

Nationalism and exile in an age of solidarity: Frelimo–ZANU relations in Mozambique (1975–1980)

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Abstract

This article contributes to our knowledge on the intricate relations between host governments and liberation movements and on the workings of transnational military partnerships in the anti-colonial struggles of the 1970s, through an examination of the political and military relationship between Mozambique's Frelimo (host) and Zimbabwe's ZANU liberation movement. There is a dearth of critical perspectives on the nature of host–liberation movement relations, more so from the point of view of hosts. The article begins to shed light on un-researched Frelimo evaluations of its relationship with ZANU. I utilise the perspectives of Mozambican political elites and non-elites to argue that Frelimo's support for ZANU was partly motivated by feelings of genuine solidarity. Frelimo–ZANU relations were frosty at first because Frelimo regarded ZANU as an inauthentic liberation movement. ZANU won Frelimo over by demonstrating cogent commitment to armed struggle. However, improved Frelimo–ZANU relations were characterised by disagreements over guerrilla tactics, ZANU guerrillas' objections to Frelimo soldiers' relationships with Zimbabwean women at the warfront, and the unpragmatic approaches of some ZANU elements towards the possibility of a negotiated independence for Zimbabwe. In addition to Frelimo's backing, ZANU received support from ordinary Mozambican citizens, particularly those who lived in areas along the Rhodesia–Mozambique border. The support of Mozambican citizens for ZANU was encouraged by Frelimo's revolutionary ideology and by the common ancestry, language and culture of Mozambicans and Zimbabweans living in the border zones. The case of Frelimo and ZANU underlines the point that hosts' influence on liberation movements' internal politics must be seen as limited by the interests and agency of liberation movements themselves. But Frelimo held decisive authority on the right to withdraw support on its territory, which it used as an inducement on ZANU to agree a negotiated independence settlement in 1979.

Introduction

In many parts of southern Africa, independence came after prolonged nationalist armed struggles against white minority regimes. The struggle for liberation in southern Africa was not confined to the region proper, but extended to other parts of Africa. As a result, some independent African countries became important host nations, both for the southern African liberation movements and refugee populations from the region.¹ Southern African

¹ T. Sellström, *Sweden and National Liberation in Southern Africa, Volume 2: Solidarity and Assistance 1970–1994* (Uppsala, Nordic African Institute, 2002).

liberation movements Southern African liberation movements developed political and military co-operation with each other, establishing regional networks of patronage and dependence, fighting side by side, living in the same neighbourhoods and camps, exchanging views and information, and hosting each other.² It is in part because of this spirit of co-operation that the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo) established political and military co-operation with the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in the early 1970s, to launch its offensive into Rhodesia alongside its own campaign in Mozambique. Following the dawn of Mozambican independence in 1975, Frelimo allowed ZANU's military wing, the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), formally to establish guerrilla bases on Mozambican soil.

This article examines the views of Frelimo elites and Mozambican citizens on the relationship between Frelimo and ZANU from 1975 to 1980. Ngwabi Bhebe, David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, Zvakanyorwa Sadomba, Agrippah Mutambara, Fay Chung, Edgar Tekere and Wilfred Mhanda all refer, in varying degrees, to the political and military relationship between Frelimo and ZANU during this period.³ These authors, on the whole, present the Frelimo–ZANU relationship in a generally positive light, with Frelimo credited for having aided ZANU's struggle for Zimbabwe's liberation in a more committed manner than did Zambia, which was ZANU's initial primary host in exile. The principal exception to this general thrust is Mhanda's (*nom de guerre*: Dzinashe Machingura) autobiography, which offers a more complicated account of the Frelimo–ZANU relationship. Mhanda extols Frelimo's resuscitation of the Zimbabwean armed struggle through its formation and hosting of the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) after the arrest of ZANLA's key political leaders in 1975. He conveys regret for disregarding Frelimo's 1975–76 criticism of ZIPA military leaders' association with the leadership of Robert Mugabe. At the same time, Mhanda expresses bitterness and resentment towards Frelimo for the role it played in ZIPA's liquidation in 1977 and his subsequent incarceration by Frelimo until 1980. A critical shortcoming in these works is that they do not make the accounts of Frelimo and ordinary Mozambicans, who played a part in hosting ZANU, central to their analyses. Added to this is the fact that the exact nature of the Frelimo–ZANU relationship has been marginal to the concerns of historians. The autobiographical accounts of Frelimo elites, such as Jose Moiane, who interacted with ZANU in the period concerned, also do not discuss Frelimo–ZANU relations in critical terms.⁴ This is partly because, as Amelia Neves de Souto explains, the writing of 'personal memoirs is a completely new phenomenon in Mozambique. Some are simple accounts, with no objectives or aims other than telling the story of what the author believes was important in his or her

² J. Day, *International Nationalism: The Extra-Territorial Relations of Southern Rhodesian African Nationalists* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

³ W. Mhanda, *Dzino: Memories of a Freedom Fighter* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2011); D. Martin and P. Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (Harare, African Publishing Group, 2012); F. Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2007); N. Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1999); E. Tekere, *A Lifetime of Struggle* (Harare, SAPES Books, 2006); Z.W. Sadomba, *War Veterans in Zimbabwe's Revolution: Challenging Neo-Colonialism and Settler and International Capital* (London, James Currey, 2011); A. Mutambara, *The Rebel in Me: A ZANLA Guerrilla Commander in the Rhodesian Bush War, 1974–1980* (Pinetown, 30 Degrees South Publishers, 2014).

⁴ See J.P. Moiane, *Memórias de Um Guerrilheiro na Frente de Combate* (Maputo, King Ngungunhane Institute, 2009).

life's journey'.⁵ Another likely reason is that the politics of preserving Frelimo–ZANU liberation solidarity in the independence years has inhibited critical reflection by Mozambicans on the partnership.

This article begins to address these shortcomings in the literature by bringing to the forefront the perspectives of Mozambicans, elites and non-elite, on the Frelimo–ZANU relationship. I draw on evaluations of secondary sources and primary material such as Mozambican press articles on the subject, particularly those in the daily *Notícias* and the weekly *Tempo*, which were the most important and widespread Frelimo publications in the independence period. Crucially, I make use of qualitative research interviews with pertinent Frelimo elites and non-elites and a sample of Mozambicans residing in the border areas who aided ZANU in its liberation struggle. Drawing on these materials, I argue that Frelimo's co-operation with ZANU was partly motivated by authentic solidarity with the cause of Zimbabwean liberation. Ordinary Mozambicans, principally those who lived in the border areas in Manica, Tete and Chicualacuala, partook in this extension of support to ZANU because of Frelimo's revolutionary ideology and political propaganda, which strongly enunciated that Mozambique's liberation was incomplete in the absence of independence for its Zimbabwean neighbours. This promotion from above of a sense of solidarity was aided by factors operating below: that is, the common ancestry, language and culture of Mozambicans and Zimbabweans living in the border zones. None the less, Frelimo was not supportive of ZANU initially because it saw ZANU as having created unnecessary division in the Zimbabwean liberation movement through its 1963 break away from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Frelimo–ZANU relations improved only because of ZANU's effective demonstration of a stronger commitment to and plan for armed struggle than ZAPU. Still, improved Frelimo–ZANU relations were far from uncomplicated, because of disagreements over guerrilla tactics. Furthermore, certain ZANLA guerrillas opposed Frelimo soldiers' involvement in intimate relationships with local women when they were operating in the Rhodesian warfront alongside ZANLA. Lastly, owing to the economic burden of hosting ZANU, Frelimo adopted a pragmatic approach to the fight for Zimbabwean independence. In practice, this meant that Frelimo actively supported ZANLA's military operations, but it was not averse to the possibility of a negotiated independence settlement. On the other hand, players such as Mhanda and a number of ZIPA commanders were entirely opposed to the prospect of a negotiated independence agreement at the 1976 Geneva conference. Mugabe also proved to be an unpragmatic negotiator at the 1979 Lancaster House independence conference. Consequently, Frelimo forced Mhanda and ZIPA to attend the 1976 Geneva conference, and in 1979 Mugabe agreed a settlement at Lancaster House after a firm warning from Frelimo that if he did not sign the agreement, Mozambique would cease to host ZANU.

We do not know enough about the complexity of relations between host governments and liberation movements operating from their territory, and we know even less about how transnational military relationships actually worked. This article goes some way towards addressing these lacunae by showing the extent of the political and military influence that hosts

⁵ A.N. de Souto, 'Memory and Identity in the History of Frelimo: Some Research Themes', *Kronos*, 39, 1 (2013).

wielded on liberation movements based in their countries. Frelimo used its influence as host to initiate an alliance between ZANU and ZAPU and their respective armies, and it took sides in ZANU's 1976–77 internal political leadership struggle. On both issues, Frelimo's word was hardly law, because the agency and interests of ZANU and ZAPU actors prevailed ultimately. But as we shall see, Frelimo retained its sovereign rights, thus it could one-sidedly determine how long ZANU continued to stage its liberation war from Mozambican soil.

The article begins with a brief analysis of the history of Frelimo–ZANU relations before Mozambican independence. This is in order to show that they were initially frosty and thawed only over time. After the next section, I examine the nature of co-operation between Frelimo and ZANU in Mozambique and Rhodesia, and the contribution of ordinary Mozambicans residing along Mozambique's borders with Rhodesia.

The Roots of Political Alliance: Frelimo and ZANU, 1968–1974

The beginnings of the relationship between ZANU and Frelimo were fraught with difficulty. As Martin and Johnson affirm, a coalition existed among a number of liberation movements in southern Africa that considered themselves as the 'authentic' groups struggling for the independence of their countries from colonial rule.⁶ These so called authentic movements included: Mozambique's Frelimo; ZAPU from Zimbabwe; Namibia's South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO); the African National Congress (ANC) from South Africa; and Angola's Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA). This coalition of liberation movements stood firm against rival movements in the region, which they labelled as inauthentic or dissident. These so called inauthentic southern African liberation movements were: ZANU; South Africa's Pan Africanist Congress (PAC); Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (FNLA) and União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA); and Comité Revolucionário de Moçambique (Coremo) from Mozambique. One of the factors that helped to forge the authentic alliance is that its constituent actors were all supported by the Soviet Union, while the inauthentic movements were backed mainly by China.⁷ Frelimo regarded ZANU with suspicion – more so since ZANU split from Frelimo's authentic ally, ZAPU, in 1963.⁸ For Frelimo, the formation of ZANU was a catalyst for further division in what ought to have been a single unitary liberation movement. Frelimo also had strong historical ties with ZAPU. Many Mozambican nationalists who went into exile in the early 1960s were supported by ZAPU, which helped them to create the União Democrática Nacional de Moçambique (Udenamo) in Rhodesia, and to leave Rhodesia for Tanzania, where they developed their political and military goals.⁹ Udenamo joined two other Mozambican nationalist movements, namely Mozambique African National Union (MANU) and União Africana de Moçambique Independente (UNAMI), to create Frelimo in 1962. Frelimo fighters also established close relationships with ZAPU

⁶ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Interview with Mariano Matsinha, Maputo, 9 October 2014. All interviews for this article were, unless otherwise stated, conducted in Portuguese and translated into English by the author.

⁹ M. Mboa, *Memórias da Luta Clandestina* (Maputo, Marambique, 2009); L.T. Ndelana, *Da Udenamo à Frelimo e à Diplomacia Moçambicana* (Maputo, Marambique, 2012); A. Bouene Mussanhane, *Protagonistas da Luta de Libertação Nacional* (Maputo, Marambique, 2012).

comrades at Kongwa camp in Tanzania from 1964 to 1966.¹⁰ In fact, in the 1960s Frelimo and ZAPU, as well as fighters from the ANC and SWAPO, had inhabited neighbouring camps at Kongwa, where they trained in guerrilla warfare. The liberation movements in Tanzania sometimes organised cultural events, to which they invited each other.¹¹ Lopes Tembe, a Frelimo veteran who trained at Kongwa camp and subsequently became an assistant of Samora Machel, points out that organised cultural events such as concerts, poetry reading and theatre took place on Fridays, with the objective of promoting inter-cultural exchanges.¹² He also stressed that relations were facilitated by the widespread use of Swahili by liberation movements to communicate with each other as well as with local people.¹³

ZANU, from the time of its formation in 1963, therefore had to work towards building trust with Frelimo, as well as with the Tanzanian and Zambian leaders. According to Matsinha, a Frelimo representative in Zambia who was responsible for organising the armed struggle in Tete province, the relationship between ZANU and Frelimo dates back to 1968, when ZANU first asked Frelimo if it could operate from Mozambique's Tete.¹⁴ ZANU made this request since it was geographically more convenient to open the north-eastern war front from Tete rather than from its Zambian base, and because Rhodesian forces had created a 'cordon sanitaire' along the Zambezi river.¹⁵ In the face of ZANU's strong commitment to armed struggle, Frelimo gradually began to allow ZANLA to carry out operations from areas that it controlled in Mozambique.¹⁶ This also allowed many people from Zimbabwe's rural areas to escape the war by fleeing to Mozambique and join the liberation struggle. However, Frelimo found it complicated to establish a formal military agreement with ZANU while maintaining a political alliance with ZAPU. According to Matsinha, the Frelimo leadership was concerned that a formal military agreement with ZANU would be seen by ZAPU as betrayal of the authentic coalition. Frelimo tried to manage a potential fallout with ZAPU by offering it an opportunity to open a military front through Tete, but ZAPU failed to seize the initiative owing to internal divisions created by a revolt in 1971.¹⁷ Matsinha stated that, in the long run, ZANU proved to be a serious liberation movement with clearer objectives than ZAPU about armed struggle, and this won it Frelimo's vote of confidence.¹⁸

In 1970 ZANU sent ZANLA guerrillas for refresher training to Frelimo's front in Tete. The first ZANLA guerrillas to be sent to Tete were Meya Urimbo, Justin Chaúke and William Ndangana. A subsequent ZANLA group included Josiah Tongogara, Joseph Chimurenga, Rex Nhongo and Dakarai Badza.¹⁹ While some of these militants took refresher courses only, others

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ C. Williams, 'Living in Exile: Daily Life and International Relations at SWAPO's Kongwa Camp', *Kronos*, 37, 1 (2011).

¹² Interview with Lopes Tembe, Maputo, 9 March 2015. Tembe was indicated as the official translator for Frelimo and ZANLA militants. Tembe speaks Shona, Ndebele and English because he lived in South Africa and Rhodesia during 1950s and 1960s.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Interview with Mariano Matsinha, Maputo, 9 October 2014.

¹⁵ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ D. Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation', in N. Bhebe and T. Ranger (eds), *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (London, James Currey, 1995).

¹⁸ Interview with Mariano Matsinha, Maputo, 30 October 2014.

¹⁹ Moiane, *Memórias de Um Guerrilheiro*.

participated in a number of battles with Frelimo against the Portuguese colonial army.²⁰ ZANLA cadres also received Frelimo training focused on how effectively to mobilise the masses in Rhodesia to support ZANU and to assist by transporting weapons.²¹ In fact, in the early 1970s, when ZANU was building up material supplies and transferring weaponry from Chifombo in Zambia to Mucumbura on the border between Mozambique and Rhodesia, Mozambican peasants assisted them in transporting large quantities of ammunition to the Zimbabwean border.²² Tete was an important operational sphere for Frelimo in central Mozambique for many reasons. First, by holding Tete it could halt the Portuguese offensive on the Cabo Delgado and Niassa fronts. Second, this front would in turn allow Frelimo forces to advance on Manica and Sofala provinces, as well as enabling contact with much of the civilian population. Finally, Frelimo could threaten the on-going construction of the Cahora Bassa dam.²³

When ZANLA began military operations from Tete in 1972, Rhodesian troops attacked the region, bombing Frelimo- and ZANLA-controlled areas constantly. This complicated Frelimo's own military action there, but Frelimo continued to support ZANLA.²⁴ According to Tembe, support for ZANLA also came from the people of Tete, who had been collaborating with Frelimo since the beginning of the struggle in that area.²⁵ Besides supplying ZANLA with food, the people of Tete also carried ZANLA's weapons and other military materials to the border with Rhodesia and offered shelter to Zimbabwean refugees in Tete.²⁶ However, the support that Frelimo gave to ZANU was not restricted to this area. In 1973, Tobias Dai, a Frelimo military instructor at Nachingwea camp in Tanzania, received a military contingent, composed only of women, of nearly 100 ZANLA recruits for a six-month training course. According to Dai, the training given to the Zimbabwean guerrillas was different from that given to their Frelimo counterparts, because the Rhodesian forces, in contrast to the Portuguese military, used a wider range of air power, particularly attack helicopters.²⁷ After Mozambican independence in June 1975, ties between Frelimo and ZANU became stronger. Frelimo hosted ZANLA, first alongside ZIPRA as part of ZIPA, from 1975 to 1976. ZIPA was a creation of Machel and the Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, in order to further the Zimbabwean armed struggle amid deep division between the nationalist politicians.²⁸ Frelimo continued to host ZANLA after ZIPRA withdrew from ZIPA in July 1976. Let me now turn to exploring in greater detail Frelimo's relationship with ZANU from 1975 onwards.

Frelimo and ZANU after 1975

Mozambicans welcomed independence in 1975 with great euphoria. Frelimo's propaganda stressed that Mozambique's victory over Portuguese colonialism was made possible by the

²⁰ 'The War is Here, Everywhere!', interview conducted by anon. with Josiah Tongogara, published in *Zimbabwe News*, 10, 3 (1978).

²¹ Interview with José Moiane, Maputo, 14 October 2012. Moiane was Frelimo's Commander on the Tete front between 1970 and 1974.

²² 'The War is Here, Everywhere!'.

²³ See J.P. Borges Coelho, *O Início da Luta Armada em Tete, 1968–1969: A Primeira Fase da Guerra e a Reacção Colonial* (Maputo, Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique, 1989).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Interview with Lopes Tembe, Maputo, 9 March 2015.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Interview with Tobias Dai, Maputo, 30 September 2015.

²⁸ Mhanda, *Dzino*.

support and solidarity of many countries. Particular emphasis was given to the role played by Tanzania and Zambia, both of which hosted Frelimo military bases, from where war operations were co-ordinated for the liberation of Mozambique. Frelimo formalised Mozambique's support to ZANU in 1975, following the proclamation of national independence. The constitution of 1975 stated that 'the People's Republic of Mozambique gives its support and solidarity to the struggle of the people for national liberation in the world'.²⁹ When Frelimo became a vanguard Marxist-Leninist party in 1977, it reinforced the idea that solidarity with the Zimbabwean struggle and Zimbabwean refugees, as well as with exiled South African nationalists, was an intrinsic aspect of Mozambican citizenship. The so-called 'proletarian internationalism was expected to be an indispensable element in the character of a Mozambican citizen'.³⁰ Thus, Frelimo adopted a radical stance in relation to ZANU, allowing it to establish its main military bases and refugee camps in Mozambique while pressuring (with Tanzania's support) ZANU and ZAPU to unite under one military command.³¹ For the African leaders, the unity of the Zimbabwean liberation movements was essential for victory over the white Rhodesian regime. It is important to underline that this attempt to unite Zimbabwean liberation movements started in 1974, during what became known as the *détente* exercise, in which the front-line leaders, Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Botswana's Seretse Khama and Machel (who was not yet head of state), tried to unite the divided Zimbabwean nationalist parties, the African National Council (ANC), the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (Frolizi), ZANU and ZAPU, so that they could negotiate as a united front for an independence agreement with prime minister Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front (RF) government.³²

The *détente* exercise did not succeed, because there was little genuine commitment to it from any side. The Smith regime wanted to use it as an instrument to eliminate the liberation guerrillas, while the nationalists remained deeply divided.³³ Another explanation for the failure of *détente* lies in the fact that it was originally an idea developed by Zambia and South Africa, rather than by the Zimbabwean liberation movements and the RF regime themselves. The Zambian government promoted *détente* for economic reasons: its economy was dependent on Rhodesia and South Africa. All Zambian exports and 95 per cent of its imports travelled through transport networks controlled by South Africa and Rhodesia or by the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. Zambia would pay a significant economic price for a prolonged independence war in Rhodesia.³⁴ The South African apartheid regime promoted the coming to power of a moderate black government in Rhodesia because it feared the alternative – the rise to power of a radical communist government – that would leave it isolated as the last bastion of anti-communism in the region.³⁵

²⁹ '25 June 1975: Independence of the People's Republic of Mozambique', *Mozambique Revolution*, 61 (Lourenço Marques, Frelimo's Department of Information, 1975).

³⁰ 'O Partido e as Classes Trabalhadoras Moçambicanas na Edificação da Democracia Popular: Relatório do Comité Central ao 3º Congresso' (Maputo, Departamento do Trabalho Ideológico, 1977).

³¹ Mhanda, *Dzino*.

³² Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.

³³ Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga*; Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.

³⁴ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

The failure of the détente initiative and the nationalist politicians' wrangling resulted in Machel and Nyerere turning their efforts to supporting Zimbabwe's armed struggle.³⁶ In fact, with the independence of Mozambique, ZANLA transferred its headquarters from Zambia to Mozambique, where they co-ordinated all infiltration operations through eastern Rhodesia. This geographic proximity made it easier for ZANLA to transport materiel into Rhodesia and to receive and train new recruits.³⁷ However, Frelimo's formal hosting of ZANLA began when ZANLA was part of the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA), which was a union of ZIPRA and ZANLA engineered by Machel and Nyerere in November 1975 because of their disgruntlement with nationalist politicians' constant feuding. ZIPA fighters were brought together in two training camps in Tanzania – Morogoro and Mgagao – and they launched attacks into Rhodesia from Mozambique.³⁸ In an interview with *Africa News* in New York, Machel explained why it was important to have military unity between ZIPRA and ZANLA:

[i]t is the desire of all of us that there is only one army in Zimbabwe.... the army is a symbol of national unity, and therefore cannot be fragmented. Such fragmentation would mean retracting to a state of primitivism of tribal armies and feudal armies ... The job of the army today is to guarantee tranquillity and permit the development of the country ... If it is divided, it cannot carry out its essential task of security, tranquillity, peace, maintenance of order and maintaining the people's confidence.³⁹

Despite the desire of Machel and Nyerere to prop up ZIPA, the joint army was undermined by deep, long-standing suspicion between ZIPRA and ZANLA, lack of commitment to co-operate by the two armies, and conflicting methods and standards of training.⁴⁰ By July 1976, the ZIPRA–ZANLA unity had collapsed. ZIPRA withdrew to Zambia, leaving ZANLA as the sole ZIPA army.

Relations between the Zimbabwean liberation movements and the front-line leaders were also not free from strain and suspicion. A pertinent issue that caused much friction between ZANU and the front-line leaders had to do with ZANU's 1974 internal power struggle and the way in which front-line leaders reacted to it. For the 1974 détente negotiations, the ZANU central committee sent Mugabe to Lusaka as its leader. But the front-line leaders regarded Mugabe with suspicion, because he had come to the meeting in place of Ndabaningi Sithole, whom they recognised as the legitimate president of ZANU.⁴¹ The central committee had deposed Sithole for unspecified irregularities and without calling an elective congress. As a result, the front-line leaders, Machel particularly, regarded Sithole's removal as a coup and refused to recognise Mugabe's leadership, insisting that Sithole attend the détente talks as leader instead.⁴² Mugabe returned to Rhodesia following the détente talks and, in March 1975, the ZANU leadership in Salisbury resolved that Mugabe and Tekere travel to

³⁶ Mhanda, *Dzino*.

³⁷ B. Cole, *The Elite: The Story of the Rhodesian Special Service* (Durban, The Three Knights, 1984).

³⁸ Mhanda, *Dzino*.

³⁹ 'Interview with President Machel', *Southern Africa*, 9, 9 (November 1977), p. 7.

⁴⁰ Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War'.

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

⁴² *Ibid.*

Mozambique to provide the ZANLA guerrillas there with political leadership and in order to avoid re-arrest by the Rhodesian government.⁴³ In April 1975, Mugabe entered Mozambique without the Frelimo leadership's knowledge. Martin and Johnson maintain that this secrecy was necessary because Mozambique was still in a transitional process to independence, so it was obligatory that they avoid detection by Portuguese forces, who could provide the Rhodesian state with intelligence of their whereabouts in Mozambique or capture and deport Mugabe and Tekere to Rhodesia.⁴⁴ The Frelimo leadership discovered that Mugabe was in Mozambique after Moiane was introduced to him by the ZIPA commander, Rex Nhongo, at the military quarters called Junta, where the ZIPA commanders were based. Moiane had gone there to resolve a dispute between ZANLA and ZIPRA.⁴⁵ When Machel received news from Moiane about Mugabe's presence among the ZIPA commanders, he was displeased, and so in time Machel moved Mugabe and Tekere to Quelimane, far away from the guerrillas and the border with Rhodesia. Matsinha, who was sent to Manica by Machel to communicate the Mozambican leader's decision to move Mugabe and Tekere, explained that Machel looked upon Mugabe with suspicion because of the irregular manner in which he and other ZANU leaders had attempted to depose Sithole from the ZANU presidency in 1974.⁴⁶

Only in 1976 was Mugabe allowed to leave Quelimane, in order to participate in the Geneva conference of October–December 1976, which aimed to achieve a negotiated settlement for Rhodesia. The Frelimo government changed its position on Mugabe's leadership because, as Matsinha argues, ZANLA guerrillas continued to maintain that Mugabe was their leader, hence Machel's suspicion of him began to decrease.⁴⁷ In addition, Frelimo pushed for Mugabe and the ZAPU leader, Joshua Nkomo, to form a united front at the Geneva conference. Thus in October 1976 the Patriotic Front, led by Mugabe and Nkomo, was agreed. The Patriotic Front served as a tactical unity for the purpose of presenting a common approach to the Geneva conference, but each liberation movement would continue to maintain its own identity and independence.⁴⁸ The Geneva talks were unsuccessful, and military unity between ZIPRA and ZANLA never materialised for the remainder of the liberation war, as evinced in the Frelimo cadre Mateus Zengeni's observation that Mozambican soldiers who fought alongside ZANLA guerrillas sometimes had to fight against ZIPRA inside Rhodesia.⁴⁹

In early 1977, the old-guard ZANLA commander Josiah Tongogara, who had been released from prison by the Zambian government in October 1976, in collusion with Nhongo, Mugabe and Frelimo, arrested some of the ZIPA commanders for resisting the dissolution of ZIPA.⁵⁰ The arrest of ZIPA commanders such as Dzinashé Machingura, David Todhlana and Parker Chipopera, among others, marked the end of Machel's ZIPA experiment. ZANLA was reconstituted, and Machel provided it with support. The arrested ZIPA leaders were held in Frelimo prisons until

⁴³ Tekere, *A Lifetime of Struggle*.

⁴⁴ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.

⁴⁵ Moiane, *Memórias de Um Guerrilheiro*.

⁴⁶ Interview with Mariano Matsinha, Maputo, 30 October 2014.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ 'Evolution of Patriotic Front', *Zimbabwe News*, 9, 2 (January 1977).

⁴⁹ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, Maputo, 15 June 2016.

⁵⁰ Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga*.

Zimbabwe's independence in 1980.⁵¹ According to Matsinha, Frelimo carried out the arrests following a request by the ZANU leadership and because it wanted to re-affirm its support for Zimbabwe's liberation struggle.⁵² Mugabe was made ZANU's president by the party's central committee at a meeting that took place in Chimoio, Mozambique, in August 1976.⁵³ Mugabe publicly proclaimed that unity between the liberation movements was necessary to achieve independence, and he also adopted Marxism-Leninism:

[t]he Zimbabwe African National Union is particularly privileged to learn from Frelimo, on a day to day basis. The slow but definite transformation of ZANU into becoming the leading liberation movement in Zimbabwe, guided by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung thought, has been as much a result of the party's role as main fighting force against the Ian Smith regime as of its association with Frelimo.⁵⁴

Mugabe's rhetorical embrace of Frelimo's emphasis on unity and his pretensions of being guided by Marxism-Leninism also explain why he received Frelimo's support from 1977 onwards.⁵⁵

I now turn to examining military co-operation between Frelimo and ZANLA after the demise of ZIPA.

Frelimo and ZANU in the post-ZIPA Era

During the ZIPA phase, Frelimo established military forces at the main border crossings with Rhodesia. The main objective was to support and cover the entrance and exit of Zimbabwean guerrillas. These Frelimo forces were stationed in Gaza, Manica and Tete.⁵⁶ The principal points of entry in Gaza province were through Mavué and Chitanga in Massegena and Pafuri (Muenze river) in Chicualacuala. In Manica, the principal points were Catandica, Mavonde, Machipanda, Changuro, Rotanda, Guro and Espungabera. In Tete, it was through Zumbo, Mucumbura, Luia and Chioca.⁵⁷ Batissonne Mabolessi, a Mozambican soldier who operated in Chicualacuala, explained joint ZANLA–Frelimo operations in the following terms: '[t]he Mozambican forces accompanied ZANLA fighters and all military materials that were discharged in Maputo Port. Those materials were taken to a ZANU base in Mapai. Then, under the cover of night, we accompanied them to Rhodesia, while some Mozambican troops stayed at the border to protect our operations'.⁵⁸

These joint operations sometimes involved active combat. According to Abílio Alface, a Mozambican soldier who participated in the joint operations by accompanying ZANLA

⁵¹ Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga*.

⁵² Interview with Mariano Matsinha, Maputo 30 October 2014.

⁵³ 'Evolution of Patriotic Front', *Zimbabwe News*, 9, 2 (January 1977).

⁵⁴ 'Inspiration Corner: Presidente Machel and the Mozambican Revolution. Something New and Inspiring in the Third World', *Zimbabwe News*, 9, 5/6 (July 1978).

⁵⁵ Interview with Mariano Matsinha, Maputo, 30 October 2014.

⁵⁶ Interview with Bistol Ruben, Boane, 4 March 2015.

⁵⁷ Estado Maior General das Forças Armadas de Moçambique, 'Pontos Fundamentais sobre a Situação Inimiga e das Nossas Forças', official report, 4 March 1977, cited in O. Saranga, 'Internacionalismo Militante de Moçambique: Estudo de Caso Contribuição das FPLM para a Libertação do Zimbabwe (1975–1980)', Licenciatura dissertation, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, 2005, p. 61.

⁵⁸ Interview with Batissonne Mabolessi, Boane, 4 March 2015.

guerrillas through Mavué right up to Chiredzi inside Rhodesia, he fought alongside ZANLA for a month in Chiredzi.⁵⁹ In addition to planned joint military operations, Frelimo soldiers also participated in unexpected combat when, for instance, they were attacked by Rhodesian troops while accompanying ZANLA militants into Rhodesia or when Frelimo soldiers were returning alone to Mozambique.⁶⁰ To facilitate operations at the war front, the Mozambican government established a base in Mapai, around 605 km from Pafuri (Chicualacuala) and 259 km from Mavué (Massangena), and they stationed a battalion of soldiers there. Mapai functioned as a concentration area for ZANLA and its war material before they crossed the border. It was to Mapai that all those wounded in the war inside Rhodesia or Chicualacuala and Massangena were evacuated.

Reacting to Mozambique's decision to close the border with Rhodesia in March 1976 and officially support ZANU's liberation struggle, Rhodesian forces began military incursions inside Mozambique, killing ZANLA militants and civilians. Beginning in 1976, lots of press articles reported Rhodesian attacks on ZANU bases and Zimbabwean refugee camps in Mozambique.

Most of these attacks were carried out in Gaza, Manica and Tete provinces.⁶¹ The objective of these raids was to peg back ZANLA incursions from Mozambique by inflicting substantial damage to ZANU camps and Frelimo troops.⁶² The Rhodesian forces used fighter jets, armed vehicles and mounted troops, with which they destroyed ZANU bases and damaged railway links from Mozambique to Rhodesia.⁶³ Zengeni described one such Rhodesian attack on Chicualacuala in 1977 as follows:

the Rhodesian forces had installed loud speakers on the border between Rhodesia and Chicualacuala. They used to play a song in the morning, called Sibongile (by the South African Mbaqanga group Soul Brothers) whose lyrics were 'we do not want neighbours to see us fighting'. And when the song ended, the Rhodesian forces started to scream over the loud speaker in Portuguese: '*atenção Frelimo, toma aí o matabicho*' ('attention, Frelimo, receive your breakfast'). Then it began to rain bullets. We used to respond to those attacks, but unfortunately their weapons were too strong and they killed a lot of ZANLA guerrillas, who were in a transit camp to Rhodesia, as well as many Frelimo militants.⁶⁴

In 1976 and 1977, Mozambique lacked the capability for large-scale retaliation against the Rhodesians because it did not have equally sophisticated armour and air power, despite the fact that Mozambican soldiers were highly trained and experienced fighters.⁶⁵ It is also important to remember that the Rhodesian forces used to speak in Portuguese, because a

⁵⁹ Interview with Abílio Alface, Mapai, 17 October 2015.

⁶⁰ Interview with Tiago Jatima, who accompanied ZANLA militants from Zumbo in Tete to Kanyemba in Rhodesia, Boane, 3 October 2015.

⁶¹ From March 1976 to March 1977 there were 143 acts of aggression against Mozambique territory: 54 in Gaza, 33 in Manica and 56 in Tete. For more details, see: 'Letter from Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the United Nations', United Nations Security Council, UN/SA collection, S/12350 June 1977.

⁶² See, for example, 'Rhodesia Attacks Mozambique', *Southern Africa Magazine*, 10, 2, 1977.

⁶³ 'Rhodesian Raids Provocation for Foreign Help?', *Washington Star*, 6 December 1976.

⁶⁴ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, Maputo, 2 November 2015.

⁶⁵ 'Rhodesian Raids Provocation For Foreign Help'.

large number of them were Portuguese-speaking Mozambican blacks, who had fought with special commando units of the Portuguese colonial army and had fled to Rhodesia after independence.⁶⁶ Most of these former members of the Portuguese army were used as reconnaissance agents (spies) inside Mozambique, roaming roads and railways, getting close to military units and defence installations so as to take note of the troops and types of weapons used by ZANLA and the new Mozambican army, the Forças Populares de Libertação do Moçambique (FPLM), and then sending the intelligence to Rhodesia.⁶⁷

The Rhodesian attacks were not only against military targets but also against Zimbabwean refugee camps. With the escalation of the struggle inside Rhodesia, Mozambique received a large number of refugees. The Mozambican soldiers had the role of receiving and protecting them, providing food and helping them to integrate into Mozambican communities.⁶⁸ Because of the massive arrival of Zimbabwean refugees in Mozambique, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Mozambican government created refugee camps in Manica, Sofala and Tete. In the first years of Mozambique's independence, the Refugee Services of the Ministry of Interior of Mozambique were in charge of the camps, but authority over them was gradually transferred to ZANU.⁶⁹ The UNHCR provided humanitarian assistance (food, clothes and medical care) both to refugees in the camps and to those who spontaneously integrated into local host communities. As mentioned above, such camps were also attacked by Rhodesian forces. The best-known of those attacks was the massacre of Zimbabwean refugees at Nyadzonja camp in August 1976. It is estimated that 618 people were killed and 300 injured in that attack.⁷⁰ The Rhodesian army justified its attacks on refugee camps as a campaign in pursuit of ZANLA guerrillas. According to Zengeni, although the Zimbabwean refugee camps received civilians, it was there that ZANLA used to recruit new members of their guerrilla army.⁷¹ Machel considered the Nyadzonja massacre and other Rhodesian incursions into Mozambique as aggression not only against ZANLA but against the Mozambican people as well.⁷² In response to Rhodesian attacks, Mozambique wrote memos to the UN Security Council highlighting Rhodesian incursions into Mozambique, as a way of calling to international attention Rhodesia's atrocities in Mozambique.⁷³

But the Frelimo government also took military measures in response to Rhodesian attacks. One of these measures was the formation of four military brigades in 1977, with the objective

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ S. Soko, 'The Confession of Mozambican Spy', *Zambia Daily Mail*, Lusaka, 29 September 1977, available at <http://www.mozambiquehistory.net/history/conflict>, retrieved 21 October 2015.

⁶⁸ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, Maputo, 2 November 2015.

⁶⁹ Ministério do Interior, 'Experiência de organização dos campos dos refugiados', Maputo, February 1978. There were around 57,000 Zimbabwean refugees in Tete, Manica and Gaza. Most of them lived in refugee camps. Some were hosted by Mozambican families or by small social centres. See 'Inspiration Corner: President Machel and the Mozambique Revolution'.

⁷⁰ 'Representante do Alto Comissariado para os Refugiados Confirma Massacre de Nyadzonja', *Tempo*, 308, 25 August 1976; 'Rhodesian Attacks Mozambique', *Southern Africa Magazine*, 10, 2 (March 1977).

⁷¹ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, 30 October 2015.

⁷² 'Presidente Samora Machel Entrevistado por Órgãos Centrais de P.C. Europeu: A Luta de Classes Trabalhadora é para Derrubar a Burguesia', *Tempo*, 325, 28 December 1976.

⁷³ See, for example, 'Note Verbale Permanent Representing of Mozambique, United State Security Council, December 1977', S/12466; 'Letter from Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the United Nations', United Nations Security Council, UN/SA collection, S/12350, June 1977; reference kindly supplied by Colin Darch.

of defending Mozambican territory against Rhodesian attacks and also to support ZANLA militants. These brigades were stationed in Manica, Tete, Inhambane and Gaza provinces. After the Nyadzonia attack, the Mozambican authorities began mobilising and recruiting young Mozambicans to join the army and fight alongside ZANLA, with compulsory military conscription becoming law in 1978.⁷⁴ Thus hosting ZANLA and defending Mozambique's territory and sovereignty became one and the same for Frelimo.

Another aspect of the Rhodesian reaction to Frelimo's support for the Zimbabwean liberation struggle was its creation of Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo). Renamo was created by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) in 1976 as a group that would provide the Rhodesians with information about ZANLA bases in Mozambique, gauge the number of ZANLA guerrillas, assess the extent of Frelimo support for ZANLA, act as local guides or reconnaissance for the Rhodesians and, finally, also carry out attacks designed to undermine the Mozambican economy, thereby increasing the costs to Frelimo of supporting ZANLA.⁷⁵ The Rhodesian CIO firstly recruited and incorporated different components to Renamo, such as soldiers who deserted from Frelimo's army before and after Mozambican independence, black Mozambicans who served in the Portuguese counter-insurgency unit and secret police, white settlers who lost their privileges after independence, and former Portuguese agents. Many of these were extremely bitter towards Frelimo for their loss of status and marginalisation in the post-independence period, making them amenable to recruitment.⁷⁶ The first Renamo commander was André Matsangaissa, who fled to Rhodesia in October 1976 after being arrested on charges of theft in re-education camps by the Frelimo government. In fact, it is in re-education camps that Renamo recruited most of its soldiers, as they usually contained many people imprisoned by Frelimo, and most of these prisoners had strong grievances against the Frelimo government.⁷⁷ However, many Renamo militants were also recruited by force, and were used to carry food and military material and to serve as guides in their home areas.⁷⁸

One of the early missions of Renamo was to disrupt ZANLA operations through the destruction of bridges and the laying of mines on routes used by ZANLA to get inside Rhodesia.⁷⁹ In addition, Renamo spread propaganda against Frelimo's leaders and their policies and ideology through a radio station called A Voz de Africa Livre (Voice of Free Africa). It had a studio and transmission station in Rhodesia and began transmissions in July 1976.⁸⁰ Its broadcasts criticised Frelimo for supporting ZANU. A 1977 broadcast titled 'The Opening Note' justified Rhodesian attacks on Mozambique in the following terms: '[i]f today Mozambique is attacked by the Rhodesian army, the blame falls solely on Machelists themselves, because it is they who provoked the retaliatory attacks by Ian Smith. Every

⁷⁴ 'Lei do Serviço Militar Obrigatório', *Boletim da República*, República Popular de Moçambique, I, 35, March 1978.

⁷⁵ S. Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo–Renamo Struggle, 1977–1992* (South Africa, 30° Publishers, 2013); K. Flower, *Serving Secretly – An Intelligence Chief on Record: Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964 to 1981* (London, John Murray, 1987).

⁷⁶ Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ W. Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique* (London and New York, Zed Books, 1994).

⁷⁹ Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique*, p. 48.

⁸⁰ 'The Voice of Hyena' is from Rhodesia', *Sunday News*, Bulawayo, 3 October 1976.

responsible government knows perfectly well that if it provokes a foreign country, it has to bear the consequences'.⁸¹ In the same broadcast, Voice of Free Africa generated propaganda about why Frelimo was supporting ZANU:

Machel is making use of the Zimbabwean problem to collect some millions of *escudos* [from Mozambican people through the Solidarity Bank], while at the same time it is using Mozambican people ... We should not forget that Machelism has long been using the Zimbabwean problem as a means of survival, because the irresponsible Machelists are incapable of solving the problems of the administration of Mozambique.⁸²

The widespread nature of this kind of propaganda in Mozambique was an effort to undermine the Machel government psychologically and encourage anti-Frelimo dissidence.⁸³ In so doing, the Rhodesian forces aimed to discourage popular Mozambican support for ZANU. Despite the fact that Renamo was created as a Rhodesian counter-insurgency force, it gained increasing legitimacy in Mozambique, resulting in its expansion and staging of a devastating civil war, which ended only in 1992.⁸⁴ However, despite the intensification of Rhodesian and Renamo attacks, Frelimo did not stop supporting ZANLA. On the contrary, Frelimo tried to intensify its military support to ZANLA by sending its forces to fight inside Rhodesia – a theme that is taken up in the next section.

Internationalists inside Rhodesia

In 1977, the Mozambican authorities took the decision to send a group of Mozambican soldiers, known as the *internationalistas*, to the interior of Rhodesia. This operation was divided into three phases. In the beginning, a small group of these Frelimo militants went to Rhodesia to sabotage and plant mines on the routes used by Rhodesian forces to enter Mozambique. Lemos Pontes, was one of the militants who was sent on this initial operation:

I was trained in Russia in 1976 as a sapper, with the specialty of reconnaissance, sabotage and engineering. When I came back at the end of 1976, I was posted to Manica with the mission to close the entries and exits of Rhodesian forces, mining roads inside Rhodesia near the Mozambican border, then returning to Mozambique. The operation was carried out in Penhalonga [Mucumbo], Zonue [Tea state], Mutare district and near Chipinga [Chipinge].⁸⁵

The second phase of the Mozambican presence inside Rhodesia also took place in 1977. The Mozambican authorities sent other groups of soldiers to Rhodesia to conduct reconnaissance missions. These groups consisted of five members introduced in each ZANLA platoon that entered Rhodesia. Their role was to verify whether the ZANLA militants were operating effectively. These militants entered Rhodesia using three principle points: the region of Chicualacuala in Gaza province, Tsetsera in Manica province and Mucumbura in Tete province.

⁸¹ 'Radio's Analysis of Machel's Tactics', *Summary of World Broadcasts*, 22 June 1977, available at http://www.mozambiquehistory.net/history/conflict/77/19770622_machel_tactics_analysed.pdf, retrieved 31 July 2016.

⁸² 'Radio's Analysis of Machel's Tactics'. *Escudos* were the currency used in Mozambique before the introduction of *metical* in 1980.

⁸³ Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique*.

⁸⁴ According to Minter, Renamo had grown from fewer than 100 in 1976 to 2,000 in 1979; Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, p. 33.

⁸⁵ Interview with Lemos Pontes, Maputo, 30 October 2015.

It is important to point out that this operation was highly secret, to the degree that the Frelimo militants sent to Rhodesia were made aware of their impending deployment to the neighbouring country only at the last minute, as Zengeni elaborated:

I was operating in Chicualacuala when I was called by the headquarters in Maputo. They told me that I had to go to the Soviet Union with a group of 20 other militants. However, instead of going to the Soviet Union we were sent to Combomune in Gaza. Here we met the brigade's commissar, Mahandjane, who told us that we were going to Rhodesia [instead] with the mission to verify what was going on there. My group joined a group of 80 ZANLA militants that entered Rhodesia from Chitanga. After crossing the border, we were stationed in Gezani, near Lundi river. After one week we went to conduct military operations in Selukwe.⁸⁶

In this phase, the Mozambican soldiers stayed inside Rhodesia and operated with ZANLA militants for a period of six months at a time. After that, they were replaced by another group that was also composed of five members. The Mozambican soldiers also acted as military advisers to the ZANLA field commanders, as they usually had more war experience than their Zimbabwean counterparts.⁸⁷

Furthermore, in 1979 Frelimo decided to send Mozambican soldiers to operate indefinitely inside Rhodesia. First they sent 340 soldiers and, after five months, a further 160 were sent to reinforce this group.⁸⁸ However, to be sent to Rhodesia it was necessary to speak one of the languages spoken there.⁸⁹ Thus most of the soldiers sent to Rhodesia were natives of provinces that had a frontier with Rhodesia. They often shared the same languages and had relatives in Rhodesia. Zengeni, for example, grew up in Rhodesia between the ages of 6 and 17, and he was more fluent in Shona and English than in Portuguese.⁹⁰ The other selection criterion for Frelimo-assisted operations in Rhodesia was war experience. Most of the Mozambican soldiers went to Rhodesia as commanders, because they had operated for a long time in Frelimo's struggle against the Portuguese army. One Mozambican soldier who fought alongside ZANLA in Rhodesia was Lemos Pontes. Pontes entered Rhodesia through Manica province and operated in Buhera, Charter, Sadza and Mhondoro, and he described the beginning of these operations in the following words:

after my operations along the Manica border, I spent three months in Dondo, Sofala province, training a group of militants. These militants were coming from the military units that operated in the border region between Mozambique and Rhodesia, during 1975–1977. After the training, we received General Sebastião Marcos Mabote, the headquarter chief, who told us that we were going to be sent on a special mission and he gave us *Chimurenga* war names. My war name was John Hondo. On 29 February, we left Manica at the night until we reached Deroi, where we met Josiah Tongogara and a group of 23 ZANLA soldiers. He told

⁸⁶ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, Maputo, 2 November 2015.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Swahili was the language of communication in most Tanzanian camps, where a number of ZANLA militants had trained. See Williams, 'Living in Exile', p. 69.

⁹⁰ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, Maputo, 2 November 2015.

us that our special mission was to fight alongside ZANLA inside Rhodesia ... and that we had to act as Zimbabwean people and use our *Chimurenga* names, so as not to be discovered by Rhodesian authorities that we were Mozambicans.⁹¹

Frelimo did not want the Rhodesians to discover that there were Mozambicans fighting inside Rhodesia, lest the Rhodesians increased their incursions into Mozambique as retaliation. From 1979, Frelimo soldiers in Rhodesia assisted ZANLA in laying landmines on the roads used by Rhodesian forces, blowing up railway lines and bridges and assaulting their military barracks. Mozambican soldiers and ZANLA guerrillas developed a good working relationship in the course of these activities because the latter looked up to Mozambican soldiers as victorious guerrillas, from whom they had a lot to learn.⁹²

Despite the proximity between Mozambican and ZANLA militants, some conflicts occurred during the war. Most of these were over women. According to Lemos Pontes, ZANLA guerrillas did not want their Mozambican colleagues to be involved in relationships with local women.⁹³ Pontes explained that there was competition for women between ZANLA and Frelimo because Zimbabwean women often preferred the Mozambican soldiers, owing to the fact that they treated them with more respect than their Zimbabwean colleagues.⁹⁴ Machel argued that a revolution could never be complete if women continued to be oppressed.⁹⁵ This might lead one to deduce that Frelimo's seemingly more 'enlightened' view than that of ZANLA on the role of women was respected and actively promoted by Frelimo elites. Isabel Casimiro challenges such a deduction by arguing that, despite Machel's rhetoric about women's emancipation, it was ordinary women themselves who struggled for recognition within Frelimo through the creation of the *Destacamento Feminino* (Female Detachment). In fact, as she points out, before the creation of the Female Detachment, the Frelimo militants used to look at women as producers and reproducers and source of sexual pleasure to the guerrillas.⁹⁶ The relationship between women and their male counterparts in ZANLA was equally controversial during the liberation struggle. As Fay Chung and Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi have written, many ZANLA militants, particularly the senior commanders, regarded women as objects to control.⁹⁷ They often demanded sexual services from women who joined the liberation struggle. Most women did not enter these casual unions willingly, but were forced into them.⁹⁸ The problem of subjugation and exploitation of women was therefore a shared one between Frelimo and ZANLA.

⁹¹Interview with Lemos Pontes, Maputo, 2 November 2015.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Samora Machel *et al.*, *A Libertação da Mulher* (São Paulo and Parma, Coleção Bases, 1979), cited by J. Santana, 'A Participação da Mulher na Luta de Libertação Nacional

⁹⁶ I. Casimiro, 'Samora Machel e as Relações de Género', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 21 (2005).

⁹⁷ Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga*; J. Nhongo-Simbanegavi, *For Better or Worse? Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2000).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Another source of conflict between Mozambican and ZANLA militants centred on military tactics. For example, Pontes explained an episode that caused conflict with ZANLA guerrillas in Buhera, in early 1979:

a group of woman, a Female Detachment carrying war material, camped in Buhera near where my platoon was camped. However, a day before, we saw the movement of helicopters, and the Mozambican commander advised his platoon and these women to leave because the enemy would bomb the area. These women did not accept the advice, and as a consequence were bombed and killed by the enemy. ZANLA militants accused Mozambican soldiers of leaving these women to die intentionally. This situation created a kind of tension between us ... It stopped when Tongogara had a meeting with all of us and asked ZANLA to drop the accusation because we were innocent.⁹⁹

The Rhodesian forces, over time, discovered that Frelimo was actively assisting ZANLA, fighting inside Rhodesia alongside Zimbabwean guerrillas, after some captured militants revealed it to them.¹⁰⁰ Zengeni, for instance, had to change his war name from Tichatonga to Mabhunu Muchampera, after a Rhodesian force captured a Mozambican soldier who revealed the names of other Mozambicans operating in the area. But Machel publicly admitted that Frelimo soldiers were active in Rhodesia only at the end of 1979, following the signing of Zimbabwe's Lancaster House independence agreement on 21 December. In Machel's words, 'when Rhodesian forces attacked Mozambique with the excuse of pursuing the Zimbabwean liberation movement, they were inviting Mozambique to participate in the struggle for Zimbabwe.... And Mozambique accepted the invitation'.¹⁰¹

In addition to the military backing assessed in this section, Mozambicans also rendered other forms of support to ZANLA. The following section will examine how the Mozambican civilian population supported ZANLA militants and Zimbabwean refugees.

Ordinary Mozambicans and ZANLA Militants

The euphoria that characterised the early years of Mozambican independence was perhaps the most influential aspect that made Mozambicans embrace Frelimo's commitment to internationalism. Frelimo propagated the notion that Mozambicans could take part in building a new international society based on principles of equality and justice. This view can be explained by the ways in which Frelimo presented itself to Mozambicans as heroic liberators and cast Mozambique's independence in a universal, humanistic light.¹⁰² Thus many Mozambicans showed their commitment to Machel's call to support total southern African liberation. In the rural western areas bordering Rhodesia, where most ZANLA bases and refugee camps were established, people developed their own mechanisms to support ZANLA and Zimbabwean refugees. According to Airessi Jacapu, who was raised in Zumbo (Tete

⁹⁹ Interview with Lemos Pontes, Maputo, 2 November, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, Maputo, 2 November 2015.

¹⁰¹ 'Cumprida a Missão: Combatentes Internacionalistas Regressam a Moçambique', *Notícias*, Maputo, February 1980.

¹⁰² J.P. Borges Coelho, 'Da Violência Colonial Ordenada à Ordem Pós-colonial Violenta: Sobre um Legado das Guerras Coloniais nas Ex-colónias Portuguesas', *Lusotopie* (2003), pp. 175–93, available at <http://www.lusotopie.sciencespobordeaux.fr/borges2003.pdf>, retrieved 9 December 2016.

province), families shared their homes and *machambas* (farming fields) with Zimbabwean refugees, so that Zimbabweans, rather than being needy refugees, could grow their own food.¹⁰³ These relationships between Mozambican communities and Zimbabwean refugees in the border areas were facilitated by the fact that the communities on both sides often shared the same language and culture. For these communities, therefore, strict borderlines did not exist as such.¹⁰⁴ According to Victória Canxixe, who lived in Changara district, Tete province, after the liberation struggle started in Rhodesia, many Mozambicans and Zimbabweans crossed the border to Mozambique seeking safety. These communities had household and family ties on both sides of the border, and people did not use passports to cross from one side to the other; they were crossing the border through shortcuts, which took them less than an hour of walking.¹⁰⁵ In addition to these cross-border family ties, Mozambicans had been migrating to Rhodesia since the 1950s in order to work in tea, tobacco and cotton farms, and because Rhodesia offered better opportunities for social mobility for migrant Mozambicans, particularly education.¹⁰⁶

However, not all Zimbabwean refugees who crossed the border into Mozambique had family ties with local people. Zimbabwean people without relatives in Mozambique tended to be hosted in refugee camps. Rural Mozambicans received refugees and then directed them to Frelimo forces, who were responsible for screening them in order to ascertain whether they were genuine refugees or Rhodesian spies.¹⁰⁷ Frelimo also organised local people to act as Frelimo also organised local people to act as *Milícias Popular* (local soldiers). These *Milícias* were given basic military training and small arms to defend the local population against Rhodesian attacks.¹⁰⁸ João Miranda, who operated in Chicualacuala as a *miliciano*, points out that, as *Milícias*, they also conducted patrols so as to detect the presence of Rhodesian forces inside Mozambique and to provide intelligence.¹⁰⁹ This practice of popular vigilance explains why the Rhodesian forces often disguised themselves as Mozambican soldiers when entering Mozambique, draping themselves in the Mozambican flag, blackening their white faces with paint and singing Frelimo songs.¹¹⁰

Rural Mozambicans also transported ZANLA's materiel and food to specific locations, which were generally near the Rhodesian border. These materials were buried in spots called *matize*, from which ZANLA retrieved weapons in small quantities and took them into Rhodesia.¹¹¹ Mozambicans residing along the border also assisted ZANLA in the evacuation of wounded guerrillas to their bases in Mozambique. Miranda was involved in these evacuation activities, and he recalled that trained local people sometimes gave first aid to ZANLA militants who

¹⁰³ Interview with Airesi Jacapu, Maputo, 6 February 2015.

¹⁰⁴ J.P. Borges Coelho, 'Conceitos Operativos, Perspectivas e Dinâmicas dos Movimentos Populacionais no Território de Moçambique', unpublished paper (mimeo) kindly provided by the author.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Victória Canxixe, Maputo, 3 June 2015.

¹⁰⁶ J. das Neves, 'Economy, Society and Labour Migration in Central Mozambique, 1930–c.1965: A Case Study of Manica Province', PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1998.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, Maputo, 2 November 2015.

¹⁰⁸ 'Tarefas Concretas e Imediatas a Realizar', Circular da Sede Nacional da Frelimo, Maputo, June 1976, p. 17.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with João Miranda, Maputo, 16 June 2016.

¹¹⁰ This occurred when Rhodesian forces attacked Nyadzonia camp in 1976, and Mapai in 1976. For more details, see Chung, *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*.

¹¹¹ Interview with Mateus Zengeni, Maputo, 11 June 2016.

crossed the border with injuries, while others used traditional medicine to stop bleeding and fevers. Only after this basic first aid were wounded ZANLA fighters evacuated to their bases to receive advanced medical attention.¹¹² Rural Mozambicans who lived in the same areas as ZANLA guerrillas also shared their food and water, particularly food that they grew in their *machambas*, such as cassava, maize and watermelon. Fenias Runguane explains that there was a kind of exchange of food in Mapai between local people and militants (both ZANLA and FPLM). Most ZANLA militants asked for farm products, particularly maize and fruits, and, in exchange, local people received food that they did not have access to, such as canned sardines, corned beef, condensed milk and biscuits.¹¹³ This kind of exchange also characterised the relationship between Zimbabwean refugees and host communities. With the intensification of war inside Rhodesia, the flow of Zimbabwean refugees increased from 5,000 in 1975 to around 40,000 in 1978.¹¹⁴ Despite the support that they received from ordinary Mozambicans and their government, the UNCHR and other organisations, there were still food shortages in refugee camps and the diet was low in protein content.¹¹⁵ As a way of getting extra food or particular food nutrients, refugees adopted a system of barter, called *chirenje*, in which they exchanged clothes and shoes that they received from Scandinavia for particular foodstuffs from local peasants.¹¹⁶

Although Mozambique supported ZANLA and Zimbabwean refugees in the manifold ways described in this article, the country was faced with economic fragility. The massive exodus of Portuguese nationals left Mozambique with major shortages of technicians and state officials, since only Europeans had been allowed access to higher education during the colonial period.¹¹⁷ To add to the difficulties, Mozambique was hit by floods in 1977, which left thousands of people without shelter and destroyed productive farms.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Mozambique paid a significant economic price from the closure of trade links with Rhodesia and from the destruction of infrastructure by Rhodesian forces. As Minter points out, the cost of Mozambican sanctions on Rhodesia over 4 years was estimated at over US\$500 million, more than double Mozambique's annual exports.¹¹⁹ It is because of these economic realities that Frelimo, despite being supportive of ZANU militarily, was always open to the idea of a negotiated independence settlement for Rhodesia. Hence Frelimo coerced ZIPA commanders, who aimed to complete a total revolution in Rhodesia by military means, to attend the 1976 Geneva conference.¹²⁰ Thereafter, ZANU attended all subsequent internationally mediated independence talks. And when Mugabe proved intransigent at the 1979 Lancaster House conference, because he preferred military victory to a negotiated settlement, Machel, through one of his aides, Fernando Honwana, firmly counselled Mugabe to agree a settlement at Lancaster House, because Mozambique could no longer meet the economic costs of hosting ZANU.¹²¹ Peter Carrington, who chaired the

¹¹² Interview with João Miranda, Maputo, 16 June 2016.

¹¹³ Interview (conducted in Changana and translated into English by the author) with Fenias Runguane, Mapai, 17 October 2015.

¹¹⁴ 'Antecâmara do Zimbabwe Libertado', *Tempo*, 12 February 1978.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Chung, *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga*.

¹¹⁷ 'Progress in Mozambique', *Southern Africa*, 10, 6 (August 1977).

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Minter, *Apartheid's Contras*, p. 32.

¹²⁰ Mhanda, *Dzino*.

¹²¹ R. Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy in Southern Africa* (London, Macmillan, 1997); P. Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past: The Memoirs of Lord Carrington* (London, Collins, 1988).

conference, and others in the Rhodesian and ZANU delegations credited Frelimo's intervention as having guaranteed a successful conclusion to the Lancaster House talks.¹²²

Conclusion

This article has examined the views of Frelimo and Mozambicans who aided ZANU in its struggle for Zimbabwean independence. I argued that the commitment of Frelimo to support ZANU is an indication of its belief in the idea that the independence of Mozambique in 1975 would not be complete while other southern African countries continued to be under colonial rule. Frelimo believed, as the new government of an independent country, that it had a moral obligation to support other liberation movements fighting white minority regimes, in the same way that Tanzania and Zambia supported Mozambique's liberation struggle. Thus Frelimo intensified its political and military support for ZANU from 1975 by offering Mozambique as a territorial base, bequeathing state resources, and engaging in joint military operations with ZANLA in Rhodesia. Frelimo's hosting of ZANLA and its defence of Mozambican sovereignty became one and the same. Furthermore, Machel and Nyerere instigated the union of ZIPRA and ZANLA to form ZIPA in 1975 and they encouraged the formation of the Patriotic Front between ZAPU and ZANU, although lasting unity between these groups never materialised. Ordinary Mozambicans in border areas also participated in co-operation between Frelimo and ZANLA. Mozambicans provided intelligence on the movements of Rhodesian forces, supplied food and helped to transport war materials to the Rhodesian border. This supportive relationship between Mozambicans and ZANLA was facilitated by shared languages and culture, which even enabled the formation of Frelimo–ZANLA military contingents, composed of soldiers who spoke the same languages and who could therefore enter Rhodesia and operate together with a measure of unity and understanding with the local people. However, the Frelimo–ZANU relationship was not without difficulties. Frelimo took an uncooperative approach to relations with ZANU in the beginning because it was not a member of the club of 'authentic' liberation movements. Relations improved, in part because of the above-mentioned sense of solidarity that Frelimo held and because ZANU attracted Frelimo's support through its convincing commitment to armed struggle. Other difficulties centred on disagreements over tactics between some Frelimo soldiers and ZANLA guerrillas on the Rhodesian war front. Additionally, certain ZANLA guerrillas opposed Frelimo soldiers' intimate relationships with local women in Rhodesia.

The article contributes to our knowledge of the intricate relations between host governments and liberation movements and of the workings of transnational military partnerships. As seen in the case of Frelimo and ZANU, hosts' influence on liberation movements' internal politics must be seen as shaped by the interests and agency of liberation movements themselves. As shown, Mugabe became the leader of ZANU in 1977 against the wishes of Frelimo. And Frelimo failed in its efforts to foster unity between ZANU and ZAPU and their respective armies. Where hosts wielded decisive authority is the sovereign right to withdraw sponsorship on their territory. Using the threat of withdrawal of support, Frelimo ordered reluctant ZIPA commanders to attend the 1976 Geneva conference, and influenced Mugabe to agree a

¹²² Carrington, *Reflect on Things Past*; Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*; Flower, *Serving Secretly*; Tekere, *A Lifetime of Struggle*.

negotiated independence settlement in 1979. Frelimo took these actions because, although it supported ZANLA guerrilla operations, it did not close off the possibility of a negotiated independence settlement for Rhodesia owing to the escalating economic costs it faced the longer the liberation war went on.

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