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HEROES, HERETICS AND HISTORIANS OF THE ZIMBABWE REVOLUTION: A REVIEW ARTICLE OF NORMA KRIGER'S 'PEASANT VOICES' (1992)[1]

S. ROBINS

Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of the Western Cape

> . . . Mrs M, 43, said she was arrested at her home . . . She said the CIO was looking for her brother, and had arrested every member of her family, including four sisters and another brother, a number of her brother's employees, her niece, and two friends — eighteen people in all. She said all of them were taken to Stops Camp . . .
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> "At Stops the CIO took me into an empty room. The place was terrible. The floor was covered with water and blood. The CIO man said, 'Where is your brother?' I said, 'I don't know.' Then they tortured me. They made me sit down on the floor. My hands were handcuffed behind my back, my legs manacled in front. They took a post office bag, a canvas post office bag, filled with water, and dunked my head into it. Then they pulled the string tight around my neck, so tight that when you sit up, the water doesn't drop out. Not one drop of water leaked out. They then started choking me with their hands, their thumbs, their fingers. The man said, 'Where is your brother?' There were so many officers, about five of them. You choke, gag, swallow the water, choke on it, blow it out through your nose and ears. The water goes down your windpipe, you gag, blow it out again. It was about two minutes before I passed out. Then they took the bag and revived me . . . The last time, they had to use artificial respiration to revive me . . ." (Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, 1986), 92–94.

A SOUTH AFRICAN prison in the dark days of apartheid? No, Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, in the early 1980s. These voices go on and on recollecting the pain and terror while the human rights lawyers tape the testimonies. Pages and pages on torture, detention without trial, political intimidation . . . However, we will never hear the testimonies of the multitudes of Ndebele-speakers who disappeared at the hands of the notorious Fifth Brigade during the 1980s. The official silence on these atrocities is devastating, but equally disturbing has been the silence of many academics who have written about Zimbabwe's recent past. The 1990s have, however, witnessed the beginnings of a break in this academic silence (Werbner, 1991; Ranger, 1992; Bhebe and Ranger, 1995). In the age of South Africa's Truth Commission, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, and the killing fields of Rwanda and KwaZulu-Natal, it is critical for academics to

[1] This article benefited from the constructive comments of M.F.C. Bourdillon, N. Bhebe and M. Last.

address questions of political violence and state terror. The reasons for past silences in Zimbabwe's historiography need to be explored and disclosed.

The recent history of post-war Matabeleland raises troubling questions about how historical narratives are constructed under conditions of nationalist triumphalism, and how scholars may find themselves unwitting accomplices in producing these heroic accounts that become 'national truths' that children learn in text books such as *Zimbabwe: A New History: History for Upper Primary School* (1982) written by G. Seidman, D. Martin and P. Johnson. While individual scholars are beginning to write about post-independence Matabeleland (see Werbner, 1991), official accounts continue to remain focused on the heroic liberation narrative that culminated in ZANU's triumph. However, traces of the memories of the beatings, torture, death and disappearances of countless Ndebele-speakers are likely to continue to haunt Zimbabwe much like angry and restless *amadlozi* (ancestors) who have not been properly laid to rest. Similarly, the biases in the official accounts of the role of ZAPU and ZIPRA in the liberation struggle need to be addressed. While these revisits to the past are in fact beginning to take place in academic historiography (see Bhebe and Ranger, 1995), it remains to be seen how, if at all, these academic interventions are reflected in public histories, archives, museum exhibits, art, television documentaries, theatre and school text books.

The Zimbabwean state has incorporated influential academic accounts of the guerrilla war by T. O. Ranger (1985) and David Martin and Phyllis Johnson (1981), incorporated into a mythology of nation-building that privileged the role of ZANU in the anti-colonial struggle. In this account, the guerrilla violence was represented as heroic resistance in a sanitised form that elided references to the killings of alleged 'sellouts' and witches, whereas in South Africa the television, radio and print media have given prominence to the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and have opened up a highly visible public accounting of the complexities and ambiguous character of 'the struggle'. While official narratives of South Africa's liberation struggle continue to highlight its heroic and triumphant character, the TRC hearings allowed a multiplicity of voices to be heard that testify not only to the torture and killing of anti-apartheid activists by agents of the South African state, but also the painful memories of White victims of ANC bombers, the violence of ANC torture camps and the mob terror, 'necklacings' of alleged informers and 'enemies of the people' by people's courts. Although it was initiated by the ANC-led government, the TRC hearings have complicated and decentred the heroic struggle narratives and allowed for a far less monologic account of the past than was initially anticipated. Journalist reports of the hearings referred to the 'rivers of tears' that flowed from the testimonies of violence

against civilians situated on all sides of the conflict. This multiplicity of harrowing testimonies by victims of violence was beamed into the homes of millions of South Africans as part of a nation-building exercise that was seen to depend on national catharsis and the public revelation of the devastating impact of violence deployed against civilians.

No equivalent process has been dealt with in post-independent Zimbabwe. Neither guerrilla violence nor the state terror unleashed against civilians during the 'dissident war' in Matabeleland in the 1980s has been dealt with along the lines of a Truth Commission. Instead, the official silence continues. This official silence is maintained by media censorship, for example, in the case of the initial banning of Ingrid Sinclair's film *Flame*, a documentary that demythologises the guerrilla struggle by revealing the rape of female fighters. The Zimbabwe War Veterans Association was outraged by the film and demanded that it be banned. The film was initially confiscated on the grounds of being pornographic but was later officially passed without cuts. As the *Mail and Guardian* (May 10, 1996) reviewer Andrew Worsdale commented, 'This [film] is not the vitriolic stuff that endorses heroes; rather it's a real, down-to-earth and poignant drama about the realities of war.' Zimbabwe's historiography has its fair share of texts that have disregarded the grim 'realities of war' and produced instead heroic narratives about African nationalism that are readily appropriated as official history by post-colonial African governments.

This article reviews Norma Kriger's *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices*[2] (1992) with the intention of using her work to interrogate academic silences on violence and coercion during and after the Zimbabwe liberation struggle. While Kriger concentrates on the period of the liberation struggle (c. 1970–80), she also suggests that practices of guerrilla violence and coercion forged during this period influenced the authoritarian character of the state during the post-war era. While Kriger is correct to point to official and academic silences about the use of violence during the liberation struggle, my own research in Matabeleland in 1990–92 challenges both Ranger's and Lan's representations of an over-arching radical peasant consciousness as well as Kriger's depiction of a reluctant peasantry coerced into supporting the guerrillas. The life history material I present demonstrates that local responses were so variable over time and place that no generalisation about peasant support or coercion is possible. Instead, local villagers entered into complex, contradictory and ambiguous relationships with guerrillas that often included both voluntary support

[2] I use the term 'peasant' with reservations. Except in cases where the authors refer specifically to the term, I will use alternative terminology, for example, 'rural Africans'. For an overview of debates on the term, see Frederick Cooper's seminal article (1980).

and acquiescence to guerrilla coercion. Villagers deployed a rich repertoire of survival tactics in their encounters with potentially dangerous and violent 'outsiders', including the Rhodesian Security Forces, youthful 'messengers' of the guerrillas (*mijiba*) and the two guerrilla armies. Playing the wrong card in such encounters could result in death.

Silences in the accounts of Matabeleland's recent past arise from the dichotomous characterisation of the war of liberation by historians such as Ranger and Lan in terms of which the guerrilla armies are seen to be 'totally heroic' and the Rhodesian Security Forces 'totally repressive'. While by no means wishing to deny the blatantly repressive measures deployed by the Security Forces, it seems that these dichotomies contributed to the academic silence throughout the 1980s about 'ethnic cleansing' in Matabeleland. This bipolar vision produced a failure on the part of historians to recognise the continuity in a culture of violence and authoritarianism that emerged during the guerrilla war. Yet, this bipolar vision of the liberation struggle produced accolades and praise from the scholars and former guerrillas who now run the post-colony.

Scholars such as T. O. Ranger (1985), David Lan (1985) and David Martin and Phyllis Johnson (1981) became the more than willing scribes of a celebratory African nationalist history that profoundly shaped official accounts of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. Martin and Johnson's *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: the Chimurenga War*, provided an unambigously heroic narrative that was incorporated into school text books. Throughout the 1980s, these scholars showed no signs of reflexivity about the problematic ways in which their work was appropriated by ZANU (PF). Following independence, when the state turned to violent repression in Matabeleland, they had very little to say about the sweet revolution that had turned so sour. It was only over a decade after independence that Ranger 'confessed' to having neglected this violent episode of post-independence Zimbabwe history. As a result, Ranger (1995) and students of his such as Jeremy Brickhill (1995) have recently begun to redress the silences in Zimbabwe's historiography.

In an article in Bhebe's and Ranger's edited volume, *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War Vol. One* (1995), Dumiso Dabengwa, a former ZIPRA intelligence officer and presently a Minister in the Mugabe Government, makes a passionate and eloquent call to address the silences and biases of academic narratives of Zimbabwe's recent past.

> For too long historians have failed our people because of their timidity, sectarianism and outright opportunism. Conditions should be created in Zimbabwe wherein a new breed of social scientist . . . can emerge. This class of scholars should be capable of withstanding threats and intimidation and will rise above those racial, ethnic and tribal considerations [and] oppose the suppression of any information . . . A

> complete history of the struggle for national liberation is a long way from being produced and will only be achieved when the chroniclers of the struggle are no longer afraid to confront the truth head-on and openly, and have rid themselves of biases resulting from our recent political past — a past which saw the brutal killings of innocent people in the name of unity, peace, stability and progress. Unless our scholars can rise above the fear of being isolated and even victimized for telling the truth we shall continue to be told half-truths, or outright lies which will not help unite our nation . . . Anything short of a tradition of selfless inquiry and exposure of the truth will certainly lead to a nation of sycophants and robots who do not possess the power of independent thought which we should all cherish . . . (p. 24).

Norma Kriger is one of the few scholars who appeared to have had the courage and independence of thought to write against the grain at a time when most scholars refrained from challenging the officially sanctioned heroic narratives of the liberation struggle. Richard Werbner's *Tears of the Dead* (1991) is another book that falls outside the genre of 'praise texts'.[3] Werbner's book addresses the human rights violations and 'disappearances' in Matabeleland in the 1980s, and like Kriger's book, is unlikely to win friends within the ZANU (PF) inner circle.

By drawing attention to violent and reactionary tendencies within the liberation movement, Kriger opened herself up to criticisms by 'progressive' scholars of Zimbabwe, many of whom I heard dismiss her as a 'White South African reactionary', a 'sell-out'. While in the mid-1990s it is more acceptable and fashionable to be critical of Zimbabwe's ruling party and its revolutionary past, and one can do this without any danger of being branded a 'sell-out', when Kriger's book was published this was certainly not the line amongst influential scholars of Zimbabwe, and her book was not received favourably. While one expected such a response from the defensive post-independent government, it was surprising that progressive scholars were so intolerant of a study that demythologised the liberation struggle. In focusing on coercive peasant mobilisation by the guerrilla armies, Kriger ended up being accused by some of the more 'patriotic' scholars as having 'betrayed the revolution'.

One of the more legitimate criticisms of Kriger's zealously revisionist approach is that by focusing on guerrilla violence and coercion, she fails to recognise the variety and complexity of the responses of rural Africans during the war. Despite this shortcoming, Kriger does draw attention to the consequences and legacies of violence, and thereby points to the silences of the 'praise texts' of the 1980s, which all ignore both guerrilla violence and the authoritarian culture of state terror in post-war

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[3] I borrowed the term from Murray Last, whose insightful comments assisted me in thinking through some of the issues raised in the article.

Matabeleland. While questions of violence both during and following the war are beginning to be addressed (Bhebe and Ranger, 1995), there remains a dearth of studies on the long-term consequences of the culture of terror forged by *both* the Rhodesian Security Forces and the guerrillas.

Despite my criticisms of the failure of historians to challenge official public history, formerly taboo topics do indeed appear in Bhebe's and Ranger's edited volumes, *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War, Vol. One* (1995) and *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War, Vol. Two* (1995). In the introduction to the first volume, the editors write that the book challenges an orthodoxy 'which gives all the credit to ZANLA and none to ZIPRA, and which hightlights some elements within ZANLA while denigrating others' (p. 3).

> . . . The 'authorised' account (of the liberation struggle) by Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, which was distributed to all Zimbabwean secondary schools, constitutes, in David Moore's words, 'a singular and celebratory narrative buttressing ZANU (PF)'s claims to power'. . . (p. 6).

The articles in Bhebe's and Ranger's *Soldiers* deal with the complexities of the liberation struggle and the violence deployed by all parties to the conflict. While these books are to be welcomed for finally addressing these questions, we need to continue to reflect upon Dumiso Dabengwa's comment, 'Historians have failed our people'. Why did so many scholars remain silent about Zimbabwe's recent past?

Now more than ever before there is a need for historians of Matabeleland to break the official silence about the torture rooms at Stops Camp where Ndebele-speakers such as Mrs M were choked and gagged. The voices of people such as Mrs M have, like the history of post-independence Zimbabwe itself, been gagged and silenced by fears of a defensive Zimbabwe state. Is there ever going to be a Truth Commission in Zimbabwe to retrieve these memories of violence and suffering? Perhaps this work has already begun, thanks to the efforts of scholars such as Richard Werbner (1991).[4]

VOICES FROM 'THE FIELD': CHALLENGES TO THE 'PRAISE TEXTS'

Kriger's *Peasant Voices* challenges influential studies such as T. O. Ranger's *Peasant Consciousness and the Guerrilla War* (1985), David Lan's *Guns and*

[4] Scholars concerned with political violence could benefit enormously from studies of violence such as Allen Feldman's *Formations of Violence* (1991). In his study of political violence in Protestant and Catholic working-class districts of Belfast, Northern Ireland, Feldman observes that transactions in violence are located in bodily practices rather than at some Archimedean point or site of origin — such as Nationalist ('Catholic') or Loyalist ('Protestant') ideology — removed from the actual performance of violence on the body. This performative perspective on violence would allow us to consider how practices of state, guerrilla and 'dissident' violence were forged during violent transactions during the liberation struggle.

Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe (1985) and Martin and Johnson's *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (1981). It also challenges scholars whose support of African nationalism resulted in the production of 'praise texts'. Drawing on oral interviews in Mutoko district, north-eastern Zimbabwe, in the early 1980s, Kriger argues that peasant-guerrilla interactions were generally experienced as coercive.[5] Moreover, far from viewing the peasantry as an undifferentiated mass of heroic participants in the liberation struggle, Kriger concludes that the arrival of the guerrillas in villages in the 1970s exacerbated serious, and at times, violent cleavages and conflicts within these communities based on gender, age and lineage.

Kriger's interviews also lead her to infer that the authoritarian nature of the post-colonial state and party relations with the peasantry can only be understood in terms of the legacy of coercive guerrilla-peasant relations forged during the war. In other words, coercion and authoritarianism during the guerrilla struggle shaped post-war political tendencies and outcomes. I would suggest that this also perhaps accounts for why, so soon after independence, ZANU was able to mandate the Fifth Brigade ('Gukurahundi')[6] to crush violently opposition to the ruling party in Matabeleland.

There is an urgent need in Zimbabwe to uncover and confront the shadow side of the liberation struggle. Yet, drawing attention to the dark side of liberation does not deny the genuinely heroic and courageous sacrifices of many African nationalists and ordinary citizens, many of whom were not complicit in coercion and political violence against civilians. Neither should it blind us to the moral and ethical justification for waging the liberation struggle in the first place. These issues, however, become blurred and at times elided in Kriger's account due to what I regard as an over-zealous and excessive concentration on guerrilla coercion and violence. Nevertheless, Kriger's work raises important ethical considerations concerning public history, the politics of representation and the character of structures of academic silence. It also draws attention to the problems that may arise when expatriate students, scholars and key academic gatekeepers practice self-censorship for fear of jeopardising research clearance permits and academic careers. These considerations can all impact upon what is written and what is excluded from academic texts.

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[5] In contrast to Kriger's conclusions, however, my own research in Matabeleland in 1990–92 suggests that many villagers did not characterise peasant-guerrilla interactions in negative and coercive terms. Although there were no doubt incidents of coercive recruitment and demands for logistical support for the guerrillas, many Ndebele-speaking villagers portrayed the ZIPRA guerrilla army as a popular liberation army.

[6] In their book, *Zimbabwe: A New History: History for Upper Primary School* (1982), G. Seidman, D. Martin and P. Johnson, refer to 'Gore reGukurahundi' as the 'Year of the Storm'. The use of this term is attributed to Robert Mugabe, who used it in 1979 to refer to the liberation war. In the mid-1980s, Gukurahundi was used to refer to the Fifth Brigade.

Ranger has recently conceded that his 1985 book, *Peasant Consciousness and the Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, uncritically celebrated the liberation struggle from ZANU's perspective.[7] This 'confession', coming from such an accomplished and respected historian, is of extreme significance and needs to be taken seriously. He now acknowledges that *Peasant Consciousness* not only marginalised the role of ZAPU and ZIPRA, but was also silent about the state terror in Matabeleland in the 1980s. Ranger's attempt to redress these shortcomings has led him to re-examine an earlier tradition of pre-1960s proto-nationalist politics in Matabeleland. He finds that earlier more pluralistic political traditions were erased and eradicated with the rise of hegemonic 'Maoist-Leninist-Marxist' nationalist politics in the 1960s. His desire to 'rediscover' earlier, more plural political traditions is a response to his current distaste for ZANU's uncompromising and authoritarian mode of political mobilisation based on 'unity at all costs'.

This earlier pluralist tradition of alliance politics, with its tolerance of ideological, cultural and religious diversity, is more compatible with the contemporary intellectual environment, as well as Ranger's moral discomfort with the violent excesses and authoritarianism of the liberation struggle. What this shift in perspective indicates is the point, perhaps by now quite obvious, that history is written with political, intellectual and ethical considerations of the present in mind. It also points to the need for a more reflexive historical engagement that acknowledges and makes explicit these considerations and contexts. During the liberation struggle there was little space for criticism of the liberation movement, even for those scholars politically opposed to the Rhodesian regime — you were either part of the solution or part of the problem. Now, more than a decade after independence, it has become acceptable to criticise what was once viewed by some scholars as a pure and glorious revolution. Norma Kriger took the brave plunge into this critical role before it was fashionable.

In the following section I discuss some of the key themes and insights of Kriger's book, as well as its shortcomings and limitations. I include a discussion of her theoretical ruminations on the character of peasant politics and revolutions.

STORIES OF GUNS AND RAIN

Kriger claims that most studies of peasant revolutions tend to privilege the nationalist agenda of the peasant elite leadership. By concentrating on

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[7] Ranger spoke about these issues in 1995 at a seminar in the Department of History, University of the Western Cape.

the nationalist project of these revolutionary organisations, such studies end up silencing the voices of the peasantry (1992, 29). To counteract this tendency, Kriger focuses on peasant experiences and perceptions of the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe. This focus on 'voices from below' seeks to challenge 'history from above' by providing what Kriger perceives as a necessary corrective to studies that fail adequately to take into account the multiplicity of motives, intentions and aspirations of individuals involved in the nationalist struggle. However, I will suggest through life history material that Kriger is also unable to do justice to this quest to take into account multiple motives. This shortcoming arises from her commitment to a theoretical perspective in terms of which coercion assumes central significance. Her peasant voices become necessary evidence for her thesis that not all successful revolutions require voluntary participation.

Peasant Voices touches a raw nerve with scholars sympathetic to the nationalist project by questioning the existence and efficacy of a radical nationalist ideology. She argues that while Ranger and Lan imagine a 'radical peasant consciousness' and popular support for the guerrillas, her peasant interviewees speak of villages ruptured by intra-community cleavages, and of peasants constantly seeking to evade the onerous demands of the guerrillas. It was only by resorting to coercion, she concludes, that the guerrillas were able to mobilise the rural masses.

Kriger's analysis of the linkages between this coercive form of guerrilla political mobilisation and post-war outcomes for the peasantry lead her to three controversial and provocative conclusions. First, she claims that the guerrillas were unable to mobilise openly due to the pervasive presence of the Rhodesian Security Forces and were therefore compelled to use coercive means of ensuring peasant compliance and logistical support. Second, the authoritarian nature of the post-colonial state and party relations with the peasantry in Zimbabwe in the 1980s can be explained as a legacy of coercive guerrilla-peasant relations during the war. Third, this legacy is held responsible for the submissive and passive character of post-war peasant politics in Zimbabwe. Kriger concludes that peasants in the post-colony continue to fear the ruling party 'because of their experience of coercion from its guerrilla representatives during the war and because local party representatives often continued to coerce peasants after the war' (1992, 8). Kriger's observations about the legacy of coercive peasant-guerrilla relations are also relevant in terms of understanding the authoritarian character and top-down implementation of rural development schemes in contemporary Zimbabwe.

However, Kriger's work is based on research done in a Shona-speaking part of the country and her findings may not be applicable to other parts of the country. In Matabeleland, for example, there were two competing

guerrilla armies. Whereas ZIPRA were generally regarded by Ndebele-speakers as the 'homeboys' (*bafana* or *obhuti*), ZANLA guerrillas were often regarded by Ndebele villagers as Shona-speaking 'outsiders' (*opasi* or *amadzakudzaku*). My own field work findings in Matabeleland South Province in 1990–92 suggest that the specific configuration of guerrilla forces in Matabeleland shaped peasant-guerrilla relations and post-war outcomes in ways that were significantly different to Shona-speaking parts of the country. On the basis of conversations in Gwaranyemba Communal Area, I found that ZAPU allegiances had remained relatively intact despite its integration into ZANU (PF) following the signing of the Unity Agreement in 1987. Former ZAPU Members of Parliament continued to be voted into office, and Joshua Nkomo was still held in high esteem, especially amongst older Ndebele-speakers. Hidden loyalties towards ZAPU and its military wing also seemed to have survived despite individual experiences of guerrilla violence, intimidation and coercion.

Apart from the problem of generalising from a specific locality, another even more problematic aspect of the book emerges from Kriger's tendency to draw on dichotomies between resistance and compliance, and between coercion and popular support. Before addressing this problem, however, I will briefly discuss Kriger's critique of the literature on guerrilla wars.

PEASANT CONSCIOUSNESS AND THEORIES OF STRUCTURE AND AGENCY: 'VOICES' THAT DEBUNK POLITICAL SCIENCE THEORIES

Research on peasant mobilisation and guerrilla-peasant relations during the war has received considerable attention in recent years (Ranger, 1985; Lan, 1985; Kriger, 1988, 1992). In *Peasant Consciousness and the Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe* (1985), Ranger writes about the emergence of a radical nationalist consciousness in the countryside during the liberation war. Ranger traces the evolution of radical peasant consciousness to accumulated grievances that include colonial conquest and the alienation of land, as well as authoritarian colonial state intervention from the 1930s onwards, especially the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951. The Land Husbandry Act was largely responsible for unpopular conservation policies such as compulsory contour ridging, destocking, as well as 'centralization' policies which sought to end the practice of shifting cultivation amongst its numerous other objectives. Ranger traces the rise of a radical peasant consciousness to the progressive undermining of the 'peasant option' resulting from these unpopular state interventions. A burgeoning class of better-off 'master farmers' were increasingly alienated from the colonial administration by the adverse economic consequences of these interventions, culminating in their embrace of the nationalist cause.

Acknowledging that the Zimbabwean peasantry has always been differentiated, Ranger's definition of peasant is sufficiently broad to include

worker-peasants, small peasant producers, rural entrepreneurs, teachers, storekeepers and businessmen. Ranger suggests that a cohesive peasant consciousness was forged in response to a common experience of exploitation and discrimination at the hands of an authoritarian colonial state. He stresses the efficacy of a radical peasant-guerrilla ideology that was capable of fusing together the divergent interests and agendas of a differentiated peasantry and a guerrilla army.

Ranger, like David Lan (1985), attributes to spirit mediums a pivotal role in the process of peasant mobilisation and the legitimation of the guerrillas. Lan argues that this process made possible the ousting of traditional leaders such as the chiefs and headmen, who had become discredited by their intimate association with the colonial administration. Michael Bourdillon has noted, however, that 'mediums derived at least as much status from the guerrillas as the other way round' (personal correspondence). Neither Lan nor Ranger seem seriously to entertain the possibility that mediums 'cooperated' with guerrillas either out of fear and intimidation and/or because of the power and legitimacy that accrued from such an 'alliance' (Bourdillon, 1984).

Without wishing to deny cases of voluntary cooperation between mediums and guerrillas, I remain sceptical of the rhetorical deployment by Lan of romanticised imagery of spirit mediums as uncontested 'authentic' owners of the land. In my opinion, the symbiotic relationship that was apparently forged between 'traditional' and 'modern' agents, between mediums and guerrillas, depends upon the persuasiveness of Lan's romantic representation of mediums and their legitimacy. It is only if we believe in their cultural authenticity that we can imagine mediums and guerrillas merging symbiotically through a process of revolutionary struggle. Fear of guerrilla violence and the lure of their power are not foregrounded by Lan as possible reasons for this 'alliance'.

Kriger challenges Ranger's and Lan's accounts of the rise of a radical nationalist consciousness, and argues instead that gender, generational and lineage tensions precipitated '*struggles within the struggle*' (see Kriger, 1988), and that these divisions undermined any attempts to forge a nationalist consciousness and solidarity in the countryside. Even more controversial, Kriger claims that it was not political mobilisation, persuasion and a radical peasant consciousness that won the war, but rather a coercive recruitment by the guerrillas. In other words, Kriger challenges the very notion that peasant mobilisation was successful due to a shared peasant-guerrilla ideology. Instead, she emphasises, and in my opinion over-emphasises, guerrilla coercion as the necessary ingredient for a successful revolution in Zimbabwe (1988, 312).

Kriger substantiates her argument with oral testimony that suggests that peasants only provided food, clothing, money and information to

guerrillas under duress. In addition, she argues that political mobilisation in the countryside failed to forge a nationalist solidarity, but merely served to heighten and exacerbate local conflicts and tensions.

> Looking at how the guerrilla war affected rural society, I found *gender, generational and lineage tensions to be at least of equal importance to class tensions within rural society* . . . these local level struggles preoccupied peasants (and) this leads me to challenge Ranger's concept of peasant radical nationalism. Because of the importance which I attribute to local struggles, and the considerable civilian and guerrilla violence and force that were employed by contestants, I am willing to talk of civil war . . . What I am describing is *a revolution within a revolution* (1988, 307 — emphasis added).

These observations by Kriger are deployed to overthrow structuralist theories that deny human agency, motives, intentions, dreams and hopes. In her critique of Theda Skocpol's 'States and Social Revolutions' (1979), Kriger challenges her contention that revolutions cannot be attributed to the mobilisation of a revolutionary movement but rather to the contradictions that emerge between particular structures, thereby precipitating crises. In Kriger's words,

> Structures appear in her (Skocpol's) work as determinate relations — of states, of the landed upper class and the state, of peasants and landlords — that are objective and impersonal (p. 6).

Skocpol's line of argument is that these structures shape the behaviour of differentially situated actors, and that the intentional actions of individuals may bring about unintended outcomes, which may reproduce or transform the structures that shape social action. From Skocpol's perspective, the beliefs, values, aims and intentions of participants in revolutions do not necessarily shed any light on revolutionary outcomes. This type of structuralist theorisation, Kriger argues, ignores the voice and agency of participants in such political processes. While Kriger recognises the problems inherent in relating such outcomes to the ideas, intentions and actions of individuals, she nevertheless still takes up the challenge of establishing the motives and interests of *peasants* participating in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle.

Kriger also criticises 'voluntarist' approaches (Migdal, 1974; Popkin, 1979) which suggest that revolutions do not succeed without 'popular support' and legitimacy. Samuel Popkin's *The Rational Peasant* portrays the peasant as a rational, cost-calculating individual who is unlikely to partake in costly collective action to bring about a revolution even though it would be in the common interests. This decision is shaped by the realisation that the public good derived from a revolution would be an 'open access' public good. Popkin suggests that the leadership can resort to two options. First, it can use coercion, threats of violence or withdrawal

of benefits in order to ensure peasant participation in collective action. Second, it can provide incentives and tangible benefits for participation in collective action, for example land reform, progressive tax and so on. Kriger challenges the assumptions of the 'voluntarist' theorists such as Popkin and Migdal for having failed to consider seriously the first option (coercion) as a 'viable' strategy in terms of a successful outcome for revolutionary mobilisation, that is revolution without popular support and legitimacy.

Kriger argues that Zimbabwe's revolution was successful in spite of a lack of popular support for the guerrillas. On the basis of oral interviews, she concludes that peasants did not on the whole support the guerrilla war and 'invented ways to avoid positions in the organisations because they perceived the work to be physically demanding and very risky' (p. 7). This evasivenes is attributed to the risks involved as well as the burdensome material and financial contributions demanded by the guerrillas. Since neither the ZANLA nor ZIPRA forces could offer tangible material and logistical incentives to induce 'rational peasants' voluntarily to participate in the war, the guerrillas were forced to opt for coercive methods to ensure active peasant participation. In addition, since the repressive capacity of the state prevented guerrillas from freely and openly mobilising the peasantry, they were forced to resort to a combination of coercion and cultural nationalist appeals. Hence the calls by the nationalists for a return to 'traditional' religion, customs, names, food, music, dress, *and* coercive methods of ensuring peasant compliance.

According to Kriger, coercion was an integral part of the nationalist programme of civil disobedience. Those that were in any way associated with the settler government, including 'master farmers', agricultural extension workers, storekeepers, the self-employed etc, were subjected to guerrilla surveillance and violent reprisals and retribution. The guerrillas also coerced peasants into defying regulations of the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, for example, contour ridge building, dipping cattle, destocking and so on. On the basis of such evidence of coercion, Kriger claims to have disposed of 'voluntarists', such as Migdal and Popkin, who erroneously assume that successful revolutions require popular support.

Kriger then proceeds to haul Eric Wolf (1969) and James Scott (1985) over the coals for focusing on peasants' relations to states, markets and landlords, to the exclusion of issues relating to internal peasant structure, that is social divisions along class, gender and generational lines. According to Kriger, Wolf's peasants participate in revolutions

> to restore their precapitalist institutions [and moral economy values] eroded by an exogenously imposed world capitalism . . . Peasants wish to free themselves of state control and subjection to the laws of markets [while] revolutionary organizations seek to extend the interventionist role of the state and centralize power further (p. 21).

Kriger criticises Scott's portrayal of peasants as striving to maintain pre-capitalist social institutions and values, and only being driven to revolt when their subsistence ethic and moral economy is violated, thereby threatening peasant security. She provides an alternative to both Wolf's and Scott's interpretations of peasant motives for participating in revolutions.

> Women, youth, subject clans, and the less well-off all had different motives for participating (in the Zimbabwe liberation struggle) because of their different structural positions in society. Both structuralists and voluntarists assume that markets, states, capitalism, imperialism, and other classes are the primary source of peasant woes. Peasant voices suggest peasants are more likely to blame their neighbors for their woes and act on this understanding of the source of their problems . . . Even if one chooses to see peasant anger turned inwards against other peasants as irrational, their ideas and actions are important for understanding revolutionary processes and outcomes (p. 21).

Kriger's work provides a detailed investigation into the ideas and actions of peasants generated by intra-village gender, generational and lineage tensions and competing interests and agendas. It is this aspect of her work that is most directly relevant to understanding the complex character of peasant-state relations in the post-war period. Her work raises a number of important questions. Under what conditions do individual peasant producers participate in acts of resistance to unpopular state intervention? Are the (male) large-scale cattle-owners, teachers and local businessmen usually the most articulate and politicised members of rural communities, as Ranger (1985) suggests, and are these generally the same individuals who participated in the nationalist struggle? Has this category of better-off farmer also usually been the most vocal and vociferous opposition to unpopular state interventions in the post-war era? These questions are important but Kriger does not really provide us with the answers.

WHOSE VOICES COUNT?

While Kriger's book provides some important observations that challenge heroic accounts of the liberation war, her evidence of systematic guerrilla coercion needs to be treated with considerable circumspection. Narrations of particular incidents of guerrilla coercion do not adequately reveal the complexities of peasant-guerrilla interactions and the extent of boundary crossing between compliance and resistance, and between coercion and voluntary participation. In drawing upon dichotomies between guerrilla coercion and peasant compliance, as well as between peasant resistance (and avoidance of guerrilla demands) and voluntary participation, Kriger fails to recognise the complex and subtle motivations, perceptions and

actions of peasants who deployed a variety of tactics of survival in their dealings with both the guerrillas and the Rhodesian Security Forces. For example, individual peasants may have supported the nationalist cause and yet been critical of the coercive methods deployed by guerrillas to extract logistical support and participation. In addition, while some peasants may have attempted to avoid the more burdensome guerrilla demands, this 'resistance' does not in any way imply a complete withdrawal of support for the nationalist cause.

My own research in Matabeleland indicates that peasants attempted to negotiate their participation in the war in a context where they often found themselves caught in the cross-fire of three armies — ZANLA, ZIPRA and the Rhodesian Security Forces. While I too came across accounts of guerrillas having resorted to coercion and violent reprisals against alleged 'sellouts', this did not in itself prove that the official strategy of the guerrillas was to deploy such practices against the civilian population. I would argue that Kriger fails to provide convincing evidence of the motives and objectives of either peasants or guerrillas. She also fails to problematise the relatively arbitrary and partial nature of her selection of the peasant voices.

The problem with Kriger's focus on a relatively small number of 'peasant voices' is that there are many possible Zimbabwe war narratives, and it is problematic to privilege either stories of coercion or those of voluntary participation.[8] In other words, there needs to be a recognition of the diversity of these war narratives. While Kriger does indeed provide convincing evidence that peasants resisted and evaded the demands of the guerrillas, she says very little about the tremendous sacrifices made by African peasants in supporting the struggle. Peasant evasiveness was merely one facet of a repertoire of peasant tactics for survival in a violent war. Over the past few decades Zimbabwean villagers have had to negotiate on a daily basis a dangerous, complex and shifting web of relations between suspicious neighbours, guerrillas, Rhodesian security forces, and agents of the colonial and post-colonial state. These dangers were brought home to me in 1990 by David Ncube,[9] a Gwaranyemba school teacher who related how he had survived the war.

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[8] This raises a number of thorny methodological problems in terms of Kriger's attempt to focus on 'direct peasant voices' (1992, 5–50). Which voices do you choose; are your informants using you as a vehicle for their own agendas, how can you bridge the gap between what people say and what they think and do? In what ways have informants shaped their responses to what they perceived Kriger's interests to be? While these questions may apply equally to all oral interview material, it is particularly relevant in this study. For example, the researcher is a White woman who did her research amongst people who were exposed to Rhodesian propaganda that attempted to convince Black Zimbabweans that 'terrorists' relied exclusively on violent coercion. This does not mean that her evidence ought to be discarded, but rather that it needs to be situated and contextualised.

[9] This name is fictitious, as are all the names of villagers in this article.

> When the White soldiers came I would tell them the guerrillas had come during the night but I did not know where they had gone in the morning. When the guerrillas came I would tell them the soldiers had come and asked questions. If I lied to them they would find out and I would be finished. That is how I survived the war (Sengezane Village, 1991).

Ncube's son had joined the guerrillas after being recruited or 'abducted' by guerrillas along with 200 other Manama Mission School pupils. He spoke of the fact that many neighbouring villagers had provided shelter and food to the ZIPRA guerrillas 'because they were our sons'. The guerrillas spent many a night at Ncube's homestead, including the night prior to the successful ZIPRA raid on the nearby Guyu administrative centre in the late 1970s. Ncube had also almost been killed by ZIPRA guerrillas because a villager had alleged that he was a 'sell-out'. Ncube was taken to a meeting in the bush where ZIPRA guerrillas interrogated him at length. Eventually, he was told he could return home. He told me he had thought that he would be killed that night. Shortly thereafter Ncube became a member of the ZAPU War Committee. His two younger sons, both of whom were messengers or runners (*amajiba*) for the guerrillas, used his car to transport guerrillas to the Botswana border. Despite Ncube's involvement on the ZAPU War Committee, when he received a message that the guerrillas (*bafana*) wanted money from him, he dressed in his most tattered clothes and went to tell them he had no cash. When they demanded a few pairs of shoes from the local store, he explained that this would not be wise because the shopkeeper would become suspicious. The guerrillas eventually accepted this argument and left with a small cash contribution.

While David Ncube may appear to have at times been evasive and reluctant to support the guerrillas, he allowed his children to use his vehicle to transport the guerrillas, and was also active on the ZAPU War Committee. Even though he had almost been killed by ZIPRA soldiers when a neighbour accused him of being a collaborator, he nevertheless continued to support the guerrillas, albeit on terms that he attempted to negotiate from his position of relative weakness. During my field work in Matabeleland in 1990–92, I was told on numerous occasions that villagers had voluntarily given assistance to the guerrillas. Yet, there were also occasions when villagers sought to evade contributions. Respondents recollected that there was widespread support for the *bafana* (ZIPRA guerrillas) during the war and that the villagers were the sea in which the fish (*bafana*) swam.

Many Ndebele-speakers claimed that it was the Shona-speaking ZANLA forces (*opasi*) that relied upon coercion to obtain logistical support from the villagers. The local name for ZANLA guerrillas, *opasi,* refers to ZANLA slogans that villagers had to repeat: 'down with the settlers' they were told to chant. The name *amadzakudzaku* refers to the ZANLA soldiers'

demands for chicken and sadza. Would Shona-speakers in Mashonaland have represented ZANLA guerrillas in similar ways? Kriger's argument suggests that they probably would have, yet she does not provide sufficient evidence to substantiate such a sweeping generalisation. Neither can Kriger account for the fact that whereas Ndebele-speakers generally regarded ZANLA as a coercive guerrilla army, they referred with pride to the ZIPRA soldiers as *bafana* 'our boys'.

To conclude, Kriger provides a less romanticised and heroic account of the liberation war than earlier work. However, a major shortcoming of her book is that, because of her commitment to the argument that the guerrillas deployed coercion to mobilise the peasantry, she is unable to account for the ways in which villagers crossed the boundaries between 'resistance' and 'compliance'. Neither is she able to show how villagers negotiated their complex and ambivalent relations with the two guerrilla armies and Rhodesian Security Forces. Instead, she sets up a dichotomy between 'coerced' and 'voluntary' participation that does not take into account the fluid and shifting political and military terrain within which the war was fought. Finally, Kriger generalises from 'her voices' without taking cognisance of the multiplicity of Zimbabwe war narratives from other times and places. One of these alternative stories could well be the accounts of the many Africans who made enormous sacrifices in voluntarily supporting the guerrillas. Another could be the collection of anecdotes of David Ncube that reveal his repertoire of tactics of survival as well as his complex and ambiguous relations with dangerous outsiders in a war where a slight error of judgement could mean a violent death.

Despite the shortcomings of Kriger's generalisations about guerrilla coercion, her work has provided a corrective to the heroic and triumphalist narratives that dominated academic accounts of the liberation struggle during the 1980s. The mid-1990s have witnessed a reassessment of the 'praise texts' produced during the heydays of independence. Ranger writes that

> historians are seeking to heal through the recovery of the total experience of the war rather than the selective version on which the ZANU (PF) regime has drawn for its legitimacy (1992, 706).

Kriger's work may have indirectly served as a catalyst for such projects of recovery. It may also serve as a catalyst for further debate about the politics and ethics of nationalist historical writing and the character of mass mobilisation, peasant revolutions, and practices of violence and healing (See Reynolds, 1990; Brickhill, 1995). To conclude, Kriger's revisionist work may have succeeded in enabling historians to take up Dumiso Dabengwa's challenge to look at Zimbabwe liberation narratives through less romantic and triumphalist lenses.

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