

THE AMBIGUITIES OF DEMOCRACY: THE DEMOBILISATION OF THE ZIMBABWEAN EX-COMBATANTS AND THE ORDEAL OF REHABILITATION 1980-93

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Introduction

"Son of the soil" during the armed struggle; "squatter" after independence' (*Moto* 1988:71:6). The irony in this statement encapsulates the predicament in which many ex-combatants find themselves today, thirteen years after independence. For most of the now destitute ex-combatants, the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe was 'a revolution that lost its way' because of the raw deal they received from the petit bourgeois nationalist leadership when they were demobilised. For many ex-combatants the refrain '*MUCHANOGUTA kumusha!*' [there will be plenty at home], made by politicians to instil resilience during the struggle, did not materialise. Whilst more than 25 000 ex-combatants have become progressively destitute in Zimbabwe, the very people they put into power, and those who opportunistically leaped on to the bandwagon of the liberation struggle, have become oppressively rich.

This poignant contradiction starkly represents some of the ambiguities of democracy and indeed to some extent the futility of independence. In addressing these ambiguities, one needs to take cognisance of what seems to have become part of the inherent nature of national liberation movements in Africa and elsewhere. During the struggle for independence the masses are mobilised by the nationalist bourgeois leadership and called upon to make supreme sacrifices to liberate the country. But as soon as they have fulfilled their historical mission of leading the bourgeoisie to power, they are ungraciously discarded.

The purpose of my paper is, therefore, to comprehensively and critically explore the demobilisation process and its impact on the ordinary ex-combatant who, at the end of the war, found himself with neither sufficient resources nor the necessary social backup to re-integrate fully into the civil society he had struggled to liberate. The paper will address the ex-fighters' concerns, fears and crisis of expectations as well as the measures they took to salvage their situation.

Zimbabwe's Demobilisation Exercise: 1980-82

In 1980 Zimbabwe's total military force stood at about 100 000: former guerrillas of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA, Zanu PF's military wing), the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA, PF-Zapu's military wing) and soldiers in the Rhodesian army (Moyo, 1985:1). For economic reasons the new Zimbabwe National Army had to be reduced by about 36 000 men. But the government did not have a blueprint to ensure the successful demobilisation and rehabilitation of many combatants. As a stop-gap measure the government introduced a short-term 'quick-fix' solution.

'Operation Seed'

The government introduced a large-scale programme for the re-integration of the ex-combatants called 'Operation Seed' (the Operation of Soldiers Employed in Economic Development). Operation Seed was aimed at encouraging the ex-combatants to 'swap their guns for picks and shovels' and to work on land acquired by government for that purpose (*Zimbabwe's Liberators: The Guerrillas Today*, 1981:42).

This Operation was not enthusiastically welcomed by the ex-combatants. Although Operation Seed was presented as a military exercise and as part of the struggle for national prosperity, the ex-combatants perceived the whole exercise as a ploy by the government to deny some of them a chance to join the new Zimbabwe National Army. Operation Seed proved to be a total failure because its objectives were not made abundantly clear by its authors.

Ex-combatants viewed it with suspicion and there was nothing in the programme to motivate them. The Rhodesian propaganda machinery which was still intact played a significant role in discrediting and misrepresenting the objectives of the Operation. Rhodesians, for instance, propagated the idea that the ex-combatants would simply be given seed and hoes and sent to the rural areas to be left to their own devices. Such a presentation raised suspicion about the actual objectives of the scheme among many ex-combatants. As a result Operation Seed just fizzled out.

Integration into the Public Service

In 1981 the Government integrated some ex-guerrillas into the new Zimbabwe National Army while seeking to demobilise more than 36 000 people. It prepared a demobilisation package which consisted of a demobilisation allowance, technical training, and business advice. Each demobilised combatant received \$185 a month for up to two years to enable him to re-integrate into civilian society. (*Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin*, 1981:10:19). This amounted to a 'severance

entitlement' of \$4,400 over a two year period (Nyathi and Hoffman, 1990:60). It has been estimated that by 1985, 36 000 ex-combatants had been demobilised, but out of this number only 16 000 had obtained employment or training (Moyo, 1985:2). In 1989 official government figures were as follows:

Total number of ex-combatants	70 000
Ex-combatants employed by government and companies (in military & security-related jobs as policemen, prison officers, soldiers & security guards, and others as personnel officers, civil servants etc) (<i>Sunday Mail</i> , 1989, August 6).	43 000
Ex-combatants who formed co-operatives or went on for further training	14 000
Unemployed ex-combatants (<i>Read On</i> , 1990:14).	13 000

It is with the last two categories that this paper is concerned, as the number of unemployed ex-combatants increased steadily to more than 25 000 between 1981 and 1993, thereby making it a single social group whose common problems warrant some analysis.

The Demobilisation Payment and Its Shortcomings

The government's demobilisation package which, in the words of Albert Nyathi an ex-guerrilla, was a 'pitiful alternative to Operation Seed', is in fact 'notorious' for falling far short of adequately preparing ex-combatants to return to civilian society. It was an impetuously designed programme which overlooked the diverse socio-economic needs of each and every demobilised combatant. Very little, if anything, was done to assess the extent to which the society at large was prepared to re-absorb them.² Some ex-combatants had practical problems such as not having a place they could call home, either because they had lost their families or because they were simply not welcomed back. The manner in which the demobilisation exercise was handled engendered a deep sense of resentment and frustration.

One of the major complaints was about the inadequacy of the demobilisation allowance they had received between 1981 and 1982. To many an ex-combatant it was a pittance. Pitted against the Poverty Datum Line [PDL]³ estimate of \$128 in December 1980 (Cubitt, 1979:1), the monthly income of \$185 they were given appears to be a lot of money. The PDL estimate assumes that one already has 'decent' shelter and a few other basic necessities. However, ex-combatants were people who had just come from the 'bush' and were starting a new life from scratch. They therefore required more than just \$185 to meet their 'objective'

needs in order to live in a condition of 'basic physical health and social decency'. Whilst ex-combatants had their own expectations about the future, their families looked up to them for an improvement to their lives. To meet the compelling demands of social decency, some ex-combatants used the \$185 they received every month to buy clothes. Some used it to pay school fees for their children and young brothers. Very few managed to engage in projects requiring capital despite the government's encouragement to the ex-combatants to form co-operatives.

The Impact of Unemployment on the Social Re-integration of Ex-combatants

Limitations in finding Employment

The problem of the social re-integration of many ex-combatants was compounded by unemployment. It was not easy for ex-combatants to secure gainful employment, particularly within the private sector. A couple of factors militated against their ability to get jobs. A considerable number of the unemployed ex-combatants lacked the necessary educational requirements. Participation in the armed struggle was not regarded as a qualification for employment, although it was considered as an advantage in security-related jobs.

At independence the government set the minimum educational qualification for employment as a civil servant at 5 Ordinary Level (O-Level) passes, at the standard of C or better. Although statistics are hard to come by, it may be said that many ex-combatants joined the armed struggle before attaining O-Level certificates because of the Rhodesian government's discriminatory educational policy; some left school prematurely when they were recruited for training.⁴ The government's 'education for all' programme was churning out thousands of better educated young people, and ex-combatants could not compete with them on the job market (Stoneman and Cliffe, 1989:77).

Ex-combatants as Employees: Private Sector Perceptions

The employment of ex-combatants in the private sector was a very slow and closely-guarded process. This was because there was a general antipathy within the private sector towards the employment of ex-combatants. A government proposal in 1989 to provide special subsidies to parastatals and private companies that employed more than five percent ex-combatants on their work force (*Sunday Mail*, 1989, 6 August) was not well received by the latter. The private sector viewed this state intervention as being incompatible with free market economics. This proposal came at a time when businessmen were bound by

statutory minimum wage requirements which they perceived to have been mounted against them (*Argus*, 1989, February 13). The first victims of this perception were ex-combatants because they were seen as having been imposed by the government on the private sector. Worse still, it was thought that they were capable of 'importing' revolutionary tendencies to the work-place. The private sector was therefore 'a no-go area for ex-combatants', as one put it (*Moto*, 1988:51:2).

The Co-operative Movement: A Vehicle to Social Rehabilitation?

The government of Zimbabwe identified the concept of co-operatives as an important vehicle towards the full integration of demobilised combatants. It was also in line with the government's socialist thrust and a partial answer to the unemployment problem. The government encouraged ex-combatants to come up with proposals for viable projects to form co-operatives. Once they had been approved by the Demobilisation Directorate they could then be given a lump sum of their demobilisation payments which would form the initial capital for their proposed projects. Furthermore the government undertook to provide advisory assistance 'specifically tailored to the needs of ex-combatants'. It is important to take note of these promises from the onset because most of the co-operative ventures collapsed due to lack of assistance.

Initially the idea of co-operatives was enthusiastically welcomed by many ex-combatants. As from 1981 co-operatives initiated by ex-combatants sprang up in various parts of the country. A common characteristic of these co-operatives was the exhortative names by which they were known ie. names which emphasised the need for self-reliance and co-operation. There were for instance Vukuzenzele [which means 'Wake up and do it yourself'] in Zvishavane, Simukai [stand up] in Seke south of Harare, Shandisai Pfungwa [use your brains] near Marondera, Batsiranai [assist each other] in Shamva (*Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin*, May 1983, 27:14-17). Most of the co-operatives were engaged in the following enterprises: crop, poultry and livestock production, welding, trade, dress-making, carpentry, etc (Moyo, 1985:47).

But co-operatives soon became a disappointment to many as they were bedevilled by practical problems. The first and probably the biggest problem that faced agro-based co-operatives was drought which afflicted Zimbabwe between 1982 and 1984. This scourge had a devastating effect on most of the seventy-two co-operatives established by ex-combatants and affiliated to the Zimbabwe Producer and Marketing Organisation [ZPMCO].⁵ Considerable loss of crops and livestock occurred. As most of the co-operatives had invested all their

resources in agricultural implements they had nothing on which to fall back (*Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin*, 27:14).

According to Elphigio Vambe, production manager of Ruponeso Co-operative near Headlands, newly established co-operatives were the hardest hit.

Drought has been a terrible blow in our young co-operative society. Having recently settled and struggling to reach a certain level of self-reliance, this severe drought is going to hammer us (*Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin*, 27:14).

The situation at Vukuzenzele Co-operative in Zvishavane, for disabled ex-combatants was equally severe. Its chairperson Sly Masuku said:

The situation here is serious. Both our crops and those of the people of the communal lands around us are completely ruined. We had a small garden which was our main source of vegetables for daily consumption, but that too is finished because Gwentyoka stream has dried up. So now we have nothing (*Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin*, 27:14).

The drought, therefore, had a debilitating socio-economic impact. In these circumstances it was quite obvious that no profits or high incomes could be realised. Once the viability of co-operatives was threatened by the severe drought, some members of the co-operative gave up hope, and ultimately joined the ranks of the unemployed. The drought also caused some ex-combatants to scrounge for existence.

The other immediate problem faced by co-operatives in Matabeleland was the dissident crisis. Although this was not a nation-wide problem, it is important to consider it because it directly and negatively affected the re-integration of ex-combatants into civilian society. From 1981 some disgruntled ex-ZIPRA fighters left the army to engage in terrorist activities in rural Matabeleland. The government reacted by sending in the North Korean trained Fifth Brigade to eradicate the dissident elements (Stoneman and Cliffe, 1989:47). Both the Brigade's search for the dissidents and the dissidents' terrorist activities among the rural communities adversely affected developmental projects such as the reconstruction of roads and bridges.

Co-operatives, particularly those established by former ZIPRA combatants, also fell victim to this political and security-related problem between 1981 and 1987. The most common problem was the harassment of co-operative members especially by the notorious Fifth Brigade. The other allegation was that co-operatives were using their land to hide arms, especially after arms caches were discovered by the government on the farms owned by ZAPU in 1982. The story of Mbuso, an ex-combatant, is a classic case which graphically highlights the harassment.

At the time of demobilisation in 1982, Mbuso and his fellow ex-combatants formed a farming co-operative about 20km outside Bulawayo. He remained as chairperson with the co-operative for two years but had a nasty experience. He was arrested on several occasions on allegations that he was a dissident. 'I was arrested, detained for some months, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for days, beaten up and things like that,' said Mbuso. But it always turned out that there was insufficient evidence to incriminate him. His crime was that, as a former combatant and commander, he had some knowledge about the activities of dissidents. During one of their many 'visits' to Mbuso's co-operative, the security forces interrogated him:

What do you know about this armed cache, tell us, especially since you were at Gwaai [assembly point]. You were a commander there, you couldn't fail to know what was happening, you are telling us lies (Barnes, 1991:11).

The other members of the co-operative were subjected to the same aggressive treatment. Mbuso's decisive moment came when he was detained for three months in 1984. He then decided to quit the co-operative. When he left, the other members followed suit.

Harassment was not restricted to the co-operatives in Matabeleland only, but occurred in other provinces once the members were suspected of having had links with ZAPU. One such was Simukai Collective Farming Co-operative Society on the border of the Seke and Chihota communal lands in Mashonaland East.

There were also other numerous constraints that vitiated the growth and consolidation of co-operatives. In 1987 Judy Acton, director of Zimbabwe Project, noted that several collective co-operatives had gone out of business (*Sunday Mail*, 1987, 15 February). This could be attributed to under-capitalisation. Despite the government's commitment to co-operatives, it had minimal resources to establish co-operative ventures which were competitive and profitable (Moyo, 1985:95). The 'socialist-oriented' co-operatives that were launched were not only crippled by the lack of adequate capital as well as high overhead expenditure, but they also had to contend with firmly established capitalist ventures, small and large. Furthermore these co-operatives did not meet the lending criteria of the banks as they lacked the requisite collateral security. Even the establishment of new financial institutions, such as the Zimbabwe Development Bank and the Small Enterprises Development Corporation, did not alleviate the problems of infant co-operatives which struggled to raise sufficient profit to repay loans.

Some of the constraints emanated from a lack of general ancillary services such as preferential credit, technical advice, pricing schemes, market contracts,

foreign exchange etc. The general lack of technical know-how, training and managerial skills, fraud, irresponsibility among co-operative members, and lack of viable markets also contributed to their lack of success (*Sunday Mail*, 1987, 15 February).

Limited government assistance, poor performance of co-operatives and generally unfavourable economic conditions all contributed to the increase of the number of unemployed ex-combatants to 25 000 by 1988, according to one newspaper estimate (*Sunday Mail*, 1988, 27 March).

Social Integration Constraints of Female Ex-combatants

In exploring the dynamics of the rehabilitation of ex-combatants, it is important to look at the gender dimension and see how it accentuated the ordeal of social re-integration. Whilst ex-combatants generally faced problems of rehabilitation, female ex-combatants faced problems associated with conservative traditional customary belief about the social and marital position of women in Shona society. The status of women in Zimbabwe was generally subsumed to that of men in the household and in the community, especially before independence. Because of the society's perception of the place of women, female ex-combatants were more stigmatised than their male counterparts after the liberation struggle.

Although female ex-combatants were accorded returning hero status as evidenced by euphoric celebrations throughout the country, settling down to face the realities of life was not easy. Those ex-combatants who wanted to be married found the civilian men unenthusiastic to marry them (*Moto*, 1990:94:4). Once a civilian man got to know that a certain woman in whom he had developed an interest was an ex-combatant, he would quickly withdraw. Female ex-combatants found it easier to marry male ex-combatants with whom they shared more or less similar experiences and a common understanding based on their relationships during the armed struggle. A group of female ex-combatants at a co-operative in Gweru disclosed that they were all married to male ex-combatants, and pointed out that this was a clear reflection of the people's general resentment towards ex-combatants (*Moto*, 1990:94:4).

There were some mixed, real, and imagined perceptions about female ex-combatants prevalent in Zimbabwe at independence. Some men were of the opinion that female ex-combatants were too haughty to be married, in spite of the fact that 'even among civilian women there are those who are born tough' (*Moto*, 1990:94:4). Charles Cheveru was forced to 'ditch' his ex-combatant girlfriend because he found it difficult to deal with 'such a wild lover'. Cheveru stated that even though they loved each other she never ceased to say:

"I can do without you," or "Do not be playful with me". She used to boss me around and would tell me about her adventures during

Chimurenga to intimidate me into fearing her. She gave me many warnings about crushing me if I failed to keep appointments (*Sunday Mail*, 1981, 6 December).

Although Cheveru did not explain why he was always bullied, one gets the feeling that when certain things were not working in their favour, women took recourse to their status as ex-combatants to defend themselves or intimidate.

Others argued that because they had lived with men in the bush 'under all sorts of circumstances', they therefore lacked decency and propriety. The popular belief was: 'They must have slept around a lot' (*Sunday Mail*, 1981, 6 December). Although there might have been isolated cases of this nature, it is important to point out that there was a strict code of conduct that was supposed to be observed by every combatant during the guerrilla warfare. It was taboo to have a private affair and those suspected could earn themselves up to forty-five strokes (*Moto*, 1990:94:5). This, however, does not mean that love and marriage were entirely forbidden. An ex-combatant called Nyasha explained the proper procedure that had to be followed if one wanted to get married:

If you wanted to get married, you had to do it properly. You would go to the political commissar and say you would like to get married. He would take your details: your name, home, parents and so forth. Because your parents would like to know how you got married, that was very important. Then they would ask you whether you were sure you wanted to get married. They would give you time to consider and then, two weeks or so after your requisition, they would come and say 'O.K., we've approved of your wedding, you can get married' (Nyasha and Rose, 1983:104).

However, notwithstanding these generalisations about the allegedly wayward character of some female ex-combatants, the majority were well behaved and dignified. It is by and large people's uninformed perceptions which made it difficult for female ex-combatants to integrate comfortably into the society.

Although the unemployed ex-combatants of both sexes went through the same ordeal of rehabilitation, for women, it was a double ordeal whose nature was dictated by erroneous assumptions and perceptions. The general lack of concern for their welfare by the government prodded the ex-combatants into forming an organisation to articulate their grievances in one voice.

The Zimbabwe War Veterans Association: 1989-93

'The Association was formed after we had discovered that the politicians who made us what we are had ditched us' (*Moto*, 1990:9).

Since the time of demobilisation ex-combatants had never boldly stood up to challenge established authority about their social predicament. If anything they

were praised by politicians for their discipline, tolerance and patience. Non-constituency MP J.J. Hundermark said of the unemployed ex-combatants:

After all these years, having had the problems that they got, the hardships that they faced, to still be tolerant, so tolerant and patient as they are, is indeed most commendable. I salute them for this. They accepted the advice from Government, from Members of Parliament that we cannot help them immediately (*The Hansard*, 1988, 24 March, 3176).

Developments immediately before and after the 1989 Willowgate scandal⁶ showed that relations between the party and the government on one hand, and the jobless ex-combatants on the other, were reaching an all time low. As if to say 'enough is enough', in April 1989 the ex-combatants launched an association called the Zimbabwe War Veterans Association [ZWVA] comprising former combatants from ZANLA and ZIPRA so that they could manage their own affairs (*Zimbabwe News*, January 1990: 25).

Factors Leading to the formation of the ZWVA

The formation of the ZWVA was a reactive initiative taken by ex-combatants when it had become abundantly clear that the government had failed to assist them. It was also motivated by the realisation that the society at large 'was not fast in integrating ex-combatants and it failed to employ them' (*Zimbabwe News*, January 1990: 25). An important feature of the ZWVA was that it was not only formed to address the unemployment problems faced by many ex-combatants, but also to act as a trade union by catering for the interests of employed ex-combatants who felt increasingly victimised at their work places. However its formation was met with suspicion by some government and party officials.

Krige (in Cock, 1993: 13) has argued that organisations of war veterans 'pose a threat to the legitimacy of a government that itself relies on its war credentials for legitimacy'.⁷ This is true of the Zimbabwe government to some extent, given the kind of bureaucratic interference in the formation of the association. In spite of the fact that ZWVA was declared a welfare and not a political organisation, its formation caused panic in government circles as it was launched concurrently with an opposition party, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement [ZUM].⁸

The ZWVA and the War Veterans Bill

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare unilaterally legislated for the welfare of the war veterans. In July 1991, the Ministry drafted the War Veterans Administration Bill and gave it to the war veterans for review in December of that year. The war veterans were infuriated by the manner in which this affair had been handled. The lack of transparency in dealing with this issue left them

wondering what the real intentions of the Ministry were. The war veterans snubbed the draft bill because of its 'excessive ministerial control' and Margaret Dongo, an ex-combatant MP for Sunningdale, mobilised other ex-combatants and set up a voluntary war veterans' committee to scrutinise the bill and to come up with their own proposals (in Cock, 1993: 13).

This committee opposed the Bill because it did not 'properly represent their needs and invests too much power in the minister.' It entitled only the minister to decide the amount, nature and duration of the assistance that was to be granted to dependents of war veterans. The other objection was that the draft dealt only with destitute and unemployed war veterans instead of all the ex-combatants. This objection was motivated by the claim that employed ex-combatants were mainly engaged in menial, 'survival' jobs which lacked future prospects. They objected to the inclusion of the 'screening' or 'means testing' mechanism in the bill. This mechanism was designed to evaluate ex-combatants to ensure that they were bona fide war veterans who deserved assistance.

The struggle for economic independence and the struggle for the most basic necessities, ie. accommodation, food, land, education and good health, was high on the committee's agenda. But this struggle would only be won if they acquired the very sources of wealth - 'factories, mines and farms' for 'that is what we fought for' (ibid). In keeping with these grandiose objectives, the committee's alternative version of the Bill emphasised the need for the establishment of five main types of assistance schemes that were specifically aimed at economically empowering war veterans and ensuring economic independence. These were: land settlement, industrial and commercial mining, academic and technical training, social benefits and financial assistance.

These proposals were in opposition to the Ministry's Bill which emphasised the welfare needs of the ex-combatants without encouraging their economic independence. At the end of the day a compromise War Veterans Act was promulgated in July 1992. It represented, to some extent, an amalgamation of the proposals made by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the War Veterans Association. Be that as it may, the ZWVA made it clear that it wanted to see minimum government intervention. 'We only want the government to intervene when the board fails to perform its duties. Otherwise we will not tolerate too much government intervention' (*Horizon*, February 1993:14) said Charles Hungwe, the chairperson of the ZWVA.

The 'No-holds-barred' Encounter Between the President and the ZWVA

If the government had real or imagined fears about the actual intentions of the formation of the veterans' association, this was somewhat confirmed by the no-holds-barred encounter between President Robert Mugabe and the ZWVA in Chinhoyi [where the armed struggle to liberate Zimbabwe started] on 25 April, 1992. Mugabe had been invited as patron of the association to inaugurate the ZWVA. Presumably by design, the President chose not to address the problems faced by ex-combatants but criticised them for not taking an active part in politics. He portrayed ex-combatants as 'armchair critics' who had to take the blame for their predicament (*Financial Gazette*, 1992, 30 April).

The veterans retorted that his government was being run by 'opportunists and bourgeois elements' [in reference to some ministers and senior government officials] who ensured the continued marginalisation of war veterans (*Zimbabwe Report*, Summer 1992:5). They argued that it was because of these 'bourgeois elements' that ex-combatants who were interested in joining the hierarchy of ZANU [PF] always found it difficult to do so. Some war veterans even suggested that Mugabe should dismiss some of his ministers who kept him uninformed about the true state of affairs which had led to a 'deep-seated lethargy and complacency'⁹.

The President pleaded ignorance of any barriers because he had always thought that it was very easy to join the ranks of the party. The President could only advise the leaders to draw up a blueprint for a new 'revolutionary leadership' (*Zimbabwe Report*, Summer 1992:5). President Mugabe's encounter with the war veterans was a clear demonstration that the latter had lost their patience with 'all the empty political rhetoric' such as the President had given them.

A few months later the President emphasised the benefits that would accrue to ex-combatants under the proposed War Veterans Act. But even when the Bill had been passed into law in July 1992, bureaucratic bungling prevented its immediate application. It took more than a year for it to be implemented because a war veterans' board had to be installed first and approved by the President. In spite of these delays, the war veterans demonstrated that they were well-organised and eager to work by submitting nearly 400 project proposals by February 1993. But nothing could be done until the board was in place and registration had been completed (*Horizon*, February 1993:15).

ZANU [PF] and the ZWVA

The simmering discontent among the war veterans also explains why there was panic when they decided to form the ZWVA. But where there are genuine

problems and the people affected decide radically to transform their social conditions by organising themselves, politicians especially in Zimbabwe are quick to smell a rat and, rightly or wrongly, allege that 'right-wing forces' are operating behind the scenes. Such an allegation was made by Nathan Shamuyarira, the party's Secretary for Information and Publicity [who is also the Minister of Foreign Affairs]. In October 1992 Shamuyarira stressed that there were some right-wing forces who were manipulating the ex-combatants to gain 'political capital.'

Shamuyarira's comment sums up the government's lukewarm attitude towards the latter. He declared that it was never the intention of the government to create a 'privileged class of ex-combatants'. He also pointed out that participation in the armed liberation struggle was not compulsory but was a voluntary decision by individual Zimbabweans. He added: 'We sacrificed in many ways to achieve our independence not because we were going to be given a job or money by anybody. It was a personal commitment to a cause' (*Horizon*, February 1993:15).

Such statements left some ex-combatants in no doubt that the party and the government were no longer concerned with their plight. Shamuyarira's comments were tantamount to blaming the war veterans for their predicament. As a result some elements in the ZWVA strongly felt that their organisation should not be affiliated to any political party, including ZANU [PF], as this would compromise their main objectives. Moreover they felt that it was futile to be affiliated to ZANU [PF], a party which had alienated them soon after independence 'and our existence is now giving the people we liberated [Zanu (PF) chiefs] sleepless nights' (*Horizon*, February 1993:15, see also *Moto*, November 1990:9). This view vividly portrayed the wide chasm that existed between the war veterans on one hand and the party and the government on the other. This development did not augur well for the future strength of the party, for it was costly for ZANU [PF] to lose people upon whom it had depended for the successful execution of the armed struggle.

However, the death in September 1993 of Mayor Urimbo, an ex-combatant and one-time ZANU national commissar, allegedly in abject poverty, demonstrated how sensitive an issue the plight of ex-combatants had become. Urimbo's colleagues accused the party and government of being ungrateful and neglecting a man who had 'faithfully' served them (*The Herald*, 1993, 15 September). The war veterans seized this opportunity to remind the government once again about the seriousness of their social conditions.

Although Mayor Urimbo was declared a national hero which ensured that his family would receive a tax-free pension to the amount of \$10 000 per annum, some war veterans argued and appealed to the President that ex-combatants should be recognised while they were still alive. Even *The People's Voice*, ZANU

PF's sycophantic weekly news-sheet, criticised the move: 'It is an insult to the memory of those who fought for the country's liberation for the nation only to remember their sacrifices after they have died' (September 1993). This was an appeal to the party and government to take the plight of ex-combatants seriously.

Conclusion

This discussion has demonstrated the extent to which the socio-economic requirements of ex-combatants, if not adequately addressed, can become a hot bed of political tension. The tensions were accentuated by the sheer arrogance of some 'bourgeois-minded' elements in the political leadership who failed to appreciate the seriousness and sensitivity of the ordeal ex-combatants went through in their rehabilitation. There was obviously a limit to which the government could go in satisfactorily rehabilitating its ex-combatants. There were other social classes such as the peasantry, workers, refugees, etc. who also needed immediate attention. The government's policies on the rehabilitation of ex-combatants were rather general in nature. Moyo's research on the socio-economic status and need of ex-combatants has shown that the major government policy documents on transformation and re-integration of ex-combatants, viz *Growth With Equity: The Transitional National Development Plan* [Vols. I & II] and *Demobilisation within the Zimbabwean National Army*, contain broad statements of intent but do not spell out the role to be played by the ex-combatants in society (Moyo 1985:92).

Zimbabwe should perhaps consider itself fortunate that the disenchanted war veterans did not consider destabilisation as a means of twisting the arm of the government to compel it to help them to be re-absorbed into civilian life. Their potential for destabilising the country should not only be borne in mind but it must be checked. This option has not yet been considered because many realise the futility of going to war, and an ex-combatant called Mwakudza probably spoke for many when he said:

We will never go to war again. For what? To fight for someone to enjoy, while we suffer. All our grievances show how much we have been forgotten (Ranger, 1985).

Postscript on South Africa's Ex-combatants

This study is quite significant and relevant to the soldiers of ANC's Umkhonto weSizwe [MK] and the PAC's Azanian People's Liberation Army [APLA]. MK and APLA may learn from the rehabilitation experiences of Zimbabwe's ex-combatants. Now that a new democratic order is in place in South Africa one wonders what the future holds for those ex-fighters who will be left out of the conventional

security and military establishments.

There are a couple of questions that need to be posed: How prepared are political organisations for the demobilisation of combatants and their re-integration into civil society? Are the ex-combatants going to be accorded preferential treatment? What sort of treatment will they expect from their political parties and the government of national unity? How will other social groups perceive any attempts to give preference to ex-combatants? In trying to answer these questions, it remains to be seen whether both the South African ex-combatants and the government will learn anything from this Zimbabwean precedent. Or will the ANC behave like other nationalist liberation movements elsewhere which mobilised people to liberate the country but unceremoniously discarded them after the new dawn?

The demobilisation and rehabilitation of combatants are after all complementary exercises which, if not dealt with systematically, may subvert the very basis of any democracy.

NOTES

- 1 Ex-combatant in this case means, 'any person who underwent military training and participated, consistently and persistently, in the liberation struggle which occurred in Zimbabwe between the 1st January 1962 and the 29th February 1980, in connection with the bringing about of Zimbabwe's independence on the 18th April, 1980' (as defined by the War Veterans Act, 1992).
- 2 A pilot study of this kind was done by the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies (ZIDS) which was contracted (not by the government but) by the Lutheran World Federation to carry out a provincial background study of the socio-economic requirements of ex-combatants in Masvingo in 1985 (See Moyo, 1985).
- 3 The PDL is defined as 'The income required to satisfy the minimum necessary consumption needs of a family of given size and composition within a defined environment in a condition of basic physical health and social decency' (Cubitt 1979:1).
- 4 It was not easy to attain an 'O' Level certificate before independence because Smith's settler-colonial administration limited the educational avenues for blacks to advance beyond Grade Seven. This in its own right was a contributory factor to the launching of the armed struggle.
- 5 ZPMCO, described as 'the mother of all progressive and collective co-operatives in Zimbabwe' was launched in July 1982.
- 6 The scandal involving the buying and selling of vehicles by members of Parliament and cabinet ministers and thereby constituting an abuse of privilege. The name of the scandal took its cue from the Watergate scandal in America.
- 7 N Krige, 'The politics of creating national heroes: the search for political legitimacy and national identity', cited in Cock, 1993:13.
- 8 ZUM is a rival political party formed by Edgar Tekere in 1989, when he fell out of grace with ZANU [PF].
- 9 J N Moyo, 'The Leadership Crisis in Zanu [PF] and the Government', *Financial Gazette*, April 30, 1992.

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