

LMM/026/0002/22

Forward

With the Cooking Stick



The guerilla

The military officials who directed Rhodesia's counter-insurgency war were all too aware that the media of the masses — *pungwes* and *Chimurenga* songs — were succeeding where their own mass media had failed. They could not admit this, however, and responded instead with a new propaganda line: there was no such thing as politicization, they maintained. What was occurring throughout the country was labelled 'intimidation'.

— despite the curfew — the attitude of the people has changed. The ones doing the intimidating, well, it's your *terrs*, of course, along with your basic thug element to back 'em up. The thug element — would that be like what we have in our housing estates in Britain?

Exactly.

Nothing ideological about it?

No, not at all.

Exchange during Rhodesian military briefing, Umtali, 10 February 1980:

What we're getting is that the *terr* is working the *kraals*, staying amongst the locals so as to supervise them, and by his very presence, intimidating. Through terrorism, indoctrination sessions at night

There is no room for dialogue with the Rhodesian soldier on the politicization of the Zimbabwean masses; the concept of 'intimidation' is too deeply ingrained. Rather ask about 'intelligence', the military term for the gathering of information about the enemy, and Rhodesian soldiers are frank, even eager, to concede that their efforts were far inferior to those of the guerillas.

ZANLA military intelligence document¹:

ZIMBABWE AFRICAN NATIONAL UNION
ZANU HEADQUARTERS, CHIMCIO
DEPARTMENT OF OPERATIONS, 28/10/76
RECONNAISSANCE

Since our war is a people's war it thus receives direct support from the masses. The enemy being very cruel to the masses cannot escape their eyes. Since we are a people's army we can surely rely on them as a source of information; usually the masses will tell us voluntarily. But the following points should be paid attention to:

- Try by all means to find reliable civilians, not agents of the Smith regime, in order to prevent false information.
- Extensively consult the information and think it over in order to prevent a one-sided viewpoint. Objectively, the civilian information is one-sided, therefore you must ask a number of civilians, not just one or two. Civilians are just like the six blind men of Hindostein who went to see the elephant.
- In consulting the civilians we should make clear our policy so that they tell us the truth. When asking them, do not lead them in their story.
- Toward the given information: it must be judged and confirmed.

Requirements for Reconnaissance Personnel:

- Loyalty and honesty: The person must be loyal to the people, the party and the revolution. The personnel must at no time vacillate, surrender or fear difficulties. Therefore, the important requirement is political consciousness, otherwise the personnel can turn traitor.
- Boldness: He should be resourceful according to the changing situation. He must mysteriously conduct his task.
- Discipline: He should obey orders and follow commands at all times. He should observe discipline. Furthermore he should report information correctly and strictly, keeping army secrets.
- Spirit: He should have the spirit of loving his comrades, and all should coordinate with each other in their work. In following Mao our army has always had two policies: first, we must be ruthless to the enemy, to overpower and annihilate him. Second, we must be kind to our own, to the people, to our comrades and to our superiors and subordinates, to unite with them. The reconnaissance personnel must learn to help each other when they are in danger. The main thing is to accomplish the task set.

The guerillas were trained to rely on the local people for material support — food, clothing, shelter — and as a source of information about the movements and tactics of the Rhodesian army.

SECRET

SPECIAL BRANCH

S.S.A. POLICE

SECURITY REPORT

Report of:

Station:

Reference:

Signature

Countersigned by

Reliability of Source

A. Completely reliable
B. Usually reliable
C. Fairly reliable
D. Not usually reliable
E. Unreliable
F. Reliability unknown

Accuracy of Information

1. Confirmed by independent sources
2. Probably true
3. Possibly true
4. Doubtful
5. Improbable

PAGE 3 RBVDFB 058 C O N F I D E N T I A L
BRAVO TWO
NTR.

ALFA THREE

(1) CONTACT

AT 210300Z AT UB 546 816 (CHIBWITI TTL) ELMB 1RR INITIATED
AMBUSH ON UNKNOWN NO CTB. ONE CT KILLED. FOL WPMB REC:
PPBH (5155) PPBH (959). NFTR.

(2) FF DEPL

AT 211100Z AT UB 810 839 (MABOSO TTL) ELMB 1RR SIGHTED CT SENTRY.
FFE (2 CDO 1 RLI) DEPL. NO CTB LOC. NFTR.

(3) FF DEPL

AT 211310Z AT UB 562 406 (CHEBA PL) ELMB 88 SIGHTED GP
OF CTB. FFE (2 CDO 1 RLI) DEPL. NO CTB LOC. NFTR.

ALFA FOUR

(1) MIP

AT 210130Z AT UB 633 108 (MADZIWA MINE-BHAMVA) 3 ZANLA CTB
EXPL DEVICE IN COMPRESSOR ROOM CAUSING EXTENSIVE DAMAGE. SPOOR
FOL BHORT DIST WHERE LOST ON TARMAC. NFTR.

(Above) The Special Branch of the British South African Police and the Rhodesian Intelligence Corps collaborated in the preparation of sitreps, a military abbreviation for the 'situation reports' transmitted through sophisticated telecommunications equipment from troops in the field to officers in command posts, for final review by Joint Operations Command headquarters in Salisbury. A coded computerized printout of a sitrep (above) describes: (1) an ambush by elements of a Rhodesian military battalion on an unknown number of 'communist terrorists' and the recovery of certain weapons; (2) the deployment of the 'Fire Force' in response to the sighting of a 'communist terrorist' sentry; (3) the sighting of a group of 'communist terrorists' by elements of the Special Branch; and the bombing of a mining installation by ZANLA followed by the unsuccessful tracking of guerillas' spoor. NFTR indicates 'nothing further to report'.



Rhodesian officials, including the Chief Justice and High Court judges, at a military intelligence briefing in the 'operational area'.

Chuck Hanson, American
Vietnam war veteran in Rhodesian Army:

How would you rate the guerillas' intelligence? Excellent. The best. Even better than Vietnam. They lived with the people, they *were* the people. That's the ultimate factor in a war like this, having the indigenous population with you. They kept the *gooks* informed, with local, tactical, hard combat intelligence, not all the highfallutin stuff we put out — the *sitreps* we relayed, and all that. That's not intelligence, though we had plenty of that. They had the *picannin* who'd run and tell them, 'The soldiers are coming.' That's combat intelligence. The *gooks* had plenty of it, and we didn't.

Dave Brooks, Special Air Services:

The other side had the most infallible intelligence system in the world. It was because of the *ningi*, as you say in Shona — that's a word that means 'what's-his-name'. It's the guy who just sits around all day and does nothing. No one would question him, because it's so natural for them to sit around and do nothing. But in fact he'd be carefully watching all that's going on, and he'd go back and report it all to the *terrs*. It's a difficult system to beat.

Is that what they were called — *ningis*?

No, that's what I called them. They called them *mujibas*.

Leonard Gwanza, shopkeeper, Mrewa:

We had our own local police, you could say. They worked side by side with the boys and they were called the *mujibas*.

A *sitrep* from Combined Operations Headquarters:

PAGE 4 RBVDFA 038 C O M F I D E N T I A L
MUJIBAS. SPOOR FOL BHOOT DIST WHERE LOBT. MFR.



Young boys who served as 'the eyes and the ears' of the guerillas were known as *mujibas*.

Johan Meiring, Defence Correspondent,
Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation:

Was their intelligence good? Amazingly so. Oh, shit — that *mujiba* system! It was those *houts* — mostly teenagers — who were ostensibly herding cattle, or whatever. Those *houts*, they knew exactly what was going on, exactly where the army was going and why. For example, they'd see a *troopie* loading beer crates — next thing you knew the word was back that the soldiers are off to drink beer. Yeah, they evolved a very, very good intelligence system with those *mujibas*.

In fact it was so good I almost saw my ass as a result. We were on patrol and picked up an old guy and made him tell us where the *gooks* were. This old *Af* told us where they were, said there were just a few. So we ambled down there — and ran into about 40 of them. Forty fucking *gooks*! They shot the shit out of us. That old *Af* knew what he was doing.

Akson Bare, student, Chibi:

Every schoolboy around here was working as a *mujiba*, when he went home after school. I just came to be a *mujiba* when the comrades first came in and told us their politics. Then we believed them. Then they began sending us to collect blankets or to look for the enemy. When I was sent to count the soldiers, I went secretly because when you are seen you are shot, of course. You look to see how many they are and what type of guns they have. You must go secretly — if you are noticed, then you are done for.

The soldiers were suspicious of the people around here; they knew all the people around here were for the comrades and therefore when they saw anyone moving about they just had the idea that he's a *mujiba*. Women could also be sent. Even an old man, he could be sent to see what was going on. Usually an old man would not be suspected because he could just go as a drunkard man passing by and they wouldn't think he was looking for soldiers, you see.

Wearing tattered clothes you would not be suspected. Also you could just count them (the soldiers) secretly, not by pointing them, just by watching them, you could approximate their number, you see.

How did you convey information to the guerillas?

We met them at their bases. That is where they would be telling us to go out and look for soldiers, or to go and tell the people to come to the *pungwe*. That is where we would meet and tell them what we had learned. Sometimes, if we could not meet the comrades, we would just make a sign, with the drum. I would hit the drum so many beats — gong, gong, gong — to pass the message that the enemies are coming, so the comrades could know and all the people could run away.

Were you ever armed?

We *mujibas*, we did not have any guns. Sometimes I wished I had a gun but the comrades did not trust all of us, even though they trusted some of us. They could not just give the gun because it wanted courage, you see. If you are not courageous you cannot be given a gun because when the enemy comes you will leave the gun and run away. Then

the gun will be taken by the enemy and that is a disadvantage to the comrades.

Comrade Zeppelin, ZANLA political commissar:

How did you select *mujibas*?

Well you know that saying, 'action speaks louder than words'. You'd find from the action of these *mujibas* — and their intelligence, of course — as to the way one reports to you on situations and developments. That would tell you if someone could be a good *mujiba*.

Also, it was not only the way of doing reconnaissance that was important; it was also the way of giving the message. During the war it was important to give a message in a way in which one who is not a local of that area would not know what is taking place. That is why we sometimes used the drum. Say an enemy is approaching a village or an encampment where the guerillas were nearby, then the drums could be a warning. There were different kinds of beats, so you could easily detect that that beat means this thing. For the enemy's intelligence they relied on these walkie-talkies and that was a problem to us. So often we discovered walkie-talkies that had been given to the people so as to report on us. But our intelligence was better because we trusted the masses. In areas where the masses were united it would be very difficult for any enemy agents to infiltrate.

What the guerillas understood as trust of the masses, the security forces saw as 'subversion of the locals'. An intelligence officer's response to the discovery of a 'subverted' village: interrogation.

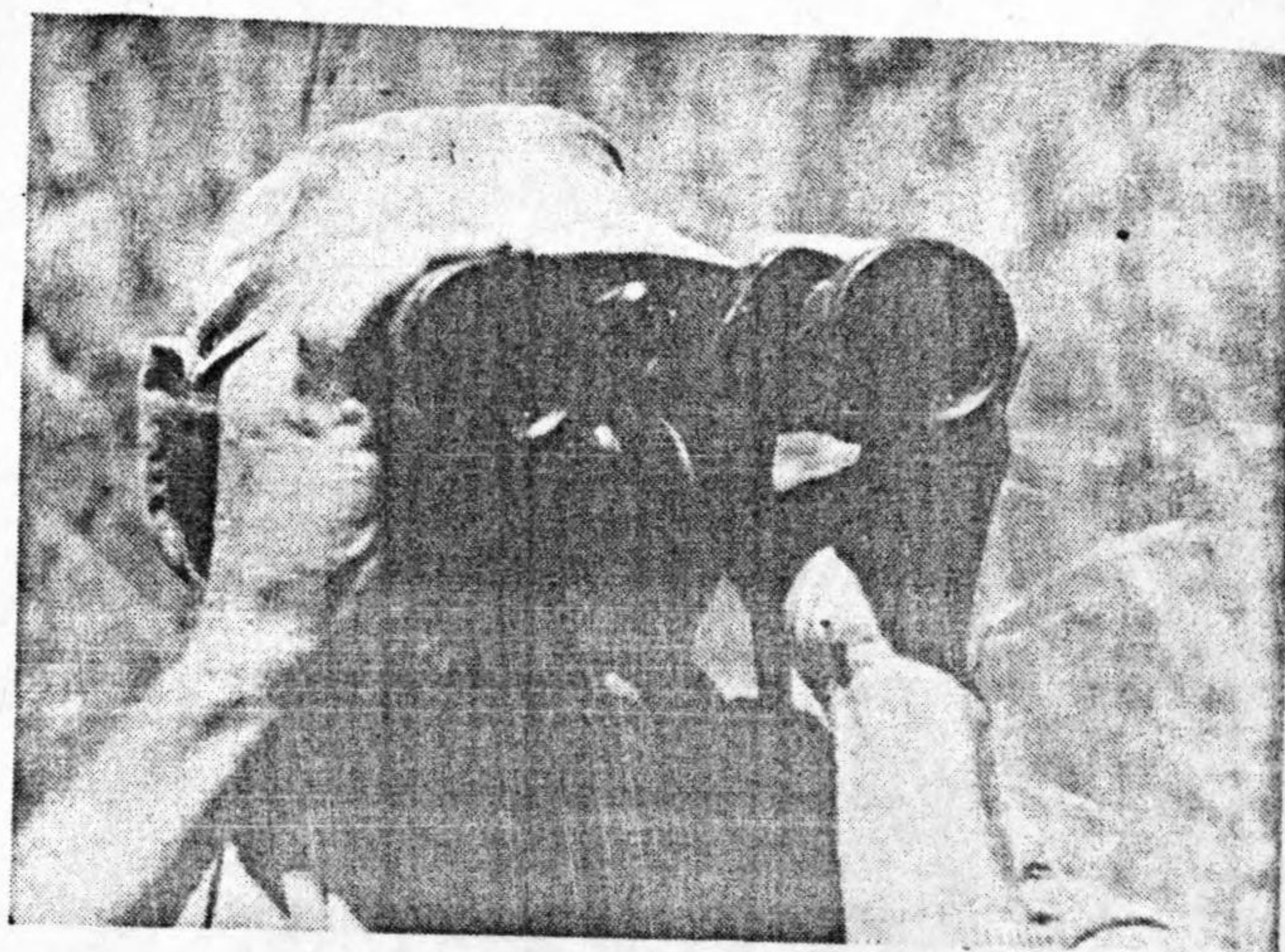
Bob North, Rhodesian Intelligence Corps:

An initial security force operation was to go into an area, pull out the locals, bring them into base, ask them what movements they'd seen, what was in the area, what terrorists, numbers, weapons. As soon as they got back to their kraal, the guerillas would be in and they'd ask them what was happening at our base. It was good intelligence. They would get numbers, troop movements, in the bases themselves, so they got a good inside knowledge of that base.

We did the same thing. We planted people in *kraals* to find out what was happening on the guerilla side, but their intelligence was more effective. They would monitor our bases and you could guarantee after a couple of days of us taking in witnesses we'd be stomped — hit, a base attack — because their knowledge was so good.

I remember one time I found a guy we'd taken in for interrogation and there he was, marking out the camp, pacing it out and writing it down! They were walking around camps taking notes and then taking it back to the guerillas, for sure. So they'd know exactly — to a pace — how far they would need to get to a base camp. That's how good their intelligence was.

Their bush telegraph — that word of mouth network — was by far superior to our intelligence. They knew exactly what the Security Forces were doing, virtually 24 hours a day, through their



runners, the sympathizers, the *mujibas*. Those *mujibas* would give the *terrs* logistics, troop movements, troop strengths, and that was one of their greatest attributes as far as intelligence was concerned.

And I'll tell you something — it wasn't just the young boys who were involved. They had a lot of women working with them. I remember this one time we were sitting on an OP one day and there was this junior *troopie*, sitting with me. I said, 'Do you notice anything unusual about the group of women — there were five of them — walking down the path?' And he said, 'Yes, they're all carrying water down to the river.' I said, 'Well, anything else?' And he said no. I said, 'They're all pregnant, and they all look as though they're the same distance gone — don't you think there's something suspicious about that?' So we went down to check it out. Land mines. Under their jumpers. It was incredible. And they're heavy, those things. Incredible. Five of the buggers. Ten land mines. One down their backs and one around the front, on rope. So I'd say that the women were pretty involved.

The female equivalent of a *mujiba* is known by another Shona word: *chimbwido*. These were the women who cooked for the guerillas, who carried material and messages over long distances and who gathered 'intelligence'.

Ridzai Gidi, ZANLA political commissar:

It was very difficult for us to know how the enemy forces were staying inside a camp or how they were performing their duties; it was easier for the people to go and reconnoitre. For example, if it was a police camp, we could send a woman — one of those women we called *chimbwido*. We could send her, then she could be proposed by a policeman, and during their love affairs she can persuade him to tell her all the duties they carry out in the camp, how they are deployed, their ammunition, and eventually when that *chimbwido* comes back to our base she can tell us all the information which she will have been given by that policeman. Then, automatically we will find it very easy to attack that camp. After that, when we have attacked the camp, some masses would go and try and feel pity for those soldiers or policemen who have been killed there and they would seem to be crying for

their children. Yet they would be going to count the number of casualties. They can even help bury them but they would be counting the dead. Then they would come and tell us all the information they had learned.

Dave Brooks, Special Air Services:

The information that came from our so-called intelligence chaps I'm afraid didn't quite match up to the standards of the enemy. We just didn't know what was going on, though everybody continued to believe and trust our guys. That was really bad, because if we had known how much we didn't

know, our eyes would have been wider open. With the terrorists, it was their penetration, their spy network, that was so damned good. Our farm had a committee that supported the terrorists. You know, along the lines of the communist principle. And I admit I didn't know anything about it. Intelligence came around and they couldn't tell me any different. What a shock when I found out!

Although the concept of *mujibas* and *chimbwidos* evolved in the rural areas, where the guerilla war began, this kind of intelligence network gradually evolved an urban counterpart, as the war spread and intermittently threatened the cities.



Chimbwidos were skilled at carrying heavy loads and thus were able to assist in the transport of war materials.



Mujibas appeared to be young boys playing or men idling, but they were actually on the look-out on behalf of the guerillas.

Bob North, Rhodesian Intelligence Corps:

Sure, the garden boy during the day could turn into your friendly neighbourhood guerilla at night. Eventually gardens and grounds were being searched and weapons were being taken out from the suburbs. A friend of mine had a garden boy and when he searched the *kaya* one night he found grenades, the lot. It was only because of the boy's arrogant attitude that my friend got suspicious. If he'd have played it cool and just been the subservient servant, he would have got away with it. But this friend of mine twigged on. He said, 'No, his bloody arrogance is coming out here, let's check things out.'

But make no mistake, the *terrs* had a good intelligence network in the towns too, where the domestics would meet in beer halls and tell them the situation, what was happening, the habits of the European — and that was very good intelligence.

To be a *mujiba* or *chimbwido* carried quite a risk, for although the government publicly attributed guerilla support to intimidation rather than politicization, any evidence of guerilla support was regarded virtually on a par with armed insurgency.

David Chikwanha, Chiweshe, unemployed:

Once I was caught feeding these boys by the police. I was tortured to hell but I told them, 'Yes, I fed the boys, simply because they were the

people who were fighting for us.' That's why we have been giving them help — so as to topple us from this horrible situation.

Winnie Paradza, nurse, Chibi:

Those soldiers of the regime, they took no chance to ask questions. They would just shoot first. The young brother of my husband, he was a *mujiba*. These young *mujibas* were having their meeting, arranging something, when the soldiers came. They all tried to run, but this young boy, he had a white shirt on and he was shot dead.

And yourself? Did you ever have trouble from the soldiers?

Yes, the police came to me and they said, 'We heard that you cooked for the boys, and the boys were around here and they were giving politics to you.' The first time, I refused to talk with them, but later they came with trucks around here and they had to search everything in the huts. They said, 'You are the one who gives injections to the terrorists,' because I am working in the mission hospital and I am the medical assistant. The other sister is a European, so they thought that I, as an African, I do everything for the boys.

I was taken to go and have — what do you call this thing? — electric shock. I was taken down there to Ngundu (police camp) and I fainted after that. They beat me and kicked me and I had wounds all round. They kept me for about ten days. They said I shouldn't feed the boys, that those are the enemies of the government. And whenever they come to your place you should

come and report at once.

Oh, they were so rough. They took me in that small room, and they took a sort of a cape and they soaked it in water and they put it over me. Then they put something like electricity — I don't know what it is — with a pin here and a pin there (points to breasts) and I was beaten and shocked and then I fainted. And then one of those soldiers said — I could just hear him — 'She's going to die; leave her,' so they took everything out of me and I was just collapsed on the floor. And then they poured water on me. Then they came back and said, 'It is better you tell the truth, that you have cooked for the boys and you are giving injections to the boys. You just admit it and then you'll be freed.'

And my husband was taken too. We went together. They said he knows it and he was beaten in the same way as me. They said he's the one who is buying clothes for the boys and doing everything for the boys.

Was any of that true?

It was all true, but I couldn't say it at that time.

Even cooking for the guerillas carried severe penalties under the regime's 'anti-terrorist' laws, yet many women — the chimbwidos — willingly offered support.



The lifeblood of the guerilla war was this open line of communication with the people. It allowed the guerillas to communicate their goals and needs to the people and the people to communicate the changing circumstances in the war zones to the guerillas. As for communication between the regime's forces and the people, those lines had so badly eroded over the years that the guerillas easily presided over the complete severing of all ties.

Mukoma Chakanyuka — Isn't it so, brother?
Chimurenga song:

Our mothers are being harassed by the *boers*;
They are asked, 'Where are your sons?'
Isn't it so, brother?

They do not say our sons are now comrades,
They say our sons are working on the farms
Where they do not need registration certificates;

But a sub-machine gun
It has no time for talking,
It talks only in action.

Brother Fidelis Mukonure, rural youth coordinator:

There was no communication between the blacks and the whites.

All the time, the whites were being told: 'We are fighting against the terrorists and those terrorists are communists.' That was all they were being told and that's all they believed. They didn't know the blacks, to put it bluntly. They knew their cooks, they knew their workers, they saw them, they talked with them but they didn't know them in reality. They would tell their workers, 'You see, these terrorists are terrible,' and their workers would say, 'Oh yes, sure boss, sure, these people are really bad.'

But they didn't know that that very guy would be sending stuff to the guerillas. They didn't know, because they didn't understand them. They thought they were so stupid, but they were the very people who were fighting the war.

So I could understand the whites, why they were bitter, because they were given only one side of the coin. They didn't know what was actually happening in the bush and underground — that the ordinary civilians, including their own cooks and workers — were part and parcel of the liberation struggle.

*Eddison Zvobgo, Deputy Secretary,
ZANU Publicity and Information Department:*

The regime's forces can only survive if they are fed with information from the people. Once that source dries up, it becomes an army of occupation. It can move into an area, but its soldiers will not be greeted. They will not be given water. If anything, everybody is anxious to betray them. Once they become an army of occupation, they have lost the war, no matter how much machinery they have. That is what happened in this country.

**P.K. van der Byl,
Rhodesian Minister of Information:**

Their intelligence? Meaning the information of the Patriotic Front terrorists? Very good. Very good. First class. They knew what was going on. Why didn't your side know what was going on? Dammit! We couldn't go around conducting a Gallup Poll in the operational area!

Richard Dewa, farm worker, Shabani:

You said that at first you thought that the guerillas could never win. Did you change your mind about that?

Yes, we changed after a time, because we saw the way they were fighting, that it was very wonderful. We found that the boys were cleverer than the soldiers. The regime had aeroplanes, but the boys, they had these things — I don't know what they call them. I know in Shona we say *chimbambaira*. They could bury it under the ground, then when a big vehicle comes, it could run on top of it and then it would burst, then it crashed and the soldiers were killed.

Land mines?

A land mine, yes, that's the thing. I had forgotten the name. Land mine. That's what the boys were using. And, of course, their guns, those small guns. But you know, even more than the guns or the

chimbambaira, what made the boys to win was that they were very co-operative with the *povo* — the people. The *povo* and the boys were working together so well. The *povo* could pass information any time. Any old person walking, if he could just see something, he would run and report to the boys. Even the women were doing that. Because we were all together. We were united. That's the thing that made the boys to win. That's the thing that made us to win.

Ridzai Gidi, ZANLA political commissar:

You see, the people played a greater part in the struggle, even more than our forces. The people are the owners of the country; the comrades were only a military wing. In our operations, most of the spade work was done by the people.

Chimurenga slogans:

Forward with the war of liberation!
Forward with the people of Zimbabwe!
Forward with just causes all over the world!
Forward with the *mujibas*!
Forward with the *chimbwidos*!
Forward with the mothers who cooked for the boys!
Forward with the cooking stick!



The Story of Berejena

Were there other efforts to smear Mugabe's forces which were never exposed in the media? How many attacks against churches, blamed on guerillas, were in fact discrediting operations? The answers will never be fully known, but there are other questions that are far more important. How did the propaganda war escalate to such violent proportions? What forces gave rise to so desperate a response from the regime's soldiers and propagandists?

Some answers to these complex questions can be found in the story of Berejena Mission. It is a story that gives the lie to the ultimate myth of the Zimbabwean conflict — the myth of neutrality. It is the story of the propaganda war and its effects on the hearts and the minds and the bodies of all its participants — black and white.

Father Francis Camenzind (Swiss, Bethlehem Mission Society) priest in charge, Berejena.

I think strict neutrality is not possible. To report to the Security Forces is also to give up your neutrality, to go on one side from the start. You can't be indifferent; neutrality doesn't mean that. You can't just stand there as an island and think, I am here and it doesn't bother me what is going on. From the beginning, I think the test for us was: where are the people standing? Because we had no other stand possible for us. The people were aggressed by the government, so you had to take a stand against the aggressor, and then you can't be absolutely neutral any more.

Sister Radigunda Müller (German, Dominican order) teacher, Berejena.

We had to grow into that. In the beginning, it was just a word for us — neutrality. In the beginning, we were never put to the test. We just heard, 'You must keep away from politics'; that was the theory. But when the war came eventually to us, then we had to test that word 'neutrality' and then I began to realize that in a way neutrality just meant an escape from coming to a decision. Where are you, really? Just wanting to evade the issue, that's what neutrality means, and we cannot be neutral because to be neutral would be to agree with the government. If I just sit back and do nothing, that means I agree; not saying anything, just being neutral, means consent. And so I cannot just remain neutral by doing nothing.

And then also we came to realize that this struggle was a struggle of our people and we had come here for the sake of our people. It wasn't just a power struggle; it was a struggle for social justice. And therefore we couldn't remain neutral. With our convictions, it just didn't make sense to remain neutral.

The chapel at Berejena, Tribal Trust Land, Victoria Falls country.

When did you first learn that the war had begun in earnest?

Of armed struggle, only when we heard that guerillas had come in up north, that there were incidents. That there was a national struggle, we had known long before. I remember the unrest in Bulawayo right after I first came to the mission in the early sixties. We even had anti-government actions here. There was a government cattle dip just outside the mission that was burnt. That

was the first incident here, when that thing went up in flames. I remember watching it at night.

But since the war was coming in from the north, we always thought, we are in the south, so by the time it reaches us, surely it will all be over, because they would have to pass Salisbury and then something will have to stop it. It came so suddenly to us. We thought we were the safest, that it wouldn't come to us, because we are so near to South Africa, and the furthest away from the north. Then when Mozambique became independent, it came in from the east and it went very fast then. We had hardly time to think. It came then really suddenly upon us.

Sharing experiences through the mission network provided some advice, some warning, some comfort, but each community soon found that in the end, only their lived experiences taught them how to resolve the contradiction of neutrality.

Letter from one missionary to another, 1979:

My dear brother in Christ,

From what you tell me, it sounds as if the war is now moving into your area and you are rapidly finding yourself in the same situation we were in a few years ago. I think it may be helpful to you to know of some of our experiences.

First of all, the most important thing is that our continued presence in this area depends on our relationship with the local people. At this mission we are fortunate in that our relationship has been good over the years. I think the people have seen the mission as being concerned for the sufferings of the people, and as having been of real help to them. However I know of some missions where this has not been the case. In these places the people have felt that the missionaries looked down on the people and treated them roughly. At such missions the missionaries have had to leave.

What happens is that the guerillas gradually move into a new area, and they will ask the people about the situation in that area. Who are helping the people? Who are oppressing the people? Which white farmers in the area treat their employees badly? Are the missionaries working to help the people, or are they simply colonialist oppressors? This is a time when old grudges may be brought up.

But from what I know of your mission, the people will speak well of you. This means that, after preliminary enquiries, the guerillas will want to make contact with you. They know well that you may be frightened of them, because of all the propaganda the government has spread about them. So they will do their best to reassure you. Our first contact was with a local man who was sent as a messenger from the guerillas to collect some medicines for them. He came several times with letters, always written in the same form: slogans at the top — 'forward with the revolution, forward with ZANU, forward with Comrade President Mugabe, down with Smith, down with sell-outs' etc. Then an introduction of who they are and that they are the forces fighting for the liberation of Zimbabwe. Then the request for

medicines. Then signed 'Yours in struggle' with about three names. It is important to be able to recognise the letters because you do sometimes get bogus letters from local thieves asking for money. So get to know the names on the letters and get to know the messengers. Letters from comrades always come by messenger. We once had a letter through the post demanding that we dismiss a certain employee; but this turned out to be from someone who had a grudge against this person for some personal reason, and had nothing to do with the guerillas. I would recommend that you always reply to letters, by the same messenger. This helps to establish a good rapport with the comrades, and indicates to them that you are friendly. When you write, use the slogans and sign 'Yours in struggle'. Probably it would also be wise to adopt a nom de guerre, just as they use. This will avoid some embarrassment if the letters are found by the army.

After a couple of weeks of letters and supplying medicines, the guerillas came to visit us. They came one Sunday, unarmed and unrecognisable if they had not introduced themselves. I think this was a bit unusual, especially since it was during the day-time. A more usual thing, indeed what happens now, is that they come armed and at night. The point of the first visit is to see what happens after they go, or while they are there. Remember that they are nervous, because they do not know you at all yet. They will be watching to see if anyone goes off to make a telephone call or use a radio to inform the army. So it is important to spend your time with them and not to disappear to do anything, however innocent, on the early visits. Later on, when they can trust you a bit more, you do not have to be quite so cautious about their sensitivities.

After the first few trial visits, if you show you are trustworthy, then the guerillas will be able to relax with you. We have had them with us in the community common room, on a few occasions, drinking, dancing and talking; really just relaxing. Meanwhile there would be other guerillas placed around the mission guarding, and messengers patrolling the area around the mission to report on any activity. On such occasions they will drink every bit of alcohol they can find, so, as I am sure you realize, they should not be allowed to find too much. If you hope for good conversations on such occasions, I am afraid you will be disappointed. The intellectuals and the thinkers are in Mozambique, directing the war. The fighting men are simply fighting for their country, fighting to rid the place of colonialism, oppression, capitalism, racialism etc. without distinguishing between what any of these particular things mean. Some of the commanders are very intelligent, but they are soldiers rather than politicians.

Some time you may get a letter asking you to come and meet the guerillas at their base camp during the day time. This is a great compliment and shows great trust in you. I go, with the messenger, on my motor cycle. We arrive at a certain village and put the motor cycle somewhere fairly hidden, and I am left there for about 15 minutes while the messenger disappears. He then returns and we walk for quite a long distance, and maybe I get passed on to other messengers. Finally we reach the house where they are staying that day

junior guerilla, armed, comes out and meets me and takes me to the house where the senior guerillas are in one of the rooms. It is a great privilege to be taken into this room, because the most senior people are allowed in there. The first time this happened I was very nervous. I was brought in there alone and everyone was kept outside. I wondered what was going to happen. But, in fact, we just talked about medicines and milk. They asked me to stay the night and to talk about politics. But soon a messenger arrived to say that the army had arrived five kilometres away, so they told me to go home and they moved to another camp.

Since then I have been called out several times, sometimes to talk to them about how the war is going, or to give them some advice on the use of medicines, or to be given money to go and buy supplies for them.

The guerillas are supported by the people in the area of providing a place to sleep and providing food. They will also expect the mission to support that is to play its part in the liberation struggle. I have found the most popular things are food and clothing. The guerillas try to provide medical service for the people and they expect the mission to provide medicines. The mission is able to help with clothing, in that we have a transport and can drive into Salisbury to buy supplies.

If you are only able to help them with some of the medicines, or with a little money, or if they have to wait for shopping until you next make a visit, then I have found them very understanding, as you explain the reason. But if you refuse every request, then this suggests that they are not cooperating and not supporting the mission. To begin with I thought there was some misunderstanding in the conflict, in terms of assistance. But it does not take long to realize that this is completely impossible. If you are not for the guerillas or the struggle, then you are against, and the result is to get out.

Some missionaries have been on very good terms with the local DC and army commanders, going to visit them for tea in the afternoon. It is possible to stay at your mission and continue with that sort of thing. When the army come here to question us, I am always very polite and helpful, but I am sorry that I am unable to help them because I do not know anything about any terrorists. They say I am lying. But they are reluctant, at present, to go through with a missionary. The time may well come when I see no point in provoking them; while at the same time not cultivating their friendship.

It is very important to realize that you are misled by the propaganda put out by the government through the radio, TV and newspapers. Although we know it is largely made up of lies and distortions of the truth, it still has a subtle effect on us. We get the impression that the guerillas are an undisciplined, disorganized group of wild devils, running around without purpose, killing and killing any easy target without discrimination. We tend to think that their leaders are incompetent and vicious, seeking only for their own power. In fact, Mugabe and the other leaders are much more competent, intelligent and

more Christian than anyone in the present government. And the guerillas are following a very definite purpose, which it is important to understand.

The guerillas have two main jobs. One is to educate the people; 'to politicize the masses'; to conscientize the people. This involves telling them what the struggle is all about, to make them aware of the evils of the present system, and to prepare them to create a new system of justice where there is no exploitation. So the guerillas spend a lot of their time addressing meetings with long speeches. The speeches are very repetitive, with lots of singing and lots of slogan-chanting. They do not go into the problems very deeply but, rather like a religious revivalist service, it rouses the people.

Their other job is to disrupt the civil administration and, ultimately, to cause it to collapse by overstressing it and undermining morale. So you do not see major military activity. You see a whole series of ambushes which means a large area is potentially unsafe and has to be patrolled. The larger the area that is made like this, the more people have to be called up into the army and the more money has to be spent on the war. And the whites in the cities will be more and more inconvenienced by having to travel everywhere in convoys outside the cities, having sons and husbands continually in and out of security duties, businesses short-staffed and luxury commodities unavailable in the shops.

Generally speaking, the guerillas will kill three types of persons: oppressors, sell-outs and witches. Many white farmers manage to survive because they are known to be good to their employees, and then they give some assistance to the guerillas. However, if the local people tell the guerillas that a certain farmer treats his employees very badly, then he is certainly going to have his farm attacked. A sell-out, who gives information to the army, is usually accused at a trial one night by the guerillas. If found guilty he will be sentenced to beating or to be killed. Witches are similar. With witches especially, this provides an opportunity for people to settle local grudges and squabbles, and the accusers are the local people who want to be conveniently rid of their personal enemy.

In all this, it is as well to remember the numbers involved in the beating or killing of civilians. Government propaganda would have us believe that the army kills terrorists only, apart from a few civilians 'caught in cross-fire'. Since you now have the war in your area, you will realize that 'caught in cross-fire' means that the army attacked a village thinking there may be guerillas there. They opened fire indiscriminately on everyone, killing women and children along with any guerillas who may have been there. You will also hear of 'follow-up operations'. This means the army arriving at a village and beating people at the village, taking people away for interrogation and torture, in an attempt to find out where the guerillas have gone. And the numbers of civilians involved in army activities of this sort far exceed those beaten or killed by guerillas.

The people know this, and this is why they give their absolute support to the guerillas. They certainly have some fear of the guerillas, but they have fear and hatred of the army. And the army do not seem to realize that the more brutal they

are, the more the people support the guerillas.

If you are going to be dealing with guerillas, then it is as well to remember the strains under which they are living. Unlike a regular army, they are behind enemy lines 24 hours a day. They cannot be off duty until they return to Mozambique after several months. They are trained under a strict code of behaviour, and the section commander carries his note book with him for reporting operations. This book also contains the rules: not to force anyone to give you anything; ask, do not demand; repay people for what they give you; no drinking; no smoking marijuana; no involvement with girls; be courteous. Needless to say, these rules are not always strictly adhered to, particularly the one about drink. But I think, that given the strains they live under, the mission can play a very important stabilizing role. If they feel that the mission is their mission, which is something they have said several times, and that they can occasionally come and relax there or receive help for particular problems, then it gives them a bit more security and I think it can have a moderating effect on their behaviour.

You will have to get used to handling the occasional drunk guerilla. In this they are like any drunk person, apart from the fact that they are armed, and so in this state could be dangerous. They talk a great deal, and are easily humoured. It is certainly not the time to try to have a serious conversation or to criticize them, or start an argument. You can sometimes have a serious conversation or criticize them, when they know you well enough to trust you, when they are not drunk, and when there are no junior comrades or other people in the group. You will not be allowed to make public criticisms, but privately and handled well, it can be very important.

The reason they are so sensitive about public criticism is that it undermines their authority in the area. Their aim is to convert an area from a 'contested area' to a 'semi-liberated area' to a 'liberated area'. The ideal they are working towards is therefore to create a liberated area. This is one in which the army do not enter, in which the guerillas have set up their own civil administration, schools, courts etc.

Since I know you are popular with the people around you, and you are sympathetic to the liberation struggle, you should have no trouble from the liberation forces. That is, unless you decide to argue with a drunken guerilla, or are unfortunate enough to have a guerilla come into your area who is unbalanced or has a grudge against missionaries. For example, Father Pieper was killed by a guerilla who was angry at having been expelled from a mission school many years before. He was not acting under orders.¹⁸

The army or special branch will certainly send spies to see what you are doing, and they will try to get some people on the mission to give information in return for money. So you must be careful and trust no one you are not sure of. Then there are the Selous Scouts. To my knowledge they have made two visits here. On both occasions they claimed to be ZANLA forces. On the first occasion they killed seven of our missionaries, as you know. On the second occasion they took away a wounded guerilla we were hiding. All we can do is to pray that they are not sent to you by Smith, or whoever

in the government gives them their orders.

I think that I have now exhausted the I can give you from my experience. All I can is to pray that God will protect you and people. By staying with your people, you are preaching the meaning of the Incarnation, more power than you ever did in church on Sunday. And if we should also be called to the Passion we must remember that we are witness also to the Resurrection.

Yours in Struggle,

Mushonga Unorapa¹⁹

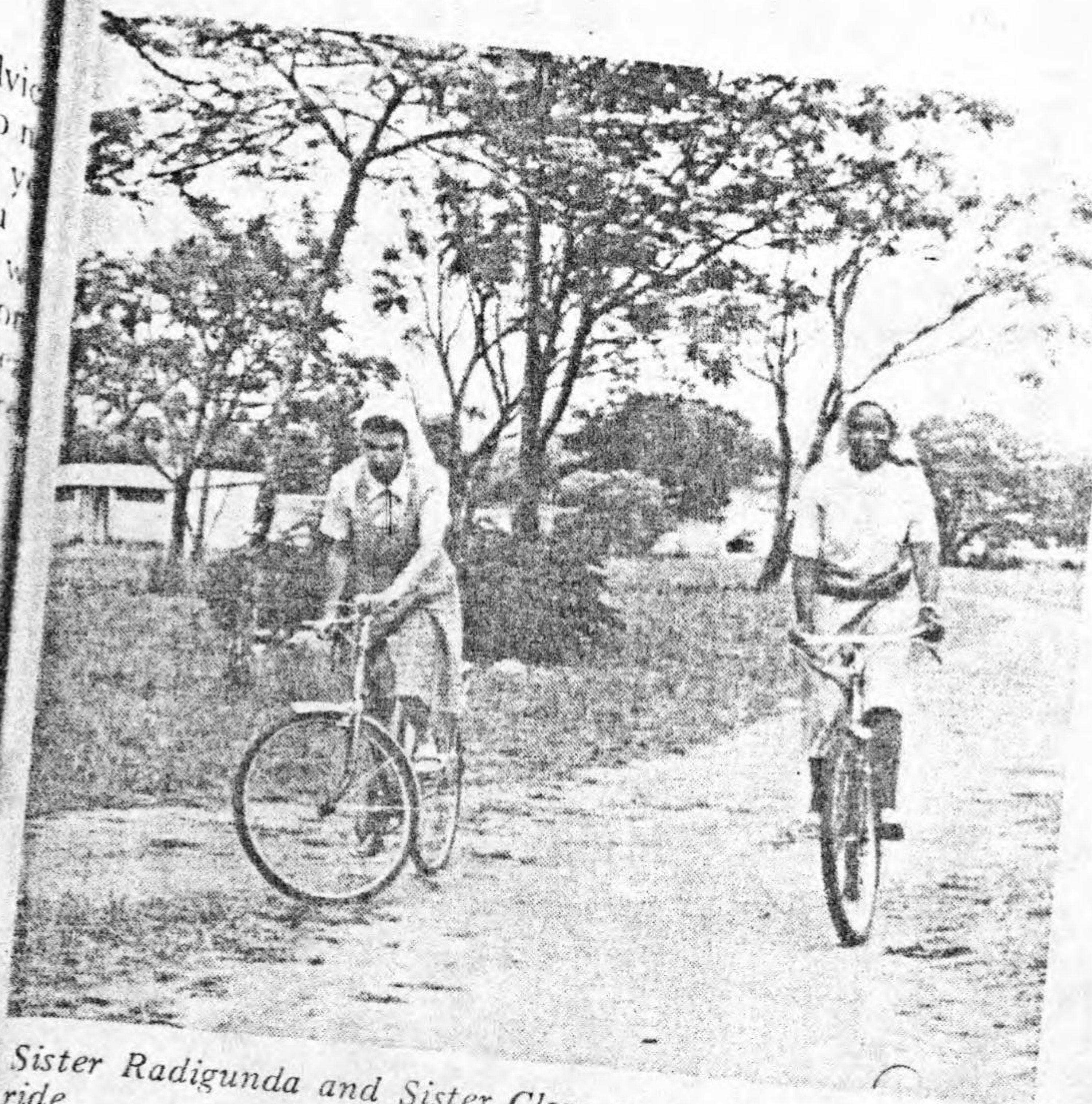
Sister Radigunda Muller, teacher, Bergjeana

When did you first see the guerillas?

It was on a Sunday, the 2nd of May, 1976. On a Sunday afternoon we went out visiting people, Sister Angelica and I. We were on bicycles, and we were cycling through the bush distance — it just needed a second to realize they were. Then we knew: now, these are the people. Angelica said, 'Shall we turn around?' But I said, 'No, running away from armed people is not a good idea.' So we got down from our bicycles and I just thought, we must be brave and face it. So I approached them and I shouted in Shona, 'Maipasa? Tipfurewo?' And then one of them said, 'Signs for us to come towards them and we greet them and they greeted us. And then they asked us where we came from and where the mission was. I was all the time thinking, how far away — and what it consisted of, all the details about the mission. Then they asked us our names and they asked whether we knew them. So I said, 'The people call you *mana*, — you know, the Shona word for boys. Then they said, 'Did you expect us here?' And I said, 'Surely not, we had no idea you were near,' and this they enjoyed, of course, that they given us a surprise.

Then they talked about the armed struggle and their aim of fighting, and striking very much the point that they are not terrorists. They did not for us to think that they were terrorists. 'We are not terrorists,' they kept saying. 'We do not kill unarmed people like you. We do not kill unarmed people. We come here to fight for our country, we are not terrorists.' Then they wanted to know what we thought about the government. And I said, 'You know quite well, I am sure you have heard enough about missionaries. The very fact that we are here and working for the people, should know what we feel and how we think. We wouldn't stay here and teach and educate Africans if we didn't know that we have to be free. They should come up and become independent one day. And we experience the injustices on them, we suffer with them, naturally.'

Then finally they said, 'Now we still want to see you for some medicine.' And then I said, 'You have to come to the hospital. We don't refuse anybody treatment if he comes to the hospital, but we don't give medicine to the people because they don't know how to take it, and that's a dangerous thing, just to give medicine.' And then he said, 'Oh, but we have our own doctor.' So he called the



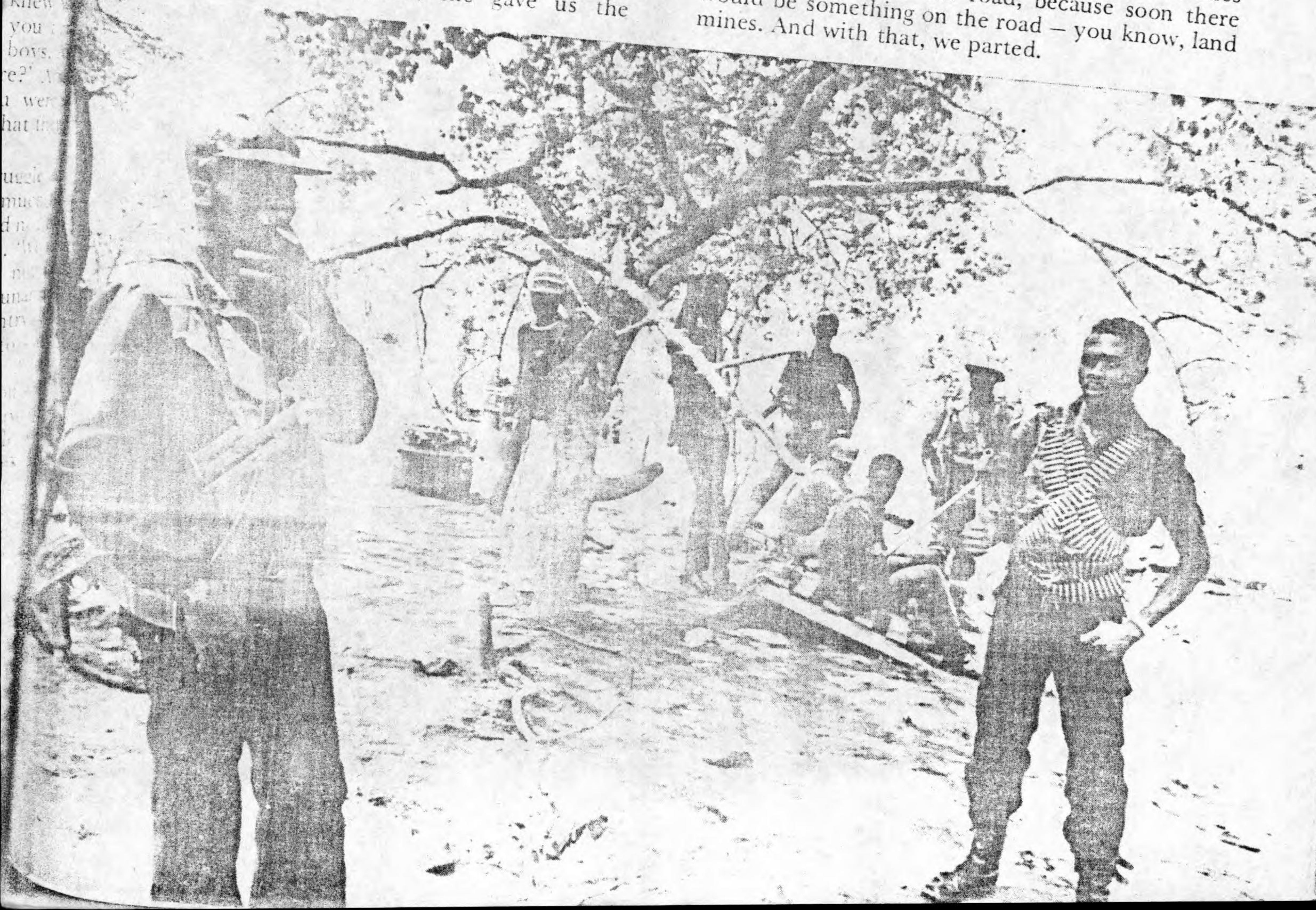
Sister Radigunda and Sister Clara on an afternoon bicycle ride.

medicines, but she said, 'Now we must go and report to the police that we have seen them because that was the order of the District Commissioner.' I said, 'No, we cannot report. We may not report, they especially emphasized. If we go and report, they will come at night and destroy the mission.'

We also worried that we had run into a group of Selous Scouts, those disguised guerillas. Because there were already rumours in the country. The sisters from other missions had told us that soldiers dress up as guerillas and just pose as guerillas, in order to catch people out. And soon after our encounter there were helicopters coming, and our hearts began bumping again with fear, and we thought now, it had all been found out. That was our greatest worry. So we had all these worries, and we discussed it amongst ourselves, and we finally decided, no, we do not report. So Sister Angelica and I cycled back to that same place, and we found the one who seemed to be the commander, and he fetched then the doctor, and we passed the medicines to them. We even also gave them some sweets that we had intended to give to the children in the villages, as a sign of kindness towards them — we knew that boys like sweets, anyway. They thanked us then and were very kind to us and impressed upon us once more not to report, and that they are not terrorists and they do not come to kill people. They want peace, they said, and they asked us to pray for them. And they said we should tell the other people at the mission that they should not be too late on the road any more and they should try not to be the first ones in the morning on the road, because soon there would be something on the road — you know, land mines. And with that, we parted.

doctor and he told us, 'These are the things we want. Just tell us how you want to bring it to us, we don't mind who makes the arrangement.' I said, 'I think it's better that we bring it here to you again', and they said, 'That's all right.'

So we raced back to the mission and all the time I was so nervous and excited. Meeting them meant all the consequences — if you meet them, then you have to report, and if you don't report — so I was thinking of all that could come out of that. Sister Margaret, from the hospital, she gave us the



Without a Gun

The mission had survived its first encounter. The shy, nervous young men the sisters met on their Sunday afternoon bicycle ride were not the deranged terrorists they had learned of in the newspapers and on the radio. They were the *vakomana* that the people spoke of with such warmth and respect. For the guerillas, the encounter disproved their stereotype of haughty, racist whites and confirmed the reports on the missionaries they had heard from the local people.

Winnie Paradza, nurse, Chibi:

Did the guerillas ever ask you about the missionaries?

They did. They asked, 'Are the sisters and the fathers in the mission good to you?' And I said, 'They are so good. They have nothing against the people.' They also asked if I was paid a good wage. And then they asked if those sisters and fathers would likely support the struggle. I told them, 'Yes, they suffer with the people.' And then they said we should send somebody to the mission, to tell them that the boys are around.

The missionaries had been warned by their more experienced fellow-missionaries that a visit from the guerillas would soon be followed by a visit from the police and soldiers, so they knew what to expect next.

Father Francis Camenzind, priest in charge, Berejena:

From the beginning, the CID came to see us, the Special Branch in Ngundu. They came to see me down there. I wrote it all down in my journal. (*Consults journal*) Here it is, July '76. Their first question was, 'What are your politics?' So I said, 'I'm Swiss, and as you know, we are neutral.' (*Chuckles*) Then he asked, 'Are you against the government?' And I said, 'I'm against certain procedures of the army.'

'What is wrong?' they asked. I said, 'It is wrong to beat up people, civilians, because of incidents with terrorists. It is wrong when the army burns down villages.' The officer then justified this way of doing things, saying that people are responsible for the presence of terrorists if they do not report their presence. And then I told him, 'I'm sorry, in this way you only make everybody your enemies.' Then he asked me, 'If the terrorists should call on you for help, would you report them?' And I said, 'I cannot tell you now what I would do then. Should they come I would do what my conscience tells me to do.' Then he explained to me that I had to realize that I would get seven years imprison-

ment for failing to report the presence of terrorists. That was the European; he came with an African CID, and at the end of the talk the African said, 'Never trust these Africans.' The African said that, yes! And the European said, 'You heard it from the horse's mouth!' Then he encouraged me to come over to their office whenever something was troubling me.

But at that stage the mission had already had contact with guerillas, isn't that so?

Of course, I had met them before, so I knew how it feels like. If you are in front of guys who have guns who could shoot you and they let you go, you can't go afterwards and report them. You feel a traitor. They have misery with you, they let you go unharmed, and then you go to report them — you are finished in the area forever. Because they were living with the people already, people were on their side. So you — being a white in this area — you can't be the agent of the white government and go and report them. That's suicide. And it's betraying the cause of the people. From a missionary point of view, that you cannot do — to take a stand against the people.

What about your personal safety? Did you carry a gun?

I told the police and the army from the beginning, 'I will never touch a gun.' They warned me not to go out alone, because they said they wouldn't like to collect more dead bodies. You see, we were just two Europeans down there at the outstation. The other was employed by the state electricity company and he was attacked by the guerillas and shot. He had a gun all the time but he was shot just the same. And I was going around on my bicycle, without a gun. To have a gun — it's hopeless. In this situation, what are you doing as an individual with a gun? Then you don't have the support of the people anymore, who have no guns. You, to be amongst the ordinary people without a gun is already a kind of a defence, because then you are in the same situation. And nobody is afraid of you. Even if you are white you get a completely different reaction compared with other white people who come in armed. So that's the best defence that you can have — if you have the sympathy of the people. If you have no gun you are in exactly the position of the people, and your only protection is the people and you have to stand on the side of the people.

The other important thing, in terms of our survival, was that we had no communication with the government side. That's why the people trusted us. Our phone was cut, so to go and report an incident, travelling by bicycle for 20 kilometres, was practically out. Nobody could ask that from you and nobody would expect that. At the same time, the communication of the guerillas with us was also showing our poor relations with the government.

Sister Radigunda Muller, teacher, Berejena:

The fact that we could communicate with our people here, local people, and with the comrades, that saved us. If we would have had no contact and no communication with them we would have been at a loss. Through communication you build up a relationship.

Father Francis Camenzind, priest in charge, Berejena:

You can't live on an island; you need to know what is going on. Whenever you went anywhere you had to be guided by the population, to know whether there is some danger ahead. When you went out on a bicycle you constantly had to ask, how is it?

Our relationship was far better with the guerillas than with the Security Forces, and I told that to the Security Forces. I told them, 'Each time you come you are against us, yet I've never had a bad word from a guerilla.' Practically each time they came here they came to find the guerillas. They went through the whole mission and were looking for them everywhere. Once they sent seven helicopters to search for the guerillas. And the first thing when the Security Forces come to you, you are accused. Then you are tense. Their approach right away was threatening, so we weren't friendly in response. For instance, we couldn't offer them anything to eat — never. They would have expected it from Europeans, but we told them, 'You forbid us to give food to the guerillas, so we cannot give food to you. Because then in the eyes of the people we'll be on your side and then it's shed for us.'

It's interesting, that the lack of communication with the government was as important as the lack of gun.

If you look very carefully at the places where the guerillas took action against missions you will find that very often these missions had a sign of communication with the Security Forces. For instance, they had a security fence, or some radio communication — that 'Agric-Alert'. So such missions were automatically closed by the guerillas.

The army kept trying to get us to co-operate with them, though. There was this psychological warfare lieutenant, and he tried to get us involved with assisting the army. With this amnesty, they were wanting us to act as middle-man in contacting the guerillas. I never supported it, because it was a game so clearly one-sided. The internal agreement was signed between those who were on Smith's side. If you have not the enemy in on signing something, it's useless. And this is what I always told them when they came to try and get co-operation for contacting the guerillas. I always told them, 'It's first a political problem which has to be solved with all parties which are involved in the conflict. I won't go, just sent by one party, to the enemy. I can't do that.' So I said, 'Until you solve the question politically, I can't help with any contacting.'

Did the soldiers accept that?

By the last years of the war they had gotten to be less civil to us. I remember when I came across some soldiers on the road when I was cycling out

to say mass near our outstation. Their truck had just hit a land mine and they accused me, they said, 'You are responsible for this land mine because you went out yesterday.' It got hotter and hotter and I got the impression that they could just shoot me. The European soldiers got so mad that we could move around without hitting land mines. You see, the people and the guerillas always told us where it was safe.

Sister Radigunda Muller, teacher, Berejena:

If you saw how helpless those white soldiers were! I mean, I understood their plight. They couldn't talk with the people, they didn't know their language. The young Europeans coming with the gun — they always did the wrong things.

And that was how they lost the war. Because they lost the people, that was very clear. And they kept getting more and more bitter.

I remember the day after two army soldiers were killed in a contact with the guerillas near the mission. All the mission staff were called out of school by an army commander, and he told us that he was very much ashamed of being a Roman Catholic himself, seeing sisters and priests doing such things, supporting the terrorists. Then the headmaster of our school said something about being sort of a shepherd to the people, and the army commander lost his temper. He shouted, 'Your shepherd? I'll tell you where your shepherd is! Your shepherd is in Mozambique!'

Father Francis Camenzind, priest in charge, Berejena:

He was referring to Robert Mugabe?

Of course. Who they hated and feared and did not know. But, you see, the Bethlehem Mission Society had had some contact with Robert Mugabe outside the country, so we knew more than the propaganda we got about him in Rhodesia. Many Swiss visitors went to Mozambique, so they could judge the man for themselves. What we found out was that the picture we got from these contacts outside the country and the picture we got through our contact with the guerillas inside was very consistent. Mugabe seemed to be quite a decent man, not at all the monster we were told about on the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation. And, of course, we also listened to the *Voice of Zimbabwe* from Mozambique, and that gave us a different picture.

Sister Radigunda Muller, teacher, Berejena:

We were often accused of being communists. That's what they called us. But that was a slogan of the government for anybody who was against them. So if we didn't comply with their wishes then we were communists, and we all got to hear that word often — 'You're a communist'.

Name-calling was only the beginning. Relations between the mission and the military deteriorated until finally the mission's top priest was assailed by the state.²⁰