

Their loss was then attributed to two factors – ZANU did not play by the rules, using violence and intimidation, and the British had deliberately favoured ZANU.

Parks states:

ZANLA did not go to the assembly points. They did put mujibas and most of these senior ZANLA people remained in the... in the bush.

Dabengwa takes a strategic view of the election process and its outcome, assessing how the British saw the situation. He imagined they would be asking themselves:

who of the two parties ZAPU or ZANU will be able to block the MK ANC coming through and who is behind those parties. ZANU - they say “China ah China we don’t think it’s a problem”.

But the Soviets were a different matter, and they had supported ZAPU:

The Russians have already gained ground in Angola, which is independent. They have already gained ground in Mozambique, which is also independent. The only obstacle between those two oceans, the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, is Zimbabwe. If Zimbabwe falls under ZAPU the Russians’ presence is going to be very strong again. So the Russians have got the whole territory from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean and they will come in and they will just push into South Africa ...And the whole of Southern Africa is going to be under Russian domination. That was the consideration, and of course the South Africans also feared that sort of scenario.

And so Dabengwa concludes that there was deliberate collusion between the British and ZANU, with the aim that ZANU should win the election and form a government. And he makes the following rather chilling statement, with great import for the post-independence history of Zimbabwe:

So they actually, they actually taught ZANU PF ... how to rig the elections and how to make sure that the only way you can win an election is by the use of force. So it was two things, two factors: you must use force in order to win an election and two, you must have the tactics of ... of rigging.

POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICS

The 1980 election set the stage for everything that followed. ZAPU was deeply suspicious of ZANU, believing that no true will of the people was reflected in the election result. ZANU, apparently, feared ZAPU, presumably because of its continuing military strength by virtue of the heavy weaponry, including armoured cars, that it had brought across the Zambezi. Nevertheless a coalition government was formed, to include not only ZAPU ministers but also a representative of the white settlers. ZANU did not need to include ZAPU, so the question must be asked – why did they? Dabengwa believes it was done knowing that they had cheated ZAPU so now they must compensate somehow:

I think it must have been again some advice by some of the people who ... knew what had happened and who probably wanted to make sure that there was peace, and that it would then be wise instead of leaving ZAPU on their own, ...it was important that they should bring ZAPU into a coalition arrangement, so at least they are be there with them and they would be able to monitor them.

Top: Reading the election results in *The Herald*

Bottom: ZAPU PF leaders Joshua Nkomo, Josiah Chinamano, A. Nxele and S.K. Moyo



Nkomo was pressured by some supporters to resist, but he wanted the war to end, preferring to attempt to build the nation through peaceful efforts, and so accepted the arrangement, and the cabinet was duly sworn in. ZAPU supporters were happy to see their elected MPs entering Parliament for its first session. George Silundika, who was one of ZAPU cabinet ministers, died suddenly the following year, and became the first to be buried at the new Heroes Acre outside Harare.

Most of the military cadres had come into the assembly points before the election, but through 1980, after the elections²¹, the ZAPU refugees and disabled were being brought home as quickly as possible so that they could be reunited with their families and returned to normal life. A reception centre was set up at Luveve, near the railway station.

When the trains arrived at the station the passengers were transferred to buses to carry them to the reception centre. There was of course great excitement on the part of the returnees and their families. But in many cases people were not sure of finding their family members, as deaths had taken place both in Zambia and in Zimbabwe. In some of the photos the children look very anxious:

... they look worried and some were even reluctant to get out of the train; they are not sure, they are still searching for known faces to them in case they might identify their ... their relatives.

Other photos show emotional reunions. We don't know whether they were tears of joy or of sadness at receiving bad news.

Nkomo was responsible for receiving them and giving them documentation, which the vast majority were lacking, and then dispatching them with bus vouchers to their homes or to the new boarding schools where many of the school children went.

Disabled fighters fell into a different category. They could not simply be sent off to their homes if they still needed care, or special facilities, and many in any case preferred to stay together.

Zakhele Ndebele explains some of the physical problems:

...the accommodation which we were given at Luveve was not good for us, because some slept in the tents and you know as somebody who is having an artificial ... some of us we could not squat on the toilets which were there and even the place for washing was not really conducive.

They were temporarily housed at Ntabazinduna Training Centre about 40 kilometres north-east of Bulawayo. Psychologically they felt more comfortable staying together. Ndebele captures the feeling shared not only by the disabled but also by many disoriented soldiers returning from war anywhere in the world:

... without your comrades you feel that there is something is amiss, for the people you would be staying with at home or wherever you gather, then there'd be no comrade by that time, you feel that somehow you are lost, you'd be like a stranger among those people. Whilst those people would be really interested to be with you, but you'd be feeling as if you are a stranger. You see that's the major thing which made most of my time I preferred to live with my fellow comrades.

TOP: First cabinet waiting to be sworn in at the opening of parliament in 1980

MIDDLE: Ruth Chinamano waiving to the crowds at the opening of parliament in 1980

BOTTOM: George Silundika's funeral at Heroes Acre in Harare

²¹ In Nkomo's interview he states the arrivals were before elections, but other evidence shows that in fact JZ Moyo Camp near Solwezi continued operating up until at least July





ZPRA disabled had a very difficult time in those post-war years, and only stayed at Ntabazinduna a few months until they were driven out by ZANLA attacks.

The disturbances which erupted early in 1981 were caused by the on-going political tensions, often being sparked by fiery politicians such as Enos Nkala, the only Ndebele speaking person to hold a high rank in ZANU. Photographs of protests in the collection all feature complaints against him. And before long open fighting did break out between ZPRA and ZANLA forces waiting to be integrated into the new army. Government had brought some of them into urban areas and in Bulawayo they were housed at a new housing development in Entumbane, but with a fence separating the two groups. After Nkala had addressed them one weekend, fighting began. As Dabengwa relates it:

A number of civilians had died, and Nkomo summoned both myself and Masuku [Lookout, the ZPRA commander] and he said "At all costs this cannot continue, please go and stop that fighting". And we had to intervene ... after we had met, we agreed that the ZANU would go and stop their own people and that we would go and stop our guys. We spoke to ... the commanders by radio and told them that we were coming towards the camp and that they should stop firing at us and we described the sort of vehicle. But there was firing. When we got there the ZANLA guys were firing at our vehicle, because they were the ones who were on the nearer side of the road ... but we managed to drive through up to the ZPRA side of the camp and stopped .. it was all blamed on Nkala having incited it, and that's what the ZANLA commanders also said. They said you get some of our politicians being very careless in their speeches, and that's what Nkala has done.

But meanwhile, a more serious threat emerged as ZPRA cadres from outside of Bulawayo decided to come to help their comrades:

... our guys at the assembly camp at Gwayi started coming in with artillery, with heavy weaponry and they were coming to participate on the ZPRA side in that fight, and then the other guys who were at Esigodini also started moving similarly towards the city in order to come and [support those at Entumbane].

The tanks coming from Esigodini were stopped by the British forces assisting with the integration of the army (BMatt), who blew out two tanks, and those coming from the north were ordered by the ZAPU leadership to return.

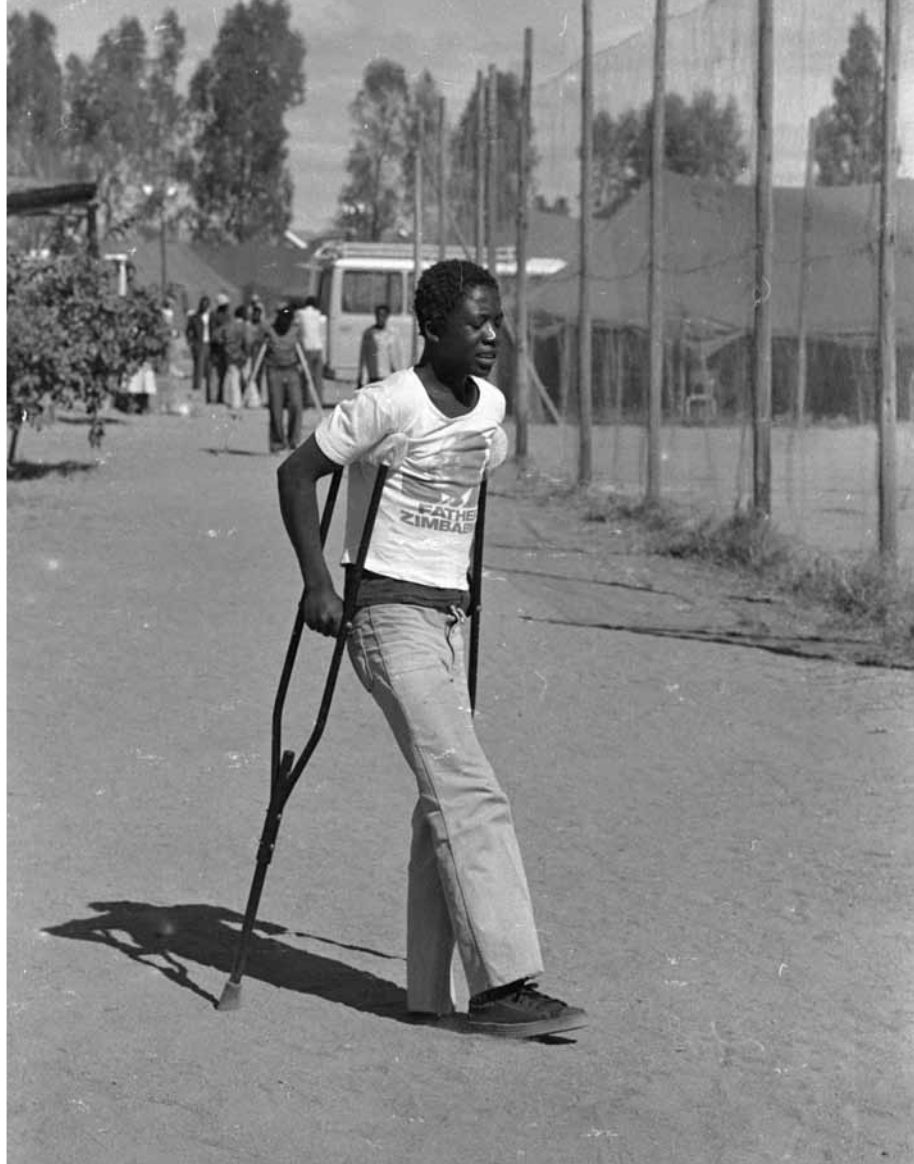
But the potential for trouble remained strong, and it became important to do something about those soldiers who would have to be demobilized. Even the disabled ZPRA men such as Zakhele Ndebele had become victims of attacks by ZANLA. Ndebele describes how he and other disabled ZPRA veterans were attacked at Ntabazinduna when a fight broke out between the integrated soldiers in the Zimbabwe National army camp nearby. Some of the ZANLA's threatened the disabled so that they were forced to flee their camp.

Dabengwa describes how ZAPU embarked on its own programme to assist its demobilized cadres when a programme that ZPRA and ZANLA presented to government to train veterans in various skills before demobilization was rejected. ZAPU formed their own company, Nitram, and with contributions from demobilized ZPRA cadres using their allowances and also those integrated into the army using their salaries, they purchased properties where the demobilised could find both jobs and training. There were several large farms where various agricultural activities took place as well as a hotel in Bulawayo, Castle Arms and several other businesses. These then became an excuse for government to pounce in 1982.



Top: Arrival of refugees at South Mpopoma Station
Bottom: Arriving by bus in Luveve

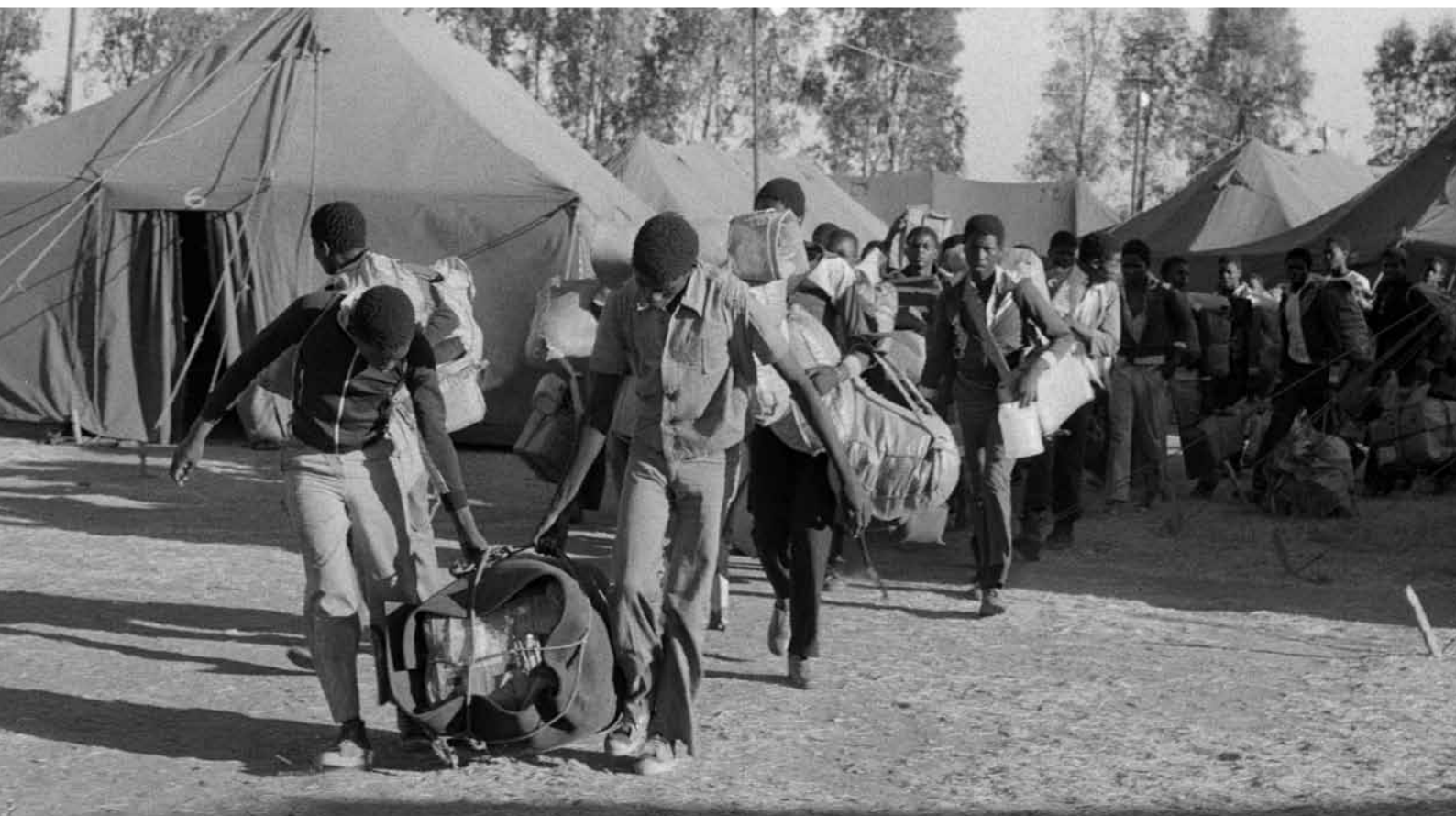


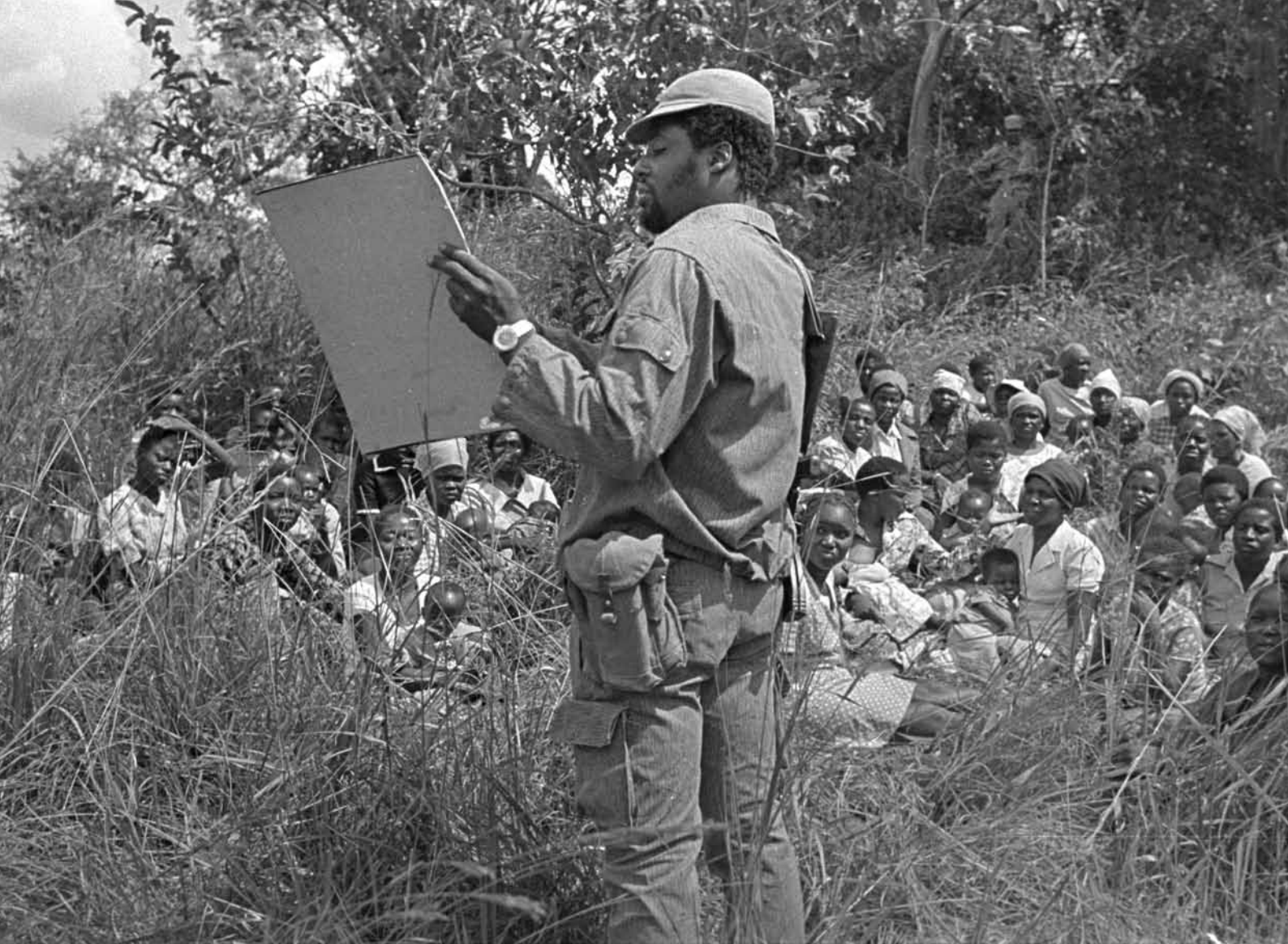


TOP LEFT: Relatives reunited at Luveve

RIGHT: Man returning on crutches

BOTTOM: Returnees arriving with their luggage





TOP: ZPRA cadre addressing civilians in the bush
BOTTOM: Disabled returnees





In February of that year, government announced that weapons caches had been discovered on one of the Nitram farms. Immediately they alleged that ZAPU was planning a coup or an armed uprising. ZAPU ministers, including Nkomo, were sacked from government and Dabengwa and Masuku were arrested and charged with treason. Many other ZAPU members were also detained and held without trial, something which was legal at that time because of the state of emergency which continued from before Independence. Dabengwa and Masuku were tried and found not guilty by the High Court, but nevertheless were detained, and remained incarcerated at Chikurubi Prison for a total of four years:

...we proved in court that there was never anything like a coup plot at all, it was an imagination that had been coined by both Mnangagwa, and the Rhodesian forces and South Africa because they wanted to destabilize the country. The court finally found us not guilty and .. but we were still detained.

Meanwhile ex-ZPRA were also being mistreated in the army. As Dabengwa explains it:

ZPRA cadres were all accused of being enemies of the state, they were not to be trusted, even those that ... had been commissioned into officer ranks they were not being trusted, and from time to time they would be arrested and locked up and tortured to reveal exactly what plots they had against the government, and a number of cadres, ZPRA cadres, especially the junior ones, were just really ill-treated deliberately and frustrated. A number of them decided to leave the army. We understand that [a] few of those that had left the army decided that they were not just going to leave the army, they were going to fight back.

Those few who took to the bush became known as “dissidents”. They were very few, and some were rather more in the nature of bandits, trying to feed themselves by force. And there was widespread suspicion that some of the so-called dissidents were in fact agent provocateurs from the army or police:

Then of course we also came to know that a number of other incidents were being perpetrated by the Zimbabwean forces themselves. People who were masquerading as dissidents and who went around and killing people and saying they were ZPRA dissidents.

Government made these an excuse to launch a full-scale attack on the civilian population of Matabeleland who were ZAPU supporters, but hardly any of whom supported any armed rebellion. Thus began the terror of the Gukurahundi, the work of a special army unit known as the Fifth Brigade. They descended on rural Matabeleland where they arrested, abducted, tortured and killed ZAPU members and especially local leadership, and burned villagers, massacring many of their inhabitants:

Well the whole idea really was to get rid of ZAPU – not just the people, anyone who was ZAPU and as far as government was concerned everyone in Matabeleland was ZAPU and therefore people had to be killed and be taught a lesson so that those that remain can never again support any other party than the ruling party ZANU PF.

Dabengwa states that ZANU really did consider ZAPU a threat:

...at one time it came out very clearly that we were a threat because of the backing that we had from the Russians. We were a threat to the government of Zimbabwe, and that remained the case right through, and we knew that was the whole reason we were being persecuted in the manner we were being. ...They did not believe that Nkomo's acceptance, final acceptance of ... the result of that election was genuine and [believed] that ZAPU had some scheme that they would undertake, and they really believed that we were going to ...

TOP: Mock funeral of Enos Nkala

BOTTOM: Part of the crowd at the mock funeral of Enos Nkala

that we had something ... and they believed that we were a threat indeed.

He describes a visit to himself and Masuku in prison by Edison Zvobgo, who was then Minister of Justice, who told their guards:

...don't ill treat them, they have no crime, keep them... the state wants them here to make sure that they are not a threat, that's all.

Sadly, Masuku became very ill in prison in 1986 and shortly after being transferred to hospital, died without tasting freedom. Dabengwa was not allowed to attend the funeral. A year later, however, when Masuku's tombstone was unveiled, he was present as he had been released.

What had changed? Negotiations had begun for a "unity accord" between ZAPU and ZANU. He had been approached while still in prison by three ZANU ministers to buy his release by joining ZANU:

And I said "Over my dead body, I'd never do it. Not after all these Gukurahundi massacres that you people have been carrying out on our people in Matabeleland. I'd never join ZANU PF". So when I came out and I found that there were negotiations to go into this unity accord, I was very critical of it.

But Nkomo once again was forced to play the role of peacemaker with a rival who only knew violence, and it was not easy for him to persuade his lieutenants that what amounted to surrender was necessary. Dabengwa was one of those who had to be persuaded:

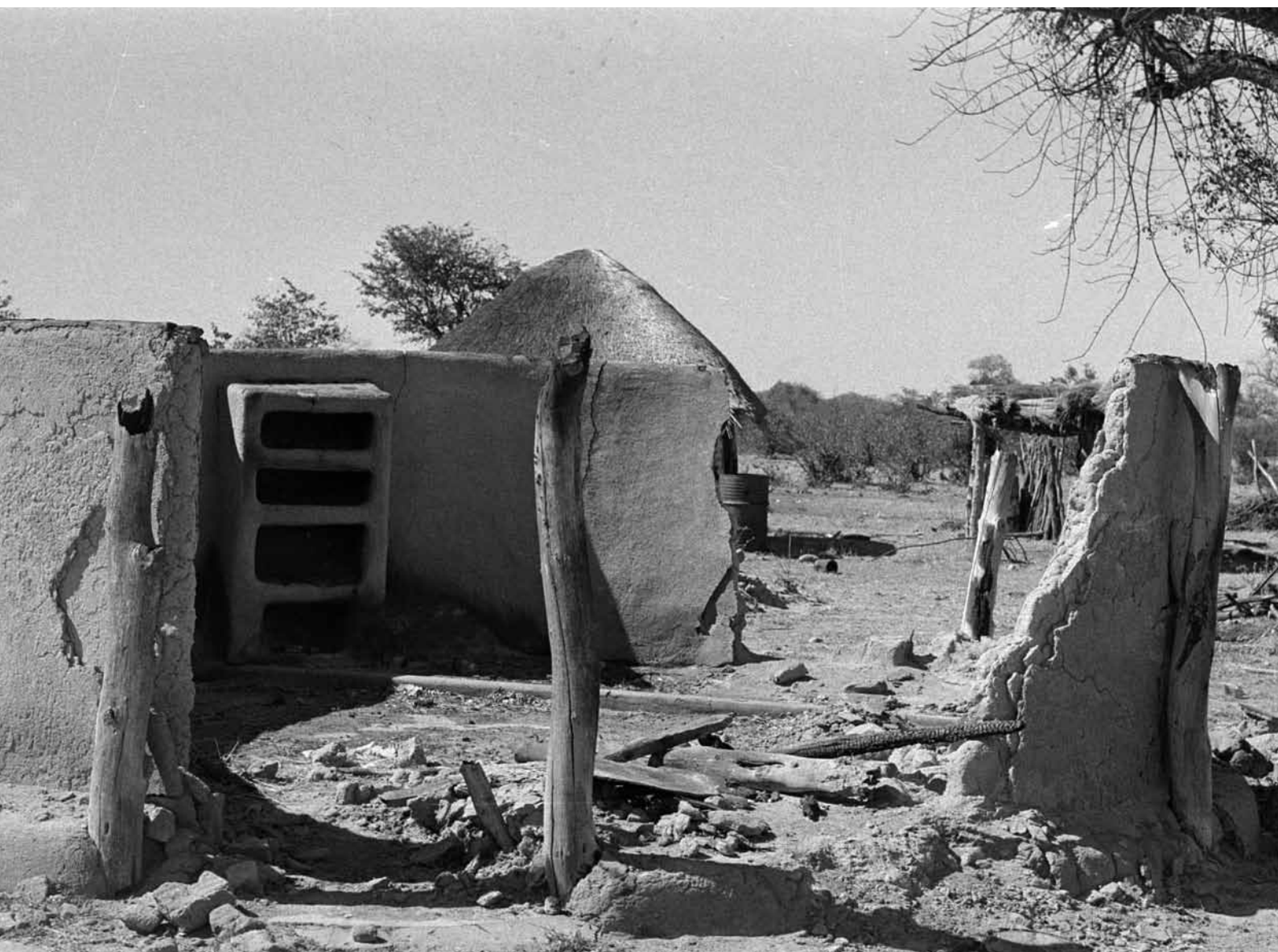
... his concern was: "Do we allow our people to continue to be killed ... in the manner they are? How do we stop it?" ... like the story he gave, he said, "You know, it's like you have a madman and who is wielding an axe and he wants to kill people and you go and confront him straight on like that. He'll manage to chop about three or four of [your] heads off but finally you'll be able to overcome him. Is that what we should do or shouldn't we try and settle that person and finally hold his hands and stop him from doing it?...

...We've got to save this nation, we've got to save our people. If we don't do that these young men,we're going to have a similar situation as in Mozambique ...with Renamo, we're going to have a similar situation we had in Angola with UNITA, and where does it end up?

Nkobi's collection did not have any photographs of the signing of the Unity Accord, and very few in fact post-dated this major event in ZAPU's history. So we leave the story there, at a very low point of almost total defeat, even though the memories, the pride lived on, to be resuscitated more than 20 years later.



MIDDLE: Homestead in Matopos destroyed by the 5th Brigade
BOTTOM: Remains of a house in Matopos





TOP: Mrs Masuku and her children at the gravesite during the memorial service for her husband, Lookout Masuku
 BOTTOM: ZAPU and church leaders attending the memorial service for Lookout Masuku
 RIGHT: Lookout Masuku's coffin being carried to McDonald hall during the burial



