

“Yesterday it was One Man One Vote, Today it is One Man One Gun:” Competing
Nationalist Narratives and the Zimbabwe African People’s Union, 1961-1980

by

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Abstract

This thesis is a political history of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), a significant, yet neglected, African nationalist party active in Zimbabwe's liberation war between 1961 and 1980. A political history of ZAPU offers an opportunity to challenge and problematize entrenched narratives which privilege the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) as the singular, legitimate expression of African nationalism during the struggle to end minority rule in Zimbabwe.

ZAPU has been criticized by politicians, war veterans, and scholars as a toothless, opportunistic party. This study disrupts this strain of historiography by arguing that ZANU's victory was far from inevitable. By incorporating ZAPU's substantial political and military contributions, a clearer picture of African nationalism in Zimbabwe emerges: ZAPU provides historians of Zimbabwe with a discursive tool to explore how resistance to colonial authority involved complex, contested processes, rather than a teleological movement from oppression to independence through a single party.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis is a political history of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), and seeks to explore the party's critical, multifaceted contribution to the liberation of Zimbabwe from minority rule. After the first popular elections in Zimbabwe in February 1980, in which Robert Mugabe and his party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU) (PF), won a resounding victory, historians, political scientists, and other writers have tended to marginalize ZAPU's role in the liberation struggle. Indeed, in the decade following independence, numerous authors, such as Martin and Johnson, evinced narratives which collapsed the complexities of African nationalism in Zimbabwe, and erased or diminished contributions of other political and military fronts, privileging ZANU as the only legitimate expression of African resistance to settler rule.¹ Furthermore, ZANU (PF)'s sustained hegemonic political dominance in Zimbabwe has excluded competing narratives that seek to incorporate the contributions of other groups which participated in the protracted, messy, bloody war to end minority rule. Indeed, ZANU (PF), which broke away from ZAPU in 1963 following an acrimonious leadership dispute, sought to cement its position as the legitimate inheritor of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe's postcolonial political order by eliminating threats posed to its social and political supremacy, most especially ZAPU and its predominately Ndebele base in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces.²

¹ David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981).

² Between 1982 and 1987, the Zimbabwe National Army's (ZNA) Fifth Brigade, which was composed of former ZANU cadres trained by North Korean military elements and led by Zimbabwe's current president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, conducted *Operation Gukuruhundi* in a supposed effort to eliminate ZAPU "dissidents." The operation, however, amounted to ethnic cleansing in an attempt to eradicate opposition to

Authors who privilege the role of ZANU in the process to liberate Zimbabwe from minority rule tend to view contributions by other political and military fronts with a great deal of suspicion, if not outright hostility. The concomitant effects of scholars sympathetic to ZANU (PF) and the party's quasi-official narrative of even, relatively uninterrupted progress towards liberation, and ZANU (PF)'s post-independence efforts to create a *de jure* one-party state have obscured ZAPU's role in the liberation struggle, and distorted the contested processes which ended minority rule at the negotiation table at Lancaster House in 1979. This work seeks to contribute to the historiography of Southern African liberation movements by interrogating ZAPU's role in the liberation war, tracing the party's origins in earlier Southern Rhodesian African nationalist groups, through to its defeat at the polls in 1980. A study of ZAPU sheds light on the contested, complex nature of Zimbabwean nationalism, and significantly disrupts historiographical strains which espouse uninterrupted progress towards liberation. Indeed, a political history of ZAPU affords scholars of Zimbabwe's liberation war an innovative discursive and analytical approach that draws attention to the limitations, failures, and contested nature of African nationalism's engagement with, and resistance to, settler colonial rule.

Considering the privileged place enjoyed by ZANU (PF) in the historiography of Zimbabwe and its extraordinary presence in the current, lived experiences of Zimbabweans, a political history of ZAPU offers an opportunity to complicate and question the struggle against the colonial regime in Zimbabwe, and challenge ZANU

ZANU hegemony, with an estimated 20,000 predominately Ndebele civilians killed by government forces. For greater elaboration on *Gukurahundi*, see especially *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980 to 1988* (Harare, The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, 1997), and Nicholas Baker, "Violent Victors and Political Precedents: Operation *Gukurahundi* and the Foundations of ZANU Hegemony," unpublished paper, 2015.

narratives which espouse a teleological, inevitable movement from oppression to independence through the efforts of a single party.

African Nationalism and Resistance in Zimbabwe

In many ways, however, this thesis may appear to belong to an older generation of Zimbabwean historiography, which found its greatest expression in the 1970s and 1980s.³ The historiography of African nationalist politics in this period stressed the importance of political elites and often took for granted the colonial state as the locus of relatively stable power, able to assert its dominance in social, political, and cultural spheres without adapting to, or incorporating, the experiences of their colonial subjects in modes of governance. This has obvious epistemological consequences for studies of resistance to colonial authority: in this framework, colonial power produces dichotomous categories of colonial violence, in all its manifestations, on one hand, and subjects of colonial violence on the other. Similarly, this historiography, by virtue of its general conception of how state power is instituted and maintained, created neat binaries of resistance and

³ Southern African colonial and postcolonial historiography occupies a relatively unique place in the study of African coloniality. The subcontinent, very broadly, achieved independence at a late stage relative to other continental regions. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Melber in particular note, these temporal conditions allowed scholars interesting interpretive frameworks which often incorporated new and old historiographical approaches to studies of African nationalism. See, for example, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Rethinking *Gukurahundi* and *Chimurenga*: A Critique of Partisan National History," *African Studies Review* 55:3 (2012), 1-26; Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Wendy Willems, "Making Sense of Cultural Nationalism and the Politics of Commemoration under the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35:4 (2009), 945-965; Henning Melber, "Southern African Liberation Movements as Governments and the Limits to Liberation," *Review of African Political Economy* 121 (2009), 453-461; Henning Melber, "Post-Independence Authoritarianism," *Development and Cooperation* 35:1 (2008), 378-381.

oppression, which pass over the basic ways in which settler colonial regimes reconstituted their forms of governance and “their reigning ideologies in interaction with their subjects.”⁴

In the early historiography of Zimbabwe’s liberation war, “interaction” was most often identified by scholars in the binary form of undifferentiated settler oppression, and colonial subjects who had disparate socioeconomic, regional, ethnic backgrounds, but resisted colonialism by strikingly similar means. This historiography collapsed Zimbabwean populations into “masses,” which afforded historians and political scientists theoretical approaches and discursive lenses through which it was possible to explore how such a varied population could engage in “mass resistance,” and how “resistance” brought groups of Zimbabweans with competing interests together with a vision to forming a cohesive postcolonial political order.⁵

Cooper provides a crucial intervention in this historiography when he notes the temptation “to read the history of the [late colonial period] as the inevitable triumph of nationalism and to see each social movement taking place within a colony – be it by peasants, women, by workers, or by religious groups – as another piece to be integrated

⁴ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 51.

⁵ See for example Terence Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia: A Study in African Resistance* (London: Heinemann, 1967); Ranger, “Connexions between ‘Primary Resistance’ Movements and Mass Nationalism in East and Central Africa,” *Journal of African History* 9:3 (1969), 437-453; Ranger, “The People and African Resistance,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 4:1 (1977), 125-146; Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* (London: James Currey, 1985); Elizabeth Schmidt, “Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe,” *Signs* 16:4 (1991), 732-756; Andre Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?* (London: Zed Books, 1985); Wellington Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)* (Washington DC: University Press of America, 1977); Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Africa: Essays in Contemporary Politics* (London: Zed Books, 1987); Michael Raeburn, *Black Fire! Accounts of the Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986); Norma Kriger, “The Zimbabwean War of Liberation: Struggles within the Struggle,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14:2 (1988), 304-322.

into the coming together of nation.” Indeed, such a reading limits the ability of historians to explore ways in which groups and individuals mobilized for competing ends, and utilized regional, national, and local institutions and niches which developed “in the clash of new and old structures.” Most crucially for this thesis, “whether such efforts fed into the attempts of nationalist parties to build anticolonial coalitions,” argues Cooper, “needs to be investigated not assumed.”⁶

African nationalism in Zimbabwe was constantly evolving as it incorporated local, regional, and global influences. Nationalism, to an extent, was derived from “below,” where its power “does not emanate from a ‘unique summit’ but rather emerges from the secondary effect of the plurality of micro-practices, of the complex network of their interrelations.”⁷ Breaking from Foucauldian notions of nationalism, Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that in Zimbabwe during the 1960s and 70s, nationalism’s power was also constituted from “above.” He notes that “when talking about nationalism being shaped from above, we mean that its local formulations and enunciations remained open to continental and global ideologies as long as they were seen as advancing and fitting the local agendas. It is within this context that nationalism incorporated such external ideological resources as Negritude, Marxism, pan-Africanism, Leninism, Maoism and Liberalism – mixing these with indigenous resources of entitlement to land for instance.”⁸ ZAPU’s political elite explored regional and continental manifestations of nationalism

⁶ Frederick Cooper, “The Dialectics of Decolonization: Nationalism and Labor Movements in Post-War French Africa,” in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Structures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Cooper and Stoler (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997), 406.

⁷ Slavoz Zizek, “Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology” in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Zizek (London: Verso Publishing, 1994), 13.

⁸ Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Do Zimbabweans Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation, and Crisis in a Postcolonial State* (Oxford: Peter Lang Publishers, 2009), 60.

and sought to incorporate them into “complex local struggles, histories, and sociologies within the colonial environment that had a basis in the fading pre-colonial past, myths, and memories.”⁹ These local struggles, drawing on the influences mentioned above by Ndlovu-Gatsheni, were carried out by district leaders and local cadres who integrated and adapted their existing practices to broader ideological changes at ZAPU’s highest levels of leadership.¹⁰ Indeed, by the time of the ZAPU/ZANU nationalist fracture in 1963, the communication of ideas became more fluid not only between ZAPU’s top leaders and their urban subordinates, but also between urban cadres and their counterparts in more remote, rural areas.¹¹

This thesis seeks to investigate the formation of nationalist power from “above” by exploring how ZAPU, and its senior leadership in particular, incorporated, adapted, and disseminated its particular brand of African nationalism: much of ZAPU’s nationalist power manifested itself through regional and international alliances with state and non-state actors which articulated new, evolving ideologies of postcolonial governance and resistance.¹² It ought to be noted that exploring ZAPU’s nationalism in Zimbabwe from

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jocelyn Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the Dark Forests of Matabeleland* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 114.

¹¹ Brian Raftopoulos, “Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury, 1953-1965” in *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe’s Urban History*, ed. Raftopoulos and Yoshikuni (Harare: Weaver Press, 1999), 143.

¹² ZAPU incorporated disparate ideologies into its political and military programs. *The Zimbabwe Review*, ZAPU’s official party organ, often used Marxist analyses to draw attention to urban-rural labour organization, particularly with respect to wage workers in capital intensive sectors. Simultaneously, much of ZAPU’s leadership, and its leader, Joshua Nkomo in particular, were typically more centrist than the majority of party cadres. Indeed, ZAPU’s leaders were sympathetic to certain strains of liberalism, particularly those which endorsed pluralism and monetized market economies. Furthermore, because ZAPU sent many of its cadres to the USSR and Eastern Bloc states for political and military training, they were often exposed to Marxist-Leninist principles which they sought to incorporate into the liberation struggle when they returned to ZAPU camps in the subcontinent. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes, these disparate, often contradictory ideologies were integrated into local Zimbabwean contexts where they were roughly moulded to speak to the communities ZAPU sought to politicize. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Do Zimbabweans Exist?*, 61.

“above,” however, exacerbates the sense in which this thesis appears to be situated in an older historiography. The extent to which this thesis is a contribution to studies of nationalism from “above” is determined by available sources which profoundly restrict its ability to see nationalism at work outside the predominant realm of high politics. Crucial to Cooper’s call for “investigation” rather than “assumption” in nationalist politics situated in colonial settings is the integration of new schools of social history which disrupt linear progressions from resistance to independence and problematize the very idea of resistance itself.¹³ Social histories of twentieth-century Zimbabwe have been used extensively throughout this study to highlight the multiple ways nationalism evolved over the course of the liberation war, and, insofar as the sources allow, draw attention to how nationalism from “above” translated into political and military action on the ground.

Furthermore, this thesis is a response to what Ranger has described as “patriotic history.”¹⁴ The groundbreaking article in which Ranger first elucidated this historiographical category in the Zimbabwean context, was in many ways a *mea culpa*: Ranger makes careful note of how his earlier work on Zimbabwean resistance and peasant consciousness was both reductionist and triumphalist. Nevertheless, his later work provided fertile ground for a new generation of Zimbabwean historians to engage critically with how quasi-official state narratives conflate the liberation struggle and earlier iterations of resistance to colonial regimes with Zimbabwe’s ruling elite in ZANU

¹³ Since the 1990s, the historiography of nationalism, colonialism, and resistance has benefited enormously from social histories and new schools of analytical thought which stress that colonial power was not nearly as hegemonic and robust as previously thought. See, for example, the extensive New African Histories series published by Ohio University Press and Heinemann Press’ The Social History of Africa series.

¹⁴ Terence Ranger, “Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: The Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30:2 (2004), 215-234.

(PF).¹⁵ This led Ndlovu-Gatsheni, for example, to reformulate Ivor Chipkin's question of whether "South Africans exist"¹⁶ to ask whether "Zimbabweans exist."¹⁷ Indeed, the question is a crucial one: the hegemonic power of ZANU (PF) has come to dominate popular conceptions of identity and belonging. Through its emphasis on Shona culture and historical achievement, and by privileging ZANU's role in a revolution that is yet still unfolding at the expense of other political organizations such as ZAPU, ZANU (PF) has led non-party members from non-Shona dominated areas to question their place in post-independence Zimbabwe.¹⁸

"Patriotic History," argues Ranger, is

intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition. It is an attempt to reach out to 'youth' over the heads of their parents and teachers, all of whom are said to have forgotten or betrayed revolutionary values. It repudiates academic historiography with its attempts to complicate and question. At the same time, it confronts Western 'bogus universalism' which it depicts as a denial of the concrete history of global oppression. 'Patriotic history' is propagated at many

¹⁵ For an overview of Ranger's remarkable contribution to the study of Zimbabwe, see especially the retrospectives on his work in a special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* 44:5 (2015), Alexander et al., 1099-1131.

¹⁶ Ivor Chipkin, *Do South Africans Exist? Nationalism, Democracy and the Identity of 'The People'* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2007).

¹⁷ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Do Zimbabweans Exist?*

¹⁸ For recent book-length studies by Zimbabwean scholars on nationalism in twenty-first century Zimbabwe, see especially Ruramisai Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation: History and Memory in Making Zimbabwe* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015); *Redemptive or Grotesque Nationalism? Rethinking Contemporary Politics in Zimbabwe*, ed. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011); Blessing-Miles Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Politics, Intellectuals, and the Media* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010); *Mugabeism? History, Politics, and Power in Zimbabwe*, ed. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (London: MacMillan, 2015).

levels - on television and in the state-controlled press; in youth militia camps; in new school history courses and textbooks; in books written by cabinet ministers; in speeches by Robert Mugabe and in philosophical eulogies and glosses of those speeches by Zimbabwe's media controllers.... It is a coherent but complex doctrine.¹⁹

Indeed, in writing a political history of ZAPU it is crucial that one avoids repeating the same mistakes of scholars who wrote patriotic histories of ZANU in the immediate aftermath of the liberation struggle, when Zimbabwe's ruling elite was in its "honeymoon" phase after peacefully transitioning to majority rule and maintaining similar levels of economic output relative to the Rhodesian regime.²⁰ Sibanda, for example, reproduces elements of "patriotic history," and offers a laudatory history of ZAPU in his work, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, in which entire sections read as hagiography of ZAPU's long-time leader, Joshua Nkomo.²¹ Works such as Sibanda's, while providing a useful entry point into a largely neglected subject, do little to problematize or complicate the liberation struggle. Indeed, referring back to Cooper, scholarly work on ZAPU which fails to account for the fissures and uneven political progress of African nationalist parties reiterate the same assumptions underpinning ZANU (PF)'s and sympathetic scholars' accounts. A study such as this, which provides a synthesis of ZAPU's political history, warts and all, better situates ZAPU within the

¹⁹ Terence Ranger, "Nationalist Historiography," 215.

²⁰ For a comprehensive study of the uncertainty and dread which dominated settler Rhodesian communities and Western political opinion at the end of the liberation war and immediately preceding popular elections, see especially Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c. 1970-80* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

²¹ Eliakim Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union, 1961-1987: A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia* (Asmara: Africa World Press, 2005), 79-88, *passim*.

range of African nationalist historiography and resistance to the many permutations of settler colonial power.

The Historiography of ZANU and ZAPU in Zimbabwe

The primary objective of this thesis is to produce a political history of ZAPU which allows for an interrogation of the party's contribution to the liberation of Zimbabwe, and the extent to which the party can or cannot be credited with hastening the demise of minority rule. In the vast library which has grown around the liberation war in Zimbabwe, ZAPU occupies a peculiar, often lonely place.²² The work of most scholars active in the 1970s and 1980s largely omit in-depth considerations of ZAPU, and often only meaningfully engage with the party insofar as it impacted ZANU.²³ Indeed, in many of these works, ZAPU is depicted as an impediment to majority rule: according to this strain of historiography, ZAPU prolonged the struggle by crowding the liberation war with political and military distractions, and by stoking pernicious currents of ethnic chauvinism to create disunity among Zimbabwean fighters, sowing discord among

²² It ought to be noted that a significant amount of literature on the "Rhodesian War" has been produced by ex-regime fighters and politicians whose memoirs have found a practically insatiable market in South Africa in particular, where large numbers of settler Zimbabweans immigrated before and after the war. With the notable exceptions of Kenneth Flower, Henrick Ellert, and Peter Godwin, these works serve to reinforce the well-documented racism of the Rhodesian Front, and contribute extraordinarily little to any study of ZAPU. Kenneth Flower's *Serving Secretly. An Intelligence Chief on Record: Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964-1981* (London: John Murray, 1984), is particularly useful for insights into the Rhodesian regime's ever-evolving counterinsurgency measures.

²³ See, for example, Themba Sono, "The Dynamics of Zimbabwe Nationalism: A Study in Political Activism of African Nationalist Movements in Rhodesia from 1956-1972" (Master's Thesis, Duquesne University, 1973); Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*; Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia* (London: Deutsch Limited, 1965); Maurice Nyagumbo, *With the People* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980); Martin, *The Past is Another Country*.

African nationalists and civilian populations.²⁴ For these historians, ZANU was the only legitimate nationalist party in Rhodesia, and any competing nationalist organizations were self-serving, opportunistic entities, seeking to exploit the situation in Rhodesia to advance a narrow set of personal or ethnic interests.

Indeed, historians who champion ZANU-centric narratives typically limit their studies to the mid-to-late 1970s, when ZANU had already built a formidable army of mobile cadres who were well-placed in populous regions in eastern Zimbabwe to deliver programmatic messages to Zimbabwean civilians and engage in hit-and-run operations against Rhodesian forces. Studies produced by historians such as Martin and Johnson in the 1980s have overlooked and discounted the contributions of other nationalist parties. For historians belonging to this earlier generation, the vicissitudes of party politics in the early stages of Zimbabwean nationalism and political and military developments within other Zimbabwean parties contribute little to our understanding of how independence was achieved. Indeed, in monographs from this period, one reads of how ZANU triumphed over colonial forces as well other African nationalist fronts such as ZAPU. This trend in Zimbabwean historiography has been pernicious and lasting: the colonial state, many have argued, and “reactionary” parties like ZAPU, were both impediments to majority rule which were decisively defeated by ZANU through the barrel of the gun and at the

²⁴ Dumiso Dabengwa, “ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation,” *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (London: James Currey, 1995), 24. For greater elaboration on this early generation of historians concerned with the deleterious effect of ethnicity on the liberation war, see Enock Dumbutshena, *Zimbabwe Tragedy* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975); W. J. Breytenbach, “Ethnic Factors in the Rhodesian Power Struggle,” *Bulletin of the Africa Institute* 3:4 (1977), 70-75; Wellington Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1977); Terence Ranger, “Rhodesia’s Politics of Tribalism,” *New Society* 6:9 (1979), 496-97; Masipula Sithole, “Ethnicity and Factionalism in Zimbabwe Nationalist Politics, 1957-1959,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3:1 (1980), 17-39.

ballot box. Including detailed analyses of negotiations and compromises made by ZANU with the state and ZAPU clouds the triumphant depiction of ZANU as an organization with a singular purpose, impervious to political and interpersonal machinations which might distract the party from its primary cause. This narrative predominates in Zimbabwe today, and while it has been enthusiastically embraced by ZANU (PF), it is largely a product of historians, journalists, and other writers who were overeager to demonstrate a straightforward, ZANU-inspired progression from colonial subjects open to exploitation and state violence, to Zimbabwean citizens led by a popularly elected president.

More recently, however, a more balanced and nuanced historiography has emerged which takes seriously the contributions of ZAPU to the liberation effort. Indeed, in 1995 and 1996, Ngawbi Bhebe²⁵ and Terence Ranger published two volumes of edited conference proceedings from a variety of historians, social scientists, and ex-combatants which signaled a dramatic shift in the scholarly treatment of ZAPU.²⁶ Dumiso Dabengwa, a former ZAPU commander, remarked at the beginning of the conference, held at the University of Zimbabwe in 1991, that a “new breed of social scientists ought to stand up against the suppression of any information and should develop an ever critical mind with respect to the facts [of the liberation war], especially purported facts and actions of political leaders.... A conference on the history of the war is an excellent beginning.”²⁷

²⁵ Since the passing of Terence Ranger in 2015, Bhebe has emerged as Zimbabwe’s preeminent historian, whose work on religious movements, nationalism, conflict, and post-independence governance have contributed new ways of interrogating African nationalism in Zimbabwe and the country’s liberation war. Indeed, Bhebe’s monograph *The ZAPU ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 2004) provides the most thorough, balanced narrative of the conflict as of the time of writing.

²⁶ *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (London: James Currey, 1995); *Society in Zimbabwe’s Liberation*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (London: James Currey, 1996).

²⁷ Cited in Bhebe and Ranger, “General Introduction,” in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, 2.

Indeed, it was an auspicious beginning for scholars interested in interrogating the multiple modes of African nationalism that existed outside the slender parameters of ZANU. Dabengwa himself, along with other ex-fighters such as Jeremy Brickhill, Henrick Ellert, and Josiah Tungamirai, as well as historians such as Teresa Barnes, Mark Ncube, and Richard Werbner, contributed some of the first work which took ZAPU as a primary object of study, rather than a secondary political phenomenon which ought to be examined to better understand the programmes and policies of ZANU.

Since the publication of these two volumes, ZAPU has begun to receive more scholarly attention, although a comprehensive political study of the party has heretofore remained unwritten.²⁸ Luise White for example, has contributed important studies on ZAPU's external networks specifically, and work on political autonomy, identity, subjectivity, and decolonization in Zimbabwe more generally.²⁹ JoAnn McGregor similarly has engaged with ZAPU in a number of important studies on colonial geography, environmental history, and diasporic studies.³⁰ In addition to her work on historical land grievances in Zimbabwe, Jocelyn Alexander has contributed significantly

²⁸ This excludes Sibanda's monograph, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*. As mentioned above, Sibanda's work can hardly be called balanced, much less nuanced. Indeed, its greatest strength for historians of Zimbabwe lay in the multiple ways the author inadvertently illustrates the subtle dangers and pitfalls attendant to studies of nationalist historiography which reproduce the triumphalist narratives being argued against. See, for example, Elaine Windrich, Review of Sibanda, Eliakim M., *The Zimbabwe African People's Union, 1961-1987: A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*. H-South Africa, H-Net Reviews, June 2005. URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10665>

²⁹ Luise White, "Students, ZAPU, and Special Branch in Francistown, 1964-1972" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40:6 (2014), 1289-1303; Luise White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*; Luise White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2003).

³⁰ JoAnn McGregor, "Locating Exile: Decolonization, Anti-Imperial Spaces, and Zimbabwean Students in Britain," *Journal of Historical Geography* 57 (2017), 62-75; JoAnn McGregor, *Crossing the Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on a Central African Frontier* (London: James Currey, 2009); *Social History and African Environments*, ed. McGregor and Beinart (London: James Currey, 2003); Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, "African Soldiers in the USSR: Oral Histories of ZAPU Intelligence Cadres Soviet Training, 1964-1979," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 49-66.

to our understanding of ZAPU: she has explored ZAPU's history through a variety of social historical lenses, most especially in her work on colonial violence, memory, commemoration, local custom, and detention.³¹ These historians, among others, have provided important insights and novel approaches to ZAPU's history, and have interrogated and problematized how African nationalist parties achieved majority rule through violence, negotiation, and compromise.

Project Parameters and Methodology

These disparate approaches, however, have made writing a political history of ZAPU particularly challenging: ZAPU still exists on the margins of Zimbabwean history, and a study of the party requires one to look for traces of it in diverse historiographies and scholarly niches. Like a jigsaw puzzle, this political history of ZAPU necessarily borrows from disparate studies in an attempt to construct a coherent and cohesive narrative, which, due to length and other editorial constraints, at times cannot do justice to the complicated, contested nature of African nationalist politics. Although not without its own set of epistemic challenges, memoirs and autobiographies have been employed throughout this thesis from nationalist figures and other politically active Zimbabweans

³¹ Like her doctoral supervisor Terence Ranger, Alexander has greatly enriched and complicated the history of colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe. Her contributions are too many to list here, but notable works include Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (London: James Currey, 2000); Jocelyn Alexander, "Nationalism and Self-Government in Rhodesian Detention: Gonakudzingwa, 1964-1974" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37:3 (2011), 551-569; Jocelyn Alexander, "'Hooligans, Spivs, and Loafers'? The Politics of Vagrancy in 1960s Southern Rhodesia" *The Journal of African History* 53:3 (2012), 345-366.

and non-Zimbabweans to gain greater understanding of the personal and collective motivations behind party decisions. Indeed, contrasting the manicured, often polemical, memories of competing nationalist figures allows for a degree of insight into the interpersonal alliances and rivalries of competing nationalist political fronts, particularly in the absence of oral testimony from ex-combatants, military commanders, and local political activists.³²

Primary source material is notoriously hard to come by for researchers unable to travel to Zimbabwe. The National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) have yet to digitize the vast majority of their holdings, and furthermore, many documents relevant to ZAPU were destroyed either by Rhodesian personnel during the late stages of the liberation war, or by ZANU officials after their party achieved electoral victory. Edited collections of documents are certainly useful, though predictably, they consist mostly of papers relating to major events, such as the Rhodesian regime's unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) in 1965, the nationalist split between ZAPU and ZANU in 1963, and the negotiated settlement reached by British, Rhodesian, and Zimbabwean representatives at Lancaster House in 1979.³³ *The Zimbabwe Review*, ZAPU's official party organ, has been

³² Some of the memoirs used throughout this thesis include Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of my Life* (London: Methuen, 1984); Fay Chung, *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2005); Abel Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk: An Autobiography* (London: Evans, 1979); Maurice Nyagumbo, *With the People* (Harare: Graham Publishing, 1980); Lawrence Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London: Heinemann, 1976); Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Judith Todd, *The Right to Say No* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972); Ian Smith, *The Great Betrayal* (London: Blake Publishing, 2007); and Terence Ranger, *Writing Revolt: An Engagement with African Nationalism, 1957-1962* (London: Boydell and Brewer, 2013).

³³ Collections of primary source documents can be found in *Zimbabwe Independence Movement, Select Documents*, ed. Nyangoni and Nyandoro (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979); Elaine Windrich, *The Rhodesian Problem: A Documentary Record, 1923-1973* (London: Routledge, 1975); and Julie Frederikse, *None but Ourselves: Masses vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1982). These documents are used judiciously throughout this work to ensure that ZAPU's history is not merely reduced to a litany of large, consequential events affecting the political history of Zimbabwe generally.

utilized throughout this work to shed light on how the party delivered its evolving programmatic messages, and the tension between ostensible policy objectives in the *Review* and the disparate, often conflicting, political machinations of ZAPU's senior leaders.

This study has benefitted enormously from archival research conducted at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS), The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), and the British Library (BL). These archives contain valuable Rhodesian newspapers, such as the *Bulawayo Chronicle* and the *Rhodesian Herald*, which afford scholars of ZAPU the opportunity to examine how the party and its leaders were perceived by white and African Rhodesians in the predominantly settler-read press. Furthermore, the research done at these institutions provides an indirect way of understanding the Rhodesian regime in a regional and international context, as well as ZAPU's political and military developments from non-Rhodesian perspectives. In the absence of source material generated by ZAPU leaders and cadres, these sources, which mostly consist of South African and British diplomatic and Foreign Office circulars, have been pieced together to gauge the impact of ZAPU's military operations, political negotiations, and relationships with regional governments and other liberation fronts such as the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and South Africa's African National Congress (ANC).

Throughout the four substantive chapters of this thesis, I argue that despite accusations and assertions to the contrary, ZAPU was a significant political and military force in Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s. As a military as well as political organization, ZAPU contributed substantially more to the liberation effort than is credited

by many scholars, and internationalized the struggle against minority rule in colonial Rhodesia. Furthermore, a political history of ZAPU begins the process of opening new ways of understanding the liberation war and its legacy in Zimbabwe. A history of ZAPU, for example, complicates linear narratives that evince a violent struggle between a powerful settler state and a revolutionary liberation front which achieved popular rule through patriotic zeal and ferocious battles. By accounting for ZAPU's role in the liberation war, a picture emerges in which popular rule was neither inevitable nor won through the barrel of a gun: ZAPU undoubtedly contributed to the armed conflict, but the party's history can also serve as a useful investigative tool for examining the multiple ways in which majority rule was achieved through a combination of consistent, acrimonious negotiation, international and regional political maneuvering, as well as local politicization, in addition to armed conflict.

In the following chapter, I analyze the early iterations of African nationalist organizations such as the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress (SRANC), the Salisbury City Youth League (CYL), and the National Democratic Party (NDP). These parties emerged at a time of intense demographic change in Southern Rhodesia: laws such as the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA), with its many amendments, were enacted to apportion unproductive parcels of land to Africans and restrict their movement in urban areas to accommodate large influxes of post-World War II European settlers. The SRANC and NDP in particular were uneasy alliances between nationalist figures with competing visions of how to ameliorate African grievances and enfranchise Zimbabweans. Much like ZANU and ZAPU, these parties rarely presented a cohesive expression of African nationalism. Indeed, because the leadership of these parties had

competing, often oppositional ideas of how to engage to the settler regime and represented different African interests, they provide an early indication that African nationalism in Zimbabwe was never a unified force with a singular voice. The second chapter examines the most consequential split in Zimbabwean nationalist politics: the fracture between ZANU and ZAPU, and the impact the division had on ZAPU's capabilities to politicize Africans and engage the colonial regime. Indeed, this chapter highlights the deep divisions that plagued the nationalist struggle by detailing the factional violence between the two parties in Salisbury's urban townships. The third chapter offers a detailed analysis of ZAPU's adoption of armed resistance, and the messy, competing ideas of cadres and senior political leaders who received disparate training abroad, and the difficulty ZAPU faced in integrating these various liberationist ideologies into a cohesive military front. The fourth and final substantive chapter interrogates the long-held position by many scholars and ZANU war-veterans that ZAPU was wary of engaging the settler regime in large-scale battles. Furthermore, it analyzes the development of ZAPU's distinct Ndebele character in the latter stages of war: rather than deliberately cultivating and exploiting ethnic divisions and rivalries, ZAPU and ZANU acquired their separate cultural dispositions through regional exigencies that required each party's military wings to operate in areas where different ethnicities predominated.

A political history of ZAPU challenges and problematizes the vision of a unified liberation movement in Zimbabwe during the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, it explores the multiple ways African nationalist politics navigated and exploited colonial authority. Settler colonial power in Rhodesia was sufficiently fractured and uneven to allow African nationalists the means to exploit weaknesses through political negotiation and armed

conflict. African nationalism in Rhodesia, however, was expressed in such vastly different ways that, as a political ideology, it was never able to confront settler power in the kind of united, convergent manner stressed in much of the historiography on Zimbabwe's war of liberation.

Chapter Two: The Initial Stages of African Nationalism in Southern Rhodesia

The roughly two decades leading up to the creation of ZAPU in 1961 are crucial to understanding the longer trajectory of ZAPU's history. As Southern Rhodesia underwent significant population changes, especially after an influx of European settlers following the Second World War, urban and rural Africans became increasingly marginalized to accommodate them. This chapter explores the material conditions, institutions, and economic and demographic developments which gradually led many political, labour, and religious leaders to adopt a more confrontational stance towards the Southern Rhodesian government. Exacerbation of preexisting tensions surrounding issues such as land and social and physical mobility required new ways of negotiating and confronting the racist and repressive colonial regime. Like the various incarnations of Rhodesian administrative structures described by Donald Moore, the early history of African nationalism in Zimbabwe in the 1940s and 50s is rife with "elaborate entanglements...that defy orderly undoing and...pull in different directions." This chapter seeks to provide a historical foundation for ZAPU and popular Zimbabwean nationalism which arose out of an often messy assortment of interests, institutions, and individuals.³⁴

As the Southern Rhodesian Government began to intensify its efforts to proscribe black nationalist associations a series of such organizations formed, with considerable

³⁴ Donald S. Moore, *Suffering for Territory: Race, Place, and Power in Zimbabwe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 9.

continuity amongst the membership of each successive party. The Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC) was created in 1957. Its political heir, the National Democratic Party (NDP) formed in 1960, provided much of the impetus for ZAPU's creation in late 1961. ZAPU, however, also evolved out of elements of the Southern Rhodesian Trade Union Congress (SRTUC) founded in 1946 as well as the Salisbury-based City Youth League (CYL) founded in 1955, among a number of other associations which sought political and economic change. Nationalism in Southern Rhodesia before the creation of the SRANC was fragmented by groups and individuals seeking to ameliorate their own specific, narrow grievances. By incorporating elites and non-elites, in rural and urban areas, the SRANC and NDP were able to give a wider, more cohesive expression to African nationalist sentiment in Southern Rhodesia. The relationship between nationalist organizations, particularly as they became more organized, and the colonial administration became progressively more fraught. As emancipatory demands increased in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Salisbury government responded with harsher, more punitive legislation meant to curtail groups like the SRANC and later the NDP. In doing so, however, the precarious position of white minority rule and the economic, social, and political privilege it afforded Europeans was challenged by Africans who demanded, amongst other things, popular representation, freedom of movement, and equitable access to arable land.

Population Change and Government Responses

After the Second World War, Southern Rhodesia, and indeed much of south, central, and east Africa, underwent what J.M. Lonsdale and D.A. Low call a “second colonial occupation.”³⁵ As many British colonies elsewhere in the world were in the process of achieving self-rule, such as India which gained independence in 1947, Britain regarded its African colonies as the last chance for imperial economic development.³⁶ The Colonial Development and Welfare Acts, passed in Britain in 1940 and 1945, reflected the growing opinion that London ought to be more active in the affairs of British colonies. This stood in contrast to previous conventions which held that territories should be self-sufficient in their finances and economic administration. By 1945, “innovatory paternalism, the leverage required before a people internalized the desirability of change for themselves, received a powerful new ideological support.”³⁷ To this end, Britain introduced new development funds meant to increase the growth and efficiency of African economies, while also making certain colonies more lucrative, attractive places for would-be settlers. Indeed, while Britain was still in a period of rebuilding and economic austerity after the war, African colonies became increasingly attractive to civilians and decommissioned servicemen alike.³⁸ In Southern Rhodesia, the

³⁵ J.M. Lonsdale and D.A. Low, “East Africa: Towards a New Order. 1945-1963” in *Eclipse of Empire*, ed. D.A. Low (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 173.

³⁶ Alexander et al. *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the ‘Dark Forests’ of Matabeleland* (Oxford: James Curry, 2000), 67.

³⁷ Lonsdale and Low, “East Africa: Towards a New Order. 1945-1963,” 174.

³⁸ Frederick Cooper has argued persuasively about the “schizophrenic” approach taken by the French and British governments toward their African colonies following the Second World War. He notes that both empires recognized the invaluable contributions of their colonies toward the war effort and the possibility that they may be needed again in the future. Britain and France, particularly in West Africa where indirect rule was applied, were willing to acknowledge the ‘imperial’ citizenship of their African subjects while

possibilities for socioeconomic advancement were much better for British citizens; low taxes, cheap labour, and land made available by the government meant that luxuries such as servants and vast amounts of acreage could be acquired inexpensively, something impossible for the vast majority in Britain. Even within the prosperous Home Counties around London and within London itself, elites were finding it difficult to find the comforts they had enjoyed prior the war.³⁹

While the British and Southern Rhodesian governments were encouraging greater immigration to Southern Rhodesia, white Rhodesians were also exhorting settlers to enter the country permanently through economic and social incentives. One Southern Rhodesian, writing in the *New Rhodesian*, stated

Don't regard [Rhodesia] as a Black Man's Country where the white is an intruder, an exploiter of Black labour, a superior; look on it as an empty country (which it practically is for what are 1 ¾ millions in a country three times the size of England?) to be settled with a white population where the few natives who care to come out the Reserves are a useful adventitious contribution to the economy.⁴⁰

This particular Rhodesian, referencing the “emptiness” of the country, fails to mention that land was made available for European cultivation by the state-sponsored evictions of

simultaneously reacting with extreme violence when African nationalism challenged the colonial apparatus. Cooper writes that “the excess of repression may well have reflected the self-perceived openness to political reform: that some Africans rejected the political inclusion and economic development that was being offered them now struck officials as an affront, not the backward inclinations inherent in the nature of the African.” Frederick Cooper, “Reconstructing Empire in British and French Africa” *Past and Present* 210:6 (2011), 205.

³⁹ David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain: 1945-1951* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), 133.

⁴⁰ 'New place in Africa: Southern Rhodesia 1939-1949', *The New Rhodesia*, 2 September 1949, 22-23.

Africans into Reserves and Native Purchase Areas. In 1930, with the passing of the Land Apportionment Act (LAA), the Southern Rhodesian government ensured that vast tracts of the most arable land would be reserved for white settlers, while the Reserves, which were chronically overpopulated and often situated on soil not fit for productive cultivation, were less than half the size of the acreage allotted to Europeans. For example, in 1931, 49,149,000 acres were set aside for settler use, while the Reserves had just 21,600,000 acres. Furthermore, the LAA restricted the movements of African Southern Rhodesians by imposing a system of passes whereby Native Commissioners and their agents could account for the presence of Africans in European domains and ensure that they returned to areas assigned to Africans.⁴¹

As Alois Mlambo notes, “colonial authorities encouraged White immigration by publicising the opportunities available in the country, offering assisted passages to immigrants, providing land for settlement and keeping in place discriminatory laws that ensured that Africans were effectively shut out from the economy except as providers of cheap manual labour and consumers of manufactured goods.”⁴² British and Rhodesian authorities succeeded in large part: between 1946 and 1953, the white settler population in Southern Rhodesia nearly doubled to 156,000, while 110,000 Africans were expelled from European farming land.⁴³ This is a particularly striking demographic shift considering that when Southern Rhodesia became a self-governing colony in 1923, the settler population was conservatively estimated to be 22,000 with an African population

⁴¹ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 53.

⁴² Alois S. Mlambo, “Building a White Man’s Country: Aspects of White Migration into Rhodesia up to World War II” *Zambezia*, 15:2 (1998), 132.

⁴³ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 54.

of roughly 750,000.⁴⁴ While the settler population was increasing, however, unresolved political and economic tensions gave greater impetus to a growing number of Africans who began to agitate for reform and substantive change.

Just as the anonymous contributor to the *New Rhodesian* was misleading readers about the “emptiness” of the land, so too was the writer incorrect in his dismissive and condescending characterization of African Southern Rhodesians. Indeed, while this will be explored in greater detail below in the context of the liberation war, media in Rhodesia intended for white audiences indulged their consumers’ near-pathological need for reassurance that they occupied a privileged and safe place in Rhodesian society. Newly arrived settlers in post-war Southern Rhodesia would have found that their new, everyday countrymen were simultaneously dismissive of popular African political ambition and deeply concerned about their precarious position as a minority community.

Among most white Rhodesians, there was a sense of unease between themselves and their black counterparts; the urban core of Bulawayo, for example, provided a haven for white society, but Africans living elsewhere in the city and in compounds around the suburbs created a tension which was often expressed in newspaper editorials.⁴⁵ Toward the end of the “second colonization” in 1949, however, the Rhodesian government was becoming increasingly concerned about African political mobilization and discontent. In 1949, the Chief Native Commissioner’s Report expressed concern with respect to African unrest, both urban and rural, prior to the liberation war:

⁴⁴ Ruth Weiss and Jane L. Parpart, *Sir Garfield Todd and the Making of Zimbabwe* (London: British Academic Press, 1999), 2004.

⁴⁵ Terence Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning: The Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2010), 83.

The vast majority of Rhodesian Natives are inherently loyal, peaceful, law-abiding, and reasonably amenable to authority, and continue to be so when they have a sense of security, but elsewhere many tend to feel that Government is heedless of their legitimate grievances or that the administration is weak and unable or unwilling to secure their redress. Self-Seeking agitators and organisations which offer no constructive criticism whatever, and whose aims seem to be disruption and non-cooperation, have not been slow to take advantage of the situation, and, playing upon the susceptibilities of the irresponsible population already embittered by their real or imaginary grievances, have fanned the discontent which has in some instances has shown itself in openly expressed contempt for the government and its representatives.⁴⁶

While the Report obviously grossly distorts its description of “inherently loyal” African subjects, it correctly identifies a growth in the number of individuals and organisations agitating for political, social, and economic reform.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Chief Native Commissioner’s Report, Lupani, 7 November 1949, file S. 160.LS 100/3/a/50, NAH, cited in Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study* (Oxford: James Currey, 1985), 104.

⁴⁷ The Report’s characterization of “inherently loyal, peaceful, law-abiding, and reasonably amenable” African subjects was often expressed by white administrators and politicians during Zimbabwe’s colonial period who prided themselves with creating an exceptionally prosperous “native” population. Ian Smith, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia from 1965-1979, was notorious for expressing his bewilderment that Zimbabweans would support what he called “terrorist” organizations when Africans in Rhodesia were supposedly flourishing. In his memoir, for instance, Smith writes “What more, we wondered and asked, were we expected to do? Not only overseas visitors, but those who came on a mission seeking evidence [of wrongdoing], including a number of British MPs, conceded how much more we had done for our black people than had been done in all the surrounding countries. We had provided better schools, better hospitals, better houses, better recreation facilities, and a higher standard of living...our problem was try to bring these Africans across, to try to bridge a 2000-year gap in the shortest time possible.” Not only do Smith’s comments speak to the blatant, insidious paternalism of the Rhodesian Front government, but they also ignore the draconian measures employed to maintain the privileged status of whites and the routine

Resuscitating the ANC and the Creation of the CYL

After the African National Congress was created in Bloemfontein, South Africa, in 1912, similar organizations were created by Africans throughout southern Africa. The first iteration of the SRANC was the Bantu Congress formed in 1934, renamed the African National Congress of Southern Rhodesia later that year.⁴⁸ Gibson notes that during this period, and under various leaders, “the ANC of Southern Rhodesia was probably even more reformist than its namesake in South Africa. Its action centred on ceaseless appeals to the white authorities in Salisbury and elsewhere for some measure of justice for the African majority.”⁴⁹ The appeals of the Southern Rhodesian ANC were primarily a response to the LAA, when the most productive land in Zimbabwe’s high veldt was made the preserve of the settler minority. Indeed, Joshua Nkomo, the future leader of the SRANC, vividly describes his own personal experiences of eviction and dislocation from the fertile land surrounding his early home in the Matopos Hills: “It was a lovely place, in the high rainfall area of the Matopos foothills, south of the city of Bulawayo. The rivers Semukwe and Tshatshane flowed nearby from the Matopos, bringing year-round water for the people and the livestock. In this delightful place I was born.”⁵⁰ His time there, however, was short-lived, as the LAA forced his family and the families of other Africans to relocate. The experience of expulsion at the behest of the

political, social, and economic disenfranchisement of black Zimbabweans. Ian Smith, *The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Africa’s most Controversial Leader* (London: Blake Publishing Ltd., 1997), 149-150.

⁴⁸ Richard Gibson, *African Liberation Movements: Contemporary Struggles Against White Minority Rule* (Oxford: Institute of Race Relations, 1972), 154.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life* (London: Methuen, 1984), 8-9.

colonial government and settlers had a tremendous impact on the young Nkomo, who turned those early feelings of bitterness into his life's work:

The land designated as 'white areas' began to fill up, and there was great pressure on the black people living there, on their ancestral lands. In the area around [the Matopos] new white farmers settled, and the established farmers began to work their land more intensively. Heavy hut taxes were levied on our homes. The white farmers began to demand that the residents work free of payment on their land, in lieu of rent. The areas available for arable farming by Africans were cut down. We were forced to reduce our livestock. Life became unbearable. Father decided to move away to what was called a 'native reserve'. He has been told that the reserves were places where Africans would be free – 'where the white people would have nothing to do with us'. But he was wrong, and later he proved it. In the reserves the natives were just occupiers, not free owners. The white administrators, the native commissioners, controlled everything that mattered. I understood almost without being told that [the settlers] had taken something from us. Later I discovered what they had taken was our country. Setting that right has been the ruling passion on my life.⁵¹

On 12 September, 1957, the new SRANC was created through an amalgamation of Nkomo's Bulwayo-based ANC, the SRTUC, and the Salisbury City Youth League

⁵¹ Ibid, 16-17.

(CYL).⁵² The CYL was perceived by many, both African and European, as a less elitist, more radical organization. It criticized, for example, black Southern Rhodesians who participated in the government of the colony, such as Jasper Savanhu and Mike Hove, who were the first African Southern Rhodesian MPs. Furthermore, the CYL attacked individuals such as Charles Mzingeli, the leader of the Salisbury-based Reformed Commercial and Industrial Workers Union (RICU), for seeking to negotiate imperial citizenship for black Southern Rhodesians which would connect them to the metropole and to the larger network of the Commonwealth. It was Mzingeli's and others' hope that such citizenship would afford them the same rights and room for political participation as in other dominions.⁵³ For the CYL, however, participation in the politics of a European-dominated administration legitimized the government, as well as the occupation of land and exploitation of resources more generally.

Timothy Scarnecchia notes that with the emergence of the CYL, “the practice of political mobilization changed drastically, utilizing the techniques of action, mass protest and intimidation -- strategies [leaders such as Mzingeli] had carefully avoided, even at times when they would have been most advantageous.”⁵⁴ Despite the change in tactics, the political platform of the CYL was remarkably similar to contemporary organizations such as the RICU. Much like the RICU, for example, the CYL drew attention to popular

⁵² It is very likely that this date was chosen for its symbolic value to white Rhodesians and as repudiation of their claims to land. 12 September was celebrated as Occupation Day, when the settler columns arriving from South Africa raised the Union Jack in Salisbury in 1890. It also worth noting that earlier in 1957, Ghana gained independence from Britain under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. This gave hope to a number of colonies, including Southern Rhodesia, that they too could achieve popular rule in the not-too-distant future.

⁵³ Timothy Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 74.

⁵⁴ Timothy Scarnecchia, “Poor Women and Nationalist Politics: Alliances and Fissures in the Formation of a Nationalist Political Movement in Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1950-6,” *The Journal of African History* 37:2 (1996), 301.

urban grievances such as poor housing, indiscriminate police abuse, unsanitary conditions in public township areas, and arbitrary pass laws, among others.⁵⁵ While the CYL's founders, George Nyandoro, Edson Sithole, Paul Mushonga, James Chikerema, and Dunduza Chisiza, had relatively similar objectives to groups such as the RICU and the progressive wing of the Capricorn Africa Society, their confrontational rhetoric and powerful oratory skills were original and effective. Furthermore, although the leaders of the CYL were educated and enjoyed a degree of social mobility, they belonged to a "generation of men frustrated with the lack of 'partnership' offered them" by older proto-nationalist and labour leaders, and crucially, were "close enough to the frustrations of the working class to see that they could mobilize a large section of the population into action."⁵⁶ Thus the CYL's leadership was effectively able to straddle class divides and speak to broader, common social and economic grievances, which was particularly appealing to young, urban African Zimbabweans. Indeed, Mzingeli became increasingly conservative in his rhetoric in the mid 1950s, frequently citing greater cooperation with the settler government as the most effective way of advancing African interests, and was perceived as out of touch with younger generations.⁵⁷

It is also important to note that from its inception, the CYL drew on more far-reaching continental influences than other political groups. Mzingeli, for example, frequently drew parallels between the plight of Africans in Rhodesia and South Africa, highlighting the need for greater enfranchisement and drawing attention to the enormous wage gap between Africans and settlers, with particular attention to the disparity in

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 302.

⁵⁷ Brian Raftopoulos, "Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury, 1953-1965," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21:1 (1995), 89.

compensation for black and white urban workers performing the same tasks.⁵⁸ In contrast, leaders of the CYL such as George Nyandoro, insisted that Kenya was a more appropriate example from which to draw comparisons and inspiration. Land legislation such as the LAA and its amendments in the mid 1950s, were similar to land apportionment acts in Kenya, according to Nyandoro, who pondered in an article he wrote for *Chapupu* [‘Witness’], the CYL’s main publication, whether the example of armed Kenyan rural resistance might be an appropriate course of action in Zimbabwe.⁵⁹ Drawing comparisons between the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya to the land grievances in Rhodesia, even in vague, hypothetical terms, immediately caused the Rhodesian government and African moderates to brand the CYL as a group of radicals and political extremists. “Veritas”, an anonymous contributor to *Chapupu*, countered these claims by arguing that “the so-called extremists were merely those who have no intention to bow under the yoke of racial discrimination in whatever form [and] who wanted a full loaf of human rights.”⁶⁰ What is clear from the 1956 report of the Director of Native Administration is that news of events happening in other African colonies were becoming increasingly accessible to African Rhodesians and were having an impact on African responses and perceptions of settler governance:

Current affairs in the other territories in Africa have an undoubted influence in this colony and, with the increasing degree to which radio news broadcasts are now being listened to on privately owned wireless

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 90.

⁶⁰ David Moore, “The Ideological Formation of Zimbabwe’s Ruling Class,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 17:3 (1991), 484.

sets, and particularly in the Harare Townships, news of unrest is soon widely disseminated.⁶¹

The degree to which the CYL was able to influence black Rhodesian opinion by drawing attention to the affairs of other colonies is difficult to judge, but given its growing popularity, it is entirely reasonable to assume that Nyandoro and the CYL were successful in their efforts to incorporate the ideas of anticolonial struggles from outside southern Africa into the realm of African Rhodesian politics and mobilization.⁶²

The CYL's founders, all of whom would play significant roles in subsequent nationalist parties, employed their rhetoric and utilized their broad appeal urban appeal in the capital, to organize what was supposed to be a non-violent bus boycott in Salisbury in response to increasingly high fares and the exclusion of African bus companies from the Salisbury transport market.⁶³ The three-day boycott, however, quickly became violent after the morning of the first day on 17 September 1956. By the evening, young men began throwing stones at busses and taxis, and, after shattering its windows, broke into a women's hostel, raping sixteen young women.⁶⁴ The disorder persisted until the boycott

⁶¹ Annual Report of the Director of Native Administration, 1 July 1955-30 June 1956, cited in Raftopoulos, "Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury, 1953-1965," 89.

⁶² Evidence for the popularity of the CYL in Salisbury can be found by analysing the results of the city's African Advisory Council elections in the fall of 1956. The CYL's victory was sweeping: the RICU and other representative African organizations such as the Capricorn Africa Society and Inter-Racial Society were virtually eliminated from the Council. Of particular importance is that Mzingeli, the man who had been referred to as the 'mayor of Harare' in the 1940s and early 1950s, was unseated by a CYL candidate. Ibid, 87.

⁶³ Scarnecchia argues that there may have been other motives, such as challenging the city administrators to see how far political agitation could go, but there is little concrete evidence of this and the focus point of the boycott among African commuters was undoubtedly the hike in fares. Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy*, 80.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 79.

was suppressed by police on 19 September, and James Chikerema spoke to the African press, saying,

It is a great pity that a hooligan element took the bus boycott for riots and started engaging in acts that are a disgrace to our race. I as an individual, and the Action Committee which I represent, sympathizes very deeply with all the residents who were unfortunate victims of the riot. We have instructed local branches of our committee to discourage looting and rioting in any form.⁶⁵

The bus boycott proved that the leaders of the CYL could effectively organize individuals into participating in mass protests, even if they were not necessarily able to control the actions of certain segments they had mobilized. What must also be considered, although it is difficult to judge with a great degree of certainty, is that there were likely individuals, both affiliated and unaffiliated with the CYL, who used the protest as an opportunity to pursue personal agendas and violently express frustration in ways that extended beyond the League's call for non-violent political action. Nevertheless, it is important to note that many African Rhodesians, either through witnessing the events, reading about them in print, or hearing of them through radio broadcasts, were left with the impression that the CYL had at least some difficulty maintaining discipline among its members.

The leadership of the CYL, as well as other individuals and groups, also became aware of some of the League's other limitations. As a nationalist movement, it represented a relatively narrow set of interests which excluded, in one way or another, the

⁶⁵ Ibid, 82.

majority of black Southern Rhodesians. It was for example, urban-based, and its agenda, outside of printed opinion pieces in African-read newspapers and its own publications, did not in practice extend to rural areas where the pressures of the LAA and the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) were being felt most directly. Thus while the CYL critiqued the settler government on issues which were of paramount importance to rural African Zimbabweans, its actions and attempts at popular mobilization rarely occurred outside of urban settings. Furthermore, because it was based in Salisbury, its membership tended to consist predominantly of Shona-speakers, based purely on the city's demographics and geographical location in Mashonaland. Indeed, the violence of the bus boycotts caused many other nationalist leaders to become extremely wary of the CYL and its leaders; while activists and revolutionaries such as Nathan Shamuyarira and Maurice Nyagumbo would later incorporate the events of 1956 into a progressive achievement on the way to independence, the majority of nationalists in mid to late-1950s Southern Rhodesia preferred more moderate approaches to reform and change.⁶⁶

A number of historians and participants in the early nationalist movement argue that subsequent parties such as the SRANC and NDP were born out of a natural convergence of the SRTUC, the CYL, and the relatively quiet Bulawayo-based ANC: similar demands and a common purpose among the leadership of each organization gives the impression of a smooth, orderly political progression. Indeed, when an interviewer

⁶⁶ See for example, Nathan Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia* (London: Deutsch Limited, 1965) and Maurice Nyagumbo, *With the People* (London: Allison and Busby, 1980), for ways in which apologies for the boycott's violence were later repudiated and cast in a more positive light. Indeed, the victims of rape were stigmatized for not participating in the boycott. Nyagumbo writes, "Of course, the leaders of the youth League were terribly embarrassed by the unruly youths who had attacked the girls at the [hostel] for ignoring the boycott. Personally, I had no reason to feel regret for the incident. I actually believed that the girls deserved their punishment." *With the People*, 105.

with the Liberation Support Movement in 1968 asked George Nyandoro to comment on the nationalist politics during this early period, he argued that “it was decided that the two bodies [the CYL and Bulawayo’s ANC], whose objectives were identical, should continue, with the objective that they work toward the formation of a national movement which would cover the whole country.”⁶⁷ Such characterizations, however, are misleading.⁶⁸ While it was politically expedient and advantageous to create a nation-wide nationalist movement which transcended regional particularities and concerns, Luise White notes that these “new parties were coalitions of conflicting interests and personalities”⁶⁹ The tactics and rhetoric of the CYL, the ANC, and the SRTUC differed dramatically, and these significant differences were not erased when the broad, national coalition of the SRANC was created. Similarly, as one might expect, clashes between personalities and agendas were not easily reconciled with the formation of a national organization. Indeed, some leaders of the CYL, such as Sithole and Chisiza, would subsequently play an important role in the cleavage of the nationalist struggle by joining a breakaway party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), in 1963. This often messy collection of conflicting individuals merged out of political necessity, extending

⁶⁷ *Liberation Support Movement Interview: George Nyandoro, General Secretary, Zimbabwe African People’s Union* (Richmond, BC, Canada: Liberation Support Movement Information Centre, 1968), 1.

⁶⁸ While this will be explored further in the subsequent chapter, the timing of Nyandoro’s interview is significant. In 1963, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) split from ZAPU, and the leaders of both parties were eager to express a degree of continuity between their organizations and these earlier political manifestations. Both ZAPU and ZANU were eager to lay claim to the ‘authenticity’ of being the natural iteration of the CYL, ANC, SRANC, and NDP. It is reasonable to assume that Nyandoro is stressing the cohesiveness of these early parties to stress the internal solidarity of ZAPU in the late 1960s.

⁶⁹ Luise White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 49.

Zimbabwean nationalism beyond urban centres. This does not mean, however, that there was necessarily harmonious agreement about how this ought to be accomplished.⁷⁰

Laying the Foundations of ZAPU

The need for a nation-wide movement more representative of the demands of all black Southern Rhodesians was keenly felt in both Salisbury and Bulawayo. In Bulawayo, the ANC was led primarily by Joseph Msika, Jason Moyo, Francis Nehwati, Knight Maripe, and Edward Ndlovu. Joshua Nkomo was also closely involved, although, as noted above, much of his time was occupied by his role as leader of the SRTUC.⁷¹ The amalgamation of the CYL and the Bulawayo-based ANC into the SRANC took place in the African townships around Salisbury, and its senior membership consisted of individuals from both factions. Chikerema was elected deputy-president, Nyandoro secretary-general, and Mushonga treasurer-general.⁷² Martin Meredith writes that the general theme of the newly created SRANC at its outset was an uneasy compromise of “non-racialism and economic progress, reform of land allocation and an improvement in the franchise, and an attack on discriminatory laws.”⁷³ After attending one of the very first meetings of the congress in late September, 1957, Terence Ranger wrote to his

⁷⁰ Terence Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning: The Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2010), 206.

⁷¹ *Zimbabwe Independence Movement, Select Documents*, ed. Christopher Nyangoni and Gideon Nyandoro (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979), XVI.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Martin Meredith, *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia, 1890-1979* (London: Deutsch Limited, 1979), 25.

parents that “[he] was on the whole impressed by their moderation.”⁷⁴ Ranger, goes on, however, to say that in his opinion, “the Congress meeting was not much larger and hardly any more radical than a Christian Action gathering. It was too shrouded in timidity and did not give the impression of a group of men fighting for the overthrow of tyranny.”⁷⁵ In short, the SRANC adopted a cautious, moderate platform which was much more gradualist than the CYL in its attempts to effect change from within the colonial administrative structure. In the absence of available evidence, it is reasonable to assume that there was at least some ideological and strategic tension between the radical and moderate groups, but it is likely that the CYL was more willing to compromise given the relatively longer reach of the ANC. Indeed, it is possible that radical elements in the CYL hoped to transform SRANC policy once it was functioning to more closely reflect their own nationalist vision. Crucially, however, the SRANC was able to focus “on the state as the source of oppression and discrimination,” and their program “went beyond opposition to particular legislation, such as the Land Husbandry Act, or particular official interferences, like contouring. They developed an ideology of their rights, as citizens of an African nation, to land and resources, to dignity and freedom.”⁷⁶ Thus while the SRANC was moderate in its approach, it was not merely seeking to ameliorate the conditions of African Zimbabweans, nor was it a regional protest group like the Matabele Home Society. Rather, it was an expression of a cohesive and ethnically inclusive nationalism.

⁷⁴ Terence Ranger, *Writing Revolt: An Engagement with African Nationalism, 1957-67* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2013), 23.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Alexander et al. *Violence and Memory*, 85.

The inclusivity of the SRANC is borne out by its leadership. While most were well-educated and had predominately settled in urban areas, the diversity of ethnic backgrounds, as well the leaders' previous working affiliations, is suggestive of the SRANC's broad appeal as it represented at least a partial cross section of African Zimbabwean society. Chikerema, for example, born in Kutama, Mashonaland, received his education at the University of Cape Town where he became active in student protest movements and joined the South African Communist Party before returning to Southern Rhodesia in 1948 to avoid arrest and begin publishing anti-colonial materials.⁷⁷ Edson Sithole, another Shona-speaker and founder of the CYL, was a well-educated attorney who began to agitate for reform in the early 1950s.⁷⁸ From the Bulawayo-based ANC faction, Jason Moyo, a Kalanga born near Plumtree, trained as a carpenter and craftsman at Mzingwane Government School in southern Matabeleland, after which he became interested in union politics and founded the African Artisan's Union in 1952.⁷⁹ Also from the Bulawayo faction was Joseph Mskia, a Zezuru from Mezowe District who attained Standard VI at the Howard Institute, a Salvation Army-affiliated school, before travelling to work as a textile worker in Johannesburg. After the firm he was working for ran into financial difficulties, he was transferred to Bulawayo where he was posted as a personnel overseer in a cloth factory. Like Moyo, Msika became interested in union politics in the early 1950s and eventually became one of the most senior leaders of the ANC.⁸⁰ While the leaders mentioned above, among many others, will be returned to below, it is worth

⁷⁷ R. Kent Rasmussen, *Historical Dictionary of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe* (London, Metuchen Press, 1979), 57.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 301.

⁷⁹ Robert Cray and Diana Mitchell, *African Nationalist Leaders in Zimbabwe: Who's Who* (London: Louis Bolze Publishing, 1977), 258.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 259.

noting that the SRANC's leadership cut across class, education, and ethnic affiliation. There were, however, a number of social and economic groups who likely struggled to identify with the SRANC's leadership: none of the leaders, for example, had worked as farm or migrant labourers, which constituted a large number of Southern Rhodesia's underemployed, exploited African population. Nevertheless, the diversity of the SRANC's founders indicates a cohesive response to the Southern Rhodesian regime, and is further indicative of the organization's conscious appeal to African Southern Rhodesians to join its ranks.

The choice to elect Nkomo as chairman and president of the SRANC was also pragmatic and politically astute: he had a reputation for compromise, and a record of multiracial and church activities which made him amenable to the Southern Rhodesian settler regime as well as to the British government.⁸¹ Moreover, as a staunch unionist who had both urban and rural ties, developed through his relationship with the SRTUC as well as his former position as General Secretary of the Railway Worker's Association, he also appealed to a significant portion of the black Southern Rhodesian population. Indeed, even as his reputation as a lay preacher in the British Methodist Church endeared him to the colonial establishment, his religious activities were not divorced from his politics. In his memoir, Nkomo records that, as early as 1952, when he first travelled to London, he

began to think about Christianity and power. At home, becoming a Christian meant giving up our own old ways to follow white clergymen and a white Christ. Our religion, in which we approached God through our

⁸¹ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 26.

ancestors and the history of our people, was said to be primitive and backward. But here in England the ancestral tombs in the churches signified the continuity of the nation, and I could not see what was so different about that...I felt inside myself that the Christianity I had been taught was, whatever its other virtues, mainly a way of imposing the white man's authority.⁸²

Indeed, when the SRANC was founded on 12 September 1957, the religious landscape in Southern Rhodesia mirrored in some ways the intensification of political protest and popular mobilization. Joshua Nkomo saw no contradiction in being a lay preacher and nationalist leader, and some missions and parish churches deliberately accommodated politically active congregants. Fr. Swift at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Salisbury, for example, deliberately arranged Sunday masses so that they would be early enough for parishioners to attend political meetings in Highfield and other townships.⁸³ William Beinart notes that "churches, although they did not always provide a vehicle for political protest, could certainly do so. The question to ask is not so much whether they were 'political', but what form their religious and political activity took."⁸⁴ Of course, not all churches in Southern Rhodesia were as accommodating as St. Peter's nor did they have within their ranks such people as Nkomo. Following the "second colonization," conservative white settlers often found churches and denominations which were

⁸² Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, 52.

⁸³ Carl F. Hallencreutz, *Religion and Politics in Harare, 1890-1980* (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1998), 326-327.

⁸⁴ William Beinart, "Amafelandawonye (The Die-hards): Popular Protest and Women's Movements in Herschel District in the 1920s" in *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape, 1890-1930*, ed. Beinart and Bundy (California: University of California Press, 1987) 261.

sympathetic to their fears of being supplanted by an African majority.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Nkomo was able to use deftly his influence as a preacher to call for reform from within the relatively safe and socially acceptable confines of religion. This, together with his history of unionism, broad appeal across the urban and rural divide, and his reputation as a moderate able to curb the perceived excesses of the CYL faction, made him the logical choice for president of the newly-invigorated SRANC.

Historians of Zimbabwe's colonial past, with reference in particular to the later years of the liberation war, have often indicated that nationalist organizations emphasized ethnic affiliation, usually to ill-effect.⁸⁶ While this will be explored in greater detail below, it is worth noting that the SRANC, with its offices in Bulawayo, was able to use the city's cosmopolitan makeup to its advantage. Enocent Msindo notes that Bulawayo, apart from being one of the first colonial cities, "emerged as a rich mosaic of different ethnic groups (Shona and their subgroups, Ndebele, Kalanga, Venda, Sotho and others); its inhabitants also came from different countries including Northern Rhodesia, Congo and Nyasaland and from varied social and cultural backgrounds."⁸⁷ This multiethnic demographic, together with the city's long history of unionism⁸⁸ and the continuation of Zimbabwean social and religious practices, made it an ideal center for a fledgling

⁸⁵ Hallencreutz, *Religion and Politics in Harare*, 337.

⁸⁶ As Luise White notes, however, ethnicity and its relationship to Zimbabwean liberation movements is fraught with problems. White writes, for example, that "terms like 'Manyika' and 'Karanaga' depict regional distinctions between Shona-speaking peoples; they may have been the stuff of regionally based competitions and notions of exclusivity, but they did not necessarily amount to ethnic strife" Luise White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2003), 46. Nevertheless, ethnicity sometimes did play a part in factional infighting, particularly among the lower ranks of nationalist organizations, in spite or because of divisions within more senior positions. Ibid, 57.

⁸⁷ Enocent Msindo, "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Urban Colonial Zimbabwe: Bulawayo, 1950-1963" *The Journal of African History* 48:2 (2007), 267.

⁸⁸ Charles Mzingeli, for example, established the Industrial Commercial Workers Union in Bulawayo in 1929.

nationalist movement, especially when compared to the relatively homogenous demographics of Salisbury. In the 1950s, for example, the majority of Africans in Salisbury were migrant workers from the surrounding Shona countryside, many of whom lodged in dormitories for temporary workers in outer districts such as Mrewa and Lomagundi.⁸⁹

Furthermore, Bulawayo was intimately connected, both socially and economically, to the rural hinterland surrounding it. Ranger notes in his important work on the Matopos Hills that there was constant interaction between the city and the Native Reserve in Matobo District, almost exactly due south of Bulawayo and approximately forty kilometers away: wage labourers working in Bulawayo would cycle or catch busses back to the Matopos at the end of the work week and farmers would similarly travel to the urban core to sell their goods. It was these men and women, Ranger writes, “who kept the Matopos elders and resident cultivators in touch with Bulwayo politics.”⁹⁰ Indeed, people coming from Bulawayo’s rural environs were able to take part and participate in union meetings which dealt with issues outside the purview of organized worker’s rights. Nduna Ncube, for example, who lived and worked on Absent Farm close to Matopo Mission, recalls that, despite not being a member, he would attend meetings hosted by the Industrial Commercial Workers Union (ICU), and was particularly impressed by the leadership of Masotsha Nlodvu, whom he remembered as “an outstanding man, ready to go to England to see the queen to demand our land back.”⁹¹ Such opportunities afforded

⁸⁹ Tsuneo Yoshikuni, “Notes on the Influence of town-country relations on African urban history, before 1957: experiences of Salisbury and Bulawayo” in *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe’s Urban History*, ed. Raftopolous and Yoshikuni (Harare: Weaver Press, 1999), 120.

⁹⁰ Terence Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe* (Oxford: James Curry Ltd., 1999), 139.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

both urban and rural Zimbabweans a platform to exchange ideas and give expression to their grievances, even if their grievances existed outside of the colonial structure or were only of particular and immediate interest to different categories of workers.

By May 1958, the SRANC had at least 39 district offices throughout the colony and claimed approximately 6,000 registered members, with many more sympathetic to its aims.⁹² Its broad appeal to Africans who were affected by the NLHA, the LAA and its addenda, and urban pass laws encouraged many non-elites to join the organization's ranks. George Nyandoro, the SRANC's secretary general, is reported to have said "the Land Husbandry Act has been the best recruiter Congress ever had."⁹³ Indeed, in Gwanda District, southwest of Bulawayo, the SRANC was unable to gain traction when compared to neighboring districts such as Insiza and Matobo until the effects of the Land Husbandry Act became more keenly felt as the government began the process of destocking cattle.⁹⁴ The lack of access to education for many urban and rural African Southern Rhodesians was also a major factor in drawing people to the SRANC. State-run schools were chronically underfunded, and during the government of Sir Garfield Todd, from 1953 to 1958, when spending on African education was at its highest, the quality and consistency of learning was extraordinarily low. Government funds allocated to schools for African pupils in this period were ostensibly meant to afford a greater number of students the opportunity to get basic education, but the returns on the government's

⁹² Joseph Mtisi, Munyaradzi Nyakuda, and Teresa Barnes, "War in Rhodesia: 1965-1980" in *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History of from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008* ed. Raftopoulos and Mlambo (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009), 105.

⁹³ Ngwabi Bhebe, "The Nationalist Struggle, 1957-1962" in *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe, 1890-1990* ed. Canaan. S. Banana (Harare: The College Press, 1989), 58.

⁹⁴ Richard Werbner, *Tears of the Dead: The Social Biography of an African Family* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991) 27.

investments reveal that Todd failed dismally. In a 1962 census, it was revealed that during Todd's tenure, 47 percent of African males and nearly 60 percent of females had never attended school, and the state expenditure on a European pupil's education averaged £108 annually compared to the paltry sum of £8 on an African pupil's learning.⁹⁵

Furthermore, the education provided to Africans was by and large qualitatively different than that for white Rhodesians. On 3 May 1955, Sir Gilbert Rennie, the United Kingdom High Commissioner for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, wrote to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, that "a rapid increase in the market for local industry can only be brought about by giving Africans in industry and 'the money economy' generally the opportunity to increase their output. This will necessitate expenditure on education, training and housing, all prerequisites of an increase in African productivity."⁹⁶ Although there were exceptions, particularly among mission schools, Southern Rhodesian education was mainly concerned with training Africans so that they might maximize their economic potential for local industry and the state. For Africans hoping to gain an education which would lead to work outside the industrial sphere, there were serious impediments. Indeed, at the beginning of each school year, parents and children travelled long distances and queued for hours, if not days, at the offices of headmasters whose schools offered the proper Standards and Forms.⁹⁷ Referencing what he called the "present crisis in African education," Nkomo

⁹⁵ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 58.

⁹⁶ Sir Gilbert Rennie, UK High Commissioner for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Salisbury, 3 May 1955. TNA; DO 201/6/45/307.

⁹⁷ Bhebe, "The Nationalist Struggle, 1957-1962," 58.

called on representatives from the SRANC, the Missionary Conference, as well as the Southern Rhodesian government to convene an emergency meeting in July 1958 to redress the many deficiencies in the educational system.⁹⁸ The call for a meeting, however, was in vain, as the Southern Rhodesian administrators remained unmoved by the SRANC's calls for reform.

Many middle class Africans were initially less certain about becoming involved in the SRANC. Lawrence Vambe, for example, a respected journalist for the *Bantu Mirror* in the late 1950s, recalls in his memoir that many middle class Africans believed the Central African Federation of Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia, and Southern Rhodesia, would deliver on its promise of making them "equal partners" by extending the franchise. Indeed, in a conversation with Nkomo on this topic in the mid 1950s, Vambe argued that if Southern Rhodesia broke from the Federalists,

[black Southern Rhodesians] would find ourselves facing a monstrous white Government, ugly, dangerous and ready to team up with South Africa in a desperate effort to maintain white supremacy. Our struggle would be infinitely harder and more costly. On the other hand, if our country remained hitched to the north we had the real possibility of inheriting a large country, which we could run together as one people, forgetting the boundaries created by Cecil Rhodes and Henry Johnston.⁹⁹

In time Vambe and many other middle-class Africans realized the futility of this dream. As the government under Sir Edgar Whitehead began to implement greater

⁹⁸ Ibid, 59.

⁹⁹ Lawrence Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London: Heinemann, 1976), 265-266.

restrictions on the freedom and mobility of all Africans, regardless of class, they became disillusioned with the Federalist rhetoric that promised Cecil Rhodes' famous dictum of "equal rights for all civilized men." As Michael West notes, by the late 1950s, "the African middle class increasingly had come to the conclusion that the advancement of its collected interests required taking power from the white settlers."¹⁰⁰ The disillusionment of the middle class was also due to the government's narrow, paternal view of what it meant to be "civilized," and the ways in which this rhetoric was used to limit certain liberties such as voting rights and the ability to move freely. As noted above, Ian Smith believed that the Southern Rhodesian government had undertaken the task of closing a 2000-year gap between the progress of African and Western civilizations. This was not the opinion of Smith alone; Vambe writes that in newspapers intended for white audiences,

we came across statements, either in the form of reported speeches or letters to the editor, which again and again stressed that the black people were primitive, lazy, thieves, and liars. By implication, these attributes gave the writers or speakers every justification for the way they treated the African. It was impressed upon us that we were like children, but, unlike real children, we would take at least two thousand years to grow up and reach the state of manhood that the white man had achieved.¹⁰¹

Indeed, even supposedly liberal, multiracial groups such as the Capricorn Africa Society reinforced the government's measures to check the political, social, and economic

¹⁰⁰ Michael O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898-1965* (Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2002), 239.

¹⁰¹ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, 123.

mobility of Africans. In its 1956 provisions and appendices, the Society declared that “the vote is not a natural right but a responsibility to be exercised for the common good...if the vote is not a right open to everyone but a responsibility of those who have shown themselves fit for it, there must be degrees of fitness among those who have earned the privilege.”¹⁰² Furthermore, Capricorn agitated to enfranchise recently arrived settlers – those who made up the ‘second colonization’ – and sought to grant them multiple votes depending on the number of their dependents and the constituencies to which they belonged.¹⁰³ Recalling his early participation in the Inter-Racial Association, a group similar in its agenda to Capricorn, Nathan Shamuyarira writes

[politicians] talked about economic progress being the key to challenging racial relations, and government spokesmen were for ever telling Africans ‘Don’t go too fast, otherwise you will have entirely the opposite reaction.’ This smooth argument marked another line dividing the races. While the white parties had argued between themselves ever since 1930 about the pace Africans should be allowed to advance, we were objecting to their taking it on themselves to decide this at all. Even the limited advances which were made never had the favourable impact they might have deserved among Africans because the decisions were taken from them, not by them or even with them. Paternalists never seem to understand that, if one is not party to a decision, one has no real obligation nor appreciation.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Kirilo Japhet, “The Capricorn Society” *Africa Today* 4:1 (1957), 8.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 22.

It has been convincingly argued by historians that white-led multiracial groups such as Capricorn and the Inter-Racial Association, while having the trappings of liberalism and progressive agendas, were created as deliberate impediments to autonomous African nationalism.¹⁰⁵

African clerks, lawyers, journalists, teachers, and other professionals sought to distinguish and separate themselves from the majority of black Southern Rhodesians through the difficult and expensive acquisition of higher education, an avenue through which one could achieve “respectability.”¹⁰⁶ By the end of the 1950s, however, the limitations of respectability became obvious as the restrictions on social mobility were made manifest by the Salisbury government’s policies. The African middle class in Southern Rhodesia - which included the top membership of the SRANC – became less concerned with advancing their own class interests and were drawn towards popular nationalism which sought to change the structure of the colony’s governance.

The incorporation of the African middle class, along with less formally-educated urban and rural residents, is reflected in the broad scope of the SRANC’s foundational charter which sought to redress land grievances and the lack of meaningful participation of Africans in governance. The *Southern Rhodesia African National Congress: Statement of Principles, Policy, and Programme*, issued in 1957, begins

The African National Congress of Southern Rhodesia is a people’s movement, dedicated to a political programme, economic and educational

¹⁰⁵ Alois Mlambo, *A History of Zimbabwe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 146.

¹⁰⁶ Timothy Scarnecchia, “The Mapping of Respectability and the Transformation of African Residential Space,” in *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe’s Urban History*, ed. Raftopoulos and Yoshikuni (Harare: Weaver Press, 1999), 160.

advancement, social service and personal standards. Its aim is the NATIONAL UNITY of all inhabitants of the country in true partnership regardless of race, colour and creed. It stands for a completely integrated society, equality of opportunity in every sphere and the social, economic and political advancement of all. It regards these objectives as the essential foundation of that partnership between people of all races without which there can be no peaceful progress in this country.¹⁰⁷

Within the charter, attention is drawn also to more specific grievances which adversely affected different sections of Southern Rhodesian society. With respect to land, for example, the SRANC leaders wrote that “Government must promote the fullest freedom for the economic use of land by competent people regardless of race, and must provide for this now largely through the system of freehold land tenure....Congress therefore believes that the Land Apportionment Act must be repealed and the land of this country freed from racial restrictions for economic development in both urban and rural areas.”¹⁰⁸

The SRANC also specifically addressed the issues of physical mobility: “Congress believes that, while a system of registration of all citizens of all races is necessary, there must be freedom of movement for all people on their lawful business throughout the country, without regard to race and without special passes. To make this possible, the Pass Laws must be repealed and ordinary administrative measures used for controlling the population.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Zimbabwe Independence Movements: Select Documents*, 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

While the propositions above posed a serious threat to minority rule, they may have been tenable for some of the most liberal white Southern Rhodesians. The proposals regarding policing, immigration, and political representation, however, were in direct contradiction to and in confrontation with the government's most basic, essential tools to maintaining the privileged status of whites. Indeed, they so radically ran counter to the government's position and to the vast majority of settler attitudes that they contributed significantly to the proscription of the SRANC and to African nationalism in Southern Rhodesia more generally. With regard to police, the SRANC leaders wrote,

Congress believes in the necessity of a police force but considers that the growth of the modern state and the political conditions of the mid-twentieth century have given the police and security services an influence which too easily becomes a threat to individual freedom. No modern country is free from this danger. Congress therefore believes that an emerging modern democratic government must take the most careful precautions to control the activities of the police and security services and to make them subject in all things to the prompt scrutiny of an independent judiciary.¹¹⁰

The SRANC also directly commented on the "second colonization," which they correctly identified as both a calculated political move to increase the European population as well as an economic one which served to dispossess Africans of their land: "Congress believes that any policy of immigration aimed at increasing the non-

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

indigenous population of the country for political reasons or from relieving other parts of the world of their surplus population is economically, politically and socially unsound and dangerous to peaceful development. . . . Immigration must therefore be strictly regulated and immigrants be very carefully selected both for their character and abilities.”¹¹¹ Perhaps most worrying of all for the Salisbury government was the SRANC’s position on political representation: “Congress can see no justification for continuing any limitation of the franchise on grounds either of income, educational standard or race. The only form of government now acceptable to the vast majority of people in the British Commonwealth is parliamentary democracy based on universal adult suffrage, since this alone can produce a government responsible to all inhabitants of the country and aware of the needs of all.”¹¹²

As noted above, the SRANC’s approach to nationalism was moderate, especially when compared to the earlier aspirations of the CYL and the inclinations of some of its more militant members. The Congress sought to use the language of nonracialism and the rhetoric of the Commonwealth to extend the rights and privileges enjoyed by citizens in other British territories to Southern Rhodesia. As Cooper notes, it seemed as though the British policy at the time offered the possibility for African colonies to become like Canada.¹¹³ In a memorandum circulated within the Commonwealth Relations Office in 1959, British officials read that “the thinking African in Southern Rhodesia is compelled by present political realities to look to the European for his salvation. . . . because this appraisal by the intelligent African in Southern Rhodesia is based on the political realities

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 10.

¹¹³ Cooper, “Reconstructing Empire in British and French Africa,” 201.

as he sees them, it is a strong counter-poise to extreme nationalism. It is responsible for the comparative reluctance of the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress to resort to unconstitutional methods. Its activities have almost entirely been confined to stirring up opposition against Southern Rhodesian legislation.”¹¹⁴ The SRANC, however, did not look to white Rhodesians for salvation, but rather purposefully contained their activities and framed their objectives within constitutional boundaries so that the organization could legally engage with the state. For the Southern Rhodesian government, however, notions of equal citizenship and the opening up of broader political and social networks was a direct assault on its program of elevating the social and economic place of Europeans at the expense of African Southern Rhodesians.

State in Emergency: The End of the SRANC and the Start of the NDP

The proposals of the SRANC were accepted by a significant portion of the African population, and repressively met by the Southern Rhodesian government.¹¹⁵ As an indication of the SRANC’s appeal to African Southern Rhodesians and its success in mobilization, by early 1959, the government declared a State of Emergency, and passed the Unlawful Organizations Act and the Preventative Detention Act. Furthermore, the

¹¹⁴ John Redcliffe-Maud, UK High Commissioner to the Union of South Africa, To Members of Commonwealth Relations Office, Pretoria, 8 August 1959. TNA; DO 201/10/435.

¹¹⁵ It is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty exactly how many African Southern Rhodesians supported the SRANC. Nevertheless, assuming the settler government’s response was at least partially proportional to the popularity of the organization, and based on Colonial Office memoranda, it can be reasonably argued that African nationalism was supported by a large number of African Southern Rhodesians.

Native Affairs Amendment Act also came into effect, which made it a crime for any African to say or do anything “likely to undermine the authority of officials, chiefs or headmen, and prohibited meetings of twelve or more in the reserves save with the [Native Commissioner’s] approval.”¹¹⁶ On 29 February 1959, the Congress was banned on the grounds that it was subversive, though no citations or substantiated evidence of its subversive activities were ever presented.¹¹⁷ The Unlawful Organizations Act was used to disband the organization, while the Preventative Detention Act was used to arrest at least 500 of its members, including those in senior leadership positions such as Chikerema, Nyandoro, Hamadziripi, and Edson Sithole.¹¹⁸ By chance, Nkomo was out of the country in Britain at the time and thus was able, for the time being, to evade capture by the Southern Rhodesian security forces. Indeed, while he would spend the next two years trying to rally support for the nationalist cause in exile, his coincidental escape from the authorities would cast a suspicious shadow on his commitment to the nationalist cause in the years to come.

The NDP, while short-lived, adopted a more radical approach than the SRANC in its attempts to ameliorate the conditions of African Southern Rhodesians and advance their economic and social interests. With much of the nationalist leadership jailed or in exile, the NDP was formed on 1 January 1960 with Michael Mawema as president and Sketchley Samkange as secretary-general.¹¹⁹ In a statement smuggled out of prison, the NDP’s principles were made available to those members of the public willing to risk the

¹¹⁶ Alexander, *Unsettled Land*, 63.

¹¹⁷ Wellington Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), 47.

¹¹⁸ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 66.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

government's repression if discovered. Adopting pan-Africanist language and a new tone of immediacy, the NDP committed itself

...to serve as a vigorous political vanguard for removing all forms of oppression, and for the establishment of a democratic government in Southern Rhodesia, with the object of having a government elected on the principle of having "One Man, One Vote"; to work for the educational, political, social and economic emancipation of the people, especially the underprivileged; to work with other democratic movements in Africa and the rest of the world, with a view to abolishing colonialism, racialism, tribalism, and all forms of national or racial oppression and economic inequalities among nations, races and people.¹²⁰

Despite the increasingly draconian measures of the Southern Rhodesian government, the NDP was optimistic about its program of substantive change: Harold Macmillan had delivered his now-famous Winds of Change speech to the South African parliament, French and British colonies were gaining independence at an accelerated pace, and the Western world had been alerted to the injustices of white rule following the Sharpeville massacre.¹²¹ In January 1961, Nkomo was elected president of the NDP and returned to Southern Rhodesia to participate in constitutional talks with the Southern Rhodesian government represented by Sir Edgar Whitehead, and Duncan Sandys, the British Colonial Secretary. Before convening the talks, a twelve-member executive of the NDP, including Herbert Chitepo, Sithole, Nkomo, Mawema, and Samkange, agreed to

¹²⁰ Nyangoni. *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)*, 47-48.

¹²¹ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 31.

insist on parity for African and European seats in the Assembly as a minimum requirement for agreeing to any constitutional reform.¹²²

The British and Rhodesian governments, however, were intransigent. The British delegation was anxious to divest itself from the internal affairs of Southern Rhodesia so long as there was tangible evidence that “African advancement was recognizably established.”¹²³ Meanwhile, Whitehead and his contingent hoped to gain as much autonomy from the British government as possible, making only a few concessions to give the appearance of progress, but not so many that he would alienate his conservative white electorate.¹²⁴ The NDP found very little room in which to negotiate. Having exhausted their alternatives, the NDP agreed to the constitutional reform which would be put to a country-wide referendum. The reform allocated fifteen of sixty-five Assembly seats to Africans, while Britain agreed to relinquish its power to veto any further legislation, regardless of whether it discriminated against race.¹²⁵

Once news of the constitutional settlement broke, many African Southern Rhodesians were infuriated by the concessions made by the NDP delegation. Indeed, even the leadership of the NDP was extremely critical: Leopold Takawira, the NDP’s Secretary for External Affairs, sent Nkomo a telegram from London which read “Agreement diabolical and disastrous. Outside world shocked by NDP docile agreement. We have lost sympathy of friends and supporters. Pray you denounce uncompromisingly and reject unreservedly conference agreement. Demand immediate reversal of present

¹²² Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 67.

¹²³ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 31.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

position. Future of three million Africans depends on immediate action.”¹²⁶ It took only ten days for Nkomo to repudiate the agreement and call for a boycott of the constitutional referendum in the hope that Britain would intervene once the widespread discontent among black Southern Rhodesians was seen and heard. Thousands of demonstrators in Salisbury, Bulawayo, and Gwelo were met by the Rhodesian security forces with tear-gas as well as live ammunition,¹²⁷ while the NDP issued a statement declaring that,

we make no bones about our part in the Southern Rhodesia constitutional conference. It was, to say the least, bad political performance. As a result, the National Democratic Party was twisted like molten iron until the delegation accepted or gave tacit approval to a constitution that leaves Africans worse than they were before the conference.... Political butchers hedged with force-maintained privileges jeer at the only democratic franchise: one man, one vote. That is not strange, criminals defend the code by which they live, so do the political criminals. The difference is that the political criminal once caught up with never raises his head again. One man, one vote is now gathering the strength of a religious belief.¹²⁸

The British government, however, failed to intervene, and after the referendum, Whitehead gained a two-to-one majority.¹²⁹

The new constitution, which was never formally recognized by the NDP, had a transformative effect on African nationalism in Rhodesia. The intransigence of the British

¹²⁶ Martin and Johnson, *Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 68.

¹²⁷ Ndabaningi Sithole, *Obed Mutezo: The Mudzimo Christian Nationalist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 123.

¹²⁸ *Zimbabwe Independence Movements: Select Documents*, 43-45.

¹²⁹ Martin and Johnson, *Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 68.

and white Rhodesian delegations on issues surrounding enfranchisement and land dispossession drove the nationalist movement to look beyond state structures in their efforts to achieve change. On 9 December 1961, less than a year after it was founded, the NDP was proscribed and a large portion of its leadership imprisoned under the same Acts that had brought an end to the SRANC. Indeed, the date of the NDP's proscription was deliberately chosen to quell nationalist sentiment in Southern Rhodesia. Julius Nyerere invited Nkomo from Southern Rhodesia, Kenneth Kaunda from Northern Rhodesia, Hastings Banda from Nyasaland, and other African political leaders to take part in celebrating Tanzania's newly-won independence from Britain, and in the midst of the celebrations, Nkomo received information that the NDP had been banned.¹³⁰ A strongly condemnatory communique was issued by Nkomo, and ten days later, ZAPU was formed, with Nkomo once again president, followed by the establishment of the far-right Rhodesian Front in early 1962.¹³¹ As the African nationalist movement was becoming more radical in its program to gain "one man, one vote," the white Rhodesian political establishment was also becoming more aggressive in ensuring that it would never be achieved. For Nkomo, writing in his memoirs, 1962 was a significant year:

The year 1962 began with the creation of ZAPU and ended in an armed confrontation with a new and even more frankly racist government of Southern Rhodesia. Of course I would have preferred the peaceful road to freedom that was open to practically all the other former British colonies in Africa. It had been just possible that British intervention, or pressure

¹³⁰ British Defence Liaison Staff Pretoria Circular, To Members of the UK Ministry of Defence, London, 14 January 1961. TNA; DO/211/12/450.

¹³¹ Ibid.

from the outside world, or even an outbreak of common sense among the settler community, might have created a hope of African advancement by peaceful means. But it was not to be. We were forced to fight.¹³²

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the development of the two most influential nationalist organizations prior to late 1961, the SRANC and the NDP, and has shown the ways in which they laid the groundwork for the creation of ZAPU. As noted above, Rhodesia's nationalist movements had to change their objectives and the means of obtaining them to accommodate a number of different issues during a time of intense demographic and political change. The SRANC, for example, had to incorporate two different factions in order to meet the diverse demands of African Southern Rhodesians. The increase in the number of settlers put a great burden on an already stretched and contentious land allocation scheme, while notions of respectability had to be compromised and reconstituted to meet the realities of a settler government unwilling to extend the franchise to Africans. The NDP, in continuing the gradualist approach of the SRANC, attempted to effect change through constitutional means, but were ultimately thwarted by a colonial structure which refused to incorporate African interests in any meaningful way. Furthermore, the NDP is a useful example of a trend which later emerged in liberation fronts seeking to end minority rule. The vision and tactics of senior leaders of major

¹³² Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*, 98.

parties like ZAPU and ZANU were often at odds with each other and their respective party members. When Nkomo agreed to the constitutional talks with the British and Rhodesian governments, for example, he abrogated the views and strategies of some former CYL members who advocated direct confrontation with the settler regime. As noted above, there is little extant evidence to indicate how radical elements in the SRANC and NDP resolved the contradictions and inconsistencies between their objectives relative to moderate elements like Nkomo. Indeed, as the liberation struggle continued, it became more and more common for senior leaders to make policy decisions without first seeking the opinions of the cadres and supporters they were leading.

After the NDP was proscribed, new tactics had to be adopted where others had failed. These new tactics, including the slogan of “one man, one vote” used by the NDP, placed African nationalism in direct confrontation with the Southern Rhodesian government. How these new strategies were developed and employed will be the subject of the following chapter. Just as important, however, is to note the inglorious end to the NDP: the way in which its most senior members politically participated with the British and Southern Rhodesian governments offer the first glimpse of a serious, and ultimately irreconcilable difference in African nationalist rhetoric which would be a source of great contention in the following decades.

During these early stages of African Southern Rhodesian nationalism, both the SRANC and the NDP were partially successful in mobilizing broader African support through organized channels. The number of SRANC district offices and official members, for example, were indicative of a new, structured approach to more easily facilitate the demands of African nationalists. Furthermore, the organized structure of

both the SRANC and the NDP afforded African political leaders the opportunity to articulate the aims of African nationalism during this period in a more cohesive manner. Despite these advances, however, it ought to be noted that both parties were unsuccessful in their attempts to effect substantive change. The NLHA, for example, remained unchanged, and neither party made meaningful gains in extending the franchise to African Southern Rhodesians. Nkomo's role in the 1961 constitutional talks, which was attacked by Takawira and other NDP leaders, for example, and the uneasy alliance between the CYL and the ANC which resulted in the SRANC, were harbingers of even greater internal political strife that would follow ZAPU in the years to come.

Chapter Three: ZAPU's Early Years and the African Nationalist Fracture

In the mid 1960s, ZAPU harnessed disaffection among African Rhodesians to challenge the state through popular mobilization and the adoption of more militant tactics. In this phase of the liberation war, however, ZAPU faced a number of challenges to its political legitimacy and ability to organize opposition to the settler regime. Indeed, this chapter scrutinizes the causes and consequences of Zimbabwe's most dramatic nationalist fracture: the split between ZAPU and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). The disunification of the nationalist movement had a profound impact on the political history of ZAPU as it adapted to new challenges posed by a rival liberation group and an increasingly repressive state. Rather than seek to reunite resistance to the Southern Rhodesian regime, ZAPU began the process of consolidating the party's structure and more clearly delineating its aims to retain and attract cadres who might otherwise join rival political fronts.

ZAPU in the period from 1962 to the end of 1964 sought new, transnational ways to challenge the Southern Rhodesian regime.¹³³ ZAPU campaigned for financial and

¹³³ The term "transnational" here is borrowed from Jocelyn Alexander et al. "The Transnational Histories of Southern African Liberation Movements: An Introduction" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 1-12. I employ the term to describe the way in which ZAPU's activities were not confined to Zimbabwe's borders: training, recruitment, arms procurement, and the appropriation and adaptation of political ideas took place both within Zimbabwe and outside of it. Indeed, it is also useful in drawing attention to the very notion of colonial borders: for many ZAPU members, the land on either side of a border was an interstitial space, linking the national to the regional and beyond. For a more in-depth analysis of colonial borders in the context of transnational history in Zimbabwe, see especially JoAnn McGregor, *Crossing the Zambezi: The Politics of Landscape on a Central African Frontier* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2009), and Luise White, "Students, Special Branch, and ZAPU in Francistown, 1964-1972," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40:6 (2014), 1289-1303. Furthermore, the term is useful to distinguish the activities of ZAPU from ZANU during this period in the early to mid-1960s. While ZANU sought the support of regional bodies and actors, it was much less successful than ZAPU, though undoubtedly ZANU

logistical backing by courting the support of international organizations and front-line states, and drew attention to draconian laws and social and political institutions which preserved minority rule and policed the lives of African Rhodesians. ZAPU's pursuit of internationalization also led the party to explore, adopt, and integrate aspects of anticolonial, Pan-African, and reformist thought from recently independent states throughout the continent, such as Algeria, Egypt, and Tanzania. Furthermore, ZAPU began the work of laying foundations for an increasingly militarized struggle against the Rhodesian Front government. By the end of 1964, ZAPU had effectively ended the course of constitutional compromise due to pressures both external and internal to the party, and began to prepare for a protracted liberation war.

Joining the Party: The Brief Legal Existence of ZAPU

Just as the NDP evolved out of the SRANC, when ZAPU was founded 17 December 1961, its political objectives and leadership reflected the recently proscribed NDP. Many of the same actors, even those who were imprisoned through the Preventative Detention Act such as George Nyandoro and James Chikerema, were elected to influential positions. Indeed, the logistics of creating a new party and electing

similarly incorporated and adapted transnational political thought. For ZANU's political transnationalism, see especially Paresh Pandya, *Mao Tse-tung and Chimurenga: Investigation into ZANU Strategies*, (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1988); Gerald Mazarire, "ZANU's External Networks: An Appraisal," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 83-106; and William Reed, "International Politics and National Liberation: ZANU and the Politics of Contested Sovereignty in Zimbabwe," *African Studies Review* 36:2 (1993), 31-59.

leaders had to be done with care and secrecy. Not only did the participants risk prosecution under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, but 356 NDP functionaries had already been banned from entering or remaining in areas designated African reserves or townships and risked further punishment.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, a gathering was convened at Herbert Chitepo's home to resuscitate the NDP under the guise of a new party and to elect a new executive.¹³⁵ The newly-formed Party continued the pragmatic practices of the SRANC and NDP by maintaining an ethnically and linguistically diverse leadership. The national executive consisted of the following members:

President: Joshua Nkomo

Vice President: Samuel Parirenyatwa

Treasurer: Jason Moyo

Financial Secretary: George Nyandoro

National Chairman: Ndabaningi Sithole

National Secretary: Morton Malianga

Deputy National Secretary: Agrippa Mukahlera

National Organizing Secretary: Clement Muchachi

Publicity and Information Secretary: Robert Mugabe

Deputy Public Secretary: Dan Ncube

¹³⁴ *Zimbabwe: History of a Struggle*, ed. Zimbabwe African People's Union (Cairo: The Permanent Secretariat of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, 1972), 19

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 24.

Secretary for Public Relations: James Chikerema

Secretary for Youth Affairs: Joseph Msika

Secretary for External and pan-African Affairs: Leopold Takawira

Secretary for Women's Affairs: Jane Ngwenya¹³⁶

Nkomo, for example, was a Kalanga who was closely associated with the Ndebele speakers, such as Moyo and Msika, while Mugabe, Chikerema, Sithole, Nyandoro, and others, were Shona speakers. ZAPU's executive, as had been the case with the SRANC and the NDP, sought broad national support by ensuring that its ranks were neither ethnically nor linguistically homogenous.¹³⁷

In the first confidential draft of its constitution, ZAPU reiterated demands and gave voice to concerns that were central to the NDP's political platform. For example, "the aims and objectives" of ZAPU included "[the establishment] of one-man-one vote as the basis for government in [Southern Rhodesia]," and the creation of "conditions for the economic prosperity of the people under a government based on the principle of one-man-one vote."¹³⁸ What was markedly different, however, was the Pan-Africanist and internationalist language which emerged in the Party's first constitution. The constitution insists, for instance, that "ZAPU shall instil [sic] and maintain the spirit of Pan-Africanism in Zimbabwe," and that it "shall work co-operatively with any other

¹³⁶ Eliakim Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union, 1961-1987: A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia* (Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, Inc., 2005), 72.

¹³⁷ As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the leadership was also professionally and educationally diverse: Chikerema, for example, was a university-educated activist and advocate, while Moyo received little formal education and worked as a carpenter.

¹³⁸ Wellington Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)*, (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), 50.

movement in Africa or elsewhere which fosters the spirit of Pan-Africanism.”¹³⁹

Furthermore, ZAPU, from its inception, used more combative, confrontational language than its political predecessor, the NDP. It claimed, for instance, that it would pursue its own agenda of confrontation with the Southern Rhodesian state, and would “co-operate with any such international forces as are genuinely engaged in the struggle for the total and immediate liquidation of colonialism and imperialism.”¹⁴⁰ Moreover, ZAPU’s constitution made overtures to the international community, with specific reference to the United Nations: “ZAPU shall observe, respect, and promote human rights contained in the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations Charter.”¹⁴¹

Indeed, in February of 1962, Nkomo and a small group of other ZAPU officials travelled to New York to appear before the United Nations Committee of Twenty-Four on Decolonization to explicate ZAPU’s political objectives and to draw the Committee’s attention to the racist and oppressive character of the Southern Rhodesian government.¹⁴²

Nkomo told the Committee that

The white settler oligarchy, assisted by a racially restricted civil service, police force and army, and a judiciary which is entirely white, has resorted to repressive and restrictive measures to muzzle and stifle African political and economic aspirations...therefore, we, the 3,000,000 African People of Southern Rhodesia, have resolved: (a) To reject the present constitution of Southern Rhodesia; (b) We have organized that no African in our

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: the Chimurenga War* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1981), 69.

motherland – Southern Rhodesia – should register as a voter on the basis of the present arrangements. Because of this stand and the support given to us by the toiling 3,000,000 African masses, our national movement, the National Democratic Party, was banned...and the national leaders, plus provincial and district as well as branch leaders numbering 5,000 are prohibited to appear in public, or address any public gatherings...on 19 December 1961, we created a new party – the Zimbabwe African People’s Union under the banner of genuine democracy – the principle of one man one vote. Our demand is simple: a constitution based on the principle of ‘One man, One vote.’ Therefore in the name of humanity, in the name of freedom and justice, in the name of peace and security, we appeal to Your Excellencies; and earnestly and respectfully ask that our case be regarded with the urgency and seriousness to which the peculiarities of our struggle entitle us. In the name of our suffering people and their party, the Zimbabwe African People’s Union, we humbly submit this memorandum of ours for your consideration.¹⁴³

Before travelling to New York, Nkomo records in his memoirs that he was asked by the Junior Minister at the Commonwealth Relations Office, the Duke of Devonshire, to reconsider putting ZAPU’s case before the UN. The Duke, whom Nkomo describes as a small man in too large an office, defended Britain’s position and reportedly said, “Mr. Nkomo, you must realize that Southern Rhodesia has a complicated, advanced economy.

¹⁴³ *Zimbabwe Independence Movement, Select Documents*, ed. Nyangoni and Nyandoro (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979), 53-54.

We could not possibly hand it over to be run by untrained hands.” In response, Nkomo said “If development in Southern Rhodesia is an obstacle to the political freedom of the black people there, then we shall have to destroy that development. In the war, if a bridge became a danger to your nation, you blew up that bridge – not that you do not think bridges a good thing, but because at that time that particular bridge was helping your enemy. So, if factories in Southern Rhodesia are an obstacle to our advance, we shall have to blow up those factories.” According to Nkomo, the Duke was horrified, and after making the same statement to the press, Nkomo reports that this argument was “one the white people never forgave me for – but it was true and I meant it, and when I reported all this to the central committee of ZAPU, they fully approved.”¹⁴⁴

Although Nkomo may be hyperbolic in his memoirs, it is clear that ZAPU was having an immediate effect on the political landscape of Southern Rhodesia and causing the British government concern. In a secret report issued to Britain’s Foreign Office, D.A.H. Wright wrote, “turning to the United Nations side, the debate has just opened in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly. The Rev. Michael Scott has been heard and other petitioners are likely to follow (including possibly Sithole, Nkomo’s deputy). We have mustered some ‘counter-petitioners’ to put the other side of the story...there is no doubt about the extent of Nationalist feeling in Southern Rhodesia and there is equally no doubt about the impact of Z.A.P.U.’s methods.”¹⁴⁵

While ZAPU’s activities were gaining greater notoriety on the international stage and drawing attention to the political and social constraints placed on Africans, the party

¹⁴⁴ Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of my Life* (London: Methuen London Ltd., 1984), 98-99.

¹⁴⁵ D.A.H. Wright, Assistant Under-Secretary at Foreign Office, London, To John Redcliffe-Maud, UK High Commissioner to the Union of South Africa, Pretoria, 9 October 1962. TNA; FO/371/161909/120.

was gaining momentum in Southern Rhodesia. By the middle of 1962, the Director for African Affairs reported that in Salisbury and its surrounding townships,

...there has been a pronounced upsurge of politics on an unprecedented scale. Methods have been practised on a mass basis where the image of the ruling African Nationalist Party and its political beliefs and dogmas have been insinuated into almost every facet of Township Administration, and has been such that it has permeated into the lives of the whole community. Advisory Boards were all affected in one way or another and this was achieved by establishing unauthorised Civic and Tenants Associations. Trade Unions were similarly loaded with politics and it is a sad admission that even certain religious organisations were also subjected to political pressures.¹⁴⁶

Indeed, in 1962, ZAPU's most obvious political success was in frustrating the Whitehead Government's plans to implement the 1961 constitution that would, as mentioned in the previous chapter, grant a restricted franchise to Africans and give tacit African support, through participation, to legislation which maintained white monopolies on political and economic power. ZAPU's Publicity Secretary, Robert Mugabe, argued that participating in the upcoming elections would be tantamount to "suicide," and that "there [would be] no purpose in taking part because the chance of improvement in the franchise is very limited. We can exert extra-parliamentary pressure and believe that this

¹⁴⁶ Annual Report of the Director of African Administration for the Two-Year Period Ended 30/6/1962, 3, cited in Brian Raftopoulos, "Nationalism and Labour in Salisbury, 1953-1965," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21:1 (1995), 87.

[would be] the right course for us at the moment.”¹⁴⁷ Samuel Parirenyatwa, ZAPU’s Vice President, echoed this sentiment in a press conference he called in early 1962, in which he said that his party was ready to organize extensively to ensure that there would be very little African participation in voter registration. Indeed, the Whitehead Government’s campaign, officially called “Build a Nation,” to register black Southern Rhodesians, was, in Parirenyatwa’s words, “a political swindle in a desperate bid to ensure the implementation of a constitution which protects minority interests. ZAPU would fight until the goal of unqualified democratic rule was achieved.”¹⁴⁸

ZAPU was indeed successful in its large-scale boycott of voter registration: of the 55,000 Africans who qualified for the ‘A’ Role, only 1,900 registered, while of the 60,000 eligible for the ‘B’ Role, there were just 9, 585.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Nkomo writes in his memoirs that a symbolic referendum, which dispensed with any restrictive voter qualifications such as property and income, was called to assess African Southern Rhodesian opinion regarding Whitehead’s campaign.¹⁵⁰ The result, according to Nkomo, was 584 yes votes to 467,189 noes.¹⁵¹ The ZAPU referendum demonstrated to settlers

¹⁴⁷ *The Evening Standard*, 21 December 1961, cited in Ngwabi Bhebe, “The Nationalist Struggle, 1957-1962” in *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe, 1890-1990*, ed. Banana (Harare: The College Press, 1989), 105.

¹⁴⁸ National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ); F120/725/L343/3, Weekly Notes up to 9 January 1962, cited in *ibid.*, 106.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*, 96.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* It ought to be noted that mention of this referendum, and its considerable voter turnout, is restricted to Nkomo’s recollections. One would expect to find reference to such an event in the memoirs of other prominent Southern Rhodesian nationalists such as Ndabaningi Sithole, Nathan Shamuyarira, Maurice Nyagumbo, or Didymus Mutasa. Indeed, it is even more unusual because the boycott and subsequent referendum took place before the ZAPU/ZANU split: future ZANU members, such as Sithole and Mutasa, often critique the early years of ZAPU’s political activity in their autobiographies, but rarely omit dramatic nationalist achievements like the one mentioned by Nkomo since they were still prominent ZAPU members. It is possible that Nkomo is misremembering or deliberately distorting the amount of “no” votes since that number would constitute approximately one-sixth of Southern Rhodesia’s African population. Nevertheless, even if the numbers are inflated by a considerable amount, the referendum is still significant because it offers an indication of ZAPU’s ability to mobilize African Southern Rhodesians for extra-state political activities.

and Africans alike “the absurdity of allowing a tiny, white-dominated electorate to make ‘democratic’ decisions against the will of an enormously larger disenfranchised population.”¹⁵² The success of the boycott is evidenced in non-ZAPU sources by the restrictions implemented by the Whitehead government which were meant to curb the activities of African nationalists. In 1962, a series of amendments to the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act of 1960 were made as a direct response to ZAPU’s political activities, including mobilizing Africans to boycott the “Build a Nation” campaign.¹⁵³ In the 1962 amendments, which cover a range of offences from producing political tokens to throwing articles at motor vehicles, the act of boycotting, as well as inducing others to boycott, is given particular attention.¹⁵⁴ The Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly, for example, adopted a measure to punish “any person who, without lawful excuse, the proof whereof lies on him, advises, encourages, incites, commands, aids or procures the boycotting of any other person or class or description of persons, shall be guilty of an offence and liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding seven years.”¹⁵⁵ It is reasonable to argue in the absence of other extant documents that ZAPU’s campaign to boycott the Whitehead Government’s initiative was successful enough to force a direct response from the Southern Rhodesian regime’s legislators.

Indeed, the Whitehead Government attempted to contain the spread of African nationalism through increasingly repressive measures. Any African seen giving what could be loosely perceived as a political speech, for example, could be detained without

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Circular from Central African Office, London, To Members of British Commonwealth Relations Office, Zomba, Nyasaland, 28 March 1962. TNA; DO/183/11/12.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

due process, and by mid-1962, over 1500 black Southern Rhodesians were arrested under the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act.¹⁵⁶ In his memoirs, Lawrence Vambe describes the day-to-day experiences at the hands of an increasingly callous and violent regime. During the boycott, Vambe writes that

The settlers were now so spiritually bankrupt that their Government and their police were using dogs and guns on defenseless black men, women and children, just as hunters through the ages had done on wild animals. The Security forces patrolled, especially at night, every section of the cities, the epicenters of this potential human volcano. One night, Leopold Takawira, myself and friends were leaving John Madzima's house where we were having a party, to find dozens of white officers lurking in the dark. We were stopped and searched. We raised a blazing row, but the police answered they were not interested in politics. Although the Whitehead Administration was conducting the 'Build a Nation Campaign,' it was fighting a desperate battle not only against the now cock-sure Rhodesian Front, but more important still against the blacks, the real cause of the wrath and fear of white Rhodesia.¹⁵⁷

By the end of 1962, a number of important developments had occurred within Southern Rhodesia. ZAPU had successfully mobilized a boycott of Whitehead's "Build a Nation" campaign, and boasted a significant number of formal members.¹⁵⁸ Indeed, when it was proscribed in September 1962, Southern Rhodesian officials estimated that there

¹⁵⁶ Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*, 96.

¹⁵⁷ Lawrence Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe* (London: Heinemann, 1976), 271.

¹⁵⁸ "After ZAPU -- What?" *Africa Report* 7:10 (1962), 26.

were approximately 190,000 card-carrying ZAPU members, with even more sympathetic to the nationalist cause.¹⁵⁹ This level of support is particularly impressive given that Southern Rhodesian security services estimated NDP membership in 1960 to be between 15,000 and 20,000.¹⁶⁰ Such a dramatic increase in party membership can in part be attributed to the reciprocal relationship between African nationalists and the Southern Rhodesian government: the settler regime often amended and introduced new laws to keep pace with the growth and evolving expressions of African nationalism. As Southern Rhodesian law struggled to keep up with changes to African nationalist tactics, which often circumvented and subverted existing legislation, more black Southern Rhodesians were drawn into ZAPU's ranks as the settler regime increased its already invasive and aggressive presence in the day-to-day lives of Africans.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, because ZAPU was the largest African nationalist organization and loomed large in settler imaginaries, many Africans arrested for contravening political laws, particularly in urban settings,

¹⁵⁹ "Southern Rhodesia Bans Main Nationalist Party," *Africa Report* 7:9 (1962), 26. When the Southern Rhodesian government banned ZAPU, police were sent to raid and shutdown party offices throughout the country. In the process, registration documents were found which enumerated ZAPU's membership. The Southern Rhodesian regime demanded that 190,000 ZAPU members hand over their party membership cards or face the penalty of a £3,000 fine or a five-year jail sentence. Given that formal membership was estimated to be this high, it is reasonable to assume that there were many more Southern Rhodesians who were sympathetic to ZAPU but had not made the effort, or did not have the opportunity, to attend ZAPU meetings or visit party offices where membership cards were distributed. *Ibid.*, 28. The other possibility is that the Rhodesian regime fabricated or greatly exaggerated these numbers to justify their repressive actions. There is little doubt, however, that ZAPU membership at this stage was at least sufficient to lead the Southern Rhodesian regime into suppressing African nationalism in new, punitive ways.

¹⁶⁰ F120/L343/2/6 Internal Security Weekly Reports, cited in T.H. Mothibe, "Zimbabwe: African Working Class Nationalism, 1957-1963," *Zambezia* 23:2 (1996), 170.

¹⁶¹ Attention ought to be drawn to the fact that the term "Africans" here is not meant to define an undifferentiated mass of people with the same grievances against the colonial state. Following the work of scholars such as Alexander, MacGregor, and Munochiveyi, "Africans" in this sense denotes a group of individuals who possessed personal, often heterogeneous reasons for confronting the settler regime. The diversity and potential number of real and perceived grievances is such that they cannot be enumerated here. See, for example, Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn MacGregor, "War Stories: Guerrilla Narratives of Zimbabwe's Liberation War," *History Workshop Journal* 57:1 (2004), 79-100; Munyaradzi B. Munochiveyi, "'War Vet Nation?': Beyond Guerrilla Nationalism and the Search for Other Nationalisms in Zimbabwe," in *Redemptive or Grotesque Nationalism? Rethinking Contemporary Politics in Zimbabwe*, ed. Ndlovu-Gatsheni New York: Peter Lang, 2011.

were lumped in with ZAPU members who would recruit their often young, politically unaffiliated cellmates from police stations and detention centers to ZAPU's ranks.¹⁶² Others preferred a more expeditious way of joining ZAPU which simultaneously proved their capabilities and willingness to confront the settler regime: as Timothy Stapleton notes, the fastest and surest way for low-level cadres and prospective members to achieve nationalist credentials with radical party elements during ZAPU's brief existence was to attack African policemen, and as a result, laws were passed and amended to reflect increased danger posed to African police.¹⁶³

The course of ZAPU's activism had also shifted in other ways: abroad, it made appeals to international bodies such as the UN as well as to regional actors and other governments which had a vested interest in Southern Rhodesia. Within Southern Rhodesia, however, the heavy-handed response of Whitehead's United Federal Party to the growth of African nationalism led to a radical change in ZAPU's domestic activities. As the door to constitutional reform closed and the intransigence of white minority rule became more pronounced, ZAPU began to agitate for change through more disruptive means. ZAPU's leadership, for example, made explicit references to a shift to violent tactics should the white monopoly of power remain in Southern Rhodesia. Speaking in Salisbury in July 1962, for example, Nkomo told the press that "we will free ourselves.

¹⁶² Munyaradzi B. Munochiveyi, *Prisoners of Rhodesia: Inmates and Detainees in the Struggle for Zimbabwean Liberation, 1960-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 30-31.

¹⁶³ Timothy Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1923-80* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 55. Indeed, while physically and verbally assaulting African policemen provided potential ZAPU members the opportunity to prove their political convictions, senior ZAPU leaders would also attack or abuse policemen. Jason Moyo, for example, ZAPU's treasurer and a future military commander, was involved in a dispute over a parking ticket with an African officer in 1962. According to the policeman, Moyo told him, "I do not want to talk to you – *voetsak* [fuck off]. If you take my particulars I will kill you." "ZAPU leader at Harare Wins Appeal," *Rhodesian Herald*, June 13, 1962 cited in *Ibid*, 53.

There are only three methods possible: negotiations, economic breakdown or bloody revolution. I warn Britain that if she does not act, I will quit the [constitutional course] of politics that we have been following.”¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, Morton Malianga, ZAPU’s National Secretary, recalled in 1971 that ZAPU leaders such as himself encouraged party members and sympathizers in the early 1960s to carry out “physical civil disobedience, sabotage, arson, demonstrations and riots which harassed the gangster settler regime, and became the root cause of the beginning of the end of Edgar Freemantle Whitehead.”¹⁶⁵

Indeed, just months before Nkomo made this statement to the Rhodesian press, ZAPU internally committed to armed struggle. Nkomo recalls in his memoirs that ZAPU’s executive began to send representatives in early summer of 1962 to the “Casablanca Group,” which comprised Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, and the Algerian provisional revolutionary government.¹⁶⁶ Nkomo himself went to Cairo after ZAPU’s leadership determined that African Southern Rhodesians “were under attack,” and that ZAPU was obliged “to defend [their] people.”¹⁶⁷ In June 1962, with the approval of ZAPU’s executive, Nkomo acquired “twenty-four semiautomatic assault rifles,” complete with magazines and ammunition, as well as a “big bag of grenades,” which he deposited in arms caches in Lusaka.¹⁶⁸ Nkomo repeated this trip several times in 1962, travelling with arms and ammunition on his person aboard Air France flights from Cairo to Lusaka, where Joseph Msika, the secretary for youth affairs, personally smuggled the weapons into Southern Rhodesia with the support of Kenneth Kaunda,

¹⁶⁴ “After ZAPU -- What?” 33.

¹⁶⁵ *Zimbabwe: History of a Struggle*, 26.

¹⁶⁶ Nkomo, *Story of my Life*, 101.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 102.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

Zambia's future president.¹⁶⁹ ZAPU's tactical shift towards achieving majority rule through violent means was noted by foreign observers and the Southern Rhodesian regime. Robert Rotburg, for instance, a research associate at Harvard University, argued in mid 1962 that "[ZAPU] is a creature of a Nkomo now genuinely converted to armed strife with government...Nkomo and his followers have moved into a new phase of nationalism where it appears to them that only the most radical approach will succeed."¹⁷⁰ Writing three years later, Nathan Shamuyarira noted that

A main feature of ZAPU's short life was a growing conviction among Africans that their struggle would have to involve bloodshed and violence. The appeals to Britain and the United Nations may be shown in the history books to have had a considerable effect on the country's political course. But to the ordinary party member they had produced no immediate result. It became a common view even among normally 'moderate' Africans that it was impossible to reason with Europeans.... Concessions might be made to buy time...but this by itself had not been enough to move white Rhodesians to realize they could never expect stability, progress and peace.¹⁷¹

From mid-1962, ZAPU cadres, at the behest of district and national ZAPU leaders, burned white-owned crops, maimed cattle, and carried out acts of sabotage

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 103.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Rotberg, "From Moderate to Militant: The Rise of Joshua Nkomo and Southern Rhodesian Nationalism," *Africa Report* 7:3 (1962), 3.

¹⁷¹ Nathan Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia* (London: Deutsch Limited, 1965), 72-73.

against railways and government-administered schools.¹⁷² Petrol bombings by young ZAPU cadres and sympathizers against state and settler-owned vehicles and shops had also increased in frequency between January and September of 1962, with the Rhodesian government admitting to 33 such attacks.¹⁷³ Furthermore, male youths were sent abroad to Egypt, Algeria, and elsewhere for training in sabotage techniques and in the use of small arms and automatic rifles.¹⁷⁴ Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor note that before cadres were sent even further abroad for training in more conventional military techniques, sabotage was ZAPU's leading strategy. James Chikerema, the secretary for public relations, was responsible for overseeing the process of sending trainees to North Africa to learn how to construct more powerful and effective explosive devices than the ubiquitous Molotov Cocktails favoured by the majority of ZAPU youths.¹⁷⁵

By 20 September 1962, ZAPU was banned through the Unlawful Organizations Act by Whitehead's Federalist Party, which was subsequently ousted from power following elections in December by Winston Field and Ian Smith's far-right Rhodesian Front (RF) which argued that the 1961 constitution had made too many concessions to Africans. During its brief legal existence, ZAPU had mobilized African support in unprecedented numbers and had deeply unsettled the Southern Rhodesia's white population through international activism and domestic disruption. In the following year, Zimbabwe's nationalist liberation struggle would become embroiled in bitter internecine

¹⁷² Martin Meredith, *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia, 1890-1979* (London: Deutsch Limited, 1979), 32. It should be recalled that Malianaga, ZAPU's National Secretary, insisted that he and the rest of ZAPU's executive called on rank-and-file members to engage in "physical disobedience" and "sabotage" in the early 1960s. *Zimbabwe: History of a Struggle*, 26.

¹⁷³ Andre Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?* (London: Zed Press, 1983), 37.

¹⁷⁴ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 32.

¹⁷⁵ Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, "African Soldiers in the USSR: Oral Histories of ZAPU Intelligence Cadres' Soviet Training, 1964-1979," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 52-54.

rivalries and divisions, while the country's new, overtly white-supremacist government would actively pursue independence from Britain and seek to remove constitutional restraints on its power.

The ZANU – ZAPU Split

Two days before a nationalist conference called for by Nkomo at Cold Comfort Farm a few kilometers outside of Salisbury, Ndabaningi Sithole, the National Chairman of ZAPU, announced on 8 August 1963 that a new party had been created, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). This marked the first of two major crises from within the leadership of ZAPU. While the second crisis in 1971, out of which the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) was born, would come at a crucial time during the liberation struggle, this second rift had less impact on ZAPU and the trajectory of Zimbabwean history more generally than did the formation of ZANU.

ZANU's leadership consisted of well-known defectors who once held senior positions in ZAPU: Sithole became President, Leopold Takawira was appointed Vice President, Mugabe the Secretary General, and Morton Malianga the Secretary for Youth.¹⁷⁶ The loss of such senior leadership and the loyalties of the cadres each individual commanded was an obvious blow to ZAPU which quickly sought to consolidate its ranks to prevent any further dissention.¹⁷⁷ Initially, the ideological and

¹⁷⁶ Martin, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 70.

¹⁷⁷ Eliakim Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, 94.

political differences between ZANU and ZAPU were minor and the ambitions of both parties were similar. Both ZANU and ZAPU sought to implement one-man one-vote, promoted pan-Africanism, and called for a social and economic restructuring whereby Africans would have equal access to resources and amenities in Southern Rhodesia. Indeed, the policy statement issued by ZANU from Salisbury on 21 August 1963, for example, set forth the following goals, which bear a striking resemblance to those outlined by ZAPU:

- I. To promote the social, economic, educational, cultural and political conditions of our downtrodden peoples of Zimbabwe and further, to inculcate in them that sense of unity which is necessary for the liberation of and development of a free Zimbabwe nation.
- II. To establish a democratic state in Zimbabwe in which the government shall be created through universal suffrage and remain at all times responsible to all the governed.
- III. To co-operate with other progressive organizations within Zimbabwe whose policies, aims and objectives are not in conflict with those of the party.
- IV. To reconstruct Zimbabwe's economy and steadily evolve a pattern of society in which the country's resources are fully tapped for the common benefit of all the peoples of Zimbabwe in close collaboration with the rest of the African continent.

- V. To engage fully in the Pan-African struggle for the complete liquidation of colonialism, neo-colonialism in Africa and to realize the complete unification of the continent.
- VI. To assist, co-operate and fraternize with all nationalist liberation movements in Africa and elsewhere whose aims, objects and politics are not in conflict with the party.¹⁷⁸

The similarities between ZANU and ZAPU's objectives and ideological positions raise a central question for the political history of ZAPU: what motivated Sithole and the other ZANU leaders to split from ZAPU? Furthermore, what immediate impact did the creation of a rival nationalist political party have on ZAPU?

Historians, political scientists, journalists, ZANU and ZAPU members, and others have posited a variety of explanations for ZANU's formation in 1963. The most often cited reason is that the rift developed out of ethnic tensions between the Shona and Ndebele.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, this was a particularly common account in the 1970s and early 1980s.¹⁸⁰ Others have argued that the Zimbabwean nationalist movement was fragmented

¹⁷⁸ *Zimbabwe Independence Movements: Select Documents*, 64-65.

¹⁷⁹ Although it is common academic and popular convention to use "Shona" and "Ndebele," they are somewhat misleading terms. Shona is spoken as a first language by several ethnicities collectively referred to as "Shona." Generally, these Shona speaking sub-ethnic groups, which constitute approximately 77% of Zimbabwe's population, are the Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore, and the Ndau. Similarly, the term "Ndebele" refers to both a language and an ethnic group. Ndebele, or isiNdebele, is spoken by the amaNdebele, Kalanga, and Venda, who constitute approximately 19% of Zimbabwe's population. Masipula Sithole, "Is Multi-Party Democracy Possible in Multi-Ethnic African States? The Case of Zimbabwe" in *African Perspectives on Development: Controversies, Dilemmas & Openings*, ed. Himmelstrand, Kinyanjui, and Mburugu (London: James Currey, 1998), 155.

¹⁸⁰ See, for example: Enock Dumbutshena, *Zimbabwe Tragedy* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975); W. J. Breytenbach, "Ethnic Factors in the Rhodesian Power Struggle," *Bulletin of the Africa Institute* 3:4 (1977), 70-75; Wellington Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1977); Terence Ranger, "Rhodesia's Politics of Tribalism," *New Society* 6:9 (1979), 496-97; Masipula Sithole, "Ethnicity and Factionalism in Zimbabwe Nationalist Politics, 1957-1959," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3:1 (1980), 17-39.

due to class antagonisms, with ZAPU “rooted among the peasantry and workers” while ZANU, whose leaders were allegedly elitists, was pursuing an opportunistic, petit bourgeois political agenda which would provide its leaders with a greater degree of economic mobility.¹⁸¹ Indeed, this idea was promoted by Benjamin Madlela, ZAPU’s representative in Dar es Salaam: ZANU’s leaders, particularly Sithole and Mugabe, said Madlela in a 1963 press release, were “intellectuals in the colonial sense...Africans who, by the privilege of their education, regard themselves more identified to the European ways of life.”¹⁸² Moreover, some have argued that the split was due to perceived ineffective leadership from Nkomo, particularly with respect to his approach to the 1961 constitutional talks between the NDP, the Southern Rhodesian Government, and Britain. A number of senior ZANU members, including Takawira and Sithole, labelled Nkomo a “sellout” for ceding too much ground to the Rhodesian government at the expense of African political aspirations.¹⁸³ Indeed, Nkomo’s character has often been attacked, and his detractors have claimed that he was both a barrier to political progress and hopelessly out of touch with the majority of Zimbabweans.¹⁸⁴ Other authors have written that Nkomo had deliberately fled Southern Rhodesia to evade capture while other ZAPU cadres and officials remained in country to accept stoically their prison sentences.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ John Saul, *The State and Revolution in East Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 112. For further class analysis, see especially Lionel Cliffe, “Towards an Evaluation of the Zimbabwe Nationalist Movement,” Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Political Studies Association the United Kingdom, University of Exeter, 29 March – 2 April 1980, 4.

¹⁸² American Embassy Dar es Salaam to State, December 5, 1963, cited in Timothy Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy and Political Violence in Zimbabwe: Harare and Highfield, 1940-1964* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 140.

¹⁸³ Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?*, 38.

¹⁸⁴ Themba Sono, “The Dynamics of Zimbabwe Nationalism: A Study in Political Activism of African Nationalist Movements in Rhodesia from 1956-1972” (Master’s Thesis, Duquesne University, 1973), 56; Martin, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 67-68; Bishop Abel Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk: The Autobiography of Bishop Abel Tendekai Muzorewa* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1978), 57; Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 35; Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 174.

¹⁸⁵ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 68.

Writers have also argued that Sithole and the other ZANU members left ZAPU after they had learned of Nkomo's plans to create a government in exile: such a government, they argued would be ineffectual and defeatist, and lacked the necessary backing of critical organizations such as the Organization for African Unity's (OAU) liberation committee.¹⁸⁶ Furthermore, it has been proposed, although rather unconvincingly and with a deficit of evidence, by Ken Flower, the former head of Rhodesia's Special Branch, that the split was carefully engineered by Southern Rhodesian intelligence operatives who had successfully infiltrated the nationalist movement.¹⁸⁷

There is, therefore, no shortage of possible explanations for the central political split in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. A number of these explanations are more plausible and convincing than others: the arguments which posit ethnic and class tension as the central causes of the split are dubious, considering that ZAPU and ZANU both had Shona and Ndebele members from widely varying socioeconomic and educational backgrounds among their ranks at executive and local levels. While both parties would later employ ethnic rhetoric to further their aims in the 1970s, in 1963, the leaders of ZANU and ZAPU understood that such language risked alienating sympathetic international organizations and independent African nations. More convincing are the arguments that there were lingering doubts about Nkomo's leadership after the 1961 constitutional talks, doubts which were extended and exacerbated by the leader's extensive travelling outside Southern Rhodesia and his attempt to create a government in

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: Rhodesia's CIO Chief on Record* (Alberton, South Africa: Galago Publishing, 1987), 104.

exile after ZAPU had been banned. Indeed, these are the reasons most often cited by those directly involved in the nationalist split.¹⁸⁸

These accounts fail, however, to take into account the more mundane aspect of clashing personalities and inter-personal rivalries which similarly fractured other Southern African liberation movements.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, much of the secondary literature, both scholarly and popular, written after Zimbabwe achieved independence celebrates the history of ZANU to the exclusion of other political parties, which has distorted our understanding of the Zimbabwean liberation movement's most dramatic and consequential fracture. Indeed, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Wendy Willems note that "the majority of the works produced within the postcolonial euphoric period assumed the format of 'praise texts' that accepted the victor's version of history and ignored the activities of such nationalists as Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Reverend Sithole, James Chikerema, George Nyandoro, and Joshua Nkomo and others who were active in the nationalist struggle throughout the 1970s but failed to come into power in 1980."¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, historians such as Eliakim Sibanda, who have absolved Nkomo, Moyo, and other loyal ZAPU leaders of responsibility for the 1963 split and instead blame leaders

¹⁸⁸ See especially Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*; Sithole, *African Nationalism*; Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia; Zimbabwe: History of a Struggle* ed. Zimbabwe African People's Union; Mlambo, *Rhodesia: Struggle for a Birthright*; Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*; Ndabaningi Sithole, *Obed Mutezo*; Enock Dumbutshena, *Zimbabwe Tragedy* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975); Fay Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe* (Stockholm: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2006).

¹⁸⁹ The leadership crisis within the Mozambican revolutionary party Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) in 1968-69 is a particularly useful example of personal antagonisms having a pernicious effect on a Southern African liberation struggles. See, for example, Georgi Derluguian, "The Social Origins of Good and Bad Governance: Re-interpreting the 1968 schism in FRELIMO" in *Sure Road?: Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique*, ed. Morier-Genoud (Leiden: Brill Press, 2012), 79-102.

¹⁹⁰ Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Wendy Willems, "Reinvoking the Past in the Present: Changing Identities and Appropriations of Joshua Nkomo in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe" *African Identities* 8:3 (2010), 192-193.

such as Mugabe and Sithole of sheer opportunism, offer little in the way of helping to recognize the complexity of the nationalist crisis.¹⁹¹ Indeed, competing narratives have led to subjective conclusions based on the accounts of a limited number of nationalist leaders who sought to stake claim to being the only authentic voice of Zimbabwean nationalism. A more nuanced, objective understanding of the split which incorporates several of the arguments mentioned above, as well as the immediate, often violent, consequences, are crucial to understanding the political history of ZAPU.

As early as 1962, serious rifts in ZAPU's leadership began to emerge. When ZAPU was banned on 20 September by the Whitehead government, Mugabe, Takawira, Moyo, and other senior cadres were arrested and moved to different tribal reserves for three-month periods of detention. It was expected, according to Nathan Shamuyarira, that Nkomo would leave Lusaka upon hearing this news to face detention in solidarity with ZAPU's leaders who had remained in Southern Rhodesia.¹⁹² Rather than travel to Salisbury, however, Nkomo departed for Dar es Salaam, against the advice of his Northern Rhodesian hosts: Sikota Wina, the publicity secretary for the United National Independence Party (UNIP), reported that Nkomo had been

strongly advised that his political leadership and the solution to the Southern Rhodesian crisis almost entirely depends on his presence in [Southern Rhodesia] and among his people, whatever the circumstances. Remaining away in Northern Rhodesia, or any other country, will have the effect of seriously weakening morale among the ranks of the toiling

¹⁹¹ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, 90-93.

¹⁹² Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 174.

masses of Southern Rhodesia...Mr. Nkomo has no alternative but to be [detained] if the Southern Rhodesian freedom struggle is to start seriously and his leadership prestige is to be maintained.¹⁹³

Nkomo, however, writes that after he heard ZAPU had been banned, he

decided to return from Lusaka to Tanganyika, set up the contacts that would ensure a continuing flow of weapons, then go home myself to face restriction. So that was what we did. Naturally enough all the journalists in Lusaka were camped outside my house waiting for the interviews with the banned Nkomo, and the police were on the watch as well. So Patrick Kumbai, who is roughly my size, dressed in clothes like mine and drove out in a car. The police and the press chased off after him and I drove quietly out a little later in my own car and set off for Tanganyika. In Dar I made the usual calls on some friendly embassies, explained our position and asked for help in our fight...then I took the plane [to Southern Rhodesia] and was met at the airport as a VIP. I got right out of the aircraft and into a car from the Special Branch of the police...my friends in Salisbury had seen me get off the plane from Dar, but neither they nor I knew where I was going next. It turned out to be Bulawayo, where I was met by no less than three police cars.¹⁹⁴

Ndabaningi Sithole, who was in Athens at the Fourth International Conference on World Politics, and Enoch Dumbutshena, a London-based lawyer and rising ZAPU cadre, both

¹⁹³ Quotation not cited, in Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 174.

¹⁹⁴ Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, 103-104.

sent angry telegrams to Nkomo while he was in Dar demanding that he return to Southern Rhodesia at once.¹⁹⁵ According to Shamuyarira, members of ZAPU were demoralized after hearing from a radio bulletin that Nkomo had travelled to Tanzania. Indeed, Tanzania's president, Julius Nyerere, was surprised to hear from the same broadcast that Nkomo was in his country.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, a number of Zimbabwean nationalists were angered by the perceived indignity of their leader using a body double to escape detection and seek the relative safety of Tanzania. For Nkomo and his high-ranking supporters, such as Moyo, Chikerema, Msika and others, however, the excursion to Dar was necessary and important: ZAPU's leader had to establish ties with sympathetic governments, just as he had done with the "Casablanca Group," to better acquaint ZAPU with emerging continental nationalist and revolutionary thought after the party had been banned, which Nkomo believed was only possible if he remained free. Moreover, according to Nkomo and those who remained with ZAPU after the split, he had always intended to return to Southern Rhodesia to be placed in custody, after he had secured the guarantee of military material, financial support, and wider ideological backing for the party.¹⁹⁷ While Nkomo's detractors blamed him for abandoning ZAPU's leaders at home, Nkomo and his supporters argued that he was acting in the party's interests by expanding the possible modes of liberation available to Zimbabweans. When he returned to Southern Rhodesia in 1964, he was arrested on 16 April and sent to Gonakudzingwa prison camp in the southwest.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Masipula Sithole, *Struggles Within the Struggle* (Salisbury: Rujeko Publishers Limited, 1979), 28.

¹⁹⁶ Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 174.

¹⁹⁷ John Day, *International Nationalism: The Extra-Territorial Relations of Southern Rhodesian African Nationalists* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1967), 117.

¹⁹⁸ Martin Rupiya, "Joshua Nkomo and the Internationalization of Zimbabwe's Struggle for Liberation," in *Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo of Zimbabwe: Politics, Power, and Memory*, ed. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017), 78.

There is a degree of irony in Sithole's recollections of this period when he notes that after he had sent a telegram demanding that Nkomo return to Southern Rhodesia, he met the ZAPU president in Dar where they decided

that [Nkomo] return to [Salisbury], and I remain outside [Southern Rhodesia] and carry on the activities of our nationalist movement. I did not quite like the idea of remaining outside my country, but I had to, as a matter of duty. By disposition I do not get much fun outside my country. In Tanganyika I settled down to the task of advancing our nationalist cause. Among other things I broadcast to Southern Rhodesia once a week, and I also visited the Congo (Kinshasa) and Congo (Brazzaville), Ethiopia, the United Arab Republic, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and the United States.¹⁹⁹

There is no mention in extant documents of whether it fell within the remit of ZAPU's president or national chairman to pursue nationalist interests abroad should the party be proscribed, or if indeed this was a course endorsed or discussed by the majority of the party's leadership. Given the accusations levelled against Nkomo for his internationalism, however, it would seem disingenuous for the ZANU leader to look back on his travels during this period as "a matter of duty:" it is arguable that Nkomo believed that he was similarly duty bound to seek regional and international support for Southern Rhodesia's liberation struggle.

¹⁹⁹ Sithole, *African Nationalism*, 34.

By April 1963 the rift that had been growing in the nationalist ranks reached a crisis point. Influential ZAPU members such as Mugabe and Malianga still resented Nkomo for his participation in the constitutional talks. It will be recalled that Nkomo, as the leader of the NDP delegation, briefly agreed with the Whitehead government and Duncan Sandys, the British colonial secretary, to constitutional reform which gave greater autonomy to the Rhodesian regime in domestic matters while granting a very limited franchise to African Southern Rhodesians. Nkomo eventually repudiated this agreement, but only after he had been admonished by senior nationalists like Takawira, who firmly believed that Nkomo had not been deceived in putting his name to the document, as Nkomo claimed, but rather agreed in principle with the proposed constitutional arrangement.²⁰⁰

Opposition to Nkomo's leadership came to a fore on 12 April 1963 when the ZAPU president convinced the rest of the senior leadership, including Mugabe and Takawira, who faced significant legal consequences for leaving the Southern Rhodesia in contravention of their detention orders, to assemble in Dar. According to Shamuyarira, Nkomo said that while he had been in New York before the United Nations Committee of Twenty Four, he had received word that Nyerere and other pan-Africanist leaders recommended that ZAPU establish a government-in-exile in Tanzania.²⁰¹ Once they arrived, however, the ZAPU contingent found themselves in a deeply embarrassing and troubling position: Nyerere told them that he was "surprised they had arrived in his capital," and said that he had expressed no explicit invitation for the Southern Rhodesians

²⁰⁰ Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, 94.

²⁰¹ Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 176-177.

to come to his country, nor did he believe that the strategy to create a government outside the country's borders was sound.²⁰² To compound the problem, Nkomo, Sithole, Mugabe, Moyo, Takawira, and Malianga travelled to Addis Ababa in May to lobby the OAU's liberation committee for material and logistical support for the provisional government-in-exile, but were told bluntly that resources would only be made available once the nationalist leaders returned to Southern Rhodesia to pursue liberation from within its borders.²⁰³

While few disputed that positive gains had been made by a number of ZAPU leaders abroad, including Nkomo, by drawing attention to the issues facing African Southern Rhodesians and acquiring financial and military support, the fact that ZAPU's executive assembled *en bloc* under false pretenses to be reprimanded by other African leaders proved to be a breaking point. Sithole writes that "After the conference we returned to Dar-es-Salaam bitterly divided among ourselves. At last Mr. Nkomo, our president, was forced to return home to be with our followers, but the whole thing left a bitter taste in our mouths."²⁰⁴ Indeed, Shamuyarira writes that "after [Nkomo] had been there a fortnight, Nyerere called [him] and told him it was time he went home; he said his earlier words had been reinforced by the leaders at Addis."²⁰⁵

Nkomo's description of events differs significantly. He makes no mention of an invitation from Nyerere. Indeed, he writes that there was a great deal of enmity between

²⁰² Masipula Sithole, *Struggles within the Struggle*, 29.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism*, 35.

²⁰⁵ Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 179.

he and Nyerere, and notes that travel to Dar was born out of necessity because Tanzania had become a confluence of Pan-Africanism and groups engaged in anticolonial struggle:

Repression created a new solidarity within [Southern Rhodesia]: at home our people had never been more united. But tragically it was at this moment that divisions began to appear within our movement's organization abroad.... The root of this problem lay in Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanganyika, which because of its geographical location had to be the main base of our external organization.... The city became the headquarters for liberation movements for central and southern Africa – for Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia as well as for my own country. But being in Dar es Salaam meant being under the wing of Julius Nyerere [who] lacked confidence in the ability of Africans to rule themselves.... Moreover, Nyerere had a special problem with me personally. He always sought to dominate the policies and the personalities of the liberation movements to which he gave hospitality.... In any case, he has regularly taken positions opposed to mine, and backed my critics even when that damaged the cause of freedom in my country.²⁰⁶

It is of course important to note that writing in his memoirs, published in 1984, Nkomo was perhaps seizing the opportunity to repudiate the accusations which were being levelled against him by authors championing the ZANU narrative of his incompetence and unwillingness to confront directly the Southern Rhodesian government

²⁰⁶ Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, 109-110.

and its supporters. Certainly, it is important to draw attention to the fact that Shamuyarira and Sithole were hardly objective themselves, given that they were senior members of ZANU writing in 1965 and 1968 respectively. Those directly involved in the split give competing, inconsistent narratives of the 1963 nationalist fracture, just as historians have done since the mid-1960s. Sibanda, for example, offers a somewhat contradictory, though certainly dramatic, explanation for the emergence of ZANU: after the Addis Ababa conference, Sibanda argues that Sithole, Mugabe, Malianga, and Takawira contrived to lure Nkomo under the pretense of a leadership meeting to the home of a liberal white farmer, Sir Stuart Gore-Brown, where they intended to either capture or assassinate the ZAPU president, who was tipped off by James Chikerema at the last moment.²⁰⁷ At the same time, argues Sibanda, “this group of rebels sent their supporters into Southern Rhodesia to nicodemusly [sic] recruit for a new party they had decided to form.”²⁰⁸ Sibanda goes on to write that,

having failed to lure Nkomo to a death trap, the dissidents decided to convene a meeting of seven executive members in Tanganyika with a view to eliminating Nkomo as leader. The meeting was attended by the dissidents, Mugabe, Sithole, Moton Malianga and Takawira, as well as Nkomo’s loyalists, J.Z. Moyo, Joseph Msika, and C.M Muchachi who boycotted the meeting once they learnt its purpose. The three loyalists declared the meeting unconstitutional, which indeed it was given that the

²⁰⁷ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union*, 91.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. The word “nicodemusly” is used almost exclusively in Southern Africa, especially Zimbabwe, where it has become part of the English lexicon. It comes from the Gospel of St. John and refers to the Pharisee Nicodemus, who visited Jesus in the night to ask questions of him. The word defines someone who operates under the cover of darkness or does something secretly.

presidency was chosen by the National Congress. The four dissidents went ahead and deposed Nkomo as leader and put Ndabaningi Sithole in his place.²⁰⁹

If Sithole and the others had planned to depose Nkomo as president of ZAPU in favor of one of their own, why would they send loyal cadres to Southern Rhodesia to recruit for a new party? Indeed, in July 1962, the ZAPU national executive agreed that another party would not be formed should ZAPU be banned by Southern Rhodesian authorities.²¹⁰

There is no evidence to indicate that Sithole and the others planned on creating a new party prior to meeting in Addis Ababa in May 1963, nor is there evidence beyond Nkomo's memoirs that the "dissidents" were hatching a plot to assassinate him. What is clear, however, is that Nkomo was losing control of his party in the summer of 1963. For Sithole and the others, the crucial breaking point was the OAU's condemnation of the proposed government-in-exile, and the demand that the Zimbabwean liberation struggle engage in a policy of confrontation, not circumvention.²¹¹ Faced with mounting insurrection among the executive, Nkomo writes that

I had to act decisively, and I sought a democratic decision of our party to resolve our problems. I summoned a general congress to meet in one of the few possible places, the cooperative farm run by liberal white people a few kilometers out of Salisbury on the Bulawayo road, and known as Cold Comfort Farm. Although thinly disguised, for ZAPU was still banned, this was to be a representative party congress. I telegraphed the Dar es Salaam

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 92.

²¹⁰ Masipula Sithole, *Struggles within the Struggle*, 27.

²¹¹ Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 177.

office to summon its members home for the occasion, authorizing air tickets for all of them. Thousands of the party faithful from all over the country came to Cold Comfort Farm, but a small group of the Dar es Salaam people chose not to come. Instead they held their own little meeting in Enos Nkala's home in Highfields, in Salisbury, and announced that they were setting up their own rival party called Zanu, The Zimbabwe African National Union.²¹²

What Nkomo fails to mention, however, is that he had arrived in Southern Rhodesia a month prior to the meeting at Cold Comfort Farm, travelling extensively around the country to reassure local ZAPU cadres and nationalist supporters that the party was still strong, despite "the former ZAPU executive plotting against him," and refuting the accusations that the party, under his leadership, had been admonished by independent African states.²¹³ The picture of this crucial period becomes even less clear as historians sympathetic to ZANU, such as Martin Meredith, argue that the telegraphs sent by Nkomo to Sithole and others in Dar were not invitations, but rather notices that they had been suspended from the party and could no longer access ZAPU funds to travel to Southern Rhodesia.²¹⁴ Ironically, the very people who accused Nkomo of fleeing Rhodesia to evade capture were stranded in Dar while Nkomo returned to Salisbury to preempt their charges against him and solidify his position.

In a 1968 interview with the Vancouver-based Liberation Support Movement (LSM), George Nyandoro, who had risen to the post of ZAPU's general secretary, argued

²¹² Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, 116,

²¹³ Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe*, 54.

²¹⁴ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 38.

that “ZANU was formed by men, who in the early days of the liberation struggle, both rejected identification with the masses and were connected to settler politics....As decolonization was spreading rapidly throughout Africa, together with the general awareness of the need to gain independent African power, these young men were forced to join the nationalist movement.... [After the split] there was a spontaneous reaction from the masses, from the ordinary people in ZAPU’s urban branches. They said: ‘See, we told you not to allow these men to come in; now look what they’ve done, they’ve divided the nation at the critical moment.’”²¹⁵ Two particularly salient points emerge from Nyandoro’s interview with the LSM: the first is that Nyandoro appears to concede that communication between the “masses” and ZAPU’s executive was, at best, lacking. Breakdowns in communication between local and national leaders emerged as a significant factor in the violence which followed the split, but also arguably point to the fact that both Nkomo and Sithole had inadvertently distanced themselves from African Rhodesians by shifting the focus of their nationalist agenda outside of Rhodesia’s borders. If there was indeed a breakdown in communication from within ZAPU’s organizational structure immediately preceding the split, it is reasonable to assume that rank-and-file ZAPU cadres and supporters were partially unaware of how their most senior leaders planned to prosecute the liberation struggle. Second, Nyandoro asserts that ZANU’s leaders were latecomers who recognized the opportunity to capitalize on ZAPU’s nationalist gains, which provided new opportunities for economic advancement to young, reasonably well-educated urban men who had personal stakes in colonial

²¹⁵ *Liberation Support Movement Interview: George Nyandoro, General Secretary, Zimbabwe African People’s Union*, (Richmond, British Columbia: Liberation Support Movement Information Center, 1968), 7-8.

structures. Nyandoro's argument that ZANU emerged as a party of educated, urban elites is not particularly convincing given that both ZAPU's and ZANU's executives were reasonably homogenous: with few exceptions, the leadership of both parties had close ties to urban, organized labour, received mission educations, and were generally close to each other in age.²¹⁶ Indeed, there is a certain irony to Nyandoro's comments, considering that it was Nkomo who, by participating in the 1961 constitutional talks, perhaps engaged most meaningfully with settler politics.

The explanations for the split between ZANU and ZAPU, and indeed the chronological sequence of events, are muddied by the competing narratives of nationalist leaders who wrote of the events only years after they had occurred and after the two parties became firmly entrenched in opposition to one another. By competing to define the past, nationalist leaders and subsequent historians have distorted the causes of the 1963 split to accommodate the interests of ZAPU and ZANU. Nkomo's perceived weakness at the constitutional talks was certainly cause for concern among some members of ZAPU's executive, particularly Takawira. The abortive government in exile was also crucially important to the split: to Nkomo's detractors, it was proof that he and his allies were out of touch with the majority of the executive and were losing the support of crucial allies in independent African States.²¹⁷ For Nkomo's supporters, however, he had made significant gains which outweighed the missteps in Dar and Addis Ababa. He mobilized a significant number of African Southern Rhodesians to defeat the "Build a

²¹⁶ R. Kent Rasmussen, *Historical Dictionary of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1979), 353.

²¹⁷ Among the national executive, Nkomo lost the support of 7 out of 12 members. Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe*, 54.

Nation” campaign, and increased ZAPU’s membership and the popularity of Zimbabwean nationalism in general.²¹⁸

Munochiveyi argues convincingly that “African nationalism in Rhodesia cannot be fully understood within the parochial and narrow paradigms of elite nationalist agendas.”²¹⁹ While this is true of much of Zimbabwean nationalism, the split between the most senior members of ZANU and ZAPU specifically can only be understood from within this paradigm because it was precisely the elites who caused the liberation movement to be cleaved in two. Much of the recent historiography on Zimbabwe has interrogated older understandings of nationalist history. Munochiveyi, for example, writes that “dominant state narratives have rendered invisible and inaudible the histories, lived experiences, and significant contributions of other historical subjects.”²²⁰ In the case of the ZANU/ZAPU split, dominant narratives have obfuscated the reasons behind the 1963 crisis in order to fit them into categories which reflect the subsequent history of Southern Rhodesia’s liberation struggle. Ambitious personalities and bitter rivalries on both sides serve neither the interests of ZANU nor ZAPU in monolithic nationalist histories, which has caused this crucial aspect of the split to be neglected in Zimbabwean historiography. Indeed, Dumiso Dabengwa writes that “the split in ZAPU was engineered largely by [elites] who had...been waiting for an opportunity to promote their personal ambitions by dividing the organization.”²²¹ Dabengwa draws our attention to a factor in the split that would never be memorialized by those directly involved in the crisis: that

²¹⁸ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union*, 88.

²¹⁹ Munyaradzi Munochiveyi, “We Do Not Want to be Ruled by Foreigners: Oral Histories of Nationalism in Colonial Zimbabwe,” *The Historian* 73:1 (2011), 65.

²²⁰ Munochiveyi, *Prisoners of Rhodesia*, 8.

²²¹ Dumsio Dabengwa, “ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation” in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (London: James Currey, 1995), 26.

their own ambitions had played a significant part in the fracturing of a united movement. It is impossible to gauge to what extent interpersonal enmities directly contributed to the division, but undoubtedly, they underwrote many features of the split.

The Impact of the Split on ZAPU

As mentioned above, the political programs and ideological dispositions of ZAPU and ZANU in the immediate aftermath of the split were strikingly similar. Indeed, it led outside observers to believe that if personal animosities could be reconciled, Zimbabwean nationalism could once again be a united force. In an interview between F.S. Miles, a member of the British High Commission in Dar es Salaam and Oscar Kambona, the Tanzanian Minister for External Affairs and Defence, in December 1963, Miles records that

Mr. Kambona went on to mention the possibility of conciliation between Nkomo and Sithole, both of whom he had seen separately in the last few days. He believed that the difficulties between them were not as wide as their public statements suggested. Moreover, the experience of various other African countries had shown the prime importance of a unified nationalist movement. The Liberation Committee had not given up hope yet; and he said he was about to write an official letter to Mr. Sandys

requesting that their sub-committee...be allowed to visit Southern Rhodesia in order to try and bring the two sides together.²²²

Indeed, it was clear to Kambona and other African nationalist leaders that the party that stood to gain the most from a fractured liberation movement in Southern Rhodesia was Winston Field and Ian Smith's far-right RF which came to power in December 1962. By the time Miles and Kambona met, however, the situation in Southern Rhodesia, and particularly Salisbury's townships, had changed dramatically. Scarnecchia notes that violence in Salisbury between "pro-ZANU and pro-ZAPU supporters started almost immediately after the announcement of ZANU's formation" and that by 14 August 1963, six days after ZANU took shape, "both Nkomo and Sithole were denouncing the factional violence in the press, but little in what both leaders said indicated they were capable of stopping it."²²³ Indeed, it is possible that neither Sithole nor Nkomo were eager for the violence in Salisbury's township to come to a quick conclusion. Both leaders, for instance, may have preferred their factions to continue fighting until a discernable victor emerged who could then undertake the difficult, if not impossible, task of assuming command and integrating the supporters of the losing party. More likely, however, is that considerable distance developed between the executives of ZAPU and ZANU and their respective district and local leaders. Given that much of ZAPU's executive had been outside of Southern Rhodesia for a considerable amount of time before the split, it can be posited in the absence of oral and written testimony from individual cadres that command structures eroded over time and the youths on the streets

²²² F.S. Miles, Acting UK High Commissioner to Tanganyika, To N.G. Lamarque, Africa Economic Department, Commonwealth Relations Office, Dar es Salaam, 24 December 1963. TNA; DO/216/16/86.

²²³ Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy*, 138.

of Highfield and Harare felt greater allegiance to their local leaders and party functionaries who were wary of ceding too much authority to Nkomo or Sithole while the outcome of the split remained uncertain. Indeed, in the most wide-ranging study of the immediate violence following the ZAPU/ZANU fracture, Scarnecchia argues that in the year immediately after the split, “those carrying out the violence and discipline in the townships had begun to set their own agendas.”²²⁴

Predictably, as the violence continued throughout 1963 and 1964, Nkomo and Sithole blamed their opposite parties for the fighting. Stanlake Samkange, a prominent journalist and author, recalled that during this period, “there were many people killed in daily clashes between the *zhanda* [vigilantes] of ZAPU and ZANU. Life in Highfields [sic] became like hell on earth” and that his person, car, and house had been routinely attacked.²²⁵ Fay Chung, a teacher in Salisbury who later joined ZANU in 1973, similarly recalls vividly how violence in the townships in 1963 increasingly became directed not towards the Rhodesian colonial regime, but towards fellow nationalists:

...whereas the earlier violence was targeted at all symbols of the colonial regime, the new violence was internecine, with ZAPU and ZANU fighting against each other in the townships. Groups of youths roamed the townships demanding party cards from all and sundry. The petrol bombing of each other’s houses was becoming a daily occurrence. It was believed that the violence was initially instigated by ZAPU, using the slogan that it was essential to destroy the “snake inside the house”, meaning ZANU,

²²⁴ Ibid, 150.

²²⁵ Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men? The Samkange Family in African Politics in Zimbabwe, 1920-1964* (London: James Currey, 1995), 203.

before destroying the “snake outside”, meaning the colonial-settler regime of Ian Smith. The Smith regime was able to maximise the violence by torching both ZAPU and ZANU houses. White agents, with their faces painted black, entered the townships to burn the houses of political activists. Very cleverly, the Smith regime escaped blame, while the two nationalist parties blamed each other. This violence was particularly painful for the ordinary township inhabitants.²²⁶

It is difficult to get a sense of how widespread the violence between ZANU and ZAPU cadres had become outside of Salisbury given the paucity of extant records. According to Ranger, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe’s second city, remained staunchly loyal to ZAPU and there was little violence between rival nationalist groups, especially when compared to Salisbury.²²⁷ Potentially useful government reports on “riots, subversion, detainees and military matters” in a number of districts and urban centers outside the capital involving local nationalist cadres dating from the mid 1960s were withdrawn and destroyed in the late 1970s.²²⁸ Nevertheless, documentary evidence survives which indicates that as Sithole and Nkomo, as well as other senior ZANU and ZAPU leaders, travelled the country, they were often met by a combination of vocal supporters, angry detractors, and locals who hoped that the protests would not devolve into violent riots.²²⁹

ZAPU’s new leadership, rebranded as the People’s Cabinet, was appointed at the Cold Comfort Farm conference, the same conference which officially suspended Sithole,

²²⁶ Chung, *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*, 60.

²²⁷ Terence Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning: The Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960* (London: James Currey, 2010), 244.

²²⁸ Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory*, 113.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

Mugabe, Malianga, and Takawira.²³⁰ Its positions generally reflected the structure of ZAPU before the split, with the noticeable exception that Nkomo was appointed president for life. In his memoirs, Nkomo writes that he “strongly disagreed with [the decision to make him president for life], and said so. I was far too young for such an honour, only forty-six, not a venerable old man. Anyway, I thought it wrong for the party to commit itself to a single president for the years ahead. But that was what they wanted, and I could hardly veto their decision.”²³¹ According to Nkomo, it was Chikerema who put the motion forward, although it is not inconceivable that Chikerema did so at the behest of Nkomo himself. As mentioned above, ZAPU needed to firmly reassert itself and project an image of a strong, stable leadership after the tumultuous split in nationalist ranks. The positions appointed at Cold Comfort Farm were:

Life President: Joshua Nkomo

Deputy President: James Chikerema

Secretary to the President: William Makarati

Secretary-General: George Nyandoro

Deputy Secretary-General: Edward Ndlovu

²³⁰ At the Cold Comfort conference, ZAPU also announced the creation the People’s Caretaker Council (PCC), which was an attempt to circumvent the fact that ZAPU had been banned by the Rhodesian government. The PCC was supposedly a social, rather than political, party, and was thus able to briefly avoid proscription under the Unlawful Organizations Act. The PCC, however, was clearly a political response to developments in Southern Rhodesia: ZANU was not banned by the RF until 1964, and ZAPU needed an organizational structure which could combat ZANU publically and vocally. The use of the name ZAPU after 10 August 1963 and before 27 August 1964, therefore, refers in a technical sense to the ‘social’ PCC and not an overtly political organization. The PCC, however, was so obviously a brief, exact iteration of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union that the term ZAPU was used by PCC members and is used in this thesis for the sake of continuity and clarity.

²³¹ Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, 116.

National Chairman: Samuel Munodawafa

Treasurer-General: Jason Moyo

Financial Secretary: George Marange

Secretary for External Affairs: Joseph Msika

Secretary for Youth and Cultural Affairs: Clement Muchachi

Deputy Secretary for Youth and Cultural Affairs: Mhariwa Gumbo

Secretary for Information and Publicity: George Silundika

Deputy Secretary for Information and Publicity: Alois Wingwiri

Secretary for Women's Affairs: Jane Ngwenya

Secretary for Public Relations: Willie Musarurwa

Secretary for Organization: Lazarus Nkala²³²

Immediately after the split, the majority of African Southern Rhodesian nationalists, and nationalist sympathizers, supported Nkomo and ZAPU's new executive leadership. Indeed, looking back on the early days of his party, Edson Zvobgo recalled in 1979 that the first meeting of ZANU only attracted 23 cadres due to the intense pressure exerted by ZAPU supporters.²³³ Scarnecchia notes that after Sithole arrived back in Salisbury in August 1963, he, "Nkala, and 200 supporters required the protection of the Rhodesian police in order to hold their meeting" and that a "milling pro-Nkomo mob of a

²³² Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, 94.

²³³ Goswin Baumhogger ed., *The Struggle for Independence: Documents on the Recent Development of Zimbabwe, 1975-1980* (Hamburg: Institut für Afrika-Kunde, 1984) vol.2, pg. 23.

thousand threatening ‘death to sellouts’ remained outside the meeting, and Sithole’s and Shamuyarira’s cars were stoned as they left.”²³⁴

ZAPU’s popularity at this early stage can be attributed to a series of factors: first, Nkomo had an advantage over ZANU by arriving in Southern Rhodesia in July, a month before Sithole and the other defectors were able to leave Tanzania, during which time Nkomo was able to attack their characters and blame them for creating rifts within a united struggle.²³⁵ Second, Nkomo was able to capitalize on the fact that he had been, since the creation of the SRANC, the face of African nationalism in Zimbabwe, and was able to utilize significant political capital he had accumulated over roughly six years of nationalist campaigning. Indeed, members of ZANU’s leadership, including Mugabe and Sithole, had played an instrumental role in establishing Nkomo as “the man of the people” and the “backbone of the nation” prior to the split.²³⁶ The very people who had cultivated the idea of Nkomo as indispensable to African Rhodesians by utilizing popular slogans and posters such as “freedom now” emblazoned below Nkomo’s face, now confronted the unenviable task of dismantling the image they had played a part in creating.²³⁷ Third, ZANU had tremendous difficulty in disseminating their programmatic messages to Africans in Southern Rhodesia. ZAPU supporters limited the capacity of ZANU leaders to speak at political rallies and other events, and were also capable of manipulating editorial decisions in popular African and settler-read newspapers such as the *Daily News*.²³⁸

²³⁴ Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy*, 137.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

²³⁶ Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe*, 58.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

²³⁸ Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy*, 141.

The emergence of ZANU as the most numerically popular liberation party in Zimbabwe will be explored in the following chapters, but it is important to note that the nationalist split created a dual-front for ZAPU: after its leadership returned to Southern Rhodesia, the party had to reassert itself as the “authentic” liberation movement, which entailed matching ZANU’s increasingly radical calls for violent insurrection against the settler state. This approach, however, brought ZAPU into more direct confrontation with Rhodesian security forces who sought to exploit the rift between the parties. The violence that had been taking place in the townships diverted attention away from military exercises that were simultaneously taking place outside of Rhodesia’s borders. Under the direction of Chikerema, three broad directives were issued with the aim of creating a new program of military operations. Chikerema expressed the need to create a specific military wing within ZAPU rather than a department, argued for a central base for the nascent army, and called for small units of two to three cadres inside Rhodesia to infiltrate different parts of the country to recruit new members, and reconnoiter and sabotage small economic targets.²³⁹ Dabengwa notes that he, Moyo, and Chikerema began sending young ZAPU cadres further abroad beyond North Africa in late 1963 to receive training in espionage and sabotage in various countries in the socialist bloc before returning in 1965.²⁴⁰ The process of simultaneously training cadres abroad to fight the Rhodesian regime and attempting to suppress the activities of ZANU placed great strain on the organization and finances of ZAPU, which worked to the benefit of the RF and its security forces. Indeed, Scarnecchia writes that “the [nationalist leaders] had failed to keep their militants disciplined, and the result was a fear among many residents of being

²³⁹ Dabengwa, “ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation,” 26.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

victimized or being falsely accused of being on the wrong side. The ability of factions to control different areas in the [Salisbury] townships resulted in a new display of power, but this factionalism meant that groups on both sides remained relatively ineffectual in terms of the larger battle against the settler state.”²⁴¹ The fear among the township residents created by ZANU and ZAPU cadres, which had largely been allowed to go unchecked by the Rhodesian police and military, allowed the RF government the pretext of declaring a state of emergency in October 1964. In that same month, Nkomo, Sithole, Mugabe, and a number of other senior nationalist leaders were placed in detention for the next ten years, which drove the remaining leadership of both sides of the struggle who stayed in Rhodesia underground while they prepared for direct military engagement with the state.²⁴² Unfortunately, the devastatingly divisive violence in the townships and the declaration of a state of emergency were not enough to unite the two factions into a united political and military front.

Conclusion

Between 1962 and the 1964, ZAPU experienced successes and setbacks. The party successfully boycotted the Whitehead government’s “Build a Nation” campaign while simultaneously swelling its ranks with both card-carrying members and nationalist sympathizers. Furthermore, ZAPU was able to engage with broader regional and international bodies as well as with emerging trends in revolutionary and anticolonial

²⁴¹ Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy*, 157.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

thought. Indeed, during its brief legal existence, ZAPU differentiated itself from its political predecessors by becoming less focused on constitutional reform and, in line with developments elsewhere on the continent, more willing to engage in direct confrontation with the colonial regime.

The split between ZAPU and ZANU, as this chapter has shown, can be attributed to several causes. From ZANU's perspective, Nkomo's legacy of constitutional maneuvering and his perceived reluctance to face imprisonment in Southern Rhodesia were important factors. More important still was his proposed government in exile which was met with contempt first in Tanzania, and then in Addis Ababa before the OAU's liberation committee. According to Nkomo and his supporters, the split was precipitated by supposed opportunists and sellouts such as Sithole and Mugabe who were out of touch with the vast majority of African Southern Rhodesians whose interests they could not, or would not, understand. Our understanding of the split, however, must also consider the role of personal rivalries and political ambition which undoubtedly was at work within ZANU and ZAPU. Such a consideration allows for greater complexity and a more nuanced understanding of the fracture than is presented in both the memoirs of nationalist elites and monolithic nationalist histories.

Finally, the ZANU/ZAPU split compelled ZAPU to make substantial programmatic changes. As ZANU became increasingly vocal in its call for violent confrontation with the state, ZAPU had to adapt its strategy to maintain its significant position as Zimbabwe's "authentic" liberation movement. Indeed, the rhetoric employed by ZANU cadres became particularly appealing to young African Southern Rhodesians and students, which necessitated ZAPU to move more rapidly in the direction of direct

confrontation. Although the party had engaged in sabotaging infrastructure and disrupting government services, and was already preparing for armed struggle as early as 1962, the split from ZANU and the increasingly draconian actions of the RF brought greater urgency to these plans.

Chapter Four: ZAPU in the Struggle: Confronting the Regime and Internal Dissent

This chapter examines ZAPU's military preparations and the initiation of its first phase of armed struggle from 1964 to 1971. This period marked a considerable effort to train and infiltrate guerrillas into Rhodesia to carry out acts of sabotage as well as engage in direct confrontation with Rhodesian security forces. Furthermore, in 1966 ZAPU reached an accord with the exiled leadership of the South African-based African National Congress (ANC), and its armed wing, uMkhonto weSizwe (MK). James Chikerema, ZAPU's vice president, and Oliver Tambo, the Deputy President of the ANC, agreed that a military alliance would be mutually beneficial, and in a joint statement released in 1968, argued that "it is the determination of these combined forces to fight the common settler enemy to the finish, at any point of encounter as they make their way to their respective fighting zones."²⁴³ Indeed, virtually every ZAPU military operation in 1967 and 1968 was coordinated with the ANC and involved combined forces.

Against this backdrop, Ian Smith and the Rhodesian Front's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain further exacerbated tensions between the settler government in Salisbury and many African nationalists: for some ZAPU members, UDI created a greater sense of urgency to topple the Smith regime, while others hoped that military escalation with Rhodesian forces would draw either Britain's superior military or the Organization of African Unity (OAU) into armed conflict with

²⁴³ "Statement to the by the Zimbabwe African People's Union and the African National Congress to the Progressive Movement in Britain," 3 December 1968. *Zimbabwe Independence Movement, Select Documents*, ed. Nyangoni and Nyandoro (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979), 120.

the Rhodesian Front, deposing Smith and creating space for popular elections. Indeed, between 1964 and 1971, ZAPU was the party best positioned to plan for such exigencies: ZAPU was much more active in terms of combat operations than ZANU, which faced significant challenges in establishing contacts with foreign governments, creating domestic military structures, and constructing rear bases outside of Rhodesia. Moreover, most member states of the OAU and other regional liberation movements perceived ZAPU in this period to be Rhodesia's authentic African liberation organization, and generally viewed ZANU as an opportunistic party lacking in disciplined leadership and direction.²⁴⁴

Nevertheless, ZAPU also had to confront damaging setbacks between 1964 and 1971. ZAPU's armed wing suffered heavy casualties fighting Smith's forces and in 1970, a series of political and military disputes crippled ZAPU's war effort and its ability to exert political influence effectively. Chikerema, ZAPU's vice president and heretofore an ally of Nkomo's since the creation of the SRANC, clashed with members of ZAPU's exiled executive in Lusaka, and left the party to form the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) in 1971. This split from within ZAPU was analogous to the African nationalist fracture out of which ZANU was formed in 1963, and had significant consequences for the efficacy of ZAPU's war effort. Indeed, several prominent political figures, including George Nyandoro, as well as a significant number of trained fighters, chose to follow Chikerema, while others, frustrated with infighting and military prevarications, defected to ZANU, leaving ZAPU to restructure itself both militarily and

²⁴⁴ Statement of Support for the ZAPU/ANC, FRELIMO Central Committee, Dar es Salaam, 1 September 1968. TNA; FCO/45/174/214.

politically. Despite these challenges and setbacks to its campaign against minority rule, ZAPU throughout the period from 1964 to 1971 was more effective than ZANU in the prosecution of the liberation struggle. African nationalist gains in this period were relatively few and extremely hard won, particularly while ZAPU “bore the weight of the war effort,” but the party’s eagerness and willingness to fight Smith’s forces is nevertheless noteworthy for what it reveals about ZAPU and its leadership.²⁴⁵ Far from what political scientist Dinizulu Macaphulana has called a party of “cowards who feared the revolutionary uses of violence,” ZAPU in this period was prepared to confront Rhodesia’s forces at a time when ZANU was incapable of challenging the RF security apparatus.²⁴⁶

Building a Military

In his autobiography, Joshua Nkomo records that in April 1964, the Rhodesian Front replaced Winston Field with “another farmer, a former fighter-pilot who seemed really to believe in unilateral independence, and publicly talked a lot of nonsense about the excellent race relations of Southern Rhodesia. He was the former finance minister, Ian Douglas Smith. We [ZAPU] were delighted. The cowboys had taken over the ranch. Now the fight could be fought in the open. Three days later I was arrested. That was on 16 April 1964. I became a free man again on 3 December 1974. Those were a long ten

²⁴⁵ J.K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (Beckenham, Kent: Croom Helm Ltd., 1985), 6-7.

²⁴⁶ Cited in William Jethro Mpofu, “Joshua Nkomo: The Trial of Philosopher of Liberation” in *Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo of Zimbabwe: Politics, Power, and Memory*, ed. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 194.

years.”²⁴⁷ Nkomowas not the only ZAPU member arrested in April 1964. Within days of taking office, Smith arrested several senior ZAPU members such as Joseph Msika, Josiah Chinamano, Lazarus Nkala, as well as cadres who had been implicated in acts of sabotage, violence, or were deemed dangerous to public order and safety.²⁴⁸ Smith’s actions served a dual purpose: he was able to jail or detain leaders whom the state considered subversive at a time when African nationalists and their sympathizers were enjoying high levels of popularity, while also proving to the white electorate that he would deal heavy-handedly with African nationalists during his tenure in office.²⁴⁹

ZAPU, while still under the guise of the People’s Caretaker Council (PCC), had decided to sell party membership cards to more easily delineate African nationalist affiliations after the ZANU/ZAPU split, and to gain a more accurate estimation of the number of their members.²⁵⁰ ZAPU produced 500,000 membership cards in preparation for the sale, which concerned the Southern Rhodesian government and white civilian population alike: if ZAPU membership was indeed 500,000 strong, it would mean that a single African party was nearly twice the size of the nation’s entire white population. For the Rhodesian government, the sale of the cards posed a number of dangers. They could,

²⁴⁷ Joshua Nkomo, *The Story of my Life* (London: Methuen Ltd., 1984), 118-119.

²⁴⁸ Eliakim Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union: A History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia* (Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc., 2005), 102. It should be noted that the Preventative Detention Act and the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, together with a long list of amendments, very loosely defined what might pose “danger...to public safety and order.” Possessing political leaflets, for example, could result in a five-year prison sentence, regardless of whether or not they were intended for wider distribution or were simply personal copies. Jeffrey Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 28.

²⁴⁹ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union*, 102.

²⁵⁰ It ought to be recalled from the previous chapter that after ZAPU was formally banned, it created the PCC at Cold Comfort Farm in 1963. It should also be recalled that the PCC was effectively identical to ZAPU in its membership and structure, but had changed its name to avoid as much legal action and attention from the Southern Rhodesian government and its security services as possible. For the sake of clarity and continuity, ZAPU will continue to be used in place of the PCC.

for example, legitimize ZAPU despite the fact that the party was proscribed, while also giving the Rhodesian public a rare indication of how much popularity the African nationalists enjoyed. Indeed, while they could be useful to the government and security services in tracking cadres and civilian members, Smith decided to have the cards confiscated and ZAPU's leaders jailed.²⁵¹

While the RF was able to disrupt and frustrate ZAPU's efforts to enumerate its membership, Smith and Ken Flower, the head of the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO), were powerless to change ZAPU's decision to engage the state in military confrontation with well-trained cadres. According to James Chikerema, then ZAPU's vice president, the pursuit of an armed struggle against the Rhodesian regime using Zimbabwean fighters trained abroad was first voiced in 1960.²⁵² The nature of the struggle, however, had changed by 1964. In 1960, Chikerema had argued that the fight against the Southern Rhodesian regime ought not be conceived in terms of engaging directly with the state's military, but rather in terms of "carrying out acts of sabotage which were considered relevant to bring forth fear and despondency to the settlers in Rhodesia in order to influence the British government and foreign settlers in Rhodesia to accede to the popular revolutionary demands of the people of Zimbabwe."²⁵³ By 1964, however, it became apparent to ZAPU leaders that the Rhodesian government would not bend to their demands, and that the British were unlikely to intercede while the self-governing colony was able to suppress dissident activity. Sabotage remained a useful and consistent strategy against the settler regime, but became secondary in importance to

²⁵¹ Ibid, 100.

²⁵² Ngwabi Bhebe, *The ZAPU ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 2004), 13

²⁵³ Ibid.

large-scale armed incursions against the state once ZAPU's executive moved to Lusaka and began to strategize new military initiatives in mid-1964.

Indeed, this conclusion was not reached by African nationalists alone. Ken Flower records in his memoirs that immediately after Smith came to power, he had heard reports from Special Branch which indicated that a decision was made in a secret session of ZANU's Congress "which renounced all further negotiation with the whites to pursue an armed struggle with all means at their disposal... I remember only too well studying with grave foreboding the details of a similar decision taken by the leadership of [ZAPU]. But my warnings then and later as to the possible side effects of the nationalists' change in strategy were heeded only to the extent that the government decided to ban parties and detain their leaders."²⁵⁴

As more and more party members were detained by the Southern Rhodesian state, the ZAPU executive decided that bases should be constructed outside of Rhodesia's borders. Increasingly large numbers of operatives and leaders were facing lengthy detention or prison sentences, and ZAPU concluded that the party would be better organized and more operationally effective outside the reach of Smith's security forces.

In mid-1964, the ZAPU executive, including Nkomo, Msika, and Nkala, who were detained at the time but nevertheless were able to contribute to policy decisions through intermediaries and by conducting meetings inside Gonakudzingwa, decided to move ZAPU's command structure to Zambia.²⁵⁵ Zambia was attractive to ZAPU for a

²⁵⁴ Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record, Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964 to 1981* (London: John Murray Ltd., 1987), 39.

²⁵⁵ Nkomo records in his memoirs that "on weekends the senior staff, who were all white, went off duty. We soon found that the African jailers were mostly members of ZAPU. They would come in and we would talk together about the future. They brought messages in and passed our letters out without going through

number of reasons: most obviously, it shared a lengthy border with Zimbabwe, and had been used previously by ZAPU as a means of exfiltrating cadres out of Rhodesia and into training camps in Zambia, North Africa, and elsewhere. Furthermore, by 1964, Zambia had achieved independence following the dissolution of the Central African Federation the year prior, and its first popularly elected president, Kenneth Kaunda, was staunchly supportive of ZAPU.²⁵⁶ Indeed, in April 1964, Kaunda publicly backed ZAPU and pledged his support for Nkomo, while simultaneously censuring ZANU politicians active in Zambia.²⁵⁷ In February 1964, a portion of ZAPU's executive which included Chikerema, Nyandoro, Moyo, Silundika, and Edward Ndlovu, travelled north to establish offices and training facilities in and around Lusaka.²⁵⁸

Indeed, Chikerema was particularly active in 1964 outside of Southern Rhodesia's borders. In January 1964, for example, he met with a group of Soviet attachés in Cairo to convey a message to Moscow that ZAPU was eager to train cadres in the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc.²⁵⁹ Moreover, Chikerema reported to these same Soviet officials in Cairo that he hoped to personally visit Moscow while travelling to Beijing, where he

the censor.” Furthermore, Nkomo was in possession of a radio and record player, and was able to communicate political and military developments to his fellow detainees: he recalls, for example, that “there were three cells in a row for us three, Msika, Nkala, and myself” and that he “chose the middle one” to afford Msika and Nkala the opportunity to listen to news bulletins issuing from the cell next to their doors. Nkomo, *Story of my Life*, 144-145.

²⁵⁶ Tamarkin goes further, arguing that Kaunda, and by extension the Zambian government, were not merely supportive. He writes, for example, that the relationship between Kaunda and ZAPU was that of a “patron-client.” M. Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe: Decolonization in Regional and International Politics* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1990), 6. This is overstating the power relationship between Kaunda and ZAPU: if such patronage existed, one would expect Kaunda to have had greater control over ZAPU's military and political decisions. Furthermore, one would also expect greater material support. Kaunda and his party, UNIP, however, actively policed ZANU representatives and cadres when in Zambia. Luise White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 2003), 48.

²⁵⁷ Gerald Chikozho Mazarire, “ZANU's External Networks, 1963-1979: An Appraisal,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 89.

²⁵⁸ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 14.

²⁵⁹ Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot “Cold War:” The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 154.

similarly hoped to secure financial and materiel assistance.²⁶⁰ This activity did not go unnoticed by Smith and Flower: in a note of protest to the British government, the RF drew attention to ZAPU's intentions to train fighters in foreign states, which, most disconcerting for the settler regime, included "Russia, Red China, and Zambia."²⁶¹ Despite the RF's foreknowledge of the plan, Chikerema secured passage for the first wave of recruits in mid-1964, which consisted mostly of cadres who already had some experience in acts of sabotage and arson against the Rhodesian state.²⁶² After training for approximately 10 months, this first group reported back to Chikerema, Moyo, and the rest of ZAPU's exiled executive in Lusaka with favourable impressions of their time spent in the Soviet Union. While recollections from those who trained abroad in the Soviet Union during this period invariably include detailed complaints about harsh winter conditions, many cadres expressed excitement at "learning the real thing" and, most especially, learning "how to do it properly."²⁶³ Once this group of six cadres returned to Zambia, communication channels were opened between ZAPU's executive and the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (SAASC) in Moscow to more easily facilitate the movement of future groups of guerrillas sent for training in the Soviet Union and states with whom

²⁶⁰ Ibid, 155.

²⁶¹ *Note to the United Kingdom Government from the Rhodesian Government, 28 August 1964, C.S.R. 45-1964*, cited in Elaine Windrich, *The Rhodesian Problem: A Documentary Record, 1923-1973* (London: Routledge, 1975), 279.

²⁶² These first recruits were tasked with learning military intelligence from Soviet instructors, and were also used as something of a test case for ZAPU. Nkomo, Chikerema, Moyo, and the rest of the executive were aware of the hospitality shown to students from around the world studying in the USSR in the 1960s, but ZAPU preferred initially to send a small group of cadres who could reliably report back on the quality of instruction and its relevance to the specific problems facing fighters in Rhodesia. Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, "African Soldiers in the USSR: Oral Histories of ZAPU Intelligence Cadres' Soviet Training, 1964-1979," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 54.

²⁶³ Ibid.

the SAASC had a good relationship, such as Cuba, the German Democratic Republic, and Tanzania.²⁶⁴

Between 1964 and 1965, cadres who had been sent abroad for training in espionage, military tactics, sabotage techniques, and other skills useful to ZAPU's military and political objectives began to return and report back to ZAPU's leadership in Lusaka. A number of these operatives, however, were arrested in Southern Rhodesia upon returning home before travelling north to Zambia. Southern Rhodesian court records are particularly useful for shedding light on the training received by these cadres, and are illustrative of the careful planning that went into sending fighters abroad for instruction. The guilty verdict rendered by Judge J. Davies, dated 31 October 1965, in the case of *Regina v. John Mashaka and 24 Others* is especially useful because of the Rhodesian prosecutors' meticulous work in tracking the movements and activities of the defendants.²⁶⁵ In Davies' summation of his decision, for example, he makes note of how the "organizers," Abraham Nkiwane, Akim Ndhlovu, Benjamin Madhlela, Wilfred Pasipanodya, Chikerema, and Dabengwa,²⁶⁶ all of whom were based in Lusaka and avoided detention, would receive and deliver coded instructions and itineraries to the cadres from an apparently unassuming Zambian address which, it was hoped, would

²⁶⁴ Vladimir Shubin, "Moscow and Zimbabwe's Liberation," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 226.

²⁶⁵ Appellate Division of the High Court of Rhodesia at Salisbury, Judgment no. 181/65, Salisbury, 31 October 1965. Archives of the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS), London, England; Southern African Materials Box 14, MS 380258, 1-60.

²⁶⁶ Dabengwa was the leader of the first group of six cadres who travelled to Moscow, and thus had intimate knowledge and appreciation of the difficulties future trainees might face in terms of exfiltration, transit, and other contingencies. His role as an organizer reflects this, and his work in monitoring the transport of cadres for training abroad was extremely effective. Dumiso Dabengwa, "Relations between ZAPU and the USSR, 1960s-1970s: A Personal View," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 217.

remain undetected by Rhodesian intelligence services.²⁶⁷ Furthermore, physical evidence was found on a number of the 25 cadres which led investigators to conclude that they had received extensive political training as well. In his defense, for example, one of the accused, Peter Madhlela, admitted that he had indeed undergone political training in Moscow, but argued that he was innocent of inciting public disorder because the knowledge he gained “would be useful to a future African government.”²⁶⁸ In addition to the work of Chikerema and Dabengwa in expanding ZAPU’s training network, Nkomo’s international connections, cultivated through the OAU, the UN Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, among others, allowed these operatives access to train over the course of several months in places as diverse as Moscow, Pyongyang, Beijing, Dar es Salaam, Cairo, and Havana.²⁶⁹

Not all ZAPU cadres received training abroad, however, and those who did returned with varied, and sometimes contradictory ideas of how to pursue the liberation struggle. Dabengwa, for example, recalls that when the operatives returned

[the military cadres of ZAPU] then got together and decided on what was to be done.... We discussed the issue that we were [trained in different countries] and obviously opinions on strategy were different. Certain people felt that we should all go into the country and start organizing guerrilla activities. Others wanted us to use the Castro method...that the whole group should go into the country and start to carry out operations,

²⁶⁷ Appellate Judgement no. 181/65, Salisbury, 31 October 1965. SOAS; Southern African Materials Box 14, MS 380258. 1-3.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 41.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 21-34.

recruit 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 a few people into the country to go and recruit more cadres and bring them out for training. That process was to be continued and maintained until we had a sizeable army after which we could then start operations. A third school of thought advocated for the setting up of a command system. Use rear bases and our headquarters in Zambia, which would send in some people into the country, charged with the task of recruiting more cadres and where possible carry out military operations. This view received more support than any other and this is what [the cadres] recommended to the political leadership. They accepted the recommendations and asked [the cadres] to form a common structure, which they did.²⁷⁰

ZAPU returnees occasionally clashed, negotiated, and compromised with ZAPU's highest political leadership.²⁷¹ As Bhebe notes, "quite contrary to popular opinion, the situation was far from being simply a matter of the politicians imposing a strategy on the army or from one of simply lifting a ready-made approach from some country...it was quite apparent from the initial debates that a conscious attempt was made to evolve, perhaps by adaptation of other people's experiences, an approach with its attendant tactics best suited to the Zimbabwean case and circumstances."²⁷² Nevertheless, Nkomo and other senior ZAPU political leaders still exhorted African Rhodesians to continue to

²⁷⁰ Interview with Dumiso Dabengwa, cited in Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 17.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 16.

²⁷² *Ibid*, 17.

commit acts of sabotage against state infrastructure, settler-owned farms, and other property while ZAPU's military wing was being established. Kaunda, for example, offered ZAPU politicians the opportunity to broadcast radio messages into Southern Rhodesia through Zambian channels which encouraged young male ZAPU sympathizers to form cells in Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) and urban townships.²⁷³

These cells, and in some cases, lone individuals, would raze maize and tobacco crops, cut down telephone poles, and use petrol bombs against storefronts, often fleeing from Rhodesian security forces afterwards across the Zambian border where they would join ZAPU's nascent military wing.²⁷⁴ These actions proved extremely effective in disrupting Rhodesian communications and settler-owned businesses, which prompted Smith to order larger numbers of police and other security personnel into urban areas and TTLs, where heavy-handed counterinsurgency operations often detained, imprisoned, injured, and killed Africans indiscriminately.²⁷⁵ Rather than halt the attacks against state and settler-owned property, Rhodesian military actions regularly, though not invariably, motivated African youths to formally join and train with ZAPU in Zambia, particularly in the latter stages of the conflict when the settler regime adopted increasingly repressive and brutal measures against rural villages.²⁷⁶ Laurence Mtinzi, who would later become a ZIPRA political commissar, recalled in 1981 that during this early period, he came to the understanding that "the enemy, there's only one language that he can understand – to just

²⁷³ H. Ellert, *The Rhodesian Front War: Counter-Insurgency and Guerrilla War in Rhodesia* (Harare: Mambo Press, 1989), 4.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 5.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Michael Evans, "The Wretched of the Empire: Politics, Ideology, and Counterinsurgency in Rhodesia, 1965-1980," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18:2 (2007), 186. See also the following chapter for the unintended effects of Rhodesian psychological operations.

put a trigger on him. So I decided to get out of the country [into Zambia], and I came back with the right stuff for the enemy and I fought.”²⁷⁷

The earliest ZAPU military incursions from across the Zambian border began in early-to mid-1965, when two units, each consisting of five cadres, crossed into Southern Rhodesia.²⁷⁸ The purpose of this first infiltration was to reconnoiter significant government targets such as large-scale telecommunication installations and electricity supplies for future sabotage operations, recruit additional fighters, and engage small Southern Rhodesian military units before disappearing back into the bush and returning to Zambia.²⁷⁹ The first group entered from the east across the Zambezi River through Mana Pools, while the second group entered from the west, near Victoria Falls. These two units, however, failed to achieve their major objectives. The eastern group was spotted by aerial Rhodesian reconnaissance who communicated the cadres’ position to Rhodesian units on the ground. In the ensuing firefight, two ZAPU combatants were killed and two were captured while the fifth escaped, only managing to inflict superficial injuries to a small number of security personnel in the process.²⁸⁰ The second unit of ZAPU fighters were reported to Rhodesian military forces by African Zimbabweans, and were killed without reaching their objectives or inflicting casualties against regime soldiers.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ Interview, cited in Julie Frederikse, *None but Ourselves: Masses vs. Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1982), 41.

²⁷⁸ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 18.

²⁷⁹ Dumsio Dabengwa, “ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation” in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (Oxford: James Currey, 1995), 26.

²⁸⁰ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 18.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

The motivation behind those who reported the ZAPU cadres' position to the government are unclear: they might have been unsympathetic to African nationalist politics, or hostile specifically to ZAPU following the 1963 nationalist fracture. Moreover, the African Zimbabweans who reported the guerrillas could have been influenced by financial and material incentives proffered by the state, or feared reprisals from the Rhodesian security forces. What ought to be noted, however, is that it would be a mistake to assume, as Astrow and Ranger have suggested, that guerrilla activity, by virtue of its ostensible aim to end regime violence in its larger struggle to achieve majority rule, disabused rural Africans from cooperating with Rhodesian security personnel.²⁸² In an interview with Comrade Msipa, a ZAPU guerrilla active during this period, Cindy Courville reports that Msipa told her “[rural Africans] ...suffered more at the hands of Smith” and that “villagers were bombed if they were suspected of helping the guerrillas.”²⁸³ Nevertheless, rural reactions to the presence of African insurgents and state violence in the early phase of the liberation war were often unpredictable, especially when one considers that spotting well-equipped guerrillas, even in small numbers, was, at this stage, a relatively uncommon occurrence in geographically isolated communities. It is tempting to assume that the gratuitous violence of the Rhodesian military always

²⁸² Norma Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1992), 123. For the work of Astrow and Ranger on mass radicalisation in rural areas of Zimbabwe, see especially Andre Astrow, *A Revolution that Lost its Way?* (London: Zed Press, 1983), 137, *passim*, and Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study* (London: James Currey, 1985), 13-14, 190-216, *passim*. It ought to be noted that Ranger's *Peasant Consciousness* remains one of the definitive texts in the historiography of Zimbabwe's liberation war, and while its impact remains profound, the work is hotly debated by historians and academics concerned with colonial Zimbabwe. Indeed, the text was often revisited and critiqued by Ranger himself who became wary of its impact on patriotic histories and to triumphalist narratives written by authors sympathetic to ZANU. See especially Terence Ranger, “Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History, and the History of the Nation,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30:2 (2004), 215-234.

²⁸³ Cited in Cindy Courville, “The Zimbabwe Movements: Strategy for Liberation,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Denver, 1988), 104.

radicalized Zimbabwe's peasantry against the settler regime which, by extension, would reasonably translate into support for ZAPU or other African nationalist fronts seeking to end minority rule. The fluidity and uncertain terrain of the liberation struggle in this very early stage, however, meant that ZAPU cadres could be caught unaware of how their presence might be perceived in the communities they found themselves in, particularly if there had not been a ZAPU political presence in the area previously or if cadres stumbled upon groups who had not been forewarned of their presence. Mutual trust between locals and cadres was essential to fighters remaining undetected, securing provisions, and recruiting new ZAPU combatants.

Despite the failure of the mission and the loss of ZAPU cadres, these incursions in northern Rhodesia marked the beginning of the armed struggle in Zimbabwe.²⁸⁴ This runs counter to the popular and widely accepted narrative championed by a number of scholars and ZANU officials who contend that the armed liberation war began 28 April 1966. According to these sources, the seven-member unit of the armed wing of ZANU, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), who were killed fighting Rhodesian security forces near Sinoia in the north of Mashonaland West Province in 1966, were the first combatants to engage the Rhodesian military.²⁸⁵ Indeed, this battle

²⁸⁴ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 18.

²⁸⁵ For scholarly and ZANU sources of this narrative, see especially David Martin and Phyllis Johnson. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: the Chimurenga War* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1981); Martin Meredith. *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia, 1890-1979* (London: Deutsch Limited, 1979); Astrow. *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?*; Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968); Fay Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe* (Stockholm: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2006); Simbi Mumbako. "Aspects of the Zimbabwe Liberation Movement, 1966-1976," Paper Presented at the International Conference on Southern African History. Maseru: Lesotho, August 1977.

was mythologized by the ZANU (PF) government during Robert Mugabe's 38 year-presidential term, and 28 April is still celebrated nationally as Chimurenga Day.²⁸⁶

Historians and ZANU members, however, are not the only architects of confusion on this point. Ken Flower, for example, notes that at the time of the ZAPU incursion in 1965, the Southern Rhodesian government was waging a "silent war" against the nationalists, and Smith as well as other Rhodesian Front politicians were eager to keep the news of white Rhodesian casualties secret by preventing such stories from appearing in the media.²⁸⁷ The fighting at Sinoia, however, was viewed as such a resounding success by the Rhodesian military that government censors allowed the most widely-read settler newspaper, *The Rhodesia Herald*, to carry news of ZANU's defeat on its front page.²⁸⁸ Because the earlier infiltration of ZAPU cadres was carefully managed by state media and kept out of the press, Rhodesian news outlets ironically contributed to the myth that ZANU fighters were the first, and most operationally active, of African nationalist cadres during the first phase of the liberation struggle. By presenting ZANU's defeat at Sinoia as the first conventional military contact between liberation cadres and Smith's forces, the settler regime inadvertently mythologized the event for ZANU nationalists who later incorporated it into a narrative of teleological progress towards ending minority rule by ZANU and ZANLA forces.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ *Chimurenga* is a Shona word which can be loosely translated as 'struggle.' Chimurenga Day, then, is a celebration of both the beginning and end of the liberation struggle, but ought to be recognized more specifically as the start of ZANU's war effort.

²⁸⁷ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 103.

²⁸⁸ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 14 May 1966.

²⁸⁹ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 9-10.

Confronting UDI

On 11 November 1965, Ian Smith spoke the now-infamous words, “we have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilization, and Christianity” over the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation’s radio waves. The blow Smith was referring to was the Rhodesian Front regime’s long-expected implementation of UDI. Smith rose to power on the assumption held by right-wing Rhodesians that he, rather than Winston Field, would have the temerity to declare Southern Rhodesia an independent state. The date, as well as the language of the declaration, was meant to give Britain the impression that Rhodesians remained loyal subjects to the Crown, but were forced into “going it alone” so as to preserve a bastion of Western civilization and Christianity in an otherwise anarchic region that was not yet ready for popular rule.²⁹⁰

ZAPU, as well as ZANU, had been prepared for UDI since the Rhodesian Front ousted Field in favour of Smith, who was a vocal proponent of independence in the two years leading up to UDI. Although ZAPU was building its military in Zambia and staging combat operations in Rhodesia, some African nationalists believed that they would not be fighting the rogue Rhodesian state alone after independence was declared. Nyangoni notes that many ZAPU leaders and cadres were convinced that because UDI was a treasonous act, Britain would intervene militarily, despite the fact that Harold Wilson’s Labour government publicly stated that it would not resort to force in the event of

²⁹⁰ The choice of Armistice Day as the day of the declaration was no coincidence: among other things, it was meant to recall that Southern Rhodesians had come to Britain’s aid during the First and Second World Wars. Furthermore, it was intended to reinforce the idea that UDI was a peaceable action, and not intended as a confrontational act against Britain.

Rhodesian independence. As Watts notes, “after the Labour government was elected [in October 1964] a small group of ministers agreed there could be no question of military intervention in Rhodesia.”²⁹¹ Instead, the Wilson government decided to impose economic sanctions. These included an UN-authorized embargo on oil entering Rhodesia, and a ban on British businesses buying Rhodesian crops such as tobacco and sugar, in an attempt to cripple the Rhodesian economy and draw Smith into a negotiated settlement with the aim of achieving a course to majority rule.²⁹² Even the use of sanctions, however, much less armed intervention, was condemned by a significant minority of the British public.²⁹³

The African response to UDI was considerably different. The leaders of four Commonwealth nations, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia, convened a meeting in Nairobi where they discussed “taking the matter out of British hands.”²⁹⁴ Similarly, the heads of four francophone states, Mali, Guinea, Senegal and Mauritania, held a meeting in Nouakchott in which they called upon every African head of state to declare a state of war with Rhodesia.²⁹⁵ Other leaders also strongly condemned the Smith regime: Nkrumah called on the OAU to create a military force to intervene in Rhodesia, while Nasser declared that the United Arab Republic would seize all Rhodesia-bound goods passing through the Suez.²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ Carl Peter Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence: An International History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 54.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 55.

²⁹³ Report on an Address Given by Sir Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, To the Anglo-Rhodesian Society, London, 22 September 1964. SOAS; MCF, ACT, 92.

²⁹⁴ Robert C. Good, *U.D.I.: The International Politics of the Rhodesian Rebellion*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 21.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

By 1966, it became clear to ZAPU that neither Britain, the UN, nor the OAU were going to intercede militarily on behalf of African Rhodesians. The majority of Britain's MPs and the UN Security Council remained convinced that sanctions would eventually force Smith to the negotiating table. Furthermore, both Britain and the UN generally shared Wilson's opinion that armed intervention "would not be a case of arresting a subversive individual...it would mean a bloody war – and probably a bloody war turning into a bloody civil war."²⁹⁷ With respect to the OAU, a few member states such as Ghana were still willing to create militias to liberate Rhodesia, but for the most part, the organization was trying to shift the emphasis from foreign intervention to Zimbabwean responsibility with the material aid of other African nations.²⁹⁸

Although the OAU officially supported ZAPU,²⁹⁹ a significant impediment to this goal was the inability of ZAPU and ZANU to reconcile: throughout 1965 and 1966, meetings were convened in Lagos and Accra by the OAU's Liberation Committee in an attempt to form a unified liberation front in Rhodesia. In each case, the OAU was frustrated by the lack of cooperation from the Zimbabwean parties, and continued to push for reconciliation.³⁰⁰ At this stage of the liberation struggle, reuniting the two parties was

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 56.

²⁹⁸ Nyangoni, *African Nationalism*, 80.

²⁹⁹ By the end of 1965, the OAU recognized ZAPU as the largest Zimbabwean liberation movement and ceased to offer financial support to ZANU. This did not mean, however, that individual member states such as Ghana, Malawi, and Tanzania did not financially support ZANU of their own accord. Ibid, 76. Similarly, the Afro-Asian Solidarity Organization (AASO) had also backed ZAPU on the grounds that it was "a more revolutionary party" than ZANU. Ibid, 78. ZANU unsuccessfully tried to rectify this situation by sending a private letter in 1966 to the General Secretary of the AASO in which Stanley Pareirewa wrote "once again the Zimbabwe African National Union (Z.A.N.U.) of Rhodesia, applies for admission as a member of the AASO. As you know, Z.A.N.U. is a popular, liberatory [sic] movement which commands majority mass support in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Z.A.N.U. is revolutionary and is fighting against the forces of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and imperialism within Zimbabwe." Cited in *ibid*.

³⁰⁰ Departmental Distribution Action Copy Circular, Lusaka, To Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 1 October 1965. TNA; DO/216/50/288; TNA; DO/216/50/71.

an unlikely compromise, even if it meant hastening the demise of the settler regime: although both ZANU and ZAPU had similar aims and objectives at this point, the bitter, violent confrontations between the two groups of cadres were still fresh in the minds of ZAPU guerrillas and their supporters, most especially those who had personally fought ZANU members in Salisbury's townships. Similarly, the rivalries, suspicions, and political frictions which contributed to the 1963 nationalist split did not disappear with the detention of some of ZAPU and ZANU's most senior leaders, such as Sithole, Mugabe, and Nkomo. At this phase of the struggle, party affiliation, more so than oft-cited ethnic loyalties, determined where guerrillas' nationalist sympathies lay and the manner in which they were expressed.³⁰¹

After UDI, between late 1965 and early 1967, ZAPU effectively suspended its military operations to re-examine its tactics and seek new ways of pursuing the liberation struggle. The early-to-mid 1965 incursion by the 10 ZAPU cadres could only be considered a defeat and loss of valuable resources. Similarly, ZAPU concluded that while acts of sabotage carried out by small cells of cadres were politically useful in disquieting the Smith regime and white settlers, they would do little to ultimately achieve majority rule in the face of the heavily-armed and relatively powerful Rhodesian military. Additionally, these small cells, which were also responsible for recruiting new ZAPU cadres, had been frustrated by the RF in their attempts to enlist fresh fighters. Cadres tasked with recruiting and training guerrillas by ZAPU's executive in Lusaka often found that TTLs and other rural areas rich in potential recruits, were being closely watched and

³⁰¹ Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Nation Building Zimbabwe and Ndebele Particularism," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 8:3 (2008), 45.

monitored by Rhodesian security forces.³⁰² This deleteriously impacted the effectiveness of ZAPU's ability to recruit cadres from within Rhodesia's borders at this stage, and required ZAPU to look for manpower from within Zimbabwean migrant and refugee communities in Zambia and Malawi.³⁰³

Given this confluence of circumstances and conditions which hampered ZAPU's liberation effort, new strategies were required to make concrete gains. ZAPU's armed wing and its political leaders concluded that a mutually beneficial alliance with another militarily frustrated liberation movement could advance the cause of the liberation war and more effectively confront large groups of Rhodesian soldiers and security personnel.

The ZAPU - ANC Alliance

The ZAPU-ANC alliance marked a dramatic shift in the liberation struggle. ZAPU cadres, along with members of the armed wing of the ANC, uMkhonto weSizwe, began to infiltrate Rhodesia in 1967 in much more significant numbers, and engaged in direct confrontation with Rhodesian military units. Dabengwa recalls that this coalition first took shape in 1966 "when the South African African National Congress (ANC) and its armed wing, uMkhonto weSizwe (MK), approached us [ZAPU] for a logical working alliance that would allow us to operate together and with common purpose.... The first

³⁰² Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 121-122.

³⁰³ *Zimbabwe: History of a Struggle*, ed. Zimbabwe African People's Union (Cairo: The Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization, 1972), 40-41.

contact was between MK commander Joe Modise and Akim Ndlovu of ZAPU's military wing. After Akim had presented his brief for discussion within the military command, a decision was made to second [Dabengwa] to attend subsequent meetings."³⁰⁴

Indeed, as mentioned above, Ndlovu and Dabengwa occupied organizational positions in Lusaka from where they coordinated and facilitated the training of ZAPU cadres abroad. These two members of ZAPU's military wing were tasked with convincing ZAPU's executive that the alliance would positively impact the liberation struggle in Rhodesia, and mollify any misgivings that a relationship between the armed groups would not imperil ZAPU's objectives by drawing South Africa's security forces into opposition with ZAPU cadres.³⁰⁵ South Africa's defence forces, they argued, were already patrolling Rhodesia's southern border, and had been seen with increasing regularity in protected villages and TTLs further north. For Ndlovu and Dabengwa, confrontation with South Africa's military was therefore likely inevitable, and, moreover, MK guerrillas were stranded in Zambia after they had been repeatedly turned back by Khama's government while trying to infiltrate South Africa through Botswana.³⁰⁶ MK elements reported to ZAPU leaders that they were prepared to traverse Rhodesia alone if need be, and so Ndlovu and Dabengwa in particular convinced Chikerema and Moyo that it would be beneficial to ZAPU's military wing if MK cadres were escorted south by ZAPU fighters who could engage Smith's forces with units reinforced by the ANC. Oliver Tambo, the Deputy President of the ANC, reached an agreement with Chikerema that the two organizations would coordinate campaigns in Wankie and Sipolilo against

³⁰⁴ Dabengwa, "Relations between ZAPU and the USSR, 1960s – 1970s: A Personal View," 219-220.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 220.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

the Smith regime, while simultaneously sending ZAPU units to aid MK fighters in evading South African and Rhodesian patrols north of the Limpopo River.³⁰⁷

Indeed, although the alliance was formally announced by ZAPU in 1967, there is evidence indicating that ZAPU began assisting the ANC as early as October 1966.³⁰⁸ In a secret communique from the British Defence Liaison Staff (BDLS) in Pretoria to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in London, the BDLS reported that twelve guerrillas had been apprehended near Francistown, Botswana, close to the Rhodesian border.³⁰⁹ Of these twelve, seven belonged to the ANC and five to ZAPU: the MK cadres were carrying large quantities of rifles, submachine guns, pistols, and ammunition, while the ZAPU guerrillas were believed to have hidden their weapons in arms caches and were acting as guides to assist the former group in entering Zambia.³¹⁰

Botswana achieved independence from Britain on 30 September 1966, just weeks before the aforementioned guerrillas were apprehended, and the Botswanan President, Seretse Khama, found himself in what Whaza Morapedi has called “a foreign policy nightmare:” the country was surrounded by hostile, white-minority ruled countries, and relied heavily upon Britain for aid.³¹¹ In a speech that was to have an enormous impact on ZAPU in subsequent years, Khama told his parliament that “My government will not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and will not tolerate interference in Botswana’s affairs by other countries. In particular, we will not permit Botswana to be

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union*, 106.

³⁰⁹ Anonymous Communique from the British Defence Liaison Staff, Pretoria, To Ministry of Defence Officials, London, 14 October 1966. TNA; DO/212/5/169.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Wazha G. Morapedi, “The Dilemmas of Liberation in Southern Africa: The Case of Zimbabwean Liberation Movements and Botswana, 1960-1979,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 38:1 (2012), 74.

used as a base for the organisation or direction of violent activities directed against other states and we will expect reciprocal treatment from our neighbours.”³¹² The twelve guerrillas from the ANC and ZAPU had contravened Khama’s policy, and were promptly deported to South Africa where the Chief of Police in Pretoria reported the incident to the BDLS.³¹³

Despite this early setback, the ZAPU-ANC alliance began to conduct large operations in the summer of 1967. In August 1967, a combined force of approximately 100 men crossed the Zambezi River at the Gwaii Gorge, located between Victoria Falls and Kazungula.³¹⁴ Once the cadres were inside Rhodesia, the majority of the ZAPU fighters split into two smaller units and proceeded to their designated operation zones in Matabeleland North, near the Wankie Game Reserve, while another ZAPU contingent escorted MK cadres south to cross the Limpopo.³¹⁵ The purpose of the first two ZAPU units was to establish concealed bases from which they could attack Rhodesian security forces and recruit more cadres. On 13 August 1967, the first battle took place between a unit of ZAPU and ANC fighters and members of the Rhodesian African Rifles,

³¹² Ibid, 75.

³¹³ Anonymous Communique from the British Defence Liaison Staff, Pretoria, To Ministry of Defence Officials, London, 14 October 1966. TNA; DO/212/5/169.

³¹⁴ The Zambezi was a significant mental and physical hurdle for many ZAPU cadres throughout the liberation war. ZIPRA combatant Nicholas Nkomo, in an interview with Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, related that the Zambezi “was the first real enemy a guerrilla crossing from Zambia to Rhodesia had to overcome.” Indeed, Nkomo gave expression to the collective fears of ZAPU cadres, recalling that “The fear of having the boat tossed in the air and then capsized in the deep waters by the giant hippopotamus; the fear of terrible currents in the water which, because of the river’s mountainous course, might sweep the dinghies down into the numerous rapids which would result in instant drowning; the fear of being eaten by crocodiles or other predators. Then there was the terrible fear of being fired upon by the enemy from the Rhodesian side of the river while we were yet to cross. As our crossing always had to take place in the dark, there was always the real possibility of being caught helpless upon the water.” Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, “War Stories: Guerrilla Narratives of Zimbabwe’s Liberation War,” *History Workshop Journal* no. 57 (Spring 2004), 93-94.

³¹⁵ Dabengwa, “ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation,” 28.

supplemented by a police anti-terrorist unit (PATU).³¹⁶ Fourteen days later, Rhodesian forces ran into an ambush in the Game Reserve, where they fought 22 ZAPU cadres for several hours. Because ZAPU's forces were so deeply entrenched in their positions, the Rhodesians were forced to call for aerial support which rocketed the cadres' position.³¹⁷ By the end of the fighting in early September, the Rhodesian forces had incurred their heaviest losses to date, with seven killed, several wounded, and radio equipment, arms, and ammunition captured.³¹⁸ Although some MK members managed to push through Rhodesian cordons and enter South Africa, ZAPU and the ANC suffered a high number of casualties: 47 cadres were killed and more than 20 were captured, while the remaining forces retreated to Botswana in the hope of returning to ZAPU headquarters in Zambia.³¹⁹

According to Nyangoni, in December 1967, another combined ZAPU/ANC unit of 90 guerrillas crossed the Zambezi with similar goals to the August operation.³²⁰ After two months of heavy fighting, four Rhodesian helicopters had been shot down, and four members of the security forces killed.³²¹ Once again, however, the guerrillas suffered heavy casualties, with as many as 45 cadres killed in battle and 35 captured.³²² Despite the high number of casualties, George Nyandoro, ZAPU's General Secretary, remained outwardly optimistic.³²³ In an interview conducted between him and a member of the British Columbia - based Liberation Support Movement, in Dar es Salaam in early 1968,

³¹⁶ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, 106.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 7.

³²⁰ Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe*, 100.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ It is of course difficult to discern how sincere Nyandoro was being in the face of so many killed ZAPU cadres, particularly without internal ZAPU documents or other sources with which to refer to. It would appear likely that he was being overly optimistic and politically astute in his comments, but it is impossible to definitively determine this.

he argued that since the summer of 1967, “the level of combat has certainly increased. Our guerrillas are active in many parts of the country, often as close as twenty miles from Salisbury, and they are winning increasing support among the masses, many of whom we are training in the arts of guerrilla warfare. The Smith Regime is now very frightened; they have to increase their local forces and bring in South African reinforcements. For the first time in Zimbabwe they recently began to use South African jet bombers to attack our positions in several areas.”³²⁴

In early-to-mid 1968, two additional joint ZAPU/ANC operations were launched before ZAPU ceased its military actions the following year to once again reassess its tactics and objectives. First, in March 1968, a force of 123 guerrillas crossed the Zambezi into Northern Mashonaland. The cadres remained undetected for nearly three months, setting up a series of six base camps at 30 kilometre intervals in the remote Chewore area, east of Mana Pools.³²⁵ These soldiers created a supply line across the Zambezi that improved conditions in the bases across the sparsely populated Zambezi Valley floor during the rainy season, which would generally last from October to April. Indeed, this group of cadres sought to supplement their rations by shooting and capturing game, and travelled further and further afield from their concealed bases which, after three months of portage, drew the attention of a Rhodesian game ranger. The ranger apparently took note of a change in the pattern of animal movements and, after investigating further, found distinctive boot tracks where none would have been expected.³²⁶ The ranger alerted

³²⁴ *Liberation Support Movement Interview: George Nyandoro, General Secretary of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), 16 January 1968* (Richmond, B.C.: LSM Information Center, 1968), 11.

³²⁵ Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 7.

³²⁶ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 108. After this discovery, it became common for Rhodesian trackers to seek out the distinctive “figure 8” pattern left by ZAPU cadres’ boots. Each ZAPU guerrilla during this period was given a pair of durable, Cuban-made boots which, unbeknownst to cadres and the ZAPU officers who

the Rhodesian military, which quickly devised ‘Operation Cauldron’ to capture or kill the ZAPU and MK guerillas.³²⁷ Between March and April, Rhodesian security forces fought a running battle with 125 guerillas, killing sixty-nine, capturing fifty, while losing six of their own forces.³²⁸ According to Flower, CIO had failed to provide the military with the necessary intelligence that might have preempted ‘Operation Cauldron.’ This was due in part to the fact that Rhodesian intelligence operatives had been less successful in penetrating the ranks ZAPU than ZANU, and also because of the logistical difficulties of communicating messages while the Zambezi was flooded during the rainy season.³²⁹

The final operation consisted of another large-scale incursion launched from Zambia between 12 and 13 July 1968.³³⁰ Three separate units totaling 91 cadres crossed into Rhodesia, each utilizing a different point of infiltration. One group of 38 crossed the Zambezi near Chewore and travelled south towards Mount Darwin, and were tasked with recruiting African Rhodesians to train in Zambia. Before they could reach their intended destination, however, a Rhodesian reconnaissance helicopter spotted the group, and they were intercepted and captured by security forces without having fired a bullet in resistance. The second unit of 25 soldiers crossed the Gwayi River close to the western edge of Kariba en route to Hartley District, with the mission of setting up a mobile base to engage the Rhodesian military in a series of skirmishes and disrupting agricultural

distributed them at training camps, left unmistakable impressions for Rhodesian security forces who, after March 1968, knew how to discern tracks left by ZAPU fighters, courtesy of the ranger’s tipoff. Remarking on this period, ZAPU veterans Thula Bopela and Daluxola Luthuli recalled that in the mid-to-late-1960s, they “didn’t know much about tracking and backtracking in those days, and took no precautions [to their disguise tracks].” Cited in Timothy Stapleton, “Tracking, Tracking, and more Tracking was Their Motto: Bush Tracking and Warfare in Late-Twentieth Century Southern Africa,” *War and Society* 34:4 (2015), 303.

³²⁷ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 109.

³²⁸ Ibid, 108.

³²⁹ Ibid, 109.

³³⁰ Nyangoni, *African Nationalism*, 100.

production.³³¹ They also, however, were intercepted by Rhodesian forces, and of the 25 cadres, nine were killed while the rest were captured after killing three members of the Rhodesian army. The third group of 28 crossed the Zambezi east of Victoria Falls and had the same mission as the second division³³²: this group, however, was entirely eliminated by Rhodesian troops, but not before inflicting a significant but indeterminate number of Rhodesian security force casualties.³³³

Other liberation movements, such as ZANU and the South African Pan African Congress (PAC), were extremely critical of the ZAPU-ANC alliance. ZANU, for example, argued that it was a poor military strategy to confront the Rhodesian military in conventional battles, and also claimed it would serve as a pretext to invite South African troops into Rhodesia.³³⁴ In ZANU's party organ, the *Zimbabwe News*, for example, it was argued that "in guerrilla warfare we must strive to spread the enemy forces so that we can wipe them out one by one. The greatest help we can get from ANC is for ANC to wage warfare...in South Africa. If ANC can pin down...the South African force, then Zimbabweans will be left with Smith alone...as it is now, the [ZAPU-ANC] alliance has made it easy for Smith and Vorster to unite and concentrate their forces to slaughter

³³¹ Hartley District was one of the most prosperous rural areas in Rhodesia, which boasted the largest cotton acreage on the continent. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla Warfare in Zimbabwe*, 59.

³³² Nyangoni, *African Nationalism*, 101.

³³³ It is extremely difficult to gauge exactly how many members of ZAPU were killed, injured, or captured, just as it is difficult to determine the exact number of Rhodesian security forces killed or wounded during the liberation war. ZAPU's *Zimbabwe Review* often significantly exaggerated the number of Rhodesian troops killed, while simultaneously downplaying the number of ZAPU cadres lost. Similarly, Rhodesian media sources, such as newspapers, radio, and television, were under a great deal of pressure to publish and report what the government asked. Johan Meiring, a Defence Correspondent for the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation, for example, recalls that "Although the RBC [Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation] liked to tell its staff that we merely supported the government of the day, during the war the RBC was a straight propaganda arm for the ruling Rhodesia Front. The RBC was there to support the government, bolster morale and to aid the war effort, as it developed. The war basically stood for the preservation of the white way of life and that's what the RBC was all about." Interview with Johan Meiring, cited in Frederikse, *None but Ourselves*, 28.

³³⁴ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, 127.

Zimbabweans.”³³⁵ Furthermore, a joint ZANU-PAC pamphlet entitled *The Wankie Fiasco in Retrospect*, distributed in 1968, claimed that “you cannot hope to gobble up an entire army, all at once in a conventional style war, as our brothers tried to do, and still claim to be waging guerrilla warfare. It is wholly unacceptable and both in theory and practice.”³³⁶ The *Zimbabwe Review*, however, defended the decision to enter into the alliance: ZAPU argued that “the masses of the oppressed people have greeted the alliance with joy. With sound revolutionary common sense as opposed to clever semantics, the oppressed people see that with unity in arms in their hands, they constitute an invincible force.”³³⁷ Indeed, for ZAPU, the presence of South African troops in Rhodesia was a moot point, as Vorster, the South African Prime Minister, sent security forces north before any large scale ZAPU-ANC military operations had taken place in Rhodesia.³³⁸

Breaking Up: The Second Fracture in ZAPU

The ZAPU-ANC military alliance effectively ended by the close of 1969 at the behest of the ANC and MK’s leadership. Scott Thomas argues that the South African Communist Party (SACP), which lent significant ideological and material support to the ANC since the mid 1950s, was not consulted during the formation of the alliance, and fundamentally disagreed with the strategy of infiltrating MK cadres into South Africa

³³⁵ *The Zimbabwe News*, vol. 3. no. 4, 1967, 4.

³³⁶ *The Wankie Fiasco in Retrospect* (Dar es Salaam: The Publicity and Communication Secretariat of the PAC, 1969), 9.

³³⁷ *The Zimbabwe Review*, no. 1, 1969, 6.

³³⁸ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union*, 128.

after engaging Rhodesian security forces.³³⁹ Colin Bundy also attributes the end of the ZAPU-ANC military alliance to ANC elements, particularly MK guerrillas. Chris Hani, an MK cadre active in joint campaigns in the mid-to-late 1960s, complained to the ANC's senior leadership that the alliance was an ineffective, costly way of breaking through the South African cordon sanitaire on its northern border with Rhodesia. Indeed, Hani spoke of "rot" in the ANC, and criticized its political leadership for "attending international conferences and other globetrotting activities" while MK fighters were losing their lives even before stepping foot in South Africa.³⁴⁰ Dissatisfaction among MK members and other ANC elements culminated in the Morogoro Conference in 1969, which restructured military command into the Revolutionary Council. The new Council, while open to political alliances with other southern African liberation movements, was critical of the armed alliance with ZAPU, which, in the Council's estimation, substantially failed to progress liberation efforts in South Africa.³⁴¹

Indeed, by the end of the decade, ZAPU was similarly engaged in a process of political and military introspection and reassessment. ZAPU had ceased its military operations by the end of 1968 and spent much of 1969 analysing and re-examining its military tactics. Both ZAPU and the ANC had suffered heavy casualties and demoralizing defeats during the fighting between 1967 and 1968: Godwin estimates that only 18 Rhodesian Soldiers were killed during this period, while at least 150 guerrillas

³³⁹ Scott Thomas, "The Diplomacy of Liberation: The International Relations of the African National Congress of South Africa, 1960-1985," (PhD Dissertation, London School of Economics, 1990), 62.

³⁴⁰ Colin Bundy, "Cooking the Rice outside the Pot? The ANC and SACP in Exile – 1960 to 1990," in *Treading the Waters of History: Perspectives on the ANC*, ed. Kondlo, Saunders, and Zondi (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2014), 56.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, 57.

died and nearly 300 had been captured.³⁴² This was not, however, due to ZAPU cadres' incompetence or unwillingness to fight. Rhodesian security forces honed their skills by holding mock guerrilla counter-insurgency exercises while the Rhodesian military simultaneously grew steadily in terms of personnel and materiel. By the early 1970s, the security forces boasted 4,700 regular army and air force personnel, 10,000 White Territorials, 8,000 members of the British South Africa Police (BSAP),³⁴³ and 35,000 police reservists, supplemented by an unknown number of PATU agents.³⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Air Force boasted 45 combat aircraft, including 10 Canberra bombers, 11 Vampire Jets, 12 Hawker Hunters, and 12 T-52 Provosts, in addition to 12 extremely effective counter-insurgency Alouette helicopters.³⁴⁵ Confronted with such a powerful adversary, some ZAPU leaders, both civilian and military, began to question the efficacy of direct confrontation.³⁴⁶

While ZAPU was conducting its military operations, the political structure in place in Rhodesia in the late 1960s remained much as it had since 1963 after the Cold Comfort Farm Conference, when ZAPU was originally proscribed. George Nyandoro, in his interview with the Liberation Support Movement, gave rare and succinct insight into ZAPU's hierarchical organization. When asked to describe the structure of ZAPU, he responded that

³⁴² Godwin, *Rhodesians Never Die*, 90.

³⁴³ Approximately three quarters of the BSAP were African Rhodesians, and the Army was separated into two units, the all-white Rhodesia Light Infantry, and the white-officered Rhodesian African Rifles. Of further note is the fact that the BSAP evolved over time: after UDI, it became more akin to a paramilitary organization than a police force. Ibid, 88.

³⁴⁴ Ibid, 89.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Dabengwa, "ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation," 33.

At the lowest level of organization, according to the ZAPU constitution, we have branches, local branches to one of which every member of ZAPU belongs. Each branch must have at least 15 members. Then you have an executive council within every branch. A number of branches are joined in a district, headed by a district executive council. The branches in each district select members from their own executives to serve on the district executive council. Then, above the district councils, we have a regional secretary whose function is to coordinate the district councils in his region. That is, his main function is to act as a contact for administrative purposes between the national executive of ZAPU and the various branches in his region. Then we have the national executive. The over-riding body is the People's Council, which is chosen by a national congress of delegates from all the districts. It is the People's Council which selects the national executive. As things stand now [in 1968], most of the members of the national executive are in prison or detention within Zimbabwe; five are outside at our headquarters in Lusaka.³⁴⁷

The five members of the national political executive mentioned by Nyandoro were Vice-President James Chikerema, Secretary-General George Nyandoro, Deputy Secretary-General, Edward Ndlovu, Treasurer-General Jason Moyo, and Secretary for Information and Publicity, George Silundika. In late 1969, Chikerema inexplicably took foreign reporters to film units in a ZAPU military base which had been erected on the Zambian side of Zambezi River. Indeed, the journalists not only filmed the camp, but

³⁴⁷ *Liberation Support Movement Interview: George Nyandoro, 9-10.*

were allowed access to interview cadres who were preparing to cross into Rhodesia.³⁴⁸

The other four members of ZAPU's executive who had remained in ZAPU's offices in Lusaka, were unaware of this bizarre decision made by Chikerema, which put ZAPU at considerable risk: the film was easily accessible and contained images and descriptions of tactics which could have been used by the Rhodesian security forces to compromise future ZAPU operations.

While this episode may not in itself have been enough to cause disunity among the executive, by early 1970 it was clear that considerable friction existed among ZAPU's most senior politicians, particularly between Moyo and Chikerema, the most influential leaders in ZAPU while Nkomo remained in detention. On 25 February 1970 Jason Moyo published a consequential tract titled *Observations on our Struggle*.³⁴⁹ In this piece, he argued that "an unhealthy atmosphere is now prevalent in our military organ [which could] easily trigger a dangerous situation similar to what befell some of our friends in the past...indiscipline is fast approaching dangerous proportions in our army. Apart from an alarming number of deserters, loose forces are increasing – cadres live anywhere they choose...our military organ is lacking in specification of duties. People do not know their duties and their rights...I do not know what I may or may not do. I do not know now what I am entitled to know...it is embarrassing and frustrating in the extreme to be in such a situation"³⁵⁰ Moyo continued his withering criticism writing,

³⁴⁸ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, 143.

³⁴⁹ J.Z. Moyo, *Observations on our Struggle*, Lusaka, 25 February 1970. *Zimbabwe Independence Movement, Select Documents*, 142-147.

³⁵⁰ Moyo, *Observations on our Struggle*, 143-144. "The situation similar to what befell our friends" is a none-too-thinly veiled reference to the ZAPU-ZANU split in 1963.

The recent filming of ZAPU cadres involved what I consider to be a major party policy. A unilateral decision [made by Chikerema] in this connection was most unfair to say the least. Personally, when I read about the film in the newspapers, I was astonished. I strongly felt and still feel that the security of cadres was compromised...I find it hard to conceive how on earth a film taken by a white – Angus MacDonald – could be concealed from me. I wish to confess that I regard this concealment of this film which was known to cadres and a selected group of military headquarters personnel an expression of no confidence in me...All involved in the army – the high command, the military command and camp administration, must show the spirit of oneness in order to be able to exercise effective control over personnel.... The military command should be expanded to include the members at Gonakudzingwa...³⁵¹ there must be no dislikes and likes in the administration of the army from top to bottom. Nobody should be caused to feel he is playing the role of pawn – being at the mercy of other person/s. Principles of the army must be seen to prevail over personal wishes.³⁵²

The accusations and counter-accusations of corruption, lack of consultation by the vice president, and incompetence among the executive in Lusaka were hurled throughout 1970.³⁵³ Indeed, it appears that serious disagreements over the roles of the five leaders in Lusaka had existed since they arrived in Zambia in 1964. Bhebe notes that quarrels

³⁵¹ This is in reference to Chikerema over-extending his authority as Deputy President by bypassing Nkomo who was still detained.

³⁵² Moyo, *Observations on our Struggle*, 145-147.

³⁵³ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 25.

frequently broke out amongst the external leadership of the party over the roles and responsibilities of each of the five leaders, particularly with respect to the position of vice president.³⁵⁴ Further disagreements had festered over the relationship between the military and political wings of the party, as well as the recruitment and training of cadres. Moyo, for example, stressed that the majority of cadres should be recruited from among Zimbabwean communities either living outside of Rhodesia's borders or within, while Chikerema argued that Zambians and Malawians ought to join ZAPU's ranks in significant numbers as well.³⁵⁵

The clash between Moyo and Chikerema came to a head when the vice president published his response to *Observations on our Struggle* on 17 March 1970. Chikerema wrote

I have earlier stated, in very clear terms, the responsibilities and the authority of the presidential powers given to the President of ZAPU in terms of the people's resolutions adopted at Cold Comfort Farm on 10 August 1963. I have also stated the mandate and authority conferred on me by the national leader, Comrade Joshua Nkomo, to direct the struggle in and outside Zimbabwe... I have, therefore, dissolved the whole military command as presently constituted. I have substituted it with a new military administration and a new command structure directly responsible to me and nobody else.... I have taken direct control of certain departmental functions, previously exercised by heads of departments here [in Lusaka]

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

and abroad. I am taking direct control of all foreign affairs matters, and the administration of all our foreign offices from Comrade G.B. Nyandoro, the National Secretary. I am taking direct control of all matters concerning education of our ZAPU cadres and people from Comrade T.G. Silundika and Dumiso Dabengwa. I have taken direct control of all external accounts of the party funds from the National Treasurer, Comrade J.Z. Moyo...In the Zambian Region, the Lusaka District Office has been the centre [sic] of tribal intrigues, conspiracy, and the promotion of personality cult for a very long time. I have, therefore, decided to dissolve the whole Lusaka District Council because of some of its members' involvement in the general disruption of the party and their complicity in some of the sordid acts committed by officials in the Head Office and in the branches.³⁵⁶

The fallout from the dispute between Moyo and Chikerema was such that the Zambian government and army had to intervene to avoid clashes among cadres loyal to the two factions that had developed: one led by Chikerema and his ally George Nyandoro, and another led by Moyo and supported by Silundika and Edward Ndlovu.³⁵⁷ Indeed, President Kaunda, with the cooperation of the Tanzanian government, implemented a news blackout and a ban on communications between cadres and ZAPU officials based in Dar es Salaam and those who remained in Zambian camps, such as Mboroma in the north.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ *Reply to 'Observations on our Struggle' by James Chikerema, acting-President*. Lusaka, 17 March 1970. *Zimbabwe Independence Movement, Select Documents*, 160-161.

³⁵⁷ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 25.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

In his *Reply to 'Observations on our Struggle,'* Chikerema left little doubt that, in his view, the significant powers invested in the President of ZAPU had passed to him while Nkomo remained detained indefinitely.³⁵⁹ Moyo, Ndlovu, and Silundika considered his position to be a tantamount to a coup, and asserted that “the authority of the party is central in the national executive, and not in an individual” and that “all policy decisions, in our circumstances, are the responsibility of the national executive, which carries responsibility for progress or blame.”³⁶⁰ Furthermore, they argued that “Mr. Chikerema seems to be in an undue hurry to assume power and status without leaving this initiative to the Party by already signing himself Acting President when the President is still alive.”³⁶¹ As the crisis deepened, Chikerema approached ZANU leaders Nathan Shamuyarira, and Obed Mutizwa,³⁶² who had both been expelled from the ZANU Supreme Council for disagreeing with the party’s position vis a vis recruitment and mobilization.³⁶³ By this point, the split in ZAPU had become irreversible as Moyo and others viewed Chikerema’s overtures to ZANU as treasonous, and despite the efforts on behalf of President Kaunda to reconcile the two factions, on 1 October 1971, the Front for Liberation of Zimbabwe was created by Chikerema and ZANU leaders who sought unity with ZAPU elements.³⁶⁴ To avoid bloodshed and further disunity, the Zambian

³⁵⁹ In his memoirs, Nkomo is surprisingly silent on this episode in ZAPU’s history. He makes no direct reference to FROLIZI except in passing when discussing later negotiations which included ZAPU and FROLIZI in the mid-1970s. Indeed, even then, he refers to Chikerema in an almost affectionate tone, calling him his “impetuous old colleague.” Nkomo, *Story of My Life*, 149.

³⁶⁰ *Zimbabwe African People’s Union: On the Coup Crisis Precipitated by J. Chikerema*, Lusaka, 21 March 1970. *Zimbabwe Independence Movement, Select Documents*, 167.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 169-170.

³⁶² Some scholars erroneously contribute the ZAPU/FROLIZI split to issues of ethnicity based on the coincidence that Chikerema, Shamuyarira, and Mutizwa were Zezuru Shona speakers. Indeed, it became a running joke among ZAPU and ZANU supporters alike to refer to FROLIZI as “The Front for the Liaison of Zezuru Intellectuals.” Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatshezi, “Rethinking Chimurenga and Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Critique of Partisan National History,” *African Studies Review* 55:3 (2012), 6.

³⁶³ Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?*, 43.

³⁶⁴ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 25.

government gave the approximately 400 cadres in country the opportunity to choose which party they wished to belong to. There is no definitive documentation of the numbers, but Cephas Cele, the commander in charge of ZAPU military camps in Zambia at the time, estimated that approximately 100 cadres chose to remain with ZAPU, while the remainder either chose to defect to ZANU, join FROLIZI, or leave the parties entirely and return to their homes in Rhodesia.³⁶⁵

In the aftermath of the split, Moyo held a week-long consultative meeting in which ZAPU members, including high-ranking leaders such as Silundika, Ndlovu, and Jane Ngwenya, the Secretary for Women's Affairs, reviewed ZAPU's entire party structure and its military operations between 1965 and 1969.³⁶⁶ By the end of the meeting, it was collectively decided that a new strategy and organizational structure was necessary to improve ZAPU's armed struggle. A new organization, the Revolutionary Council, was created which was to be the main body of ZAPU outside of Rhodesia: this Council included all members of the national executive and the entire command structure of the Party's military wing.³⁶⁷ It was under this new structure that the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) was created.³⁶⁸ According to Dabengwa, who was also present during the meeting, "the task of the Revolutionary Council was to organize the entire liberation campaign and ZAPU's strategy inside and outside the country and gather the resources required for a successful armed struggle," and to "review from time to time the military strategy of the of the party and to align it with the

³⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 26.

³⁶⁶ Dabengwa, "ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation," 32.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

political objectives of the national struggle for independence.”³⁶⁹ The most pressing matter after the exhaustive restructuring was the need to recruit and train new cadres to replace the significant number that had left ZAPU following the ZAPU/FROLIZI split.

Conclusion

Between 1964 and 1971, ZAPU underwent significant changes as it responded to events within and outside its control. The party was particularly successful in providing extensive military training for its cadres, while also carrying out effective sabotage operations against the Rhodesian state. The Party also made efficacious advances from a regional perspective: it secured, for example, a crucial alliance with the Zambian government while also expanding its military capabilities by securing useful alliances with other liberation movements such as the ANC.

It must also be acknowledged, however, that ZAPU experienced a number of dramatic setbacks and failures. Its military operations, in cooperation with MK members, were unsuccessful in threatening the stability of Rhodesia’s government. In the process, the party suffered a number of defeats which seriously depleted and demoralized ZAPU’s fighters. ZAPU was also unsuccessful in courting international and regional pressure to halt the Rhodesian Front’s unilateral declaration of independence. Furthermore, the ZAPU/FROLIZI split was another blow to the effort of creating a united front with which to engage the Smith regime. This further loss of cadres and political operatives forced

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

ZAPU to restructure itself politically and militarily, and diverted attention away from the primary goal of securing majority rule for African Zimbabweans. During this period, the Rhodesian Front government expanded and enhanced its own military capabilities, inevitably prolonging the liberation struggle, while also successfully avoiding the full brunt of economic sanctions.³⁷⁰

After 1971, however, the rest of the decade was not entirely bleak for ZAPU: in the aftermath of the 1971 leadership crisis, new military techniques, political structures, and alliances emerged which put ZAPU back on course to be an effective liberation movement. The ongoing evolution of ZAPU's organizational structure, its shifting politics and ability to form coalitions with other Zimbabwean freedom movements, and its return to the armed struggle in the mid-1970s, contributed significantly to the end of minority rule, which will be the subject of the following chapter.

³⁷⁰ Wilson believed that a decisive factor in ending UDI and the rebellion would be a sustained oil embargo. Portugal, however, disregarded the international call to close the Beira-Umtali pipeline. South Africa similarly disregarded UN sanctions and maintained its pipelines across the Zimbabwe/South Africa border. Furthermore, by the late 1960s, parastatals like the Grain Marketing Board and the Cold Storage Commission, and other new government agencies were specifically tasked with evading sanctions by planning the diversification of the Rhodesian economy. Flower notes that "Rhodesia became self-sufficient in many crops which had been grown only marginally before UDI, and from an almost total dependence on the importation of manufactured goods was soon manufacturing a host of goods for domestic consumption." Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 74.

Chapter Five: Settling Down: ZAPU in the Late Stages of the Liberation War and the Achievement of Independence

The previous chapter discussed the chronic problem of disunity and factional infighting which plagued ZAPU and other African Zimbabwean nationalist groups since the inception of the SRANC in the late 1950s. The fractious nature of the Zimbabwean liberation war will be examined further by investigating and analyzing efforts of African nationalists in Rhodesia and leaders of front line states to create a united African-Zimbabwean political and military force to confront minority rule in the 1970s. Indeed, ZAPU's political elite engaged briefly with regional actors including the Smith regime and the South African government in a détente exercise which sought to dismantle minority rule through negotiated settlement. The period of détente, however, was short-lived, and drew the ire of rank and file ZAPU cadres who admonished ZAPU's leaders to cease negotiations and redirect their attention towards military operations. Throughout this period in the mid-to-late 1970s, ZAPU experienced successes and failures in its attempts to create unity in the Zimbabwean liberation struggle: in addition to the détente exercise, the party entered into a number of other tenuous power-sharing and joint-operational agreements with different nationalist groups between 1972 and 1979, such as the abortive Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) and the more politically successful Patriotic Front (PF).

The Pearce Commission, which sought to test the acceptability of new Anglo-Rhodesian proposals in Rhodesia in early 1972, is given particular attention in this chapter, and is especially illustrative of how nationalist movements responded to, and

mobilized support against, RF and British politicians. African mass political opposition to these proposals reveal the extent to which ZAPU could rally its underground networks, and its ability to attract and recruit cadres from a politically reinvigorated African population. Furthermore, ZAPU's response to the Pearce Commission offers compelling evidence that as other African nationalist groups adopted ostensible policies of nonviolence, such as the African National Council (ANC), ZAPU's military wing could marshal its forces to conduct operations in Rhodesia while the political arm of the party navigated slippery alliances and fragile negotiations.

This chapter continues to draw attention to the military achievements and failures of ZAPU and its armed wing, the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), to gain a more accurate understanding of the party's contributions to the liberation effort. It is important to note, however, that neither ZAPU nor ZANU won the war in a conventional sense: the end of minority rule was the result of a negotiated settlement, hastened by an increasingly bloody war that had eroded white trust in RF and other settler politicians, and created war-fatigue among white and African Rhodesians in the late 1970s. Rhodesia's security forces between 1975 and 1979 were fighting larger scale battles against significant numbers of guerrillas and conventional ZIPRA forces, and had to contend with increasingly sophisticated military hardware. ZAPU, for example, acquired heat-seeking missiles from the Soviet Union which brought down two Air Rhodesia passenger jets in September 1978 and February 1979 respectively.³⁷¹ The attacks on civilian planes and fuel depots by surface-to-air missiles and rocket-propelled

³⁷¹ Henrik Ellert, *The Rhodesia Front War: Counter-insurgency and Guerrilla War in Rhodesia* (Harare: Mambo Press, 1989), 37.

grenades crippled white Rhodesian morale, and censors at the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation and other news outlets were no longer able to deliver confidently the quixotic message that Rhodesian security forces were defeating a small, ill-equipped group of so-called terrorists in remote locations.³⁷²

Furthermore, the slow decline of ZAPU's influence in the latter years of the African nationalist movement against the settler regime will be examined, particularly as it lost its primacy of place to ZANU. This political transition, which saw ZAPU lose large swathes of support, is one of the most fraught questions regarding the political history of Zimbabwe's liberation war. Ethnic rivalry and partisanship have often been used to explain this crucial chapter of Zimbabwean history, but these explanations alone are insufficient. While the Ndebele character of ZAPU will be discussed, other factors must also be considered, even in the absence of conclusive documentary evidence: internecine political and military machinations which emerged from ZANU and ZAPU's marriage of convenience in the formation of a joint popular front, international pressure, relationships with front line states, and popular perceptions among Africans of the efficacy of significantly different military approaches all contributed to the erosion of ZAPU support and its marginalisation in the 1980 national election. By reassessing ZAPU's varied contribution to the liberation movement in the 1970s, and accounting for its poor performance relative to ZANU in Zimbabwe's first post-independence election, a

³⁷² See, for example, the contribution of Georgia Rhodes, Cecil Rhodes' 82-year-old niece, to the *Bulawayo Chronicle*. In this front -page story, Rhodes writes at length about how safe she felt traversing the country, meeting old Rhodesian friends, visiting her uncle's grave in the Matopos Hills, as well as visiting the David Livingstone Memorial School in the outskirts of Bulawayo. "Rhodes' Niece Says I love Rhodesia," *Bulawayo Chronicle*, 7 March 1972.

clearer, more accurate depiction of ZAPU's political history emerges from behind the opacity of narratives predominantly sympathetic to ZANU (PF)'s quasi-official accounts.

The Pearce Commission and a New ANC

In January 1972, a commission headed by Lord Pearce, a British High Court judge, travelled to Rhodesia with a panel of former British colonial service officials to test the acceptability of Anglo-Rhodesian negotiations aimed at ending the armed struggle and bringing Rhodesia into the Commonwealth.³⁷³ After Harold Wilson's Labour government lost to Edward Heath's Conservative Party in 1970, relations improved between the RF regime and Britain, particularly after former-Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home was named Foreign Minister.³⁷⁴ Indeed, Douglas-Home and Smith, after months of negotiations, produced a White Paper in 1971 called *Proposals for a Settlement* in which both the RF and the British government made considerable concessions: the RF broadly agreed in principle to four of the five stipulations proposed by Harold Wilson in 1966 which would legitimate Rhodesian sovereignty.³⁷⁵ Indeed,

³⁷³ Luise White, "'Normal Political Activities': Rhodesia, the Pearce Commission, and the African National Council," *Journal of African History* 52 (2011), 321.

³⁷⁴ While the RF was wary of Douglas-Home's earlier opposition to UDI, Smith and others were cautiously optimistic that, because of his long familiarity with Rhodesian politics dating back as far as the Central African Federation, the new Foreign Secretary would be more sympathetic and amenable to favourable negotiations than the previous Labour administration.

³⁷⁵ The five principles laid out by Wilson were "(1) The principle and intention of unimpeded progress to majority rule. (2) There would have to be guarantees against retrogressive amendment to the [1961] Constitution. (3) There would have to be immediate improvement in the political status of Africans. (4) There would have to be progress towards ending racial discrimination. (5) The British Government would need to be satisfied that any basis proposed for independence was acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole." "UK Proposals for Settlement of Rhodesia Problem – Rhodesia, Proposals for a Settlement, 1966," *International Legal Matters* 6:1 (1967,) 134.

Proposals for a Settlement addressed many of Smith's chief concerns, including lifting British sanctions, short-term retention of settler dominance in Rhodesian politics, continued detention of political prisoners, and an open-ended timeframe for a transition to majority rule.³⁷⁶

The main impediment to the implementation of the Anglo-Rhodesian negotiations was Wilson's fifth principle, which stipulated that any settlement had to be acceptable to the population of Rhodesia as a whole.³⁷⁷ Pearce and his panelists deployed a number of quantitative methods to determine whether the people of Rhodesia, which included Europeans, Africans, Coloureds, and Asians, were satisfied by the proposed settlement. Members of the commission, for example, visited Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) as well as urban centres and townships, where meetings were held in which votes were recorded by shouts, raising hands, and individual oral testimony given before Pearce's panelists.³⁷⁸ While the Pearce Commission's polling methods left much to be desired, it was clear that African Rhodesians were overwhelmingly opposed to the settlement. After including written submissions, letters, and petitions, Pearce and his commission members determined that 97% of whites favoured the settlement, along with 96% of Rhodesia's Asian community, while the Coloured population narrowly endorsed the proposals.³⁷⁹ To the consternation of most of Rhodesia's settler population and the RF, well over 80% of

³⁷⁶ Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 80.

³⁷⁷ White, "Normal Political Activities," 322.

³⁷⁸ Ibid, 331.

³⁷⁹ *Report of the Commission on Rhodesian Opinion under the Chairmanship of the Right Honourable the Lord Pearce: Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by Command of Her Majesty, May 1972*, 56.

Africans were opposed, which demographically meant that the Anglo-Rhodesian settlement substantially failed to meet Wilson's fifth principle.³⁸⁰

Among African Zimbabweans, whether they belonged to ZAPU, ZANU, FROLIZI, were independent of a formal party or simply wary of the proposals, many feared that without political unity, the African vote could be manipulated into either a small majority of "no" votes, or, even worse, a considerable amount of "yes" votes.³⁸¹ Such an outcome would pave the way for Rhodesian independence without majority rule through the political machinations of the RF and British governments, as well as many pliable chiefs in TTLs who desperately relied on Rhodesian officials for material and logistical support to maintain their positions as local leaders.³⁸² In response to these concerns, the African National Council (ANC) was established on 16 December 1971 as an uneasy amalgamation of African nationalist parties which, through a variety of means,³⁸³ successfully ensured that Pearce would be left with little doubt that the

³⁸⁰ Ibid, 58-66.

³⁸¹ Peter Niesewand reported in 1973 that the Rhodesian and British governments, as well as "the ordinary white Rhodesian," fully expected Africans to endorse the proposals. Indeed, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had assured Smith of this outcome, leading the RF Prime Minister to naively report that his country has "the happiest Africans in the world." Peter Niesewand, "Rhodesia: What Smith Really Faces," *Africa Report* 18:2 (1972), 3.

³⁸² Terence Ranger, "Tradition and Travesty: Chiefs and the Administration in Makoni District, Zimbabwe, 1960-1980," in *Past and Present in Zimbabwe*, ed. Peel (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 27.

³⁸³ As White and others have noted, the campaign to secure a "no" vote among African Rhodesians was not always a peaceful one. Youths in particular, belonging to both ZAPU and ZANU, frequently attended rural meetings where the Anglo-Rhodesian proposals were read aloud to crowds in both Shona and isiNdebele. While the proposals were being read, young cadres would often shout down the Pearce commission panellists as well as intimidate those in attendance. It was common practice, for example, for African Rhodesians to be told that if they voted "yes," they would be subjected to beatings or worse. David Lemon, a white Rhodesian policeman who was present at a number of these meetings, recalls in his memoirs that when he raised the issue of violent coercion to his superior officer, he was told "this is Africa, and any vote here hinges on threats and intimidation." David Lemon, *Never Quite a Soldier: A Policeman's War, 1971-1983* (Stroud, UK: Alvida Books, 2003), 55. Intimidation, however, was not consistently applied in all places and at all times, and the majority of meetings were relatively peaceful. White, "Normal Political Activities," 332.

proposals lacked African support.³⁸⁴ Indeed, arguably the greatest impact the Pearce Commission had on African politics was to mobilize opposition to the White Paper among black Zimbabweans.³⁸⁵

Abel Muzorewa, the Methodist Bishop of Rhodesia, was chosen by ZAPU and ZANU elites to lead the ANC for pragmatic reasons: he had a history of fighting racial oppression, but was also perceived as a moderate by the RF. Furthermore, ZAPU and ZANU leaders who remained in detention, such as Nkomo and Sithole, believed Muzorewa to be a malleable, novice leader who would easily bend to the diverse interests of those politicians and cadres seeking to end minority rule through armed struggle. Indeed, while ZAPU and ZANU remained outlawed by the RF, Muzorewa, as leader of the newly created ANC, which had obvious epistemological connections to earlier iterations of the African National Congress in the 1950s, incorporated political elites from both parties who represented a relatively non-partisan, broad cross-section of Zimbabwean nationalism from within established party lines. It was agreed, for instance, that Michael Mawema, a founder of the NDP, and Edson Zvogbo, a former ZAPU cadre, would represent the interests of ZANU while Josiah Chinamano, Cephass Msipa, and Arthur Chadzingwa, all of whom had links to NDP, would stand in for ZAPU.³⁸⁶ The ranks of the ANC were also filled by pastors and teachers who had volunteered to campaign for a “no” vote in rural and urban areas.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ *Zimbabwe Independence Movements: Select Documents*, ed. Nyangoni and Nyandoro (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979), 185.

³⁸⁵ Luise White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 232.

³⁸⁶ *Zimbabwe Independence Movements*, 185.

³⁸⁷ Ngwabi Bhebe, “Healing the War Scars in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe” in *Society in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (Oxford: James Currey, 1996), 151.

Nkomo's detention, however, did not mean that he and other detained ZAPU cadres necessarily had to sit idly by while the commission did its work and the ANC sought support to reject the proposals. In a memorandum to Lord Pearce from Gonakudzinwa Prison, Nkomo wrote "we would like to emphasize to the commission that we unreservedly reject these proposals because they do not satisfy the universally accepted conditions of independence and self-determination for all of our people; they are racial and discriminatory, and we believe that if implemented they will engender feelings of hostility between black and white citizens of our country and bring about bloodshed and untold human suffering."³⁸⁸

With Nkomo, Sithole, Mugabe, and other ZAPU and ZANU leaders detained until 1974, the Bishop took advantage of the leadership vacuum among Zimbabwean nationalists. He claimed, for instance, that the ANC had superseded ZAPU and ZANU and argued before the UN, as well as before the British, American, and Rhodesian governments, that the ANC was now the only party which enjoyed the support of the African majority.³⁸⁹ Indeed, Muzorewa argued in late 1972 that "the ANC is not the continuation of any previous organization... [it is] a spontaneous grassroots movement which came into being at the time of the [Anglo-Rhodesian] proposals, not merely to oppose the proposals but as a means to a greater end. It is the embodiment of the hopes and aspirations of the people of this country... in terms of method, we have pledged ourselves to work for the attainment of democratic rule by non-violent means."³⁹⁰ As he

³⁸⁸ "Joshua Nkomo's Memorandum on the Settlement Proposals submitted to the Pearce Commission, February 1972," in *Zimbabwe Independence Movements*, 222.

³⁸⁹ Judith Todd, *The Right to Say No* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1973), 184.

³⁹⁰ "African National Council: Address by President Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Salisbury, September 22nd, 1972" in *Zimbabwe Independence Movements*, 243.

travelled abroad, particularly in the United States, Muzorewa would frequently report that “we no longer have ZANU and ZAPU,” and that the question of “‘where do you belong?’ was one of the worst enemies in the last years.”³⁹¹

The ANC, however, relied heavily on underground ZAPU networks and cells to secure a “no” vote, without which the organization would have been politically impotent within Rhodesia’s borders.³⁹² White argues that the ANC enjoyed a great deal of success not because of Muzorewa’s leadership, but rather because there already existed enough impetus behind rejecting the proposals among Africans that Muzorewa simply had to utilize the fruits of ZAPU’s years of organizing, sending political and clerical volunteers around the country to court support.³⁹³ Indeed, in her pioneering work, White notes that the ANC owed much of its success to ZAPU detainees who were released between 1972 and 1974: many cadres and political prisoners returned to leadership positions or rejoined active units prosecuting the liberation struggle where they were able to reanimate latent nationalist networks and invigorate non-violent and violent opposition to Smith and Douglas-Home’s proposals.³⁹⁴ Indeed, in the two months leading up to Muzorewa’s statement that the ANC had eclipsed or incorporated other parties and was seeking peaceful negotiations, J.Z. Moyo reported a number of ZAPU operations undertaken at the behest of the party’s political and military leadership: on 3 August 1972, ZAPU

³⁹¹ Nancy McKeon, “Rhodesia’s Fighting Bishop,” *Africa Report* 17:3 (1972), 9.

³⁹² White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 224.

³⁹³ It is important to note that at this point in the early 1970s, ZANU lacked the same kind of extensive underground national, political, social, and military networks that ZAPU enjoyed. It would be an exaggeration, however, to argue that ZANU political structures at regional and district levels played no part in mobilizing opposition to the proposals. ZANU’s limited national reach at this phase of the struggle, which was largely contained in the east and northeast of the country, however, meant that the ANC depended far more on ZAPU’s structures inside Rhodesia’s borders than ZANU’s to repudiate the Pearce Commission. David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 88.

³⁹⁴ White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 224.

fighters had blown up a goods train near Thompson Junction on the Bulawayo-Victoria Falls line, killing the driver and his firemen on the spot. On 29 August, at Mana Pools Game Reserve in the Urungwe District, ZAPU fighters blew up a Rhodesian army truck, killing seven soldiers. On the same day, a car driven by a white farmer was also blown up, resulting in the farmer losing his leg. Furthermore, on 29 October 1972 at Impampa in Binga District, ZAPU fighters blew up another Rhodesia army truck and killed six soldiers.³⁹⁵ Clearly, ZAPU cadres and commanders were given the latitude to pursue the armed struggle while the ANC simultaneously delivered its message of nonviolence.

In a 1973 edition of the *Zimbabwe Review*, ZAPU's official party organ, an anonymous editorialist emphatically stated that ZAPU remained a distinct political organization and rejected the leadership of Muzorewa in favor of the still-detained Nkomo. Indeed, reacting against the idea that Muzorewa was the figurehead of a new, non-violent Zimbabwean nationalism, the same editorialist wrote "it is only fitting for us to warn fellow-Zimbabweans that sacrifices to the armed liberation struggle cannot and will not be dodged by prostitution with or proliferation of political parties." The author went on to say "be aware that as the struggle progresses, the net is closing in and, at some stage, you will be caught up with and you will have to account either as a dodger or a sellout...for fellow Zimbabweans still aloof to the liberation struggle is not a game and therefore there are neither observers nor spectators nor linesmen nor, even, referees. It is a liberation war; ALL ZIMBABWEANS ARE PARTICIPANTS [emphasis in the original]."³⁹⁶ This is a stark repudiation of Muzorewa's claim that ZAPU had effectively

³⁹⁵ Cited in Ngwabi Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War: Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 2004), 24.

³⁹⁶ "Pot of Dynamite by a Special Correspondent," *The Zimbabwe Review* vol. 5 (1973), 3.

ceased to exist and that under his leadership, the struggle for majority rule was to be non-violent. While the Bishop was proposing peaceful struggle in Rhodesia during Lord Pearce's visit, another editorialist argued in the *Zimbabwe Review* that "Our stand under the direction of our Party ZAPU has always been and still is that the problem of British colonialism in Zimbabwe can never be NEGOTIATED [emphasis in the original]; unless and until the enslaved popular masses are politically, ideologically, and militarily, armed to meet on equal footing with the enemy. Our people through their historical struggle have had many experiences under the Horse Shoe of British colonialism, and therefore, do not expect mana to fall from heaven."³⁹⁷

In Muzorewa's words, when the Pearce Commission reported to the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly in late May 1972 that the proposals had been defeated by a lack of African support, "the news struck Rhodesia like the final flash of lightning and crash of thunder at the finale of a violent summer storm."³⁹⁸ For Nkomo and the vast majority of ZAPU supporters, the ANC had accomplished its mission: the *Proposals for a Settlement* had been successfully defeated, and Muzorewa had served his purpose as a malleable, interim leader.

³⁹⁷ "Editorial by a Special Correspondent," *The Zimbabwe Review* no. 2, 1972, 2. As will be discussed below, the emphatic language used in the *Zimbabwe Review* with regard to negotiations would have to be radically tempered when Nkomo met with Smith to discuss possible diplomatic resolutions to the issue of majority rule in 1975.

³⁹⁸ Abel Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk: The Autobiography of Bishop Abel Tendekai Muzorewa* (London: Evans Brothers, 1978), 117.

Enlarging the ANC, Détente, and (re)Restructuring ZAPU

Once the Pearce Commission had determined that the Anglo-Rhodesian proposals had been rejected, it was clear that there was little point in following that line of negotiations any further. Front line states were eager for a peaceful settlement, particularly as the liberation war intensified in 1974, and argued for a period of détente between regional governments and Zimbabwean liberation fronts. Military and civilian casualties, both African and European, were steadily mounting in 1974, while the political landscape of the subcontinent was shifting dramatically.³⁹⁹ The RF was pressured into releasing political leaders in 1974 as a precondition for more settlement talks, which had become much more desirable to the Rhodesian regime following the overthrow of Caetano's dictatorship in Portugal in April 1974. Indeed, the coup in Lisbon carried out by the Armed Forces Movement paved the way for Mozambican independence and created new, vital staging areas for Zimbabwean nationalists to launch attacks in eastern Rhodesia. The RF and ZAPU both publicly placated their respective supporters by underlining their unwillingness to make concessions through negotiated settlement: the vitriolic condemnation of negotiations in ZAPU's *Zimbabwe Review*, for example, reassured ZAPU's hardline cadres and supporters that they would only settle for a complete and total victory over the Rhodesian security forces. Similarly, Smith publicly espoused an uncompromising position as well, arguing at an RF Party congress on 20

³⁹⁹ Report Compiled for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, by the Central and Southern Africa Foreign and Commonwealth Office Department, Lusaka, 11 April 1974. TNA; FCO/45/1488/244.

September 1974, that “our stand is clear and unambiguous. Settlement is desirable, but only on our terms.”⁴⁰⁰

John Vorster, South Africa’s Prime Minister, was eager to bring a peaceful end to the liberation struggle in Rhodesia to increase South Africa’s security by achieving greater political and social stability in Southern Africa. Vorster recognized that as more states gained independence, the situation in Rhodesia would become increasingly precarious. Securing their northern neighbor’s borders, for instance, would mire South African security forces in more guerrilla struggles, further exacerbating the issue of armed resistance to apartheid.⁴⁰¹ Furthermore, Vorster believed that, unlike in South Africa, continued minority rule in Rhodesia was demographically untenable: in Rhodesia in 1974, the settler population was dwarfed by African Rhodesians by a ratio of approximately 22:1,⁴⁰² while in South Africa, the ratio was much closer, though still distant, at approximately 5.3:1.⁴⁰³ Vorster was of the opinion that “a peaceful political settlement of the Rhodesia dispute under South African auspices, and in agreement with black Africa [*sic*], could serve as a cornerstone on which a new regional stability could be built. Thus, the role of white Rhodesia was being rapidly transformed from that of a vital defense outpost to that of a sacrificial lamb for a new regional order.”⁴⁰⁴

Meanwhile, Zambian president, Kenneth Kaunda, courted the support of Julius Nyerere, president of Tanzania, Seretse Khama, president of Botswana, and Samora

⁴⁰⁰ Cited in Mordecai Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe: Decolonization in Regional and International Politics* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1990), 14.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid*, 22.

⁴⁰² *Africa South of the Sahara: 1974* (Rochester, Kent: Staples Printers Ltd., 1974), 636.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, 749.

⁴⁰⁴ Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 23.

Machel, leader of Mozambique's FRELIMO, to convince ZAPU, ZANU, and FROLIZI forces to establish unity with a view to putting forward a substantial and cohesive case for majority rule to Smith and the RF.⁴⁰⁵ Kaunda was motivated in part by the toll the Rhodesian crisis was having on Zambia's vulnerable economy.⁴⁰⁶ The political unrest in Southern Africa had created significant disruptions to Zambian exports, particularly copper, as transportation networks became less reliable amidst guerrilla activity and increasingly militarized borders.⁴⁰⁷ Kaunda's political machinations, however, were not merely designed to ameliorate Zambia's increasingly unstable economy. Kaunda and the other African leaders earnestly believed that a negotiated peace settlement would benefit African Zimbabweans more than an open-ended and unpredictable liberation struggle.⁴⁰⁸

Nkomo recalls, with an abundance of hindsight, that he told the front-line presidents

of my fruitless meetings with Smith, and said that more years of fighting might possibly force something more useful out of him. President Kaunda assured me that he had been in office for many years without ever wavering in his support for us, and that would certainly never change; but although he could not guarantee it, he thought there was a chance that talks might get something out of Smith. We had already lost enough good

⁴⁰⁵ Pathisa Nyahi, "Lancaster House Talks: Timing, Cold War and Joshua Nkomo" in *Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo of Zimbabwe: Politics, Power and Memory*, ed. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Palgrave-MacMillan: Cham, Switzerland, 2017), 151.

⁴⁰⁶ Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 24

⁴⁰⁷ Douglas Anglin, *Zambian Crisis Behaviour: Confronting Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 1965-1966* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 245-254.

⁴⁰⁸ Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 25.

people in the war. The decision was ours, but the presidents were for talking.⁴⁰⁹

Nkomo and ZAPU's senior leadership agreed with Kaunda that a united force of African nationalists, as opposed to disparate liberation groups, would likely hasten the demise of minority rule more quickly. To this end, the ANC was enlarged, and nationalist leaders were released from detention to meet in Lusaka on 7 December 1974 where they hoped to finally resolve the chronic problem of nationalist political discord. In a statement released by the ANC, African Rhodesian leaders announced that "ZANU, ZAPU, FROLIZI, and ANC, hereby agree to unite in the ANC which is the unifying force of the people of Zimbabwe." Furthermore, "the leadership of the ZAPU [sic], ZANU, and FROLIZI call upon their supporters and all Zimbabweans to rally behind the ANC under its enlarged executive [which will] take steps to merge their respective organs and structures into the ANC before the congress to be held within four months."⁴¹⁰

The reinvigorated, expanded ANC collapsed almost as quickly as it was formed. Nkomo, in a less-than objective summary of the situation, argued that "the Lusaka agreement was to be the charter for reuniting the nationalist forces. Tragically, it was never carried out. My own party, ZAPU, was the only component of the African National Council to fulfil its terms. The agreement specified that ZAPU, ZANU and FROLIZI would merge their 'organs and structures' into the ANC. But in reality, neither ZANU nor FROLIZI had any organs or structures."⁴¹¹ Nkomo's

⁴⁰⁹ Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, 150.

⁴¹⁰ "Zimbabwe Declaration of Unity, Lusaka, 7 December 1974" in *Zimbabwe Independence Movements*, 295.

⁴¹¹ Nkomo, *Story of My Life*, 152. Nkomo's descriptions of ZANU and FROLIZI are misleading. While FROLIZI was a relatively new group with little popular support, it did have party structures, owing to the

assessment of the political breakdown at Lusaka is clearly self-serving, and much like the 1963 nationalist fracture, his memoirs omit personal rivalries and competing claims to authority and political legitimacy. The question of who would lead the new ANC, for example, was not resolved ahead of the conference, which crippled the potential negotiating strength of the ANC with Smith and Vorster. Furthermore, Nkomo, Mugabe, and Chikerema all believed Muzorewa to have fulfilled his political role in the liberation struggle, but the three nationalist leaders could not agree on who would lead this new iteration of a patchwork liberation front, or how a power sharing agreement between the parties might practically function once Muzorewa had been sidelined. To complicate matters further, Muzorewa strongly disagreed with his nationalist colleagues that he “should return to the pulpit” and quit national politics, and continued to engage with the Smith regime and liberal Rhodesian political elements until the end of minority rule.⁴¹²

It is important to note that it is unlikely the détente exercise would have gone ahead without the ardent support of Zimbabwe’s most senior African leaders. Compared to many of its grassroots and mid-level commanders and political activists, ZAPU’s leadership was far more centrist and conservative, especially at the highest levels.⁴¹³ This discrepancy led to disjointed political and military objectives, a problem which was

former ZAPU and ZANU cadres who maintained their political contacts when they shifted allegiance to Chikerema, Nyandoro, and the rest of FROLIZI’s leadership. Nevertheless, FROLIZI never had anything resembling the level of support and organization that ZAPU and ZANU had cultivated since the mid 1960s. ZANU had “organs and structures” as well, but what Nkomo neglects to mention is that his erstwhile rival organization was undergoing its own series of internal crises, the most important of which was the Nhari Rebellion. This was led by ZANLA field commanders Thomas Nhari, Dakarai Badza, and Caesar Molife, who directed a mutiny of sympathetic cadres who believed that ZANU’s leadership had strayed from its Maoist principles by engaging in dialogue with the Smith regime and enjoying luxuries in Zambia while ZANLA combatants were suffering on the front. For a recent, comprehensive study of the rebellion, see Blessing-Miles Tendi, “Transnationalism, Contingency and Loyalty in African Liberation Armies: The Case of ZANU’s 1974-1975 Nhari Mutiny,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 143-160.

⁴¹² White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 213.

⁴¹³ M.E. Cook, Under Secretary Rhodesia Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Salisbury, Prepared for British High Commission in Ghana, Accra, 11 December 1974. TNA; FCO/45/1592/5.

brought to the fore at a ZAPU party congress held in early 1975 in the aftermath of the Lusaka debacle. The congress, which was attended by as many as 200 ZAPU members, recognized that there existed within ZAPU a sharply contrasting political and military vision between the party's leaders and its rank-and-file members, and in careful language, the congress participants chastised senior leaders such as Nkomo and Silundika for their attempts at achieving détente at the expense of a focused military campaign.⁴¹⁴

Because the failure of the détente exercise necessitated ZAPU's 1975 party congress, the political setback at Lusaka provided an unexpected, providential opportunity to reexamine ZAPU's political and military structures and aims. The congress, for example, more clearly delineated ZAPU's position vis á vis the role of workers, peasants, women, youth, and students, whom ZAPU decided had to contribute more material as opposed to primarily ideological support for Rhodesia's liberation. Indeed, a major development from the party congress was a clearer explication of what ZAPU members expected of these diverse groups of African civilians in providing for the party's military efforts, which included supplying ZIPRA fighters with provisions and information on Rhodesian troop movements and regime activities in rural and, less commonly, urban areas. Material support, however, also often translated into voluntary, and sometimes involuntary, recruitment of new cadres for ZIPRA forces. Indeed, as the liberation war intensified in the latter half of the 1970s, ZAPU had to utilize increasingly heavy-handed measures to enlist new cadres to keep pace with ZANU's relentless recruitment drives.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ *The Zimbabwe Review*, vol.2 no.6, 1975, pg. 2.

⁴¹⁵ Josiah Tungamirai, "Recruitment to ZANLA: Building up a War Machine," in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (Oxford: James Currey, 1996), 42-43.

In the mid 1970s, however, ZAPU more often, though not always, appealed to the consciences of African Rhodesians rather than pressganging new cadres or abducting potential recruits.⁴¹⁶ *The Zimbabwe Review* in this period, for example, constantly reiterated the call for Zimbabweans to fulfill their patriotic duty by fighting with ZAPU to end minority rule and improve material conditions for African Rhodesians.⁴¹⁷ Other factors, however, beyond the incessant calls for mobilization in the *Review*, contributed to cadres joining ZAPU. Jocelyn Alexander, for example, gives a succinct overview of some of the dominant theories behind ZAPU's appeal to, and recruitment of, civilian Zimbabweans in this period: ZAPU (and ZANU) guerrillas, for example, laid claim to accessing spirit mediums, bypassing the authority of living chiefs, which made the acceptance of guerrillas and recruitment drives in rural areas easier, quicker, more binding and more profound by allowing this feature in the experience of the peasantry to be assimilated to established symbolic categories.⁴¹⁸ Also contributing to rural and urban mobilization was a historical consciousness of past grievances, particularly with respect to land alienation, which accounted for many African Rhodesians joining ZAPU.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ "The National Democratic Revolution," in *The Zimbabwe Review* vol. 2, no. 7, 1975, 2. As discussed below, ZIPRA's recruitment strategies evolved as the liberation war progressed. By the late 1970s, ZAPU and ZIPRA often used draconian methods to supplement units of experienced cadres with children, young adults, and reluctant fighters.

⁴¹⁷ See, for example, "Nkomo Sets the Record Straight," *The Zimbabwe Review* vol. 4, 1975, 1-3, and "Distorted Situation," *The Zimbabwe Review* vol. 2, 1976, 1.

⁴¹⁸ Jocelyn Alexander, "Things Fall Apart, the Centre Can Hold: Processes of Post-War Political Change in Zimbabwe's Rural Areas," in *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (Oxford: James Curry, 1996), 176. This was particularly true of the guerrillas who operated in and around the area of the Matopos in southwest Zimbabwe. Spirit mediums in the Matopos were most often sought by Zimbabweans seeking plentiful rain, but this was also the location of the Mwali Rock shrine, which "was concerned with the transition of regimes – specifically the downfall of a regime that had become objectionable and the establishment of a moral regime in its place." Terence Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture, and History in the Matopos Hill of Zimbabwe* (Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1999), 259. Given that the Matopos are in Matabeleland, this shrine had particular resonance with the Ndebele, many of whom joined ZAPU in increasingly large numbers after the mid 1970s.

⁴¹⁹ Zvakanyorwa Wilbert Sadomba, *War Veterans in Zimbabwe's Revolution: Challenging Neo-colonialism and Settler and International Capital* (Oxford: James Currey, 2011), 8-9.

Nevertheless, ZAPU cadres in this period also resorted to coercion to enlist and intimidate rural Zimbabweans, and in the process, sought to erase traditional distinctions between elders, ruling lineages, the wealthy, and well-educated.⁴²⁰

What is lacking in accounts of the liberation war, however, is the role played by Rhodesian Psychological Operations Unit (PsyOps) operatives when they escalated counterterror maneuvers in late 1974 to horrify rural African civilians into submission. Rather than discouraging potential liberation fighters and supporters, these operations often had the opposite effect, creating fresh ZAPU cadres from TTLs and townships who were keen to respond to the state violence they routinely witnessed.⁴²¹ These government actions were often grisly, horrific displays: Johan Meiring, a PsyOps commander, recalls that for many operations, “we used bodies, carted them around as displays, macabre as it sounds. Yeah, it was done. Certainly.”⁴²² When asked if it was effective, Meiring responds that it was, but “only in the area where the *gooks* were known. Say a guy joins [ZAPU] from a village, everyone knew he was now a *gook*. If you happen to nail that guy and take him back to his village – shit! – that was great, that was tremendous. You just say to the people, ‘Look at so-and-so, that’s the price he paid.’ So, what to his mother and brother viewing his mortal remains. I’ll buy that. But if you didn’t do it right it was a

⁴²⁰ Ibid, 177. For greater detail on spirit mediums and the liberation war, see especially David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). For elaboration on historical grievances among the Zimbabwean peasantry during the liberation war, see Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study* (Oxford: James Currey, 1985). There is scant secondary literature on ZAPU’s recruitment techniques, but for broad overviews see Norma J. Kriger, *Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory: 100 Years in the Dark Forests of Matabeleland*, London: James Currey, 2000.

⁴²¹ Norma Kriger, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28-29.

⁴²² Julie Frederikse, *None but Ourselves: Masses vs Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House Ltd., 1982), 127.

waste of time. The people would say, ‘Those aren’t *gooks*, but soldiers you dressed up as *gooks*.’”⁴²³ In addition to these war crimes, Rhodesian pilots would drop leaflets throughout the country depicting dead, horribly disfigured ZAPU and ZANU cadres as a way of asserting settler dominance and warning African Rhodesians what might await them should they join or assist liberation fighters. One ZAPU member, Alex Zidonga, who was a young secondary school student when he joined guerrilla ranks, recalls that “having seen and experienced Smith’s regime’s oppression, brutality, cruelty [sic] and violence I made up my mind to join the struggle.... When I crossed the border into Zambia [in 1974] I was so happy because at last I could get a gun and go back home to fight the enemy.”⁴²⁴

Even for rural villagers who were unable to join ZAPU’s combat units, the 1974 escalation of heinous psychological operations more often drew the ire of the population rather than leading them to fearful quiescence. Leonard Gwanza, a shopkeeper from Murehwa, west of Salisbury, reported to a foreign correspondent that “I don’t know why they call them ‘Security Forces’, because you don’t feel secure with those people. They would force us to look at those bodies, saying, ‘We have killed terrorists – come and see!’ This is against our customs, to treat the dead in such a way, we are never supposed to show dead bodies to our children. It’s a disgrace, it’s angering.”⁴²⁵ Indeed, there is a direct, corresponding relationship between the escalation of Rhodesian PsyOps in 1974 and 1975, and the numbers of new ZAPU recruits, particularly from rural areas.⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Cited in *Schools in the Struggle* (Harare: Zimbabwe Foundation for Education with Production (ZIMFEP), 1991), 18.

⁴²⁵ Frederikse, *None but Ourselves*, 129.

⁴²⁶ Jeremy Brickhill, “Daring to Storm the Heavens: The Military Strategy of ZAPU, 1976-79” in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (London: James Currey, 1995), 66.

Rhodesian PsyOps often crafted their anti-guerrilla operations around the inaccurate but longstanding belief that Africans almost exclusively understood politics through the mediated lens of violence, and that these heinous displays would be an effective deterrent.⁴²⁷ In the absence of available, substantial testimony from former ZAPU guerrillas, evidence indicates that these operations motivated new cadres from war-weary communities who had been confronted with, and responded to, new, vivid depictions of state-sponsored terror by joining ZAPU's ranks.⁴²⁸

The ZIPA Experiment and ZIPRA Military Engagements

Front-line states and OAU members continued to push for a united military front, despite the lackluster political progress following the détente exercise between South Africa and independent front-line governments, and the failure to reach a lasting agreement in Lusaka. Between November 1975 and January 1977, ZIPRA and ZANLA merged some of their forces at the behest of OAU leaders, particularly Nyerere and Machel, to form the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA).⁴²⁹ Much like the attempts at political unity at Lusaka, ZIPA was riddled with political and military contradictions which antagonized ZAPU and ZANU fighters and leaders, leading to yet more division

⁴²⁷ Ellert, *The Rhodesia Front War*, 149.

⁴²⁸ Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, "War Stories: Guerrilla Narratives of Zimbabwe's Liberation War," *History Workshop Journal* 57:1 (2004), 88.

⁴²⁹ David Moore, "The Zimbabwe People's Army: Strategic Innovation or More of the Same?" in *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, ed. Bhebe and Ranger (London: James Currey, 1995) 74.

within nationalist ranks and sowing seeds of discord which would persist past independence.⁴³⁰

Dzinashe Machingura, a ZANLA commander and sometime-ZIPA spokesman, argued in 1978 that

The liberation movement made great strides in a short period of time under the leadership of ZIPA and sent shockwaves to the imperialist circles. By June 1976, evidence of the successes scored by ZIPA were manifest in the desperate maneuvers of the Smith regime to thwart the revolutionary advance of the liberation struggle. [Rhodesian Security Forces] resorted to massive call ups, prolonged the period of national service, instituted convoy systems for all major transport services, introduced the curfew system and mobile martial courts, resorted to hot-pursuit operations and finally switched from a strategy of “clear and hold”

⁴³⁰ While it is outside the purview of this thesis, the ethnic cleansing in Matabeleland and the Midlands perpetrated by North-Korean trained Zimbabwean forces, led by Zimbabwe’s current president Emmerson Mnangagwa between 1982 and 1987, can partially be attributed to this abortive attempt at military unity. The distrust and factional infighting between ZAPU and ZANU members, which plagued ZIPA throughout its brief existence, persisted in army barracks where Zimbabwean liberation cadres were supposed to demobilize following the end of the minority rule. Accusations of complicity with the RF regime and “selling out” were rife in the post-independence Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) in the 1980s, and when soldiers began to seek security in their old ZAPU and ZANU units, many former ZAPU cadres simply left the army to return home under the impression that their fighting was finished. The ZANU government, in a moment of tragic irony, accused these former liberation fighters of being dissident terrorists, and the ZNA was sent to put down the supposed rebellion of former ZAPU fighters in Matabeleland and the Midlands. This period, referred to by its operational name of *Gukurahundi*, was defined by massacres of Ndebele civilians and former soldiers. For comprehensive studies on the ethnic cleansing, see *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980 to 1988* (Harare, The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, 1997), and Nicholas Baker, “Violent Victors and Political Precedents: Operation *Gukurahundi* and the Foundations of ZANU Hegemony,” unpublished paper, 2015.

into one of general offensive. All this in a vain attempt to check the development of the people's war failed dismally.⁴³¹

What Machingura neglects to mention, however, is that ZIPA was not a truly unified force, and that the Rhodesian escalation was part of a wider attempt to reimpose settler hegemony in rural areas, particularly TTLs and Protected Villages.⁴³² Smith and Ken Flower, the CIO chief, believed that African nationalist forces were in disarray when they failed to commit to a political partnership, and sensed an exploitable weakness in the liberation struggle. Flower's CIO operatives understood that tensions and frustration were mounting between ZAPU and ZANU, which was exacerbated by placing hostile military wings of both parties in combined ZIPA camps. Indeed, White refers to this period as the "inactive years," due to the fact that much of ZIPA's manpower primarily focused on fighting each other, particularly in Mozambican bases, rather than pursuing the liberation of Rhodesia.⁴³³

It should come as little surprise that cadres coming from ZIPRA and ZANLA made for reluctant and apprehensive bedfellows. Most obviously, ZIPRA and ZANLA cadres had been trained to view each other with suspicion and antipathy owing to the legacy of the 1963 ZANU/ZAPU split. As Bhebe notes, "the two armies had been born and nurtured in the politics and violence of the split between ZAPU and ZANU and when the guerrillas underwent their training in their respective camps one of the major aspects of their political education was the history of their respective political parties, especially

⁴³¹ Cited in Donald Moore, "The Zimbabwe People's War," 80.

⁴³² Gerald Chikohza Mazarire, "Discipline and Punishment in ZANLA: 1964-1979" *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37:3 (2011), 575.

⁴³³ Luise White, "'Heading for the Gun': Skills and Sophistication in an African Guerrilla War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51:2 (2009), 238.

the justification of their existence in relation to others.”⁴³⁴ Other discrepancies quickly came to the surface: ZAPU had long been trained to operate as a more conventional fighting force by infiltrating groups of cadres into Rhodesia where they would fight pitched battles against the regime’s security forces. ZANU, however, preferred substantially different tactics: these typically involved embedding small numbers or even individual combatants, often within their own communities, to strike Rhodesian targets quickly and, perhaps most importantly, enlist new cadres. Indeed, ZANU also often held *pungwes* which were major recruiting and political exercises, but were regarded by ZAPU cadres as near-suicidal operations that potentially gave away the locations of guerrillas and left fighters exposed to Rhodesian forces in concentrated numbers.⁴³⁵ Dumiso Dabengwa, the commander of ZIPRA forces during this period, succinctly summarized ZAPU’s reservations about the military capabilities of ZIPA due to the lack of training afforded to ZANLA cadres:

ZIPA developed problems soon after its formation largely because of disagreements over strategy. ZIPRA command elements found that ZIPA strategy to be completely disjointed. For example, disciplined ZIPRA commanders were shocked to find ZANLA deployed people inside Rhodesia who were not well trained or completely untrained. Some recruits were trained using sticks and were only given a gun on the day of

⁴³⁴ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 62.

⁴³⁵ *Pungwes* were night-time gatherings where villagers and ZANU cadres would dance and sing revolutionary songs, which almost always featured themes of sacrifice and loyalty. They were not, however, always festive occasions – ZANLA fighters would often berate local populations for their lack of logistical support and routinely pressgang villagers into their units, often with very little training. For greater detail on this subject see Paresh Pandya, *Mao Tse-Tung and Chimurenga: An Investigation into ZANU’s Strategies* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1988).

crossing into Rhodesia. Most of these people were literally butchered by the enemy...as a result ZIPA began to collapse in 1975 and ZIPRA elements [sought to] escape back to their original bases in Zambia.⁴³⁶

The leaders of ZANU and ZAPU were wary of creating ZIPA, but had little choice given that both parties relied on front line states for training and infiltrating guerrillas, as well as for material support.⁴³⁷ Zimbabwean historian Masipula Sithole notes that

Originally, ZIPA had a high command of 18 men, 9 from ZANU and 9 from ZAPU. Clashes ensued. After a few weeks of joint operations, the surviving ZAPU men withdrew from ZIPA in Mozambique and fled to Zambia, where they largely remained [after 1977]. Thus ZIPA, as a joint ZANU-ZAPU enterprise failed. The frontline states and the Liberation Committee [of the OAU] encouraged and endorsed ZIPA, but this did not work. The ZAPU army, ZIPRA, remained in Zambia, while the ZANU army, ZANLA, remained in Mozambique.⁴³⁸

From Sithole's comments, two additional factors which account for the failure of ZIPA emerge. First, ZANLA cadres were furious that despite the fact they comprised nearly 80% of ZIPA's fighters, they were relatively underrepresented at the highest levels since operational authority was distributed evenly between ZAPU and ZANU commanders.⁴³⁹

Such a discrepancy in leadership was exacerbated by the widely-held (and accurate)

⁴³⁶ Cited in Donald Moore, "Struggles for Socialism and Democracy," unpublished manuscript, 1998, 34.

⁴³⁷ Nkomo, *Story of my Life*, 160-161.

⁴³⁸ Masipula Sithole, *Zimbabwe: Struggles Within the Struggle* (Harare: Rujeko Publishers, 1999), 123.

⁴³⁹ Mozambican Information Agency and Dzinashé Machingura, "The Zimbabwe People's Army: An Interview with Dzinashé Machingura," *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 7:1 (1977), 17.

suspicion that ZAPU had withheld the majority of its forces in Zambia. This only further spread distrust and doubt among ZANLA cadres toward their ostensible ZIPRA allies. Second, ZIPRA forces had always enjoyed the support and protection of President Kaunda, and the majority of ZIPRA fighters were stationed in training camps throughout Zambia. Nyerere and Machel, however, were much more sympathetic to ZANU: ZANLA had been training fighters in Mozambique's Tete Province since at least 1972, and after Mozambican independence, ZANLA were allowed ingress through the length of Mozambique's border with Rhodesia, primarily through Manica, Gaza, and Tete Provinces.⁴⁴⁰ From the Tanzanian perspective, Nyerere had neither forgotten nor forgiven Nkomo's reluctance to return to Rhodesia in the 1960s, and continued to view the ZAPU leader with a certain degree of suspicion. Unlike Kaunda, Nyerere put his material and political support behind ZANU, providing training bases and arms to ZANLA combatants. Indeed, the relationship between Tanzania and ZANU was so strong that Nyerere appointed ZANU chairman, Herbert Chitepo, to the position of Tanzania's Director of Public Prosecution in the late-1960s and early-1970s.⁴⁴¹ Thus ZIPRA combatants who had been redeployed with ZIPA were cut off from their main organizational structures in Zambia, and were required to sleep, train, and operate with cadres whom they distrusted and believed to be unready for combat.

Indeed, because ZIPRA cadres were outnumbered by ZANLA fighters in ZIPA by a factor of nearly five-to-one, ZIPRA combatants would often have to execute missions and count on soldiers whom they believed to be unreliable and incapable of

⁴⁴⁰ J.K. Cilliers. *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (London: Croom Helm Publishers, 1985), 178.

⁴⁴¹ Gerald Chikozho Mazarire, "ZANU's External Networks 1963-1979: An Appraisal," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 91-92.

fighting cohesive, well-trained Rhodesian units. For these ZIPRA members, ZIPA operations often carried the added psychological burden of worrying whether their fellow soldiers could be relied upon for protection during firefights, and avoiding detection while in the bush. Indeed, in an interview with Ngwabi Bhebe, Dumiso Dabengwa notes that ZIPA had become so ineffectual in its fighting, and posed such a risk to ZIPRA lives, that by 1977, ZIPRA combatants were told by their ZAPU commanders within ZIPA “that once they arrived in Rhodesia they should desert, head for Matabeleland, get recruits, and then leave the country with them for Botswana, from there they would be flown to Zambia for training.”⁴⁴² There was so little communication between ZAPU and ZANU despite their supposedly united forces that many within ZANU came to regard ZIPRA’s actions as cowardly and counterrevolutionary, which led Mugabe and other ZANU leaders to once again begin the familiar refrain of ZAPU being a party and military apparatus that refused to engage Rhodesian security forces.⁴⁴³ By 1977, however, unbeknownst to ZANU, most ZIPRA combatants had returned and regrouped in ZAPU command centers in Zambia where they began preparations for a major military escalation which, in Jeremy Brickhill’s estimation, meant that “for the first time in Africa, a liberation movement began to prepare military forces that actually had the potential to achieve its stated political objective: to seize political power.”⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 64.

⁴⁴³ Report Compiled by Gbalabo Ogunsanwo, Reporter for the Nigeria Tribune, To Foreign and Commonwealth Office Rhodesia Department, London, 23 December 1976. TNA; FCO/45/1782/28.

⁴⁴⁴ Brickhill, “Daring to Storm the Heavens,” 50. As Eliakim Sibanda notes, Brickhill was in position to deliver such dramatic pronouncements. As a white Rhodesian committed to fighting the RF regime, Brickhill joined ZIPRA and was an assistant to Dumiso Dabengwa tasked with analysing ZIPRA operations during this period. Eliakim Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union, 1961-1987: A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia* (Asmara: Africa World Press, Inc., 2005), f. 73, 227.

ZAPU's "Turning Point:" Military Escalation and Accounting for ZAPU's Ndebele Character in the Latter Stages of the War

Alexander, McGregor, and Ranger note that "following its withdrawal from ZIPA, ZIPRA intensified recruitment and set about elaborating a new military strategy notable for its development of a conventional capacity."⁴⁴⁵ Indeed, well over half of all ZIPRA recruits arrived in Zambian camps in 1977, often after being rerouted through Botswana.⁴⁴⁶ It is difficult to overstate how dramatically ZAPU's membership rose when ZIPRA began its recruitment drive in Matabeleland and the Midlands in the mid-to-late 1970s following the collapse of ZIPA: in 1975, ZIPRA could boast approximately 1,000 cadres.⁴⁴⁷ Three years later in mid-1978, this number had climbed to roughly 8,000, and by the end of the liberation war, ZAPU conservatively estimated they had 20,000 cadres either in Rhodesian operational zones or in Zambian rear bases.⁴⁴⁸

To acquire these large numbers of troops in the latter years of the war, ZAPU expanded and evolved its recruitment techniques: the party still exhorted African Rhodesians to fulfill their patriotic duty by fighting against minority rule, but also resorted to more heavy-handed measures. Paulos Matjaka Nare, a former teacher at Manama Secondary School, for example, recalls that in January 1977, he and six other teachers, along with 300 hundred students, some of whom were younger than thirteen, were forced by armed ZIPRA cadres to move *en bloc* under the cover of night to the Botswanan border where they crossed into Francistown before making the arduous

⁴⁴⁵ Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory*, 141.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, 197.

⁴⁴⁸ Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 192.

journey north to training camps outside of Lusaka.⁴⁴⁹ Other injurious recruitment methods were also practiced. Mayor Urimbo, a ZIPRA commander active in Lusaka in 1978, recalls that Zimbabweans living in Botswana and Zambia were often “kidnapped” by ZAPU forces. Pressganging became common at this late stage of the war, and Urimbo recalls that “you were told you were going for national service, that your time had come. You were told you were a Zimbabwean, and that you were to go and save your country. You were just told to pack up and go. You had no choice.”⁴⁵⁰ The massive increase in ZAPU cadres did not go unnoticed: both Britain and the Rhodesian regime were aware that preparations for a major military escalation were underway in Zambia while simultaneously, ZANLA was conducting operations from bases in Mozambique, inflicting heavy casualties against Rhodesian forces and displacing local structures of Rhodesian governance with ZANU administrators.⁴⁵¹

By 1978, ZIPRA and ZANLA effectively encircled RF forces by using Botswana, Mozambique, and Zambia as rear bases from which they infiltrated cadres into Rhodesia. In response, Rhodesian military units forced rural Zimbabweans in their tens of thousands into Protected Villages where they would be unable to supply guerrillas with provisions and information regarding Rhodesian troop movements in the bush.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁹ Paulos Matjaka Nare, “Education and the War” in *Society in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, 130. As mentioned above, ZAPU was under increased pressure to keep up with the massive recruitment drives undertaken by ZANU in Mashonaland and Manicaland. In 1978, for example, ZANLA commanders used Radio Mozambique channels to broadcast the message to aspirant guerrillas that they should remain in Rhodesia to inflict what damage they could against regime infrastructure because ZANU lacked adequate food and training due to the high number of cadres already in Mozambican camps. Kriger, *Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War*, 92.

⁴⁵⁰ Cited in Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 23.

⁴⁵¹ Confidential Circular Prepared by Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mexico & Caribbean Department, Mexico City, To Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Rhodesia Department, London, 7 September 1977. TNA; FCO/45/1964/42.

⁴⁵² Godwin and Hancock, ‘*Rhodesians Never Die*,’ 104. As Godwin and Hancock note, the Rhodesian government defended the massive relocation of rural Zimbabweans to Protected Villages by arguing, quite

Another tactic employed by the Rhodesians to protect settler infrastructure and populations was the creation of defensive zones. In December 1972, the RF established a defensive sector codenamed OP Hurricane, which was intended to guard Mashonaland, Zimbabwe's most populous and wealthy region, from ZAPU and ZANU guerrillas entering through Mozambique and Zambia. By 1978, however, the number of defensive zones had increased dramatically, and included OPs Grapple, Repulse, Splinter, Tangent, and Thrasher, which, when taken together, covered the entirety of Rhodesia.⁴⁵³

The expansion of Rhodesian defensive zones was not solely a response to increased numbers of guerrillas around Rhodesia's borders, but was also a reaction to more frequent, large scale nationalist military operations and acts of sabotage.⁴⁵⁴ Once the recruitment of predominantly Ndebele cadres was underway, ZAPU turned its attention to finalizing what the party hoped would be ZIPRA's final military stratagem, the "Turning Point," which sought no less than a full-scale invasion of Rhodesia and the seizure of political power from the RF regime. Indeed, this plan was significant in that it sought to confront regime forces head on, and was created in "light of historical experiences elsewhere regarding guerrilla wars: it was said that many of those guerrilla wars had terminated with the guerrillas trying to negotiate with the enemy and then ending up with their ideas and main objectives completely diffused. ZAPU wanted to anticipate all that [sic] by winning a total victory involving the surrender of the enemy which would enable the party leadership to take over the country."⁴⁵⁵

unconvincingly, that the policy was meant for development purposes and to protect the lives and property of African Rhodesians. Ibid, 105.

⁴⁵³ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 67.

⁴⁵⁴ Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia*, 79.

⁴⁵⁵ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 102.

In 1977, ZIPRA's High Command began the process of clearly articulating the military wing's new strategy, but was forced to reorganize the structure of ZAPU's War Council.⁴⁵⁶ ZAPU's Vice President Jason Z. Moyo, one of the Party's longest serving and most capable members, was killed by Rhodesian Selous Scouts in Lusaka.⁴⁵⁷ On 22 January 1977, Moyo received a parcel mailed from an address in Francistown, Botswana. Moyo had been expecting correspondence from ZAPU organizers, and when he opened the letter contained in the parcel, an explosive device detonated, killing him instantly.⁴⁵⁸ With Moyo removed as leader of the War Council, ZIPRA commanders and members of the High Command appointed Nkomo as the new commander of ZIPRA, which cemented his position in this phase as uncontested leader of ZAPU's political and military branches.⁴⁵⁹

Dabengwa notes that after Nkomo was given command of ZIPRA forces in the leadup to the "Turning Point," ZAPU cadres made significant inroads in the Zimbabwean hinterland: by the end of 1977, ZAPU guerrillas were operating in a wide arc, from Sipolilo and Urungwe in the north, through Gokwe and Silobela in the center of the country, to Lupane, Nkai and Tsholotsho in the west. ZAPU forces had also crossed the Salisbury-Bulawayo rail line, south of the Shangani, and opened their Southern Front towards Shabani, and further south towards Gwanda and Beitbridge.⁴⁶⁰ The main thrust of the "Turning Point" strategy was meant to supplement these guerrilla units with

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. 101.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid. 101-102.

⁴⁵⁸ Ellert, *The Rhodesian Front War*, 109.

⁴⁵⁹ After Moyo's assassination, the ZAPU Revolutionary Council, which effectively directed the War Council, consisted of Nkomo as president, Samuel Munodawafa as party commissar, Lookout Masuku as ZIPRA commander, and Dumiso Dabengwa as War Council secretary. Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, 183.

⁴⁶⁰ Cited in Jeremy Brickhill, "Daring to Storm the Heavens," 52.

regular forces which would defend and establish bases once zones had been liberated or semi-liberated. Guerrilla forces would then make progress travelling further inside Rhodesia when, according to the plan, Rhodesian military elements would be scattered trying to dislodge entrenched units of conventional soldiers in positions throughout Matabeleland North and the west Midlands.

In order to liberate territory from Rhodesian forces and retain control, ZAPU needed more powerful weapons than semi-automatic rifles and small arms.⁴⁶¹ Before the “Turning Point,” ZIPRA began using advanced, heavy artillery pieces such as 105 mm and 85 mm mortars, ZGU anti-aircraft guns, as well as Strella 15 SAMs, almost all of which were acquired from the Soviet Union, Cuba, or the German Democratic Republic after mid 1977.⁴⁶² Indeed, it was these SAMs which brought down the two Air Rhodesia Viscount jets mentioned in this chapter’s introduction. The use of effective military hardware was essential to the success of ZIPRA operations in this period, and led Rhodesian security forces to radically alter their counterinsurgency measures when they were confronted with a well-trained, well-equipped military. In October 1978, for example, ZIPRA began moving large quantities of regular troops and war materials to a camp near Kariba, on the rocky escarpment above the Zambezi, across the border from Rhodesia. ZIPRA’s activity attracted the attention of Rhodesian forces who sent a detachment of the Rhodesia Light Infantry, supplemented by an elite unit of the Special

⁴⁶¹ As mentioned above, ZANU also employed a strategy which entailed incrementally liberating areas and placing them under ZANU-directed civil administration. ZANLA, however, relied upon sheer numbers of cadres and the participation of politicized civilians to gain control of Rhodesian-held territory. ZAPU, because it could not match the strength of ZANU’s numbers despite its late recruitment drive, and had spent less time politicizing the communities they operated in, depended more on advanced weaponry and well-disciplined soldiers to liberate and protect territory. Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory*, 160-161.

⁴⁶² Jeremy Brickhill, “Daring to Storm the Heavens,” 53.

Air Services, to launch a ground assault on ZAPU forces located on the Zambian side of the river. The Rhodesian infantry division, however, was shocked to find that they “were up against a vast assortment of military hardware and an opposition whose discipline and determination were outstanding.”⁴⁶³ Indeed, ZIPRA managed to pin down the Rhodesian forces with sustained small arms fire, before bombarding the enemy with mortars during the night and conducting a strategic, orderly withdrawal from the area.⁴⁶⁴ Sensing an opportunity to gather intelligence, the remaining Rhodesian forces crossed the Zambezi the following morning and arrived at the ZIPRA camp to find that it had been strewn with well-concealed landmines the previous night, which inflicted further casualties.⁴⁶⁵ Rhodesian forces detected nine more ZIPRA camps across the escarpment, but the previous engagement led regime commanders to determine that they could no longer carry out ground operations against fortified ZIPRA positions, and instead conducted an aerial bombardment with 18 aircraft at Chinyunyu Camp, which contained approximately 4,000 ZAPU troops.⁴⁶⁶ Mark Ndlovu, the camp commander, recalls that “the attack lasted for one hour and thirty minutes, but they could only do random bombing very fast.... Moreover, they were bombing outside the garrison because the firepower was too much. I even heard the commander of the jet fighters through our means of communication saying, ‘I want that target destroyed’ ...the pilot said ‘I cannot get inside, the firepower is too much.’”⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶³ Cited in Barbara Cole, *The Elite: The Story of the Rhodesian Special Air Service* (Durban: Three Knights, 1985), 388

⁴⁶⁴ Jeremy Brickhill, “Daring to Storm the Heavens,” 53

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 63.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with Mark Ndlovu, cited in Ibid, 64.

The best indicator of how dramatically the war escalated in the final three years of the struggle is the number of African and settler Rhodesians killed and wounded. Kriger notes that between 1972 and 1979, 310 white civilians, 3,845 black civilians, 760 security force personnel and over 6,000 guerrillas were killed.⁴⁶⁸ Of these casualties, 60 percent of white civilians, 45 percent of black civilians, 37 percent of security forces, and just under 50 percent of guerrilla deaths occurred in 1978 alone.⁴⁶⁹ Furthermore, of the total deaths in the liberation war, 33 percent occurred in 1979.⁴⁷⁰

For the RF regime, the situation in Rhodesia had become untenable by the end of the decade. News of Rhodesian losses and sabotage attacks in predominately white areas effectively ended “normal” civilian life, and Rhodesia’s economic output was critically impacted by the reallocation of resources for the war effort which were originally intended for manufacturing sectors. Rhodesia had managed to cope with its economic and political isolation by engendering a sense of self-sufficiency, which was a boon to farmers and other settler Rhodesians who were expected to make up for import shortfalls by producing and variating basic foodstuffs and other essentials. As Godwin and Hancock note, this was no longer possible by the end of the war: farmers were reluctant to remain and work their land as the threat of guerrilla attacks increased amid the general uncertainty and undercurrents of fear which became a hallmark of settler life in the late

⁴⁶⁸ Kriger, *Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War*, 92.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 93. It should be noted that these numbers are the official figures determined by the Rhodesian government at the end of the liberation war. They are the most widely accepted, but nevertheless, it ought to be recognized that like ZAPU and ZANU, the RF regime tended to exaggerate certain numbers while downplaying others. The number of Europeans killed, both civilian and military, are likely low estimates, while the number of guerrillas killed is probably at least somewhat embellished. Nevertheless, given the paucity of sources which enumerate the lives lost during the war, these numbers at least impart some idea of how sharply Zimbabwe’s liberation war escalated in the final years of the conflict.

1970s.⁴⁷¹ For Smith and the rest of the RF, the only option remaining was a negotiated settlement through which they might secure favourable terms.⁴⁷²

Once the major recruitment drive was underway in 1977 and 1978, the Ndebele character of ZAPU became more pronounced. Most scholars attribute the close association between ZAPU and the Ndebele to two factors: first, most of its military engagements, particularly in the latter years of the liberation war, took place in Matabeleland and the Midlands, where ZAPU enlisted cadres and enjoyed the material support of Ndebele Rhodesians in provinces where they constituted the majority. Conversely, ZANU's bases in Mozambique naturally made the more populous, Shona-dominated areas of Mashonaland, Masvingo, and Manicaland more accessible to ZANLA fighters. Second, writers and commentators have attributed the ethnic divisions in ZAPU and ZANU to decisions made by political leaders, going so far as to ascribe the 1963 split to xenophobia and chauvinism. As argued in chapter two, this is a misleading argument given that ZAPU made a conscious effort to ensure ethnic diversity in its ranks, particularly at this early stage in the liberation effort.

Indeed, well before ZIPRA's ranks swelled with new cadres from Matabeleland in the late 1970s, ZAPU was conceived by most to be at least a nominally Ndebele party, despite efforts to counter this characterization. In a special 1976 edition of the *Zimbabwe Review*, for example, Nkomo responded to claims made by Muzorewa in the mid 1970s:

⁴⁷¹ Godwin and Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, 290.

⁴⁷² For an indication of pervasive the fear of guerrillas overrunning the country had become in 1979, one only has to look at the front pages of settler-read newspapers. The 18 January 1979 edition of the *Herald*, for example, featured a life-size photograph of Mugabe with the headline "Losing to a Black Hitler?" "Losing to a Black Hitler?," *The Rhodesian Herald*, 18 January 1979.

The bishop [Muzorewa] has been going about telling all and sundry that since he comes from Mashonaland, and since there are more people living in Mashonaland than in Matabeleland, he represents more people than I do because he comes from Mashonaland and I come from Matabeleland. This is the most absurd, most dangerous tribalistic trash I have ever heard since I first became active in the freedom of our country almost thirty years ago. When I asked Bishop Muzorewa to lead the African National Council during my detention in 1971, I did not say he should regard himself as leading a region but a nation.⁴⁷³

As argued in previous chapters, ZANU and ZAPU have often been accused of stoking ethnic rivalries to benefit their respective parties, particularly with respect to asserting or maintaining authority.⁴⁷⁴ In Morgan Ndlovu's pioneering work, he argues that Joshua Nkomo, within the range of African historiography, has been portrayed as "a terrorist, liberation hero, nation builder, father of dissidents, sellout, coward and 'father of Zimbabwe.'"⁴⁷⁵ What has emerged from this kaleidoscopic historiography is that, for non-specialists, Nkomo and ZAPU have effectively become synonymous. Indeed, for scholars of modern Zimbabwean history who provide only a cursory examination of ZAPU, the party has come to possess the cultural and sociological disposition of its long-

⁴⁷³ "Message by Joshua Nkomo," *Zimbabwe Review* Vol. 5 (1976), 1.

⁴⁷⁴ For further elaboration on this point, see especially Enock Dumbutshena, *Zimbabwe Tragedy* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975); W. J. Breytenbach, "Ethnic Factors in the Rhodesian Power Struggle," *Bulletin of the Africa Institute* 3:4 1977, 70-75; Wellington Nyangoni, *African Nationalism in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1977); Terence Ranger, "Rhodesia's Politics of Tribalism," *New Society* 6:9 1979, 496-97; Masipula Sithole, "Ethnicity and Factionalism in Zimbabwe Nationalist Politics, 1957-1959," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 3:1 1980, 17-39.

⁴⁷⁵ Morgan Ndlovu, "Making Sense of Joshua Nkomo's Political Behaviour: A Sociogenic Approach" in *Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo of Zimbabwe: Politics, Power and Memory*, ed. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2017), 237.

time leader. Such a characterization, however, substantially misrepresents the way in which ZAPU acquired its Ndebele character during the liberation war, and arguably insinuates that Nkomo embarked on a deliberate project to cultivate Ndebele culture and identity within the party to the exclusion of other ethnicities. Furthermore, this characterization has had the pernicious effect of implying that ZAPU was an Ndebele party since its inception in 1962, rather than a product of political and military exigencies which determined ZAPU and ZANU's operational zones.

When the parties split in 1963, both endorsed ethnic pluralism within their ranks: as the liberation war progressed in the mid 1970s, however, and military reconciliation between ZAPU and ZANU became extraordinarily unlikely, both parties became more deeply entrenched within their respective regional heartlands where they sought to solidify support through recruitment and politicization. The confinement of ZAPU and ZANU to these areas was exacerbated by the geographic realities of rear base support. FRELIMO's support for ZANU, for example, meant that the majority of ZANLA's rear bases were across Zimbabwe's eastern border in Mozambique. Conversely, Kaunda's support of ZAPU, and Khama's reluctant tolerance of ZIPRA forces in Botswana, meant that the majority of ZAPU military operations were launched in western Zimbabwe.

Most crucially, ZAPU acquired its solidly Ndebele character not because of conscious choices made by members of its political or military leadership to align with a particular ethnicity, but because of the way in which the liberation war unfolded in the mid-to-late 1970s. From Nkomo's and other leaders' memoirs, recollections of ZIPRA and ZANLA commanders, reports from Rhodesian military sources, as well as maps depicting the operational zones of ZAPU and ZANU, it is clear that after ZIPA failed,

ZAPU was limited to fighting and recruiting in western Zimbabwe where the Ndebele predominated. Because ZAPU was limited to fighting and recruiting in Matabeleland and the Midlands, it developed its reputation as an Ndebele party through regionalism rather than ethnic rivalry or cultural hostility between Shona and Ndebele guerrillas. Enocent Msindo, in his comprehensive, ethnographic study of the Ndebele and Kalanga, provides compelling evidence for this argument when he notes that the division in the nationalist movement, though not caused by ethnicity, “led to mobilization of supporters of the two parties on a regional basis, with the result that ZAPU became like a Matabeleland and Ndebele party, notwithstanding the fact that other ethnic groups [such as the Kalanga] lived in the same region.”⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, Msindo argues convincingly that “unresolved differences between the two main regional parties, ZAPU and ZANU, spilled into postcolonial Zimbabwe and led to more bloodshed, which further hardened this Ndebele identity.”⁴⁷⁷ Indeed, while ZAPU inadvertently developed into a predominately Ndebele party during the course of the liberation war through regional factors, recent scholarly work shows that post-election violence committed by the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) in Matabeleland against Ndebele civilians and former guerrillas reified the ethnic distinction between ZAPU and ZANU in ways which postdate the struggle against minority rule.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶ Enocent Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: Transformations in Kalanga and Ndebele Societies, 1860-1990* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 230.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Wendy Willems, “Making Sense of Cultural Nationalism and the Politics of Commemoration under the Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35:4 (2009), 949.

Negotiated Settlements, the Patriotic Front, and ZAPU's Electoral Defeat

After the failure of the détente exercise, Nkomo still harbored a private willingness to negotiate with Smith. As mentioned above, this was in direct contradiction to the strategy of armed struggle which he publicly endorsed and which was favoured by the majority of ZAPU and ZIPRA cadres.⁴⁷⁹ Rumors were rampant, particularly among ZANU leaders and supporters, that Nkomo had been conducting secret talks with Smith since at least the early 1970s.⁴⁸⁰ Indeed, when Smith remarked that “I don't think you must take what politicians say in public too seriously,” many African Rhodesians in different political camps took this a direct reference to his experiences with Nkomo.⁴⁸¹ ZANU leaders, as well as Muzorewa and Sithole, were given a great deal of ammunition when it emerged in 1976 that Nkomo had been engaged in negotiations with Smith since mid-1975. The timing of these talks meant that while Nkomo was participating in efforts to establish ZIPA, he was simultaneously meeting with Smith. On 19 March 1976, the ANC released a statement based on leaked information that Nkomo and Smith had made progress with respect to how a post-independence political order in the Legislative Assembly would be constituted, but could make no headway when it came to the length of time before majority rule and the character of an interim government.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁹ Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, 161.

⁴⁸⁰ Over the course of the liberation war, Nkomo and Smith met a total of 14 times, although not always in secret. Obviously, these talks aimed at achieving majority rule were unsuccessful before the negotiations at Lancaster House. Meredith, *The Past is Another Country*, 211.

⁴⁸¹ “An Interview with Ian Smith,” *Rhodesian Herald*, 13 October 1975.

⁴⁸² “African National Council: Statement on the Issues After the Breakdown of the Smith-Nkomo Talks, Salisbury, 19 March 1976” in *Zimbabwe Independence Movements*, 396-398.

Nkomo must have been aware of the danger posed by sitting down with Smith to negotiate. He would have known, for instance, that the RF could and likely would use the occasion for its own purposes in the Rhodesian press. The Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation had become an information wing of the RF after UDI, and the *Rhodesian Herald*, the country's most widely-read settler newspaper, was similarly little more than an RF propaganda machine. In a 14 December 1976 edition of the *Herald*, for instance, a columnist reported that Smith and the RF had walked away from talks with Nkomo because a settlement was not worth the danger posed to Rhodesian civilians.⁴⁸³ In the Rhodesian national press, it was Nkomo who appeared most desperate to end the war, not Smith and his cabinet. Moreover, Nkomo would have understood that this information could be used by other liberation leaders to project a disparaging image of him as a reactionary sellout, uninterested in pursuing armed struggle in Rhodesia.

Why then, would Nkomo take the risk of negotiating with Smith? It is possible that he earnestly believed the discussions would make the goal of popular rule more easily attainable, and put an end to Rhodesian military operations. Equally possible is that, given the intensification of the liberation war on Rhodesia's eastern front by ZANU, Nkomo acknowledged his party's military prospects were poor at this phase relative to ZANLA, and he hoped to preempt a ZANU military victory which would likely see Mugabe gain control of an independent Zimbabwe. In his memoirs, Nkomo writes in typical fashion that "Smith said that some of my friends had been contacting him, saying they thought it was time for direct talks...I lost my temper... I told him I thought I was cooler than him after all, and that the best thing to do was to abandon these talks for they

⁴⁸³ "Smith Ends Talks with Nkomo," *Rhodesian Herald*, 14 December 1976.

were hopeless. Smith was talking as the victor to the vanquished, calling us terrorists, and there was no point in going on with that.”⁴⁸⁴ This language is consistent with Nkomo’s recollections generally: the invitation to negotiate was first proposed by other ZAPU members before Smith put the idea to him directly. Similarly, Nkomo insulated himself from criticism in certain circles by asserting that it was he, not Smith, who terminated the negotiations. Nkomo was a skilled politician adept at maintaining his public persona as “father of the nation” and leader of a liberation front, and so it ought to be less than surprising that his memories of the talks are at odds with Smith’s and the Rhodesian Press. The most likely reason Nkomo chose to speak with Smith is that he was willing to seize the initiative after the failure of the Lusaka agreement and détente exercise. As argued above, ZANU was going through a series of internal crises at the time, and Nkomo may have wagered that the liberation war would eventually favor ZANLA given that its strength was now bolstered by Mozambican and Tanzanian support. Indeed, while ZAPU was inadvertently cultivating its reputation as an Ndebele party, ZANU was doing the same in Shona-speaking areas in eastern Zimbabwe.⁴⁸⁵ Demographically, if voters favored candidates from their respective regional ethnic groups, Mugabe was well positioned for post-independence presidency. It is impossible to determine the precise reasons why Nkomo decided to meet with Smith, but after a thorough examination of his writings, it is reasonable to argue that Nkomo was motivated to come to the bargaining table while he still enjoyed wide-spread popularity in Zimbabwe and among OAU members. Nevertheless, a history of ZAPU must recognize that Nkomo’s secret

⁴⁸⁴ Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*, 148-149.

⁴⁸⁵ Circular from British Defence Liaison Staff, Pretoria, To Staff at the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office and the Ministry of Defence, London, 4 April 1976. TNA; FC0/45/1939/4.

negotiations were detrimental to the party. While Nkomo was preparing to negotiate with Smith, ZIPRA forces were distracted from participating in large skirmishes with Rhodesian security forces, and Smith was able to buy more time for minority rule.⁴⁸⁶

The Patriotic Front (PF) was yet another marriage of convenience between ZAPU and ZANU, created on 9 October 1976.⁴⁸⁷ Much like ZIPA, it was the product of OAU leaders who insisted on political unity before providing additional material support.⁴⁸⁸ Unlike ZIPA, however, the PF was a loose political alliance conscious of its contradictions due to the competing strategies of ZANLA and ZIPRA. The PF was also meant to counter the political efforts of African Rhodesian leaders who were willing to accept a settlement at almost any cost so long as it brought them into the halls of power.⁴⁸⁹ In a 1978 edition of the *Zimbabwe Review*, an editorialist wrote

The fact of the matter is that the Patriotic Front is the most popular force in Zimbabwe today. It is the sole movement that represents the hopes of the oppressed in Zimbabwe. We must register today that the Patriotic Front will sweep any election that is held in Zimbabwe. The falsehood that the Patriotic Front took control of the interim period [sic] because it fears losing elections in Zimbabwe in favour of Muzorewa or Sithole, is sheer malice to say the least. All the Patriotic Front is stressing that this is not a time for election campaigns.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁶ Andre Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?* (London: Zed Books, 1983), 133.

⁴⁸⁷ Ellert, *The Rhodesian Front War*, 39.

⁴⁸⁸ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 54.

⁴⁸⁹ Munyaradzi Munochiveyi, "We Do Not Want to be Ruled by the Foreigners: Oral Histories of Nationalism in Colonial Zimbabwe," *Historian* 73:1 (2011), 71.

⁴⁹⁰ "Editorial," *Zimbabwe Review*, vol. 1. no. 2, 1978, 1.

Indeed, the possibility of Muzorewa, or the politically-sidelined Ndbaningi Sithole, reaching a settlement with Smith was very real in 1978. George Silundika, the Deputy Press Secretary for ZAPU, in response to a question directed at the intentionality behind the PF and the possibility of an internal settlement, stated

The Patriotic Front of Zimbabwe is struggling not only against Ian Smith's racist regime, but also against any attempts which some African political leaders are making for an "Internal Settlement" with the white minority regime. The talks that were conducted in Salisbury between Ian Smith and "the gang" – Bishop Muzorewa and the Rev. Sithole – are directed at preserving the racist order in our country. The Patriotic Front...is against the "Internal Settlement" for it provides for no changes in the economic system, and for the Zimbabwe people's further exploitation by the white settlers and western monopolies...the so-called internal settlement guarantees the continued existence of the army and the police, the entire judiciary and political structure which enables the white minority to prevent any constitutional changes from being introduced.⁴⁹¹

The internal settlements provided by Sithole and Muzorewa were qualitatively different than the proposals put forward by Nkomo when he met with Smith in 1975. Nkomo demanded popular rule and a dismantling of the RF political machine; Muzorewa and

⁴⁹¹ "Struggle Until Victory," *Zimbabwe Review*, vol. 2, no 1, 1978, 22-23.

Sithole both agreed in principle to a settlement which would allow for the structures of white supremacy to remain in place.⁴⁹²

The PF was also a strategy to counter the political maneuvers of Sithole and Muzorewa while giving ZANU and ZAPU the opportunity to pursue their own armed struggles. Indeed, in this respect, the PF was far more successful than ZIPA. For ZIPA to be effective, there had to be common understanding between ZANLA and ZIPRA commanders which never materialized. The PF, on the other hand, afforded Mugabe and Nkomo the opportunity to denounce the internal settlement, one of the few points they both agreed on, while still giving them the ability to command their respective military wings. Like ZIPA, the PF was a marriage of convenience, but it was a marriage that made room for the tensions and variances of ZAPU and ZANU military tactics.

On 20 August 1979, the PF was invited to the Lancaster House Conference after Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, was asked by Commonwealth heads of state to take responsibility for setting Rhodesia on the course to independence. The situation in Rhodesia had become completely untenable, and it was clear to RF politicians that the war had become a losing proposition.⁴⁹³ It was in Smith's best interests to meet with the Zimbabwean leaders to reach a deal while there was still an opportunity to negotiate beneficial terms for Rhodesia's settler minority. The call by the Commonwealth leaders for free, fair, and prompt elections can also be interpreted as a repudiation of the internal settlement reached by Smith and Muzorewa in January 1979. Indeed, the front-

⁴⁹² Ken Flower. *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record, Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964 to 1981* (London: Murray Ltd., 1987), 101.

⁴⁹³ Circular from British Defence Liaison Staff, Pretoria, To Staff at the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office and the Ministry of Defence, London, 23 March 1979. TNA; FCO/45/1970/46.

line presidents were also eager for a resolution to the Zimbabwe crisis: Kaunda and Machel in particular were incurring huge financial losses by hosting ZAPU and ZANU, and both leaders were facing domestic pressure to encourage a peaceful settlement. If the PF was construed to be the cause of a failure at Lancaster House, both leaders threatened to withdraw their long-held support for the Zimbabwean liberation fronts.⁴⁹⁴

Lord Carrington, the British Foreign Secretary, chaired the acrimonious conference which took place between September and December 1979, and included representatives from ZAPU and ZANU who formed the PF, as well as Muzorewa and other elements from the ANC. It is important to note that Rhodesian security forces, most especially Flower and the CIO, were constantly seeking means to weaken the ascendant position held by the PF. Disinformation about the “Turning Point” strategy for example, was disseminated by CIO agents which seemed to implicate ZAPU in a plot to topple Mugabe, should he come to power. Indeed, the concerted efforts to sow suspicion among PF representatives was extremely effective; the conference did not last long enough, however, for the Rhodesians to reap the rewards of their counter intelligence ploys.⁴⁹⁵

The PF managed to maintain a unified voice long enough to cease entertaining compromises, and instead put forward demands. Mugabe and Nkomo, for example, refused to sign any ceasefire agreement that did not include universal suffrage and majority rule as preconditions.⁴⁹⁶ The most difficult aspect of the negotiation process was the ever-present land question: Mugabe and Nkomo, for example, initially refused to

⁴⁹⁴ Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla War*, 116.

⁴⁹⁵ Flower, *Serving Secretly*, 198.

⁴⁹⁶ Circular from British Defence Liaison Staff, Pretoria, To Staff at the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office and the Ministry of Defence, London, 23 March 1979. TNA; FCO/45/1970/45.

accept the provision that land could only be sold on a willing seller-willing buyer basis. Indeed, the land question was used by both ZAPU and ZANU throughout the liberation war as a rallying point against minority rule: land grievances constituted one of the principle complaints among Zimbabweans ahead of the conference, and Mugabe and Nkomo had been using the rhetoric of land redistribution to gain the support of much of rural Rhodesia since the beginning of the African nationalist movement in the late 1950s.⁴⁹⁷ Indeed, Mugabe nearly quit the conference over this impediment until Josiah Tongogara, a senior ZANLA commander, reminded Mugabe that he would no longer be welcome in Mozambican camps if he left Lancaster House empty-handed.⁴⁹⁸ The PF eventually agreed to the Rhodesian land demand once provision was made for a vaguely-defined scheme in which Britain and other foreign governments would finance a land redistribution program while still maintaining the willing seller-willing buyer principle.⁴⁹⁹

Some authors and commentators have been critical of the Lancaster House Agreement. Astrow has perhaps been the most vociferous critic of the settlement. For Astrow and other Left political theorists, the PF was too easily swayed by outside powers, and was a signatory to a constitution which did not go far enough in implementing the revolutionary principles cadres had been taught in China, the USSR, Tanzania, Egypt, and other progressive states.⁵⁰⁰ That the signatories to the new Zimbabwean constitution managed to reach an agreement at all, however, ought to be celebrated given the personal histories of obstinacy and antipathy that were present at Lancaster House. It was an open secret that the British contingent, for example, was

⁴⁹⁷ Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 278.

⁴⁹⁸ Nyahi, "Lancaster House Talks: Timing, Cold War, and Joshua Nkomo," 156.

⁴⁹⁹ Tamarkin, *The Making of Zimbabwe*, 284.

⁵⁰⁰ Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?*, 144

guilty of sanction busting, which prolonged the liberation war and provided a vital lifeline to the Rhodesians.⁵⁰¹ Similarly, it was a remarkable achievement for the PF delegation to reach an agreement amongst themselves, and to initiate the process of transitioning to popular rule. It should be remembered, for example, that ZANU and ZAPU did not have merely conflicting military theories of how to end minority rule: both parties fought pitched battles against each other as early as 1963, and engaged openly in armed combat in Mozambican ZIPA camps.

For Nkomo and the rest of ZAPU, the agreement reached at Lancaster House preempted much of the “Turning Point,” particularly the aspect of the stratagem that entailed creating liberated zones in incremental steps, providing ZAPU with defensible positions inside Rhodesia. While ZIPRA engaged the Rhodesian security forces throughout the 1970s, they could not claim to have made a greater military impact than ZANU at the close of the liberation war. From 1975 until Lancaster House, ZANLA poured its manpower and resources into Rhodesia, seeking to enlist or pressgang new cadres with each infiltration while concurrently politicizing communities through *pungwes*. This, as it turns out, was the decisive tactic. Despite the massive increase of ZIPRA cadres and guerrilla incursions in the final three years of the struggle, many African Zimbabweans were uncertain of ZAPU’s fighting capacity: most of ZIPRA’s cadres were still in Zambian training bases, while their considerable military hardware had been put to little use inside Rhodesia. ZAPU’s military contribution to the liberation effort was greater than many historians have credited, but ZANU’s tactic of using cadres

⁵⁰¹ Communique from Sir Leonard Allisson, British High Commission, Lusaka, To Staff at Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office, London, 15 September 1979. TNA; FCO/45/1904/2/2.

to simultaneously fight the RF regime and politicize Africans with ZANU slogans and propaganda was a tremendously effective technique for prosecuting the war.⁵⁰²

Nkomo was aware that both he and his party were perceived by African Rhodesians to be less intent on confronting Smith militarily, and was mindful that many Zimbabweans would support Mugabe because of his outwardly aggressive prosecution of the armed struggle. Furthermore, he was also well-aware that Mugabe and ZANU had slowly achieved a numerical advantage in terms of supporters after the 1963 split. Given these conditions, Nkomo hoped that the PF would last into 1980, past the Lancaster House Agreement: if the PF truly represented all Zimbabweans as opposed to regional interests, Nkomo stood a much better chance of achieving victory at the polls as a PF candidate than as the leader of ZAPU. Unfortunately for him, Mugabe shared the same opinion, and was quick to dissolve the PF before the 1980 elections. Nevertheless, Nkomo made an impressive showing, capturing almost a quarter of the popular African vote.⁵⁰³ This is a notable achievement, and one which deserves closer examination in light of the ethnic factors ascribed to the election outcome.⁵⁰⁴ IsiNdebele speakers made up approximately 17% of Zimbabwe's population, yet Nkomo gained almost 8 additional percentage points at the polls. If ZAPU was a party which only represented Ndebele interests as has been often argued, Nkomo ought to have performed far worse in the 1980 presidential race.

⁵⁰² Clinarete Victoria Luis Munguambe, "Nationalism and Exile in an Age of Solidarity: Frelimo-ZANU Relations in Mozambique (1975-1980)," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 43:1 (2017), 163.

⁵⁰³ Josiah Brownell. *The Collapse of Rhodesia: Population Demographics and the Politics of Race* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 207.

⁵⁰⁴ Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The Death of the Subject with a Capital 'S' and the Perils of Belonging: A Study of the Construction of Ethnocracy in Zimbabwe," *Critical Arts* 26:4 (2012), 542.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored ZAPU's military and political successes and failures in an effort to shed light on a number of crucial questions concerning the party's history. By detailing ZAPU's prosecution of the liberation struggle in the 1970s, it is clear that the party was far more active politically and militarily than credited by many scholars. Indeed, without ZAPU's influence in the liberation struggle, which included engaging Rhodesian forces and hemming them in with fortified rear bases in Zambia and Botswana, the end of minority rule might possibly have been prolonged and the constitutional agreement may not have been as favourable towards African Zimbabweans. Not only did ZAPU apply military pressure in western Zimbabwe, the party, and Nkomo in particular, also served a crucial role in articulating African Rhodesian grievances to the RF, and in securing material support from regional and international governments to support the liberation war, most especially Zambia and the USSR.

This chapter has also accounted for the slow decline of ZAPU's popularity among African Rhodesians. Failed talks with the regime, misguided alliances, unfortunate military timing and improper tactics, and the inadvertent cultivation of a regional Ndebele character all led to ZAPU's decline as the preeminent liberation party in Zimbabwe. What must also be taken into consideration is the success of ZANU's often rough, but usually effective recruitment practices, which afforded ZANLA the

opportunity to have a near-constant presence in Zimbabwean townships and rural areas. In accounting for ZAPU's failure to achieve power following the end of minority rule, ZANU's successes must be acknowledged. Nevertheless, throughout this chapter, attention has often been drawn to the disproportionate, laudatory praise given to ZANU for ending minority rule: this has had a deleterious effect on the historical memory of ZAPU and its supporters who fought for majority rule. The same risk, however, is involved when examining ZAPU's contributions to Zimbabwe's liberation: while ZAPU played an important, crucial role in halting the settler regime, ZANU must also be given credit for the part they played. ZAPU's history has undoubtedly been corrupted inadvertently by scholarly mistreatment and misinformation, and had also suffered deliberate attacks by Zimbabwean politicians and commentators after independence. By providing an accurate political history of ZAPU, a clearer understanding of Zimbabwe's liberation emerges.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis has examined ZAPU's role in the effort to end minority rule in Zimbabwe, and the struggle to achieve independence from Britain and the settler regime. Throughout this work, significant consideration has been given to the various ways in which studies of the liberation war have privileged the role played by ZANU in toppling the Rhodesian settler power. Indeed, attention has been drawn to scholars from various disciplines who have written, broadcast, and given voice to triumphalist narratives which evince straightforward, relatively static accounts of the liberation war. According to a variety of historians and writers such as Martin, Meredith, Tamarkin, and Astrow, the demise of colonial rule was brought about through a convergence of circumstances which enabled ZANU to politicize varied groups of Africans who in turn materially supported and often joined ZANLA ranks due to common grievances and patriotic zeal. This thesis has substantially complicated that strain of historiography by exploring the many, multifaceted ways in which ZAPU contributed meaningfully to hastening the demise of the RF regime, and opening space for popular elections in an independent Zimbabwe.

This work does so not merely by examining ZAPU as another liberation front which similarly sought to end minority rule and gain the political support of African Zimbabweans. Rather, this thesis has used ZAPU, as a political and military entity, to show that the liberation war did not follow a teleologically inevitable path in which anticolonial discourse from "mature" political leaders brought Africans together from diverse backgrounds to oppose colonial rule in both violent and non-violent modes of resistance. ZAPU, like ZANU, for example, often had to pressgang and coerce

Zimbabweans into their combat ranks, particularly during the latter stages of the liberation war. If the “masses” were prepared and indeed eager to fight Rhodesian security forces as is often claimed in ZANU-centric narratives, such recruitment methods would be unnecessary and likely counterproductive to the nationalist goal of creating a cohesive, postcolonial political and social order.

Indeed, throughout the four substantive chapters of this thesis, a revisionist element of Zimbabwean historiography has been stressed which incorporates the significant contributions ZAPU made to the war effort, and provides a more balanced account of the armed conflict. As mentioned in the third chapter, for example, it was ZAPU, not ZANU, which first engaged the Rhodesian regime in armed struggle. This may appear to be a small, even petty point to make in analysing ZAPU’s contribution of the war effort, but it significantly problematizes ZANU (PF)’s account of the war which claims the battle at Sinoia in April 1966 as the opening salvo of the militarized struggle. For ZANU (PF), this grants the party a degree of legitimacy denied to ZAPU and has important implications for memorializing the war: ZANU, its supporters claim, started and finished the second *chimurenga* war, which creates an artificial genealogy of the struggle that serves to undermine ZAPU’s legacy while simultaneously stressing ZANU as the “authentic” and “active” African nationalist force during the liberation war.

Furthermore, this study of ZAPU has highlighted the gulf that sometimes existed between African nationalist leaders and those whom they claimed to represent. As mentioned in the thesis introduction, this work seeks to provide a study of African nationalism in Zimbabwe from “above,” and endeavours to situate ZAPU’s political and military policies within the context of evolving anticolonial ideologies from within

Rhodesia and without. Programmatic changes were more easily disseminated from ZAPU's leadership to urban and rural cadres as well as district political representatives as the war progressed, and were adapted to fit specifically local Zimbabwean contexts. This was not always accomplished easily or effectively, however, and there were often disparate, conflicting ideas between ZAPU's leadership and its members on the ground. ZAPU cadres and supporters, for example, were often more politically radical than their putative leaders who were regularly prepared to exploit weaknesses in colonial authority to further specific party aims, or the nationalist cause generally, by engaging in negotiation and compromise with the settler regime. Indeed, the tension between Zimbabwe's ruling elite and the War Veterans Association today can be construed as an inheritance of the liberation war, in which rifts have developed between former cadres and political leaders owing to competing ideas about the nature of the African nationalist project in Zimbabwe during minority rule.⁵⁰⁵

This conclusion is reinforced by providing a holistic examination of ZAPU's political and military role in Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s. ZAPU experienced military and political successes and setbacks which complicate the oft-repeated convergence narrative of African nationalists moving *en bloc* from discrete periods of proto-nationalism, protest, and armed struggle, culminating in national independence. A study of ZAPU draws attention to the ways in which fissures and crevices in colonial authority could be engaged in multiple ways extending beyond armed confrontation: despite the incessant commentary of the *Zimbabwe Review* arguing the contrary, Nkomo

⁵⁰⁵ Richard Saunders, "Zimbabwe: Liberation Nationalism – Old and Born-Again," *Review of African Political Economy* 38:127 (2011), 125.

and other senior ZAPU members were often willing participants in negotiations with the settler regime for a variety of purposes. ZAPU sought to negotiate with Smith, for example, to counter ZANU's ascendancy after the mid 1970s, while by the end of the decade, ZAPU formed an alliance with their erstwhile rivals ZANU in an effort to strengthen African nationalist negotiating power at Lancaster House. Indeed, while Lancaster House was precipitated by a strong surge in the war effort during the latter stages of the liberation war by ZAPU and ZANU, it was the leadership of the parties who expressed the inclination to sit down with their long-standing colonial enemies which ultimately secured Zimbabwean independence. A willingness to compromise with the colonial regime is frequently neglected in the historiography of Zimbabwe's liberation war, despite being an enormously consequential aspect of nationalist politics.

Indeed, negotiation and cooperation have been central themes in this thesis. ZAPU's efforts to internationalize the liberation struggle were tremendously effective in securing the support and cooperation of essential state and non-state actors. Nkomo and ZAPU, for example, can be credited with extending Zimbabwean nationalism beyond Rhodesia's borders by enlisting the material aid of front line states in the early 1960s, particularly through pursuing channels in the OAU. ZAPU sought political and material backing from a wide array of sources: the OAU and MCF, for example, provided important ideological backing, while the USSR and other progressive states afforded ZAPU with crucial armaments and training which better prepared the party's armed wing to confront the RF's security forces. Negotiation and cooperation were also central to the joint operational agreement between ZAPU and the ANC's MK cadres, which had mixed success fighting Rhodesian units: ZIPRA and its South African allies were able to glean

important lessons from their incursions against RF forces, but the alliance became impractical once political and military elements from within ZAPU and the ANC demanded a reassessment of tactics after suffering heavy losses against Smith's and Vorster's ground and air forces.

This thesis has also interrogated the many reasons posited by scholars and contemporary activists and fighters for the split between ZANU and ZAPU. The individual, often competing interests underpinning the ZANU/ZAPU fracture make this important development in Zimbabwean history notoriously hard to pin down. Loss of confidence in the leadership of Nkomo was certainly a significant factor, particularly in light of his propensity for internationalism, which often meant he was outside of Rhodesia's borders courting support for the Zimbabwean nationalist cause. Personal rivalries and individual antagonisms, however, have been neglected in much of the literature which proffers political histories of ZANU and ZAPU. Rivalries between central figures like Sithole, Takawira, and Nkomo exacerbated existing differences concerning how each faction thought the liberation struggle should be prosecuted.

Moreover, this thesis has engaged with the fraught topic of ethnic chauvinism, particularly as it pertains to the development of ostensibly distinct Ndebele and Shona parties. As noted in chapter two, the ethnicity factor has been overemphasized in much of the literature, and in many ways a product of post-colonial developments in Zimbabwe, particularly the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Shona-dominated elements in the ZNA's Fifth Brigade against largely Ndebele civilians and ex-combatants. In much of the historiography on the liberation war, the Ndebele character of ZAPU is often taken as a given, misrepresenting the way in which this aspect of the party was acquired. A

significant number of historians, particularly those writing in the 1970s and 1980s, articulated narratives in which the Ndebele character of ZAPU was a conscious political calculation made by Nkomo and others, either immediately before or after the nationalist fracture. I have demonstrated how this pernicious mischaracterization was the partial product of postcolonial developments, though much more significant were the latter stages of the war: regional exigencies caused ZAPU and ZANU to politicize and recruit cadres from areas most accessible to ZIPRA and ZANLA rear bases, which led Shona communities in Eastern Zimbabwe to back ZANU, while Ndebele communities in Western Zimbabwe, particularly in Matabeleland and the Midlands, were generally sympathetic to ZAPU. Indeed, this feature of historical geography substantially contributed to ZANU's electoral victory: Mugabe was able to exploit the more populous, demographically Shona-dominated Mashonaland provinces.

This thesis provides a more holistic, nuanced political history of the party than is offered by works such as Sibanda's *Zimbabwe African People's Union*, which reproduce laudatory histories similar to earlier strains of historiography which celebrated ZANU at the exclusion of other African nationalist parties in Zimbabwe. This thesis then, is a useful entry point for a more in-depth study which can elaborate and explore Ndlovu-Gatsheni's call to interrogate African nationalism from "above," and properly incorporate Cooper's emphasis on investigation, rather than reproducing and rearticulating colonial and postcolonial assumptions.

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