

**'Where Civil Blood Made Soldiers Hands Unclean' Rethinking  
War time coercion in Rural Rhodesia. Reflections on the  
Chivi Experience 1976 80.**

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***Abstract***

*The Rhodesian Security Forces and ZANLA guerrillas operating in Chivi had to win the war! It mattered little to them whether this goal was to be achieved by means fair or foul, and as the war progressed, the problem was aggravated by their ever increasing numbers in the battlefield. With more emphasis being placed on quantity rather than quality in recruitment as well as training, the calibre of the forces on both sides of the battlefield deteriorated rapidly as well. This corresponded directly with the deterioration of relations between the combatants themselves and the civilian population at large.*

***Introduction***

Studies on the Zimbabwean liberation war have often emphasized non operational aspects.<sup>1</sup> Yet the conduct of this war impacted strongly on the society in which it was fought. Moreover, the topical issues that have occupied researchers of this war for the past two or so decades seem to represent more the interests of the various factions that fought it, so that far from simply studying the war in question, others have of late been accused of still fighting it.<sup>2</sup> This paper attempts a reassessment of war-time coercion of civilians from a military perspective, and, broadly speaking, rests on three main historiographical observations. First, that by and large, civilian casualties, and for that matter African civilian casualties, outnumbered those of the military. Between 1975 and 1979, writes Tungamirayi, the increasing number of civilians killed, (the majority being young people), were shot as curfew breakers or were victims of crossfire.<sup>3</sup> It seems to me that an even larger proportion of civilians died because of

<sup>1</sup>D.N. Beach; 'But What About The War', *Zimbabwe Review*, October 1995 p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>J. Tungamirayi; 'Recruitment to ZANLA: Building up A War Machine' in N. Bhebe & T. O. Ranger (eds), *Soldiers In Zimbabwe's Liberation War Vol 1*, (U.Z.P. Harare 1995) p. 43. V. De Waal; *The Politics of Reconciliation: Zimbabwe's First Decade*, (Hurst & Co., London, 1990) p. 80. For more detailed statistics see M. Meredith; *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia, 1890 1979*, (Andre Dentsch, London. 1979) p. 157.

their precarious identity as civilians with the potential to compromise both belligerents' military strategies. Secondly, until fairly recently, and so far as discussion on the war has been concerned, distinct studies of soldiers on the one hand and civilians, often lumped together as peasants, on the other, have emerged and this has kept analysis fairly polarised between these two categories. Finally, and for the rest of Zimbabwe, the increasing number of belligerent forces on the battlefield resulted in a military confusion that was in itself a reflection of the political crisis that had developed at the time.<sup>4</sup>

The paper therefore argues that such a scenario was fertile ground for potential conflict between the warring parties and the civilians. For instance, where guerrillas as a rule 'lived off the land' they had only the civilians to blame when they were supposedly 'sold out', while on the other hand, dealing with those 'civilians harbouring terrorists' was more the rule than the exception in the Smith regime's counter-insurgency strategies. In other words civilians constituted what F. de Mulinen has termed the 'unfavourable background' from which combatants often have to fight, where the latter would not always feel obliged to observe humanitarian principles.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the deliberate use of arms to intimidate or coerce civilians to achieve the desired ends of the military is common. I wish to illustrate here how such developments shaped events in Chivi during this period.

In his recent book, Bhebe has identified three different phases in Zimbabwe's war of liberation, the first being dominated by ZAPU and the South African A.N.C. from 1964 to 1969, the second by ZANU from 1970 to 74, and the third phase from 1975 to 1979 which involved both liberation movements.<sup>6</sup> My approach is not markedly different save for the fact that Bhebe's first phase is synonymous with my phase of rural nationalism in Chivi, itself dominated by ZAPU as well but stretching well into the mid 70s. In addition, what Bhebe considers the end of ZANU domination was actually its beginning in Chivi although in the light of his categorization I take into consideration the fact that ZIPRA was not operative in the district. I however pay particular emphasis to the post-Internal Settlement phase for

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<sup>4</sup>By 1978 the Rhodesian security forces were composed of the regular forces, including the police force, Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel & armed forces, operating as combined operations or COMOPS, later they were joined by the auxiliaries loyal to Muzorewa and Sithole who themselves became antagonistic in the political competition between the two and worse still hostile enemies in the wake of Muzorewa's election win in April 1979. On the other hand ZANLA guerrilla numbers had been augmented by some Frelimo cadres in the region concerned since 1976, but by 1978 there were local initiatives by guerrillas to train and field cadres in the front. This is notwithstanding the fact that some mujibba were arming themselves with homemade A.K. s and other weapons picked from battle sight scavenging.

<sup>5</sup>F. de Mulinen; *The Law of war and the Armed Forces* (Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva 1989) pp. 18-19.

<sup>6</sup>See N. Bhebe; *The ZANU and ZAPU Guerilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church In Zimbabwe*, (Mambo, Gweru, 1999). See also my review of the book in *Journal of African Conflict 1*, no. 1 1999 pp. 102-104.

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its politically volatile and militarily complex nature had severe implications on the smooth running of ordinary civilian life.

***Guerilla Warfare, Counter-insurgency and Civil Society in Rural Zimbabwe: Some considerations***

Guerillas of necessity require light, effective arms, must be scattered in their operations, but still be able to maintain a high level of mobility while effectively using the physical landscape and the local population to their advantage.<sup>7</sup> In this light, therefore, guerilla warfare ideally requires a large area of operation and a generally supportive population for it to be carried out successfully. Thus in strategic terms, it falls within the framework of defensive fighting, where 'arming the people' constitutes a form of resistance involving retreat into the interior and may not necessarily exclude the application of force to achieve that end.<sup>8</sup>

The Maoist doctrine followed by ZANLA guerillas operating in Chivi and elsewhere in the country, that saw the guerillas as the 'fish' and the civilian population as 'water' should be viewed in this context. The assumption that civilians always constituted good 'water' for the so called 'fish' meant in effect that the hosts were subordinated to the demands of the defended. Thus ZANLA's crude conception of the 'masses' as a homogenous group exposed them to a number of technical problems regarding loyalty.

The most effective attempt to assess this impact of rural social stratification on ZANLA War strategies has been Kriger's celebrated work on Mutoko.<sup>9</sup> She has found this social differentiation within the peasant communities of Mutoko, coupled with the failure of what she terms ZANLA mobilization strategies to be the chief factors accounting for the latter's resort to coercion and violence as the panacea for support.

Kriger has among other things been criticised for decontextualizing the war by not taking into account the various political and social struggles prior to the 1970s, and how they shaped especially African perceptions of the liberation movements, as has been typical of say Ranger or Manungo's works on Makoni and Chiweshe respectively.<sup>10</sup> More importantly, as this

<sup>7</sup>Beach; 'But What About The War' p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>R. Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War* (Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1985) pp. 291-292.

<sup>9</sup>See N. J. Kriger; 'The Zimbabwean War of Liberation: Struggles within the Struggle' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14, 2 (1988) 304-22.

N. J. Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War Peasant Voices* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992).

<sup>10</sup>T. O. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War In Zimbabwe*, (James Currey, London, 1995). K.D. Manungo; 'The Role Peasants Played In The Zimbabwe War of Liberation With Special Emphasis on Chiweshe District', Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Ohio University 1991.

paper will illustrate for Chivi, Kriger's work is devoid of the specific military detail which shaped the activities of ZANLA guerrillas, given Mutoko's proximity to Salisbury and therefore to security forces and later the auxiliaries.<sup>11</sup>

David Maxwell, for example, was struck by the absence of guerilla voices in Kriger's aptly titled text: *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War: Peasant Voices*, for it to constitute balanced picture of the war situation in Mutoko at that time. On closer analysis, he argues, Mutoko was far too unliberated for the guerillas to exercise such influence given the prevalence of Protected Villages in the area. He equally dismisses as far too cynical, Kriger's assertion that peasant motivation lay in the latter's quest for material aggrandisement. Instead, Maxwell exalts the prominent role of 'genuine religious ideology' in peasant mobilization, so that from his work in Katerere in eastern Zimbabwe, Maxwell saw guerilla coercion occurring only when guerillas felt rather too self assured than insecure!<sup>12</sup> Indeed, while there may be nothing to stop armed young men - as guerillas often are-from becoming trigger-happy, it is equally worse when they are military disadvantaged. The situation after 1978 posed a lot of such disadvantages, guerrillas ran the risk not only of being outnumbered by security forces and their auxiliaries but also losing of their much needed contact with the civilian supply base given the higher volume of anti-guerilla patrols during this period. This was compounded by the fact that their dispersed nature of fighting and the absence of discipline enforcing mechanisms similar to those found amongst regular forces rendered discipline management a practical impossibility. In all cases, however, it remains true that civilian interests lay at the mercy of the armed men. Counter-insurgency on the other hand as practiced by most European minority regimes in the region aimed at the complete extermination of insurgent forces and their supporters. To the Smith regime, this involved 'flushing out the terrorists' and the 'civilians running with terrorists',<sup>13</sup> or to use the Maoist analogy: 'to get rid of the fish as well as the water.'<sup>14</sup> The regime deliberately denied the guerrillas lawful combatant status under

<sup>11</sup> J. Alexander, 'Things Fall Apart, The Centre Can Hold: Process of Post-War Political Change in Zimbabwe's Rural Areas' in N. Bhebe & T.O. Ranger (eds) *Society In Zimbabwe's Liberation War Vol. 2* (U.Z. P. Harare, 1995) pp. 177, 227.

<sup>12</sup> D. Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs In Zimbabwe: A Social History of the Fwesa people c. 1870s-1990s* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999) pp. 145-6.

<sup>13</sup> Hansard House of Assembly Parliamentary Debates vol. 95 no. 13, 23 January 1977.

<sup>14</sup> S.J. Ndlovu Gatscheri Pers. Commun. March 1998. In fact this contradiction is dealt with at length in Ndlovu's as yet unpublished manuscript on the history of Political Prisoners and Detainees in Zimbabwe.

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Article 44 of the Geneva Protocol 148-9 of 1949.<sup>15</sup> This was not helped by the fact that by the 1970s the ever growing number of such Conventions, their increasing bulk and complexity, had steadily diminished the credibility of the laws of armed conflicts.<sup>16</sup> Thus Smith successfully managed to convince the world that the war in Rhodesia was a domestic insurrection where the guerillas were to be dismissed simply as 'terrorists' to be treated just like 'common criminals' without any significant international outcry until the late 70s. To illustrate this point, in September 1977 for example, the Speaker of the Rhodesian House of Assembly banned the use of such words as 'guerillas' or 'freedom fighters' by members of the house to refer to 'those who engaged in naked acts of terrorism'.<sup>17</sup>

As long as it remained a 'domestic problem' so domestic means to deal with it were employed, and the regime's key instrument for this was the Law and Order Maintenance Act or LOMA which in itself was a blueprint condoning the use of violence and coercion upon the civilians where it suited the desired ends of the Rhodesian Security Forces. Under Chapter 39 of this Act for instance, severe penalties including even the death sentence could be imposed on those civilians found 'harbouring terrorists', a dubious catch-all-phrase which could refer to feeding, failing to report or lying about the presence of the latter. In addition by the Emergency Powers (Collective Fines Regulations: Rhodesian Government Notice 101 of 1973), the state could impose collective fines and/ or confiscate the property of all inhabitants of an area, if the particular 'offenders' could not be identified.<sup>18</sup> Imposition of Martial Law from 1976 onwards not only meant that civil society was placed under military tutelage, but exposed also to its abuses. The formation of the Ministry of Combined Operations or COMOPS sealed this militarization process, which saw every white man in rural Rhodesia from the Internal Affairs personnel, the police to even the farmers, being armed having at some point. There was compulsory military service in the form of 'call-up', while curfew governed the day to day life of civilians.

Chivi is not only an excellent case study of where both the guerilla and counterinsurgency strategies elaborated above were implemented to their fullest, but offers an example of how parts of rural Rhodesia gradually

<sup>15</sup>S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni; 'The Imperialist Project of Denial of Human Rights to the Africans: The Analysis of The Problem within the ideological Framework of Rhodesia Settler Colonialism and Human Rights Discourse'. Paper Presented to *The Historical Dimension of Human Rights and Democracy Seminar* series I.D.S (U.Z.) May 1998 pp. 41-45, See also Meredith; *The Past Is Another Country*, p. 157.

<sup>16</sup>De Mulinen; *The Law of War and The Armed Forces* p. 19.

<sup>17</sup>Hansard House of Assembly Parliamentary Debates vol. 97 No. 6 29 September 1977.

<sup>18</sup>Manungo; 'The Role Peasants Played' p. 171.

developed into highly contested environments militarily; in addition civilians were also abused by both the Zanla guerillas and the Rhodesian Security Forces.

***Prelude to War: The Role of Rural Nationalism in the Preparations for Armed Conflict.***

The period immediately prior to the liberation war in Chivi is essentially that of rural nationalism. Chivi had been fairly active as a district in the struggles against colonial injustices since the 1940s and quite a number of local heroes emerged as a result. This is notwithstanding the fact that there were isolated acts of resistance to colonialism prior to the 1940's. African consciousness rose during the 1940s in the wake of resistance to centralization and the mass resettlements that went with it. The Rhodesian Bantu Voters Association was quickly gaining influence in the district and its local representative Samuel Takavarasha successfully led a defiance campaign against, the then Native Commissioner, resulting in the latter's failure to relocate the Zihove, Mashanda and Mazarire kraals of Takavarasha in the reserve to pave way for Native Purchase Area in 1946.

Takavarasha became a fine example of the emerging breed of nationalists, idolised by many as a symbol of resistance and christened *Bhuru raChivi* or Chivi's bull for his many acts of insubordination since then. Benjamin Burombo's visit to the district in February 1948 was an inspiration to many would-be active rural nationalists, the majority of whom claim their careers as nationalists to have begun after the famous Mandiva school meeting. This is true of the testimonies of Jonas Zvovurere, Albert Madusise and Leonard Shumba themselves household names in Chivi's struggle against colonialism. Zvovurere was later on in the 60s to mould an effective ZAPU youth league which constantly engaged in acts of sabotage that had almost crippled the day to day running of the local district councils by the mid 70s. He worked closely with Samuel Munodawafa, the then chairperson of ZAPU who was resident in nearby Mshawasha Native Purchase Area.<sup>19</sup>

By 1975 most of these rural nationalists had been detained at the various incarceration camps scattered in the country, coincidentally at a time when ZANLA opened Gaza province where Chivi fell under its sector

<sup>19</sup>For a detailed view of Rural Nationalism in Chivi see G.C. Mazarire; 'A Right To Self Determination; Religion Protest and War In South Central Zimbabwe: The Case of Chivi District 1900-1980,' unpublished M.A. Thesis University of Zimbabwe 1999 pp. 67-71.

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2. It was this province that contained all the valuable communications links Rhodesia had with her remaining sanctions busting ally, apartheid South Africa, one of them being the Fort Victoria Beitbridge road which ran some 100 kilometers through Chivi. To safeguard these and other links, the Rhodesian launched 'Operation Repulse'.<sup>20</sup>

As elsewhere in Zimbabwe, Chivi was not excluded from experiencing what Ranger has termed the ‘substantial discontinuity’ that emerged between nationalism and the war.<sup>21</sup> Whilst nationalist consciousness in the district had hinged upon predominantly ZAPU principles and the nationalists themselves remained staunch ZAPU cadres although a sizeable proportion had gone ZANU - the war in Chivi was pursued on strictly ZANU and ZANLA terms which sought the permanent exclusion of ZAPU from the struggle. In practice, the guerillas embarked on a full scale anti-ZAPU campaign that saw the remainder of these then elderly nationalists such as Shumba fleeing for safety to the urban areas. This discontinuity, Ranger argues, made it difficult for there to be total collaboration between peasant elders and the young guerillas.<sup>22</sup> However it seems clear that guerillas could clash with both elderly and young civilians if they were assumed to be actual or potential ‘sell outs’.

By February of 1976, ZANLA guerillas had made their appearances in the southern parts of the district at such places as Gororo, Chasiyatende, Razi, Mupagamuri and Chikofa where they were engaged in serious re-orientation exercises. The Smith regime had reacted to earlier incursions by forming a second battalion of the Rhodesian African Rifles (2RAR) in October 1975, and as it turned out this 'A' company was to take the majority of operations in the district. However, these only began after April 1976 under the command of Major Andre Dennison, after the shooting of South African cyclists near Rutenga. 2RAR maintained heavy surveillance of the area since then so that by May they were making false starts in the vicinity of Madzivire, marking the first shots to be fired in the district.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See T. Mugoba; 'Zanla Operations In Gaza Province', *Journal of African Conflict* 1, no. 1 1999 pp. 92-101.

<sup>21</sup> Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness* pp. 206/7

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>23</sup> See *Harvest of Fear; A Dairy of Terrorist Atrocities in Rhodesia* (Government Publishers) p. 26 see also J.R.T. Wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison* (Ashanti, Gibraltar 1989) p. 50.

***War and Chivi Society Prior to the Internal Settlement 1976 77.***

Despite the ZAPU-ZANU conflict, the popularity of the guerillas should not be underestimated for two important reasons. Firstly, these political squabbles seemed to make a significant impact only to the literate sections of the civilian population who could follow this up in newspapers and afford wireless radios. The majority felt the 'boys' were correcting certain ills in the revolution, especially as some of these local nationalists were slowly accumulating a reputation for embezzling party subscriptions.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, guerillas targeted the colonial instruments of oppression, in the same way that the ZAPU youth had done. They did not only offer an effective, well equipped and organized alternative, but also the continuation of revolutionary objectives in a much more militant way-baffling as it was in its exclusion of ZAPU. This boosted their image as 'men of action' and 'liberators' as amply demonstrated in the nature of punishments they meted out on the notorious Native Councils, then famous for extortionate taxes, forced labour and other abuses. The Native Councils were a colonial project begun in the late 60s with the aim of transforming rural Rhodesia into pockets of self-sustaining units. This project was belatedly introduced to Chivi in 1973 when it had already registered problems in other areas, and for that matter it was quickly implemented in such a way that had incensed local people that guerillas could not have come at a better time than 1976.<sup>25</sup>

On 1 December 1976, the guerillas descended on Matsveru Council premises at Chishave and left behind a trail of destruction.<sup>26</sup> The Council offices and beerhall were burnt to the ground and the council personnel were flogged, setting a precedent for the fate of the remaining native councils in a few months to come.<sup>27</sup> Such 'acts of liberation' arguably worked to the advantage of the guerillas, at the same time sending the message that those Africans found allying themselves with these and other instruments of colonial oppression, including African council employees, would be seen as themselves divorced from the goal of their own liberation and therefore as targets of attack. As such the term 'sell-out' became an

<sup>24</sup>Interviews with Pfeke Vakai, S. Chigadza, Sabhuku Sendeka & Ofias Mutsvangwi, at Chomuruvati on 1 August 1998..

<sup>26</sup>For more detail on the Native Councils, See A. K. H. Weinrich *Chiefs and Council In Rhodesia* (Heinemann, London 1971) and for their impact on Chivi society see Mazarire 'A Right to self Determination' pp. 63-71.

<sup>25</sup>National Archives of Zimbabwe *Masvingo Records Centre* Box 03893, D.C. Chivi to P. C. Victoria 31 May 1977. Interviews with James Dher'ere 4/6/98, Jeremiah Mbanditi 28/6/98, Siwela Matsaure 7/6/98 and B.T. Mazarire 5/6/98.

<sup>27</sup>Barely two years later, Madhlangove council to the north of the district suffered a similar catastrophe where its properties at Madzivadondo and Mhandamabwe were further attacked in October 1978. In the same month Gororo council lost a truck and its buildings were burnt down. See Box 03895 D. C. Chibi to P. C. Victoria, Quarterly Reports on Mandlangove and Gororo councils as at 31/10/78 respectively.



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integral part of guerilla propaganda, much as it became increasingly difficult on the part of the guerillas to dissociate an enemy attack from 'sell-out' influence.

As has been alluded to earlier, the ZAPU threat provided yet another background for the existence of 'sell-outs'-actual or potential. This prompted ZANLA guerillas to sacrifice a few people as examples as an intimidatory measure both to ensure their security and establish loyalty. Thus the first fatal contact in the district at Mvicha in February 1977 was followed by the capture, kangaroo trial and brutal murder of a teacher at Chikofa School who had been 'proved' responsible.<sup>28</sup> However these introductory measures themselves set precedents as well so that as a rule, so it seemed, each contact was followed by ceremonial trials of sacrificial lambs; the 'sell-outs'. This however could not guard against the settling of local civilian differences in the process, especially where guerillas ought to have an answer.

In this culture of fear that the guerillas cultivated and thrived upon, they could requisition resources of any kind at a time that suited them, while it was up to the civilians through their respective base committees, to see how these were made available. The salaried class, particularly civil servants in the majority of Chivi were subjected to compulsory contributions of a third of their salaries to be channeled to guerilla supplies. When this was discovered by the Matsveru council for example, the teachers of Muzogwi, Makamure, Mhosva and Chikofa schools had their salaries withheld for three months as punishment.<sup>29</sup> A number of emergent business entrepreneurs particularly the less established, confess forcible closure during this period as they had turned into supply zones for guerillas. One cannot however detail the day to day experiences of the war although the issue of collective punishments can pose as an illustrative example of the predicament of the civilians during this period.

As the war raged on, guerillas continuously made requests for adequate food supplies which the civilians could hardly provide. Raiding nearby farms for cattle was not only the last resort but a strategy encouraged by the guerillas themselves in line with their aim of crippling the colonial economy. Between October and December 1976 many Chivi people living adjacent to European farms such as Mukosi River Ranch, Makwari Ranch, Dowa and Tokwe Grange farms raided these for cattle primarily to supply

<sup>28</sup>Anonymous informant Chivi 8/6/98.

<sup>29</sup>See Box 03893 Matsveru Council Minutes.

guerilla requirements, although the temptation to channel some for personal domestic requirements was not always resisted. This however, may only have raised the number of thefts to an alarming rate, much to the chagrin of the farmers, who in their capacity as complainants but also functioning under the auspices of COMOPS, reacted promptly. The main areas implicated in these thefts were Gororo, Madzivire, Shindi and the southern area of Jaka. In this period alone the farmers enumerated their losses to a startling 2442 beasts valued at \$Rh 214, 000 although this number and value includes some taken by Africans residing in Nyajena.<sup>30</sup> Security Forces descended on the villagers confiscating cattle belonging to all the inhabitants of implicated areas. Many civilians were arrested for what were to be effective 9 year prison sentences had independence not come in 1980. Whilst official records claimed that of the 120 villages found guilty, only 93 convictions for stock theft and 16 for possession of stolen meat took place, this seems to be contradicted by many eyewitness confessions.<sup>31</sup>

It seems COMOPS conducted a sweep of all the households, for example in Gororo and Shindi, combing them of all adult male civilians who were taken either to Ngundu, Rutenga or Fort Victoria for arbitrary imprisonment. They were often brutalised and experienced very unpleasant moments at the hands of members of the Special Branch. Reports of civilians being forced to burn their huts if any meat was found in them are not uncommon, worse still are the allegations that security forces shot certain fat people, assumed to have grown so because of eating stolen meat.<sup>32</sup> Many innocent civilians were unlawfully imprisoned as a letter by Smart Chamano to the local District Commissioner will signify, part of it read:

... Shadreck Hosiya was arrested last year because of those cattle which were stolen at Makwari ranch, but my uncle because of people who does not like him *sic* they did make him to be in prison for 9 years now I am worried about at Sir because he knows nothing about those cattle ...<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile the farmers took advantage of this exercise to increase their own herds beyond their original sizes, often by falsely claiming

<sup>30</sup>Hansard House of Assembly Parliamentary Debates Vol. 95 No. 16, 2 march 1977 'Collective Punishments' Speech by Mr Musset (Minister of Internal Affairs) p. 111.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>32</sup>Interviews with Tizirayi Vurayayi 24/7/98 Gororo, Constantine Vengesayi, and G. Musenge 25/6/98 Berejena.

<sup>33</sup>SBV1 African Councils General Box 03894; Smart Chamano IRR.B. Coy. MOZ. Salisbury to D.C. Chibi 20 April 1978.

certain African stock. At one time, the European owner of Dowa farm in Nyahombe, with the assistance of the security forces, claimed 6 beasts belonging to one Joseph Garakacha from Chief Shindi's area who was then a T.B. patient admitted to Ngomahuru hospital at the time of the stock thefts.<sup>34</sup> Later in 1979 such abuses were to be condoned by Francis Zindoga the Minister of law and order in the new Internal Settlement government when he publicly refused to distinguish between 'terrorists, stock thieves and mujibhas' and sanctioned Rhodesian Security forces to take 'appropriate measures' and impose tougher penalties on stock thieves. The Victoria Province farmers were told to do as they wished and take any necessary action to defend themselves.<sup>35</sup> The guerillas for their part never ceased to make their requests for meat and as the Smith regime gradually handed over power to men on the spot in rural Zimbabwe, the situation was to grow even worse in the period after the Internal Settlement.

### ***Internal Settlement, 'Operation Favour' and the Military Melee in Chivi 1978-80***

With the escalation of guerilla penetration from all corners of Rhodesia, Ian Smith, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Chief Jeremiah Chirau signed the controversial document known as the Internal Settlement of 3 March 1978. This facilitated the formation of an interim government to function until the elections to be held in February 1979. By then it was hoped, both Muzorewa and Sithole would have persuaded the Patriotic Front guerillas to surrender. This paper is concerned most with the military implications of this development and how they impacted on civil-military relations on the ground in rural Zimbabwe. First it is important to note that the Internal Settlement also signaled the implementation of a secret military plan by the Security forces code-named 'Operation Favour', designed to facilitate the much waited for surrender of the guerillas. The plan provided for the retreat of regular troops from operational areas and their replacement by pseudo-operations such as the Selous Scouts and later the auxiliaries.<sup>36</sup> In practice this meant leaving civilians at the mercy of these pseudo-groups as well as inexperienced and less professional soldiers. Meanwhile, there is no doubt

<sup>34</sup>Box 05149 Government Medical Officer Fort Victoria to D.C. Chibi, 6 July 1978.

<sup>35</sup>P. Godwin & I. Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die!* (Baobab, Harare, 1993) pp. 255-256.

<sup>36</sup>For a detailed treatment of 'Operation Favour' see H. Ellert, *Rhodesian Front War: Counter-insurgency and Guerilla Warfare 1962-1980*, (Mambo, Gweru, 1993) pp. 179-195.

that neither Muzorewa nor Sithole had any genuine guerilla support; it is also clear, according to Stiff, that both used the auxiliary concept and the money it generated as a means of producing private armies from nothing.<sup>37</sup>

The failure of the envisaged guerilla surrender forced the security forces to implement the second and more aggressive phase of 'Operation Favour', which involved the large scale training of the auxiliaries on Special Branch establishments known as 'Mujibha farms'. One such establishment near Chivi was 'Maybrook farm' or *kwaMabhurungu* in Mashaba where suspected *mijibha* in the area which meant every young man to the security forces- were abducted, forcibly trained on a 3 months or less crash programme, depending on demand.<sup>38</sup> Two more 2RAR companies had been deployed in the district by July 1978, with 'D' company operating from the north, while 'C' company joined parts of 'A' in the South. With heliborne troops new positioned at either Buffalo Range or Shabani, they could enjoy more prompt reactions to mount an effective fire-force in less than 20 minutes.<sup>39</sup>

The Maybrook project was supplemented by yet another project at Manenji. However, as the hostage recruits were mostly *ex-mijibha*, they quickly accumulated a reputation for insubordination as well as indiscipline.<sup>40</sup> For Chivi, 'Operation Favour' was implemented in early 1979, just in time for the elections. Thus the American John Cronin entered the district with a new breed of Selous Scouts in mid January and by the end of February hordes of Maybrook graduates or the auxiliaries were pouring into the district.<sup>41</sup>

Meanwhile the guerillas were perfecting what they had also established as a training camp for *mujibhas* who had distinguished themselves at Munaka Range near Berejena, and the first graduates of this camp had already joined the guerilla sections operating to the north of the district by the close of 1978.<sup>42</sup> This camp, many guerillas claim, continued to operate undiscovered until independence.<sup>43</sup> However guerilla intelligence had managed to infiltrate the local security forces

<sup>37</sup>P. Stiff, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War*, (Galago, Alberton, 1982) p. 541.

<sup>38</sup>See Ellert *Rhodesian Front War* pp. 186-7, Tungamirayi 'Recruitment to ZANLA' p. 43, Wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*, p. 312. Interviews with Sekuru Banda: 17/6/98, Chibi Mission & Cde Jocks 23/4/97 Chibi.

<sup>39</sup>Wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison* p. 294, See also Alan Thrush *Of Lands and Spirits* (Transition, Guernsey 1997).

<sup>40</sup>Wood, *The War Diaries of Andre-Dennison*. p. 312.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 229, 312.

<sup>42</sup>Local attempts by guerillas to train cadres are not only peculiar to Chivi. In his unpublished B.A. Honours dissertation Brigadier Trust Mugoba identified similar developments in other sectors within Gaza province such as Mberengwa and Gezani although he emphasises that talk of well established and static training bases could be an over-exaggeration.

<sup>43</sup>Interviews with Godfrey Zibako 22/6/98 Shokoni, Wellington Mugabe, 27/6/98, Mapuvire.

establishments resulting in the bombardment of *kwaMabhunungu* in April 1979 that freed a number of the young male hostages.<sup>44</sup>

Likewise, ill-discipline was not uncommon amongst the new breed of guerillas as well, especially now that the command structure was being stretched over the swelling number of forces. Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi captures from the ZANLA archives explicit examples of serious disciplinary problems amongst guerillas operating in Gaza province and indeed in Chivi at this time. By 1978, she observes, Gaza's Provincial Operations Commander Freddie Matanga was finding it difficult to contain the problem of undisciplined guerillas, some of whom 'had become very daring and made arrogant assertions with little regard for the importance of rank in the military'.<sup>45</sup> In Gaza province's Sector 2 which encompassed Chivi's Makonese, Madhlangove, Berejena and Nemavuzhe areas where the disciplinary situation was reportedly satisfactory, Simbanegavi identified a number of cases which had forced the guerilla commander to execute physical punishment in the form of "a few strokes on the back" of offending guerillas.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, as Alexander observes, the growing pressure on guerillas from auxiliary forces, their own increasing numbers, younger age and inexperience led them to make 'unreasonable' demands on the civilian population.<sup>47</sup> Certain elements amongst these new guerillas in Chivi targeted local buses and literally robbed them and their passengers of cash, while a considerable number of impostors escaped.<sup>48</sup> By this time, the majority of *mijibha* had been transformed into lower echelon guerillas, with many of their duties having been transferred to the more juvenile sections of the community or *zvigubhu* literally 'message drums' relaying messages from one point to the other.<sup>49</sup>

Of concern, however, are the implications to the civilian population of such a militarized environment. The net effect of this development on local social relations was devastating.

Families of those abducted and serving with the auxiliaries or 2RAR soon joined the class of a different sort of 'sell-outs' the victims of circumstance-torn between protecting their family members and the guerillas. Peter Stiff confirms that in some areas it had become a practice

<sup>44</sup>Wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*.

<sup>45</sup>J. Nhongo-Simbanegavi 'Zimbabwean Women In The Liberation Struggle: ZNLA and its Legacy 1972-1985' Unpublished D. Phil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1997 p. 192.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>47</sup>Alexander, 'Things Fall Apart' p. 178.

<sup>48</sup>Interview with Venesiya Chifove and Elias Manyatera 22/7/98 Jaka Chishozhova.

<sup>49</sup>Interview with T. t. Mhazo, Chibi Mission 16/7/98.

to remove the families of African Scouts, particularly former guerillas from their home areas, taking them to Inkomo if they were in danger. This practice was not so common in Chivi and this put family members of local security forces at risk. Headman Mhlambi of Muvhundusi village near the Chibi Mission whose son Bhuyana was serving with 2RAR 'A' company, was alleged to have revealed the presence of a landmine laid by guerillas at Chihava to his son. As a result he was abducted, summarily tried before a guerilla kangaroo court and flogged to death.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, some of the rural nationalists that had been released from detention by the 1978 general amnesty, like Zvovurere, were again forced to leave the district in the manner their colleagues had done in 1975. The situation grew even more tense on the eve of the elections of 1979.

### **'Of Guns and Ballots,' The Elections of 1979.**

Preparations for the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia elections in the district began as early as January 1979 with the garrisoning of the Chibi administrative centre. This was followed by intensive auxiliary training, the plan as Ellert puts it, being to flood the district with U. A. N. C. supporters to garner popular support for Muzorewa. These auxiliaries, he argues were given clear instructions to round up villagers at election days and transport them to polling stations.<sup>52</sup> On 26 March, Muzorewa and Zindoga arrived at Chibi office to address a campaign rally of a mere 350 people that had been forcibly brought by security forces. Another 350 were brought in to listen to Sithole a week later.<sup>53</sup> To the guerillas, attending these rallies was a crime and some of these civilians did not go unpunished.<sup>54</sup> By 15 April the polling stations had already been established and guarded, with a mobile polling station having been made available from Jaka.<sup>55</sup> However towards election time many people from the latter area, including those from Mafenga to the north and Sese further south were abducted by security forces and bundled up in a semi - Protected Village at Ngomahuru hospital across the Tugwi in order to vote from there. This attempt to force people to vote was foiled by guerillas led by comrade Nylon operating in the Mushawasha Native Purchase Area, who bombarded the camp and freed the people.<sup>56</sup>

The elections were generally characterised by a poor turn out coupled

<sup>50</sup>Stiff, *Selous Scouts; Top Secret War*, p. 541.

<sup>51</sup>Interview with Matorasi Mhlambi 13/7/98 Tugwane, See also wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*, p. 192.

<sup>52</sup>Ellert, *Rhodesia Front War*, p. 192.

<sup>53</sup>Wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*, pp. 315.

<sup>54</sup>Interview with C. Vengesai.

<sup>55</sup>Wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*, pp. 316-318. Interview with Matorasi Mhlambi 13/7/98 Tugwane, See also wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison*, p. 192.

<sup>56</sup>Interviews with Venesiya Chifove, Elias Manyatera and Boriface Jaka.

“Where Civil Blood Made Soldiers’ Hands Unclean”

with diligent but futile attempts by security forces to drag people to vote amidst conflict with sections of guerillas trying to stop the fraud. In the end only 23.3% of the Chibi electorate made it to the polls. Of this, Chirau's ZUPO and spoil papers both claimed over 10% of the votes in the district, the remainder being Chibi's contribution to the outcome of the 1979 elections at national level.<sup>57</sup> A journalist with the *Sunday Telegraph* covering the elections in Chibi remarked that the low turn out was attributable to:

A lack of understanding about the election itself (by the voters). Despite a widespread publicity campaign, the trickle of people filing through the Chibi polling station seemed to have little idea of what they were doing or why they were doing it ...<sup>58</sup>

She had not however comprehended the role of security forces coercion in the election although a few days before in the *Daily Telegraph* she had made reports that some ZANLA guerillas had ordered 5000 people to vote for Muzorewa.<sup>59</sup> These were of course auxiliaries posing as guerillas in Muzorewa's election plan elaborated by Ellert above. In fact many local civilians had taken precautions having been warned by the ZANLA guerillas that they would face the consequences if they exposed themselves to forced voting by the security forces. Some took refuge in caves while others went to even greater heights, in Mberengwa for example, Nyathi, the headmaster of Musume Secondary School went to the extent of closing the school so as not to expose the school pupils to abduction during the election.<sup>60</sup>

After the elections, the guerillas fought on while security forces registered more problems with their African recruits. Indiscipline and desertion was rampant, while pro-Sithole auxiliaries vented their anger on civilians in the wake of Muzorewa's 'victory' in the elections.<sup>61</sup> In May 1979 the auxiliaries had to be withdrawn, leaving the district in the hands of pseudo-operations who continuously terrorized civilians. Meanwhile, as deliberations at Lancaster House took place, the belligerent forces in the field continued to exchange shots, so that even with the announcement of ceasefire, it seemed that for a while, nobody was inclined to observe it. As late as 20 February 1980, the Selous Scouts were still terrorising civilians, this time their victim was Fr. Killian Huesser, a Catholic priest at Berejena mission who was

<sup>57</sup>T. Rich, 'The Muzorewa Election: A Preliminary Analysis of Electoral Response', Unpublished Seminar Paper, Department of History, University of Zimbabwe, 1980, p. 12.

<sup>58</sup>*The Sunday Telegraph*, 22 April 1979.

<sup>59</sup>*The Daily Telegraph*, 20 April 1980.

<sup>60</sup>Bhebe, *The ZANU and ZAPU Guerilla Warfare*, p. 222.

<sup>61</sup>See Ellert, *Rhodesian Front War* p. 192.

murdered in front of school children.<sup>62</sup>

### *Conclusion*

War-time coercion in rural Rhodesia can be easily analysed from a period perspective. This paper has attempted to show that violence escalated with the increasing number of belligerent forces on Chivi soil. While it was the absolute aim of Rhodesian Security forces to exterminate the guerillas once and for all, this objective could not be achieved without victimising the civilians in the process. Similarly, guerillas being what they were in strategic terms, they could not launch any meaningful offensive without ensuring their security among the civilians and this could mean ensuring regular and adequate supplies of food and other provisions as well as getting rid of those, apart from the Rhodesian forces, that could threaten such security, which indirectly meant certain sections of the civilian population. Thus for either side, the political motive for fighting the war 'justified' the military means through which it was fought. Thus Clausewitz aptly characterized war as merely 'the extension of political policy by other means', that 'means' consisting in the application of force or threat of use of force.<sup>63</sup> After 1978 several political motives were represented in the battlefield, leading to much confusion, the Rhodesian Front represented by COMOPS supposedly working together with Muzorewa and Sithole represented on their part by respective groups of auxiliaries, while on the other hand ZANU was first represented by ZANLA guerillas and later by locally trained cadres as well as some disproportionately armed *mijibha*. It is not only acknowledged here that each representation was not averse to the use of force, as has been shown, to achieve their respective political objectives but also that such strategies directly victimised the civilian population. Perhaps the most illustrative description of the predicament of the civilian population in rural Rhodesia is given by Michael Evans who concluded:

"... Deterrence ruled and the hapless tribespeople *sic* were in the hopeless position of facing execution by insurgents as 'sell outs' if they co-operated with (Rhodesian) authorities and prison and hanging if they did not.<sup>64</sup>

Suffice it here to say the Chivi experience summed up here is not the only one of its kind during this period.

<sup>62</sup>See J. Frederickse; *None But Ourselves: Masses vs Media In the Making of Zimbabwe*, (Anvil/OTAZI, Harare 1982) pp. for the full story.  
<sup>63</sup>P. Pareet, 'Clausewitz' in P. Pareet et al. (eds), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli To The Nuclear Age*, (Princeton, 1986) pp. 200,207.  
<sup>64</sup>M. Evans; *Fighting Against Chimurenga: An Analysis of Counter-Insurgency In Rhodesia 1972-9*, The Historical Association of Zimbabwe, Local series 37 1981 p. 13.





