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THE AMBIGUITIES OF DEMOCRACY: THE DEMOBILISATION OF THE ZIMBABWEAN EX-COMBATANTS AND THE ORDEAL OF REHABILITATION, 1980-1993

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The Ambiguities of Democracy: The Demobilisation of the Zimbabwean Ex-combatants and the Ordeal of Rehabilitation, 1980-1993

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INTRODUCTION

"`Son of the soil' during the armed struggle `squatter' after independence."[1] The irony in this statement encapsulates the predicament in which many ex-combatants[2] find themselves in today, thirteen years after independence. For most of the now destitute ex-combatants the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe was " a revolution that lost its way" because of the raw deal they got from the petit bourgeoisie nationalist leadership when they were demobilised. For many ex-combatants the refrain *"MUCHANOGUTA kumusha!"* (there will be plenty at home], made by politicians to instill resilience during the struggle did not materialise. Whilst more than 25000 ex-combatants have become progressively destitute in Zimbabwe, the very people they put into power and those who opportunistically leaped on to the bandwagon of the liberation struggle have become oppressively rich.

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

In current social and political discourse questions have been raised in Zimbabwe about the hue and cry over the predicament of ex-combatants as if other sections of society e.g. peasants, are better off. This lends credence to Norma J.Kriger's observation that internal peasant struggles after the war were centred around new questions created by the war, such as who had sacrificed resources for the guerrillas and deserved compensation?[3] It has been argued that ex-combatants should not be treated differently or be given preferential treatment to other social groups which "equally" contributed to the successful execution of the war. Ex-combatants, therefore, cannot claim to have liberated Zimbabwe on their own.

The purpose of my paper is, therefore, to comprehensively and critically explore the demobilisation process and its impact on the ordinary ex-combatant who, at the end of the war, found himself without enough resources nor the necessary social backup to reintegrate fully into the civil

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1. Moto, June 1988, No. 71, p.6
2. Ex-combatant in this case means, "any person who underwent military training and participated, consistently and persistently, in the liberation struggle which occurred in Zimbabwe between the 1st January 1962 and the 29th February 1980, in connection with the bringing about of Zimbabwe's independence on the 18th April, 1980". (as defined by the War Veterans Act, 1992).
3. N.J. Krigler, Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices, Cambridge, 1992, p.213

society he had struggled to liberate. The paper will address the ex-fighters' concerns, fears, crisis of expectations as the measures they took to salvage their situation.

ZIMBABWE'S DEMOBILISATION EXERCISE: 1980-1982

In 1980, Zimbabwe's total military force stood at about 100 000[4] of which about 70% were former guerrillas of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA, Zanu PF's military wing) and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA, PF-Zapu's military wing) and Rhodesian army. The new nation could ill-afford to maintain such a massive force in the post-war period. Therefore, the new Zimbabwe National Army had to be reduced by about 36 000 men. It is common knowledge that in 1980 the government inherited a war shattered economy, high levels of unemployment and other attendant politico-socio-economic problems. Besides, the new government had to deal with the return and rehabilitation of more than 256 000 refugees.[5] Given this backdrop, it was apparently clear that without a blueprint to ensure the successful execution of such a monumental exercise demobilisation and rehabilitation were bound to be an ordeal to many ex-combatants. As a stop-gap measure the government introduced a short-term "quick-fix" solution.

"Operation Seed"

Whilst the government was deliberating on the modalities to be followed in creating a new national defence force it introduced a large-scale programme for the reintegration of the ex-combatants called "Operation Seed" (the Operation of Soldiers Employed in Economic Development). Operation Seed was aimed at encouraging the ex-combatants to "swop their guns for picks and shovels" and to work on land acquired by government for that purpose.[6]

This Operation was not enthusiastically welcomed by the ex-combatants. Although Operation Seed was presented as a military exercise and as part of the struggle for national prosperity, the ex-combatants perceived the whole exercise as a ploy by the government to deny some of them a chance to join the new Zimbabwe National Army.[7] Operation Seed proved to be a total failure because its objectives were not made abundantly clear by its authors.

Ex-combatants viewed it with suspicion and there was nothing in the programme to motivate them. The Rhodesian propaganda machinery which was still intact played a significant role in discrediting and misrepresenting the objectives of the Operation. Rhodesians, for instance, propagated the idea that the ex-combatants would simply be given seed and hoes

4. S.Moyo, 'The Socio-Economic Status and Needs of Ex-Combatants: The Case of Masvingo Province', A Z.I.D.S Consultancy Report prepared for the Lutheran World Federation (Harare), No.4, 1985, p.1
5. "Zimbabwe's liberators: the Guerrillas today", Univ. of Cape Town, Afrosoc. Zimbabwe, 1981, p.42.
6." Zimbabwe's Liberators: the Guerrillas today", p.42
7. ibid.

and sent to the rural areas and left to their own devices.[8] Such a presentation raised suspicion about the actual objectives of the scheme among many ex-combatants. As a result Operation Seed just fizzled out.

Integration into the Public Service

In 1981, the Government decided to integrate some ex-guerrillas into the new Zimbabwe National Army and to demobilise more than 36 000 people. It prepared a demobilisation package which consisted of a demobilisation allowance, technical training, and business advice. Each demobilised combatant received $185 a month for up to two years to enable them to reintegrate into civilian society.[9] This amounted to a "severance entitlement" of $4,400 over a two year period.[10] It has been estimated that by 1984 36 000 combatants had been demobilised and out of this number only 16 000 had obtained employment or training by 1985.[11] In 1989, official government figures were as follows:

Total number of ex-combatants	70 000
Ex-combatants employed by government and companies (in military & security-related jobs as policemen, prison officers soldiers & security guards and others as personnel officers, civil servants etc)[12]	43 000
Ex-combatants who formed co-operatives or went on for further training	14 000
Unemployed ex-combatants	13 000[13]

It is with the last two categories that this paper is concerned, as the number of unemployed ex-combatants increased steadily to more than 25000, between 1981 and 1993 thereby making it a single social group whose common problems warrant some analysis.

The Demobilisation Payment and Its Shortcomings

The government's demobilisation package, which in the words of Albert Nyathi a former combatant was a "pitiful alternative to Operation Seed" is in fact "notorious" for falling far short of adequately preparing ex-combatants to return to civil society. It was an impetuously designed programme which overlooked the diverse socio-economic needs of each and every demobilised combatant. Very little, if anything, was done to assess the extent to which the society

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8. ibid.
9. Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin, No.10, Aug-Sept. 1981, p.19
10. Nyathi and Hoffman, Tomorrow is Built Today, p.60
11. Moyo, 'The Socio-Economic Status and Needs of Ex-combatants', p.2
12. Sunday Mail, Aug.6 1989
13. Read On, July-Aug. 1990, p.14

at large was prepared to reabsorb them.[14] Some ex-combatants had practical problems such as not having a place they could call home either because they had lost their families or were simply not welcomed back. The manner in which the demobilisation exercise was handled engendered a deep sense of resentment and frustration among many ex-combatants.

One of the major complaints of the ex-combatants was about the inadequacy of the demobilisation allowance they had received between 1981 and 1982. To many an ex-combatant it was a pittance. Pitted against the Poverty Datum Line (PDL)[15] estimate of $128 in December, 1980[16], the income of $185 they were given appears to be a lot of money. The PDL estimate assumes that one already has "decent" shelter and a few other basics. But, ex-combatants were people who had just come from the "bush" and were starting a new life from scratch. They, therefore, required more than just $185 to meet their "objective" needs in order to live in a condition of "basic physical health and social decency." Whilst ex-combatants had their own expectations about the future and of what the government was supposed to do for them, their families looked up to them for an improvement to their lives. To meet the compelling demands of social decency, some ex-combatants used the $185 they received every month to buy clothes. Some used it to pay school fees for their children and young brothers. Very few managed to engage in capital projects despite the government's encouragement to the ex-combatants to form co-operatives.

THE IMPACT OF UNEMPLOYMENT ON THE SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF EX-COMBATANTS

Limitations in finding Employment

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

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14. A pilot study of this kind was done by the Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies (ZIDS) which was contracted not by the Government but by The Lutheran World Federation to carry out a provincial back-ground study of the socio-economic requirements of ex-combatants in Masvingo in 1985.
15. The PDL is defined as "The income required to satisfy the minimum necessary consumption needs of a family of given size and composition within a defined environment in a condition of basic physical health and social decency." in V.S.Cubitt, 1979 Supplement to The Urban Poverty Datum Line in Rhodesia: A study of the Minimum Consumption Needs of Families (1974), Faculty of Social Studies, University of Zimbabwe, 1979, p.1
16. ibid.

At independence the government set the minimum educational qualification for employment as a civil servant at 5 Ordinary Level (O-Level) passes, at the standard of C or better. Although statistics are hard to come by it is not an overstatement to say that many ex-combatants joined the armed struggle before attaining O-Level certificates largely because of the Rhodesian government's discriminatory educational policy and also the fact that some left school prematurely when they were recruited for training.[17] The government's "education for all" programme was churning out thousands of better educated young people and ex-combatants could not compete with them on the job-market.[18]

Ex-combatants as Employees: Private Sector Perceptions

The employment of ex-combatants in the private sector was a very slow and closely-guarded process. This was because there was a general antipathy within the private sector towards the employment of ex-combatants. A government proposal in 1989 to provide special subsidies to parastatals and private companies that employed more than five percent ex-combatants on their work force[19] was not well received by the latter. The private sector viewed this state intervention as being incompatible with free market economics. This proposal came at a time when businessman, manufacturers, etc were hide-bound by a system of labour laws and the statutory minimum wage requirements which they perceived to have been mounted against them.[20] The first victims of this perception were ex-combatants because they were seen as having been imposed by the government on the private sector. Worse still it was thought they were capable of "importing" revolutionary tendencies to the work-place. The private sector was, therefore, "a no-go area for ex-combatants", as one ex-combatant put it.[21]

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

The government of Zimbabwe identified the concept of co-operatives as an important vehicle, *inter alia*, towards the full integration of demobilised combatants. Not only was it going to serve as an avenue for this purpose but it was seen as being in line with the government's socialist thrust. It was also seen as a partial panacea to the unemployment problem that prevailed in the country. The government encouraged ex-combatants come up with proposals for viable projects to form co-operatives. Once they had been approved by the Demobilisation Directorate they could then be given a lump sum of their demobilisation payments which would form

17. It was not easy to attain an 'O' Level certificate before independence because Smith's settler-colonial administration blocked the educational avenues for blacks to advance beyond Grade Seven. This in its own right was a contributory factor to the launching of the armed struggle.
18. C.Stoneman and L.Cliffe, Zimbabwe:Politics, Economy and Society, London, 1989, p.77
19. Sunday Mail, Aug. 6, 1989.
20. Argus, Feb.13, 1989
21. Moto, No.51, p.2

the initial capital for their proposed projects. Furthermore, the government undertook to provide advisory assistance "specifically tailored to the needs of ex-combatants." It is important to take note of these promises from the onset because most of the co-operative ventures collapsed due to lack of assistance.

Initially, the idea of co-operatives was enthusiastically welcomed by many ex-combatants. As from 1981 co-operatives initiated by ex-combatants sprung up in various parts of the country. A common characteristic was that some of these co-operatives bore exhortative names i.e names which emphasized the need for self-reliance and co-operation. These were, for instance, Vukuzenzele [which means "Wake up and do it yourself"] in Zvishavane, Simukai [stand up] in Seke south of Harare, Shandisai Pfungwa [use your brains] near Marondera, Batsiranai [assist each other] in Shamva.[22] Most of the co-operatives were engaged in the following enterprises: crop, poultry and livestock production, welding, trade, dress-making, carpentry, etc.[23]

But some co-operatives soon became a disappointment to many ex-combatants as they were bedevilled by some practical problems. The first and probably the biggest problem that faced agro-based co-operatives, in particular, in Zimbabwe was drought. Between 1982 and 1984 Zimbabwe was afflicted by a serious drought. This scourge had a devastating effect on most of the seventy-two co-operatives established by ex-combatants and affiliated to the Zimbabwe Producer and Marketing Organisation [ZPMCO].[24] Considerable damage was done to crops and livestock. As most of the co-operatives had invested all their resources in agricultural implements they had nothing to fall back on.[25]

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

> "Drought has been a terrible blow in our young co-operative society. Having recently settled and struggling to reach a certain level of self-reliance, this severe drought is going to hammer us."[26]

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

> "The situation here is serious. Both our crops and those of the people of the communal lands around us are completely ruined. We had a small garden

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22. Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin, No.27, May 1983, pp.14-17
23. Moyo, The Socio-Economic Status and Needs of Ex-combatants, p.47
24. ZPMCO, described as "the mother of all progressive and collective co-operatives in Zimbabwe" was launched in July 1982.
25. Zimbabwe Project News Bulletin, No.27, p.14
26. ibid.

> which was our main source of vegetables for daily consumption, but that too is finished because Gwenyoka stream has dried up. So now we have nothing."[27]

The drought, therefore, had a debilitating socio-economic impact on ex-combatants. In these circumstances it was quite obvious that no profits or high incomes could be realised. Once the viability of co-operatives was threatened by the severe drought there was a turn-over of some members from co-operatives who ultimately joined the ranks of the unemployed. This also saw some ex-combatants scrounging for existence.

The other immediate problem faced by co-operatives especially in Matebeleland was the dissident menace. Although this was not a nation-wide problem it is important to consider it as it directly and negatively affected the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian society. From 1981 some disgruntled ex-ZIPRA fighters left the army to engage in terrorist activities in rural Matabeleland. The government reacted by sending in the North-Korean trained Fifth Brigade to eradicate the dissident elements.[28] Both the Brigade's search for the dissidents and the dissidents' terrorist activities among the rural communities adversely affected developmental projects such as the reconstruction of roads and bridges.

Co-operatives, particularly those established by former ZIPRA combatants, also fell victim to this political and security-related problem between 1981 and 1987. The most common problem was the harrassment of co-operative members especially by the Fifth Brigade on allegations that because they were ZIPRA ex-combatants they were bound to have a lot of knowledge about the operations and activities of dissidents. The other allegation was that co-operatives were using their land to cache arms - an allegation that gained currency when arms caches were discovered by the government on the farms owned by ZAPU in 1982. The story of Mbuso, an ex-combatant, is a classic case which graphically highlights the harrassment.

At the time of demobilisation in 1982, Mbuso and his fellow ex-combatants formed a farming co-operative about 20km outside Bulawayo. He remained with the co-operative for two years but had a nasty experience. He was the chairman of the co-operative. He was arrested on several occasions on allegations that he was a dissident. "I was arrested, detained for some months, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for days, beaten up and things like that," said Mbuso. But it always turned out that there was no sufficient evidence to incriminate him. His crime was that as a former combatant and commander he had some knowledge about the activities of dissidents. During one of their many "visits" to Mbuso's co-operative, the security forces interrogated him:

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27. ibid.
28. Stoneman, Zimbabwe: Politics, Economics and Society, p.47

> "What do you know about this armed cache, tell us, especially since you were at Gwaai [assembly point]. You were a commander there, you couldn't fail to know what was happening, you are telling us lies."[29]

The other members of the same co-operative were also subjected to the same aggressive treatment. His decisive moment came when he was detained for three months in 1984. Finally, Mbuso decided to quit the co-operative. When he left the other members followed suit.[30]

Harrassment was not restricted to the co-operatives in Matebeleland only but even those in other provinces once the members were suspected to have had links with ZAPU. One such victim was Simukai Collective Farming Co-operative Society on the border of the Seke and Chihota communal lands in Mashonaland East. The chairman, Andrew Nyathi and all the other members were all ZIPRA ex-combatants. Their co-operative was situated in the heart of a ZANU [PF] stronghold. Although members of Simukai had publicly distanced themselves from the dissidents this did not exonerate them from suspicion and harrassment by government security agents.[31] Such treatment adversely affected their operational efficiency as they lived in constant fear.

There were also other numerous constraints that vitiated the growth and consolidation of co-operatives. In 1987, Judy Acton, director of Zimbabwe Project noted that several of the collective co-operatives that had been formed had gone out of business.[32] This could be attributed to under-capitalisation. Despite the government's commitment to co-operatives, it had minimal resources to establish co-operative ventures which were highly competitive and profitable.[33] The "socialist -oriented" co-operatives that were launched were not only crippled by the lack of adequate capital as well as high overhead expenditure but they also had to contend with small and large-scale firmly established capitalist ventures. Futhermore, these co-operatives did not meet the lending criteria of the big financial power-houses as they lacked the requisite collateral security. Even the establishment of new financial institutions, such as the Zimbabwe Development Bank and the Small Enterprises Development Corporation did not alleviate the problems of infant co-operatives which would struggle to raise sufficient profit to repay loans.[34]

Some of the constraints emanated from a lack of general ancillary services which are central to the survival and sustenance of co-operatives such as preferential credit technical advice, pricing schemes, market contracts, foreign

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29. Barnes, The Heroes'Struggle, p.11
30. ibid.
31. Nyathi & Hoffman, Tomorrow Is Built Today, p.108
32. Sunday Mail, 15 Feb. 1987
33. Moyo, `The Socio-Economic Status and Needs of Ex-combatants', p.95
34. ibid. p.95

exchange etc.[35] The general lack of technical know-how, training and managerial skills, fraud, irresponsibility among co-operative members, and lack of viable markets also contributed to the their lack of success.[36]

With limited government assistance, the poor perfomance of co-operatives and the generally unfavourable economic conditions the number of unemployed ex-combatants had risen to 25 000 by 1988.[37]

Constraints that faced the Social Integration of Female Ex-combatants

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

Although female ex-combatants were accorded the returning hero status as evidenced by the euphoric celebrations throughout the country settling down to face the realities of life was not easy. Those ex-combatants who wanted to be married found the civilian men unenthusiastic to marry them.[38] Once a civilian man got to know that a certain woman he had developed an interest in was an ex-combatant, he would quickly withdraw. Female ex-combatants found it easy to marry male ex-combatants with they shared more or less similar experiences and a common understanding based on their relationships during the armed struggle. A group of female ex-combatants at a co-operative in Gweru disclosed that they were all married to male ex-combatants and pointed out that this was a clear reflection of the people's general resentment towards ex-combatants.[39]

There were some mixed real and imagined perceptions about female ex-combatants prevalent in Zimbabwe at independence. Some men were of the opinion that female ex-combatants were too haughty to be married in spite of the fact that "even among civilian women there are those who are born tough."[40] Charles Cheveru was forced to 'ditch' her ex-combatant girlfriend because he found it difficult to deal with "such a wild lover". Cheveru stated that even though they loved each other she never ceased to say,

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35. ibid. p.95
36. Sunday Mail, 15 Feb. 1987
37. The Sunday Mail, March 27, 1988
38. Moto, No. 94, Nov. 1990, p.4
39. Moto, No. 94, Nov. 1990, p.4
40. ibid.

> "I can do without you," or "do not be playful with me. She used to boss me around and would tell me about her adventures during Chimurenga to intimidate me into fearing her. She gave me many warnings about crushing me if I failed to keep appointments."[41]

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

Others argued that because they had lived with men in the bush "under all sorts of circumstances" they, therefore, lacked decency and propriety. The popular belief was, "They must have slept around a lot."[42] Although there might have been isolated cases of this nature it is important to point out that there was a strict code of conduct that was supposed to be observed by every combatant during the guerrilla warfare. It was taboo to have a private affair and those suspected could earn themselves up to forty-five strokes.[43] This, however, does not mean that love and marriage were entirely forbidden. An ex-combatant called Nyasha explained the proper procedure that had to be followed if one wanted to get married:

> "If you wanted to get married you had to do it properly. You would go to the political commissar and say you would like to get married. He would take your details, your name, home, parents and so forth. Because your parents would like to know how you got married, that was very important. Then they would ask you whether you were sure you wanted to get married. They would give you time to consider and then, two weeks or so after your requisition, they would come and say 'O.K., we've approved of your wedding, you can get married."[44]

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

Although some female ex-combatants were employed in the defence forces, in local authorities, in the public and private sectors alongside their male-counterparts, they represent a minority. The majority of female ex-combatants are either married housewives or single women who are presently struggling to eke out a living. These women like their male-counterparts are very bitter about the way things have gone since independence. Sithembiso, an ex-combatant

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41. Sunday Mail, 6 Dec. 1981
42. ibid. p.5
43. Moto, No.94, Nov. 1990, p.5
44. Nyasha and Rose, 'Four Years of Armed Struggle in Zimbabwe', in M.Davies, Third World - Second Sex: Women's Struggles and National Liberation, Third World Women Speak Out, Zed Books, London, p.104

from Lupane, complained bitterly: "Those who called us to fight no longer look at us. They made us leave school, but wherever we go looking for jobs, they ask for `O' and `A' levels."[45] Sithembiso went on to touch on an ironic point of discontent, "If we had been dissidents, perhaps we might have been treated differently."[46] This was a sarcastic allusion to the sympathetic and preferential treatment accorded to former dissidents who, following the unity accord between Zanu-PF and PF-Zapu on 22 December 1987, were given a lot of assistance by the government and some non-governmental organisations to rehabilitate them.

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

THE ZIMBABWE WAR VETERANS ASSOCIATION: 1989-1993

> **"The Association was formed after we had discovered that the politicians who made us what we are had ditched us."47**

Since the time of demobilisation ex-combatants had never boldly stood up to challenge established authority about their social predicament. If anything, they were praised by politicians for their discipline, tolerance and patience. Non-constituency MP J.I.Hundermark said of the unemployed ex-combatants:

> "After all these years, having had the problems that they got, the hardships that they faced, to still be tolerant, so tolerant and patient as they are is indeed most commendable. I salute them for this. They accepted the advice from Government, from Members of Parliament that we cannot help them immediately ----."[48]

Developments immediately before and after the 1989 Willowgate scandal[49] showed that relations between the party and the government on one hand and the jobless ex-combatants, on the other were at an all-time-low. As if to say "enough is enough", the ex-combatants launched an association called the Zimbabwe War Veterans Association [ZWVA] comprising former combatants from ZANLA and ZIPRA in April 1989 so that they could manage their own affairs.[50]

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45. Moto, No.94, Nov.1990, p.5
46. ibid.
47. Moto, Nov., 1990, p.9
48. The Hansard, March 24, 1988, p.3176
49. The scandal involving the buying and selling of vehicles by members of Parliament and cabinet ministers and thereby constituting an abuse of privilege. The name of the scandal took its cue from the Watergate scandal in America.
50. The Zimbabwe News, Jan.1990, p.25

Factors Leading to the formation of the ZWVA

The formation of the ZWVA was a reactive initiative taken by ex-combatants when it had become abundantly clear that the government had failed to assist them. It was also motivated by the realisation that the society at large "was not fast in integrating ex-combatants and it failed to employ them."[51] An important feature of the ZWVA was that it was not only formed to address the unemployment problems faced by many ex-combatants, but also to act as a trade union by catering for the interests of employed ex-combatants who were increasingly victimised at their work places.[52] However, its formation was met with suspicion by some government and party officials.

Krige has argued that organisations of war veterans `pose a threat to the legitimacy of a government that itself relies on its war credentials for legitimacy.'[53] This is true of the Zimbabwe government, to some extent, given the kind of bureaucratic interference in the formation of the association. In spite of the fact that ZWVA was declared a welfare and not a political organisation its formation caused panic in government circles as it was launched concurrently with the Zimbabwe Unity Movement [ZUM].[54] It was suspected of having a hidden agenda. So it was that the government increased its interest in the organisational affairs of the association, presumably, to ensure that no anti-government activities were planned.

The ZWVA and the War Veterans Bill

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare unilaterally and arbitrarily legislated for the welfare of the war veterans. In July 1991, the Ministry drafted the War Veterans Administration Bill and gave it to the war veterans for review in December of that year. The war veterans were infuriated by the manner in which this affair had been handled. The lack of transparency in dealing with this issue left them wondering what the real intentions of the Ministry were. The war veterans snubbed the draft bill because of its "excessive ministerial control" and Margaret Dongo, an ex-combatant MP for Sunningdale, mobilised other ex-combatants and set up a voluntary war veterans' committee to scrutinise the bill and to come up with their own proposals.[55]

They opposed the Bill because it did not "properly represent their needs and invests too much power in the minister." It entitled only the minister to decide the amount, nature and duration of the assistance that was to be granted to dependents of war veterans. The Bill also gave the minister

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51. ibid.
52. ibid.
53. N.Krige, `The politics of creating national heroes: the search for political legitimacy and national identity', cited in Cock, `The Social Integration of Demobilised Soldiers in Contemporary South Africa', p.13
54. ZUM is a rival political party formed by Edgar Tekere in 1989, when he fell out of grace with ZANU [PF].
55. ibid.

powers to appoint three of the five-member board which was to act mainly in an advisory and supervisory capacity, whilst the war veterans would appoint only two members. Instead they wanted a very powerful seven-member "investment and administration" board with three government appointees and four chosen from war veterans. Whilst the voluntary war veterans' committee was in favour of the establishment of a war veterans'administration fund, they were opposed to the idea that the fund be administered by the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare with the aid of "a board and a powerful commissioner and other civil servants." They, instead, wanted the fund to be administered by the Minister of Finance as this would, presumably, prevent bureaucratic red-tape when the funds were required.[56]

The other objection was that the draft dealt only with destitute and unemployed war veterans instead of all the ex-combatants. This objection was motivated by the fact that employed ex-combatants were mainly engaged in menial, "survival" jobs which lacked future prospects.[57] They objected to the inclusion of the "screening" or "means testing" mechanism in the bill. This mechanism was designed to vet ex-combatants to ensure that they were bona fide war veterans who deserved assistance.[58] Much as these war veterans desired to see the Bill become all-inclusive, essentially this would mean that those ex-combatants who were relatively living "comfortably" would have an unfair advantage over those living in destitution and were unemployed.

The struggle for economic independence and the struggle for the most mundane basics, i.e. accommodation, food, land, education and good health was high on the committee's agenda. But this struggle would only be won if they acquired the very sources of wealth - "factories, mines and farms" for "that is what we fought for."[59] In keeping with these grandiose objectives, the committee's alternative version of the Bill emphasised the need for the establishement of five main types of assistance schemes that were specifically aimed at economically empowering war veterans and to ensure economic independence. These were:

(i) Land settlement;
(ii) Industrial, commercial mining, and service industries and investment;
(iii) Professional, academic, technical and vocational training;
(iv) Social benefits for veterans and their dependents; and
(v) Financial assistance, including loans and grants for development schemes and individuals.[60]

These proposals were in opposition to the Ministry's Bill which emphasised the welfare needs of the ex-combatants without encouraging their economic independence. At the end

56. ibid.
57. ibid.
58. ibid.
59. ibid.
60. ibid. p.18

of the day a compromise War Veterans Act was promulgated in July 1992.[61] It represented, to some extent, an amalgamation of the proposals made by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the War Veterans Association. Be that as it may, the ZWVA made it clear that it wanted to see minimum government intervention. "We only want the government to intervene when the board fails to perform its duties. Otherwise we will not tolerate too much government intervention."[62] said Charles Hungwe, the chairperson of the ZWVA.

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

If the government had real or imagined fears about the actual intentions of the formation of the veterans' association this was somewhat confirmed by the no-holds-barred encounter between President Robert Mugabe and the ZWVA in Chinhoyi [where the armed struggle to liberate Zimbabwe started] on April 25, 1992. Mugabe had been invited as patron of the association to inaugurate the ZWVA. Presumably by design, the President chose not to address teething problems faced by ex-combatants and which they expected him to deal with but criticised them for not taking an active part in politics. He portrayed ex-combatants as "armchair critics" who had to take the blame for their predicament.[63]

It was on this note that the President raised the ire of the war veterans. Without mincing their words, they told the President that his government was being run by "opportunists and bourgeois elements" [in reference to some ministers and senior government officials] who ensured the continued marginalisation of war veterans.[64] They argued that it was because of these "bourgeois elements" that ex-combatants who were interested in joining the hierarchy of ZANU [PF] always found it difficult to do so. Some war veterans even suggested that Mugabe should dismiss some of his ministers who kept him uninformed aboutthe true state of affairs which had led to a "deep-seated lethargy and complacency."[65]

The President pleaded ignorancee of any barriers because he had always thought that it was very easy to join the ranks of the party.[66] The President could only advise the leaders to draw up a blueprint for a new "revolutionary leadership."[67] President Mugabe's encounter with the war veterans was a clear demonstration that the latter had lost their patience with "all the empty political rhetoric" such as the President had given them.

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61. The War Veterans Act, 1992
62. Horizon, Feb. 1993, p.14
63. The Financial Gazette, April 30, 1992
64. Zimbabwe Report, Summer, 1992, p.5
65. J.N.Moyo, `The Leadership Crisis in Zanu [PF] and the Government', The Financial Gazette, April 30, 1992
66. ibid.
67. Zimbabwe Report, Summer, 1992, p.5

A few months later the President placed emphasis on the benefits that would accrue to ex-combatants under the proposed War Veterans Act. But even when the Bill had been passed into law in July 1992, bureaucratic bungling prevented its immediate application. It took more than a year for it to be implimented because a war veterans'board had to to installed first and approved by the President. In spite of these delays, the war veterans demonstrated that they were well organised and were raring to work by submitting nearly 400 project proposals by February 1993. But nothing could be done until the board was in place and registration had been completed.[68]

ZANU [PF] and the ZWVA

The simmering discontent among the war veterans also explains why there was panic when they decided to form the ZWVA. But where there are genuine problems and the people affected decide to radically transform their social conditions by organising themselves, politicians especially in Zimbabwe, are quick to smell a rat and, rightly or wrongly, allege that "right-wing forces" are operating behind the scenes. Such an allegation was made by Nathan Shamuyarira, the party's Secretary for Information and Publicity [who is also the Minister of Foreign Affairs]. Shamuyarira stressed in October 1992 that there were some right-wing forces who were manipulating the ex-combatants to gain "political capital."

Shamuyarira's insensitive comment on the plight of ex-combatants sums up the government's lukewarm attitude towards the latter. He declared that it was never the intention of the government to create a "privileged class of ex-combatants." He also pointed out that participation in the armed liberation struggle was not compulsory but was a voluntary decision by individual Zimbabweans. He added: "We sacrificed in many ways to achieve our independence not because we were going to be given a job or money by anybody. It was a personal commitment to a cause."[69]

Such statements left some ex-combatants in no doubt that the party and the government were no longer concerned with their plight. Shamuyarira's comments were tantamount to blaming the war veterans for their predicament. As a result some elements in the ZWVA strongly felt that their organisation should not be affiliated to any political party, including ZANU [PF] as this would compromise their main objectives. Moreover, they felt that it was futile to be affiliated to ZANU [PF], a party which had alienated them soon after independence "and our existence is now giving the people we liberated [Zanu (PF) chefs] sleepless nights."[70] This view vividly portrayed the wide chasm that existed between the war veterans on one hand and the party and the government on the other. This development did not augur well for the future strength of the party for it was costly for ZANU [PF]

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68. Horizon, Feb. 1993, p.15
69. ibid.
70. Ibid., see also Moto, Nov. 1990, p.9

to lose people upon whom it had depended for the successful execution of the armed struggle.

However, the death of Mayor Urimbo, an ex-combatant and one time party national commissar, in September, 1993, allegedly in abject poverty demonstrated how sensitive an issue the plight of ex-combatants had become. Urimbo's colleagues accused the party and government for being ungrateful and neglecting a man who had "faithfully" served them.[71] The war veterans seized this opportunity to remind the government, once again, about the seriousness of their social conditions.

Although Mayor Urimbo was declared a national hero ensuring that his family would receive a tax-free pension to the tune of $10 000 per annum, some war veterans argued and appealed to the President that ex-combatants should be recognised while they were still alive. Even The People's Voice, ZANU PF's sycophantic weekly news-sheet criticised the move: "It is an insult to the memory of those who fought for the country's liberation for the nation only to remember their sacrifices after they have died."[72] This was an appeal to the party and government to take the plight of ex-combatants seriously.

CONCLUSION

This discussion has demonstrated the extent to which the socio-economic requirements of ex-combatants, if not adequately addressed, can become a hot-bed of political tension. The tensions were accentuated by the sheer arrogance of some "bourgeois-minded" elements in the political leadership who failed to appreciate the seriousness and sensitivity of the ordeal ex-combatants went through in their rehabilitation. There was, obviously, a limit to which the government could go in satisfactorily rehabilitating its ex-combatants. There were other social classes such as the peasantry, workers, refugees, etc. who also needed immediate attention. The government's policies on the rehabilitation of ex-combatants were rather general in nature. Moyo's research on the socio-economic status and need of ex-combatants, has shown that the major government policy documents on transformation and re-integration of ex-combatants, viz Growth With Equity: The Transitional National Development Plan (Vols.I & II) and Demobilisation within the Zimbabwean National Army, contain broad statements of intent but do not spell out, for example, the role to be played by the ex-combatants in society.[73]

Zimbabwe should, perhaps, consider itself fortunate that the disenchanted war veterans did not consider destabilisation as a means of twisting the arm of the government to compel it to help them to be reabsorbed into civilian life. Their potential for destabilising the country should not only be borne in mind but it must be checked. This option has not

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71. The Herald, September 15, 1993
72. The People's Voice, September 1993
73. Moyo, 'The Socio-economic Status and Needs of Ex-combatants', p.92

yet been considered because many realise the futility of going to war and an ex-combatant called Mwakudza, probably spoke for many when he said:

> "We will never go to war again. For what? To fight for someone to enjoy, while we suffer. All our grievances show how much we have been forgotten."[74]

South Africa's Ex-combatants

This study is quite significant and relevant to the soldiers of ANC's Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) and the PAC's Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA). MK and APLA can draw a leaf out of the book of the rehabilitation experiences of Zimbabwe's excombatants. Now that a new democratic order is in place in South Africa one wonders what the future of those ex-fighters who will be left out of the conventional security and military establishment, is going to be like.

There are a couple of questions that need to be posed, how prepared are political organisations for the demobilisation of its combatants and their reintegration into civil society? Are the ex-combatants going to be accorded preferential treatment and status? What sort of treatment will they expect from their parties and the new government of national unity? How will other social groups perceive any attempts to assist ex-combatants as a special social group, etc. In trying to answer these questions, it remains to be seen whether the South African ex-combatant and the government will both learn something from this historical precedent. Or will the ANC behave like other nationalist liberation movements elsewhere which mobilised people to liberate the country but unceremoniously discarded them on the day of a new dawn?

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

74.T.Ranger, Review of the Zimbabwe Press, May, 1985