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Second Chimurenga

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The **Second Chimurenga** was a struggle fought between the Africans and white Rhodesian government which culminated in the independence of [Zimbabwe](#) in 1980. The war started in the early 1960s but took a more militant stance with 1966 at the [Battle of Chinhoyi](#) and ended in 1980 after the signing of the [Lancaster House Agreement](#).

Second Chimurenga War

Part of Zimbabwe's Liberation War



The Lancaster Conference talks that ended the Second Chimurenga

Date

1960s - 1979

Location

Zimbabwe

19.0154° S, 29.1549° E

Result

[ZAPU](#) & [ZANU](#) waged an intense war leading to negotiated settlement with the Rhodesian government at Lancaster. Ultimate result was majority rule in Zimbabwe.

Rhodesia was renamed Zimbabwe

Territorial changes

Belligerents

[Rhodesian Security Forces](#)

[Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army](#) (ZIPRA) [Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army](#) (ZANLA)

Commanders and leaders

[Ian Smith](#)

[John Nkomo](#)

[Josiah Tongogara](#), [Wilfred Mhanda](#)

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The Name Chimurenga

In the local [Shona](#) language, the word [Chimurenga](#) refers to a violent uprising or revolt. It has strong connotations of violence. The word is also part of the [Ndebele](#) language and it is called [Umvukela](#).^[1] In the history of Zimbabwe, the word was first used to refer to the wars of resistance (1896–97) fought by the local Shona and Ndebele peoples against colonisation by the British under [Cecil Rhodes](#) of the [British South Africa Company](#).

Genesis of the War

The Second Chimurenga war was as a result of a collective need by the black Africans to get political independence, access to economic resources and land. The war was also necessitated by the harsh laws imposed by the Rhodesian settler government such as the [Land Apportionment Act](#) of 1930 and the [Native Land Husbandry Act](#) which restricted Africans to certain areas which were not agriculturally productive.

Political Parties

A number of political parties were involved in the liberation struggle against the [Rhodesian Front](#) government under [Ian Smith](#). One of the earliest parties to be formed by Africans was the African National Congress in the 1950s. It had branches in most urban areas such as [Salisbury](#) and [Bulawayo](#). There was also the [National Democratic Party](#) (NDP) formed in 1959 and was led by [Joshua Nkomo](#). It was banned in 1960 and this resulted in the formation of the [Zimbabwe African People's Union](#) (ZAPU) under Nkomo. ZAPU eventually into factions and this resulted in the birth of the [Zimbabwe African National Union](#) (ZANU) in 1963 in the [Highfield](#) suburb of Salisbury. It was led by the likes of [Herbert Chitepo](#) and [Enos Nkala](#).

Training, Strategy and Ideology



Freedom Fighters During the War

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ZAPU and ZANU had the [Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army](#) (ZIPRA) and the [Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army](#) (ZANLA) as their military wings respectively. ZANLA had most of its bases in neighbouring Mozambique in areas such as [Tete](#), [Chimoio](#) and [Nyadzonja](#) where the freedom fighters were trained. ZIPRA was headquartered in Zambia. The two movements had also bases in countries such as Tanzania where they trained their fighters. Both parties adopted the Marxist and communist ideologies. They also adopted guerrilla warfare as their strategies in battle. Guerrilla warfare involved surprise attacks and ambushes.^[2] The Second Chimurenga is said to have drawn its inspiration from the First Chimurenga.^[1] One of the unique characteristics of the nationalist parties was their reliance on the peasant communities for both material and moral support. This was called the "fish and water" strategy adopted from Chinese communists led by Mao.

The Beginning of the War

The liberation struggle is also said to have been planned during the first congress held by ZANU in 1964 when [Ndabaningi Sithole](#) called the clarion for war where the party issued its five-point plan, which remains unknown.^[2] However, prior to the Chinhoyi Battle of 28 April 1966, many acts of sabotages were instigated by ZANU the most notable were the acts of the [Crocodile Gang](#) led by [William Ndangana](#) which launched sabotage attacks from 1964.

The [Chinhoyi Battle](#) and ZAPU/ANC attacks

It was on the 28th of April 1966 when a group of 7 ZANLA fighters sneaked into the country from Zambia where they had received their military training.^[3] The seven soldiers namely [David Guzuzu](#), [Arthur Maramba](#), [Christopher Chatambudza](#), [Simon C Nyandoro](#), [Godfrey Manyeranyere](#), [Godwin Dube](#) and [Chubby Savanhu](#) went on a mission to destabilise the settlers. The seven brave fighters were only killed after running out of ammunition having relentlessly fought the Rhodesian Security Forces which included its air force, ground force and cavalry.^[3] They are said to have downed a Rhodesian helicopter during the battle and killed 25 soldiers.^[4] It is known today as the [Chinhoyi Battle](#).

A combined force of and the African National Congress of South Africa also launched its acts of sabotage and the most common is the [Wankie-Spolilo Campaign](#) of 1967-68.

While the guerrillas were defeated in both campaigns, the incidents attracted headlines and some more support from the OAU Liberation Committee.^[5]

The Detente Period

It was a period between 1974-1975 when the liberation struggle had gone on abeyance. It was during this period when Kenneth Kaunda the then president of Zambia which was part of the Frontline States and John Vorster the then president of South Africa were making efforts to bring the liberation struggle to a halt to pave way for independence through political negotiations.

Kaunda and Vorster's efforts had been facilitated by a [Tiny Rowland](#), the chief executive of [Lonrho](#), a multinational company. Kaunda's role was to bring the nationalist parties to the negotiation table, while

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Vorster would bring Ian Smith. Various meetings between South African and Zambian officials in 1974 resulted in a document dated 8 October 1974 which was titled "Towards the Summit: An approach to Peaceful Change in Southern Africa". This initiated what was nicknamed "The Detente Scenario". Unfortunately, the Zambian leader was committing to things without the knowledge of the nationalist party leaders.

Later in December, the nationalist party leaders were invited to a meeting in Lusaka to discuss the terms of the political settlement. The negotiations happened in Lusaka in December and incarcerated leaders were brought to attend. Leaders of the Frontline States (Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia) were part of the negotiations in Zambia. The chairman of the Frontline States was Julius Nyerere.

Herbert Chitepo, then chairman of the Dare reChimurenga was opposed to this political negotiations saying on 4 December:

"There will be no talks, no negotiations, no discussions involving our movement until Mr Smith recognizes the right to immediate majority rule tomorrow, next week, next year or whenever. It is now. Until we hear that man, the rebel leader of the rebel regime, speak those words, our war goes on and it will continue until we have liberated every acre of our country. I do not know if we could even sit down with Smith until Rhodesia has gone back on the 1969 constitution and returned to the pre-UDI position. We are not going to be bound by whatever is decided in Lusaka, great as is our respect for the leaders who are gathering there and who have helped us so much in the past."^[6]

ZANU generally refused to compromise at the Lusaka meeting. One proposal refused by ZANU was a suggestion by Nyerere to form a united movement with Nkomo as president, Muzorewa as vice president and Ndabaningi Sithole as secretary general. Nyerere accused ZANU of being "married to disunity" and described Chitepo as a "black Napoleon".^[7]

On 8 December 1974 however the nationalist parties however agreed to form a temporary united party under ANC and its president ABel Muzorewa. This new united movement would go to congress in 4 months. This unity is generally considered as a facade as ZANU did not agree to the cease fire and in fact had a clause that said *"The leaders recognize the inevitability of continued armed struggle and all other forms of struggle until the total liberation of Zimbabwe."*

The achievement of the detente was that some nationalist leaders who had been incarcerated include [Joshua Nkomo](#), [Robert Mugabe](#) and [Ndabaningi Sithole](#) were released after a decade of imprisonment.

Internal Divisions

The Badza-Nhari rebellion

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[Tap here for a full article on the Badza-Nhari Rebellion](#)

Also referred to as the [Nhari Rebellion](#), it occurred in November 1974 when commanders on the war front rebelled against the High Command on the rear in Lusaka, Zambia. It has been one of the major significant events to have happened during the [detente](#) period. The rebellion was led by Thomas Nhari whose real name was [Raphael Chinyanganya](#) and [Dakari Badza](#) who are said to have had a comparatively large following.^[8]

Nhari and Badza argued that the [High Command](#) and the [Dare ReChimurenga](#) (War Council) was neglecting guerrillas hence they saw the need to present their own situation in a rebellious manner. It was alleged that senior ZANU members were gallivanting at the expense of efforts on the war front. In regard of this, the rebellion can be viewed as a class struggle between those in power and the cadres. They captured some senior ZANU and ZANLA leaders at Chifombo Training Camp in Zambia.^[2] They however surrendered and punishment was meted up on all those who participated and conspired with these two.

It is generally believed that all the conspirators and those who participated in the rebellion were from Manyika.^[2] From this line of thought, the rebellion has been characterised as an attempt by the Manyika for the universal control of the party from the Karanga after most of the Manyikas were demoted during the 1973 elections.^[8]

Sithole who was the then leader of ZANU was deposed from power on the basis that he had capitulated to the pressure of Kaunda and Voster who were favouring the attainment of independence as a result of negotiations. The deposition of Sithole came about as a result of the decision made by the detained ZANU leaders and commanders who constituted the High Command and the Dare reChimurenga.

During the period of the detente, [Herbert Chitepo](#) was assassinated on 18 March 1975 and ZANU was implicated as having orchestrated Chitepo's death.^[9] It has also been argued that Chitepo was one of the conspirators of the Nhari rebellion and this culminated in his death in 1975. After this tragic event, members of the High Command and the War Council as well as senior ZANU PF members were arrested. It was during this period when [Robert Mugabe](#) and [Edgar Tekere](#) were released from prison.^[9] They were then helped by Chief [Rekayi Tangwena](#) to cross the Mozambican border to organise the struggle from there. It was also during this period when a decision was made unanimously by members of the High Command as well as those of the Dare ReChimurenga that Mugabe was to be the president of ZANU PF.^[9]

Though ZANU PF was implicated for killing Chitepo, it has been generally believed that Chitepo had been a target for the RSF.^[9] This was mainly because he had been labelled as the 'Black Napoleon' and he was viewed as a radical.^[9] The death of Chitepo is still shrouded in mystery as many narratives have been produced to try and account for his death.

Factionalism

Antagonism and animosity characterised the liberation struggle and this has been linked to a phenomenon termed as 'struggles within a struggle'. By implication there were various conflicts which were witnessed during the liberation struggles and they have been premised on tribalism. The 1963 ZAPU split which

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culminated in the formation of ZANU has been described as the mother of all splits. For instance within ZANU, it was argued that the Karangas were preoccupied with the idea of ousting the Manyika and this saw the appointment of [Josiah Tongogara](#) as the leader of the [High Command](#).^[2] The High Command was also believed to be composed largely by the [Karanga](#).^[8] This resulted in factionalism.

The formation of Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI) led by [James Chikerema](#) has also been linked to factionalism which saw [James Chikerema](#). Senior ZANU leaders who had supported the idea of letting ZANU-PF to be part of the FROLIZI which was to be a joint military command were demoted from their posts and formed and or joined the FROLIZI.^[2] FROLIZI was short lived.

In 1976, there was the formation of the [Zimbabwe People's Army](#) (ZIPA) which was a united army consisting of ZANLA and ZIPRA forces.^[8] But it was thwarted as a result of ethnic antagonism. This resulted in ZANLA and ZIPRA forces returning back to their tide of fighting against the whites as separate forces.

Within [Abel Muzorewa's](#) United African National Congress (UANC), formerly known as African National Congress (ANC) there were also factionalism as some members tried to defect the Internal Settlement and they tried to communicate with the guerrillas.^[8]

There was also the formation of the the vashandi movement led by [Wilfred Mhanda](#).^[8] This movement was disbanded and this has also been linked to tribalism. This movement has also been implicated in supporting the oust of Sithole in favour of Mugabe.^[8]

Rhodesian Security Forces' counter insurgencies

ZANLA and ZIPRA forces were registering success and in the wake of these victories, the RSF deployed various counter insurgencies to curb the efforts of the guerrillas. There was the implementation of the protected villages (in [Chiweshe](#), [Mount Darwin](#) etc), hot pursuits (process whereby they followed the guerrillas after they had launched an attack), the division of the country into six operational zones namely Hurricane, Thrasher among other. There was also the issue of pre-emptive attacks (bombing of training camps), poisoning of food, water and clothes as well as the use of the Selous Scouts.^[10]

Conscription

Although many people joined the liberation struggle as a result of nationalistic feelings and or volunteering to do so, there has also been the aspect of people being coerced to join the forces. People were press ganged to join the fighting forces and most of them went on to receive military training.^[11]

End of the war

The end of the war was spearheaded by the [Lancaster House Agreement](#) of 1979 which was chaired by Lord Carrington. Prior to the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement, several conferences were organised and hosted to try and bring the war to an end but they never yielded any results. In 1976, for instance, there was the Geneva Conference.^[8] In 1978, there was the signing of the [Internal Settlement](#)

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also referred to as The Sell-out Settlement which was however botched as it was rejected by ZANU PF and ZAPU who were not included in the whole processes.^[8] It was signed by Smith, Muzorewa, Sithole and Chief [Jeremiah Chirau](#) and it led to the creation of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia.^[8]

Many reasons have been put forward which led the fighting parties to finally come to the negotiation table. It is argued that Smith was receiving pressure from his allies in this case Voster end the war mainly because it was now becoming too costly.^[8] The failure of the Internal Settlement was also pointed as a factor which lured Smith to come to the negotiating table.^[8] Rhodesia was under sanctions as a result of the [Unilateral Declaration of Independence](#) (UDI) of 1965. The fall of the Portuguese empire in Mozambique also enabled the infiltration of more guerrillas from Mozambique and this posed a major threat to Smith's forces.^[8]

On the side of the Africans, pressure began to be mounted from the Front-line States as their economies were also failing, hence they were no longer in a position to support the liberation struggle.^[8]

Legacy of the Second Chimurenga

The Second Chimurenga has become an important aspect of the history of Zimbabwe in general. It has become an important reference point to show the country's unity of purpose which enabled the different nationalist movement to bring to an end minority government. Like any other war elsewhere, the Second Chimurenga has been politicised and manipulated by sectors of the society.

Trivia

The Second Chimurenga was is referred to as the [Rhodesian Bush War](#) especially by those who sympathised with the Rhodesian government.

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