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The Origins, Context and Political Significance of the Mushala Rebellion against the Zambian One-Party State^{*}

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Abstract: This essay provides a multidimensional reading of Adamson Mushala's insurgency, the only significant internal armed rebellion against the post-colonial Zambian state. It circumvents the standard depiction of Mushala's guerrillas as South African-sponsored "bandits" and contends that their movement must be understood as the precipitate of the complex interaction between local, national and regional political dynamics. While the origins of the rebellion are to be sought in the tension between the United National Independence Party and supporters of Katanga in the Lunda district of Mwinilunga in the early 1960s, the adoption of a military strategy on Mushala's part was a direct consequence of the increasingly authoritarian and unpopular nature of UNIP's rule during Zambia's First Republic (1964-1972) and the coeval manoeuvres of Portugal and South Africa. The paper ends with an examination of Mushala's war in the North-Western Province from 1976 and the threat it posed to the fragile hegemony of the Zambian one-party state.

^{*} The authors are indebted to Zambia's late Human Rights Commissioner, John Chipawa Sakulanda, without whose precious and dispassionate assistance this paper would not have been written. BaSakulanda's untimely death in 2006 robbed the North-Western Province of one its finest sons. It is to his memory that this essay is dedicated. The authors also wish to thank Marja Hinfelaar and Alida Green for translating some key records in Afrikaans. Earlier versions of this article were presented to Africanist seminars in Cambridge, Kwaluseni and Pretoria. Participants are to be thanked for their stimulating remarks, as are Stephen Ellis, Jan-Bart Gewald and Andrew Roberts, who read and commented on the paper.

Introduction

Between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s, Adamson Mushala led the only significant internal armed rebellion against the post-colonial Zambian state. While making no substantial military gains, Mushala succeeded in destabilising the North-Western Province, the site of his insurgency, and creating an atmosphere of fear and paranoia among local and national leaders of the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP). Despite his notoriety during his life and continuing place in the memory of the peoples of the North-Western Province, Mushala has hitherto existed on the margins of post-colonial southern African history, mentioned in passing and in relation only to subjects more pressing to – and better understood by – the authors concerned.¹ Building on Patrick Wele’s little-known study,² and making use of a large body of untapped archival and oral sources in both Zambia and South Africa, this essay circumvents the standard, superficial depiction of Mushala as a South African-sponsored “terrorist” and “bandit” and contends that his insurgency must be viewed as the precipitate of the complex interaction between local, national and regional forces and structures.

The Zambian post-colonial state, its artificial borders drawn across powerful ethno-linguistic territories and identities, was threatened by the enduring relevance of such allegiances. Mushala capitalized on the strength of local systems of ethnic affiliation,

¹ Brief and inaccurate references to Mushala are to be found in D.G. Anglin and T.M. Shaw, *Zambia’s Foreign Policy: Studies in Diplomacy and Dependence* (Boulder, 1979), 12; J. Hanlon, *Apartheid’s Second Front: South Africa’s War against Its Neighbours* (Harmandsworth, 1986), 12; and P. Stiff, *The Silent War: South African Recce Operations, 1969 – 1994* (Alberton, 1999), 39-42.

² P. Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala Rebellion: The Untold Story* (Lusaka, 1987). In compiling his book, Wele – a publisher at Multimedia Publications, Lusaka, and amateur historian of the North-Western Province, his home region – drew mainly on interviews with direct protagonists of the events and locally produced records. Whilst *Kaunda and Mushala* is poorly organised and lacking in analysis of any kind, its empirical findings are, the authors believe, generally accurate and supported by their own research.

following in the footsteps of chiefly authorities who had expressed their rejection of UNIP's national project by leading their people across the barely visible colonial borders separating an enduring Lunda polity or "commonwealth."³ But his rebellion was also fired by the increasingly manifest failure of the independent Zambian state to fulfil its people's expectations of national social and economic development. He and his supporters consistently acted and saw themselves as the spokesmen of the neglected peoples of the North-Western Province. Finally, the regional (and, during the Cold War, global) dimension of the rebellion stemmed from a geopolitical context in which covert diplomacy and destabilization were the principal means by which the surviving colonial powers and settler regimes – Portugal, Rhodesia and South Africa – sought to neutralize the liberation struggles waged by armed movements operating out of Zambia and other "frontline states."

Adopting an anti-Communist rhetoric, and striving to manoeuvre in a shadowy world of armchair conspirators, cynical intelligence agents and gung-ho military instructors, Mushala and his allies made temporary common cause with the regional enemies of the UNIP-dominated state. In the event, however, the changing profile of South Africa's foreign policy and its détente initiatives towards Zambia frustrated and even threatened Mushala's capacity to wage his war. Mushala's struggle within Zambia, from 1976 to 1982, was fought largely without external support. The insurgency was thus more notable for its political impact than its military significance. For no matter how ineffective and circumscribed, its very existence presented a threat to the fragile hegemony of the Zambian one-party state, rooted as it was in UNIP's claim to speak on behalf of all Zambian peoples. UNIP perceived the rebellion as evidence of the disloyalty of the peoples of the North-Western Province and feared its diffusion elsewhere in the country. Although hemmed in to a provincial base and reliant on the use of violence, Mushala briefly advanced an alternative vision of independent

³ We borrow this useful definition from J. Vansina, "It Never Happened: Kinguri's Exodus and Its Consequences," *History in Africa* 25 (1998), 387, n. 1.

Zambia based on revitalised chiefly authority, capitalist free enterprise, and Western democratic values. For some Zambians, Mushala's ragged band of fighters, inspired simultaneously by anti-Communism, post-colonial economic discontent and the power of magic, were heroes who resisted the one-party state and, in so doing, paved the way for the pro-democracy movement of 1990-91.

Local Roots: The ANC in Mwinilunga District and the *Mayouth* (1960-71)

Even though Kaonde malcontents in the early post-Independence era could draw upon a long tradition of heroic criminality,⁴ the immediate local antecedents of the Mushala rebellion are not to be found in present-day Mufumbwe district, whence Adamson originated, but in the neighbouring Lunda district of Mwinilunga (see map). In the early 1960s, this strategically important area, a British salient wedged in between newly-independent Congo and Portuguese Angola, was one of the few Northern Rhodesian localities not to be won over by the radical version of nationalism espoused by Kenneth Kaunda's UNIP.

[Insert map somewhere here]

For the old and widely respected Senior Chief, Kanongesha Ndembi,⁵ the notions of independent nationhood and "Zambia" had a much less tangible appeal than the revamped Lunda mystique brought about by the ongoing Katanga secession and the promise of an

⁴ Consider, e.g., the exploits of Tumiwa Sakutenuka in 1911, as recounted by S.J. Chibanza, "Formation of the Kasempa Chieftainship," in idem, *Central Bantu Historical Texts I. Part II: Kaonde History* (Lusaka, 1961), 70-77.

⁵ In 1959, the district commissioner, Mwinilunga, "put his age between 65 and 70" and described him as "popular with his people ... because he [did] not 'trouble them.'" Mwinilunga Tour Report, 9, 1959, SEC 2/967, National Archives of Zambia (hereafter NAZ), Lusaka.

ethnically-inspired redrawing of the geopolitical map of Central Africa that it seemed to hold out.⁶ From the beginning of the secession (July 1960), Katangese dignitaries appear to have been in touch with Ndembi and a number of his sub-chiefs. In May 1961, a Mr. “Ja-a Tshilembe,” a Lusaka-based associate of Moïse Tshombe, the Katangese President, visited the senior chief and other Lunda authorities in the North-Western Province with a view to soliciting support for the secession.⁷ This – as later reports from the area suggest – may have entailed the recruitment of “men for the Katanga army.”⁸ Shortly thereafter, Tshombe’s ethnic message was brought to the border area between Katanga and the North-Western Province by none other than the then holder of the highest Lunda political title, the Mwata Yamvo, with which the Kanongeshas had maintained close relationships for almost two centuries.⁹

Kanongesha Ndembi was not the only resident of Mwinilunga with a vested interest in events across the Katangese frontier. Local representatives of the nearly bankrupt African National Congress (ANC) – Harry Nkumbula’s party, from which UNIP (and its short-lived predecessor, the Zambia African National Congress) had sprung in 1958-9 – were quick to identify in Tshombe a potential ally in their uphill struggle against the unquestionably stronger, richer and better organized UNIP. Given the latter party’s explicit Lumumbist sympathies, anti-secessionist stance and appraisal of Tshombe and his “murderous-ministers” as “imperialist puppet[s],”¹⁰ it is hardly surprising that Katangese authorities felt favourably

⁶ D.C. Mulford, *Zambia: The Politics of Independence* (Oxford, 1967), 270-71, 277; E. Bustin, *Lunda under Belgian Rule: The Politics of Ethnicity* (Cambridge [Mass.] and London, 1975), 191-93.

⁷ J.C. Ntambo, “Report from North Western Divisional Publicity [Secretary],” n.p., 27 June 1961, UNIP 1/1/3, United National Independence Party’s Archives (hereafter UNIPA), Lusaka.

⁸ *African Mail*, 28 November 1961.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See M. Sipalo to M.M. Chona, Lusaka, 20 July 1960; M. Sipalo to Q. Armah, n.p. [but Lusaka], 27 February 1961, UNIP 6/7/3, UNIPA; and S. Wina to UNIP’s ‘Constituency Leaders’, Lusaka, 8 December 1961, UNIP 16/1/62, UNIPA.

inclined towards the ANC's overtures. Accompanied by Tshilembe, Ronald John Japau, the ANC's provincial general secretary in the North-Western Province, visited Katanga in May 1961.¹¹ At the beginning of August, Japau had yet to make his way back to Mwinilunga, having been delayed by Tshombe's promise of "some valuable goods to help the ANC activities."¹² As a result of Japau's exertions in Elisabethville (Lubumbashi), as many as five vehicles and an undisclosed sum of money were made available to the ANC between 1961 and 1962.¹³

Their common alliance with Tshombe strengthened the link between the Lunda of Kanongesha and the ANC. As early as the beginning of 1961, Japau felt able to reassure Nkumbula to the effect that the only followers of UNIP in Mwinilunga were people who had "come for work, Kaondes, Bembas, etc. not the Lundas, there are very few Lundas."¹⁴ As the "Lunda-speaking people" learnt to "support ANC just as one supports his family,"¹⁵ Kanongesha Ndembi became the *bête noir* of UNIP's organizers in Mwinilunga. Ever keen publicly to condemn UNIP's activities in his district, he even refused to grant Kaunda an audience when the latter visited his capital in June 1962.¹⁶ Ndembi's ethnic exclusiveness (what a district commissioner [hereafter DC] called his "conceit and ... sense of his own

¹¹ Ntambo, "Report"; B. Mashata to J. Michello, Mashata village, 22 June 1961, ANC 2/7, UNIPA.

¹² B. Mashata to J. Michello, Mashata village, 1 August 1961, ANC 2/7, UNIPA.

¹³ Interview with Winston Japau, Mwinilunga, 1 August 2005. This may have been in addition to the £10,000 mentioned by Mulford, *Zambia*, 241.

¹⁴ R.J. Japau to H.M. Nkumbula, Mwinilunga, 26 January 1961, ANC 2/7, UNIPA.

¹⁵ These were the words used by a J.D. Chimwana in a letter to the *Central African Mail*, 23 October 1963. Paradoxically, Chimwana came from the Luapula Province, where the association between the Lunda and the ANC was much more tenuous than in Mwinilunga.

¹⁶ Mashata to Michello, 1 August 1961; J.M. Sokoni, "The National President's Tour Report of the North Western Province," Lusaka, 25 June 1962, UNIP 5/3/2/5/1, UNIPA.

importance as Senior Chief”¹⁷) and the ANC’s openly chauvinistic message on the eve of the first Northern Rhodesian general elections of October 1962 fed upon each other. Ndembi and most other Lunda chiefs of Mwinilunga – wrote the then deputy provincial president of the ANC – were “sorry and ashamed” to be

hated by other Chiefs, Government and UNIP because that they are the Chiefs who have made ANC to be strong. Even so they said they can not stop it because they are the people of Mwantiyamvwa not from the Nyasaland. ... We dislike Mr. Kaunda. Kaunda is a Nyasalander.¹⁸

Thanks to Tshombe’s resources, Kanongesha Ndembi’s partisanship and Japau and his associates’ organizational abilities and selective use of violence against UNIP, Mwinilunga remained an ANC island in a sea of UNIP.¹⁹ In the general elections of 20 January 1964 – when Congress only managed to win ten out of the 65 seats available to African parties – Japau defeated Peter Matoka, the UNIP candidate, and was returned to Parliament with a comfortable majority. Despite UNIP’s countrywide electoral success, the new rulers of independent Zambia were profoundly disturbed by their fiasco in Mwinilunga.²⁰ For not only did Mwinilunga abut the potentially explosive Zambian borders with the Congo and Angola, but the rejection of UNIP by the Lunda of the district also militated against the party’s

¹⁷ Mwinilunga Tour Report, 9, 1959.

¹⁸ B. Mashata to H.M. Nkumbula, Mashata village, 28 June 1962, ANC 2/7, UNIPA. On the ANC’s anti-Malawian campaign from 1960-61, see G. Macola, “Harry Nkumbula, UNIP and the Roots of Authoritarianism in Nationalist Zambia,” in M. Hinfelaar, J.-B. Gewald and G. Macola, eds., *One Zambia, Many Histories: Towards a History of Post-Colonial Zambia* (Leiden, forthcoming).

¹⁹ On Congress’ violence in Mwinilunga district, see, e.g., D.S. Kambilumbilu to DC (Mwinilunga), Mwinilunga, 20 June 1963, UNIP 5/3/1/8, UNIPA; and F.N. Bulawayo to M.M. Chona, Mwinilunga, 10 October 1963, UNIP 5/3/1/17, UNIPA.

²⁰ See, e.g., *Central African Mail*, 28 January 1964.

sustained efforts to present itself as the sole legitimate embodiment of the blossoming nation and to portray the ANC as a moribund tribal organization, limited to the Tonga-speaking areas of the Central and Southern Provinces.

Following the elections, the direction of political violence in Mwinilunga changed abruptly, and the ANC found itself on the receiving end of an aggressive campaign of intimidation of the part of UNIP. On 22 January, as Kaunda was being sworn in as prime minister, UNIP activists in chief Ntambo's area assaulted ANC's members, leaving four of their number "badly beaten up and injured."²¹ Strong pressures were brought to bear on Japau to cross the floor and join the ruling party. When Japau stood firm, UNIP youths went on the rampage in his home village near the Kampemba stream. They "started beating the people and burned houses and ended in assassination of Philip Samubaza Malichi of Mwinilunga village by shooting him with bow and arrows ... and the culprits were not arrested."²² Kanongesha Ndembi, who was perhaps underestimating UNIP's determination to "crush and smash" the ANC in Mwinilunga,²³ remained defiant to the end. As late as June 1964, he was still urging his people "to kill all UNIP" and declaring "that he was a 100% ANC member."²⁴ But for all his bombast, the old chief's days were now numbered. Sometime in November 1965, having been openly threatened with deposition on several occasions, Ndembi and a sizeable group of his followers (variously estimated at between "some hundreds" and several "thousands") crossed the border into neighbouring Lunda areas of Angola, just as a menacing motorcade

²¹ M.L. Samudengu to M.M. Chona, Ntambo village, 27 February 1964, UNIP 5/3/1/20, UNIPA.

²² R.J. Japau, "The Decadent and De Facto of the Political Dodgers and Malediction in North-Western Province," n.p., n.d. [but 1973-1977(?)], typescript in the possession of Mika Larson Japau.

²³ Political Assistant to the Resident Minister (North-Western Province) to UNIP Regional Secretaries (North-Western Province), Solwezi, 20 August 1965, UNIP 5/3/2/21, UNIPA.

²⁴ "Four Teachers" to DC (Mwinilunga), Kanongesha village, 10 June 1964, ANC 2/7, UNIPA.

led by Resident Minister H.M. Kikombe, and consisting of “all Chiefs, elected Councillors, Police, Messengers, Party Officials and Party Youths,” was approaching its capital.²⁵

It is likely that Ndembi or some of his closest advisers had already established contact with Portuguese authorities before their hurried flight to Angola. For after the death of the senior chief in a road accident at the end of December 1965, the Lunda exiles – now under the leadership of John Samawino, one of the late chief’s councillors and the ANC’s provincial general secretary since Japau’s election to Parliament – regrouped in Calunda, some fifty kilometres from the Zambian border, where they began to be trained by the Portuguese military as a counter-guerrilla force to be used against the Zambia-based insurgents of the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA). Although smaller and less effective, the Zambian *mayouth* (as the Lunda trainees became known locally) were not unlike the *Flèches Noires*, the contingent of former Katangese gendarmes whom the Portuguese were then starting to employ against Angolan nationalist bases inside the Congo and who would later form the kernel of the *Front pour la Libération Nationale du Congo* (FLNC).²⁶

Throughout 1966, MP Japau – who still supported Tshombe’s dreams of ethnic restitution and who appears to have become increasingly convinced that only military action could unseat UNIP from power – kept in touch with Samawino and did his best to provide the

²⁵ Japau, “Malediction in North-Western Province.” According to Japau, the chief was frightened because “nobody knew” the reason for the minister’s visit. Given the strength of his escort, however, it is not unreasonable to surmise that Kikombe had in fact been entrusted with the delicate task of serving the senior chief with a deposition order. For conflicting estimates of the size of the fleeing Lunda contingent, cf. Japau, “Malediction in North-Western Province” and interview with Senior Chief Kanongesha, Mwinilunga, 1 August 2005. Anglin and Shaw, *Zambia’s Foreign Policy*, 33, n. 6, wrongly date the flight of Ndembi Kanongesha to February 1965.

²⁶ C. Young and T. Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, 1985), 255; I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo: de l’héritage ancien à la République Démocratique* (Brussels, 1998), 755-56; and interview with Deogratias Symba, Kitwe, 4 August 2005.

mayouth with fresh recruits from Mwinilunga. Kaunda hinted darkly at these subversive movements when he presided over the installation of a new, UNIP-sponsored Kanongesha in June 1966. After warning the new senior chief to “keep in line,” the President “said he was keeping certain trouble-makers in the district under ‘very careful watch. I warn them that they will be dealt with very very severely if the occasion should arise.’”²⁷ At the end of the year, Japau’s activities were openly denounced in the wake of the first recorded *mayouth*’s incursion into Zambia. The people who attacked Musumali village in the early hours of 24 December, leaving one man dead and 31 spent military cartridges on the ground, were not Angolan soldiers, but “members of ANC who are living in Angola and some people who Mr. John Japau recruited.” The local UNIP’s regional secretary concluded his worried missive by recommending that “quick action be taken against John Japau, if not ... many people will die in this District.”²⁸

It was only a matter of time now before Japau was arrested and charged with high treason. The ensuing trial in Ndola’s High Court in July-August 1967 revealed both the solidity of Japau’s links with the Lunda exiles in Angola and the depth of his hostility to the post-colonial political dispensation. The most telling passages of his “New Plan for North Western Rhodesia To Join Lunda and Angola” – a text which Japau wrote between January and October 1964 and which the director of public prosecution sought to employ against him during the court proceedings – read as follows:

“Lunda Empire is strongly opposing to the Zambia Government which has taken over from N. Rhodesia Government which is being run by a foreign Prime Minister ... The Lunda Empire ... does not want to see that the missionaries, settlers and all the white men whose homes have been set up here to be deported ... by the new

²⁷ *Times of Zambia* (hereafter *TZ*), 24 June 1966.

²⁸ L. Kamwandi to Resident Minister (North-Western Province), Mwinilunga, 28 December 1966, UNIP 5/3/1/30, UNIPA; *TZ*, 29 December 1966.

Government which is predominantly communist ... We are to join together with the people of Angola and Katanga to form up a great force but we don't want fighting ..."²⁹

Japau emerged victorious only because his defence was able to demonstrate that the initial statements of prosecution witnesses had been extracted under duress. And though he acquitted Japau, Mr. Justice Evans was "left with the suspicion that [he] and others have been engaged in activities prejudicial to the State, and that this investigation has merely touched the fringe of such activities."³⁰

After his close escape, Japau found it prudent to sever his direct connection with the *mayouth* and to devote more and more attention to Congress affairs in Lusaka.³¹ But if Japau was prepared temporarily to sideline his plans to destabilize Kaunda's government by military means, Samawino and his Portuguese backers were not. On the night between 26 and 27 November 1968, a mere three weeks before the Zambian general elections, the *mayouth* reminded Zambia and the world of their continuing existence with their biggest yet show of strength. Three villages of UNIP's supporters near the capital of Kanongesha were razed to the ground and the local UNIP's constituency secretary murdered. About one thousand terrified villagers sought refuge in the Mwinilunga boma. Among them was the senior chief, whom the *mayouth* viewed as a traitor and who may well have been the ultimate target of the attack.³² About one week later, as the Zambian army and police frantically combed the bush around Kanongesha's, Samawino and his boys struck again, burning down 12 huts in Sambao's village and seriously wounding the son of its headman.³³

²⁹ Excerpts of Japau's memo were published in *TZ*, 8 April and 27 July 1967.

³⁰ *TZ*, 2 August 1967.

³¹ Interview with Winston Japau.

³² *TZ*, 29 November 1968.

³³ *TZ*, 6 December 1968. The authors are inclined to dismiss Japau's allegation to the effect that the raid was stage-managed by UNIP; Japau, "Malediction in North-Western Province."

Samawino had undoubtedly succeeded in bringing home to the UNIP's government the vulnerability of the Zambian border. But most Mwinilunga residents were clearly outraged by the attack and registered their dissatisfaction by abandoning en masse the ANC on polling day. Moreover, the attack provided the ruling party with the excuse it needed to clamp down ANC activities in the district and to justify the arrest of the party's remaining local officials.³⁴ With the ANC all but extinguished in Mwinilunga and local support for their destabilization campaign dwindling rapidly, the *mayouth* must have entered a period of crisis, from which they sought to emerge with a renewed incursion into Zambian territory. In the early hours of 16 May 1971, Samawino and his followers attacked a paramilitary camp in the proximity of Kanongesha's village, murdering one policeman. Police returned fire and killed four of the guerrillas. "The attackers then went on the rampage, ambushed a bus travelling from Kelenge to Mwinilunga and fired on it, killing three passengers and wounding four seriously and 11 slightly."³⁵ The dynamic of the attack suggests that isolation and lack of clear political direction were transforming the *mayouth* into a small, inward-looking, mercenary force, the survival of which depended solely on the goodwill of the Portuguese and their willingness to deploy it against forays into Angola by the MPLA.³⁶ But the imposition of a one-party state in Zambia at the end of 1972 and the violent opposition which it arose among some top officials of the banned United Party (see below) gave the Lunda exiles a new lease of life and an opportunity to recast their political and military strategy.

³⁴ Mention of widespread intimidation on the part of UNIP is made in B.K. Chipango, "Party Report: African National Congress – North-Western Province," Kabompo, 23 February 1969, ANC 7/33, UNIPA, and in D. Mackay to ANC's Administrative Secretary, Mwinilunga, 19 January 1970, ANC 7/32, UNIPA. See also *TZ*, 26 January and 30 April 1971; interview with Winston Japau; and Japau, "Malediction in North-Western Province".

³⁵ *Zambia Daily Mail*, 18 May 1971.

³⁶ Interview with Senior Chief Kanongesha.

The National Context: UNIP's Discontents and the Drive towards the One-Party State (1966-73)

While Japau continued to operate within the framework of the ANC – whose president is likely to have turned a blind eye to his subversive activities – other opponents of UNIP in the mid-1960s came to doubt the effectiveness of Nkumbula's leadership and gave birth to an alternative political organization. Launched at the beginning of 1966 by such ANC defectors as Mufaya Mumbuna, a Lozi courtier and the MP for Mazabuka, and Berrings Lombe, the ANC's former national secretary, the United Front (rechristened the United Party [UP] in May of the same year) became a force to be reckoned with once it attracted a number of UNIP officials who criticised what they characterised as their party's neglect of Barotseland and the North-Western Provinces and its more general inability to match popular expectations of independence.³⁷ The first to leave were Dickson Chikulo, UNIP's former education secretary and the MP for Lukulu, and his erstwhile deputy, Adamson Mushala. A few days after his resignation from the party, Chikulo accused UNIP of not being truthful to the motto "one Zambia, one nation." "If this Government wants unity" – he charged in the National Assembly – "then it should share the national wealth equally. Nothing has been done for North-Western and Barotse Provinces."³⁸ Mushala, the UP's deputy national secretary from the end of May, put it in broader terms.

³⁷ On this broader theme, see G. Macola, "‘It Means as if We Are Excluded from the Good Freedom’: Thwarted Expectations of Independence in the Luapula Province of Zambia, 1964-1966," *Journal of African History* 47 (2006), 43-56; and M. Larmer, "‘A Little Bit Like a Volcano’: The United Progressive Party and Resistance to One-Party Rule in Zambia, 1964-1980," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 39 (2006), pp. 49-83.

³⁸ TZ, 24 March 1966.

“It was true freedom that the people fought for which is not the meaning of the freedom UNIP wants to bring in the country. The truth,” concludes Mr. Mushala, “is that people are fed up with UNIP because of its ideas of oppression and dictatorship.”³⁹

Specifically Lozi feelings of disaffection with the post-Independence dispensation grew more intense between the end of 1966 and 1967 as a result of the government’s ban on the labour recruiting activities of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association in Barotseland and the coeval defeat sustained by Lozi candidates in UNIP’s central committee elections.⁴⁰ More high-profile resignations from UNIP followed suit. William Chipango, who had opposed the central committee’s decision not to reconfirm him as mayor of Livingstone in September 1966 and had spent several months in detention for his troubles, joined the UP in September 1967 and became its national organising secretary shortly thereafter.⁴¹ But the UP’s biggest catch was undoubtedly Nalumino Mundia, a hero of UNIP’s independence struggle, who had been forced to relinquish his ministerial post for alleged malpractices over government loans at the beginning of 1966 and whose subsequent clash with the UNIP leadership had led to his expulsion from the party in March 1967.⁴² Mundia replaced Mumbuna as the UP’s national president early in 1968.

Besides its strong regional bias, the UP’s political programme was not significantly different from that of the ANC. Pledged to the defence of multi-party democracy against UNIP’s authoritarian temptations, the UP espoused a loose right-wing agenda, the clearest expressions of which were its commitment to individual economic initiative and resolve to

³⁹ TZ, 9 June 1966.

⁴⁰ TZ, 21 November 1966, and C. Gertzel, “Western Province: Tradition, Economic Deprivation and Political Alienation,” in idem, ed., *The Dynamics of the One-Party State in Zambia* (Manchester, 1984), 212-13.

⁴¹ TZ, 17 September 1966 and 22 September 1967; interview with William Chipango, Livingstone, 15 April 2005.

⁴² TZ, 29 January 1966 and 7 March 1967.

establish friendly relationships with the white regimes of southern Africa.⁴³ However, what differentiated the two parties was the degree of militancy and enthusiasm with which they set about weakening UNIP's position. Less encumbered than the ANC by a studiously cultivated moderate image, the UP displayed a clear determination to expand outside its original ethnic constituencies and to physically confront UNIP's predictably violent reaction. The UP's attempt to gain a foothold in the Copperbelt in the early part of 1968 plunged the industrial heartland of the country into a vicious spiral of inter-party violence and prompted President Kaunda to bring the party's life to a premature end.⁴⁴ After branding the UP's "activities a danger to national security, peace and order," Kaunda employed the emergency powers vested in him to ban the party and "rusticate" most members of its executive.⁴⁵

UNIP's precipitous action presented Nkumbula with the chance to (re)incorporate former UP supporters into his own party. Within the space of a few months, and after a round of successful negotiations with Mundia and other UP detainees, most members of the banned party were persuaded to join the ANC.⁴⁶ The merger between the two parties accounts for the comparative success of the ANC in the general elections of December 1968, when, to the dismay of UNIP and the surprise of many foreign observers, Nkumbula's party managed to double its parliamentary contingent by supplementing its traditionally safe constituencies in the Southern and Central Provinces with as many as eight out of the eleven Barotseland seats. The results – gloated E. Mungoni Liso, the ANC's national secretary – showed that it was "not possible to have a one-party state in Zambia" and that UNIP's much-heralded ambition

⁴³ See, e.g., *TZ*, 31 May 1966 and 6 January 1968.

⁴⁴ *TZ*, February to August 1968.

⁴⁵ *TZ*, 15 August 1968.

⁴⁶ *TZ*, 27 August and 2 September 1968; and T.L. Kalimbe to H.M. Nkumbula, Livingstone, 29 November "1969" [sic, but 1968], ANC 9/2, UNIPA.

of effecting this transformation through electoral (as opposed to legislative) means was destined to remain a pious intention.⁴⁷

Upon their release in 1969, Mundia and Chipango were appointed as the ANC's deputy president and administrative secretary, respectively. Under their leadership, former UP officials and MPs in the ANC retained a distinctive identity and considerable room for independent manoeuvre – mainly, though not exclusively, in their home-areas in Barotseland and the Kaonde-speaking districts of the North-Western Province, now under the sway of ANC Provincial President Mushala. Livingstone, where Chipango and his right-hand man, Timothy Kalimbwe, resided, became the centre of what the then provincial minister of state called a “terrorist campaign unleashed by the ANC and ex-UP members.” With rumours of “military camps” being established by the ANC in nearby farms, “morale” among local supporters of UNIP was “very, very low indeed.”⁴⁸ As inter-party clashes marred the life of the town throughout 1969, Chipango and Kalimbwe succeeded in making contact with representatives of the South African military intelligence stationed across the Zambezi, in the Caprivi Strip.⁴⁹ Although their request for financial aid was turned down by the South Africans, Kaunda may not have been unaware of their movements when he took the decision to impose a total ban on the ANC in Livingstone district in February 1970.⁵⁰

Whatever its ultimate motive, the ban convinced the ANC's leaders that UNIP's limited toleration for internal dissent was a thing of the past and that the ruling party had now resolved swiftly to move in the direction of a one-party state, regardless of the 1968 electoral

⁴⁷ E.M. Liso to ANC Members, Lusaka, 11 February 1969, ANC 9/44, UNIPA.

⁴⁸ N. Tembo to A.K. Shapi, n.p. [but Livingstone], 20 February 1969, SP 1/14/58, NAZ.

⁴⁹ I.D. Du Plessis, “Zambië: Hulp aan Zambiese Politieke Partye (ANC)”, secret memo encl. in idem to Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 31 December 1970, 1/157/1, vol. 36, South African Foreign Affairs' Archives (hereafter SAFA), Pretoria.

⁵⁰ *Zambia Mail*, 13 February 1970.

results and the support that their organization continued to receive in parts of the country. Nkumbula embarked on what he would later call his “last battle” equipped with real determination and solid arguments.⁵¹ As early as 1966, in a lecture delivered to the University of Zambia, he had equated the one-party state to “dictatorship, fascism, tyranny and corruption. The moment the right to oppose Government is taken away from the subjects of the state, misery and terror will follow. The rule of Law can be ruled out.”⁵² Between 1970 and 1971, with a split within UNIP gathering momentum, and with unmistakable signs of mounting popular frustration at the slow pace of post-colonial “development” in much of Zambia, Nkumbula and the ANC were able to invigorate their ideological opposition with the charge that the proposed one-party state was the last-ditch resource of a discredited and fundamentally weakened political class, rather than the legislative expression of the overwhelming popular support for UNIP that Kaunda claimed. Liso, for one, reminded ANC officials that “Africa’s leaders” tended to discover the virtues of the one-party state once they “realised that more and more opposition [was] building against them.”

This is because they haven’t got the guts to stand up to the challenges of the opposition. They feel their highly placed positions in society are threatened while they still want to retain them. So while they become more oppressive to their opponents, real or imaginary, they preach a certain amount of righteousness – “Unity, one country, one leader” and all the other nonsense.⁵³

UNIP’s leaders – Nkumbula wrote in June 1970 – behaved like “frightened animals.”⁵⁴ The real extent of both their fears and authoritarian inclinations became evident in

⁵¹ Minutes of the ANC’s National Assembly, Lusaka, 10-11 July 1972, ANC 9/20, UNIPA.

⁵² H.M. Nkumbula, “A Speech Delivered by the Leader of the Opposition to a Council of the University of Zambia in November, 1966,” ANC 2/23, UNIPA.

⁵³ E.M. Liso to ANC Officials, Lusaka, 30 May 1970, ANC 9/15, UNIPA.

⁵⁴ H.M. Nkumbula to ANC Officials, Lusaka, 25 June 1970, ANC 7/77, UNIPA.

August 1971, when a highly influential group of UNIP defectors, led by Simon Kapwepwe, launched the United Progressive Party (UPP). The UPP had its origins in the ethno-regional tensions that had come to the fore during the disputed UNIP central committee elections of 1967. Kapwepwe's election as UNIP and Zambia's Vice President had sparked opposition, particularly amongst Easterners, who feared what they characterised as "Bemba dominance" of UNIP. Partly, these divisions can be understood as a reflection of rising discontent in much of Zambia at the ruling party's perceived failure to deliver on expectations of post-Independence transformation.⁵⁵ As Szeftel pointed out, colonial economic underdevelopment and the consequent lack of domestic private capital made the post-colonial Zambian state the focus of accumulation for the aspirant bourgeoisie.⁵⁶ Attainment of (or exclusion from) a position within UNIP and/or the expanding state bureaucracy could enable (or prevent) the acquisition of capital for business, self-enrichment and clientelistic mobilization. Politicians, under pressure to deliver development to their areas of origin, defended themselves by accusations of regional bias in the allocation of resources, which they in turn related to the skewed provincial representation in the UNIP leadership.

Following Kapwepwe's resignation as Zambian Vice President in 1969 after threats of a no-confidence vote by Eastern-based UNIP leaders, many Bemba-speakers in the party became convinced they were being systematically excluded from party positions and began to organise an underground opposition organisation. Following the public launch of the UPP two years later, Kapwepwe, despite his supposed left-leaning radicalism, quickly made common cause with the politically more conservative Nkumbula, who shared his offices with the new party. The potential for an alliance between the two opposition parties meant that UNIP could find itself a minority party for the first time, raising the prospect of its defeat in the next

⁵⁵ Interview with Alexander Chikwanda, Lusaka, 12 April 2005.

⁵⁶ M. Szeftel, "Political Graft and the Spoils System in Zambia: The State as a Resource in Itself," *Review of African Political Economy* 24 (1983), 4-21.

general election, due in 1973. The UPP attracted support not only from the Bemba heartland of the Northern Province, but also amongst organised workers and small businessmen in the economically strategic Copperbelt, as well as the intelligentsia and radical students in Lusaka.⁵⁷ The vast majority of UPP leaders were detained within weeks of the party's launch. Despite the continuing intimidation of the UPP's members and supporters that mirrored the earlier repression of the UP, the party was able to compete in a series of by-elections in December 1971. While the ANC demonstrated its enduring popularity by holding four of its six seats in a situation hardly conducive to open campaigning,⁵⁸ Kapwepwe won the Mufulira West seat despite being prevented from touring the mining constituency. After an assault on Kapwepwe the following month, violent clashes between UPP and UNIP supporters provided the excuse for Kaunda to ban the party in February 1972, heralding the declaration of the one-party state.

After the banning of the UPP, and despite the ANC's robust parliamentary and legal opposition to the planned constitutional move between 1971 and 1972, it became clear to a number of former UP's officials that the leaders of the party in which they had found a safe heaven were not prepared to adopt what to them appeared to be the only viable strategy to stop the one-party juggernaut: armed insurgency with the backing of UNIP's regional enemies. Unlike Mundia, Mushala – who was still based in Mufumbwe as the ANC's president in the North-Western Province and who was by now in touch with the South African intelligence – decided to boycott the negotiations over the one-party state into which Nkumbula was finally drawn by Kaunda during the latter part of 1972. At about this time, Mushala visited Caprivi. However, when, on 11 January 1973, the Zambian police, alarmed

⁵⁷ Larmer, "A Little Bit Like a Volcano".

⁵⁸ *TZ*, 22-23 December 1971.

by rumours of Kalimbwe's recent recruiting activities, closed in on Chipango, it was to Calunda that Mushala, his family and a handful of other followers resolved to escape.⁵⁹

Regional Politics: Zambia, Portugal and South Africa (1969-76)

From the late 1960s, South African and Portuguese military intelligence regarded Zambia as the primary base of regional national liberation movements and a major threat to the long-term survival of the Apartheid state. Angolan, Mozambican, Zimbabwean, Namibian and (to a lesser extent) South African guerrillas were operating out of rear bases within Zambia. In 1970-71, South Africa's Consul General in Luanda repeatedly warned his superiors in Pretoria that Portuguese rule in Angola would ultimately collapse in the wake of nationalist aggression – an event that might herald the end of white minority rule in southern Africa as a whole. The only solution – he believed – was to take the war to the nationalists' bases, inevitably leading to open conflict with Zambia itself.⁶⁰

The aforementioned contacts between the South African military intelligence and former leaders of the Zambian UP should be understood in this context. Growing links with the Portuguese intelligence police, the General-Directorate of Security (DGS) (former International and State Defence Police (PIDE)), brought the presence of the *mayouth* in

⁵⁹ Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 54-57, 79. When interviewed by Wele in the 1980s and the authors (Livingstone, 15 April 2005; Lusaka, 8 July 2005), Chipango denied any direct involvement in Mushala and Kalimbwe's operations between the end of 1972 and the beginning of 1973.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., C.M. Malone, "First DGS Briefing on Overall Security Situation in Angola," 9 June 1971, Luanda, 1/22/1, vol. 14, SAFA. In an earlier report to the secretary of foreign affairs, Consul Malone had argued: "I cannot see how, in the long run, the war can end in [Portugal's] favour – unless, of course, the whole situation were to alter as a result of some internal development in Zambia itself." "Angola: A Survey of the Security Situation, February 1971," Luanda, 9 February 1971, 1/22/1, vol. 4, SAFA.

Calunda to the attention of the South Africans. At some point in 1972, General Hendrik van den Bergh, head of South Africa's Bureau of State Security (BOSS), conceived a plan to provide military training to Zambians mustered by Mushala. These forces were to be used to destabilise Zambia, thereby persuading Kaunda to end his support of Angolan and Zimbabwean nationalists, the South African ANC, and the Namibian SWAPO.⁶¹ According to Jan Breytenbach, whose Number 1 Reconnaissance Commando (Recces) was initially entrusted with the task of training the Zambian dissidents in guerrilla warfare, this operation was authorised at the highest level; he recalls being present at a meeting in which South African Prime Minister John Vorster gave his telephonic approval to bringing the group to Caprivi.⁶² Early in 1973, Mushala appears to have travelled between Calunda, Luanda and Caprivi, working closely with both DGS and BOSS. The relationship, however, was by no means harmonious. As suggested above, after 1971, the *mayouth* seem to have been restricted to defensive operations against MPLA forays into Angola. Mushala's desire to take the fight into Zambian territory led to conflict with the Portuguese authorities and to his brief detention in Luanda.⁶³

With Mushala's closest partisans temporarily gathered in Calunda, the first Zambian trainees to reach Caprivi before the end of January 1973 were a contingent of "one hundred

⁶¹ Stiff, *Silent War*, 39.

⁶² J. Breytenbach to M. Larmer, e-mail of 28 November 2005.

⁶³ "Mushala caused so much trouble that he was imprisoned in Luanda while his followers stayed ... [in] the east of Angola." "Beweerde Aantygings duer Zambie soos in die Pers Gerapporteer [sic, spelling errors in the original document]," n.p. [but Pretoria (?)], n.d. [but ca. July 1976], 1/157/3, vol. 1, SAFA. Despite its title (translated as "Rumoured Accusations of Zambia as Reported by the Press"), the core of this important document, addressed to the South African's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, consists of an internal response by South African military sources to reports in the media describing South African support of Mushala.

Lozi” under the leadership of Kalimbwe.⁶⁴ But by the time Kalimbwe’s men arrived in Namibia, South Africa’s relations with Zambia were changing. South Africa now shared (and indeed helped influence) the United States’ assessment that the Angolan nationalist organisations, which had been forced back from their earlier advances in 1972-73, would not be able to overthrow Portuguese colonial rule in the immediate future.⁶⁵ More urgent in South African and Zambian official minds was the need to settle the Rhodesian conflict. Kaunda and Vorster had first exchanged letters discussing regional political conflicts, and that in Rhodesia in particular, in 1968.⁶⁶ Vorster’s exposure of this correspondence in 1971 had worsened the tension between the two countries and led to a temporary breaking off of covert diplomatic contacts. The 1972 Pearce Commission increased international pressure on Rhodesia’s UDI regime to reach a settlement that would incorporate the Zambia-based Zimbabwean nationalists, who were then having a significant military impact for the first time.⁶⁷ Rhodesia’s unilateral closure of its border with Zambia in January 1973 was lifted after pressure on Ian Smith from Vorster. Although it chose to keep its own frontier sealed as a political statement, the Zambian government – disturbed by deepening conflicts within the Zimbabwean liberation movement and frightened by the likely economic impact of the border closure at a time of declining profitability of the strategic copper mining industry – was by now desperate to bring the Rhodesian crisis to an end. For their part, Vorster and van den Bergh came to believe that rapid resolution of the Rhodesian conflict would greatly reduce international pressure on

⁶⁴ Directorate Military Intelligence to P. Killen, n.p., 22 January 76, 1/157/1, vol. 45, SAFA; SAPA/Reuters Reports, 14 April 1977, 1/157/1, vol. 46, SAFA.

⁶⁵ J.A. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution Vol. II: Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare (1962-1976)* (Cambridge [Mass.] and London, 1978), 235.

⁶⁶ Anglin and Shaw, *Zambia’s Foreign Policy*, 283.

⁶⁷ D. Martin and P. Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (Johannesburg, 1981), 73.

South Africa itself.⁶⁸ Kaunda encouraged them in this belief by reiterating the distinctions drawn in the 1969 Lusaka Manifesto, in which South Africa, unlike Rhodesia, had been recognised as an “independent sovereign state.”⁶⁹ By mid-1973, South Africa was making significant efforts to strengthen diplomatic and military contacts with Zambia, seeking to utilise (reluctant) British go-betweens to bolster their own covert links.⁷⁰

In this context of embryonic détente, South Africa’s hosting and training of the Zambian dissidents became something of an embarrassment.⁷¹ In November 1973, van den Bergh appears to have sacrificed the one hundred Zambian trainees on the altar of regional diplomacy. During Mushala’s detention by the Portuguese, the Lozi contingent was apparently returned to Zambia, only to find Zambian armed forces waiting for it. Most of these men were

⁶⁸ S.C. Nolutshungu, *South Africa in Africa: A Study in Ideology and Foreign Policy* (Manchester, 1975), 189. Anglin and Shaw, *Zambia’s Foreign Policy*, 290, date South Africa’s attempts at re-engagement with Zambia from February 1974 – later than suggested in the present article, but earlier than the Portuguese coup of April 1974, which has generally been seen as a decisive watershed in South Africa’s foreign policy.

⁶⁹ Martin and Johnson, *Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 134.

⁷⁰ In May 1973, as part of the efforts to normalize relations with the Zambian military, the South African regular army replaced the militarised police deployed in No.1 Military Area, which included Caprivi’s border with Zambia. Most significantly, Col. “Rooi Rus” Swanepoel, the officer personally responsible for bringing Mushala to Caprivi in the latter part of 1972 was “recalled.” J. Breytenbach to M. Larmer, e-mail of 25 Oct. 2005; and P. Howard-Harwood to Ministry of Defence, “SW Africa Border,” 29 June 1973, FCO 45/1323, National Archives of the UK, Kew.

⁷¹ The development of South African policies of “détente” and “total strategy” approaches to regional diplomacy are explained in D. Geldenhuys, *The Diplomacy of Isolation: South African Foreign Policy Making* (Johannesburg, 1984), and J. Barber and J. Barratt, *South Africa’s Foreign Policy: The Search for Status and Security, 1945-1988* (Johannesburg, 1990). More recent insights have been provided by P. Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill, 2002).

killed on the spot, with the rest being immediately detained.⁷² Kalimbwe managed to escape back into Caprivi, but subsequently returned to Zambia in circumstances that remain unclear. Quickly apprehended, he and three others were convicted on treason charges in July 1974 and sentenced to death.⁷³

Shortly before the Portuguese coup of April 1974, Mushala's immediate followers were transferred from Calunda to Luanda by their DGS handlers. Mushala's widow, Rejoice, explains this decision by pointing to the need to protect them from the renewed activism of Angolan nationalist forces.⁷⁴ However, it is equally likely that by relocating the leading Zambian guerrillas, the Portuguese sought to ensure closer control over their movements. As a result of the coup, Mushala's supporters in Calunda were granted a form of political asylum in Caprivi in August-September 1974. The agreement stated that the Zambian exiles "will be used as the Republic of South Africa needs them," but that they will "not take part in any undermining activity against Zambia." Mushala reluctantly accepted these conditions, but only 23 of his male partisans, together with 43 women and children, followed his lead. This group was transported to Caprivi on a Portuguese military flight on 17 November 1974.⁷⁵ The Zambians who remained in Calunda appear to have eventually forsaken the military option

⁷² Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 58. Stiff, *Silent War*, 40, fails to provide a clear date for this event. The authors are however persuaded that the massacre of Zambian dissidents on the Zambezi took place at the end of 1973 and that it involved Kalimbwe's trainees rather than (as has also been suggested) a separate group brought by Mushala from Calunda late in 1974.

⁷³ In the event, Kalimbwe was not executed and remained in prison until the amnesty of 1990; Stiff, *Silent War*, 42.

⁷⁴ Interview with Rejoice Mushala, Kasempa, 3 August 2005.

⁷⁵ "Beweerde Aantygings."

and returned to Mwinilunga in 1977, having reached some form of reconciliation with Kaunda.⁷⁶

There is substantial disagreement regarding the extent of military training provided to the Calunda contingent in Caprivi. Whilst official South African documents claimed that training was limited to the defence of the “Zulu” camp in which they resided, Wele states that Mushala’s men were instructed in the use of rifles, hand grenades, bazookas and machine guns.⁷⁷ He also suggests, however, that the group was in practice limited to occasional incursions into Zambian territory to lay landmines and to recruit a few villagers to the cause.⁷⁸ Given the divisions between and within South African military and political intelligence at this time, it would be unsurprising if the Recces in Caprivi offered Mushala and his men significantly more support than their distrusted political superiors in Pretoria had officially approved.⁷⁹ Breytenbach, whose sympathies were undoubtedly with Mushala, met him on only one occasion, during which he gave him a copy of *The War of the Flea*, a popular study of the tactics of guerrilla warfare and their successful application in Vietnam and elsewhere.⁸⁰

In the wake of the Portuguese coup, Kaunda shared South Africa’s fears that an MPLA victory in Angola would create a dangerous and destabilising Communist presence in Southern Africa.⁸¹ Late in 1974, at a time when the *União Nacional para a Independência*

⁷⁶ Interview with Senior Chief Kanongesha. It is possible that some members of the *mayouth* were incorporated in the FLNC and took part in its two ill-fated invasions of Katanga in 1977 and 1978 (Shaba I and II); interview with Deogratias Symba.

⁷⁷ Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 68.

⁷⁸ Ibid. and “Beweerde Aantygings.”

⁷⁹ Regarding this distrust, particularly of van den Bergh, see Stiff, *Silent War*, 39-41.

⁸⁰ Breytenbach to Larmer, 25 Oct. 2005. R. Taber, *The War of The Flea: A Study of Guerrilla Warfare Theory and Practice* was first published in New York in 1965. Numerous editions and reprints have since been produced.

⁸¹ Anglin and Shaw, *Zambia’s Foreign Policy*, 329.

Total de Angola (UNITA) was receiving direct military assistance from South Africa, the US channelled covert support to Jonas Savimbi's organisation through its embassy in Lusaka.⁸² During this period of significant cooperation between Zambia and South Africa, representatives of both countries met regularly in Pretoria and Lusaka. These *entrevues* culminated in the unsuccessful Victoria Falls Bridge talks between Smith and the Zimbabwean nationalist leaders in August 1975.⁸³

It is therefore unsurprising that Mushala's constant requests for South African assistance in his fight against the Zambian government were denied. As a secret South African military intelligence brief subsequently reported, this led to open conflict with his handlers and a dramatic return to Zambia that challenges received wisdom regarding South African support for Mushala:

After he realised that he will not get any assistance and may not continue with an operation from South Africa, he suggested that his only option was to go back unarmed and get assistance from the local communities ... It seemed as if Mushala was not going to abide to the orders and he and his traditional headman [presumably, his "medicine-man," Yotam Chimwanga] were, as a precaution, separated from his followers. Mushala and his headman were held in custody at another piece of land from 23 April until the end of November 1975. When Mushala promised to forget about his plans and comply with the conditions, he and his traditional leaders were sent back to his people. This happened on 29 November 1975. On the night of 7-8 December Mushala and 11 of his followers ran away from the camp. The following morning it was realised that somebody had broken into the warehouse and stolen 10 guns and a small amount of ammunition. It was generally accepted that Mushala was responsible for the theft and that they had returned to Zambia. On the morning of 21 December 1975 it was

⁸² J. Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story* (New York and London, 1978), 59; F. Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa* (Edinburgh, 1986), 112-20.

⁸³ Kaunda's personal foreign affairs representative, Mark Chona, met with Vorster and van den Bergh in Pretoria on 15 October 1974 and 1 April 1975 to discuss the Rhodesian peace process. Chona also met South African Minister of Foreign Affairs Brand Fourie in Lusaka on 21 July 1975. Verbatim transcripts of these meetings are to be found in 1/157/3, annex. 1975, and 1/157/1, vol. 3, SAFA.

discovered that another 9 men ran away during the night. No weapons were missing during this incident ... After this only the women, children and 4 men were left.⁸⁴

The same report notes that South Africa unofficially informed Zambian authorities of the escape of the group. Despite this, Kaunda would later accuse South Africa of having sent Mushala and his men to destabilise the country.⁸⁵ It is noteworthy, however, that the charge was made not at the time of Mushala's escape (when both countries were still tacitly cooperating in seeking to prevent a MPLA success in Angola), but rather in June 1976, by which time the Rhodesia-Zimbabwe détente initiative had broken down and the MPLA's victory in Angola was secure. There were certainly suspicions that Mushala might have been assisted by elements of the South African military sympathetic to his cause and hostile to BOSS. The following month, Pik Botha, South Africa's representative at the United Nations, was forced to concede that Mushala and his followers had been brought to the Caprivi Strip two years earlier, but described this as a "humanitarian gesture."⁸⁶ On that occasion, Botha spoke of Mushala as "a disreputable character, a nuisance and an embarrassment."⁸⁷

The War of the Flea (1976-90)

Following their escape from Caprivi, Mushala and his small group of around twenty supporters trekked north to their home-areas in the North-Western Province. They went first to Mufumbwe, then to the dense forests of Mulumbwanshika, to the north of the Kafue National

⁸⁴ "Beweerde Aantygings."

⁸⁵ Reuters Report, by A. Cowell, 14 April 1977, 1/157/1, vol. 46, SAFA; Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 76.

⁸⁶ P. Botha's Statement to UN General Assembly, 22 July 1976, 1/157/3, vol. 1, SAFA.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Stiff, *Silent War*, 42.

Park. From January 1976, the Zambian authorities began to receive a steady flow of reports of armed robbery and shootouts with local police. In March of the same year, Mushala was in Senior Chief Kanongesha's area, where his forces burned the house of a Rabani Chitenga of Matafwali village.⁸⁸ By May, when Minister of Home Affairs Aaron Milner reported the capture of Mushala's base camp, 14 people had been killed (six of whom were poachers mistaken by the police as members of the rebel group).⁸⁹ In July, Mushala's men burned one village near Matushi and one near Mufumbwe (four civilian casualties), clashed with the Zambian Army on two occasions (three army personnel killed), and broke into a school in the Kasempa district.⁹⁰

In September 1976, three months after Kaunda's press conference linking him to South Africa, Mushala issued a statement denying that he was receiving external logistical support but asserting that, under his rule, Zambia would adopt an anti-Communist stance and open diplomatic relations with South Africa and Rhodesia. Mushala also claimed that his group was targeting government officials, not civilians, in its military actions.⁹¹ Despite UNIP's characterisation of Mushala's followers as mere "bandits," the rebels appear to have taken distinctively political actions during this period, for example issuing written propaganda against the one-party state in the Mufumbwe area in as early as February 1976.⁹² When, at some point in 1977, Mushala returned to Mwinilunga and held a secret meeting with the then Kanongesha, Sailas Kamonda, he explicitly told the latter that his wish was to contest the

⁸⁸ M. Sinyinda, "Crime Notes, 16 March – 1 May 1976," UNIP 16/6/30, UNIPA.

⁸⁹ Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 75.

⁹⁰ "Secret: Summary of Intercepted Messages on Events in Southern Africa. Situation as at 29 July 1976, Division G," 1/157/1, vol. 45, SAFA.

⁹¹ Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 75.

⁹² D.G. Mpundu, "Crime Notes 15 February – 16 March 1976," UNIP 16/6/30, UNIPA.

presidency of Zambia against Kaunda in competitive elections. He also explained that he was fighting to address the marginalisation of the North-Western Province and its peoples.⁹³

Mushala's programme cannot be summarised into a single coherent agenda for political change. Indeed, the rebellion's capacity to deliver a range of widely different messages to potential supporters was, like other rural movements, a significant part of its mobilising power. Mushala did, however, produce a "Plan of Action" that amounted to an alternative vision for the organisation and governance of independent Zambia.⁹⁴ The "Plan" proposed to replace UNIP's "atheistic" government with a federal multi-party democracy – the "United States of Zambia" (USZ) – consisting of sixteen states, each officially headed by a paramount chief. Considerable powers would be placed in the hands of traditional rulers, with "power in the government ... so diffused among different persons so much so that no one person shall be able to make dictatorial laws and impose them on others." Economic development would lead to the construction of more houses, schools, roads, hospitals, and universities, funded by the opening of new mines. Fundamental human rights would be observed, and an independent press and radio permitted. Churches would be "called upon to play a leading role in nation building of institutions of learning without government interference." Trading with Rhodesia and South Africa would be sanctioned, and the USZ would adopt a "policy of alignment with the western world." Free enterprise and economic competition would be supported, state-owned mines, banks and other institutions privatised, and farming encouraged with the concession of the right to buy and sell land.⁹⁵

In April 1976, it was reported that villagers were, on orders from Mushala, tearing down the posters of a UNIP councillor in Musonko's village. The district governor for

⁹³ Interview with Senior Chief Kanongesha.

⁹⁴ The extent to which the "Plan of Action" was practically used during Mushala's campaigning activities remains unclear. The "Plan" is reproduced in Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 152-56.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Kabompo pointedly remarked in his account of this incident that “Mushala could have been caught if the Zambia Army had been supplied at this time [i.e. informed] of the situation by bush hunting him.”⁹⁶ The suggestion of a lack of public cooperation with the authorities was strengthened to imply active collusion with the enemy by Bautis Kapulu, the member of UNIP’s central committee for the North-Western Province, who wrote to Kaunda that “Mushala [knew] very well the movements of our security forces including number plates of the trucks that [were] following him.”⁹⁷ And a few months later, the same Kapulu admitted that because Mushala knew “the area very well and also the people, it [was] very easy for him to organise in this particular areas and be able to amass support from the local population.”⁹⁸ By the end of 1976, 16 people had been arrested for allegedly supplying Mushala with food and/or information.⁹⁹ Distrust amongst the security forces of the peoples of the North-Western Province, particularly the Kaonde, led to violence and brutality against civilians suspected of sheltering or supporting the rebels.¹⁰⁰ Mushala himself apparently believed in the principles of guerrilla warfare expounded in *The War of the Flea*. In an address to his grandly-named “national security council and defence mobilisation council” at his headquarters in the Mulumbwanashika forest, Mushala warned that

⁹⁶ D. Kalepa, “Report to the MCC NWP on Mushala Terrorists Movement,” Kabompo, 1 June 1976, UNIP 16/6/30, UNIPA.

⁹⁷ B. Kapulu to K.D. Kaunda, Solwezi, 11 June 1976, UNIP 16/6/30, UNIPA.

⁹⁸ B. Kapulu to UNIP’s Secretary General, Solwezi, 16 August 1976, UNIP 16/6/30, UNIPA.

⁹⁹ Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ See, e.g., N. Mundia to E. Mudenda, Solwezi, 11 August 1976, UNIP 16/6/30, UNIPA. By this time, having made his peace with Kaunda, Mundia was serving as cabinet minister for the North-Western Province.

“Those who doubt our support should realise that we are capable of carrying a successful guerrilla war for even a thousand ... years. Without people’s support our survival up to the present would have been very difficult. I do not want to impose terror on the people on whose support we depend for our survival and political existence.”¹⁰¹

In 1977, the capture or killing of some members of the original rebel group, including Mushala’s brother and his “medicine-man,” Yotam Chimwanga, significantly reduced the guerrillas’ activities; they never again reached the previous year’s degree of disruption. Accounts of Mushala’s deeds, however, depicted an increased level of violence by the “gang.”¹⁰² It was reported at this time that agricultural production in the province had been adversely affected, for Mushala’s presence made people afraid to go to the fields to farm.¹⁰³ Somewhat contradictorily, accusations of tacit or open support for his activities also became more common. Despite the restriction of his operations primarily to the North-Western Province, Mushala’s frame of reference remained both national and regional. In April 1978, he wrote to Savimbi, arguing that since UNITA and his own “Democratic Supreme Council” (DSC) shared an anti-Communist perspective, they should cooperate along the lines of NATO. But Mushala’s request for supplies of ammunition and mines was apparently not met.¹⁰⁴ Although Mushala instructed the chiefs to direct their subjects not to vote for UNIP and Kaunda in the 1978 one-party state elections, UNIP’s fears that Mushala might disrupt the elections in the province were not realised.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, in 1979 there were renewed

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 87.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 83-86.

¹⁰³ Prime Minister Mudenda’s Tour of the North-Western Province, 9-19 July 1977, UNIP 8/1/107, UNIPA.

¹⁰⁴ Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 88. Mushala’s former deputy confirmed that no aid was ever received from Angola; interview with Alex Saimbwende, Mwinilunga, 1 August 2005.

¹⁰⁵ B. Kapulu to B. Litana, Solwezi, 15 December 1978, UNIP 16/5/13, UNIPA; Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 88.

rumours of localised famine.¹⁰⁶ And in 1980, UNIP's failure to recruit members in the North-Western Province was officially attributed to the danger of violent reprisals from the gang.¹⁰⁷

Mushala mounted a campaign of recruitment and propaganda against the one-party state. He and leading members of the band would travel to villages in Kabompo, Mwinilunga and Solwezi districts, and to the shantytowns of the nearby Copperbelt. They would hold secret nocturnal meetings on the edge of the bush, aimed at those who were discontented with Kaunda and his government.¹⁰⁸ Mushala's lieutenants utilised the familiar discourse of regionally-based thwarted expectations:

"Money from Kansanshi and Kalengwa mines [in the North-Western Province] is not spent on tarring Mutanda-Chavuma road ... All this revenue from these mines goes somewhere else. Why are we neglected? ... the MPs from the Province have forgotten us ... We want the government to be ours so that everything will be ours."¹⁰⁹

Although some villagers would flee as the rebels approached, others would stay and engage in discussion. In this way, Mushala's following grew to a fluctuating force of between 150 and 500 "soldiers" (many of them were actually unarmed) by the late 1970s. The guerrillas would normally camp in small semi-permanent bases, growing some of their own food and acquiring additional foodstuffs and other necessities by trading with villagers, to whom they offered attractive opportunities in a context of economic decline. The rebels would poach ivory and ask the villagers to sell it; the proceeds would then be split equally between them.¹¹⁰

Other guerrillas were recruited to the cause by more forceful methods. Alex Saimbwende was effectively kidnapped in 1977. By 1979, he had risen to become Mushala's

¹⁰⁶ Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 93.

¹⁰⁷ F. Liboma, cited in *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Alex Saimbwende.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Wele, *Kaunda and Mushala*, 92.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Alex Saimbwende.

second-in-command in the DSC. Today, Saimbwende emphasises both the brutality of the one-party state and the allegedly “Communist” orientation of the UNIP government. He also recalls that lack of hospitals, roads, education and other social infrastructure fed people’s malcontent with UNIP. Such materialist ideas ran alongside a profound belief in the power of Chimwanga and his successors’ medicine, the distribution of which Mushala appears to have tightly controlled. Saimbwende says he personally witnessed three occasions when the bullets of Zambian Army soldiers fell away from the body of those wearing charms, carried in a pouch around the neck. Finally, he stresses the importance of bush training to the guerrillas, reporting that the rebels were trained by those who had themselves received instruction from Portuguese and/or South African soldiers. Saimbwende’s descriptions are notable for the absence of effective UNIP or state authority in the remote villages of the North-Western Province. Local UNIP’s officials were amongst those who came and listened to Mushala and his propagandists. Mushala also contacted many local chiefs; whilst few were prepared to offer him active support, a significant number effectively granted free passage to his forces through their areas.¹¹¹

Despite UNIP’s hysteria, lack of outside support ensured that the Mushala group remained small and poorly armed. In November 1982, Adamson was cornered and killed by Zambia’s security forces.¹¹² By this time, Mushala’s reputation for trickery and magical disappearances was such that his dead body was publicly displayed, with photographs of the corpse printed in local and international newspapers. After the leader’s death, most of his erstwhile supporters returned to their villages, reducing the band’s number from approximately 160 to 26. Saimbwende, now president of the DSC, wanted to end the struggle, but was convinced by others that they would be killed if they surrendered. Instead, they used their bush skills to survive in remote rural camps until 1990, when Saimbwende was

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *TZ*, 29 November 1982.

eventually invited by Kaunda to give himself up to the authorities, in exchange for an amnesty that enabled him to retire to the remote farm in Mwinilunga district where he lives today.

Conclusion

Saimbwende's amnesty was one of a large number that was granted by President Kaunda in mid-1990, as he prepared to accept the return of multi-party democracy, which would shortly thereafter end his 27 years in power. Writing in *The Post* newspaper in October 2004, Kaunda himself did not question the customary catch-all description of Mushala as "funded by the Boers to destabilise us. Thank God, we walloped him."¹¹³ For many in the North-Western Province, however, the election of the rebel leader's son, Berts Mushala, as an independent MP for Mufumbwe in 1996 was an indication of the enduring appeal of his father's challenge to the failure of the Lusaka-based government to address the concerns of the peoples of what remains a remote and poverty-stricken part of Zambia. Berts' popularity was noted by the ruling Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), which in 2001 made him its candidate for the same constituency. The MMD implemented many of the policies that Mushala had advocated in his "Plan of Action": privatisation, the right to buy and sell land, an increased role for faith-based organisations in the provision of social infrastructure and a substantially reduced role for the state. While in no way inspired by Mushala's thinking, the MMD's agenda made it viable for its local officials to establish a linkage between their party and the rebel's memory – a linkage aptly symbolised by the appointment of Berts Mushala as minister for the North-Western Province early in 2002.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ *The Post*, 23 October 2004.

¹¹⁴ Discussions with political officials and others, North-Western Province, August 2005.

By mid-2005, when the younger Mushala was removed from his post, the economic marginality of the province was apparently being transformed. The opening of new local copper mines and extensive prospecting for copper and other minerals coincided with unprecedentedly high international mineral prices. This led to widespread speculation that the area could, in the words of President Levy Mwanawasa, become the “new Copperbelt.”¹¹⁵ Plans are afoot for new rail links between the recently inaugurated mines and Solwezi, the provincial capital, and the Copperbelt and Angola.¹¹⁶ Yet questions have inevitably arisen as to whether the supposed provincial boom will actually benefit local people. North-westerners living in the vicinity of the new Lumwana mine pointed to the removal of copper ore to refineries outside the province and were sceptical that any lasting advantage would flow to them. Indeed, Berts’ demotion and his replacement by a Nyanja-speaking outsider from the Eastern Province were perceived as signs that the province’s resources were now too important to be left to its people to benefit from.¹¹⁷ Strong and potentially exclusionary forms of local identity; a cynicism bred from decades of broken developmental promises and imperfect integration into the post-colonial state; a fundamental weakness vis-à-vis the vagaries of the international political and economic conjuncture – the complex combination of local, national and regional forces by which Mushala was made (and unmade) continues to shape the destiny of his province.

¹¹⁵ ZNBC TV, 3 August 2005.

¹¹⁶ *The Post*, 27 April 2005.

¹¹⁷ Discussions with political officials and others, North-Western Province, August 2005.