

The plight of teenage male children inside 'protected' villages during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, (1973-1978)

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Abstract

It is generally considered that male children were better positioned and protected in 'protected villages' during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle. However, it is important to note that war spares no one, including male children. In fact, teenage boys faced numerous challenges, most of which were gender specific, during the struggle for independence. Among others, they were recruited into different roles by both the Rhodesian (colonial Zimbabwean) forces and the guerrillas. Thus, they were literally burning from both ends as the two rival camps demanded their unquestionable loyalty and support. To this extent, they were used as informers, messengers, spies and porters. They were forced to commit crimes in the name of the war, exposed to violence and forced to perpetrate violence. Whilst some of these challenges empowered them, on the whole the war dehumanized and traumatized them in many ways. There has been a customary tendency by historians not to give attention to the war time experiences of children in general, and those in inside 'protected villages' (PVs) in particular, in the construction of Zimbabwe's liberation war narratives. This paper is an attempt to capture these overlooked and bitter memories of the liberation struggle. It is an attempt to make them visible in Zimbabwe's liberation war narratives and also afford them a platform to tell their overlooked but nonetheless significant experiences in PVs. The study largely depends on archival documents, interviews and secondary sources.

Keywords: Male children, protected village, Guerrillas, Rhodesian Forces, Victims, Liberation.

Introduction

By mid-1973 the Rhodesian state established Protected Villages (PVs), also known as Keeps or Consolidated Villages. These PVs were largely introduced by the Rhodesian government to safeguard itself from guerrilla infiltration than to protect

the African civilians who were settled in them (Mazambani and Mashingaidze, 2014:2) Broadly, this was meant to forestall the spread of the African nationalist influence among communities living along or close to the borders, especially with Mozambique. Those who were settled in these 'keeps' faced a number of problems which affected their wellbeing and upkeep, including ill treatment from the authorities, pressures for undivided loyalty and support from both the Rhodesian state agents and the African nationalists, food shortages, sexual violations and various other forms of violence perpetrated differentially by both the Rhodesian agents and the African guerrillas. Male children who were in PVs that were scattered across Rhodesia were not spared from such inhuman treatment and were also vulnerable to violence perpetrated by the guerrillas, Rhodesian Forces and other colonial functionaries. To many children, in general, and male children in particular, life in the 'keeps' was unbearable as they were largely caught up in the middle. These children were victims of the violence related to the waging of the liberation struggle. Even those youths who perpetrated the violence were also victims as political instruments of the protagonists. Children were forced to kill and commit crimes all in the name of the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe or in defense of the so-called "highest Standards of civilization" in Rhodesia (Wood, 2012:237). The experiences of children, like the rest of the rural residents, was unenviable in the sense that both Rhodesian Forces and guerrillas demanded unquestionable loyalty from them. However, unlike other participants and victims in the war who harbored political interests, children were largely taken advantage of and victimized because of their young age. The young boys were mostly recruited and forced to participate on both sides of the opposing forces in the liberation war. The African liberation forces, especially, Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) forces were mostly responsible for recruiting children below the age of 18 to perform various tasks during the prosecution of the war. Primarily, the young girls recruited became *chimbwidos* while the boys were called *mujibhas*. For this article, the young boys who were recruited as the *mujibhas* became *de facto* child soldiers. Graca Machel (1996:6) noted that:

A child soldier is any child - boy or girl-child under the age of 18, who is compulsorily, forcibly or voluntarily recruited or used in hostilities by armed force, paramilitaries, civil defense units or other armed groups. Child soldiers are used for forced sexual services, as combatants, messengers, porters and cooks... The majority are boys...

Framing the discussion: Protected Villages in Rhodesia

As the map below indicates, there were many PVs during the Second Chimurenga (liberation struggle). Protected villages, and their ilk, concentrated villages, which had no fences around them, entailed "the concentration and resettlement of the

local population into defensible villages" (Cilliers, 1985:83). They were established from May 1973 to 1978 following the placement of Africans into concentrated villages beginning in Centenary and Muzarabani and later to Mukumbura and Gudza Tribal Trust Lands. From 1974, following the Rhodesian government's decreeing of Operation Overload and Overload Two, PVs were established in Chiweshe and Madziwa Tribal Trust Lands, respectively, from where they were extended to the rest of the country including areas such as Maramba, Mrewa, Kandeya, Chisvito, Chipinge, Chiredzi, Karuyana, Makoni and Honde Valley (Cilliers, 1985:83). Primarily, they were established as part of the Rhodesian state's three-fold counter-insurgency/counter-terror strategy in the mould of a "total revolutionary war" that involved the laying of mines along the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border, creating of no-go areas that were heavily manned by the security forces and placing rural residents into protected villages and concentrated villages" (Cilliers, 1985:83). Officially, however, the protected villages were packaged in the racist propaganda meant, in the words of a District Commissioner cited in Ranger, to usher "... a higher standard of [living] than the traditional way of life..." (Ranger, 1985:267). In reality, however, they were created to disrupt guerrilla logistics by increasing the government's "foothold" in contested areas and to engender the government's "physical control of the rural areas" meant to eliminate guerrilla-civilian interactions aimed to deny the guerrillas "food, intelligence, recruits, and access to their primary objective, people" (Cilliers, 1985:83). The above resonates with the view commonly held by two Rhodesian colonial officials, a Provincial Administrator and a Police Superintendent, that PVs were the "only method to divorce the people from the guerrillas" because "all other ways of trying to obtain cooperation of the [villagers had] failed" (Cilliers, 1985:83). As such, these 'Protected Villages' were meant to act as a buffer to minimize the interactions between the ZANLA guerrillas and the rural people. Most of these were established along the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border. This was little surprising because from 1975 to 1979, the growing nationalist incursions, mostly from ZANLA, occurred from Mozambique. By 1978, when the PVs were destroyed, they accommodated about 750 000 Africans in about 234 villages (Cilliers, 1985:90). On the whole, the model of PVs in Rhodesia was copied from what was done by the British in Malaya, the French in Vietnam and Algeria, and the Portuguese in Mozambique and Angola (Mazambani and Mashingaidze 2014:2).



Source: Adapted from: NAZ, CCJP in "Rhodesia the Propaganda War"

Teenage boys as *mujibhas* in the Second Chimurenga: Dilemma, Hope and Despair

The teenage boys were mostly used as *mujibhas* by the guerrillas. In this role of *mujibhas*, they were gatherers of intelligence on the movements of Rhodesian security forces both within and outside of the Keeps. The guerrillas preferred using young boys because they were least suspected by the colonial forces. According to Mukumbuzi, one of the most prominent guerrillas who destroyed petrol tanks in Salisbury, "It took a very long time for the Rhodesians to discover that *mujibhas* were the backbone of guerrilla operations as they monitored enemy movements." He pointed out that, "the *mujibhas* were messengers who disseminated information from one guerrilla group to another and from the guerrillas to people inside the keeps. They were the eyes and ears of the comrades." He further described them as "the heart or engine of the war" whom the guerrillas could not survive and function without.

(Mukumbuzi 01-02-14) Chiteya, (09-01-14) an ex-*mujibha* who resided in one of the PVs, also noted that, "You are useless without a backbone and you cannot survive without it and the guerrillas would not have won the war without the *mujibhas*."

As much as the *mujibhas* played such crucial roles in the prosecution of the war, their roles exposed them and endangered their lives tremendously. In 1979, for example, the Rhodesian security forces in Nyajena TTLs conducted air strikes using napalm killing 120 *mujibhas* after mistakenly taking them for guerrillas since they were moving around with wooden AK rifle imitations (Moorcrat and McLaughlin 2008: 98). This demonstrates that the role *mujibhas* played was associated with tragic consequences and exposed children to death. These experiences of children were worsened by the fact that they were not trained militarily and this had tragic consequences for them. In times of attacks, therefore, children were often found wanting and many perished in crossfires. The lives of many *mujibhas* inside the Keeps were further endangered by the activities of the Selous Scouts, a pseudo-terrorist Rhodesian army unit that was re/formed in 1974 with a clear mandate to fight the incursions of African nationalists in Rhodesia both within and across the country's borders. At times, the Selous Scouts infiltrated guerrilla units and or communities to gather vital information on the operations of ZANLA and ZIPRA (Stiff, 1982:35). Chiteya (09-02-14) cemented this predicament and highlighted that "We had a dilemma as we did not know who was a genuine or a fake guerrilla. We could not know whether one was a Rhodesian or a guerrilla." This confirms that the lives of *mujibhas* were at risk, bearing in mind that they were unarmed and virtually defenseless. To prevent the *mujibhas* from gathering intelligence and assisting the guerrillas, the Rhodesian government imposed a curfew system. Time and again, curfew breakers, mostly the unarmed *mujibhas*, were shot and killed by the security forces.

The *mujibhas* also routinely raided cattle from white commercial farmers which were closer to PVs. Although, Mediel Hove, refer to these raids as "cattle rustling" (Hove 2007:56), these were more of organized political raids than ordinary criminal theft cases. The *mujibhas* were not doing this purposefully with the intention of depriving the white farmers of their cattle and benefiting themselves. They did this for political reasons and the intention and purpose were more political than criminal. The raided cattle were usually driven by *mujibhas* overnight under the supervision of the guerrillas. On 3 October 1978, for example, guerrillas and *mujibhas* raided about 50 cattle from a farmer in Chiweshe TTL. The cattle were slaughtered after which their meat was shared among the inmates of PVs so that they would be able to prepare food for the guerrillas (Chiteya 09-02-14). The meat from raided cattle was called 'vegetables' (*Maolheji*) in most parts of Mashonaland and *Matamani* (*Mopani* worms) in southern-eastern Zimbabwe. These names were meant to deceive the Rhodesian soldiers when they made follow-ups to recover the raided cattle. The

soldiers usually targeted young children and asked them the type of relish they had eaten on a particular day. The children would often tell them that they ate 'vegetables' or '*mutamani*' and not meat⁶ (Makari, 1985: 30).

It is important to note that the raiding expeditions were not always successful. At times, the raiding parties were met with fierce resistance and fire power from white farmers and Rhodesian soldiers. One such raiding expedition proved fatal in the Honde Valley in early 1978 when *mujibhas* were instructed to raid cattle belonging to a white farmer who knew well in advance of their coming and alerted soldiers to be on guard. Mutasa (05-03-14), a witness to the calamitous raid, explained that:

I and about 20 other young boys were summoned to the mountains by the guerrillas. We were instructed not to return to the Keep on that particular day. We were briefed of our mission, which was to bring a lot of cattle from Mr. Johnson's farm. We left for the farm just before mid-night. We arrived at the farm and cut the wire and went straight to where the cattle were kept. As we approached the kraal, the soldiers opened fire on us and switched on some search lights. There was nowhere to hide and 10 of our friends were killed, three were captured and only seven of us managed to escape. The encounter was tragic we were unarmed and defenseless.

The above confirms that the lives of *mujibhas* were often at great risk during the liberation war. What worsened their situation was the fact that the *mujibhas* were not trained on how to deal with such eventualities. They were also not experienced in dealing with such encounters. As such, they proved to be vulnerable and exposed, which resulted in most of the dangerous tasks assigned to the *mujibhas* being fatal. A lot of the *mujibhas*, therefore, perished while carrying out assignments given to them by the guerrillas. What also aggravated their position was that as cattle raiding became a routine part of the *mujibhas*'s political role, the Rhodesian government became ruthless in its efforts to curb it. It was thus little of a surprise that many *mujibhas* ended up being shot and killed by the Rhodesian Security Forces. The essence of this brutality is well encapsulated by Moorcraft and McLaughlin (2008: 98) who noted that:

Hut burning and the slaughter of cattle became more common as security forces' methods of punishing civilian co-operation with guerrillas. First, dwelling huts would be razed, then grain storage bins would be destroyed and livestock killed if co-operation persisted. It also became a routine procedure after actions against the guerrillas to raze kraals in the immediate vicinity... stock theft was so prevalent that the national herd was depleted by nearly a million beasts in the last two years...

It is also important to note that the Rhodesia Security Forces sometimes engaged in the indiscriminate use of terror on real or imagined *mujibhas*, often in a deliberately

evil, shameless and callous manner. In this sense, some *mujibhas* were tortured, brutally beaten and at times murdered or mutilated. The Rhodesian army even went to the extent of destroying kraals as a way of preventing people from supporting what it termed terrorism by the guerrillas. (Gonye 2013:6) At times, the Rhodesian Air Force shelled whole villages as a way of punishing guerrilla sympathizers. This exposed children in many ways and made their lives miserable.

Mujibhas were also given tasks to destabilize the economy, communication, movement and transportation of goods and services to PVs. Chauke, an ex-*mujibha*, pointed out that, at times they were given tasks involving destruction of roads and cutting-off telephone lines (Chauke, 05-06-14) The destruction of roads involved digging trenches across, thereby making it impossible for cars and buses to pass through. Although the *mujibhas* were mostly successful in carrying out these tasks, time and again they were caught or they were killed by the Rhodesia forces or were killed by the landmines planted by the Rhodesian forces (Dzimbanhete, 2013: 14). At other times, as Jairos (20-02-14) from Madziwa TTL highlighted, whenever the young boys were caught or suspected to have carried out sabotage activities, they were subjected to a thorough hiding. He testified that:

In 1974, all young boys aged 10 years and above were rounded-up after a dip tank and a bridge were destroyed. They were taken to Madziwa Police Station. We were subjected to prolonged beatings, kicking, blind folding, and beatings with fan belts and banging of heads against the wall. We were beaten by European and African policemen. They called us collaborators and terrorists. Some of the boys sustained permanent injuries. I remember one had his ear permanently damaged.

At times, the *mujibhas* were also ordered to commit crime in the name of the liberation struggle. At times they were tasked by the guerrillas to raid and rob shops and buses (Moorcraft and McLaughlin, 2008:133-4). Such tasks were not only dangerous, but also bordered on political criminality. While forcing children to commit crime does not in itself make them criminals, this had serious immediate and long term catastrophic consequences on some of the *mujibhas*. As Moorcraft and McLaughlin (2008:133-4) concluded:

A whole generation of African children was exposed to violence. Their attitudes towards law and order were strongly negative, since every part of the white-built administrative system was fair game. Vandalism became a way of life for youngsters, and virtually every administrative or commercial structure in the TTLs outside PVs was destroyed. Youths as young as 13 enjoyed immense authority through their association with the guerrillas in the *mujibha* system and often held the power of life and death over adults. Unarmed boys in their teens could rob buses packed with adult males merely by invoking the authority of their guerrillas.

Notwithstanding all this, it is both misleading and naive to argue that *mujibhas* were meaningfully empowered and that they exercised long term immense powers

in their communities. Among others, the use of children by the guerrillas exposed them to extreme violence, which potentially affected them psychologically and emotionally. Children in their teens were too young to shoulder such burdens and this sowed the seed of violence in their minds and hearts. Findings across Africa affirm the fact that children in conflict areas face similar problems as those that were faced by their counterparts in PVs. In the end, “war violates every right of a child – the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to the development of the personality, and the right to be nurtured and protected” (Convention on the Rights of the Child, cited in UNICEF).

However, it has been suggested that the *mujibhas* were not always on the receiving end as they accumulated a lot of power from their association with the guerrillas. Kriger (1992: 181) argues that “there were different attitudes between male and female youth, a male youth empathized with guerrillas and lambasted parents for not letting their daughters stay with them in the mountains.” She further argues that the parents feared that their daughters would become pregnant and that generational conflicts were rampant between traditional chiefs on one hand and the guerrillas and their *mujibhas* on the other. She quoted one youth leader who boasted that “...We would have to beat the parents sometimes before they let their daughters live in the mountains” (Kriger (1992: 181). Although this demonstrates that at times the *mujibhas* abused their newly found status to force parents to comply with guerrilla demands, it is prudent to note that, for this the *mujibhas* depended on the guerrillas. Also, the *mujibhas* were not forcing parents to release their daughters for themselves but for the guerrillas. Therefore, the *mujibhas* were largely political instruments who survived on borrowed rags. They had no powers to make independent decisions.

Kriger (1992: 181) also brings out a very interesting point that:

Youths had no financial responsibilities to the government; nor did they have to provide food and money to the guerrillas. While parents struggled to pay their war taxes, youth and guerrillas consumed them. Since they ate together, the more lavishly parents contributed to the guerrillas, the better the youth ate. With meat regularly included in the guerrillas’ diet, youth probably ate more of it than usual during the war.

She also highlighted that the youth abused their associational relations with the guerrillas to grow powers that enabled them to forge letters to the community members to demand more than what the guerrillas were demanding and pocketing the difference” (Kriger, 1992: 181). Although, the youth cheated here and there during the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe, this does not in any way make the war a romantic escapade for the majority of the *mujibhas*. The so-called benefits by Kriger cannot be compared with the pain, suffering and trauma endured by the majority of these *mujibhas* during the liberation struggle especially in PVs, which was associated with violence, death, hunger, and forced displacement, among others. It

is also critical to note that, only a minority of these male children were lucky to have access to adequate food and power. The majority of the *mujibhas* did not enjoy the benefits; rather they were exposed to the damaging violence of the Second Chimurenga.

It can, thus, be argued that the semblance of empowerment itself that derived from the adoption of coercive tactics was temporary and not independently acquired. Among others, the *mujibhas* used borrowed guerrilla powers. These powers vanished when the guerrillas deemed it necessary and when the war ended. Therefore, to suggest that the *mujibhas* wielded enormous power is problematic and should be dismissed. On the whole, it is also important to note that the guerrillas believed that all was fair in any war situation and conflict and considered it necessary in uprooting colonialism.

The Rhodesian government also naturalized violence and justified it. Broadly, the Rhodesian Security Forces adopted a “get tough” (Moorcrat and McLaughlin 2008:56) policy by becoming ruthless and merciless. All this led to the violation of children’s rights since they were subjected to increased inhuman and degrading treatment. Among others, young boys were also forced by the Rhodesian government to provide labour for the construction of PVs. Male children were responsible for cutting down poles, carrying them for long distances, constructing the houses and thatching them. The tasks which some of the children performed in PVs were both detrimental and harmful to the children as they exerted tremendous labour requirements from the young boys. They tremendously affected their wellbeing, safety and development. (CCJP 1978: 8) See picture below which shows children carrying poles for the construction of huts in PVs.



Source: NAZ, CCJP, “Rhodesia. The Propaganda War.”

Recruitment of children during the War: Coerced or voluntary participation?

While there is no doubt on the participation of children in the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe, there is huge debate on whether or not these children were forced to participate. This debate has generated a polarity of views, which broadly can be linked with the propaganda of the Rhodesian state's propaganda on the one hand and that of the African nationalists on the other. The Rhodesian government argued that the African people in general and children in particular were forced to support terrorism. *Inter alia*, the Rhodesian government cited in CCJP (1978:5-10) argued that:

Guerrillas are communist terrorists and communists embody all that is evil... kidnapping children, starving and beating recruits, infecting women with V.D. (venereal diseases) shooting old men and young girls, and engaging in every kind of brutality...

It has to be factored in that the Rhodesians engaged in the manufacturing of propaganda to demonize the Zimbabwean nationalists. This was an inescapable consequence of war propaganda. On the whole, one would not be far from the truth to posit that the colonial explanations were based on a stereotyped mentality and were politically manufactured for propaganda purposes. This does in any way exonerate the guerrillas and make them politically righteous. The paper is only stating that the Rhodesian accounts were over-exaggerated to elicit a deliberate effect. While there were some incidences where children were kidnapped by the guerrillas from schools and from PVs, such as from St Albert's Mission and Manama Mission, this was not a standing rule prescribed by guerrillas. As Dzimbahete has argued, this was carried out by some overzealous guerrillas who wanted to raise their profiles (Dzimbahete, 2013: 14). This does also not either moralize or justify the kidnapping of children by guerrillas. Kidnapping, whether done by guerrillas or Rhodesian Security Forces, was unjustified and had terrible effects on children.

On the other hand, the black nationalists strongly perceive the participation of the youths drawn from the PVs (and other rural communities) as voluntary and based on their conscientisation about the evils of the Rhodesia state. This view was mostly articulated by the ex-freedom fighters that we interviewed. Most of the interviewed ex-guerrilla fighters maintained that the people (*povo*), *chimbwidos* and the *mujibhas* voluntarily joined the war to destroy colonialism. To them, the young boys and girls were amazingly politically conscious and were prepared to make sacrifices to bring freedom. The ex-guerrillas further maintained that the *mujibhas* welcomed them and presented themselves for duty and service. Thus, from the foregoing the young boys (and girls) "voluntarily" joined the war (Gweme, 13-01-14).

While it may be true that there were cases of mobilization that led to some of the young boys to volunteer to participate in the Second Chimurenga in different capacities, Graca Machel (1996: 11) posits that, "it is misleading, however, to consider this as 'voluntary.' Rather than exercising free choice, these children [were in fact] responding more often to a variety of pressures..." There were so many push factors, as will be outlined in the next section, which drove these young boys to take part in the war. It is also important to note that this was against the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 which categorically and equivocally stated that, "children... shall neither be recruited in the armed forces or groups nor allowed to take part in hostilities" (ICRC, 1994: 20). Therefore, the admission by ex-guerrillas that the *mujibhas* voluntarily supported and joined them is a clear admission of guilt that they violated the Geneva Convention and the Humanitarian law. The Humanitarian Law plainly prohibits the participation of children in hostilities (ICRC, 1994: 20). In the end, the recruitment and enlistment of children in any conflict, the Zimbabwean liberation struggle included, was both unjustified and wrong.

Below, we now turn to give a pithy discussion on the reasons for the participation of young children in the Second Chimurenga, with a particular view to demonstrating some aspects of the coercion that pushed them into participating in the struggle on either side of the pendulum. The discussions will be animated by the tensions of the polarized perceptions of the participation of underage boys in the war based on the framings provided by the Rhodesians and the guerrillas. On the one hand, the Rhodesian government believed that guerrillas always used terror tactics to terrorize the African people and teenage boys, which coerced Africans to join the struggle on the guerrilla sides. On the other hand, the guerrillas argue that, the *mujibhas* voluntarily joined the liberation struggle. While the debate remains unresolved, it is important to note that teenage boys were pushed by some of, or combinations of, these various factors to become *mujibhas*. The factors differed from one *mujibha* to the other and from time to time. The push factors were specific and particular and not general.

Poverty, socio-economic pressures and the participation of boys in the Second Chimurenga

PVs encountered severe socio-economic challenges that helped to push many children into supporting the liberation struggle. Poverty in many Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) where PVs were established led many to believe that the only way to end the suffering was to fight colonialism. For this piece, we are considering poverty as a complex phenomenon with social, economic, existential, physical and political dimensions. For us, poverty is defined as "a basic deprivation of well-being to live comfortably" that is "lack of adequate income or assets for generation of income;

physical weakness as a result of under-nutrition, disability or sickness; physical or social isolation that affects access to goods and services; vulnerability to risks; and voicelessness or exclusion from decision-making processes within the existing economic, political, cultural and social spheres." (Magombeyi *et al*, 2013:4) In the end, as the Moldavian woman quoted by the World Bank avers, "[p]overty is pain; it is like a disease. It attacks a person not only materially but also morally. It eats away one's dignity and drives one into total despair." (World Bank Group 2000:3) It stands to reason that as the hostilities and fighting between the Rhodesians and the African nationalist guerrillas worsened, the levels of poverty among the villagers 'incarcerated' in the PVs worsened. Among others, agricultural production, which was the backbone of livelihoods sustenance for the majority suffered as the war escalated. This was because the increased enforcement of resettlement into PVs, widespread enforcement of curfews around PVs and a rise in general insecurity prevented many people from tending to their fields, which were now long distances away left the crops at the mercy of roaming cattle and wild animals, which worsened the food provision in the PVs. At times, also, other economic assets that sustained the rural communities such as domestic animals like cattle goats and sheep were left out of the PVs and later confiscated by the Rhodesia authorities (Munochiweyi 2014:210). At other moments, too, shops and grinding mills were closed down by the colonial authorities. The above is clearly captured in the view of the African Member of Parliament in the Rhodesia-Zimbabwe Government, Chitauro, that "Africans "were poorer than they were before the establishment of the villages. (CCJP 1978: 4)" These sentiments were echoed by Chief Mutoko who argued that "more of us (Africans) were dying inside the villages than outside." (Chief Mutoko 01-03 14).

The situation was worsened by the introduction and strict enforcement of some draconian pieces of legislation such as the Collective Fines Regulations and Emergency Powers (Maintenance of Law and Order) from the middle of the 1970s with the intensification of the war (Dzimbanhete 2013: 14). There were also crafted regulations which empowered members of the security forces to loot or destroy domestic animals such as cattle and other property owned by the African people. These drove many children to support and/or to join the war who witnessed the impoverishment of their families by the looting and or destruction of wealth and property. The potential of the loss of property on the nationalistic mobilization of the Africans was ably captured by one African Member of Parliament cited by CCJP (1978:17) who in 1973 pointed out that:

If I were in Chiweshe, I would have joined the terrorists if the people go on to take my *mombes* (cattle). That is the first thing an African would not want to see. If you want to touch the African from the bottom of his heart, go and take one of his animals...

On the whole, the capacity of the Africans to sustain their lives was severely hampered as the means of production available to them were systematically destroyed. These scenarios generated despair and despondency among the rural villagers, including the boys. To this end, the air of despair may degenerate into a frustration-aggression cycle. This scenario is best illustrated by Koffi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations Organisation who, in an address on terrorism, argued that: "terrorists thrive on despair. They may gain recruits or supporters where peaceful and legitimate ways of redressing a grievance do not exist, or appear to have been exhausted. By this process, power is taken away from people and placed in the hands of small and shadowy groups" (Annan 2003: 1). The basic contention here is that desperate situations tend to harden people and to turn others into joining groups, violence or other extreme situations.

Violence of the Rhodesians and youths joining nationalists

In this section, we delve into an assessment of effects of the harassment by Rhodesian Security forces as well as state sponsored and sanctioned political violence into pushing many black children in the PVs to support and/or to join the liberation struggle. We attempt to discuss the violence in its multifarious ways, including physical lynching and public humiliation, economic, social and even cultural forms. Broadly, the violence and violations of the residents' human rights were committed by the members of the Rhodesian police, the Internal Affairs officials, and members of the Guard Force, District Security Assistants and Security Force Auxiliaries, who at different moments manned the PVs. (Cilliers 1995:93) To begin with, there was violence in the unilateral creation of the PVs. Among others, the Africans were not consulted in their creation, they were given ultimatums to move into these, some were literally force-marched into them, they had their old homes razed to the ground, were separated from their fields and cattle the two main means of producing and storing wealth, there was no state assistance in the construction of new homes, the homes in the PVs were squashed and put very close to each other, there were inadequate health provisions including clean water and toilets, there were also food shortages which at times generated malnutrition, and there were various forms of harassment from the PVs 'keepers' including sexual and other inhuman forms of treatment. (Cilliers, 1995: 85) On the whole, the pushing of people into the PVs and the destruction of old villages and homes outside of PVs disarticulated Africans from their socio-cultural environment including burial grounds for late relations. This policy was constitutive of the Rhodesian forces scorched earth methodological warfare.

The colonial forces also used terror tactics to intimidate African people in TTLs by demonstrating the "fire power of the Rhodesia weaponry" (Cilliers, 1995: 85) This was meant to symbolically demonstrate the Rhodesian security forces valor

and invincibility intended to dissuade the villagers from supporting the so called 'terrorists'. To exemplify the above, a missionary from Chiweshe (CCJP 1975: 16) revealed that:

... On Wednesday 6th August 1975, a group of five white and one black policemen moved into Chigaregare Village assaulting almost all adults present for no apparent reason. Some of the men and women were taken for questioning to Chibare ... The policemen ... killed five chickens, had them cooked and ate them on the spot. The people who had been left behind at the village were most offended and angry...

To cement the above, among others, the Rhodesia state security forces displayed dead bodies of alleged terrorists as a way of demonstrating that the terrorists were 'digging their own graves' by trying to fight the white regime. According to the *Rhodesia Herald* of 15 May 1976, "The body of a terrorist was on view in Beitbridge police station yard. Among those who went to see it on Wednesday were many Beitbridge residents, including children (*Rhodesian Herald*, 15-05 1976). Rather than dissuade the Africans from supporting the guerrillas these tactics and antics helped to cement the African people and children's hatred against the Rhodesian government. Most of these black African villagers began to believe that the guerrillas were a source of salvation, a perception that encouraged many children to be easily recruited as *mujibhas* to fight the evil system. As well, many children who witnessed such violence, harassment and brutalities supported the guerrillas. Due to the engendering of the hatred of the oppressive white regime due to the parading of the dead corpses, the African nationalist ideology enjoyed better reception in PVs across Rhodesia and children embraced it. The acceptance of the guerrilla ideology was a pursuit for political freedom and the quest for an end to the historic structural and symbolic violence that was visibilised through the political violence, intimidation and brutality perpetrated by the colonial forces on the Africans.

Furthermore, African economic activities were curtailed by the erection of the Keeps. For example, in 1976 the Rhodesian government (CCJP 1975: 16) announced in a communique "To ALL PEOPLE IN THE MASOSO TRIBAL TRUST LAND" that:

The Masoso Reserve has been closed to enable the police and soldiers to find the terrorists. As you know, terrorists have entered your land and they are being given help by the people of your land. In order for the police and soldiers to be able to do their work well, your schools, your butcheries, your grinding mills and your general stores have been closed ... If you inform the police and the soldiers soon, your grinding mills and your general stores will be re-opened soon.

Our broad argument here is that the rural folks who were force-marched into the 'keeps' endured a lot of hardships which encouraged them to adopt Zimbabwean

nationalist ideology. Thus, many began to conceive of the PVs as “concentrated camps” or as a form of “a collective fine” for the rural support of the guerrillas. As such, there was “bitter resentment” of the Keeps by Africans (Ranger, 1985:267). The consciousness of the young boys against the PVs has also to be located in this context. On the whole, such brutal and inhuman conduct by Rhodesian security forces enabled the guerrillas to market their propaganda easily and indoctrinate the *mujibhas* to fight colonialism and into supporting the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe. To the children, the guerrillas were “*vana mukoma*” (Big Brothers) who were living heroes sacrificing their lives to liberate the African people from colonialism. The guerrillas were living martyrs in the eyes of many children and as such many joined the guerrilla ranks or as *mujibhas* for the allure associated with the valor of heroism associated with fighting the evils of Rhodesian colonialism. However, this did not in any way justify the recruitment of young children as *mujibhas* or into other guerrilla ranks both in and outside Rhodesia. This is not to undercut the fact that most of the youths joined on their own constituting, in Tekere’s words cited in Ranger, “an endless flow of men [recruits] ...” (Ranger, 1985:268).

It is also important to note that the guerrillas also used coercive methodologies to force the *mujibhas* to support and/ or to join the liberation struggle. They crushed violently those who were real or imagined sell-outs. During *pungwes* (overnight meetings) the guerrillas demonstrated their ruthlessness on alleged sell-outs. Mr T. Chauke (05-06-14) noted that:

Whenever, a sell-out was identified the *mujibhas* would be ordered to bring the person to the *Pungwe*. The boys were then ordered to torture or thoroughly beat the sell-out singing war songs. The boys would take turns to thrash the sell-outs mostly with logs on the buttocks. The beatings were meant to demonstrate to the *mujibhas* that selling-out was a terrible mistake. Sell-outs were at times beaten to death. Therefore, anyone who refused to take part in the war was considered a sell-out and faced the consequences.

The above narration speaks also to the findings by other Second Chimurenga historians on the violence meted out against sell-outs and witches who were castigated for negatively impacting the war efforts (Bhebe, 1999:93 & Kanengoni, 1997:22). What should also not escape scrutiny is the fact that the violence against [so called] sell-outs at the *pungwes*, like that perpetrated by the guerrilla forces, was not only meant for the transgressors but for the larger community members. As Foucault (1998) says in the case of the public disciplining of Damians, for example, a large crowd was necessary to create a spectacle and to send an unambiguous message to the others. This was more to send a message to the larger audience that witnessed as it was also aimed at disciplining the one undergoing

the punishment. Thus, in the above use of coercion and violence against the sell-outs also helped to enlist the services of *mujibhas*. To this extent, some of the young boys who became *mujibhas* joined the liberation struggle out of fear and to protect themselves against guerrilla brutality. This does not minimize the importance of other factors and does not in any way imply that the Rhodesian security forces were better in terms of the use of violence to gain the support of the teenage boys. Therefore, teenage boys inside PVs were suffering from both ends. The guerrillas and the security forces were two sides of the same coin when it came to the use of force to achieve political ends. They both believed that power came from the barrel of the gun, dealing rather ruthlessly, mercilessly, brutally and heartlessly when with perceived enemies.

Arguably, however, Rhodesian agents' violence tended to be indiscriminately applied as all Africans were considered as supporters of the guerrillas. This is ably demonstrated by a former security officer cited by Paul Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin (2008: 98) who confessed that "... towards the end of the war Africans who lived in TTLs could be automatically classified as supporters of guerrillas." The Rhodesia state agents violence also has to be considered in the context of the 1975 Act that indemnified security agents from prosecution against murder or injuries to civilians in "good faith" in the execution of their duties (Ranger 1985:268). Once the Africans were labeled as supporters of terrorism, the Rhodesia regime unleashed undiluted violence towards them. The Rhodesian methodology actually achieved the opposite by pushing many young people to support the guerrillas.

On the other hand, the guerrillas differed in terms of the use of violence on the villagers as a political and military instrument. Broadly, guerrillas used violence as a last resort. Guerrillas began by politicizing the African people through political education which exposed the evils of colonialism and discrimination and promised a prosperous future in a "Free Zimbabwe." *Pungwes* which were held inside the PVs played an important role. Ranger (1985:268) argued that:

Political meetings, called *pungwes* were held in villages at night. Speeches would be made by the political commissar, and almost invariably would follow the singing of Chimurenga songs and often beer drinking. Summary justice might also be meted out to those who were accused of collaborating with the Rhodesian government. Great play was made of the Chimurenga tradition of resistance, the need for land, the brutality of the Rhodesian forces and the general poverty of rural life.

The use of *mujibhas* was also an effective mobilizing strategy used by the guerrillas. Moorcraft and McLaughlin (2008: 98) argue that, "particularly effective was the guerrilla *mujibha* system, which mobilized young males from the age of five who

were romantically attracted by the admiration combat guerrillas enjoyed among Africans..." (Ranger 1985:268)

Mujibhahood as a survivalist strategy

Going forward, and taking off from the point of view of the piling of hardships upon the villagers of PVs, this section addresses the joining of the ranks of *mujibhas* by [sometimes underage] boys as constitutive of innovative survivalist strategy. In this sense, we try to deduce how the *mujibhas* (and *chimbwidos*) joined and supported guerrillas as a means to mitigate the hardships and to negotiate survival under the obtaining difficult conditions. As already alluded to in the previous section, hunger, food shortages, malnutrition and starvation were major problems which haunted inmates of PVs. This, as already highlighted also, was due to the disruption of agricultural activities, including loss of cattle and destruction of crops. In order to underscore the above, it has been established, among others, that due to the rampant food shortages in the 'keeps', many women, married and the unmarried, alike, entered into sexual liaisons with 'keeps' guards, police officers and soldiers as a way of accessing food.

Following from above, it stands to reason therefore that for many residents of the 'keeps', including young boys, working with the guerrillas provided opportunities and privileges. Among others, joining the guerrillas was an escape route from biting poverty and food shortages in the 'keeps'. Broadly, active participation as *mujibhas* enabled the participants to have access to the scarce food resources and it was also an opportunity to assume new political roles some of which debunked the traditional lines of authority.

Conclusion

The escalation of violence of the Second Chimurenga tremendously affected the lives of many male children inside PVs. This demonstrates that children were among the principal victims of war in PVs. There were gender specific problems faced by children who were inmates in Keeps which were dotted around the country. War time roles and duties inside PVs were gender specific. Male and female children faced different problems at different times. It can be concluded that the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe was largely a nightmare for male children. Between 1978 and 1979 both the guerrillas and the Security Forces forcibly conscripted thousands of young people from schools, kraals and PVs. Although both groups violated the Geneva Declaration which outlawed children's participation in a conflict situation and the types of abuses and the extent and magnitude differed. This was confirmed by the CCJP in 1977 when it highlighted that, "the village inhabitants were in greater need of protection from their keepers

than from the guerrillas" (CCJP 1975: 16). The war situation in Rhodesia tremendously affected children in many ways. Studies on the effects of war on children in conflict situations across Africa demonstrated that war destroys the capacity to protect children as communities are ripped apart and can no longer provide a secure environment for children.

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