

Constructing, Deconstructing, & Reconstructing Zimbabwean Political-Patriotic History: Critiques of Ngwabi Bhebe's *Simon Vengayi Muzenda: The Struggle for and Liberation of Zimbabwe*

PRELIMINARY NOTES

David Moore

'The rest, as they say, is History.'

*Keith Breckenridge, Toward a Theory of the Biometric State,
African Studies Seminar, UKZN, April 13, 2005*

'This fake Professor, this fake Professor ... a fake Historian.
I don't know where he got his degree.'

*Dzinashe Machingura & Parker Chipopera
Interview, after reading Muzenda, September 9, 2004*

Professor Terence Ranger, both celebrated and vilified as the father of Zimbabwean history and historiography – sometimes, even of Zimbabwean nationalism itself! – has published an article recently bemoaning the degeneration of Zimbabwean history to a discourse in the service of 'patriotism' for a largely discredited and illegitimate régime¹ (the notion was also presented, on a panel with a demagogic practitioner of patriotism,² at a packed public meeting at Harare's famous 'Book Café' during the Zimbabwean International Book Fair in August 2004). It is not the intent of this seminar paper to criticise or even interrogate Professor Ranger's article itself, nor his long, distinguished and committed career in the service of Zimbabwean history and 'progress' in

¹ Terence Ranger, "Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation; the Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 2004, 215-34.

² The Reverend Owen Matamisa, head of the ZANU-PF supported African Unity Church, was the representative of patriotic nationalism at the Book Café seminar. Stating that Zimbabweans living in fear had 'nothing to fear but fear itself,' Matamisa outlined the new ideology in Zimbabwe, buttressed by a 'mental re-engineering' combining Africa-centrism with strident entrepreneurialism. In an article published in the *Voice*, a weekly ZANU-PF newspaper (not a state newspaper, a category including the *Herald*, and the *Sunday Mail* in Harare and the *Chronicle* and *Sunday News* in Bulawayo) he marries socialism, Biblical exegesis, and patriotic nationalism: 'There are people in this nation [who think that it] will succumb to the wicked forces of globalisation' but Zimbabwe will stand firm against those 'having round talks with the devil; never ever.' We read that St. Paul told the Ephesians to 'resist [sin and the devil, equated with globalisation and western individualism – the latter leading to 'destabilisation and unrest'] unto blood striving against sin' but not to 'undermine or tamper' with the government, which has 'a mandate from God of restraining sin.' 'Matamisa, 'State Stance on Globalisation Commendable,' *The Voice*, August 8-14, 2004.

the geo-political space in which this process unfolds (or not).³ It might suffice to quote Professor William Freund, who in a forthcoming chapter differs 'with the view that there are "good" nuance-laden forms of African nationalism in which historians and anthropologists can play a helpfully formative role and "bad" forms promoted by cynical politicians'⁴ or to suggest that a structural approach to the vicissitudes of ideology on the long road to (capitalist) 'civilisation' via primitive accumulation might take one further on the road to understanding than looking at the realms of discourse alone.⁵ An approach based on the conflicts among proponents of human, class, and sovereign 'rights', and how liberal analysts fail to interpret these tensions, could also assist.⁶

There is, however, no time or space in the present instance to take on these tasks. All that will be attempted here is a reflection upon a book that fits Professor Ranger's bill of 'patriotic history' perfectly – but, ironically, was reviewed favourably by him.⁷ The review lauds Muzenda

³ It might be acceptable to put Professor Ranger in the category of 'Whiggish' liberalism in the Zimbabwean case. I recall a short conversation in the midst of the June 2000 parliamentary elections in Zimbabwe, in which the Zimbabwean African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) was under severe pressure in the face of strong opposition from the newly minted Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and thus resorting to strong repressive measures. While all around him were criticising the ruling party for its excessive use of violence, Professor Ranger remarked that this election was a good sign of progress towards democracy.

⁴ Bill Freund, 'African Nationalism in the Twenty-first Century: Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe,' forthcoming in Todd Leedy and David Moore, eds. *Zimbabwe on the Edge: Essays on Crises and Transitions*, UKZN Press.

⁵ This author's efforts to unravel structure and agency in Zimbabwe and beyond include: 'The Second Age of the Third World: From Primitive Accumulation to Public Goods?' *Third World Quarterly*, 25, 1 (February 2004), 87-109; 'Zimbabwe's Triple Crisis: Primitive Accumulation, Nation-State Formation and Democratisation in the Age of Neo-Liberal Globalisation,' *African Studies Quarterly*, 7, 2-3 (Winter 2003), 35-47; 'Africa: The Black Hole at the Middle of *Empire*?' *Rethinking Marxism*, 13, 3/4 (Fall-Winter 2001), 100-118; 'Neo-liberal Globalisation and the Triple Crisis of 'Modernisation' in Africa: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe and South Africa,' *Third World Quarterly*, 22, 6 (December 2001), 909-929; 'Is the Land the Economy and the Economy the Land? Primitive Accumulation in Zimbabwe,' *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 19, 2 (July 2001), 253-266; 'Democracy is Coming to Zimbabwe,' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 36, 1 (March 2001), 163-69. See also (with Patrick Bond), 'Zimbabwe: Elections, Despondency and Civil Society's Responsibility,' *Pambazuka News*, 201, April 7 2005, www.pambazuka.org, an attempt to marry structure with event. Also note Patricia McFadden, 'Stop Vilifying our Efforts,' in the April 14 *Pambazuka*, for the easy availability of patriotic discourse – and its compatibility with a variant of feminism – in response to criticism of a régime with, still, some legitimacy for those who call themselves 'leftists.'

⁶ David Moore, 'Marxism and Marxist Intellectuals in Schizophrenic Zimbabwe: How Many Rights for Zimbabwe's Left? A Comment,' *Historical Materialism*, 12, 4 (December 2004), pp. 405-425 and 'A Reply to "The Power of Propaganda: Public Opinion in Zimbabwe 2004",' *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 23, 1 (January 2005), pp. 109-119 go along these lines. Amy Bartholomew and Jennifer Breakspear's 'Human Rights as Swords of Empire,' *Socialist Register 2004: The New Imperialism*, Colin Leys and Leo Panitch, eds., London: Merlin Press, is critical for assessing the different ideas of 'rights' held by sovereigntists, liberals and 'critical cosmopolitans.'

⁷ In *African Affairs*, 104, 415, (2005) 357-359. Also, in *The Zimbabwean*, a newspaper published in London but also widely available in southern Africa, Ranger mentions the book favourably in a

as a “humble man,” and credits Bhebe with the wherewithal to use his proximity to ZANU-PF to gain access to sources otherwise unavailable, such as

Kumbirai Kangai, Emmerson Mnangagwa, Frederick Shava, Eddison Zvobgo, as well as ZANU-PF ‘dissidents’ like Rugare Gumbo and Henry Hamadziripi. As Bhebe says in his preface, he was able to use these interviews ‘to learn so much about ZANU-PF. My knowledge of the party is now profound’ (p. vi).⁸

It will be one of this paper’s tasks to assess Bhebe’s claims to profundity, and the veracity of his claims that Muzenda’s ‘gifts’ included are ‘revealed as those of uniter and reconciler’.⁹ Does the book avoid the ‘propagandist’ temptation, as Professor Ranger claims, or not?

One of the ways to do this is to ask *real* ‘dissidents’¹⁰ about the book: since Rugare Gumbo’s moment of dissidence, he has resurrected himself so that he is a cabinet minister (for Public Enterprises), and has taken himself out of that category – but undoubtedly needs history to resolve him and to concretise his new identity.¹¹ Such could almost be said of Henry Hamadziripi, who in any case is too old to be a threat to current holders of power: but not quite, as he was clearly contending for some of the same pieces of power within ZANU as was Muzenda. One could conceivably ask why Professor Bhebe did not speak too the dissidents involved in a chapter of the book, some of whom had close contact with the book’s subject, and of whom he wrote rather pejoratively. This author had the opportunity to perform such a task.

The book is a biography of the recently deceased vice-president of Zimbabwe, Simon Muzenda. The copy reviewed here is a dummy, produced by Mambo Press in Gweru (initially started up by Roman Catholic missionaries, and publisher of *Moto*, a magazine that was a thorn in the side of the Rhodesian régime) in time for the 2004 Zimbabwe International Book Fair. It was the last copy on the shelves at the bookstore (the second last was obtained by Professor Ranger, who told this writer about it) and was obtained only after persistent efforts and promises to review it ‘quickly’ by this author, who did not mind that the

review of others: and notes that ‘one of the big men mentioned in his book’ is suing: ‘New Books Reflect Political Upheaval,’ *The Zimbabwean*, April 15, 2005, 18.

⁸ Ranger, 2005, 357.

⁹ Ranger, 2005, 358.

¹⁰ The use of the word ‘dissident’ is politically charged in Zimbabwe, given that it was the label attached to those whose pursuit justified, in ZANU-PF’s view, the *gukuruhundi* in Matabeleland in the mid-1980s that killed at least 20,000 *non*-dissidents. As well, the *vashandi* deny that their intent was to depose and replace ZANU leaders, as is more than implied in this book. However, if ‘dissent’ mean genuine and openly aired dissatisfaction the way in which a political organisation is governed and intent to alter it – but not necessarily by changing the personnel involved, then the word can be applied to the *vashandi*.

¹¹ Part of this resurrection involved a particularly vicious campaign in 2000 against his aunt, Sekai Holland, who was campaigning for election with the MDC.

cover needed to be replaced,¹² but found it impossible to do justice to in a short time. A final copy was apparently on sale in Zimbabwe by early 2005, but it has not been seen by this author.

Ngwabi Bhebe is an historian: once at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare, later deputy vice-chancellor there, now vice-chancellor of the relatively new Midlands State University in Gweru, capital of Zimbabwe's Midlands.¹³ He has published a biography of Benjamin Burombo, a famous trade unionist and proto-nationalist in the forties; an account of aspects of the liberation war that focuses on the 'capture' and long march to Lusaka of a school of children; and has co-edited, with Terence Ranger, a two-volume series on the history of the liberation war that emerged out of a 1991 conference, in which this author participated,¹⁴ as well as a two volume set on 'the historical dimensions of democracy' in Zimbabwe.

This writer's chapter¹⁵ in the book *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* indicates the starting point for this critique of *Simon Vengayi Muzenda and the Struggle for and Liberation of Zimbabwe* (henceforth called *Muzenda*). The chapter is a summary of a section of a doctoral thesis, with some additions from interviews in 1991, that is a preliminary analysis of a group of young guerrilla soldiers in the Zimbabwean nationalist movement who in the midst of a crisis-ridden interregnum¹⁶ in the mid-1970s took charge of and escalated the

¹² As will become apparent in this paper, it was impossible to review the book in a short period of time. The problems it contained could not be dealt with quickly.

¹³ Mid-2004 interviews with students whose political radicalism at MSU led to encounters with Bhebe do not put him in a favourable light.

¹⁴ Ngwabi Bhebe, *Benjamin Burombo: African Politics in Zimbabwe*, Harare: College Press, 1989; Bhebe and Terence Ranger, eds., *Soldiers and the Zimbabwean Liberation War* and *Society and the Zimbabwean Liberation War*, London and Harare: James Currey and University of Zimbabwe Press, 1995; Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999.

¹⁵ The chapter is, David Moore, 'The Zimbabwe People's Army: Strategic Innovation or More of the Same?' in Bhebe and Ranger, 1995, 73-86. Perhaps incidentally, the chapter in the book is *not* the chapter submitted. The chapter in the book is a much shorter and indeed unfinished copy of a paper, presented to a conference organized by Professors Ranger, Bhebe and Hallencreutz in Uppsala early 1992, than the one presented after the 1991 conference: the slightly altered Swedish chapter is Moore, 'The Zimbabwean People's Army and ZANU Interregnum: Innovative Military, Political and Ideological Struggles,' C Hallencreutz and S Axelson eds., *Annual Report of Uppsala Studies of Mission*, Uppsala: University of Uppsala Dept of Theology, 1993, 33-57. The author was not aware until the book's publication in 1995 that the wrong paper was included in the Bhebe and Ranger volume. It represents somewhat of an advance over the submitted paper, because it included interviews with actors who were still in exile when the doctoral research was conducted, in 1984-86, but it also lacked some of the complicated and crucial details of ZIPA's manoeuvres and alliances.

¹⁶ 'Interregnum' means 'between reigns' and thus indicates precisely a time between leaderships. In 1975, Zanu's 'leader,' Herbert Chitepo, in Zambia was assassinated, and Ndabaningi Sithole, its 'leader' elected in 1964 had been replaced by a 'coup in (Salisbury's) prison,' to use Samora Machel's incredulous phrase, uttered in response to the news. Does one need to repeat Gramsci's memorable phrase about 'interregna?' During them, 'many morbid symptoms appear.' See Luise White's *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Text and Politics in Zimbabwe*,

'liberation' war, attempted to unite Zanu's and Zapu's armies, whose suggestions resulted in a political united front,¹⁷ established the beginnings of a marxist ideological challenge to a formulaic African nationalism, and, for their sins, were accused of challenging Zanu's leadership, thereby being sent to prisons (and later, prison camps) in Mozambique where they remained until just before Zimbabwe's first elections in 1980.¹⁸ These people's history is reflected in *Muzenda*, but trivialised. Sometimes – indeed at crucial times – some of them were left out. They were available for interviews, but not approached.

Their collective name within the camps was *vashandi* (Shona for 'workers,' thus indicating their ideological stance). In official history, these *de facto* leaders of the Zimbabwe Liberation Army (ZIPA) have been affixed with the tag of 'counter-revolutionary.'¹⁹ Semi-official history, following Samora Machel's chastisement on tiring of supporting them and taking its cue from David Martin and Phyllis Johnson's celebration of Zimbabwe's rulers – and, incidentally, anticipating South African ideological discourse – condemns them as 'ultra leftists.'²⁰ When ZIPA's ideological core refused to follow Machel's advice to go to an October 1976 conference in Geneva promising the end of the war, at which nothing happened eventually except Mugabe's consolidation of his alliances, Machel spoke thus: 'You are extremists, you youngsters. You are reflecting a tendency of left-wing infantilism, equivalent to being Trotskyites. If you're talking of ideology, you've got 100 years.'²¹ Aside

Bloomington, Cape Town: Indiana University Press and Double Storey, 2003, for the riddles of fact and discourse around this emblematic death.

¹⁷ Note that until the 1980s the nationalist parties were 'Zanu' and 'Zapu.' It was only after they formed a (fragile) united front – the Patriotic Front – in late 1976, partially at the instigation of the 'young Turks' that 'PF' became part of the nomenclatural scene. It has been added on and taken off the parties' identities at various times since then, signifying a desire, sometimes satisfied and others not, for an elusive unity in Zimbabwean politics and – arguably – ethnicity and 'nation.'

¹⁸ Other articles on ZIPA are Moore, 'Democracy, Violence and Identity in the Zimbabwean War of National Liberation: Reflections from the Realms of Dissent,' *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 29, 3 (December 1995), 375-402 and 'The Ideological Formation of the Zimbabwean Ruling Class,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17, 3 (September 1991), 472-495.

¹⁹ Robert Mugabe, 'Comrade Mugabe Lays the Line at Historic Chimoio Central Committee Meeting,' *Zimbabwe News*, 5-6 (July-December 1977), p. 13; Robert Mugabe, 'Report to the Central Committee,' *Zimbabwe News*, sp. issue, *ZANU (PF) Second Congress 8th-13th August, 1984*, 16, 1 (January 1985). The section referring to ZIPA is entitled 'The Unending Contradictions in the Enduring Revolutionary Party.'

²⁰ The 'semi-official' version of ZIPA's role in the liberation struggle is in two chapters in David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: the Chimurenga War*, London: Faber, 1981. Many in contemporary Zimbabwe consider David Martin to have been Mugabe's voice to the western world, through his reports in London's *Observer*. On Zimbabwe's independence, Martin and Johnson established the Zimbabwe Publishing House, to be followed by the Southern African Documentation Centre.

²¹ Quoted in David Moore, 'The Contradictory Construction of Hegemony in Zimbabwe: Politics, Class and Ideology in the Development of a New African State,' Phd Dissertation, York University, Toronto, 1990, pp. 359-360. Before the occasion of this conference, Machel supported ZIPA and was suspicious of Mugabe.

from this official and semi-official history – and a recent intervention by RW Johnson on some of ZIPA's members' re-entry to the political scene in 2000,²² the *vashandi* have been written out of Zimbabwean political history – the past is *not* history, even though the *rest* may be, to coin Keith Breckenridge's (already coined, but thought provoking) phrase.

This writer's attempts to write this group back into a socio-political history of Zimbabwe occasioned the opportunity to invite some of them to criticise *Muzenda*.²³ Muzenda's rise to Zanu's pinnacle was accomplished during the seventies, when the 'young turks' were grappling with the complexities of power themselves. His rise and their rise and fall represent a clash of generations, motivations, ideology – and 'success' and 'failure.' An investigation of their reactions to the book promised to reveal if the chronicling of an aspect of one generation's rise to power represented in the writing of a particular brand of patriotic history, and to determine to what extent that writing meant compromising with the truth – at least as seen by those for whom the *rest* is *not* history, but lies. Congruent with that question is this: does the construction of patriotic history also mean making hagiographic biography?

Interrogating Patriotic History

The collective interrogation of *Muzenda* took place in Harare during September 2004, in two meetings lasting the best part of an afternoon each. Three of ZIPA's leaders, two from Harare and one from near Gweru, agreed to meet to record a discussion of the book, with the expectation and indeed the hope that the results would be published. The interviewer and the interviewees were well known to each other, having carried out interviews since 1991 in the case of 'Dzinashe "Dzino" Machingura,' 1992 with 'Parker Chipopera,' and 1995 with Webster Gwauya. Machingura is considered the *de facto* leader of the *vashandi*,²⁴ but his official role in ZIPA was Deputy Political Commissar, second in command to 'ZIPRA's'

²² This is a liberal version – both in ideology and fact. RW Johnson in 'How Mugabe Came to Power,' *London Review of Books*, 23, 4, February 22, 2001, http://www.lrb.co.uk/v23/n04/print/john01_.html. Moore's riposte is 'How Mugabe Came to Power,' *LRB*, 23, 7, April 5, 2001, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v23/n07/letters.html#2>. The version held by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique before Machel moved against ZIPA is repeated in John S. Saul, *Transforming the Struggle in Zimbabwe*, "State and Revolution in Eastern Africa," New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979, 107- 122, first published in an American solidarity movement magazine in 1977.

²³ The author was using his sabbatical last year to contrive a comparative analysis of historical moments – the late 50s and early 60s, the mid-70s, and now – in Zimbabwe wherein new 'generations' of political actors attempted to move from 'civil' to 'political' society. The research has been funded by the UKZN's Centre for Civil Society.

²⁴ 'David Todlhana,' nicknamed 'JV' by Machingura, whose name is not on official lists of ZIPA's leadership, was very influential nonetheless, perhaps a *de facto* second in command. He became a psychiatric nurse, then a hospital administrator, and, in 2000, led some land invasions in Concession, near Mazoe, north of Harare.

(Zimbabwe Peoples' Revolutionary Army, ZAPUs' armed wing) representative to the united army, Alfred 'Nikita' Mangena, who was later assassinated in Zambia.²⁵ He is now the director of the Zimbabwe Liberators' Platform, an organisation representing approximately 10,000 war veterans opposed to the strategy and tactics of the 'war vets' who, in alliance with ZANU-PF, led the land invasions in 2000. He is also attempting to start up an enterprise manufacturing bricks out of sawdust.²⁶ Parker Chipopera, then Deputy for Training and Personnel, is now a fertilizer company representative, and Webster Gwauya, ZIPA's Director of Political Affairs, was a prison warden in Gweru and is now retired. Copies of two of the chapters in the book dealing with the time most concerning the men's history were distributed to them beforehand.

Unfortunately the transcriptions of the digital recording of these interviews, which are full of interjections, hoots of laughter, lots of checking and re-checking dates, times, and the names of people at various meetings, are not yet complete, so it is not possible to replicate much of the 'voices' at those meetings at this time. However, it can be said that the consensus among the three 'young turks' was that the book was inaccurate and misleading at best – at worst, purposefully so.²⁷ The main sources in the book, Rugare Gumbo, Kumbirai Kangai, and Muzenda himself, are 'suspect,' to say the least, by these participants in the struggle. Gumbo, Kangai and Muzenda were all relatively late on the scene of the external struggle in Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique, and on took some time to find a niche. Muzenda, who had been close to Gumbo for many of the 1960s years of the struggle, was clearly in competition with another man, Henry Hamadziripi, for status as the chief representative from the Masvingo area – or, as more ethnically oriented analysts might put it, with 'the Karanga.'²⁸ According to the *vashandi*, Muzenda kept closer to Mugabe than did Hamadziripi, because the latter 'had a base' due to his long relationship with guerrilla fighters and nationalist politicians outside Zimbabwe, while Muzenda was imprisoned and, later, working with the internally based African National Council, led by Bishop Muzorewa as a 'front.' Muzenda's relative newness on the scene enabled Mugabe to keep a reign on him. As they noted, this was

²⁵ Many interviewees believe Mangena was assassinated on the call of Joshua Nkomo, who, in a Thomas á Becket fashion, said more or less rhetorically, 'who will rid me of this man,' after the ZIPA interlude.

²⁶ Much as was the case with the 'war vets' who in 1997 allied with Mugabe – or forced Mugabe to join them – to take pensions and land, the Liberators' Platform was quickly infiltrated by the Central Intelligence Organisation, and temporarily wrested from its legitimate leadership. By early 2005, however, it was back in its originators' hands.

²⁷ Among many other aspects of the book, the *vashandi* cast full-scale doubt on a rather quaint tale related by Muzenda on how he convinced spirit mediums to fly in planes to Mozambique: they claim that *no one* flew to Mozambique (201).

²⁸ Bhebe admits as much, stating that 'after the death of Zanu vice-president Leopold Takawira in prison Muzenda naturally became the most senior Karanga official in the party' (*Muzenda*, 171). He forgot Hamadziripi at that point, however, who also had claims on that honour.

especially apparent when Mugabe was at the Geneva conference. 'The two of them, Muzenda and Hamadziripi were deputies to Robert Mugabe and they were fighting ... because Muzenda was with no base, so Robert Mugabe was threatened by Hamadziripi. So he was actually trying to out manoeuvre Hamadziripi.' The interview moved to Hamadziripi's assertion in *Muzenda* – later qualified somewhat by Bhebe – that the *vashandi* were '*my forces*'²⁹. When this was raised, the *vashandi* erupted into laughter. Gwauya, characteristically principled, stated: 'How do you have political soldiers being owned by an individual?'

The discussion continued to a very important meeting of September 5, 1976, called by Julius Nyerere on the eve of the Geneva conference, in which various political and military leaders were asked 'who was their leader?' According to the *vashandi* Bhebe gets a number of the names of the participants at the meeting wrong, incorrectly including Joshua Nkomo, for example. Of the ZIPA group, he writes that Rex Nhongo (now Solomon Mujuru, the retired head of the armed forces who is still one of the key powers behind the throne, probably because it was he who helped Mugabe engineer the elimination of the *vashandi*) Webster Gwauya, Elias Hondo 'and a fourth one' attended³⁰. The fourth was Dzino Machingura. 'How is it possible that Muzenda forgets Dzino?' asked Chipopera, and Gwauya answered, 'no, he did not forget Dzino.'

This meeting was very important, because the ZIPA leaders refused to sanctify *one* leader. They said – with Nyerere's prior approval – that they were soldiers for the liberation of Zimbabwe, not the followers of one leader or another, and they need not bother going to Geneva. Indeed, they recommended that all the political leaders – even the 'puppets' like Muzorewa and Sithole (who in Zambia after the Chitepo assassination had proved himself incompetent at saving Zanu from the machinations of Kaunda and the 'détentists,' so was effectively dumped by these young men, not by Muzenda and company, as indicated in *Muzenda*, but that too is a story that will have to be revised elsewhere) should go to the conference as a united front, so Rhodesia's prime minister, Ian Smith, would not be able to divide and rule (which is exactly what he did, eventually leading to the Internal Settlement of Rhodesia-Zimbabwe). This principled stand for unity was taken as rebellion by Mugabe. He would have his revenge later, after persuading Machel to force them to follow him there, where he hoped to show the rest of the world that he had the soldiers on his side, as he had announced in January.³¹ The

²⁹ *Muzenda*, 205, Bhebe's italics. Bhebe writes (p. 207), that 'it is difficult to establish the extent to which they accepted him as their leader, since, after the Geneva conference, they stopped all the former detainees, including Hamadziripi, from entering the camps in Mozambique.' The qualification should not, then, be 'difficult.' The extent of the 'stopping' is disputed, too.

³⁰ *Muzenda*, 200.

³¹ This was after he and Tekere had escaped from Rhodesia to Mozambique in order to 'meet the guerrillas.' However, on arrival he was placed under house arrest by the Frelimo. After ZIPA was formed in November, the cadre arranged with Machel to host Mugabe in the camps. The man

characters in Bhebe's book, however, claim loudly and clearly that *they* supported Mugabe from day one.

The meeting was important for more reasons than that, however, and to more people than Zimbabwean guerrillas and nationalist politicians. On the day of the meeting, Henry Kissinger – who had pushed John Vorster to pressure Ian Smith to abandon his idea of 1,000 years of minority rule³² – sent a telegram to Julius Nyerere promising the immediate arrival in two days of his envoy to relay to Nyerere the results of Kissinger's meeting with Vorster, and to return with Nyerere's success. 'Depending on this exchange of views and the meeting with Prime Minister Vorster,' wrote Kissinger, 'the secretary would then decide whether to undertake another round of negotiations.'³³ It continues rather ambiguously:

5. IT IS MY HOPE THAT THE MEETING WILL CONFIRM THAT THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF PROGRESS. AS I AM SURE YOU REALIZE, IF THE MATTER IS PUSHED BEYOND CERTAIN LIMITS, THIS MUST MEAN THAT THE PRESENT EFFORT CANNOT SUCCEED. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE RESULTS OF THE IMPORTANT MEETING YOU HAVE CONVOKED IN DAR ARE POSITIVE AND INDICATE A POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROGRESS LAID OUT TO YOU BY SECRETARIES ROGERS AND SCHAEFFEL, I AM PREPARED, AS YOU KNOW, TO LEND MY FULLEST EFFORTS IN THE SEARCH FOR DECISIVE SOLUTIONS IN RHODESIA OR THE NAMIBIA, OR BOTH, IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. Warm regards, HENRY A. KISSINGER. END TEXT.

KISSINGER

One could interpret these words as follows: *if* the *vashandi* had their way, would the 'present effort' been deemed unsuccessful? Would this have indicated that the 'marxists' feared by Kissinger, because of indications their approaches to the Soviet Embassy might bear fruit for a united *political* army, were gaining control? If, on the other hand, they had 'voted for Mugabe' would the meeting have been deemed a success, but 'not beyond certain limits?' Previous telegrams from Kissinger's envoys in Dar indicate that Nyerere was extremely worried about

who drove Mugabe to the camps said, in an interview in March 2005, that within half-an-hour he was convinced Mugabe was not a good leader. All he asked about was the tribal affiliation of the camp's leadership and subalterns. This, indeed, was the primary criticism that the *vashandi* leaders had of the man that they had, ironically, helped into power.

³² This is a moment recalled by many Zimbabweans now as a pointer to South Africa's current president.

³³ Department of State Telegram, Secret NOD864, 040450Z Sep 76, USDEL Secretary in London to AmEmbassy Dar es Salaam, held at the National Security Archive, George Washington University, Washington, DC.

divisions within the Zimbabwean nationalists, and perhaps he had given up on his idea of a 'third force.'³⁴

10. COMMENTS ON BALANCE NYERERE MAY BE KEEPING HIS OPTIONS
 OPEN. EVEN THOUGH MOMENTUM SEEMS TO HAVE PASSED BACK TO HIM FROM
 HIS LOSS OF FAITH OF FAILURE TO ORGANIZE "THIRD FORCE" AS POLITICAL
 FORCE. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE HE STILL SUPPORTS OUR INITIATIVE AND ANY
 DUBIUM IS BASED ON WHETHER HE AND OTHER PRESIDENTS CAN DELIVER,
 I AM SOBERLY DOUBT CAPABILITY OF FOUR PRESIDENTS TO FORCE
 THEM, IN PART BECAUSE THEY ARE PROBABLY UNWILLING TO USE ULTIMATE
 MEANS. MUCH CONTROL OF DISTRIBUTION OF ARMS AND MATERIAL TO
 LIBERATION FORCES PROVIDES THEM, TO CUT OFF SUPPLIES TO OR SEVERELY
 REDUCE MOVEMENTS OF LIBERATION FORCES WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SUBJECT
 THEM TO SERIOUS ADVERSE AFRICAN REACTION.

In the end, the *vashandi* – perhaps Nyerere's 'failed' "third force"? – did not give their support to politicians intending to restart the party parade. They ended up in prison, with the enthusiastic help of Muzenda, who chaired the meeting that led them to their incarceration. They lost the battle of the generations and ideologies, for that time at least. What they may win in the future, other than a reputation for the most sustained and principled opposition to Mugabe in Zimbabwean history, is as yet undecided.

Edgar Tekere's Trial

The book was also discussed with two other prominent nationalists and former members of ZANU. The first interviewee is Edgar Tekere, famous in Zimbabwe for going into Mozambique from Rhodesia with Robert Mugabe in 1975, for shooting a white farmer in 1980,³⁵ and for starting the first Zimbabwean opposition party – Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in 1989. He took issue with the book for its assertion that he had threatened the lives of some ZANU members accused of planning a coup against Mugabe in 1978.³⁶ Muzenda states that Tekere 'was conspicuous by his demand for their elimination' and that Muzenda - by then Zanu's vice-president, saved their lives.³⁷ This, according to Bhebe, 'demonstrated [Muzenda's] immense humanity, which many people during the war appreciated and came to depend on.'³⁸

The second interviewee is Patrick Kombayi. First a fireman for the National Railways of Rhodesia, he joined ZANU in the sixties and moved to Lusaka – where he was among the first to 'press-gang' Zimbabwean exiles into the party's army. He became a successful businessman,

³⁴ Telegram, Department of State, Secret NQ0061 Dar Es 03138 28200, For the Secretary from Schaule, 2616107 Aug 76.

³⁵ This incident served to confirm Tekere as a 'firebrand,' but his interview – and the court record – reveals a certain degree of self-defence in the actual shooting incident.

³⁶ Muzenda, pp. 202-223.

³⁷ Muzenda, p. 220.

³⁸ Muzenda, p.222.

owning butcheries and other food retailing outlets, and provisioned ZANU before the introduction of international support. He also chaired the most important 'Dares' (War Councils) in 1971 and 1973, in which ZANU's many internecine leadership struggles were played out. When he joined the training camps in Mozambique after the ZIPA moment, he was also put in charge of food supplies: there, he says, he learned the 'law of the gun.' Once the Mozambican authorities allowed ZANLA into the national parks to shoot elephants for food (and the huge influx of trainees/refugees in the camps were indeed in dire need of protein), the highest authorities in the liberation army also shot rhinos, sold their horns in the Middle East, and deposited the money in Zanu's London bank accounts.³⁹ Once mayor of Gweru, when he joined ZUM in 1989 and ran against Muzenda, who had changed his constituency from Masvingo to the Midlands, he was almost killed by the Midlands Central Intelligence Organisation chief, also Muzenda's head of security.⁴⁰ He walks with two canes as a result. Now the owner of Gweru's downtown hotel – which is like a museum, with halls full of photographs of significant political events and personalities, including the corpse of Josiah Tongogara, who died in a car accident on his way from Maputo to the Mozambican training camps, and the many cuts and bruise of recent opposition supporters after their beating by ZANU-PF thugs – and many other businesses, he was a Movement for Democratic Change candidate in the 2000 elections and has been a firm supporter since then. Transcripts on interviews with him have not yet begun.

A key element of Professor Ranger's review, through which Muzenda's reputation as a peace-maker is buttressed, quickly puts the reader in the context of one of the many 'rebellions' Muzenda quelled. One of those, in 1978, is commonly called the Hamadziripi-Gumbo rebellion. A key foil to Muzenda's moderation is Edgar Tekere.

Some of those endangered by the 'rebellion' – like Edgar Tekere, who was held hostage – urged that Hamadziripi and his associates should be put to death. Muzenda disagreed. He told Emmerson Mnangagwa,⁴¹ who, as chief of security, had prepared criminal dossiers against the 'Hamadziripi [sic] gang': Don't you see that if we were to use or rely

³⁹ Interview with Patrick Kombayi, September 2004.

⁴⁰ Richard Saunders, *Never the Same Again: Zimbabwe's Growth towards Democracy 1980-2000*, Harare: Edwin Spicer Productions, 2000.

⁴¹ Mnangagwa, also of the Midlands, was up until late 2004 touted as the chief contender for Mugabe's job on his retirement. Just before the ZANU-PF congress slated to name the vice-president, however, he was involved in what was labeled a 'secret campaign,' six members of which were removed from the party for four years, to pre-empt the vice-presidency of the woman who eventually got the job, and thus was waylaid on the route to the top. He ran in the 2005 election as contender for Kwekwe, in the Midlands, and lost to the MDC candidate. However, Mugabe's choice of thirty MPs to parliament included Mnangagwa, indicating a resurrection of sorts. He was not, however, re-appointed to the post of house speaker, which is considered the fourth highest position in the party. Mirror Reporters, 'Mnangagwa Bounces Back,' *Daily Mirror*, April 14, 2005; Felix Njini, 'Mnangagwa Blocked from Speaker's Post,' *Financial Gazette*, April 18, 2005.

on such flimsy evidence to convict each other we could end up completely wiping each other out? (p. 219) Muzenda could see that if the revolution went on devouring its own children there would be no-one left to celebrate independence!⁴²

Edgar Tekere was interviewed in August 2004, and was, as is increasingly the case in such situations, drawn into a discussion of the murder of Herbert Chitepo. He remembered that he had been drawn into the case because he had been investigator, judge and jury of the Gumbo-Hamadziripi 'coup,' which had involved the kidnapping of Tekere! This claim is contrary to Bhebe's that Mnangagwa was the investigator. Investigation of the coup led inevitably to a study of the Chitepo assassination.

I was investigating this Chitepo thing ... and Josiah Tongogara [commander of ZANLA, the ZANU guerrilla army, released from Lusaka's jails, where he was incarcerated under suspicion of killing Chitepo, to attend the Geneva conference in late 1976 that served to bring Mugabe to the pinnacle of power, and now Mugabe's – and therefore Tekere's – ally] was in the centre of it ... it was Tongogara, Tongogara. Now, when I got kidnapped, along with Ushewokunzwe, Tongogara had gone to Malta; these people, you know, who arrested me wanted me killed. After rounding them up and putting them in custody and awaiting trial, while I was processing their cases and making the necessary interrogations and preparing the necessary statements, I thought of this one, I said OK here is an opportunity ...

That group had committed one thing, which I wanted to have dealt with. They were in the forefront of spreading it among the troops that is was Tongogara who killed Chitepo to cause disaffection among the troops. So when Tongogara came, I wanted to get this done.

So I simply said, 'OK, Tongogara, I summoned you from Maputo.'

Well, we were sitting on a rock somewhere with others, some of the prisoners, people he had worked with, so when he came along, I said 'OK I want your gun.' I disarmed him. I said 'stand there, I am going to place you under custody. I want you charged. And your charge is very different from these ones. It is that you killed Chitepo. The witnesses are your colleagues. Hamadziripi, Gumbo and the rest, the ones that I have here, that have been arrested for something else. They have been the ones that have been preaching the gospel that it's you that killed Chitepo and I want to press you to trial for killing Chitepo. The witnesses are these. Now, do you want to confront them?'

Tongogara wept. Literally wept.

He said, 'Thank you very much. I think this was happening among the troops, happening behind my back. Now it has come into the open, I want it done with, that is it. Thank you very much indeed.'

I said 'yes, that is your offence; that is it. Yes, I'm taking this to trial and you are going to be the witnesses. You have been planting it among the troops.'

And, who was it? Rugare Gumbo; he put it so very craftily, you know! So very disarming. 'Comrade Tekere, you should understand that this man Tongogara was a sell-out. Hmm?'

⁴² Ranger, 2005, p. 358.

He was a sell-out to us, the rest of the group. We regarded him as one of us, of the Masvingo group. But when we were arranging things to affect this coup – there is no doubt that that was what we were up to, and that is why we wanted you out of the way – this man would have nothing of it, he objected to it. He wouldn't go along with his fellow home people. He is a sell-out. That is one of these things. And naturally, being the commander of the armed forces is a very powerful position. We had to create disaffection.'

'Ahh,' he said, Rugare Gumbo said, 'Where is your politics? What do you do when you want support? You know? This man is very powerful in the army. To cause disaffection in the army so they turn against him, we had to do that! We had to tell them that he had killed Chitepo, but take it from us now, no, it is not true, Tongogara did not do that. It was just a game because we wanted to do what we wanted to do, what we wanted to achieve, you see?'

So, I said 'right, Hamadziripi, right, there you are.' He said, 'yes, that's correct,' that's correct, that's correct.'

So I finally said, 'OK, there you are, so you finally hear it for yourself, these people admit that they have been campaigning and spreading that you'd killed him. And I was making ready now, to place you in custody, and put you on trial for the murder of Chitepo. That's why I disarmed you, to take you into custody, but now you can have your gun back and you can dress properly. And that's the end of the matter.'

You see, you have so many twists of it.

Here one is presented with a different view than that offered by Bhebe, and through him Muzenda and his contemporary allies (Muzenda died just after the book was finished). In *Muzenda*, Rugare Gumbo, who was all the time quite close to Muzenda and who at the time of writing was in the higher echelons of power, is made out to be

an idealist at this stage of his development and naïve in the field of real politics and political survival [and] particularly irked by the fact that people ... did not seem to believe in the *Dare reChimurenga* [the Zanu war council, including himself since he was brought back to Africa from studies in Canada by Hamadziripi in 1973⁴³, Tongogara, and Hamadziripi] in the killing of Chitepo. ... [He] found their strategies to pander to tribal sentiment and to fly in the face of revolutionary principles ... ignore[ing] the principle that leadership of a revolutionary party 'must have ideological and political clarity ... I was very clear that the ideology of regional balance does not help the party in its work. It was useless in the war. It might be helpful when it comes to the sharing of the spoils.'⁴⁴

Unless he was very quickly attempting to exonerate Tongogara to maintain links with him and thus Mugabe – and unless Tekere was fabricating *his* version of the truth, it would seem that Tekere's words challenge the Bhebe's interpretation. In any case, when Tekere heard that he was accused of demanding the execution of Hamadziripi's group

⁴³ In *Muzenda*, 174, it is claimed that Chitepo 'persuaded' Gumbo to return from Canada. However, in a 1986 interview with Hamadziripi, it was said that the latter did the persuading.

⁴⁴ *Muzenda*, 214-215.

(Muzenda dismisses Hamadziripi as a 'hot-head ... whose agenda was clearly a struggle for power in the leadership'⁴⁵), he was mildly outraged.

Oooh, uh uh ... That's not true. You must talk to Mudzi on that one. It is the exact opposite. Right. OK, this is what happened then. We went with the rest of my prisoners, and we presented them to trial that night. This was a midnight trial. They didn't deny anything at all. They were tried by the rules that were based on what they set in Zambia. For such a crime, you know, punishment is death, death by firing squad. So they admitted, they pleaded guilty, and they were sentenced to death. And immediately there, the more junior commanders who would take the responsibility of carrying out the execution, the officers responsible for looking after the prisoners, said that OK, it's finished, off we go, we will carry out the executions, but we can't carry them out on foreign soil. We have areas that are fairly liberated back home, so we will do them there. In areas that we had liberated, not on foreign soil.

So there I was. And here is Mugabe.

Mind you, I had been the victim of a plot. Now I was the arresting officer, rounding them up, and fortunately without a single shot being fired. Putting down a rebellion like that. And then prosecutor, formulating the charges and presenting them, for trial, right [laughter] and going through all that! So they were getting taken away. And I was looking at my friend Tongogara, you know. 'It's happening, it's going to happen. These people are going to be executed.' So I said, no, wait, I asked, 'may I make an interruption?' And I said, 'sit down.' So they were called back again. So I went through like this: 'If indeed this brief should be carried out, we would rather have it confirmed by a superior body at home after independence. Let us not do that. You people killed one another like nobody's business out in Zambia there, no we cannot afford that.' Then I went into lots of preaching about the spirits of Zimbabwe. 'If we went about like that we would earn the anger of the spirits of Zimbabwe, We would never succeed, we would always fail, so please don't, I plead to you, Mugabe.' I had hoped that such an intervention would come from Mugabe, but no, it didn't. I looked at Tongogara, because in spite of all, you know, we worked very closely. We had a good measure of personal friendship. I hoped this friend of mine might make an intervention. Nobody did. Muzenda was there, he didn't. I did. So, right, so then it was accepted and came in as a resolution now from the court, from the floor, they said, 'OK Tekere, you were Number One for execution by these people, the you bring them to trial, and you plead that they don't execute them and you say this is something that you can do, but those are your prisoners, so we give you back your prisoners, look after them until we can produce them back home, at a gathering back home, at a congress and go for a retrial, that's what you are advocating. So there, you have your prisoners, so all the prisoners given back to me. Then I had to arrange to take them into custody in our camp. But after awhile, naturally I knew it would be very rough. You could end up with one of them killed, you know, with these young chaps of ours. So quickly I went to Frelimo and asked Frelimo to provide for me a place of imprisonment for my prisoners where they can be safely looked after.

...

And why I said you better ask this chap, Mukudzi Mudzi, is because while I took them out of our camps, into the Frelimo provided prison, during one time when I was making my inspections, while I went running about after the welfare of our prisoners with my guards, saying hello, hello, how are you, he stayed behind. He made a bid, he wanted to follow me, and the guards stopped him, but no, he hugged very vigorously, he wanted to follow me as I'm walking away. So finally I turned back to this commotion behind me, so I said

⁴⁵ Muzenda, 214-215

let him come, let me see what he wants. So he stood in front of me, you know, shedding tears, he said to me, 'Comrade Tekere, I'm not qualified to thank you and I don't think you are qualified to receive my thanks. It's only your fore-bearers out there who are entitled to receive thanks and from my fore-bearers. It no longer belongs to our level, because I cannot understand it. I am going to tell my fore-bearers in their spiritual home. They will convey their thanks to your spiritual fore-bearers in their spiritual home. That's the level of the game. Because I cannot understand this, this is a miracle. You are number one; we targeted you – you were number one on our list of executions ...

...

You were the one who arrested us. Everything was very clear. That's exactly what we wanted to do. We owned up. And then we get sentenced by a rule which we ourselves formulated when we were still in Lusaka there, that punishment for this is execution, and then after we were sentenced you dared to ask, in front of such a furious crowd, that such a sentence not be carried out. That was a very dangerous thing, a very daring and dangerous thing to do in front of that big ... if they had turned against you ... but you put it in such a way that ... so I now owe my life to you: I who was in the forefront of wanting to take your life, you managed to save my life.

So, who was the great humanitarian who moved ZANU-PF into the age of peace and harmony after 1980? Both Muzenda and Tekere agreed with the *Gukuruhundi* massacres, but Tekere gave up on the party in 1989 (although sometime appears to want back in). And Tekere never told voters that even if ZANU-PF ran a baboon for office, Zimbabwean must vote for it. Muzenda is famous for uttering that remark in the 2000 elections. Perhaps, though, thanks to this book, his place in history will be remembered for things other than that. The rest, though, is history.