The struggle within the struggle: an examination of the political power wrangle between the African National Council and other nationalist parties, especially ZANU and ZAPU, in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle (c.1971- c.1980)

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Abstract

The article examines the logic behind the establishment of the African National Council (ANC) under the leadership of Bishop Abel Muzorewa and it further explores how the movement got entangled in power politics of Zimbabwe’s liberation movements (c.1971 – c.1980) especially with the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) under the leadership of Ndabaningi Sithole and later Robert Mugabe, as well as its struggles with the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) under Joshua Nkomo. It further examines how the predominantly clergy-led ANC, having been constituted to represent the collective interests of Zimbabweans and the incarcerated nationalists, evolved after the 1972 “Test of Acceptability” into a political party whose support base would largely emanate from Protestants. This article highlights that the struggle for power in the nationalist leadership was the paramount cause for the undermining and discrediting by ZANU and ZAPU of the ANC and its Protestant-dominated leadership’s contributions to the Africans’ struggle for liberation (c.1971 – c.1980).

Introduction

The assessment of the role of Bishop Abel Muzorewa and his African National Council (ANC) in Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle circa 1971-1980 has been largely negative and mono-dimensional. Muzorewa and the ANC are often caricatured in Zimbabwean historiography as “opportunists”, “selfish”, “sell-outs” and “simpletons” who sought to hinder “genuine” African independence by unwittingly settling for Ian Smith’s political decisions and policies that disadvantaged Africans. This portrayal is beginning to come under serious scrutiny. The article will further seek to locate the ANC position(s) within a complex web of nationalist political wrangles and contests for partisan and personal political mileage. Furthermore, it seeks to bring to light evidence that highlights the validity of assessments which posit Muzorewa in his ANC leadership as well as Ndabaningi Sithole as credible nationalists. In relation to part of this period that is about to be explored Joshua Nkomo commented: “The last and bitterest stages of the Zimbabwean liberation war were entirely unnecessary.”

By the early 1970s newspaper headlines such as that which appeared in the Rhodesian Herald of 9 March 1973, “Politics in African Clergy”, were becoming a common feature of Zimbabwe’s, then Rhodesia’s, news headlines. It was becoming evident that, besides its settler section, the general political-liberal African church leadership in Zimbabwe was making serious attempts to deal with the sociopolitical problems facing Africans. The various changes that had gradually taken place in the past decade within the leadership were now reflected in its response to the political challenges of the 1970s. 1972 was to prove a decisive year, in which political developments again tested approaches among the churches to fundamental political issues. This arose from a series of diplomatic efforts aimed at breaking the political impasse between the British government and the Rhodesian Front government that stretched back to the official dissolution of the Federation of Central Africa on 31 December 1963.

1 Muzorewa’s ANC later changed its name to United African National Council (UANC).
In 1971 Britain, still trying to find a solution to the Rhodesian crisis, tasked Alec Douglas-Home, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, to conduct a consultation with Smith and other interested parties such as African nationalists and churches to present their opinions on the best way to settle the Rhodesian political crisis. The outcome of the consultation was referred to as the Home-Smith Proposals or, in some quarters, as the Anglo-Rhodesian Settlement Proposals. In the final draft the opinions of Africans and liberals alike were ignored, but the British government, in order to ascertain and assure Zimbabweans that the proposals forwarded by Douglas-Home were a true reflection of the broad spectrum of the community, had stipulated beforehand that a test of acceptability would be conducted. A referendum was ruled out in favour of a public expression of opinions in open public meetings. According to Ian Smith, the Rhodesian Front’s rationale for this approach was that...

... it would be impossible to obtain an honest assessment from our black people, since the vast majority of them had never exercised a vote in their lives, could neither read nor write, did not understand the meaning of the word constitution, and were completely bemused by all the talking and manoeuvring going around them.

The origins of the African National Council

The Test of Acceptability spurred a significant historical development in Zimbabwe. On 16 December 1971 a group that became known as the African National Council was formed solely to lobby against the Anglo-Rhodesian proposals and further tackle the constitutional problems. The Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) claims it was its leadership that hatched the idea of the National Council. Since political parties had been banned and leading African nationalists were in prison the need for a distinct African voice to oppose the Home-Smith proposals had necessitated the formation of the National Council. It was solely black African in terms of its leadership composition but accepted whites if they wanted to be members. Furthermore, according to Muzorewa it claimed to be guided by a Christian ethos, proclaiming:

We declare our solidarity with those international organisations dedicated to the peaceful creation and preservation of the basic universal human rights and the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.

The National Council differed from the Christian Council in being simply a political lobby group, but it was one with a religious ethos. It re-introduced a united voice of protest among Africans that had been missing since the split of the African nationalist camp in the early 1960s. Some semblance of unity and a single African voice had been viewed as necessary if the Pearce Commission was to take the African call for a “No” to the proposals seriously. The ANC sought to be a non-partisan lobby group acceptable to both Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and ZAPU supporters and their leaderships. Christian leaders were believed to be suitable for such a task and hence the National Council was formed in which they held a predominant position in its leadership.

According to Fay Chung in Second Chimurenga, the clergy were chosen to lead because they were weak and therefore ZANU and ZAPU assumed they could control them. However, the evidence

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9 “Christian Council of Rhodesia”, minutes of an emergency meeting held at the University of Rhodesia, Salisbury, 30 December 1971, NAZ, GEN-P/WOR.
10 Smith, Great Betrayal, 156.
11 Ibid, 153.
15 Canaan Banana, “What is What About the African National Council”, May 1973, NAZ, GEN-P/MUZ.
17 Ibid.
20 Chambati, “National Unity”, in Turmoil and Tenacity, 147.
21 Ibid, 148.
22 Chung, Second Chimurenga, 88.
does not support this assertion, and in fact points to the contrary. Muzorewa had by then proved that he was capable and courageous, not just by acquiring a Master’s degree and being voted the Methodist church bishop, but also by having confronted the system he was restricted and barred from entering Tribal Trust Lands by the Smith regime in 1970.23 It would not have served the nationalists’ goals to employ a weak caretaker leadership to protest against the proposed constitution reforms proposed in the Smith-Home agreement. These clergy were capable and trusted community leaders and it is this that also attracted the nationalists in prison to ask them to lead the struggle towards the restitution of Africans’ political rights.24

On the other hand, it is also evident that the nationalists had chosen Christian leaders to run the Council with the hope that the arrangement would serve their own interests.25 In the incarcerated nationalists’ thinking, the National Council was to be a temporary caretaker organisation that would relinquish political power once successful in the “No” campaign mission, although no termination date was set.26 They seemed to believe that the clergy would have no political ambitions of their own.27 Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the first president of the National Council, upon his appointment appeared to confirm this view: “I have no personal ambition. I seek no office, nor position for myself, only democratic rule for my country.”28 The same declaration was repeated in the following year: “I have no political ambition, I seek no office position or financial gain, only democratic rule for my country.”29 It would remain to be seen whether both Muzorewa’s claims and the nationalists’ assumptions proved correct.

Alongside Bishop Muzorewa, other African clergy selected in the leadership of the National Council30 included Reverend Canaan Sodindo Banana, who became its vice-president, and later the first President of Zimbabwe.31 Reverend Henry Kachidza, who was the General Secretary of the Bible Society in Rhodesia,32 was appointed the deputy treasurer and was later promoted to be the treasurer.33 Muzorewa and Banana who held the Council’s top leadership roles had not been formally involved in nationalist politics before then,34 although in 1970 Muzorewa had protested against the Land Tenure Act which led to his prohibition by government from entering Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs).35 Even Ian Smith recognised the capabilities of the National Council’s leadership.36

The influence of African Christian leaders in the final struggle against colonialism was consolidated as the National Council began to work closely with the Christian Council and various churches in the campaign to reject the Home-Smith proposals. The two bodies became closely identified, and it was only in 1979 that members were required to officially resign from their Christian Council duties if they held offices in the National Council.37 The clergy chosen to lead the National Council were already part of the Christian Council. Muzorewa worked tirelessly campaigning for a refusal of the proposals and his efforts were further complemented by various Church groups in general and by the Christian Council in particular.38 On 11 January 1972 when the Pearce Commission arrived to conduct the Test of Acceptability the efforts of these two groups had effectively shaped African opinion.39 The Secretary General of the Christian Council of Rhodesia during this period, CD Watyoka, noted: “By the time the acceptability of the Anglo-Rhodesian proposals was tested, the country was literally shouting, NO! NO! NO!, at each meeting place.”40

Within a few days of the start of the Pearce Commission, as the popularity of the ”No” protest was becoming clear, the Rhodesian Front arrested and restricted some of the leading figures in the

26 Ibid.
27 Chambati, “National Unity”, in Turmoil and Tenacity, 147.
28 Abel Tendekai Muzorewa, “Return to Legality”, address at an African National Council rally by Bishop Tendekai Muzorewa, Harry Margolis Hall, Salisbury, 20 July 1972, NAZ, GEN-P/MUZ.
29 Abel Muzorewa, “Speech to the National Affairs Association”, Bulawayo, 29 May 1973, NAZ, GEN-P/MUZ.
30 Abel Muzorewa, “Address to the UANC”, 9 September 1977, NAZ, Acc. MS771/3.
32 Muzorewa, Rise and Walk, 91; Kawadza was also known for his evangelical convictions.
33 Abel Tendekai Muzorewa, “Return to Legality”, address at an ANC rally, Harry Margolis Hall, Salisbury, 20 July 1972, NAZ, GEN-P/MUZ.
34 Muzorewa, Rise and Walk, 94.
36 Smith, Great Betrayal, 154.
37 Watyoka, 25 Years, 19; the Christian Council argued that the demands of political office in the Internal Settlement government would not allow those that had been elected into parliament to effectively undertake their duties in the council.
38 Muzorewa, Rise and Walk, 92ff.
39 Smith, Great Betrayal, 155.
40 Watyoka, 25 Years, 17.
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campaign. On 18 January 1972 Reginald S Garfield Todd and his daughter Judith were arrested on 
the grounds that they were inciting violence. Neither father nor daughter had advocated violence, and 
Judith was clear that the reason was “their opposition to the settlement”. Other members of the 
National Council and Christian Council were detained or restricted in their movements, including 
Percy M’kudu (an Anglican and vocal member of the opposition in Parliament, and one-time President 
of the Christian Council) and Reverend Henry Kachidza of the Methodist Church in Rhodesia.

The African population was subjected to a further excessive use of force by government security 
agents. The African Registration Act was amended and consequently made it compulsory for all 
Africans to carry registration certificates at all times. The government introduced “collective fines” 
for rural communities suspected of harbouring guerrillas especially in the northern parts of the country 
where there were increased guerrilla attacks, and livestock could be confiscated. A regulation was 
also introduced which barred Africans from drinking alcohol in areas registered as white areas after 
7 pm during weekdays and after 1 pm on Saturdays. On Sundays Africans residing in white areas were 
prohibited from drinking alcohol. To some in the churches these regulations were simply viewed as 
promoting morality, and were not opposed, but to most Africans the laws re-asserted their inferior 
social status. To Banana the actions were

Purely a product of the racial policies of the Rhodesian Front, that breed contempt and 
resentment and deliberately seek to create [sic] conditions and platforms of bitter racial 
conflicts...

The Pearce Commission finished its task on 12 March and the results were officially published on 23 
May 1972. The “No” response had carried the day. The Christian Council and the National Council 
through a vigorous campaign chiefly based on the dissemination of information on a national scale had 
played a key role in ensuring one inequitable solution to ending colonial power was defeated. It would 
remain to be seen if this success could be repeated in relation to other political problems that faced the 
Rhodesian community.

The metamorphosis of the ANC

Perhaps it was the respect the National Council’s leadership won through the successful “No” 
campaign that propelled the succession of events that followed in the National Council after the Test of 
Acceptability. When a council seeking to represent all Africans was established, its ultimate purpose 
was not clearly established, leaving the potential for it to take a life form of its own or a different life 
form from that desired by the ZAPU and ZANU nationalists. On 10 March 1972 the National Council 
was transformed from being a lobby group into a political party. Muzorewa declared:

This organisation, like the old ones, will be referred to, by outsiders, as an African Nationalist Organization ... heirs to the People’s struggle which has ceaselessly been waged since the imposition of alien rule in 1890, in the name of Almighty God, who, in 
His love and mercy, created all people and races in His image.

It then went on to boldly claim:

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41 Todd was a missionary who later turned settler and became Prime Minister of Rhodesia and was sympathetic to the 
nationalist struggle.
42 Judith Todd, “Chikarubi” A letter from prison to Anthony Eastwood, 18 February 1972, NAZ, GEN-P/TOD.
43 Ibid.
44 Watyoka, 25 Years, 18.
45 Canaan Banana, “What is What About the African National Council”, May 1973, GEN-P/MUZ.
46 Ibid.
48 Canaan Banana, “What is What About the African National Council”, May 1973, GEN-P/MUZ.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Canaan Banana, “Racialism Our Worst Enemy”, address at Hellenic Hall, Gwelo, 29 August 1972, NAZ, GEN-P/MUZ.
52 Smith, Great Betrayal, 155.
53 Muzorewa, Rise and Walk, 106.
54 Smith, Great Betrayal, 154.
55 ZAPU Publicity Bureau, “Z.A.P.U., Its Origins and Direction”, Paper presented at the World Conference Against Apartheid, 
Racism and Colonialism in Southern Africa, 16-19 June 1977, NAZ, GEN-P/WOR.
56 Abel Muzorewa, “Under the Banner of Unity”, The African National Council, Manifesto, 10 March 1972, NAZ, GEN-
P/MUZ.
... we here now summon every African in this land, young or old, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, chief or subject, and those members of other races dedicated to the establishment of human brotherhood, to recognise the trumpet we here sound and to rally around us, so that together, we continue our arduous journey to Zimbabwe in a Christian and non-violent manner.57

The African National Council believed that its success nationally in orchestrating the “No” response gave it a clear mandate from the African masses to turn into a political party.58 Muzorewa accepted his nomination as the African National Council’s (ANC) president. Notable was the dominant role played by African Protestant Christian leaders and their continued presence at different points throughout its life, including Reverend Banana (who later resigned and rejoined ZANU), and Reverend Max Chigwida of the Presbyterian Church who later became its secretary general. Reverend AT Kanodereka (later assassinated, most likely by political competitors) and Reverend Henry H Kachidza were other clergy who held leading roles in the ANC.59

The transformation of the Christian-dominated ANC into a political body had a gradual and significant impact on Zimbabwe’s political developments in the 1970s. This impact was also significantly felt among the leadership of ZANU and ZAPU.60 The ZAPU publicity bureau began a systematic attempt to discredit Muzorewa:

Bishop Muzorewa rode on the crest of his wave and found himself suddenly looking at the world from its horizons as caretaker of the African National Council. He mistook the storm of enthusiasm over the surface revival of ZAPU (under the cover name ANC) for personal support. This had an accidental effect on his mind. He was tempted to change the course of history and seize the moment for himself and the opportunists ...61

The political presence of the ANC now left the claim of ZANU and ZAPU to the political leadership of the country in jeopardy.62 The ANC stepped into the gap created by the banning of other nationalist parties and the imprisonment of their leaders, and offered a vehicle of protest markedly different from ZANU/ZAPU with its commitment to violent means, not just against the Rhodesian Front government but also against fellow Africans. Muzorewa believed that even some Christians who did not want to join partisan politics were swayed by the new party’s initial dedication to non-violence,63 and motivated some Africans to seek the transformation of the ANC into a political party despite the consequences.64

With ZANU and ZAPU in detention, the future direction of the ANC was in the determination of the new ANC leadership.65 Although Muzorewa did not disown the other nationalist leaders in the first few years of the ANC becoming political, it was clear that the ANC was no longer their political baby or junior. Muzorewa believed that it had superseded ZANU or ZAPU:

We of the ANC Executive saw the verdict as a clear-cut summons for black Zimbabweans to realise the essential power of unity. This was a victory which outshone the achievements of all the other previous black organisations.66

There was failure to realise how threatening this was to the other nationalist leaders.67 Despite the common enemy of the Rhodesian government, ZANU and ZAPU still contested one another for political power, and now the ANC too.68 Their war within the war became as brutal as the armed
struggle against the white supremacist government.\textsuperscript{69} Political contestation within the struggle for national liberation was far from being resolved, but rather increased.\textsuperscript{70}

**Escalation of tensions within the nationalist camp**

Towards the end of 1973 divisions between ZANU, ZAPU and the ANC brought negative reaction against Christians, churches and her institutions that were viewed as supporting the ANC which by and large were members of the Christian Council of Rhodesia.\textsuperscript{71} From this period the Roman Catholic leadership began to gradually identify with ZANU machinations in the liberation struggle, a subject on its own beyond the scope of this discussion.\textsuperscript{72} Some prominent nationalist members who had become part of the ANC leadership during its non-partisan period began to shift their allegiance to their old parties. The resignation of Edison Zvobgo,\textsuperscript{73} who was the principal overseas representative of the ANC, and his subsequent identification with ZANU, illustrates the tensions:

I admire the bishop. I believe he is a man of great courage and sincerity. But I am convinced that he is not an experienced negotiator. Remember that he has not been schooled in the crucible of real nationalist politics. He is not able to speak with more than one voice. Whites must be led down the garden path of slaughter. Morality does not come into it. What frightens me and other nationalists abroad is that the bishop might not be able to demonstrate this versatility. This may result in the wholesale sale of the people.\textsuperscript{74}

Zvobgo ignored Muzorewa’s success in opposing the Land Tenure Act and a successful “No” campaign;\textsuperscript{75} Zvobgo and others began to be enticed back to their former nationalist political loyalties when it had become clear that Muzorewa would not settle for the position of titular leader of the joint nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{76}

Efforts were made by the southern African Frontline States in 1974 to unite nationalists and consider a settlement with the Rhodesian government in a political deal,\textsuperscript{77} negotiated by the American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in consultation with John Vorster of South Africa.\textsuperscript{78} Part of the ZANU leadership still in prison from the early 1960s, including Edgar Tekere, Enos Nkala and Maurice Nyagumbo, removed their party leader Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole in favour of Mugabe, who was also in prison, on the grounds that he had jeopardised the liberation struggle.\textsuperscript{79} The jail leadership coup had been orchestrated, among other reasons, because of Sithole’s refusal to admit in court that he had committed sabotage\textsuperscript{80} – a crime punishable by hanging. This was viewed as an ethical predilection towards non-violence, which was despised by ZANU leadership hardliners in prison.\textsuperscript{81}

According to Bhebhe these actions created “confusion” in the party and were denounced by Frontline leaders, by Herbert Chitepo and Josiah Tongogara, a member of the executive of the external wing of ZANU and the party’s Chief of Defence, as “an illegal coup”.\textsuperscript{82} Frontline leaders forced the reinstatement of Sithole, compelled the leaders of ZANU, ZAPU, ANC and FROLIZI\textsuperscript{83} to unite, and then later used their diplomatic influence on the OAU to withdraw recognition of ZAPU and ZANU as a means of putting pressure on the parties to unite.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{70} N Bhebhe, Simon Muzenda, Mambo Press: Gweru 2004, 166.
\textsuperscript{71} List of ANC/ Muzorewa Central Committee Members, n.d., NAZ, Acc: MS 771/1-3.
\textsuperscript{72} Hallencreutz, “A Council in Crossfire” in, Hallencreutz & Moyo, State and Church, 82ff.
\textsuperscript{73} E Tekere, A Lifetime of Struggle, Harare: SAPES Books 2007, 68-69.
\textsuperscript{76} E Tekere, A Lifetime of Struggle, Harare: SAPES Books 2007, 68-69.
\textsuperscript{77} Bhebhe, Simon Muzenda, 169.
\textsuperscript{78} Chung, Re-living Chimurenga, 86.
\textsuperscript{79} Bhebhe, Simon Muzenda, 169.
\textsuperscript{80} Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) was made up of disgruntled former members of ZANU and ZAPU. The movement was led by James Chikerema. It merged into the ANC on 6 December 1974.
\textsuperscript{81} Bhebhe, Simon Muzenda, 170.
The protracted struggle for political power: partisan and personal

These efforts saw the three main African nationalist movements briefly reconstitute under the ANC and under the leadership of Muzorewa.\textsuperscript{85} In the process the ANC changed its name to United African National Council (UANC) to reflect this new-found, if not imposed, unity among nationalists and also in order to differentiate it from the old ANC.\textsuperscript{86} It was not long before internal power struggles resurfaced. Muzorewa at one point suspended Joshua Nkomo from leadership of the ANC, but when he also tried to bring the ZANU leadership in Mozambique under his control he was rejected.\textsuperscript{87} ZAPU publicity described Muzorewa’s growing influence between 1974 and 1977 as a product of “imperialist forces” and their “propaganda media” who “used an immature and inpet leader with which to forge a reactionary neo-colonial deal for Zimbabwe” and preserve their own interests. Muzorewa, as a bishop, was dismissed for convincing himself that he had a “messianic role”, but also for being so naive that he could not understand he was being used as a front for “the vicious Rhodesian regime”. To his surprise, on 2 June 1974 the executive of the ANC (virtually ZAPU) rejected the deal he had made with Ian Smith when he had accepted a constitution rejected by the masses as a basis for independence. When the leaders of ZANU and ZAPU were released from prison on 3 December to discuss the possibilities of a constitutional solution, the need to present a united African front became a priority too. ZAPU believed that, ignoring the powerful influence of the other organisations on the African National Council, Muzorewa “took an opportunististic posture”, which precipitated a series of regroupings and factions. He failed to call the planned congress, fearing he would lose to comrade Nkomo. His chances of becoming one of the established leaders slipped away. ZAPU believed that Muzorewa had mistaken the rejection of the Pearce Commission proposals as support for himself.\textsuperscript{88}

It seems clear that any attempt at a political settlement initiated by Muzorewa and including ZANU and ZAPU was bound to fail.\textsuperscript{89} A UANC settlement would have spelt disaster for ZANU and ZAPU nationalist leaderships.

ZANU and ZAPU leaders took every opportunity to reassert themselves in order not to lose out to the UANC.\textsuperscript{90} From 1974 onwards, with Kissinger and South Africa pushing for a settlement and Mozambique becoming independent (leaving Rhodesia’s eastern border accessible to guerrilla incursions), the liberation of Rhodesia from its colonial past appeared within sight, but there was still one war which was far from being over; and in fact that was beginning to escalate as a result of the confidence that Rhodesian independence was imminent. Dzinashe Machingura,\textsuperscript{91} a member of the Zimbabwe People’s Army (ZIPA) which was a joint military wing for ZANU and ZAPU, commented:

... the traditional political leadership of Zimbabwe ... divided the people ... it became quite clear to us that if we were ever going to be able to prosecute a successful armed struggle we could not be either part of the two rival ANC factions, the Muzorewa faction or the Nkomo faction. We realized the time of personality politics had long passed. It was this approach to politics which had divided the people of Zimbabwe.\textsuperscript{92}

ZANU saw its access to power as primarily through the barrel of the gun\textsuperscript{93} and called for the intensification of the war, downplaying attempts to settle the Rhodesian problem at the table.\textsuperscript{94} ZANU thought talks would “rob it of a military victory”.\textsuperscript{95} ZAPU policy alternated negotiation and a continuation of the armed struggle in line with ZANU.\textsuperscript{96} After 1976, with the parties now maintaining separate identities, Muzorewa’s UANC looked to continue talks to secure restitution of African rights

\textsuperscript{86} For a further reading on the causes and nature of these splits consult Bhebhe, \textit{Re-Living Chimurenga}; and C Nyangoni & G Nyandoro eds., \textit{Racism and Colonialism in Southern Africa, 16-19 June 1977}, NAZ, GEN-P/WOR.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Whose real life name was Wilfred Mhanda, guerrillas used pseudonyms as a way of safeguarding their anonymity, hence protecting their families still in the country from retribution from the settler forces for having joined the armed struggle.
\textsuperscript{92} Dzinashe Machingura, interviewed by, Mozambican Information Agency, Maputo, 22 September 1976, NAZ, GEN-P/WOR
\textsuperscript{93} Chung, \textit{Re-Living Chimurenga}, 83.
\textsuperscript{94} Tekere, \textit{Lifetime of Struggle}; 83.
\textsuperscript{95} Chung, \textit{Re-Living Chimurenga}, 83.
and negotiate a political settlement with the Smith regime. Sithole, who had been deposed in jail as ZANU leader and choosing also to keep the name ZANU for his newly formed party, also distanced himself from those still bent on prosecuting the armed struggle and concentrated on talks.

As the nationalists fought for political control, tribal animosities were stirred up, and many died. To Mugabe, Muzorewa and Sithole were “idiotic characters” and also “irreligious”, who valued personal glory more than the freedom for the masses. He dismissed them as praying to “the white man as their only god”, and for being “pledged to sacrifice the whole black race to appease their monstrous deity … those whom the gods wish to destroy …

Sithole’s ZANU reminded people that contrary to press coverage

The father of the armed struggle in Zimbabwe Rev. Sithole is militarily and politically very strong inside Zimbabwe, but our pronouncements have often fallen on deaf ears …

Those advocating the non-violent approach were dismissed by ZANU and ZAPU for being “black puppets” of the state. ZAPU claimed to expose the “lies” of the Christian leaders:

The Bishop told Mr. Smith that as soon as they enter into some agreement he, as a cleric, will be able to lift up both his hands and order all the young men to come home and they will do it overnight. Another Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, told Mr. Smith, “You know Mr. Smith, Mr. Mugabe does not command the ZANLA guerrillas but I do it.”

Now these two Rev. gentlemen have been telling lie after lie ... I say to the Black Silent Majority, it is high time you called a lie a lie.

The UANC still claimed that the masses “remained solidly ranged behind” it, and bitterly dismissed “as naked hypocrisy” Sithole’s attempt to pose as a champion of unity when he had broken away from the UANC in September 1976.

ZANU and ZAPU focused their attacks on discrediting Muzorewa and the UANC for its political philosophies of gradualism or political evolution, and non-violence. This included an attack on its Christian stance, since the UANC was generally believed to be Christian-friendly and supported by the Protestant leadership. Josiah Chinamano, vice-president of ZAPU, dismissed claims of assassination plots against Muzorewa, and attacked his integrity as a leading cleric:

I say to the Bishop, please preach what you do or do what you preach. Do not continue to cheat people. Do not continue to cheat the masses of people pretending to be a nationalist and yet in fact you are being used as an agent of oppressors and imperialists.

Chinamano noted that some were calling “Down with VAFUNDISI”. While he distanced himself from this, he asserted: “You know there are some who put on sheep’s skin and yet they are wolves. Some people put on clerical uniform and yet they are crooks”, and added a warning which sought to undermine his clerical opponents:

I say to all Christians, all church-goers, the silent majority, please draw a line between crook vafundisis and genuine vafundisis. And when you do that then you must be brave to say pasi nema crook vafundisi pamberi nevafundisi vakanaka. In the same way there are certain white leaders who have led people astray and brought about the bloodshed. They are not all white leaders who do that.

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97 Ibid.
98 Bhebhe, Simon Muzenda, 181.
100 Ibid.
101 James B. Dzvova, (Chief ZANU representative in UK & Europe and ZANU’s Publicity Secretary), letter addressed to Mrs. P. Altman, 26 September 1978, NAZ, GEN-P/SIT.
102 J.M. Chinamano, Speech delivered at a ZAPU rally, Ascot, Gwelo, 10 June 1978, NAZ, GEN-P/CHI.
103 Ibid.
104 Vafundisi is a Shona word which means ministers or pastors and its singular is mufundisi.
105 “Vafundisis” is another colloquial Shona anglicized version for ministers or pastors.
106 “Pasi nema” is Shona for :down with”. It was a term very popular and still popular among nationalists for denouncing their opponents.
107 “Pamberi” is another Shona term that was popular and still popular as part of nationalist slogans. It means “forward” hence in this case forward with “vafundisi” (ministers) that are “vakanaka” (good)
108 Ibid.
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ZANU and ZAPU, from the time that the ANC became formally political, began to redefine some major aspects of their identity, stressing the need for an intensification of the armed struggle, but also, in order to distinguish it from the UANC, to proclaim its Marxist Leninist teachings, and ZANU officially adopted Marxist Leninism in 1973. An adoption of communism in general, even without its atheist component, was a deliberate distancing of itself from the UANC which openly declared its commitment to Judaeo-Christian beliefs in its manifesto:

We here declare that we are simply creatures made in the image of God ... Only as we are fully liberated can we fulfil the purpose for which we are created ... we shall strive to create a nation where black and white can live as children of the One Almighty God.

ZANU had been advised by the Chinese government in 1974 to retain its identity, even if it chose to unite with other nationalist forces in Zimbabwe as demanded by the Frontline States. ZANU and ZAPU nationalists forced Muzorewa and the ANC to either choose to stand alone or declare a communist allegiance. Muzorewa chose his way:

I do not subscribe to the romantic and un historic view that the liberation struggle is won by armed clashes between the forces of liberation and the colonial army. Important as they are, such acts of war form only sporadic episodes in the total process of liberation.

Muzorewa continued to assert that only his Christian approach was sufficiently rounded to bring an end to colonial oppression:

Liberation embraces the whole process of opposition to all forms of the colonial oppression. This opposition is at various times moral, spiritual, mental, economic, political and physical as appropriate. The church’s contributions are manifold including its attack on the very rationale and philosophy of racism.

Once each nationalist group had redefined its identity and stood alone there was then need to compete for support and recognition both inside and outside Zimbabwe. Major criticism was directed at Muzorewa by ZANU and ZAPU. They felt Muzorewa had broken a Zimbabwean traditional ethical code as taught by the Shona idiom Kunzi dzipakate handi kunzi dziridze (When you are given a drum to carry it does not mean you should play it.) In other words, if one is asked to hold onto something it does not mean one should do with it as one pleases. ZANU and ZAPU viewed Muzorewa as an opportunist who should not have turned his role as caretaker leader into a permanent nationalistic leader’s role, although no nationalist group ever communicated to Muzorewa that he was a caretaker leader.

Conclusion

In light of this narrative of the “struggle within the struggle”, in other words the struggle for partisan or personal political power among nationalists, Muzorewa, Sithole and the ANC’s contribution to the Zimbabwean struggle for independence demands a fair reassessment. The ANC’s actions and decisions within the political developments that occurred for March 1972 up to the 1979 Lancaster House Agreement, and even into the first decade of Zimbabwe’s postcolonial politics, should be reassessed in light of the machinations of political leveraging in which decisions and actions were considered, accepted or rejected primarily based on envisaged, partisan and personal, political gains and losses. It

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109 Dzinasho Machingura, interviewed by Mozambican Information Agency, Maputo, 22 September 1976, NAZ, GEN-P/WOR.
111 Ibid.
112 Abel Muzorewa, “Under the Banner of Unity”, The African National Council, Manifesto, 10 March 1972, NAZ, GEN-P/MUZ. The word God is used in the manifesto about six times.
113 Bhebhe, Simon Muzenda, 179.
114 Muzorewa, Rise and Walk, 91.
115 Ibid.
116 Mbira is the instrument referred to in Shona; because of a lack of a similar word in English a dynamic equivalence has been employed.
was this status quo that influenced and effected a chain of significant historical developments as well as the process of political decision making and significant political outcomes from 1972 to circa 1980. The “struggle within the struggle” phenomenon serves as an interpretive tool to help understand these historical chains of political action and reactions in this critical period of Zimbabwean history. This metaphorical dynamic of political contest embedded in the “struggle within the struggle” further serves as a key to unlocking the paradox, on one hand, of why unpopular political courses and decisions were undertaken and on the other hand of why popular decisions and courses were rejected by nationalists.

Political decisions and courses of action were not largely taken to advance the African struggle but were primarily accepted, taken or rejected based on how much partisan and/or personal political leverage they would bring to a nationalist party or an individual within the party, and the ANC was equally susceptible to this phenomenon. The breadth of this article does not allow further analysis of the cluster of significant historical developments in Zimbabwean history in light of the phenomenon; hence this article will conclude here, reiterating one of its pivotal arguments that the perpetuation of the caricature of the nationalists and clergymen Muzorewa and Sithole as “puppets” and “sell-outs” cannot be justified in light of the force of evidence, and to insist on such a portrayal or trajectory as either following partisan propaganda or as a deliberate misrepresentation of facts, if not a combination of the two.

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118 Some of the critical political courses of action, processes and decisions affected by this phenomenon in the period in question include the political floor crossings by significant nationalist players such as Edison Zvobgo who moved from the ANC to ZANU in 1973, of Percy M’kudu who crossed over to the ANC; and of Nkomo from the ANC, and Muzorewa in 1975, and in 1976 Banana moved to ZANU from Muzorewa’s ANC; then there were the ill-fated Lusaka Accord of 1974, the leadership wrangle over ANC between Muzorewa and Nkomo and the subsequent mushrooming of ANCs in 1975, the continued secret talks between Nkomo and Smith from 1975, the secret talks between Muzorewa and Smith in 1975 and subsequent years, the pastime marriage of convenience between ZANU and ZAPU under the banner of the Patriotic Front from 1976, the failure of the Geneva convention in 1976, the stillbirth of the Internal Settlement of 1978 that led to the elections of 1979 and also the stillbirth of the hybrid nation of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, the escalation of the armed struggle by ZANU in the late 1970s, the acceptance of another half-baked settlement, after the Internal Settlement, in the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979, the refusal of Mugabe’s ZANU to unite with Nkomo’s ZAPU in the 1980 elections, the arrest of Muzorewa and harassment of former of non-ZANU leaders in the early post-colonial period, and the crisis in Matebeleland and Midlands that led to the ZANU PF and ZAPU Unity Accord of 1987.

119 These manuscripts are stored in looseleaf folders, each file marked with an abbreviated title, which is included after each entry above. The individual items within each folder are un-catalogued, and have no accession or catalogue numbers.

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