reported the presence of their members, whether they were coming in to stay or they were operatives in transit. The government was very clear to the liberation movements' representatives, mainly that their operatives were not going to stay, but they should always be on transit. Other people who were not operatives, like business people and common people, could stay. If the operatives did not comply they were arrested. There were many instances where some were arrested. They were later released and sent to other countries, mainly Zambia. In fact the liberation movements were given the latitude to decide or determine where the arrested cadres could be sent to; normally they were sent to Tanzania or Zambia, and sometimes to Russia.

Botswana tried very hard to resolve factionalism and conflict within the liberation movements themselves, and to remain neutral and maintain a non-partisan position. We tried to mitigate, arbitrate and urged them to unite and bury their differences. In Botswana there was never any flat out war because of differences, but in Zambia and

Tanzania some of these wars culminated in fierce fighting. But here, we were clear that we were not going to support one liberation movement over the other.

Like I said, our relations with Zimbabwe have never been smooth because of the earlier background. Our relations with South Africa have been very cordial. One thing that can be said is that the liberation governments or liberated governments have always clubbed together. In conferences and meetings, they will always club together up to this day.

The Rhodesians were more arrogant and more careless than South Africa, in the wars of destabilization. The Rhodesians behaved as if they had nothing to lose whereas the South Africans were restrictive and cautious about their actions. The Rhodesians were very arrogant, uttering statements that were very provocative – they would march in and take Francistown, for example.

I cannot say much about the lessons learnt by Botswana from the phases of political struggle, except that the liberated governments have a fixated way of looking at things. The Zimbabwean situation is a typical example. The government there has failed to liberate itself from the liberation mentality, to the extent that it would compromise fate of its people to safeguard its ideological stance. The lesson we can learn is that we need to appreciate that our way of doing business has stood the test of time. We must realize that we cannot depend on our neighbours because of this liberation mentality, Zimbabwe used to feed northern Botswana, and if we do not stand and do something, we may find ourselves in the doldrums. What is happening in South Africa should be ringing bells in our minds.

The Frontline States were the liberators. They ensured that escalation of violence and bloodshed was stopped. It is because of their efforts that South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are now liberated. Our non-combative approach also helped because we were the mediators, ensuring that there was unity. The Frontline States preached unity, negotiation and peace. Their role in the liberation struggle cannot and should not be underestimated.

The question of refugees was dealt with under the United Nations guidelines. The Representative for United Nations High Commission for Refugees was highly involved, making sure that they were catered for as far as food, accommodation and education was concerned. There was a joint committee of UNHCR and the government of Botswana. The Intelligence (National) would segment these people and determine who were refugees and who were not; that is, political refugees, economic refugees, or agents. They would be put before a panel which interviewed them and this committee would determine whether someone was a refugee or a spy. Botswana was very clear on the question of genuine refugees, it would never return refugees to their places of origin. If a person was undesirable to us we would ask him where he desired to be sent to and pass him or her to another country.

Our intelligence was in touch with the representatives of the liberation movements, but the overriding fact was the emphasis that Botswana was not to be used as a

springboard. Even when we found arms caches we would ask the representatives to remove them.

The Botswana Defence Force played a role in the struggle, in that it protected its citizens from aggression by the minority regimes. Both citizens and non citizens were protected by the BDF especially in the volatile areas like Francistown and the North East. The BDF was also protecting refugees and guerrillas that were running away from Rhodesian Security forces. Whenever BDF encountered freedom fighters, they disarmed them and sent them to refugee camps; the government then arranged for their transit to Zambia. So we were protecting them in that sense.

## Mathora, William Maziba

[Mabole; May 2007]

*William Maziba Mathora is 71 years old and a former businessman and farmer from Mabole explains his experiences with freedom fighters and how he got into problems with the South African authorities when it was alleged that he was assisting freedom fighters from that country.*

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We were in big trouble because of the liberation war. I often had difficulties with the South African authorities who alleged that I assisted freedom fighters with transport to enter South Africa and kill the whites. They locked me up at the border for about three hours completely naked on one occasion. They informed me that if I did not tell them the truth they would execute me. I denied any knowledge of transporting freedom fighters, but stated that I went to South Africa from time to time to order goods for my shop; and on my way to South Africa or back to Botswana I occasionally gave a ride to people who needed transport, but for a small fee. They then let me go and ordered me to return in three days time for further questioning, and if I did not return as agreed they were going to follow me in Botswana and shoot me.

Indeed, on a Wednesday the following week, I went to the border post to meet a Mr Johnson who questioned me. On arrival I was informed that he had gone to Pietersburg. On being contacted, Johnson said he did not know anything about me, so they let me go. All that was harassment, believing that I was going to give them some information about freedom fighters. Thereafter, I continued to enter South Africa to order goods without further trouble.

Refugees from Rhodesia used to come in large numbers. We fed them and I transported them in my truck to Gobojango from where they would be transported further. One day a group of six freedom fighters asked me to help them carry their weapons from near our village, where they had been hidden, to Shashe River, on the border with Rhodesia. On reaching the river their commander surveyed the river to ensure all was safe, and then he walked across the river and returned; the others walked across in his footsteps to appear as if only one person had crossed. After bidding me farewell and thanking me they entered Zimbabwe. Some days later they returned to our village with some cadres they had recruited. That was a recurring activity, that is, recruitment of cadres. We fed them with food supplies brought to Join Ngala's home by the Botswana Defence Force (BDF). Sometimes I fed them with food from my shop if Join's supplies were finished.

One day at around midnight we heard gun fire. People fled everywhere. Someone came to tell us that the Rhodesians had killed Join Ngala. In that confusion, I realized that my aged mother who could hardly walk had been left behind. She was a big woman. She refused to flee with the others though I offered to carry her on my back. On crossing the stream we fell and rolled. She then hid in a bush in the river and I went on to join my wife and others.

At day break we returned to my home and I made fire to warm my mother who complained that she was feeling cold. Then suddenly a group of refugees appeared including Mareko Magisi, the father of Mdubane, one of the leading freedom fighters. They told us that Join's home was deserted. We removed thorns from their feet as they had walked at night through thorny bushes. Then I went to Join's home and was told that he was alive and he had fled to Semolale.

One night a number of freedom fighters came to ask me to go to carry some of their colleagues who had been wounded. They had been injured in a clash with the Rhodesian forces. I brought the three injured ones to Mabolwe and the BDF transported them to Bobonong and Selebi-Phikwe for treatment. I later saw one of those who had been wounded, and he had recovered well.

An incident which led to the execution of one freedom fighter once occurred. This freedom fighter was in love with a woman in Gobojango and generally harassed people. His colleagues took him and went with him towards Shashe River. On reaching my cattle post they shot and killed him. My herdsmen came to report the incident to me and I informed our soldiers; they went to collect the body.

Another incident involving freedom fighters was of the one who fled from Selebi-Phikwe, to return to Rhodesia. The other freedom fighters followed him and found him at my cattle post where he had put up. One of the two freedom fighters shot him and broke his leg. This was reported to me and I reported to the BDF. One of the guerrillas had moved on into Zimbabwe and the other stayed behind to explain to the BDF what had happened. Indeed the injured man admitted to the BDF soldiers that he was Smith's soldier. They took him away, disarmed the other freedom fighter, who then went his way.

One day chief Sehato asked me to ask the freedom fighters to help him because some white persons had killed his herdsman who was looking after his cattle near the Zimbabwe border. I reported this to Join who was in contact with freedom fighters. Four of them agreed to go. They arrived and found lots of people and no one dared to collect the body. Even the police were afraid to collect the body but the freedom fighters did. Having so assisted they left, and the chief was grateful for their assistance. Indeed the freedom fighters were very helpful to the people of our area.

## Mathumo, Meshack

[Francistown; June 2007]

*Mr Meshack Mathumo, 72 years old went to school in Southern Rhodesia, but lived in Francistown. While working in Northern Rhodesia he became involved with Nkomo's ZAPU, he was trained in different aspects of military in Tanzania; he also trained in counter-intelligence, and became a ZAPU spy. He tells of his experience in the field as an activist in the liberation struggle.*

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My name is Meshack Mathumo; I went to primary school in the then Southern Rhodesia, lived in Francistown and went to work in the then Northern Rhodesia. There, I found the politics of nationalism heated up led by Kenneth Kaunda and Harry Nkumbula. Kaunda's UNIP was aligned to ZAPU of Joshua Nkomo. I became interested in Southern Rhodesian politics and became involved with ZAPU. Nkomo declared a government in exile and the OAU decided that those Africans outside Southern Rhodesia should go for military training in Tanzania.

I went to Tanzania and trained in different aspects of war including commando. I trained in Tanzania for counter intelligence and became a ZAPU spy. In Tanzania, there were a few ZAPU camps, with cadres from other countries, there was FRELIMO from Mozambique, SWAPO from Namibia, the ANC from South Africa, and UNITA from Angola; and the overall command was handled by a Tanzanian national. I was later taken to Livingstone, Zambia to head the security sub-headquarters. I was given an air ticket by Dumiso Dabengwa and flew to Maun, Botswana, where I was immediately arrested and thrown into prison.

During this period, many refugees from different countries were flocking into Botswana and the freedom fighters did not know that they were being infiltrated. There were sell-outs within the cadres and I was suspicious that one of my comrades in Livingstone betrayed me. I was taken to Francistown where I was handcuffed. This was in 1967. Three men came to me and introduced themselves and PG, Nkhwa, and the other one was Ndolo. Norman Mangoye who was a police radio operator was there and he was my friend; he asked me what had happened. I asked Mangoye if he knew of any good lawyer in Botswana, and Mangoye mentioned Madikizela who was an ANC man based at Lobatse.

The police drove me 35 kilometres outside Francistown where they interrogated and tortured me. The police knew me very well and they kept asking me why that was happening. One policeman by the name of Harrison told me that I had been arrested because I was a communist who wanted to destroy Botswana. For seven days I was subjected to hardships. Steenkamp was the District Commissioner of the area and he came over to say that I was a Motswana. I was tortured with a heater, but I used my commando skills to overturn the table and escaping. The District Commissioner's office asked for my release after they saw me bleeding; but other officers wanted me charged for assaulting police officers.

I was released, but my mother's place was monitored for 24 hours. This was not easy for the police because I had received training on how to evade such monitoring. I used to sneak to Siviya and Nata, making 'connections' while they were monitoring. I and my colleagues had good training, but their operations were difficult because the Rhodesian security agents had infiltrated ZAPU. Some Babirwa in Gwanda spoke Setswana and they made ZAPU operations difficult because they were in the movement. These were the people who used to kidnap Zimbabweans in Botswana. Some 13 Zimbabweans were kidnapped close to a house where I now live.

Botswana contributed immensely to the liberation struggle in the SADC area. My mother operated a restaurant and provided fat cakes to people fleeing from Zimbabwe. A neighbour by the name of Margaret Mukuru also provided help; a man called Choba Maposa provided a lot of help too. Freedom fighters used to run from Hwange and Victoria Falls, crossed into Botswana and reached villages such as Nata and Manxotae, where they explained the situation to Maposa. He hid them in his cattle kraal and killed goats and sheep to feed them. When Rhodesian forces pursued them early in the morning, Choba sat facing the border fence. If Rhodesian forces on horseback asked Choba what he had seen and he replied that he saw the fighters running in the opposite direction. In the meantime Choba opened his kraal in the morning to destroy footprints, when freedom fighters were hiding in the kraal.

There was also a man called Store who was a backyard mechanic. He was also called Mbokodo. When cadres communicated secretly, they said, 'Go and see Mbokodo.' If communication was tapped, the enemy would not know who Mbokodo was. Mbokodo would tell Maposa the number of cadres in Nata who wanted to be taken to Francistown and that they needed arms and ammunition and food. After crossing Dukwi, I sent messages that cadres should walk in a single file and he counted them. He returned with them to Francistown at night and provided them with arms and ammunition and then drove them to Siviya and Jackalas from where they proceeded to Zimbabwe.

Weapons were kept in the yards of cadres and those who helped. A one foot trench was dug and weapons covered in plastic because they were oiled. They were covered with tarpaulin and covered with soil and vegetables were planted and watered. Weapons crossed the Zambezi into Botswana because people were so helpful. They were submerged in water and crossed the river. Truckers in Lusaka worked with welders to open drums, pack in arms and ammunition and re-seal the drums, then put oil and water on the top compartment. The Criminal Investigation Department officers and police opened the drums only to find oil or water. Those drums were only half full of water. Other vehicles were designed such that the bottom part of the car was welded with metal sheets, then it would be re-welded and weapons fitted in.

When freedom fighters were stranded along border villages such as Siviya, people helped because they provided food and shelter. It was difficult for freedom fighters to cook for themselves because the fire and smoke could be seen by the enemy. In Francistown, Bapostori who wore white dresses were very helpful because they were

not suspected of any wrongdoing since they were Christians. When freedom fighters were pursued, Bazezuru pretended to be in church, whereas they were hiding those fleeing. When Ethan Dube was kidnapped, he had been pretending to be involved in social activities.

ZAPU provided money for the freedom fighters. Freedom fighters were effective because they got to places like Siviya and pretended to be herd boys looking for employment. At sunset they disappeared to carry out missions and came back at dawn. ZAPU operatives also ran a taxi operation, and the driver was a certain Moyo. This taxi raised funds for refugees. Other tactics used by cadres were like, after they got information here in Botswana, they cut hole in a shoe at the base, place a letter inside, between the sole and base of the shoe, sew it and then the traveling cadre put on the shoe and went to Lusaka. At Lusaka he opened the shoe and handed over the information. From Lusaka, they did the same.

Some police officers were sympathetic to the freedom fighters, but the problem was that the force was headed by white officers. Other officers were bootlickers. The sympathetic police officers gave directions to cadres in order to avoid arrest. Botswana government used to confiscate weapons from freedom fighters, but stopped when they realized that the weapons were for a good cause.

Most refugees were found in townships such as Kgaphamadi and Bluetown. Botswana did not favour any particular group of refugees, but treated them equally.

## Maruatona, James

[Bobonong; January 2008]

*James Maruatona, 70 and he is a politician, farmer, businessman, and educationist. He went to school in South Africa and worked in South Africa where he learn about liberation politics from his boss, who often got together with nationalists like Nelson Mandela, Slovo and Ruth First.*

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I will tell you what I know about the liberation struggle. Before doing so let me tell you about my early political experiences. I went to school in South Africa. I found young South African students aware politically because of the oppression by the apartheid regime. We learned about nationalist movements like the ANC and often attended their meetings. I knew of the ANC during the Presidency of Dr Moroka. Later I worked in South Africa and learned even more about politics. I used to work for an Indian bioscope owner. He was a member of the Indian Congress and often got together with nationalists like Mr Nelson Mandela, Slovo, Ruth First. I learned about liberation politics then.

During the defiance campaign against pass laws, Mandela got involved in organising the campaign. I met many of the nationalists there as a young boy, but did not join the movement, as I feared arrest. Michael Dingake, a friend from Bobonong like me, was very much involved, but did not press me to join the nationalist movement. He was deeply involved in the ANC. I later went to train in Lesotho as a teacher and then returned home to teach in Francistown.

While in Francistown, South Africans began to flee to Botswana due to oppression in South Africa, some of them who knew me while I was in South Africa came to me for assistance. One of them was Joe Modise of Umkhonto we Sizwe, who later became Defence Minister of the new South Africa. We became close friends and I assisted him as best as I could. At one point Michael Dingake, requested me to take some of his papers and possessions, such as a Bank Book, to Bobonong for safe keeping in case he got arrested due to his involvement in ANC underground work. I did so and kept his material which he later got from me on his return.

Let me continue to state how I assisted in the liberation efforts by helping some South Africans. There was a man, called Isaac Gontse who worked at the District Commissioner's office in Francistown; he is deceased now. I requested him to assist fellow Africans from South Africa by obtaining relevant documents to enable them to travel to Rhodesia, and from there to wherever they wanted to go, such as to Zambia. Many of them travelled in this way. Later Joe Modise arrived. His mission was to examine where South African freedom fighters could penetrate their country from Botswana. Joe Modise went to such places as Maun, Gantsi, and Matsiloje. He did this for quite sometime. He then requested me to get him a travel document to enter Rhodesia and Gontse obtained one for him. I later learned that he was in Zambia.

Joe was replaced in Botswana by Tenyson Makiwane who continued Modise's work in Botswana. He had been referred to me by his superiors in South Africa who knew me. I assisted him as I had done for Modise by securing travel documents from Gontse. Makiwane used to travel to and from Zambia, and would enter South Africa periodically. I later learned that he was killed by the Boers.

Later Michael Dingake returned to Botswana. He used to travel north via Rhodesia, but there were some spies who were looking for him in both Rhodesia and South Africa. I then realised that among the Batswana there were some spies. One of these spies got to know where Dingake lived in Lobatse. At one point the Motswana spy got information about Dingake's movements to Rhodesia and alerted the Rhodesian police who arrested Dingake; that is how he ended up in Robben Island. This was in 1965, and I had gone for a course in the UK.

The Botswana government was sympathetic to those who fought for freedom, and so they helped these people a great deal. Some top government officers were very helpful in this regard. Here is an incident which illustrates how the government tried to help freedom fighters. One of the senior Botswana police, who trained Botswana CID, planted a bomb at a refugee camp at Satellite. The bomb, however did not do damage. Motswana CID officer, Batshedi Kgathi, was instructed to spy on this expatriate officer. As he was about to arrest him, the spy fled to South Africa where he joined the police in Pretoria. This shows clearly that the white minority governments spied on the activities of the freedom fighters in Botswana.

In 1986, while I was a councillor, I led a group from Botswana to Zambia for a course. There we met people from the liberation movements and learned a lot about the liberation struggle. I realised that the Zimbabwean and South Africa liberation movements worked closely together. My political awakening grew as I was now in politics and had a good friend called Dumiso Dabengwa, a Zimbabwean freedom fighter, who travelled to and from Botswana freely. Dumiso's mother and my mother were great friends and had met when she visited Botswana. This is how my friendship with Dumiso started – through the friendship of our mothers. His mother was a school teacher who was later killed by the Rhodesian soldiers.

At one point Dabengwa sent one freedom fighter, Ethan Dube, to me so that I may assist him. I used to assist Dube in dealing with liberation issues. He was later kidnapped in Francistown by Rhodesian spies and disappeared for good, presumably he was killed. Despite all this the Botswana government continued to assist the Zimbabwean freedom fighters.

One of the ways I assisted was that I acceded to Dabengwa's request to hide their weapons at my farm for use by the freedom fighters. They hid them where I did not know on the farm near Francistown. I was concerned that the Rhodesians might know about this and I would be in trouble. But because I supported the liberation struggle I agreed. Another way I assisted the liberation struggle was through a small shop I opened on the border with Rhodesia, at the Shashe River. The shop was opened to serve mainly government officers who guarded the border with Rhodesia, and

people at the cattle posts in the area. One day I was driving to the small shop carrying some goods and we came across a group of freedom fighters with their weapons. The young people I was travelling with were terribly scared. I assured them that these were freedom fighters and would not bother Batswana. They were fighting to liberate their country from white rule.

Dabengwa had assured me that they would not bother Batswana. At one point fifteen freedom fighters came to my shop to ask for food. I gave them bread and drinks. They asked for soap to wash and they then left the area on their mission.

Botswana assisted Namibians. I got to learn this from Dr Chitendero, speaker of the Namibian Parliament, who became my friend. He used to tell me how Botswana assisted Namibians. He came with a group of Namibians entered Botswana and they were all protected and fed by Batswana until the government took over and arranged for them to be transported to countries to the north. Many went on to get education, such as Dr Chitendero who obtained a doctorate in USA, and even married an American. I do not know much about assistance to Namibians.

Botswana developed close ties with her liberated neighbours. For example relations with Namibia are very good. We consult regularly on matters of mutual interest. Even the dispute over Sedudu Island was settled amicably and did not spoil our friendship. As for Zimbabwe, many Batswana have relatives in Zimbabwe and so relations were always good. However the current government of Zimbabwe does not sufficiently promote that friendship. Such incidents as stopping Zimbabwe trains from passing through Botswana do not promote good relations. As regards to South Africa, the relations are excellent. We get a lot of help from South Africa in University education and specialist medical attention; whereas during the apartheid period, very few Batswana studied in South Africa.

## Mbakani, Maria

[Lesoma; July 2007]

*Maria Mbakani comes from Pandamatenga but was married in Lesoma and lives with her relatives there. Her son died in the Lesoma ambush and the BDF has been taking care of her.*

My name is Maria Mbakani. I have never worked anywhere except some piece jobs in the drought department. I am not actually from Lesoma. I come from Pandamatenga, where I was born in 1925. I was married here and some of my relatives live here in Lesoma. I am doing nothing, except ploughing during rainy seasons, but I am now too old to travel to the lands. I was being helped by my cousin's son Gure Kelesitswe who was employed by the Botswana Defence Force to take care of the monument where the Botswana Defence Force soldiers died. He is the one who used to buy food for me and my children. He passed away in May 2007 and now there is no one providing for us here.

Gure was sick for a long time and was sick when he was working at the monument. He died from a disease that I don't know. He is the one who took care of me. The BDF sometimes came here to give me groceries. The commander of the BDF, Major General Fisher, came here to say goodbye when he was leaving the army. The BDF also built this two-roomed house for me and even put up the fence. They have also promised to connect water to the house.

The BDF employed Gure to take care of the monument because he is one of the people who survived the Lesoma ambush. My child Uwe died there and this is why the BDF built a house for me. I don't want to continue with this interview because I don't want to remember my child Uwe. He died when he was still young with some 15 other soldiers during the day of the ambush.

On that day the freedom fighters attacked the white soldiers inside Zimbabwe and crossed into Botswana. We heard gunshots inside Zimbabwe in the morning at around 9 o'clock. After a few minutes the guerrillas came running with their big guns. I was sitting here with my children and they passed here running into the high land bush up there. Those who were at the fields ran away when they saw the white soldiers entering Botswana. There was chaos as people were running away from the village. I did not run away. The white soldiers' helicopter kept hovering over our village but they were not shooting at us. We knew they were looking for the guerrillas. The headman then called my child Uwe and his son Gure and sent them to go and call the BDF soldiers. They rode on bicycles and went to Kazungula. Within a short period they arrived with the soldiers. Uwe and Gure were used as guides for the BDF soldiers to show them where the guerrillas ran to. The BDF soldiers went to the high land area to search for guerrillas. They searched for them for an hour. What I heard from Gure was that they found armed freedom fighters hiding in the bush. According to Gure there was an argument between them and the BDF as to whether to arrest the guerrillas or not. The guerrillas begged the BDF troops not to arrest them because they were

fighting the white soldiers. The Commander present was insisting that they should arrest the guerrillas. Some freedom fighters then ran away with their arms and only two guerrillas were arrested by the BDF. They manhandled them and walked them to the vehicles and when they got into the vehicles they were attacked. Gure came here running and when we asked him where Uwe was, he said he did not know. The attack happened in the afternoon. Some soldiers were badly injured and were rushed to the Kasane hospital. Uwe never came back and when we heard that 15 soldiers were killed I knew he might have been killed. I cried the whole night. In the morning some soldiers (BDF) arrived and searched for the missing soldiers. They found all the dead bodies. Some were stabbed and some burnt. Uwe was also found dead and the bullet had opened up his chest. Please, I don't want to remember what happened to my child because he was later found near the vehicles dead and his body was already beginning to rot. We buried him in Kasane. The death of my child affected me for a long time and we even suspected that they were attacked by the guerrillas.

When the headman decided to send the two small boys to guide the BDF, we never thought there was going to be such an attack. We knew that freedom fighters were having a camp at that high land in Lesoma. We thought they were just going to show the BDF where the guerrillas were hiding. They had a camp up there and they used to come here to ask for tobacco from people. They even used to drink traditional beer. People knew where the camp was but they never disclosed to outsiders where the camp was. The freedom fighters used to beat up people who showed signs of betrayal to their cause. They were saying we should not tell anyone where they were hiding.

There is nothing I remember my child, except that I lost a child that day. The BDF still come here to help me with food and I have asked them to employ my other son so that he can take care of me. The other thing is that there is uncertainty as to who killed the 15 soldiers and my child. There was this version about guerrillas who had escaped from the Botswana soldiers and then another regarding the white soldiers who were seen in a helicopter that was hovering over our village. As to who carried out the ambush, nobody knows because even Gure does not know who carried out the ambush. There was confusion when they were attacked.

Thank you Sir.

## Mbaya, (Mr)

[S/Phikwe]

*Mr Mbaya was an ordinary person who witnessed the liberation struggle and developed interest as a student. he lived in Swaneng where there were many South African refugees, some of them being his teachers*

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I was just an ordinary person, who saw other people struggling. This struggle started when I was at school when I was doing my form 1 in 1969 at Swaneng. I had a Biology teacher by the name Davidson Ngcweleni, he was South African and another one called Lawrence Nota and others. While we were still in school Mr Ngcweleni was deported to Zambia and we started wondering why this teacher was deported and what he could have possibly done at Swaneng. Different teacher came from different countries of the world others from Zimbabwe and so on and so forth.

Well life went on I went to stay in Gaborone and then Phikwe later on. We used to read about what was happening in South Africa in newspapers like Sowetan. When I was in Gaborone in 1974, there was a Drum magazine dated December 1973, this magazine had a headline “The Most Wanted Men in South Africa” and it showed pictures of the men and from the pictures I noticed a man who taught me, Mr Ngcweleni. And then I came to Phikwe and in Phikwe there weren’t a lot of South Africans. After June 1976, a lot of South Africans came to Phikwe; people like Tsietsi Mashinini came to Phikwe. So during that time a man called Zama Mbeki, whom I ended up getting used to, came. Zama Mbeki was a friend to my cousin called Mr Phumaphi who is a Judge now. Later on I met a lot of South Africans at Zama Mbeki’s place. Zama Mbeki was staying in Phikwe at Moshoeshoe Street, but I don’t know whether he was a refugee or not. What I know is that he practiced Law, he was a lawyer and he had an office at the Mall which he took over from O Maraka; Mr Gaongalelwe later on joined Mbeki as a partner.

We are talking about 1976 or 1977, somewhere there. When he was with Gaongalelwe there were other people who came to work in his office from South Africa for instance the current Minister of Justice in South Africa, Richard Mabandla, worked in Zama Mbeki’s office, I don’t know if he was practicing law or not. He will not be able to remember me but I do. I take it he was a lawyer, maybe, that is why he is the Minister of Justice. Zama Mbeki had these other boys who were staying with him, he also stayed with his family, he was married with children, and his wife was a nurse at the BCL mine; his house was small. I also had a house but I was staying alone. When I started getting used to the people who were staying at Zama Mbeki’s place, I started taking some to stay with me, but it was not permanent as they sometimes went back to his house, even when I was not around I gave them my key.

When I was staying with these people we never ever discussed politics; even with Zama Mbeki we did not discuss any politics. I remember at one time years back, I had read a book by Brian Fisher in South Africa, the book mentioned something about

his father in Robben Island and then I asked him how he was related to Govan Mbeki and he mentioned that it was his father. And at times Zama's wife went go to Robben Island and check on the old man and sometimes he asked me to go, but I refused to go because it was during the times of apartheid and I was afraid to go. I wish I could have gone.

When I said I took people to my place I am not talking about a lot of people; just a few that I got used to came as visitors, sometimes for food, and then went back to Zama's place. They didn't mention anything about the parties they belonged to; I just learnt about the freedom charter from them but, some things I read about from newspapers.

## Merafhe, Mompoti

[Gaborone; September and October 2006]

*Minister Mompoti Merafhe, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. He started his career as a police officer and rose through the ranks until he became the Deputy Commissioner of Police. When the government decided to set up Botswana Defence Force (BDF), the late Seretse Khama then the President of Botswana decided to give him the responsibility of putting the Defence Force together; and since then he commanded BDF for 13 years. In 1989 he retired and joined politics and became the Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration in 1994. He ran for elections, won, and then became the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.*

My name is Mompoti Merafhe. As you are aware I am currently the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. I have held a number of appointments within this government. I started my career as a police officer and rose through the ranks until I became the Deputy Commissioner of Police and then when government decided to set up the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), the late Seretse Khama who was the President of this Republic decided to give me the honourable responsibility of putting this Defence Force together, and since then of course I commanded this Defence Force for 13 years and in 1989 I retired and joined politics and became the Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration in 1994. I ran for elections, won and then became Minister of Foreign Affairs and I have been here in politics and government since. So briefly that is where I come from in terms of my own personal credentials.

I joined the Police 1960, a long time ago; I am embarrassed to say this, since some people in this room were not born then. The PMU was set up way back in 1968; because it was becoming clearly obvious that we needed a paramilitary force that could deal with matters of internal disturbances and also provide minimum military resistance to people who were obviously posing a threat. We could read what was coming our way in terms of hostilities that were beginning to heighten within our region. It was becoming obvious because the spirit of liberation was gaining momentum and there were more and more people from neighbouring countries that were under these oppressive regimes, who were coming into Botswana. There was temptation of the white regimes following freedom fighters into Botswana, and it became obvious that we really had to do something to ensure that there was paramilitary force that could deal with this problem. It became clearly obvious that we needed a full fledged Defence Force to be able to handle these problems that were emerging as a result of the increase in the activities of the liberation struggle within the region.

It was clearly obvious that there was more and more impatience on the part of the minority regimes in Rhodesian and South Africa to destabilize the independence of Botswana. We were viewed as a bad example for the white ruled regimes within this region. So we were a bad example because we were challenging the South African

apartheid belief that an African country could not run itself in the manner we were running this country. That was the problem, and they were doing everything they could do to destabilize us in many ways. Sometimes through sending hit squads just to create instability within the country.

If we can talk specifically about Namibia, I would say for us Namibia was a source of many refugees. In fact most of the leadership of SWAPO, who are currently running the country, went through Botswana for military training in countries such as Tanzania. They all went through Botswana. The current president, I mean President Pohamba, was a resident in Francistown for months.

A number of leadership of Namibia went through this country, on their way to the north, where they were trained in the liberation struggle and eventually came back and put up an armed struggle resistance against the Namibian regimes. But there wasn't much military activity as far as that front was concerned because I think it was basically because of the nature of the border with Namibia. We got this vast desert, shrub desert between us, and therefore, built up areas like Gaborone, Lobatse, Francistown and other places were not easily accessible by the marauding forces of the then South West African government, which of course was under the control of the South Africans. So there were fewer activities as far as military operations were concerned, because the centre of activity was concentrated along the border between Angola and Namibia. That was the centre of activity.

Those who were coming in through Botswana were going back through Angola where real military activity was taking place. But here in the south, along the border with South Africa, of course there were many activities; I mean everybody, Mandela went through here, Mbeki, you name it; everybody went through Botswana. The problems started when these people started coming back in order to find a way of launching attacks against the white regimes in their countries. The same applies to Zimbabwe. We had a lots of Rhodesians, as they were called, coming here. We had scores and scores of refugees who were based in Francistown. Some of them were actually travelling to countries in the north to receive military training. When they were returning they had to go through Botswana to access their countries. So really without Botswana I don't think we would be where we are today. Quite frankly, we had to come up with or draft a policy which ensured that our own independence was not in any way compromised. If our independence had been compromised, the independence of South Africa, Rhodesia, Zimbabwe and Namibia would have been delayed even more.

We were accommodative of everybody. The only thing we were a bit careful about was not to be seen to be supporting the freedom fighters openly because if that had happened, we could have opened ourselves to attacks by the white regimes, or to a full scale war that we would not have been able to stand. So we felt that we had to be careful in the way in which we dealt with the people who were on transit through Botswana, back to South Africa and Rhodesia to persecute the armed liberation

struggle. Fortunately in Namibia they were coming in from Angola; So we had a policy of turning a blind eye but we had to be very careful.

More often than not we were accused by the South Africans for collaborating with the freedom fighters; and to some extent they were right, but we just had to ensure of our own survival and the survival of our own independence. So we did not want to make unnecessary sacrifices.

There were two serious problems that this country or this nation faced as the result of our role in the liberation struggle. There were some elements within the liberation movement: those who felt that Botswana should open its doors to the liberation fighters, regardless of the consequences. That we should allow them to use Botswana as a base or use Botswana as launching pad for attacks against our neighbours. Those fighting for the liberation were complaining that we were not doing enough to assist their struggle. On the other hand the South Africans and the Rhodesians also accused for collaborating with the freedom fighters. So we were this dichotomy where we were caught between two situations; two conflicting situations. Of course, generally speaking I think most of the leadership of the liberation struggle appreciated the predicament in which Botswana found itself. But the ordinary rank and file fighters felt very strongly that Botswana should be allowing the country to be used as a launching pad. In fact there was one leader who will remain anonymous for the purpose of this interview who advocated for Botswana being used as a military base. He used to say Botswana could afford to sacrifice 5000/6000 people. I cannot mention his name

My comment is that those statements that Botswana did not do much in the liberation of our neighbouring countries, are belittling, misplaced and completely false. Some people do not seem to realize the difficulties which we faced, and the policy options that we had to choose in order to ensure that we continued to be of use to the struggling masses in South Africa, Rhodesia and Namibia. If we had acted foolishly Botswana would have been overrun in no time, and I can tell you the independence of South Africa would have been further delayed. However we had to make some political statements in some of the international fora, and we were bold enough to describe the situations in South Africa, Rhodesia and Namibia. We were fearless in our condemnation of the apartheid regime using the Organisation of African Unity, the Liberation Committee and the UN. We were bold in terms of expressing our views regarding what was happening in South Africa. So, we contributed a lot to the liberation struggle of southern Africa. I can tell you that without Botswana, so many of those who went through our country for military training abroad would not have been able to do so without Botswana's assistance.

The challenge faced by this country was to try and come up with a policy that would take into account our self-preservation. In other words we had to do business with the white ruled South Africa. There was no way we could detach ourselves from the economies of that country. We were economically, part of South Africa, and so we had to be very careful as to how we handled the situation. All our fuel and all

the strategic commodities that we required here were coming through South Africa. If one morning South Africans decided to close the border we would suffer the consequences. We avoided what had become fashionable, like what other people who were shouting from the comfort of distance, talking about imposing sanctions on South Africa. We had to make sure that we maintained our principles and convictions. That is as far as our commitment to the struggle was concerned; but always we were mindful that we had to survive as a country

The 1980s raiding by South Africa and the Lesoma Incident, an attack by the Rhodesians, are two main incidents and they were prominent by virtue of them having received a lot of publicity, but there were a lot of skirmishes. Let me take for instance our border with Rhodesia, there were skirmishes almost regularly between members of the BDF and the Rhodesians; and we killed some of their people but we didn't want to climb on our roof tops, boasting about the fact that we killed Rhodesian soldiers. If we had boasted about, it we would have invited the possibility for attacks because they were a much stronger force than we were. But our chaps were not intimidated in terms of confronting members of the Rhodesian armed forces, and therefore they played a credible role, because the Rhodesian soldiers knew that they could not come to Botswana without sacrificing their own lives. That is

what is called *deterrent*, in the army language. So I think our force, young as it was, played a very important role in terms of providing protection to our people along the border, who were being harassed ever so often by the marauding forces of Ian Smith. Of course the Lesoma Incident was a terrible incident in the sense that the Rhodesians were accusing us for harbouring terrorists, and then mounted attacks against us. They decided that they were going to lay an ambush against our chaps in order to punish us. In fact, what happened that day was, a number of freedom fighters had entered Botswana in the Kasane area, and the Rhodesian soldiers crossed into Botswana following the guerrillas. We got wind of the presence of Rhodesians in our country and sent our small troop there to apprehend this group of Zimbabwean fighters in order to interrogate and make them aware that their cross border activities were not welcomed in the country. The Rhodesians decided to lay an ambush for our people, and that is when our soldiers were shot and killed. I was actually one of the first people to arrive at the scene of the ambush.

Can you imagine the emotions and everything when you find the bodies of 15 of your compatriots, your colleagues, comrades and subordinates, you know, scattered all over the place? I only had about 12 men when I got there, I remember that when I decided to go there General Khama was coming to Gaborone to fetch more reinforcement and said to me rather jokingly, "Please commander, do not go there because I am too young to take command of this BDF". But despite this caution I decided that we should get there. We went there, just to find dead bodies all over the place. It was an experience that will forever haunt me for the rest of my life.

I think there was a lot of sympathy on the part of Botswana; and even more importantly, the Botswana also appreciated that we were not a superior force that

could really confront Rhodesians and South Africans confidently in the battlefield. However, they did appreciate that we were offering minimum resistance to the forces of Rhodesia and white South Africa. There was a general understanding that we had to act with absolute caution, to avoid endangering the lives of Batswana, in our attempt to counter the acts of provocation and aggression by the South Africans and Rhodesians. I think there was a general appreciation of the predicament we found ourselves in, as a country.

BDF was a small army. In a situation like that you identify areas where you think there is a concentration of activities because you cannot seal a 640 kilometre border; what you do is you try and identify areas where there is a concentration of activity, and you give it attention because you are limited in terms of manpower, in terms of resources, to be able to cover something like 45,000 troops. Can you imagine 45,000 troops? We had very few soldiers. I suppose now I can give you figures because time has gone; I think we had not more than 3 000 at the time. So we were no match at the time to the Rhodesians soldiers in terms of capacity. We had to do all the best we could. In some cases you felt it was like putting a small bandage over a very large wound, but nevertheless, we did manage to cover areas which we felt were somewhat troublesome.

Without the BDF securing the border and providing opportunities for the fighters who were destined for South Africa and Rhodesia the liberation struggle could not have yielded the sort of results that we are now talking about.

Oh! We had to share information with both the liberation movement and the white regime. Yes, there were times when we had secret meetings with the white regimes when they were accusing us of all sort of things. Remember, they put us under pressure, wanting us to sign the Nkomati Accord. The government did not agree to sign that Accord. The South African white regime signed it with one of our neighbours, but we refused and occasionally we had to speak to them. Although they said “look, let’s talk confidentially”, and then they would go around telling every other country that we spoke to Botswana and when they met the Mozambique leadership, they will come and tell us what they were discussing with Mozambique. So we knew that it was never a secret whenever they met with to one of us in the region. But generally speaking, we shared information with the members of the liberation movements.

We shared with them the activities of the Rhodesian Forces. We also shared information about the activities of the South African Defence Force, so that in their planning they could factor this in, as they tried to execute their struggle.

There were other incidents beside the raiding of Gaborone and the Lesoma incident. You will remember those who were shot and killed and the Tswaipe Court case and the rampage at the university by students protesting against the manner in which this case was handled. We were constantly under pressure, politically, diplomatically, militarily or otherwise. The idea was to intimidate us into complete submission so that we should completely detach ourselves from any form of support to the liberation struggle. But we had to find the right form of words to express our

displeasure about what was going on within South Africa and our condemnation of the system in the country

There was no country which was more frontline than Botswana. So we couldn't really have frontline states without Botswana. All these other countries were remote from the situation so we found ourselves in a position where we could not really not become part of the frontline states, when, in fact, we ourselves were more front line than any other country. Frontline states meant a body that was going to be used to mobilize public opinion against South African leadership and also had a forum for consultation on issues pertaining to the liberation struggle.

By virtue of the locations of Angola and Mozambique, we really did not have many Angolan refugees. The many Angolan refugees came during the civil war, after the independence of that country; that is when many of them came, across Botswana, running away from the civil war. This was particularly so, because Southern Angola is very close to us and UNITA was very active in that part of the country. But in terms of fighting the Portuguese, there was really no urge for them to come here. The Mozambicans used this as a transit route; you know Samora Machel was a resident of Lobatse, and a few other leaders went through Botswana, It is important to appreciate that Botswana provided a transit facility to all the political activists of the liberation struggle.

I have learnt a lot; I have always been a part of this government in my capacity as Commissioner of Police, my capacity as Commander of the army and my capacity as a Minister. So I have been at the centre of the policy formulation in this government and I really appreciate the art of going through situations which are extremely difficult. This is the kind of experience that I always find extremely rewarding.

The truth of the matter is that leadership plays an extremely critical part in the management of public affairs. We have been extremely lucky as a country to have the kind of leadership that this country has had. Seretse Khama laid a strong foundation at independence, the kind of formation which is going to be extremely difficult to destroy. You need somebody who is really terribly malicious to be able to destroy the foundation which has been laid down by Seretse.

When Masire took over, he confined his leadership along the same path earlier created by Khama; and when Mogae took over he also continued along the same path. I am sure the next president of this country will have no option but to follow the foundation that has been established by the founders of the Botswana independence. Botswana have always been people who are endowed with wisdom because they choose the right kind of people to lead this country. Please, don't ask me where they get this wisdom something rare amongst other African nations. I used to sit with the late Seretse Khama and discussed these issues that affected our country, and you could admire the wisdom coming through him; just the way he was navigating his way around in a conversation. Some of these extremely intricate questions that you have been putting through to me have a direct bearing in the manner in which he directed

his cabinet and this nation; the manner in which he ensured that we continued to develop even in the face of these problems that we are discussing in this interview.

Having lived and interacted with Seretse Khama for so long, I can say that the man was such a liberal democrat, that it comes out of his character. The reasons why African politics are in such chaos at the moment it is because there is lack of the culture of tolerance. Seretse had some sense of tolerance. Although he was the son of the chief, he tolerated opposition from different angles. He was prepared to listen to all kinds of opinion, and that I think is what has built this nation to be what it is today. That is why we don't have a single refugee outside this country; it is because Seretse tolerated all different views during his regime; so did Masire, and so did Mogae. I think we had leaders who have really placed this country into proper developmental process. I think we must thank ourselves for having chosen them for leadership. Seretse was a man, when faced with an absolute crisis, would behave as if there was no crisis. Let me tell you something, one day I instructed a platoon of men under General Ian Khama to go and destroy some strong Rhodesian military points. The Rhodesians had strong points. I instructed General Khama to take a whole group of men to go and destroy a Rhodesian camp base a few metres away from the border crossing at Kazungula. When I gave him that instruction, I told him he was going to destroy those strong points, so as not to allow those guys to be sitting there and pointing weapons at us at the crossing point, making it difficult for people to cross the border. There had been an incident when the Ian Smith regime soldiers crossed over into our country to blow up the ferry. When the ferry was blown up our soldiers went there to assess the situation and apparently the Rhodesians had observation points, and they saw our guys coming close to where they were hiding. Then there was a complete shoot-out across the border and one of my tribes' men, actually a distant cousin of mine, who was a soldier at the time, was shot and killed. Then somebody from Rhodesia contacted Phil Steekamp and told him they had a body of a Botswana Defence Force soldier, who was killed within the Rhodesia soil. The fact that our soldiers had crossed the border into Rhodesia of course became a problem to Seretse. Since the Rhodesian soldiers were creating problems for us, we had, on some occasions, sent in a small squad of 90 to go and sort them out. I was then called at the State House, to go and explain the nature of the problem leading to the death of a soldier in the Rhodesian soil. The meeting was called by the President, and Phil Steekamp was present in that meeting; I cannot remember the other two who were also in the meeting. I was asked to account for sending troops. I told His Excellency that he was responsible for the general supremacy of the Defence Force and I was responsible for its operational responsibilities. I told the meeting that I probably erred by not telling H.E about the operation. However I did not think the gentlemen around the table who were all furious really wanted me dead.

That I should have told them before sending soldiers on operation into Rhodesia, but you don't go around telling everybody that you are moving into Rhodesia. So Seretse sat back and evaluated the matter, and later called me to remind me that he

was the Commander in Chief, and cautioned that at least I should have taken him into confidence. I apologized and accepted all the responsibility, as Commander, on behalf of the army, regarding what had happened. Seretse Khama was able to sort out this problem nicely. He was really a Statesman in the true sense of the word.

You remember *ko bo Butale kwa*? The Rhodesians went in there; landed in helicopters; they were all over the border you know harassing our people. If you ask people from the Northern part of Botswana particularly in the North East, *bo Mapoka*, they will relate one story after another of their experiences and their encounters with the Rhodesian Security Forces. The South Africans initially were not as aggressive as the Rhodesians. The South Africans of course came in during the 1980s, when they came in to attack people when they were asleep, in Gaborone. But generally speaking this border was a little quieter than the Rhodesian border. Please remember that in fact the struggle in South Africa was not as fierce as it was in Rhodesia, although as you may know the South African army was very strong, and ANC had a big problem in trying to assert their military operations within South Africa. But the same cannot be said for the Rhodesians. The ZANU and ZAPU forces were all over Rhodesia harassing the Smith regime. The Smith regime felt this pressure and decided to go to Mozambique; whereas, in that part of the country the pressure wasn't as much on the South Africans, as it was on the Rhodesians.

## Mfanamajaha, Friday Mufisa (The Late)

*My name is Friday Mufisa Mfanamajaha was born in Zimbabwe in 1924 and never went to school. The only thing he learnt was driving. He worked in many companies in Zimbabwe as a driver and as a tractor driver in one of the Safari Companies. This was in the 1970s, at the time when people used to cross to Zimbabwe without any problems. He also worked in many farms in Pandamatenga.*

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My name is Friday Mufisa Mfanamajaha. I was born in Zimbabwe in 1924 and I have never gone to school. The only thing I learnt was driving. I worked in so many companies in Zimbabwe working as a driver. I also worked as a tractor driver in one of the Safari Companies. In Botswana I worked in many farms here in Pandamatenga. I worked in Zimbabwe in the 1970's and that was the time when we used to cross to Zimbabwe without any problems.

In the 1970's that was the time when blacks were trying to liberate themselves from whites. The situation was not good in Zimbabwe because freedom fighters had no mercy on blacks who betrayed them. They tortured and killed people who informed the white soldiers about the whereabouts of guerrillas. *Kana* these freedom fighters were stubborn because they had a tendency of getting into the white man's farms and drove black farm labourers all the way to here in Pandamatenga. They did not want white farms to have labourers.

I did not witness any fighting between guerrillas and white soldiers. I was working for a Safari Company and it was owned by whites. They warned me early that there were going to be problems in Zimbabwe. Before the problems started the company gave me a Landover and I had to drive a distance of about one hundred and twenty miles, from the camp in Zimbabwe to here. I left early in the morning and by 9 pm I had crossed the border into Botswana. The whites who owned the Safari company I worked for came another day and collected the car from Botswana. They advised me that it was not safe for me to work in a country where there was going to be problems. So I came back from Zimbabwe during the time of the war and settled in my home village.

Many freedom fighters used to come to Pandamatenga to drink alcohol. They also liked visiting their fellow Ndebeles at "Botebele". They had camps in the bush especially at Sebuyu cattle post area. That is where they had a camp. There was this guy called Mkhwanazi (commander of freedom fighters) whom I knew. Initially I was not aware that he was a freedom fighter. At first I thought he was just an ordinary refugee. I became aware that he was a freedom fighter when I heard that the vehicle he was driving was bombed at 256. He used to visit me during the day and would disappear in the evening. I hear he used to meet other freedom fighters in the evening and told them how things were in the village. He also used to buy food in Kasane to supply the guerrillas at their different stations along the Pandamatenga – Kasane road. One day I was traveling with him from Kasane. We fetched water at Kazungula and on the way we were stopped by the guerrillas. They recognized the vehicle he was driving

and he (Mkhwanazi) gave them the water. They called him Commander. Mkhwanazi was a freedom fighter, and I don't know where he got the car from; the pieces of that vehicle are still there in the bush at 256. That man was a trained guerrilla. He did not die there. I don't know how he escaped the bombing, but he survived and walked to Pandamatenga. It was the Smith white soldiers who did the bombing.

He never stayed at one place. He used to travel between Kasane, Lesoma and Pandamatenga checking how his 'boys' were operating. Some of the freedom fighters were not good because they used to fight for women here in Pandamatenga. They had the power of the gun but there were no cases of shootings over girlfriends.

I am not sure that some people especially Basarwa were troubled by the guerrillas. The only thing I know was that Moruti went missing at Sebuyu. What I still don't understand is whether Moruti was killed by white soldiers by the guerrillas. I suspect he was killed by white soldiers in the bush because he was their spy and they used him for tracking. There is also one guy called Jack who also went missing at Sebuyu. What we heard was that Jack's girlfriend was cheating on him with one freedom fighter and they came back to the village and took him away at night. People believe the freedom fighters killed him. These guys were never found. One of the people who were tortured was a certain Mosarwa man, I can't remember his name. The guerrillas tortured him because he mistakenly told black soldiers who were working for whites where the guerrillas were hiding. The guerrillas used to warn us that there were black men who were employed by whites as spies.

Thank you Rra.

## Mgadla, Nono

[Tati Siding Village]

*Nono Mgadla, is 85 years old and he explains about his experiences of the Rhodesian soldiers as he lived on the border. He had to move to another area, Moseitse, which was less isolated to avoid frequent harassment from the Smith regime.*

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The liberation war affected us because it made us uncomfortable, uneasy and frightened; the Rhodesians terrorized us. We did not know what to do but the government of Botswana advised strongly that those who lived very close to the border should move and live in larger settlements rather than in isolated homesteads. That is why I moved from Jackalas no.1 to Moseitse.

The soldiers of Joshua Nkomo used to mix with the people and they would ask for food, water, and sometimes shelter. The soldiers of Ian Smith would then follow them and ask us by terrorizing and intimidating us about the whereabouts of Nkomo's soldiers. They would harass us and ask us why we gave Nkomo's soldiers water and food. We told them that we were scared that if we did not give them food and water perhaps they would kill us. The Smith soldiers used to trace Nkomo's freedom fighters by following their foot prints or shoe prints.

There were times when we or some other people, being so close to the border, crossed into Rhodesia either to cut and fetch thatch grass or, in the case of men, to go and hunt. This is what once happened to me. I wanted to build a roundavel, and I, and another woman called Mma Onius jumped the fence into Mthenjwa's farm which was in Rhodesia. The grass in that farm was tall and very good for thatching. We crossed at Vakaranga which is the closest railway siding with Rhodesia. We met a man called Magabile. He was a neighbour in the homesteads of Jackalas no.1. He was carrying an axe, and he too was crossing into Mthenjwa's farm in Rhodesia to cut rafters for his house. Being a farm it did not only have good grass for thatching, it also had good trees that made good poles. Mr Magabile was moving behind us carrying his axe.

Suddenly I saw something, some movement which resembled the movement of people. I alerted my colleague, Mma Onius. Indeed there were people and they were Smith's soldiers. They let us proceed, but they confronted Magabile, arrested him and took him to Plumtree for questioning. He was released and returned to Botswana after three days or so. They had took away the axe though!

Sometimes the Smith soldiers opened fire and killed people. Two sons of the Bavu family in Jackalas no.1 were killed in this manner. One day they crossed the border and went to the ruins of Mthenjwa. Their purpose was to go to this old place and steal corrugated iron that was left in the old house. They wanted to roof their own houses on the Botswana side of the border. The Smith's soldiers saw them and opened fire and both of them were killed instantly. They mistook them for Nkomo's soldiers. They were eventually brought to the Botswana side of the border as corpses.

Another man from Ntemane ward, in Moroka suffered the same fate. He was a hunter and was in possession of a hunting rifle. One day he crossed into Rhodesia to hunt kudus, duikers and springboks. While hunting he came across Smith's soldiers. Rather than be submissive and humble, he decided to intimidate them probably because he was in possession of a rifle. He started shooting at them, and they returned fire killing him instantly. Botswana authorities were alerted about this incident, and he was eventually buried at Moroka. The owner of the farm and his workers also witnessed the incident and confirmed it to Mafuta's relatives.

One day again there was widespread panic in Jackalas no.1 village. I still remember that; it was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when there was confrontation between Smith's soldiers and BDF at the border near the present Ramokgwebana border. By 4pm gunfire had started; there was exchange of fire from both sides. The Botswana side had an upper hand; they used bazookas and mortars that literally burnt the other side of the border. We witnessed the other side of the border burning. The Smith's soldiers left their weapons and ran for their dear lives. That day nobody slept in their houses. We just put our cattle in their kraals and ran to further and bigger settlements as far as we could. One particular soldier on the Botswana side was singled out as a hero by the villagers as he was known to have been unleashing deadly weapons that made the Rhodesians to retreat.

On another day again we were in the compound and we saw a white soldier carrying his army paraphernalia and I confronted him because he was walking across my field. He was very polite and told me that where he was coming from "was very tough"(kwa ka sima). He was later arrested at the immigration office and I don't know what happened to him thereafter.

We also knew that Nkomo's soldiers were deadly and whenever they met with the Rhodesian soldiers many white soldiers were killed. Sometimes when herd boys were heading cattle they reported having seen a cache of weapons hidden in the hills near Chikes homestead. The weapons were assumed to belong to Nkomo's soldiers.

## Minyoi, Lloyd Mutakela

[Kasane]

*Lloyd Mutakela Minyoi was born in 1942. He was employed in the forestry department in Kasane in 1960, as a young boy and was responsible for making roads which separated forestry areas from the national park and the community area. He worked in the government until 1989 when he retired and started to do some business.*

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My full names are Lloyd Mutakela Minyoi. I was born in 1942. I was employed in the forestry department here in Kasane in 1960. I was a young boy and we were responsible for making cut lines or roads which divide forestry areas from national park and the community area. I worked in the government until 1989 when I retired. I started to do some business, and now I am just home as you can see I am blind.

Point of correction Sir, those people were refugees but they were our relatives. Some were our brothers. What we used to do was to visit them at the police station when they arrived. We used to go there, offer them food and then they were repatriated to Tanzania, through Kazungula border. During the liberation struggle the refugees were not given permanent residence here. They spent a few days here before being transported to Tanzania.

I stayed in Kavimba and Parakarungu for sometime but from my own knowledge there wasn't any freedom fighter from Namibia who came there. What I know is that there were our relatives from Namibia who were coming from Caprivi. They were handled by the police. In Kavimba and Parakarungu there were no refugees seen. The area in Namibia or along the border was open and the white soldiers used to patrol the area using helicopters. I understand there were some refugees who used to cross the border and stayed with their family members. Freedom fighters were not seen around there. Most refugees were coming from Katima Mulilo and the neighbouring settlements. They liked crossing at Ngoma or just in the bush along the Chobe National Park. Some of these people came to Kasane from Mpalila in Caprivi, and they were normally seen by the wildlife department people who informed the police about them. Others knew where the police station was so they went there and reported themselves.

Obviously we were affected by the struggle during the time I was working in the forestry department. It affected us a lot. You remember there were those white soldiers who brought war here and killed our sons at Lesoma. Those were our sons. Fifteen soldiers were too much for our small populated country. The Rhodesia Smith force killed our sons and that affected us a lot here. I went to the hospital that day when the bodies of the 15 soldiers were brought. That affected us a lot people were crying. Men and women were crying. People cried a lot when the bodies were flown from here to Gaborone. Some women even fainted. There were white soldiers in Namibia and white soldiers in Zimbabwe. These soldiers did not like the Botswana government because the Botswana government was transporting refugees to Tanzania and hiding

those who were wanted by the white soldiers. They were making follow ups to try and find out where the refugees were. This is why they even killed our sons at Lesoma. I still remember the other day when I was in the Forestry Department. We found a road block made by the Smith regime forces. They stopped us. We were using a government vehicle. The road block was right in the Botswana road border. There were four of us, the driver and three labourers. They ordered us to come out of the car, and we got out of the land rover. They told us to undress; we could not refuse, and so we did as they told us. We stood there naked and they told us to dress and go away; and we went away. They just wanted to find out whether the underwear we were putting on were made in Zambia or South Africa. They did not like Kenneth Kaunda's idea of training freedom fighters.

They also had a tendency of cross checking people's passports when they were traveling to Zimbabwe. I used to travel to Zambia but preferred going through Zimbabwe to get to Livingstone where my brother was working. They used to search us and there were road blocks almost after every 30 km. They looked at me to check if I was a freedom fighter.

To the best of my knowledge, there were these whites who had Safari Companies in Kasane and were specializing in hunting. There was Chobe Safari Lodge and Hunters Africa. The white man I knew who was here, was Mr Mamson. He was working for WINELA. That is the man who was controversial because he was a spy. He took information from Botswana to Namibia, informing the white soldiers there about what was happening. He was transferred to Shakawe, as he was one of those people who were against Kaunda's attitude of supporting the liberation struggle. When he saw people that he did not know he would tell the white soldiers that he saw freedom fighters in Kasane. He said the freedom fighters were the enemies of the Boers.

It was not common to have freedom fighters in Kasane; it was common in Lesoma, Kazungula and Pandamatenga. The freedom fighters were tricky because they never put on uniform when they came to the village. It was difficult to recognize them because they did not carry their weapons when they came to the village. Some people say they used to see some of their relatives who were freedom fighters but I never saw anyone I knew.

It was good for the government to support the liberation struggle. The idea was excellent because a black man cannot suffer when another black man has a shelter. The black guerrillas and refugees were our relatives; the white soldiers were troubling our relatives. During that time there was no peace in Namibia and Zimbabwe. We could not leave your cousins in trouble without helping them. The border divided us but we were still one thing. The border was just a road. Some of our relatives are still in Namibia and Zimbabwe, even today. The government was doing a good thing and that is why there is independence in Southern Africa. These white soldiers used to put road blocks especially at Gwezumba. The road blocks were meant for trapping the BDF or freedom fighters. They came from Zimbabwe and immediately on seeing a car they moved into the road and asked what you were doing in the bush; even if

the vehicle belonged to the government, with all the markings, they wanted to know what you were doing. Then they searched inside the vehicle to see if there were any weapons. It was not safe to travel along the border carrying a gun, because white soldiers from Zimbabwe would think you were a freedom fighter and shoot you.

The government of Botswana did not to allow freedom fighters to enter with weapons for strategic reasons, and so as not to provoke the Smith government. It was good that way because we were a small country with a small army. If it was known that the freedom fighters were coming in with their weapons, the Namibian regime forces and Smith regime forces were going to come and destroy us all. The white forces were stronger than our BDF; they were more sophisticated and had more weapons.

It was not common in Kasane to have trekkers and people who acted as guides for freedom fighters. It was more common in Lesoma and Pandamatenga. The people who liked to work with white soldiers and freedom fighters are the Basarwa. Basarwa knew the bush very well and it was easy to use them and later given them little gifts. Basarwa also knew where there was water in the bush; and they were good trekkers because they were hunter gatherers.

I don't know anyone but what I heard was that there were Basarwa who were employed by white soldiers and others by the refugees. This is not something which was made public this is why I don't know anyone but I heard they were there.

Thank you Rra.

## Mmantsho, Mme

[Bontleng]

*Mme Mmantsho came to Bontleng in 1971 while looking for a job, and started working at the city council as a cleaner. He was in contact with refugees and interacted with them.*

I started staying in Bontleng in 1971, as I was coming from Olifant drift. I was looking for a job so I had to come to town and stay where accommodation was a bit cheap as compared to other places in Gaborone. I found a job at the city council as a cleaner. When I arrived here the refugees were already staying here at Mmakholong's place, during the bombings I was already staying here. One of my friends was accommodating them, so when I visited her I got to interact with them; she was running a shebeen here in Bontleng. They were renting a room with many of them staying in one room. They were very nice people, some of them we did not know that they were refugees, up until after the bombing, that was when we heard that those people were not supposed to stay here because the Boers were looking for them, and they were refugees.

I remember it was on 14th June when the Boers come to bomb Botswana, but I don't remember the year. We accepted them just like the local people, they were polite people, they had their own bus which they were using to get food and clothing somewhere, one of them was called Tshepo, he was a friend of mine.

Both males and females came and they had kids but their kids were still young to attend to school at that time. I remember they were supposed to get proper papers to show that they were registered to stay in Botswana, but those who were staying here did not show us any papers. They were supposed to get papers from the Botswana government, they had to go and report to the government officials about their presence in Botswana. They were very polite people who were law abiding, they feared people, staying in small groups without mingling with the local people much. As they stayed here longer they started mixing with the local people drinking alcohol, having sexual relationships with the local people and fighting in the streets. They started causing trouble in the village; they were now calling themselves South Africans freely.

There was a little bit of tension, some were taken to the kgotla for sentencing. The kgosi by then was kgosi Pilane. Local groups formed groups fighting with them at night.

Some of the women refugees were married and their Batswana husbands were taking care of them, those who were not married used to ask for temporary jobs so that they could earn a living. Some Batswana women started accusing refugee women of breaking their marriages and fights also broke out. Some of them were married to Batswana men while others were just having relationships with them; it was a common thing here. The fights that broke among the locals and the refugees were based on sexual relationships. The refugee men wanted to go out with local women

but they did not want local men to date refugee ladies. Police used to arrest them and charge them but the fights continued even at drinking places.

The reaction of local men towards refugee men dating local people is what caused the fights, but the refugee men were less hostile maybe because they were in a foreign country; again some of the refugee women were just their sisters not wives.

When it was time for the refugees to go back home, they left behind women and children; some of those children are living with us in the village. I don't know of any one of them who came back or who went home with the local women.

There was no lobola paid; it was just cohabitation. People just moved in with one another without any elders being told. The elderly people who were staying in the village were just fine with it. One lady who was staying with us was staying with a refugee but elders never said anything. At that time their children were still young but those who were born during intermarriages are schooling here because they are Batswana.

The refugees stayed in Botswana for a very long time, some were able to go back home while others were still coming. The first refugees who came to Botswana were very polite, they were showing that they were into unknown world, and had to behave, but those who came later were not that polite; maybe it was because their counterparts had told them that Batswana were good people. I don't know the political parties they belonged to, but mostly I think they were supported Mandela.

No one was killed here in the bombing here in Bontleng, only a dog was killed and the house was destroyed. I only interacted with the refugees from South Africa. The refugees were arrogant and disturbing the peace that we once had before their arrival. The children were just playing together. When they got home they would tell us that they were playing with refugee children.

I just heard them saying they got food from somewhere but I didn't know where exactly. They said they chose to come to Botswana because Botswana was near South Africa.

The coming of refugees affected the government policies and development at that time because development went down; I remember before they came the government was in the process of building flushing toilets for us but after the refugees came that did not happen only the deep holes were left.

I don't know whether the local churches played any role in assisting the refugees because I don't go to church, I just saw them drinking alcohol around. They were not involved in criminal activities; they were only fighting as I mentioned above.

## Mmutla, Gaditshwane

[Gumare/Maun; November 2007/June 2007]

*Gaditshwane Mmutla, 70, went to Moremi Memorial School and Molefi Secondary School in Mochudi. He came back I worked in Palapye at a company called RA Bailey before joining politics, as a member of the Bechuanaland Peoples Party (BPP), in 1961, and later followed Mr Motsamai Mpho and became the Regional Secretary in North-West district (Ngamiland). That was the area he had experiences with refugees coming to Botswana, from Namibia, mainly.*

My name is Gaditshwane Mmutla; I was born in 1937, and right now I am 70 years old. There was no education in our country because schools were still being built. I started school and went to Moremi Memorial School, and from there I went to what is now called Molefi Secondary School in Mochudi. I then came back since my parents did not have enough money to pay for us at school. So when I came back I worked in Palapye at a company called RA Bailey. I worked there before I joined politics. When politics started in 1961, I joined Bechuanaland Peoples Party (BPP) and it split into Bechuanaland Independent Party (BIP) and then I followed Mr Motsamai Mpho. I started as a member and then became a Regional Secretary in North-West district (Ngamiland). My assignment was to take care of refugees who were mainly from Namibia. We helped them to pass through Botswana. I helped refugees at my own expense. I remember the late Kgosi Letsholathebe calling us to help refugees, but that was after independence.

After independence, some of us were called by Letsholathebe to help refugees. We transported them as far as Kazungula and they moved on to their destination. We even took them to Zambia, but at first we used to take them to Rhodesia and they had to go through Francistown which was our party headquarters. I worked on this assignment for a long time; I did that until we got independence; until Botswana became what it is today. I once stood for elections when Bechuanaland did not have the local government, when there was a Prime Minister not the President. Then we saw that we could not attain independence without having a local government. The process started before September, and in July that was when the local government came into being. I stood for elections in 1966 and a fellow BDP counterpart defeated me with 411 to 407 votes. From there I continued with my job as an organizer for North-West.

When we say Ngamiland, we mean the whole district that is to say Ngamiland and the Okavango. From 1974 we had an old man by the name Sauqho Goipatabotho as a councillor for Shorobe; I am the one who campaigned for him, and he won in 1966. He died in 1973 and by that time there were no by-elections like now; there was no Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) which was responsible for elections. I then became a Councillor for Shorobe in 1974. I was defeated by a BDP candidate in 1979 and then bounced back in 1984 up till now.

I was still doing my assignment, which was difficult. Refugees from Namibia came in Ngamiland and I once saw one young man from Mozambique and helped him to pass through Botswana to Zambia. Our leader, Mr Mpho Motsamai already knew about the liberation struggle. He was taught and was also involved in the South African liberation struggle. We were also taken by the African Nationalist movements to Zambia and Tanzania to be taught about liberation. We were aware of the risk, but we also understood that Botswana's independence alone could not take us anywhere therefore; we had to cooperate with our neighbours. You see the problem? Mr Motsamai encouraged us a lot because he had the experience. We did that as a political party. From the beginning the ruling party had fear of helping freedom fighters because of the attitude of the neighbouring countries towards Botswana, since they were ruled by the white people. The Police caught the Freedom fighters. This was until Mr Mpho Motsamai asked them to take them to South Africa, and also to take them to where they were heading to for military training.

The Botswana government did not want to support the struggle from the beginning. I don't know, maybe they didn't have an idea of what to do when face with a situation where they were expected to assist people that the white regimes regarded as enemies. After sometime, they saw the need to help these people ...after being involved in organizations such as the Organization of African Union (OAU) and the Liberation Committee. OAU then formed a sub-organ called Liberation Committee and it was responsible for its funding, and funding was done by member states.

While supporting freedom fighters we came across some problems. You should be aware that by that time our policemen were under the British. They harassed and became suspicious of us. We experienced such problems. Since these people had to go to Tanzania we had to find ways of assisting them without the police knowing. The Bechuanaland Protectorate police were suspicious; they guarded our houses time and again thinking that they were going to find freedom fighters. I remember in 1967 when we were driving from Kazungula; after crossing the border a policeman searched us even in our socks. During that time it was called Police Mobile Unit (PMU). They used to hide and wait for us after Samxu in Xhusa, near Mababe. We usually found them in that area; one of the officers is still alive and he lives in Bokalaka. He was in the Special Branch. The last time I went there I met him and he asked us whether we knew the terrible things he used to do.

The other problem was funding. The truth is that I am the one who was working hard in this region. I was the only one who was funding this charity project, at times helping with petrol. We had cars which we were given by the OAU Liberation Committee. The truth is that they were from Nkrumah and Nyerere, but we needed petrol to run around.

The cars were given to BIP; we used them for the party. Nkrumah didn't know which party in Botswana would attract Botswana popular vote, so he gave BIP, BDP, BNF and BDP money. The sub-committee, Liberation Committee was meant to liberate other countries and it was based in Tanzania. OAU's headquarters were in Addis Ababa,

the first conference was in Addis Ababa in 1962. That was where the headquarters are even today. Emperor Haile Selassie declared his country headquarters of Africa's independence; hence the OAU headquarters are in Ethiopia, you have read about it and you should know what I am talking about.

Some Batswana realized what we were doing was for the good of our fellow Africans, but others did not; some thought we were crooks or criminals. Some Batswana believed that we were committing crime to assist freedom fighters. Some thought that we were bringing Communism to Botswana. Some even accused us of bringing criminals into the country. We were however able to explain to them what our aim was. We had songs we sang to pass the message to the public. The song goes like, "*ae buye, South Africa, ae buye Zimbabwe, ae buye Namibia*" and mentioning other countries which were not liberated. It was a message we gave to Batswana in freedom squares.

So people understood our message; we had refugees staying with their relatives here and getting the message across to the rest of the community through relatives who accommodated them. In villages along the border, they gave them accommodation, clothes and food. For example, Baherero and Mbandero of Namibia are related and it was easy for them to get help. In the southern part of this country, in villages like Ramotswa and in the Borolong people there have relatives across the border. In Bokalaka in villages such as Maitengwe or Jackalas they have relatives in Zimbabwe.

We had good relationship with Zambia and Tanzania as we were serving one role in the liberation struggle. The relationship was smooth. One should not forget that the Zambian economy collapsed because it accommodated a lot of refugees from the liberation struggle countries, you know. Refugees and freedom fighters passed through Zambia up north.

We knew people from ANC and SWAPO. When helping them we didn't care which party they were from. We accepted them as fellow Africans. We had good relationship with ANC, SWAPO and ZANU. The independent government of Botswana allowed us to help freedom fighters. South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia were still fighting for their independence, and by keeping freedom fighters here we were aware of a possibility of an attack by the white regimes. Our government found it important to accommodate refugees even though there was that threat. We accommodated them. Our government really helped. This is why at the end we set up the Dukwi Refugee Camp.

At first people were afraid, but freedom fighters were highly disciplined. They came here with their mission. Don't forget that Botswana was a member of OAU right? They had discussions about these problems, right? Hence the UN had an organ responsible for refugees. Therefore, all these made Botswana to realize that it is part and parcel of that body, hence the need to help other countries.

Our President used to explain to the nation that we were helping the freedom fighters and refugees; but we could not allow our country to be used as a battlefield. That message I still remember, meaning that we could help refugees, but they shouldn't

launch their attacks from our country. So this is how Botswana managed to control and keep that cooperation with other countries.

There were shooting incidents along the border, like the Lesoma incident in the Kasane/Kazungula area. We were threatened by regimes in our neighbouring countries. They tried to threaten Botswana. They believed that we accommodated freedom fighters. There were also some minor incidents near Shakawe, Seronga and other nearby cattle posts along the border. In Shakawe they threatened people with aero planes, flying over villages. They did not drop bombs, but they were threatening people and the villagers were terrified. This happened in the 1970s before the Namibian independence. The government of Botswana could only report such incidents to the United Nations. We had a small army and we were a young country. Botswana opted for tactical diplomacy.

Earlier when we were assigned to look after refugees, we used to be called to villages near the border to meet political activists such as Sam Nujoma, having crossed straight from Namibia. They used to wait for us at a village called Makunda that is next to Charles Hill in Gantsi District, near the border. We looked for petrol to fetch them and brought them to Maun. They travelled in groups of four, five, or even ten. We kept them at Sehithwa and in Maun at my place. Some of them came in groups as teenagers; those were kept at Maun prison. Their leaders already knew about us prior to sending their people here and when they arrived in Botswana they trusted us. Suspicion only came after the Rhodesian wars of liberation intensified along the Botswana border. Therefore, we never knew who the enemy was and who was not. Even for us activists, it was difficult at times to differentiate whether they were genuine refugees or spies.

One young man from Mozambique first met Mr Barxten Mokwena at Sabbath Church upon his arrival in Maun, and Mr Mokwena informed us about his presence in the village; he was not in good health. He said someone told him that the easiest way to proceed north was to pass through Botswana. He said he came through South Africa before coming here, and he also stayed briefly in Swaziland but people there did not want to cooperate with him. He stayed at Mokwena's place and we later arranged for him to travel to Francistown. During those days, in the 1960s, trucks travelled for about 5-6 days from Maun to Francistown. There were trucks which were going to Francistown and since we were worried that he might get arrested at the airport, we decided he that he should travel in a truck. It was in 1969 when we met this boy. When we saw him at the SDA Church, he seemed tired and he wasn't eating well and people were afraid of him since they were not used to seeing people in such condition. He stayed in Maun for about a week. Since the driver was a member of our political party we knew he would know how to take care of the young man until they reached Francistown. We had instructed the driver to inform our colleagues in Francistown to prepare papers for his transit.

Mr Sam Nujoma is a respected politician of the liberation movement. When Toivu Ja Toivu was arrested around 1963/64 and was taken to Robben Island, that is when

Mr Sam Nujoma took over the leadership of SWAPO, he ran away when they were searching for him. He crossed into Botswana at Makunda. Daniel Munamava, and myself travelled to Makunda to pick him up. Mr Munamava was the coordinator of SWAPO activities here. He linked those in Botswana and those in South West Africa, now Namibia. Munamava was a Motswana. You know that Baherero are related or have relatives in Namibia, so are the Mbanderu. The other one who was also active in SWAPO politics from here was Edwin Kwatheri, he was also a Motswana. There were Batswana linking Namibians in Botswana and their relatives back home. They were the ones who gave us information. Since I was the party chairman of the region, I was informed of everything that happened here in to the region. Therefore they came to me and told me everything.

We managed to arrange for Nujoma to pass through Botswana. Since he was the leader, Special Branch police heard about his presence in the district and since he was the leader of a liberation movement and they Police were still operating under the British colonial rule, they searched for him all over Ghanzi. When they went to look for him in Makunda, Munamava and Kwatheri came to us and told us that the police were looking for Sam Nujoma. The Special Branch went to Makunda in search for us and Sam Nujoma, but then we spent that day at one cattle post known as Motwere and they were not able to locate where we were. From Makunda and Makakung they went to the Kuke Gate. When they were at Kuke, we slept at Xhoga at Mr Mokwena's farm; it is just close to the Kuke Gate on the western side. Munamava and Kwatheri used horses to keep us informed of the whereabouts of the special branch and what directions we should take to avoid meeting them. We were using cars, but Munamava and Kwatheri were riding on horses and they knew how and where to find us. There were no cell phones at that time and in our region communication was mainly through transport movement. We were able to arrive with him safely in Maun and stayed with him at my place. He stayed for 2 weeks. We enjoyed conversations with him because we were new in politics and we liked to hear about the liberation struggle. We always talked about liberation when we were with him. We talked about how we wanted African countries to be liberated. We heard about Nelson Mandela and that Nujoma

saw him in prison. There were some newspapers like the *Contact* and *New Age* that we liked reading with Nujoma. We read them just like today's *Mmegi* and *The Guardian*. We enjoyed reading a lot. Nowadays there is no politics in the papers; they are after money. *Ga go na polotiki*. Nujoma told us about problems experienced fellow blacks in his country and that such problems affected Africa as a whole. He was determined to help the fellow Africans in his country. By then there were Pan-Africanist legends like Nkrumah, Nyerere and Kaunda who were great men, and we talked about them because they were very supportive to the struggle.

I think the lesson learnt by Botswana was to cooperate with other countries. This made Botswana a member of the OAU and to support the liberation movements; she also became a member of the Frontline States. When she matured in some of these things, Botswana started to be fully involved in the struggle.

My own personal experience about the struggle was bad at times, and it was at times nice; this was because it involved risking one's life. Like I told you, the police were under the British rule and they sent spies or other people to come and tell us rubbish while addressing meetings in the Freedom Square. At first people did not understand, but at the end they understood the message of liberation.

I understand that we did a lot; and even though we did that as a political party, we did it for Botswana. Our aim was that this is our country and we had to help our fellow brothers and sisters in neighbouring countries. At the end what would benefit Botswana would also benefit others. As you can see, we can now take our children to schools in South Africa or Zambia; we couldn't do that before independence.

## Moahi, Billy

*Billy Moahi is aged 41 years, and he worked as a teacher in the Dukwi refugee camp, teaching primary school level refugee children between the 1980s and 1990s. He also had the privilege of interacting with the parents of those children.*

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I taught at Dukwi primary school in the mid 1980s until the early 1990s, so I had the privilege of interacting with refugees and their children.

Educationally refugee children were high performers when I compare them to other schools that surrounded us. They were fine; their refugee status was not expressed in their gestures. They were just normal children with good behaviour. Cases of indiscipline were not anything to worry about because it was only childhood mischief which is normal to all children. They conformed to school policies and loved school. We never had cases of running away from school.

Setswana was an option earlier; it was done by those who were interested in taking it as a subject. So people with languages close to Setswana chose it as a subject, for example the South African refugees who could speak Sesotho or Sepedi. I went for national competitions with these children in music and sports. They were also very energetic in extra curricula activities.

The refugees needed love; I realized that they only became difficult when they were not given love. My wife worked at the office of the president in the camp and sometimes they reported cases of displeasure about certain personnel who were supposed to be taking care of refugees.

Parents' participation in the education of their children was higher than that of Batswana parents. Most refugee parents were educated. The Angolan parents were the ones who were not as educated as Zimbabweans and South Africans. Their relationship with teachers was just fine. Teachers were tolerant.

Access to school was not done looking at students' age. Some parents were attending school with their children because the idea was to give all refugees basic education and try to make them forget that they were away from their countries.

The South African refugees were not happy to be at the camp at all. The difference between them and other refugees was that they were still too much involved in the struggle; always singing and chanting. Most of the time they were lamenting about the type of life they were having in the camp. They wanted relocation to countries such as America and Australia in order to be exposed to various opportunities such as good jobs and scholarships.

There was good cooperation between refugees and Batswana; I went to church with many refugees. South African refugees taught music in our church (OAC). They were our friends and they always narrated their rough history to us. Sometimes there was dissatisfaction because the supplies that refugees got were not 100% satisfactory. The quality of food and quality of clothes they were given were sometimes not up to their standard.

In 1994 some South African refugees did not go back home. Some had found better lives in America; some felt it was unsafe to go back home and a few were people who were ‘wanted’ for one reason or other and so they feared for their lives.

The Botswana Christian Council was one of the organizations that offered its services to the refugees. The BCC sought different donations for refugees, and to help refugees to cope, the BCC offered counselling sessions. The Botswana Council for Refugees (BCR) on the other hand dealt with the general welfare of the refugees. Refugee complaints or grievances were channelled through the BCR.

I felt pity for the refugees considering the type of life they lived. Displacement is a painful experience. The refugees were always monitored; they had no freedom of movement as much as they would have wished for. For them to leave the camp they sought permission and without permission they could be imprisoned for leaving camp without permission. That was one of the policies in the camp; refugees lived a governed life.

I do not regret the gesture Botswana took to accommodate refugees. Refugees are just human beings like anyone else. We must help others so that in future we may also be helped when we are in the same situation

## Mogae, Festus G.

[Phakalane, Gaborone; 5 November 2008]

*His Excellency Mr Festus G. Mogae was in the public service for many years and rose to position of Vice President, and then President.*

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First and foremost, Botswana served as a conduit for refugees from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia to the outside world. People had to escape clandestinely from oppression, and our role was to assist them to reach their destination. We did this in a situation where we were surrounded by hostile regimes of apartheid South Africa, racist Rhodesia, and Namibia which was ruled by South Africa. We had a small population and we were weak militarily and economically. But we were acutely aware that our independence was not secure as long as we were surrounded by these hostile racist regimes. We regarded the liberation of the region as our own liberation. Once these countries were free, we would enjoy genuine freedom. Our independence would be secure as we would have neighbours who respected us.

Consequently, the first thing we did on gaining independence was to join the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which was highly critical of the racist regimes and which these regimes hated. This demonstrated where we belonged and later we became a member of the Frontline States. In the late 1960s, we were already facing attacks from South Africa. Whenever refugees from there fled to Botswana they would punish us by withdrawing railway wagons to stop goods from moving to and from Botswana; so we would not be able to export goods for periods of up to three months. This hostility grew as evidenced by the blowing up of a plane in Francistown, which was used to carry refugees from Francistown to Zambia.

The role of Botswana being a conduit was vital to the struggle because many refugees and leading nationalists passed through Botswana. I would say about 90% went through this country. It was important that those waging the struggle from outside be connected to those inside South Africa. Some of our people acted as couriers for the liberation movements. Those arrested such as Michael Dingake, served many years in jail, in South Africa. We were surprised about the severity of these sentences. The liberation movements later explained to us that carrying messages from leaders outside to leaders inside South Africa was a serious crime in South Africa, hence the severe sentences. But we always realised that we were part of the struggle. Some of our friends like Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia realised our precarious situation.

Around 1971 when Britain joined the EEC, they issued an invitation to the Anglophone African States to seek an association with the EEC like the Francophone states had done with France's assistance (the Yaunde Convention). The Anglophone countries felt that the Yaunde Convention was a neo-colonial arrangement. It fell on Botswana to convince the others that we should negotiate. We explained our position that in our precarious geopolitical situation, even a neo colonial arrangement would be better than being isolated from the rest of the world, and being dominated by

racist South Africa and Rhodesia. We further argued that if we small countries, namely Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland negotiated without the support of the larger African countries, then a neo-colonial arrangement would result, as we had no bargaining power: But if we joined together, the weak ones and the strong ones like Nigeria, which was already exporting oil and groundnuts, we would have leverage.

To get things moving Mogae and Bareki were sent to East Africa to learn how the association with EEC operated. The East African States had associate status with the EEC. Botswana's objective then was to have access to the EEC market for our beef. We spent 3 months in East Africa. A meeting of Anglophone officials was convened where we presented papers. Essentially we explained the weakness and vulnerability of the BLS countries. It was imperative that BLS be assisted by stronger and larger African countries to negotiate with the EEC so as to loosen the stranglehold of the racist regimes. We got the support of the officials. Our position was then supported at the meeting of Ministers where our delegation was led by Quett Masire, who was Vice President and Minister of Finance and Development Planning.

It was agreed that we should avoid alienating Francophone Africa by regarding them as neo-colonialists. We should win them over to the idea of negotiating with Europe together. This position prevailed and a meeting was convened in Abidjan where the idea of negotiating as a united group prevailed. When the negotiations began, Nigeria chaired the African Group. Finally, a broader front emerged of African, Pacific, and Caribbean States (APC). Botswana played a leading role in this because we always felt that as a weak small country our survival would depend on uniting with others. In this we had a strong backing from the East African Community. Indeed Botswana played a leading role in the ACP. We did this in order to protect our Independence. It was a struggle for survival.

Botswana was a conduit for liberation movements and refugees who wanted to go north for training for the liberation war. We facilitated their passage. The South Africans demanded their return to South Africa. We told them that they had to move on, because they were never intended to stay in Botswana. In this way we contributed to the struggle and we always regarded ourselves as part of the liberation struggle. This role was not easy because of the hostility of the racist regimes. For example, they demanded that we remove the offices of ANC and PAC from Botswana. We told them we couldn't do that because the offices assisted in handling the many South Africans who fled to Botswana.

They claimed that many or 10% of those who came as refugees were, in fact, "terrorists". We denied any knowledge of that and wondered why they did not stop them from leaving since their police were better placed to do so than ours. Our police force was too small to cope with the situation they were concerned about. South Africans charged that we sent people to train in countries to the north like in the USSR, as guerrillas. We denied that. All we did was to facilitate their passage northwards and did not know what they did once they arrived at their destinations. Then long before the attacks of later years, the South Africans blew up Botswana homes claiming they

were hide outs for freedom fighters. There were many such incidents, but being a small country these incidents were not reported in the international press. The Rhodesians also attacked our army and invaded border areas and Francistown. They painted their trucks the same colour as BDF trucks and made uniforms similar to that of the BDF, so that they would not be easily detected. At times they kidnapped our people. So we suffered a great deal from these attacks but we persisted in assisting in the struggle. Many countries, except our neighbours such as Zambia and Tanzania, did not know about how we were attacked and harassed by the racist regimes.

In the earlier days, the liberation movements such as the ANC wanted us to allow their freedom fighters to transit through Botswana to attack South Africa. We constantly reminded them of our policy of not allowing attacks to be launched from our country, pointing out that if that were to be allowed then both we and the ANC cadres would be wiped out. After the Nkomati Accord between South Africa and Mozambique, ANC renewed the request to open up Botswana for guerrillas to transit to South Africa. We refused explaining our policy as we had done before. We then quietly told the ANC that Botswana was a huge country and that we would not be looking for them. They had the responsibility to avoid being seen by us. In other words they could pass through Botswana but avoid been seen and arrested.

Despite our vulnerable position, we supported the struggle. We tried not to give South Africa a pretext to attack us. We explained to our African colleagues why we could not open up the country for freedom fighters. Eventually they understood our position. The relations with the liberation movements were good. Whenever there were differences we discussed them amicably. Our security people worked closely with the ANC security, exchanging information on matters of mutual interest. Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki visited us periodically to exchange views on matters of mutual interest. We told them what we were able to do and what we were unable to do, in the liberation struggle. On the whole, they appreciated our position. There are those who urged that we should establish bases for the liberation movements. We said to do so would be to open both the freedom fighters and Botswana to attacks; we would be sitting ducks.

If freedom fighters were caught in Botswana, they would be arrested, put on trial, sentenced, and then we sent them back to Zambia and Tanzania. They did not serve their sentences because we supported the struggle. The arrests and trials were meant to demonstrate to South Africa that we did not allow attacks on our neighbours from our country.

We took risks all the time so as to liberate the region, and there were many dangers. For example we had learned through our security that one white teacher was targeted by the South Africans. He refused to move north for his own safety. We declared him a prohibited immigrant so as to get him out, and he went to Angola. The South Africans sent him a letter bomb which killed his wife and daughter. These letter bombs were quite common. Other people such as Tiro were killed in this way. A priest in Molepolole also lost his arm from a letter bomb. So Botswana was destabilized

throughout, not just in the 1980s, when more dramatic events occurred and were reported in the international press.

Concerning application of UN sanctions against the racist regimes, we could not do this as we had no capacity to do so. Moreover, applying sanctions would hurt us as the regimes would retaliate.

There were incidents by both the nationalist movements and the South Africans where they used some of our people as spies. For example, the ANC used a certain woman in one of the villages as a courier. The South Africans also used her as a spy and she was in love with one of their policemen who belonged to the same ethnic group. The ANC later exposed her and reported her to us. We told them our worry about using our people as spies as this endangered their lives and the lives of their families. There were also rivalries among liberation movements. The PAC had a perception that we tended to favour ANC. We explained that we dealt with ANC more regularly because they had more people here. As for ZANU's perception that we tended to favour ZAPU, we explained that ZAPU, like ANC, had more people here just as ZANU had more in Mozambique. This was a function of geography. In reality we welcomed all who came this country, such as the man who later became the founding Executive Secretary of SADC. He came through Botswana.

Concerning Namibia, SWAPO was the dominant party here. They lived in a house dubbed the "white house". When elections approached, SWAPO wanted us to stop the Herero from going to Namibia to vote. The Turnhalle Alliance supported the Botswana Herero's desire to emigrate to Namibia as they stood to gain votes. But SWAPO and Botswana opposed the move. In the end they did not relocate. This was to happen after independence when some Herero returned to Namibia.

## Mogorosi, Benjamin

[Gobojango; May 2007]

*Mr Benjamin Mogorosi is a 51 years old teacher, but during the liberation struggle he used to drive a truck to transport refugees to Bobonong police station. He narrates how the Rhodesian soldiers were harassing villagers and even students. He says that the Rhodesian government was aware of those people who assisted the freedom fighters. He also explains why the borders with Rhodesian and South Africa were not secure, as the white farmers were armed and were in support of the governments of those countries.*

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Things were tough during the war because there was neither a police station nor army bases. The refugees relied on members of the community who were willing and able to assist. For example I used to drive Rre Mogorosi's truck to transport the refugees to Bobonong police station. We suspected that there were some people in the village who told the Rhodesians who were assisting the refugees. People like Mogorosi, Phalandwa of Semolale, Ngala of Mabolwe were known to the Rhodesian government. With time, the government provided trucks to transport the refugees.

There was a lot of insecurity and people like Motsumi, Ngala and others often hid at night to avoid being captured by Rhodesian soldiers. Even feeding the guerrillas was hazardous because those who assisted could be attacked by the Rhodesians. At one point they captured some teachers at night and freed them at the border. One John Mokgoba was once captured but he bolted and escaped from them. They came to capture people at the cattle posts. At some point they came to our cattle post, but we escaped to report to the BDF who traced them, but they had fled across the border back to Rhodesia. As for the refugees, the villagers really rallied to help them as best as they could. The villagers also protected the refugees and freedom fighters by not disclosing their whereabouts.

There is the incident of Manama students who were harassed by a plane. We had to move the pupils from the kgotla to the school. So, transport was arranged for them to go to Bobonong. One disconcerting thing was that the white farmers in Tuli Block near Bobirwa border villages could not be trusted. They were well armed as if they supported the Rhodesians and South Africans.

The economy of the country was affected adversely. Foot and mouth disease spread from Zimbabwe, as the veterinary services had broken down. Livestock theft increased, especially by some Batswana. Theft from Botswana was not that widespread. Some Batswana were even arrested and tried for stealing Zimbabwe cattle.

We were very suspicious of white farmers whom we thought collaborated with the whites in Zimbabwe and South Africa. For example, I feared going to South Africa because we were often questioned about the freedom fighters, and finally, I stopped going to South Africa for fear that I would be arrested or harmed in some way if I continued going there.

I personally once helped two freedom fighters who were badly injured in confrontation with the Rhodesians. I went to Shashe River to transport them to Bobonong. On the Rhodesian side they had been transported by donkey to Shashe River.

Concerning alerting freedom fighters about the movement of Rhodesian soldiers and an incident at Dinde River near Gobojango, I reported this to the freedom fighters we were sheltering. Fortunately, the BDF soon arrived and went to repulse the Rhodesians. At our homestead there was a room where we often hid freedom fighters. Children were not allowed to enter that room for fear they might divulge the information.

Concerning the question as to whether Botswana gained anything from its support for liberation struggle, I feel that, overall, Botswana had not gained much. Rather, the country was adversely affected economically. Its support for refugees drained the country's meagre resources. There was a break down in veterinary services in Zimbabwe, which led to the spread of the foot and mouth disease to the Bobirwa area, and up to the present day the disease ravages the area from time to time. So, from time to time Bobirwa is banned from selling its cattle to the Botswana Meat Commission. Cattle theft increased during the liberation war. Some Batswana stole cattle from Zimbabwe border areas, thus further spreading of foot and mouth disease. As for relations between Botswana and the liberated countries, the relations with South Africa are very good. Batswana who could not go to South Africa during the apartheid era are now welcomed to South Africa. However, relations with Zimbabwe are not that good. Sometimes one feels that some Zimbabweans tend to harass Batswana.

## Mogorosi, Okgetheng Legong

[Gobojango]

*Mr Okgetheng Legong Mogorosi, is 52 years old Motswana Babirwa, who fought in the Liberation War on the side of Joshua Nkomo's ZIPRA force.*

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We are Babirwa people who live on the eastern border between Botswana and Zimbabwe. There are many things which we have always shared with our relatives on the Zimbabwe side of the border. For example, in the past, many of our people in Botswana went to Rhodesia for medical care and education, as these were not well developed in our area of the Bechuanaland Protectorate.

During the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, many people fled to our area to escape oppression in their country. We assisted them as best as we could, with such things as food, in some cases clothing, and transport for those who wished to move on to other destinations. The three villages of Gobojango, Semolale and Mabolwe were very much affected because of the influx of these people.

We took these people to the chief who allowed us to transport them to the police camp in Bobonong, from where they were transported to Selebi-Phikwe and from there to Francistown where the liberation movements had their offices. This assistance was given by those in these villages who wanted to help these people and had the ability and means to do so.

I personally played a part in assisting the fleeing people as I was able to drive. My uncle, Mr Motsumi Mogorosi, had a shop and some trucks. We used these trucks to transport refugees to Bobonong or even further to Selebi-Phikwe. We assisted the police in the task of transporting them. At that time the police in Bobonong had rudimentary transport which could not cope with the large numbers of refugees. So the few people in our area who had trucks assisted with the transport. In addition to dealing with the refugees, we also had contact with some members of the liberation movements, especially ZAPU. They periodically travelled from Francistown to our villages to explain to us about the struggle, and gave us advice on how to take care of ourselves as the oppressors in Rhodesia and South Africa were going to try to harm us because of the assistance we were giving to the refugees. The oppressors knew the names of such people as Motsumi Mogorosi of Gobojango, Join Ngala and Maziba Mathora of Mabolwe who were very active in assisting refugees from their informers. So their lives were in danger, as spies sometimes came clandestinely to these villages to ask about the whereabouts of these men. However, generally the villagers who supported what these men did and sympathised with the refugees, refused to divulge any information about these men, and instead alerted them about the spy activities in the village.

But these agents of Rhodesia and South Africa persisted in their efforts to know and, perhaps hurt or capture those who helped refugees and liberation movements.

In the mid 1970s they sometimes placed bombs in the homes of those who supported refugees and freedom fighters.

In fact some of the leading helpers of the liberation struggle in the villages had to avoid living in their own homes most of the time. They had to hide in different places to avoid being hurt by the agents of the oppressive regimes. There is an incident that illustrates the danger these men faced. A Boer and a black man once came to our shop and placed a bomb in a room where I slept, believing that freedom fighters hid there; fortunately, the freedom fighters had taught us how to identify bombs and other harmful objects. So I saw the bomb under my bed and diffused it. The persons who taught us about bombs and other harmful objects were generally known by their war names, but we knew some of them by their real names such as Joel Sijie, Ethan Dube, Mohadi who is now (2007) a government minister in Zimbabwe. They came at night and disappeared before day break. Their main task was to meet the refugees and to make arrangements for them to move on to Francistown and then to Zambia and other countries north of the Zambezi. They also came to see what the situation was in our villages, so as to tender advice on how to deal with the dangerous situation caused by the influx of refugees.

One of the ZAPU men, Joel Sijie, lived among us in Gobojango, which was the base from which he recruited cadres for ZAPU from among the refugees. Periodically he crossed into Zimbabwe to recruit cadres directly from there. We assisted him in this recruitment drive. Sometimes we went with him at night to meet the recruited cadres at the Shashe River. The River is not far from the border villages of Bobirwa area. Joel functioned easily because he lived with his relatives in Gobojango. He was an able and brave functionary of ZAPU.

I was about 20 or 21 years old when I got involved in these activities of assisting freedom fighters and the refugees. I realised that my life was in danger, and fearing that the agents of the oppressive regimes could eventually harm me, I decided to leave Gobojango. I was the manager of Mr Motsumi Mogorosi's business and transport. Some of the prominent people who were involved were: Motsumi Mogorosi, a business man (Gobojango), Chief Makwati (Gobojango), his successor, Sehato Koma, Join Ngala who became chief of Mabolwe village in later years, Maziba Mathora (Mabolwe), a business man, Phalandwa (Semolale), and others in Bobonong such as B. Sekwababe. These men had trucks which they volunteered to use to transport the refugees to Bobonong and Selebi-Phikwe. They transported, housed and fed these people at no charge. They considered it a duty to do so in order to assist the refugees. The villagers contributed food and helped to cook and feed the refugees; many of them being their relatives from Zimbabwe and to some extent from South Africa (The South African element was to a smaller extent in the Bobirwa area). In Bobonong some of the people who assisted with food and transport were Mr James Maruatona, Mr Selelo Phofuitsile. Both these men were businessmen in Bobonong.

In all this we worked closely with the Botswana Police. I recall the good cooperation we had from officer Macha who ran the small police station in Bobonong. We took

the refugees to the police and they liaised with government agencies to take these people to their destinations.

The line of communication was (1) village chief(s), (2) Bobonong police, (3) Selebi-Phikwe, (4) Francistown and onwards to refugee camps or to countries north of the Zambezi via Zambia.

Concerning my own situation, it became untenable. Mr Motsumi Mogorosi was now no longer able to live in his home due to fear of being harmed by the agents of Rhodesia. So I was now responsible for all his business affairs and receiving and transporting refugees. My life was in danger. So Mrs Mogorosi advised me to leave Gobojango for Gaborone to seek advice from Dr Phineas Makhurane, Motsumi Mogorosi's brother, who taught at the University of Botswana. He and others advised that if I so wished, I should go north and join the liberation forces. To continue staying in Gobojango was fraught with danger. I too felt that I should join the liberation forces. So I went to Francistown where I consulted with the ZAPU people we used to work with in Gobojango such as Dick Vuma. They arranged for me to go to Zambia. So together with cadres recruited in Botswana, we went straight to ZIPRA (the armed wing of ZAPU) to train as soldiers for the liberation war. We were trained by the trained ZIPRA soldiers who had trained in various countries like USSR, Cuba etc. The Zambians did not participate in our training. They played the protective role to safeguard our camps like what the Botswana police and later Botswana Defence Force did.

Zambia was really a transit camp. The real training was done at Morogoro in Tanzania. There we met some ZANLA cadres who were the armed wing of ZANU. It was decided that ZIPRA and ZANLA should join forces and go to fight from the Mozambique front. Some went there, but others saw the danger of merging with ZANLA and fled to Zambia from where we decided to open our own front. The merged army was called Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA); they began to take our arms and we saw the danger of being eliminated by ZANLA. ZAPU decided to disengage from ZIPA, clandestinely, and moved back to Zambia to fight as a separate force. In Zambia we cooperated with Umkhonto we Sizwe (ANC) and the SWAPO Liberation Army.

I recall one incident in which I was involved; ZAPU had learned that the Rhodesians had recruited an American who was said to have fought in the Vietnam War. His job was to advise the Smith regime on how to crush the liberation movements operating from Zambia. We were sent to capture him alive, if possible, in Victoria Falls. The aim was to extract information which could be useful to the liberation struggle from him. The mission was successful, but unfortunately the man was shot during interrogation, before extracting the information from him.

We had broad training which also embraced survival skills. In 1976 we were given experience in the field, but not actual fighting was involved during that phase. We infiltrated Zimbabwe to make contacts with the people to tell them about the liberation struggle. It was when we returned from one of those sorties that we were

ambushed by Smith's soldiers and I sustained severe injuries; that is why I have these scars on one of my hands and eye brow. Some of us died there, and two of them were from Gobojango (Botswana), like me. I was sent for treatment and later sent for officer cadet course at the training college in Zambia, where I met some 12 BDF men from (PMU) who had come to train, including. Ramadeluka Seretse, Rameleko, Ntalamo, Motlhatlhedhi.

I was sent with 300 cadres in Libya, but things did not go well and they were returned to Zambia. I was sent to the Soviet Union to train in communications and intelligence, and how to be commander. On returning to Zambia I found that peace talks had begun, and operations had been suspended.

Concerning the Frontline States, we were once addressed by Presidents Kaunda, Seretse, and Neto. The purpose was to encourage us to fight on as our mission was very important for all the countries in the region. They addressed all the liberation movements together. They asserted that our fighting would force Smith's government to enter negotiations. Those who trained earlier tended to be more dedicated and disciplined. Some few members who came later tended to be undisciplined, and some became sell-outs.

In terms of cooperation among liberation movements there was a lot of cooperation. However, the splinter movements like ZANU (from ZAPU) and PAC (from ANC) we in ZAPU did not cooperate well with them. ZAPU worked well with Botswana, Zambia, and Angola. FRELIMO tended to cooperate with Tanzania mostly, and later following independence of Mozambique, with ZANU.

Concerning the role of Botswana in the liberation struggle, the country made great contribution. We worked well and shared information with the BDF. Botswana gave material, moral and political support to the liberation struggle. Some Batswana actually went to participate in the struggle. On some occasions, guerrillas got ammunition secretly from BDF. The working relationship between BDF and ZIPRA in the field was good, and there was cooperation.

## Molapisi, Motlatsi

[Francistown; May 2007]

*Mr Motlatsi Molapisi, a 64 years old from Boikhutso Ward, Francistown, tells about how the refugees and freedom fighters were treated by the Botswana government and people.*

Botswana was affected by the wars of liberation because people from these countries fled here. Botswana did not assist these people with weapons, but protected them from their enemies. She gave them shelter, hid and fed them. Botswana made a great contribution to the liberation struggle because she provided protection and food. Refugees from the neighbouring countries of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia were well received and some were even accommodated by ordinary citizens.

The winds of change were sweeping through Africa and Botswana knew that their fellow Africans were fighting for the truth. At the beginning of the struggle, a few people understood the liberation struggles, but with the arrival of people like P.G. Matante, people began to understand. People in towns such as Francistown, were the first to understand what was happening. In places such as White City and Blue Town in Francistown, there were houses known as Refugee Houses, and refugees stayed there.

Rhodesians soldiers launched raids at night as the liberation struggle intensified and refugees dispersed. Botswana helped those who were injured with medical treatment. Botswana assisted freedom fighters, but did not want it to be revealed for fear of reprisal.

The coordinators of the liberation movements monitored the movement of freedom fighters in Botswana. Freedom fighters passed through Botswana on their way for military training. Even when they re-entered Zimbabwe from their training they went through Botswana secretly. Commanders of freedom fighters helped in these movements. When the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) encountered these fighters, they provided them with transport. Some countries in the OAU and the UN condemned Botswana for continuing to trade with the white dominated settler states, but Botswana could not cut trading links with these countries because she was landlocked; it was not possible. It was a clever move by Botswana to continue economic links because she had no other options, but she continued with her policy of supporting liberation movements.

Botswana also mediated between feuding liberation movements because they were fighting one enemy. Their feuding could affect the liberation struggle, while they were pursuing a single goal. Botswana were much more inclined towards Nkomo's ZAPU, because it was the first movement and he had started politics early. Some Botswana such as Knight Maripe, also worked with Nkomo in the Railways in Bulawayo.

Botswana made major sacrifices in the liberation struggle because she was a small country that had just achieved her independence. During the liberation war, buildings were destroyed and people in Botswana were killed. The Mophane Club was bombed

and there was also bombing at Minestone and some Batswana together with some refugees lost their lives. Botswana condemned the racist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia, and called for the independence of these counties at the OAU and the UN. She angered these strong neighbours, but this was an indication of bravery. Botswana believed in her ideal of *Ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo, which means It is better to jaw jaw than to war war*. She was in a vulnerable position, but she persevered. The leaders of the liberation movements understood Botswana's position; that she was a weak country in a desperate position. Had Botswana allowed to be used as a launching pad, she could have been overrun by her powerful neighbours. Botswana maintained her foreign policy principles.

Development and government policies were affected due to the war of liberation because people along the border in the North East were forced to leave their ploughing fields. It was not safe to live near the border. The friendship between Botswana and the former white racist states were cemented after the latter obtained independence. But, Botswana has not been happy with the way she is treated by South Africa. There is a lot of competition economically and each country wants to further its own interests. Botswana has not benefited much from SADC. The aim of SADC was to attract foreign investment, but Botswana has a small population of 1.7 million people and foreign investors come in and later move on to other countries, hence there has not been much benefit from SADC. Botswana had hoped that the independence of SA and Zimbabwe would reduce the illegal movement of people. There is need for economic independence in the SADC countries and not only political independence. Peace and stability can only be there if people in the region live well. The Front Line States tried to coordinate the liberation struggles and encourage countries and liberation movements to stand together. Countries such as Tanzania and Zambia coordinated resources against apartheid. They offered encouragement to liberation movements.

## Molefhe, Patlako

[Gaborone; October 2008]

*Patlako Molefhe is a businessman and a retired civil servant, who was active in the struggle for freedom with ANC and PAC activists. He moved to Botswana where he could be more active, and was well received as a refugee. Later he assisted others who were crossing the border into Botswana*

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I spent three to four years at Turflop (University of the North) which catered mainly for Tswana speaking students. I was elected chairperson of the University Cultural Society. We used to invite activists in the nationalist movement such as ANC, PAC and others to address us. They inspired us a lot about the struggle for freedom. Most of the students wanted to skip the country to study abroad which was the primary motive of many of us. Eventually we returned to fight for the liberation of the country. It was not easy to leave the country. So some came to Botswana from where they would be enabled to go further north.

In Botswana we were well received. Those who had relatives stayed with them. Others moved on north. The reception was good and they were catered for. Upon arrival one had to report to the police and to the UN High Commission for Refugees. You then went to meet your representative who would direct you where to go. Organisations like the YWCA also helped to cater for these students. These people did not enter through gazetted border posts. They entered illegally.

Later I sometimes played a role in assisting those who skipped the border into Botswana. Some of them were former school mates and others were relatives. We reported these to the police and we were allowed to host them for a short period before they moved on. This was a risky undertaking as the South African police and secret agents were after them.

I recall one incident when one of our friends came scantily dressed. We gave him some clothing and arranged for him to travel north by ambulance dressed in pajamas, pretending to be a patient. Arrangements were secretly made with the ambulance driver to take him along, because he was wanted by the South African police. We used to disguise activists so that they could go undetected. At times we arranged for some to travel in a hearse after we had arranged with the undertakers secretly.

The genuine refugees were well treated by ordinary Batswana and the government; those with qualifications were offered employment.

## Morake, Kesegofetse

[Topisi; November 2008]

*Mr Kesegofetse Morake is a retired livestock inspector and a farmer who worked in Nata and Kasane, and had a good experience with the freedom fighters that were transiting in the area. He tells of how he used to give them transport and food because they looked desperate and hungry whenever he met them.*

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In 1972 I was transferred from Palapye to Francistown. Later I was reposted to Nata. During the days I worked in Nata and Kasane, I used to meet with freedom fighters as I travelled in the course of my duties. When I met them, they were usually desperate and hungry, and I would give them whatever I had to eat. Whenever I went on my trips, I took with me food to feed them if I met them.

I gave them transport free of charge from Nata area to Maitengwe from where they made incursions into Rhodesia. I really felt pity for them and sympathised with their cause. At times I would spend the night with them in the residence of my cousin, called Mangazha Moremi. I used to meet different groups of guerrillas there. He was working at the quarantine in Maitengwe as a fence foreman. Moremi used to give them shelter and food, but they warned me not to tell whoever I met about them. I was warned, 'Never tell them you saw freedom fighters.' On several occasions I met Rhodesian soldiers who asked me if I had seen a group of people moving together, and I denied ever seeing them. The guerrillas came to know me, and my car. Those I had never met would tell me they had known about me from those whom I had met before. They came to like and trust me, and I too liked them, for I knew about their cause.

At one time I spent the night with them at Moremi's place in Maitengwe. The following day I went with Moremi to Francistown to get our pay. On the evening of that day the Rhodesians attacked the quarantine camp hoping to kill some freedom fighters and Moremi. However, luckily, there was nobody at the camp that night. Then they drove towards Dukwi to attack it, but they realised that the sun was going to rise soon, and they beat a retreat to avoid being found in Botswana at day time.

The freedom fighters did not bother anybody. All they asked for was help; because when they carried heavy weapons when they travelled. I felt pity on them and so helped them by carrying them and their heavy weapons to their destination, several kilometres from Nata area. I usually travelled on roads not normally used to avoid meeting people who might pose danger to them or report their whereabouts.

They used to tell me what they did after reaching Rhodesia. They told me that they used to lay land mines in areas frequented by Rhodesians. Then they returned to Botswana, leaving one of them, who later reported whether the land mines had worked or not. On one occasion I met some guerrillas who hurriedly departed warning me about the possibility of meeting Rhodesians. Indeed, soon I met the Rhodesians who enquired about the guerrillas, but I denied seeing them. Later

when I went to Maitengwe from Kasane I was told there was some fighting between Rhodesian soldiers and guerrillas, and many Rhodesian soldiers had died. I actually saw the damaged car belonging to the Rhodesians, where the fighting had taken place.

Moremi helped guerrillas by giving them shelter and food. The guerrillas came to know him well. They used to plan their method of attack from Moremi's house. Moremi gave them information about the whereabouts of the Rhodesians; and the Rhodesians knew about Moremi but they were unable to capture him. We knew about the oppression in Rhodesia and wanted to contribute to the struggle by aiding the guerrillas.

On one occasion I was stopped at Dikabeya near Palapye by a man driving alone in a car. He told me he was Oliver Tambo and wanted to be taken to Motsamai Mpho's house in Palapye. I took him there and Mpho hugged me saying they had heard Tambo had fled from South Africa but they did not know where he was. He then took Tambo to his house. At that time Mpho was living in Palapye.

## More, Mme Lentle

[Naledi Secondary School, Gaborone; October 2008]

*Mme Lentle More stayed with many people, who were mostly refugees, in the 1980s. At that time she was working at the President Hotel, and many of the refugees frequented the President Hotel, which was a social meeting place for different people. These people were mostly from South Africa.*

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In the 1980s I stayed with many people who were mostly refugees who had run away from oppression. These people were mostly from South Africa. At the time I was working at the President Hotel. Many of the refugees frequented the President Hotel, which was a social meeting place for different people.

Some of these refugees were young people, others were adults but they used to ask for all kinds of help from us. At the time I was working in the reception. They used to ask me to help them call their parents, friends and relatives in South Africa. That I did, using President Hotel's facilities and not so much with the permission of management. They also used to ask for food and drink; and I and my friends would dip into our pockets to buy these people some food. Whenever there were social gatherings, like parties, we used to invite them; sometimes we even invited them to our homes. They were very easy going, and they found comfort in our homes, particularly in my home.

As I said earlier, some of these refugees from South Africa were very young, and had been students who belonged to students' organizations such as the South African Student Organisation SASO, other belonged to Black Conscious Movement BCM, and yet others were members of the ANC Youth League. Some came with families, and others with very young children, but we got used to them. Most of them got used to me through my work at President Hotel. Some began to have confidence in me and began to ask me to do errands for them.

At one point I and a sister called Mma Segola, and my late brother went to Johannesburg for a visit. While there, we decided to visit a friend in one of the local townships. This particular friend asked us if we would give her cousin a ride to Botswana. We happily agreed. When we asked specifically where in Botswana she was going, we were told that she was visiting a cousin of hers, who was a refugee. This refugee man was a priest; I think his name was Morris Ngakale, if I remember well. I also confirmed that I knew Morris as he frequented the President Hotel. So we agreed to give this cousin a lift. Our host did not elaborate beyond this, as to what kind of a person we were to travel with. The following day we went to get her. When she came out, she came with a baggage of nice suitcases, and dressed very nicely. We came with her all the way until we crossed the border with her. She was not saying much during the journey. We crossed the border in the evening, and I was going to work the next day. Unknown to us, she was using a passport that did not belong to her, and she would have landed us into trouble of unimagined proportions.

But by the grace of God, the police did not recognize her. They did not realise that her passport was not hers. Meanwhile she was known to have been a prominent “official” who organized students to cross the border; because of oppression, and such students crossed the border either for educational or military purposes. Later we learned through other people that she was wanted by the South African Police. Her photograph was said to have appeared in several South African papers.

When we got home, I said to her that it was late at night and besides, I didn't know where her cousin Morris lived, I only knew him because of his frequency to the President Hotel. I was going to work the following day at two in the afternoon, and I promised her that I would enquire after her cousin. At that time I was married and lived with my husband in Ext 10 in Gaborone. I told my husband the whole story and that I was going to help her locate her cousin when I reported for duty. When I got to the President Hotel, the cousin was nowhere to be seen, and I knocked off at ten in the night without seeing him. The first, second and third days passed, without the cousin being seen. It became obvious to me that the girl was stranded. She didn't know me, and I didn't know her; the only thing I knew was that her aunt had requested us to give her a lift to Botswana.

I told her that it was over three days, and this cousin had not showed up at the President Hotel as was expected. I could tell from her face that she was petrified of the news, and she still had not divulged to me that she was a refugee. I asked her if I could talk with my husband about accommodating her for some time, while hoping that the cousin would show up. Suddenly she brightened up because of that suggestion. My husband said he had no objection, and if I wanted to give her accommodation I could do so. I started to stay with her, and even when I eventually found the “cousin” and told her about it, she said that she just wanted to stay with me, and she did not want to go to live with the cousin.

I was buying her food, clothes and shoes; from this a bond emerged, and we became one. By this time she had told me that she was a refugee but still she had not told me about herself and the passport.

At that time refugees were being given free food, and there was a place in Gaborone where food for refugees was distributed. My cousin tried to suggest to her that she could register for food rations as other refugees were expected to do then, but she was not interested in that suggestion. We shared the food I bought at my house, and I could understand why she did not register for food rations.

One notable thing was that the police never came to look for her in my house. We stayed together like that for two years and I was treating her like a member of my family in every sense. I later learnt that she was waiting to go to school somewhere abroad. But many people from South Africa used to come by the house to see her and I just took it that they were her former school mates, as the majority of them were of her age. Even her parents, when they came from South Africa to Botswana, they came to visit my house. She told me of her two sisters who were both in exile in Zambia. There were many student organizations then, but she said she belonged to the ANC.

We stayed together while she was organizing her papers to go to school abroad. One day a cousin of mine said that the girl was a wanted person, according to the papers in South Africa. That is when she told me that she crossed the border without using her own passport. I was not worried by those reports as most refugees at that time were almost always on the wanted list of the South African Police.

It came to a point where her arrangements for further studies abroad were finalized. She left to go to school in New York, United States of America. She went to school, finished and worked there. She began to send me stuff from there. She has been sending me things from America ever since. As we speak, this lady is now the South African Consular General in Los Angeles, USA. Her younger sisters have now returned from exile, they are now in South Africa and are doing very well. One has a doctorate degree in engineering and is in the construction industry; the other one is an economist.

Both of them look after me because I used to look after their parents and sister. Even her cousins and relatives who were refugees, whenever they are in Botswana they come to the house called Lentle. My house was ever so full of refugees. But as they came, I gave them food, and generally provided them with what they needed.

My brother died in 1982 and I felt like I needed a breath of air. I decided to go to Port Elizabeth. That is where I nearly got into trouble with the police. When my permission to stay was almost expiring, I went to the immigration police to extend my permit, and they just told me to wait. While waiting, the police came and said if I told them about the refugees in Botswana I would have my days extended. They even offered to bribe me, so that I could tell them where the refugees were. I told them that I did not know anything about refugees, and that I was just a worker in the President Hotel. They offered me tea, but I refused because I suspected that they had put something in the tea to drug me. I was kept there for almost three hours, but I refused to tell them anything. They refused to extend my days and I immediately returned to Botswana.

I suspected that they had unconfirmed reports of my association with refugees, especially that one of my cousins was married to Koous Segola, a refugee who was among the men who were most wanted by the South African Police. At one point I went with my cousin and her husband to Zambia where I stayed with refugees for five months. Since that time I used to receive refugees from Lusaka, and they would stay with me for brief periods. Sometimes they would disappear for a night or two days, and when they came back some had inexplicable injuries which they would not talk about. I suspected they had crossed the border for their missions. They used Botswana a lot to cross the border. I was not afraid because I wanted to help our people. They even bombed a house in the neighbourhood that used to be occupied by Koous and his wife, who was my cousin.

A refugee called Thami, who was one of the officials of the ANC, once came into my house during what was called “stay away”. That was when their intelligence had told them that it was not safe to stay where they were that particular night. I found

him in my bedroom sleeping with a gun besides him. He was also friends with the most wanted Koous Segola, and that is when I feared for my children in the event of him being traced. But he immediately left, explaining that it was a stay away.

When Gaborone was bombed, I was in Francistown, and I heard that many refugees were killed including someone that I knew quite well, George Phahle, but when I returned to Gaborone I accommodated his brother Levi Phahle until he went to school abroad.

I was determined to help the South African refugees. You could feel pity for them (Ba ne ba tlhomola pelo) and some Batswana were afraid of them, in the event they got caught in the crossfire. They wanted them to go to Dukwi. The Batswana men particularly did not like the refugees as they accused them of taking their women (Ba ne ba re ba tseela banyana).

South African refugees, in my view, were more polished and more trustworthy than those from Zimbabwe. The refugees who stayed with me were mostly ANC members and were genuine. There used to be a refugee who was said to be a pilot called Knox, he is now deceased, and he used to come from Zambia on their missions and stay with me. Such refugees used to come with lots of money, and I don't know where they got the money from. They used to entertain us with parties and dinners.

On one occasion the police came looking for some wanted refugees and warned me that such refugees were dangerous to me and to others and that they should be made to leave the country. Koous Segola was one such refugee, among others. Sometimes the police came, and asked me that they had heard that so and so was here the day before. I remember them looking for a boy called "Pretty Boy", he is now in Pretoria. Another person who was wanted by the police was Thabang, who is now the Premier of Mpumalanga.

We have helped the people of South Africa a lot. I feel proud that I have played a part in their eventual emancipation, all because of Janet Ndlovu, the present South African Consular General in Los Angeles, USA. People here used to see her here at Lentle's house. She knows me, even if you asked her, she will tell you that Lentle is my sister, she was a friend of Koous Segola and visited my place a lot. I also knew Dr Manto Shabalala when she was a medical doctor at Athlone Hospital. She is now a Minister in the ANC government.

## Moroka, Tshidi

*Tshidi Moroka is a South African ex-refugee who lived in Botswana during the liberation struggle. She arrived in Botswana in 1977 as a student and continued with her education. She explains about the kind of life she had as a refugee.*

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When some of us arrived in Botswana in 1997 it was not difficult for us to secure schools in the institutions because the ground work had already been done by those who were there before us. I applied to the institution and was accepted on merit. The applications did not differentiate between Batswana and non Batswana. I then had to go to the Botswana Council for Refugees with my acceptance letter; it was they who had to contact the schools and arrange for payments. It really was not difficult to find schools for those who wanted to go to school. There was no discrimination in terms of gender; education was accessible to those who wanted to further their education.

When we arrived in Botswana we had nowhere to stay and there were some discussions between an organized group of South Africans and the YWCA about finding alternative housing for women. The World Council of Churches (WCC), through Ms. B Bam organized a house through YWCA for South African women to stay. The women got better accommodation and food; amongst ourselves we had programmes along gender lines. There were very young girls who needed to guidance and support from the elderly ones, and this meant that we had to form a women's group to cater for the needs of the women.

Educational levels were from high school to tertiary. There were those who had not finished their matric and had to complete. Some went to schools such as: University, NHI, and BTC, and used to look after the ones who were not at school by providing food.

The lives of South African refugees in Botswana were very interesting and challenging. When most of us arrived in Botswana we were very young less than 20 and we had to assume great responsibilities for our lives, without parents to guide us. We found each other, and each one of us was a parent to the other. We had one thing in common, the struggle, and all of us wanted to go back and fight the Boers. We were very clear that we were not going to stay long in Botswana, Our commitment to the struggle; militancy was what kept us close. The other ladies who shared the place with me were like my sisters, and we supported each other emotionally and other wise. When one gets visitors, we shared those visitors and everything that they brought.

I never had any problems relating to Batswana, and even when I worked in Ramotswa they treated me like one of them. When the Boers were raiding the places we were staying, some of them offered me their place to hide; that's how supportive they were. Of course there were those who were negative, but those were in a minority. I believed the government was very negative towards us and they made it difficult for us to live there. When we were suspicious of a person and reported to the authorities, they did nothing about it, or just asked the person to leave the country. I remember

there was one guy of whom we were suspicious of being a South African spy, and reported this to the authorities.

I was never in Dukwi, but I used to visit the people there. There was no gender differences, both male and female used to live together. The conditions were difficult for people; they had to fetch water from far, look for firewood in order to make fire and cook, they did not get any stipend. They had to live on canned food donated by the UN, and spoilt maize meal with worms. This was a harsh reality. There were no shops; people did their shopping in Francistown when they had money, which was very far, and there was no regular transport so they had to rely on lifts.

What made it easy for us to adjust to life in Gaborone was the language, even though we did not speak the Setswana we understood each other. There were also lots of former South African families that resided in Botswana and they accepted us into their homes. That made our lives better. I was never rejected by the local people I only felt the hostility of the authorities. I think the authorities failed us because they did not look at us as kids, but expected a lot of maturity from us.

There was a lot of interaction with the South African community in Botswana, and I indicated earlier that was where we got the comfort and felt accepted. We had social gatherings with them and others hosted some of us. We developed a lot many friends and we kept in touch up to now; we still visit each other and very much keep in touch.

We received support from other refugees, because we were like one big family. Whenever we had problems we tried to resolve them and if we could not, we took them to the older guys who were like our parents, and there they tried to find a solution. Those of us who were at school, school kept us busy, and we focused on the books. We had contacts with the home base, and could get information of what was happening. Newspapers also kept us informed about the situation at home. We had music; we went to cinemas and participated in local sports. There were guys who played soccer for the local teams and they made their mark there.

The South Africans who lived in Botswana provided support and in them we found refuge and acceptance. The local people were supportive as well, and some made us a part of their lives. The broader refugee family provided the cushion for all of us; without our bond we would not have survived there. We made friends at school, worked there and became part of the community. The good thing was that, after completing any sort of training, the government placed all of us without discrimination. I guess at that time there were no systems in place to check who was a Motswana and who was not. This helped some of us because when we finished our course we were placed in different places of work.

Ethnicity was never an issue with South Africans then, and that is why we could not understand when the Zimbabweans were fighting amongst themselves and along ethnic lines. We saw each other as South African first before anything else. We had one goal which we all wanted to achieve.

Most of the Batswana in South Africa were Xhosa speaking, and they treated us the same. Most of the youth came from Soweto, and really ethnicity was never an

issue. There were some groups from other places but there was no discrimination displayed to us. Settling in Botswana was not difficult because we found people there and they welcomed us, and took care of us. The authorities however were very biased towards the ANC, when you declared your status they would want to coerce you to register that you belonged to the ANC. There we were very adamant and because we were already made aware of this, we had to present our case very clearly; they told us that there was no group like BCM, Soweto students and so forth. A few minutes after arrival the representatives from different organizations started fighting amongst each other for the group. Each organization wanted to score points by having as many students as possible. This is where most of the students had no choice but to join organizations that were already there. Some political organizations were favoured more than others; as indicated above the ANC was supported more than other organizations. They were like part of the government.

Some of the refugees are still in Botswana. Some got married and never returned and others are working.

## Mosetlhe, John

*Mr John Mosetlhe was one of the people involved in accommodating refugees between 1976 and 1978. He tells of his experiences with the task he had during the liberation struggle.*

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Our task was accommodating refugees when I was staying with Mr Aubrey Sago. He was a South African, working for a company called IGI. These refugees came around 1976, but most of them came around 1978, I think we had about 15 to 17 of them who were introduced to us by one gentleman, I didn't know them before. We stayed with them for nearly two years; some came and stayed for some time and then went to Tanzania for training. Others came and stayed for a while and also left, while others came for food and then left.

These people did not tell us much, but what we knew was that they were being attacked by the Boers, so they were running away. Some came very young; they were very young, I think most of them were under 20, and when they arrived they were given scholarships by the United Nations or somebody I don't know but what I was just doing was to offer them accommodation. I don't have the details as to how they obtained the scholarship and how they went to school. The first lot who were nearly fifteen stayed for nearly two years.

They interacted very well and they were well behaved. You wouldn't believe they were South Africans, except those who were very young and had girlfriends, they would occupy you with them and we would become a parent to them. We were just their parents; we also interacted with them in parties.

You know! those South Africans were well behaved they were not like what we are seeing today about our other neighbours. They looked for jobs and did not steal or interfere with people's property like our neighbours today; they had a mission which was that they came from South Africa as passerby who have come to stay for a while and go to school or go to do some training and go back with their degrees; they were really behaving well.

As far as I know I did not receive any assistance from the government, even the guys we were staying with we were just using our own money on them; so we were just buying them food and they cooked for themselves. We accommodated about 15 to 17, and those who were passersby were up to 6. They liked Botswana very much, I think even up to now if I can go with you to Jo'burg and let you meet a few of them, you would see that they really had protection when they were in Botswana, and also Botswana liked them.

I still have connections with some of them like Dr Mmotlana's children; two of them were not refugees, but one was a refugee and he even married here. There were others who came in disguise that they were UB students, but I knew that they were running away from that side.

When the government established the facility for refugees in Dukwi, that really helped because when they came in they went to Dukwi and then we were no longer accommodating them.

## Mosogwane, Makgabane

[Gobojango; May 2007]

*Mrs Makgabane Mosogwane is a former school teacher who took care of refugees and freedom fighters who came to Gobojango. She explains how she and her close relatives went through some experiences in dealing with and taking care of refugees, particularly from Zimbabwe between 1977 and 1980.*

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In 1977 we began to see many people coming to Gobojango. They went to the chief's place. We lived near the chief's place. Whenever they arrived, I would go to the chief's place to check if any of my relatives were among the arrivals. We learned that they were fleeing from the war in Rhodesia. They were fed at the chief's place and sometimes I took some of them to feed them at my home. As the cooking pots were not sufficient, I bought a huge pot to be able to cook for large numbers. Up to this day I call that pot the "pot of Zimbabwe" because it was used to cook for people from that country.

They arrived in large numbers and some of them were injured. One day I met an elderly man who was very weak. I gave him a very nutritious drink called Mageu to revive him. He told me they had gone through a difficult situation and they had been on the road for three days. His sister was shot in the hip and could not walk; she requested him to finish her off with a knife but he refused to do so. Another time there was some fighting and my brother's son was involved; he was shot and they took him to Selebi-Phikwe to remove the bullet. One other man was also hurt and I requested to take him to my home to take care of him. He spent the night at our house.

I used to request the chief to allow me to take care of those women who were particularly suffering from bruised feet and could hardly walk. I used to put their feet in warm water so they could feel better. They spent nights at my home. Sometimes I had a large number of women staying at my home. I experienced a particularly painful incident when I saw a small girl in a group of refugees. She was dressed in a large dress which was not her size. I took some clothes from my children to dress her properly. When the group was transferred to Bobonong, the little girl refused to go with the others, saying she had found a mother. The chief allowed me to keep the girl, and in 1978 I registered her at our school. In 1979, she enrolled in standard two, and in 1980 she did standard 3; but in that year, Zimbabwe got independence and she returned to Zimbabwe with the others.

After the Independence of Zimbabwe I visited my relatives there to attend a funeral. Some gun men came there and asked me where I came from. They threatened to hurt me. These were the freedom fighters who had refused to return home after independence, the so-called dissidents. They did not harm me and I returned to Botswana safely.

In 1983, there was a report that some armed men had been sighted. These were the Zimbabwean dissidents. Soon they appeared at our home and harassed us. They took

the Tirelo Sechaba boy we stayed with to the school and they stole his shoes, watch and clothes; thereafter he left for his home. We fled from our home and put up in the veld that day; my husband fled as they were looking for him. The following day there were no classes as teachers had been kidnapped. One teacher, Mr Ngakedi was released at the Shashe River. All the remaining teachers fled to Bobonong to report the incident to the Police. Finally, we returned to Gobojango after spending two days in Bobonong.

Concerning the Manama Mission students, when we came from our school, we were surprised to see children in red uniforms. We were told they were pupils from Manama Mission who were abducted by freedom fighters. It was pathetic. Women in the village were weeping for the children. Among them were mission hospital nurses and teachers such as Mr Paulos Matjaka. I took one group to feed, and the others went to the school to be fed there. Just then, a Rhodesian plane flew low over the pupils; some of them removed their uniforms to avoid being spotted by the plane. My husband and other people drove to Bobonong to report the incident, and the pupils were then driven to Bobonong.

One aspect of the liberation struggle was that quite often freedom fighters stayed with us for a number of days; we fed and hid them. One day a report was received that a young man had spotted Rhodesian soldiers nearby. He reported to the chief. The freedom fighters at our house were armed and ready to fight. They quickly ran to where the Rhodesians were and fought them. They fled. Our soldiers arrived and told the freedom fighters not to fight on Botswana soil as that was the government policy, but they did not disarm them.

Another incident was that at one day, just before classes ended at our school, we saw pupils fleeing. It was said that some pupils had picked up something which exploded when they played with it, it was a grenade. One pupil was hurt on the head. We all fled due to this. The pupil was taken to the hospital for treatment. It was thought that the grenade was planted by spies from Rhodesia.

Concerning spying, I had no knowledge of it then, except that my brother-in-law was once arrested in Zimbabwe. He was shown my photograph at the soldiers' camp in Manama Mission, and he was told that it was of a woman in Botswana who assisted refugees and freedom fighters. How and who took the picture I do not know.

The reason why I assisted in the liberation struggle was that I felt pity for the people of Zimbabwe, because many of them were our relatives. I felt pity not just for our relatives, but also for others who I did not even know. It was the plight of fellow human beings which made me associate with them in their struggle for freedom.

## Motang, Pule

[Good Hope, Barolong; June 2007]

*Major General Motang is a former Major General of the Botswana Defence Force. He explains the role that Botswana and in particular the Botswana Defence Forces played in defending the country and the people against South African and Rhodesian forces*

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Botswana is a peaceful country because our first President took it upon himself to protect every human being, resident in the country regardless of colour, race or creed. Examples can be found in such people as David Finlay, Phillip Steenkamp who found refuge in this country.

Many people running away from oppressed regimes of their country of origin passed through Botswana. People like Samora Machel of Mozambique, Mandela, Tambo, Mbeki, and Hani of South Africa, all passed through this country. The regimes pointed a finger at Botswana and yet she continued to lend support to the people who were in the liberation struggle. At that time we did not even have an army, it was just the Police Mobile Unit, which used old fashioned guns like 303 and 306.

Botswana had its own intelligence, the Special Branch, which interrogated the refugees, gave them protection and eventually helped them to be on their way to places further from Botswana, like Zambia and Tanzania. If the regime asked the Botswana government if it had seen such people, the answer was that "We have not seen them".

Botswana did not have much in terms of resources to help the liberation struggle. It made do with the little resources that it could find; perhaps the hospitality of Botswana towards these oppressed people was a sacrifice on its own right. They gave them shelter and food.

Botswana supported the refugees, because we were aware that they were oppressed. We had visited those countries and seen for ourselves how black people were oppressed. Botswana identified with them as their brothers and sisters and helped them in the best way they could.

Botswana's internal policies were not affected by the struggle. In fact, the internal policies were used to employ some refugees, give them shelter and help pursue further studies.

We had good relations with other countries and organizations because they were the ones who understood our situation and helped us in a number of ways. But South Africa and Rhodesia were hostile, demanding visas from Botswana. At one point they closed the border for the train, and it had to return at Rakhuna. The other organizations such as Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth and the United Nations were sympathetic to the Botswana situation.

Botswana was clear with the liberation movements. It discouraged disunity, encouraged unity and avoided supporting one faction of the liberation movement over the other.

It was not known that there were freedom fighters in the country, but if they were seen, they were arraigned and returned to where they came from. I remember that in Francistown some were once arrested because they were in possession of firearms, and they were returned to their place of origin. Chris Hani was once arrested and put in prison because he was suspected of having been carrying weapons. He was later released and helped to return to where he came from.

The role played by the BDF in the liberation struggle, was that the BDF protected Botswana. It guarded its people against South Africa and Rhodesia. There were occasional skirmishes between our soldiers and the enemy. The Lesoma and Sedudu incidents are cases in point.

In 1985 the BDF did not retaliate because there would have been lots of casualties involving civilians. We were once attacked by Rhodesian soldiers at Dukwi, and my battalion repulsed the attack with no casualties.

## Motswai, Sekgwa

[Boyei Ward/Gumare; September 2007]

*Sekgwa Motswai was born in 1929 in Seronga. He worked in Wankie, Southern Rhodesia from 1949 to 1951 when he was back in Botswana. He was then employed as a local policeman, the job he did until he retired in 2006.*

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My name is Sekgwa Motswai. I am from Seronga. I was born in 1929. I worked in Wankie in Zimbabwe. I was in Rhodesia in 1949 and came back in 1951. From 1951 I was employed to be a local police and worked there for a long time until I retired. I think I retired in 2006.

I met with freedom fighters and refugees from neighbouring countries when they arrived in Shakawe. They were given accommodation and at times they were given food and everything for their survival. When they arrived in Shakawe we were told freedom fighters have arrived and that there was shortage of accommodation and the government officials in Shakawe asked Mabowane here in Gumare of the possibility of him offering them accommodation. Some of them were brought here and the chief was asked to come and see them. They had their leader who was called Tsombo. He was a Mombukushu, and he helped those who came from Namibia. During the colonial times we were not allowed to help freedom fighters at all, but we did that secretly.

It was not at all safe to help freedom fighters, and so we were very careful. It was highly secretive. We also put our faith on Jesus that we shouldn't get caught. Freedom fighters stayed with me here in my home, they came here without anything and I was forced to take one blanket from children and accommodate their need. It was a pity that they didn't have anything but we had to help them. They sometimes came in the night and by the following day they disappeared.

After their arrival in Ngamiland, we gave them food. They were accepted by the independent government of Botswana. Initially when they started coming, we were called Bechuanaland Protectorate but those who came after 1966 found that things were much better, because Botswana was independent.

Officials of the Bechuanaland Protectorate under the British government did not encourage the supporting of freedom fighters. However, our chiefs accepted freedom fighters to stay in their villages. We were allowed to take freedom fighters to the "kgotla"; we reported them to the chief whenever they arrived in our village.

The only problem we experienced with the presence of freedom fighters in our village was when freedom fighters and refugees looked down upon each other. Those who knew a little bit of English were taken to Dukwi. They came to us and reported all sort of unpleasant incidents; fortunately they did not stay here long before they were taken to Dukwi.

Baherero was the dominant tribe among the freedom fighters who came to Botswana. These came here long before the liberation struggle and a lot of them were

from Namibia. Baherero were many but that was before the Angolans came here. We did not have any problem with them.

It is true that some Basarwa staying along the Mohembo border area once joined and worked for the South African Force against the liberation of Namibia; some Basarwa worked for the Namibian army but up to now I don't know even a single one of them who left the job or who retired. I haven't seen one.

I only know that, in Lesoma in the Chobe there was fire exchange. There was no such an exchange here.

## Mpho Motsamai

[Maun]

*Motsamai Kejetswe Mpho is a Moyei, born in 1931 in Maun. He went to school at Batawana Primary School. After he finished school he went to work in the South African mines and became one of the active members of the South African political movement in trying to get black workers recognized during those days in the mines. As politics took a different phase in South Africa, he became actively involved in politics, became very popular and worked alongside President Mandela and President Mbeki.*

Motsamai Kejetswe Mpho is my name. I am a Moyei and I stay in Boyei Ward. I was born in 1931 here in Maun, grew up at the cattle post and then returned to Maun. I went to school at Batawana Primary School but my parents experienced financial hardships, and because of that I left school and went to Boajwankwe, where I stayed for some time. During that time we had to pay school fees, and if our parents could not afford to pay for us, we were not allowed to attend school. Later when fees were available I came back to Maun to continue with my education. I met one gentleman who noticed my potential. When the gentleman went to work in the mines of South Africa later, he asked me to go there and join him. After I finished school here I stayed for a few months and then went to work in the South African mines, where I met that particular gentleman. I worked with him and I had great respect for him, and he also respected me.

I worked in the mines for a long time. As you might be aware, the South Africans were also trying to get their independence from the white racist regime. I was one of the active members of the South African political movement in trying to get black workers recognized in the mines during those days. A lot of people did not know that I was a citizen of Botswana; they thought that I was a South African, and most of them wanted me to join politics so that I could help them get liberated. I worked with them and they were satisfied with what I did to help. As politics took a different phase in South Africa, I became actively involved in politics and became very popular. I worked alongside Nelson Mandela and the current President Thabo Mbeki.

There was a time when Mbeki approached me to campaign for the position of the Secretary General of ANC, but I refused. I actively participated in the organization of ANC, and mind you, by then there was no political party in Botswana. I learnt a lot of things, particularly politics, from South Africa. Since the mines were run by whites, one morning we were told that in order for us to move from one Province to another we needed to have a “pass book” which would be used to travel from one Province to the other. I called all those I worked with to refuse to get these “passes” forced unto us. I continued talking to mine workers about pass books; and one morning when we woke up the mine owners introduced some Acts on the “pass books” and our salaries were also affected. I then called all the workers and organized a strike. That is a day I will not forget, and I think a lot of people involved will remember that day. We did

not sleep; I was one of the demonstrators and we burnt all the “pass books”. The police were called to come and “shambok” us, but it was difficult for them to contain us. It was on this day that workers died and some had their compounds burnt down.

My friends warned me that the police were looking for me and instead of going to my place after the incident I decided to change place of stay and look for another safer place. The police were searched for me the whole night, and since I was already popular, they would have easily identified me. We spent a few days without going to work and during that time some of us were required to report to the police. That was the time when my wife was pregnant with our first baby boy. I had met my wife for the first time when I was in South Africa. I was caught and imprisoned for a week if not two, when my wife was inside South Africa. When in prison a lot of politicians came to see me, as I was the ANC Youth Secretary General; and some politicians insisted that I should stand for elections but I kept on refusing because I wanted to come back to Botswana and start my own political party. When I was released from prison, I was deported back to Botswana and I took my wife and my new born baby to Botswana.

When I came back home, I stayed in Palapye because when I left for South Africa there was a conflict between the Bayei and Batawana in Ngamiland and I was actively involved in that conflict. Therefore, authorities in Ngamiland already knew my ‘political’ record and they saw me as a bad person. Starting a political party in Maun was going to be a problem, nobody was willing to listen to me because of what I did while in South Africa and the image I left behind before going to South Africa was not satisfactory in many people’s eyes. I then decided to stay in Palapye and started a political party alongside the likes of Phillip Matante, Kgalemang Motsete and others. This is the time when there was nothing like Botswana. It was Bechuanaland Protectorate under the watchful eyes of Britain which declared Bechuanaland a Protectorate after the three dikgosi visit to England. The three dikgosi went to seek for the Queen’s protection after being threatened by South African Boers and Cecil John Rhodes with the idea of incorporating Bechuanaland, Lesotho and Swaziland into South Africa. Bechuanaland was under the British and everything that took place had to be approved by the British before they could roll into action. Therefore, everything the chiefs did had to be approved by Britain first. This translated into the help Botswana gave to refugees; Bechuanaland was not given the opportunity to help freedom fighters by Britain. The Bechuanaland Democratic Party members (BDP) did not want to help freedom fighters but we at Bechuanaland People Party (BPP) were actively participating in helping freedom fighters, because we believed we could not watch our neighbours being tortured and fail to give them food to eat. We argued on the need to help freedom fighters; that the outcome of helping freedom fighters would ultimately benefit the whole country and not just the BPP. As an opposition party, BPP came up with a committee of a few people responsible for taking care of refugees. The ordinary people in the country on the other hand, were at first afraid to give help to freedom fighters because they were afraid of the government;

and the police were ordered to “shambok” all those who would be caught helping freedom fighters.

A lot of freedom fighters passed through Maun, on their way north, and some ended up staying here for good. Maun was a transit route for refugees. They passed through Maun to Francistown, Bulawayo, and from there they were taken to their destinations where they got their military training.

There were no offices established for the ANC of South Africa and SWAPO of Namibia, anywhere in Bechuanaland. We could not establish such offices because that would have been more dangerous. We only assisted the liberation movements through protecting freedom fighters. We wanted them to be safe but not by assisting them in setting up offices here; that would have been very dangerous. There were no offices of SWAPO, ANC or SWANO in Bechuanaland, but some of their leaders knew us and if they needed any kind of help they contacted us directly. These guys had their offices in Lusaka, Zambia, that is where they were operating from, not from Botswana. The offices in Lusaka were the nearest point from which they operated. In addition, Zambia devoted some areas in Lusaka and elsewhere to build refugee camps, and spent a lot of money helping refugees. I want to make myself clear that there were no offices of ANC, SWAPO, SWANO or PAC in this country. But they operated from Zambia. When I left ANC I came here and formed a political party and left everything about ANC behind.

Whenever ordinary people heard that refugees were found in their village, some were afraid having them around but, some were not. Some of them did not want to help refugees. But as times went on, people were getting educated on liberation movements through grassroots politics; they gradually changed and began to participate in helping freedom fighters. The love of the brother and sister freedom fighter and refugee persisted among Batswana, and they began to see the need to help their neighbours. I can cite an incident of some people from Namibia who were kept at Makunda village to be transported to Maun, and we found ways of assisting them to get to Maun.

Refugees came in from South Africa, Angola and Namibia, but of course most of those who came here were from Namibia. There were people in BPP, which was our party, who were responsible for guerrillas. We assisted them a lot. We as a party had a certain number of people who were helping freedom fighters. They ensured them security and safety. We had “mekhukhu” [shacks] in our homes here in Maun, where at times we were forced to keep freedom fighters inside for some days before they travelled to Zambia. The ANC had its offices in Lusaka, which was relatively not far away from my home in Maun. Some of them were transported to Francistown and some to Palapye. We once transported one boy who was from Mozambique by a truck from here to Francistown.

BPP was responsible for the transport of the freedom fighters. I also personally helped a lot. I used my own money to help these people to be transported through Botswana. We used to pay £85 to Charpet Baipudi who was a BPP activist, for him to

transport freedom fighters to Kazungula Ferry. This man had a truck which he used to transport these people. Bishop Setlalekgosi of the Catholic Church also played a role as a leader during the struggle. He helped by contributing money so that freedom fighters could be taken to their destination. Indeed, he did play a major role.

There was some money that came from Tanzania, I should think, because the country was fully involved in helping freedom fighters. They gave us money in order to help freedom fighters. They sent in money to a bank and that's where we collected the money and used it properly for managing the welfare of refugees.

Botswana had good relations with various liberation movements from the respective neighbouring countries. Botswana even built the Dukwi Refugee Camp to cater for freedom fighters. Some, of course, went back to their countries but others refused to go back. But the governments of South Africa, Namibia and Rhodesia did not like us because of help we were giving to freedom fighters. If you look at Zambia, it was very supportive of what we were doing, and Zambia alone did more than enough in helping freedom fighters.

Of course, the government only helped after the country was independent, and especially after we had built the Dukwi Refugee Camp. The government wanted to make sure that they gave comfortable accommodation and well deserved security and safety for freedom fighters through the establishment of Dukwi.

I don't know how Botswana government dealt with the wars of destabilization because I wasn't in the Botswana Democratic ruling party. But let me tell you that at least we had a remarkably intelligent President who was able to deal with all that with ease. President Seretse Khama met with intelligent people like Kwame Nkrumah, Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere, and they discussed such issues at their Pan- African and Frontline states meetings. Our President always believed in dialogue. He knew that when the region was free from all these problems, it was going to benefit him and the country a lot. He chose not to confront either the Rhodesians or the South Africans because he knew we heavily relied on them economically.

I never had any problems with President Seretse Khama. During parliamentary session, he used to come to me at break times, and we drank tea together. He asked me some interesting questions; and we talked mostly about the OAU, UN and how one could approach the liberation struggle issues. I enjoyed working with Khama. He used to deal with other countries in a diplomatic way. I respected him very much because there was always the possibility of him taking your words of advice or ideas seriously. He sometimes came to me and said, "I don't understand how to handle this." Not that he really did not know how to handle such situation, but he come to me so that he could get some ideas on how to deal with other situations. He was a good man.

One day when I was at Mohembo I went to the border and I found about six tall, dark complexioned men. They were a bit far from us and as I approached them, I realized they were refugees. When at first I talked to them they wanted to run away but I convinced them not to run away. They said they were from Angola and this was

the time that the Angolan Civil war was going on. I took them to Maun and I notified the police of their presence; this time around the police did not have problems with freedom fighters. After reporting them to the police at the Maun station, they were taken to the prison cell so that they be could be kept there before they were sent out to Dukwi. I owned a bar for sale of liquor at that time, and I could afford to take more people into my house, so I took three of them and they stayed with me for a month before leaving for Dukwi.

Today we have an area called Etsha from number 1 – 13, those people are refugees, they are from Namibia, and Angola. Most of them are from Angola even today they are still there, they live there and they were given citizenship. Most of the people in the villages of Etsha 1 to 13 are Angolans, I must say. Namibians just came and passed; the largest number of Namibians who passed here could be estimated to be between 40 and 60.

Botswana has benefited a lot, economically, from the establishment of SADC, because what is done at SADC is done jointly, and therefore we benefit a lot from that. At SADC level member states are given tasks and they try to provide solutions for the benefit of the whole region.

Thank very much mma.

## Munisola, Joseph M.

[Kasane; December 2007]

*Mr Joseph M. Munisola is a Mosubiya born in 1936. He was born at Parakarungu but he moved to Kasane to search for employment and he is now staying in Kasane. He went to school at Kachikau primary school up to standard four and then was employed as a tractor driver in North West District Council.*

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I am Joseph Munisola. Most people call me “Va J” which is a nickname I was given when I was still a football player. I am a Mosubiya born in 1936. I am not sure of the day and month of my birth because my mother never kept the records. I was born at Parakarungu but I moved to Kasane to search for employment and I am now staying in Kasane. I went to school at Kachikau primary school. During those years Kachikau was the only place or village where there was a primary school. I went up to standard four; then I was employed as a tractor driver in North West District Council. I can’t remember which year it was when I attended school but I remember that I got employed in NWDC in 1965 and retired in 1999. I retired because I was old and not feeling well. The tractor was killing me.

People who live along the Botswana border with Namibia are relatives. We have Basubiya here in the Chobe and our cousins are living across in the Caprivi. Those who ran away from the whites and came to Botswana were helped a lot by people here. Our relatives used to cross the river and spend days here. Refugees who had relatives here were also welcomed by their relatives. The groups of refugees used to arrive in Kasane from Namibia early in the morning, then the Kasane people would go to the kgotla and take relatives to their homes. Sometimes the refugees came in large numbers, but I can’t remember when this happened because it has been a long time since some of us experienced the refugee movement across the border.

There was a time we spent some days with a group of male refugees from Namibia, who had ran away from the Caprivi because the white soldiers used to beat them in trying to find out if they had seen freedom fighters. These young men came to my place because they heard my children speaking Sesubiya. Fortunately I knew their father. They spent a number of days with me and then went back to Caprivi.

There were many refugees who came to Kasane, but I cannot mention their names because I don’t know how some of these people ended up settling here. Many of the refugees went back to Namibia and some crossed to Zambia and were transported to Tanzania. The other group was taken to Dukwi and Francistown. Honestly speaking I do not want to put myself into trouble. There are many refugees here who came here a long time ago. The government took the responsibility for transporting the refugees to other places far from this place. The police were received them and transported them to Dukwi.

The only refugees we received in Kasane were from Namibia. We were not treated well when we visited our relatives in Namibia. The problem was that there were other

Basubiya who were employed by the white soldiers as their informers. These are the people who used to inform the Boers that there were refugees in Kasane and were being housed by relatives. Many people who visited relatives in Namibia were beaten up by the white soldiers. The good thing is that the white soldiers did not know people well, they could not tell a black from another black. Whenever they saw someone they did not know well, they would beat them mistaking them to be freedom fighters. My cousin Daniel Shamukuni crossed into Namibia and he was seriously injured by white soldiers. I really did not understand the Basubiya of Namibia because we never troubled them when they came here. They used to come and buy food here in Kasane because this was the only place close enough, where could buy food from. The BDF warned us not to cross to Namibia because it was not safe.

The whites who had Safaris in Kasane were a bit difficult to understand because they never troubled us. But they used to allow white soldiers from Namibia to cross into Botswana to drink beer at Chobe Safari Lodge. Renleys and Mamson were named soldiers by the villagers. It was difficult to know who the real white soldiers were because they all dressed in their plain clothes and drank beer with their white fellows in the safari industry. These soldiers were coming here secretly to check if there were any freedom fighters in Botswana but they failed to find them. This is why they now started to beat up people who crossed into Namibia. There were people here who used to report to the white soldiers about Botswana who harboured refugees.

The refugees were our relatives. I am saying this because nobody ever complained about the refugees. The government also helped with providing shelter, especially for the refugees who did not have relatives. These were tents and were erected at the police station. They were given food and clothing by the government, and this is where we used to visit them. They were immediately transported to Dukwi and Francistown.

The white soldiers used to patrol along the border; they even used planes for patrolling; sometimes they entered Botswana. They sometimes patrolled with boats and fighter jets. The BDF even stopped us from going to Namibia for fear of attack. These whites who stayed in Botswana working in Safari Companies used to inform their fellow white soldiers in Namibia about what was happening here in Botswana; Mamson is one of them. He was working for WENELA. Another one was called Renleys. Renleys worked in a company called Hunters Africa. I don't know exactly what happened, but what I know is that Mamson moved from Kasane to Shakawe.

I don't know what happened to Renleys, but I think those who were members of BDF can answer that one because they wanted that white man dead or alive. The other time they followed him where he was hiding in the bush. We heard rumours that he was killed by BDF soldiers. Please ask the guys who were BDF soldiers. I think they can give you better information about what happened to Renleys. Thank you Mma.

## Muyoba, Akanyang

[Lesoma]

*Akanyang Muyoba was born on 12 June 1973 in Pandamatenga, where she also attended primary school. She went to Chobe CJSS in Kasane, and later joined the Botswana local police in 1993.*

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My full names are Akanyang Muyoba. I was born on 12 June 1973 at Pandamatenga, where I attended primary school, and later I went to Chobe CJSS in Kasane. I then joined the Botswana local police in 1993.

I was young during the days of the liberation struggle but what I learnt from my auntie was that in 1978 our uncle Moruti Zambo went missing and was never found. She told me that one day Moruti went to look for cattle and never came back home. What the elders used to tell us was that they don't know what happened to him because they searched for him but failed to find him. Even his bones were never found. When this incident happened we were staying at the Sebuyu cattle post and the guerrillas came and camped near our place. What I heard was that uncle Moruti was one of the best friends of the freedom fighters. They used to come at the cattle post and ask him to accompany them when they were going to cross over to the then Rhodesia. We understand he was their tracker. He is the one who guided them when they were moving around in Botswana and in Rhodesia, particularly at the border area. What I am not sure about is whether he was killed by the white soldiers in Rhodesia or not. My Auntie suspects he was shot by the white soldiers in one of the cross fire encounters between the Smith white soldiers and the guerrillas who used to fetch Moruti to go with them or their operations.

After Moruti went missing, I understand my father reported the matter to the police. They carried out some investigations and it is likely they found out that Moruti was being used by the freedom fighters. The police did not want people to relate closely to the guerrillas. The police wanted to find out where the guerrillas were hiding. They interrogated my father but he refused to tell the police where the guerrillas were camping. My father was tortured by the police who wanted to know where the guerrillas were hiding. They even injured him and had a wound which never healed. The old man [Akanyang's father] refused to show the police where the freedom fighters were camping. He claimed he did not know where they were hiding because he feared the freedom fighters were going to kill him, had he tried to show the police the guerrilla hiding spot.

Moruti went with the guerrillas and never came back. People did not understand what happened to Moruti. I am not sure whether the guerrillas told my father what happened to Moruti because he never disclosed anything to us and he is now late. People in Pandamatenga heard that Moruti was missing and this created dilemma to my father. He did not know whether to inform the police about the guerrilla's hiding place or keep the secret. The police tortured him but he did not tell them

anything. It is not known whether Moruti was killed by the guerrillas or died during the guerrillas' fight with white soldiers. Moruti was recruited by guerrillas to work as spy and he is the one who used to inform them about the movement of the white soldiers. I think that is the little I know.

Thank you very much Ntate.

## Muyonda, Gaufiwe

*Gaufiwe Muyonda was born in 1920 in Kgosing Ward. He grew up in Gumare village as a tax collector. His father was the Moyei chief of Gumare. He focuses on the war of liberation and how freedom fighters reached Ngamiland from either Namibia, Angola or South Africa, and how the people of Gumare helped them.*

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My name is Gaufiwe Muyonda. This village was set up in 1939 and when I grew up I was one of those people who were collecting tax from the people of Gumare. When the village was set up, chief Moremi sent one chief representative from Maun to come here in Gumare and take care of us and he was Chief Monie Tladi. When he arrived here in Gumare he brought with him a letter from Chief Moremi requesting that the village should be shifted from where it was first. Initially, this village was not here; it was on the other side of the stream, where our cattle posts used to be situated. The letter requested that the village should be moved from there to where it is now situated. After shifting, we continued with our responsibility as tax collectors. By then my father was the Moyei chief of Gumare.

When Moremi went to Mmadinare for a year, after being charged for unfair treatment of people, and was found guilty. On his arrival he was told that he should not continue with such practice, as everybody was considered free in the country. When Sir Seretse Khama came here after independence he also advised the Batawana chieftaincy that there should not be unequal treatment of people, and no one is supposed to be oppressed. But all in all oppression was there but it was not that much, because the villagers here detested oppression.

We knew that the guerrillas were our people, our brothers and sisters. They felt welcomed here, except that at some instances they caused some problems. They did not want to listen to our advice; they only did what they thought suited them best. For example, they could come and ask for accommodation, but early in the morning we would find them gone without knowing when they left or where they had gone to. Those who were from Angola, and were staying in Etsha, did not cooperate with us at first. They came in large numbers and they were accepted by our government, settled at Etsha village. When they were asked to turn up for “kgotla” meetings, they failed to come, and at times they used to destroy our properties at the farms and they stole our livestock. The government bought them donkeys for ploughing their farms. They also had to choose their own chiefs from their own people and they did choose one of their own, not a Motswana. You could see that they were required to be totally independent upon arrival.

Freedom fighters from Namibia passed here but they were not troublesome. We hear that most of them stayed in Dukwi, but then of course some of them stayed in Maun, before they moved on to Dukwi, and subsequently went to Francistown; and then they proceeded to Zambia for military training. Freedom fighters just passed through Gumare, but sometimes they asked for accommodation and food. Those

who are now staying in Etsha were given accommodation and security; and were given citizenship by the government of Botswana.

People of Ngamiland gave refugees accommodation, food and safety; but those who ended up settling in Etsha were given some donkeys so that they could use them for ploughing. We gave them anything we could in order to help them. Botswana helped freedom fighters a lot because these people were not denied the opportunity to pass through Botswana. Botswana gave all the help needed by freedom fighters. But for those who are staying in Etsha, government gave them draught animal-power to plough.

There were conflicts and misunderstandings between refugees or freedom fighters and the villagers, because those who are staying in Etsha are the ones who were stealing donkeys, goats and cattle from us; even today some are still doing that. At first they were afraid and they were not stealing as much as nowadays. These days they are not afraid because they are citizens of Botswana; they are not afraid of anything. I think it is also because they have stayed here for a long time. In the past they might have been afraid that they would have been taken back to their countries and be oppressed by the white regimes.

I think Botswana has learnt a lot, especially on how to deal with people from other countries in the region.

Botswana helped freedom fighters. Of course, Sam Nujoma stayed in Maun for some time, but he also came here in Gumare for some meetings. He even went as far as Nxaunxau. He came here in the company of some Botswana government officials. They were addressing meetings here and in other villages. When Sam Nujoma first started addressing the meeting here in Gumare, he asked the Baherero who were staying here with us whether they were those from Namibia. Most of them said they were now Botswana. He told them that they should know it was still dangerous to go back to Namibia. He told all those who wanted to return to Namibia about the dangers and the hardships they were likely to go through. He told them that there were no schools for their children, and facilities were limited for blacks and they were going to be in trouble under the white regime rule. Some of those in the meeting insisted on going back and that is when the government of Botswana started spending a lot of money in trying to help them to resettle in Namibia. Some of them went back others settled here for good. You know some of those who returned are coming back here in Botswana secretly. They want to settle here in Botswana again. Some of them are going to Maun to ask for residence and citizenship, they want to come back to Botswana.

don't know whether the government is giving them papers for residence or they are being given citizenship

I don't know for how long Sam Nujoma stayed in Botswana because he used to sleep everywhere he addressed a meeting. He started addressing meetings in Maun.

The freedom fighters told us that they were oppressed in their own country; they were killed by those Boers and that is why they had to run away from that kind of oppression. They were open enough to tell us that they ran away from war.

Thanks a lot.

## Ngonga, Edward

*Edward Ngonga was born in 1940, and come to Botswana as a refugee in 1976 during the liberation war for Angola. He is married to a Batswana and has been granted Botswana citizenship.*

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I'm now a Motswana; I have an Omang and I receive tandabala like all old Batswana. When voluntary repatriation was announced I opted to stay in Botswana because I have a large family. I did not think we could make it in Angola. Government built us houses that we are currently living in Newstands. I can't complain, my children are all working and the family is managing well.

All my stay in Dukwi I have lived well with Batswana; my children are all grownups now and have married Batswana. During wedding arrangements there was no fuss. We sat down and harmonized our cultures to allow the marriage of our children

I left Angola in 1976, and I stayed in Shakawe, Etsha, Maun, Gaborone, Phikwe and eventually I settled in the camp in 1982. It was logical to choose Botswana because it was the only country which was not involved in a struggle.

I tried applying for resettlement but failed. I guess it was due to the number of children I have. I have a large family because I was married to two women. I had no specific country in mind but I thought of a peaceful place where my children could grow, get good schooling and job opportunities.

My family lived on what we produced in our garden. Part of it was sold, while the other part was used to feed the family. All the family members worked equally on the garden. Normally when people hear the word garden, they think of a small piece of land. Ours were huge pieces of land, so all my family members were absorbed in the garden. I also sustained the family through knitting; I continue to knit even today. The rest were supplementary rations we got monthly from UNICEF.

There were good inter-refugee relations because through zone leaders unity was emphasized. Zone leaders were individuals who were given responsibility over sections of residence within the camp. We unanimously voted for such people and some were charismatic that they were obviously suited for the role. It was a position of responsibility and people of good conduct held the position. Zone leaders also took our grievances to the BCR.

We could practice our culture freely. We were known for our Shinganje dance (masquerade dance) this dance was the only lively cultural aspect that we did not share with Batswana. The rest of other things were a fusion of our culture and Batswana culture.

Coping strategies, we have been through a lot and I cannot say anybody could forget what we went through. However the fact that we were not just seated folding our arms in the camp was enough as a coping strategy. We were preoccupied with our gardens and putting other skills into practice. There were various entertainment facilities within the camp and our children attended them. Some of us went to church.

The relationship we had as refugees was also a way of making up for what we lost in the war.

When we came here we were told not to participate in Botswana politics and we respected that. We could not also regroup and start our own politics in Botswana. That was the policy.

## Ngala, Join

[Bobirwa Area; May 2007]

*Join Ngala, 64, is a Headman (Kgosana) in Mabolwe, in the Bobirwa area, a village which is nearest to the Zimbabwe border. He was an activist in the liberation struggle, and was involved in rendering assistance to freedom fighters and refugees from both Rhodesia and South Africa. He tells of his experiences with the freedom fighters as well as with soldiers and spies from the Smith regime.*

During the war of liberation, I met with many difficulties. Many people came to this village and to my home. I was not a chief then. Many did not know exactly where they were going as they were fleeing from the war. Some were given my name by people who knew me in Zimbabwe such as teachers or pastors because I had studied in Zimbabwe. They gave them pieces of paper with my name written on them. This is how many of them came straight to my home. They sought assistance to reach their leader Joshua Nkomo. I told them that in Botswana they were required to go to Bobonong to report to the police. From there they would be taken to Selebi-Phikwe and other places, as guided by the Botswana authorities. I told them that secrecy was vital for purposes of security,- this was before the actual liberation war started.

Some of those who passed in Botswana earlier went for military training and then returned to our part of the country so that they could make incursions into Zimbabwe. One of those who came early was a young man called Kgaogelo. He was alone. He crossed into Zimbabwe and killed a white man who was buying goats. He took money from the white man and returned to my home. He passed on and later came with other freedom fighters. They crossed into Zimbabwe to recruit cadres for the war because people were suffering in Zimbabwe. I used to provide them with transport on my tractor, picking them up from the border. The Botswana police and other people transported them to Bobonong and onwards.

As the war accelerated in Zimbabwe, hundreds of people fled here. At times 300 or 500 people would flood our village. The government stationed a truck here so as to cope with transporting these people to Selebi-Phikwe and Francistown.

There was an incident where students from Manama Mission in Zimbabwe crossed into Botswana led by freedom fighters. They came with some teachers and nurses. A Rhodesian aeroplane came in search of them, but it did not do anything to the pupils. I think they were deterred by the presence of our soldiers and the freedom fighters. We cooked for the students and fed them, and we hid them in the bushes and streams. Later they were transported to Bobonong and onwards.

As time passed the number of freedom fighters and refugees increased and we fed and housed them. The government assisted me with food supplies to feed them. We felt safe because we believed that Rhodesian soldiers would not dare attack us because of the presence of the army and the freedom fighters. We were not only assisting the people of Zimbabwe. We knew we were also safeguarding Botswana. As for the

freedom fighters, they cooperated with our soldiers. The soldiers did not bother them when they were at my home with their weapons hidden there.

Concerning South Africa, at times some freedom fighters passed through our village to attack South Africa. On one occasion they told me that they were going to enter South Africa and they did. We later learned that they had attacked a bank there. Many people did not know that among the freedom fighters there were those of South Africa.

I was encouraged when, as the war escalated and the refugee numbers rose, President Seretse Khama invited me to Gaborone. He had learned that I was doing a great job of assisting refugees from my own resources. The President was surprised that I was able to keep these people. I told him that the villagers also contributed food to assist. Among those present at the meeting with the President was Joseph Legwaila and Charles Tibone who were working at the office of the President.

As the war heated up and the freedom fighters were attacking the Rhodesian soldiers, the Rhodesian intelligence sent spies to check exactly where I lived. In fact, at one point a Zimbabwean black soldier came with some refugees pretending to be a refugee, and he fled back to Zimbabwe at night. I suspect he is the one who gave information about where I lived and that indeed I harboured freedom fighters.

In 1978, on Good Friday, Smith soldiers came intending to capture me. They knocked at our bedroom door at night. On asking who they were, they said they were Nkomo's freedom fighters who had come to seek help as one of their colleagues called Erington, my brother-in-law, had been injured badly in a shoot-out with Smith's forces. The mention of my brother-in-law's name was a ruse to get my cooperation. They asked if I had some medicine to treat him so that they could then take him to Selebi-Phikwe for proper medical treatment. The moon was bright and when I peeped I saw that one of them was a white man who stood behind a black man. I told them falsely that my wife and I were visitors, and we found that Join Ngala and his wife had gone to Selebi-Phikwe. I then said I would go next door to seek assistance. They had surrounded my house and others were under a tree near my house. They wanted my wife to go seek help, but I told them that this was her first time to visit the village and so she would not know where to go. Only I knew the village well. This is when they allowed me to go to seek help but instructed me to hurry.

I was wearing a white shirt which my wife said I should remove as it would make me easily visible. So I did and dashed out. At some safe distance away I shouted, "I am the Join Ngala you are looking for." This was meant to draw their attention away from my wife. They left her alone in a hot pursuit. They fired everywhere and the villagers were awoken by the sound of guns. Some emerged undressed and fled to the bush. Fortunately I met my brother, Busang, and hopped into his truck. We drove to the army base and reported the incident. They had already heard the gun fire.

What helped us was that there was a freedom fighter nearby who was caring for one of them who had been injured. He dashed unnoticed to call on the assistance of fellow guerrillas who were nearby, such as Mdubane, the son of Tlou's step brother

who lived in Zimbabwe. There were seven of them. They vowed to repulse the invaders because they knew if I was killed, they would have lost a vital rear base. I had to be protected at all costs. I believe that they wanted to capture me alive so that they could extract vital information from me. This may explain why they let my wife go.

In the morning, together with our soldiers we followed their tracks which went towards the Shashe River, where there was their camp across the river. The seven freedom fighters had laid an ambush for them. They killed all 27 of them and brought back the loot to hide at my home, such as watches and clothing, some of which we later gave to the refugees who needed shoes and clothing. Often some of the refugees came without any clothes.

After this incident, our soldiers advised me that I should leave my home for a while and live with relatives in Semolale, a neighbouring village. As there were some refugees at my home, I took them to the lands and requested some families to hide and care for them. I also distributed some food to them because following my visit to meet the President, food supplies were available. I told the freedom fighters that often used my home to continue doing so.

My home had literally become a supply base for the freedom fighters. Their ammunition and other war material were hidden in my home. This was a strictly kept secret. Indeed the President had advised me to keep these things secret.

By the end of 1979 it was clear that the Smith regime had felt the impact of the war. Several freedom fighters were making frequent successful raids into the Gwanda South area. For example, from my area alone there were three groups of freedom fighters that I worked with, operating in the Beit Bridge, Mberengwa and Kezi areas. Each of them told me about the successes they scored in the war. One of the great battles was fought near Manama Mission where Smith had established a base. The regime's soldiers had been sent to hunt for freedom fighters on horseback, and they terrorised villagers in the area. They clashed with the freedom fighters and were almost wiped out with their horses.

Following the raid of Mabolwe, the next morning Seretse Khama, Ian Khama and later Merafe, Commander of the BDF, visited Mabolwe to see for themselves what had happened.

When the war ended, the freedom fighters told me that they were now returning to Zimbabwe with their weapons. They requested me to help transport their weapons to where the high command of Nkomo would meet us and take over the weapons. That is when we saw the huge arsenal the freedom fighters had assembled. There were weapons of many kinds and a lot of ammunition. I mobilised transport. I used my tractor and others like Motsumi Mogorosi, Mokgoba, Maziba and Daniel Maposa made their trucks available. We transported the weapons for about four days. These weapons were hidden in the mountains in our area all the way to the confluence of the Shashe and Tuli Rivers. Later we discovered some of the weapons near our lands and reported the finds to the BDF who took them. Certainly, there were sufficient weapons to protect Botswana. Otherwise Smith would have terrorised Botswana.

Indeed many battles were fought in the areas adjacent to the Botswana border. The freedom fighters had turned the area into no go area. I was invited by the freedom fighters to visit their assembly camp at Zezane. They were happy to see me and told their comrades how I had assisted in the war effort.

Sometimes there were misunderstandings among the freedom fighters. I recall rescuing one ZAPU official whom they nearly shot, the complaint being that he delayed bringing war material to the front. This threatened their lives as they could not defend themselves if they were attacked.

There was a case of a spy who used to come to look for me. I was away in Bobonong. When I arrived some villagers told me to return to Bobonong as some of Smith's soldiers were looking for me at my lands. They were being helped by Mogorosi Sethukga, a Zimbabwean who lived on the border area. The matter was reported to the police in Bobonong. There was no BDF camp at that time. By the time they came, Smith's soldiers had disappeared. There was also a South African man called Mpheku. He was deported because of his spying activities. There were other instances when I was harassed on my shopping visits to South Africa. They often held me at the border to check if I was Join Ngala, but they did not harm me in any way. Confusion of names helped me. My passport was written Nkala but they had Ngala in their records. They asked if we knew anything about guerrillas. We denied any knowledge of freedom fighters. They told us that if we ever knew of or saw any, we should report to them and we would be rewarded for that.

Tswaipe of the BDF had learned that some white farmers in the Tuli Block Farms had guns. He went there and arrested two farmers who refused to be searched. He locked them up in a cell in Bobonong. The following day he brought them back and took them to the farms. One of the Boers tried to shoot him and he ordered that he be shot. He searched their houses and killed both of them. When we learned that he was being tried we were sad because we knew he had killed enemies.

Some of the heroes of the war were Joel Sijie, Mdubane Mangisi, Keobokile Ndebele, Brain Mashila, and Kgaogelo Modise. I knew many people in Zimbabwe for I studied at Manama Mission, and I was taught by Thomas Tlou.

What made me support the struggle was that the people in Zimbabwe knew me and I knew them well because I had studied in Zimbabwe. Also my cattle post was on the border with Zimbabwe and so there was interaction between me and Zimbabweans. Besides, the people on either side of the border were relatives. There used to be free movement of people in the olden days. There were no border restrictions. Now, border demarcations restrict people's free movement and hence separate related peoples.

## Ngonga, Lucas

*Lucas Ngonga was born in 1978 and he is a son of a former refugee from Angola. His parents left Angola for Botswana in 1976, but settled in the refugee camp in 1982. He was born in Gaborone.*

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My parents came from Angola in 1976 but we settled in the camp in 1982. I was born in Botswana, Gaborone. The family survived through food rations provided by UNICEF and through farming. We sold vegetables in and around the camp. At first we had with free transport from UNICEF, but later we were asked to pay a 5 pula transport fee.

We enjoyed peace from Batswana; we could even play with Batswana children without any nationality divide. It did not occur to us that we were different. Refugees practiced their culture without any problem. My family was polygamous, but we were never persecuted for that fact. More cultural elements were demonstrated during Dukwi Day celebrations. The refugees were also flexible in that they adopted some elements of Batswana culture.

The Botswana Council for Refugees (BCR) was one of the organizations that were responsible for our welfare. It processed refugee grievances and scholarships, among other things. I think the BCR was well organized and well equipped despite certain displeasures especially by the South African refugees.

The South African refugees wanted to be above law, they were uncontrollable. They put the government under pressure with constant strikes and police had to intervene with tear gas and other weaponry. The South African refugees burnt the BCR offices with a petrol bomb in 1992 or 1993 I'm not certain of the date, but I am sure they burnt it and the ruin still stands there to date.

Some South African refugees had tried to escape from the camp by cover of darkness, and road blocks were mounted by the police and soldiers and they were taken back to the camp. This was around 1989 or 1990. The SA refugees hated the camp; they did not like being there. Most South African refugees could not go back home because they feared for their lives. In fact some were killed on arrival in South Africa.

The camp was really big, and we were not located by house numbers but by zones. Each zone had a leader who could forward grievances to the authorities or act as a unifying factor when there were problems between refugees.

We coped with our situation as refugees through various sporting activities in the camp. There were various forms of entertainment. Even attending school was a way of coping for refugee children. We enjoyed schooling; we were treated with dignity by the teachers. We were initially struggling to grasp Setswana but later we spoke it like any Motswana child. I had trouble especially with proverbs and Setswana figures of speech. We were very active in extra-curricular activities and travelled through the whole country. Sometimes we went on tours and all the children enjoyed it because

it brought all the things we were learning to reality. We shared our experiences with our parents, who were mostly not educated. Our conduct was good. During our time, unlike nowadays, there were no cases of teenage pregnancy, we schooled up to the end without disturbance.

Being a refugee has taught me never to give up in life. There is always a way out of every situation. Who would have thought that today I would be married and working?

## Nkhwa, Kenneth Moesi

[Gulubane; May 2007]

*Kenneth Moesi Nkhwa, 80 years old, is the headman of Nkhwa Ward, Gulubane village. He was the former MP for North East, and explains how Botswana was involved in the liberation struggle of southern African countries.*

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Botswana obtained independence in 1966 through an election. There was no bloodshed in the independence process. As an independent country, Botswana had to assist other countries that were still struggling to achieve their independence. These were the neighbouring countries of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, Angola and Mozambique.

As the liberation war intensified in Zimbabwe people started pouring into Botswana as refugees. In Botswana there were different political parties such as the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) and opposition Botswana Peoples Party (BPP). The BPP welcomed refugees, but the BDP was worried at the beginning, thinking it was risky to welcome refugees. The BPP argued that if Botswana was truly independent, then she should accept refugees. Other countries had to know and accept the fact that we were receiving people who were facing oppression in their countries of origin.

During the liberation war in Zimbabwe, the different movements started sending cadres outside for military training in order to come back and liberate the country. Botswana government later started to accept refugees. Other countries such as Zambia were prepared to accept refugees to go for military training abroad. Many refugees came to Botswana and they were well received and moved abroad for military training. Botswana did not accept military training to be conducted here. Botswana did not accept to be used as a launching pad to attack her neighbours. Botswana was a young country that had just gained her independence and could not withstand attacks from her strong white dominated neighbours. Botswana thought she did not need an army at the beginning. In Parliament, the BPP led by myself, Mr Motlhagodi and Matante called for the formation of an army to defend its citizens.

As the war in Zimbabwe intensified, Rhodesian soldiers crossed the border into Botswana and attacked villages, burning homes and kidnapping both refugees and Batswana. The BPP warned the government that what was happening was inevitable and that led to the formation of the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) in 1977. Despite her precarious situation of being landlocked and surrounded by white dominated settler states, Botswana accepted refugees and supported the liberation struggle, because she knew that those people were fleeing oppression and murders in their countries.

When the refugees arrived at the borders, Batswana informed the authorities and the army, who took the refugees to refugee camps at Dukwi and Francistown. Batswana lives were endangered when Rhodesian forces crossed the border in pursuit

of refugees and what they called ‘terrorists’, as there were kidnappings of both the refugees and Batswana.

At the beginning of the struggle, some Batswana did not understand what was happening, and why their country had to be involved. With time, Batswana started to understand why Zimbabweans were coming in large numbers and why Batswana had to support them. When they arrived, Batswana helped fleeing refugees with food, and took them to relevant authorities. Batswana understood the fact that these people were fighting for their rights. Batswana were more inclined to the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) because it was the movement that was formed earlier, and it was also strong in Matabeleland, which borders Botswana. The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) appeared later. The Botswana government did not discriminate between these two movements, and the government and its people assisted those Zimbabweans who were on transit to other countries. However, the Botswana government did not tolerate conflicts between the different movements, because that could have caused trouble.

The Frontline States (FLS) helped liberation movements a lot, because many of the refugees from South Africa and Zimbabwe received military training in countries such as Zambia. Financially, the FLS assisted liberation movements to buy weapons. Other countries such as Cuba assisted with weapons. Although Botswana was not at war, she helped with finances and transportation of refugees. Leaders of liberation movements understood Botswana’s position, that she was militarily weak. Botswana was a new and militarily weak state, and the powerful neighbours could retaliate if she allowed herself to be used as a launching pad to attack those neighbours. Other countries at the United Nations (UN) and the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU), also understood the fact that Botswana could not stand alone economically because she bought many things from Zimbabwe and South Africa. Botswana even bought most of her foodstuffs from those countries. When Botswana army came across freedom fighters, they helped them to transit to Zambia, and there was no fighting between the two.

After the independence of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia the countries worked together with Botswana. These countries already had good infrastructure when they obtained their independence, whilst Botswana was lagging behind. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Botswana gains something because she has access to SADC markets where she can buy and sell her products. She obtains those things she doesn’t produce.

Botswana policy during the liberation struggle was clear, she did not want any war because of fear of reprisal, but supported the oppressed people. Refugees were not allowed to possess arms when in the country.

## Phatudi, Gladstone

[Barolong Farms/Hebron Good Hope; July 2007/June 2007]

*Gladstone Phatudi was born on the other side of the Botswana border. His parents were Batswana, but they were working in South Africa. He went to school there and saw for himself how the black people were being treated. After finishing high school he trained as a teacher; he came to Botswana and started teaching among his people, the Barolong, and became one of the people who were in the forefront in helping escapees of apartheid to cross over to Botswana.*

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Batswana helped the refugees in the liberation struggle because they were oppressed by the Boers. We stood by not only for refugees but by the African National Congress which sought liberation from the Boers. We believed that once the African people of that country were liberated, we would also be liberated.

I was born on the other side of the border. My parents were Batswana, but they were working in South Africa. I went to school there and saw for myself how the black people were treated from there. After finishing high school and trained as a teacher, I came here and started teaching among my people, the Barolong. I was one of the people who were in the forefront in helping escapees of apartheid to cross over to Botswana. When they crossed the border, illegally of course, we went to fetch them. At night we used to go to the fence and meet the refugees and give them accommodation for about two to three days before sending them to comrade Fish Iketseng in Lobatse. Oliver Tambo passed by here and we took him to Lobatse where he was later helped to move on to Zambia.

As to why Botswana supported the liberation struggle, Black people in South Africa are the same as black people here. Their suffering was Botswana's suffering. Although the country was in a vulnerable position, as far as resources are concerned, the country helped the refugees in every way possible. Some refugees were accommodated by other Batswana and the government allowed skilled refugees to work within its structures as teachers and civil servants.

Batswana subtly supported the liberation struggle for fear of reprisals from the hostile neighbours of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. However, the people of Botswana did the best they could to recognize and help the refugees. The help that Botswana offered to escapees of oppression made it gain international reputation among the independent countries of Africa, organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

Botswana could not afford to be partisan in relation to these movements. The government treated all of them the same, at least at the surface of it. The country could not be used as a base camp for fear of exposing its people to the menace of the oppressors of the settler regime. While there may have been occasions when guerrillas used Botswana as a transit passage, it was not allowed; and when detected freedom fighters were apprehended and disarmed. It is not impossible to imagine that sometimes the organs of the law chose to be subtle about some such acts.

Sometimes liberation movements competed among themselves and vied for recognition by the government of Botswana. Sometimes among the movements there were conflicts of issues of strategy, ideology and who really represented the people. The government of Botswana acted as an arbitrator and counselled the liberation movements on unity and standing for a common goal.

While the government faced the problems of the liberation movements and refugees, it also had to deal with acts of destabilization from the settler regimes. The country invited the settler regimes to come and identify bases that they claimed were in the country. The country condemned all acts of harassment and appealed to the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Commonwealth. The country also started its small army to defend itself and educated its citizens to be vigilant against suspicious persons, both black and white.

As far as refugees were concerned, the Government of Botswana built refugee camps in Dukwi, Francistown and Selebi Phikwe, so that genuine refugees could be screened. A verification process in that direction was put in place.

Dr Molema was informer of the ANC, and was friends with a British policeman, he tipped them. In May 1959 the Boers tried to kill him, by recruiting him into the police force, and sending him to Scotland Yard. Although he had never been a policeman, Boers were aware that he was an ANC link. He ran away to Botswana and was followed, but he refused to go back. Boers tried to frame him in all kinds of ways. Ntloko was his nickname. He helped the 1976 Soweto Uprising refugees to be taken to Lobatse. Ramatlabama Police came to know that I was the transporter of refugees. Codename was Modisaotsile, Slovo, Mandela, Thambo stayed in Boswela; Tlou was a freedom fighter. Ocallighan helped freedom fighters by educating them in Botswana; and Tiger Kloof with Masire and Chiepe saved Dr Molema from being arrested by the Boers. Mangope was also ANC initially, but subsequently joined the Boers.

## Pinto, Alvaru

[Dukwi; July 2008]

*Alvaru Pinto is a former refugee and he was born in 1942 in Angola. In 1979 he ran away from the war and crossed into Namibia, but in 1980 came to settle in the camp in Botswana.*

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I left Angola due to the political instability in 1979. From Angola I crossed into Namibia but could not stay long in Namibia because there was a war going on there against the Boers. I stayed briefly in Selibe Phikwe and then came to settle in the camp in 1980. I found mostly Zimbabwean refugees, whose houses we later occupied when they were officially repatriated in 1982. Before the Zimbabwean repatriation we lived in tents.

I sustained myself through gardening and monthly rations. We sold our vegetables in areas such as Tutume, Nata, Gweta, Francistown and the other villages surrounding us. UNICEF offered us a free truck to carry our produce, but later we were asked to pay 5 pula fee for transport. It wasn't much because we made much more from the sale of vegetables. We never returned with vegetables back to the camp, they sold well. With this money I could cover where monthly rations failed to cover. With money I could buy things of my choice.

The Botswana Council for Refugees (BCR) helped us by overseeing that we received our rations, helped parents with their children's school uniforms and many other things that affected us as refugees.

The war had terrible effects on my life because I had to give up everything I managed to raise for my whole life. I had to start life afresh. I lost my freedom because in the camp we were not allowed to move freely; we could not go anywhere we pleased. Our movement was monitored and it made life really hard. I did not like living in the camp but it was better than living in a war zone. If I had stayed in Angola maybe I would be dead by now.

There were many zones within the camp each with a leader. We could even meet as zones to discuss our problems within the camp and also discuss ways of improving relations among refugees. The relationship between various refugees was fine. We also had a good relationship with Botswana.

Refugees were allowed to practice their culture. During Dukwi Day celebrations, we came together and displayed our culture through music and artefacts. The Angolans presented our traditional dance known as Shinganje. The Zairians presented kwasa- kwasa. Within the camp, there were Angolans of different ethnic groups such as Kikongo, Kimbundu, Ombundu, Chiokwe, Kubale, Kunyama and Ngangera; but we got on well with each other.

Recently when all was calm in Angola we were given the choice to be repatriated or to become citizens of Botswana. Most of us chose to stay; only a few went back to Angola. I'm sure you saw them on BTV. Having decided to stay, the government built us two roomed houses in Newstands and we left the camp to stay in our new homes.

We made way for new refugees in the camp, like Namibians and Somalis, to mention only a few. Though it took long, we were given Omang cards, and we were left to live life like all Batswana. Recently our rations were stopped because we are no longer regarded as refugees. This is where life started becoming difficult for us. We were promised that we would be funded to start our own projects, but the promise seems to be taking long to be fulfilled.

## Ramsden Ronald

[Boseja – Kubung Maun]

*Ronald Ramsden attended Moremi Memorial School; and then started working in one company which was responsible for road construction in Kasane from 1977 up until the late 1990s then he went back to Maun and joined politics. He worked for a long time in the Wildlife Department in Maun. He has been a member of BDP since the 1999 elections, and he has been a Councillor since 2004.*

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My name is Ronald Ramsden. I started schooling at what we now call Moremi Memorial School. And then when I finished my schooling there I started working in one company which was responsible for road construction in Kasane. I started working in Kasane from 1977 until the late 1990s, then I came back to Maun and joined politics. I have been a member of BDP since the 1999 elections and I won the council seat in Maun in 2004; and up till now I am a councillor. Before becoming a councillor I worked for a long time at the Wildlife Department here in Maun and I made tremendous changes in the department before I joined politics. I left Wildlife because people wanted me to be a councillor and I did not want to be in two different government jobs at the same time. After winning the 2004 elections I left the Wildlife Department and I became a councillor.

Botswana helped freedom fighters. You know, if your neighbours are in fire you help them; but when we did that we were not doing it publicly because we knew that would provoke war with the white regimes who were fighting these freedom fighters. Therefore, we helped freedom fighters knowing that we could be attacked by the Boers anytime, and we did not want the Boers to be aware of what we were doing. Even though we knew what was likely to happen to us, we helped our fellow African neighbours and that worked for us in the long run. We definitely helped freedom fighters.

I have a clear understanding of what was happening in the Chobe district, where I was based at the time. Whenever freedom fighters arrived in Lesoma they normally travelled in groups of 3 – 5 people, and it was difficult for some people to know whether they were freedom fighters or villagers. They spent a few minutes with us in the village before they disappeared back into the bush. We were used to them because I was a driver at the time and I used to give them lift from Kasane to the border. They did not wear military uniform, and therefore some people had no idea they were freedom fighters.

We met them quite often and sat down with them to discuss issues of the liberation struggle. We used to drink traditional beer with them at the border area. Whenever freedom fighters came to Kasane we would sit down with them and tried to understand what was going on in Rhodesia. They would share their own personal experiences before going back to their camp across the border. We met different people.

You know what they did to me one day, when I was driving to Lesoma from Kasane on a gravel road across very bushy area? One freedom fighter ran into the road and faced the vehicle, standing right in front of it. He was pointing a gun at me. Since I already knew what was going on in the region and was familiar with their movements, then I knew that he was a guerrilla fighter. He was ordering me to stop the car, but this was a way of requesting us to wait for him and give him and the friend a ride. I stopped the car and he came in and told me to drive slowly following him, as he was walking in front, to where he picked his injured friend and he asked me to drop them at the hospital. I wasn't afraid of him because that seemed to be my daily bread, helping freedom fighters lifting them in our vehicles and dropping them where they wanted. They did not want to occupy the front seat of the lorry. They sat at the back of the vehicle, where I covered them with the canvas material, and rushed them to the hospital. I also informed the police who then took care of the freedom fighters. For me that was an easy thing to do because freedom fighters only needed help from us and they were not causing any trouble. I was used to seeing them carrying guns; that was nothing to me. I wasn't afraid because it was my daily bread to help freedom fighters. I cooperated well with freedom fighters because these people spent a long time with us on the Botswana side of the border and discussed their problems with us which made it easy for both parties to cooperate. The local people did not have any problem with freedom fighters. One thing that you should be aware of is that the local communities and freedom fighters had something in common. Since these freedom fighters were from Rhodesia and they stayed close to the border, they had an affectionate relationship with local people in villages at the border. They shared something in common: language. Therefore, it was easy for them to communicate with those who lived in Botswana. You should be aware that Baherero here in Ngamiland have relatives in Namibia, same applies to Basubiya of the Chobe and people across the border.

Of course, it was difficult to control their movement but our government tried its best to control their movement. I will keep on referring to Chobe area because when liberation struggle in Rhodesia happened I was based there. Whenever freedom fighters crossed the border into Botswana and when they were not seen by anyone they would launch attacks from where they were hiding in the remote areas of the border area. This became a problem for Botswana. We were on spotlight. The Botswana Defence Forces (BDF) played a significant role and should be applauded for having done a good job defending us against possible attacks. They always patrolled the border day and night so that when freedom fighters arrived in our country they knew about their presence and where to keep them safe. We once heard that freedom fighters shot three jet fighters from Rhodesia and then ran back to hide in the bush near some of the villages along the border. That is what they normally did, when they were in the village; they could cross into Rhodesia go into the bush and secretly launch an attack at the Rhodesian camp, and then ran back to hide in Botswana. This is what caused one of the major shootings in Kazungula border near the ferry where

some soldiers were killed. We stayed near the border and it was during the night when we heard some gun fire and saw some bullets in the air. This was in Lesoma. I understand few civilians and soldiers died in the Lesoma incident. I think it was in the late 1970s.

One day when I was drinking beer with them, they were putting something on the ground, some sort of syringe which had water and methylated spirit in it. According to the guerrillas, a movement of that water and the methylated spirit was a sign that they were under attack. They showed me the movement of water and methylated spirit and quickly ran into the bush for hiding. In a matter of minutes we saw jet fighters flying above Lesoma and the guerrillas shot them from the bush which was confirmation of their suspicions. There were about 3 jet fighters and they were all shot.

Freedom fighters from Namibia and other countries were using Maun or Ngamiland as a transit route to either Francistown or Zambia. Some went to Francistown, where they were taken to Bulawayo and transported to East Africa but others went to Kazungula to cross the Chobe River to Zambia for their military training. During those days Zambia housed a lot of refugees which led to the downfall of their economy. I only know that they used Maun as a transit route to East Africa. Some of the freedom fighters stayed in Maun some days before passing or going to Zambia. The former president of Namibia Sam Nujoma stayed here in Maun for a few days with Mr Mmutla. A lot of refugees, both youth and elderly, passed through Maun. They travelled in groups and also arrived on different days. Some passed to other countries but some of them of course stayed here for good, even today they are still here with us as they never went back to their country.

Of course Angolans were coming in large numbers, but a lot of refugees were from Namibia. Some of them like I said earlier never went back to their countries. If you take a village like Etsha in Ngamiland, today it is made up of refugees and few local people. Refugees from Namibia and Angola have stayed in Etsha for some time and they are now citizens of Botswana. They can do anything a citizen can do; they can even vote.

Of course, Boers from South Africa and Rhodesians raided Botswana. You know of the Gaborone, Bontleng bombing by the South Africans. Those raids were a sign of showing Botswana or suspecting that Botswana took part in helping freedom fighters. But all in all, we cooperated well with those countries partly because some of them were not sure that we were taking part in helping freedom fighters.

I don't know of any churches in either Ngamiland or Botswana that may have played a role in assisting freedom fighters. Here in Ngamiland we had intelligent people like Mr Sethoko who worked well with the late Kgosi Letsholathebe and they were responsible for taking care of freedom fighters. Most chiefs did not understand politics and our Chief was under the watchful eyes of Mr Sethoko, who always advised him and Letsholathebe never had problems with freedom fighters. Here in Maun we received them with both hands.

In Ngamiland such incidents might have happened in Shakawe, Seronga or Mohembo, because those villages are close to the border. If you look at Lesoma, Kasane or Pandamatenga, those villages are close to the border and if you need information about activities in the Chobe, it will be easy to get people who witnessed the activities from such villages. I know of the exchange of fire in Lesoma. Maun is about 450 or 500 km from the border hence few liberation activities of such nature happened in Maun.

I witnessed the Lesoma incident because I was there. I also witnessed other activities. I remember one night we crossed into Rhodesia, it was around 5pm and we went to the Zimbabwean guerrilla camp because there was a bar there. We drunk beer with them and they also bought beer for us. It was nice we were laughing and they were laughing too. They didn't talk about the struggle and we also avoided conversation on liberation activities. We stayed there until 9pm and then we told them we wanted to go back to Botswana and they accompanied us until we crossed the border and they went back. It was really nice.

The Botswana Defence Force was formed during hardships and they were determined to face the challenges, hence being able to deal effectively with safe guarding the border. We understand that when it was difficult to contain the incursions they called for other soldiers from either Gaborone or Gantsi or anywhere else in the country to assist at the border, and I am glad they managed. It was okay for us to help our brothers to get independence.

Thank you.

## Sankwasa, Luckson

[Kasane; December 2007]

*Luckson Sankwasa was born on the 3rd April in 1946 at Kavimba. He attended school at Kachikau primary school from 1954 and finished. He was born on the 3rd April in 1946 at Kavimba. He attended school at Kachikau primary school from 1954 and finished standard four in 1958. He is currently the Chairman of the Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust.*

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I am Luckson Sankwasa. I was born on the 3rd April in 1946 at Kavimba. I attended school at Kachikau primary school from 1954 and finished standard four in 1958. This was the highest standard of primary education during those days. I never studied further. From 1958, I was just home and in 1974 I decided to join politics and was a member of the Botswana Democratic Party. I was in politics from 1974 and quit politics in 2004. I am now the chairman of the Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust.

Our area Kasane or Chobe district as a whole did not have people who were seriously involved in politics. I wanted to represent my people. We were a new country having attained independence in 1966 and the country was developing. I wanted Chobe to be recognized and developed. I also used to attend political meetings which were held by Sir Seretse Khama. He was a strong man. He had the words of wisdom. His words pulled me along and I ended up in the Botswana Democratic Party.

I was a councillor for Kasane Central from 1974 – 2004 and brought developments which were not there before 1974. I asked for so many things and the government brought developments to our district. You know how Kasane was in the 1970 and 1980? I tried hard to push for developments and schools were built. The Chobe Community Junior Secondary School is one such example of development provided by the government.

It did not quit. Honestly I was not elected to be the Councillor. People decided to change and elected Mme Diao. Luckily I was employed by the Chobe Enclave Conservation Trust and I was elected the Chairman in 2004 and I am still with the Chobe Enclave now.

I personally definitely think the reason why Botswana decided to do that was because as an African republic state, it was important at the time for Africans to assist in the struggle for the independence of other African states. I think Botswana was right to support the liberation struggle because leaving other Africans suffering in the continent was going to leave Botswana isolated from other African states. This was the reason why Botswana decided to support the liberation struggle to free other Africans from the colonialism, an oppressive system.

The government of Botswana contributed to the liberation struggle and there were some challenges. When freedom fighters came into this country they were fed by villagers and the government, and this was a constraint because it was not something that the country was ready for. This was a constraint on the side of people because freedom fighters asked for food from our people. These freedom fighters were coming

in unexpectedly. Feeding somebody you did not expect in your home was itself a constraint.

During the liberation struggle the movement of ordinary people was difficult. It was not easy to travel from here to Victoria Falls. People were searched at almost every one kilometre that one travelled. People were stopped and searched. The system of travelled across into Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was difficult. The white soldiers knew that people from Botswana were supporting or helping freedom fighters. It was not easy to visit relatives in either Namibia or Zimbabwe.

There were several other problems. I remember one incident where a pontoon was blown by the Rhodesia regime forces. The pontoon was from Zambia and there were some casualties. People died there. I can't remember who died and how many. This was in 1978. I still remember another incident whereby about 15 of our soldiers were killed at Lesoma because the Smith regime forces were following freedom fighters and ended up killing our soldiers.

White soldiers illegally crossed into Botswana several times. They did not wear army uniform when crossing to Botswana. They liked moving along the border and even crossing into our territory. The areas around Kazungula and Lesoma are the ones which were liked by white soldiers. These are the areas where freedom fighters used for hiding, as well. They followed white soldiers in Zimbabwe at night and attacked them. The freedom fighters sometimes asked for food from people around Lesoma and Kazungula because these places are close to the border.

Before Namibia got independent there were some refugees who were crossing into Botswana and they received help. They were given food at the police station. Botswana was mainly used as a stopover before they were immediately moved from here to Zambia and then Tanzania, where some young men were trained as freedom fighters. Some refugees were taken to Dukwi and Francistown. Refugees did not stay in Kasane for a long time. They were secretly transported to Francistown. It was not safe for them because Kasane is close to the border and white soldiers from Namibia and Zimbabwe could easily cross into this area. Among the refugees there were political refugees and those who ran away from the war. Political refugees were not kept here; they were taken on transit to prevent them from being killed. Villagers were free to help refugees. Some people had relatives among refugees. Non-political refugees had relatives in Kasane, whom they frequently visited and were allowed to stay with. They normally asked for permission from the police officers and spent a day with their relatives before they were repatriated. They gave them food and in the evening went back to the camp. The community around here helped refugees a lot. There was nothing much done to use refugees here. They would stay here in Kasane for a day or two before being transported to Francistown.

Botswana accommodated refugees and this affected the economy. These refugees were transported to their point of exit at Kazungula or to Dukwi and Francistown in Botswana government vehicles. Service delivery in the country was for both citizens and refugees. Nelson Mandela was happy that Botswana helped them. When they

attained independence, he mentioned that they were lucky that Batswana were there for them and that people of Botswana supported the struggle whole heartedly.

The only point of exit I knew was Kazungula because that is where Botswana and Zambia share the border. Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa were still under colonial rule. All these countries were ruled by the white minority regimes and they did not like freedom fighters and refugees. Kazungula was the only area I knew those days. Maybe there were other places in Botswana but personally I feel Kazungula was only place safe for freedom fighters when people were using the pontoon to cross to Zambia. The Kazungula border was also guarded by the Botswana Defence Force and the police. When the white regime forces realized this, they were not happy because it meant that Botswana was harbouring their enemies, and that is why they bombed the pontoon.

The relationship between Botswana and the people that were being liberated was quite good. People from Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe were very friendly; moreover we had a lot of things in common. The relationship was not bad at all.

Let me just be honest to you, there were completely no *impipis* here. People here saw Africans from Namibia and Zimbabwe as their brothers and sisters. There were no such people who informed the white soldiers about the whereabouts of the refugees. What I know is that people here in Kasane used to warn refugees that there were white soldiers at such and such a place.

There were no freedom fighters who came here from Namibia. The only freedom fighters that came here were from Zimbabwe. The white soldiers in Namibia had total control of the Caprivi Strip. Those freedom fighters that came to Botswana were those who were troubled by white soldiers and then ran away across the border to their relatives here. We used to hear that there were freedom fighters that came to certain areas and reported to the police. These types of refugees were repatriated immediately to Tanzania. This was a secret between family members and the police. It was not something for public consumption because if the white soldiers had known about their presence here, they would have troubled the host families.

As a politician, there was little that I did to help refugees from Namibia or Zimbabwe. We never housed any refugees or hid any because most refugees from Namibia had relatives and never suffered a lot. The police were also responsible for looking after them. Kasane is close to the border and there is a National park on the western side [Chobe National Park]. The police and soldiers were always getting the refugees from the national park where they were hiding; and they were never allowed to spend many days in Kasane, before being transported to Francistown.

There were many political refugees who crossed into Botswana and were received by the police at the police station. I don't remember their names.

Thank you *mma*.

## Sarah, Mma

*Mma-Sarah, a former refugee, arrived in Botswana in the 1970s from Zimbabwe. She settled in the camp and chose to remain in Botswana after Zimbabwe got independence.*

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I cannot pin down the year I arrived in Botswana, but it was in nineteen-seventy something. Some Zimbabweans went back home after independence but I and my relatives chose to stay in Botswana because we were already established down here.

Settlement in the camp was facilitated by different organizations within the camp. They made our life easier. We had two roomed houses, furnished. We had a police station, a clinic and a school. That is why I say settlement in the camp was not a problem at all.

We lived more or less like Batswana, because we kept chicken and goats. We also did field crop production. Adjusting in the camp was not specific to any sex or gender. We were equally involved in farming.

My children attended school and some even ended at Mc Connel College in Tutume for their senior secondary school education. They were all born here. I am trying to emphasize that they did benefit from the education system in Botswana. They are even participating in the development of Dukwi village. My daughter has been in VDC for a while now. Batswana were good to us that was why we chose to stay. Batswana are really good people. We continue to live as neighbours and nothing xenophobic has ever risen between us. There was once an inter refugee ‘war’ between Zimbabweans and Angolans, but the police managed to quench it. That was the only scenario; refugees were relating well too.

To me life in the camp was easy because we were provided with everything. However things changed when we became Batswana and made way for new refugees,. We were promised programs that could empower us but such promises were never fulfilled. We expected financial support to start businesses and other projects but it never materialized. However I think we are now managing because my children are all grownups.

I sought comfort in many churches but I coped well because my relatives were all around me in large numbers; they gave me enough support to make me cope with life as a refugee.

I think there are many lessons to be learnt from living as a refugee. We taught and inspired people to do vocational activities. Many Batswana can now go around selling goods produced at home, they have textiles and gardens. The self-reliance we see around was inspired by work done by refugees.

## Seepapitso, Kgosi

[Gaborone; February 2008]

*Kgosi Seepapitso was a good friend of Pik Botha, former Foreign Minister of apartheid South Africa and related well with him. While his friends (Botha) had hang-ups about race, Botha was different as he was a liberal Afrikaner. He used to invite him to his house on several occasions. Being related to Dr Moroka because his mother's mother came from the family of the Moroka, Kgosi Seepapitso frequented Thabanchu in the Orange Free State where Moroka stayed. He used to be sent errands by his uncle for the ANC, like secretly being sent to give some letters to Nelson Mandela, who was then in hiding in the Orange Free State, as he was wanted by the Boers; but that particular errand saved Mandela from arrest as the letter was warning him to move to another hiding.*

Botswana supported the liberation struggle because the apartheid regime oppressed black people and that oppression was spilling over this country. Also those of us who went to school in South Africa were always attacked, not physically but psychologically. For instance, there were certain shops that discriminated against black people, and as students, we used to see other black people being oppressed. So Botswana supported the liberation struggle because it wanted to stand by other black people.

Botswana welcomed the refugees, but there was always the danger that not everyone would be accepted as a refugee. There were some who were spies of the apartheid regime. At one time some white people who knew that I crossed the border frequently, followed me by driving behind me to my own village in Kanye. I stopped the vehicle and confronted the men about their intentions and I simply told them off, and they drove back.

As far as the liberation struggle was concerned, I also played a role. Being related to Dr Moroka because my mother's mother came from the family of the Moroka, I frequented Thabanchu in the Orange Free State where Moroka stayed. Moroka was also a member of the African National Congress in the 1950s. I used to be sent errands by my uncle – errands of the ANC like secretly being sent to give Nelson Mandela some letters. Mandela was then in hiding in the Orange Free State as he was wanted by the Boers, but that particular errand saved Mandela from arrest as the letter was warning him to move to another hiding.

Botswana related well with the liberation struggle movements. It urged all liberation movements to bury their differences and fight a common goal. Liberation movements vied for recognition from the government and differed from each other in terms of strategy and recognition. Among members of the liberation struggle there were spies or “double crossers”. There was one known member of the ANC who was a double crosser, working for both the movement and the Boers, he was called George Phahle. The Boers discovered that he was a double agent and wanted to eliminate him. I tried to warn him not to be a double agent and to stop this cunning act! But George would not listen. If he had listened, he would probably be alive. I warned

George that he was being tailed by a car, and sometimes by unknown people on foot. I warned him once again, but he did not listen.

I also helped some comrades in the liberation struggle. There was a group that I was supposed to deliver. I drove the group and delivered them at Rakhuna and they crossed the border on their own and I went through Ramatlabama border only to pick them up again on the other side. I left them at an undisclosed place to do what they had come gone to do. I crossed the border into Botswana carrying weapons, grenades and letters to be delivered. Mandela still has not forgotten me, every time he has seen me, he has thanked me for delivering the letter that saved his life. I also helped Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, to locate his brother Jarma Mbeki who was a lawyer in Selibe Phikwe, some 350 km north of Gaborone.

About the raid of June 1985; some people knew about it but did not want to confront the situation because consequences would have been disastrous. It was safer for the citizens to let the South Africans do what they wanted to do and get out rather than be confronted by a small and unsophisticated army. It was better to sacrifice the few who died, than have the entire nation wiped out.

Botswana was brave enough to host refugees, some of whom could easily have been freedom fighters. But Botswana had a clear policy that its country could not be used as a base to unseat other governments. The position of Botswana was clearly understood and supported by organizations such as the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Organisation of African Unity.

## Sefako, Fumbani

[Pandamatenga; July 2007]

*Fumbani Sefako was born on the 15th of March 1937 worked in the Colonial Development Corporation as a maid for a few months; she got married and became a full time farmer in Pandamatenga.*

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My name is Fumbani Sefako. I was born on the 15th of March 1937. I worked in the Colonial Development Corporation as a maid. I only worked for a few months and this is when CDC was moving out. I then became a full time farmer here in Pandamatenga. I worked in CDC in 1954 as a maid. I was just a maid. I retired when I got married to my late husband Rre Sefako and that was in 1955. I then concentrated on subsistence farming.

In Pandamatenga during the liberation struggle I used to see guerrillas coming from Zimbabwe. The white soldiers used to follow freedom fighters here. The freedom fighters used to attack white soldiers in Zimbabwe and then cross over to Pandamatenga. The White soldiers then followed them but they never entered Pandamatenga. Freedom fighters used to move people (blacks) from the white-owned farms in Rhodesia. Then they came with them all the way from Matetsi to Pandamatenga.

The freedom fighters came with those Zimbabweans to the border and crossed with them right here at the border with Botswana. The guerrillas wanted farming to fail because whites relied on black labour. Normally they travelled at night and white soldiers followed them up to the border. Some of those Zimbabweans sometimes went back to the farms to work if the guerrillas just accompanied them up to the border.

Here in Pandamatenga we were affected by the war because some of our people died. One person was killed by the Boers and another one called Chibariso, was killed by the white soldiers, because he was carrying a gun along the Zimbabwe border and I think they mistook him to be a freedom fighter. This was when the war was coming to an end, and those Whites came to remove freedom fighters from the bush and sign some kind of peace treaty; they were moving along the border from Kazungula to Pandamatenga.

The other people died at a certain place called Sebuya on the road to Kasane just 5 kilometres from Pandamatenga. We heard that there was a fight over a girlfriend between a certain man called Jack and a freedom fighter. These freedom fighters were using a particular tree at some cattle post as their base. People here still believe the freedom fighters took Jack away and killed him. They were fighting over a girlfriend.

I think we should leave this matter. You can ask his relatives *bo* Akanyang and Tiyane, if you need to pursue it. This other one called Moruti also went missing but according to rumours here, he was a guide to the freedom fighters. He was also their tracker and the rumours we heard were that he went away with the freedom fighters some day and never came back. His relatives suspect he was killed in the cross-fight between

whites and guerrillas because he was always with them, showing them the directions and the safe places.

There was this old man called White. I don't know his surname. He was once tortured by the freedom fighters. It's like he knew where the white soldiers were hiding and they found out he knew. They wanted to find out where the white soldiers were hiding and he was refusing to tell them. They lit a big fire and "*ba bo ba mobesa*" (roasted him). Initially he was refusing to give them information but later gave up, and told them where they were, by the border. I don't know why he was refusing to tell them. What we heard is that he was tortured. You can ask his children, they are around.

When we came across freedom fighters we gave them food. They used to cross the border to ask for food and we gave them. If we had not cooked anything we cooked for them. Sometimes we had no choice but to take them to the police at the border because some of them came with broken arms and some having bad injuries in their heads. Those who had no injuries were helped with food and then they went back to the bush. Those who were injured were taken to the police and the police immediately took them to Kasane where there was a hospital. There were some refugees who ran away from the wars in Zimbabwe during the liberation struggle. Some were coming with children, traveling at night and in some cases they left those who were not able to run in the bush. What was happening was that when they arrived here in Pandamatenga they informed us about some of their relatives who remained behind. Since freedom fighters used to move around the village drinking beer and socializing we would then inform them about other black Zimbabweans at certain places and the freedom fighters would then follow them, get them and bring them here.

The police vehicles were used to transport them, and it was done in secrecy in case the whites were around hiding; they were not supposed to see what was happening. When refugees were going to the police station they moved in a group of two or three with one person from the village directing them where the police station was.

Freedom fighters never had time to stay and talk with refugees. They spent most of their time fighting and the refugees were handed over to the police who transported them to Kasane. We did not keep refugees here because the village is close to the border. When they were just by the border, white soldiers used to come to the border following these people. It was not safe to keep them here. I think the government played a big role in moving these people from here because on their arrival we immediately informed the police and they were secretly transported to Kasane and then Francistown. We had no choice but to take some of our relatives and those we knew to the police so that they were also moved from here to safer places. You know I am surprised that now these same Zimbabweans are coming here stealing things from us and not getting advice not even from the President of Botswana. Even their President today is not listening to SADC. The Botswana government helped them a great deal during the liberation war.

It was not safe to allow these freedom fighters to stay in this country, because freedom fighters were running from the white soldiers and attacking them from here. They had camps around Pandamatenga. They had a camp at Sebuyu and at that place where there are Wildlife Department offices. I feel it was not safe for them to stay here because white soldiers were following them and liked torching the village at night with search lights.

The only freedom fighters we reported were those who were injured so that they could be transported to Kasane where there was a hospital. We failed to report others because some of these freedom fighters had relatives here and we knew some of their parents. Most of them had relatives especially among the Ndebeles, and they used to visit fellow Ndebeles at that place called "Botebele". There is one story I nearly forgot to tell you. This is about a certain man who was bombed by the whites. They laid a bomb along the border road. This man was working at a Safari Company and he was in a car with the other white guys. I am not sure when this was but it happened at "Kapaipi" along the Pandamatenga, Lesoma border. It happened in the morning at around six o'clock. The White soldiers came and troubled us here at night. They came with an aeroplane at night and I think they were following guerrillas. During the middle of the night in the village they threw a big search light and the whole village was 'electrified'. This caused panic, people ran away from the village. We went to a certain place called Base 1, and slept there. One woman even gave birth to a baby boy and this boy was named Masole (soldiers).

This was in 1977 and the BDF soldiers came to get us from the bush and told us to go back to the village. They assured us that we were safe and when we went back to the village we found that Botswana soldiers were now right on the Botswana border road, guarding people's movement. They advised us that it was not safe to be at Base 1 in the bush because if the White soldiers found us there they were going to think that we were refugees or freedom fighters, and would kill us. The soldiers (Botswana Defence Force) stayed in the village for some days guarding us.

Some refugees had relatives and some were known to village people here. Those who had relatives were received by family members but they never stayed here for a long time because it was close to the border where their enemies were camping. They were immediately transported by the police to Kasane where they did not stay long before again being transported to Francistown and Dukwi. I think there were not enough facilities to keep refugees here. They were given tents to sleep in and these were not enough to protect them from rain and cold. We reported many refugees to keep them safe from white soldiers. Even our own relatives, we informed the police and they were taken to safer places like Dukwi and Francistown.

We did not report freedom fighters because they were soldiers fighting for freedom. One other thing which made us not to report them was that they had previously asked us not to inform anyone where they were hiding because some of their enemies were black *impipis* (sell-outs). We also did not report or inform anyone where they were because we feared them. We heard that in Zimbabwe they tortured those black

Zimbabweans who betrayed them. This is why we did not inform the police or Botswana soldiers where they were. They killed people in Zimbabwe, especially those who were on the side of white soldiers.

Most of the freedom fighters were Ndebele and there were a few from my tribe of the Nanzwa. There is one person who can tell you more about these people. She is one of the women from here who fell in love with the commander of the freedom fighters. This woman went to Zimbabwe with that soldier after the war. The man who took her was called Mkhwanazi and the woman is called Monica.

They never troubled us; they respected us a lot. They only came to socialize among our people. They used to drink traditional beer with our people. They bought the beer in containers and went to the bush. They used to tell us that in the evening they went back to work in Zimbabwe.

They were fit to be members of your society because they were our tribesman and had relatives here. During the day when white soldiers came with their aeroplanes harassing and throwing the search light the guerrillas really helped. One day the search light which was thrown by white soldiers caused a veld fire and we found guerrillas putting out the fire when our people were running away. The fire was also going to destroy our traditional huts. I think they put out the fire because they did not want to be seen by their enemies from a distance.

Thank you a lot.

## Sekgororoane

[Borolong]

*Sekgororoane was a former government employee at Good Hope. He worked with a refugee, who was killed by the South Africans, which was a traumatic experience for him. He continued working with refugees as a way of helping them to live as normal a life as possible.*

Botswana as a country never struggled for independence. It was not like its neighbours where people fought and ran away from their countries. We have a Setswana saying that if your neighbour's house is burning you should help in putting out the fire, because the next house that burns might be yours "Matlo go sha mabapi". That is the spirit that Botswana adopted regarding the liberation struggle.

Botswana supported by doing what it culturally knows best "Ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo". It urged negotiations and discouraged war in countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa. In the negotiation process, Botswana lost a number of people, including soldiers because the other countries shunned negotiations and preferred war. Our contribution was mostly in human terms. Botswana helped and accommodated refugees. Botswana helped in the negotiations for the liberation of the oppressed countries.

Botswana themselves did not initially support the liberation struggle. They did not understand why the government supported the struggle. They wanted to be left alone. It was the Botswana leadership which took people aboard and explained to them why it was necessary to support the liberation struggle.

A lot of policies were affected. We had to get enough soldiers to the border with Rhodesia. We had to have enough funds to man the border with South Africa. Some of the developments that were supposed to take place were shelved because the funds were diverted to the army. Funds had to be diverted to the negotiating teams.

Botswana's relations with the international world were quite good. International organizations and friendly countries understood Botswana's position and supported it. Zambia and Tanzania particularly sympathized with Botswana in its precarious position with the hostile neighbours of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia.

The relations were quite good and the government of Botswana worked well with these liberation movements. Last year the President of Mozambique came here to build a house for the family that accommodated the head of liberation movement, Samora Machel, the government also accommodated Tambo Mbeki, Mugabe, Nkomo and Nujoma. Botswana supported all these movements.

The army, the police, the intelligence were instrumental in monitoring guerrilla activities and got the situation under control. Botswana encouraged unity and not factionalism within the liberation movements. Botswana has purely good relations with all the countries that were involved in the liberation struggle. They know what Botswana did to get their liberation. Before then the relations with these countries were sour, because the settler regimes were accusing Botswana of harboring terrorists.

But Botswana has never stopped assisting people who are oppressed and that has put Botswana's reputation in good standing. Botswana also helped refugees as people who needed help. It gave them accommodation and food.

## Sekhambo, Mma

[Lesoma]

*Mma Sekhambo was born at Pandamatenga in 1928 and has been a subsistence farmer since she was a young lady. She got married in Lesoma and has lived there with her husband who passed away, and children since then.*

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I am called Mma Sekhambo but I have a name which I was given by my parents. Sekhambo is my first born child. I was born at Pandamatenga in 1928. I am not sure about this year because my parents were not educated. I never went to school and have been a subsistence farmer ever since I was a young lady. My parents were subsistence farmers at Pandamatenga and that is where I grew up. I got married here in Lesoma and had children with my husband who passed away around 1985.

During the liberation struggle the people of Lesoma did not understand what the government was doing. We saw things happening in secret. People were not allowed to keep refugees and freedom fighters in their homes. The police and soldiers used to come to Lesoma asking people whether they had seen freedom fighters and when they found them at beer parties they ordered them to go away. Freedom fighters liked coming into the village to socialize but the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) never wanted them to be in the village, they chased them out. Whenever the police found freedom fighters they would take them to Kasane; sometimes they even arrested them and took them to Dukwi. The government was supporting guerrillas but they never wanted us to be part of the struggle. They were saying we would be killed by the Smith regime forces if we hid refugees and freedom fighters. This is why I am saying I cannot give my name to someone coming from Gaborone. I am not sure what is going to happen to this information if it reaches the government. Maybe they want to send us out of the country to Zimbabwe where our relatives are. The government had secrets regarding the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe.

We helped freedom fighters a lot because they never had time to relax. These guys were busy in Zimbabwe fighting the white soldiers. They moved around the village particularly in the evening around seven asking for food from people. They came to us in the village at night to ask for food. We sometimes cooked food for them or gave them maize meal and raw meat for relish to go and cook elsewhere and they would happily go away. The other place where we met most freedom fighters was at the

fields (*masimo*). This is where they preferred coming to meet villagers because there were no police officers or BDF bothering us about their whereabouts in the bush. We spent hours with them in the afternoon, and in the evening they crossed into the then Rhodesia to fight white soldiers. We used to cook fresh maize corn for them. We had a good relationship with these freedom fighters because they sometimes gave us game meat when they had killed an animal in the bush. Sometimes they came to our fields and picked fresh maize corn, but we never reported them to the police. They even slept in the fields guarding our crops from animals which destroyed them.

I have been here for a long time. When the Zimbabwe war started I was married and still energetic. You should know that freedom fighters had relatives here in Lesoma and they used to visit them. I can't mention their names because when the sixteen (16) soldiers were killed there were people who accused the Ndebele people here for allowing freedom fighters to visit them. This nearly divided people into factions and this is why I said I cannot give you my full name. The police went to the extent of saying Kgosi Jameson should not have reported the guerrillas, yet they were repeatedly saying we should report guerrillas and refugees when we saw them. Freedom fighters used to visit some of the people they knew here in Lesoma, but never stayed with them for a long time. They came during the day and went back to the bush after visiting their relatives.

I am from the Nanzwa tribe and never met freedom fighters from my tribe. The only time I met a freedom fighter from my tribe was at the *masimo*. I heard him saying something in Nanzwa language and when I asked him if he was from the Nanzwa tribe, he said that he was. He then introduced himself and I knew his parents. Some people in Lesoma had relatives among freedom fighters and they helped them. However, some of us helped freedom fighters because they were fellow blacks and we were only divided by the border. Another time freedom fighters came into the Lesoma village and camped near our yard; my husband was still alive by then. They came in large numbers but the police and BDF never saw them because during those days it was bushy and the guerrillas hid in the dense bush. The guerrillas used to leave the camp in the evening or at night and whenever they were about to leave they informed us that they were going to leave for Rhodesia, but two guerrillas were left to guard their belongings. They normally arrived in Lesoma in the middle of the night or early in the morning looking very tired. One day, one of them came with an injury on the arm. When I asked them what happened, the others told me he was hit by a bullet shot by the white soldiers. We treated his wound and he was fine. These freedom fighters were many and had no containers for fetching water. We had drums of water at our place, and whenever they arrived from a battle in the middle of the night, they woke me and my husband up to give them water. They could finish two drums of water; and one good thing about them is that they thanked us a lot. During the day they dressed in ordinary clothes and came to our place and we talked about what was happening in Rhodesia. They hardly gave us any details regarding where they attacked the Smith soldiers or how many they had killed. When visiting us in the village in the evenings, they never left their weapons at their secret camp. They brought their weapons with them in case of any attack from the Smith soldiers. My husband used to talk to them a lot because he used to visit them at their secret camp. He used to spend long hours with them, but he never told me what they were talked about. Freedom fighters stayed at that camp for a long time, and towards the end of the war they came to thank us for our cooperation.

I can't remember when freedom fighters had a secret camp here. I am now too old to remember. The years and some things which happened have been forgotten by most

people, but the young people around here never witnessed the events; most people who were there have now passed away. Men are the ones who talked to freedom fighters a lot, and most of them are no longer with us. You should have carried out your research immediately after the war when we had fresh memory of these events. Freedom fighters never troubled us; therefore there was no need to report them to the officials. The only thing which brought fear to us was that the Smith soldiers knew that freedom fighters were in Botswana and they liked patrolling along the border and sometimes coming into our country in airplanes. We were always worried that one day they would attack us like they did with the sixteen (16) soldiers. We had good relationship with the freedom fighters, so they never troubled us. How do you report someone you know well to the police when he has not troubled you? Some of them had relatives in Lesoma, and reporting them would mean police taking them to Kasane, that would be like a betrayal to your own relatives. We also did not report freedom fighters who had no relatives here because initially they begged us not to tell anyone where they were. They warned us that some of their people from Rhodesia were enemies employed by the white soldiers as informers. The other thing which made us not to inform the police about their presence in our villages was the things we heard from people who were coming from Rhodesia. They told us that those who betrayed freedom fighters were tortured. We were afraid they could have caused us trouble.

We were always in fear of being attacked. We used to hear guns inside Rhodesia along the border. We thought one day they would cross into Botswana fighting. The only incident which shocked us here was the day when the sixteen (16) soldiers were killed. What happened was that the guerrillas crossed into Botswana in the morning at around nine. This was after we heard gun shots inside Rhodesia. The headman of Lesoma then sent his two children to go and inform the BDF at Kazungula. When the soldiers reached Lesoma, they were killed, and up to now there is confusion because we don't know who killed them. Some people say it was the white soldiers, others say it was the guerrillas. When the BDF vehicles were bombed the earth was shook. We ran from here to the bush and spent the night there. The BDF searched for us and found us in the bush. They asked us to return to the village and we did so. It was bad that day because the whole village was covered with smoke. One boy who was sent to call the soldiers died there and another one called Gure survived. I can't remember the name of the young boy who was killed; he was still young. His mother is still alive and she is called Maria. You can go and ask her. Unfortunately Gure passed away a month ago from illness.

There were no refugees who came to Lesoma. The white soldiers were patrolling the border. If the refugees crossed and came here, then they immediately went to other places. Any movement was monitored. One day, the white soldiers found me at the border with a small boy from one of the Ndebele families here, looking after cattle, and they told us to move away from the border. They wanted to beat the Ndebele boy. They were speaking Afrikaans and we did not understand, but later we realized that they never wanted us at the border. Lesoma was a small village. If there were any refugees who came here, maybe they were accommodated by other people secretly; you can ask other people in the village.

Thank you *mma*.

## Sekwababe, Calvin Thunamo

[Bobonong; January 2008]

*Calvin Thunamo Sekwababe is a politician and a farmer, who was one time the head of Criminal Investigation Department. He talks about what he experienced as a member of the police force in Botswana, particularly in the border areas, during the liberation struggle; He explains about the raids and bombings by Rhodesian and South African forces, of the villages and what role was played by the Botswana Police.*

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Our task, as police, was to safeguard our people along the borders. The Selous Scouts of the Rhodesian police were particularly harsh on our people, suspecting that they sympathised and aided the freedom fighters. I recall an incident in the Francistown area near Moroka. The Selous Scouts entered a village pretending to be Nkomo's guerrillas and asked for food, and then left some of their weapons with the old man of the village. Later another group of the scouts came to demand those weapons, and they abducted the old man and took him to Rhodesia for interrogation.

Another incident was when the Rhodesians attacked a truck driven by Batswana, whom they abducted and imprisoned in Bindura. Then the Rhodesians alleged that Botswana had established training bases for freedom fighters along the border. I went to investigate and there were no such bases. This proved that the allegations were baseless. The abductees were held for 4 to 5 months being interrogated. Sometimes they slept in a room full of corpses to frighten them so that they might reveal that there were training camps in Botswana, but this did not work.

From South Africa bombings were frequent and spies were rife. At one point they kidnapped an innocent person who I had to go and free in Pretoria. We also cooperated with the South African police to fight crime. But we always knew that among the police who worked with us, they planted spies who disappeared when they realised their cover was blown. We used to interrogate them, and we could see that they were soldiers, not police. It seems there was an element of truth about the suspicion by people in border areas that white farmers in Tuli Block worked with Rhodesians and South Africans. The farmers used to wear military uniform, an indication of such cooperation. We believe that, yes, they passed on information about freedom fighters to the minority governments.

The law prohibited armed guerrillas and so we arrested them. After completing their sentences, they were not sent to South Africa or Rhodesia where they could face trouble; some stayed here or chose to go north.

There were spies amongst the refugees; sometimes there were fights among refugees because of allegations of spying. I recall in Lobatse some refugees burnt a spy with hot iron. In another incident they murdered a spy and burnt the body along the Lobatse road.

Botswana assisted these countries to gain independence and we work better with independent neighbours as opposed to former racist regimes.

## Sekwababe, Kapaletswe

[Bobonong; January 2008]

*Kapaletswe Sekwababe is a businessman who transported refugees within Botswana, while working for the Red Cross and the United Nations Council for Refugees.*

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I was a driver and used to transport refugees from such places as Gobojango, Mothabaneng, Talana farms. We were working for the Red Cross and UN Council for Refugees. We took them to Bobonong, from where they were transported to Selebi-Phikwe and then to Dukwi Refugee Camp. Some passed on to Zambia to fight for freedom. Many lived at Dukwi camp until the independence of Zimbabwe and then they went back to their country.

We were not the only ones who transported refugees. Some villagers with transport also assisted to bring the refugees from remote villages to Bobonong. The villagers were transporting refugees even before we started doing so. They also fed them and gave them shelter.

The guerrillas recruited people for the war effort, such as students who often left their homes without bidding farewell to their parents and joined the freedom fighters voluntarily. I recall Manama Mission students who came to Botswana en mass, and they were assisted to go onto Zambia. These were the forms of assistance Batswana gave to refugees.

Whenever we found freedom fighters on the way as we transported refugees, we gave them a lift to Gobojango, from where they went wherever they were going. I knew some of them personally such as Modubane, Brain and others. They operated from Gobojango and Mabolwe and we often gave them transport when it was necessary. They used to carry their weapons, which were brought from Zambia. I knew Nkomo's guerrillas in particular, as they were the ones who used to enter through Gobojango.

At times, among the people I transported, there were Smith's spies who were discovered and arrested at Selebi-Phikwe.

Some of the early refugees from Staudze area came with their property, like donkeys, building material and settled at Talana farms. They were fleeing from ZANLA forces that were harassing them for supporting Nkomo. Batswana welcomed them warmly. I later transported them to Dukwi. So in the earlier days refugee communities were established in Bobirwa villages before they were taken to Dukwi. At Dukwi they had arable land and they grew crops which they sold in Francistown. After the war many decided to live in Botswana. Some joined relatives and did not return to Zimbabwe.

Batswana assisted the refugees largely because these people were our relatives on the Zimbabwe side. We felt strongly that they deserved to be free. But we did not discriminate against the others who also fled to Botswana. They too were assisted. The ethnic ties were so strong that we sometimes tried to stop our relatives from proceeding to Zambia to become freedom fighters. But they were so committed to the struggle that they went to join the freedom fighters.

## Serote, Thibedi

*Thibedi Serote left South Africa immediately after the pro-FRELIMO rally, in 1973, which was organised by the Black Peoples Convention, BPC, which was affiliated to SASO. He was helped by his uncle, Bishop Nkwane, who is now late, who drove him all the way to Suping Stadt in South Africa.*

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Botswana accepted refugees from South Africa and other countries because of its humanity “botho”. Despite the fact that South Africa was prone to attacking countries such as Botswana, the latter continued to accept refugees nonetheless. It felt obliged to do so because even international law allowed it to do so. Botswana therefore took a deliberate stand that despite attacks from South Africa, it would continue to host refugees until there was freedom in that country.

I was a member of the African National Congress, and I know that refugees of the ANC were well received by the government of Botswana. The Botswana government helped even those who wanted to go to other countries, whether for further studies or other purposes such as military training.

ANC had two kinds of freedom fighters, those who came from South Africa to go abroad, presumably for military training and those who came from abroad into South Africa, presumably infiltrating guerrillas. The structures of the ANC were such that they were underground to the extent that even the government of Botswana did not know about them. The MEDU Ensemble was such an organisation. It was on the surface an Art and cultural organisation, but underground it was military strategist. It was founded by Tim Williams, and someone who is presently Acting Commissioner of Police in South Africa and Dr Wally Serote. These were the co-founders of this organisation. This organisation functioned as such, but within it there were members who belonged to its underground structures.

I left South Africa immediately after the pro-FRELIMO rally, which was organised by the Black Peoples Convention, BPC, which was affiliated to SASO. That was in September 1973. For me to come over I was helped by my uncle, Bishop Nkwane who is now late. He drove me all the way from Johannesburg up to Suping Stadt in South Africa. He dropped me at around 3.30 am. I jumped the fence at Tlokweng after walking for about two hours from Suping Stadt. I did not know exactly where I was, but my only bearing was the Onion Tower at the station. By then it was very visible because all these building that are there now had not yet been built. I was told about this Onion Tower before I left Johannesburg. In fact the road that I took was used frequently. I jumped the fence at about 6 am and arrived in Gaborone at 4 pm. I walked through Tlokweng. Abram Tiro was already here; there were other comrades that were here, like Bo Zikalala.

I started asking around and I ended up in the main mall of Gaborone. People did not seem to know these comrades. Then I met this Zimbabwean chap who also happened to be a refugee. I asked him about the comrades but he didn’t know them

either. Eventually he suggested that I go to the Central Police Station, which was not very far from the mall. I went and reported myself there and I spent about three days at the Central Police Station trying to locate these people. Meanwhile I was being processed by the police to legitimize my refugee status. From there they referred me to Botswana Christian Council. At the BCC there was a lady we called Mma Rogers, she was an American lady. I went through all this screening process, and then from there, there was a refugee camp where Tsholofelo Hall is. The building looked like an old farm house which was renovated to become a refugee camp. I stayed there for about seven days. By then I managed to locate them. They came to pick me up. I went and registered with the ANC.

I ended up staying with my other comrades that I knew from Johannesburg instead of staying in Bontleng. There was a house in Ext 10, next to Mr Balopi's residence. It was popularly known as Phela Ndaba. It became so popular that whenever we had problems we gathered there to sort them out. In 1975 I left Botswana and went to Libya for military training. From Libya I went to Baghdad, I spent 11 months in Libya and 3 months in Bagdad and then came back. When I left for military training, I went under the pretext that I was going to school. I then stayed in Botswana being involved in ANC underground structures. When I left home, I was straight from a technical school, where I did motor body building. So when I came back from abroad I joined Wilco, the Panel Beating Company which had a good reputation. That gave me a good cover. That was in 1976 the year of the Soweto Uprising. Towards the end of 1976 I went up to Angola for further military training. In Angola I was taught how to infiltrate arms into South Africa. Because of knowledge and training in motor body works, I was able to conceal weapons in cars.

I would take a car, do whatever I had to do on it and somebody would come and collect it. I concealed weapons in cars. I worked on buses as well. We left the normal floor of the bus, and we put another floor for the weapons. We elevated seats, so that we could have the whole compartment for the weapons. ZCC people used to hire those buses to go for their pilgrimages in Moria, South Africa and normally they were there for three to four days. When they arrived there, the buses would be taken for 'service' by our contacts there and they would strip them and remove the consignment, before putting the seats back. All this was done without the knowledge of either the driver of the bus or the passengers.

I also went across into South Africa several times. I was involved in the Slurry operation. That was the first time the ANC got into the country using 17 land cruisers. That was in 1987. There was a South African army camp on the way to Vryburg; they have turned this army camp into a school. The 17 land cruisers were not detected because we had cut the fence and crossed at ungazetted points. Some of the land cruisers went through the normal immigration processes. That operation was very successful. When we were retreating we lost about three land cruisers. No one within that unit was injured or captured. Three or four days later, the Boers retaliated by attacking certain houses in Gaborone. One of the houses belonged to Maloiso in

Mogoditshane. This was not the first time that I had crossed, in fact I had crossed many times on reconnaissance missions. I did that for operation Vula Vala. I was involved with comrades in our units. Some of the comrades were local Batswana and some of them were former Botswana Defence Force officers. We recruited them because some of them had relatives in South Africa. We used to give intelligence reports even to those who were still in the army, the MI, and they would act on the information that we gave them, or vice versa.

Regarding the South African Raid of June 1985. We got information from sources within the South African Security that a raid was imminent. Even the Russians, from the Russian Embassy warned us, that there was a lot of movement from the South African side of the border. A red alert was issued to the comrades that something was going to happen, but we didn't know when. Everything was normal where we stayed; between 9 or 10 and 11 pm people switched off the lights and moved out of their houses. Some of the comrades spent time at the bars or at some parties and came back the following morning. The reason why Thami Mnyele was killed was that he was from a meeting of the MEDU ENSEMBLE which went on until late at night. When the meeting was over it was very late and he was simply tired so he went to sleep, and therefore did not move out of his house as directed. However most of the ANC cadres who were underground survived the raid.

I survived all this because I had a cover of the workshop. I had started my own workshop as early as 1982, so I had a legitimate cover, but towards the end of the 1980s the cover was blown. A certain Boer by the name of Coetzee came and pretended to have the lights of his car fixed. It was immediately after a comrade was blown up in a car one morning near Northside Primary School. This chap was driving a motorbike, but that day the comrade had a mission and brought the motorbike to my workshop. He then took a Skyline from the workshop to use in his mission. It was this Skyline that was blown up with this comrade inside. This Coetzee came and pretended he was looking for lights of a Skyline as he was driving a white Skyline. He then shifted his attention to the motorbike and started asking questions about the motorbike. I told him that the motorbike belonged to Mpho Masire because the latter had a lot of junk at his workshop in Tlokweng. He said are you sure? And he was asking in Afrikaans but I replied that I didn't understand Afrikaans.

Within the ANC there were people planted by SADF. The comrade who was blown had been from a reconnaissance mission and was using a land cruiser, but when they came back they hit a donkey. They brought the land cruiser for fixing as it was part and parcel of the Slurry operation. We worked on the cruiser the whole weekend.

While working on the cruiser, I came across a list of a requisition of arms that were going to be used for Slurry operation. There was this comrade who was a senior commander locally and there was always something cloudy about him. It turned out the list was deliberately left in the land cruiser for the Boers to see it. I gave the list to the comrade, but what was surprising was that when I gave it to him he was a bit surprised. The operation Slurry was carried out on Tuesday but early Wednesday

morning BBC interviewed Pik Botha about Slurry. I was surprised when Pik Botha mentioned the list and the type of arms and mortars. They had all the information, and within us we knew that someone was a double agent and the situation became very tense. Slurry was the biggest successful ANC operation after SASOL and Vortrekker. The operation was carried out by 27 people using three land cruisers.

After these successful operations, we used to give ourselves time to go and “chill out” relax and have fun. Most of the time we used to go to the villages, and there was a popular spot in Metsimotlhabe that we used to go to. We hung around a certain ‘letlapa’ by the Metsimotlhabe River.

## Sethoko, Lethogile Modumo

[Maun; September 2007]

*Lethogile Modumo Sethoko, 70 years old, started schooling at Tawana Primary School which is now Moremi Memorial School in Maun. He did his Junior and Senior Secondary at Moeng College. He then came back and started working in Maun in 1959, at the District Administration for four months and then in a company called Ngamiland Trading Company until 1978, when he left the job. All this time he was working he was also involved in Botswana politics, as he joined Bechuanaland Peoples Party (BPP) in 1962 and when it split he followed Mr Mpho Motsamai to form Bechuanaland Independent Party (BIP).*

I am Lethogile Modumo Sethoko, and I am 70 years old. I started schooling at Tawana Primary School which is now Moremi Memorial School in Maun. I did my Junior and Senior Secondary at Moeng College. I came back and started working here at District Administration for four months, before joining a company called Ngamiland Trading Company in Maun, in 1959. I worked at the Ngamiland Trading Company until 1978, when I left the job; but all this time I was working at the same time that I was involved in Botswana politics. I joined Bechuanaland Peoples Party (BPP) in 1962 and when it split I followed Mr Mpho Motsamai to form Bechuanaland Independent Party (BIP). In this party I have been holding certain positions, like that of a Branch Secretary, in charge of Youth Affairs and then went on to be the Secretary General position of the party. But before that I was a Foreign Affairs Secretary and ended up as a Deputy Secretary until Rre Tlhomelang's party Freedom Party joined BIP to form Independent Freedom Party. At that time I was still a member of the BIP party holding certain positions. From IFP we then formed Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM) and I continued as a member holding certain positions. In BAM I became the Foreign Affairs Secretary and now I am a National Chairman.

When I first got involved in the Botswana politics, we wanted to strengthen our own political party in the country, but not forgetting our fellow brothers who were oppressed in Namibia, South Africa and Rhodesia. So we helped them to go to countries north of Botswana where they were heading to as freedom fighters. We helped a few refugees including Mr Sam Nujoma. He stayed here for some days. We gave him a hiding place here in Maun.

In the 1970s Botswana was newly independent surrounded by white ruled regimes, but we, as independent citizens of the Southern African region had an obligation, that our neighbours should be independent. Of course we were putting ourselves under risk of possible attack, knowing what could happen to Botswana. I'm happy to say we took a risk as an independent country and not as the colonial government.

We started assisting freedom fighters while still under British rule in the 1960s. BPP activists started assisting freedom fighters when our offices were in Palapye. Mr Mpho was the one who was responsible for them. Botswana was a transit route for such people like Thabo Mbeki, the current President of the Republic of South Africa,



as well as other political activists from his country. Before independence some of the freedom fighters were caught by the authorities when using the then colonial Botswana as an exit point. We secretly let their relatives know their whereabouts. We talked to chiefs and district officers. Chiefs did not have powers, they were under Queen Elizabeth.

Most of the freedom fighters and refugees we assisted in Ngamiland were from Namibia and a few from South Africa. I remember we hid someone from African National Congress (ANC). Although it was raining we had to hide him in a kraal with goats. So we kept him with those goats. At 2 am some of our colleagues came to my house suggesting I show them where we had hidden this freedom fighter as they were planning to take him to Kazungula, unfortunately when they reached Kazungula their car failed to stop and it sunk in the Chobe River and they all drowned. Well, I wasn't sure who was driving this guy to Kazungula since it was early in the morning and I did not go to where the car was parked. They had sent one person to come and call me from my house so that I could show them where this person was hiding. I don't remember the name of the gentleman from ANC that I helped, but I think he was Debaranke and this was in 1964.

The problem was that *ba ga Mma Mosadinyana* colonial officials did not want these people to use Botswana as a transit route. Even after independence we had a policy that freedom fighters were not supposed to launch their attacks from Botswana. During that time it was better, because the government got involved a little bit, that is why refugees and freedom fighters were kept at Francistown and Gaborone. Military attacks which were made by the South Africans showed that they suspected that we were working hand in hand with refugees or freedom fighters. The government of Botswana managed to control these freedom fighters and ensured that they were not launching attacks against their enemy from Botswana because they were easily seen when they arrived here or when some of them were on transit to other countries. So I would say the government here was vigilant.

There was a small group of people taking care of the refugees and freedom fighters. These refugees passed here secretly. The Ngamiland committee responsible for their welfare was not of a large group. It was comprised by Mr Mmutla, I, Mr Motsamai and a few others. We were responsible for helping the refugees. If the group was larger, there was a possibility for infiltration and it would be easy for the Boers to know when freedom fighters were coming into our country and they could easily send military troops or detective soldiers to come and bomb here. Such a committee was made out of, I think, ten and some members from the central committee of BPP and BIP.

Freedom fighters and refugees passed here quietly, they were not disturbing or stealing people's properties. They knew their mission, and people here knew they were refugees. Naturally some people are likely to say they were not good people, but a lot of them were minding their own business. Of course they may have been some bad elements. People did not openly complain in public about their presence in the village.

I cannot say the relations between Botswana and other countries were not affected, but the cooperation was there. Refugees from Botswana went through liberated countries like Zambia when going to Tanzania. There was good relationship among the black people. Most of the refugees who went through Botswana were from SWAPO and a few came from ANC and PAC in South Africa. There were a few refugees from ZANU passing through here. There was good relationship between all of us black people in the region. In Zimbabwe ZAPU and ZANU were the main liberation movements at that time, and they had a good relationship and cooperation with people in Botswana. The freedom fighters cooperated very well with us because they needed our help.

There were a few women who were very active in the committee; for example, Mr Motsamai's wife. She was a member of the BIP party and played a big role in helping refugees. There were others who also assisted, but they have passed away. Women at that time did not venture into politics much. Women like Mrs Wright and Mrs Mauchaza are new in politics

There were no churches in Ngamiland which played a role in helping freedom fighters; even through the party there was no church which did that. These old churches were from Britain and they were afraid to help.

These liberation movements were given money by the OAU and the UN. They sympathized with the liberation movements and they funded them in order to help the refugees and freedom fighters. They also had representatives in the country.

Freedom fighters had offices in Botswana, but you see, it was a struggle for the liberation movements to run an office here where the 'Boers' were keen to know how politicians here were working together with freedom fighters. So they didn't have an open area where anybody anytime could come and get help because it would have been easy to be infiltrated. I know of a secret area where freedom fighters operated from in Botswana; they held meetings with their fellow countrymen. They were political asylum seekers. If they were to operate openly here it would have been dangerous because the government would have exposed itself to attacks by the Boers regime. It was risky because both the Rhodesians and the South Africans wanted to see how freedom fighters were operating outside their home countries; they always suspected that freedom fighters wanted to bomb them. The 'Boers' were always a nuisance to Botswana.

There were no any cross-border incidents here like that of Lesoma because Lesoma is close or next to the Rhodesian camp. Therefore, here Namibians were operating from far. We had patrols by the soldiers along the border. Even the Boers from Namibia also patrolled their own border. We say there were rare incidents because of the distance from the border and the nature of the terrain; for example, the road that links Maun with Shakawe was terrible, it might have been a problem to them.

The soldiers from the Boers regime came into these villages, but not in uniform. Indeed, they were a threat to villagers close to the border, but the difficult part was that at Mohembo, our San people (Basarwa) joined the Namibian force. Therefore,

in some cases it became easy for the Boers to get information through the Basarwa here who had relatives across the border. Some of us were able to find out that some of the San from Botswana became soldiers in colonial Namibia. We were told by their tribesman that these people were Namibian soldiers. We also gathered information about what they were doing in Namibia, their routes in and out of Botswana and what days the South African force would be patrolling along the border, we managed to get such information. We knew it was dangerous and if we were going to be seen to be against our fellow Basarwa, it was going to be worse.

Those in Namibia had relatives in Botswana; on this side of the border. Some of them are still crossing the border today, when visiting their relatives. Even those who were soldiers there are now back and some of them are employees of the Botswana Defence Force. They are today good trekkers because they were used by the Boers as trekkers following or trekking freedom fighters into Botswana. They are still working with BDF as trekkers for poachers, but I do not have their names.

I remember some of the leaders like Daniel Munamava who persuaded his fellow countrymen to register for elections here at independence and we managed to assist in registering them. Even now some of them are still here as citizens although some of them left; but this was after their independence.

Many of the people I talked about have passed away. But regarding Mr Sam Nujoma's stay in Maun you can talk to Mr Mmutla.

Personally I think Botswana learnt a lot from the 'small' good relationship with other countries, and especially liberation movements from countries in the region. Over time we built good relationship and cooperation even after independence. We need not to have to go to Namibia so that they can help us, they already know that Botswana is one of the African countries which helped them. This has created and opened ways of good relations and cooperation.

SADC has provided cooperation and has made it easier for African countries to work at regional level. They should continue the cooperation.

Well, from the beginning it looked as if we were putting ourselves at risk by supporting the liberation struggle, but we had the right vision of where we were going and what was going to happen. The vision was the independence of these other countries. This is why even after their independence we still have good relationship with these countries because of the earlier cooperation. That is why African countries struggled for the formation of SADC. That is why the likes of Mr Nkrumah stood aside to help the struggle together with Mr Kaunda. The Zambian economy fell because of his government fully getting involved in helping liberation struggle.

## Setshwaelo, Ntombi

*Mrs Ntombi Setshwaelo is one of the people who assisted people who came to Botswana as refugees or freedom fighters during the liberation struggle.*

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I am one of the people who assisted refugees and freedom fighters during the liberation struggle. First there was, you might term the regular coming in of South African refugees, the first lot were more like older people, and then later on, after 1976 during the June 16 riots, a lot of young people came. They were in their 20s and early 30s and so on, across the spectrum.

Well there were some that we lived with as a family, but there were also others who had other accommodation, some were provided by the institutions like UNHCR and the Botswana Council of Refugees and so on; at some stage other people assisted materially and interacted with them. We assisted them materially, morally and emotionally. I accommodated about six people at any one time.

As I was staying with these people they did mention what was happening in their own country and how they were being treated. The fact that I'm originally from there also, this was very topical, what was going on. We spoke about it a lot, it was in our minds. Basically I knew their parties, but it was not about parties but about people coming in and also knowing that these people needed my assistance.

They talk about many things, and it was a matter of trust; the people trusted me well enough, like I said we did choose which people should come here but they wouldn't talk about that. We had our own debates here and talked about geology, about approach and everything we needed to discuss.

Well for one thing Gaborone was very small, even people who were sort of outsiders so to speak were very visible and there was sort of negligence but there are lots of people here who were originally South African. So for almost like each case, we met people like that socially, at other people's homes, at the mall, in church, so we talked and developed some kind of rapport and relationships; and thirdly by virtue of the fact that expression of languages, culture and a question of history, some of them were people that we had gone to school with. Others came and were introduced like people and some I searched for them and found them, the young ones brought others in to the house. I did not get any government assistance for what I was doing.

Well, I am not aware of any refugee policy change. Besides, that situation has changed drastically, because at that point, remember, it wasn't only just South African refugees. There were a whole lot of other people from Angola, Namibia, and Rhodesia. Whatever policy prevailed, was, I think, on the basis of what was going on then; but right now I do not know if there has been any policy change.

The refugees were treated well, but there was the question of girlfriends from the young ones, they complained about stipend but other than that Botswana treated them well.

Certainly there were no any elements of xenophobia at the time; it was a different time all together. There was not so much unemployment, and remember a lot of Batswana historically had worked in South Africa. So there was a lot of compassion for refugees, and some of them even became part of families, and some of them even stayed on after their independence in 1994. Batswana were very friendly and good at accepting people from other places. Even I who was an outsider, married to a Motswana, never experienced any negative reception from Batswana.

I think the biggest assistance from the Botswana government was creating an environment that was friendly, that was comfortable for the refugees, you know there wasn't any harassment. There was a government house which accommodated these people and it was comfortable. Educational training was open to refugees; schools were open to everyone and to refugees. Some were even at a secondary school level, remember this was about high school students; the June 16 story was about high school students and even primary level and some at a tertiary level. They did not have to pay fees for their education that is why I said the government was of assistance.

There was an office here of the UNHCR which assisted with the refugees. The Botswana Council of Refugees existed at the time, and that is where refugees found assistance. It was very active at the time

I still have contacts with the people I accommodated; even those I didn't accommodate. I even see some of them when I am in South Africa; some of them are officials in their government

The relationships between South African refugees belonging to different political organizations were normal. We used to host some informal meetings, and they differed on ideological grounds, and used to engage one another on their differing perspectives. Although they had different opinions on political grounds, they always viewed themselves as South Africans, united by their common predicament, and for this reason they always remained civil towards one another and never fought over that.

## Sisingi, Adriano

*Adriano Sisingi is 60 years old and a former refugee from Angola who has been living in Botswana since his arrival in 1979. He tells about his experiences as a refugee in Botswana.*

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I left Angola and arrived in Botswana, Maun in 1979. Botswana and their president welcomed us with warm hands. They understood our situation. In 1980 I arrived in the camp during the time which some Zimbabwean refugees were going back home. As they repatriated, we occupied the houses they left because most of arriving Angolan refugees lived in tents provided by the Red Cross in collaboration with other organizations such as the LWF.

With the involvement of the Red Cross, LWF, BCR, UNICEF and other organizations our settlement in the camp was made easier. We were not struggling or suffering like refugees in other countries.

The BCR ensured that we had food supplies and clothes. Apart from that we lived through money made through selling vegetables and the food we actually produced in our gardens. Personally I am a builder, but when I won tenders outside the camp a lot of paper work had to be done before I left the camp. My employer had to arrange for a work permit with the labour department and the authority within the camp had to approve before I left the camp.

We sold our services in and outside the camp. Selling outside the camp needed validation from the Settlement Commandant. Transport was provided for by the UNICEF.

Reception was good. When we sold our vegetables there were no cases of xenophobia or hatred. People appreciated what we were doing and we shared our skills with them. I even married a Motswana woman in 1983 and since then we have been living in peace.

My children are all working and one is a Doctor in Princess Marina hospital. This is evidence that refugee children were allowed access to school and that they were good performers at school. All my children were born in Botswana of course. Distance education was also recently introduced for adults who never went to school. We even learnt Setswana from our children, and I also learnt Ikalanga language from the interaction with Botswana.

Life was hard at the camp due to lack of freedom. People could not fully utilize their skills by just staying at the camp. Opportunities could not just bring themselves to an individual in the camp. We were over protected.

Of course war had negative implications on most of us. We lost our jobs running to save our lives, we lost our homes, and we lost relatives and our means of surviving such as livestock and other valuables.

At one point we were granted citizenship after we declined to repatriate. The Botswana government built us two roomed houses and we relocated to Newstands, Botshabelo ward. Immigration officers came and also processed our Omang cards.

Since then all former Angolan refugees have been cut from monthly rations. Most former refugees are poor because they are now too old to work. A few that keeps livestock do not own boreholes, and in order to water their livestock they have to pay people who are already established.

## Slash, Siana Mothusi

[Dukwi; June 2008]

*Siana Mothusi Slash is twenty seven years old. He tells of his experiences as a Batswana child among the refugee children in Dukwi.*

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When I arrived in Dukwi Refugee Camp in 1990, I was doing Standard 3. Our class was largely populated by Zimbabweans, Angolans and a few South Africans and Zambians. Batswana children were very few; even in the whole school because for a Motswana child to live in the Camp, mostly they had to be a relative of a police officer, teacher, nurse or BCR worker.

The refugees received free basic education just like any Motswana child and there were free meals in school but they did participate in fund raising activities for the school

Access to education was very relaxed because all refugees we schooled with were very much older than normally expected. A standard 7 pupil during the time was a big man or woman who was much closer to the age of the teachers then. Relatives, brothers and sisters, despite their age differences, could be found in the same class. During athletics and sporting activities, Dukwi Primary School always excelled more than other primary schools, like Tachibona Primary School, and Mosetse Primary School, due to the fact that we had older pupils.

About 99% of the teachers were Batswana, and I remember only one Zimbabwean who was an upper class teacher. The non-teaching staff such as the cooks and those who were pounding sorghum were mainly refugee parents, only a few Batswana.

The refugees were being treated like Batswana because they learnt all the subjects including Setswana. The way they spoke Setswana was awkward and that posed a great challenge to their learning. Angolan children, who most of the time spoke Portuguese experienced double the problem because they had to learn Setswana and English.

Refugees could repeat a particular standard or grade several times and that did not seem to matter to anyone. Some even wrote the standard 7 examination more than once. However in other subjects the refugees were equally good. In supplementary practical subjects such as Art and Craft, Home Economics and Agriculture the refugees were exceptional.

The refugees were very active in extra curricula activities such as traditional dance, which was then under the well-known 4B, scout movement and other school clubs. They were involved in all school trips just like students from other schools.

Student discipline was not a cause for concern as such, except constant cases of fighting. Some parents could unceremoniously come to school to attack teachers while some pupils absconded from school at will. In other cases we were sent around the camp to literally carry some refugee students back to school.

Teachers, who were much older as compared to those who came for Tirelo Setshaba, were very tolerant of refugees. The TS participants were fond of ridiculing

the refugees, especially males and most of the time were assaulted by students outside school or the relatives of those students.

Traveling to school was not a challenge because the residences of refugees surrounded the school. At Junior and Senior Secondary School we were in boarding school and traveling back to the camp during school holidays. Some of the refugee pupils made it to Junior Secondary School and Senior School. I also met very few at the University of Botswana and it sounds very interesting that they were mainly in the faculty of Engineering.

Those who did not do well at Junior school were catered for by the Education Resource Centre (ERC). Teachers were mostly foreigners but not necessarily refugees. Some Batswana also enrolled at this school. There was also a carpentry school within the camp to cater for the interests of other refugees. Some went to Maun Vocational Training Centre to further their education after failure to proceed beyond Form 5 level.

What I observed was the fact that as we went up the ladder of education it meant living outside the camp most of the time and meeting more Batswana. Hence in those instances refugee students always displayed low self-esteem.

From my view both males and females had equal access to education. Both males and females studied similar subjects within the same class., the gender divide was only evident in extra curricula activities e.g. boys were scouts while girls were doing traditional dance.

Access to school was varied, the younger ones started normally just like Batswana at 6 or 7 at Primary school, there was also a crèche for refugee children and Batswana children whose parents worked in the camp. Some students were slotted in according to their ability or age, but the basic idea seemed to be letting all refugees have some education because some were older than normal school going age.

I have already mentioned that the refugees followed the Botswana curriculum; there was nothing political in their education but some refugees were citing that before they were taught in their languages. There was previously a school known as Sizanani where mostly Zimbabweans were schooling. There were text books in Ndebele. However I did not witness that, when I came, what was previously Sizanani had become a hostel for Dukwi CJSS students who had to travel to school 3km or more every day before the hostels were built within Dukwi CJSS. Of course supplementary reading material was availed through the help of the UNICEF.

I'm not sure of any intercept between education and political objectives because all the refugees I schooled with managed to complete, except for those who left school just to idle around the camp.

The refugees' set-up was similar to that of Batswana; women performed mostly domestic roles while men were always 'outside' family doing farming. The refugees had been supplied with different farming materials and one could see the letters UNICEF printed on most of these tools.

Housing was provided for all refugees; two roomed houses were built for refugees and they still stand up to this day, they had a toilet and some stand pipes to provide them with water. Electricity was the only thing which was not available in these houses. There was basic furniture provided in the houses e.g. beds and wardrobes. Some refugees however extended those houses with mud bricks, making themselves kitchens depending on their family size.

Refugees had huge gardens where they planted vegetables and other crops. These crops had market within and outside the camp, I remember tomatoes and spinach, choumolier were sold as far as Tutume and Francistown. The South Africans were mainly involved in poultry and pig production. The Zimbabweans were mainly involved in field crop production to sustain themselves. Some had donkeys, kept pigeons and one refugee owned an orchard. Some refugees were sustained by their talent and skills; we had refugees who were photographers, brick moulders, mechanics, sculptures and knitters. Some performed 'piece' jobs around Batswana yards.

As you enter the camp, there was a bar and a restaurant which were run by refugees collectively; Batswana could only rent it out. Batswana could also rent a hall meant for refugee entertainment. Some refugees had small shops where they sold everyday needed commodities. One Angolan even owned a bakery which supplied Dukwi CJSS with bread.

I can't specify the intervals but something like every month, the refugees were given free food rations and clothes. There were two big warehouses where refugees went to collect food and clothes.

Some refugees married or co-habited with Batswana. Hence the Setswana names among refugee children. The refugees also interacted with Batswana in recreational activities such a football. The football team at the camp was called Stone Breakers; it was comprised of refugees and Batswana, mainly policemen, but it was supported by everyone in the camp.

Refugees were free to practice their culture; sometimes there were masquerade dances, especially by Angolans and more cultural practices were displayed during what was known as Dukwi Day (refugee day commemoration). On this day refugees displayed even their talent and skills, like music and poetry. Some were evidently still practicing polygamy and burial rituals dictated upon them by their culture.

There was a library where refugees went to read, and in the evening in the same library there was movie watching. There was also a clinic within the camp. There were shebeens around the camp where home-made beer was prepared. From these places came noise, abusive language and fighting.

Generally Batswana who were living in the camp accepted and appreciated refugees, except for a few protective cases. I was not allowed to play with refugee children or even bring them home, but I never ceased to be their friend. We pushed toy cars together and shot catapults together. Batswana parents met with refugee parents during PTA meetings in school, there was a good relationship.

Refugees were divided by sections or Zones within the camp; the Angolans stayed in Zone 9 while the Zimbabweans stayed at what was termed Plot 5. The South African refugees stayed in part of these zones. The ANC and the PAC were divided, they did not stay together. The PAC stayed on the periphery of Plot 4 while the ANC stayed on the periphery of Zone 9. It must be noted that the South African refugees, unlike others were mainly males. They did not reside as families, men and women. They were just like soldiers in their barracks. However I don't recall any inter-refugee conflicts; despite the separation they mixed well.

There was an open ground which served as the refectory and cooking place for South African refugees. They convened there during meal times and every evening they met in the open space and chanted ANC slogans and sang freedom songs, which were characterized mostly by names such as Oliver Tambo, Chris Hani and Nelson Mandela. AK47 and Scorpion were mentioned in the songs as war tools. The songs talked about killing Boers and taking back 'our country'. We even learnt such songs and sang them in school, mainly during school athletic or sports competitions.

There were days when SA refugees were taken for an outing with a truck to Francistown. There they spent the day whiling off or even shopping.

The SA refugees houses' walls had the ANC logo or emblem drawn on them; there were drawings of Hani, Mandela and Tambo and drawings of Guns and then labelled scorpion or AK47. Some walls had hand grenades and several other war artefacts drawn on them.

I remember one day there was an SA refugee strike and the BCR offices were burnt down by a petrol bomb. I cannot possibly outline what their grievances were.

The SA refugees seemed engulfed in the struggle than anyone else, they also feared for their lives hence they used false names for fear of being tracked down. For example some called themselves Power and Lovebeat; I am mentioning these two because they used to teach us martial arts.

Refugees who had stayed for a very long time were then allowed Botswana citizenship. Most Zimbabweans became Batswana, some stayed in Dukwi village while most of them resided in Shashemooke. When Mandela was released from prison, most of the South African refugees we lived with went home. I must admit everyone missed them; their singing and some of them were our church mates. In school we were just left singing some of their songs such as 'Mkonto we sizwe'

Refugees taught me one big lesson, and that is tolerance. In my life I have always managed to make friends with people who were different from the majority; these are the disabled, the old and people from other ethnic groups and races.

Refugees contributed immensely on my education. In school all my Design and Technology projects were inspired by things I saw at the camp or things we used to play with. I just re-lived my memories in the camp through materials provided for me at school. Everyone thought I was very intelligent, they did not know I was just a collection of refugees' ideas.

The refugees shaped most people's interest in Agriculture; almost everyone had a small garden in the backyard tending some vegetables. I also developed zeal for working with my own hands.

## Thupane, Shirley

*Mrs Shirley Thupane is a Motswana from Kanye who felt sorry for the refugees and started helping them with food and other logistical matters.*

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I am a Motswana in Botswana, I was just helping the refugees, am just a Motswana from Kanye. I was feeling sorry for them. Long back at the time, when they started in 1976, most people came to Botswana, as you know we go around meeting people, I was staying in town at the time, I was introduced to these people and they told me that they were here and they are running away from this and that. These people told each other that there is a lady that offers assistance and so on. And since am a person who likes feeling sorry for people, they came to my house and I offered them food. Life at that time was not as difficult as it is today, I was able to feed them because things were cheap.

It was a Motswana who introduced these people to me; as you know you would meet people in parties and this person told me these people's problems and we knew how the Boers were treating them from the TV, and I knew that these poor people were suffering and did not have relatives here. They told me their problems and how they were suffering, I felt sorry for them and every weekend they came to my house

I did not want to interfere with their things, as you know they were from two parties, some were from ANC and others from PAC and also amongst themselves, they did not trust one another, I was not very much involved but I knew they had a problem. I knew I could help where I could manage because life at that time was cheap and by looking at how much I was earning. These people came in numbers of about 13,14,15; am not talking about 2 people, but I could manage to give them food. My sitting room was full of people and sometimes my friends asked me if I would be able to manage and I told them that I could, because I also felt that I needed to help them. They called me their mother and if they did not have accommodation they told me.

They were staying in some houses near the station and were given food, but the food was not enough. They were not staying with me, but I bought them food. I could not give them accommodation because I was staying in a small house and I also had my family.

They just told me what was happening and told me how the Boers were treating them.

They were not staying in a refugee camp, they were just given accommodation in people's houses like Bontleng. If I had a house I would have accommodated them. Some were staying in Mochudi others in Francistown as you know. There were others who were a bit elderly like Makoko, and Ziikalala (Snokie) he is on SABC now. These people brought them to me when they arrived, but the government of Botswana was helping them. There was also a council of refugees They were very happy with the

government of Botswana's assistance. Botswana is very peaceful and they did not have any complaints.

They were very happy about how Botswana was treating them, and did not complain about anything at all. They were only complaining about the Boers from where they came. Botswana were really helping them and I also heard that some were given money to look after them. I did not get any of the money though.

The people I helped were not schooling, they were older people; most of them were already at a tertiary level and most of them went overseas. It was not schooling like Mater spei or GSS; some went to Nigeria to train as guerrillas to fight South African Boers. Even the lady who was killed during the raids, she was a social worker so these people were already professionals. As I told that these people did not trust each other, they sold each other out to the Boers, a lot of houses were burned in Bontleng and we were asking ourselves how the Boers knew about them. A lot of them were killed There were no elements of xenophobia at the time. Botswana, as you know, even though they do not like foreigners, it is foreigners from the North, they do not like, Zimbabweans and so on; but they liked those from South Africa because as you know South Africans and Botswana are relatives. There was no feeling of dislike; they did not have any complaints, they were happy. Sometimes I went to see them and they were fine. At that time I was working at the National Assembly.

As you know Botswana are sympathetic people and they made favourable policies. That is why they made an office especially for them. If the policies were not favourable they would not have done so. So the policies were there and they were favourable.

I do not know about the treatment of refugees today, but sometimes we hear them complaining on the radio. I only know about those of a long time back because they are those that I stayed with and helped.

I do not keep in touch with the people I accommodated; but it does not matter because I just wanted to help them, and not that they should give me something in return.

## Tlou, Stephen

[Dukwi; June 2008]

*Stephen Tlou is 39 years old, and he was born of refugee parents from Zimbabwe, in Semolale, Botswana. He lived in several parts of Botswana as a child and finally he resided in the Dukwi refugee camp.*

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My parents came to Botswana as refugees from Zimbabwe and settled in the camp. I did not experience the war in Zimbabwe; I was born here in Botswana. I spent part of my childhood in Semolale where I was born. My parents' intermarriage with Batswana saw me living in different parts of this country, until eventually following my other relatives in the camp.

Educationally I observed that Zimbabweans liked education and schooling. They had a school of their own called Sizanani meaning 'help each other.' This was a primary school, but it later became a secondary school before Dukwi CJSS was built. In Sizanani there were Zimbabwean volunteers who were teaching the young ones, however the government of Botswana paid them for their services. This was mainly a Zimbabwean school. There were Ndebele books which were used to teach children, but later it was stopped and every refugee child embraced the Botswana curriculum. Setswana might have been difficult for students, but they liked it due to their enthusiasm for learning. Most pupils were very happy to learn the new language. Both boys and girls were equally energetic about schooling; all children attended school and no one remained at home. Student discipline was impressive and there were no cases of leaving school for political activities.

Adjusting in the camp was not easy for some refugees. Some Zimbabwean youth were without their parents in the camp so sometimes they tried to escape to go back home to their parents despite the political instability. When caught and brought back to the camp, such youths were placed under foster care or under any volunteering individual who was willing to raise them as his/her own children. Most people escaped at night because it took a long time before it was noticed that they were not around.

The refugees coexisted with Batswana without any problems. Refugees felt more comfortable and safer in Botswana. Hence they married Batswana. When some had to go back to their home countries, they did not agree because of the hospitality in Botswana. Today that is when we are seeing refugee hatred by Batswana, maybe it is because of new twists in political consciousness, but back then Batswana and the refugees accepted each other. I played football with other refugees and Batswana; I was a goal keeper then.

Refugees from the different nations mixed well with each other, however the South African refugees' commitment to this interaction was very suspicious. They were always together as a group and never mixed like other refugees were doing. They could attend football matches but after that they always re-grouped and walked to their residences as South Africans. The South Africans were even divided among

themselves along party lines. The ANC and PAC members were not staying The ANC were always together singing liberation songs.

Though I might not be sure, among the South African refugees there were Xhosas and Zulus while the Zimbabwean refugees were mainly Ndebele and a few Shonas.

The South African refugees were always complaining and claiming they were not taken into consideration. During that time most of them wanted re-settlement; they wanted to live in Canada and America, but mostly they were obsessed with re-settling in Australia. Some wanted scholarships. Hence they did strike burning down the BCR offices around 1991 and 1992.

The refugees were highly supported by the refugee office in Botswana; they were all involved in farming. South Africans refugees kept rabbits, pigs and chicken. Others were involved in gardening and field crops. Refugees were agriculturally empowered and sometimes students from other parts of Botswana toured the camp to gain agricultural insights.

The refugees resided in different zones, but these zones were meant to monitor reception of food rations. Different zones received their rations on different days to avoid overcrowding. Food rations were received on a monthly basis and family size was taken into consideration when this food was distributed. Clothes were given out after a much longer period, something like 6 months. Each zone had a leader and if a refugee left the camp they had to notify the zone leader.

Refugees had different methods of trying to ease off the thought of the struggle. There were various forms of entertainment within the camp: movies, music bands and sports. There was even a very famous team which was known as Bubezi, which means lion. The refugees also went to church with Batswana

I cannot certainly say all South African refugees left in 1994. I know one who was an engineer in the Soda Ash mine, he never went back but instead he was granted citizenship and continued to live in Botswana.

## Tsholofelo Morake, Mrs

[Gaborone]

*Mrs Tsholofelo Morake was a senior officer who was working in the hospital during the liberation struggle. She explains briefly of her experiences with freedom fighters who came for treatment at the hospital in Francistown.*

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We were living in Francistown at that time, and I was working at the hospital as a senior officer. Occasionally freedom fighters and others with injuries came for treatment at the hospital; some of them had lost their limbs. We lived in constant fear of attacks by the Rhodesian forces. On one occasion there was a shoot-out between the Rhodesians and our Police Mobile Unit. We were instructed to turn off the lights early in the evening to avoid being detected by the Rhodesians. So by eight o'clock at night, we had eaten our meals and gone to bed. We strictly observed this routine.

I recall the occasion when our soldiers were ambushed by the Rhodesians at Lesoma resulting in many being killed. We were told at the hospital to be ready to attend to the injured. There was total mobilisation of staff, including doctors and nurses, amongst others, in to prepare them to receive the injured. However, the hospital did not receive the injured that were taken elsewhere. We were ready to assist. Although we were afraid that Rhodesians might attack us, our patriotism and desire to help the injured made us to ignore the fact that we were putting ourselves in danger of being attacked. There was that war and we rose to the occasion.

We were sympathetic to the people of Zimbabwe who were fighting for their freedom. We also knew that the war could spill into Botswana. So we assisted the freedom fighters as best as we could with the hope that they would defeat their oppressors.

Those who fled to Botswana told us how they suffered under the white rule in Rhodesia. We could see that it was true because many of them were injured, but they struggled to reach Botswana for help.

Another thing I remember is that, they used to tell us that they survived in the bush because the people in the country side fed them and protected them by hiding them, so the enemy would not find them. The people in the country side warned them about the whereabouts of the enemy and their movements. I recall one freedom fighter stating that on one occasion he hid under a bushy pumpkin plant in the arable land and the Rhodesians could not find him. Generally, the Rhodesians ill-treated Batswana living on the border alleging that they were hiding freedom fighters. There was a lot of harassment, especially along the border areas.

We saw the Manama Mission students. They were many. Some parents came to persuade them to return to Rhodesia, but only a few returned with their parents. Most of them refused to Zimbabwe, and said that they were going to join the liberation movements.

Concerning our soldiers and the Rhodesian soldiers, our soldiers were sometimes attacked by white soldiers from Zimbabwe. I recall an occasion when they attacked our soldiers at night. We lived near the army base by Ngangabgwe Hill. We could see traces of bullets as fire was exchanged. Eventually the Rhodesians retreated. It was these incidents which made us live in constant fear. That was why people were not allowed to move about at night in Francistown. There were also incidents of kidnappings that we heard about. There was one painful incident which occurred. Our hospital driver went to Tsamaya village to collect a patient. On his return, he found that the Rhodesians had massacred two people. Their remains were brought to the hospital. It is alleged that these people had been kidnapped and then murdered.

Despite its precarious position, Botswana assisted the liberation movements because the country sympathised with the suffering people of Zimbabwe, who were being oppressed by the whites.

## Vanqa, Mrs

[Gaborone; February 2007]

*Mrs Vanqa, worked with the young people that were coming in from South Africa to Botswana as refugees in 1976, under the YWCA. She was employed to counsel the girls who were part of the refugees. She tells of her experience with the youngsters.*

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It was in the 1970's, particularly after 1976, when the YWCA was requested to do something about the large numbers of young people who were coming in. It was worse with girls, particularly due to personal hygiene issues. A lot of them were about 13-14 years of age. Mrs Molefhe was employed as the Programme Officer, and we had to offer counselling, as some needed it badly.

The accommodation problem was also serious, so we looked for a place, later to be known as WAZA, an acronym for Women of Azania. That was the house where they were accommodated, which was initially a disused farm in Broadhurst. There were other girls who came from Namibia and Southern Rhodesia and they all lived together there. It was mostly girls who were accommodated there, while boys were just there temporarily until the Botswana Council for refugees could place them somewhere else.

We now had to start looking for something for them to do as well. We started Art classes, and Thami Mnyele was very active in this. We also offered book-keeping and secretarial courses, and we connected with Pitman's so that they could offer certificates. We even offered sewing lessons, and once a month we sold the items that were sown in the Centre; it was called "Why not" shop. The current Centre opened in 1984. We had a crèche, and some of the refugees worked there, people such as Jeff Baqwa. Actually, we decided to open the program to all young people in Botswana. We did this purposefully so that we could encourage integration. Some of these young people made such strong relationships and formed such strong bonds that they have lasted long after that period of their lives. Most of the teachers were refugees themselves.

Life in exile was very difficult, and as I mentioned already, many of the refugees were very young. They needed mothering, and this was provided by people like Mrs Molefhe and Mrs Esther Mosinyi. Most of the refugees were mobile, but others were married here. We also did fund-raising for those who were taken to Dukwi. They got donation of clothes, but we also received clothes from overseas. The Quakers also worked with them to help with fund raising to buy them the basic necessities. Sheila Willet, in particular, used to work with us. Trips were organized for the YWCA to go to Dukwe to see how the young people were living there; the conditions were not very good, but they could not leave as they had to have a job or be in school to be able to avoid living in Dukwe. Those who had relatives could go and live with them and did not have to go to Dukwe. The people who did not have to go to Dukwe were people such as panel beaters who had set up their own enterprises

There were real security risks involved, and we used to be threatened with bombs. One day we all got a scare of our lives, because somebody reported that there was a bomb in the Centre, and we were all running around scared. Thankfully, it was just a hoax.

## Vanqa, Themba

*Prof. Themba Vanqa left Port Elizabeth and migrated to Botswana in 1958, where he was accommodated by friends whom he had known in South Africa. After completing his education he continued with his profession as a teacher for both the refugees and Batswana nationals.*

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We left Port Elizabeth in South Africa where we were working around the close of the 1950s, and the beginning of the 1960s. The reason for our departure was that the Boer government was sending Administrators to schools to teach people Afrikaans, so that teachers could then be in a position to teach in this language. Prior to 1948, political pressure was not so much, but after 1948 apartheid was institutionalized. In 1955, I had finished my studies at Grahamstown. After 1958, we came to feel the pressure because there were many laws and regulations which were applied. Things were particularly bad in the Eastern Cape, due to the activities of people like Mandela and others. When we came to Botswana, we were accommodated by friends that we had known previously.

There had been earlier migrants, people such as bo-Sikunyana, Tsoebebe, Gugushe, Mei and Mqum. Apart from South African refugees, there were others from places like Lesotho as well. In Botswana we were also with people like the Lupondwanas, Mzondekis who had come after us, and they went to Moeng.

We came here because we already knew of many South Africans who were already here. In fact, there were many South Africans at Moeng College, and we could have even gone there too. There were teachers there such as Petze, Mokoka, and Mkhize. But others went to Swaziland and Lesotho. Still many went to places like Ghana and Nigeria, where the salaries were reportedly good. One chap by the name of Nqcobongwana left Port Elizabeth and went to Nigeria, then proceeded to Manchester in England, and then to Botswana where he ended up working at the Tonota College of Education.

Teachers were not necessarily a political unit, even though they may have been members of political units. Even those who were going to places like Nigeria and Ghana were not an organized lot; they went of their own accord. However there was another category of people, even prior to 1976, but after 1948, who had come to work and were passing on, and were sponsored by political organizations. The linkage that we had with them came from the fact that they were people we had previously known. Some of them had been imprisoned, while others left because they were feeling the pressure. Some of us who had come earlier accommodated them. People like Njobe who was a Maths teacher went on to Zambia, and after some time decided to go home, then felt even more pressure and had to leave again. This second lot was generally politicized. There was also a chap called Rasekwala who came from Jo'burg. The Boers always wanted the migrants to cooperate with them, and questioned those whom they suspected wished to leave. But the exodus kept mounting all the time, and by the close of 1960s, the volume of migrants was really intensifying.

## White, Songai

[Lesoma]

*Songai White was born in Lesoma and attended school in the same area. Although he was very young when the liberation struggle was going on, he remembers some pertinent issues that he could recall and he tell them as part of his experience as a boy, as he lived on the border with Zimbabwe.*

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My name is Songai White. I was born in 1964 and I don't know the day and month of my birth. I was born here in Lesoma and attended primary school here in Lesoma, but I did not finish school.

During the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe I saw a few things happening here in Lesoma but I was young and did not understand certain things. But what I understand was that my family and a few other Basarwa were staying near the border. Our parents were informed about the possibility of troubles before the massacre of the 16 Botswana soldiers.

The Botswana police and other government officials came here and told us that Zimbabwe freedom fighters were going to fight the white soldiers in Zimbabwe. The white soldiers were along the border and we moved from where we were staying close to the border. Our plots were close to the border and we moved to the higher land, some few kilometres from the border.

I used to see the Zimbabwean freedom fighters; they were called guerrillas. These guerrillas used to come to the village but they never carried any weapons. They used to come in the evening to ask for food. One day, around twelve people came to ask for food. They looked hungry, so I cooked papa without relish for them and they ate it. They used to say that they were fighting for us. They also used to come to my mother's place to ask for washing powder and tobacco and we used to offer them some. There were freedom fighters who also came to the village to drink traditional beer.

I think they bought it because there were no complaints from the people who were selling the beer. They also used to ask for it and they never forced the people to give them beer.

After drinking the beer they went back into the bush where they had camps. One of their camps was not far from where we were staying. It was at the highland and we used to see fire when guerrillas were cooking in the evening. The police and the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) had a tendency of coming into the village, and sometimes chasing away these guerrillas. They did not want them to walk about freely in the village. What I can't confirm was whether they knew that guerrillas had camps in Botswana.

We used to hear gun shots inside Zimbabwe but the bullets never reached us here. On the day of the massacre gunshots were heard inside Zimbabwe. What we heard from our elders was that freedom fighters attacked the white soldiers. It was in the morning. That was the first time we saw freedom fighters carrying guns in the village.

They were running towards their camp base. They passed by our place running at very high speed. They then hid in the bush and a helicopter came into the village. I think they were searching for the freedom fighters but they did not see them. People came into the village from the fields running. Others ran into the bush towards direction of Kasane. The headman Jameson Kelesitswe sent my cousins Gure and Uwe to go and call the BDF. They went to Kazungula and came with the soldiers. Uwe and Gure were older than me and understood some things better. The soldiers came with three Land Rovers and went to the area where the freedom fighters were running to. After some time we heard gun shots and there was fire where the Botswana soldiers had gone to. Gure came running with other BDF soldiers, some of whom were injured. Gure was not injured. When he arrived he told his father Jameson that they were attacked and Uwe and some soldiers had remained behind; Uwe never came back and we knew he was killed.

## Willet, Sheila

*Sheila Willet, worked with refugees under a project that was started by the Society of Friends (Quakers) in 1979, in Gaborone. She resigned her work in the University of Botswana and Swaziland, and started working with the Botswana Council for Refugees and the UNHCR. She later formed a committee which worked with other agencies connected with refugees in Botswana,*

I started working with the refugees on a Project that was administered under the Society of Friends (Quakers) in 1979. This was started by the Quakers in the UK who had an interest in Southern Africa. When they got to hear about the enormous refugee problem in Botswana, they sent someone out to see if something could be done, especially in education. The Quaker work started was largely carried out at the Kagisong Centre in Mogoditshane

My involvement with Kagisano commenced when I decided to resign my work at the University of Botswana and Swaziland. I found a house at the Village in Gaborone, near the BTC. There I started working with the Botswana Council for Refugees and the UNHCR. I then formed a Committee called the Kagisano Society, which worked with the Lutheran World Federation, the Botswana Council for Refugees, the Botswana Christian Council, the International Red Cross, UN agencies and the Quakers. All these bodies were connected with the refugees and had representation in this Committee. The house opened as a short stay Centre. The Americans had a program through which they were sending people to the States; so initially they would come to us. We also worked with the Special Branch, as there were security matters involved during these short stays, whilst papers were still being processed. Some of the refugees were sent to Lobatse Secondary School before Dukwe started.

In relation to South Africans, who were part of the 1976 struggle, the government had some of them staying at a farmhouse in Broadhurst. The farm also housed Namibians, Angolans and Zimbabweans. At my place in the Village, we had turned a garage into a dormitory. My maid, Mma Emily also helped out; the Quaker Peace and Service paid her allowance, and met the costs of her food and rental. At the house, which was called G9, the first people who stayed there were Zimbabweans.

Some refugees found accommodation privately, and others were staying with people (refugees) who had come earlier. The ANC had their own place and some South Africans stayed there. Most of the South Africans belonged to SASO. We may have had some ANC members staying in our accommodation but we did not know since we did not ask. The ANC generally did not come to us, as they were worried that there could be spies amongst the refugees. The Namibians belonged to SWANU. We used to run evening programs with films and got South Africans, like David Housen for their entertainment.

We also ran counselling programs for the youth with problems, such as those who ran out of money before their allowances were paid, lack of money for food and rental, and general social problems within the community. A lot of them were

struggling and were not understood by Batswana. Some had been tortured and lost hearing, others had been in prison.

We had a kind of a “slush” fund, and we got financial help from the Lutheran World Federation. Out of this Fund, we were able to finance some of them to start businesses, for example Angolan refugees.

As we carried on with the work, women and children started appearing; eventually we had the Quaker Peace Service and a young Australian to help with babysitting. The space was getting smaller, and meanwhile, we had a woman in the Red Cross and she advised that we should see Chief Dihutso, who was tremendously helpful. He finally allocated us a plot, which was on the outskirts of Mogoditshane. We got money from the Quaker Service in the UK and also fundraised with the European Union, who actually gave us the bulk of the funds. We were able to build houses for staff, a dormitory, a kitchen and a dining room. We soon had to build a crèche, which was also used by the village. We started getting some young white South Africans as well, but they were not conscientious objectors. They were a mixed bunch and they all fitted in; one of them was Mike Hamlin. It was during the time when Americans were also resettling refugees in the States. They were resettling mainly Angolans, because they were fighting a Communist regime. They also took a few South Africans.

Batswana were more accepting at the beginning. After 1985, Batswana did not want refugees nearby. In Mogoditshane, after the raids, Chief Dihutso held a meeting to explain to the community that they were not being targeted. Chief Dihutso was very helpful, and this helped the villagers to understand.

The Botswana Defence Force soldiers came in the morning to search for other soldiers who were missing and found them dead and Uwe was also found. I was young and did not attend his funeral in Kasane. If I remember well, he was buried the following day because he was rotting. Rumours are that the BDF found some guerrillas hiding in the bush and the freedom fighters did not agree to be disarmed. Some BDF soldiers said that they should be left alone, but the commander insisted that they should surrender their weapons. When they were discussing some guerrillas ran away and those who remained were disarmed, and some of their cache was taken away. What I heard was that, as the BDF went back into their vehicles, they were immediately attacked. The only person who could have told you the true story is Gure but he is late.

The White soldiers never came to the village on foot. The time we saw them was when they came chasing some guerrillas. They had employed some people as informers to give them information.

There was one man, a Mosarwa who was an informer and was paid by the white soldiers. This man had a girlfriend and this girl fell in love with one of the freedom fighters. The girl knew that the boyfriend was serving as an informer for the white soldiers. One day this man found a photo of a freedom fighter and wanted to know what was happening. He beat up the girl and then the girl told the freedom fighter that his boyfriend was working as a spy for the whites. The freedom fighters came in

the evening and took him away to the bush and beat him thoroughly; they thought he was dead and left him there. He was found by herd boys who reported the matter to the police. When the police went there they learnt that he was beaten up for working with soldiers of the white regimes. He was ordered to leave the village, and we were told he went to the mines in South Africa and he died there. I did not mention their names because I don't want trouble with their relatives. I can't remember the year that all this happened.

Thanks.

## Woman (2) - Anonymous

[Gaborone; November 2008]

*The Anonymous Woman (2) grew up in Francistown, Botswana, an area which was highly politicized and she grew up with children of famous politicians who migrated to Botswana as refugees. Later when she grew up she continued interacting with the liberation struggle and got married to a refugee. Since she was a media person by profession she also became a courier of information. Whenever there was critical information which might be helpful to the community in which she lived, including the community of refugees, she transmitted it. She also relates her life as a government employee and her support for the liberation struggle, and the risks she took by allowing her house to be used as a transit area for refugees and liberation movement members.*

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Botswana was obliged to help the liberation struggle because of its position in the region. In Setswana, and other cultures, when a neighbour's house is on fire, you are obliged to help lest tomorrow it is yours. It was also the humanity of Botswana to help in the liberation struggle (botho). Even politically, Botswana was obliged to help as it was one of the few politically independent countries in the midst of oppressive countries.

We have long been associated with South Africa. We used to have students educated there; training of some of our nurses and medical staff was done in South Africa. Because of the oppression in that country some of the people fled and became refugees here and those with skills were employed in our civil service.

I grew up under that political environment – I grew up in Francistown and it used to be a highly politicized area with Pan Africanism, especially in the 1950's and 1960's until we got our independence. Our homestead was neighbours with that of Matante, who was the leader of Botswana Peoples Party, which was challenging the Botswana Democratic Party. In our area in White City, Francistown, there were many refugees who lived there and belonged to the ANC and PAC, like Rre Seperepere, Rre Ndlovu, and many others who I can easily name. We lived not far from the famous White House, the house that housed refugees with personalities such as Nthite. Francistown was developed in terms of its interaction with people with other political ideas. We grew up playing with these people's children, and we came to know that their parents came here because they were oppressed in their own countries. We therefore had to accommodate some of those people.

So from long time ago, I interacted with the liberation struggle, not so much because I eventually got married to a South African refugee, who was fighting for liberation, but because the political ideas of liberation had always been part of my growing up. This of course was coupled with humanity (botho) of generally wanting to help other people.

Rre Seperepere belonged to the African National Congress. He was a representative of the ANC and used to accommodate new arrivals before they proceeded to their missions. He was in charge of the transit area.

The different liberation movements were fighting as a united people fighting for one cause. These were like one big family fighting for one cause. The White House is now demolished, but people can show you where it used to be, especially at Blue Town, people could show you who used to live there.

Mophane Club used to be the meeting place and when it started, it used to be associated with whites until bo Rre Muchekwane came into the picture and changed its outlook. Other members included, teachers such as bo Rasebotsa. It was just like Notwane Club today. In the 1970's Mophane became a popular disco place and the bombing incident happened during a disco party at night. Someone told me that when the bomb exploded, it was at a time when a popular song of the time, "Remake the World", by Jimmy Cliff was playing. It was terrible. I know some people who were there, and when you talk about it, they start crying. The bomb was the orchestration of Smiths Security Forces.

Regarding my contribution to the struggle. As you know, I am a media person; as a media person you end up as a courier person, a courier of information. Whenever there was critical information which might be helpful to the community in which I lived, including the community of refugees, I transmitted it. The community was called Isandhlwana Revolutionary Movement and was a Black Consciousness Movement; this group came at the time of Onkgopotse Tiro, Harry Nengwekhulu. Some of those people who set up Isandhlwana had been well trained in different professions, like my husband did four years of medical school; some were trained as teachers and ended up teaching at such secondary schools as GSS; so this group of BCM was a group of very literate people. They started a newspaper, using the old typewriter which I still have at my house. They used stencils which are also still there. You gather information and when you come across crucial information, you pass it on to them. You also tip them if you see something so that they should be alert. You gave them information that could help them in the liberation struggle or information, such as scholarships, that could help them to further their education. Isandhlwana was neither PAC nor ANC, it was BCM, mostly composed of members of the June 16 Soweto Uprising, when most of them skipped the border and came to Botswana, (Steve Biko era). I used to go to the UN office, read around and identify possible scholarships and let them be aware of possibilities for scholarships.

It was not easy. It was a time when the ANC was making inroads, and was fighting for recognition from other South African organizations. So, if you were not a member of the ANC they pushed you out of the scholarship programme. Things got better with the coming of the Nigerian High Commissioner, Mme. Ibrahim. Isandhlwana appealed to her, and a group of them managed to go to study in Nigeria, for a variety of professional careers. Makgolo who had trained in Nigeria in Museums ended up working in the Botswana Museum, and now he is the Director of Museums in South Africa. Others are holding important government positions in South Africa. Some ended up getting married here, like Kgotso Lebata who is married to Motsepe's daughter. Mr Lebata used to run the shoe fix companies in Gaborone and also used

to run dry cleaners. He is now a Motswana owns a farm. The older generation looked after the younger ones who came in 1976, under the ANC Youth member. Tsietzi Mashinini lived with Mme. Mosinyi in Bontleng before he moved on to Liberia. The SASO group, learnt from those older members from Zululand, because education there was more advanced compared to that of Johannesburg or Soweto.

My house was one of the transit areas because I used to accommodate young girls, coming as refugees. We had to run around and report to the police before we facilitated their movement northward. During the raids it was uncomfortable because one was not sure whether one's house would be bombed or not, since I was helping the refugees so much.

During the 1985 bombing I was not there, but I lived with my brothers and sisters and my husband; my house became a protected target, because there were so many young men who went in and out of it, that it was beginning to be associated with military training.

Sometimes other Batswana were hostile to refugees because they thought that they would bring them trouble because there was the possibility of being bombed. My house was patrolled and protected by the Botswana Defence Force (BDF), but I didn't even know it until I heard it from other people. The government knew who was involved with the liberation movement and gave them due protection. Regarding my relationship with the refugee man who stayed in my house, a lot of people did not even know that I am a Motswana; they thought that I was a South African. I also found the level of appreciation of political issues very low in Gaborone, compared to where I came from in Francistown. Besides, being a journalist I was aware of political issues. I went through a difficult time because once you associated with refugees, you lose friends and relatives because people do not appreciate your position and they end up calling you names like "refugee girl". My parents were not initially supportive of my marriage.

As far as courier-ship was concerned, as a journalist I undertook a lot of trips overseas. I carried literature to and from overseas to share with comrades. They used to give me a list of books to buy when I was overseas, and I used to use my own money to buy such books. I was never sent to do any errands in South Africa. We still have some of these books and we are keeping them for posterity. This would be our Isandhlwana history. We are looking at possibilities of publishing a book with Rampholo Molefe on our lives here.

We had two commune houses in Mogoditshane under Isandhlwana. A commune house is where all refugees lived. My husband had to quit his job as a teacher at GSS because he had to choose between working and working for the liberation struggle. He left and was running transport taxis which was not that much in terms of remuneration.

I know that arms and ammunition used to pass through Botswana and some weapons were kept in my own house. My house ended up being used as a base, it was dangerous, but I was saved by the fact that I worked for government. We transported

the arms that were in our house, easily as we were running public transport. We transported them through a taxi, and we used to go through road blocks with them because the police hardly ever searched taxis. The arms were transported to certain areas, (masimo) close to the borders; such areas as Tlhareselele where there are Basotho residents. Sometimes he would undertake reconnaissance missions in these areas. Even my brothers, with whom I stayed in the house, never knew that there were guns in the house because we were so discreet.

I did not have the support of my marriage from my parents, and it was difficult. My husband's parents were not here; finally his mother and aunt came. In the end we just had to sign ourselves, but my parents cancelled it, until Minister Makgekgenene intervened. Finally when his parents came and my parents saw them and were assured that their child was not totally lost, they agreed and I got married.

