

Others, like Sibongile Khumalo⁵, preferred to take the military option.

Recruitment is a topic that virtually all the interviewees discuss in one way or another, as all were recruited or made a decision to join the struggle. Many of the interviews discuss at length their efforts to join the struggle, and the events of their journey out of Zimbabwe to Botswana where many met further adventures with the Botswana police and military, or even their own relatives on the Botswana side of the border who wanted to dissuade them from joining the struggle and send them back to school in Zimbabwe.

MILITARY TRAINING

As mentioned above, the first military training took place in 1963, and it continued thereafter until 1979. Guerrillas were trained initially in other countries – Tanzania, Ghana, China, Algeria, the Soviet Union – but ZAPU eventually established its own training camps in Zambia where the bulk of the later training took place – as well as in Angola. Most of those interviewees who were in the military mention their training in one way or another, but two were specifically interviewed on the subject of training. Jack Mpofo was trained as early as 1967 in Tanzania by ZAPU cadres, including Alfred Nikita Mangena, the later commander. He describes how they were trained for nine months on small weapons, mortars, obstacle crossing, tactics and reconnaissance, as well as political science. He characterises the training thus:

...the aim of the training was to make a man, that he can survive in a very, very tough situation. Then that's why we did all these things that a man himself, he could be a commander even if he's alone or he could train others even if ... he's alone ... and then he could be also be a politician or something like a ...[commissar]

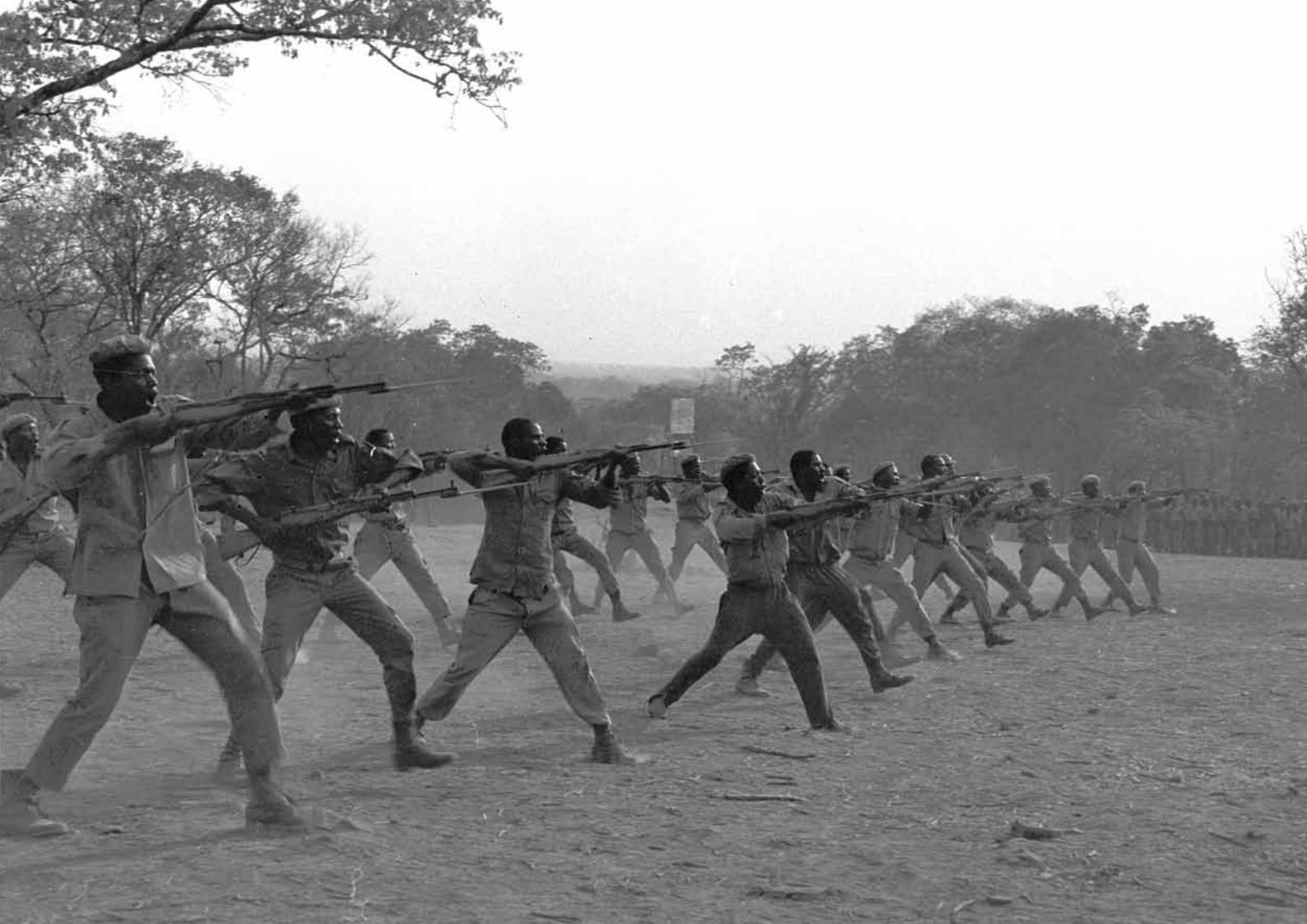
Later, after spending some time on operations, Mpofo became a trainer himself, when ZPRA had set up camps for training within Zambia. One of the main camps was at Mwembeshi, in the Zambezi valley, towards the Zambian/Rhodesia/Mozambiquan border. The training was intense, beginning with practice in carrying the heavy weight of a gun, sometimes using logs. Next would come the stripping and assembling of light weapons, and shooting or target practice later. The shooting training began in the lying position:

...as time goes on you find that the man now is used in firing when on the lying position; then you teach him to shoot on the kneeling position and then on the ... standing position, and then if they qualify there then there's no problem. But you don't allow them to stay with the ammunition as ... as they can make an error and kill others.

Many different types of weapons had to be learned, along with the ammunition to be used, and then also hand-to-hand combat with bayonets or judo and anti-aircraft. Again, tactics, reconnaissance, topography were essential additional skills to master. When they had sufficient skills, they would be sent on manoeuvres with very little food, to see if they could survive in the bush for several days. The physical exercise which had been a part of the routine at Nampundwe now became useful, as was the political orientation, as hardships were many during the preparation for even greater difficulties across the river. During the training suitable candidates would be identified to be appointed to command their units, and then they would be ready to go on operations within the country. Mpofo also talks about the importance of discipline, because a disciplined man

TOP AND BOTTOM: Cadres in training, 1978

⁵ Pseudonym





even if he's alone he can maintain the struggle, he can continue fighting. There was nothing ... nothing more important than discipline itself because a person who ... holds a gun and if he's not disciplined he can be a terrible person; he can fire to anybody he wants because he's having power in his hands.

In 1976, the training camp in Tanzania at Morogoro was closed and a camp was established in southern Zambia, towards Kariba, known as CGT1 [Camp for Guerrilla Training] to cater for large numbers of recruits who were flooding in to join the struggle. The first trainings took place there in 1977. At the same time, large numbers were also being sent to Angola.

Mzila-Ndlovu describes his training in Angola in 1977, by the Cuban military. The journey itself was an enormous adventure for the young men, travelling by truck across that part of Angola which showed the scars of recent war:

I remember the day we left we were transferred from Nampundwe to FC⁶ [Freedom Camp]. We were a group of some 2,000 ... 2,000 recruits, yeah. A group of 2,000 recruits. We ... took seven days to drive from Lusaka to Boma. it was my first time to come into contact with Cubans. We were driven by Cubans ... everything, security, food, logistics, and what have you, was done by Cubans. It was a highly organized, you know, convoy.

Once there, they were organized for training which lasted six months.

The first ten units or companies did infantry training. And because maybe of my education then they put me into artillery training ... and the Cubans were so good at it because they had clearly laid out programmes of how to ... you start with the physical training, and then of course if you were in an infantry you would then go to small arms like grenades, and ... small arms like AK, the pistols and so forth. You know, this kind of became basic. We did this, but in addition to this basic training including the communications and including ... reconnaissance ...

In the interview Mzila describes in detail the process of training on different skills, and explains what was going on in each of the photographs. He also gives us information on the different types of uniforms used. Mzila was selected for heavy weapons, artillery training and he also describes the handling of these weapons and how to ensure you get the target. He talks about the Cubans and the Russians:

All the instructors were Cuban, but we also had a Russian contingent, the Soviets. They were there but they kept their distance from the Cuban activities. I think they were monitoring because ... I think they must have been sponsoring They were providing the weapons. ... the food came from Cuba, the rice came from Cuba, the fish came from Cuba .. but they [the Soviets] were smaller, a smaller contingent who were also based there. Later of course I came to understand that ... well as a major sponsor of ZPRA they needed to be on the spot and they would be reporting to Moscow on a wide range of activities and also even taking the responsibility in the event of an attack like what happened some two years after I had left when that same camp was attacked by the Rhodesian forces together with the South Africans.

⁶ Freedom Camp



Mzila-Ndlovu also talked about the political classes and when asked about whether elements of international law or warfare were taught, he replied:

... I remember there were laws that we learned all through our training that you cannot use some of these weapons for extra-military, you know ... ways of killing your enemy. You want to be humane in the manner in which you kill your enemy ... like you don't want to tie a grenade to the head of your enemy and, and, and you blow them up. It's unethical

This is one other area of our training that I think many people did not understand. Of course given also the kind of information that came from different operational areas, the kind of ways of elimination of the enemy our people were using, it meant probably they didn't understand that component of our training to say that even if you are to kill your enemy kill them in a humane way ... and I had a special interest in that because somewhat it had coincided with my religious training in the home that, you know, you can't be cruel and being a soldier it meant you had to overcome that, but it remained kind of being part of you ... that you have to be humane ... you may have to kill because of the greater cause, but you want to do it in a humane way.

Another element of training was to provide for medics. Benjamin Dube, a ZAPU doctor who was responsible for military camps, commented that some were trained separately, but some were trained within the context of the general training:

Some we trained them, some were trained separately. What used to happen is, as the struggle, you know, grew, as we grew in numbers, is that when a battalion or a... let's say a battalion or a brigade went for training, it was at the same time when people to train as medics were identified and trained at the same time.

Mzila-Ndlovu describes the training he received as “advanced guerrilla warfare”:

So the training that was being done there ... saying advanced guerrilla meant that you had a kind of combination of guerrilla warfare, kind of hit and run you know activities, but you want to transform those ... those operations to hit, assault and stay. And the hit, assault and stay approach would then be useful when you go for settlements – enemy settlements...

After spending some time on operations Mzila-Ndlovu was later sent for training on heavier mortars in Egypt, and he finally learned to use the Strela heat-seeking missile from ZPRA cadres in Zambia who had been trained in the Soviet Union. He commented on the quality of the training received as follows:

... look, I did not receive a training anywhere else, but I can compare with what I saw in Egypt for instance where I was doing actually commando training together with some Arab fellows, guys from the PLO, yah, guys from Sudanyou are able to compare yourselves with other armies like the Egyptian army for instance where you felt look your basic training was more superior than some of these fellows were getting from an established army like the army of the state of Egypt . You really felt someone proud to be ZPRA ...

Besides discussing training, Mzila-Ndlovu's interview deals with several aspects of operations as well as the military strategy, which are referred to below in the section on operations.

Towards the end of the war, in 1978, a new camp was opened at Mulungushi north-east of Lusaka, where training on conventional warfare began. There soldiers were trained on heavier weaponry, such as heavy mortars, and including the use of tanks and armoured cars. Five battalions – nearly 10,000 men were trained there.

Women were also receiving military training. The early arrivals trained along with the men, and both Precious Nleya and Grace Noko refer to their training at Mwembeshi. Grace was amongst the first eight women to be trained along with the men, and she described it as very tough. They were in the same platoon with men but:

... we had our own section, section A... So we trained there for two ... a month or two months and the supreme commander Dumiso Dabengwa came, he was sent by Dr. Nkomo to say “No, ask those ladies if they could come back to be sent to school”, So when Dabengwa came we told him that “No we can’t go back, we want to be trained as soldiers.

Grace went with others to be trained in Tanzania, during the period when there was pressure for ZANLA and ZPRA to train together, and then returned to become an instructor at Mwembeshi for the next group of women – this time numbering 25.

Joshua Nkomo was clearly concerned about the combined training of men and women and eventually found a way out of that situation. From early 1977 women who wished to go for military service were channeled to a special women’s brigade. A separate camp was constructed for them at Mkushi in central Zambia, where they received complete military training, first with male instructors, and later with a full complement of women instructors.

Sibongile Khumalo⁵ gives a detailed description of that training when being interviewed about the Women’s Brigade. They spent 6 to 8 months and were being prepared to proceed to the front to fight:

We were trained on combat and tactics and we were trained on political science. This is where we were taught about things like socialism, imperialism, capitalism, we had to understand all those ... all those issues and how they...they related to our struggle, yes and what the party policy was and the focus, what it was. ... we were young and from school, and we enjoyed it, we really, really enjoyed it. And we were taught topography and map-reading. You would have to know and say “If this shadow ... the shadow of a tree is here, what time could it be?” Things like that those came under topography. How the sound, the echo of a bird ... why is such a bird making noise? How ... is it because the bird is seeing a lion or seeing a human being ... and those were various signals we would get from natural things and we were taught all those things.

I learned to use the Semenov, which was a semi-automatic rifle, and then the AK 47, a bazooka and I can tell you, and my friends will tell you, that during our pass-out parade when we were doing demonstrations, I was hit by bazooka flings from the bazooka ...

The basic pattern of the training emerges through the various interviews – first basic training, either in Zambia or in another neighbouring country, followed by more specialized training for some, interspersed with periods deployed inside the country or along the Zambian border. Only the women were not deployed into the front. All those interviewed praised the training received as very thorough and preparing them for all eventualities.

TOP: Gun stripping lesson

BOTTOM: Cadres attending bush training camp

⁵ Pseudonym

