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The Role of Women in Second Chimurenga, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The guerrilla conflict that lasted from 1966 to 1979 and resulted in the de facto independence of Zimbabwe and the end of white-minority rule in Rhodesia is referred to as the Second Chimurenga, the Rhodesian Bush War, or the Zimbabwe Liberation War. For the first time in history, women were heavily drafted into the military during the independence movement. From the start of the conflict, the male insurgents organized the greatest percentage of women to carry out military duties and used them in both the civilian and military sectors. Although they were active and shown significant worth to their nations, women guerrillas were demobilized in large numbers after the war. As female veterans, they were mostly compelled to forget their wartime experiences and conform to stereotypically feminine societal norms.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Liberation Struggle, Guellilar Fighters

INTRODUCTION

Marxism served as the foundation for the Rhodesian Bush War Second, also known as the Second Chimurenga. According to Akwabi-Ameyaw and Kofi (1997), contemporary Marxism promoted women's involvement in the revolutionary frontline, claiming that women's oppression resulted from the colonial and class-based exploitation that such movements would target. Based on a nationalist identity and an anti-imperialist perspective, a liberation movement is an organization or political movement that leads a revolt or non-violent social movement against a national government or colonial authority. These movements often aim for independence. Guerrilla groups in Zimbabwe were adopting this concept, suggesting that women's rights will be an inherent feature of a future democratic society and that the equality ideology just attracted to young women just as much as it did to young men. According to Sachikonye (2004), several women who had previously fought in Zimbabwe joined the liberation struggle in an effort to better their own and their families' lives.

The issue of sexuality and morality also became a significant source of discontent for female warriors (Kriger, 2003). By 1976, many young women had joined the male-dominated, historically male-dominated ZAPU and ZANU camps. Despite recruiting women, nationalist leaders wanted their female warriors to be submissive and meek, which created a dilemma. However, the feeling of freedom that came with joining the movement made women more receptive to their own sexual demands. However, the nationalists believed that women shouldn't act in ways that are typical of men. Activities at military camps were seen as interfering with work, and women were directly held responsible. In contrast, men's behavior was accepted and seen as natural (for men), while they were accused of enticing men away from their labor.

Ultimately, sexual interactions between cadres became a political and military matter for the High leaders and a moral dilemma for female leaders. Teurai Ropa Nhongo and other female leaders have indicated that the primary issue was that young women were "misbehaving" by becoming sexually forceful, which was detrimental to the revolution. Following these grievances from female leaders, the ZANU Defence Secretariat organized a demonstration in July 1978 to address the "problems of women" (ZANLA, 2009). Additionally, it was observed that despite the demands of some female cadres for men to also be penalized for immoral behavior, men's sexuality was never questioned when women were subjected to limitations. Male aggression is sometimes viewed as normal and inevitable because of these ideas of masculinity and femininity among leaders, according to Moyo (1992). As a result, Zimbabwean society failed to question the wrongs done to women at the end of the war.

As Lyons states in (Kriger, 2003:128), sexual abuse of women, including combatants, is another problem that should be taken seriously during times of conflict. A review of internal ZANU documents and interviews with female ex-combatants shows that, contrary to the official rhetoric that encouraged women in military camps to be “decent women and not use contraceptives,” male guerrillas sexually abused female fighters on a large scale, with offenders ranging from the

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lowest ranks to the highest leadership. Guerrillas wanted sexual fulfillment from their female counterparts, while black and white troops forced themselves on their female victims and senior commanders in the camps forced themselves on young female warriors, according to reports (Nkomo, 1984).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The current study investigated challenges faced by women during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. The research also evaluated the attempts by the government level to establish reintegration process of women war veterans in Zimbabwe.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The researcher evaluated the problems and challenges encountered by war veterans during and after the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. The study is a systematic review of available literature that focused on problems related to abuse of women liberation fighters and spotlighted on access to resources and opportunities on the reintegration process.

Experience of women

Women had not been employed in the military in significant numbers or in formal units until the Second Chimurenga. They played a relatively little part in the First Chimurenga and had a very limited military function. Military authorities of many colonized nations saw the need to utilize women in the armed forces as a result of the Second Chimurenga's cruelty and entirety. Women had the option to voluntarily join the army but were mostly exempt from enlistment (Scrivener, 1999). The country's level of involvement in the war was reflected in the degree to which its women were employed by the military. According to Mumbengegwi (1984), males force their will on women of their choosing when there are no natural social institutions in place. By enabling male cadres to assert authority over female combatants, patriarchal views held by male nationalists exposed female cadres to sexual assault.

Additionally, male cadres at the front had taken advantage of the civilian people in a similar manner to how they had taken advantage of the female warriors who had sacrificed their lives for the nation before to 1980 independence. Many independence fighters took advantage of pungwes, which are nightly gatherings where insurgents politicized people, to sexually abuse women and girls, according to one of the chimbwidos, or young girls who aided the freedom fighters during the conflict. Throughout the liberation fight, women veterans of the war faced up against various males on a weekly and monthly basis. Women veterans of the war are reluctant to talk about sexual assault during the conflict, according to research on sexual violence throughout the conflict. Even if it was preferable if the truth was first said, most people find it embarrassing to discuss it, and some people just do not want to cope with such psychological problems.

However, this paper put forward a cultural perspective from what was known as rape. In our culture in Zimbabwe if a woman is approached by a man for sexual favour or for a proposal, the women is supposed to decline the offer despite the fact that she might be interested. As a result, the issue for their male counterparts during the war the refusal by their female counterparts was, thus, a cultural aspect of saying no when they in fact were willing. Accepting an offer at once is associated by a woman is associated with loose moral within the Zimbabwean culture. As a result, for the male the refusal by women was a way of accepting the proposal. This cultural perspective might have been misunderstood by males' combatants although in some instances they might have been correct.

According to Pfukwa (1998), a lot of young men and women who have participated in wars as fighters also have trouble adjusting to civilian life after serving. Some people have a terrible problem regulating their violent and angry tendencies, and sometimes they yearn for the high-adrenaline lifestyle they had during the war. In addition to the issues that both men and women face, young women's sexual reputations and marriage chances may be severely harmed by their confinement and, in some situations, pregnancy. Women may have a harder time overcoming their experiences of sexual violation, in part because it is often a "open secret" that is acknowledged by everybody but seldom talked or addressed. While not necessarily as obvious, the scars left by female survivors of military camp confinement are just as permanent as those of landmine victims. These women's futures are hampered by the stigma and embarrassment they face, which reduces their chances of getting married and reintegrating into society.

Contraceptives were outlawed, male-to-female sexual relations were denounced, and bride prices were enforced. The arguments put forward were that using contraceptives promoted promiscuity and was unethical. However, as African feminists have shown, even traditionalists used family planning (Pfukwa, 1998). A careful examination shows that the commanders' activities were more focused on upholding the idea of "decency and morality," which the nationalists believed was being threatened, than they were on maintaining proper military order and discipline. Despite the fact that maternity meant being barred from active service, we see that women revolutionaries who enlisted to fight were encouraged by their own leadership to get married and have children. Unsurprisingly, a lot of women who were involved in the battle started to feel irritated.

Women who got pregnant were transported to the women and children's camp in Mozambique, where they were forced to work in feminine jobs like sewing and knitting, as if to further irritate women cadres

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(Nkomo, 1984). Nevertheless, a careful examination of what happened in the camps reveals that the British colonialist program, which aimed to teach girls to be excellent housewives and boys to be assistant clerks for the white administrators, was essentially the source of women's initiatives that focused on cooking and sewing. The majority of elite nationalists' pre-war opinions were influenced by the "cult of domesticity," which also served as the explanation and excuse for excluding women from active participation in the conflict and from giving them the necessary prominence. Generally speaking, male and female nationalist leaders enacted laws and rules in the military camps to safeguard the interests of the middle class. But since this best fitted and reaffirmed their supremacy, these laws rebuilt and redefined gender roles and gender relations to the traditional/colonial private/public split, exactly as in colonial conceptions (Raftopoulos, 2001).

On the other note concerning the same aspect, the paper was on the opinion that the rape issue during the liberation struggle is often mentioned on a one-sided. The paper argued that in some instances where the women themselves would demand sex from their male counterparts without their consent. One has to look as a sexual endeavours as a call for nature and under such circumstances it is normal for someone who had not had sex for a long time to want to have sex. On the other hand, reintegration and compensation of former combatants did not put into consideration the plight of the women who were not involved in the actual war but might have had many male combatants forcing themselves on them. The paper, therefore, argue that they too ought to have been part of the reintegration processes as they were traumatised and some of the experiences haunt them up to this day.

Enabling Policy Environment

The present policy climate is unquestionably quite beneficial, but it can yet be improved. The disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation program (DDR) planners failed to adequately account for the needs of child and female combatants, despite UN Security Council resolution 1509 requiring that special attention be given to these groups in Liberia's disarmament programs. The former child combatants' DDR program was plagued with fraud and lengthy issues that ought to have been resolved during the planning phase. The choice to provide the former child fighters a stipend, for instance, was particularly problematic since the money was not used toward worthwhile endeavors like economic opportunities or educational advancement. Commanders were given the money back, and many of these kids are still under their influence. Many people are still addicted to narcotics. One Liberian humanitarian group said that the teenagers spent the first $75 of the $300 payment on marijuana and other readily accessible narcotics. Additionally, giving money to ex-young fighters may be seen as rewarding individuals who participated in the fight.

Furthermore, gender experts maintain that although DDR programs have explicit policies to consider the needs of girls and young women and efforts are underway to integrate their unique needs, many members of this vulnerable group may still be left behind even though the programs address some of their needs. Making sure that young people are seen as a force for change and a valuable resource in post-conflict environments, rather than as a "problem" in need of a solution, will help governments, donors, and civil society overcome the obstacles they face in implementing the successful reintegration of youth and former combatants into society. In this sense, while designing the reintegration elements of DDR programs, a longer-term perspective is necessary. Therefore, it is crucial for regional organizations and agencies like the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to increase youth involvement as partners in peace and development in post-conflict nations. NEPAD has previously made it plain that its action plan's top priority are the advancement of peace and security as well as good political, economic, and corporate governance across Africa, with the involvement of all societal segments, especially young people. It will be difficult to effectively integrate the youthful inventiveness and positive energy into important participatory development and decision-making processes.

The process of demobilization and reintegration of women veterans

An average spectator would never guess that these young women's lives are full with such tragic and dramatic memories of horror and survival as they go about their everyday lives in Zimbabwe years after the ceasefire. These young ladies are very strong despite all that has happened to them. Conditions after the conflict are still challenging; they are impoverished, unemployed, and lack access to adequate education. The resiliency of these young individuals challenges conventional wisdom on child development, which holds that children and young people are particularly susceptible to hardship. African youth have shown a greater capacity for personal resilience than many adults, as well as a particular ability to cope with dissonance, hardship, and change (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, August 2001).

Mass army demobilization had started by the conclusion of the Second Chimurenga. The Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJPZ) both recommended that armies with female troops demobilize them as soon as possible. Following the conclusion of the war, the women were all unceremoniously removed from the service. Military leaders made demobilizing women their primary goal. Many women returned home after serving in the military and in the industrial sector. The need for women's labor and military occupations decreased as the males went

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back to their employment at home. Following demobilization, former female warriors began to reintegrate into society, which differed greatly from that of males. For many women, the true problems didn't start until they went back to their homes. It was difficult for former fighters to resume a "normal" existence after years of trauma and battle, and many of them believed that their interwar sacrifice had gone unappreciated.

Social support was lacking for female veterans. Women's contributions during the interwar period were rarely acknowledged after the war ended, in part because post-war societies' needs and priorities differed greatly from those of a wartime society. While men and women were encouraged to play similar roles as fellow soldiers in armies and guerrilla movements, post-war societies promoted gender differences. For former female soldiers, this had significant ramifications for their sense of self. Rather than risk social rejection, many female ex-soldiers choose to hide their military service. Joyce Mujuru, the former vice president of Zimbabwe, Tenjiwe Lesabe, Sally Mugabe, the late former president Robert Mugabe's wife, Florence Chitauro, Ruth Chinamano, Jane Mutasa, Oppah Muchinguri, and Edna Madzongwe were among the few women veterans of the Second Chimurenga who were highly esteemed in Zimbabwean society. They all had connections to men in the ruling class.

In the Chimurenga era, the impoverished were entirely excluded, while a small number of women who achieved political success and influence were commended for their military prowess and efficiency (Moyo, 1990). In the post-war era, a non-formal language that denigrated female warriors as sexually immoral evolved, despite the fact that military women had extremely high morale and discipline. A severe public disparagement of women's roles at the front was facilitated by the erasure of women's wartime accomplishments. This antagonistic behavior evolved without any formal catalyst. Although allusions to women's sexual repute dominated public discourse, they had no bearing whatsoever on official commemorations of the conflict. Collectively, women veterans struggled with their image. While some remained "as silent as fish," others continued to justify their combat record. It was the decision of the majority of the ladies to keep the uniform a secret. In order to avoid stigma, they did not want to admit that they had been in the front. Collectively, women veterans struggled with their image. While some remained "as silent as fish," others continued to justify their combat record. In order to avoid stigmatization, the majority of the ladies chose to keep their uniform a secret from everyone.

CONCLUSION

The importance of women to the war's success was overlooked, and female soldiers lacked the bravery to openly discuss their experiences since they faced the danger of being subjected to unfavorable rumors. During the post-war era, military women were seen by the public as immoral and promiscuous. In contrast, women veterans in Botswana and Mozambique did not experience the same pressure, and many went on to hold significant roles within the Communist party. According to the data, women who demonstrated their fighting abilities during the Second Chimurenga mainly failed to get social assistance or recognition as veterans of the armed forces after the war ended, and their contributions to the war effort were mostly forgotten. Overall, they encountered a lack of comprehension on their actual actions throughout the battle. Societies expected them to forsake military occupations for males and become moms and home. Women were demobilized "en masse" for that reason.

According to the experiences of former Zimbabwean combatants, class and social standing act as a mediating factor in the circumstances faced by underprivileged, impoverished women. They never made an effort to convince the public of their significant role in the war's result because of the unfavorable perception of women veterans of the Second Chimurenga. The role of women in the liberation movement was all but eliminated, despite the many accolades these women won for their military prowess. The outcome of the war would have been different if they had not been heavily involved in military operations. However, we may observe that the lack of justice in the case of Zimbabwean women former warriors exacerbates the suffering of these women veterans. The national male privilege of rape has persisted, depriving women of a resolution to their horror.

In addition to their social hardship, women in most guerrilla activities confront a significant dilemma: they find it difficult to really verify their conduct. In Zimbabwe, activities other than direct combat engagement were seen as secondary to the war effort, and war veterans' pay was contingent upon proving they had been involved in active combat. As a result, women combatants had to rely on males to validate their veteran status. According to Hoffman (1990), males were ultimately in charge of determining women's status and military contributions. Given that males used this to get sexual favors, it is clear that this put women in precarious circumstances. Therefore, it has been very difficult to determine how many women, if any, profited from the 1998 war veterans' compensation program in Zimbabwe, which compensated over 50,000 former fighters Z$50,000 + Z$2000 each month. However, studies reveal that many women had not had their positions officially recognized by 2000, which was twenty years after independence (ZANLA, 2009).

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