Uprooting the weeds: Power, ethnicity and violence in the Matabeleland conflict.
Yap, K.P.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: http://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Chapter Three
Power, Ethnicity and Violence:
The Matabeleland Conflict 1980–1987

This chapter attempts, in considerable detail, to map out what here is considered ‘the Matabeleland conflict’, 1980–1987. It ventures to describe political and army developments leading up to the first army desertions, and to disclose background, motives and structure for the three dissident groups involved. It also looks into the Zanu-Zapu public discourse exchange during the conflict, as well as examines the government’s military, policy and discourse interventions.

Although recent research has shed a light on both post-independence dissidence and army responses, events of destabilisation and army operations in Zimbabwe 1980–1987 are nevertheless still shrouded in obscurity and secrecy. The Matabeleland conflict remains politically sensitive, and information available to the government is left unacknowledged or denied. To date no comprehensive narration nor analysis of the Matabeleland conflict has been published. Due to the lack of description and detailed information, the understanding and the interpretations of the conflict’s scope, impact, and importance are perceived with great differentiation by observers.

This chapter attempts to address the existing information gap with regards to the conflict. The conflict description is the result of interviews, analysis of events described in newspaper clippings, television and radio programs, magazine articles, government documentation, CCJP reports91, and available academic material describing singular events between 1980–1988. From the gathered data, one objective has been to record main conflict events. What has been considered ‘the dissident dilemma’ or ‘Matabeleland disturbances’ are here placed in a wider political and historical context. That is, by linking political occurrences, perceptions, and government strategy, the scope of the conflict is expanded – allowing for a more complex picture of the Matabeleland conflict to emerge.

90 See Alexander et al, 2000
91 Unpublished sources from the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJP) have been of primary importance, as has CCJP’s and The Legal Resource Foundation’s extensive 1997 report ‘Breaking the Silence – Building True Peace’ regarding the Matabeleland human rights abuses in the 1980s (CCJP/LRF 1997).
What this chapter furthermore attempts to contribute, is insight into government activity and strategy during the conflict. Existing material often focus singularly on one method of government intervention, such as military operations. Here, however, an attempt is made to comprehensively regard all alleys of penetration in order to crystallise government intention. To enable such a disclosure of government objectives, an analytical distinction is made between military, policy, and discourse interventions.

Yet another main objective of this chapter is to bring out different perceptions of the Matabeleland conflict. As noted above, interpretations of what the conflict was about and its’ impact varies considerably. Perceptions formed during the conflict are still valid to many. The purpose of highlighting people’s interpretations as the conflict developed is to show how perceptions influenced the course of the conflict. The argument put forward is that actors in the conflict (dissidents, victims, army personnel, church officials, government decision makers, Zanu (PF) members and others) responded to what they perceived have taken place, as much as to actual events. Thus, based on perceived intentions, actions were at times taken. Therefore incorporating perceptions into the description, it is here argued, increases the scope of understanding of the conflict, and will also lay a possible basis for further analysis into political values and developments in the post-unity era.

In line with incorporating perceptions, the chapter includes ‘voices’: actors in their own words perceiving, explaining, remembering, and stating what the events discussed meant personally, or in their view, to Zimbabwe at large. The purpose of the voices is firstly to allow exposure to discourses different from those of the government. Furthermore, to increase awareness of the personal impact the conflict had, as well as to give insight into the historical understanding people had about events that took place. Thus, although the voices in the text are placed after each section of conflict description, their location is not to be interpreted as an appendix to the body of the text. On the contrary, they constitute an important part of the description and argument of the chapter.92

The central argument in the chapter concerns power competition. Examining events, it is noted that a consistent pattern of opposition party (Zapu/Zipra) persecution emerged following the Zanu (PF) election victory after independence in

92 The ‘voices’ are obviously selected and many more (and different ones) could have been chosen. However, since an intention with the voices is to allow exposure to a discourse different than that of the government, suppressed conflict perceptions were in the majority of cases selected. Subsequently, with the author’s awareness, the ‘unheard’ side of the dispute constitutes a ‘bias’ in the voices section.

106
1980. Due to this development Zipra ex-combatants deserted guerrilla assembly points and the new national army. Returning to their home areas in Matabeleland and Midlands, did however not offer a secure alternative. As army units searched for deserters, many ex-Zipra combatants fled into the bush where they defended themselves against army units and engaged in sabotage activities. The government’s response to those they termed ‘dissidents’ was heavy-handed. Based on the assumption that the dissidents operated through Zapu political structures, from 1981 onwards the government attempted by various means to break down the opposition party’s organisation. However, in the light of recent research and information gathered for this study, it is put forward that this assumption was incorrect. Zapu did not support ex-Zipra dissidents as a party, nor did the ex-Zipra dissidents seem to enjoy popular support in their areas of operation. Nevertheless, the government carried out army counter-insurgency operations in Matabeleland North, South and Midlands provinces, targeting the civilian population. Furthermore, in combination with army interventions, the government imposed extensive curfews, including a detrimental food embargo in Matabeleland South, resulting in the immobility and starvation of 400,000 people. In addition to these state interventions, the chapter explores how government discourse manipulated information in an attempt to manoeuvre citizens to accept and support government measures in the conflict. The conflict came to an end in 1987 when a Unity Accord was signed by Zanu (PF) and Zapu, whereby the two parties merged. Noting that the party merger was primarily a step towards the construction of a one-party state, the chapter examines power relations between Zanu-Zapu at the last stretch of the conflict. It is put forward that the underlying rationale and object of the merger was access to state power: for Zanu(PF) the expansion of its hegemony, for Zapu the re-establishment of (in the conflict eroded) recognised power sharing and national legitimacy.

The material in the chapter is organised in six sections. The first two sections describe events chronologically. As the conflict becomes increasingly complex, the subsequent two sections concentrate on a description of dissident organisation and government interventions respectively, but with a loser connection to the time axe. The last two sections return to chronological description. Each section is followed by a compilation of ‘voices’ which relate experiences to the events described.


As this description begins, so does Zimbabwe’s history of independence. In 1980 a whole nation entered a new era, one whose development no one could totally imagine or foresee. A sense of jubilation existed in everyone, the war was finally over.
There were victors and losers, with all the experiences and feelings both categories entailed. Beyond the relief of the liberation war being over, a sense of insecurity combined with a variety of expectations (positive and negative) enveloped most people. What would the new Zimbabwe bring in its wake?

Politically, party alignments became clarified in the 1980 general election, Zanu (PF) winning an overwhelming victory. The elections also clearly demonstrated that the country had two major political parties – Zanu(PF) and PF-Zapu – and a coalition government was formed. Nevertheless, for Zapu the election outcome was a bitter pill to swallow. Zapu’s disappointment did not decrease by an increasingly hostile anti-Zapu and anti-Ndebele government discourse, where Zapu’s role in the liberation war was downgraded or omitted. Zapu seen as a ‘surplus’ in the new government was mirrored in the newly integrated forces. Zanla ex-combatants saw themselves as the victors of the war and thereby the obvious basis for the formation of the new national army. Hostility turned into violence and a war-like atmosphere developed both in ex-combatants’ assembly points and in the new army. From both places defections began to occur, and ‘banditry’ began to spread in various places in the country. Tensions between the guerrilla armies escalated, resulting in two armed clashes, causing more defections. The government responded to the defections by sending in troops to arrest the ‘dissidents’.

Concluding from the above developments it is put forward that a consistent pattern of Zapu and Zipra persecution formed as the Zanu(PF) 1980 election victory was established. What would become the Matabeleland conflict was already in motion, the country being only a few months old. Zanu(PF) was in power; it’s liberation war victories commemorated and celebrated. Zapu as an opposition party was recognised, but it’s contribution to the country’s newly won freedom was given a secondary role. Zipra soldiers disappointed by the Lancaster House Agreement also grew disillusioned by what many saw as Nkomo’s compromising politics. Politically ridiculed and militarily harassed, many saw defection as the route out of the situation; not by choice but by default.

The section describes events as they unfolded chronologically, focusing on the political events and the military developments which with hindsight appears as catalysts to what would become the Matabeleland conflict.

1.a. The Demilitarisation Phase

After three months of painstaking negotiations, the Lancaster House Agreement was signed on 21 December 1979, and at midnight of this day all military movements were to cease. Cease-fire was scheduled for midnight 28 of December 1979,
which marked the beginning of a demilitarisation period scheduled to last until elections in March 1980.

During the Lancaster House negotiations the British pressed for certain conditions during the demilitarisation period. Although both parties – the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) and the Patriotic Front (PF) – had objections, concessions to the British were mainly cosmetic (UNIDIR/95/41:16). One such concession was the monitoring force. Initially the PF had called for the United Nations as a monitoring force for the demilitarisation period, however, the UN was not approached due to British resistance. The British, who wanted to maintain control over the monitoring force, opposed UN involvement believing that UN peace-keeping would be ineffective in Rhodesia (UNIDIR/95/41:17). Thus the Commonwealth Forces (CMF) were deployed in December 1979, monitoring both parties to safeguard that neither breached the cease-fire agreement. The CMF was expected to be neutral and create confidence as a supervising force in order for the opposing parties to carry through the highly sensitive exercise of demilitarisation. However, neither side was assured of CMF’s impartiality. The Patriotic Front feared that the British had struck deals with the Rhodesians, whilst sections in the RSF experi-

---

93 See previous chapter for details regarding the formation of the Patriotic Front.

94 The British conception of the period included the following: *A minimalist force disposition to supervise the cease-fire; *British command and control/Commonwealth legitimisation – the force composition was predominantly British, but with small contingencies from other Commonwealth countries. Britain, rather than the Commonwealth Secretariat, assumed command and control of the force; *British ‘rule’ – a British Governor was appointed to run Rhodesia prior to, and during the cease-fire; *A facilitating, monitoring role for the force – its task was to observe and report, not to compel either side to maintain cease-fire; *Demilitarisation through separation and containment; *A short, well-defined timescale for implementation/withdrawal – the Commonwealth Force (CMF) would depart after elections; *Rejection of the disarmament option – none of the parties would contemplate disarmament, it was also not seen as a viable option by the CMF or the British (UNIDIR/95/41:15).

95 The British believed that the demilitarisation had to take place rapidly, and that they would be able to do the task faster than UN peace-keeping forces (which had a history of prolonged mandates in similar situations elsewhere). However, the exclusion of the UN was also a political decision, since the British knew that the Rhodesian regime would not agree to UN involvement (UNIDIR/95/41:17).

96 The CMF was specifically expected to: provide its own logistics and deployment; meet PF forces at rendezvous points and escort them to APs; provide teams for the Assembly Points (APs); monitor RSF bases; man border crossings; maintain liaison teams in Mozambique and Zambia; maintain communications between all units and HQ at Salisbury; ensure safe transportation through out the country; identify breaches of the cease-fire; and conduct investigations into cease-fire breaches through the Cease-fire Commission (UNIDIR/95/41:5,27).
enced the agreements reached as favouring the PF and as a betrayal of white solidarity (UNIDIR/95/41:21).

A Cease-fire Commission (CC) was also set up with British military as chair and with high level representatives from the three armies. Their main task was to ensure that guerrillas moved to assembly points (APs) and remained there under the Commonwealth Forces (Dabengwa 1990:1).

The first step in the demilitarisation phase took place when the Rhodesian security forces withdrew to their bases in December 1979. The guerrillas subsequently moved to 23 rendezvous points after which they were transported, under protection of the CMF, to 15 more permanent assembly points. Both the rendezvous points and the APs were distanced from the Rhodesian bases in order to separate the two warring forces; the Rhodesian Security Forces on the one hand, and Zipra and Zanla on the other. These geographical points had been predetermined by the British military (with the Rhodesian Army) in the Lancaster negotiations, and were under the Commonwealth monitoring force.

An important agreement between all parties was that the three armies would remain armed. According to the Lancaster House Agreement, Zipra and Zanla ex-combatants would not be disarmed until the integration process was complete or upon demobilisation (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Defence outline:28). The underlying reason for ruling out disarmament was deep mistrust and suspicion which existed between the opposing forces. In addition, apprehension and insecurity prevailed also between Zipra and Zanla. Common to the three armies was the position that the soldiers had a right to bear arms, giving them up would create a situation of extreme insecurity. Particularly the guerrillas in the APs felt vulnerable of attack and feared that having agreed to the cease-fire arrangements they would lose their military advantage with which they had entered negotiations (UNIDIR/95/41:6,53). Giving up arms in this situation was inconceivable. Thus Zanla and Zipra forces were allowed to keep their personal weapons in the APs. This meant that each guerrilla had their rifle, pistol, grenades or rocket launchers and light machine guns, but not heavy weapons such as heavy machine guns, large calibre mortars or recoiless rifles (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Judgement: 4). Both Zanla’s and Zipra’s surplus arms were kept in armouries at the assembly points. The Rhodesian soldiers and their armoury were located at their military bases.

The work of both CMF and the CC was precarious. The CMF could only use diplomacy to enforce their tasks, risking aggression and violence due to the perceptions of impartiality the monitoring forces carried. In the CC tension was inevita-
ble, due to the deep mistrust between the three forces. The critical task of both structures was to keep the opposing forces separated and inside their camps/barracks. Violations could lead to fighting and the degeneration of the whole demilitarisation scheme. Yet non-compliance to the rules was a major issue. Both parties during January-March 1980 consistently broke the cease-fire, and clashes between the guerrillas and Rhodesian Security Forces took place in various areas (Dabengwa 1990:2, UNIDIR/95/41:36-41). However, the violation of the containment rule was not always in the first place due to threat or attack. With regards to the APs, breach of the rule was frequently a result of individual indiscipline when guerrillas left to gather supplies, meet friends or for other reasons. Furthermore, compliance with the containment rule varied in the different APs. Nevertheless, being outside the confined camps and breaking the rule, the guerrillas could be subject to RSF attacks – given that the RSF were allowed to exit their bases and where lawfully moving around whilst the guerrillas were not. According to Alexander et al, at Mike AP at St Paul’s mission in Lupane, ‘Rhodesian forces were responsible for a large number of guerrilla (as well as civilian) deaths during the process of assembly’ (Alexander et al, 2000:183).

In addition to the RSF-guerrilla contacts, tension between Zipra and Zanla forces and the possibility of clashes between the two, added a hazard during the demilitarisation phase. A further risk was the control of weapons which was difficult to oversee due to the (expected) fact that some guerrillas hid their weapons before

---

97 One of the major problems regarding clashes between RSF and guerrillas was that the Lancaster House Agreement allowed RSF to exit their bases, whilst it was unlawful for guerrillas to exit APs. Subsequently a sense of insecurity which encouraged dissertation was created amongst the guerrillas in the camps, who feared attacks from the RSF. It was difficult for the CMF to monitor the APs, however it was even harder for CMF to oversee the RSF. For example, the Special Air Service and the Selous Scouts were not permitted to be monitored, and even though it was known to the CMF that the Selous Scouts were carrying out a destabilization exercise through attempted assassinations, the monitors could only give warnings (UNIDIR/95/41:39—40). The frequency of contacts between guerrillas and the RSF were recorded in the mid-February period to be nine or ten per day (UNIDIR/95/41:45).

98 Breaches of the containment rule were partly due to resource shortages. At many APs basic supplies such as food, water, bedding, and cooking utensils were minimal (UNIDIR/95/41:35).

99 It is for example reported that in the Zanla AP ‘Delta’ a constant movement of guerrillas leaving the camp took place, allegedly for political campaigning, and thereby breaking the containment rule. On the other hand, monitors reported that Zipra commanders imposed severe punishment on breaches of discipline within the camps (UNIDIR/95/41:37).

100 In the opinion of Maj. Gen. Sir John Acland ‘the majority of the incidents in the vicinity of the APs were the responsibility of the RSF, and the majority in the countryside that of Zanla’ (UNIDIR/95/41:39).
heading for the APs. One of the reasons for this was stated to be that the Rhodesian Army had an interest in disclosing guerrilla equipment capacity in order to judge comparative advantage (Dabengwa 1990:2).

An important element in the demilitarisation phase was to achieve a degree of integration between the three forces, in order to begin the process of creating a new national army. Little progress was made in this direction, apparently due to all parties wishing to know the election outcome before initiating army integration. Also, attitudes amongst Zanla and RFS were negative towards integration; Zanla seeing themselves as victors wished to form the army, whilst RFS viewed the guerrillas as less proficient assuming that the white officers would remain the core of the new national army. Zipra forces were seen to be more constructive with regards to willingness to integrate (UNIDIR/95/41:47,49). For Joshua Nkomo army integration prior to the general elections was important, and was an issue brought up at the Lancaster House negotiations. His concern was the vulnerability of the Zipra forces in the post-election period had integration not taken place:

> It is all very well for the British to separate the parties and put themselves in the middle as a “referee”, but what would happen subsequently? Would the winning party eliminate the other? The question before the conference is one of life and death (UNIDIR/95/41:46-47).

At the end of February and early March 1980 two integrated battalions were set up on a makeshift basis, where PF forces and RSF began joint training (UNIDIR/95/41:50).

1.b. The 1980 General Elections

During the election campaign in January–February 1980, tensions were running high in the country. Having ended a civil war barely two months earlier, neither side nor any actors involved, knew what to expect. The pressure in the Cease-fire Commission was particularly high whilst the general election campaign was taking place. Each organisation had military and political interests to safeguard. One issue, which created strain in the CC, was that it became evident that the APs had deliberately been located in isolation from the population.\(^{101}\) Being confined to the camps in areas with little transport facilities, the guerrillas were secluded. This was particularly damaging during the election, when both Zanu and Zapu wished to use experienced guerrillas in the electioneering campaign. Nevertheless many guerrillas were outside

---

\(^{101}\) General G.P. Walls, allegedly ‘insisted that the PF should be kept as far away as possible from population centers and under very strict control’ (UNIDIR/95/41:21, see also Dabengwa 1990:2).
the APs, and intimidation and violence took place during the election campaign. The CMF was unable to contain this pre-election violence.

On a political level, all parties started campaigning in January 1980 for the general election. Although Zapu and Zanu had negotiated at the Lancaster House conference as a united Patriotic Front, this unity only lasted during the conference. In the 1980 elections the parties contested as independent organisations. Eight parties took part in the elections, under circumstances in which political campaigning was far from friction free. Despite intimidation civilians were subjected to from various political parties and the RSF, the Commonwealth observers – although noting inevitable 'imperfections' – concluded that they were satisfied with the integrity of polling conducts (Martin/Johnson 1981:333). The result of the election was an overwhelming victory to Zanu (PF) who (out of the 80 African seats) won 57 seats, whilst Zapu secured 20 seats.

For most Zapu supporters and particularly in the Matabeleland provinces, the election outcome was a great disappointment and difficult to come to terms with. Zapu members and supporters viewed the party's chairman Joshua Nkomo as 'Father Zimbabwe' – a title earned after many years of nationalist politics – and had expected his leadership to continue as head of state. In terms of election results, Zapu support was overwhelming in the Matabeleland provinces (15 seats), but with additional support only in Midlands (4 seats) and Mashonaland West (1 seat) provinces. Therefore, Zapu's electoral support could not be defined as being 'national'. Similarly however, despite Zanu (PF) receiving almost three times as many votes as PF-Zapu, the overwhelming Zapu support in Matabeleland North and South denied Zanu(PF) the claim of being a truly nationally based party. Voting had fol-

102 In mid-January when the guerrilla 'check-in' time for the rendezvous point expired, it was estimated that 4,000–6,000 guerrillas (no differentiation made in numbers between Zanla and Zipra) remained in the bush (UNIDIR/95/41:31).
103 To restore order the Governor permitted Gen. Walls to deploy the 20,000 strong Security Force Auxiliaries through out the operational areas. The Auxiliaries were identified with Muzorewa's UANC (United African National Council) and did reportedly persuade and intimidate people to vote for UANC rather than fulfilling their directive to restore order (UNIDIR/95/41:44, see also Dabengwa 1990:3).
104 For a discussion regarding the break-up of the Patriotic Front before the 1980 elections, see chapter two, pp. 96–97, 99–104.
105 The parties included: National Democratic Union; National Front of Zimbabwe; Patriotic Front [Zapu]; United National African Council; United National Federal Party; Zimbabwe African National Union (Sithole); Zimbabwe African National Union (PF); and Zimbabwe Democratic Party.
106 For 1980 election results in terms of seats per district, see Cliffe 1981:46.
lowed regional and ethnic divisions, influenced by the historical background of Zapu’s and Zanu’s nationalist struggle.\(^{107}\)

The 1980 elections in the new Zimbabwe were crucial in many ways. It opened the door for the new country to start operating on a democratic majority basis. The elections also clearly demonstrated that the country had two major political parties, Zanu (PF) and PF-Zapu. Both having national agendas but also, for various historical reasons, having regional and ethnic ties which would fundamentally influence politics in the post-independent state.

1.c. Tension and Conflict during Army Integration

In order to follow the development which took place within the army during the process of integration of the three different forces, it is crucial to simultaneously follow the political debate between Zanu and Zapu. What occurred in the army integration process was, both on a level of command and amongst the ex-combatants, linked to the tension and disputes taking place between Zanu and Zapu during this time. The following section is an interwoven description of political and military developments during the first volatile period of the newly independent Zimbabwe.

The February 1980 general elections marked the end of the demilitarisation phase, and signalled the conclusion of the Commonwealth Forces’ mission.\(^{108}\) Following the implementation of cease-fire was the formation of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA). For this the Joint High Command (JHC) was set up and was lead by Lieutenant-General Peter Walls, the Commander of the Combined Operations of the Rhodesian Security Forces. The JHC had equal representation from all three armies.\(^{109}\) The inclusion of the Commanders of the Rhodesian Army was a reconciliatory act, but it was also argued that their exclusion could have been far more dangerous and volatile than their inclusion. The integration of the three forces started in 1980 and went on until September 1981, by which time all the Assembly Points were closed down.

---

\(^{107}\) See chapter one for discussion on political/regional/ethnic divisions in a historical perspective, pp. 48–49, 53–54, 80–82.

\(^{108}\) The CMF left the country between 3–5 March 1980.

\(^{109}\) Other members of the JHC were: the Commander of the Rhodesian Security Forces, Lt.-Gen. Sandy Maclean; the Commander of the Rhodesian Air Force, Air Marshal Frank Mussell; the Commander of Zanla, Rex Nhongo; the Commander of Zipra, Lookout Masuku; and the Secretary of Defense, Alan Page. Also members of the British Military Training Team were present at most meetings. (Alao, 1995:107).
For the new government, the guerrillas' stay in the assembly points turned out to be a critical trial. As during the demilitarisation phase, it was firstly crucial to get ex-combatants to come into the assembly points and secondly, it was as imperative to keep them inside these areas. To maintain security in the country it was unacceptable for all parties to have armed ex-combatants moving around without being accounted for.

**The Emergence of ‘Dissidents’**

Despite strict instructions for ex-combatants to move to and remain at the AP's, many disregarded this ruling. Disorder, violence and killings for which both Zanla and Zipra ex-combatants were responsible for, took place in connection to the armed ex-combatants being outside the assembly points. The government at first responded to the actions as ‘banditry’, but as the situation grew in scale a political dimension was added: terms such as ‘outlaws’ and ‘bandits’ were exchanged for ‘dissidents’.

At first the new government used former guerrillas to convince those outside the camps to return, in order to refrain from unnecessary provocation by using regime forces. However, this strategy was changed in June 1980. The government perceived it needed to use tougher methods and deployed troops which placed the rounded up dissidents in jail (Kriger 1996:79). Zanla guerrillas from both Fox-trot and X-Ray assembly points who were involved in attacks such as ambushing vehicles on the Mtoko-Harare road, were apprehended by the newly integrated army units and the police. Other Zanla guerrillas attacked police stations in Gutu, Mount Darwin and Mtoko, on some occasion with rockets, causing deaths amongst the police force. Zanla ex-combatants were also accused for abducting young girls and murdering civilians (Alexander 1996:3–4). In Matabeleland North a number of Zipra ex-combatants were moving around outside the assembly points, some never reported to the assembly points, others defected. Of these Zipra ex-combatants some believed the end of the war had been a negotiated ‘sell-out’, and decided to act as if no cease-fire had taken place. In May and June 1980 army units located 400 ex-Zipra combatants outside their APs, and took them to Khami prison (Alexander 1996:4–5).

---

110 For Zanla dissidence, see Ranger 1986:391.

111 The parliament voted twice (June 1980 and January 1981) to extend the State of Emergency based on the ‘dissidents’ who had not entered the assembly points, or had permanently left the same. The State of Emergency allowed the authorities to keep anybody in custody for up to thirty days if they were suspected to disturb the maintenance of public order (Kriger 1996:79).
Although both Zanla and Zipra forces were responsible for violence and destabilisation, Prime Minister Mugabe stated that ‘army units would be used first against former Zipra dissidents in the Midlands, whose behaviour reflected a ‘definite pattern of revolt’ (Kriger 1996:80). Zapu alleged that the government dealt with the Zanla violations more favourably than those of Zipra ex-combatants. In her research, Kriger supports this claim, giving documented examples of government leniency towards unlawful Zanla ex-combatants (Kriger 1996:80).112

Mugabe’s statement about the Zipra dissidents leading a revolt, fuelled a growing division. The term dissident and its definition were a matter of political debate and tension, as was the treatment of those defined as dissidents. In a later statement, Mugabe alleged that the Zipra dissidents were getting instructions from local Zapu structures and were engaged in undermining government authority (Kriger 1996:80). Although Zapu as a party was drawn in to the dispute, Mugabe was particular about separating local and central Zapu structures due to Zapu centrally being member of the coalition government of national unity. Zapu vehemently disputed any connection between the dissidents and Zapu or Zipra structures, and defined the dissidents to be former guerrillas with no connection or allegiance to any party or government.

Divisions in the Coalition Government

Simultaneously with the disputes over how to define those remaining outside the assembly points and their political allegiance and objectives, a political atmosphere showing a deepening division in the coalition government was developing. Fierce political rivalry between Zanu (PF) and PF-Zapu was erupting only a few months into the new era of independent Zimbabwe, directly influencing the army integration process and thereby the government decision making in security matters.

Origins to division were linked to the fact that elements within Zanu (PF) were forcefully against the coalition government with Zapu, favouring instead a one-party state. Enos Nkala, Minister of Finance in the Zanu (PF) government stated at a party rally in June 1980 that ‘my personal opinion is that we should have a one-party state in this country’. Other Zanu (PF) ministers and party officials at public

112 Kriger gives as examples the government’s lenient responses to Zanla ex-combatants located at Zanu (PF) farms in Goromonzi district (Oasis and Grazely), whom on numerous occasions violated law and order. They had been ‘involved in killing and assaulting white farmers and mine managers, attacking police and police stations, intervening in personal disputes between farmworkers and farmers, and politicizing – sometimes through intimidation – farm laborers’. The army was not used to quell the Zanla violations. Instead Mugabe instructed the guerrillas to be disarmed, which did not occur (Kriger 1996:80).
meetings and rallies expressed similar views. In addition to giving signals of Zapu being a ‘surplus’ in the government, Zapu’s role in the liberation war was downgraded. The government controlled broadcast media presented the liberation war as if it had been fought only by Zanla guerrillas, and airing only Zanla liberation war songs and slogans (Kriger 1996:77). In June 1980 a Zapu delegation called on Prime Minister Mugabe, raising four complaints: inflammatory speeches by Zanu ministers and MPs against whites and Zapu; Zanu (PF) bias on radio and television; lack of opportunity for non-Zanu (PF) members in civil service; and the slow pace of integration of the armed forces (MW1AAM:6). The meeting seemed however to have had little impact on anti-Zapu government discourse. This became evident when minister Nkala stated at a Zanu (PF) rally that the government was now collecting information about people assisting in the deployment of dissidents, warning that actions would be taken and ‘those preaching “Ndebelism” should stop before they are liquidated’ (MW1AAM:7). In response to this provocative statement, Nkala was criticised in parliament by 15 Zapu MPs. In July 1980 Nkomo added to the verbal battle when he spoke in Bulawayo, claiming that Zanla was responsible for atrocities worse than the previous regime and had more dissidents than anyone else. Nkomo also said that Mugabe should realise Zapu no longer could accept the distortions about Zipra presented in the media (MW1AAM:7). The next day at a Zanu(PF) rally in Bulawayo, Nkala retaliated and called Nkomo ‘a self-appointed Ndebele King’ and declared that Zanu (PF)’s task ‘from now is to crush Joshua Nkomo and to forget about him’ (Kriger 1996:77, MW1AAM:7).

Particularly Zipra guerrillas, but also Zapu members considered the antagonistic Zapu and Ndebele speeches by government representatives a severe provocation. The downgrading of Zipra’s role in the liberation war in combination with accusations of Zapu aiding and supporting the dissidents, summed up, in their view, to a Zapu smear campaign. Government tarnishing Zipra and Zapu had a direct impact on the Zipra and Zanla guerrillas in the assembly points, creating insecurity amongst Zipra guerrillas and a great amount of tension between the forces. For many Zipra ex-combatants it had been hard to accept the negotiated independence settlement, and there after the Zanu (PF) election victory. This was partly connected to a belief that history could have taken another turn, more favourable for Zapu, had the liberation war not ended through the Lancaster House negotiations. Many saw the settlement as a ‘sell-out’, believing that had the liberation war continued a military victory could have been won by the armed guerrilla forces. This view was particularly internalised by Zipra forces, as Zapu in mid 1978 deployed regular artillery and anti-aircraft units against the Rhodesian forces, and
had decided to launch a strategic offensive (Zero Hour). However, Zapu and Zipra never got to the point of execution of their strategic offensive due to the settlement in the Lancaster House Agreement. An agreement which put the new Zimbabwe into a position of status quo with regards to economic independence from the white Rhodesian settlers. Had a military victory been won against the colonial power, it would have given the victors the possibility to start transforming the new independent state under entirely different circumstances, allowing changes (more radical) than was possible under the Lancaster House Agreement.

Thus for the Zapu and Zipra ex-combatants in particular, the end of the war had been different than many had foreseen. Furthermore, Mugabe’s great election victory did not put soothing balm on the already sore spots. The subsequent government anti Zapu/Zipra discourse was for many a frustration which made the sores fester. In addition to Zipra soldiers disappointment and resentment, fear and suspicion were added. The aggressive political attacks on Zapu were mirrored in the assembly points by Zanla troops, and rivalry between Zapu and Zanu was even more evident between Zipra and Zanla. Being more in number and having the security of being the party in power, the Zanla ex-combatants were overtly confident of their rights over the minority coalition partners. In addition, the government’s often more lenient stand towards unlawful Zanla activities, fed Zanla guerrillas’ view of them – rather than the police – being legitimate forces of law and order (Kriger 1996:81). This atmosphere made existence in the assembly points highly volatile, and in the newly integrated units (combining Zanla and Zipra forces) the mood was often explosive.

Due to an increase in unrest, armed violence, and killings in September 1980, Mugabe addressed the nation on the first of October. The Prime Minister announced the deployment of newly integrated ZNA units and police to various parts of Zimbabwe (MW1AAM:7). The task of the army and the police was to restore law and order, round up dissidents and take possession of illegal arms.

1.d. Guerrilla Accommodation

Due to the ex-combatants’ long confinement in the assembly points where both isolation and health matters were a concern, the government decided to provide more suitable accommodation sites for the guerrillas. A cabinet committee was selected for the task, which in August 1980 announced that accommodation was located in two places: in the Chitungwiza municipality (outside Harare), and in the Entumbane township (outskirts of Bulawayo). The committee did not favour send-

---

113 For elaboration on the ‘Zero Hour’ offensive, see chapter two, pp. 86–94.
ing only Zanla ex-combatants to the predominantly Shona township of Chitungwiza, nor only Zipra ex-combatants to the Ndebele dominated area of Entumbane (Kriger 1996:103). Instead both Chitungwiza and Entumbane were to be inhabited by roughly an equal amount of Zipra and Zanla ex-combatants. The former soldiers could keep their personal arms in their new homes, other equipment would be stored in armouries. To avoid ex-combatants leaving their accommodation areas with their arms, security fencing was to be erected and guards were to be stationed at exit-points. The accommodation scheme was to be temporary until barracks were completed (Kriger 1996:103).

Being aware of the extreme tension between the two armed forces; the generally volatile political situation between Zanu (PF) and Zapu; and the outbreaks of violence addressed by Mugabe on October first, the committee’s decision to move a combination of Zanla and Zipra forces to adjacent city accommodation was highly surprising and controversial. The Joint High Command, local government authorities, guerrillas, police, and other political parties opposed the decision. The Joint High Command thought that the government’s housing scheme was a ‘well-intentioned recipe for disaster’, and stated that the temporary housing transfer was a political problem of the government rather than military problem of the army (Kriger 1996:104). The police opposing having the forces next to each other in urban areas, appealed to the Joint High Command to at least disarm the men first. Despite much criticism, the government did however not cancel its plan, and in October 1980 military convoys with ex-combatants started arriving at the designated areas. Large numbers of ex-guerrillas were moved, an estimated maximum of 17,000 to Chitungwiza, and 12,000 to Entumbane (Kriger 1996:103), leaving over ten thousand not yet integrated or demobilised ex-combatants at the assembly points.

The political polemic between Zanu and Zapu continued, but now with the added tension of having armed Zanu and Zapu guerrillas intercepted with civilians in urban housing schemes. Life in the townships inhabited by guerrillas was anxious. On October 30 1980, 2,000 residents fled from their housing scheme in Chitungwiza after rumours that the next day a battle between the armies would take place (Kriger 1996:104). Yet the politicians did not slow down in pace with regards to their disputes. The Zanu(PF) Minister Edgar Tekere asserted in November 1980 that ‘Nkomo was in government as an act of “charity”, and further stated ‘We did not need his army in the war, so why are they making a nuisance of themselves now’ (Kriger 1996:77). Following factional fighting between Zanu (PF) and (PF) Zapu supporters, Zanu (PF) Minister Nkala stated in an extremely inflammatory speech at White City Stadium (9/11 1980) in Bulawayo:
From today the PF [Zapu] has declared itself the enemy of Zanu (PF). The time has come for Zanu (PF) to flex its muscles. Our supporters must now form vigilante committees in readiness for those who want to challenge us. There must be a general mobilisation of our supporters. Organise yourselves into small groups in readiness to challenge the Patriotic Front [Zapu] on its home ground. If it means a few blows, we shall deliver them. If the police do not want to act according to the specific instructions I have given, then we shall proceed with those to whom the instructions have been given (State vs. Dabengwa et al Defence Outline:24–25).

Minister Nkala’s speech seems to have operated as a catalyst by its extreme provocative tone, aggravating the tension which entrenched assembly points, urban settlements, and newly integrated army units. Directly succeeding Nkala’s confrontative address, the first serious armed clash between Zanla and Zipra forces took place.

1.e. Entumbane One, November 1980

After the Zanu (PF) rally at White City Stadium in Bulawayo, fighting first broke out between Zanu and Zapu supporters. This spilled over to an armed confrontation between Zanla and Zipra in the urban guerrilla settlement schemes at Entumbane. The fighting, in which heavy weaponry were used, raged for two days (9–10/11 1980). Thousands of civilians fled Entumbane township, whilst about 2,000 homes were damaged (Kriger 1996:104). In order to help the Zipra contingent at Entumbane, a relief column was set in motion by Zipra soldiers at the Gwaai River Mine assembly point. However, on the orders of Joshua Nkomo the column was stopped at the Umguza River bridge, and commanded back to the base at Gwaai (State vs. Dabengwa et al, State Case Judgement:20). Rumours of the fighting spread to other camps, stirring reactions at Mudzi and in Chitungwiza, but there Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) contained incidents. The fight at Entumbane ended when the government deployed ZNA units and encircled the area with Hunter jets from the Zimbabwean Air Force (former Rhodesian forces). Dumiso Dabengwa (Zipra) and Rex Nhongo (Zanla) who spoke to their respective forces negotiated a cease-fire. Of the 55 casualties the majority were civilians, at least 550 were injured (Kriger 1996:104).

Who initiated the armed conflict has never been established. Although this situation remained unclarified also in the court case State vs. Dabengwa et al, evidence was established that ‘Zanla did use heavy support weaponry against Zipra which it must have accumulated in its camps in breach of the order that only small arms in the form of each soldiers’ personal weapons were allowed to be retained in these places’ (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Judgement:7). Zipra forces replied fire with small
arms, as they were not in possession of any support weapons (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Defence outline:24).

Despite the evident confusion after the battle, only hours after the cease-fire Mugabe gave a radio address where he concluded that Zapu/Zipra had started the trouble. He listed measures to be taken including the dispatchment of Zipra and Zanla commanders to Bulawayo to defuse the situation; strengthening of ZNA and air force units in the affected areas; and the implementation of dusk to dawn curfews\textsuperscript{114} (MW1AAM:8, Kriger 1996:104). The same, day in a news conference Zanu (PF) Minister of Manpower, Planning and Development, Edgar Tekere, demanded the disarmament of Zipra guerrillas and a ‘very tough clean-up’ (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Defence outline:25).

The fighting at Entumbane sent shock waves through the country. Ministers were sent to the civilian areas were fighting had taken place to calm the inhabitants. Nevertheless the tension remained high, also in national politics. On the 20 November nine prominent Zapu officials were arrested under the Emergency Powers legislation\textsuperscript{115}, authorised by the Minister of State, who then had within his authority the power to only arrests for political matters (Press Statement 1981:1). The arrested were kept in detention for weeks, then released in batches, without charges being made.

Political violence was reported from several places perpetrated by both factions. In the assembly points and particularly in the newly amalgamated ZNA army units a warlike atmosphere dominated. Various incidents took place in the army, and walkouts by ex-Zipra members were reported after disputes with Zanla counterparts (MWAAM:9). Murders and counter murders took place by both Zipra and Zanla guerrillas.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114}This curfew remained in force for six months until April 10, 1981.

\textsuperscript{115}The detained were C.Z Moyo, Sydney Malunga (MP), Richard Ndlou, Charles Sigangatsha Ndlou, Patrick Chiwanga, Mrs. Zodwa Sibanda, Mrs. Bessie Harare, Dou D Mabus a and Fletcher Dulini.

\textsuperscript{116}In the conclusions of the Zapu Central Committee Meeting of 17–18 January 1981 held in Salisbury, it is stated that serious incidents involving both Zipra and Zanla guerrillas were noted. Mentioned Zipra casualties were: a) the abduction of four Zipra ex-combatants in Salisbury, who were murdered and buried in shallow graves near Dzapasi Assembly Point; b) the abduction and murder of former Zipra members of the National Army at Mtoko; c) three Zipra ex-combatants who were intercepted at a road block manned by Zanla forces of which two were murdered and one escaped; and d) three former Zipra members in the National Army who were apprehended at the instigation of former Zanla ex-combatants in the National Army at Gutu, two of whom were murdered and the other escaped (Conclusions, 1981:1–2).
Many Zipra ex-combatants found their personal safety acutely threatened by Zanla ex-combatants’ attitudes and actions, and did not feel that the government listened to or understood their protests. In State vs. Dabengwa et al, it was heard that Zipra’s complaints to the government and to the Joint High Command regarding Zanla provocation and violations, ‘were ignored as the Government was not prepared to take any action, disciplinary or otherwise, against Zanla’ (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Defence outline:25). For many Zipra ex-combatants the deep-seated fear of persecution led to desertion from the army (Alao 1995:110).

The government’s army integration and appointment policies were another reason for Zipra misgivings. In the Joint High Command it had initially been agreed that after courses the commissions for guerrilla soldiers in the integrated army would be on the basis of merit. In State vs. Dabengwa et al, the court heard that when it became apparent to Zanu (PF) that the vast majority of commissions on merit basis would be from Zipra, the agreement was changed to make commissioning on the basis of parity. This change of rule greatly frustrated many would-be Zipra officers (State vs. Dabengwa, Defence Outline:26). Another part of the problem was that the new battalions were mostly led by young and relatively educated members. Guerrilla veterans with years of experience but with poor academic qualifications found themselves occupying low ranks (Dabengwa 1990:6). Furthermore, ex-Zipra combatants complained that their promotion was disfavoured by ‘tactical elimination’ such as retirement, dismissal, allurement with political offices, and the elimination of would-be Zipra positions (Alao 1995:116). Frustration was not alleviated by the fact that all members of the Rhodesian Security Forces who were considered acceptable and who wished to remain in the army could do so with their rank unchanged, whilst Zanla/Zipra guerrillas were given the rank of private irrespective of previous experience (Alao 1995:108).

To address Zipra apprehensions Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku (members of the Joint High Command) reportedly sent memoranda and spoke to Mugabe on many occasions regarding the frustrations experienced within Zipra. However, according to Dabengwa and Masuku, although the Prime Minister always adopted the attitude that he would look into the matters raised, he failed to do so. Consequently, Dabengwa and Masuku ‘found it difficult to convey orders to members of Zipra, as the members of Zipra considered themselves threatened by the predominance of Zanla within Zimbabwe’ (State vs. Dabengwa, Defence outline:26). As little was done to rectify the situation, some chose to demobilise or defect.

---

117 These allegations have been difficult to substantiate, since although the army had established promotion procedures, promotions could have been adapted for political purposes (Alao 1995:116).
Nkomo's Demotion

In January 1981 Joshua Nkomo was removed from his post as Minister of Home Affairs, a portfolio which had included the jurisdiction of the police. Whilst having this post, Nkomo had frequently been verbally attacked by radicals in Zanu (PF), who claimed that the police had under Nkomo become biased against Zanu (PF), and turned into a Zapu force instead of a government institution (Kriger 1996:77). Although Nkomo refuted the accusations\(^\text{118}\), he was removed from his post. Mugabe first offered him the lesser post of Public Service Minister, but Nkomo rejected this. Eventually an agreement was made for Nkomo to take a post as Minister Without Portfolio, but with a key voice in security affairs (Mugabe Orders, 1981). Upon transferring Nkomo, Mugabe stated that ‘As Minister without Portfolio, I will assign to Comrade Joshua Nkomo specific tasks from time to time, which in my judgement require special handling in the national interest’ (The Fifth, 1981). Nkomo’s transfer created uproar in the Zapu Central Committee, were militant colleagues pressurised Nkomo to pull out of the coalition government due to the demotion (Hawkins 1981). Nevertheless a conclusion was reached reasoning that it was important that Zapu would not withdraw in order to have input in the control of security issues:

In considering the Cabinet reshuffle, the [Zapu] Central Committee noted that the involvement of the Patriotic Front [Zapu] in the control of security at ministerial level was a recognition of the need to arrest the lawless trends and anarchy, as well as to complete the joint obligation to integrate the Zipra and Zanla forces in order to create a single National Security Force for the peace and stability of the country. That this process is still incomplete the Central Committee considers the exclusion of the Patriotic Front from the joint control of the security at this stage disruptive (Conclusions 1981:2).

As the situation in the assembly points and in the integrated army units were extremely sensitive for provocation, Nkomo’s demotion was a severe blow for both Zapu/Zipra members, adding salt to injuries.

\(^{118}\) Nkomo stated in Parliament in June 1980 that ‘Disparaging statements by some party officials and others against the police and other lawful authorities can only erode the public confidence in these authorities. The powers of the police, the courts and of other Government agencies must be protected and usurped’ (Kriger 1996:78).
1.f. Entumbane Two, February 1981

The second battle between Zanla and Zipra seems to have been initiated by a minor incident, but due to the prevailing tension, it developed into bloodshed. There are several versions as to how the battle started. One often-quoted description is that it broke out over a beer hall brawl in the 12th Battalion base at Ntabazindua (30km from Bulawayo). Disabled Zipra members from a rehabilitation centre apparently visited the base beer hall on Saturday night, and tensions led to fist fights which developed into the soldiers breaking ranks and opening fire on one another (Mac-Manus 1981). The fighting spread to the 13th battalion at Glenville in the outskirts of Bulawayo, from where it spilled over to the Zipra/Zanla Entumbane urban settlements, and to the 41st battalion at Connemara (near Gwelo). This time the fighting went on for six days (7–13/2 1981). In Bulawayo, the residents again fled the affected areas. In radio broadcasts people were urged not to go to work or let children go to school, and to stay indoors. Business came to a standstill, shops and schools closed, milk deliveries were cancelled and the railway shut down.

This second battle was on a far larger scale than the Entumbane eruption in November 1980. Whilst during the first conflict the then integrated army units stayed out of the fight, this time the national army split along former guerrilla and party alliances. When rumours of the fight spread, Zipra men from Gwaai River and Essexvale camps headed for Entumbane, equipped with armoured personnel carriers, heavy ammunition trucks and tanks.

The government’s initial reaction to the severe fighting was inaction. According to a senior British Military Advisory and Technical Training team member, he had to:

convince the government to intervene to stop the fighting. Secure in Harare, government ministers seemed content to let the fighting in Matabeleland take its course. The Zipra commanders wanted the government to send troops to end the fighting; failure to do so, they feared, would make the consequences for Zipra, Zapu and the Ndebeles even worse (Kriger 1996:105).

On the seventh day of fighting the government finally took action by sending in a ZNA unit consisting of former Rhodesian African Rifles (still unaffected by the integration exercise), and the all-white air force. With jet fighters, helicopter gunships, mortars and tanks, it took less than 24 hours to restore order. In the press the event was described as Mugabe ordering to ‘smash mutinous former guerrillas loyal to his coalition partner, Joshua Nkomo’ (Mugabe orders 1981), and for the RAR and the air force to ‘crush the Zipra dissidents’ (Hawkins 1981). It was also reported that Zapu officials and Zipra commanders did try to intervene but were ineffec-
tual (Hawkins 1981, Lelyveld 1981), and that Nkomo had lost authority and control over younger and more militant elements within Zapu (Hawkins 1981b).119

When the fighting was over, the media reported that the death toll was 300, many more injured, and a thousand people made homeless (MacManus 1981). According to Lt-Col L. Dyke (government forces) who later gave a statement to the inquiry (see below), the death toll was 800, whilst 1800 were injured (interview L. Dyke, 1994). Bodies were first put in the city morgue, and when it was filled three refrigerated railway cars were used. Scores of people waited for many hours to go through the cars in order to identify next of kin. The majority of the killed were guerrillas (In Zimbabwe, 1981).

After the cease-fire, a complete evacuation of guerrillas from the Entumbane township took place (15–16/2 1981). The two forces were disarmed 120 and geographically separated. Zanla ex-combatants were trucked to Godhlawayo Shooting Range (north of Bulawayo), and Zipra ex-combatants were taken to a temporary camp at Woolendale Rifle Range (south of Bulawayo) (Kriger 1996:105).

In parliament Mugabe blamed Zipra ex-combatants for starting the battle, stating that a ‘definite organised pattern among certain elements of Zipra forces had resulted in the factional fighting’ (Hawkins 1981). In addition to Zipra, Mugabe also blamed Zapu as a party, charging that ‘They never reconciled to the fact that they lost the election last year. Now there are those who think they can reverse the de-

119 International press coverage of the conflict was limited. During the height of the fighting the government banned any photographs being taken in the Entumbane area, and officials barred any TV/still film to be taken out of the country (Ross 1981).

120 According to court records, immediately after the second clash between Zanla and Zipra, a meeting between representatives of Zanla, Zipra and the former Rhodesian forces was held, and it was agreed that the urgent need was to get the opposing forces out of Bulawayo and that the guerrillas could take their weapons with them. However, due to a decision in the Zanu (PF) central committee (not in the Joint High Command) the guerrillas were to be disarmed due to the violence that had occurred. This was communicated by Robert Mugabe to Dumiso Dabengwa, upon which Dabengwa stated that he did not appreciate military decisions being taken by the Central Committee of the Zanu (PF). The Prime Minister stated that ‘since this was the decision, he could not be seen to go against it, as it would show that he was a weak leader’. However, Dabengwa got the impression that Mugabe did not himself believe in disarming. (State vs. Dabengwa, Defense outline: 29). The directive was communicated to Nkomo, who stated that ‘for the sake of peace he would go ahead with the Prime Minister’s directions’, but he would pursue the matter with the government. On the first Sunday after the second battle, Nkomo addressed all Zipra combatants at Entumbane and stated that the guerrillas would be disarmed in obedience to government order. This was met by reluctance by the officers and dissatisfaction by the Zipra ex-combatants (State vs. Dabengwa, Defense outline:29–30, Judgement:13).
feat by taking up arms' (Ross 1981b). Zipra forces' side of the story held that they took arms only when they heard rumours of a planned Zanla attack on Zipra forces. Zapu denied that there was an organised revolt in any sense (Hawkins 1981b). As a result of the fighting, the Cabinet established a commission of inquiry headed by High Court judge Mr. Enoch Dumbutshena, which would ‘determine the causes of the uprising and if possible, identify the persons or organisations responsible for planning and inciting the disturbances’ (Mills 1981). In September 1982 the results of the inquiry was discussed in Parliament, Mugabe stated that ‘the government was greatly disappointed with the report’, and that ‘It appears that the commission has attempted to avoid condemning one side or the other, the whole report being inconclusive’. On the question (from Ian Smith) if the report would be published, Mugabe answered that ‘the Government did not feel that its publication would serve any useful purpose’, ‘however, if this was the view of the MPs, the Government would comply’ (Bandits will, 1982).

The severity of the second armed confrontation was underlined by the fact that both sides breached the rule of heavy arms and equipment, making the clash into a military battle. Once it had started, it was difficult to halt in any way other than a greater show of force. According to Zipra witnesses, until the first Entumbane fight Zipra guerrillas had observed the rule that no heavy weaponry was to be kept in the camps. But after the first clash, it was evident to them that Zanla was breaching the order (since heavy weaponry was used by Zanla in Entumbane One), and this ‘not only reinforced the distrust they had of Zanla, but persuaded them that their security and possibly their lives depended on their obtaining similar equipment to defend themselves in the future’ (State vs. Dabengwa, Judgement State Case:8). The Brigade Commander at Gwaai stated that after the first Entumbane, soldiers were concerned about their security and felt that they could be attacked at any time (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Judgement State Case:9). Many in the Zipra forces felt that the Government was biased in favour of the Zanla forces, and according to the court records there was ‘evidence to show that the Zipra men were prepared to disobey the instructions of their commanders if they believed that

---

121 The inquiry report was never published, nor was it referred back to the commission, because the government believed nothing would be gained by such an action (Bandits will, 1982). Mugabe stated in Parliament that the report had not pinpointed the underlying causes leading to the mutiny, neither had it identified persons or organizations responsible for planning and promoting the disturbances. The report never being published created a view amongst sectors within Zapu and Zipra, that the government withheld the public information regarding Zanla’s illegal use of heavy weaponry in the fighting because this would have damaged Zanla’s reputation and would have counteracted the government’s anti-Zapu/Zipra discourse (interviews 1994, private conversations with ex-combatants).
these would place them at a disadvantage compared to Zanla’s fighting strength (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Judgement State Case:17). Many thought Nkomo was too easily pressurised into concessions by the government, as expressed by one long time Zapu supporter: ‘It seems as if they [the government] want to crush Nkomo, and Nkomo is too prepared to compromise’ (Army rivals 1981). When the government forces intervened, for many Zipra soldiers the fact that the government used ex-Rhodesian forces against the Zipra soldiers, implied an alliance between Zanu and the former Rhodesians, against Zapu and Zipra.\textsuperscript{122} The distrust and feeling of hostility became further cemented.

1.g. Policies of Disarmament and Demobilisation

In February 1981 there were between 14,000–20,000 armed men still awaiting integration at the assembly points.\textsuperscript{123} Up to this point Zanu, Zapu and the government as a whole, had been in agreement regarding the guerrillas’ right to keep their arms (Kriger 1996:108). Each assembly place had kept it’s own armoury, stocked with all but the guerrilla’s’ personal weapons. The government had for a year tried to find formulas to disarm the guerrillas and integrate the assembly armouries into the national armouries. Now however, as a result of the second Zanla-Zipra clash, the government decided to immediately disarm all remaining guerrillas in the different camps. The idea was resisted by Zipra’s Dumiso Dabengwa (member of the Joint High Command), as he stated that the disarmament was taking place too soon after the February clash, and warned that the insecurity amongst Zipra men could lead them to hide arms as an insurance against possible future Zanla attacks (Kriger 1996:109). Indeed, particularly within Zipra forces disarmament was opposed, the suspicion and mistrust between Zipra and Zanla did not cater for voluntary disarmament. But disarmament was resisted in both camps also for other reasons. As it was stipulated in the Lancaster House Agreement that ex-combatants would not be disarmed until integrated or demobilised, guerrillas equated disarmament with compulsory demobilisation – an action the government had given their word not to do (Kriger 1996:107). Despite resistance disarmament took place, and on May 21, 1981, the Joint High Command declared that the operation had been successfully completed. It was nevertheless common knowledge that there was sizeable amount of arms that had not been recovered by the National Army in the disarmament op-

\textsuperscript{122} For further elaboration on Zipra’s fears that the Rhodesian Security Forces and Zanla were cooperating at the expense of Zipra, see Alao 1995:110–111.

\textsuperscript{123} The recorded numbers of non-integrated ex-combatants at this point in time (February 1981) vary. The numbers here given represent the lowest and highest numbers reported in the press, and can therefore only be seen as approximate (Thatcher 1981, Army rivals 1981).
eration. These unaccounted for weapons existed in various unidentified places in the country, being either remnants from the war, hidden by the guerrillas before entering the APs or before the disarmament exercise (Kriger 1996:110). For the government the weapons were an internal security concern, particularly since dissidents were believed to have access to them.

In addition to the Zanla-Zipra clashes, disarmament became another reason for Zipra defections. Thus, due to fear, insecurity and frustration many ex-combatants left APs and ZNA units with their arms, and headed back towards their home areas, Matabeleland North and South. Having taken that step, they were automatically identified as 'dissidents' by the government.

Soon after the completed disarmament exercise, a Cabinet Committee was formed to formulate a demobilisation policy. This scheme was made public in June 1981. Contrary to what many guerrillas believed, demobilisation was to be compulsory. All those awaiting integration in the APs were affected, but so were soldiers already integrated in the national army. The demobilisation was massive: 14,000–20,000 men in the APs, 30,000–35,000 men from the ZNA. The government motivated its' decision to demobilise those already integrated in terms of finances. The army had to be reduced to a size of 40,000 soldiers (Kriger 1996:111). Demobilisation packages were provided, in which the corner stone was an allowance of Z$185 per month for up to two years. In addition educational benefits would be offered to those who wished to study or finish disrupted education, and skills training in various institutions was to be another part of the package. An additional option promoted was for the ex-combatants to form co-operatives and by combining the members’ allowances, buy land and other necessities (Kriger 1996:112).

The demobilisation policy was received with mixed feelings. For many ex-combatants the financial scheme was attractive and was received positively, particularly by those who were prepared to leave army life. For others, forced demobilisation irrespective of package, was resented since the government had promised not to take this action. Also in society at large, the policy was met with various responses. Some voiced a fear for scores of unemployed ex-combatants, possibly leading to an increase in criminal activity. Others were confident that employment and educational opportunities would be found for the demobilised. Upon commencement of the demobilisation scheme in September 1981, Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Kumbirai Kangai, stated that ‘I don’t see any problem finding work for these people’ (Kriger 1996:114). Unfortunately this would not be the case. In the majority of cases, the demobilised ex-combatants remained unemployed or (much on their own initiative) formed co-operatives (Kriger 1996:125).
The government’s demobilisation policy gave many added reasons to defect. The scheme was the end of the road for many guerrillas, who had in the camps been waiting for integration, work or education. The benefits obviously helped, but were far from comparable to the hopes and expectations many had nurtured. Added to the disappointment, there was the extreme hostility between Zanla and Zipra and the political antagonism between Zanu and Zapu. Whilst the demobilisation exercise was under way, an increase destabilisation took place. Armed robberies spread, conducted mostly by ex-combatants as they ran out of money for food and transport. The government expanded its surveillance, and in their quest to contain dissidents, police and security forces increasingly used harsh methods. Due to the equation popularly made between Zipra members, dissidents and banditry, ex-Zanla soldiers exerted severe pressure on ex-Zipra soldiers. It became increasingly difficult to be a Zipra member, the affiliation was enough to be considered a dissident. Many of those remaining in the army were punished for those who had defected, causing more defections. This conflation of identities resulted in Zipra members not going through the demobilisation exercise at all. Some chose to simply leave. Others already demobilised desisted from claiming their monthly allowance. Report Mpoko, an ex-Zipra commander serving on the Demobilisation Directorate explained that ‘most demobbed ex-combatants from that part of the country [Matabeleland] had a tendency either to destroy their [demobilisation] books or not go to offices. Security forces could arrest them lining up to get demobilisation pay’ (Kriger 1996:122). Thus, the government’s response to the increase in defections and destabilisation was a hard-line attitude.

1.h. The Establishment of the Fifth Brigade

It became clear in August 1981 that in line with the government’s hard-line attitude, a new brigade outside the regular army system was being formed – the Fifth Brigade. In order to organise and train this brigade, 106 North Korean instructors and a massive amount of military equipment and arms arrived in the country. The news leaked in The Umtali Post on August 7, 1981. The newspaper reported that North Korean troops were based in barracks formerly occupied by the national army’s 33 Infantry Battalion, on the eastern banks of the Nyamombe River in Nyanga (Manicaland). The editor concluded that ‘Foreign troops are now based in Manicaland’, seeing the arrival as a ‘sinister development’, and questioning ‘What

124 Those who defected were obviously not entitled demobilization allowances.
125 For personal accounts on Zipra persecution, see Alexander et al, 2000:189–190.
have they come for?’ (Spring 1986:84). 126 The government later clarified that the Fifth Brigade was only for internal defence purposes, and admitted that for this purpose the brigade received special training from instructors of the Democratic Republic of Korea (‘Gukurahundi’ 1990). The task of the Brigade was to ‘wipe out dissidents and criminals’, also those ‘in the army’ (Alexander 1996:8).

Zapu was highly critical to the formation of the Fifth Brigade. Joshua Nkomo stated that Zimbabwe had adequate and efficient forces of law that could handle any internal problems, including the civil police. Nkomo was also critical about the fact that he was a minister in the Prime Minister’s office and had not been consulted in the matter (No need, 1981). The government found Nkomo’s assertion irritating, stating that Nkomo had ‘openly criticised a major government decision’, disappointingly since ‘for a while it appeared as if he [Nkomo] had settled down to working within the system, – difficult as this may have seemed initially’ (The Fifth, 1981). Mugabe told a Zanu (PF) rally a few days later that ‘Some people have said they should have been consulted. Who are you to be consulted?’ (Is new, 1981). Nkomo answered when speaking at a meeting in Plumtree, that his statement had been motivated by his desire for completely non-partisan security forces in the country, emphasising that this role was fulfilled by the national army (Is new, 1981).

In October 1981 the formation of the Fifth Brigade was questioned in parliament by Senator Wilson, who asked the Minister of State, Emmerson Munangagwa, to justify the expense of the Fifth Brigade in the light of the number of British military instructors already in Zimbabwe. Minister Munangagwa replied that the Fifth Brigade had been formed to accommodate the ‘two extra armies in the country after independence (Zipra and Zanla)’. 127 He assured that the establishment of the Fifth Brigade was ‘not for imposing the Government’s plans for a one-party state’, explaining further that when Mugabe visited Korea, Zimbabwe was offered a grant of ‘military hardware’ worth 12.5 million pounds. The minister further claimed that the British training team was not equipped to do all the necessary training since it was already fully committed, and politically justified the Koreans’ presence by stating that:

126 The editor, Jean Maitland-Stuart, was called to the Prime Minister’s office where she was asked to, for Mugabe and the Minister of Information Dr. Nathanael Shamuyarira, explain her motives for writing the article. After having been at the newspaper since 1945, she was due to this article forced to leave her job (Spring 1986:85).

127 What ‘accommodating’ Zipra and Zanla by creating the Fifth Brigade most likely means, is that the Brigade would absorb Zipra and Zanla ex-combatants.
Being a non-aligned country we have relations with the countries in the West and the East, and to prove that Zimbabwe is fully non-aligned we have the British training four brigades and the Koreans training the fifth (Nothing sinister, 1981).

The training of the Fifth brigade continued albeit the criticism raised against it. The news of the formation of a brigade whose sole task was to deal with internal security problems, did not alleviate any tension amongst those about to be demobilised or create a better atmosphere in the integrated army units. The establishment of the 'crack force' was perceived by many as a direct threat to anyone in opposition to Zanu(PF).
Voices Section One

I served all the way through that [liberation] war as a member of various units and my parent unit was the Rhodesian African Rifles with whom I was with up until 1980. In 1980 the time came to make a great number of decisions, there was a lot of emotional decisions being made; we were going to fall under a Communist government, we were going to fall under a black government and we were also subject to our own propaganda that we as Rhodesians had been putting out, saying what would happen to anybody who served under a Communist government or a black government.... The South Africans involved offered all of us to come to South Africa under the same conditions that we were serving under here: if you were a Major, you would be a Major there; if you had served 18 years, you would get 18 years there; your pension would be payable, you would lose nothing, just come down.... It was a very obvious ploy to very quickly break down the Rhodesian Army. The Rhodesian Army was a very effective army and we certainly lost in 1980 but I do not think we ever lost a battle, we lost the politics. My decisions, and I speak fairly personally, were that I was going to stay here. We had fought a long and hard battle and a lot of people had died. Some very good friends of mine had died, both black and white, and if I ran away I believed I would be destroying whatever we fought for, I would have fought for nothing. I also believe that as an officer it is my job to lead and it is easy to lead when you are winning, but it is a hell of a lot more difficult to lead when you are losing. And certainly in 1980, we had lost, the morale of the country, the morale of the people, the morale of the soldiers was very low and there was this fear. At that time, I believe it was necessary to be a leader because everything was crumbling, we did not know what to do and I personally – and hopefully a number of the officers who were serving with me, certainly all the officers in my unit, I talked them into staying, because at that time we needed to stay and keep things together. Mugabe had said in the early days of 1980 when we were still making our appreciations, had said that there was going to be a policy of reconciliation and that what was over, was over, and we must now get together and build a nation. Well, I believed that that was necessary too, we had to get together and build a nation. Through all the years of war – which I thoroughly enjoyed, it was my profession, I was a soldier – there are moments of war which are pretty heart breaking. When you bury a friend, and the anguish and thoughts that go with it. But you still want to stay and make sure that it was not all for nothing. Lt-Col Lionel Dyke, ZNA.128

I could not believe it. But the official results confirmed the information. Leaving aside the twenty white seats, all won by Ian Smith’s Rhodesian Front, Zanu (PF) had fifty-seven

128 Interview with Lt Col Lionel Dyke, Harare 1/3 1994.
seats, PF Zapu twenty seats, the bishop's UANC three. It was beyond belief. I was deeply distressed.... That my party should have won not a single seat in Salisbury, and only twenty seats in the whole western strip from Kariba down to Beitbridge, I could not believe and still do not believe. Even the known and massive campaign of intimidation could not have achieved that. That the first election in free Zimbabwe failed to reflect the people's will is something of which I am sure.... First I had to consult my senior party colleagues. They were deeply disappointed and angry. Some had been candidates, declared defeated in constituencies where they knew a large majority of voters wanted them to win. The soldiers in particular were distraught: the Zipra commanders had used every ounce of their personal authority to persuade the men to stay quietly in their assembly points throughout the election campaign, despite many provocations. Now they would have to go back to those soldiers and tell them they had been cheated but must accept it. To my relief and gratitude I found that my colleagues accepted my bitter analysis: there was nothing for it but to swallow the result and trust that the alleged victors would use their triumph generously and in good faith.

Joshua Nkomo. 129

[The 1980 elections were] absolutely tribal.... PF [Zapu] has no meaningful power base in Mashonaland... but it will take a lot to change Matabeleland. The Ndebeles are not, by and large, an enlightened people, and it is only through enlightenment that you can shake these primitive tribal affiliations. Zanu(PF) spokesman and election candidate (Midlands). 130

The party (PF Zapu) enjoyed no support from the Shona youth, intellectuals and the middle-age group. In addition, the war strategy of our party contributed to our defeat: Zanu had spread throughout the country but Zapu concentrated on Matabeleland. So in the areas that mattered, Zapu had no influence at all. It became an issue of he who controlled the military in certain areas must win those areas in the election. Kennedy Sibanda. 131

My general conclusion is that, in the Rhodesian context..., the elections were in general a reflection of the wishes of the people, though in no sense free from intimidation and pressure. However my view is that in the country as a whole the degree of intimidation and pressure was not so great as to invalidate the overall results of the poll. Sir John Boynton, Common Wealth Observer Group. 132

129 Nkomo 1984: 210-211
130 Rich 1983:44
131 Mr. Sibanda was one of J. Nkomo's legal advisers at the Lancaster House conference (Rich 1983:48)
The phase that we are entering, the phase of independence, should be regarded as a phase conferring upon all of us the people of Zimbabwe—whether we are black or white—full sovereignty and full democratic rights. We have no intention of taking advantage of the majority we have secured. We shall ensure that there is a place for everybody in this country. Robert Mugabe.

Our majority rule could easily turn into inhuman rule if we oppressed, persecuted or harassed those who do not look or think like the majority of us. Democracy is never mob-rule. It is and should remain disciplined rule requiring compliance with the law and social rules. Our independence must thus not be constructed as an instrument vesting individuals or groups of individuals with the right to harass and intimidate others into acting against their will. Robert Mugabe.

When we came to independence, people in Matabeleland believed that Joshua was going to rule. Then, when the elections came it was the other way around, because it was on divided lines. But because of the belief that they [Zapu] were going to win, people did not accept the fact that Mugabe had won. The division was there. It really now needed the two leaders to talk to their people. F. Chitauro.

People had their kader all the time and it was difficult to acclimatise to the new realities where your leader was no longer on the top. Prof. C. Banana.

The other party had won the elections and you had that feeling of fear, because you do not know what is taking place, whether we would be accommodated in that system. That was the problem. When I came back I joined the other comrades in Filabusi Assembly point, it was not nice for some of us. We did not join the National Army, for we feared that we were going to be victimised. My injury was not so severe that I would not have joined the Army, I would have joined if I did not have much fear. But I just decided to go into some other business, because I feared that maybe my opponent was going to destroy me when I joined the Army. There was hate amongst us, the Zipra and Zanla forces—like the situation that happened to me when I was in Camp Four. Our camp was right in the centre, inserted by Camp One and Camp Two, which were Zanla camps. There was tension all the time, which led to fighting. Paul Nyathi, ex-Zipra combatant.

133 Speech by Prime Minister Mugabe in 1980 (CCJP/Spicer 1992)
134 Prime Minister Mugabe’s Independence Message, April 17, 1980 (Department of Information, 204/80/JEM:3).
[Those who have not gone to the assembly points] must move away quickly to the assembly points. They either go to the Police or join their comrades in the assembly areas. This is vital because it will assist in the re-establishment of law and order, which is an indispensable element in the consolidation of our hard won independence. We need that peace and I call upon everyone to subscribe to this principle so that there may be tranquillity in Zimbabwe. Joshua Nkomo.\(^{138}\)

The heat was on. There was serious fighting and killing and no jobs. When the soldiers boarded the train, we would each find out where the other guys were sitting. Then we would find each other and throw each other out of the train. Some of us preferred to travel by train than by bus. On the bus it would be the driver, the bus conductor and some of the passengers. If they were Zanla supporters, then you knew that was the end of you. It was a sport to throw you out of the bus through the back window or the door, whilst the bus was going full speed. Or when the bus had stopped, they would beat you up severely using spanners or whatever they could lay their hands on. They intended to beat you to death and leave you there. There are a lot of guys who were with us, who were left for dead after such incidents. Those who survived would wear scars. E. Setobole, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident.\(^{139}\)

The differences that were happening in the camps were that the government sponsored its armed bandits to kidnap and assassinate Ndebele speaking persons. That was a problem faced, not only by Zipra, but Ndebeles. It automatically went tribal. During that time when the disturbances were continuing, people were thrown out of the trains, and a lot of murdering was going around. We reported all the matters to the officer commanding. Even that could not help us. Because we were sometimes taken by the police even if we were within the army, taken to be murdered. The Battalion commanders knew all that was happening but they could not say anything. They were just quiet. We did not know what was the problem. C. Ndiweni, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident.\(^{140}\)

The government will preserve law and order against disloyal, misguided and politically motivated armed hooligans and political malcontents whose final objective, according to the information before me, is to create chaos and lawlessness so as to pave the way for the eventual fall of my Government. Robert Mugabe.\(^{141}\)

---

\(^{138}\) Stated in March 1980, as the new Minister of Home Affairs. (Kriger 1996:79).

\(^{139}\) Zimbabwe Project, 1993.

\(^{140}\) Zimbabwe Project, 1993.

\(^{141}\) Radio speech 10 November 1980 by Prime Minister Mugabe, addressing the first Entumbane clash (Mugabe, 1980).
They treat us like traitors. No one feels safe now. I speak Shona to former Zanla colleagues. I never confide my private thoughts to them. Now we are sent this questionnaire asking for details of our fighting record during the struggle. Now why? To award us war medals? Or to mark the ZIpra men down? Charles Ncube.\textsuperscript{142}

We suffered hardship there and when we fought [in the liberation war], but I wasn't surprised by that, because that's what we went for, what we prepared for. The thing that shocked us is what happened here. We thought that we had won the country and then found we were being killed. Why was the government killing us for what we had won? We were the ones who won Zimbabwe and made independence. Yet we were being killed again. We couldn't understand that. Keti, Ex-ZIpra combatant.\textsuperscript{143}

Then in late 1980 we were transferred to Entumbane, in Bulawayo. So there, that's where we started this fighting between Zanla and ZIpra. The fighting at Entumbane - well, the whole thing was provoked by politicians. I wouldn't say it was provoked by the comrades themselves. Because I remember on the day when the first incident occurred, there was a rally which was organised by Enos Nkala at White City Stadium, where he actually made some very bad remarks about ZAPU and ZIpra. And then after that rally, some ex-Zanla combatants came back to the camp. They visited a local beer hall at Entumbane where civilians were drinking. They started beating up the civilians. So these civilians ran away and came to our camp, that is the ZIpra camp. And they said 'No, these people are at Entumbane, they are beating us'. Some were bleeding. So when we went to that beer hall to actually check what was happening, that's when the shooting started. People still had their weapons. The fighting only lasted for a day and a half. Ex-combatant 'X'.\textsuperscript{144}

Having armed soldiers sitting around in buildings rather than in tents, in cities rather than mountains and valleys, did nothing to ease the mounting frustration and uncertainty we all felt. Indeed, it actually made things worse, for now we were mixing socially with Zanla comrades in a situation in which sectarianism and recrimination had become part and parcel of everyday political argument. I am convinced that it was a serious mistake not to transfer us to barracks. The decision to shunt us from one assembly point to another was simply an opportunistic sop to the Rhodesians who naturally could not stomach the thought that we were disciplined soldiers and not a rabble of wild terrorists. Had Mangena and

\textsuperscript{142} Cauté, 1982.

\textsuperscript{143} Werbner 1991:164.

\textsuperscript{144} Barnes 1995:122–123.
Tongogara still been alive, I am sure this insulting decision would not have been taken. Andrew Nyathi, ex-Zipra regional commander.145

These actions [hostility and violence between Zanla and Zipra] did not confirm the Unity they had told us about. A lot of people were scared. We stayed in the army, then we saw the fighting at Entumbane. That was a painful experience to us. Then the people became to be chased out of the army. They were demobilised. It looked like as if the country had been won [by Zanu(PF)/Zanla], and these people [Zipra ex-combatants] were no longer useful. We were supposed to look for jobs for ourselves. Jobs were difficult to find here at home [Matabeleland]. We were to think back and to discover our old skills, and become self-employed. But we would get arrested for that. For instances, I was a carpenter and I was designing a lot of art works. When I tried to sell them in the street, I would be chased by the police, and arrested for selling things unlawfully – when in fact I was trying to support myself. In 1981 I decided to think back where I came from, and I joined the armed fighters [dissidents] which I did until 1988. Morgan Nkomo, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident.146

Following the fighting [Entumbane One, November 1980] a curfew was imposed, but only on pedestrians from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. Vehicles were free to move about, and I am convinced that it was in this period that stocks began to be built up of unauthorised heavy arms.... [After Entumbane Two, February 1981] one grave error was made, over my strong objections. Emmerson Munangagwa, the minister of State in charge of security, insisted that all the men be disarmed even before they had moved back into their own barracks. The result was that many soldiers and ex-soldiers must have hidden their weapons rather than return to their dangerous camps without them. The stocks of concealed weapons in the country were dangerously swelled by this order. Men of both guerrilla armies had their secret arms dumps. This became apparent later in circumstances of extreme danger for me and for the country. Joshua Nkomo.147

I can still remember the sense of anger and dismay I felt when I learned that so many of our freedom fighters were going to be forcibly demobilised after independence. There was a feeling of sickness in the pit of my stomach as I heard one of our commanders announce that thousands would have to leave military life. The new National Army was going to be drawn from the ranks of both the liberation forces and those of the old regime. Two things concerned us in particular about this process of ‘integration’ as it was called. Obviously, the first was the

145 Nyathi / Hoffman 1990:42.
146 Zimbabwe Project, 1993.
147 Nkomo 1984:221.
fact that we had fought and died for a liberated Zimbabwe: the Rhodesians had fought to perpetuate racism and privilege – and in support of a regime which the whole world had declared illegal. And yet not only was the Rhodesian army part of this integration exercise, but they were regarded as the established army and we, supposedly victorious freedom fighters, were to be invited to join them – in suitably modest numbers. So what kind of justice was this? The second problem arose from the fateful decision to break up the Patriotic Front alliance. Given the tensions which had resulted – and we have already seen how they manifested themselves in the assembly points – it was going to be much more difficult to decide in an amicable way who was going to be integrated into the new army and who was going to be forcibly demobilised. Andrew Nyathi, ex-Zipra regional commander.\textsuperscript{148}

We had been fighting for a free Zimbabwe, and we all knew that this struggle for liberation would have to continue. It was not going to stop at independence. On the contrary, major compromises had been forced upon us at Lancaster House. Just to mention two of its particularly controversial features, this agreement provided for entrenched parliamentary seats for whites, and for a so-called ‘willing buyer/willing seller’ policy clearly indented to block or at least obstruct the redistribution of land. Compromises like these made the need to resist demobilisation all the greater. Given the way in which independence had come about, there was now a real danger that demobilised comrades would simply return to their old life of exploitation and poverty. Andrew Nyathi, ex-Zipra regional commander.\textsuperscript{149}

During the time we were in the army we felt threatened, but it was still better than when we were demobilised. When we were demobilised it was even worse. CIO\textsuperscript{150} could come at night and pick up somebody that was an ex-soldier and disappear with him and the person disappears forever. They would come during the day and ask who are you, what is your background. If you said that you had been in the army, they would take you. Zwelibanzi Ndlovu, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident.\textsuperscript{151}

I had to hide my demob book, so that I was not found out. They [ZNA soldiers] would not be asking for your national id, they would want to see your demob papers. If they found it, they would know that you were a Zipra soldier. If they found this out, you would simply disappear. We felt painfully threatened by this situation. Kumbulani Mbedzi, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{148} Nyathi/ Hoffman 1990:47.
\textsuperscript{149} Nyathi/ Hoffman 1990:48.
\textsuperscript{150} CIO - Central Intelligence Organization.
\textsuperscript{151} Interview with Zwelibanzi Ndlovu, Greenlight Co-operative, 17 March, 1994.
\textsuperscript{152} Zimbabwe Project, 1993.
Some of us who were demobilised, thought it best to return home because at least you could live in your own house. But little did we know that we were coming to a much worse situation. This was what some of us like myself, faced. I did not even have enough time to spend my demob money before I had to leave to go to this second war. Because anyone could just arrive at your doorstep, whether a soldier, a policeman, or the CIO. Especially the CIO, wanting to find out what you were doing there, at home. ‘No, I have filled out my demob papers’, and you would bring them out to show them. Since you were a demobilised Zipra ex-combatant, they would immediately find you guilty and level you as a dissident.

E. Setobole ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident.

I went into the bush. When I left the army, I knew other people had been affected just like me. I went to join the others. We were eight people when we left the camp, but when we arrived in the area where we were going, we were only three. Later we met with the other five again.... Most of the dissidents were ex-Zipra, but we did not segregate that much. Sometimes you could find also ex-Zanla guys who were disgruntled. But mostly only ex-Zipra.... All of us that left the army, we realised that what we had been fighting for, the freedom we were looking forward to and everything else we expected at independence, was not there. Weather or not there would be danger to our lives, we felt that we wanted to defend our lives as individuals. It was just the same [as dangerous] to stay in the army, there wasn’t anything there that we had expected would be there. What we were taught in Zipra, was what we were doing as dissidents. We did not change any objectives. M. Ndebele, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident.

I deserted because there was no understanding between Zipra and Zanla, there was rivalry between the two forces. I felt unsafe and eventually I decided to leave. It was a continuous fight between the two – Zanla/Zipra. I felt unsafe. And also because of the ideology I had been taught by the Zipra forces and I thought I should follow the ideology. I thought I should defend my life by following that ideology, that is why I decided to leave. There was a big difference between what I saw, and what I was taught. M. Ndebele, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident.

When Mugabe won, Zapu said accept this. When Zapu said join the army we did, or the police. But then here comes this situation knocking on our door. We never had intentions to lead this life. We’d done our duty, we wanted to build our homes, what had we done wrong?...[I]n the 1980s war, no one was recruited, we were forced by the situation, all of

153 Ibid.


155 Ibid.
just met in the bush. Each person left on his own, running from death. M..D. Ex-Zipra dissident.\textsuperscript{156}

I have got the hammers to knock off their heads. These dissidents should know that I am all out to crush them. If it means fist fighting, I know how to use my fists. If it is knobkerries, I also know how to use them. And if it comes to guns, I have too many of them. We have one national army, one government, and one Prime Minister – not two. Robert Mugabe.\textsuperscript{157}

Mr. Mugabe’s statement that he discussed the matter with Zanu (PF)’s central committee can be taken to mean only one thing – that the Fifth Brigade is a Zanu(PF) army and not part of the Zimbabwe National Army. My position is clear. We have a national army and a civil police force, both of which are capable of dealing with any trouble emanating either from inside or outside our borders, and we do not need political or partisan brigades. And what does Mr. Mugabe mean by ‘crack force’? Which of our national army is not a crack force? Calling one section of the army a crack force and others something else, is not wise. Joshua Nkomo.\textsuperscript{158}

I was supposed to be consulted on the formation of this brigade which, to me, is for the possible imposition of a one-party state in our country. It cannot be for anything else because we have an established army with instructors accepted publicly by all our Government organs. The so-called Fifth Brigade is obviously a separate army. Joshua Nkomo.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{156} Alexander et al, 2000:192

\textsuperscript{157} Speech at rally in Gwanda October 1981 (Ruthless war, 1981).

\textsuperscript{158} Is new, 1981.

\textsuperscript{159} No need, 1981.
2. 1982: Power Competition – Power Intervention

In 1982 Zimbabwe went into its second year of independence. The country grappled with many problems; army integration, unemployment, destabilisation and economic hardship. Further difficulties lay ahead. In February the government publicised that large arms caches were unearthed at various properties owned by Zapu officials. Based on the disclosure, the government accused Zapu for conspiring of a coup. Subsequently Joshua Nkomo and several Zapu ministers were dismissed, Zapu-owned properties were confiscated, and former Zipra commanders Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku were arrested. Meanwhile tension was running high in the integrated army, and in combination with the above developments, mass desertions took place. In addition, South African security agents successfully infiltrated, adding to the confusion and violence. In response to the internal and external destabilisation, the government stepped up military interventions, subjecting primarily Matabeleland civilians to harsh treatment.

An intention of this section is to explore the issue of the unearthed weapons and the subsequent detention of Dabengwa and Masuku, the politicisation of this development, and its impact on the arising conflict situation. The section begins with a historical backdrop based on court records, describing how arms after independence arriving from Zambia were stockpiled in various locations in the Matabeleland provinces. Next, based on evidence available today (however not at the time), South Africa’s role in the arms caching is described. The narrative then returns to 1982, describing the circumstances as presented in the media and by government sources at the time. Juxtaposing developments in this way highlights the government’s discourse aimed at incriminating Zapu for the arms stockpiles and dissident activity, which – apparent with the information provided – was incorrect. A main point put forward in this section is that despite Zanu (PF)’s lack of certainty at the time whether Zapu was plotting for a coup, considering the arms stockpile and the by South Africa planted Zapu disinformation, the government’s anti Zapu-discourse and military clamp down cannot thereby be considered without a political stake and self-interest. Subsequently, irrespective of erroneous conclusions regarding the arms stockpiles and misleading intelligence information, it is concluded that the Zanu (PF) government took (and made) the opportunity to incriminate it main opposition party Zapu.

The 1982 section also demonstrates that the government’s choice of army strategy back-lashed: rather than containing dissident activity, the government’s harsh military intervention led to more desertions and prompted further violence. Lastly, it is here highlighted how civilians being subject to the government
security forces, perceived the aggressive treatment as a punishment for their membership in a minority party, rather than the government protecting them from dissident activity.

2.a. Weapons of War: Covered and Uncovered

In February 1982 the government announced they had found a massive stockpile of weapons located on Zapu owned property. It assumed that Zapu was to use these weapons to overthrow the government, which led in March 1980 to the arrest of Dumiso Dabengwa (former Chief of Intelligence Officer for Zipra), Lt.-General Lookout Masuku (Deputy Army Commander and military aide to Mr. Nkomo) and four other Zipra members, on charges of high treason and unlawful possession of arms.160 As the arms caches and the subsequent arrests played a fundamental role in the conflict, these events are here explored in some detail.

The background to the stockpiled weapons unearthed in 1982 goes back to 1980. As described earlier, Zanla and Zipra guerrillas were allowed to keep arms in the assembly points, excluding heavy weapons which were to be kept in armouries. Besides these weapons, both Zipra and Zanla had substantial military equipment outside Zimbabwe: Zipra in Zambia and Zanla in Mozambique (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement: 4). It was ‘anticipated and accepted’ that these weapons were to be returned to Zimbabwe and space was made available at Llewellin, Cranborne and Inkomo Barracks. Control of this process was given to the Joint High Command (JHC), who consequently issued a directive (6/5 1980) that all weapons in caches outside assembly points were to be returned to the national armouries. Hence in October/November 1980 forty-nine railway trucks of weapons and war material arrived at Victoria Falls. These weapons had been donated from various countries to Zipra during the liberation war, and had been stored in Zambia under the control of the Zambian army. Large quantities of these weapons were consigned to Bulawayo where the First Brigade of the ZNA would, under the directives of the JHC, monitor the importation of the material into the area. According to Brigadier Charles Grey, liaison officer with the First Brigade, the content of the railroad trucks was known to the First Brigade who extensively discussed their arrival at Victoria Falls. However, due to logistical problems (‘insufficient national depositories’) at the original destiny in Bulawayo, the final location of the arms changed. The First Brigade decided, following clearance by the First Brigade’s then commanding officer, Brigadier Shute, that the weapons should be held at Gwaii River Mine AP (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court

160 The additional four accused were I.L Nyathi, M.V. Ncube, M. Sibanda, G. Khumalo, and D. Todhlana.
Judgement: 15–17). There the arms would be under the control of Zipra forces, ‘subject presumably to whatever supervision was provided by the small group of National Army liaison personnel who were stationed there’ (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement: 23, 80). Thus the trainloads went to Dete and thereafter to Gwaii River Mine, where they were unloaded, and the contents removed. Unlike the claim put forward by the state, the possession of the weapons by the Zipra command at the camp was therefore lawful, and through the JHC, authorised by the government (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement: 24).

Before the arms arrival at the AP, Gwaii Zipra camp commanders were advised by Brigadier Grey as well as Zipra commanders Masuku and Dabengwa (JHC) to unload the trucks and remove the contents to the camp (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement: 15–17). Masuku instructed to ‘scatter, store and disperse’ the weapons around the camp. In addition, Dabengwa told the commanders to keep the weapons separate from the already existing weapons held at Gwaii River Brigade, since the JHC would want a full accounting of the load. The task was carried out by Brigade commanders Cecil Banda and Soneni Ndhlalose, with assistance from their selected teams (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement: 7, 15, 16, 29, 82).

However, rather than following their instructions as to lawfully disperse the weapons at the Gwaii River Mine camp, Banda and Soneni proceeded to unlawfully cache parts of the weapons elsewhere. According to his own accounts (used as State evidence), Banda cached small arms around the camp itself within a 30 kilometre radius; organised three trips to Hampton Ranch (Midlands) transporting quantities of weapons and other offensive material, as well as one trip to Ascot Farm (near Bulawayo, Matabeleland North). A colleague took weapons also to Woodyglen Farm (Nyamandlovu area, Matabeleland North). Hampton Ranch, Nitram (Pvt) Ltd., a company through which Zapu’s commercial enterprises were conducted, owned Ascot and Woodyglen farms. In addition to Banda and Soneni’s

---

161 Dete was previously called Dett, and is located at the railway route linking Zambia and Bulawayo.

162 In the High Court Judgement it is stated regarding this evidence that ‘we are abundantly satisfied that the situation came about as described by Brigadier Grey, who was actually concerned in the events’ (p.17). This was in opposition to the State case put forward, where it had been argued that Zipra army personnel at Gwaii River AP had secretly (without the knowledge of the ZNA’s First Brigade) and intentionally diverted the truck loads of weapons to Dete, unloaded them and taken the war material to the Assembly Point for subversive purposes against the State (State vs. Dabengwa et al, Judgement: 7). However, the allegations (as above noted) did not hold in court.

163 Cecil Banda was Chief of Logistics, and Soneni Ndhlalose Chief of Staff. Both names are wartime names, i.e. not the persons’ accurate names.
teams, caching also took place by other Zipra members with knowledge of the arms\(^\text{164}\) (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement:3,8,12,17,28).\(^\text{165}\)

At this point in time the first Entumbane clash took place (9–10 November 1980), where it became evident that Zanla used heavy weaponry which must have been accumulated in their camps against regulations (see p. 110). As a result of the first Entumbane clash, in addition to the above caching, Banda gave evidence that he provided ‘considerable quantities’ of weapons from the same original supply to Zipra camps such as Chitungwiza, Silalabuchwa and Entumbane. He argued having done this ‘on requisition from the commanders of those camps who were all senior to him’, and who were motivated by the belief that they may also be attacked by Zanla forces as had happened at Entumbane in 1980 (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement:9). The weapons at the Entumbane Zipra camp were later moved to Ascot Farm by the Entumbane camp brigade command. This took place after the second armed clash between Zipra and Zanla 7–13 February 1981, but before the government disarmament of the combatants in the affected urban areas (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement:13–14,56).\(^\text{166}\)

As established in the High Court, arms and war material originating from the 49 truckloads arriving from Zambia, were thus cached by Zipra soldiers at various places in the country. However, the charges brought against Dumiso Dabengwa et al (expect #4)\(^\text{167}\), as to them having ‘wrongfully and unlawfully possessed or kept

\(^{164}\) That caching had taken place in addition to Banda’s and Soneni’s teams, became evident when much more weaponry and offensive material were recovered at above mentioned places, than was concealed by Banda and Soneni – or could be reconciled with their activities.

\(^{165}\) It was not the task of the court to conduct a general inquiry into who was doing neither the caching nor how widespread it was, nor whether there was a popular move in such a direction amongst the Zipra ex-combatants. The function of the court was to decide if it was proven that the accused directed, organized, controlled or assisted the caching admittedly carried out by Banda and Soneni in the way and to the extent alleged by the State (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement:18). Therefore the court record does not indicate further who those additional persons involved in the caching were, since this was not investigated in this legal matter.

\(^{166}\) After Joshua Nkomo, Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku met with senior camp and brigade commanders at Entumbane subsequent to the fighting, – commanding that the men would be disarmed in obedience with government order –, a decision was made by the Entumbane brigade command that the weapons originating from the truck loads were to be taken to Ascot. These war materials were heavy weapons, and in breach with the directive of what was allowed to be kept in the camps, and therefore the brigade commanders wished to remove them before the disarmament exercise. (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement:50–56).

\(^{167}\) Accused four (Misheck Velapi Ncube) was found guilty of contravening Section 37(1) of the Law and Order in aiding and abetting the caching by arranging for transport at Soneni’s request and by assisting Banda to convey his reconnaissance team to Ascot for that purpose. His sentence was three years imprisonment with labour (State vs. Dabengwa, High Court Judgement:86–87,99).
on premises that they controlled or occupied, offensive weapons and material’, where found not guilty. Instead the High Court found that those Zipra members caching the war material did so without the consent of the Zipra high commanders Dabengwa and Masuku. A section of the judgement reads:

That there was extensive caching on these various properties is clear beyond question. But if this was done, as appears to be the case, as a result of the Entumbane clashes and out of expectation of future attacks by Zanla or was done by people who had taken part in the fighting against Zanla, it is probable that it was done at a lower level of command and at all the Zipra camps. This seems to be so because of the acceptable evidence of restlessness or even outright disobedience and violence to their commanders or senior officers that was shown at various Zipra camps, not only about pay but at the belief that the leaders did not share their concern either to protect themselves from Zanla or to revenge themselves upon Zanla for these attacks as the case may have been.

That evidence in the second place must be contrasted with the objectively established behaviour of the leaders, especially accused one [Dumiso Dabengwa] and two [Lookout Masuku] and Nkomo at moments of crisis when armed Zipra were at least in a position to cause considerable further damage to life and property or seriously stretch the government’s capacity to keep law and order. On all such occasions that disclosed in the evidence, it was the intervention of these leaders which avoided further clashes. And the evidence from the State witnesses who were at the meeting at Entumbane Camp after the second disturbance bears out this attitude further. When the officers of the Zipra Entumbane Camp and Brigade were told that the men were to be disarmed, they protested; but the attitude of the leaders was ‘You will obey the government’. That seems to us to be the complete antithesis of people who were allegedly scheming to overthrow the same government (State vs. Dabengwa et al: High Court Judgement:85-86).

The insecurity in the country at the time seems to have led Zipra members to cache weapons as a protective measure: they ‘were not caching weapons with a view to overthrowing the government, but rather to provide the means for relief if further attacks were launched against them and their colleagues’. (State vs. Dabengwa et al, High Court Judgement:97). Despite the High Court’s judgement that the arms caching took place in self-defence, the government continued to perceive the caching having been in preparation for war. Although acquitted by court,

168 The High Court found Dabengwa also not guilty of the charge of committing high treason.
the six Zipra members were immediately re-detained by the government, under the Emergency Powers.  

2.b. South African Destabilisation Discovered

What was not brought up in the High Court trial in 1983 (and therefore presumably unknown at the time) is the extent of the South African government’s involvement in planting arms and the ‘discovery’ of the caches. The apartheid regime, with a history of destabilisation activities in Angola and Mozambique, added Zimbabwe to their hit list upon Mugabe’s election victory. Zanu (PF)’s communist rhetoric and the government’s outspoken anti-apartheid stance (which included its decision not to maintain political relations with the South African regime), prompted reactions from the country’s southern neighbour. The apartheid regime tried by various methods to put pressure on the new Zimbabwean government, and to destabilise the country in order to make it ungovernable.

Evidence so far available suggests that the South African security organisation attempted two routes of destabilisation at this time: firstly by planting arms and orchestrating their ‘discovery’ on the Zapu owned farms; and secondly, by training and arming those dissidents who were willing to be supported by the South African government. The strategy used by the South African Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) was ‘incitement to over-react’ (Engel 1994:203,207), thus creating situations whereby the government would opt for harsh counteractions when in reality the objective situation could have been dealt with through less extreme measures.

In the arms affair, evidence suggests that Zipra commander Soneni provided information to a CIO officer, who also worked for South African security. Soneni informed Malcolm Calloway, a CIO superior at Dete, about the arms, and who Soneni had regular contact with (Hanlon/Smart 1986:183, Engel 1994:206–207).

169 After have been detained for 11 months, been acquitted in the High Court (trial: 7/2–27/4 1983), the six Zipra members were re-detained 27/4 1983, based on a government claim that it had withheld certain information from the court for ‘security reasons’ (Alao 1995:90). In November 1983 the High Court declared the detention invalid and ordered a release, because the review tribunal had not heard their case within 30 days. However, this ruling was over-turned by the Appeal Court, which said that the review tribunal was independent of the detaining authority and so the latter could not be held responsible for its failure (Amnesty International/AFR/46/21/85:4). The four co-accused were released over time, prior to Masuku and Dabengwa. Masuku was released to a hospital due to a brain decease 9/2 1986, where he died 5/4 1986. Dabengwa was released 4/12 1986, after four years and nine months in jail (Engel 1994:207 endnote #763, p.208 endnote #769, and Dabengwa will, 1987).

170 There is extensive literature on the apartheid regime’s involvement in the region. For detailed account on South Africa’s activities in Zimbabwe, see Engel 1994.
Calloway in turn passed the information to Geoffrey B. Price, then Chief of Close Security of the Prime Minister. However, Price was also connected to South African government intelligence and advised Mugabe in accordance to instructions from South Africa. Allegedly Price added ‘false information implicating Dabengwa and recommending that the Zipra leader and others should be charged with treason (Engel 1994:206–207, Pauw 1991:212, Hanlon/Smart 1986:183).’ Hanlon also indicates the possibility of ‘the CIO agents having been in a position to manipulate the timing of the arms discovery and the supply of information to Prime Minister Mugabe’ (Hanlon 1986:183). Pauw goes further and states that ‘it is highly probable that Calloway himself encouraged the hiding of the arms’ (Pauw 1991:212). It has however not been established from exactly which period CIO’s Calloway and Price began to work for the South African Security. It is nevertheless documented that in early January 1982 Calloway and Price fled Zimbabwe to South Africa, after two other former CIO members had been detained on espionage charges (Engel 1994:207). In South Africa Calloway joined the Directorate of Military Intelligence in a new ‘ultra-secret’ unit working closely with Special Forces called the Special Tasks’ Directorate, responsible for destabilisation of Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho and Angola. The Zimbabwe unit was under Malcolm Calloway (Ellis/Sechaba 1992:109). Price became head of the Zimbabwe desk in South Africa’s police ‘A Division (Intelligence)’ (Engel 1994:207).

In addition to Calloway and Price, the key officer who organised the State led investigation in Dabengwa et al. also defected to South Africa. According to Hanlon ‘it was clear that their “investigation” was aimed at Zapu leaders’, and Hanlon quotes a witness from the trial having been told by a white officer that: ‘if the case

---

171 However, to complicate matters further, Soneni’s role was not innocent in this chain of events. In the High Court Soneni stood as the main State witness, and claimed that the caching was done by orders of Dabengwa and Masuku. Yet he is on record elsewhere (Nyathi 1990:94) to have stated that no information regarding the caching should be reached by the senior Zipra officials. In court Soneni’s statement was critical, since all other witnesses said they had been instructed by Soneni (not directly by Dabengwa and Masuku). The High Court did however not find Soneni’s evidence credible. Noteably, Soneni spent only 36 hours in custody, despite admitting having been central in the caching exercise. Hanlon and Smart suggests that ‘at the time of the arrest this key figure was already serving as a Zimbabwe police or security agent’ (Hanlon/Smart 1986:183, see also Engel 1994:208). Thus, it seems Soneni did not act on instructions from his Zipra commanders, but for the benefit of Zimbabwean intelligence, who in turn was infiltrated by the South Africans. If Soneni knew about the South African infiltration or was indeed employed by both sides, is not evident in the available research.

172 Hanlon believes Calloway did so starting ‘probably in 1980’ (Hanlon/Smart 1986:183), and according to Ellis/Sechaba Calloway was in contact with South African intelligence when working for CIO and stationed at Dete (SouthScan 16 Nov. 1990 in Ellis/Sechaba 1992:109).
was successfully completed I would stay well and get the same protection as the chief witness [Soneni]. When I refused to implicate Dumiso [Dabengwa] and the others, he told me I was going to rot in Chikarubi Prison — and I have been rotting in Chikarubi’ (Hanlon 1986:57–58).

Thus the possibility of South African security involvement in the arms affair is likely. For the South African government’s aim to widen the divisions between Zanu and Zapu circumstances could have not been better; the personnel infrastructure was in place, as were favourable conditions. The unstable political and military situation in Zimbabwe in 1980–1981, gave the South African government opportunities to exploit the disunity within the country and to infiltrate it. By falsely implicating Zipra leaders for the arms caches, the South African regime would aggravate the Zanu/Zapu tension and generate destabilisation. This at a time when the Mugabe government had been able to resist South African economic pressure (Hanlon 1986:183).

However, this does not necessarily leave the Zimbabwean government without a political stake in the arms affair. As Engel points out, it is difficult to measure the impact the ex-Rhodesian CIO employees with both Zimbabwe and South Africa loyalties, had on this development (Engel 1994:207). Caching was done by Zipra forces and friction between Zanu and Zapu had been publicly aired from 1980 onwards. Meanwhile Zanu ministers pressed for a one-party state. If the information from the two spies (Calloway/Price) came in handy for Mugabe in his quest to create a one-party state, or if the government reacted in earnest to CIO information alerting them on a coup attempt, is open to speculation. However, the authenticity of the arms caches being presented as a ‘discovery’, is highly doubtful. As became evident in the court case, the national army (not only Zipra) was well aware of the arms arriving at Gwaii River Mine Assembly Point, and Mugabe publicly made reference to his knowledge of the arms delivery from Zambia at a press conference. What the government may have been unaware of, was the movement of lower level Zipra ex-combatants caching activities. Yet it in general terms it was a well-known ‘secret’ that both Zanla and Zipra cached arms illegally (Engel 1994:207). Already in 1981 it was reported in the British press that arms had been stockpiled in Zimbabwe (Hanlon/Smart 1986:183). Also, according to

173 Commenting on the unearthed arms caches, Mugabe stated that ‘It was an affair that had happened long after arms had come into the country from Zambia and Mozambique. Arms were brought in but were diverted to Gwai’ (We knew, 1982). From this statement it is obvious that Mugabe new about the arms, however his comment on the arms being ‘diverted’ to Gwai, can either be understood as him believing the arms going to Gwai being unlawful, or that he wished the public to perceive it as such.

148
CCJP\textsuperscript{174}, Dumiso Dabengwa was member of an ad-hoc committee consisting of R. Mugabe, J. Nkomo, and E. Mnangagwa (Minister of State, Security), who met in early 1982 to discuss how to best handle ‘the known existence of arms caches’. However, before the committee had resolved on a course of action, CCJP reports, the news broke regarding the government’s ‘discovery’ of huge arms caches. CCJP concludes that ‘It was apparent that Zanu(PF) had decided to use the arms caches as the “point of no return” in the growing crisis between the two parties’ (CCJP/LRF 1997:41). Thus, having been victim of South African infiltration and destabilisation, does not exclude the Zanu(PF) government from having acted in it’s own political interest. What is however not possible to conclude is matters of degree: to what extent was the government misled by the South Africans for destabilising purposes, and to what extent did the government mislead the Zimbabweans in favour of Zanu(PF)’s power ambitions? This notion will be returned to later.

2.c. Zanu and Zapu on Collision Course

Having some insight into how arms were illegally hidden in 1980–1981 and the external involvement into the arms affair, the description here turns back to the flow of events as they occurred in Zimbabwe in 1982.

After the first announcement of arms caches having been found on Zapu owned property or on land owned by Zapu members (February 6, 1982), the event was extensively covered in the media and elsewhere. At a rally in Norton, Mugabe stated that the ‘government discovered the arms on its own’, following ‘some Zipra officials who had been “bought” by the government disclosed their location’. He further told the crowd that ‘these people [Zapu/Zipra] were planning to overthrow and take over the government’, having bought farms throughout Zimbabwe in order to have space to hide arms. Allegedly Zapu had only joined the government to ‘string along’, whilst making their coup plans. Mugabe further warned ‘Zapu and other elements who wanted to start a civil war’ that they would be ‘dealt with’, calling on all Zimbabweans to be ‘vigilant against the enemy by forming cells and village committees in order to identify the enemy easily’ (Mugabe to, 1982).

Zapu’s response to the arms discovery was one of oblivion. Nkomo stated in the press that the arms caches were unknown to him and a ‘bizarre discovery’, adding that he believed that the arms had been planted by the same source who had later informed the security forces of the arms (Zapu did, 1982). Mugabe ignored this and at a rally in Rudaka Stadium (13/2 1982) he again emphasised that Zapu had stockpiled the weapons strategically in order to start a civil war. In Mugabe’s view

\textsuperscript{174} CCJP – Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.
Nkomo was motivated by ‘that Zanu(PF) had refused to contest the election with him [Nkomo] as a leader of the Patriotic Front alliance, so that he would have become Prime Minister’. After a detailed description of what Mugabe called ‘Dr. Nkomo’s failures and shortcomings’, Mugabe warned that ‘any political party which tried to overthrow his government would face the full wrath of his government and party’ (Zapu’s fate, 1982).

_Government Interventions in Response to Located Arms Caches_

In February 1982, as a result of the arms caches being found on Zapu owned property, all properties associated with Zapu were declared unlawful, confiscated and handed to a liquidator (Nkomo 1984:227; Mugabe to, 1982). Workers on the properties were detained where after the schemes were occupied by police or ZNA soldiers.

The farms and companies in question were part of a Zapu resettlement scheme for Zipra ex-combatants, an initiative in which the investment was based on the guerrillas pension schemes and at no cost to public funds. Four thousand ex-combatants were involved in the operation to create co-operative enterprises, each contributing 50Z$ a month. For a total of Z$1 million properties were purchased (Zava 1992:16). The idea was to ‘give people a stake of their own in the country, to free them from dependence on the state or the municipalities by encouraging home ownership and co-operative enterprises’ (Nkomo 1984:227). The scheme was discussed in government, and officially supported through President Banana and other senior Zanu ministers attending the opening ceremonies of some of the operations. In 1982 Zapu as a party owned two farms and five business enterprises. Under a company called Nitram four farms and four businesses were in operation. In addition five farms and three business enterprises were owned by individual party members, used for the resettlement scheme (Nkomo 1984:227).

---

175 In the literature the reported number of Zipra members in the resettlement scheme, as well as the collected amount invested, differs. This can be due to variation over time. The lowest numbers are as occur in the text, the highest encountered in the literature is 10,000 Zipra soldiers in the scheme, and Z$2.6 million invested (Zava 1992:16; Who planted, 1982).

176 The type of enterprises in the resettlement scheme included: vegetable farming; cattle ranching; a motel and tourist complex; a garage; a clothing factory with a retail outlet; chicken farming; pig breeding establishment; a farm operated as an experimental women’s cooperative; a secretarial college; and urban housing scheme (Nkomo 1984:227). The reported number of properties owned by Zapu or individual Zapu members affected by the government confiscation vary. According to Nkomo (1984) eight companies operated under Nitram, but in a Horizon article (Zava 1992:16–17) Nitram was said to have had 13 subsidiaries (all liquidated). The exact constellation and number of companies is unclear.
Schemes such as Nitram had been in operation one year when the arms stockpiles were unearthed and all resettlement schemes were stopped. No compensation was offered to the ex-combatants or Zapu for the seized assets.\(^{177}\) \(^{178}\)

The next action taken by the government subsequent to the disclosed arms caches, was the dismissal of Joshua Nkomo and three Zapu Cabinet members (17/2 1982).\(^{179}\) Selecting only some Zapu government members, Mugabe explained that the plotting was done with the knowledge of some commanders and by a clique at the Zapu top, leaving others unaware of the conspiracy. Mugabe stated that those Zapu members in government not mentioned with regards to the arms caches, had ‘nothing to fear’ and were free to continue working. The same counted for Zapu followers in ministries and in the army, according to Mugabe ‘there would be no interference or frustration’. However, anyone trying to overthrow the government would be ‘vigorously repulsed’ and ‘any such attempts might result in deaths’ (Nkom o sacked, 1982; We knew, 1982).

Reportedly an additional reason for Nkomo’s dismissal was a claim that the Zapu leader had attempted to make a deal with the South African government. Lt-Gen P. Walls (JHC) alleged that he had arranged two meetings for Nkomo at which ‘Nkomo asked whether, in the event of Zapu restoring to overthrow the government, South Africa would help him’. According to Walls, both times the request

\(^{177}\) In addition to the infrastructure confiscated, personal goods and property belonging to the ex-combatants were also seized. For Zapu, all records for the resettlement properties (registers and shareholders’ lists, inventories, financial records and contracts), as well as party records such as the complete historical records of Zapu in exile and in Zimbabwe (including casualties) were confiscated by CIO in 1982. Former Zapu members fear that the extensive historical recordings seized were destroyed by the then government. (Nkom o 1984:228, Zava 1992:16, interview Brickhill, 1994).

\(^{178}\) In 1992 the trustees of the former Nitram claimed compensation from the state, whilst individual ex-combatants were planning legal action for damages caused due to the confiscation (Zava 1992:17). The resettlement properties were in 1992 estimated to be worth Z$3 million, if assessed as their status were in 1982 when confiscated. However, the property value dramatically dropped due to farms and properties were neglected and heavily deteriorated, some properties being derelict. After workers were detained and before a liquidator was appointed, the properties were vandalized and looted: irrigation equipment, farm tools, and household goods were stolen. The vandalized properties were difficult to sell, subsequently property was sold at far less than market value. The liquidator took three years to dismantle only Nitram’s businesses (his salary, accommodation and transport being deducted from what he raised). In 1992 only Z$150.000 were available in a trust account, following the liquidation exercise (Zava 1992:16–17).

\(^{179}\) The dismissed were: Josiah Chinamano, Minister of Transport (Zapu vice-president); Senator Joseph Msika, Minister of Natural resources and Water Development (Zapu secretary-general); and Jini Ntuta, Deputy Minister of Mines.
was rejected. The allegation was vehemently denied by Nkomo who in response to
the accusation threatened that all Zapu ministers would withdraw from govern-
ment (Nkomo sacked, 1982).

A few weeks after the cabinet dismissals, another severe Zapu blow followed. As
described above, on March 11, 1982, Dumiso Dabengwa, Lookout Masuku and
four other Zipra members were arrested for high treason and unlawful possession
of arms.

Zapu and Zipra Responses to Government Actions

The series of actions taken by the government had a fundamental impact on how
events would develop further. Zapu was internally divided on how to react to the
government's interventions. Nkomo was under pressure within the party: some
sections pressing for tougher actions (not only rhetoric) against Zanu's anti Zapu-
performance; others favouring accommodation within the Zanu-Zapu govern-
ment coalition. The disparate views became publicly apparent when Nkomo's
confrontative response threatening to withdraw Zapu ministers from the govern-
ment, was counter-acted by Josiah Chinamano (dismissed Zapu ministers and
Zapu vice-president) who favoured a strategy of non-confrontation. He spoke at a
party rally in favour of national unity and Zapu's continuing participation in gov-
ernment (MW1AAM: 11). The lack of a Zapu one-line stance, but particularly the
accommodative position, was deeply resented by a number of Zipra guerrillas,
who experienced the government's actions and discourse humiliating (Engel
settlement schemes, the cabinet dismissals, and the arrest of Zipra high command-
ers were for many ex-Zipra combatants explicit signals of Zapu, Zipra and Ndebe-
le speaking people being disfavourably differentiated if not discriminated against,
both in the army and in the nation (Hodder-Williams 1983:9, Alao 1995:110).

Following these events, during 1982, thousands of ex-Zipra combatants deserted
the army. However, the perceptions of government injustice did not per se seem
to be the main motivation. What mainly triggered the armed mass desertions, ac-
cording to Zipra ex-combatants, was Zipra persecution within the army. Neither
approaching the government regarding perceived injustice or fear, nor internal
army solutions, were seen as viable alternatives (Alao 1995:110). In order to sur-
vive victimisation, violence and murders, many Zipra ex-combatants perceived the
only choice to be defection (Alexander 1996:9, interviews 1994, Alexander et al,

---

180 The numbers of defections from the ZNA during 1982 vary in the literature. Estimates range
from 1,000 to 4,000 (Alexander 1996:11).

152
Simultaneously dissident activity increased, ambushes, killings and armed robberies escalated. Those responsible for the violence were generally thought to be isolated and uncoordinated groups of Zipra dissidents or deserters from ZNA (MW1AAM:11).

The escalation in violence in turn intensified the government's discourse incriminating Zapu. Addressing a crowd of 40,000 at a rally at Fort Victoria, Mugabe made reference to Zapu's 'Zero Hour' strategy, but giving the military plan a different meaning than Zapu's. Mugabe explained that he had received reports during the liberation war that Zapu was withholding its crack forces and best weaponry for a final struggle to overthrow a Zanu government if it came to power. 'That is why they were hiding and hoarding weapons. It is also why some weapons unearthed on their properties were never used during the war. They were to be used against a black government other than Zapu in order to seize power by force' (Zapu plotted, 1982).

Mugabe continued his attack by adding that 'Zapu has always been against Zanu from the very beginning', describing intra-party violence in 1963. Meanwhile supporters in the crowd held up placards stating "Traitors must be guillotined" and "We grow crops, not guns" (Zapu plotted, 1982).

The whipped up polarisation was further deepened on March 22 when the police located a new large arms cache in the Filabusi area (Matabeleland South), containing four truck loads of weapons and ammunition. The location of the weapons coincided with the deployment of troops to the Filabusi, Silalabuhwa and Gwanda areas to deal with the increased armed dissident activity. As a result of the discovered arms and dissident activity, detentions increased. According to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, a hundred members of Zapu were at this time detained under the Emergency Powers (Auret 1992:147). Whilst ZNA troops were deployed in Matabeleland South, a highly specialised elite force called the Task Force led by Lt-Col L. Dyke was in early 1982 deployed in Matabeleland North. The Task Force was

---

181 For further details see Alexander 1996:9-10, and Zimbabwe Project, 1993.

182 As discussed in the previous chapter, the hearsay that Zipra withheld forces in the end of the liberation war for other future purposes, was a perception amongst Zanu(PF) and former Zanla forces (Youths to, 1982; Hodder-Williams 1983:6; interview, Lt-Colonel L. Dyke 1/3 1994).

183 Mugabe's description of Zapu waging a war against Zanu followers (see entire quote in Voices' section, endnote 203), is in the literature described in a less biased way. According to Nyangoni/Nyandoro, in the intra-party violence in 1963–64 'Zanu and Zapu sought to eliminate each other, physical thuggery and party clashes became the order of the day' (1979:73).

184 Neither Lionel Dyke himself nor other sources have specified the exact date of deployment of the Task Force. 'Early 1982' (Carver 1993:74, interview Dyke, 1994) one can presume to be February or March, following the flow of events.
an amalgamation of former Rhodesian forces and Zanla/Zipra ex-combatants. Although denied by its Commander (interview L. Dyke, 1994), the Task Force was reported to be responsible for serious human rights abuses (Carver 1993:74). According to Dyke, during operations the Task Force killed 120 dissidents – or anybody with a weapon, since the Task Force could not make a distinction between dissidents and civilians who happened to have a weapon. As Dyke explained: 'In this country if somebody is pointing a rifle at me, I will kill him, and then find out what he was. We never made a distinction' (interview L. Dyke, 1994).

2.d. The Emergence of Low-Intensity Warfare

Being an ex-Zipra combatant became increasingly difficult. Those ex-Zipra combatants lawfully demobilised were not safer than the deserters were. For many in both categories, returning home to the Matabeleland provinces turned out to be just as violent than in the army. With the increase in dissident activity, the government expanded their security presence in Matabeleland North and South. In addition to the Task Force, the government deployed the First Brigade; the Sixth Brigade (a presidential guard unit); parachute and commando battalions; and police units (Seegers 1986:165, note #77). In a combined effort with CIO, these units searched for and apprehended dissident suspects both in the rural and urban areas. Minister of National Supplies, Senator Enos Nkala, warned that the government had a list of ‘subversives’ which the security forces were locating, people who were ‘known to be going around tarnishing the Government’s image by making false accusations’ (We have, 1982). Detention camps were set up Tsholotsho, Lupane, Gwaii, Bulawayo, Lubimbi, Kezi and at the airport in Plumtree, where suspects – particularly ex-Zipra combatants – were detained, interrogated, tortured and sometimes killed (Alexander 1996:10, Alexander et al, 2000:190).

Whilst the government stepped up its military interventions, the previously isolated and uncoordinated dissident groups began to create structures. It became increasingly clear that organised forms of dissident activity were taking place. Reportedly armed groups of up to 60 dissidents were at large in the Filabusi and Karoi areas (MW1AAM:11–12). In May 1982 a railway line, a water tank and two electricity supply installations were blown up, a development suggesting that the dissidents were selecting military and economic targets. Later research shows that dissidents began operating in small units, and some established bases in remote areas in Matabeleland North (Hanlon 1986:179, interviews, 1994). Thus in this period, in Matabeleland North and South, low intensity warfare was slowly taking form. Whether violence was conducted by the organised dissidents or was isolated acts by individual bandits; shops, farms, villages, infrastructure, and road traffic were increasingly attacked.
The Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) complained that dissident activity caused serious disruption to commercial farming in Matabeleland. Government services such as veterinary assistance, drought relief, and land resettlement were difficult to maintain, and were in certain areas suspended completely – effectively leaving those sections without local government presence or control (MW1AAM:12). By June 1982 the security situation had deteriorated to such an extent that it was not advisable to travel on Matabeleland secondary roads after dusk, due to the increase in armed robberies and murders (Seegers 1986:154, MW1AAM:12). Highway travel was also a risk, since the buses were frequently attacked and driver/passengers robbed. The police agreed to escort long-distance buses, which were most frequently targeted (Clamp on, 1982). According to police records, between 1 March and 31 August 1982 reported incidents in Matabeleland, Midlands, Masvingo and Mashonaland totalled 1,136 (Johnson/Martin 1986:54).

June 24, 1982, Prime Minister Mugabe's and Senator Enos Nkala's houses in Harare were attacked by deserted ZNA soldiers (ex-Zipra), who upon detention maintained that they were part of a group of 20 people planning a coup. The following day Nkomo disassociated the party and himself from the attacks, stating that ZAPU unreservedly condemned acts of violence and banditry. He further called for the immediate establishment of an all-party parliamentary select committee to investigate acts of banditry in the country. Nkomo suggested the committee would be able to indicate the people responsible for the wave of banditry taking place, determine their motivation, and make appropriate recommendations in the light of their findings.

The government rejected Nkomo's appeal for a select committee, stating that it was 'not possible at present' (Nkomo appeals, 1982; Parliament must, 1982). Despite ZAPU's disassociation of the attacks, Mugabe told the press that ZAPU was to be held responsible.

2.e. External Intervention and Government Repression

On July 13 the government renewed the Emergency Powers (Maintenance of Law and Order) Regulations. Originally initiated by the Smith regime in 1965, the new Zimbabwean government re-enacted it in 1980, renewing it at six months intervals through a majority vote in Parliament. As on previous occasions, dissident activity and fear of South African destabilisation were given as motivation. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace appealed to the government not to extend the

---

185 Over two-thirds (847) of the incidents occurred in the Matabeleland provinces. 175 bandits were reported captured during the same period, and 66 people reported dead (41 civilians, 17 bandits, 8 security personnel) (Martin/Johnson 1986:54).
Emergency Powers since it invalidated sections of the Declaration of Rights contained in the Zimbabwe Constitution, but were unsuccessful (Auret 1992:148).\textsuperscript{186} The Emergency Powers also included the Security Forces Indemnity Regulations, which granted all state officials and members of security forces immunity from persecution, if their actions were ‘for the purpose of or in connection with the preservation of the security of Zimbabwe’ (CCJP/LRF 1997:26).\textsuperscript{187}

Two major incidents occurred in July 1982 which worsened the already unstable security situation in Zimbabwe; the kidnapping of six foreign tourists (23/7) and the destruction of fighter aircrafts at Thornhill air base near Gweru (25/7).

\textit{The Tourist Kidnapping}

The kidnapping occurred at a makeshift roadblock on the Victoria Falls-Bulawayo road, where tourists from a three tonne over-land truck were forced out of the vehicle. The driver and three women were released, but six (British, Australian, and American) men were taken into the bush. A ransom note had two demands: the release of all ‘Freedom Fighters’ (D. Dabengwa and L. Masuku within seven days); and the return of Zapu property. The note stated that if the first demand was not fulfilled, the tourists would be killed. The note was signed ‘Zipra Forces’. A combined army and police search was mounted, with spotter-planes, helicopters, ground-troops and trackers searching the Nyamandlovu area (Ministry of Information 1984:30–31; PM tells, 1985). In parliament Prime Minister Mugabe stated that it was now well established that the bandits were operating on instructions from Zapu, ordering the Zapu leadership to retrieve the tourists. He claimed that the government had been too tolerant with Zapu, and that the government would take ‘extra-legal’ measures to deal with the security situation (Get tourists, 1982).

Nkomo denied any Zapu involvement and appealed to the kidnappers to release the men unharmed. Zapu organised a series of rallies in Matabeleland in August/September to urge people to cooperate with the army to rescue the tourists, and eliminate the area from dissidents (Auret 1992:148, Alexander et al, 2000:215). All efforts were however unsuccessful.

\textsuperscript{186} The State of Emergency invalidated personal liberty (Sect.13), freedom from arbitrary search or entry (Sect.17), freedom of expression (Sect.20), freedom of assembly and association (Sect.21) and freedom from government discrimination (Sect.23). The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights found the most disturbing aspect of the Emergency Powers the use of preventive detention, since it ‘invited arbitrary deprivation of personal liberty, eroded respect for the rule of law, and perpetuated improper police practices’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:148).

\textsuperscript{187} The indemnity regulation meant in practice that government forces were not held accountable for any abuses, since their actions could be motivated by the ‘preservation of security’ clause.
The day after the tourist kidnapping (24/7), the government imposed under the Emergency Powers a dusk-to-dawn curfew in the Tsholotsho communal area (Matabeleland North), which two days later was expanded to wider areas of Lupane and Nyamandlovu. Under the code name Octopus, this operation brought a massive concentration of security forces to these districts. The curfew entailed prevention of all movement of vehicles, other than military, and restricted people to within 50 meters of their homes. The curfew lasted until October 18, 1982 (Auret 1992:149). In the Lupane area, the tourist kidnapping led to increased violence and earmarked a period in which ‘targeted harassment, detention and murder of political [Zapu] leaders and councillors by government forces’ took place (Alexander, McGregor 1996:11). Zapu leaders, councillors and civil servants were suspected of collaborating and harbouring dissidents and/or having knowledge of the tourist kidnapping. The overtly ruthless treatment by the government forces towards civilians led many people to believe that dissident activity and the tourist kidnapping was a government action implemented to justify repression, and that the dissidents actually were government paid pseudo soldiers (Alexander, McGregor 1996:12, interviews 1994).

Despite massive search and interrogation exercises, the tourists were not found. Unknown to the security forces at the time, the six men had been killed three days after their capture – a story not widely publicised until March 1985. According to the government, the ‘Zipra kidnappers’ had operated in a gang of 22 members, of which ‘the majority’ were killed by security forces. The ex-Zipra combatant and alleged leader (Gilbert Ngweny) claimed that the kidnapping was conducted on the orders of Nkomo. He was in a highly publicised court case sentenced to death in 1984, and executed in 1986 (PM tells, 1985; Berkley/Schrage 1986:21). In October 1996, a new version of the kidnapping was publicised in Zimbabwe. According to confessions by former Rhodesian CIO operatives, now South African residents, but at the time employed by the Zanu (PF) government, the tourists were abducted by eight ex-Rhodesian Selous Scouts. This South African covert opera-

---

188 The information on the levels of violence in the Lupane area may well have been similar in Tsholotsho and Nyamandlovu districts, however Alexander/McGregor’s research concentrated on the Lupane area (Alexander/McGregor 1996:11-12).

189 The perception of government responsibility in the tourist kidnapping and particularly generally in dissident activity, was a view widely also held by those the author interviewed in 1994 in Bulawayo and Tsholotsho district.
tion was reportedly geared to fuel antagonism between Zanu (PF) and Zapu (CCJP/LRF 1997:29, 44).106

At the time the tourist kidnapping made a substantial political impact, particularly since the incident received extensive press coverage internationally and damaged Zimbabwe’s reputation abroad. However, those who suffered most were innocent civilians who were subject to the security clampdown that followed.

South African Destabilisation Uncovered

Only two days after the tourist kidnapping, an act of sabotage took place in which 12 military aircraft were damaged. The destruction occurred at the Thornhill air base near Gweru, and was attributed to agents operating on instructions from South Africa. Amongst the planes destroyed were four BAC Hawk advanced training jets, which had arrived from the United Kingdom ten days earlier. The destruction diminished the Zimbabwean air force by a quarter, and the loss of particularly the Hawks severely affected the country’s air strike capability. However, the way in which the investigation into the sabotage took place, has been seen to cause more political damage than immediate military damages (Engel 1994:214).107

106 Doubts regarding the government’s account of the tourist kidnapping were put forward at an early stage. South African involvement was contemplated already in 1985, because when the news of the kidnapping reached the government, it was already known by South African journalists who contacted counterparts in Zimbabwe (Sithole 1985:5). The quality of evidence given by the accused under government interrogation was also questioned. Legal experts found for example Ngwenya’s credibility suspect, querying that information may have been obtained under coercion since Ngwenya changed his evidence several times during detention. Further doubts were raised regarding the government’s inability to locate the kidnappers despite massive searches, and the timing of the broad press coverage of the ‘full story’ being three months before the 1985 general elections. For detailed (government-based) accounts, see PM tells, 1985, and Sithole 1985:5–6. For opposing view, see Nkomo 1984:233–234.

107 17 people were in a short time span detained under suspicion of having been under instructions from South Africa, amongst them most senior (ex-Rhodesian) air-force staff. However, in the Harare High Court where six of the air-force officers were charged, Justice Dumbutshena dismissed the state’s case questioning the integrity of the prosecution’s chief witness and stating that fundamental constitutional rights of the accused had been violated since they had been subject to torture and access to lawyers were denied. Nevertheless, the accused were immediately re-arrested in court. After internal and external pressure, the six officers were released. The way in which the case was handled damaged Zimbabwe’s reputation, and particularly relations with Britain. In addition, air-force officers of European origin left the country en masse in response to the incident, which grounded the air force. In 1990, South Africa’s involvement in the sabotage was established when investigations revealed that the incendiary device at Thornhill was supplied by an ex-Rhodesian CIO officer (Graham Branfield) who moved to South Africa there heading the DMI’s Zimbabwe Special Operations Unit (Engel 1994:213–215).
The South African government’s involvement in destabilisation within Zimbabwe was proved beyond doubt on August 18 (1982). Seventeen soldiers, all from the former Rhodesian Light Infantry and Special Air Service, exchanged fire with a unit of the 4:3 Battalion of the ZNA, in the Sengwe district near the Mozambican border. The group consisted of 13 black and four white soldiers, of which the four white were killed in the contact, whilst the remaining fled over the South African border. Reportedly the group were deployed on an eight-day reconnaissance and sabotage operation. Initially the South African government denied knowledge of the men, but after pressure from the families of the deceased, the South African Chief of Defence (Gen. C. Viljoen) officially admitted that the killed were South African troops and wished for the bodies to be returned to Pretoria. Yet he insisted that the men had acted without authorisation from their superiors. This internationally embarrassing incident did however not discourage South African destabilisation efforts. Only, uniformed commandos were no longer used (Min. of Information 1984:28–29, Engel 1994:213).

In addition to the South Africans’ sabotaging military hardware, assassinating Zimbabwean politicians and ANC representatives in Zimbabwe, a new strategy was attempted in the second half of 1982. South African security began recruitment within and outside Zimbabwe, in order to set up a proxy army. Up to this point dissidents had been identified in two groups: firstly, disgruntled ex-Zipra soldiers with political goals, added by deserted ex-Zipra soldiers operating in self-defence; and secondly, singular or gangs of bandits operating for their own benefit. The South African recruited so-called ‘Super Zapu’ members thus added a third group of dissidents operating in the Matabeleland Provinces. These were used in three ways: as cover for South African agents infiltrated into Zimbabwe; as providing supplies to dissidents to maintain armed force against the government; and for fuelling discontent to generate more dissidence (attitudes and/or activity) (Hanlon/Smart 1986:178).

Further Security Clamp-Downs and Escalation of Violence

The uncovered South African troops operating inside Zimbabwe, resulted in a series of dusk-to-dawn curfews and major search operations in Matabeleland North and South, which were to last on and off for the next three years (Auret 1992:149, Hanlon 1986:179). Under a curfew, the army, the CIO, and the police set up roadblocks and conducted house-to-house searches in order to conduct identity checks and look for weapons. In October (1982) the Minister of State (Defence), Dr. Sekeramayi, reported that 425 dissidents had been captured in the Bulawayo area (425 seized, 1982). In which manner the government forces identified a person to be a dissident, was not disclosed.
The lack of improvement in the security situation led to increasing repressive actions by the security forces. In September the dusk-to-dawn curfew in Matabeleland North was lifted, but a complete ban on private vehicles followed instead. Only government vehicles were allowed. The restrictions on movement remained (50m within household). In addition all curfew areas were on September 13 announced to be closed down for the press. Foreign correspondents were required to inform the Department of Information if their assignments took them more than 40km outside of Harare or Bulawayo (Auret 1992:149).

The ban on traffic and personal movement had a great impact in the affected areas in Matabeleland North and South, particularly since the areas were drought stricken. Due to severe drought in 1981/82, a nearly total crop failure was evident in most of Matabeleland. The government drought relief programme (initiated in May 1982) was in September withdrawn from areas with dissident activity (MWALAAM:13, see also Auret 1992:150–151). In addition storeowners could not transport food to their locations, nor could people reach urban areas to go to work or to secure food, since bus traffic was banned. The severest blockade including both Matabeleland North and South lasted for 16 days (September) when the total ban led to starvation for people in the affected areas (Auret 1992:151). When this curfew was lifted (26/9), the previous dusk to dawn curfew was resumed.

Whilst movement was restricted in Matabeleland, militia training was ‘fanned across the country’ to train ‘every able-bodied Zimbabwean’ for service in the national militia. The purpose of the national militia was to serve as an armed reserve force to the national army. The members were subject to the same standing orders as regular army units. On the graduation of the first batch of seven hundred militia members at Gokwe, Mugabe stated that the militias would function as a stationary defence force but that all Zimbabweans must be vigilant against the ‘double-barrelled threat’ of dissidents and those who fled to South Africa after independence (We are, 1982). Nkomo rejected the idea of creating a ‘peoples militia’ and proposed that the government should instead create brigades for ploughing, building and farming. The dissident problem should be solved in a different way, Nkomo suggested, repeating a call for Zanu (PF) and PF-Zapu to meet and discuss the causes of the problem (Nkomo in, 1982).

**CCJP Involvement**

The civil vigilance encouraged by Mugabe against violence and unlawful activities, became a burning issue for people in Matabeleland at the latter end of 1982. However, it concerned not only dissidents, but also government forces. Already in
February 1982 the CCJP received reports expressing concern regarding the situation in Matabeleland. In August-September 1982 an increased number of complaints were recorded regarding the way in which the army conducted their security measures, such as the widespread searches of people and property, the curfews, and the detention and interrogation of suspects (Auret 1992:150). To verify the complaints CCJP conducted research in Hwange and Bulawayo Dioceses in October 1982, interviewing people with personal experiences of violations by dissidents and/or government security forces. This report was personally presented to Robert Mugabe (5/11 1982). The report concluded that

a) the use of the army to interrogate large numbers of people in their homes and at road blocks had led to serious abuses of power by some members of the security forces. This had led to criminal actions such as rape.

b) persons detained for interrogation had illegally been subjected to degrading treatment, beatings and electric shocks by both the CIO and the army (Auret 1992:150).

The CCJP established the existence of six interrogation points or camps: the CIO office in Bulawayo; Lubimbi Camp; Gwaii River Mine Camp; Lupane Police Camp; Tsholotsho Camp; and St Paul’s Mission. The authorities held various numbers of people at the detention camps. Informants separately estimated that 400 detainees were held in St Paul’s Mission (Auret 1992:150). Under the Emergency Powers regulations police had extensive powers to detain persons for up to 30 days. Nevertheless, the persons were to be informed within seven days (in a language that he/she understands) of the reasons of the detention and permitted to obtain legal representation of his/her own choice and cost (CCJP 1982:13). Those ex-detainees interviewed by CCJP/LRF stated that they had been accused of various crimes, mainly knowledge of dissident presence or having weapons. None of the interviewees had contacted legal aid, which the CCJP concluded they were unlikely to know was their right (CCJP 1982:13).

In their report CCJP also pointed out the effect of the security measures on political attitudes. They noted that Zapu had an ‘extensive membership and excellent organisation in Matabeleland’, and that due to the extensive support of Zapu almost all the members of Parliament and District Councillors represented Zapu. It was therefore inevitable that ‘a policy of searching every home and detaining and

---

192 The type of ill-treatment described consisted of varying combinations of humiliating activities under threat of force, causal blows, deliberate sustained beatings, threats of execution, electric shocks and rape (CCJP/LRF 1982:18).
interrogating very large numbers of people would lead to the detention of large numbers of Zapu members’, and ‘equally it is the case that active members of Zapu were more likely to be known by and contacted by ex-Zipra dissidents’. None of those interviewed by CCJP had been officially charged with any offence, and in most cases they had been approached because their names appeared on a list. Due to this, CCJP stated, the individuals perceived they had been singled out because they were active in a minority party and their detention was experienced as a punishment for the same reason. Because of this, CCJP concluded, those interviewed were disappointed and bitter. However, in spite of the negative feelings, most of the elected representatives were prepared to continue with their posts. A distinction was made by some of those interviewed, between the government and its agencies and also between some of the agencies (CCJP 1982:29–31).

The CCJP’s intention with presenting the report to Prime Minister Mugabe was to highlight for the government what effect its security measures had on the rural population in parts of Matabeleland. In addition, the report was to point out that although the security measures created difficulties amongst the population, people strongly condemned the level of violence and crime taking place – whether committed by dissidents or government forces. The CCJP’s concrete proposal was for the government to carry out a thorough investigation and to bring to justice those who were guilty of crimes. In the meeting (5/11 1982) Prime Minister Mugabe responded by describing the security forces actions as ‘over-enthusiastic’, but ensured the CCJP that the government would initiate an investigation (Auret 1992:151).

In the last month of 1982 dissident activity reached new peaks. The second year of independence came to an end with a record of growing violence and internal destabilisation, localised mainly to Matabeleland North and South. Political statements and military measures led to reciprocal responses, creating a situation in which an escalation of political dissonance and armed intervention interactively lead opposing forces on to a collision course. On the political arena the debate was immersed with Zanu-Zapu accusations and counter-accusations. After the highly politicised arms disclosure and the subsequent events Zapu reciprocity on the political stage could scarcely be other than bitter. In the military, reciprocal responses were also in motion: anti-Zapu aggression in the army led to desertions; dissident activity led to army intervention; the government’s harsh security measures led in turn to acceleration and intensification of dissident activity. Adding to this internal situation was the external element of South African destabilisation. Once in motion the escalation seemed irreversible. But was this the case? As a government,
responsibility for initiating the means to resolve the ensuing conflict lay in its hands. But rather than minimising the conflict, the government by its discourse and actions provoked further tension and disunity. Irrespective of the government’s actions being misled by South African disinformation, the government could have chosen a different path of actions. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the question remains, to which extent the government was mislead with regards to the arms affair, and to what extent the government acted in this situation based on its own political interests. At the closure of Zimbabwe’s second year of independence many were left – irrespective of ‘side’ – disillusioned and disappointed in the way in which independence was unfolding. Yet, in Matabeleland North and South, levels of violence had not reached its culmination. In 1983 dissident activity and the government security clampdown would squeeze the population even further.
On 5 February 1982, Robert met me at my request to discuss the serious problems of the country, and in particular rising unemployment and the resulting discontent. During the meeting I was handed an urgent telephone message saying that the police had raided Ascot and Woodville farms, near Bulawayo, properties associated with my party and centres of employment schemes for former ZIPRA soldiers. I briefly mentioned the matter at the end of the meeting. The Prime Minister said he knew about it and we could discuss it later. That afternoon I travelled on the plane to Bulawayo with two ministers close to Robert Mugabe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, the minister of state responsible for security in the prime minister’s office, and Sidney Sekeramayi, minister of lands and resettlement. There was nothing out of the ordinary about the journey: no problems were raised, no suspicions. Mnangagwa, without mentioning it to me, went straight to Ascot Farm, to which he had summoned the press, radio and television. Next day he and then the Prime Minister announced on the radio and TV that massive stocks of weapons had been found at the two farms. There was, they said, a plot to overthrow the government with the help of South Africa. The man responsible was Joshua Nkomo.... I was not only a minister in the government, but a member of the cabinet committee on security. If there were indeed suspicions against me, I had the right to be asked by the Prime Minister to offer my own explanation. If stocks of weapons had indeed been found on properties under my control, I would expect to be shown the evidence and asked to account for its presence: even if I were a common criminal, that would be the correct procedure. Instead I was told nothing about the allegations — although I had been in personal conversation with the Prime Minister and his chief of security — until they had given the widest possible publicity by the state press and broadcasting monopolies. Joshua Nkomo.193

I am convinced that, although there were weapons in those places, the numbers found were swollen by the ferrying in of arms from elsewhere by the investigators. I also know, and the Prime Minister knew as well, that the process of collecting weapons for the former combatants was not completed when the two guerrilla armies were disbanded. Robert Mugabe himself said: ‘If all arms cached by ZIPRA were found in or near assembly places only, my government and I would not have minded.’ Ascot Farm is less than eleven kilometres from the Entumbane assembly points where two rounds of fighting between ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA soldiers had taken place.... It was not lawful, but by common knowledge both ZANLA and ZIPRA ex-combatants had held onto arms after their entitlement to do so had ceased. This recognised problem should have been solved by recognised procedures. Instead, the

193 Nkomo 1984:224–225
discovery was exaggerated by the government, then exploited as a means of discrediting my party, Zapu, and expelling me from the government. Joshua Nkomo.\(^{194}\)

We brought Zipra commanders into the National Army because we wanted unity, now we want them to show us where the arms are hidden. If they do not do that, their integrity in the army will be questionable... These people were planning to overthrow and take over the Government. They bought farms throughout the country so that they could have places to hide arms. Robert Mugabe.\(^{195}\)

We did not know [about the arms caches]. It was a revelation to us. This is a bizarre discovery as far as I am concerned. It would have been absurd for experienced former freedom fighters to have hidden arms on a farm owned by their own political organisation. Joshua Nkomo.\(^{196}\)

It would take a damn fool to accept that a man who opposed you, becomes immediately on joining forces with you, a close ally. Robert Mugabe.\(^{197}\)

Arms definitely had been found on Zapu’s farms: this was on Hampton Ranch near Gweru. Chris Moyo can verify this fact because he helped to cache them. Back in 1981 before demobilisation had taken place, Chris was summoned by a man called Soneni who was then the Zipra commander at Gwaai Assembly Point... Soneni told Chris that he was very worried by the incidents at Entumbane and Connemara... He convinced Chris that it was essential for Zipra ex-combatants to conceal a certain amount of weaponry in case they were attacked again. Chris agreed to transport a number of AK 47 and SKS rifles and bazookas back to Sierra Assembly Point where he was then based. With a group of his comrades, he took the weapons to Hampton Ranch, which was owned by Zapu, and there hid them. It should be said for the record that although this was an unlawful and foolish thing to do, everyone knew both Zipra and Zanla combatants were caching weapons in this way... When Soneni had discussed the matter with Chris, he had explicitly told him not to say anything about the matter to Lookout [Masuku] or Dumiso [Dabengwa]. ‘Dabengwa,’ Soneni had told Chris, ‘is selling us out. Look how at Gwaai he and Nkomo tried to stop us from going to the assistance of our comrades at Entumbane! You must not breathe a word to him about what we are doing.’ Andrew Nyathi, ex-Zipra regional commander.\(^{198}\)

\(^{194}\) Nkomo 1984:225–226
\(^{195}\) Mugabe to, 1982
\(^{196}\) Zapu did, 1982
\(^{197}\) We knew, 1982
We have barely covered a two-year journey as a government, and in those two years have endeavoured to uplift the living standards of our people. But in the midst of all our endeavours our colleagues in Government were stockpiling and hiding enough weapons of war to arm 20,000 men. Zapu has bought more than 25 farms and 30 enterprises throughout the country. We have now established they were not genuine enterprises, but places to hide military weapons to start another war at an appropriate time. Robert Mugabe.

Now what Nkomo wanted to show you, the people of Zimbabwe, was that you had no right to reject him. These weapons were being amassed so that he would teach you he cannot be rejected. When you reject him, as you did [in the elections], he fights against you. Robert Mugabe.

When we entered the assembly points in 1980 it was said that we would be demobilised and we did not know what the future held. As commissar of the ZIPRA unit, I got some people together to discuss our future. We decided to collect money — 50 [Zimbabwean] dollars from each ZIPRA combatant — to buy farms for agricultural projects. It was an apolitical thing. Dr. Joshua Nkomo was approached to help buy the farms with the $2.6 million that had been collected. So are we going to blame Dr. Nkomo for anything illegal that we find on these farms?... We [ZIPRA combatants] that raised the money to buy the farms want to know who planted the arms caches on the properties. Riversand Mlilo, ZIPRA Commissar.

During the early years, 1980–1981, there was still tension between ZANU and ZAPU. Anything could happen. But that was not Nkomo’s fault. The commanders who were commanding the ZIPRA forces could have taken their own initiative with fear that maybe something will arise tomorrow. Paul Nyathi, ZIPRA ex-combatant.

ZAPU has always been against ZANU from the very beginning. During 1963 and 1964 when ZANU was still a fledgling party, ZAPU waged a war against it followers to prevent people from supporting it. ZANU supporters were beaten up, stoned, even burned, but ZAPU failed to destroy the party. Robert Mugabe.

At the time of demobilisation in 1982, we formed a co-operative with some of my colleagues who were staying at the assembly point.... I stayed there up to 1984. My stay

---

190 Zapu’s fate, 1982.
200 Danger is, 1982.
201 Who planted, 1982.
203 Zapu plotted, 1982.
was not really nice; I eventually decided to leave. On several occasions I was arrested, suspected for being a dissident; I was arrested, detained for some months, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for days, beaten up and things like that. Just because I was a former combatant, and I belonged to the other party. So most of the combatants were actually suspect. Somehow, somewhere if it was known that you were a former Zipra combatant, you ended up in jail [because of] a funny story that had been created against you.... I was picked up, detained and tortured. There was no case to prove against me, but just because I was detained several times, they were not satisfied with my explanations. They suspected me about the arms cache thing in 1982. ‘What do you know about this arms cache, tell us, especially since you were at Gwaaí [assembly point].’ I was at Gwaaí and was one of the commanders there. ‘You were a commander there, you couldn’t fail to know what was happening, you are telling us lies.’ It was really a problem; my life was difficult. X, Zipra ex-combatant.\(^\text{204}\)

On 11 March [1982] these two men [Lookout Masuku, Dumiso Dabengwa] were arrested, along with five other senior ex-Zipra officers, and charged with treason and other grave offences arising, for the most part, in connection with the Ascot Farm and Hampton Ranch arms finds. Thus the people best able to keep the remaining dissatisfied elements of Zipra under control were removed from the scene. Joshua Nkomo.\(^\text{205}\)

It was like you are finding all your members, your officials being cut out, not to be within the circle of government. So it is quite an obvious thing that Zapu was being thrown away. Paul Nyathi, Zipra ex-combatant.\(^\text{206}\)

During the Patriotic Front, the two organisations [Zapu and Zanu] were very close and they worked together. Once there was the split, when Zapu was thrown out of government, problems arose and the ruling party felt that the JP [Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace] should continue to support them rather than criticise them on the victimisation that was carried out on Zapu members.... My own detention came about as a result of misunderstandings between the two organisations and the manipulations of former security agents who remained in the country in the name of CIO, who mislead government completely into thinking that Zapu was going to carry out a coup to overthrow the elected government of the day. I am supposed, together with the late Lookout Masuku to have initiated this coup plot. Government decided to pounce on us and it was a result of misinformation given to

\(^{204}\) Barnes 1995:128

\(^{205}\) Nkomo 1984:229

\(^{206}\) Interview with Paul Nyathi, Harare, 11 February, 1994
them by the same secret agents that we had been fighting against. Dumiso Dabengwa, Minister of Home Affairs.207

My belief is that the South African forces were involved in the whole plot. It was a destabilisation plot. They were involved from the very onset, they planned it. All the Rhodesians had to do was to implement... If the South Africans would have not [been involved], I don’t think that it [the dissident problem] would have ever happened. In the first place, all the things that took place: the expulsion of Zanu Cabinet ministers in government would have not happened; neither the arrest of military leaders; or the cashing of weapons to the extent it was done.... As I said, Calloway was responsible for the caching of weapons. Weapons were cached from only one point, from the Gwaai assembly point. It was done in such a way that the security forces (Calloway was in the security forces) were not intercepted. They were able to move all the way from Gwaai, past Bulawayo. Vehicles were never seen by the security forces. They went up to the farms and cashed the weapons – not intercepted at all. The Rhodesian forces were supposed to be very, very efficient in enforcing security, but they obviously had decided to look the other way. So this whole thing would not have happened. The caching of weapons was not an instruction from Zanu, it was not an instruction from the Zifa military command. It was an instigation by Calloway on the commander at Gwaai. Dumiso Dabengwa, Minister of Home Affairs.208

During my time in detention I felt that I had [previously] never suffered. What I went through in the liberation struggle was a sacrifice that I had taken upon myself. Whatever difficulties and sufferings, I did not regard as suffering because I had voluntarily decided to be involved in the prosecution of the armed struggle. But after independence, when I got detained, I felt it was unjustified. I was suffering more than I had suffered from anything else in my lifetime. It was a difficult period especially when one’s conscience was absolutely clear, I had not committed any crime and had not been involved in any way in the sort of allegations levelled against [me]. And more so since I had appeared in a court of law and I was found completely innocent, and that my own government, my own colleagues that I had fought the war with, were responsible for my detention — that made it more painful. Dumiso Dabengwa, Minister of Home Affairs.209

Dr. Nkomo is trying to overthrow his government because he was disappointed that Zanu(PF) had refused to contest the last elections with him as a leader of the PF alliance.

207 Quoted from transcribed interview for CCJP/LRF/Spicer 1992
208 Interview with Dumiso Dabengwa, Harare, April 21, 1994
209 Quoted from transcribed interview for CCJP/LRF/Spicer 1992

168
Dr. Joshua Nkomo is like a cobra in a house. The only way to deal effectively with a snake is to strike and destroy its head. Robert Mugabe.

The Prime Minister declared nation-wide that every wing of Zapu were enemies. He described Zapu as a snake, a cobra. This was after the arms caches. After that there was no space for a Zapu or Zipra member. We were threatened. That was why I decided to desert. I went back to my home area, but I found that you cannot stay. Because of the forces, they were deployed all over. Here in the homelands they were searching for the ex-combatants, taking all others and killing some. I came here and found the situation that way. I could not stay, I went in the bush. I left and I met others in the bush. We found that one was coming from this direction, another one from that direction. There were those who had deserted, who were from the national army. The majority of them were soldiers who had integrated and then deserted. There were some others who had demobilised, but they were victimised by the troops in their homelands. Some had been killed, and some had escaped and then went back to the bush. So we met one by one. Some of us had deserted with weapons. Some joined the units without arms, they got arms through assaulting. There were some people who had hidden arms. Sometimes you can find that a person told you that 'I got a fire arm that I have left by some ex-combatants during the previous time'. They were collected one by one by one. Obert Dube, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident.

In 1982 I became a dissident. I first demobilised from the army and went back to my home area. Then I decided to go back to the bush because the tribalism and because of the divisions that was being practised within the battalions when they were integrated. Our main reason to be in the bush was to defend ourselves, more than even defending Zapu itself. We wanted to defend ourselves personally. Our lives were threatened. During the time we were in the army we felt threatened, but it was still better than when we were demobilised. When we were demobilised it was even worse. CIO would come at night and pick up somebody that was an ex-soldier and disappear with him and the person disappears forever. They would come during the day and ask who are you, what is your background. If you say that you have been in the army, they would take you. Zwelibanzi Ndlovu, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident.

Zapu unreservedly condemns these acts of violence, banditry and armed robberies, perpetrated against the very people we fought to liberate. I say to these people whoever they are, stop this behaviour towards your people. I call for an immediate inquiry by a parliamentary body.

---

210 Zapu's fate, 1982
211 Interview with Obert Dube, Sibantubanye cooperative, Matabeleland North, 15 March, 1994
212 Interview with Z. Ndlovu, Green Light Cooperative, Matabeleland North, 14 March, 1994
select committee to determine who is responsible for the acts of banditry and why. Joshua Nkomo.\textsuperscript{213}

The Government will invoke extremely harsh measures to administer shock treatment to these harmful pests and their deceitful mentors. The swords are drawn and it will be war to the finish.... The Government will take ‘extra-legal’ measures to deal with the security situation. As the government appreciated the task of the judges, [but] it can not allow the technicalities of the law to fetter its hands for the preservation of law and order.... Those who work against democracy do not deserve democratic treatment. Robert Mugabe.\textsuperscript{214}

My replies to the verbal attacks were passed over in silence, ignored by the press, radio and television. The government spoke of a problem of ‘dissidence’ – a problem that it did not define, and that was hard to understand. That there were gangsters at work, especially in Matabeleland, was clear. There were many unexplained deaths, robberies and beatings. A significant number of white farmers in the open ranch land of Matabeleland were killed without explanation. By lumping all these deplorable incidents together as ‘dissidence’, the government implied that they were the result of an organised and politically motivated movement: the clear indication was that ex-ZIPRA people were at work, and that I was behind their crimes. Joshua Nkomo.\textsuperscript{215}

I absolutely guarantee that neither I nor Zapu had anything to do with that kidnapping. The diplomats of those very important countries came to my house to ask for my and my party’s help in obtaining their release. I asked why they came to see me: Zimbabwe was run by Robert Mugabe. They said he had approved their visit. But I told them they were being used to divide my country, by treating me as though I ran my own little republic within it. Joshua Nkomo.\textsuperscript{216}

I was asked to form the Special Forces outfit which was then called the First Parachute Battalion. It was basically a make-up of what was left of the Selous Scouts, the SAS, the Rhodesian African Rifles and into that we brought ZIPRA and ZANLA soldiers from the Shona and Ndebele factions.... I set up selection courses in Special Forces, we had very tough courses. We did not mind if someone died – a bit callus but we were now aiming at something greater than the individual, we wanted to produce a unit that could work. So the

\textsuperscript{213} Nkomo appeals, 1982
\textsuperscript{214} Mugabe addressing the National Assembly during debate on the President’s Speech (Get tourists, 1982)
\textsuperscript{215} Nkomo 1984:230
\textsuperscript{216} Nkomo 1984:234
selection courses were particularly tough and we built in a very high failure rate. At the end of that time we got out of the sausage machine, as it were, people who had survived through adversity. It did not matter if they were Shona, Ndebele, ZIPRA, ZANLA, black or white, Rhodesian, or whatever, they had achieved something together.... This was called a Task Force, and the Task Force was deployed into Matabeleland in 1982. I produced the Task Force plan and the orders, and deployed. It was a very big unit. I think we had four or five battalions, a very big operation, and I effectively commanded it.... So we deployed into Matabeleland and we sat on the problem for some time. We were quite successful, the problem did not escalate. But it was one of these problems that cannot be won by soldiers, it is a political problem. We kept saying to the Government, that you can stop this tomorrow with the correct political initiative. These people are reacting to your politics. We can find them and kill them, which we were doing but it was just like the ZIPRA/ZANLA war. We could not get across to the Government that it was a political problem, and that if they produced the right political solution, these guys would put their rifles down and go home and just be ordinary people. Or you fight terror with terror. The Fifth Brigade was subsequently put in and fought terror with terror. It is a successful tactic to fight terror with terror, which is that the end justifies the means, you then have peace. So you terrorise and kill a number of people. It might be well worthwhile doing that in three months than having a ten year war when more and more people are terrorised.... We went in there to hunt and destroy the dissidents. Now that I have been doing since 1966 up until 1980, in the Rhodesian Army. We operated on the same basis: we secured areas; we hunted the dissidents; we caught and killed them. Lt-Col Lionel Dyke, ZNA.217

The soldiers [of the Task Force] beat and hit us and threatened us in a terrible way. They accused us of feeding the dissidents. They hit one old woman and said she was a mother of dissidents. Then the White soldier picked one boy and asked him what he was going to say. He said he knew nothing to say about dissidents. The White soldier took the gun from his belt and just shot the boy in the head. Just in front of us. Eyewitness, Tsholotsho (Matabeleland North).218

Those who take to violence deserve punishment through violence because those who wield the sword should perish by the sword. Robert Mugabe.219

---

217 Interview with Lt Col L. Dyke, Harare, 1 March, 1994
218 Carver 1989:15
219 Speech by Robert Mugabe to Bulawayo business community (State to, 1982)

1983–1984 are most likely the darkest years in Zimbabwe’s independence history. Violence perpetrated by dissidents and government forces squeezed the civilian population beyond limits of physical and emotional trauma. People in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces were reeling under a conflict in which their actions to appease either side, most often led to violent repercussions.

As became apparent in the previous section, dissident activity was not conducted by a coherent force. The intention of this section is to discuss the three groups of dissidents (ex-Zipra, Super-Zapu and bandits), their modes of operation, basis of support, and internal conflicts. Having different motives and structures, the dissidents lacked a spokesperson or a leader, therefore their motives and goals remained unclear for most citizens. The explanation available was the government’s interpretation of events. The pillars of this discourse were Zapu’s responsibility of dissident activity (the goal being seizure of power); the non-differentiated stance towards dissident groups – blaming ex-Zipra dissidents for most destabilisation; and a claim that dissidents had large popular support in the affected areas. However, this interpretation of events differs from and omits circumstances as perceived by the actors. Therefore, based on research of dissidents’ own accounts, this section will describe dissident activity as perceived by themselves juxtaposed to government perceptions. The intention is in this manner to crystallise core issues in the conflict as seen by both sides.

The main points of difference in this comparison are that ex-Zipra dissidents acted without the Zapu structure as support. Their primary objective was not to overthrow the government but to defend themselves and create destabilisation. Neither did the ex-Zipra dissidents seem to enjoy broad popular support in the affected areas. According to their own accounts, ex-Zipra dissidents’ civilian stance was one of non-violence. In contrast, Super-Zapu elements admittedly carried out civilian mutilations and murders aimed at destabilisation and division, as instructed by their South African financial supporters. In addition, bandits acted for their own benefit, mainly raping and robbing civilians under the disguise of on going dissidence.

Examining dissident views and government discourse, it is apparent that the government’s presentation of events, although perhaps lacking information and overview of dissident intentions, was used in the interest of the ruling party’s power ambitions. Had the government’s intentions been the containment of a small group of armed men and peace in Matabeleland, it may have contemplated other venues than massive military intervention of affected areas. Instead, Zapu was
linked to dissident legitimacy and the threat of power seizure was argued to be extensive, which in turn was used as a justification for armed confrontation.

3.a. Ex-Zipra Dissidents: Motivation and Goals

Ex-Zipra combatants constituted the core of the dissidents. Their ideological basis was foremost the ideology Zipra had stood for in the liberation war. In this new and different situation, the basic ideas of the distribution of wealth to the people, democracy and non-discrimination remained, since these issues were perceived not to have been addressed (interviews Ndlovu, Ndebele, Dube, Ngwenya 1994). However, superimposed on this broad agenda, was ‘staying alive’, which was the one fundamental factor that propelled many dissidents to continue fighting. In the early literature on dissident activities much stress is put on ex-Zipra combatants being disgruntled mainly due to 1982 events, taking to the bush as a conscious choice amongst others in order to demonstrate their grievances through force against the government (Ushewokunze 1984:177; Mnangagwa 1989:238). This view of rational choice is the position taken in government discourse at the time, in which dissidents were presented to have selected to take up arms in order to overthrow the government, not accepting the Zapu election defeat in 1980. Not until research based on the dissidents’ own accounts of their motives, does another picture emerge. Many ex-Zipra dissidents presented their actions to have come about by lack of choice. Due to their life threatening situation based on persecution and violence in the army and in the Matabeleland provinces, ex-combatants saw as their only alternative to return to the bush in self-defence (interviews, 1994; Alao 1995:110; Alexander 1996:13). Had the element of self-defence not been present, it seems doubtful that the pre-independence Zipra ideology on its own account would have brought many ex-Zipra soldiers to the bush. Furthermore, to some dissidents, the factor of self-defence was the only relevant one, no political goals were mentioned (interview Ndlovu, 1994). Alexander comments that ‘Dissi-

---

220 Alexander et al notes that all dissidents interviewed for their study emphasised that ‘they were unwilling to form a new movement, that their loyalties remained with the Zipra High Command and Zapu leadership’ (Alexander et al, 2000:197).

221 As an option to taking up arms, many ex-Zipra combatants fled to neighboring countries. This was not without danger however, since refugees risked repatriation through the administration of Zimbabwean authorities (see Engel 1994:209–210). For others, fleeing was likely representing an option of utter defeat. In the situation of unjustified harassment, torture and murder, some thus chose to defend themselves and fight back. Considering the ex-Zipra combatants’ background of skilled military training, their participation in the liberation war and particularly the access to arms, this choice may have not appeared far fetched. One author argues that this reaction was a ‘reflex reaction, not a conscious policy with considered aims’ (Hodder-Williams 1983:15).
idents rarely referred to political motivations in explaining their flight’ [to the bush] (Alexander 1996:18). Yet once in the bush together with other previous comrades of war, the pre-independence Zipra ideology seems to have enveloped motivation. Thus, although ideology was important for many ex-Zipra dissidents as perhaps cohesive and motivating elements, it was not necessarily the factor which initially launched them to an armed response against the government.

Besides survival and the over-arching pre-independence Zipra goals, dissidents emphasised ‘lack of unity in the government and the country’ as an argument for fighting (Dissidents respond, 1988; interviews Ndlovu, Ndebele, Dube 1994). In their perspective, the political and ethnic disunity, violence, and discrimination were caused by government actions and the army anti-Zipra stance. These actions had forced the ex-Zipra dissidents to defend themselves, and motivated them to respond against the government. In extension, the foremost goal expressed by many ex-Zipra dissidents was unity: a government and a nation in which Zanu and Zapu functioned together without aggression and division. Part of this goal was therefore to press for the reinstatement of dismissed Zapu officials in the government and in the army.

Another important source of motivation for ex-Zipra dissidents was in their perception the ethnic discrimination they were subject to. The ethnic element followed from the fact generally known and accepted that most Zapu members were Ndebele. Based on the assumption that all dissidents were Zipra, their supporters were Zapu, and since Zapu members were Ndebele, the conflict polarised between the Shona and Ndebele ethnic identities. Ex-Zipra dissidents perceived the government to be fanning this polarisation further by making statements like dissidents fighting a ‘tribal war’ (Nkala 1988:13; Alexander 1996:25–26; Alexander et al, 2000:192, 196). Furthermore, government actions such as the Zipra property confiscations, the harsh security clamp-down in the search for dissidents in Matabeleland, the whipped up anti-Zapu/Zipra government discourse, and the Zanla aggression in the ZNA, were all experienced as ethnic discrimination as much political antagonism (Hodder-Williams 1983:14; Berkeley/Schrage 1986:15; Alexander et al, 2000: 201–202).

Being motivated by survival and above ideological goals, according to ex-Zipra dissidents, the identified operational enemy were those armed government forces who pursued them, and subjected civilians to violence in this pursuit (interviews Ndlovu, Ndebele, Dube 1994; Zimbabwe Project, 1993). Furthermore, to underline their rejection of government policies, ex-Zipra dissidents sabotaged economic development projects and infrastructure. With regards to civilian relations, ex-Zipra dissidents stated that a non-aggressive stance towards civilians was impor-
tant. Firstly, the ex-combatants operated in their provinces of origin, and more importantly they were dependent on the civilians for food and material goods. Nevertheless, in the conflict situation civilians were killed. With regards to civilian mutilation and the targeting of white farmers and Zanu officials, these charges were denied by interviewed ex-Zipra dissidents (interviews, 1994). Instead the responsibility for these killings were mainly put on government forces. An exception was made in relation to ‘sell-outs’ (people informing the government forces of dissident presence/movements), who could represent a life-threat and ‘had to be dealt with’. Thus, excessive violence towards civilians in the Matabeleland provinces was counter-productive to the ex-Zipra dissidents purposes, and allegedly therefore not part of their agenda. Similar findings are made by CCJP in their 1997 report where they state that those targeted were ‘sell-outs’, but also Zanu(PF) officials in retaliation for murdered and arrested Zapu officials. Furthermore, the organisation comments that it seems likely that most of the multiple murders and ambushes were committed by a few groups of dissidents, whilst the rest confined their activity to petty crimes. CCJP concludes that ‘dissidents did not appear to murder civilians as a matter of course’ (CCJP/LRF 1997:39).

Although ex-Zipra dissidents may well have in general tried to live by a non-aggressive civilian code, no doubt violations occurred. According to eyewitness accounts and reports from clergy and human rights organisations, dissidents conducted robberies, rape, mutilation and murder of civilians through out the 1981–1987 period. However, in these reports it was not possible to make a distinction as to which group of dissidents were the perpetrators. Thus, because the dissident movement was not internally cohesive and a number of dissident fractions existed, it is not possible to separate the ex-Zipra dissidents’ actions from others, in order to verify their claims.

The government’s view of dissident motives and activities differed substantially from the actors’ perception. Firstly, in government discourse differentiations between the different dissident groups were rarely made. Ex-Zipra dissidents were in most cases made out to be wholly responsible for dissident activity in the country. Furthermore, the blame was not put on those persons alone, but on Zapu, it being the ‘parent’ organisation of Zipra. This created perceptions of Zapu/Zipra organising actively and taking part in an insurgency at the cost of civilian atrocities, in order to take over power. The perception was consciously constructed by government propaganda material such as the 1984 illustrative publication ‘ Chronicle of Dissidency’, mirroring Smith’s ‘terrorist’ propaganda during the liberation war (Min. of Information, 1984).
Secondly, in contrast to ex-Zipra dissident views, in the government perspective disunity, violence, and discrimination prevailing in the country was caused by the dissidents. The foremost goal the government perceived the dissidents to have (as stated in their public discourse) was seizure of power and government replacement by Zapu (see section two). These activities therefore justified a military intervention in order to eliminate the dissidents. Thirdly, the seizure of power was linked to an ethnic cause, in which the government perceived the dissidents fighting a tribal war, trying to ‘liberate’ areas in the Matabeleland provinces, and through ethnic alignments force themselves into government (Tribal rule, 1983).

Ex-Zipra Dissident Structure

Opposite to what was first believed in early literature (Hodder-Williams 1983:15; Berkeley/Schrage 1986:7), the ex-Zipra dissidents were fairly well organised. With Zipra’s command structure and geographical organisation as a model, this much smaller group of armed men tried to function structurally as they had done in the liberation war. By having a certain framework including a command, the ex-Zipra dissidents differed significantly from other operating groups.

The area of operation was divided into three regions: the northern region which included Lupane, Nkayi and KweKwe (Matabeleland North, KweKwe-Midlands); the western region which contained Tsholotsho and Plumtree (Matabeleland North); and the southern region consisting of Beitbridge, Gwanda, Insiza and Kezi (Matabeleland South). Contact was kept through meetings within and between the regions, although not all sections where connected to the regional system (interviews, Dube; Coltart 1994; Alexander 1996:21). Each region had a commander and a commissar, men responsible for security and medical officers. The commanders were appointed as were an administration. Under the regions there were smaller sections which had section commanders, and had varying numbers of men (10–30). At times sections would split into two after meetings were held and a decision was made for a certain mission to be carried out (interview

---

22: The government’s narrow view of the conflict did not convince everybody. Particularly for Zapu members it was hard to believe that fellow members resorted to violence in their own home provinces. Instead, the undifferentiated reporting and the government’s propaganda stance back lashed, and caused Zapu sympathisers to disbelieve the existence of ex-Zipra dissidents altogether. In this view those responsible for dissident activity were ‘armed criminals, government agents pretending to be dissidents, and agents infiltrated from South Africa’ (Ranger 1986:391; see same theme in Berkeley/Schrage 1986:27).

223 According to an ex-Zipra dissident, a unit in the Matopos did not communicate with the regional structure until 1986, due to ‘fears about Super Zapu’ (Alexander 1996:21).
Due to this organisation, locally the dissidents were well aware of who were operating where. This was exemplified when in court cases after Amnesty (1988), ex-Zipra dissidents were giving detailed evidence of who in their area was a dissident and who was a criminal (interview Coltart, 1994).
Also, those with no prior training did not know guerrilla tactics or how to interact with civilians. As a result violations occurred, as one ex-Zipra dissident stated ‘Some were criminals among us and would beat civilians, causing loss in support’ (Alexander 1996:22).

In government discourse dissident capacity was not discussed much. At first this may have been due to lack of information. However, in 1985 government sources estimated dissident capacity (including all groups) to be ‘no more than 300 at any given time’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:16). This was not publicly disclosed, perhaps to avoid alarm or to conceal how small the dissident capacity actually was.

Ex-Zipra Dissident Legitimacy

Having left army or civilian life in self-defence or in response to government activities, the ex-Zipra dissidents functioned outside the law. They did not have guerrilla legitimacy since their actions were not sanctioned or supported by any recognised party or organisation. Instead Zapu, the ex-Zipra dissidents’ organisation of origin, denied the dissidents any legitimacy by continuously condemning their actions and pleading for the dissidents to give up. Nor were their actions visibly and officially recognised or supported by extensive numbers of civilians (Ranger 1986:391–392; CCJP/LRF 1997:14).

Yet the ex-Zipra dissidents did not act without a sense of legitimacy. They used the legitimacy given to Zipra soldiers in the liberation war and the model of Zipra as structure, without the official legitimacy that came with it. Their Zipra background was a unifying element amongst them, which was also publicly disclosed by notes signed ‘Zipra forces’. Thus, although not sanctioned from outside the dissident framework, their previous collective legitimate guerrilla experience still evoked validity in this new situation. Dissidents gave themselves and each other a sense of legitimacy through their well established (albeit loosely connected) organisation. They did not act aimlessly and on an individual basis, but in units and regions through meetings and most importantly – through a command structure. Commanders gave orders, and missions were undertaken. Based on their previous status, belief of self-defence and the right to act against government’s policies, the dissidents created a legitimacy to act – even if it was one which lacked official sanctions from others than themselves.

This legitimacy brought them to actions in the bush. To be able to survive, the dissidents needed food, clothing, arms and information regarding government troop
movements. This was to an extent given to them by local civilians.\textsuperscript{225} In their own accounts, dissidents stress their ‘support from the masses’ and having been met just as in the previous liberation war. Others experienced hesitance, fear and at times rejection from the local population (interviews Dube, Ndebele, Ngwenya, Ndlovu 1994, see also Alexander 1996:24). In the study of Alexander et al, most ex-Zipra dissidents expressed that they had very little support from local Zapu leaders due to the pressure dissident presence caused on civilians. Having ex-Zipra dissidents in the area brought government forces against which civilian protection could not be guaranteed by the ex-Zipra soldiers (Alexander et al, 2000:200). Thus, the civilians confronted by dissidents were caught in the middle: they had to either feed and shelter the dissidents and thereby violate government security measures, or refuse the dissidents, rejecting ex-combatants with the same ethnic background and (likely) political conviction/party belonging as themselves. In both cases the repercussion of their choice could be violence. One can only speculate about the extent to which civilian support was due to commitment towards the dissidents cause based on the liberation war experiences and/or the prevailing situation, or based on fear of harassment and violence. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that some civilians out of conviction did support the dissidents (Hodder-Williams 1983:15; CCJP 1983a:3; Berkeley/Schrage 1986:25; dissident interviews 1994; Alexander 1996:24) which irrespective of scope, gave the dissidents another element of legitimacy.\textsuperscript{226}

It has been argued that for both Zapu and Zipra during the liberation war a close link existed between political legitimacy and the usage of shrines (Ranger in Alexander 1996:27). This religious practice was continued by ex-Zipra dissidents in the 1980s, who visited shrines and discussed their situation with mediums, asking for protection and advice (Alexander 1996:27). Alexander suggests that ‘In the absence of other leadership, shrines were perhaps more important to them [dissidents] after independence, in terms of their own well being and as a means of

\textsuperscript{225} The dissidents were armed mostly through arms they had brought with them, through hidden weapons in caches, through contacts with government forces, and some through South African supplies. The supply of arms was a serious problem, as was access to ammunition (Peace at, 1988; Nkala 1988:13; see also Alexander 1996:22).

\textsuperscript{226} An important aspect of civilian support of dissidents is linked to loyalty with Zapu and towards the Ndebele ethnic identity. Alexander et al describes in civilians an ‘unswerving and profound loyalty to Zapu, which many people ascribed to the “Ndebele character”, and which had firm roots in Zapu’s long history of resistance’ (Alexander et al, 2000:225–226). The authors also note regarding Zapu loyalty that ‘loyalty is cast as an essential feature of Zapu’s political culture and of being Ndebele’ (Alexander et al, 2000:229).
sounding out public opinion’ (Alexander 1996:27). If shrines had for Zipra soldiers been an important element in substantiating legitimacy during the liberation war, continued practice in the dissident period may well have fulfilled the same function.

In government discourse, Zapu bestowed dissident legitimacy since, according to the government, the party sanctioned, supplied and directed their activities. This accusation was repetitiously denied by Zapu officials, as outlined previously. Dissidents themselves state that they had ‘no direct contact or assistance from Zapu’, but that ‘individual Zapu members would help’ (interview Ndlovu, 1994; see also Hodder-Williams 1983:15 and Alexander 1996:23). In the government discourse however, notes signed ‘Zipra forces’ and ‘Father Zimbabwe’ batches (Zapu material featuring Nkomo) found in deserted dissident camps, were described to the public as proof enough. The government also tried through court cases to establish a link between Zapu as an organisation and the dissidents, but failed to do so (interviews Coltart, Feltoe, 1994).

By linking Zapu to dissidents legitimacy, and refusing to address any dissident grievances or opening up a dialogue through negotiations, the government denied the dissidents any independent validity. It only recognised the legitimacy the government itself was giving the dissidents: the one connected to Zapu. Had the government recognised the dissidents as an independent group of disgruntled armed men, the proposed threat to the country would have come in a different light. The small ill-equipped troop could scarcely justify a massive military occupation of affected areas. Thus, the government needed the Zapu legitimacy as a cornerstone for its actions, whether it was established in court or not. Similarly, the government also claimed that the dissidents had a large popular support base in the Matabeleland provinces (CCJP/LRF 1997:40). Then, equipped with the notion that the opposition party was intending to overthrow the government, it related directly with the dissidents, through armed confrontation.

3.b. Super-Zapu Dissidents

As mentioned in section two, South African security began in 1982 recruiting Zimbabweans into what was attempted to be a proxy army. Under the code name

---

27 The court case used during the conflict by the government as its most significant evidence of a Zapu-dissident link, was the earlier mentioned kidnapping trial of Gilbert Ngwenya. Although the ex-Zipra combatant was convicted for murder of the six tourists (see section two), specific evidence linking Zapu to the crime – other than Ngwenya’s testimony –, was not reported. To date there is no documentary or material evidence to support the contention that Zapu concretely supported or instructed dissidents (CCJP/LRF 1997:30–31).
“Operation Drama” covert support was organised for these dissidents, who went under the name of Super-Zapu (CCJP/LRF 1997:30). The South African recruited dissidents were initially contacted inside Zimbabwe, in the Dukwe refugee camp in Botswana, and in South Africa where Zimbabweans (particularly from Matabeleland) crossed mainly to seek employment (Martin/Johnson 1986:57, Engel 1994:209). The training was conducted jointly by ex-Rhodesian security forces and South African Defence Forces (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:23). Two ex-Rhode-sians were involved in this process, one of whom was Malcolm Calloway, the former CIO agent involved in the arms caches in 1982. Calloway now organised weapons and training at a South African military base near Louis Trichard (Northern Transvaal) for the recruited Super-Zapu dissidents (Johnson/Martin 1986:55, Engel 1994:209). The second significant person was Kevin John Woods who after independence worked for CIO as a senior administrative officer in Matabeleland. His task was to prepare intelligence reports on the dissident situation, which were given to Prime Minister Mugabe. Simultaneously he was taking orders from the South African security, for which he started working as a spy in 1983 (Ellis/Sechaba 1992:109–110). Thus South African’ forces Special Tasks Directorate had an excellent opportunity to stir division and create destabilisation particularly through these two people (located in each country) with extensive knowledge of the local situation in Matabeleland and Zimbabwe at large. According to government sources the South African involvement in dissident recruitment and training was most intense in 1982–1983 (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:24). Ballistic proof of South African sources arming dissidents became evident for the first time in late 1982 when in a contact with the ZNA, bandits were captured and arms were recovered. The bandits admitted to have been trained by the South African defence forces, and their weapons (Romanian AK 47s) carried ammunition manufactured in 1980. Thus the weapons were not from the Zipra armaments which was last supplied in September 1979. Furthermore the Zimbabwean government did not use weapons from the Warsaw Pact countries. Instead it became clear that the ammunition was from the same source as used by Renamo forces in Mozambique, supplied by South African sources (Martin/Johnson 1986:55–63).  

228 Other training camps in Northern Transvaal were Spencer, Ntabeni, Phalaborwa and Hammerskraal Camps (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:23).  
229 Kevin Woods was arrested in 1988. Two additional people with central roles in “Operation Drama” are reported to be Col. Moeller and Col. Jan Breytenbach (CCJP/LRF 1997:30).  
230 For detailed account on evidence (based on police records) of South Africa’s involvement in arming bandits, see Martin/Johnson 1986:55–63.
The Zimbabwean government approached the Super-Zapu issue through three methods. Firstly, military pressure in general in the Matabeleland provinces to eradicate all dissidents. Secondly, through diplomatic relations with Botswana, leading to intensified border monitoring on both sides, and a repatriation of suspected dissidents from Dukwe refugee camp. Diplomatic contacts did however not progress smoothly due to ZNA units having operated inside Botswana, and after a statement by Mugabe that the Botswana government was unwilling to co-operate in the eradication of dissidents. Nevertheless, the repatriations from Dukwe limited South African recruitment efforts (Engel 1994:209–210).

The third method to constrain Super-Zapu was to confront the South African government with proof of its involvement in recruiting and arming dissidents. In February 1984 a detailed dossier was given to South Africa’s then Chief of Staff (Intelligence), containing information regarding Calloways’ involvement, arms supplies and statements by captured dissidents. At this point dissident recruitment and training was seemingly halted, and for 17 months there was no evidence of infiltration or arms supplies. How long Super-Zapu functioned is not clear. Alexander claims that it ‘operated little over a year’ (1982–1983), whilst Martin/Johnson state that Super-Zapu support was reactivated in 1985 (Alexander 1996:18; Martin/Johnson 1986:62).

The South African destabilisation strategy never did reach planned effect. Due to the strong anti-apartheid and pro-ANC stance amongst the ex-Zipra dissidents, the basis for operations fundamentally differed between the groups. When ex-Zipra dissidents’ own accounts became available, evidence of extensive violence

---

231 South African supplied arms caches were found in Botswana through information given by captured Super-Zapu leaders (Martin/Johnson 1986:60-61). In an interview with Lit-Col L. Dyke of the ZNA, he confirmed that he had commanded a ZNA operation into Botswana to eliminate arms caches. He states that in this operation, ‘I destroyed some caches there [in Botswana] and killed some Botswana soldiers’... ‘we had to kill some Botswana soldiers to do that at the time’ (interview, Dyke, 1994). When bilateral relations were strained by clashes between Botswana soldiers and ‘armed men’ (whose identification had first been that of ZNA but later changed to unspecified ‘armed men’), an urgent meeting was held by the Joint Commission on Defense and Security in Bulawayo (10/11 1983). According to Engel, the commission established that ‘no Zimbabwean soldiers were involved’ (1994:210). Whether this was the specific operation commanded by Lit-Col Dyke or not is not clear; however his own testimony clearly indicates reasons for bilateral tensions between Botswana and Zimbabwe at the time.

232 This could have been due to three factors: the evidence of South African involvement presented by the Zimbabweans; the South African government signed a non-aggression treaty with Mozambique in March 1982 and wished to show the international community they would honor an agreement of non-aggression; and/or due to military pressure by ZNA forces in Zimbabwe (Engel 1994:211).
within Super-Zapu as well as between ex-Zipra and Super Zapu dissidents were brought to light (Alexander 1996:18–20; Alexander et al, 2000:196–198). Much confusion was caused by the fact that Super-Zapu had some ex-Zipra leaders. When ex-Zipra combatants joined Super-Zapu units without knowledge of the units background, they were met by a brutality towards new recruits unknown to Zipra forces. The violence towards ex-Zipra recruits apparently originated from Super-Zapu dissidents’ awareness of Zipra’s anti-South Africa stance. Therefore Super-Zapu commanders tried to exclude any questioning of their status or connections by a terror discipline – including killings. Zipra ex-combatants also noted with rejection other differences to their Zipra background; the way in which meetings took place and the manners in which civilian contacts were handled. These differences in methods and conviction led both to in-fighting in Super Zapu, and clashes between the two groups (Alexander 1996:18–20). The first reported fighting took place in 1983. According to evidence given by captured dissidents, the ex-Zipra dissidents fought Super-Zapu in an effort to stamp out South African involvement because they suspected ‘South Africa to be using them to promote its own interests’ (Martin/Johnson 1986:57–58; Engel 1994:209). Super-Zapu never grew much in size, the resistance by ex-Zipra dissidents being one reason. Active Super-Zapu dissidents were estimated at best to be 100, and the amount of trained Super-Zapu dissidents was assessed by the Zimbabwean government not to be more than 300 (Engel 1994:209).

As with other types of destabilisation conducted by the then South African regime, the goal of the Super-Zapu dissidents was to destabilise and create division. During 1982–1983, the seemingly most active period of Super-Zapu, killings of white farmers rose drastically. Some of these cases have, through ballistic evidence, been linked to the Super-Zapu dissidents (Martin/Johnson 1986:61). Another of South Africa’s military tactics was to assassinate Zimbabwe’s political leadership (Engel 1994:213). During the conflict a number of Zanu (PF) officials were murdered. As this being one of the apartheid regime’s strategies, Super-Zapu may have particularly targeted Zanu members. However, evidence linking these crimes to Super-Zapu dissidents has not been established, therefore the connection remains speculative. What is beyond doubt is that through its brute methods, (including mutilations as in Renamo activities), Super-Zapu succeeded in destabilising by spreading terror in the rural areas. They also accomplished their goal to create division, by committing crimes blamed generically on ‘dissidents’ but by implication in the dis-
course the responsibility was put on ex-Zipra dissidents and Zapu as a party. Nevertheless, lacking more specific data on both ex-Zipra and Super-Zapu dissident activities, it has not been possible to establish on the whole how much impact the influx of Super-Zapu dissidents had in terms of destabilisation and violence.

The government's official discourse on South African destabilisation in general, and Super-Zapu dissidents in particular, was ambiguous during the years of the Matabeleland conflict. The threat of South African destabilisation was duly stressed particularly in parliament, where with six months intervals, the government argued for an extension of the state of emergency. However, when examining the government media coverage of the Matabeleland conflict (1981–1987), there is relatively little written about the South African infiltration. In one of the few articles where the government raised Super-Zapu, Mugabe emphasised three points: that the South African regime infiltrated dissidents through Botswana in order to 'develop hostile relations between us and Botswana'; that the Super-Zapu dissidents were Ndebele speakers so as to emphasise the 'ethnic factor' and 'make it Shona versus Ndebele'; and that Super-Zapu had a different strategy than the ex-Zipra dissidents because:

They think the dissidents directly from Zapu are wrong in killing and torturing people and, therefore, alienating the masses from them. They [Super-Zapu] say they are opposed to the strategy, want a better image and are better armed (Why the, 1983).

What is noteworthy of this statement is that the two first points are issues that the government partly itself carries responsibility for, but here blame is laid on South Africa. In the third point ex-Zipra dissidents are characterised as the 'wrong-doers' whilst Super-Zapu (rejecting Zipra dissidents), are pictured as 'better' in a choice of two negatives.

Precise reasons for the scarcity of government statements on South African destabilisation remains withheld. Engel points out that the security dimension of Zimbabwe's foreign policy vis-à-vis South Africa in 1982–1987 was confined to a very close

---

233 An additional way South African security created division specifically tarnishing Zipra, was a disinformation campaign focusing on unsolicited publications, circulus and letters. These were mailed to prominent politicians, diplomatic missions, and individuals, containing threats or political statements and 'signed' by Zipra officials. In a particularly serious case, the government having evidence of South African involvement, required a member of the South African trade mission in Harare to leave Zimbabwe (Martin/Johnson 1986:66–67).
circle of persons\textsuperscript{234} and that channels of communication between the two countries ‘have never been a subject of public discourse’ (Engel 1994:212). Yet it seems a choice was made, for other than security matters, Mugabe’s government was famous for its anti-apartheid stance. Had the South African infiltration been the centre of the government discourse in the Matabeleland conflict, the political Zanu versus Zanu dispute (including the ethnic elements) would have taken on an entirely different dimension. Instead, the official government discourse did not stress international destabilisation (although having ample evidence of South African involvement), but blamed Zanu as wholly responsible for the dissident activities.

3.c. Bandits

The third category of people operating in Matabeleland and generically identified as ‘dissidents’, were criminals or bandits. Motive was the element which in general distinguished bandits from ex-Zipra or Super-Zanu dissidents. Bandits conducted robberies, murders and rape for their own ‘benefit’, were not known to have a structure or commands, but acted mostly on the spur of the moment. An example of banditry was reported in \textit{The Herald} (29/6 1984) where Nation Dube had been operating in his home area near Gwanda (Matabeleland South). Dube admitted that he had raped a number of women and robbed some stores. He stated that his actions were not based on any political motives, but to get money. Dube was apprehended by local people (quoted in Ranger 1986:392).

Another example of banditry described in \textit{The Herald} (17/5 1984) was that of Robert Moyo, who whilst looking for his cattle entered a homestead posing as a dissident. To impress his status he produced two spent cartridges, claiming that he had used two bullets killing two people. He also stated that they were 11 men in total, the rest hiding in the bush. His act was however not convincing, and he was apprehended by people in the village (quoted in Ranger 1986:392).

Thus, due to the volatile situation in the region and the availability of arms, banditry became an occurrence in addition to the ex-Zipra and Super-Zanu dissident activity.\textsuperscript{235}

\textsuperscript{234} The circle consisted of Prime Minister Mugabe, who was also holding the defense portfolio (1980–1987), Minister of State (Security) Emmerson Mnangagwa, Minister of State (Defense) Sydney Sekeramayi in 1982–1983, and his predecessor the late Ernest Kadungure. Sekeramayi continued being an important advisor after he took over as Minister of Health (Engel 1994:212).

\textsuperscript{235} For a historical perspective on banditry, social banditry and guerrilla activity in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, see Ranger 1986:373–396.
Although the difference in motive, the activities conducted by all three groups were interchangeably referred to in the media as ‘dissidence’ or ‘banditry’: the distinction between acts based on political grievances and non-political criminal activity were thus left in ambiguity. Generally then, all dissidence was seen to be banditry (unlawful activities for personal benefit), all banditry was dissidence (unlawful activities here based on the wish to overrule the government). Allowing for this ambiguity, catered to the government’s position not to grant any legitimacy to dissidents with a political motive, since crime for personal benefit is an offence scarcely no one will accord legitimacy. In this way public opinion could be moulded to dismiss ex-Zipra political motives, instead focusing on a military response to deal with criminality.

3.d. Dissidence or Banditry: A Civilian Loss

The damage, loss, and trauma dissidents irrespective of category inflicted on civilians, is beyond numerical configurations. However, besides the impossibility of including emotional impact when counting casualties, the fact remains that in this conflict including state authorities, reliable statistics are not available. When debating for the renewal of the State of Emergency, government statistics were presented for parliament. These statistics remain the only officially compiled information regarding dissident activities. However, due to the fact that the State of Emergency had to be justified based on these statistics, the figures can only be observed with caution. Furthermore, neither the method nor compilation of the sources are given (Weitzer 1990:161). In addition to these cautions, sources quote (the same) government data differently (compare Berkeley/Schrage 1986:25 and Weitzer 1990:162). It is therefore of little value to list exact numbers given.

Yet the question remains what the scope added to during these most two intense years of dissident activity. With all statistical cautions posted, as derived from quoted government sources, dissidents (all categories) killed an average of 100 people per year (1983–1984).\footnote{An additional problem with the statistics was that at times the same incidents were reported in different versions, depending on who reported it: soldiers/government sources reported an incident committed by dissidents, whilst civilians reported the same incident having taken place but stating that the perpetrators were government soldiers (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:25; Carver 1989:17). This was partly due to a government strategy of so called ‘pseudo-ops’, in which government soldiers would act as dissidents in order to find out if local people were supporting dissidents. An elaboration of pseudo-ops will follow in section four.} Counting 1983 and the beginning of 1984, 40 white
commercial farmers were reported killed.\textsuperscript{237} Of those killed in 1983, 58 were reportedly Zanu (PF) officials, whilst in 1984 12 Zanu (PF) officials were reported murdered by dissidents (Berkeley/Schrag 1986:25; Weitzer 1990:162).\textsuperscript{238}

\textsuperscript{237} In early 1984 nearly 500,000 acres of commercial farmland was abandoned in the Matabeleland provinces. In 1980 Kezi district had 41 registered commercial farmers. In 1983 only nine remained, and after three commercial farmers were killed in the district in February 1984, the six commercial farmers left, fled the area (Commercial Farmers Union, quoted in Berkeley/Schrag 1986:26).

\textsuperscript{238} How many people the dissidents killed over the whole conflict period remains speculative. Government sources state 700–800, however CCJP states that ‘in areas [with allegedly high dissident activity] where fairly exhaustive research has taken place, these high claims are not borne out’. In the two case studies (Nyamandlovu and Matobo) research results illustrate that approximately 98\% of deaths and disappearances in the communal lands were conducted by government agencies, and 2\% were murders by dissidents (CCJP/LRF 1997:39, 201).
Voices Section Three

I became a dissident because there was division. We felt there was no freedom. We had fought together with Zanu in the liberation war, but there was no governing together. Trainos Nyathi.\(^{239}\)

We [dissidents] were still following that previous goal. To distribute the wealth to the people, to start projects, like this one [co-operative]. As you know, there were some farms where they discovered arms. It was the land issue. Because after the war we were going to do farming, at the farms. But it did not happen during 1980–1981, there were misunderstandings between the parties. The policy we were told, was not followed. So therefore we followed the previous [Zipra] policy... Our final goal was unity. We have struggled a lot to establish unity. This was one of our objectives. We know that Zanu had deserted this unity. There were people who were influencing and distorting information about the current officers in Zapu and Zanu. Our objective was to unite together. Obert Dube.\(^{240}\)

Apart from defending ourselves, there was very little we wanted to achieve. Except that when we started trying to defend ourselves it worsened and worsened. It was difficult to say that “I was just trying to defend myself, and I want to put down my arms and I want to come back home”. So we carried on, we continued the war because it was started.... Anything concerning power or land or whatever, we would look at that through Zapu which still existed then. We were actually merely doing something for ourselves, not looking for anything else [such as] rights for ourselves. Just defending ourselves, staying alive. Zwelibanzii Ndlovu.\(^{241}\)

It would have been better of course for us if Zapu had been ruling, but we did not really intend to get Zapu into power. What we were fighting against was the prevailing system, which was making everybody uncomfortable. We were trying to neutralise that discomforting situation in the country. M. Ndebele.\(^{242}\)

We were using the guerrilla warfare strategy, the same as before independence. [But] the target was different. The target was not the Zanla forces, because Zipra forces are political forces. We must consider whom we are meaning... We were not so much against them [the

\(^{239}\) Ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident, (Peace at, 1988).

\(^{240}\) Interview with Obert Dube, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye co-operative, Matabeleland, 15 March 1994.

\(^{241}\) Interview with Zwelibanzii Ndlovu, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident, Green Light Cooperative, 14/3 1994.

\(^{242}\) Interview with M. Ndebele, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye co-operative, Matabeleland, 15 March 1994.
army, but we were fighting with them because they were soldiers – if they got a gun, you must shoot. If you don’t, they can shoot you. Our target was to destroy the economy.

Obert Dube.\textsuperscript{243}

Our enemy was the government forces. Those were the people we were fighting against. The government forces, meaning the Zimbabwe National Army, the Support Units, the police itself, and the CIO. Never Mazwi.\textsuperscript{244}

The government destroyed infrastructure to make it look like that the dissidents had done it. It was a way of the government to destroy us. Zwelibanzi Ndlovu.\textsuperscript{245}

It was the strategy of the government. They were just going in the villages, collecting some of the people. They were saying ‘you are supporting the dissidents, you are doing this and this, you have cooked sadza for the dissidents, you are buying clothes’. If you have a gun, you can say ‘cook sadza for me’, because you have a gun. That was not supposed to be done, because that was innocent people. But they [the army] were doing it. Ansker Ngwenya.\textsuperscript{246}

There were two types of dissidents; those who were genuinely against what was happening, and those who where posing as dissidents so as to cause chaos and justify the sending in of the Fifth Brigade. The government was responsible for those who posed as dissidents. Simon Silonda.\textsuperscript{247}

My husband is a hunted man. He has to sleep at seven different places per week. Dissidents say he is a sell-out, I suppose just because he owns the little shop. One night they woke me up at about midnight and said they wanted my husband. I told them he was away in Bulawayo. They said they wanted cigarettes, beer and radio dry-cell batteries from me. I told them I did not have the keys to the shop which was some four kilometres from home, and that they had better return the following day. They assaulted me accusing us of being sell-outs because we sat on sofas at home. They said they wanted to bring us down from the sofas to mats. They then told me to tell my husband that they wanted brandy and beer,\textsuperscript{243}

\textsuperscript{243} Interview with Obert Dube, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye cooperative, Matabeleland, 15 March 1994.

\textsuperscript{244} Never Mazwi, former dissident (Zimbabwe Project, 1993).

\textsuperscript{245} Interview with Zwelibanzi Ndlovu, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Green Light cooperative, Matabeleland, 14 March 1994.

\textsuperscript{246} Interview with Ansker Ngwenya, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye cooperative, 15/3 1994.

tobacco and shoes. That is why he [the husband] has to sleep at seven different places per week like a hare, and I am now squatting in Bulawayo. Emma Ndebele.248

During the time we were operating, the only way to arm ourselves was to lie down in ambush and shoot down soldiers. Then you get more ammunition, and you get more weapons. Because usually you would find four guys with weapons, maybe three of them with nothing. Maybe two guys with nothing and one with a weapon, and others using hand grenades. It was really a tough situation. And we were facing about 45,000 troops within the area. Collin Ndiweni.249

The reason we deployed ourselves more in Matabeleland than Mashonaland was because at times we would run out of ammunition, during that time we would be sure we would be secure where we were. We could go and sit with our people, who would look after us well during that time. We had support in Matabeleland, that made it easier for us. Our main reason to be in the bush was to defend ourselves, more than even defending ZAPU itself. We wanted to defend ourselves personally. We were threatened, our lives were threatened. If we did not do this [become dissidents], we did not think we would survive. Zwelibanzi Ndlovu.250

Since we were holding guns, and the soldiers were also holding guns, it would happen that some people would get caught in the crossfire. But we did not kill civilians intentionally. The policy was not to kill civilians. It was the government forces that were doing injuries to the people. We were fighting with the soldiers. The people we interacted with. We talked a lot about the reasons why we were in the bush, the political grounds, to make people aware why we were not happy in the army. People were behind us. That is why the government failed to catch the dissidents. People would not tell where we were. M. Ndebele.251

Some individuals were afraid, not everyone, and they would go and tell. Some of them said 'I will not report my child. No matter that you are not in my family but you are my child, we are family because we are the same people'. We had a big support amongst the civilians. Ansker Ngwenya.252

248 Civilian in Bulilimamangwe District (Dissidents: The, 1986).
249 Ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident (Zimbabwe Project, 1993).
250 Interview with Zwelibanzi Ndlovu, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident, Green Light Cooperative, 14/3 1994.
251 Interview with M. Ndebele, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye cooperative, Matabeleland, 15 March 1994.
There was no direct contact or assistance from Zapu. The only way we got assistance was when we went directly to the people in the communal lands and got information through those people. Individual Zapu members would help. Zwelibanzi Ndlouvi.253

Those children who refused to return worried us because we did not know what else they wanted, and how they could be helped. Some people, in some areas, say that some children went back to fight after the war, and that they became dissidents. They say they were very frightening. Civilians were afraid of them and they wondered why they had gone back to fighting. So, although they did not want to give them food or water to drink, they ended up doing so, after asking themselves: why did he go back to fight; and what is his aim in doing so? There must have been a reason. Of course, they were also afraid for their lives. But some, a lot, of homes were burnt down. I cannot say how many and I also cannot give names because I am still frightened. There were also men who were killed for nothing, nothing. Thema Khumalo.254

Zapu wasn’t supporting us. We took by force with a weapon.... We didn’t even have youth to support us, to get information. Zapu was saying they didn’t know why we left the ZNA, they just heard of us in the forest. No one could support us. Each Zapu member was supposed to be killed then. Everything was so quiet... even Nkomo ran away. Gcobala Ncube, ex-Zipra dissident255

When the dissidents menace began in about 1982, most people thought it was a passing problem, passing in the sense that it could not take more than a few months before the security forces neutralised those responsible for it. Dissidents came to my home a couple of times but did not find me because I was away at school. They demanded food and emphasised that relish had to be chicken. In fact they looked around and chose for themselves one of my best cocks. They remarked that I had a lot of fat hens and cocks, and that relish for them would not be a problem in my home. They told my aged mother and little children present that I should be told that they (dissidents) would like to find a large assortment of alcoholic beverages, which would include not less than half a dozen bottles of brandy, the following Sunday. They said as a teacher I was well paid and should not find it difficult to buy the drinks for them, plus cigarettes.... After a week or so, the dissidents arrived late at night and demanded food, drinks and cigarettes. This time they wanted a goat to be slaughtered. They said they were ‘over-many’, were ‘over-hungry’, and were ‘over-tired’.

254 Staunton 1990:82.
Five of them took turns to assault me with a thick mulberry tree stick [because there were no drinks]. They hit me so severely that my buttocks became a mass of blood. Carlton Dube.

As far as I am concerned, there are three types of criminals, all of whom we call dissidents. There is the ordinary boy from next door who goes out at night, picks up a piece of wood which looks like a gun, walks a couple of kilometres away and rapes and robs women and girls. Then there are those who actually deserted from the army, or where expelled for one reason or another. They decided to head for the bush from where they emerge once in a while to terrorise people. They also claim to have a political motive. The third group comprises those who seem to have been trained somewhere, we are told in South Africa, and were sent here to cause havoc through sheer terror. But none of them are prepared to listen to someone else’s view. No! No! If you question what they tell you, you are going to be brutally punished. Margaret Msindo Ngwenya.

A cousin of mine approached me and urged me to go to South Africa where we would get money and drive cars. Once we were in South Africa I found myself at the Entambeni camp [Louis Titchardt], and we did not get any money.... We received four months’ military training at Entambeni before we deployed back into Zimbabwe. We had both black and white officers training us using English, Shona or Ndebele.... Captain Calloway told us to take up arms because the country [Zimbabwe] was not yet free and needed to be liberated.... He told us that even if we came across whites, especially farmers, these are bad people because they grow the food which feeds Mugabe’s dogs. He [Calloway] told us he had instructions from Nkomo, and that he himself was a commander appointed by Nkomo.... As initiation we were made to cut of the hands of two [ZNA] soldiers.... We made one armed robbery and killed eight people. Dragon Mabuza.

I don’t know any dissident that has killed white farmers. We think that the government forces were pretending to be dissidents and they killed the white farmers. We know a number of incidents when government forces came into the villages and told people that they were dissidents. The villagers would prepare food for them, and after the food they would hit and kill them.... It was the same thing [regarding killed Zanu-members]. We were not killing Zanu (PF) members just like that. We only killed somebody if they tried to kill us.

---

256 Civilian in Nata Communal Land (Dissidents: The, 1986).

192
We only killed those who held a weapon against us, not those who did nothing to us. We did not kill civilians. Zwelibanzi Ndlovu.\textsuperscript{259}

We could never work with South Africa as the independence war was against such countries. We were not fighting to help South Africa. We were fighting to include everyone in the government of this country. Trainos Nyathi.\textsuperscript{260}

We did not group with those people [Super Zaphu]. They were moving around with their own part. We knew [they were not Zipra] because we knew each other.... We were in that unit where people were trained before, in the first struggle. Those who were from South Africa, we did not have them. Ansker Ngwenya.\textsuperscript{261}

Zipra [dissidents] did not cross over to South Africa. Of course there could be that some people entered, but others would know that better. Here in Matabeleland [in his area] that group did not exist. They were entering from the outside, going over the Eastern border. So here in Matabeleland there was no contact with the South African government [agents]. Obert Dube.\textsuperscript{262}

The security forces should seek the rural people's co-operation, not force co-operation out of the people, because such an approach would place the people between two forms of violence, none of which is acceptable. I also feel that the government could get some of these terrible people back to normal life if they were promised some form of amnesty which would then be followed by a well-thought-out and effectively implemented rehabilitation programme. Albert Ndoda.\textsuperscript{263}

\textsuperscript{259} Interview with Zwelibanzi Ndlovu, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident, Green Light Cooperative, 14/3 1994.

\textsuperscript{260} Trainos Nyathi, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident (Peace at, 1988).

\textsuperscript{261} Interview with Ansker Ngwenya, ex-Zipra combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye cooperative, 15/3 1994.

\textsuperscript{262} Interview with Obert Dube, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye cooperative, Matabeleland, 15 March 1994.

\textsuperscript{263} Albert Ndoda, civilian in Nata Communal Land (Dissidents: Thc, 1986).

This section describes the most fierce kind of government interventions conducted during the Matabeleland conflict. In 1983–1984 state aggression reached a peak in which the scale of organised violence towards civilians affected many thousand people. The most violent operations were conducted by the Fifth Brigade. Examining the Brigade, the narrative is initially focused on describing background, training, operations, and the Fifth Brigade's ethnic stance. However, describing this time period and focusing solely at the Fifth Brigade operations would exclude the context in which the army unit operated, and omit the authority that gave it the legitimacy to act: the government. Subsequently, the narrative includes other types of government measures taken during these two years, connected to the conflict. For the sake of overview state involvement in the conflict has been divided into three types of interventions: military interventions, non-military policy interventions, and discourse interventions. Analysing events in this light, it is apparent how these actions effectively enveloped the government's scheme, as they were intricately interwoven and operated simultaneously. Whilst the military operations much in a covert manner saw to the execution of the strategy locally, the more overt policy interventions (such as curfews) gave the nation the idea that dissident destabilisation was addressed. Framing the whole exercise was government discourse which, it is here argued, was effectively used to mould public consent for government interventions.

Exploring the ways in which the government dealt with the ongoing destabilisation in Matabeleland and Midlands, it is clear that indiscriminate civilian targeting was a state policy. Thus, the hardship and violence civilians were systematically subjected to was no 'side effect' of the government's efforts to pursue dissidents, as was put forward at the time. Instead, based on government actions and orders, it is argued that the government's focus was on undermining political opposition in Matabeleland and Midlands, whilst the containment of dissident activity was of a relatively lesser concern. Based on the logic to destroy Zapu structures, civilian targeting was a deliberate policy. Subsequently, the elimination of political structures was executed through army counter-insurgency operations, in which the military enemy identification encompassed not only Zapu members, but all those considered of Ndebele ethnic origin.

4.a. Government Military Interventions

Since the Entumbane clashes (1980/1981), military operations were continuously carried out in Matabeleland North and South in order to contain dissident activity (interview Munemo, 1996). Military intervention reached a peak when the deployment of the Fifth Brigade took place in January 1983. Due to its special training
and its counter-insurgency methods, the Fifth Brigade’s legacy was – and continues to be – controversial in many camps; within the army, the government, in civil society, and the international community. Conceptions of its composition, motives, orders and tactics continue to flourish, often contradicting each other, mostly due to little information available.264

The Fifth Brigade Formation

The Fifth Brigade was formed based on an agreement made in October 1980 between the then Prime Minister Mugabe and with the president of North Korea, Kim Il Sung. The Brigade consisted of approximately 3,500 men, organised in three battalions of 1,000 men each (the surplus being other military staff). In September 1982 the first battalion from ZNA was designated for the Fifth Brigade. This was the 24th Infantry Battalion stationed at Rushinga (Mt Darwin) under the command of Lt. Col. Munemo. Munemo’s battalion and the subsequently designated battalion consisted of both ex Zipra and Zanla combatants, having undergone training in the newly integrated ZNA.265 The third battalion, which was an amalgamation of two battalions from Tongogara Assembly Point, were ex Zanla guerrillas without the integration experience (‘Gukurahundi’ 1990:33; interview Munemo, 1996).266 This difference was initially highly noticeable according to Munemo, since the two integrated battalions had adopted a regular army life style in which the administrative and military culture had changed. The relationship between the integrated and the

264 Parts of the below description of the Fifth Brigade rely on an extensive interview with its deputy and later commander, Lt. Col. Emile Munemo. Due to the limited data on the Fifth Brigade and the sensitivity surrounding its operations, it is difficult to further confirm information given by Lt. Col. Munemo. Some information therefore represents his perception of the Fifth Brigade, and must be read in this light.

265 One of the reasons given for the battalion under Lt. Col. Munemo being designated to the new Fifth Brigade was its ‘capacity to hold together during the formative stages’ of integration. The soldiers with both Zanla and Zipra background had through their collective training created an identity as a battalion ‘without inter-party and intra-unit squabbles’, and were made to understand by Minister of State (Security) Mr. Mnangagwa, that they had therefore been ‘earmarked for this important task’ of forming the Fifth Brigade (interview Munemo, 1996).

266 Much criticism was raised against the Fifth Brigade’s Zanla bias (Alao 1995:112). However, the claims that the Brigade was exclusively assembled by Zanla forces is rejected by Munemo, who stated that under his period of command both ex-Zanla and Zipra forces were part of the Brigade (interview Munemo, 1996). Due to discrimination however, according to Alexander/McGregor, the ex-Zipra content diminished in the Fifth Brigade: they were not seen as loyal to the government and were associated with the dissidents. Therefore the ‘former Zipras were subsequently attacked, demoted, and posted to other battalions’ (Alexander 1996:11). Alexander et al also describes how former Zipra officers attached to the Fifth Brigade had their careers prematurely ended. See Alexander et al, 2000:191.
previously non-integrated battalions was like ‘between different people’ until the latter group of soldiers ‘learned that what we were representing was what the government was supporting’ (interview Munemo, 1996).

In September 1981 the battalions were addressed by Minister of State (Security), E. Mnangagwa, and (former) senior Zanla, Zipra and Rhodesian officers, motivating the new brigade’s formation. The soldiers were told that ‘aspects of insecurity were creeping into the young nation, notably by malcontents’ (interview Munemo, 1996). The Fifth Brigade was needed to handle this situation, but was first to undergo training for one year (September 1981–September 1982), conducted by North Korean instructors.

The Fifth Brigade Political Education

During the year the soldiers were kept in Nyanga without intermission, attending an intense military training program. Although the training at an operational level was geared towards an abstract external enemy, the North Korean instructors attempted a political dialogue in which it was indicated that the enemy was internal and against the government. In the limited literature on the Fifth Brigade, it is often mentioned that the Brigade had on their syllabus political instruction (“Gukurahundi” 1990:33). This seemed to have been Zanu (PF)’s and the government’s intention, as Mugabe clearly stated:

They [the Fifth Brigade] were trained by the Koreans because we wanted one arm of the army to have a political orientation which stems from our philosophy as Zanu (PF). So when we deployed them in parts of Matabeleland North, their approach was not just to use the gun. It was also political, as was their approach during the war. You don’t just act against the dissident. You also act with the population so that they can support the government (Fifth Brigade, 1983).

However, according to Lt Col Munemo, although originally so intended, political education in the form of official daytime lessons was not part of the soldiers’ syllabus. Due to persistent resistance from Fifth Brigade commanders, political education was placed after the daily military syllabus was concluded. Yet the North Korean instructors then expected that soldiers would participate in a ‘voluntary association’, comprising political education (interview Munemo, 1996). Films and talks about North Korean society took place, in which their local version of commu-
nism and the idea of 'duty' were emphasised. Sessions were held about the North Korean ruling party's structure and the position of their leader Kim Il Sung\(^{267}\).

Due to its alien character, the reception of the information was not successful: 'We found it strange, I must admit', Lt Col Munemo stated. In his view the political education took place based on a 'misconception' by the North Koreans. This originated firstly from their invitation by Zanu (PF) as the ruling political party, and secondly by the North Koreans' limited knowledge of Rhodesian/Zimbabwean history. Based on their own history and ideological perceptions the North Korean instructors saw a commonality between the two countries' political processes; the Zimbabwean ruling party was understood as all-encompassing and in a process forging a new political doctrine. In the North Korean perception it would follow that the soldiers would all be Zanu (PF) supporters, if not members. This was not the case since the brigade included both ex-Zanla and ex-Zipra soldiers. Furthermore, the aim of those integrated units had been depolitization, a process that was acutely necessary to avoid disintegration. In the transfer from guerrilla forces to a regular army, the political element was therefore formally removed from all formations, cancelling positions such as that of a political commissar, and replacing it with an administrative system. As a result instructions would no longer come from a political party, but from the army headquarters.

Based presumably on guidelines given with their invitation, their local historical experience, and perhaps lack of insight into the crucial depolitization process in the Zimbabwean national army, the North Koreans tried to fill the role of political cadres in the Fifth Brigade. This caused a dilemma, according to Munemo, since it re-entered political education into the army and produced a contradiction with two sets of rules: the regular military hierarchy and a 'social rule' given by the political cadre. This model was unacceptable to the Zimbabwean commanders, therefore it remained a de-emphasised after hours activity (interview Munemo, 1996).\(^ {268}\)

---

\(^{267}\) The North Korean instructors' commitment to their leader Kim Il Sung was partly assumed to be honored by the Fifth Brigade commanders, who for example were expected to send birthday greetings to Kim Il Sung on behalf of their soldiers (interview Munemo, 1996).

\(^{268}\) Although a process of depolitization in order to create an apolitical army had been attempted, political identification amongst the soldiers prevailed (Alao 1995:115). Therefore, in the light of strong Zanu (PF) sentiments in the Fifth Brigade, depolitization per se was perhaps not the primary argument for rejecting North Korean political education, as put forward by Munemo. Officially introducing political education of an alien character may have been a stronger reason.
Although the political education was thus not a dominant training item, the persistency of this view prevailed. According to Lt Col Munemo, this persistency materialised from the North Korean instructors’ emphasis on political education in the soldiers’ training syllabus. This conviction spread to society mirroring the North Koreans’ and the ruling party’s position, rather than that of the Fifth Brigade commanders, cementing the idea of the soldiers being heavily politicised during their training (interview Munemo, 1996). The fact that the disparity of views regarding political education resulted in counter-instructions by commanders reflects tension between the government and the army. Neither institution was at this time homogeneously congruous regarding the role of politics in the army.\textsuperscript{269} The fact that the view of the Fifth Brigade as a professionally politicised army prevailed, was likely due to government discourse.

**The Fifth Brigade Training and Deployment**

In 1981 the military threat perception held by the government was based on an external enemy, locally manifested through dissidents, but which could develop into an incursion by for example South African forces.\textsuperscript{270} At the time however, although an air force was in place, the army units’ capacity could not combine with an infantry to fight a regular army incursion (interview Munemo, 1996). Therefore, not only strategically but also at an operational level, the Fifth Brigade soldiers were to be trained to face a regular army opponent in a modern warfare situation, rather than internal guerrilla incursions (interview Munemo, 1996). Suitable for this task, the North Koreans brought – as an unconditional gift – military equipment for a value of Z$12.5 million. This included seven T54 tanks, armoured personnel carriers, and artillery (Alao 1995:113). With the above threat perception in mind, the training differed in many ways to other ZNA units. Whilst the British taught regular and low-intensity warfare, the Fifth Brigade were trained in ‘all arms warfare’ and instructed to operate as an infantry, together with other supporting arms such as artillery and air support. In this warfare training the enemy would carry modern Western style weaponry, including nuclear and chemical weapons. The purpose of this comprehensive addition to the existing ZNA brigades was to ‘give the government a strategic depth in its military capacity’ (interview Munemo, 1996).

\textsuperscript{269} For army/government views on the role of politics in the ZNA, see Alao 1995:115.

\textsuperscript{270} This view was emphasised by Prime Minister Mugabe in 1983, when he at Fifth Brigade Tank Squadron demonstrations stated that ‘The national army needs “sharpening” in order to repulse South Africa’s continued acts of aggression against Zimbabwe’s independence’, and that ‘We must improve the capability of the army and its equipment so that we can prepare to defend ourselves against South Africa’ (Stronger Army, 1983).
During the year of training however, the government’s threat analysis changed, as perceived by Munemo, altering from emphasis on external to an internal threat. Outside the training barracks a highly politicised military conflict was under way, polarising Zanu and Zapu, including military wings and ethnic affinities. In this polarisation, according to Munemo, Zanu (PF) claimed the Fifth Brigade as ‘its’ army in the contest against Zapu, as well as in the operations against dissidents. In his view, this occurred because government members lacked an understanding of a government divorcing itself from partisan politics. Rather than acting as a national government with a national army, Zanu (PF) members claimed the government as theirs – including the military force – and thereby reverted to the model of a politicised partisan army (interview Munemo, 1996). This view clashed with the messages forcefully put through to the soldiers, which was to obey political authority in the form of the democratically elected government, distinguishing party politics from government authority.

Whilst the political crisis was building with fierce exchanges taking place between Zanu and Zapu, the soldiers were meanwhile continuously trained with the same program, emphasising external threat. As a result, by the end of their training in September 1982, the soldiers’ perception of their task was not to fight ‘a small guerrilla force’, but ‘being ready for big fire fights’, representing national military power (interview Munemo, 1996). A passing out ceremony was conducted with a massive show of force, including a firing range composed of small arms, mortars, rockets, anti-air guns and tanks (“Gukurahundi” 1990:35). In his speech at the ceremony, Prime Minister Mugabe delivered a message of duty to the Brigade, stating that ‘The knowledge you have acquired will make you work with the people, plough and reconstruct. These are the aims you should keep in yourselves’ (“Gukurahundi” 1990:35). A brigade flag was handed over by Mugabe to the Brigade Commander Perence Shiri, with the inscription ‘Gukurahundi’.

However, despite the pompous ceremonies, the concluded training resulted in an anti-climax for the soldiers. Instead of fighting enemies with modern weapons, the Fifth Brigade soldiers received instructions to deploy in Matabeleland in counter-insurgen-

---

271 This was a process which had much importance at the assembly points and at army integration, where the ex-guerrillas had to accept to no longer obey orders from their respective parties, but the government. See chapter three, pp. 112 and 145.

272 The name ‘Gukurahundi’ was explained as follows by Lt. Col. Munemo:

Gukurahundi is the rainfall that comes around September. ‘Hundi’ is the shaft that remains in the harvesting area after you have been thrashing your harvest. ‘Gukura’ is to sweep away. That is the context. If you have shaft in our society, you need to clean it (interview Munemo, 1996).
cy operations. According to Munemo the soldiers experienced their task to come as ‘a big bore’ (interview Munemo, 1996).

Subsequently the Fifth Brigade split into battalions and moved to camps in Midlands and Matabeleland. The first battalion was located at Zvishavane Mine (south of Gweru); the second went to Gokwe; and the third battalion was sent to Ntabazinduna (outside Bulawayo). These locations were to be semi-permanent, but in this phase the battalions were not yet deployed for military operations. In Munemo’s location (Zvishavane Mine) the battalion embarked on training, familiarising with the area in terms of the local leadership, establishing local supplies, and doing ‘population work’, since ‘this is where we were sent, this was going to be our home’ (interview Munemo, 1996).

In January 1983 the battalions were deployed into different sections, so called ‘tactical areas of operation’. Battalion headquarters were in Tsholotsho, Nkayi and Lupane. Being deployed in counter-insurgency operations, certain military assumptions (regarding the dissidents) were made: an insurgent movement with a political base had been identified; it was armed; it had a military and political program with certain objectives; and it had local and perhaps foreign backing. These assumptions required a military action conducted in steps. At the first stage appeals were to be made for the insurgent movement not to use force, thereafter a military threat would be given, after which a military response would be added (interview Munemo, 1996). Based on the Fifth Brigade actions, they entered the sequence at the third stage.

Due to the nature of low-intensity operations in which the insurgents were assumed to be closely linked to local structures, the Fifth Brigade perceived it to be ‘difficult, if not impossible to operate against the military men themselves’. As had been the case in the liberation war, the brigade commanders believed the dissidents had more than dissident identity: ‘The farm boy you see during the day, is the guerrilla at night’ (interview Munemo, 1996). Now knowing how the dissidents operated, such dual existence was rarely, if ever, lived by the ex-Zipra or Super-Zapu dissidents who stayed in camps in the bush. Only the small category of

273 Lt. Col. Munemo stayed in Zvishavane until December 1982, when he was promoted to deputy commander of the Fifth Brigade (to this point he had been battalion commander). As deputy under (now Air Marshall) Perence Shiri, Munemo was mainly concerned with administration and logistics, whilst Shiri had the responsibility of training and operations. With his new responsibility Munemo was relocated to rear base at Guniefowl head quarters, in Midlands. Munemo remained until April 1983, when he and Perence Shire switched roles. Lt. Col. Munemo was Commander of the Fifth Brigade until July 1983. Subsequently he was sent for further training in Nigeria, after which he was given other duties in the army (interview Munemo, 1996).

274 See chapter three, pp. 176-177.
bandits followed this pattern. Nevertheless, in the army the perception prevailed that dissidents at times lived a civilian life, or that civilians were dissidents by supporting and supplying those who had literally taken to the bush. Following this perception, multiple identities made dissidents unidentifiable to the soldiers. Therefore in the militarily it was concluded that 'it would not have been possible for any military operation to be conducted solely against armed bandits' (interview Munemo, 1996). Furthermore, since the dissidents were identified as former Zipra guerillas, 'all efforts from the very beginning [1981] were to break down the Zapu structure that was supporting the dissidents' (interview Munemo, 1996). Thus, the army acted (on government orders) on the assumption that Zapu as a party was sustaining and aiding the dissidents, although proof of this did not exist. In the same manner, it was beyond doubt in Lt Col Munemo's view that civilians were involved in supporting the dissidents, as he stated: 'it was no way they [the civilians] were not aware, not part of it' (interview Munemo, 1996). Civilian targeting was thus clearly part of the Fifth Brigade's goal. However, civilians also paid the price for soldiers' frustration originating from their inability to locate dissidents. An anonymous Fifth Brigade corporal states:

While with the Fifth Brigade, my operations involved tracking down dissidents. There were however incidents where we killed innocent civilians. This was by either crossfire or mere frustration from forces when we had failed to track dissidents. We would label anyone we met a dissident collaborator. There was an operation order that "if you don't get the ball, kick the man". By this we ended up killing villagers if we missed the dissidents (Fifth Brigade, 1997).

Simultaneously to the operations of the Fifth Brigade, regular ZNA army units, the CIO, the police, and a Task Force operated in Matabeleland North and

---

275 One army method used to entrap civilians for assisting dissidents were so called 'pseudo operations'. In this tactic, inherited from the Rhodesian forces, soldiers posed as dissidents, demanding supplies from the civilians. Later the soldiers would return, having 'proof' that the civilians were dissident supporters. The same method was used for committing abuses and atrocities later blamed on the dissidents. Several well-documented cases exist in which it is beyond doubt that the perpetrators were army personnel impersonating dissidents (interviews Auret, Karlen and Silonda 1994; Berkely/Schrage 1986:27–28; Carver 1989:17; Carver 1993:76; CCJP/LRF 1997:17).
Amongst the various government forces, the Fifth Brigade enjoyed a particular status. This originated from the government having distinctively selected the Fifth Brigade to solve the dissident problem, its specialised training, and its command structure which bypassed intermediate army levels observed by other units – answering directly to Prime Minister Mugabe (Berkley/Schrage 1986:33; interview Munemo, 1996). The Fifth Brigade therefore had a reputation based on a perception of power. Being seen as a ‘super force’, they were given preferential treatment by government authorities which created jealousy within the army (Alaö 1995:115; interview Munemo, 1996). However, their power position was not only based on reputation and preferential treatment. The Fifth Brigade instilled their power position amongst colleagues just as amongst civilians: through force. In Nkayi the soldiers beat policemen as well as soldiers from another ZNA unit (Alexander et al., 2000:217). The soldiers also harassed regular army personnel attached to their Brigade (interview Khoza, 1994). However, in Lt Col Munemo’s view, being seen as a ‘super force’ was not as much linked to Brigade performance, as it was to other units feeling marginalised. According to the Commander, all involved government forces wanted ‘to deliver the final solution to the Prime Minister’, and this resulted in the need for other battalions to prove themselves to be equally effective as the Fifth Brigade was perceived to be (interview Munemo, 1996).

In the first half of 1983, what was termed military operations by the army only took place for approximately three weeks, according to Lt Col Munemo. Once an area had been in military terms pacified, that is the ‘armed element was removed’,

---

276 The three different arms of the state security apparatus all active in the Matabeleland conflict were: the National Army (ZNA) for which executive responsibility is located in Ministry of State (Defense) in the Prime Minister’s office; the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) which investigates internal security affairs and which reports to the Ministry of State (Security) in the Prime Minister’s Office; and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) responsible for general criminal cases, and falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Within the police force functions a special intelligence unit called PISI (Police Internal Security and Intelligence) which was particularly involved in the Matabeleland conflict (Berkely/Schrage 1986:31,41,46). A Task Force was a temporary formation with a specific mission. The first Task Force in the Matabeleland conflict was lead by Air Marshall Mutchena 1981–1982, the second Task Force 1982–1985 was commanded by Lt. Col. Lionel Dyke (interviews Dyke 1994, Munemo 1996). With the arrival of the Fifth Brigade troop numbers in the region totaled to more than 5000, a troop to dissident ratio of at least 25 to 1 (CCJP/LRF 1997:47).

277 Emphasis added. It is noteworthy that Lt. Col Munemo uses the term ‘the final solution’ in the context of the Matabeleland Conflict. This term was used in the Second World War with regard to extermination of Jews. For full quote, see footnote #331.

278 An additional effectiveness factor was career security. For the Fifth Brigade soldiers a sense of career security was present. In Lt. Col. Munemo’s view, those who felt insecure about their careers in other army units ‘might have used desperate tactics to get results’ (interview Munemo, 1996).
a new phase was to follow. The underlying assumption for this subsequent step was that the population was not actively resisting government authority. Therefore, in the next phase military contacts were replaced with methods to alienate or pacify undesirable ideas still embedded in the local population. These ‘hearts and minds’ operations took place through meetings (so called ‘pungwes’) held with the local population, similar to the ways in which political education had been dissipated by guerrillas in the independence war.\footnote{For elaboration on ‘pungwes’ and political education during the liberation war, see chapter two, pp. 57–59.} The meetings were not voluntary, people were forced to attend. According to Lt. Col Munemo ‘All pacification tools are through coercion’ \cite{interview Munemo, 1996}. However, the assumption is that people are under so much pressure having military forces present that they will voluntarily attend, and that through the suffering that they have endured in the first phase of operations, they will be persuaded to see that their opinions are wrong \cite{interview Munemo, 1996}. The message given at these meetings was for the population to stop supporting the dissidents, and fully accept government authority. This political mission proved to be frustrating for the soldiers. Under pressure from the army people went \textit{en masse} to Zanu (PF) offices to purchase membership cards to ‘verify’ their new political thinking\footnote{CCJP recorded how Matabeleland residents were made to wait (sometimes over night) at local Zanu (PF) offices for their purchasing of membership cards. Whilst queues of many hundred people formed, people were commonly forced to sing songs praising Zanu (PF) and denouncing Zapu \cite{CCJP/LRF 1997:55}.}. The soldiers soon however became aware of people having both Zapu and Zanu membership cards, and therefore saw the party cards as a useless exercise in validating government authority \cite{interview Munemo, 1996}.\footnote{Using Zanu (PF) cards as a legitimate verification of accepting government authority is a contradiction in terms, since the government was a coalition of Zanu and Zapu. Thus being a Zapu supporter/member did not per se indicate dissension towards the elected government. Therefore the use of Zanu (PF) membership cards as an instrument to prove ‘innocence’ or as a ‘verification’ of having the ‘right’ political affiliation, exemplifies how the quest for Zanu (PF) hegemony was central in this conflict. The possibility for the civilians to remain apolitical or support another party, did not seem an option.} According to Lt Col Munemo the Fifth Brigade soldiers realised at an early stage that their political pacification campaign was a ‘mission impossible’ \cite{interview Munemo, 1996}.

\textbf{The Fifth Brigade Human Rights' Abuses}

The Fifth Brigade soldiers’ realisation of a ‘mission impossible’ did not translate into a cancellation of operations. Instead this first operation was one of grotesque violence towards civilians, particularly Zapu members. Soon after the Fifth Bri-
gade’s deployment, international aid agencies and rural missions received reports of massive human rights abuses conducted by government forces. Eye witnesses, church officials, missionaries, journalists, medical personnel, and some military personnel gave accounts to the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace (CCJP) of arbitrary searches of homes and stores, looting, mass detention, rape, torture, and massacres. Within six weeks more than 2,000 civilians had died, hundreds of homesteads were burnt, and thousands of civilians had been beaten. Most of the dead were killed in public executions, involving between one and twelve people at the time (CCJP/LRF 1997:48). 282 The soldiers often carried a list with names of people, usually of Zapu members or officials, known members of the ZNA, ex-Zipra combatants or deserters. If they were apprehended they were executed (CCJP/LRF 1997:50). Mass beatings were furthermore a significant and widespread Fifth Brigade technique during their first operation. Large numbers of villagers were marched at gun point to a centrally located venue such as a school or borehole and were made to lie down, there many (up to 200) soldiers administered public beatings with sticks or gun butts which often lasted for several hours. The beatings included men and women, but at times also elderly and children aged 12 and upwards. 283 Often after these beatings some victims were randomly chosen and executed (CCJP/LRF 1997:23, 50, 83).

Another significant characteristic of Fifth Brigade soldiers’ activity was their demand that civilians did not to show emotions when family or community members were killed. In reported cases family members were executed having wept whilst loved ones were killed. In addition, corpses were not allowed to be buried, instead they were ordered to remain exposed to decompose in the sun or be scavenged by animals until the bones were removed by soldiers (CCJP/LRF 1997:55–56). Being aware that burial and mourning are central in Ndebele culture, whereby the tears of the living release the soul of the deceased and allow rest for the dead, this sadistic denial of cultural specific customs was chosen to add further pain.

282 The most extensive mass execution recorded by CCJP took place in Lupane (5/3 1983), were 62 people were shot on the banks of Cewele River. By pretending to be dead seven survived with shot wounds, whilst the remaining 55 died (CCJP/LRF 1997:48).

283 After beatings villagers were warned not to seek medical help. Many victims were left with permanent disabilities ranging from paralysis, blindness, deafness, miscarriage, impotence, infertility, and kidney damage, to partial lameness and recurring back and head aches. These injuries have left victims impaired for work required in rural areas, such as labour in the fields or water collection. In addition, CCJP recorded psychological trauma, leading in extreme cases to insanity, and in many other cases to recurring depression, dizzy spells, anxiety, anger, or a permanent fear and distrust of government officials (CCJP/LRF 1997:80).
The Fifth Brigade’s pattern of operations in this initial period consisted of waves of intense brutality lasting a few days, followed by random incidents of beatings, homestead burnings and executions. Due to the reoccurrence of violence, civilians experienced constant fear and anxiety of renewed attacks. The insecurity and terror in the region led to an extended refugee problem as thousands of civilians fled the Fifth Brigade, seeking safety in Bulawayo or Dukwe refugee camp in Botswana (CCJP/LRF 1997:80).

The Fifth Brigade Ethnic Stance

In addition to Fifth Brigade brutal operations, the brigade has been characterised by its ethnic stance. Victims’ accounts repeatedly emphasise the ethnic discourse used by the soldiers, victimising people identifying with the Ndebele ethnic group, and stressing Shona superiority. Civilians describe how soldiers arrived in villages addressing residents in Shona through an interpreter. Being unable to answer in Shona was enough reason for being severely beaten. If somebody did speak Shona, they were told to go ‘home’ (interview Karlen, 1994; interview Dlodlo, 1996). Often soldiers told the civilians that their task was to ‘wipe out the Ndebeles’, one of the reasons being crimes conducted by Ndebele ancestors towards Shona ancestors (CCJP 1984:9; Berkley/Schrage 1986:97; Weitzen 1990:180; Werbner 1991:162; Tragedy, 1992:14; Carver 1993:16, Alexander et al, 2000:222). The historical link was recognised by Lt Col Munemo, who stated:

The blunt truth is that we are dealing with a situation in which there was a forced feeling of superiority and inferiority complexes between the two tribes, shall we say. That is the truth. A subsequent explanation would be that it was a clear question of settling old scores between the two tribes.

The Fifth Brigade having started out being a highly professional brigade, reportedly trained to be both apolitical and ‘aethnic’, transformed in their first mission into an army unit being neither. Besides the soldiers’ personal perceptions, an alteration seems to have occurred in professional terms. In the general setting the link between (some) dissidents being Zapu and Zipra members, and Zapu constituting mainly people from the Ndebele ethnic identity, was partly the reason for this militarisation of ethnicity. However, historical divisions and political tensions linked to ethnic identity, played undoubtedly a role. Due to the polarisation between Zanu and Zapu which in turn encompassed ethnic polarisation, the Fifth Brigade became part of the ethnic division, although it had representatives from both ethnic identities. In Lt Col Munemo’s view, when the ruling party claimed the Fifth Brigade as ‘its’ army, this also translated into an ethnic (pro-Shona) claim, which influenced the brigade’s transformation to an ethnically and politically biased bri-
gade. Furthermore, it was the government’s orders that dictated the Brigade’s modus operandi, rather than independent army decision-making, adding further to the politicisation. According to Lt Col Munemo, the government having firstly, chosen to conduct counter insurgency operations, and secondly, the crisis being highly politicized and ethnically polarised, required government decision-making. When the orders had filtered down to the operational level, ethnicity crystallised further. On that level, in Munemo’s view, ethnicity was central: the political contest between Zanu and Zapu amalgamated political and ethnic identity into the enemy being an insurgent firstly of Ndebele origin, and secondly with Zapu as political affiliation (interview Munemo, 1996). CCJP concluded that ‘with the deployment of the Fifth Brigade, the trend of failing to distinguish the possibly innocent from the possibly guilty was broadened from a presumption of guilt against Zapu to a presumption of guilt against all Ndebele speakers’ (CCJP/LRF 1997:45). Lt Col Munemo admitted that when reaching down to the level of soldiers carrying out operations in villages, ‘it [the modus operandi] could not have any sophisticated discourse, it became simply ethnic’ (interview Munemo, 1996).

Civilians responded to this overtly ethnic aggression by at times claiming Shona identity, creating a degree of confusion amongst soldiers. Lt Col Munemo explained that:

> Although things get much more complex as you [the Fifth Brigade] then move in, because you get a situation where the guys [soldiers] go to a village and this old man says ‘just sit down’ to the soldiers. He then starts lecturing about how much more Shona he is than them [the soldiers]. He tells them where he came from, and he tells them where all the people in that village came from.

This type of historical ethnic identification review was often given to the Fifth Brigade soldiers, according to Lt Col Munemo. Civilians went out of their way to explain that they actually were Shona by origin, not Ndebele, and had through acculturation assimilated into the Ndebele culture and language. Due to this, in the Fifth Brigade ‘a lot of soldiers lost steam, in terms of steam to hate’ (interview Munemo, 1996).284

284 The outlined response by civilians noted by Lt Col Munemo, i.e. that civilians were given space to ‘lecture’ to the Fifth Brigade, seems unlikely to be a frequent occurrence noting recorded documentation of Fifth Brigade-civilian encounters. Although the discussion described by the commander may have occurred a limited number of times, the remark is of interest. Firstly, it indicates the Brigade’s ethnic stance, as civilians obviously believed to get a different treatment if proven of Shona origin. Secondly, Lt Col Munemo’s disclosure that the soldiers lost ‘steam to hate’ gives a vivid insight into the spirit in which the soldiers conducted the operations.
On July 22, 1983 the Fifth Brigade was pulled out from their tactical areas of responsibility for further training, this time by the British. For some time the brigade had experienced ‘moral problems’, manifested by an extended number of soldiers applying for leave. This was according to Lt Col Munemo due to protracted duty without intermission, since the battalions had been active from the training at Nyanga and onwards.285

The Fifth Brigade Tactics of Terror

The Fifth Brigade was re-deployed in September 1983 (Auret 1992:156) and remained this second period until the end of 1984. The British training did not moderate their methods, instead this operational period saw ‘sadistic refinements’ in methods of mass detentions and mass physical torture (CCJP/LRF 1997:119). Due to persistent dissident activity, the pacification campaign following the counter insurgency operations in early 1983, was evidently cancelled. The government seems to have decided in favour of a strategy to induce extreme fear, and turned to so called ‘tactics of terror’ (interview Munemo, 1996). To change strategy in favour of terror tactics demands an appraisal of the level of rebellion in the affected areas. According to Munemo, the responsibility of such an appraisal and the consequences of a campaign of terror tactics is beyond the authority of the army, and is therefore a political decision (interview Munemo, 1996). Judging from the operations, Lt Col Munemo believes that ‘this would be the only explanation’ to the army’s subsequent interventions.286 CCJP’s 1984 report would well support such a change of strategy:

The evidence before the Commission cumulatively points to very excessive and deliberate brutal treatment of the civilian population by certain elements of the army and police. People are beaten up severely on the mere suspicion that they are dissidents, are helping dissidents, or are withholding information about dissidents. Again on these suspicions others are killed – some in most cruel way which is beyond description by human words (CCJP 1984:7).287

285 The training by the British is often in the literature mentioned as ‘re-training’ (Auret 1992:156; Alao 1995:114; Weitzer 1990:178), indicating that adjustments were necessary. According the Lt. Col. Munemo this was not the case, instead the return to barracks for training was a way to address the need for the soldiers to have a break. This remains an issue of interpretation.

286 At this time Lt. Col. Munemo was no longer commander of the Fifth Brigade, thus his description relates to his general army knowledge and experience.

287 The report continues to give a few examples from the evidence collected, namely:

A four month old infant was axed trice and the mother forced to eat the flesh; and eighteen year old girl was first raped by six soldiers and then killed; an eleven year old girl had her vagina burnt with plastic and was later shot; twin infants were buried alive (CCJP 1984:7).
The extensively used strategy of public mass beatings lessened during this period. However, when this widespread method was used it had new cruel variations on the theme.\textsuperscript{288} A shift also took place regarding operation environments. Whilst the offensives with interrogations, assaults and executions in the village setting decreased, civilian operations conducted in particular interrogation camps increased. Mass detention took place particularly in the beginning of 1984, when thousands of people were taken by the Fifth Brigade or other ZNA units to make-shift detention camps in both Matabeleland North and South. It was common for detainees to be first taken to Fifth Brigade bases or ‘holding camps’ for interrogation. When enough detainees were assembled to fit a truckload (~100), they were transferred to detention camps (CCJP/LRF 1997:120). The majority of the detainees were never charged nor informed why they were detained. The detentions were not made public, thus relatives remained unaware of where family members were taken. All together the operations occurred less in the open, and took on a more clandestine feature. Bodies were for example no longer left in shallow village mass graves, but were disposed of in mass graves inside camps and in mine shafts (CCJP/LRF 1997:55, 203–204).

The most notorious Fifth Brigade detention centre was Belaghwe camp, feared because of the excessive human rights abuses conducted there (CCJP 1984:8,16–19; interview Khoza, 1994; Godwin 1996:363–366).\textsuperscript{290} It was located approximately five kilometres from Maphisa, near Antelope Mine in Matobo district (Matabeleland South). The camp was most extensively used in February–May 1984, when it was a centre of detentions for both Matabeleland provinces. Here women, men, infants, children, and elderly people were kept for different lengths of time. The turnover in the camp was high, according to ex-detainees one to two weeks seemed a common detention period. Women were released after shorter

\textsuperscript{288}Whilst the common pattern still involved people lying face down in rows, people were now on occasion made to lie on thorny branches first – after which soldiers ran along their backs before beatings. People were forced to roll in and out of water (sometimes naked) whilst beaten. Civilians were made to push government vehicles with their heads only, and were assaulted for bleeding on government property. Women were forced to climb up trees and open their legs, so Fifth Brigade soldiers could insult their genitals whilst simultaneously beating them (CCJP/LRF 1997:119–120).

\textsuperscript{290}Reportedly Fifth Brigade soldiers swept through areas on foot, forcing villagers out of homesteads they passed by, herding them ahead whilst beating them. Victims report having walked extensive distances in this manner, whilst soldiers accumulated detainees along the route (CCJP/LRF 1997:120).

\textsuperscript{290}By the local population Belaghwe camp was called “Bulala lapa”, Ndebele for ‘the place of killing’ (Godwin 1996:361).
periods unless chosen as ‘wives’, and Zapu and ex-Zipra members tended to be held longer (in cases six to nine months) (CCJP/LRF 1997:124). According to CCJP investigations, a turnover of a 1000 people every two weeks is a conservative estimation. According to an army source attached to the camp February–April 1984, up to 10,000 people were kept in the camp simultaneously (CCJP/LRF 1997:124, interview Khoza, 1994). Structural conditions were created and enforced to induce maximum hardship. Detainees report that despite times when holding spaces were vacant, they were deliberately crowded into a few sheds, until there was virtually no sleeping space (CCJP/LRF 1997:176). Men, women and children were separated, and zone divisions were organised based on detainees’ geographical origin and employment. Zapu and ex-Zipra members were kept in a separate area, in small buildings with no windows. Unlike other detainees they were leg-ironed, and were subjected to the most brutal torture (CCJP/LRF 1997:124). Irrespective of length of detention, those held were subjected to at least one fierce interrogation, the majority experienced this more than once. The accusations (with no evidence cited) always included civilians failing to report, having fed, or themselves being dissidents. Survivors report the use of electric shocks, excessive beating, rape, genital mutilation292, and fundamentally dehumanising activities where ethnicity and sexuality were central (such as forced sex with animals) (CCJP/LRF 1997:119–120, 124). In addition to physical torture, food denial293 and labour such as digging of graves were administered (CCJP 1984:16–19). Ex-inmates at Bhelagwe report daily deaths in the camp. At first the bodies were buried inside the camp but seemingly only as a temporary measure.294 Interviews on record refer to corpses being removed in trucks at night, whilst villagers living ad-

291 For a Surveyor-General’s aerial photograph of Belaghwe Camp (15 May, 1982), see CCJP/LRF 1997:123.

292 Female genital mutilation was according to survivors common practice at Bhelagwe. Sharp sticks were forced into women’s vaginas, and witnesses refer to women adopting a characteristic, painful, wide-legged gait after receiving this torture. Men were also subject to genital mutilation, whereby their testicles would be bound in rubber strips and beaten with a truncheon (CCJP/LRF 1997:120).

293 Detainees were given half a cup of water per day and one meal every second day (CCJP/LRF 1997:124).

294 According to CCJP, in November 1996 gravesites at Bhelagwe were still clearly visible, although empty except for pieces of asbestos sheeting. Detainees involved in the burial at the time recount the use of the sheeting to demarcate graves. CCJP suggests that this could indicate that the graves were intended to only be a temporary measure, and the asbestos sheets were designed to facilitate later identification of sites and removal of bodies (CCJP/LRF 1997:203).
4.b. Government Policy Interventions

In addition to military intervention, the government implemented measures of non-military character in the course of the Matabeleland conflict. Curfews under the Emergency Powers was one extensively used method, initiated in 1982. During 1983 and particularly 1984 this tactic of restricting movement of people and traffic severely affected people in Matabeleland. The curfews were imposed and lifted in different waves and were at times 24 hour curfews, other times dusk to dawn.

Denial of Food Supplies and Health Facilities

In 1984 a detrimental practice was added to the curfew; the withholding of food in to the curfew region. On February 3, 1984, the government ordered a strict curfew in Matabeleland South, covering 5,000 square miles (from Beitbridge to Kezi to Plumtree), affecting 400,000 mostly rural civilians (Berkley/Schrage 1986:135). Restricting food for political and military reasons was a method used by the Smith regime, now returned to use by the new government. The motivation was an increase of South African supported dissidents into the region. The expressed logic behind the government’s scheme was that since dissidents received their supplies through the population, suspending all food provisions would force the dissidents out of the area (Curfew, 1984). Having suffered from three consecutive years of drought, many were dependent on government drought relief distributed through stores and granaries, which was now withheld. No external residents were allowed to enter the curfew area, stores closed, all traffic stopped, and people were ordered to stay within 50 meters from their homes. The population was thus entrapped in their areas without access to food.

Available food rapidly diminished, and thousands of people began to starve (Berkley/Schrage 1986:137). Particularly hard hit were children and the elderly. NGO child-feeding programmes organised through special feeding centres were in most cases closed down. The army took control of the regional National Foods depot to ensure that mealie meal was not distributed to stores. The Fifth Brigade played an active role locally to ensure that the food embargo was enforced. Going

295 In the 1990s bodies have been exhumed from ‘Old Hat Mine No. 2’ in Silobela (Midlands), and Antelope Mine (Matabo, Matabeleland South). The first response by the government was to claim that the bodies were from the liberation war, since the Rhodesian army was known to throw bodies in mine shafts. However, coins found in pockets of deceased in Antelope Mine proved the bodies to be from the 1980s (CCJP/LRF 1997:203).
to extreme lengths, the soldiers rationed water, punished people for eating wild fruits, destroyed fencing to allow cattle to graze the minimal crops having survived the drought, and brutally beat people merely waiting at shops accusing them of breaking the food curfew (CCJP/LRF 1997:118–119). Missions with own food supplies were forbidden to feed civilians.\textsuperscript{296} Schoolteachers were the only category who under severe restrictions was allowed food, since the government wanted the schools in operation. However, children being weak with hunger failed in many cases to attend classes (CCJP/LRF 1997:118–119). Civilians mostly survived the period by eating roots and juice from wild plants. Despite the danger many tried to flee the curfew region to avoid hunger and military operations.\textsuperscript{297}

A slight change took place in mid-February 1984 when Minister of Home Affairs, Simbi Mubako, stated that ‘some shops would be allowed to open in consultation with the security officials if the need arose’ (Suffering, 1984). Subsequently the army periodically allowed stores to be opened in certain areas for a few hours a week, or allowed civilians to eat whilst being watched by soldiers (Berkley/Schrag 1986:137). However, the stores being open due to the goodwill of the army left some areas worse off than others. Frequently it happened, as in Empandeni and Plumtree, that soldiers demanded that civilians bring dissidents to the army before they would open the local store (interview Karlen, 1994).

The psychological impact of the food restrictions was profound. Firstly, weakened by hunger, but secondly being aware that the cause of the situation was a state induced policy, seriously demoralised people in Matabeleland South. Fifth Brigade commanders repeatedly told the civilians that the government’s goal was to starve all the Ndebele to death, in punishment for them being dissidents (CCJP/LRF 1997:118). This collective punishment of the rural population of Matabeleland was denied by the government, who claimed in February (1984) that food ‘flowed freely’ in the curfew area (Berkley/Schrag 1986:138). However, at a press conference in Bulawayo (14/4 1984), Prime Minister Mugabe admitted that food restrictions had been used in the quest to capture dissidents:

\textbf{But we also recognise that the dissidents have been sustained by the community here, which is Zapu oriented, and they have been giving some of this food to the dissidents. That is why we had to impose some restrictions on them [people in the community], but not to get them to

\textsuperscript{296} An exception was St Joseph’s Mission which was allowed to daily feed 300 children up to five years old, leaving mothers only to watch (interview, Karlen 1994; CCJP/LRF 1997:119).

\textsuperscript{297} An estimation of 6.000 refugees from the rural areas were looking for safety in the Bulawayo suburbs at the time (Berkley/Schrag 1986:137).
starve to death, but to get to assess which communities really were sponsoring dissidents and giving them succour (Press transcription, 1984).

In addition to the food restrictions, many health clinics were closed based on the same logic to put pressure on the civilians (Curfew, 1984), causing much suffering amongst the rural population. Since no transport was allowed, those who urgently needed health care had to walk long distances to the nearest functional hospital, risking moving around during the curfew.

The rigid curfew lasted for three months, until the end of April 1984. Then pressure had been exerted from the US government who threatened to withhold an emergency shipment of 30,000 tons of corn to Zimbabwe unless the government guaranteed that food would reach all areas of Zimbabwe, including Matabeleland. The government’s announcement of more lenient curfew restrictions was made the same day the US food agreement was signed (Berkley/Schrage 1986:140-141).

For many people outside the curfew areas it was hard to imagine what took place in Matabeleland, particularly since the government enforced a news embargo for independent sources. No journalists were allowed inside the curfew areas, and the conflict news coverage available was in principle only through government sources (CCJP 1984:9; Auret 1992:208). In their 1984 report CCJP commented:

In parliament the government seems to be at pains to convince the country that the curfew is achieving its objectives without causing undue suffering to the innocent civilians. The question that the people in the affected areas are asking is whether the government is genuinely uninformed about events in the curfew areas or whether knowing what is actually happening, it is deliberately trying to cover up the questionable activities of the security forces? (CCJP 1984:10)

The Chihambakwe Committee of Inquiry

The CCJP having monitored the development of the conflict demanded (together with opposition parties) an independent inquiry into human rights violations. In June 1983 the government announced the investigation of alleged army atrocities conducted between December 1982 and March 1983, covering the initial Fifth Brigade deployment. However, the committee was not established until November 1983, and was further delayed until January 1984 before starting to interview peo-
ple (Auret 1992:209). When publicising the members of the committee, Minister of State (Defence), Sidney Sekeramayi, also stated that ‘after its findings the commission will present a report to the Prime Minister and everything will be made known to the people of this country’ (State names, 1983).

This statement created hope for justice to be meted to those guilty of atrocities, and prompted an impressive response to the Committee’s call for witnesses. The committee was rapidly overwhelmed, and in order to accommodate everybody it had to extend the period of hearings (Big Bulawayo, 1984; Inquiry into, 1984). The Committee heard individuals, many of who had travelled long distances to give evidence, and also representatives of organisations and institutions. The members also visited Tsholotsho, Lupane, Nkayi, Nyamandhlovu, Nyathi and Gwanda during its work (‘Atrocities’ inquiry, 1984). However, the mineshafts in which witnesses stated the army had disposed of bodies, were not visited (interview anonymous, 1994). Ironically, as CCJP points out, Belaghwe camp was operating in its full potential at the very time the Chihambakwe Committee was collecting data on the previous year’s atrocities (CCJP/LRF 1997:124).

To the disappointment for particularly victims and others affected, the investigation into the alleged army atrocities was never made public. One year later (5/7 1984) the Parliament heard by the Minister of State (Defence) that there was no obligation on the Committee to publish it’s findings (Findings may, 1984). Not wanting the issue of investigation to slip, Zapu and the Republican Front set a motion to Parliament in July 1984, pressing for a select committee to investigate the security problems in Matabeleland. This motion was however defeated the motivation being that Parliament was not suited to deal with security issues and that ‘the motion was nothing but an effort by the opposition parties to besmirch Government’ (Weitzer 1990:152; same theme: MPs Attack, 1983).

Zapu Restrictions and Violence

Selectively banning Zapu meetings was yet another method of non-military government intervention in the conflict. In June 1984 Minister of State (Security), Mr. Mnangagwa, announced that Zapu meetings were banned in Midlands province

---

296 The committee consisted of Simplicius Chihambakwe (chair), John Ngara (secretary), Prince Machava, and of retired army officer major general Michael Shute. Mr. Chihambakwe is a Rhodesian trained lawyer who served for Zanu(PF) already in the 1976 Geneva talks (Berkeley/Schrag 1986:153). According to a source close to the Committee, John Ngara represented the CIO on the inquiry, and Michael Shute the ZNA, in order for the Committee to gain access and co-operation of these organisations (interview [anonymous], 1994).
until all dissidents had been eradicated from the area. This ban lasted until October 1984 (MW1AAM:21).

A new form of (non-army) violence began to occur in the latter half of 1984, which would be substantiated in the last years of the Matabeleland conflict. This was harassment, destruction of property, violence, and murders of Zapu members and (perceived) sympathisers, conducted by the Zanu (PF) Youth Brigade and the Zanu (PF) Women’s’ League in co-operation with the People’s Militia and civilian clothed CIO agents (Berkley/Schrag 1986:115–126; Auret 1992:159). Significant to this occurrence was that it was not per se linked to dissident activity, but was political violence carried out mainly by Zanu (PF) members towards opposition party members and civilians. Between October 1984 and January 1985 the CCJP received reports from Matabeleland North/South and Midlands of politically motivated attacks which all had a similar pattern. CCJP registered complaints of how large numbers of Youth Brigade members backed by armed militia men travelled through Matabeleland and Midland villages demanding to see peoples’ Zanu(PF) membership cards. If people did not have Zanu cards or were suspected to be Zapu sympathiser, they were severely beaten, their property looted or destroyed, and homes were burnt. In several instances people were killed.299

In the last half of 1984 thousands of civilians in Matabeleland and Midlands were forcefully made to attend meetings or join the ruling party Zanu (PF): civilians were against their will taken by bus to Zanu (PF) rallies, and a great amount of people were coerced to become members (Berkley/Schrag 1986:115–116). CCJP received reports that in some cases passengers were hindered by Zanu (PF) youth to travel on the rural buses until they purchased a Zanu (PF) card, sometimes being forced to pay several years retroactively (Auret 1992:160).300

299 One of the most serious incidents took place in Midlands province in June 1984, provoked by the killing of two Zanu (PF) officials, allegedly by dissidents. In six cities Zanu (PF) members violently took out their anger, leaving ten civilians dead, 150 people admitted to KweKwe hospital, and many homes destroyed (Berkley/Schrag 1986:116). Another example is Lower Gweru in October 1984, where CCJP investigations interviewing eye-witnesses and victims confirmed that 207 houses and huts, 55 granaries, five cars and two shops were completely destroyed by fires started by members of the Zanu (PF) Youth Brigade. People found at the homesteads at the time of the attacks were severely beaten (Auret 1992:161). For further cases, see Declare Zapu, 1984; Berkley/Schrag 1986:115–126; Spring 1986:183.

300 At a mass rally in Kwekwe (Midlands) Prime Minister Mugabe was shown 50,000 PF-Zapu membership cards which had been ‘surrendered by their members who wanted to join Zanu (PF)’.

In his speech Mugabe thanked the people of Kwekwe and said that ‘Now that there were many people coming from Zapu to join Zanu (PF), people from the party should welcome these people who were lost and educate them’ (We Will, 1983).
4.c. Government Discourse Interventions

At an operational level the military and policy oriented interventions had an immense impact in the affected areas, leaving the Zimbabwean population outside the conflict areas unaware or fundamentally less affected. However, government discourse intervention was a tool that encompassed most citizens, and was seemingly efficiently calculated to build up the government’s case in its pursuit of dissidents and their alleged sympathisers. Underlying in most aspects of government discourse was the strong message of Zanu (PF) hegemony, and in its extension the non-acceptability of a vital opposition. Government discourse in this period moulded public opinion into one in which having a position different from that of Zanu (PF), one could be considered an enemy of the state. The effectiveness of government discourse is obviously difficult to measure. However, that civilian Zanu (PF) members were prepared to, as described above, with violent means punish local Zapu members for dissident activities, is an indication that government discourse found resonance and furthermore resulted in actions. The simplification of the conflict matter, a central method in propagandistic discourse, seemingly polarised the nation into those who were wrong and those who were right.

To clearly distinguish elements used in government discourse to strengthen its case, listed below is a separation of some aspects continuously repeated during 1983–1984 in government speeches, statements and articles.

The Role of Zapu in Government Discourse

The way in which Zapu was portrayed and used in the government discourse was complex, having several interpretations and aspects of the conflict interwoven in times contradictory patterns. The politically and militarily complex situation was transmitted in often simplified and minimised messages, and lacked transparency in order to support the governments’ political stand.

‘Zapu Responsible for Destabilisation’

A pillar in the government discourse was to blame dissident crimes on Zapu, whilst denying its own responsibility in any human rights abuses.301 As noted earlier, Zapu’s alleged responsibility rested on the fact that the core group of the dissidents were former Zipra and Zapu members. Their armed dissidence was interpreted as an attempt by armed force to install a Zapu government. In government discourse this stand was repeatedly put forward, whilst a total public silence remained re-

garding deprivation and violence inflicted through government policy interventions and army operations. In the media and at mass rallies repeated statements alleging Zapu responsibility in destabilisation and atrocities were juxtaposed with Zanu(PF)’s claimed efforts of peace and harmony and government benevolence toward Zapu. For example, according to the ruling party Zapu did not accept election results, created disunity in the country, stood for lawlessness and destabilisation, and was an enemy of ‘the People’. 302 This stood in contrast to Zanu (PF), who according to Mugabe:

[Zanu (PF)] has constantly appealed for unity, peace and harmony, but Zapu – which has been given undeserved favours – responds with violence.
Over the past three years Zapu has a record of assassinations, rape, arson, abductions and assaults (Declare Zapu, 1984).

‘Zapu is Divided’

In contradiction to above Zapu blanket blames, government discourse at times included a nuance in view of its coalition partner. Rather than being portrayed as a homogeneous entity, Zapu was then seen to have ‘misguided elements’ or ‘subversives’ within its structures. In the government’s view, those should be removed by the ‘moderates’ or ‘progressives’ who accepted Zanu(PF) government authority. As Mugabe stated: ‘We hope the progressives in Zapu will have the upper hand and subdue the subversives’ (Mugabe Threatens, 1983). Perceiving Zapu as divided in this way, allowed those who were not ‘misguided’ to stay active in the government and remain blameless of dissident activities. How the differentiation between the innocent and the guilty within Zapu was made, was never elaborated on in the public discourse. Yet a distinction was made, as Mugabe stated that ‘Government cannot endlessly continue its present course of discriminating between those members responsible for organising dissidents, and those in Zapu it recognises as innocent’ (Mugabe Orders, 1983).303


303 This perception operated as a public explanation why Zapu was not excluded entirely from the coalition government. It is to be noted that although Zanu (PF) meted out such serious allegations towards Zapu as mentioned above, through the whole conflict period (1981–1987) Zapu remained in government as a minority party.
Dissidents a Military Problem, Yet a Political Dispute

Another pillar of the government discourse was the perception of the conflict being a military problem. The dissidents were criminals who caused violence and disorder; therefore negotiations with them was not a government option. However, the dissidents were interchangeably also seen as a political problem, being a politically oriented force with an agenda to overthrow the government. The two different aspects of the dissident problem, caused a contradiction in government discourse.

In the ‘military view’ the dissidents were not given the benefit of political motives, being seen as common criminals. As stated in a government policy paper ‘The perpetrators are not political weapons – nor even soldiers. They are criminals committing criminal acts in a law-abiding and constitutionally legitimate country’ (Ministry of Information 1984:39). If the dissidents were merely criminals and bandits committing senseless crimes, as argued when putting forward the military view (Ministry of Information 1984:39), then the conflict would only have been about catching law offenders and bringing about justice. For this task, the political discrediting of Zapu as a party would not have been necessary.

However, this is not how the issue was portrayed simultaneously in other parts of government discourse. In the ‘political view’ when accusing Zapu for the dissident activities, the dissident question was seen as a political problem. As Prime Minister Mugabe put it in 1983 ‘It is clear that dissidents are operating politically, are motivated politically, and belong to Zapu’ (Zapu Shunning, 1983).

Thus, although the government claimed the Matabeleland conflict to be a military problem and should only be dealt with militarily, the main focus of the government discourse was on a political dispute: power competition between Zanu and Zapu. However, when the government was approached (as in Parliament by the Rhodesian Front) to solve the problem politically since it was perceived a political dispute, a political solution was rejected with the argument that criminal activity can only be solved militarily. As Prime Minister Mugabe stated: ‘Lawlessness cannot be solved by political debates’ (Murders Part, 1984; same theme: Killings Continue, 1983).

Ethnicity in Government Discourse

The use of ethnicity in government statements and speeches added an effective element of polarisation to the exchanges taking place. A red thread through the discourse was emphasising the government’s commitment and support of multi-ethnicity, as opposed to an alleged dissident (Zapu) stand based on tribalism. Leaders often spoke of nationhood and ‘one-ness’, the government having an all-encom-
passing ethnic stance, and protecting its citizens irrespective of ‘race, tribe or creed’. Meanwhile, dissidents and their sympathisers were perceived to cause a split in the nation, and challenging the government on the basis of ethnic claims. In a highly inflammatory statement Prime Minister Mugabe claimed that dissident’s and Zapu were fighting a ‘tribal war’ (Tribal Rule, 1983). Entering such an ethnic proclamation into the discourse had much impact since tension between the Shona and Ndebele identities had historical background. Being expressed by the Prime Minister added weight to what citizens would perceive as the ‘truth’ regarding the conflict, thereby sharpening the polarisation further. Thus whilst the government propagated its own multi-ethnic stance, and accused its adversaries of creating ethnic discord and strife, the government was simultaneously through its choice of statements and accusations deepening divisions in the country. The accusations of dissidents and Zapu creating ‘disunity’ was often more forcefully carried out by the government’s own (military/policy/discourse) interventions than those the dissidents or Zapu could take responsibility for.

The Legitimisation of Violence as Conflict Resolution

Throughout the conflict violence stood in the centre of events and interpretations. In government discourse violence was accepted and treated as a method of problem solving, which was overtly expressed in statements such as government authorities would ‘eradicate’, ‘destroy’, ‘crush’, ‘wipe out’, and ‘kill’ all dissidents. The possibility of capturing dissidents and reaching justice through the courts was not an option often suggested, nor any other paths of conflict resolution. Thus, the message disseminated to the public was one of legitimising violence as the answer to the dissident problem. As explicitly put by Mugabe:

‘... My Government has full moral – not to say political and constitutional – authority to wipe out the scourge that would debilitate and finally destroy our sovereignty and unitary nationhood (Ministry of Information, 1983:4).

Another aspect of the same line of argument (armed force a solution) was the violent measures taken to apprehend alleged dissident sympathisers. In government discourse Mugabe repeated that it was impossible to distinguish between dissidents and their sympathisers, and that both categories were just as guilty of dissident

304 For statements with ethnic components, see Tribal Rule, 1983; We will, 1983; Mugabe Threatens, 1983; Nkomo Turned, 1983; Disarm Now, 1983; Throw Away, 1983.

305 For sources for these expressions, see Ministry of Information, 1983:4; Tribal Rule, 1983; Throw Away, 1983; Disarm Now, 1983; We will, 1983; Dissidents Caught, 1983.
crimes. Therefore the same measures were implemented regarding both categories, and it was unavoidable that innocent people got victimised in the process. Mugabe explained:

Communities which sympathised with dissidents must not be shocked when the Government viewed them as enemies of peace as the dissidents themselves. Communities which helped dissidents must not be surprised if they were punished as severely as the dissidents (Mugabe Threatens, 1983).

The government is going to track down the dissidents until they are completely wiped out. Those who harbour and support dissidents will too be wiped out. We cannot select, because dissidents have no distinguishing marks (We will, 1983; same theme: Throw Away, 1983).

The threats of blanket punishment of whole communities suspected of having elements aiding dissidents, supports Lt Col Munemo’s claim of the government choosing ‘terror tactics’ to induce fear in order to instil government authority and diminish dissident support. The fright for the ‘wrath’ of the government was intended to be greater than the fear of non-cooperation with the dissidents. As Minister of National Supplies, Enos Nkala, stated: ‘If you are one of them [who support and give succour to dissidents] you shall die or be sent to prison’ (Five Brigade, 1983). Thus, the legitimisation of state violence, – even at the cost of innocent suffering –, was evident.

The government not only sought to legitimise its own violent measures, but also encouraged civilians to use the same methods. Government officials promoted civilians to take the law into their own hands and apprehend and/or kill dissidents. Minister for National Supplies, Enos Nkala, instructed that: ‘When you see a dissident, you must arrest him and report him to the security forces. If he resists, just finish him off’ (Curfew lifted, 1983: same theme: Youths to, 1982; No Mercy, 1984). Zapu leader Joshua Nkomo instructed similarly: ‘If you see a dissident, get your spear and kill him, and report the matter to the police’ (PF-Zapu Will, 1983).

Through these varieties of expressions, public opinion was moulded to accept violence as the means to solve the Matabeleland conflict.

Intolerance of Government Critique

Through the heavy curtain of government opinion regarding the conflict, differing sources were able to penetrate – even if minimally. The way in which the government responded to criticism is significant, since it exemplifies how it strove for its discourse to be in an unquestionable position. Although perhaps sanctioned in
closed circles, openness toward public critical discussion of government conflict policies, was not a considered option.

The most active and courageous effort of critical discussion during the conflict came from the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJP), who through the conflict collected information and interviewed affected people. The CCJP and ZCBC (Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference) delegations were sincerely received by government officials in closed meetings (interview Auret, 1994). The organisations were however, ferociously criticised in the media for being ‘pro-Zapu’. This is well exemplified by the governments’ reaction to CCJP’s confidential reports, but particularly to the Pastoral Statement ‘Reconciliation is still Possible’ by the ZCBC. In contrast to the reports, the Pastoral Statement was published by the government news paper *The Herald* (30/3 1983). In this document, after first ensuring the government that the ZCBC supported the government’s duty to maintain law and order, and its use of the army in a peace-keeping role, the document reads:

> Violent reaction against dissident activity has, to our certain knowledge, brought about the maiming and death of hundreds and hundreds of innocent people who are neither dissidents nor collaborators. We are convinced by incontrovertible evidence that many wanton atrocities and brutalities have been and are still being perpetrated.... In all this the mass media have singularly failed to keep the people of Zimbabwe properly informed of the facts which are common knowledge, both in the areas concerned and outside them through the reports of reliable witnesses. The facts point to a reign of terror caused by wanton killings, woundings, beatings, burnings and rapings. Many homes have been burnt down. People in the rural areas are starving, not only from the drought, but because in some cases supplies of food have been deliberately cut off and in other cases access to food supplies has been restricted or stopped. The innocent have no recourse or redress, for fear of reprisals (Catholic Bishops, 1983).

Prime Minister Mugabe replied to his critics in a speech to Ecclesiastical leaders, in which the Catholic Bishops’ concerns were manipulated so as to diffuse the content (Ministry of Information, 1983; PM Lashes, 1983). In this verbal attack directed towards ‘this band of Jeremiahs’ and ‘sanctimonious prelates’ three points were emphasised. Firstly, the government found it ‘shocking and reprehensible’ that those with ‘dubious credentials’ from the liberation war presumed to ‘lecture’

---

the government on the morality of the government’s anti-dissident campaign, when the government had the moral, political and constitutional right to eliminate the dissidents (Ministry of Information, 1983: 4–5). Secondly, the government questioned the ZCbc’s ethnic discourse since the critics alleged that the government was carrying out a tribal war against the Ndebele people, and asking the government instead to preserve minority ethnic rights in the country. The critics having made such a statement caused the government to question whether they were not propagating tribe before nation and ethnic division before national unity. Had the church ‘drawn a leaf from South Africa’s apartheid book?’ And did the Church now recognise ethnic groups as political groups ‘to be accorded political rights on that score?’ in contrast to the government’s ‘political philosophy of the nation and not the tribe’ (Ministry of Information, 1983:5–6). Thirdly, the government questioned the ZCBS’s content understanding of human rights, since the critics cast doubts on the government’s commitment to human rights by accusing it of violations in the military operations in Matabeleland. According to the Prime Minister, the government members having been part of the liberation war, gave them credentials better than the “holier than thou” critics’ on understanding what true commitment to human rights meant (Ministry of Information, 1983:6–7).

In this speech, followed by other government statements similarly reproaching CCJP and ZCbc (No Evidence, 1984; Press Transcription, 1984; Book By, 1984), critique was skilfully manipulated for government discourse benefit. Thus not only was the government unwilling to openly discuss its action’s in the conflict, but those who dared to be critical were frequently subjected to counter-accusations – often with exactly the issues raised (ethnicity, human rights, democracy). This manoeuvring fogged government responsibility and deflated attempts of an independent discourse to emerge.

Further intolerance toward government criticism was evident when international articles on army atrocities in Matabeleland resulted in the expulsion of journalists from the country (Killing Continue, 1983).307

307 In a press meeting Mugabe stated regarding journalists publishing abroad on Zimbabwean matters that ‘...these journalists must be restricted and restricted very firmly.... We have to take very, very firm steps in curbing the mischief making of these journalists’ (PM Meets, 1984). An example of these restrictions is the Zimbabwean journalist Peter Godwin (London Sunday Times) who after publishing on the conflict, was not only forced into exile but declared ‘persona non grata’ in Zimbabwe (Godwin 1996:385).
4.d. Concluding Remarks

From the above description of the government’s military, policy and discourse interventions, it is clear that during the 1983–1984 period the government used a variety of means available to push its cause. The army’s unambiguous, indiscriminate and massive targeting of innocent civilians in the conflict, in comparison to the (lesser) military effort in the containment of armed dissidents, has in shock and disbelief been questioned by civilians, clergy, human rights activists, and many others. CCJP conceptualises the government’s interventions as ‘two overlapping conflicts’: one between the government defence units and the dissidents, and the other between government agencies and all those who were thought to support Zapu (CCJP/LRF 1997:3). However, gaining insight into the army’s counter insurgency strategy, it is clear that the government fought one battle. That is, the army acted first and foremost from 1981 onwards on the basis to destroy Zapu structures – not eradicate dissidents. Thus, the civilian targeting was not coincidental, or a side event of dissident contacts, nor actions by (as often believed) drunk, undisciplined, or bored soldiers, but a conscious, coherent government choice translated into army orders, as clearly explained by Lt Col Munemo. Furthermore, as the conflict stretched out, on an operational level also the Zapu category of enemy identification faded. By the time the Fifth Brigade deployed, soldiers’ targeting had lost specificity and consequently enemy identification encompassed all those considered Ndebele. The same logic of punishing all Matabeleland South residents is also clearly evident by the enforced food embargo. Thus, although the government attempted to justify their actions by dissident destabilisation, it seems here beyond doubt that dissident activity was of a lesser concern for the rulers. What was the driving force behind government interventions appears rather to have been the eradication of political opposition.
Voices Section Four

We were said to be not loyal to the Government and were associated with dissidents.... Towards the end of our [Fifth Brigade] training, former Zanlas with no ranks at all were promoted to Lieutenants and now each platoon had two commanders, that is, former Zanlas understudying former Zipras.... At the end of the training, former Zipras were withdrawn from units and former Zanlas took over. At a passout parade he then Brigade Commander told the parade, ‘From today onwards I want you to start dealing with dissidents. We have them here at this parade.... Wherever you meet them, deal with them and I do not want a report’. G.N. Ex-Zipra guerrilla reposted from the Fifth Brigade.\textsuperscript{308}

I interviewed the young Matabele refugees at St. Paul’s [Catholic secondary school in Bulawayo] with all the pedantry of an ex-lawyer. Places, names, times, descriptions. I probed for inconsistencies and exaggerations. In my heart of hearts, I think I was hoping that the whole thing was a fantastic construction of the politically dispossessed, the ethnically antagonistic. I made no allowances for the fact that many of these boys had recently seen family members killed and had narrowly escaped death themselves. And they seemed to expect no sympathy. They told their tales in quiet, controlled voices, dealing patiently with my many interruptions. The more I heard the young Matabele refugees, the more horrified I became. By the end of the day, my doubts had been swept away by an awful certainty. The stories I heard that day, sitting in the wooden school desks at St Paul’s, had a pattern to them. These were no random acts of violence, these were no soldiers roaming out of control. This was worse. It was calculated and methodical. In almost all instances they boys told me that soldiers arrived armed with a list of names. Those on the list were taken first – they were almost invariably office-bearers of Zapu. Then the soldiers rounded up any men of military age and took them away. If co-operation was not forthcoming, and often even if it was, some were shot there and then, and the villagers were forced to dig communal graves for them. Peter Godwin.\textsuperscript{309}

The soldiers told us ‘From now onwards [January 1983] no busses, no private cars, and no bicycles will be allowed to operated in this area’. I didn’t believe it. [But] Within the first two weeks teachers ran away from the school, ordinary citizens ran away. We heard ‘so-and-so has been killed here, and so-and-so has been killed there’. Some people were being killed in our presence. There was this Matanda Fuzane who had been a very active Zapu fellow within the area. They [the soldiers] took him for a few days, they beat him up,
they kept him at the police camp. He was tied to the back of a land rover like that, in a very bad shape. They paraded him at the shopping area crossroads, then proceeded to his home. In front of us – it was just nearby our home – in front of his children, his relatives, they made him stand by his house and three shots went and he was just down. Then they took him, his corpse, to the shopping centre again and paraded that they’d killed a dissident. Nicholas Ndebele.310

My family of eight people has been living on goat meat and marula fruit juice since the curfew was imposed. I appreciate the need for security and peace in this area but I wish the Government could allow stores to operate during the curfew. I don’t think the people support the dissidents, since they don’t know what the dissidents are fighting for. Our area has been very quiet and I have not met anyone who says he has ever seen dissidents. All we hear are rumours that they have been seen in other places asking for food. Edward Mpofu.311

During the curfew we lived on marula fruit juice and water. The stores were shut, and you could die with your money because you couldn’t buy anything. It went on for two whole months. Whoever died, died; and if you had God with you, you lived. Some became cripples. We were beaten then by the poles the way today we are beaten by the wind. They would beat you severely, and force you to lie down, shouting ‘You are a liar, until you’d say, ‘Yes I saw them [the dissidents]’. In that time of the curfew we spent the day clapping hands and singing. We had to draw water for them, and we had to go on singing [for them] until sunset. Baka Sala.312

There were special days in the week when we had to gather under some trees for meetings. We had to sing in Shona, we were taught these songs. We were told to stop following Nkomo because Nkomo lost the elections. Mugabe is ruling now. We should follow Mugabe’s rule. The soldiers killed people to show that Nkomo was not leading the country. It was shown to us by killing the people. But the people can never be changed, they will not change to support anything else than Zanu. When the Fifth Brigade was here, people bought Zanu-PF cards to get away from the problems with the soldiers. But when the soldiers were gone, and the meetings stopped, people threw the cards. James Ngwenya.313

310 Civilian eyewitness and active member of CCJP (CCJP/Spicer 1992).
311 Edward Mpofu (Matabeleland buyers, 1984).
313 Interview with James Ngwenya, Sukumuzenzele cooperative, Tsholotsho District, Matabeleland, 17 March 1994.
The tribal feelings have been whipped so high. They are much too sharp. I have never known them like this. They [people] are so bitter against Mugabe and the Shona. Anonymous.\textsuperscript{314}

Let me be honest and say that after the deployment of the Fifth Brigade, Shona establishes itself in that area as a language. This is something I witnessed. Again life fails history; Ndebele really was more of a cultural domination than military. Lt Col E. Munemo.\textsuperscript{315}

Mugabe came to the area [Silobela] and accused everybody for harbouring dissidents and stated that all dissidents would be killed. Mugabe said ‘You know what happens when a hunter goes hunting and he sees a hare slipping through some bush and grass? All the bush and grass will be crushed so as to get the hare’. Nicholas Ndebele.\textsuperscript{316}

We are going to see this through to the bitter end. I shall give power to the police, security forces, all of them, to mount a manhunt not only in houses, but also in bushes, anthills, and trees. Robert Mugabe.\textsuperscript{317}

I was beaten up by the Fifth Brigade soldiers. My cattle had gone astray, and I passed their post several times looking for my cattle. My hip was dislocated. I spent one month in the hospital. But twelve men were picked up at night and beaten the whole night. The gunshots were heard by other people in the co-operative. The next morning I sent a young boy to pick up a chicken. He found the bodies at the side of the road. We never saw any dissidents in this area. The soldiers were here for six months. James Ngwenya.\textsuperscript{318}

Obviously it can never be policy to mete out blanket punishment to innocent persons, but in areas where banditry and dissident activities are rampant and civilian sympathy is a common feature, it may not be possible to distinguish innocent from guilty. Robert Mugabe.\textsuperscript{319}

\textsuperscript{314} Anonymous Zapu activist in Bulawayo, after month-long Fifth Brigade intervention (Nkomo flees, 1983).

\textsuperscript{315} Interview with Lt. Col. E. Munemo, former Commander for the Fifth Brigade, Harare, 20/9 1996.

\textsuperscript{316} Interview with the former director for the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe, Harare 12/5 1994.

\textsuperscript{317} Speech at funeral of killed Zanu(PF) official, May 18, 1984 (Spring 1986:183).

\textsuperscript{318} Interview with James Ngwenya, Sukumzenzele cooperative, Tsholotsho District, Matabeleland North, March 17, 1994.

\textsuperscript{319} Robert Mugabe addressing rally at Bulawayo State House Independence Day festivities (Mugabe threatens, 1983).
I don't know which of the things I saw I can explain really. Because I saw almost everything that is inhuman. Anything inhuman you can think of you would see in the Fifth Brigade activities.... The people were grouped in the camp [Belaghwe]. There was what used to be called One Seven Battalion, and One Eight Battalion. People where grouped in the camp for the One Seven Battalion, and the One Eight Battalion was where soldiers where inflicting the injuries on the people. You would wonder what was the whole idea of this thing. It was simply to dehumanise them [the people in the camp]. That was the whole idea. There were men, women, children and elderly people. It was a collection of everybody. Small children, the smallest child you could think of you could find there. And the oldest men you could think of. They [the Fifth Brigade] were picking people out. They could just look into the crowd and say 'you come here, you there come here'. I witnessed the torture being done on people. They would use water. When you are blindfolded like that they would put your head in the water. The water would come into your nose and the mouth, the ears. Some people died like that. Or they could tie a black cloth on peoples' eyes – just blindfold them – and lie them down and with big stick work on their buttocks. Work on there buttocks thoroughly until your clothes tears, until your flesh tears, until you cry, until you cry no more. They were doing that in the barracks. The soldiers brought them back [to the field hospital], after having beaten them to an extent that a person is injured and a person can no longer help himself. A lot of horrible thinking was in me. I got frustrated but because I was there in the army I could not say 'I cannot stand this any more, I want to go home'. I could not say that. In the army you live under order. I got so much frustration that I never settled down in the army after this experience. That was my last ever operation in the army.

Rafael Khoza.  

If you allege atrocities, give us concrete evidence. We are humanitarians. We don’t want to see people killed wantonly, killed for no purpose. Robert Mugabe.  

I myself was only beaten, but I saw others being given electric shocks and when they fainted water was thrown on them. What I saw is that they put a wire into the mouth of the victim, which is secured by strings that are attached to the ears. The other wire was put at the back. This second wire was placed on and off the back of the person. Four people in army uniform, two men and two women, did the electric torturing while the victim was lying down. Anonymous Belaghwe camp survivor.

---


321 Robert Mugabe at news conference regarding alleged Fifth Brigade atrocities (No reason, 1983).

My knowledge is that anyone who is guilty of any irregularity, be it torture or anything, is subject to correction or discipline by his commanders.... In circumstances in which we find ourselves, tempers rise in the police because of the long hours which they work. They find themselves acting rather over-enthusiastically. We must sympathise with them rather than begin to criticise them.... What the courts regard as torture now might not have been torture in the days of Ian Smith... but because we are more liberal, we have a democratic order, any little scratch... is interpreted as torture. I think we must feel for those whose duty it is to give maximum security to the nation. Robert Mugabe.323

The Fifth Brigade herded everyone in our village together, about 70 or more people. From 6 am until 11 am we were beaten, including women and children, with sticks and fanbelts. Then they chose 12 people to come to Bhelagwe — four women and eight men. Two of the women were old and two were schoolgirls. Three of the men were schoolboys, including myself: I was sixteen.... We were taken first to Kezi, and the Fifth Brigade told us we were being taken there to be shot. When we arrived, they told us we would be taken two by two at one p.m. and be shot. When one o'clock came, they told us they had decided to throw us down a mine instead. Then they loaded us in a truck and drove off. We thought we were being taken to be killed, but we were brought to Bhelagwe.... At Bhelagwe the charge office was full of blood. We had to sit in lines outside the office waiting our turn to be beaten. When you were in front of the line, you knew it was your turn next. The beatings started at 5.30 am. I saw two people being shot, and seven being beaten to death. Very many died, but I helped to bury only these nine I saw die. I dug their graves. People were buried two or three to a grave. Anonymous Bhelagwe camp survivor.324

If some innocent people are caught up it is regrettable but it is not a Zimbabwean peculiarity that in a conflict situation some innocent individuals get some bruising. Sydney Sekeramayi.325

They brought us to Belaghwe camp to get information about the dissidents. Questions about this were asked during the beatings. In the morning we used to dig graves, dig toilets, wash army clothes, wash pots, fetch firewood. We were given food and water to drink only on alternative days, i.e. skipping one day when we got neither food nor water. The young men dug the graves and old people buried those who died in the camp. Those who died must have died because of beatings and electric shock. I saw two in my sleeping barracks who

324 Cited in CCJP/LRF 1997:179.
325 Minister of State (Security) answering question in parliament 26/1 1983, regarding massacres in Matabeleland (Spring 1986:117).
were found dead one morning. I was in the camp from 7-17 February [1984]. Until I left we were being beaten every day. 19 year-old Belaghwe camp survivor.\(^{326}\)

The ‘sojas’, they broke my wrists. And not only my wrists. My ankles also. But I am quite lucky. Many people are dying in Belaghwe. The ‘sojas’ are killing them during interrogation. Civilian in Kezi area.\(^{327}\)

Blessed are they who will follow the path of the government laws, for their days on earth shall be increased. But woe unto those who will choose the path of collaboration with dissidents for we will certainly shorten their stay on earth. Minister of State, (Security) E. Mnangagwa.\(^{328}\)

Smith’s army brought us grief, but later we saw that Smith’s war was better than the war of Gukurahundi. That war which came later, the Gukurahundi, we saw that it went much, much further, because our children who had gone away to fight came home and found war again at home. It finished people off. Oh, those Mashona who came to be too many here, oh…. Yes, Smith’s war was better, we found later. That war did not leave so many corpses of our people around here. Compared to this one just now, no. In this one people have been taken and stuffed into mines. At Belaghwe a very large mine [Antelope mine] has been dug for all the corpses. People have just been finished off. They [the soldiers] were simply killing and stuffing them in, until it made the missionaries object: and they wrote to other countries, saying that what was being done here is wrong, people are being killed off. It was devastating. The other war was better. Baka Sala.\(^{329}\)

I support it [the government’s strategy to deploy the Fifth Brigade]. I think quite often you have to be cruel to be kind. Had an operation like that not taken place, that battle could have gone on for years and years and years as a festering sore. And I believe the Matabele understand that sort of harsh treatment far better than the treatment that I myself was giving them, where we would just hunt and kill if a man was armed – or find a man who was unarmed.

\(^{326}\) CCJP 1984:18.

\(^{327}\) Quoted in Godwin 1996:360–361. Regarding broken wrists and ankles Godwin writes: The breaking of wrists and ankles was very common in Belaghwe. To some of the soldiers it was a game, a competition. They broke the joints by jumping on them with their heavy boots. This was carried out during bone-breaking speed trials, on which the men would take wagers. Mostly it was part of the ritual of interrogation. Before they even began to question you, they would break one wrist. If you didn’t yield any information about dissidents, they broke an ankle, then the other wrist, then the other ankle (Godwin 1996:361–362).

\(^{328}\) Minister E. Mnangagwa included this parody of the Scriptures in his speech at a forcibly assembled rally in Matabeleland North, April 1983 (CCJP/LRF 1997:54).

...and seemed to be a terrorist, and take him away to be dealt with legally. That was the Rhodesian way of doing things, and I had been brought up to do. It was, I think, not all that successful. The fact is that when the Fifth Brigade went in, they did brutally deal with the problem. If you were a dissident sympathiser, you died. And it brought peace very, very quickly. When we were there, we did not know if we were talking to a terrorist because we were not prepared just to say, "Well, I think you are a bloody Matabele and you are a black man and I am going to shoot you". When the Fifth Brigade went in they were quite prepared to take that role and do it, and they were successful. Lionel Dyke.330

You know, any security forces when they are operating, there is going to be competition. Particularly in highly politicised atmosphere that we deployed into the period we were in Matabeleland. It appears to me by then there was very strong spirits of competition amongst the various sections of the security forces. Between the Task Force, the battalions, the intelligence people (CIO), the ZNA. Everybody wanted to deliver the final solution to the prime minister. I am not absolving the Fifth Brigade, but this is what suspicions I have. In this contest to deliver the final solution, I think the other [army] people felt marginalised by the Fifth Brigade and must have done more harm to get good results. That is my perception. Lt Col Munemo.331

When we [ZNA medical personnel] arrived in Kezi, we were armed with G3 rifles. When we came out of the trucks the Fifth Brigade were there. They [the Fifth Brigade] accused us of being sell outs because of the G3s. They had different guns. They met us with slogans which they expected us to reply. But we did not know how to reply to that slogan. Then they said 'Oh yes, these are real sell-outs'. We were quite a number. It was only the medics, but we were about 20–30 people. We were ex-Zanla, ex-Zipra and ex-Rhodesian medics. A few of us had AK rifles but most of us were armed with G3s. After some harassment which was in the form of three or four people asking you questions at the same time and you did not know who to answer. We wondered what this was. We were not used to this, we had never seen it in the army. They were people wearing a uniform like us, who are asking us foolish questions. After integration we had been told that the army is apolitical, but there we were and these people were asking us political questions. We did not know how to react to this. After a while we realised that these people were to stay and we had to be with them. Rafael Khoza.332

331 Interview with the former commander of the Fifth Brigade, Harare 20/9 1996.
I started seeing visions of two old men we had buried alive. We met the two old men and took them home. We dug a big hole. We told them to kneel down in the hole and covered them with soil, thereby burying them alive... The other vision that troubled me a lot was of a girl that I had raped and strangled to death. Anonymous Fifth Brigade Corporal.\(^{333}\)

I decided to go to Mr. Mugabe. On the 12 of February [1983] I wrote to Mr. Mugabe that people were being killed and raped, and that people are speaking of genocide. The Fifth Brigade say that they are sent by you [Prime Minister Mugabe] to kill... We did not get any response to that letter. After that I organised some meetings with other churches. We met here a few times. Then one time we met in the Anglican Cathedral, all of us. The other ones said 'It is terrible, terrible what is going on. We have to pray and pray'. I told them 'Why do you have to pray? It is not enough. We have to act'. Then I had a proposal: three African bishops from whatever churches – it did not matter – should go to Mr. Mugabe. A delegation from Matabeleland. Not one volunteered. They were too scared. Bishop Karlen.\(^{334}\)

We do not respond to scriptures, but according to given political principles. It is not when the Bishop sneezes that we all catch a cold. No, we are a government and we run our affairs as we see fit and if bishops speak it does not mean that we should all stop working because their holiness have spoken. We run our government according to the policies of the government. The fact that bishops spoke should not get us running around. What for? It is one of the statements we have received. Other citizens have made similar statements. Nkomo has made his own statement, and others have written to us to say ‘can we do this quietly’. We don’t have to tremble as if the world is coming to an end if bishops speak. Robert Mugabe.\(^{335}\)

By the end of March [1983] I got notice that I could go see Mr. Mugabe. Bishop Mutume and the Catholic Commission [CCJP] accompanied me to the meeting. There was Mr. Mugabe, Mr. Muzenda [Deputy Prime Minister], and Mr. Mnangagwa [Minister of State (Security)] who was in charge of the army, and a secretary. We spoke for an hour and a half. I told them about all the atrocities, I was very straightforward. I told them the whole thing. First Mr. Mugabe tried to explain the background of the conflict, the different armies, and that at war times things can happen. He tried to explain the whole back-

\(^{333}\) Visions mentioned are traumatic hallucinations the corporal is suffering from due to Fifth Brigade operations. Based on his severely affected mental health, the corporal has sued the Zimbabwe National Army for $Z\(200,000\) in compensation (Fifth Brigade, 1997).

\(^{334}\) Interview with Bishop Karlen, Bulawayo 18/3 1994.

\(^{335}\) Press Transcription, 1984. See also Spring 1986:175.
ground, which I new.... I told Mr. Mugabe that these people [the civilians] have been smashed up. They will never forget, they will take revenge. I told Mr. Mugabe and Mr. Muzenda that if somebody is going to rape your mother or your wife or your daughters, you must be a good Christian not to take revenge. And these people are going to take revenge.... I asked them why the soldiers are not going to the dissidents when they are told where they are? Why do they rape women and girls to fight the dissidents?... I was very straightforward. Then at the end Bishop Mutume told Mr. Mugabe that we are going to publish a statement. Mr. Mugabe said go ahead.... We were attacked by Mr. Mugabe [in the press].

But the Fifth Brigade was withdrawn [temporarily], and we can say that we saved thousands and thousands of people. There is no question about that. Bishop Karlen.  

You have got to distinguish between the civilian population that is law abiding, and that part of the civilian population which lends support to the dissidents — they [who] aid and abet dissident activities. Dissidents need not necessarily be armed people. You see civilians can become dissidents as well, and they all prey to the super God Nkomo. Apparently Bishop Karlen's church in this area has erected a mammon of their own in the nature of Joshua Nkomo. The church in Matabeleland — the Catholic church in particular — supports Nkomo and ZAPU. Bishop Karlen and some of his priests are supporters of ZAPU. They have chosen to counteract government action because its [the government's] political affect is to neutralise those activities of ZAPU which sponsors dissidents. [Bishop Karlen and some of his priests] they are supporters of Nkomo and they are the ones who go to the other bishops and say what is happening, and the other bishops merely listen to them and accept what they say as the word of God, which cannot be denied because it is a man of God who is saying it. But they don't know perhaps that a man of God is worshipping mammon instead of the real God, so the poor bishops are mislead into believing that what Bishop Karlen is saying is the holy truth and nothing else but the holy truth. We are studying the documents very seriously, nevertheless, and now that the situation has relaxed we will certainly go to the bishops and ask: where did the killings occur, take us to the areas. So we will be going to their missions and wanting them to indicate — not intimidate them — where the atrocities took place. If they have no information, then fine, but if they indicate what has happened, sure we will take action. But I can assure you that the troops have been very restrained and I am full of praise for what they have managed to do over this short period. Robert Mugabe.  

**336** Interview with Bishop Karlen, Bulawayo 18/3 1994.  
**337** Press Transcription, 1984. See also Spring 1986:175.
It was difficult for us because people were frightened of us. We were now political again. We were condemning the government, and most people outside Matabeleland didn’t know what was going on there. The newspapers which published [on the conflict], published outside the country. It was only our statements that gave any indication of the situation inside the country. It might have been seen that we were anti-government, and therefore anti-state, and therefore pro-South Africa. Certainly the government thought so. Van der Byl called us communists, Machachi called us Zapu spokesmen, somebody else called us South African supporters. Of course it was not true. We hope we are objective. What happened in Matabeleland was obscene. Michael Auret.

I was sceptical until July-August 1983. Then CCJP asked me to assist them in compiling affidavits from women who lost their husbands and sons up in Lupane and Tsholostho. I went to the Catholic Cathedral and helped compile these affidavits, which were then submitted to the Chihambakwe commission of inquiry. It was when taking these affidavits down when I started to realise the magnitude of the problem. In the interim, as a private lawyer I had received the instructions to represent various people who had disappeared. But they were isolated cases. Up to then I had not believed it was something as systematic. David Coltart.

The government will not tolerate interference from outside in its operations against dissidents. It is common knowledge that the process of fighting would cause some people to suffer. Robert Mugabe.

We cannot say what intentions people had. We can only judge from facts. There are allegations that soldiers would pose as dissidents, recruited other dissidents, checked them for some time, and then shot them. There was something fishy about the contacts. The reports were always the same. There was a contact, a few dissidents were killed, others fled. But never a report that a soldier was killed. We cannot prove it, only say what people reported. People had the impression that the dissident problem was artificially forced on them, so as to give a reason to smash up the people. Bishop Karlen.

The government has now accepted the challenge of those who continued to support and give succour to the dissidents. If you are one of them, you shall die or be sent to prison. You will soon have the war you have been asking for. People who posed as dissidents were feted by

339 Interview with lawyer David Coltart, Bulawayo, 16/3 1994.
340 Robert Mugabe addressing a rally in Midlands (Zhombe Crossroads) (Throw away, 1983).
341 Interview with Bishop Karlen, Bulawayo 18/3 1994.
the peasants with girls, food and drink. They are treated as national heroes and flattered as liberators. This has proved to the government the extent to which the dissidents are glorified and held in high esteem. Enos Nkala.342

Ultimately their rights [the dissidents'] are governed by the constitution and the main one is the right to life, and the right to a fair trial. That is the constitution and it overrides every right and every law. Before seven days they would be entitled to see a lawyer of their choice at their own expense. But once again, we are theorising, you know. David Coltart.343

In this country if somebody is pointing a rifle at me, I will kill him, and then find out what he was. We never made a distinction. Lionel Dyke.344

The military goal [of the Fifth brigade] was to flush out the so-called dissidents. But the goal was also politically to silence those who would ever want to go into opposition against the government. From the military point of view, the military were doing it in order to completely contain the dissident element. But whilst they were doing that, the politicians had a different goal. The goal was obviously to ensure that there is no opposition that would ever rise against them. Dumiso Dabengwa.345

The solution in Matabeleland is a military one. Their [the dissidents'] grievances are unfounded. The verdict of the voters was cast in 1980. They should have accepted defeat then.... The situation in Matabeleland is one that requires a change. The people must be reoriented. Robert Mugabe.346

---

342 Minister of National Supplies, Enos Nkala, addressing 1500 peasants at Makwe irrigation scheme (Five Brigade, 1983). Note that in this statement Minister Enos Nkala admits openly that government forces were posing as dissidents, which then 'proved' to the government that civilians were supporting dissidents.

343 Interview with lawyer David Coltart, Bulawayo, 16 March 1994.


345 Interview with Minister of Home Affairs, Dumiso Dabengwa, Harare, 21 April, 1994.


Despite the numerous severe government measures taken to contain dissident activities in Matabeleland and Midlands, the government was unsuccessful in this task. Dissident destabilisation continued, although more sporadically. Having in 1983–1984 heavily relied on army interventions, the government changed strategy in 1985, as national elections drew closer. Civilians suspected for opposition affiliations – mainly in Matabeleland and Midlands – were in the pre-election period subjected to systematic political intimidation, detentions, and abductions conducted by Zanu (PF) members in co-operation with the police and CIO.

Having secured majority in parliament in the July 1985 elections, the ruling party’s intimidation campaigns were not concluded. Instead violent actions were taken towards suspected opposition members, in a punitive rage by the election victors. In addition, the immediate post-election period saw a wave of mass detentions of Zapu members.

Exploring the developments pre and post the 1985 elections it is argued that the measures taken by the government and Zanu (PF) organisations in 1985, further strengthens the notion that the Matabeleland conflict was less about apprehending a small number of armed dissidents, than about undermining and collapsing Zapu as a political party. This notion is further linked to the commencement of Zanu-Zapu unity negotiations. As the narrative describes the secret negotiations, juxtaposing them to the government’s public discourse, it is put forward that the measures taken by the government and members of the ruling party were actions to incapacitate the opposition party Zapu and compel it into a disadvantaged position in the unity negotiations.

In this section the continued dissident activity is discussed first, subsequently turning to government measures, divided into sections of military- and policy intervention, and discourse intervention.

5.a. Dissident Activity

During the two year period 1985–1986 dissident activity occurred in an irregular pattern. After intense activity in 1982–1983 and a decline in 1984, very few dissident incidents were recorded in the beginning of 1985. The two months preceding the July 1985 elections Minister of State (Security) E. Mnangagwa stated that dissident operations had ‘gone down to nothing’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:125–126). Different reasons for this were put forward, one being that some dissidents had hopes for a successful Zapu election and were therefore limiting their activity (Ber-
Another view presented was that dissidents were avoiding the provocation of further army repression amongst civilians (MW1AAM:23).

After the July 1985 general elections a dramatic rise in dissident operations occurred. After a 17-month intermission in the infiltration of recruits and armaments from South Africa, these activities were resumed subsequent to the elections (Dissidents Get, 1985; Martin/Johnson 1986:62). The revival of South African destabilisation was seen to be partly connected to the unity negotiations between Zanu and Zapu (Pretoria Plotting, 1985). A successful conclusion of unity talks leading to a conflict settlement, was not seen to be a best-case scenario for the apartheid regime's destabilisation scheme. Another likely reason for the infiltration revival was that destabilisation in Matabeleland would possibly compel the Zimbabwean government to route ZNA units from Mozambique to Matabeleland, to take pressure of the offensive against South African supported Renamo (Martin/Johnson 1986:62).

Upon the resumption of dissident activities and the influx of Super Zapu elements, murders of white commercial farmers reoccurred. Prior to this post-election upsurge, white farmers had not been killed for 15 months (MW1AAM:25). Extremely violent attacks on civilians were reported during the second half of 1985, including such acts as cutting off arms, legs and tongs (Ziana Dissidents, 1986). Of those civilians killed, a number were Zanu (PF) officials. As in 1982-84, little information is available regarding which groups of dissidents were responsible for which acts.


Having in 1983–1984 failed to contain dissident activity despite a massive show of force, the government now attempted new avenues of penetration. An important circumstantial factor influencing the flow of events was the upcoming local and parliamentary elections. The public beatings and executions decreased. Amnesty International reported in 1986 that ‘no further allegations of large scale killings by the security forces were received in 1985’, only isolated incidents in which soldiers or militia were reportedly responsible for killings (Amnesty Report, 1986).

Although the methods changed, it did not alter the underlying assumption that Zapu as a party was tied to dissident activity. Thus whilst the army was in general assigned a different role, many civilians were not experiencing 1985–1986 as a period of lesser violence. On the contrary, Zapu members were particularly victims of severe

---

347 Although the role of the army was de-emphasised in this phase of the Matabeleland conflict, their presence was still harshly experienced by people in the affected regions. In March 1985 for example, four thousand soldiers closed off townships in the outskirts of Bulawayo for two days in a wide house-to-house search for arms and dissidents (Zimbabwe, 1985; Mugabe 1985). As a result of this clampdown 1.282 persons were temporarily detained (Frankel, 1985b).
human rights abuses. But now the abuses were much more difficult to detect. Rather than using the unmistakable ZNA soldiers, the government attempted a strategy of a less obvious pattern of harassment and violence. The role of the army was de-emphasised, whilst police, civilian clothed CIO agents and Zanu (PF) members became substantially more active in the Matabeleland conflict (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:31; Weitzer 1990:179; Auret 1992:162; Carver 1993:41).348

The following text is divided into action related sections to highlight how government interventions changed as compared to the previous strategy of massive military intervention in 1983–1984.

Pre-Election Violence

The months preceding the July 1985 elections were characterised by intimidation and violence. Although dissident activity was comparatively low, local Zapu members in Matabeleland and Midlands were persecuted justified by the assumed Zapu-dissident link. Primarily two types of actions were taken during this time: political intimidation and political abductions.

Political Intimidation

The violent political intimidation by Zanu (PF) members in co-operation with the People’s Militia and civilian clothed CIO agents which started in late 1984 (see section four), regained momentum in the first half of 1985. As the previous year, the violence was not linked to dissident activity per se, but was carried out against those civilians suspected to be opposition party sympathisers or members. In the months preceding the July 1985 general elections, fierce rioting took place by Zanu (PF) supporters primarily in Matabeleland and Midlands, including harassment, looting, destruction of property and assault of perceived opposition sponsors.

The attacks conducted by ruling party members appear to have occurred in two ways. In connection to pro-Zanu(PF) demonstrations, the political events in several cases developed into mob scenes. Thousands of people vented their hostility toward government opposition and physically tried to instil their preference of polit-

348 The de-emphasis of the army in Matabeleland could partly have been linked to commitment of army personnel to Mozambique. The background for a ZNA offensive against Renamo in Mozambique was the latter’s attacks on civilians in Zimbabwe. Reasons for Renamo attacks inside Zimbabwe were ZNA presence in Mozambique guarding the Beira-Mutare oil pipeline, and the 1985 ZNA capture of the Renamo base ‘Casa Banana’ in Gorongosa, Mozambique (Carver 1993:77-78). Prime Minister Mugabe stated that the government was prepared to allocate 30,000 soldiers for tasks in Mozambique (Carver 1993:78), whilst it is estimated that up to 15,000 Zimbabwean troops did join the Mozambican army (Chitiyo 1996:3).
ical choice on to those (believed to be) differently minded. In Chiredzi a demonstration of 30,000 (January 1985) turned violent resulting in stone throwing and assault; in Kadoma (June 1985) a mob of 40,000 people went to Zapu and UANC offices, destroying both; in KweKwe (June 1985) a pro-Zanu (PF) demonstration of 2,000 attacked the Zapu office, and threw out an office worker from a third floor window; in Gweru (June 1985) in a similar pattern the Zapu office was burned down, injuring 30 people; in Kwekwe (June 1985) mobs attacked Zapu supporters resulting in 150 injuries and five deaths (Hawkins, 1985; Spring 1986:183). Cynically, due to violent Zanu (PF) demonstrations against Zapu and other opposition groups, Zapu was in June 1985 banned from having meetings in Midlands (Hawkins, 1985; Spring 1986:183).

The second type of violent political intimidation was one of pre-organised character in which a large number of Zanu (PF) supporters travelling in vehicles would arrive in rural villages, with the intent to harass and assault Zapu supporters. CCJP received a report from Tsholotsho District where on January 27, 1985, approximately one hundred young men and women came to Jimila Village in a Zimbabwe Omnibus Company bus and other vehicles. Four men were armed with new rifles, others with sticks. More than twenty homes and two stores were destroyed and burnt. Elderly and sick people not able to flee or defend themselves suffered most, leading to one person burning to death in his home. Reportedly the attackers said they ‘came to hunt for PF-Zapu members’, and asked people to produce Zanu (PF) membership cards. Those unable to do so, were severely beaten. After having finished in Jimila village, the group continued to other villages in the district, repeating their assaults. When the local CCJP representative reported the matter to the police, the response given was ‘These are just political affairs’ (CCJP, 1985b:2–3; Raath, 1985). The same pattern occurred in Nkayi in January 1985, when two busloads of Zanu (PF) youth went on rampage destroying property and beating people, apparently in response to Zapu having won all seats in a recent district council election (Raath, 1985).

The army also played a role in the political intimidation campaign. Joseph Msika, Zapu vice president, reported in June 1985 that three PF-Zapu meetings in Tsholotsho district were ‘broken up by the army’. In the same area soldiers together with Zanu (PF) Youth members, rounded up civilians from Tsholotsho and ordered them to board buses to attend a Zanu (PF) presidential rally (Frankel, 1985c).

The attacks on Zapu members and the party’s infrastructure diminished the organisations’ electoral capacity. The US based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights concluded that
the official and quasi-official campaign to intimidate presumed supporters of minority parties has seriously undermined freedom of assembly and freedom of association in Zimbabwe (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:113).

The human rights organisation also noted that the extent to which the government sanctioned the violence couldn’t be verified. However, ‘law enforcement authorities made little effort to interfere with the rioters, and a few if any of those responsible have been prosecuted’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:113).

**Political Abductions**

In the wake of army de-emphasis in the Matabeleland conflict, the government implemented abductions as a new strategy to disrupt and destroy Zapu structures. In the first half of 1985, CCJP received reports of disappearances conducted in a similar pattern in the Matabeleland provinces and Lower Gweru. Unidentified men arriving in vehicles, would at night enter civilian homesteads in the rural areas. Some of them wore civilian clothes, others were dressed in Militia uniforms or camouflage fatigues, and some or all were armed. In most cases the abductors did not identify themselves, in some instances civilians were told they were from CIO, in others they claimed they were dissidents (Auret 1992:162). The abductors would ask for a family member (most often the senior male) to step outside with them, there after the person would be driven away in a vehicle. Those abducted were identified by civilians as ‘community leaders’, such as Zapu officials, village headmen, school teachers, hospital administrators, church pastors, and local development workers. No explanation was usually given why the person was wanted. The abduction would take place, leaving family members without any information where to turn for clarity in the matter. Between January-April 1985 ‘at least 80 local Zapu officials and supporters, and perhaps as many as 400 civilians were abducted from their homes by unidentified gunmen’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:61. See also Raath, 1985; Frankel, 1985; Auret 1992:162).

The government denied any involvement in the abductions and continuously claimed (as did the police) that they were conducted by dissidents, or those ‘abducted’ had voluntarily left the country for dissident training (CCJP, 1985:2; Raath, 1985; Frankel, 1985; Berkeley/Schrage 1986:65). However the abductions, defined as ‘systematic’ by CCJP (Raath, 1985), had a certain pattern which led witnesses and observers to believe that they were not conducted by dissidents, but by government enforcement agents. The abductors often spoke Shona or Sindebele with an accent; appeared in looks and had arms which did not tell of an extensive stay in the bush; used (government) vehicles; and frequently captured elderly men (60–70 years old). In contrast, the dissidents usually spoke Sindebele; reportedly
looked scruffy; had no access to vehicles or gasoline; and in abduction cases their victims were usually women – not aged men who would slow down their retreat. Nevertheless, Minister of State (Security), E. Mnangagwa, stated that:

The government categorically refutes any suggestion that its forces are responsible for these alleged abductions. The abductions are the subject of an ongoing investigation and to date, there has been little evidence to support the claim that such a number of people have in fact vanished (Berkeley/Schrag 1986:59–60).

In March 1985 CCJP carried out their own investigations, and were able to within a week verify 20 abductions. In all cases the victims were Zapu officials or supporters. More importantly, in May 1985 the CCJP were able to locate 25 abductees in Kwekwe jail (Auret 1992:162), a disclosure which invalidated the government’s argument of non-involvement in the abductions. Held in jail under CIO authority (in most cases without charge or detention order), the victims been beaten and tortured (Frankel, 1985; Auret 1992:162). CCJP concluded that ‘the modus operandi of all abductions indicated the involvement of certain elements of the Security Forces, despite the claim by Minister Nkala [and other government officials] that they were committed by the dissidents’ (Auret 1992:212).

In response to the disappearances, Mr. Nkomo submitted a list to Parliament which included 53 names of civilians abducted during January-March 1985 (Frankel, 1985). Zapu spokespersons stated that the political kidnappings were a strategy by the government to sabotage Zapu’s organisational structure as the parliamentary elections grew closer (Berkeley/Schrag 1986:61—62).

With the exception of the 25 abductees located by CCJP, officially no clarification has been provided regarding the situation in most other instances. In the majority of cases the victims have officially (through the courts) or unofficially (by relatives) been presumed dead (Berkeley/Schrag 1986:67). 349

The 1985 General Election

In the Matabeleland conflict, the 1985 general election constituted a critical measure of political strengths between Zanu and Zapu. Although Zanu (PF)’s majority

349 A well-documented case of disappearances is the ‘Silobela Nine’, when nine Zapu members where abducted during the same night (30/1 1985) from Silobela Communal Land by armed men. CCJP attorneys took the case to court ‘for the delivery of the missing persons’, but after a long process the court ruled in 1991 the men ‘presumed dead’. In police investigations (on court instructions) all instances denied any knowledge of the abductions. Due to insufficient evidence the State could not be implicated in this case (Auret 1992:212–215).
support was questioned by few, Zapu’s local relative strength was critical. For Zanu (PF), its members stated that it was crucial for the party to penetrate Matabeleland and for Mugabe to conclusively demonstrate that he was a national leader who was also supported by the Ndebele (Frankel, 1985c). For Zapu, it was similarly imperative to prove that the party was a national party with support not only in the Matabeleland provinces.

The election was originally planned for the fifth independence anniversary in April, but was postponed until July 1985 due to low registration by voters. Electoral procedure differed from the 1980 election, where people could vote geographically anywhere. This time it was held on a constituency basis, requiring a different organisational structure. The phase of registration varied in different provinces. In areas such as Matabeleland, where Zanu and Zapu were fiercely competing for votes, registration was completed faster. In areas such as Mashonaland, where without much competition the majority of voters supported Zanu (PF), registration was not taken as seriously (Lemon 1988:5). Elections did finally take place in two phases: the vote for the 20 white seats were conducted on 27 of June, and for the 80 African seats the vote followed 1–4 July 1985. Having gone through a turbulent pre-election period, the procedure itself took place relatively peacefully. The Electoral Supervisory Commission and the CCJP pronounced the elections having been ‘free and fair’ (Lemon 1988:13). Six parties had put forward candidates for the 80 African seats, whilst several independents, one party, and one electoral group competed for the 20 white seats.350

With the election results, it became evident that for both Zanu (PF) and Zapu the ambitions to penetrate each others’ strongholds had failed. Despite the massive efforts through persuasion, intimidation and violence, Zanu (PF) remained politically excluded from Matabeleland, where PF-Zapu won all seats. For Zapu on the other hand, political support was minimal outside Matabeleland, where Zanu (PF) over-whelmingly won the contested seats.351 Thus neither party proved to be organisations which were well entrenched in all provinces of the country, parties which could claim through electoral backing that they stretched beyond regional loyalties to the sphere of national support.

350 The parties participating in the 1985 general elections were: Zanu(PF); PF-Zapu; UANC (United African National Council); Zanu-Ndonga; NDU; NFZ; CAZ (Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe); and IZG (Independent Zimbabwe Group).

351 Out of the 80 African seats Zanu(PF) won in total 64, PF-Zapu 15, and Zanu-Ndonga 1. Out of the 20 white seats Ian Smith’s CAZ won 15, The IZG won 4, and one seat was won by an independent candidate (Sithole 1990:464). For a breakdown of the election results per province, see Lemon 1988:14.
For Zanu (PF), the devastating loss in Matabeleland was not only an electoral defeat. It was also evident that government policy interventions aimed to break down Zapu structures, had not affected peoples’ choice of political party affinity. Zapu success was certainly expected in the Matabeleland provinces, but the extent was an unpleasant surprise to the ruling party (Weitzer 1990:174–175). For Mugabe, the inability to claim national support for his party, worked strategically against the aim of creating a one-party state. An opposition party with massive regional backing did not allow Zanu(PF) the expected electoral mandate for its political platform, in which one-party rule had historically been a central objective.

For PF-Zapu, the defeat in all provinces except Matabeleland, was a step back from the 1980 elections when Zapu had in addition to Matabeleland secured four seats in Midlands. Zapu had in their platform propagated policy issues regarding the nation, the state, and the economy (PF-Zapu, 1985). However, particularly for Zapu, the contestation of power as such seemed to have been the central issue, rather than the elaboration of policy differences with regards to the ruling party. Furthermore, politically the differences between the two parties were not that considerable. Consequently the result of the electoral power competition was painfully disappointing for Zapu. Its’ position as a government coalition partner, historically based on the liberation war efforts and the 1980 election, was undermined by the 1985 election results – as was the argument of power sharing. Yet the backing Zapu did get demonstrated a resilient electoral loyalty in Matabeleland which overcame a crippled party infrastructure, an undermined organisational framework, and survived the intimidation of massive state violence. Nevertheless, the election considerably lessened Zapu’s political clout as a major opposition party in Zimbabwe.

The show of great loyalty to Zapu in the elections, did however not translate into strong local level democratic institutions in the affected conflict areas. Due to the severe military repression of Zapu members and leadership, local Zapu committees as well as Councils were deeply affected. Alexander et al show how Zapu leaders initially played a key role in the post-independence era, normalising relations with Ministry representatives, promoted reconstruction and reconciliation, and lowered unrealistic expectations of rapid transformation. Thus, Zapu officials’ role became that of intermediaries between the new government and their constituencies. With the systematic undermining of Zapu structures and persecution of Zapu members however, structures weakened as leaders were killed, detained or immobilised. Subsequently, according to Alexander et al, the capacity of local institutions to mediate with the state was undercut. In the absence of Zapu mediation, people found development activities suspicious and were not offering cooper-
ation, leaving civil servants and District Administrators in a precarious situation whilst development activities for this and other (conflict) reasons came to a standstill (Alexander et al., 2000:210, 224).

Thus, the government’s policy to break down Zapu structures and Zanu(PF) opposition failed on two accounts: despite weakened Zapu structures and terror, political allegiance did not shift in Matabeleland; and the local structures that had initially mediated and facilitated the implementation of government policies, were undermined or eliminated by the government’s own actions.

Post-Election Violence

The incapability of both parties to penetrate each others’ electoral strongholds, left the power struggle between Zanu and Zapu in an inconclusive state. The elections had not brought about a settlement of political forces, or an acceptance of each others strengths. Instead, the violence preceding the elections gained new momentum immediately after the elections, and was as earlier conducted both by ruling party members and by state enforcement agencies.

Mock Funerals and ‘Days of Madness’

Having won the elections, many Zanu(PF) members accentuated their position of hegemony through mass demonstrations, often resulting in harassment and violence against opposition party members or sympathisers. Rather than having the tone of election victory celebrations, mass demonstrations were in a number of cases explicit anti-Zapu manifestations. Mock funerals where people carried coffins of supposedly Nkomo and Zapu were held at several places, demonstrators demanding that Nkomo be hanged (Sithole 1990:465). Zanu (PF) supporters also rallied for the banning of Zapu and UANC, the dismissal of non-Zanu civil servants, and the immediate implementation of a one-party state (Weitzer 1990:174).

A more forceful way of emphasising Zanu (PF) hegemony emerged through rioting. This was particularly extensive in Harare suburbs, where for three days mobs of Zanu (PF) Youth and Women assaulted opposition members and destroyed property in what became known as ‘Days of Madness’ (Sylvester 1991:81). Before the riots started, Prime Minister Mugabe is on record to have in Shona broadcasted to his supporters to ‘go and uproot the weeds from your garden’ (CCJP/LRF 1997:63). The women and youth, equipped with sticks and clubs, forced occupants out of their houses, looted and destroyed their belongings, locked their houses and kept the keys,

---

352 For elaboration, see Alexander et al., 2000:224–229.

353 In Kadoma the death of Zapu was symbolised by axing to death a live bull (Zapu’s election symbol) in front of a massive crowd (Sithole 1990:465).
or set the houses on fire. In the Harare suburbs nearly 600 houses were looted and burnt and six people were killed (Mugabe followers, 1985; Berkeley/Schrage 1986:126–128; New Crackdown, 1986; Sithole 1990:465; Auret 1992:163). When asked what their motives were for the riots one Chitungwiza woman answered: ‘They [the victims] have to pay for the support they give to other parties. We are all Zanu here and we don’t want them in our midst’. Another motive was given by a woman who said ‘There is a shortage of houses. Their houses will be distributed to party members by the party’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:128). A youth stated ‘These people must not stay here any more. Their parties have been beaten and beaten well. There is no space for them in the one-party state’ (Mugabe followers, 1985).

Similar mob violence against opposition members took also place in Mvurwi, Kwekwe and Marondera. Comparable in all cases was the non-intervention of the police. CCJP officials contacted senior government members and the Commissioner of Police in an effort to persuade the government to intervene, but were unsuccessful (CCJP, 1985). Finally on the third day of Zanu (PF) riots Central Committee officials did ask their members to desist, after which in the Harare suburbs the police began breaking up mobs on rampage, and arrested some rioters. Not until a week after the riots did Mugabe address the issue, claiming that his members had before the elections been provoked by reactionary elements ‘deployed’ by Zapu. Nevertheless Mugabe admitted that the three days of violence were ‘unfortunate and out of step with party principles’. Therefore Mugabe praised the people for ‘heeding to the party’s call to stop the violence’, since ‘this proved to the outside world that Zanu (PF) supporters were people capable of controlling themselves’ (Zapu deployed, 1985). However, he added that ‘unrepentant’ opponents would soon find that ‘things will get tough’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:127; New Crackdown, 1986).

‘Few if any’ were prosecuted for the acts of destruction taking place during the riots, and no compensation was offered to the estimated 2,000 homeless victims (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:132; CCJP, 1985; CCJP/LRF 1997:63). CCJP concluded regarding the riots that ‘This situation [the non-intervention of the police] is deplorable and gives rise to serious concern over the ability of the police force to protect life and property, particularly in the face of [Zanu(PF)] party pressure’ (CCJP, 1985).

**Detention without Trial**

Another development that took place immediately following the elections was large-scale detentions of Zapu members. In August 1985 at a Heroes Day celebration Mugabe delivered a ‘final warning’ to Zapu, foreshadowing what was to come:
"I wish to warn them [Zapu] in the name of all our gallant heroes who lie buried here - and I do this for the last time - that unless they take immediate and positive steps to mend their ways and put an end to the banditry they deliberately created, my government will have no alternative but to take stern measures against them" (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:81).

'Stern measures' were subsequently taken against the opposition party. In a first wave 200 Zapu officials, including five members of parliament were detained (Auret 1992:162). Thereafter followed extensive detentions of lower level Zapu officials. Zapu spokesperson and Member of Parliament, John Nkomo, stated that 415 Zapu members had been detained in the month of August 1985 (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:74). Of the second wave 200 employees of Bulawayo City Council and included municipal police, garbage collectors, ambulance drivers and middle level administrators were detained.

In a number of instances the rights of the detainees were ignored. Many were legally held seven to fourteen days for questioning before release, but others substantially longer. The Bulawayo Legal Practitioner's Association wrote a report presenting evidence of malpractice having taken place during 1985, including case descriptions, to the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. Cases presented were: illegal detentions exceeding 30 days; illegal detentions due to absence of detention order; denial of access to legal practitioner; the disappearance of persons after detention (Bulawayo Legal, 1986).

Torture was another illegal occurrence many detainees were subject to. On 13 November 1985 Amnesty International released a public report on torture in Zimbabwe, after first having disclosed the findings to Prime Minister Mugabe (25/10 1985) but not having received a response. In this report the organisation concluded that 'Arrests and torture of suspected government opponents have increased sharply in Zimbabwe since the general elections last July [1985]' (Amnesty, 15/85). Accounts supported by a wide variety of sources and from a number detention centres, Amnesty reported, gave evidence of torture, including beatings with truncheons, whips, rubber hoses or sticks on the soles of the feet; electric shock; and 'water treatment'. The torture was aimed at 'extracting statements incriminating

354 The five MP detainees were S. Malunga, E. Ndlovu, W. Mabhena, S. Nkomo, and K. Mohadi (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:75-76).

355 Victims head is forced into a canvas bag full of water which is tied tightly around the neck, resulting in the prisoner swallowing water when trying to breath. When the victim loses consciousness through suffocation, he/she is kicked in the stomach until vomiting occurs. The process is then repeated. Electric shocks were at times simultaneously applied to feet or genitals (Amnesty, 15/85:3).
the victim or other people in alleged support of armed rebels [dissidents] who are active in Matabeleland and other areas'(Amnesty, 15/85:1,2).

The practice of torture, Amnesty stated, is believed to be widespread in police stations immediately after arrest or during interrogation. 356 Those detained for political reasons were reported to be arrested at the instigation of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and carried out by Police Internal Security and Intelligence (PISI), and were held in police custody under the authority of the CIO (Amnesty, AFR/46/21/85:2; Amnesty, 15/85:2). Amnesty stated that it adopted a number of detainees as prisoners of conscience, detained solely on account of their ‘non-violent political opposition to the government’. The organisation also stated that in a number of instances ‘members of minority parties have been detained as part of the ruling party’s effort to establish a one-party state, a process which appears to have accelerated since the general election of July 1985’ (Amnesty AFR/46/21/85:4). The organisation furthermore expressed concern regarding received reports of ‘a number of deaths in detention as a result of torture’ (Amnesty AFR/46/21/85:2).

Without collaboration with Amnesty International, CCJP investigated torture allegations concerning mainly Kwekwe, Bulawayo and Karoi. According to the local human rights organisation ‘all reports were investigated and found to be correct, with remarkable similarity in the methods used in all cases’ (CCJP, 1985:4).

**Unity Negotiations**

Official unity negotiations between Zanu and Zapu began in September 1985 in an atmosphere of caution, scepticism and mutual distrust. Particularly the latter for Zanu, due to increased dissident activity, and for Zapu, with the background of the extensive executions, torture and detentions of its officials and members. The negotiations would take more than two years, concluding with the unification of Zanu and Zapu on December 22, 1987. During this period the negotiations were in flux several times, held back by the deadlock of giving the unification a meaning acceptable to all, and overshadowed by the underlying Zanu belief that Zapu as a party was supporting dissident activity. This section will describe the first two-year period (1985–1986) of the lengthy negotiations.

---

356 A detention centre where torture was frequently reported to be practised was Stops Camp, part of Mzilikazi Police Station in Bulawayo (Amnesty, 15/85:1), where conditions in general were poor. The Bulawayo Legal Practitioners stated in their report that at ‘any one time there are up to 300 people detained in the security cells’ which neither sanitary nor space conditions catered for (Bulawayo Legal, 1986).
Before turning to a description of the negotiations, it is imperative to disclose in which light the negotiations are here perceived. Rather than seeing the negotiations strictly as a settlement between two political parties, the unity negotiations are here discussed under government policy interventions. The unity negotiations formally initiated by the ruling party were, although officially not a government matter, nevertheless closely linked to that of government. Precisely because the negotiations were in extension regarding degree of, and accessibility to, state power, the question of party and state were inflated in this case. Thus, although the unity negotiations were per se a matter between two political (coalition) parties, they turned in to a matter of government interest, since the settlement results were for the negotiating proponents directly linked to expansion of state power. Accordingly, the unity negotiations are here interpreted as a government intervention in the Matabeleland conflict in which an attempt is made to find a political solution (all else failed) to the dissident problem, as well as the means of expanding scope of power.

As to who actually set in motion the unity negotiations and exactly when, is inconclusive in the limited literature. Suggested initiators are Robert Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo, Cananaan Banana and Joseph Msika (Hull 1986: 210; Light at, 1986), two sources stating attempts being made already in 1983 (Unity, 1987; Waal V. de 1990:95). What went on behind the scenes between the two parties before the negotiations became official, constitutes a gap in the available literature. Observable to the public, one of the precipitating factors for the emergence of unity negotiations was a statement made by Robert Mugabe during Prime Minister’s Question Time in parliament:

We will hope that the majority of the small segment which is Zapu will respond to the call to join hands with us.... A situation of conflict can never, ever, bring about a Zapu victory, never, ever, bring about the power that Nkomo is thirsting for. That can never come. The only way in which honour can come to Nkomo and Zapu is to accept the reality of the political decision made by the people.... I invite them, and I want to lend weight to that reality and extend by invitation, my hand of friendship to them to join us (Sylveste 1991:82).

The secretary of the unity negotiations (Mr. A. Chiwewe) concluded that, ‘Of course, behind this call was the Prime Minister’s belief that the political organs and infrastructure of Zapu were being used to feed, cover and provide information to the dissidents’. Chiwewe also interpreted Joshua Nkomo’s quick response as an attempt to reverse the public image built by Zanu, in which Nkomo was seen to ‘seek power
through the dissidents’ (Chiwewe 1989:244). The CCJP, who were consulted by Zapu officials in the course of the talks (Auret 1992:165), interpreted the initiative of unity negotiations as a realisation by both parties that the Matabeleland problem ‘is a political problem and cannot be solved militarily’ (CCJP, 1985:4–5).

Although the eradication of dissident activity was a central motive per se to the unity negotiations, for Zanu (PF) the merger of the two parties was primarily a step towards the construction of a one-party state (Mugabe 1989:353). Having pledged that the move towards a one-party state would take place in a constitutional manner, a party merger would give the united party 79 seats out of 80 in parliament and thereby allow through the vote motions in this direction to be achieved (Hull 1986:210). Neither the abolition of dissident activity nor the one-party state goal were however clearly put forward in the declaration of motivation. Instead, the stated reasons for both parties to merge was the general notions that they together ‘commanded the support of the majority of the people of Zimbabwe’, and that ‘of this majority Zanu enjoyed a major share’; and the ‘desire of the two parties for unity, peace, law and order, as prerequisites for socio-economic development’ (Chiwewe 1989:271). However, what the negotiations boiled down to was state power: Zanu (PF)’s expansion of hegemony and its definition encapsulated through the creation of a one-party state; (PF) Zapu’s resumption of recognised power-sharing, regaining its national legitimacy based on its participation in the liberation war and its electoral backing, (power sharing and legitimacy both having been undermined during the Matabeleland conflict), by handing over its electoral support to the new party constellation.

The starting point for the negotiations was Zanu’s uncompromised position of dominance which indeed negated the content of ‘negotiations’. Firstly, Zanu was the party having officially initiated the negotiations, and secondly it used the threat of termination of negotiations as a way of pressing home its demands (Chiwewe 1989:264). The political pre-requisites for unity with Zapu set by the Zanu (PF) central committee were: unity had to be achieved under the name of Zanu (PF); Robert Mugabe would remain as leader for the party; the unity of Zanu and Zapu
should end banditry; and Zapu had to accept the ideology and political philosophy of Zanu (Chiwewe 1989:261). Despite these uncompromising pre-conditions, there were nevertheless members in the ruling party who entirely objected to the idea of merger. For some officials the party merger was a threat, since with the influx of Zapu members in decisive positions, the unification of the parties would translate into new power constellations and alliances – displacing the previous power balance and perhaps the beholders. Others believed that a merger was superfluous since the past election victories had given Zanu (PF) a majority to rule, and therefore political concessions to Zapu were redundant (Frankel, 1986; Zanu-Zapu, 1986). Since Zanu (PF) proceeded with unity negotiations, one may assume that those against merger remained a minority (or had comparatively less influence).

Zanu (PF)'s hard-line stand was at the time unknown to the public who new little about what the content of the negotiations were, having merely access to press releases which disclosed only the fact that unity negotiations were under way. This secrecy was based on an agreement between the parties, who wanted to pre-empt premature political reactions from members (Light, 1985; Unity, 1986; Chiwewe 1989:260). This was particularly important for Zapu negotiators, who had to tread the thin line between compromising without capitulating. If information regarding the unity process which could be perceived antagonising or compromising to Zapu members at the grass-roots level, reached outside negotiating teams and the respective central committees, Nkomo could lose his influence in bringing the negotiations to a conclusion altogether. Without doubt, Zapu members having been harassed, detained and tortured, were left more than suspicious regarding the ‘hand of friendship’ extended to them by Zanu (PF). With Zanu (PF)'s political pre-requisites added, for Zapu the negotiations were a precarious balancing act where internal Zapu interests played a decisive role in how the negotiations were presented for members and the public. Joshua Nkomo had to convince his party, particularly the hard-liners, of unity being in the party’s interest and that when

357 The inclusion of ‘end of banditry’ as a pre-requisite for unity seems a curious dilemma in the negotiations. Since Zapu as a party had continuously through the Matabeleland conflict denied any link with the dissidents, having the discontinuity of dissident activity as a term of reference in the negotiations must have proven difficult. Having as a party disassociated itself from the dissidents and their actions, how could Zapu guarantee end of dissident activities? If they did, it would imply a connection with dissidents. If they didn’t, negotiations could terminate since end of banditry was a Zanu (PF) pre-requisite. When Robert Mugabe queried Joshua Nkomo regarding unity resulting in the ending of banditry in Matabeleland and the Midlands, Nkomo’s reply circumvented this problem by treating banditry as a national problem (rather than a party problem). He argued that the problem could partly be solved as a result of the unity, since ‘those bandits who paraded as pro-Zapu would not have any further excuses to do so once Zapu had become one with Zanu’ (Chiwewe 1989:260).
assuming the new role in the united party and government, members would not be absorbed and ignored (Light, 1985; Unity: Nkomo, 1986).

For Zapu a priority outcome of the negotiations was that violence in Matabeleland would stop. Although Zapu had no control over dissidents activity, a merger between the parties would cease government persecution of Zapu members. Nkomo stated in a Bulawayo mass rally that ‘The unity talks have to bring peace to the country. If the talks don’t bring tranquillity and peace, they are not worth it’ (Zanu (PF) and, 1986). Besides this overall priority, in the negotiations, one of Zapu’s prerequisites for unity was the release of all political prisoners from detention and jail. Zapu also demanded the lifting of national state of emergency (Hull 1986:209). However, what would occupy negotiators for long was Zapu’s condition that merger of the two parties was ‘achieved as between equals’ (Chiwewa 1989:249). Negotiators resisted terms such as Zapu ‘joining’ Zanu, as was put by Zanu negotiators: ‘if Zapu negotiators were serious about unity, then they should accept that it was natural for the minority to fold up and join the majority’ (Chiwewa 1989:248 emphasis added). Zapu negotiator John Nkomo saw the process differently: ‘the unity exercise did not involve two entities where one came from the outside to join the other, but a fusion of those two entities’ (Chiwewa 1989:248 emphasis added). For both parties the way in which unity was achieved, was as important as the unity itself. This stand was maintained throughout the negotiations, and manifested itself in a prolonged debate regarding the name of the new party.

For Zapu unity under the name Zanu(PF) was perceived as ‘capitulation to Zanu’, because it required the party to disband and drop its name. Joshua Nkomo argued that this would equal to dropping Zapu from history, but leaving Zanu with both a history and a future. Such a ‘distortion of history’ should be avoided by creating a situation where both parties had a history but no future (dropping both names in favour of a new name), or have a history and a future together (having a name in which both parties were represented) (Chiwewa 1989:262). Zanu negotiators found Zapu’s demands both ‘unpatriotic and unreasonable’ (Chiwewa 1989:248). The concept of equality in the merger put forward by Zapu was rejected by Zanu because in the party’s perception this would equate Zanu who enjoyed overwhelming popular support throughout the country, with Zapu whose support was limited to the Matabeleland provinces. Also, unity under any other name than Zanu (PF) was feared to constitute a betrayal of the majority who rallied behind Zanu (PF). Mugabe foresaw greater problems for the country if a majority were forced to disband and join a minority, than if a minority were forced to join the majority. However, Zanu (PF)’s strongest motivation against a name shift appeared to be linked to
the assumption that the dissidents were supported by Zapu: the ruling party feared of being perceived as making concessions to dissidents by changing names (Chiwewe 1989:249).

To overcome the locked positions, Zapu proposed the interim name ‘Zanu-Zapu’ until the first congress under unity, where members could then proceed to choose a new name. According to Zapu, this compromise would allow Zapu members to re-orient themselves at least until the congress and avoid bitterness regarding the name question. Having satisfaction amongst members would, according to Joseph Msika, guarantee lasting unity and stability in the country, whilst a ‘disgruntled following would carry with them the beginnings of future instability in the country’ (Chiwewe 1989:258). In Chiwewe’s view, what remained unsaid was that Zapu negotiators believed it to be too much political risk in accepting unity under the name of Zanu (PF) in relation the demands by militant Zapu followers, fearing blames of ‘Zanu surrender’ resulting in rejection of loyalty and mandate to negotiate. Indeed, Joshua Nkomo when facing a possible collapse of the unity negotiations due to the name question (January 1986) appealed to more understanding for his position, not creating a situation where only the top leaders of Zapu joined Zanu – leaving behind their followers. This, Nkomo perceived, would create more problems for Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister, ‘because it would fail to remove one of the causes of insecurity in the country’ (Chiwewe 1989:266–267). Nkomo therefore suggested that the two leaders would sign a memorandum comprising all areas of agreement, leaving out the name question. This would create a psychological atmosphere that would gain him credibility and confidence within Zapu, allowing more ease in solving the question of the party name. The signature of a memorandum of agreement was approved of by Zanu (PF) (April 4, 1986).

The psychological atmosphere for prospective merger was generally enhanced in August 1986, when Robert Mugabe announced that the unity negotiations had reached a ‘sufficiently advanced stage’ to allow the Attorney General to withdraw treason charges against ten Zapu members.358 Mugabe explained that ‘it would not be in the national interest to proceed further with the case’ (Unity talks, 1986). In addition, government authorities would immediately start a review of all cases involving politically motivated crime and detentions, considering withdrawal of charges and in the cases of convictions, to determine whether pardons should be granted (Unity talks, 1986). Another important discharge took place in December 1986, when Zipra commander Dumiso Dabengwa was released from nearly five

years of indefinite detention. Zipra General Lookout Masuku had been released in March 1986, shortly after which he died of an illness.

When 1986 drew to its close the unity negotiations were far from conclusive. However, progress had been made. The two parties had agreed on: their unification as one political party; party leadership under Robert Mugabe; a commitment on the construction of a socialist state on the basis of Marxism-Leninism; and the introduction of a one-party state. Conversely to the name debate, the fundamental question of ideology and the policy of one-party state, had provoked little discussion (Chiwewe 1989:263).

5.c. Discourse Interventions

The government discourse interventions during 1985–1986 were obviously coloured by the political context of the period: sharp rise in dissident activity after pre-election lull; the general elections; and the unity negotiations. The Matabeleland conflict still beyond solution, the government’s official line during this period continued to be Zapu’s link to dissident activity. This connection was officially expressed in more fierce terms than ever, after the appointment of Enos Nkala as Minister of Home Affairs, following the elections in July 1985.

Mugabe selecting Nkala for this position, an Ndebele with an unmistakable history of Zapu (and particularly Nkomo) hostility, was seen by many in Matabeleland as ‘deliberate affront to the Ndebele’ especially since the position included the authority of the police and the emergency powers regulations (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:51). The Matabeleland electorate explicitly rejected Nkala in the 1985 poll, and he could only gain a seat in parliament six weeks after the elections by filling a vacancy in Karoi district. Some observers concluded that ‘Nkala was deliberately chosen [as Minister of Home Affairs] as the man who would act most decisively against the Zapu leader, put an end to the country’s guerrilla unrest, and set the stage for a one-party state’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:53–54). Mugabe being well aware of Nkala’s widely publicised extreme anti-Zapu sentiments, made no doubt by his selection a choice for a confrontative style of government discourse expression.

Enos Nkala soon lived up to his reputation. When he September 1985 signalled the coming crack down of Zapu officials, Nkala concluded that ‘We want to wipe out the Zapu leadership’ without ‘hearing any pleas of mercy’, further assuring that ‘the policy of reconciliation towards Zapu has been withdrawn’ (Time has, 359

359 In 1980 Lord Soames banned Nkala from standing in the elections because his inflammatory campaign (Auret 1992: 164), and in November 1980 many saw his anti-Zapu speech as a direct catalyst to the first Entumbane clash. See chapter three, pp. 119–120.
1985). Nkala also instructed that he wanted to hit dissidents at their roots and ‘that root is Zapu and the countries which harbour them’, warning further that ‘I’ll lock up more MPs and the leader himself’ (Time has, 1985).

Observers believed that the government’s intention with the mass detentions and the hostile anti-Zapu discourse was a strategy to further weaken Zapu’s position at the sensitive moment of unity negotiations, and that they took place due to the government’s lack of evidence in linking Zapu as a party to the dissidents (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:80). Certainly Nkala’s statements were far from conducive to ‘unity’, particularly as he publicly expressed that he did not know if the unity talks would succeed since ‘Dr. Joshua Nkomo had never succeeded in any talks – or in anything else – although he had been in politics for 30 years’ (Dissidents, 1986). Robert Mugabe’s statements were not less confrontational although unity negotiations were under way, when he stated that:

Nkomo cannot accept a secondary role in our political order and so he must organise the people tribally. And if they cannot be organised tribally, he must set dissidents on them so that they do his will (Mugabe, 1985).

Although the government took no notice of Zapu’s repeated proclamation of non-involvement in the dissident activities, and officially continued to connect the party with banditry, privately some ministers and security personnel began doubting the validity of the claim (Weitzer 1990:174). However, (as discussed in section four) questioning government discourse publicly was not received favourably in government circles, and challenges particularly relating to the Matabeleland conflict, were received with a resounding counter-charge in order to deter shifts in perceptions.

360 Nkala did indeed attempt to ‘lock up’ Nkomo, who in September 1985 was taken for questioning by the police whilst his house was raided and property confiscated, his aides and bodyguard were arrested, and his passport was held (Time has, 1985; Berkeley/Schrage 1986:52).

361 The government’s response to critique was further exemplified by the reception of Amnesty International’s above-mentioned public report on torture in Zimbabwe. In government discourse Amnesty’s work was fundamentally questioned, Mugabe calling the organisation ‘Amnesty Lies International’ (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:9). Its inquiry results were misrepresented (Amnesty, 1986:4), and in parliament an MP suggested that since the organisation had spies, was an enemy of the country and was destroying it, it should be ‘banned’ from Zimbabwe (Parliament, 1986:129). Following the report Enos Nkala met with Amnesty International representatives in London (15, 18/11 1985 ) where Nkala suggested that Amnesty and the government should jointly investigate the torture allegations, and that Amnesty should as part of this process give the government the names of its informants. Amnesty disagreed to both suggestions (Amnesty 15/85:4), resulting in Nkala investigating matters himself. The minister spoke to detainees privately and concluded that ‘they were not being beaten and they were provided with three meals a day’, and at Stops Camp ‘the story was the same: no torture and no maltreatment’ (Dissidents not, 1986).
As the unity negotiations painstakingly proceeded, government discourse began however to transpose, albeit in an inconsistent manner. In February 1986 Enos Nkala had to take back his earlier charges, now stating that ‘security operations in Matabeleland are designed solely to smash the dissident menace and there is no intention to persecute Zapu’, and he denied his previous claim that it was government’s intention to ‘wipe out’ the organisation – since if it was, ‘it would be very easy to ban Zapu’ (Dissidents not, 1986). In a Herald editorial (16/3 1986) a discourse shift became exceptionally pronounced. From Robert Mugabe having six months earlier declared that ‘We are satisfied that without Zapu, without the dissident element, they [people in Matabeleland] will fall in line’ (Mugabe faces, 1985)\(^362\), to the following editorial, in which the Matabeleland population no longer is seen as state enemies in need behavioural adjustment, but can fraternally re-enter the nation:

We want to believe the end of the brutal dictatorship over the rural folk in Matabeleland is in sight. The rest of the nation awaits the day when our brothers and sisters in that troubled province rejoin us all in the gainful process of national development and the enjoyment of freedom and independence (Action time, 1986 emphasis added).

However, most significant in this editorial is that for the first time publicly the Zapu-dissident link was questioned, hinting that if a link existed, the dissidents transformed from what was originally intended: ‘If the dissidents were indeed a Nkomo-Zapu creation, then they have definitely metamorphosed into a most dangerous Frankenstein monster’ (Action time, 1986). The editorial concludes that now when law-abiding Zapu followers wants the dissidents ‘stopped and killed’ and are increasingly more for unity, any saboteurs are warned: ‘Woe unto anyone who does anything to frustrate this healthy [Zapu against dissidents – for unity] tendency!’\(^363\)

Thus, the massive anti-Zapu stance gave erratically away for a more reconciliatory position. Whilst at one moment government discourse represented ‘the hand of friendship’, next the message was a fierce anti-Zapu attack reverting to the previous pattern of expression. This back and forth positioning by government regarding its way of relating in public to Zapu, may have been the result of a non-intended discourse shift due to a growing differentiated Zapu stance amongst government representatives. More likely however, it may have been a calculated effort to change discourse accord for the prospective party merger. In this effort, the ac-

\(^362\) Emphasis added.

\(^363\) That Zapu had officially been against dissidents through out the conflict and historically for unity, was ignored in government discourse.
cusatory elements in the government discourse still played a role. Shifting between a reconciliatory and an antagonistic approach, the government transmitted a message in which the receiver was introduced to the idea of Zanu-Zapu co-operation, but was still reminded of Zapu’s ‘offences’. With these offences in mind, the ruling party’s willingness to merge with Zapu came across as an act of benevolence: Zapu should be ‘grateful’ for the hand that was extended to it – allowing it in from the cold. Thus Zanu (PF) was (in this perception) the reconciliatory force which for its goodness sake was willing to open its doors for the villains. The above mentioned Herald editorial ends:

Implicit in all we have said is the need for Zanu (PF) to keep stretched the hand of reconciliation. It is a tribute to the party [Zanu (PF)] that, in spite of all temptation, it has held fast to this policy and a great deal of good has been done to all our people (Action time, 1986).

What was less obvious in this discourse, was that the unity negotiations were a step toward a one-party state, – and for its implementation Zanu (PF) needed to deal with its greatest opposition. Hence, a merger between the parties was not a favour to Zapu, but a consistent step towards the expansion of Zanu (PF) hegemony.
Voices Section Five

On 24 August [1985], around 7pm in Lahleka area, in Silobela Communal Land, my home and my two brothers’ homes were burned to the ground. All of the huts and the granaries were destroyed. A year’s supply of food and surplus [for sale] destroyed. Now we are refugees in Bulawayo. My family of eight children and I are staying in Magwegwe bus terminal. I have eight children and two wives. My brother has five children and one wife. One [brother] is a refugee now in Gweru, the other is also here in Bulawayo, in Magwegwe bus station. It was the Zanu (PF) Youth, backed by Constabulary, two constabularies, armed with rifles. The youth were armed with sticks, clubs and matches. My wife was there at the time. She saw them. My wife has been a member of the Zanu (PF) village committee, the lowest level of Zanu. You know that everyone in the area has been forced to join Zanu. And she knows who the Youth are. She knows them by face. I myself have got a Zanu (PF) card. We all have Zanu (PF) cards now. I am Ndebele, of course. Even among the youth, they are not all Zanu (PF). Many have been forced to participate. My own son was forced, press-ganged, into joining the Zanu (PF) Youth. He was forced to go around burning other people’s villages. First they beat him until he was unconscious. Then they forced him to participate. The youths started out as a hundred or so, but by the end they had picked up many more in this way. At least 12 homes were destroyed in my area. The security forces were ordered to stay away while the youth were burning homes. They only intervened when there started to be intra-party clashes, when the people resisted, when some of the youth were killed. Then the soldiers came in and intervened. Refugee Magwegwe Township, Bulawayo.364

15 youths stormed my home and ransacked it. The Zanu (PF) members threw our property outside, locked our house and took the keys away. They said we would not get our house keys until we surrendered our party cards and got those of Zanu (PF). We slept outside in the cold last night, and I don’t know what we will do next. We reported the matter to the police, but they said that had no power to intervene. Douglas Moyo.365

It is no use reporting this sort of thing to the police [Zanu (PF) Youth harassment] because they are afraid of party officials. Remember the post-election violence when they watched us being harassed and property thrown out of our homes…. It won’t help. Anonymous.366

People live in fear because they fear they may be killed at any time. People live in suspicion because they fear that the Zanu youths will force them to buy Zanu cards. People live in

---

366 Headaches for, 1986.
fear of being harassed one way or another. If we are going to have elections under such a situation, it means the elections will not be free and fair. Sydney Malunga.367

In 1985 we had a bad time after one of the Zanu leaders was killed in our area. Zanu supporters then burnt down more than twenty homes in our district and many people were very severely beaten, some died. It was their way of retaliation, but they did not stop to ask questions, or to find out what people thought first. They just picked on those homes where they knew people had been Zapu supporters. My home was burnt down. That is why I say I am pleased that there is unity because during the struggle we helped both Zanla and Zipra and there was no trouble between us. Ida Mtongana.368

Before unity, the situation was very bad. The truth is people were tortured. I was even put in a cell. They put me in prison for eight weeks. I left my baby who was eight months old at home while they imprisoned me. We were beaten up because we are Zapu supporters. In that way things were difficult. Many homes were burnt down and a lot of people disappeared. This was a blow to us women because we had worked so hard during the war, supporting the freedom fighters and then, after independence, we found we still had hardships. We have several villagers who just disappeared and cannot be traced. Several homes were burnt down including mine; the whole property that we had developed was burnt to ashes. My home was not as it is now. Tetty Magugu.369

The oppression in the country now is more oppressive than it was under Smith. Because the oppression now goes down to the grass roots. It is a sin not to belong to the ruling party. Under Smith, it was only the elite's who were in danger from the government. Now it is everyone. The youths can go into a church on Sunday and force everyone to attend the Zanu rally outside. The party is more important than the church. You cannot predict what the rulers will want. One is reminded that, both in Shona and Sindebele, there are no words for 'rival' or 'opposition', only 'enemy'. In Shona it is 'mwengi', in Sindebele: 'isita'. Anonymous nationalist politician.370

Let me assure the nation that the policy of reconciliation towards Zapu has been withdrawn. Nkomo should take note, in the next few weeks you'll be seeing fire. We've been picking up a lot of Zapu officials and whites who encourage or participate in dissident activities. We want to wipe out the Zapu leadership. You have only seen the warning lights. We have not reached

368 Staunton 1990:181.
full blast. The next few months will see us in top gear and Zapu must be warned. I don’t want to hear pleas of mercy. I only want encouragement to deal with this dissident organisation.... The murderous organisation [Zapu] and its murderous leadership must be hit so hard that it doesn’t feel obliged to do the things it has been doing. I will lock up more MPs and the leader himself. Enos Nkala, Minister of Home Affairs.371

I was picked up in December 1982. I was director of the Matabeleland North Province [Zapu], and I was also the chairman of the Tsholotsho District Council. I was kept in detention from December 1982 to December 1984, then I was released. But I was picked up again in 1985, the second round I was in detention for six months. During the first round I went through a Tribunal. Only to get to the court and the prosecutor had no evidence against me. The police was supposed to be the State’s witness, but they did not come. So the case automatically fell through. My detention order stated ‘Zapu supporter’. That was merely the case. That is why I am saying this was a political ploy. There was nothing about breaking the law.... The first period [in detention] was better, but in 1985 it was terrible. It was terrible. I was beaten up, very much ill treated. I was asked to take off my shoes, and they were using a plank to hit me under the feet. As a result, when I left Stops camp from Bembezi police station where I was detained, I could not put my shoes on. They were also using a rope on my back.... I have forgiven, but I will never forget. What happened during my detention – people were being killed. At Stops camp we were with another young man, whom I don’t think is alive. He was castrated. He was castrated. A. Mkwananzi, Member of Parliament (Tsholotsho).372

My instinct tells me that when you deal with ruthless gangsters, you have to be ruthless. I have locked up a few honourable members [of parliament] and I think they will have a rest for a long time to come, before they reappear to continue with their dissident activities. Enos Nkala, Minister of Home Affairs.373

Before I was tortured, they asked if I wanted to visit God for a few moments. Unless I was prepared to say that I was a dissident. They began the torture.... The interrogators were CIO and PISI. For the first six days, I was not tortured. On the seventh day, I was tortured by CIO. On the eighth day, by PISI. But the questions were identical. I was interrogated five times. Each until I passed out.... We gave our lives for the struggle for this

---

371 Speech in the Senate by Minister of Home Affairs, Enos Nkala (Time has, 1985).
372 Interview with Mr. A. Mkwananzi, Tsholotsho Member of Parliament, Harare, 10/5 1994.
373 Speech to the House of Assembly by Enos Nkala, Minister of Home Affairs (Berkeley/Schrage 1986:53).
374 Police Internal Security and Intelligence (PISI).
country. But what is going on now, it's not a question of being Zapu. It's a question of the language you speak. They tell you, 'We are torturing you because you are Ndebele, you are not our tribe'. Anonymous Stops Camp ex-detainee.\textsuperscript{375}

If we were to release to the public everything that happens in all our operational areas there would be more alarm and despondency among Zimbabweans, and they would think they were living in hell. So we want to keep these things to ourselves. Minister of State (Defence).\textsuperscript{376}

In the run up to the 1985 elections I became more involved. At that time the black lawyers in Bulawayo were too scared to represent their former political colleagues and I found that suddenly I was instructed by all sorts of Zapu politicians including the late Edward Ndlovu, Sidney Malunga, and Welshman Mabhena. That really sapped me in further, to such an extent that between 1985 and 1988 I virtually did no other work, other than human rights related work – defending Zapu politicians, Zapu supporters who were detained, beaten, and [relatives to people] who had disappeared... I think that they [Zanu(PF)] were fairly confident in the 1985 elections that they would do well. But they were hammered down here [Matabeleland]. Zapu won every seat. We then saw a change in strategy, they did not go for the people. They went for the middle to high level politicians in Zapu. That is were we saw people like Sidney Malunga and Edward Ndlovu being detained. All the guys who had stood and won in 1985 elections. They did not go through Nkomo, they left Nkomo alone. But they went for virtually every one underneath Nkomo. Enos Nkala said at the time 'If you want to kill a snake, you got to stamp on its head'. It was a very graphic statement of what their policy was then. That did not work either. They stood on the head of the sneak, but the snake carried on and then they got really desperate. In 1986 they were embarrassed. They had this big show trial including Sidney Malunga. I defended him. And we got an acquittal. The trial was designed to show the link between Sidney Malunga and dissidents. They did not manage to establish that link. They had a whole series of other cases, political show trials that followed that one. That one [Malunga] fell, and they knew that they could not continue with the rest. The NAM [Non-Aligned Movement] conference happened at the end of 1986, and all these people were suddenly released just before NAM – so that they would have a clean slate. But the dissident thing continued to fester, and that is when the government got really anxious. At the beginning of 1987 they started unity talks in earnest. At the end of 1987 the unity agreement was signed. David Coltart, Human Rights Lawyer.\textsuperscript{377}

\textsuperscript{375} Berkeley/Schrage 1986:96–97.

\textsuperscript{376} Intervention by Minister in Parliament August 1985 (Weitzer 1990:163).

\textsuperscript{377} Interview with lawyer David Coltart, Bulawayo 16/3 1994.
The most difficult task really is to re-unite the people in Zimbabwe. The last four years [1983–1986] have brought about a wealth of friction and misunderstandings, based unfortunately on party political lines which also affected the tribal lines. That was unfortunate. So we have to work very hard, to be sincere, to be honest, and to be straight to each other, and I am certain we shall overcome that. Joshua Nkomo, Zapu President.378

People have been tortured, including my own driver and assistants. A lot of people disappeared forever. During all this, I have said nothing because I was interested in unity and once we have it, we will be able to control this nonsense. I have not talked before because I wanted to nurse this thing to success. But there are politically hungry people who want to destroy the nation for their own selfish interests. Joshua Nkomo, Zapu President.379

379 Frankel, 1986.

The mileage covered in the unity negotiations during 1985–1986, seemed in the first half of 1987 to be entirely lost. The discourse shift towards a more reconciliatory stance reverted to the language of pre-unity talks, and Zapu was yet again linked to dissident activity. In addition, the unity negotiations grinded to a halt, reportedly over the design of the new party logo. Whilst negotiations stood still, an upsurge of dissident activity took place, resulting in curfew threats, closed Zapu offices and banned Zapu meetings. Thus Matabeleland was under new military threat and Zapu was effectively closed down. Consequently, when unity negotiations resumed, Zanu (PF)’s position was one of unreserved dominance. This time the negotiations led to a final agreement.

Examining the secret unity negotiations and simultaneous government policy and discourse, Zanu (PF) halting the unity negotiations appear more as political tactics than the result of negotiation disagreements. Wielding power through tactical moves also becomes evident when noting the timing of the agreement: i.e. the lapse of time between the actual unity settlement unknown to the public, and the announcement through public signature of the Accord. During this lapse of time Zanu (PF) orchestrated a last radical crackdown on Zapu. Seemingly the intention was to disclose the ruling party’s power capacity in order to press home acceptance of Zanu (PF) hegemony in the light of the forthcoming Unity Accord. Subsequently, the negotiations for a Zanu-Zapu merger come across as a massive show of Zanu (PF) force, rather than a negotiation for unity.

The Unity Accord signed, an amnesty for dissidents and a pardon for convicted security personnel was declared. Both the amnesty and the pardon created upheaval, considering passed activities of both categories of armed men. The reactions were nevertheless of lesser scale than was the reception of the Unity Accord. Although in government discourse the ‘nation as one’ had awaited for the merger of the parties, behind the speeches and toasts a diversity of reactions were brooding, all of which would have an impact on Zimbabwe’s future political development. Only one point was agreed across different allegiances: the Unity Accord brought the Matabeleland conflict to an end.

In this section the final stretch of the unity negotiations is described first, followed by a discussion of the amnesty declaration and the subsequent surrender of dissidents. Subsequently, the pardon of security personnel is debated, followed finally by a comparison of what meaning unity was given by different Zanu and Zapu sectors.

The first meeting in 1987 between Zanu and Zapu negotiation teams resulted in a total break down of the talks. The matter at stake was the new party emblem, which Zapu suggested to include a bull (Zapu’s symbol) beneath an image from the Zimbabwe ruins on which a rooster was placed (Zanu’s symbol). Zanu (PF) rejected this party emblem, and reportedly due to the lengthy discussions regarding the party logo bringing the talks to an impasse, Zanu (PF) decided to discontinue the talks indefinitely. The public announcement of unity negotiations being halted took place without first notifying Zapu, on the eve of the seventh independence celebration on April 17, 1987 (Chiwewe 1989:271, 274). Mugabe declared that the negotiations had been ‘deadlocked for too long’ and therefore Zanu’s central committee had decided that the talks ‘served no useful purpose’ (Unity talks, 1987). The announcement shocked not only Nkomo and Zapu, but also citizens at large – all perceiving the merger process well on track. The government newspaper The Herald posed everybody’s question ‘What happened?’, then proceeded to blame Zapu for the deadlock. According to the newspaper, Zapu used a tactic of ‘dragging out the talks endlessly’ for purposes of their own gain. The paper concluded that the party merger was only advantageous to Zapu, ‘serving no purpose for Zanu(PF)’. Yet the party did not display a genuine desire to unite with Zanu (PF) (Unity Breakdown, 1987). Thus in this view, Zapu would only ‘display genuine desire’ to unite with Zanu if it was entirely on the ruling party’s terms. Robert Mugabe explained:

We have to assure ourselves that in fact psychologically, Zapu is prepared to become part of us.... The [Zapu] leadership has a psychological problem.... We don’t view the situation ripe for the unity we desire. We can never agree to killing Zanu. Anything that we accept must be unity within Zanu. Zanu must be the party and no other (Zapu members, 1987).

Joshua Nkomo recorded his dismay over the halted talks to the state president Canaan Banana. Nkomo’s reaction was particularly negative since prior to the ruling party’s decision, Zapu had been working on a new logo proposal (Chiwewe 1989:274).

Seemingly as an affect of the cancelled unity talks in April 1987, dissident activity previously sporadic, now began to increase. A wave of civilian killings took place, including local peasants, commercial farmers and two German tourists (Nkala

---

380 Zanu (PF) rejected the logo because the bull appeared too prominent and was a personification of Joshua Nkomo, since in Sindebele Nkomo means ‘beast’ (Chiwewe 1989:269).
In response to the upsurge of dissident activity, the government tightened security operations in the Matabeleland provinces and Midlands. As a step in this action Minister Nkala banned in June 1987 all Zapu rallies and meetings until ‘such a time he was satisfied that Nkomo was not undermining the State and ridiculing the security forces’ (Nkala threat, 1987). Nkala also threatened to impose new curfews as well as banning Zapu, if the security situation did not improve. As a result of the increase of dissident activity and Nkala’s warning of a new curfew, people from rural Matabeleland began moving into Bulawayo fearing new military operations (Nkala 1987b:7).

In the tense atmosphere of increased dissident activity and renewed Zanu-Zapu antagonism, behind the scenes unity negotiation teams met (3/8 1987). This ‘the most dramatic meeting of the two leaders’ took place much to the benefit of state president Canaan Banana who had worked out his own proposal for the unity of the two parties (Chiwewe 1989:274). In this meeting the commitment of both parties to unite was reconfirmed, Joshua Nkomo also effectively agreed to unite under the name Zanu (Chiwewe 1989:276). In the month of August 1987 two additional meetings (10/8, 23/8) were held, in which primarily the addendum ‘Patriotic Front’ to the new party name was negotiated. In the last August meeting Nkomo reported that Zapu had finally agreed to merge with Zanu under name of Zanu (PF). After some non-controversial amendments, agreement had finally been reached on a formula for the unity of Zanu and Zapu. This draft would subsequently be presented to Zanu central committee for approval, Robert Mugabe committing himself to ‘do all in his power to create the correct atmosphere for Zanu to accept the draft agreement’. Thus, the last August 1987 meeting concluded the negotiations. Zanu’s central committee met the following week and approved the draft agreement (Chiwewe 1989: 274–286).

What had taken place between Zanu and Zapu top level negotiators were not disclosed to the public, who were still uncertain if a party merger would take place. This uncertainty amongst the public would remain in place until December 22, 1987, when the Unity Accord was finally signed. Paradoxically, whilst the merger was finalised behind closed doors, government-Zapu antagonism grew in the open. In September 1987 (thus after finalised agreement) Minister Nkala closed all Zapu offices in Matabeleland to enable a police search for evidence linking Zapu and dissident activity to create an impression that dissident murders were conducted by the security forces, and considered therefore to enforce existing laws to allow the arrest of anyone who undermined the role of the security forces by exposing them to contempt, ridicule, disrepute or dis-esteem (Nkala threat, 1987).

---

381 Nkala perceived Nkomo to create an impression that dissident murders were conducted by the security forces, and considered therefore to enforce existing laws to allow the arrest of anyone who undermined the role of the security forces by exposing them to contempt, ridicule, disrepute or dis-esteem (Nkala threat, 1987).
In connection to office searches, 12 Zapu officials were detained in Gweru and Kwekwe (CCJP/LRF 1997:73). Prime Minister Mugabe explained that this was a new initiative to eradicate dissidents, and that ‘immense evidence’ connecting Zapu to the dissidents had been uncovered by the police investigation (Immens, 1987). Minister Nkala stated that ‘From now on Zapu would be viewed in the same manner as the MNR bandits in Mozambique’ (CCJP/LRF 1997:73). A week later Presidential Powers was used in a radical move, in which the six elected district councils in Matabeleland North were dissolved. From these Zapu-dominated councils, all 104 councillors were dismissed with immediate effect. Reportedly the government had established that councillors were influencing officials not to co-operate with government ministries for political reasons. Minister of Local Government, Mr. Chikowore, explained that councillors were found to be ‘frustrating government and council development programmes, supporting and collaborating with dissidents, and diverting food-for-work materials and other supplies to persons who did not qualify to receive draught relief’. As a result the councillors would with immediate effect be met by the ‘wrath of law’ and dealt with accordingly. In the councillors replacement, Mr. Chikowore was empowered to appoint district administrators ‘until the situation improved’ (Six councils, 1987).

In a fierce reaction to the government linking Zapu and dissident activity, Joshua Nkomo strongly restated that Zapu had no association with, nor did support, banditry in Zimbabwe, and would continue to condemn banditry ‘no matter what source it comes from’ (Unity is, 1987). Government press found Nkomo’s statement ‘at best feeble and at worst glib’ (Zapu, 1987). In this hostile atmosphere, Zanu’s primary unity negotiator M. Nyagumbo, declared in October 1987, that the unity talks were ‘dead’ (CCJP/LRF, 1997:73). The agreement already been finalised, this statement raises a number of questions. So does the fact that CCJP reports having had talks with both Enos Nkala and Joshua Nkomo in November 1987, in an effort to ‘resume’ unity negotiations (CCJP/LRF, 1997:73).

---

383 As repeated previously in this chapter, to date there is no documentary or material evidence to support the contention that Zapu concretely supported or instructed dissidents (CCJP/LRF 1997:30). The 1987 government claim of securing ‘immense evidence’ was never lawfully contested, and thus remains an allegation.
384 In Lupane and Nkayi councils were suspended and placed under the ‘management’ of civil servants. In Lupane, Zanu(PF) ‘councillors’ were appointed in 1987, each responsible for more than one constituency. According to Lupane Council Minutes (7/9 1987), Zanu(PF) Minister Maurice Nyagumbo noted that PF Zapu councillors were no longer continuing their jobs. Instead, ‘The council is going to be run by Zanu(PF) Councillors and this position is going to continue as long as Zanu(PF) is in power’ (Alexander et al, 2000:227).
Chiwewe’s description of the unity negotiations, being the secretary of the process, and having published at length the information in a government oriented publication (Banana 1989), leaves one with lesser doubt of the correctness of his data. Instead, it is more convincing that unity negotiations were concluded to the point of signing in August 1987, and there after were held a well-guarded secret until the unity announcement in December 1987. However, the question immediately arising is what was the purpose of the fierce government anti-Zapu campaign, including the dissolution of the district councils, detentions and effectively banning the opposition party, post (unofficial) unity agreement? The answers remain speculative until the involved parties release further information. However, comments from Zapu spokespersons at the time may give some insight. Joshua Nkomo claimed in November 1987 that Minister Nkala was ‘creating charges’ against Zapu because he had failed to ‘find out who was behind banditry’ (Nkala, 1987b:9). John Nkomo stated that the allegations that dissidents were using Zapu’s political structures was ‘more a political statement that a statement of fact’, since Zapu as a party had never been contacted about these allegations (Nkala, 1987b:9). Thus, the government’s radical move to locate evidence against Zapu, although a merger was already unofficially agreed upon, could have been an artificial exercise – ‘a political statement’ – rather than a legal action. Having the top echelon of Zapu in agreement for a merger, the Zapu crack down was geared towards the lower level Zapu officials, such as district councillors. The message was unmistakable: Zanu (PF) had as a ruling party the capacity, with the use of extraordinary Presidential Powers, to implement far reaching political interventions – to the point of overnight eliminating democratically elected bodies. With the realisation of what the ‘wrath of the law’ may encompass, lower level Zapu officials would presumably at the time of unity announcement, succumb and orderly incorporate themselves in to the new expanded Zanu (PF) hegemonic order. Following this supposed government logic, the question remains why Joshua Nkomo and the party would persevere in silence through this period of renewed Zapu harassment. Again, a comment by Nkomo may explain this. In 1986, whilst negotiations were still taking place, Joshua Nkomo commented that people had been tortured and disappeared without his public denouncement, explaining that ‘During all of this, I have said nothing because I was interested in unity and once we have it, we will be able to control this nonsense. I have not talked before because I wanted to nurse this thing to success’ (Frankel, 1987). One may conclude a similar choice of tactic by the Zapu central committee, it being the last shivering period before the public signature of the merger. Zapu already having agreed to Zanu (PF)’s conditions, a public outcry against government actions might have jeopardised the deal. Con-
versely, the ruling party well aware of Zapu’s entrapped position, lost no time in delivering a last few blows to the opposition party before signing the long awaited unity agreement — thereby at the moment of unity enhancing their perceived benevolence as a ‘reconciliatory’ force towards the villains.

Whether the above scenario — of Zanu (PF) postponing the signature of the Unity Accord whilst with use of state authority implicating Zapu — was an orchestrated effort or not can be debated. However, undoubtedly, this last effort of collapsing Zapu before the unity agreement was not accidental. If the motive was other than purely a message of Zanu (PF) power capacity, can only be disclosed by the responsible actors.

6.b. Dissident Amnesty and Pardon of Convicted

The Unity Accord was signed by Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo December 22, 1987. In a mode of exuberant festivity and celebration, speeches and toasts signalled a new political era for Zimbabwe. Unity meant, Mugabe explained, a common allegiance, loyalty and struggle against both internal and external forces of destabilisation, and work for a one-party state ‘the political order we regard as more democratic’ (PM spells, 1987). He also assured that having come together as two parties ‘naturally’ this translated to government as well, promising Zapu inclusion in ‘the whole fabric’. Nkomo cautiously building in a defence against criticism, stated that ‘the document may appear incomplete’, but emphasising that ‘the important thing is the spirit behind the document, not the document behind the spirit’ (Chiwewe 1989:290). A point accentuated by both leaders was that the document had no validity if not accepted by the population. To avoid the agreement being merely a recorded consensus by a few individuals, Nkomo propagated that ‘our people should accept and throw their weight behind this act of unity’ (Chiwewe 1989:294). Unity between the parties was presented by both leaders as a logical conclusion to historical attempts made between Zanu and Zapu, starting with the first ‘Chimurenga’ war in 1896 to several undertakings in the 1970s. In this

385 The two parties agreed to: unite under one political party with the name Zanu (PF); Robert Mugabe being the First Secretary and President of Zanu (PF); to have two Second Secretaries and Vice Presidents appointed by the President of the party; to seek to establish a socialist society on the guidance of Marxist-Leninist principles; to seek to establish a one-party state; leaders to abide to Leadership Code; leaders to help eliminate and end the insecurity and violence in Matabeleland; to effect the agreement through respective party congresses within shortest possible time; to in the interim give Robert Mugabe the full powers to prepare for the implementation of the agreement and act in the name of Zanu (PF) (Chiwewe 1989:285–286).

386 Mugabe noted that ‘The rest of the fabric, the Civil Service, has never been based on ethnicity’, indicating that the government had been based on ethnicity (Speeches, 1988).
light, the merger was not immediately seen as a post-independence occurrence solving the dissident problem, but a solution to a lengthy and fundamental search conducted by both parties, which now needed the full acceptance of the citizens in order to turn into a concrete reality. What both leaders did not explain was that the failure of previous attempts was partly linked to both parties’ wish not to merge, as the parties’ perceived at different conjunctures that separated paths would bring advantages to one without being merged to the other. Thus, the ‘logic’ in the merger was more based on political expediency, than a lengthy exercise of repetitious attempts in which the final outcome necessarily was a deductive conclusion.

After the ceremonies were concluded, Mugabe swiftly moved on to introduce changes facilitating the planned one-party state. On 31 December 1987 President Canaan Banana retired, and Robert Mugabe was elevated from Prime Minister to Executive President, increasing his power. The 20 seats reserved for Whites were abolished creating a de facto one party state. As Zanu (PF)’s Mr. D. Mutasa concluded, ‘the attainment of a one-party state would not be difficult’ since 93 of the 100 Members of the House of Assembly were Zanu (PF) members, six non-party MPs were backed by the party during the election to fill the twenty non-constituency seats, leaving only one MP out of the ruling group (Mutasa 1989:297). Emphasising the Unity Accord resulting in a fusion, Robert Mugabe appointed Joshua Nkomo as the Second Secretary and Vice President of Zanu (PF) as well as cabinet Senior Minister. Cabinet posts were also appointed to Zapu’s Joseph Msika and John Nkomo. In April 1988 both Zanu (PF) and PF-Zapu held special congresses formally endorsing the unity agreement. Consequently, for PF-Zapu this was their last congress, as the country’s oldest liberation party voted to dissolve itself.

Declaration of Amnesty

On the Defence Forces Day, April 19, 1988, Robert Mugabe declared an Amnesty for the dissidents still at large in the bush and ‘other political fugitives’. The latter included those in detention or imprisoned for collaborating with dissidents. Criminals (not habitual) who still had up to 12 months to serve but had already served not less than a third of their jail terms would also be released (General, 1988).

---

387 For discussion on pre-independence unity efforts, see chapter two, pp. 54–96.

388 The one MP outside the ruling group was G. Sithole for Zanu (Ndonga).

389 Including new cabinet members resulted in a reshuffle, the prospects of which had worried many. The reshuffle did however not result in dramatic changes. One replacement incensed by many was Enos Nkala’s elevation from Minister of Home Affairs to Minister of Defence, reportedly due to his ‘apparently successful “get tough” policy towards Zapu’ (Sithole 1988:29).
The amnesty was declared until midnight May 31, 1988. Those dissidents surrendering to any police station, government official, chief, or ‘responsible person’ before this period would not be prosecuted for crimes committed during the Matabeleland conflict. Extensive tours were undertaken by prominent Zapu members such as Joshua Nkomo and Dumiso Dabengwa into remote rural villages in the Matabeleland and Midland provinces, disseminating the message of the unity accord and amnesty. Nkomo also visited Dukwe refugee camp in Botswana, urging its 3,000 inhabitants to accept unity and return to Zimbabwe (Nkomo, 1988). Insecurity regarding whether dissidents would accept Amnesty or not was widespread, since no pronounced leader existed who could accept or reject the amnesty declaration. However, dissidents did respond, and sporadically in groups gave themselves and their weapons up at local police stations. By the end of the stipulated period, 122 dissidents had turned themselves in (CCJP/LRF 1997:37). The government, who had estimated the dissidents to number between 100–120, were confident the amnesty had been a success with no more dissidents remaining in the bush (Amnesty, 1988).

Those formally responding to the amnesty were all ex-Zipra dissidents. Presumably bandits acting for personal gain, withdrew by melting back into their own surroundings, whilst those so called Super Zapu dissidents had either at an earlier stage given up dissidence or did so at this point but without formally reporting it. The way in which the ex-Zipra dissidents responded to the amnesty demonstrated the organised character of their activities, contradicting the common perception of the dissidents being a ‘disorganised rabble of hoodlums’. Rather than coming in as individuals, the amnesty announcement had first been discussed in ex-Zipra dissident structures, where after commanders and their groups went as units to nearest police stations (Nkala 1988:11). Two units turning themselves in three days before the deadline, read out a list of government reforms to be implemented.\footnote{The demands included: a return of all confiscated Zapu property; resettlement of displaced people in Matabeleland due to the war [the Matabeleland conflict]; pensions for all disabled victims of war; an inquiry into the issue of missing people; and the removal of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Harare’s Heroes’ Acre, and its replacement with a tomb commemorating Zimbabwe’s Fallen Heroes (Nkala 1988:11).}

In Nkayi one of the units stated to a crowd of hundreds of locals and some government officials, that their reasons for taking up arms against the government was Zapu and Zipra harassment after independence and the way in which government responded to the arms stockpile disclosure. However, now ‘all of us here salute the unity agreement’, and since there was unity and peace ‘there should also be forgiveness’ (Nkala 1988:11). Many ex-Zipra dissidents expressed that unity had been
their goal, the parties now having reached an agreement resulted in their reason to fight being removed (Mackay, 1988).

Reactions to the dissident amnesty varied. The new minister of Home Affairs, Mr. M. Mahachi, promised the ex-dissidents a rehabilitation programme under the Ministry of Labour in order to assist reintegration (Amnesty, 1988). However, certain sectors within Zanu (PF) did not favour the amnesty, even less so any government benefits (Mackay, 1988). Also amongst the population in affected conflict areas the amnesty brought mixed reactions, people questioning the fact that those having committed crimes were not punished. Local reactions became particularly evident when a group of former dissidents after first having stayed in Gwanda police rest camp, returned to their homes, only to three days later be back at the police station. Reportedly the former dissidents were not accepted by local community leaders and villagers because of their ‘past deeds’ (Former, 1988). Perhaps under internal pressure, the government soon took back their offer of rehabilitation programmes. Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Mr. E. Mnangagwa stated in parliament that ‘They [the dissidents] were granted an amnesty so that they could join society, but to say the Government should find resources to look after the ex-dissidents is taking it too far’ (Minister, 1988).

Many of the former dissidents had gone from one war to the next, having had little time for education or securing themselves financially. Creating a new starting point in this scarce situation was difficult. Fearing that the lack of future perspectives could set in motion new anti-government sentiments, local officials and non-governmental groups decided to act. The Zimbabwe Project and CCJP assisted in setting up one mining and two agricultural co-operatives, absorbing a majority of the former dissidents through offering self-sustaining projects (Maier, 1988; interview Nyathi, 1994).

Pardon of Convicted Criminals

In a move to ‘parallel’ the reconciliatory gesture of dissident Amnesty, the government announced in June 1988 the release of 75 members of security forces, serving terms for murders or ill-treatment of suspects in the course of the Matabele-

---

391 Zimbabwe Project is a local NGO who are focusing their work on helping ex-combatants to start development and training schemes.

392 In an effort to seek support for their new projects, cleanse themselves, and initiate contact with former Zapu leadership, ex-dissidents visited shrines and consulted ancestral spirits. Zapu politicians failed however to respond to the invitations for these ceremonies, resulting in disappointment and tension amongst ex-dissidents. For elaboration, see Alexander 1996:29–31.
land conflict (Thornycroft, 1988). The decision created an uproar amongst human rights activists, who believed that members of the Fifth Brigade, CIO and the ZNA convicted in the court of law (unlike the dissidents) did not deserve to be released. CCJP's chairperson Mike Auret appalled by the decision, stated that ‘No society should tolerate men like these being freed unconditionally’ (Thornycroft, 1988). The government justified its decision on the grounds of ‘political balance’, government officials arguing that the move was to assuage discontent within the ZNA and Zanu (PF). Africa Watch dismissed this stand by arguing that where as the dissidents acted on individual basis, the security forces did not and were furthermore government servants with a responsibility for protecting human rights of Zimbabweans. Allowing members of the security forces to be pardoned, Africa Watch argued, signalled to government agents that in practice they were immune to punishment for human rights abuses (Carver 1989:22). Thus, the government argued ‘parallel’ between the pardon and the amnesty was seen by human rights activists to be a false one.

6.c. The Interpreted Meanings of Unity

Whilst government representatives and press described the unity agreement as a ‘miracle’, inferring it to be such an extraordinary occurrence that it surpassed all known human powers, the meaning of what unity entailed varied most considerably amongst the population and within the united party. Cleavages in meaning were pronounced centrally and locally in both Zanu and Zapu, differentiation's which would affect political development in this new political era.

In the higher echelons of Zanu (PF) it was clear that unity was necessary as a stepping stone to the desired one-party state (Mutasa 1989:290). This system, considered a more democratic order, would empower the ruling party to implement its program without competition from an opposition. As Mugabe stated:

Notwithstanding the temporary nature of its mass base, national unity under Zanu (PF) discourages the formation of opposition parties by exposing their bankruptcy in political programme and ideological direction. Indeed, against the background of the existence of a united, mass democratic, socialist oriented national party, what political programme and ideological direction can an opposition party give to the people as an alternative? Such a party will have to feebly rely upon discredited personality cults, regionalism and tribalism, the forces which unity under Zanu (PF) has rejected with contempt (Mugabe 1989:357).

Thus, in Mugabe’s view, all that could possibly be desired with regards to political program and ideological direction, fitted within the realm of the united Zanu (PF)
and was offered through this party. No opposition parties were needed, any attempts were doomed as anti-democratic tendencies and rejected with contempt. Therefore in this perception, Zapu with its similar party program and ideology, had made no concessions signing the unity agreement. This only serious opposition party now having merged with Zanu, did not lose out on the unity deal. As put by Mr. D. Mutasa ‘What must be always borne in mind is that unity was not a compromise between the two parties Zanu (PF) and PF-Zapu, and not the defeat or victory of one party over the other’ (Mutasa 1989:298). The agreement was an ‘organic merger’ of two parties, and an agreement of the ‘two major Shona and Ndebele tribes to forget past differences’ (Mugabe 1989: 351). To unify in this way was a natural conclusion since, as Mugabe gathered, ‘It was admittedly lack of unity which had given rise to the dissident problem’ (Mugabe 1989:339). Therefore, Zanu (PF) argued, it was the ‘duty’ of Zanu an Zapu to ‘represent the wishes and aspirations of Zimbabweans by entering into a unity agreement’ (Saboteurs, 1988). This particular presented meaning of unity obviously leaves out the notion of power, its inclusion no doubt having cast a different light on the meaning of unity.

Perceptions expressed by central Zapu politicians gave meaning to the unity agreement in the form of a process, not a singular event, which would eventually lead to national integration (Nkomo 1989:304). The killing had stopped in Matabeleland, the military occupation of the region was over. Zapu members were no longer under suspicion of being enemies’ of the state, their national political legitimacy had been restored. Ambiguities regarding the way in which this status was re-in-stated, and the content of the unity achieved, were met by Nkomo stating ‘Unity first, solutions later’ (Alexander/McGregor 1996:23). In a centrally orchestrated manner, unity was forged, and now had to be accepted by Zapu members. It was perceived that a way of reaching acceptance of the Unity Accord, was to work for meaningful development in the affected areas, through the framework of the new united party. Central Zapu figure Dumiso Dabengwa stated that if unity was to be genuine Zapu must go into the new party as a strong unit, contributing new ideas both regarding the party and the development of the country’s economy – adding: ‘That old Zanu (PF) I am not joining. I am joining a new party’(Whaley 1988:15).

At lower levels of Zanu (PF), convictions regarding the unity agreement were not as convincing as the ones centrally expressed. Within Zanu(PF) the idea lingered that unity would not have been necessary, a one-party state could have been created without considering Matabeleland voters. Nevertheless, now that unity had taken place, Zanu (PF) should remain exactly the same, no changes were necessary to accommodate the entry of the former Zapu members.
Similarly to Zanu (PF), at lower levels of PF-Zapu the benefits of unity perceived centrally were not always mirrored locally. The scars from the security force operations were not ready for any healing, and deep resentment and suspicion against Zanu (PF) persisted. In Lupane Zapu members at first refused unity, questioning how they could ‘join the enemy’ (Alexander/McGregor 1996:23). At Dukwe refugee camp (Botswana), Nkomo met resistance when urging the Zimbabwean refugees to return home: unity did not convince all civilians of their rights nor their security (Nkomo, 1988). The party merger caused bitterness. Zapu chairman Naisen Ndlovu calling the Matabeleland conflict ‘an exercise to silence Zapu members’, stated that in this conflict ‘people died’ but ‘none ever abandoned their party for the mercy of their killers’ (Whaley 1988:15). Particularly having experienced the violence, some felt the Unity Accord was nothing less than a ‘broad daylight’ surrender to Zanu (PF): a document signed without the consultation of party members, rubber stamped at the special congress, and then at rallies intimidated to acceptance (Whaley 1988:15). As a result of resistance and bitterness unity was accepted but with elements of distrust, translating in the maintenance of Zapu identity and loyalty within the merged party. The possible advantage now sought and expected by many was in immediate rewards. As put by a Zapu member ‘Most of the benefits [so far] have gone to Zanu areas. If we can get a fair deal now – that is all that counts’ (Baum, 1988).

6.d. Concluding Remarks

Despite the diversity of reactions to what unity stood for and which meaning it should be given, it was unanimously acknowledged that the Unity Accord brought one important change: the end of the Matabeleland conflict. Seemingly one lesson was learned, as Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. M. Mahachi, explained:

I want to stress an important fact. The fact is that this country has achieved unity, not through a military victory, but surely through a political solution. The solution to the problem of the dissidents was political (Bandits, 1988).

Thus, admittedly the government’s fierce military campaign had not achieved the government’s goals. Tragically, innocent civilians paid the price for this strategic miscalculation. However, what Zanu (PF) could count as a victory – resulting from seven years of conflict – was the incapacitation of its only serious power competitor PF-Zapu. As Weitzer noted, the merger resulted ‘not from the force of argument, but from the argument of force’ (1990:186). Despite the official discourse of a ‘win-win deal’, Mugabe did admit the agreement ending in Nkomo ‘conceding an awful lot’ (Mutasa 1989:290). Zapu’s concessions signalled for Mugabe the end
of a complex operation to remove Zapu as an obstacle of a legislated one-party state. In terms of state power, with the removal of its key challenger, Zanu’s position of hegemony was reaffirmed. From this perspective the Unity Accord was far from a ‘miracle’, but rather the culmination of a power struggle between two parties in which one had to bend for the other. A struggle which was realised at an extremely high cost to civilians, who upon the struggle’s culmination were asked to ‘cast the light of sanity on the history of division and, at the same time, to start afresh without letting the wounds weep’ (Whaley 1988:29).
Voices Section Six


After eight years of experience we have examined the position in the country: the interest of the people, the interest of our parties and the interest of the leadership and we have come to no other conclusion than that unity would enhance our freedom and independence.... We would hope that those who yesterday felt they had cause to wage a political fight because we were divided, can now take note and cognisance of our unity and lay down their arms, come and join the rest of the people and work constructively for the nation. Robert Mugabe.393

Comrades, we in Zapu have always said, and I continue on this signing day and this sealing of the fact, that the unity we have attached our names to, Cde Robert Gabriel Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, means the real unity of our people. There is no going back. The continuance of this unity is essential for the future of our country. We do not want to leave behind us the legacy of division of the people of Zimbabwe. We want to lay the beginning of the foundation of one people, one nation. Joshua Nkomo.394

For us, it is in the blood. We have chosen leaders, we are loyal to that person until the end of whatever the circumstances and whatever he does, good or bad... Surely, we are now living under Mugabe’s Zanu government, but we are there through marriage, not that we’ve switched to Mugabe, but that we followed our leaders loyally into that marriage. But we’re still Zapu in that marriage: a woman doesn’t lose her maiden name even if she uses her husband’s name. Former Lupane MP and Headmaster.395

If you look at the comment that the end justifies the means, at the end of the Fifth Brigade period, the Matabeles did sign a peace agreement with the Shonas. So they [the Fifth Brigade] had achieved their aim. Lionel Dyke.396

I am not saying that the repression in Matabeleland was positive in that it brought unity. I am saying that it was then (PF) Zapu was beaten into the Unity Accord. They had no alternative, or people would be finished in Matabeleland. Arnold Sibanda.397

393 From speech at signing of Unity Accord (Speeches, 1988).
394 From speech at signing of Unity Accord (Speeches, 1988).
397 Interview with Arnold Sibanda, Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies (ZIDS), University of Zimbabwe, 17 November, 1993.
Unity is good for this country because it brought quietness and calm. There is not so much fear anymore, people are not being killed. But we are still not so sure about our security, there are ears in many places. James Ngwenya, Tsholotsho peasant.398

The Unity Accord by itself was nothing more than a piece of paper. The people of the region [Matabeleland] wanted to see something more concrete and this gesture of goodwill [dissident amnesty] has probably done more to convince them than any amount of political sloganeering or unity rallies. Matabeleland resident.399

The situation had forced us to become dissidents. At Amnesty we were saying that we are going back. If they [the government] change their minds, it is up to them. They cannot kill all of us. If they kill this man, they have not destroyed the whole ZAPU. Because wherever you go in Matabeleland, there is ZAPU. So it did not matter if they had killed us [at Amnesty]. We were not afraid. Because we were based on unity, that was our major point, to build a unity accord. For everyone to live without fear, to become one people. We were not afraid of that [to give up under amnesty], because that [unity] was in our ideology. You cannot be afraid of your ideology. You sacrifice, whether you die or you survive. Former Dissident.400

After the announcement of the Unity and the announcement of the Amnesty we were sure that we would not be hanged. But we still thought that there might be some means by the government to try to frustrate us. What we had been fighting for we achieved, the unity between ZANU/ZAPU. Therefore even if we were going to be accused of whatever, we would be OK. The people was in Unity. Even if we had to die at this point, it did not matter. Former Dissident.401

Unity between our parties has removed the reason why many of us were fighting. We felt excluded from Government after independence, despite having fought for our freedom from the Rhodesians. The Government, however, has now offered us a chance to rebuild. Former dissident.402

398 Interview with James Ngwenay, Sukumuzenzele co-operative, Tsholotsho District, March 17, 1994.
399 Mackay 1988:19.
400 Interview with Anske Ngwenya, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye, Matabeleland North, 15 March, 1994.
401 Interview with M. Ndebele, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye co-operative, Matabeleland, 15 March, 1994.
402 Mackay 1988:19.
I heard about the amnesty on the radio. It was a stupid war with no direction and no leadership. When I heard the leaders were talking, why should I stay in the bush? The war is over and it is useless to go on fighting. Former dissident.\textsuperscript{403}

I am tired of all this. I just want to go and be a farmer. Former dissident.\textsuperscript{404}

Well, it [the Matabeleland conflict] brought about unity but whether that unity is wholehearted or not is questionable. But it did bring peace in terms of the stopping of the killing and the stopping of torture. M. Auret.\textsuperscript{405}

Zanu ruthlessly got its way. It finally caused Zapu to capitulate and come in as junior partners, and have a political unity arrangement as the result of intimidation and terror. Prof. G. Feltoe, University of Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{406}

This reconciliation, you know, we can interpret it in a different way. Maybe it is punishment, reconciliation under disguise. Come to me, I will absorb you but I will frustrate you. The government still believes that the Matabele people are not running behind it fully, wholeheartedly. They still have that notion that these people are not really supporting the government genuinely. Paul Nyathi.\textsuperscript{407}

Unity has really helped us because previously we were not settled in our homes. Unity has made us more co-operative than we were before when we grouped ourselves into Ndebeles, Shonas, Mazezuru, Karanga and Kalanga, but now we are one people and our leaders are working together towards the same end.... There is no longer anything to frighten and intimidate an individual because we are all Zimbabwean. Anyone can go to any district regardless of where they come from and that I come from Matabeleland does not hinder me from going to Mashonaland and feeling welcome there. Unity has brought a new Zimbabwe: it's as if we'd just become independent. A lot of bad things were happening in the villages in Matabeleland, but now many development projects have begun. Unity has changed everybody's life. Thema Khumalo, Esigodini.\textsuperscript{408}

\textsuperscript{403} Peace, 1988

\textsuperscript{404} Peace, 1988


\textsuperscript{406} Interview with Prof. G. Feltoe, Faculty of Law, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 23 February, 1994.


\textsuperscript{408} Staunton 1990:82.
We are building things here. There is gold in the stone that I carry. This wealth is the reason we came here. It means things are changing, things that were not here yesterday are here today. Yesterday it was difficult for people to talk about gold or about having a mine. But today the government has realised that people have the right to decide to develop their own country. Former dissident.

We have given ourselves to development, but the situation is still not yet really that much better. But it is up to the politicians to deal with it now, we will concentrate on developing ourselves.... When we gave into Amnesty, there was quite a lot of talk about that the government would help us and give us all we needed. But it ended there. We have not had any assistance from the government. All we got here is from Zimbabwe Project. Nothing else. We have no benefits although we were many years in the army. We don't get demobilisation money because we were dissidents. Former Dissident.

When I finished fighting I took a pick again and gave them back [the weapon] and said, 'Here is your gun'. They have got it now. I don't have nothing to do with guns any more. We are building something that has been shattered here. And we have to move with vigilance. Nobody is sure of anything. Because we are coming out exactly of a situation of killing. You know, here we are talking about something that is very difficult because also we are speaking for the dead. And the government must not drag its feet, because it said now it's passed and now we have to reconcile and build. But then how can I build when someone is still unburied or when someone lies in a shallow grave? It is hard to build. We must have a place to start. That is why we are in this world, not to kill each other. No, but to build the economies, to tap the natural resources, to control our economies, and to have our rights as human beings. That is all. Former Dissident.

The whole conflict was a historical one. Shona speaking people have never forgiven the Ndebele for years of humiliation and domination through Lobengula and others. The fact that the Ndebele speaking people are perceived as foreigners, and the fact that for years – up to 1963 – the liberation struggle was dominated by Ndebele leadership in the person of Joshua Nkomo. There are historical reasons why the majority has always had this sense of ‘we must sort out those people’, ‘we must get our own revenge’, but there must be an understanding that there is no basis any more for repetition. Exerting vengeance on an innocent people because of historical injustices does not make sense. But it is also power:

409 Morgan Nkomo (Zimbabwe Project, 1993).
410 Interview with Zwelibanzi Ndlovu, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Green Light cooperative, Matabeleland North, 14 March, 1994.
411 Collin Ndiweni, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident [Zimbabwe Project, 1993]
suppress the Ndebele, and they will not contest power in any form whatsoever. Paul Temba Nyathi.\textsuperscript{412}

As far as I am concerned, I would not call what happened in Matabeleland 1982 to 1987 a military action. It was a civil eradication of a certain community or a tribe. There was no war, there was not even any fighting. Even the Gukurahundi said that. What happened was politically motivated, in the sense that those who were responsible felt that the Matabele people were not in favour of the government of the day, not supporting the people in power. The whole time it was more or less a purge. Innocent people died because they happened to be found in those areas, and the Gukurahundi could not identify those who were targeted. A. Mkwananzi.\textsuperscript{413}

It would be wrong to bring about the word reconciliation in the relationships between blacks and blacks, especially Shona and Ndebele. That would be very wrong. We in Zimbabwe, the blacks, have always lived as one people, not on tribal lines. Yes, we might have fought tribal wars before but once that was done, it was over. There has never been a question of reconciliation after Independence between the Shona and the Ndebele. We have lived like that [as one people] and this is one reason why Zimbabwe succeeded, this is one reason why we have remained a peaceful country, we do not depend upon tribal and regional politics, and this is what has saved us compared with other places. Nelson Mawema, Zanu (PF).\textsuperscript{414}

The ethnic problem was then [1980s] reviewed in the sense that those in government, those in Zanu (PF), and I think those in most parts of Zimbabwe thought that the so called dissidents, were the first step towards secession. Dr. Kambudzi, University of Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{415}

I think the effect [of the Matabeleland conflict] was that most people were influenced by tribalism, it was tribalist politics. The effect was that the quarrels of two different tribes and two different parties. It led some people to use tribalistic politics. You cannot destroy somebody's origin. You cannot. Those people were coming here and talking historical politics, saying that the Ndebele people are invaders from South Africa. They said and they wanted to kill all men, and take the women and children. Former Dissident.\textsuperscript{416}

\textsuperscript{412} Interview with Paul Temba Nyathi, Director of Zimbabwe Project, Harare, 1 December, 1993.

\textsuperscript{413} Interview with Member of Parliament (Tsholotsho), Mr. A. Mkwananzi, Harare, 10 May, 1994.

\textsuperscript{414} Interview with Mr. Nelson Mawema, Director for Commissariat and Culture, Zanu (PF), Harare, 16 November 1993.

\textsuperscript{415} Interview with Dr. Kambudzi, Department of Politics and Administration, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 23 November, 1993.

\textsuperscript{416} Interview with Obert Dube, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye co-operative, Matabeleland North, 15 March, 1994.
It [the Matabeleland Conflict] was a mistake because of the misinformation that came to government. It was all mostly due to deliberate misinformation by the former Rhodesian security to bring about strife in the country. There were certain elements within the Cabinet that remained who, I want to suspect, I have no proof of that, but who I suspect, for one reason or another decided to go along with the misinformation and decided to act in the manner they did. They decided to use it and some of them, to use it for their own personal benefits. To maintain their positions in government. If the South Africans would have not [been involved], I don’t think that it would have ever happened. In the first place, all the things that took place: the expulsion of ZAPU Cabinet ministers in government would have not happened; the arrests of the military leaders would have not happened; and the cashing of weapons, to the extent that they were done, would have not happened. Dumiso Dabengwa.417

I do not think that it would have made any difference whether South Africa existed or not. I think there would have still been a desire to liquidate ZAPU and create a one-party State, with or without ZAPU. Dr. Machava-Hove, ZimRights.418

The ZANU (PF) government wanted to control this country through a one-party state. Matabeleland was a very hard nut to crack. Therefore they wanted to have an excuse to militarise the situation, and therefore purposely created civil conflict and war. Then they could send in the army – the Fifth Brigade – and do what they did. Nicholas Ndebele.419

If the government had tried to address their problems peacefully, nothing like this could have happened. Because it was the government who created the dissidents by sending in the Fifth Brigade. That was not a solution. Paul Nyathi.420

I would not call it a civil war myself because I regard a civil war in a different way, like armed people fighting each other, like two opposite groups fighting each other. But the situation in Matabeleland was quite different because it was a well established army fighting innocent civilians. Paul Nyathi.421

The Fifth Brigade was fighting a tribe. They were not fighting the dissidents, the people that held a gun. They were actually out to destroy the Matabele. The Fifth Brigade

417 Interview with Minister of Home Affairs, Dumiso Dabengwa, Harare, 21 April, 1994.
421 Ibid.
disguised themselves as dissidents, or else just came into the community and destroyed them bit by bit. This is the right time to say everything out. We should say everything but not put accusations to anybody. They should just talk about things so that people would be aware about what happened. Since there is a Unity Accord, they should work on that unity even more. Talk about the unity freely and explain to each other what was happening here. If even it would be known that somebody had killed. Former Dissident.422

Everything should be revealed. People must know. Those who think that if everything is exposed about the Fifth Brigade can start new fighting, maybe those people are those who are actually putting the pressure on the differences between Zanla and Zipra. People must be aware that those people can still be amongst us. They might still be trying to influence us into fighting once more. People must talk about what happened freely and to know about their background and history. Former Dissident.423

If it was a government that knew of its rights, but this government does not. It does not follow the existing rights. It is a government that creates its own rights which are for the government officers only. Somebody must say this thing out. There will be many ways to try to punish who ever exposes this. But for how long are we going to have it like this? Who does it help? For whose good? Rafael Khoza.424

You don’t bury history, you leave it as it is. No new word, no new paint, no new colour should be put over it. No reason should be given which was not there. If you hide the fact that caused trouble at a particular time, it will repeat itself because people will never know. Misheck Velapi, former Zapu member.425

Up to today there are people missing, nobody knows where they went to. The mine shafts are full of skeletons and skulls. And it looks like they [the government] do not want this to be looked into in depth. Just forget it, just bury the hatchet and forget about the past, and let us build a nation. But in order to build a nation we have to rectify our mistakes by exposing the past. People must be aware of the past, not to hide it. Paul Nyathi.426

422 Interview with M. Ndebele, Zipra ex-combatant and former dissident, Sibantubanye co-operative, Matabeleland North, 15 March, 1994.
423 Ibid.
424 Interview with Rafael Khoza, former ZNA medic attached to the Fifth Brigade in Kezi (February-April 1984), Bulawayo, 15 March, 1994.
425 Whaley 1988:15
How do you begin to build a nation when there is a festering sense of insecurity in one part of the population – in a group representing more than 20 percent of the population? Paul Temba Nyahti.\(^{427}\)

We are still not free.... We still can be eliminated at any time.... This wound is huge and deep. I have young children, but they’ve never set foot here and don’t intend to.... I’m staying alone like a mad person. There are still barriers.... The liberation war was painful, but it had a purpose, it was planned, face to face. The war that followed was much worse. It was fearful, unforgettable and unacknowledged. Councillor and headman, Malunku.\(^{428}\)

I do not believe you can get any genuine resolution of the problem if you patch it up and are not prepared to delve into the depth of that particular problem. In my role in bringing ZAPU and ZANU together, for instance, there was a point where it was quite clear that there was a very deep mistrust not only between the parties but also between the leadership. We needed to build bridges. I think that President Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo ought to talk about things themselves and find a way to handle them. I think that the government would actually be a lot more respected if they were seen not to be hiding anything. I do not believe that you serve any useful purpose by covering up and ignoring certain factors, facts and realities. You would do well to deal with them head on so that they will not resurface in some ugly form.

Prof. Canaan Banana, University of Zimbabwe.\(^{429}\)

The best apology as far as I am concerned, is to get the government to show their responsibility. Dumiso Dabengwa.\(^{430}\)

I won’t apologise. This is what happens in a war. Robert Mugabe.\(^{431}\)

\(^{427}\) Interview with Paul Temba Nyahti, Director of Zimbabwe Project, Harare 1 December, 1993.


\(^{429}\) Interview with Prof. Canaan Banana [Zimbabwe’s President 1980–1987, and chief mediator in the Unity Accord negotiations], University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 29 November, 1993.

\(^{430}\) Interview with Minister of Home Affairs, Dumiso Dabengwa, Harare, 21 April, 1994.

\(^{431}\) Robert Mugabe, addressing a rally in ‘Meet the People’ tour of Zimbabwe, regarding the Fifth Brigade atrocities (Tell me, 1993).
7. Concluding Remarks

The Matabeleland conflict was a tremendous loss for Zimbabwe. No actor involved was left untouched. The heaviest burden was however carried by civilians who were subjected to immense trauma through economic damage, physical injuries, and psychological disorders. The immediate political impact of the conflict cemented deep-seated perceptions of exclusion, mistrust, and apathy. In the national fabric the conflict brought about division and ethnic antagonism.

Results and consequences of the above magnitude could partly be foreshadowed during the course of the conflict. After seven years of selected targeting, neither trauma nor political apathy could come as a surprise to those politically responsible. Therefore it is important to note that the government to a great extent dictated the way in which the conflict developed. Had the government had the political wish to find means for a peaceful solution of the conflict, this could have been achieved at an early stage. Decisions were taken at many conjunctures, chances to find avenues of lesser aggression were present. However, the government’s intent was not to search for political solutions with the dissidents, not to accept their failure to legally tie Zapu to destabilisation, nor to bend for the fact that Zapu was a vibrant opposition party. Instead, its calculated actions had an explicit political purpose: incapacitating its main opposition and creating a one-party state, composed of a Zanu (PF) hegemony. This incapacitation was conducted through a deliberate policy of civilian targeting, in which not only Zapu members but also all those considered of Ndebele ethnic origin, were subject to unprecedented organised state violence.

Perceiving the conflict from this angle, as here argued, dissident destabilisation was a side event in this conflict, although publicly presented as the centre of the conflict. The ex-Zipra dissidents having taken to the bush in self defence and because of their deep seated convictions, turned out to be an opportunity which Zanu (PF) took (and created) as tool for manipulation in their quest to immobilise Zapu. That great capital was made out of a relatively small threat is evident when considering how few dissidents were active, as compared the government’s large-scale regional military occupation. Ironically, whilst dissidents caused destabilisation to press for changes in government policies, the government caused destabilisation justified by dissident actions, in order to implement its own political program. The ex-Zipra dissidents were thus fundamentally used for exclusive Zanu (PF) political benefit, whilst fighting for Zapu political recognition and political unity.
Unity did come about. A structural framework for political co-existence was created, although by many experienced as a surrender rather than a merger. The unity accord was celebrated as a result of a cause long attempted, power competition set aside. However, as those affected may want to remember, unity was not forged in terms of a historical exercise with a pre-determined resolution. It was rather the result of skilful political manoeuvring, in which the costs were high. The Matabeleland conflict was not a dispute which coincidentally moved in the currents of violence and destabilisation. It was a political power competition in which ethnicity was mobilised, in which the government manipulated its course at the expense of the citizens, in which the price was paid by innocent civilians, and in which the final result led to the ‘unification’ of two political parties – but in which the nation remained scared and divided.