

ARMED STRUGGLE IN ZIMBABWE:

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF GUERRILLA WARFARE, 1966-1974

by

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I. 1966

April: First action of armed struggle, near town of Sinoia (90 miles northwest of Salisbury and 60 miles south of Zambia). Combatants of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANLA) engage in an intense skirmish against a larger number of enemy forces. 25 enemy forces killed or injured. Subsequent to beginning of guerrilla warfare, the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) had launched sabotage campaigns (1963-4).

May: "Sinoia Band" strikes again, after other clashes, in Hartley area 300 miles inland, almost in center of country.

Aug.-Sept.: Makuti-Sinoia area, ZANLA clashes with enemy.

Sept.-Dec.: Clashes elsewhere in the north and northeast, by ZANLA combatants.

Mid-1966: ZAPU Campaign begins. ZAPU force engages enemy in open combat for the first time. Carries missions around Lupane and Urungwe areas of northern Zimbabwe (Gomoza area near Lupane). Some victories, but many set-backs and losses: militants not properly equipped or politically and militarily prepared; in contrast, Rhodesian Security forces use modern equipment and have established a fairly good intelligence network.

II. 1967-71

Mid-1967: ZANLA clashes at Feria, Rukomeshi River, Karoi, Nharine Hill. General military conflict takes place in Zambezi Valley during 1967.

July-Aug.: ZAPU-ANC (of South Africa) open front in northwest Wankie Game Reserve forest. Hundreds of mobile South African units are flown into Bulawayo, 70 miles south of the northwest ZAPU-ANC new front, to counter actions (both combat and sabotage) in Lupane and

Urungwe. The ZAPU-ANC launch a "three-pronged offensive" which catches the enemy by surprise, deep inside the country. The enemy had expected frontal assault along Zambezi Escarpment.

- 1967-68: Guerrilla activities in many parts of the country, often as close as 20 miles from Salisbury.
- Early '68: ZAPU unit crosses Zambezi Escarpment to carry out reconnaissance in Mtoko area east of Salisbury.
- 1968: ZAPU actions in Lupane and Sipolilo areas. In March, continuing ZAPU-ANC advances in Sipolilo.
- 1969: Continuous ZAPU reconnaissance missions across the Zambezi. Combat and clashes around Wanki and Urungwe. ZAPU operations spread out to cover most of northern Zimbabwe.
- 1970: ZAPU attacks South African "police" camp and overruns airport at Victoria Falls. Other incidents in Zambezi Valley.
- Dec. 4: Member of Rhodesian Territorial Army is shot dead.
- Dec. 20: Rhodesia Rifleman in "accident".

1971

- Jan. 23: Another Rhodesian Rifleman in "accident".
- Feb. 10: Rhodesian private is shot at farm 16 miles north of Salisbury.
- March 2: Explosion damages in Bulawayo.

In 1971, ZPRA, military wing of ZAPU is structured. Between 1970 and 1971, serious internal differences and splits in ZAPU which paralyze military operations, as well as political work among the masses; 1971-72 sees re-organization of ZAPU. 1972, ZAPU and ANC form Joint Military Command and in March 1972, ZAPU and ZANU also form a Joint Military Command and Political Council: not "operational" from 1972 to 1974. (Further factionalism results in the formation of FROLIZI.)

III. 1972-1974

Intensity of armed struggle increases. ZPRA (after a long gap in military operations) employs new tactics and strategy:

extensive land-mine campaign against settlers and troops from May 1972 to May 1973, in area stretching from Mana Pools to the Chirundu (Otto Beit Bridge) and in the Victoria Falls Bridge region. May 15: 2 settlers are injured; Aug. 30: a settler family detonates a mine; Jan. 20: military truck sets off an explosion; similar incidents on March 22 and May 9.

1972

- Aug.: ZPRA blows up rail line from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls.
- Aug. 29: ZPRA land-mines blast South African forces. (Also kills settler at Mana Pools area.) Rail line between Salisbury and Sinoia, blown up.
- Sept.: Joint ZAPU-ZANU actions.
- Oct.: Mana Pools National Park: Land-mine explosion just south of Lake Kariba on northern border (11 miles north of Impamba).
- Nov.: Guerrillas cross border from Mozambique's Tete Province. Strength built up in northeast area and Sipolilo, north of Sinoia.
- Dec.: ZANLA attacks in northeast increase. Takes "security" forces almost completely by surprise. Attacks preceded by several years of political work among peasants in area. Have gained much support and cooperation locally.
- Dec. 21: Guerrillas strike at two farms in Centenary area, 120 miles north of Salisbury.
- Dec. 22: Another land-mine ambush, Rhodesian army corporal killed, three others injured.
- Dec. 26: Skirmishes in Centenary area.
- Dec. 29: Three more Rhodesian soldiers injured in land-mine ambush. Large numbers of Rhodesian security forces move into Mavuradonha Mountains near Zambia for "sweeping manhunts".

Early 1973, penetrations deep into northern and northeastern Zimbabwe; repeated attacks on Rhodesian security forces and white strongholds in farming areas (ZANU-ZAPU joint command, again): covering more than 800 miles of Rhodesian territory. Border with Zambia closed by Smith regime.

1973

- Jan. 11: ZPRA: Two South African policemen killed, several injured, Wankie area. Land-mine near Kariba in northwest.
- Jan. 12: ZANLA guerrillas attack near Mt. Darwin.
- Feb. 14: Land-mine ambush, one soldier killed, six injured; such incidents recur with frequency during this time near Zambian border; as a result, Rhodesian troops cross into Zambia, killing Zambian civilians (pattern of such invasions of past several years into Zambia and Mozambique, latter in cooperation with Portuguese troops, etc.). General Rhodesian alert; many reprisals against people, from beginning of this campaign.
- Feb. 27: ZANLA shoots down helicopter, spotter plane, foothills of Mavuradonha Range.
- March-April: New front opens as guerrillas become entrenched northwest of Salisbury, area around Karoi, 120 miles north of Salisbury. Clashes with PATU (Police Anti-Terrorist Unit). Continuing activity in Centenary and Mt. Darwin areas in northeast. Reprisals, shutdowns by Rhodesian regime in Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land and Chese Purchase Area near Mt. Darwin, to counter guerrilla activity. Thousands rounded up, detained, African businesses closed, torture; wholesale intimidation of people; harrassments in villages (rape, etc.).
- Mar. 17: (Zimbabwe Day): At special OAU meeting, ZAPU and ZANU form united front. Agree to set up Political Committee of Zimbabwe.
- Mar. 12: Car hijacking incident, Hartley, 50 miles southwest of Salisbury.
- April 3: Two security officers killed, Centenary area; settler killed at Wedza, 70 miles south of Salisbury.
- April 23: Engagement in which four security forces members are killed, five wounded, between Centenary area and Mt. Darwin.
- April 24: Incident on farm near Shamva, 120 km. northeast of Salisbury.

- May 8: Ambush of farmer in Bindura district.
- May 9: Guerrilla rocket attack on a farm in Sipolilo district, west of Centenary district, where most of the fighting has been taking place since Dec. '72.
- May 16: A farmer killed, another injured, land-mine explosion, game reserve north of Salisbury.
- End of May: Much guerrilla activity in Mt. Darwin area. Ruthless campaign of oppression against the people of these areas stepped up by regime (in northeast), especially in Chesa, Centenary areas, including up-rooting and resettlement in border areas, mass removals, and further torture during interrogations of "guerrilla sympathizers". Many hangings and executions of freedom fighters between Dec. 1972 and June 1973.
- June: Guerrilla activity south of Salisbury at Enkeldoorn (80 miles south), also in Mozoe, 12 miles south. ZANLA guerrilla activity in June continues in northeast area of Zimbabwe, increasing casualties of Smith regime soldiers.
- June 3: Incident at farm, Shamva.
- Aug.-Sept.: Many land-mine explosions around farms near Centenary
- Sept. 27: ZPRA over-runs camp of 13 billets of 42 South African soldiers in Urungwe district.
- Oct.-Nov.: ZPRA land-mine blasts (almost every week) of troop carriers, personnel patrols, Landrovers, enemy camps, etc.
- Oct. 13,14: Several such incidents.
- Nov. 8: Troop-carrier hits mine, five killed, several injured, Chete Forest area, mid-east of the Kariba Dam in Mana Pools Game Reserve. Holiday resorts there closed to tourists by regime in October, due to guerrilla activity (ZPRA).
- Dec.: ZPRA minefields along all roads in areas leading to Mana Pools, particularly along Makuti-Mana Pools road.

Dec. 7: 17 South African soldiers killed in land-mine blast, truck destroyed, on this road (Urungwe area); two other trucks destroyed in rescue attempts.

1973 saw fiercest and most sustained fighting by military units of ZAPU and ZANU (ZPRA, ZANLA) since UDI. Strong bases established by guerrillas among the people of northeast Zimbabwe. Much cooperation from FRELIMO militants in Mozambique. Many settler and security forces casualties, minimized by the regime.

IV. 1974

Jan.-Feb.: Intense fighting on borders along the Zambezi River during Dec., Jan., Feb., and along the northeast border with Mozambique. In Feb., regime declares "Emergency Regulations" in northeast. FRELIMO aids guerrillas with attacks on Salisbury-Beira rail link, Untali-Beira line.

Feb. 18: Successful ZANLA ambush in Centenary area, causing Rhodesian Front candidate to miss meeting, much panic and confusion among farmers of area (Smith flies in by helicopter, etc.).

Feb.-Mar.: New front formed by ZPRA in northwest border of Zimbabwe.

Mar. 8: South African police patrol wiped out, Kandabar region, near Victoria Falls. Brutal Rhodesian reprisals, arrests. (18 South African policemen killed since Jan. 1974). Most arrests take place in Madziwa Tribal Trust Land. Death sentences, hangings of freedom fighters. Earlier, ambushes in Mbilizi area of Binga district. Landrover and troop carriers. From Dec. 1972 through March 1974, hundreds of settler and security forces casualties, especially in northeast. Many farmers panic and leave.

April: Incident, Government Health Inspector killed, near Bindura. ZANLA shoots down three fighter planes during first three weeks in April.

Early May: Series of gun battles with security forces, northeast: five Rhodesians killed in Centenary area; also Rhodesian African Rifles truck blown up by land-mine ambush on main road from Salisbury to Mt. Darwin.

- June-July: More land-mine explosions. Guerrillas firmly entrenched in Centenary area. Smith regime forces mass removals in July of 60,000 people from Chiweshe Tribal Trust Land, 40 miles north of Salisbury, which borders Centenary area in northeast. Security screenings; brutalities, terror inflicted on people. "State of Emergency" extended for another year; regime begins "Operation Hurricane" to "clean out" guerrillas.
- June-Oct.: ZANLA guerrillas step up land-mine attacks on roads in Chiweshe area.
- Oct.: Two security forces members killed by explosion. continuing flow of ZANLA guerrillas across Mozambique border. Mass support by people of area. Between May 1974 and August 1974, ZANLA killed 109 enemy troops, destroyed five enemy camps, 17 enemy trucks, shot down three aircraft and damaged five.
- Sept.-Oct.: ZPRA guerrillas kill 49 Rhodesian and South African soldiers in Wankie and Urungwe districts, and in actions near Kariba where Rhodesian Light Infantry camp at Kanyambizi overrun.
- Sept.: Heavy fighting from Upper Kariba area to Urungwe, spreading to Wankie by October.
- Oct. 5: Heavy battle when ZPRA forces are encircled by enemy; after an hour, 15 enemy killed, many injured.
- Nov.-Dec.: ZANU, ZAPU, FRONLIZI work out unity agreement, merging into one organization, the African National Council.
- Dec. 11: Informan cease-fire announced to become formal only after date of constitutional conference is set to arrange mechanics of the transfer of power from minority to majority.

V. 1975

- Jan.-April: Guerrilla warfare continues in the northeast front. Informal cease-fire ineffective. Ambushes resume in northern war zone.

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