

Transnationalism, Contingency and Loyalty in African Liberation Armies: The Case of ZANU's 1974–75 Nhari Mutiny

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This article revisits the history of the 1974–75 mutiny in the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). The mutiny was primarily led by field commanders Thomas Nhari, Dakarai Badza and Caesar Molife. Dominant accounts on the mutiny maintain that the colonial Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF) influenced Nhari and Badza to stage the revolt. The article traces part of the life history of Rex Nhongo/Solomon Mujuru (a ZANLA commander who interacted with the mutineers) in order to challenge these long-standing accounts of the mutiny. The article highlights the import of conflicting understandings of loyalty in the mutiny, arguing that the revolt was not an RSF scheme. Instead, the mutineers took advantage of the absence of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and ZANLA leaderships, which were abroad on various transnational diplomatic engagements in countries sympathetic to Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, to stage a revolt. The mutiny could have been avoided had the ZANLA commander, Josiah Tongogara, heeded Nhongo's advice that ZANU's transnational appointments be postponed in order first to address growing dissent among guerrillas at the war front. The article underlines that the revolt's primary grievances did not originate from ZANLA camps but in the war zone. Focusing on the war front provides an important corrective to the exile literature's emphasis on the space of the camp, which mistakenly gives a lower profile to the influence of war-zone dynamics in upheavals experienced by liberation movements. It is potentially more insightful to consider meticulously the ways in which war-front dynamics interact with camp politics.

Introduction

Most Southern African liberation movements were forced into exile because of strong domestic repression by colonial states, which greatly inhibited their ability to organise independence struggles. Tanzania, especially, played host to and was a transit route for a range of exiled liberation movements from Zimbabwe, South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia and Angola, among others. Following their respective years of independence, Zambia (1964), Mozambique (1975) and Angola (1975) also became important hosts of diverse liberation movements from South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Ostensibly, exile offered liberation movements respite from the colonial state's repressive reach. But, as a number of scholars have pointed out, the condition of exile generated new, multifarious challenges for liberation movements, such as violent and divisive internal politics, inoperativeness, isolation, privation, contending claims between rival movements about who represented the liberation struggle from without, and the politics of unstable relations with host states, in which the guests were often the weaker party.¹ What is more, even in exile the colonial state still cast a long shadow, as seen by the Rhodesian Security Forces' (RSF) attacks, throughout the 1970s, on camps and party offices belonging to the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in Zambia and on the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) in

1 J. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution: Volume 2: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1978); Y. Shain, *The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2010); R. Gibson, *African Liberation Movements* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1971).

Mozambique. Recent studies on southern African liberation movements pay increasing attention to ‘the camp’ as an important arena for studying exile politics.² In this scholarship, liberation movements’ military training places, refugee settlements, prison spots and transit points are understood as camps, which constitute sites for the study of histories of revolt,³ discipline and punishment,⁴ and ideas about establishing order in campsites, which shaped postcolonial governance processes.⁵

This article focuses on histories of mutiny in the armies of exiled southern African liberation movements and in the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), ZANU’s military wing, specifically. The Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA), the military arm of South African nationalist movement the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), the African National Congress’ (ANC) military branch, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), Namibia’s South West Africa People’s Organisation (SWAPO), ZAPU’s Zimbabwe African People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and ZANLA, all experienced important mutinies at some stage in exile. For example, the 1976 Soweto uprising in South Africa spawned an increased in-flow of hundreds of new student soldiers to APLA military camps in Tanzania.⁶ A small clique of the APLA old guard feared loss of its pre-eminence to the rising numbers of educated recruits, resulting in tensions and attempted mutinies in the late 1970s. MK camps in Angola also experienced mutinous disorders in 1983. These internal conflicts had part of their roots in generational differences between restless young cadres who arrived in MK camps after 1976 and an old-guard leadership that lacked the capacity to manage, amicably, friction with youthful cadres over MK’s perceived lack of wide-scale military activity in South Africa.⁷ The Stuart Commission, appointed by ANC leader Oliver Tambo to investigate the 1983 violent disorders in MK, also established that the movement’s camps in Angola

had become the ‘dumping ground’ for ‘enemy agents, suspects, malcontents and undisciplined elements’. These categories were clearly not of the same order, yet all were sent to the camps in Angola to have discipline instilled into them. Some of the suspects were deployed in sensitive positions such as cooks, medical officers and even commissars The Commission found that an elitism had developed that separated the administration from the rank and file in diet, accommodation, even access to the smallest of treats such as cigarettes and liquor. Even the female cadres, the report noted, were perceived by complainants as having become ‘sex objects’.⁸

Akin to some of the grievances of MK cadres in Angola, ZIPRA recruits in Zambia, who staged the 11 March 1971 revolt, had as one of their major objections the fact that they ‘had spent up to a year doing nothing [in camps] because the

2 See, for example, C. Williams, *National Liberation in Postcolonial Southern Africa. A Historical Ethnography of SWAPO’s Exile Camps* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015); P. Trehwela, *Inside Quatro: Uncovering the Exile History of the ANC and SWAPO* (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2010); various authors, ‘Special Section: Camps and Liberation in Southern Africa’, *Social Dynamics*, 39, 1 (2013), pp. 1–91.

3 L. Callinicos, ‘Oliver Tambo and the Dilemma of the Camp Mutinies in Angola in the Eighties’, *South African Historical Journal*, 64, 3 (2012), pp. 587–621.

4 G. Mazarire, ‘Discipline and Punishment in ZANLA: 1964–1979’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37, 3 (2011), pp. 571–91.

5 M.G. Panzer, ‘Building a Revolutionary Constituency: Mozambican Refugees and the Development of the FRELIMO Proto-State, 1964–1968’, *Social Dynamics*, 39, 1 (2013), pp. 5–23.

6 G. Houston, T. Plaatjie and T. April, ‘Military Training and Camps of the Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa, 1961–1981’, *Historia*, 60, 2 (2015), pp. 24–50.

7 Callinicos, ‘Oliver Tambo’.

8 *Ibid.*

[political] leaders were preoccupied with their petty and selfish leadership in fighting, which they characterised as “tribal squabbles””.⁹ Additionally, the 11 March leaders decried ‘overly strict rules for trainees’ in camps.¹⁰ However, the Zambian government intervened on the side of the ZAPU leadership, leading to the suppression of the 11 March cadres. SWAPO, also in Zambia, experienced internal upheaval in the mid 1970s, which had at its core the clamour for increased internal democratic participation and accountability.¹¹ This demand was put forward by a post-1975 tide of young newly arrived Namibian recruits, who had been forced into exile by rising South African repression in Namibia. As was the case with ZIPRA in 1971, the Zambian army assisted the SWAPO leadership in repressing the revolt by arresting thousands of so called dissidents in 1976. From the foregoing, it is evident that there are some standard causes of revolt in the armies of southern African liberation movements in exile. The grounds for revolt often revolve around living and training conditions and politics in the camps. Varying levels of education and or ideological differences and generational fissures, facilitated by an influx of younger cadres in camps, were generally issues for dispute. Younger cadres tended to view the old guard as corrupt, undemocratic, elitist and sexual exploiters of women, and they also advanced criticisms centring on camp conditions and military inactivity. The decisive intercession of the host state in support of the challenged or ousted leadership is another common feature of the upheavals that ZIPRA and SWAPO underwent in Zambia.

This article takes up a mutiny that bucks the standard explanations. Here the subject is a revolt – the 1974–75 Nhari mutiny in ZANLA – the primary grievances of which did not emanate from the camp per se but in the Rhodesian war front. Indeed, in practice, the Nhari mutiny began at the war front and the mutineers subsequently marched back to Zambia, the rear front (exile), in order to assert control over the ZANLA headquarters in Lusaka and over the camps, which both mattered as sites of power. As we have seen, increasing travel to camps by diverse young recruits was often a generator of ideational and generational tensions that sometimes led to upheavals, but this was not strictly so in the Nhari revolt. Transnational travel was a factor in the mutiny, but in this case it was the ZANLA top leadership’s outbound travel from its Lusaka headquarters, camps and the war front in 1974 that facilitated revolt. The Nhari mutineers exploited the absence of leading ZANLA commanders, who were in China and Romania on diplomatic engagements, to stage a mutiny. Conversely, hundreds of guerrillas from ZANLA’s Mgagao training camp in Tanzania were deployed to Zambia and they partly enabled the deposed High Command to re-establish its authority. And the mutiny’s leader, Thomas Nhari, was apprehended only after being entrapped at a bogus meeting mediated by the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo) in Mozambique. Whereas new, young and more educated recruits in APLA, SWAPO and MK articulated grievances that contributed to mutiny, the instigators of the Nhari revolt were not necessarily younger and more educated, and they were certainly not new recruits but established field commanders, some of whom had been recently demoted. In addition, during the Nhari mutiny, the

9 E.M. Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union, 1961–87: A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia* (Trenton, Africa World Press, 2005), p. 146–7.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 146.

11 C. Leys and J.S. Saul, ‘Liberation Without Democracy? The SWAPO Crisis of 1976’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 20, 1 (1994), pp. 123–47.

Zambian state did not intervene in decisive terms in support of the deposed military commanders, as it did in the ZIPRA and SWAPO revolts. The ZANLA leadership suppressed the Nhari mutineers largely on its own initiative. In fact, ZANLA leaders alleged that the Zambian state was in cahoots with the Nhari mutineers because the host preferred its rival ZIPRA, and supposedly because the Zambian government wanted the mutiny to paralyse ZANLA military operations, thereby making ZANU more amenable to talks about a negotiated independence settlement, which coincided with the 1974 revolt.

There are no extant testimonies by the mutiny's key leaders because they were all executed. Thus, to demonstrate my arguments, the article tracks part of the life history of Rex Nhongo (Solomon Mujuru), a leading ZANLA commander, who interacted closely with the mutiny's leaders, Nhari, Dakarai Badza and Caesar Molife. Nhongo was also involved in Nhari's capture in Mozambique. I use interviews about Nhongo's life history in this period to argue that the Nhari mutiny might have been forestalled if ZANLA's commander, Josiah Tongogara, had heeded Nhongo's intelligence that there was mounting discord at the war front and postponed ZANLA leaders' transnational diplomatic engagements in China and Romania until this increasing dissent had been addressed. Official accounts on the Nhari revolt by David Martin and Phyllis Johnson and by other scholars such as Ngwabi Bhebe maintain that Rhodesian intelligence operatives used the Nhari group to engineer a mutiny.¹² Rhodesian intelligencer Ken Flower also claims that the RSF was running Nhari and Badza.¹³ But, according to Nhongo, a central observer and participant in putting down the revolt, responsibility for the mutiny's occurrence lay with Tongogara, who sanctioned trips abroad without first addressing escalating grievances at the war front. Nhongo was silent on any Rhodesian involvement in the Nhari mutiny. The article therefore adds to long-standing arguments about the Nhari mutiny's causes by accentuating the point that the revolt was internally driven. It also introduces the argument that the mutiny's occurrence in November 1974 was contingent on Tongogara's disregard for intelligence from the war front, which pointed to the likelihood of upheaval, and his decision in late 1974 to go ahead with transnational diplomatic activities despite restlessness among the guerrillas.

Additionally, the article emphasises the significance of conflicting understandings of loyalty in the Nhari mutiny. Existing literature does not amplify how contradictory understandings of loyalty placed the Nhari mutineers at odds with the ZANLA High Command. The Nhari mutineers adopted an exclusive stance on the divisibility of loyalty, which saw them execute ZANLA guerrillas who were alleged to be family relations of blacks serving in the Rhodesian army. In conflict with this position was the High Command's standpoint that family loyalty is divisible. Thus opposed understandings of loyalty are an undeveloped dimension in the mutiny. I also maintain that corporal punishment was another likely source of grievance for Nhari and Badza. Nhari and Badza were subjected to corporal punishment on Tongogara's orders before they staged a revolt. Martin and Johnson make passing reference to Nhari and Badza's subjection to corporal punishment, while scholars such as Luise White and Gerald Mazarire, who have revisited the mutiny in more recent studies, do not state that the two leading mutineers were caned prior the mutiny. Grievance

12 D. Martin and P. Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (Harare, African Publishing Group, 2012); N. Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1999).

13 K. Flower, *Serving Secretly. An Intelligence Chief on Record: Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964 to 1981* (London, John Murray, 1987).

created by the experience of corporal punishment should not be treated as irrelevant. I contend that the experience of corporal punishment by Nhari and Badza probably deepened their grievance against Tongogara's leadership.

The transnational dimension of the Nhari mutiny is a final contribution advanced in the article. As already stated, the mutiny was contingent on the ZANLA leadership's travel abroad. Moreover, in Martin and Johnson and Bhebe's accounts, Nhari and Badza met Rhodesian operatives on Mozambican territory, supposedly because they thought that their meeting would be secret from ZANLA guerrillas at the Rhodesian war front. Nhari, Badza and the Rhodesian operatives then conspired to stage a mutiny that began in Rhodesia and proceeded to Zambia, so Martin and Johnson's and Bhebe's argument goes. In the absence of Zambian military support in suppressing the mutiny, Tongogara ordered ZANLA's main camp in Tanzania to provide 250 guerrillas to suppress the revolt in Zambia. Lastly, Nhari and Badza's decisive capture occurs in Mozambique. These movements of bodies of armed men point up the sometimes limited implication of borders and their control during southern Africa's liberation struggles. Through this transnational dimension of the Nhari revolt, the article thus underscores an interactive pattern of mutiny – unusual compared to most mutinies that occurred in other exiled southern African liberation armies in the same period – in which grievance construction at the war front interacts with military camps and headquarters in exile and with the movement of guerrillas across national borders.

Before I begin developing my arguments, let me first elaborate upon the sources employed in this article. I am Nhongo's official biographer. This position facilitated exclusive access to the Mujuru family's private archive, which includes audio files of Nhongo narrating his life history. I make use of oral history files in this private archive, which focus on the Nhari mutiny. Oral sources have been criticised by some scholars as 'the world of image, selective memory ... utter subjectivity' and 'myth'.¹⁴ Subjectivity is undoubtedly a facet of oral sources, but this does not make oral records entirely unhelpful, especially in the case of the Nhari mutiny, in which simplistic official accounts that cast the mutineers as Rhodesian agents are dominant. Thus Nhongo's oral material is valuable because it presents a revealing narrative that is unstated in official history. Let me also address the matter of my position. As Nhongo's official biographer, I have admittedly been drawn into intimate relationships with my subject's family and his confidantes. This proximity raises valid questions about my critical distance. My response to this concern is that Nhongo died in 2011 – before I became his official biographer – and not having known him in depth does allow for a measure of critical distance, which would be difficult to maintain were he alive to influence my use of his oral records. Furthermore, I adopted a reflexive approach in the course of my research, and I must also declare that the Mujuru family – his widow Joice Mujuru, in particular – have, to a large extent, given me free rein to carry out a scholarly representation of Nhongo's life history. Being Nhongo's official biographer facilitated access to previously inaccessible interviewees, such as Rugare Gumbo, who was part of the ZANU external leadership (*Dare re Chimurenga*), of which the Nhari mutineers were critical, and to others like Nathan Shamuyarira (a former Zimbabwe government minister and academic, and Robert Mugabe's official biographer), who did not witness the revolt first hand but was in possession of interview material by High Command members such as William Ndongana, which he granted me permission to use. These previously inaccessible

14 P. O'Farrell, 'Oral History: Facts and Fiction', *Quadrant*, 23, 11 (1979), pp. 4–9.

perspectives were useful in assessing the veracity of Nhongo's oral account of the mutiny and in shedding some light on themes that Nhongo himself did not mention. Nevertheless, a critical shortcoming in my re-interpretation of the Nhari mutiny is the absence of a commissioned report on the revolt. The aforementioned upheavals in SWAPO and the ANC were investigated by the John Ya Otto Commission and James Stuart Commission, respectively. Both commissions produced rich reports that illuminate the nature of the revolts and that make critical recommendations. ZANLA, like SWAPO and the ANC, appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate the Nhari mutiny, but it never completed its work because the cadres accused of leading the mutiny were executed by Tongogara before it could finalise its work. There is therefore no known report that specifically examines the Nhari mutiny, bar some analysis of the revolt in a deeply contentious report commissioned by the Zambian government in 1975, which is primarily concerned with revealing the factors and actors behind the March 1975 assassination of Herbert Chitepo, the leader of ZANU's war council in exile.¹⁵ This Zambian government-commissioned report adopts a rudimentary ethnic framework for analysis of ZANU politics, which has been widely criticised by scholars as unhelpful in understanding the party's internal problems at the time.¹⁶ The absence of a formal, exhaustive and credible report on the Nhari episode makes it all the more essential that hitherto unheard accounts about the mutiny, in this case that of Nhongo, who knew Nhari and Badza well, be made more central to interpretations of the revolt.

I begin the body of the article with a brief section outlining the broader geopolitical context within which the mutiny occurred. I then track part of Nhongo's life history in ZANLA in the early 1970s so as to glean a modicum of insight on Nhari's and Badza's histories. Although this process is vicarious, it none the less affords us a vignette of both men's largely unknown histories and reputations in ZANLA before the mutiny. The subsequent section uses Nhongo's oral account to re-interpret the Nhari mutiny.

The Détente Context

Since 11 November 1965, when the Rhodesian Front (RF) government made the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from the British Crown, consecutive British governments attempted to rein in the errant Rhodesian colony and broker an honest independence. The HMS Tiger (1966) and HMS Fearless (1968) talks between the British and RF governments came and went, with little diplomatic headway made. The 1971 Anglo-Rhodesian Agreement also proved a false dawn. In 1974, exasperated by ineffective British diplomatic manoeuvres and with his country straining under the cumulative social and economic burdens of hosting black liberation armies on its territory, Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda sought to engineer a negotiated independence settlement for Rhodesia.¹⁷ Kaunda conducted secret diplomacy with the South African apartheid administration, led by prime minister John Vorster, which was the RF administration's chief military and financial backer. Kaunda reasoned that if the apartheid government could be coaxed into

15 See 'Report of the Special International Commission on the Assassination of Herbert Wiltshire Chitepo' (Lusaka, Government of Zambia, March 1976).

16 For some critiques of the report, see L. White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003); F. Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga. Memories from Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2007).

17 For an understanding of the economic difficulties Zambia faced, see K. Woldring, 'Aspects of Zambian Foreign Policy in the Context of Southern Africa', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 34, 3 (1980), pp. 338–48.

supporting a negotiated independence for Rhodesia, the RF administration would have little choice but to enter talks because it could not envisage winning the war against ZANLA and ZIPRA without South African support. And since Kaunda was hosting the ZANLA and ZIPRA armies, he could influence them to negotiate with the RF by, for instance, threatening to withdraw shelter.

Vorster collaborated with Kaunda in this diplomatic scheme in part because the April 1974 Carnation Revolution in Portugal heralded the termination of Portuguese rule in Angola and Mozambique. One of the strategic implications of Mozambican and Angolan independence was the rise of communist governments in both countries. And yet the strength of anti-communist South Africa's diplomatic links with the US and Britain was predicated on its ability to act as a regional hegemon, which promoted stability and capitalist economic growth in southern Africa.¹⁸ Accordingly, Vorster sought to use the Rhodesia negotiations to avert another coming to power of communists. Vorster wanted South Africa 'seen [by the West] to be playing a leading role' in the negotiation of 'a moderate, internationally acceptable government in which white Rhodesians would have a continuing part'.¹⁹ South Africa pressured the disinclined RF government to release detained nationalist leaders for the initiation of a *détente* between the warring parties. Thus on 3 December 1974 the RF government announced that the ZAPU and ZANU leaders, Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole, respectively, had been freed after a decade of confinement to participate in talks in Lusaka with Kaunda, the heads of state of Tanzania (Julius Nyerere) and Botswana (Seretse Khama), Mozambique's Frelimo leader Samora Machel, and two other liberation groupings, the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (Frolizi) and African National Council (ANC). The December 1974 Lusaka talks coincided with the Nhari mutiny in ZANLA. According to ZANU, Nhari and Badza were induced by the RSF to stage a revolt, and they were also abetted by the Zambian government.²⁰ Zambia sought to paralyse ZANU's active military wing in order to make its leaders amenable to the Lusaka negotiations, while the RSF aimed to weaken ZANU's hand in the talks, so official accounts go.

Nhongo, Nhari and Badza

In August 1973, at the *Dare re Chimurenga*'s two-yearly conference in Lusaka, Nhongo was elevated from field commander in Nehanda sector, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe (MMZ) war front.²¹ His new appointment was Provincial Commander of the Zambia Zimbabwe (ZZ) sphere of guerrilla activity. In addition, Nhongo was elected to the ZANLA High Command for the first time. Nhongo was deployed to ZZ front, which was situated to the west of MMZ, following the biennial conference. The provincial commanders of the adjacent ZZ and MMZ fronts maintained contact, and they sometimes co-ordinated movement of arms. During the course of these exchanges, Nhongo alleged that it became apparent to him that there was growing indiscipline and discontent among some guerrillas in MMZ front.²² Nhongo operated in MMZ before moving to ZZ, and so he had worked with MMZ field commanders such as Nhari and Badza. Nhari had a historical bond with Nhongo.

18 J.E. Spence, 'Southern Africa's Uncertain Future', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 65, 258 (1975).

19 J. Barber and J. Barratt, *South Africa's Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security, 1945–1988* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 185.

20 Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.

21 Rex Nhongo interview material in the Mujuru family archive, Oxford; W. Mhanda, *Dzino: Memories of a Freedom Fighter* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2011).

22 Rex Nhongo interview material in the Mujuru family archive.

They underwent military training together in Bulgaria (1969–70) as ZIPRA trainees and they defected simultaneously to ZANLA in 1971. But Nhongo began to develop differences from Nhari and Badza in the aftermath of the 1972 ZANLA attacks on Altena and Whistle Field farms, which provoked a strong response from the RSF. This 1972 disagreement was about tactics in the operational field, as Nhongo narrated:

The Rhodesians were attacking us. We were losing a lot of men. We [MMZ front commanders] had a meeting to discuss our strategy. It was myself, Badza and Nhari. There were problems at the meeting. Badza and Nhari were feeling pressure from the war. They said we as the commanders should go back to Zambia. I said no, we cannot leave the boys [junior guerrillas] at the front on their own. Badza and Nhari went back to Zambia. I stayed with the boys. I moved with them further into Rhodesia to avoid detection. We left the Rhodesians looking for us along the border. That is how we survived.²³

The second dispute between Nhongo and Nhari occurred a year later. By June 1973, ZANLA guerrillas in Nehanda sector had managed to make significant recruitment strides. They had done this by actively avoiding confrontation with the RSF and focusing on intensive recruitment by persuasion.²⁴ According to Nhongo, Tongogara became keen on a first-hand briefing from the subdivision's commander:

Tongogara wanted to know what was going on at the front. We had brought about 700 recruits in one year. Before we had never had so many being recruited in a short time. He wanted to know how we had done it. I was commander of Nehanda. I said I could not leave until someone was sent to replace me. Thomas Nhari was sent to take my place. We stayed together for one week. I was showing him how I had been operating. After that I left. I walked for five days to reach Chifombo [ZANLA camp in Zambia]. The very day [5 July] I arrived, I was shocked to hear on the radio that St Albert's mission [a school in Nehanda sector] had been closed. Children [and teachers at St Albert's school] had been abducted [by Nhari]. Tongogara wanted to know what was happening. It seems Nhari wanted a name like Nhongo. He wanted to show he could recruit more than me so he abducted school children. I had stayed around St Albert's for two years speaking to parents, children, teachers, priests. Recruiting takes time but Nhari wanted to do it quickly. Our policy was to take [recruit] people voluntarily but Nhari wanted a name like mine.²⁵

George Rutanhire, a fellow Nehanda sector guerrilla, 'knew at the time that the [St Albert's] abductions had not been approved by Nhongo as the possibility had been discussed and rejected before Nhongo left for Chifombo'.²⁶ By going ahead with the abductions anyway, Nhari stressed his disregard for Nhongo's authority in Nehanda sector. Nhongo's remark that 'Nhari wanted a name like mine' also suggests personal rivalry between the two guerrillas. It is essential not to lose sight of an additional dimension in Nhongo's reproach: 'recruiting takes time but Nhari wanted to do it quickly', which, like their first disagreement in 1972, underscored differences between ZANLA field commanders about how best to conduct the liberation war. In the 1960s, ZANLA often shanghaied civilians as guerrilla recruits, but by 1973 there had been a shift in recruitment methods, which now emphasised a voluntary approach.²⁷ However, Nhari preferred building up ZANLA's guerrilla corps speedily

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Interview with Rex Nhongo conducted by Sister Janice McLaughlin, 15 August 1990; Rex Nhongo interview material in the Mujuru family archive.

²⁵ Interview with Rex Nhongo by Sister Janice McLaughlin, 15 August 1990.

²⁶ J. McLaughlin, 'The Catholic Church and the War of Liberation', DPhil thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1991, p. 223.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

and by any means necessary. Nhongo was also in favour of rapid expansion of the ZANLA corps, as demonstrated by the concentrated recruitment drive that he oversaw in Nehanda sector, but for him this was not supposed to compromise ZANLA guerrillas' cordial relations with potential local allies.²⁸ Voluntary recruits were also more likely to become committed cadres than those who were forced to join ZANLA.

The Nhari-led St Albert's abductions put ZANLA in a difficult position. ZANLA could not publicly denounce the abductions without exposing internal indiscipline and personal rivalries and division among some of its commanders over how to conduct the war. ZANLA guerrillas received material assistance at St Albert's mission, but these convivial relations soured because of the 1973 abductions.²⁹ Moreover, ZANU's recognition by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Liberation Committee as an authentic player in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle was still a recent development, having occurred only in 1972. ZANU still had a long way to go in fully justifying the OAU's sanction. The St Albert's incident was far from a feather in its cap in this regard.³⁰ The abductions also gave some credence to white Rhodesian propaganda that attempted to delegitimise the guerrillas' cause. White Rhodesian media greatly exploited the St Albert's debacle for an extended period. Subsequent to the abductions, for instance, a leading state-controlled Rhodesian weekly newspaper ran an editorial titled 'The Enemies of All', which was a forerunner of propaganda brochures produced and distributed by the Rhodesian army's Psychological Action Unit in ZANLA's operational areas.³¹ 'The Enemies of All' editorial attempted to dehumanise ZANLA guerrillas, and it foretold a bleak future if they ever came to power:

[t]he terrible events at St Albert's Mission last week have aroused great anger throughout Rhodesia among Europeans and Africans alike.... This cowardly crime was not the work of men; it was the work of hyenas.... The way of the terrorist is to murder and rape, to abduct and destroy ... these are the methods they would employ to rule [independent Zimbabwe] if they ever won the fight. It is Rhodesia's good fortune that the terrorists cannot, and will not win.³²

The *Dare re Chimurenga* and High Command were indignant about Nhari's indiscipline and the multilayered damage it caused.³³ The *Dare*'s publicity arm launched a damage-control campaign, in which it endeavoured to cast the St Albert's incident as a case of voluntary recruitment, not abduction, but this was largely futile.³⁴

We know so little about who Badza and Nhari were, let alone Caesar Molife, the third key player in the mutiny, and the rest of the mutineers. Yet they loom large in ZANLA's history because of the revolt they staged in 1974. This is perhaps because predominant official accounts simply present them as sell-outs. What motivated Badza, Nhari and Molife to join the liberation war? What were their ideological beliefs, if any? We know that Nhari underwent military training in Bulgaria with Nhongo under ZIPRA, but what sort of military training did Badza and Molife undergo (and where), and what was their expertise? There are also no known surviving photographs of Molife, Nhari and Badza, making them faceless but not insignificant historical figures. However, through Nhongo's life history in ZANLA in

28 Interview with Rex Nhongo by Sister Janice McLaughlin, 15 August 1990.

29 McLaughlin, 'The Catholic Church and the War of Liberation'.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*, p. 214.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.*

the early 1970s, we can learn a modicum about Nhari's and Badza's history, albeit vicariously. They were obviously men with a different view from that of Nhongo on appropriate guerrilla tactics on the war front. Nhari also disagreed with High Command policy on how to go about guerrilla recruitment for ZANLA, and he acquired a controversial reputation after the St Albert's abductions.

Re-interpreting the Nhari Mutiny

Martin and Johnson, and Bhebe, pinpoint RSF skulduggery as having played a role in the Nhari mutiny. For Bhebe, ZANU's lack of a fully functional information department for the churning out of effective pro-ZANLA propaganda meant that the RSF was winning the battle for hearts and minds in 1974.³⁵ 'In those circumstances ZANLA combatants must have been easily influenced against their leaders by the Rhodesian Special Branch people', Bhebe surmises.³⁶ Martin and Johnson affirm that ZANLA's problems at the war front began to come to a head 'soon after' a covert meeting in Mozambique on 21 September 1974 between Nhari, Badza and Rhodesian intelligence operatives.³⁷ Mozambique was on the path to independence from Portuguese rule after the swearing in of a transitional government on 20 September. Consequently, Portuguese soldiers were in the process of withdrawing from Mozambique, and Frelimo fighters were already in their camps. These developments, Martin and Johnson deduce, made it 'possible [for Nhari and Badza] to meet [with Rhodesian operatives], without fear of attack or detection, on Mozambican territory. The [independence] settlement in Mozambique had made transit conditions much easier for... [ZANLA] guerrillas who could now cross the Zambezi River in broad daylight'.³⁸ In Martin and Johnson's account, Rhodesian operatives encouraged Nhari and Badza to cause unrest in ZANLA. The first stage of this disturbance saw the two guerrillas leave MMZ without the High Command's authorisation, after the alleged 21 September consultation with their Rhodesian handlers, in order to register their fundamental grievances about operational challenges at the war front, such as inadequate supplies and weapons inferior to those of the RSF.³⁹

Nhongo interacted closely with Nhari and Badza at the war zone, as we have seen, but he did not identify Rhodesian manipulation as a cause of the MMZ discontent, as Martin and Johnson and Bhebe did. Nhongo's silence on any Rhodesian involvement suggests an alternative interpretation of the mutiny's causes, in which endogenous factors have supremacy. This point will be developed shortly. Before doing so, let me first amplify the significance of corporal punishment in deepening the grievances held by Badza and Nhari. The historian Mazarire upholds that the High Command responded to Nhari and Badza's airing of grievances in September 1974 by punishing them through demotion in rank.⁴⁰ Mazarire and others overlook Martin and Johnson's noting that, in addition to demotion, Nhari and Badza 'were given 15 cuts [strokes] each' before being commanded to go back to the war front.⁴¹ For ZANLA, demotion was a key means of punishment in the early 1970s, even if it was mainly employed to repress dissension instead of fostering correction, Mazarire argues. White adds that demotion resulted in growing numbers of guerrillas at the war front

35 Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare*.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

37 Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, p. 160.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

40 Mazarire, 'Discipline and Punishment in ZANLA'.

41 Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, p. 160.

who were used to giving, not receiving, orders, thereby creating disciplinary and relational problems.⁴² While White's explanation of the detrimental effects of demotion on order and discipline is a logical one, it suffers from lack of evidence about proportion. Precisely how many ZANLA guerrillas were demoted in relation to the overall number of guerrillas and field commanders? Where were demoted guerrillas posted or re-posted, and what were the qualities (disciplinarian or not) of the field commanders whom they now fell under? Crucially, Mazarire does not mention that ZANLA administered hidings to Nhari and Badza in 1974 – perchance because of his reliance on White, who overlooked Martin and Johnson's fleeting allusion to beatings. If we neglect, as recent work by Mazarire and White does, or simply make passing reference to corporal punishment à la Martin and Johnson, we risk losing sight of the deep sense of humiliation that Nhari and Badza are likely to have felt in September 1974. Cuts are normally administered to juveniles, but Nhari, a field commander, was subjected to corporal punishment. The humiliation of receiving cuts was a probable personal supplementary grievance that fomented the mutiny that Nhari led months later.

Nhari and Badza subsequently returned to MMZ front but, unbeknown to Tongogara, the High Command's administering of corporal punishment and demotion without a firm commitment to address disgruntled guerrillas' grievances at the war front only deepened their restlessness. At the beginning of October 1974, Tongogara summoned Nhongo from ZZ front to Lusaka. According to Nhongo, Tongogara instructed him to join a 10-member ZANU delegation on a study tour to China, which was also meant to strengthen relations with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and to procure new weapons.⁴³ The study tour came hard on the heels of grievances emanating from MMZ front, which Nhari and Badza put to Tongogara in the preceding month. Nhongo claimed that upon his arrival in Lusaka he updated the High Command on increasing disharmony in MMZ following Tongogara's September 1974 order that Nhari and Badza return to the war front with their grievances unaddressed, and Nhongo also alleged that he advised Tongogara to postpone the planned trips abroad in order first to address fermenting discontent at the front line.⁴⁴ However, Tongogara, according to Nhongo, insisted that the China excursion go ahead as scheduled.⁴⁵ Nhongo's account that he presented intelligence to Tongogara pointing to the likelihood of upheaval because of grievances harboured by guerrillas at the war front, and that he briefed against the China trip, is absent in existing literature.

In mid to late October 1974, Gumbo led the ZANU delegation to China, which included three female cadres, Tendie Ndlovu, Sheba Tavarwisa and Pedzisai Mazorodze.⁴⁶ Nhongo, Justin Chauke, Patrick Mpunzarima, Kumbirai Kangai and Meya Urimbo were the other Zambia-based ZANU delegates. Dzinashe Machingura, who resided in Mgagao training camp in Tanzania, met these nine ZANU members in Nairobi (Kenya), completing the China-bound delegation.⁴⁷ The majority of these delegates were either key members of the *Dare re Chimurenga* (Gumbo and Kangai), or were leading ZANLA commanders (Nhongo, Urimbo, Chauke, Mpunzarima and Tavarwisa), so their absence created a leadership vacuum in Zambia, which was

42 White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo*.

43 Rex Nhongo interview material in the Mujuru family archive.

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*

46 Interview with Rugare Gumbo conducted by the author, Harare, 3 January 2015; Mhanda, *Dzino*.

47 Mhanda, *Dzino*.

intensified by the fact that soon after they left for China Tongogara and Chitepo made a joint trip to Romania. The ZANU delegation to China returned to Zambia on 4 December 1974.⁴⁸ When they returned, Tongogara, who had come back to Zambia before them, updated the returnees that a mutiny led by Nhari had occurred when the *Dare re Chimurenga* and High Command were abroad.⁴⁹ The Nhari group, which had Badza, Molife, Timothy Chiridza, Patrick Tabenga, Herbert Mutise, Peter Sheba, Chemist Ncube, Cephas Tichatonga, Cuthbert Chimedza, Matthew Ndanga, Fidian Kashiri and Sam Chandawa as its leading organisers, opportunistically exploited the authority vacuum created by the High Command and *Dare*'s transnational engagements to stage a mutiny. Accordingly, ZANLA's Lusaka headquarters and Chifombo and Teresera camps in Zambia were easily taken over by the mutineers. Field commanders such as Josiah Tungamirai were abducted at the war front and force marched back to Zambia, while others, like Ndangana, Joseph Chimurenga and Sheba Gava, were arrested in Zambia. Tongogara's insistence the China trip go ahead, and his departure for Romania without laying any plans in case Nhongo's intelligence about impending disorder at the war front was accurate, demonstrates the degree to which Tongogara was out of touch with developments at the war zone. This substantiates to some extent the Nhari mutineers' grievance that the High Command leadership rarely visited the war front. It also lays bare the fact that, in this specific instance with Nhongo at least, Tongogara did not always take seriously the views of his junior commanders.

Nhari intended to replace Tongogara as head of the High Command, Badza would supplant Ndangana as the chief of operations, and Molife would replace Cletus Chigowe as the intelligence chief.⁵⁰ The Nhari mutineers also accused the High Command of corruption, noting Tongogara's favouritism towards Tungamirai, who, so they claimed, sometimes received whisky and cigarettes at the war zone as gifts from Tongogara, even though drinking at the war front was forbidden military conduct.⁵¹ This allegation about the selective distribution of alcohol is, of course, reminiscent of the Stuart Commission's findings of selectivity in the supply 'of treats such as cigarettes and liquor' in MK camps in Angola – the difference being that the Nhari group objected to the provision of alcohol at the war front, not in the Lusaka headquarters and in camps as such. The Nhari group further criticised the High Command for living it up in Lusaka – exile – leaving guerrillas in the field as mere cannon fodder in the war because of poor Chinese-made arms.⁵²

In addition to their primary grievances about poor weapons and conditions at the war front, the mutineers lambasted the High Command for being 'too old',⁵³ which resonates with the generational struggles in APLA and MK camps in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively, and in SWAPO camps in 1976. It must be said, however, that Tongogara was born in 1940,⁵⁴ making him 34 years old at the time of the Nhari mutiny. Nhongo was born in 1945,⁵⁵ so he was 29 years old when the revolt took place. These ages can hardly be considered 'too old', and it is not as if the High

48 *Ibid.*

49 Rex Nhongo interview material in the Mujuru family archive; Mhanda, *Dzino*.

50 'Report of the Special International Commission on the Assassination of Herbert Wiltshire Chitepo' (Lusaka, Government of Zambia, March 1976).

51 *Ibid.*

52 Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 161.

54 Josiah Magama Tongogara Legacy Foundation, *Tongogara in His Own Words* (Harare, African Publishing Group, 2015).

55 Rex Nhongo interview material in the Mujuru family archive.

Command was completely closed to the entry of younger cadres. For example, at the 1973 Lusaka conference, Machingura was proposed for election to the High Command at the age of 23, but he eschewed the nomination because he 'felt somewhat of an outsider in the murky politics of Lusaka'.⁵⁶ According to Machingura, 'Tongogara had also intended to appoint me as a special assistant' in his office but was dissuaded from doing so by Webster Gwauya who thought he was more useful as a political commissar.⁵⁷

Besides, the Nhari mutineers accused some High Command members of abusing female cadres. This is similar to the Stuart Commission's finding that women were treated as 'sex objects' in MK camps. Tongogara is alleged to have had an extra-marital affair with a female ZANLA cadre, impregnated her and then coerced her to terminate the pregnancy.⁵⁸ 'For reasons best known to the leadership ... female comrades have been transformed into nannies and house girls and they are compelled to satisfy the animal lusts of our High Command leadership',⁵⁹ the Nhari group alleged of the military leadership – a censure that is substantiated by the historian Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi's work on the experiences of women in ZANLA during the liberation war. Moreover, Nhari was a schoolteacher before joining the war, and he believed that the High Command discriminated against formally educated cadres,⁶⁰ which correlates with friction in APLA camps between more educated cadres and a less educated leadership. However, Machingura left his first degree studies at the University of Rhodesia to join ZANLA in Zambia, but, despite his high level of formal education, he was lined up for election to the High Command and to become Tongogara's special assistant in 1973, as already noted.⁶¹ Tungamirai – who, the Nhari mutineers claimed, was Tongogara's blue-eyed boy – went to the war after completing advanced-level studies in Physics and Mathematics and 2 years' study at Salisbury Polytechnic.⁶² The examples of Machingura and Tungamirai indicate that there was no out-and-out discrimination by the High Command against educated cadres.

The breadth of the above-mentioned grievances suggests that, in addition to the mutineers' reasons for disgruntlement at the war front, there was a calculated attempt by Nhari and his co-organisers to tap into the widest possible reasons for disaffection so that the mutiny would attract the backing of the generality of ZANLA guerrillas. The High Command was certainly guilty of discounting the Nhari group's legitimate grievances about pitiable conditions and weapons at the war front, which it first articulated formally before resorting to violence.⁶³ But the Nhari mutineers' undoing was that they alienated many potential sympathisers by abducting ZANU cadres and civilians, such as Tongogara's wife and children, and because they executed some abductees. Ndangana narrated the following proceedings, which reveal some of these alienating aspects of the mutiny:

I was moved to Teresera camp [in December 1974]. When we arrived we heard that about 50

56 Mhanda, *Dzino*, p. 38.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Josephine Nhongo-Simbanegavi, 'Zimbabwean Women in the Liberation Struggle: ZANLA and its Legacy, 1972–1985', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1997.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 163.

60 White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo*.

61 Mhanda, *Dzino*.

62 'Obituary for Josiah Thomas Mberikwazvo Mutasa Tungamirai' (Harare, Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services, 2014).

63 Mazarire, 'Discipline and Punishment in ZANLA'; Mhanda, *Dzino*.

people had been killed before we arrived having been found to be sellouts [by the Nhari mutineers] either because they did not support their new bosses or they were related to the police officers and army officers in the Rhodesian government. When I was at Teresera one man was shot by Roy [a mutineer]. The killing was scheduled Hitler style. This shocked me. I was getting new surprises all the time, from the time Nhari had tried to kill me on the way from Lusaka [to Teresera camp] At Chifombo they [later] found the duplicate to a letter that had been written by Badza ordering Kashiri who was keeping us under arrest to execute us by firing squad.⁶⁴

If the Nhari mutiny was indeed a Rhodesian intelligence project, as argued by Martin and Johnson, Flower, and Bhebe, why did the mutineers execute some guerrillas at Teresera camp as ‘sellouts’ because ‘they were related to the police officers and army officers in the Rhodesian government’, as Ndangana reported? And why did the Nhari mutineers have as one of their grievances against the High Command the fact that it was reluctant to take action against guerrillas at the war front perceived as Rhodesian spies?⁶⁵ The alleged killings of guerrillas said to be linked to RSF members undermines the argument that the Nhari mutineers were Rhodesian-sponsored. If anything, the killings point to the mutineers’ virulent abhorrence of the RSF and perceived sell-outs. The alleged execution of fellow guerrillas simply because they were purportedly related to black Rhodesian servicemen shows that the Nhari mutineers took a more exclusive, hard-line position on the divisibility of loyalty than did the High Command. The Nhari group saw family loyalty as indivisible; a single family could not contain members with varying allegiances to the RSF, ZANLA, ZIPRA and Frolizi without them being sell-outs. In contrast, the High Command saw family loyalty as divisible; just because a ZANLA guerrilla’s family member belonged to the RSF did not make that guerrilla a sell-out or spy. Contested understandings of loyalty were therefore part of the differences between the High Command and Nhari group, and in this contestation the former was more inclusive and practical than the latter. Persecuting guerrillas related to RSF members was an extreme position that would have caused indefinable instability and witch hunts in the camps, which had the potential of reducing guerrilla numbers at a time when ZANLA was still actively building up the size of its force. The High Command sensibly desisted from treating loyalty as indivisible. These conflicting understandings of loyalty are not covered in current literature on the Nhari mutiny.

The dubiousness of the contention that the Nhari rebellion was a case of Rhodesian infiltration is further accentuated in the historian White’s work. White gained unique access to Rhodesian intelligence and army records in the Bristol Museum of Empire (UK) before this valuable archive became inaccessible.⁶⁶ White found that, despite the claim in 1987 by Rhodesian intelligence chief Flower that Nhari and Badza were instruments of the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO),⁶⁷ his ‘unpublished [internal] reports to the Operations Co-ordinating Committee’ during the period of the Nhari mutiny ‘indicate he did not know’ Nhari and Badza ‘and had

64 William Ndangana, transcript of an interview [AQ8] on his role in Zimbabwe’s liberation war, supplied by Nathan Shamuyarira on 1 August 2012.

65 ‘Report of the Special International Commission on the Assassination of Herbert Wiltshire Chitepo’.

66 The ownership of these army and intelligence records is now a matter of dispute between former Rhodesians who transported them abroad and the Zimbabwean state. The whereabouts of the records is currently unknown.

67 Flower, *Serving Secretly*.

only learned of the extent of the disruption in ZANU from affidavits taken from five captured guerrillas'.⁶⁸ In these internal reports,

Flower described the mutiny as if it were a polite gathering, a matter of a delegation of ZANU section commanders 'visiting Lusaka to query orders, protest about corruption, and complain that the hierarchy never visited the operational area'. Most of what Flower thought noteworthy had to do with Tongogara. An attempt was made on his life sometime between 11–25 December, and he sent for 250 supporters, kept 50 as a bodyguard and 'set the rest on a disciplinary mission around the camps. Reports claimed that he personally shot three of the ringleaders'. All in all, Flower told his fellow commanders, 'it was an eye-opener to see the extent of what had been happening in Zambia'.⁶⁹

And while it is fair to conclude, as Bhebe does, that the absence of a fully working ZANU information department in 1974 meant that it was losing the propaganda war to the Rhodesians, it is an intellectual leap of faith to then assume that 'ZANLA combatants must have been easily influenced against their leaders by the Rhodesian Special Branch people'.⁷⁰

One of the other reasons for the Nhari mutineers' downfall was the High Command's fight-back. There was a sizeable ZANLA force at Mgagao camp in Tanzania that was near completion of its training in 1974. Tongogara ordered the Mgagao commander, Robson Manyika, and Machingura and Gwauya, to assemble these trainees into a force comprising 250 men.⁷¹ Within a fortnight, Manyika and Gwauya arrived in Zambia with 250 guerrillas who executed a military operation, codenamed *Gukurahundi*, that contributed to suppression of the mutiny.⁷² The ZANLA command did not receive Zambian military assistance, unlike the ZIPRA and SWAPO leaderships when they faced revolt in 1971 and 1976, respectively. ZANU interpreted the Zambian state's stance as a reflection of its preference for ZAPU because, so ZANU leaders believed, Kaunda continued to view their party as a renegade group that broke away from Nkomo's leadership in 1963.⁷³ That the Nhari mutiny coincided with Kaunda's and Vorster's détente talks was also not lost on ZANU personnel. A burning sense of injustice in ZANU about the Zambian government's alleged hand in the Nhari mutiny is best captured in Fay Chung's paper, 'ZANU's problems in Zambia', which she wrote on 28 May 1976.⁷⁴ Chung, a Zimbabwean lecturer at the University of Zambia in Lusaka, joined ZANU in 1973.⁷⁵ Her 1976 paper censures the Zambian government for supporting the Nhari mutiny in order to install a new leadership that was 'prepared to accept an immediate ceasefire' as part of the Kaunda- and Vorster-led détente arrangements.⁷⁶ Chung claimed that Zambian police had allowed some captured Nhari mutineers to abscond from jail on 31 December 1974 and 26 January 1975. As Chung writes,

[a]fter the first 'escape' the rebels were recaptured by ZANU and handed over to the Zambian authorities but after the second 'escape' the feeling in ZANU was that the Zambians were in

68 White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo*, p. 35.

69 *Ibid.*

70 Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 57.

71 Mhanda, *Dzino*.

72 *Ibid.*; Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*.

73 Interview with Rugare Gumbo, 3 January 2015; interview with Enos Nkala, conducted by the author, Bulawayo, 28 August 2011.

74 Fay Chung, 'ZANU's Problems in Zambia', Terence Ranger Papers, Rhodes House Library, University of Oxford, Box 1, 347–50.

75 Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga*.

76 Chung, 'ZANU's Problems in Zambia', p. 1.

connivance with the rebels and that the rebels would again be released. The two 'escapes' were recorded in the *Zambian Commission Report on Chitepo's murder*. What is not revealed in the Report is that after each 'escape' the rebels reappeared fully armed and resumed their activity of terrorising ZANU members in Zambia.⁷⁷

Chung was particularly scathing of the *Zambian Minister of Home Affairs*, Aaron Milner, for suspending ZANU's Lusaka bank accounts, which crippled the party's political and military operations and left wounded guerrillas' and freedom fighters' families without adequate health care and sustenance. Milner was Zimbabwean, coincidentally, and widely perceived in ZANU as partial to ZAPU. Nevertheless, that the *Zambian government* allowed 250 ZANLA guerrillas to enter its territory from Tanzania to crush the Nhari mutiny suggests that the straightforward ZANU contention that the host state supported the mutineers may lack complete explanatory force.

Ultimately, the mutiny collapsed after the apprehension of Badza and Nhari, with the assistance of Frelimo. ZANLA and Frelimo had established mutual relations, cadres such as Nhongo having operated with Frelimo against the Portuguese colonial state as part of gaining guerrilla fighting experience in the early 1970s.⁷⁸ Nhongo described the course of events leading to Nhari's capture as follows:

Tongogara went with me to see Jose Moyane [Tete provincial commander in Mozambique] from FRELIMO. We wanted FRELIMO to help us trap Nhari. Moyane told us to tell Nhari to come to Kaswende to meet us and FRELIMO. Kaswende was a FRELIMO camp inside Mozambique on the *Zambian side*. We can discuss and FRELIMO will help us fix our problems. Nhari came with others. When they arrived FRELIMO helped us arrest them. We took them back to Zambia.⁷⁹

The mutineers gravely miscalculated by taking Moyane as sincere about mediating dialogue with the High Command. Nhongo and Tongogara's resort to Frelimo's assistance in capturing the mutineers also reinforces the ZANLA leadership's distrust of the *Zambian government* at the time. 'There were enemies in ZANU and enemies in Zambia. The whole thing is to eliminate ZANU', Tongogara maintained.⁸⁰

On 22 January 1975, three *Dare re Chimurenga* members – Chitepo, Gumbo and Kangai – were tasked with investigating the Nhari mutiny. The triad never completed the Nhari enquiry and it did not generate a report on its brief investigative work. Gumbo's account of the enquiry's abrupt end and the mutineers' fate ran thus:

Kangai, Chitepo and myself went to Chifombo to hear accounts about the rebellion. [John] Mataure [political commissar on the *Dare* accused of complicity in the Nhari mutiny] came and explained his case. So did Nhari. After we had heard these accounts we adjourned to go and deliberate with the intention of coming back to hear more accounts and then finalise our judgment. But Tongo [Tongogara] and [Robson] Manyika went behind our backs and killed Nhari, Mataure and others. Manyika did some of the shooting himself. I was later told by witnesses that Manyika would say 'bugger you' before shooting each one. 'Bugger you', then shoots! We were in Lusaka when all this happened. We had no idea what was going on in Chifombo. Tongo was a good military strategist. His problem was that he was too ambitious. So he sometimes went overboard with his steps to consolidate his power. He felt threatened by the Nhari rebellion so he came down hard but even before the Nhari rebellion he took many decisions on his own without telling the *Dare re Chimurenga*. This was one of the differences I had with Tongo. You do not take a decision to eliminate people without consulting others. And

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁷⁸ Rex Nhongo interview material in the Mujuru family archive.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Martin and Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*, p. 165.

you know, Chitepo was very consultative so even he clashed with Tongo a number of times. You enjoyed it when Chitepo held his consultative meetings. Chitepo enjoyed debate. Tongo was not like that. Tongo wanted people to follow his orders.⁸¹

Many guerrillas and politicians accused of supporting Nhari fled. Some, such as Simpson Mutambanengwe, a former *Dare* member, and Noel Mukono, the *Dare*'s secretary for external affairs, were given death sentences *in absentia*. John Mataure, the *Dare*'s political commissar, was executed for allegedly supporting Nhari. Many others were arrested, beaten and executed. The exact figure of how many were executed is unknown. Total death tallies vary from 60 to 250.⁸²

Conclusion

This article tracked part of Nhongo's life history in order to re-interpret ZANLA's 1974 Nhari mutiny and to illustrate a small part of the elusive histories of the mutiny's leaders. I begin my conclusion with some final remarks about the significance of loyalty – an under-recognised facet in the Nhari mutiny. We have seen how the Nhari mutineers' understanding of loyalty as indivisible was at odds with the High Command's conception of loyalty as divisible. Framing the mutineers' alleged executions of ZANLA guerrillas with family members supposedly in the RSF in terms of loyalty is potentially more insightful towards understanding their behavior, and conflict with the High Command, than simply characterising the mutineers' actions as witch-hunting. Loyalty was also at play between Nhari, the mutiny's chief leader, and Nhongo, one of the key actors against the mutiny. Training together in the military, as Nhari and Nhongo did in Bulgaria and Tanzania, fosters bonds of loyalty between soldiers. Mutually experiencing life-threatening risk, such as that which Nhongo and Nhari underwent when they simultaneously made a perilous defection from ZIPRA to ZANLA in 1971, fortifies loyalty bonds created in training. Loyalty bonds improve solidarity between fellow combat soldiers, thereby increasing the probability of triumph in war. Soldiers can risk their lives for their fellow combatants because of these loyalty ties. But, as we have established, the bonds of loyalty between Nhongo and Nhari began to fragment because of tactical disagreements over guerrilla operations on the MMZ front in 1972. Nhari returned to Zambia, leaving Nhongo behind, amid relentless pursuit of ZANLA guerrillas by the RSF. A year later, loyalty bonds between Nhari and Nhongo fragmented irreparably because of the fallout from the St Albert's mission school abductions, which the former carried out. Considering the St Albert's abductions after the independence war was over, Nhongo commented: 'I think up to now this was where the problem of Nhari and his friends wanting to take over [the leadership] began'.⁸³

After the July 1973 St Albert's debacle, Nhari's reputation in ZANLA descended. As Nhari's reputation fell, Nhongo's status increased, by way of his election to the High Command for the first time in August 1973 as provincial commander of ZZ front. Nhongo's election to the High Command entailed the subsequent building of new loyalty bonds with its members, Tongogara particularly, making remoter what was left of his loyalty ties with Nhari. Thus when Nhari attempted to take over the High Command in 1974, Nhongo's loyalty now lay with Tongogara. However, Nhongo's loyalty to Tongogara did not denote uncritical allegiance. Nhongo's stating of his disagreement with Tongogara on the timing of the

81 Interview with Rugare Gumbo, 3 January 2015.

82 White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo*.

83 Rex Nhongo, quoted in Bhebe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 44.

1974 trip to China is essentially a critique of Tongogara's command. Tongogara did not heed the advice of his junior commander, bearing intelligence about increasing unrest at the war front. He did not devise contingency plans in case a revolt occurred, nor did he move to pre-empt potential unrest by addressing disgruntled guerrillas' grievances. Instead Tongogara insisted that the China trip go ahead as arranged, and he left for Romania. Thus the Nhari mutiny was, perhaps, not inevitable. The mutiny could have been pre-empted or neutralised had Tongogara taken Nhongo's intelligence seriously. I also suggested that the High Command's administering of corporal punishment to Nhari and Badza was another likely fount of grievance, which is either omitted or given cursory treatment in the literature. Added to this is the fact that the RSF's influence on the Nhari mutineers is questionable, as demonstrated in this article. In the light of these arguments, to represent the Nhari mutiny as externally driven is problematic.

Turning to the broader literature, this article flies in the face of customary arguments about how the reasons for revolt in armies of exiled southern African liberation movements tend to orbit politics and conditions in the camps. Contrasting degrees of education, ideological disputes and generational schisms caused by the arrival of many young recruits in camps do not adequately account for ZANLA's 1974 Nhari mutiny. Nor was there pivotal intervention by the Zambian host state in aid of the besieged ZANLA High Command, unlike during revolts in ZIPRA and SWAPO in Zambia. Instead, the Nhari mutiny's prime grievances emanated outside the camp. Still, although the revolt commenced at the war front, it spread to the ZANLA headquarters in Lusaka and to camps elsewhere in Zambia. ZANLA guerrillas from Tanzania eventually entered Lusaka and the camps to re-establish the High Command's authority, and some of the mutiny's key leaders were duped and captured in Mozambique. This transnational element of the Nhari revolt highlights the importance of thinking about the construction of grievance and staging of mutiny in this period in interactive terms, particularly when considering armies that were actively engaged in operations at the war front. Finally, there are some issues about the Nhari mutiny that are inextricably linked to broader literatures about the causes of revolt in southern African liberation armies. Foremost among these subjects is junior soldiers' objection to the sexual exploitation of women by senior commanders. Rank-and-file soldiers' grievances focusing on some military leaders' penchant for the high life in exile and corruption also cut across the literatures on revolts in liberation armies.

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