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Article (Accepted Version)

Alexander, Jocelyn and McGregor, JoAnn (2020) The travelling toyi-toyi: soldiers and the politics of drill. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. ISSN 0305-7070

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The Travelling Toyi-Toyi: Soldiers and the politics of drill

Jocelyn Alexander (University of Oxford) and JoAnn McGregor (University of Sussex)¹

The toyi-toyi is commonly described as a high-stepping ‘dance’ and associated above all with the anti-Apartheid protests of the mid-1980s in South Africa’s townships. Its origins are, however, some two decades earlier and nearly 5,000 miles to the north, in the military training given to cadres of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) in Algeria. Now, the toyi-toyi is as often used in protest against governments led by the region’s former liberation movements as in displays of support for them. Between its Algerian origins and its current incarnations, the toyi-toyi has carried many meanings. We focus here on how veterans of the Zimbabwean and South African liberation struggles remembered the wartime toyi-toyi in oral histories and memoir. Veterans of ZAPU’s armed wing traced the toyi-toyi’s travels from north to south, in training regimes in the military camps of Algeria, Tanzania and Zambia. They remembered it as a defining feature of their army, able to create powerful bonds of loyalty and the physical toughness necessary to survival on the battlefield. Veterans of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the African National Congress’ armed wing, learned the toyi-toyi from ZAPU cadres in shared camps. They agreed it was emblematic of ZAPU’s army, but often portrayed it as an expression of an intolerant, macho militarism that had corrupted MK, above all in its Angolan camps. For all these former soldiers, the toyi-toyi became both a symbol and vector of particular kinds of military strategy, political belief, and masculinist bodily power that provided a means of talking about influences and tensions between and within liberation movements. Tracing the toyi-toyi’s travels allows us to see how liberation movement military cultures were made, moved and revalued over time and across a vast geographical terrain.

Keywords: ANC, exile, liberation movements, military culture, MK, South Africa, toyi-toyi, ZAPU, ZIPRA, Zimbabwe

Introduction

The ‘dance’ known as the toyi-toyi is most powerfully associated with the anti-Apartheid township protests of the mid-1980s. Television screens the world over were filled with images of youth moving to its ‘high-stepping syncopated marching style’ as they confronted police or accompanied crowds at the funerals of activists.² Robben Island prisoners linked the toyi-toyi’s urban spread to the release from prison in 1982 of members of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC). As Murphy Morobe put it, the MK

¹ We owe a great debt to the ZIPRA veterans and Bulawayo intellectuals whose memories and views form the foundations of this work. We would also like to thank Paolo Israel, Hugh Macmillan and the journal’s anonymous reviewers for their comments and discussions, which have greatly enriched our analysis.

² Gwen Ansell, *Soweto Blues: Jazz, Popular Music and Politics in South Africa* (New York, Continuum, 2004), p. 330, cited in Hugh Macmillan, “‘Past history has not been forgotten’: The ANC/ZAPU Alliance – the Second Phase”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 1, 2017, p. 192.

men brought about ‘the translation of the transposition of an art form, or a struggle form, from across the boundaries into prison, from prison into the townships. And you can’t think of the UDF, for example, without the toyi-toyi, you can’t think of ungovernability of the township politics without the toyi-toyi.’³ For South African youth leaders, the ‘toyi-toyi dance’ was ‘as African as big funerals’ and offered ‘an alternative to urban, violent anarchy’.⁴ Scholars have credited its upbeat energy with creating ‘social solidarity’ alongside the ‘militarization of youth culture’.⁵ Songs that accompanied the township toyi-toyi encouraged an identification with MK through lyrics such as ‘your comrade is your blood, your brother’ and invocations of bazookas and AKs.⁶ One former youth activist recalled how, in the absence of guns, ‘The toyi-toyi was our weapon’.⁷ When the ANC became a ruling party, the toyi-toyi evolved again, into an all-purpose expression of protest with an expanded range of targets. This shift was reflected across the region as the toyi-toyi became entangled in the trajectories of ruling parties, opposition politics, and social movements.

This is a fascinating story in itself but the life of the toyi-toyi is an even more remarkable instance of ‘the translation of the transposition of an art form, or a struggle form’ than Morobe suggests. Its origins lie in the military training Algeria offered the fledgling army of the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) in the mid-1960s. For much of its life the toyi-toyi was understood as a military training drill not a protest dance: in fact, ZAPU veterans of this earlier era only grudgingly recognize the township toyi-toyi as a distant cousin of the genuine article.⁸ While these martial origins have been acknowledged, little has been written about the travelling life of the toyi-toyi as a specifically military performance.⁹ Drawing on oral history and memoir, we trace the shifting uses and meanings attributed to the toyi-toyi from Algeria to training camps across the frontline states, showing how it percolated through ZAPU’s liberation army and that of its ally the ANC in strikingly different ways. In the accounts of these former soldiers, the toyi-toyi served as a powerful symbol of particular kinds of military strategy, politics and masculinist bodily power. It provided a means of talking about friendly interactions and convergences as well as deep tensions within and among liberation movements. Tracing the toyi-toyi’s journey and its

³ Fran Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), citing her interview with Murphy Morobe, pp. 158-9. The UDF is the United Democratic Front.

⁴ ‘Notes on Meeting with Brigadier Ernest Schetler of the South African Police, by Mkhulesi Jack of Port Elizabeth Youth Congress, 1986’, G.M. Gerhart and C.L. Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 6, Challenge and Victory, 1980-90* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 447-48, quoted in Macmillan, “‘Past history’”, p. 191.

⁵ Ari Sitas, ‘The Making of the Comrades Movement in Natal 1985-91’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 3, 1992, p. 636.

⁶ Sitas, ‘The Making of the Comrades Movement’, pp. 635-6.

⁷ Former youth activist cited in Michaela Vershbow, ‘The sounds of resistance: the role of music in South Africa’s Anti-Apartheid struggle’, *Inquiries*, 2, 6, 2010, pp. 1-2.

⁸ E.g. Interview, Cetshwayo Sithole, by Jocelyn Alexander and Pathisa Nyathi, Bulawayo, 20 December 2017; Interview, Canaan Sibanda and Miclot Ncube, Bulawayo, by Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Pathisa Nyathi, Bulawayo, 20 December 2017; Interview, Nico Ndlovu, Bulawayo, by Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, 3 August 2018.

⁹ Scholars commonly note the origins of the township toyi-toyi in MK’s interactions with ZAPU, but say little beyond that. E.g., see Janet Cherry, *Umkhonto weSizwe* (Auckland Park, South Africa, Jacana Media, 2011), p. 67; Ansell, *Soweto Blues*, p. 330.

military meanings allows us to focus on the significance of a neglected topic: the role of everyday military cultures in liberation movements.¹⁰ Exploring the meanings former soldiers have attached to the *toyi-toyi* reveals how these military cultures were made, moved, and revalued across a vast geographical terrain, shaping both 'the struggle' and memories of it.

The politics and purposes of military drill

Much has been made of the role of marching drill in the making of militaries. In *Keeping Together in Time*, a book devoted to the effects of the movement of bodies in unison through human history, William McNeill opens with a story about his experience of endless, dusty drill as part of basic training in the US army in 1941. As he recalls, 'A more useless exercise would be hard to imagine', but it 'somehow felt good', a sense he attributed to 'the euphoric fellow feeling that prolonged and rhythmic muscular movement arouses among nearly all participants in such exercises.'¹¹ A British Army recruit of the same era recalled, 'This marching was queer – at the beginning I felt for the first time, almost in spite of myself, that pride in numbers, marching numbers, squad after squad in step.'¹² Alongside these feelings of pride and euphoria, scholars and soldiers have stressed the uncomfortable demands of the conformity required by drill, and the sheer physical brutality often needed to achieve it. Indeed, military institutions' desire to foster automated bodily reflexes through drill play a central role in scholarly critiques of militarization, and in the testimony of soldiers turned dissenters and deserters.¹³

Marching drill – and notably formal parade drill – has also been portrayed as no less than an expression of 'a certain philosophy of life', as George Orwell put it. In an essay first published in 1940, he argued that, 'One rapid but fairly sure guide to the social atmosphere of a country is the parade-step of its army.... The goose-step, for instance, is one of the most horrible sights in the world, far more terrifying than a dive bomber. It is simply an affirmation of naked power; contained in it quite consciously and intentionally, is the vision of a boot crashing down on a face.' He could not imagine the goose-step in Britain: 'In the British army the drill is rigid and complicated, full of the memories of the eighteenth century, but without definite swagger; the march is merely a formalized walk. It belongs to a society which is ruled by the sword, no doubt, but a sword which must never be taken out of the scabbard.'¹⁴ Orwell's stark contrast might well jar, but the interpretation of drill as a readily recognizable performance of politics is a commonplace of both soldiers' memoirs and military studies.¹⁵

¹⁰ See discussion in Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, 'Adelante! Military Imaginaries, the Cold War, and Southern Africa's Liberation Armies', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, forthcoming in issue 62, 3, 2020.

¹¹ William McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (New York, American Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 2-3.

¹² Quoted in Emma Newlands, 'Preparing and resisting the war body: Training in the British Army', in Kevin McSorley (ed.), *War and the Body: Militarisation, practice and experience* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2013), p. 41.

¹³ See discussion in Kevin McSorley, 'War and the body', in McSorley (ed.), *War and the Body*, p. 7; Newlands, 'Preparing and resisting'.

¹⁴ George Orwell, *Why I Write* (New York, Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 19-20.

¹⁵ For diverse examples see Andrew Bickford, *Fallen Elites: The military other in post-unification Germany* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011); Lesley Gill, *The School of the Americas:*

The bodily movement of military drill is thus cast as able not only to instill corporeal discipline alongside ‘euphoric fellow feeling’ and ‘pride in numbers’, but to cultivate and express a nation’s ‘philosophy of life’. These accounts reflect a particular context: the conventional state militaries of World War II. How did the potent possibilities of drill shape the very different armies of southern African liberation movements? Liberation movement armies were products of both transnational solidarities and bitter ructions and divisions.¹⁶ They were typically trained in a host of countries across Africa, the Eastern Bloc and further afield, under the tutelage of instructors bearing diverse military traditions, from Soviet to British, Algerian to Cuban. Many soldiers were trained in more than one place and lived in exile camps whose governance was often unstable and at times violently contested. In these unsettled contexts, cadres attributed particular meanings to training and drill in light of the specific conditions of their wars and their own political ideas, loyalties and military training.

Understandings of the corporeal, emotional and political role of drill in western conventional armies can certainly begin to shed light on the work done by the toyi-toyi in liberation armies. But the toyi-toyi’s movement across space and beyond militaries into popular protest culture also resonates with an earlier episode of cultural appropriation and diffusion – that of the spread of the militarily inspired *Beni* dances across East and Central Africa in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁷ The *Beni* dances developed in interaction with and as part of the fast changing social networks of the colonial period, and took on new meanings as they were ‘translated and transposed’ from military contexts and incorporated into, for example, rites of passage, religious ceremonies or performances in social gatherings that enabled new means of interpreting the powers of colonial authorities.¹⁸ The methodology of tracing the geographical movement and transformations of a cultural form such as the *Beni* dance is revealing in the case of the toyi-toyi too: it allows us to locate appropriations and moments of change in everyday practices, and to interpret

Military training and political violence in the Americas (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2004); and contributors to McSorley, *War and the Body*.

¹⁶ A rich literature on the transnational lives of liberation movements has traced many of the effects of these contexts, though there has been little attention specifically to military cultures. Key collections include Lena Dallywater, Chris Saunders, and Helder Adegar Fonseca (eds), *Southern African Liberation Movements and the Global Cold War ‘East’: Transnational activism 1960-1990* (Oldenburg, De Gruyter, 2019); Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (eds), *Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa in Context: New local, regional and global perspectives* (Claremont, University of Cape Town Press, 2013); Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Blessing-Miles Tendi (eds), ‘The Transnational Connections of Southern African Liberation Movements’, Special Issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 1, 2017.

¹⁷ The classic study is Terence Ranger, *Dance and Society in Eastern Africa, 1890-1970: The Beni Ngoma* (London, Heinemann, 1975). As this and other studies have noted, the drill practices of European militaries seeped into global histories of music and dance in many contexts. Ranger makes this point in the conclusion of *Dance and Society*. Also see the rich collection of studies in Suzel Ana Reilly and Katherine Brucher (eds), *Brass Bands of the World: Militarism, colonial legacies, and local music making* (London, Routledge, 2013). McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time*, situates western military drill in an extraordinarily broad sweep of human history.

¹⁸ For a range of interpretations in east Africa, see Peter Pels, ‘Kizungu rhythms: Luguru Christianity as Ngoma’, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 26, 2, 1996, pp. 163-201; Rebecca Gearhart, ‘Ngoma memories: How ritual and dance shaped the northern Kenyan coast’, *African Studies Review*, 48, 3, 2005, pp. 21-47; and Kelly Askew, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2002).

them in relation to politics and military history. In what follows, we argue that the *toyi-toyi* was a linguistically and politically flexible travelling bodily performance through which soldiers made sense of their military experiences.

We begin by tracing stories of the *toyi-toyi* in the oral histories of veterans of ZAPU's armed wing – known as the Special Affairs Department in its early days and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) from 1971 – before turning to accounts of the *toyi-toyi* in MK memoirs, and finally seeking to make sense of their divergences. The ubiquitous and unstable presence of the *toyi-toyi* in soldiers' accounts allows us to give it a peripatetic and political history, as well as to explore its symbolic and cultural weight.

ZAPU's *toyi-toyi*

The ZIPRA cadres we have interviewed over the past decades have come from different generations and held positions of varying seniority. Many of them have engaged in extended efforts to right what they felt was a denigration of ZAPU's war in official histories propagated by the Zimbabwe Africa National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU[PF]) government since independence in 1980. This gave political purpose to their stories, though it did not create a single 'counter-history' as veterans held divergent views on many aspects of their own war.¹⁹ They are also all men: we have only recently begun to interview veterans from ZIPRA's women's brigade, and we have not sought to include their views here.²⁰ Our focus is on accounts of the *toyi-toyi* as it moved through space and time from the perspective of different generations of male veterans. There is among these men robust agreement on the *toyi-toyi*'s importance as a source of the physical strength necessary to survival in war and on the standing this strength gave to ZIPRA as the toughest of all southern African liberation armies, a claim that robustly asserted a masculinist militarism based on battlefield experience. There are also, however, historical shifts in the political uses and meanings attributed to the *toyi-toyi* that reflected the dramatically changing contexts of ZAPU's war, as we explore here.

In their stories, ZIPRA veterans made the *toyi-toyi*'s journey legible by tracing its passage between distinct 'groups' of ZAPU cadres whose training ordered the struggle's history. These groups carried, redefined and passed on the *toyi-toyi*'s political and military meanings through the medium of transnational training and in a kaleidoscope of different – at times barely understood – languages. Such groups were at first small in number and associated with specific military camps and well known instructors. From 1976/77, however, the *toyi-toyi* became part of a mass mode of induction for the vastly increased flow

¹⁹ See our discussion in Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, 'War Stories: Guerrilla narratives of Zimbabwe's liberation war', *History Workshop Journal*, 75, 1, 2004, pp. 79-100, and '*Adelante!*'. We have worked with ZIPRA veterans' networks since the mid-1990s. In the recent research drawn on here, Zephaniah Nkomo, a central figure in the Mafela Trust, an organisation established to document ZIPRA history and to provide support for veterans and their families, and Pathisa Nyathi, a historian and public intellectual resident in Bulawayo, were invaluable in helping us to identify interlocutors. They also undertook many interviews with us, and offered their own passionately felt views and interpretations.

²⁰ Women ZIPRA veterans' experience of training, camps and war is a central focus of our ongoing research but it is at an early stage. The authors of the MK memoirs we draw on below are also entirely male. We have not, as a result, sought to extend our analysis of the *toyi-toyi* to women's narratives in either case.

of young men into Zambia and, from 1978, new questions would be posed about its efficacy by cohorts of conventionally trained soldiers.

ZIPRA veterans agreed that the origin of the toyi-toyi lay in the revolutionary solidarity offered by newly independent Algeria. Its conduit into southern Africa's liberation movements was through the military instruction offered by the FLN (*Front de Libération Nationale*) in the mid-1960s.²¹ ZAPU cadres, many recruited from among the Zimbabwean population resident in Zambia, were dispatched to Algeria in 1965 and 1966. Actwell Siwela and Moffat Hadebe were among them. Siwela arrived in Algiers with a group of 90 men who had journeyed from Lusaka via Dar-es-Salaam, Khartoum and Cairo.²² They were trained at Bogari under the command of Algerians, but directly by Egyptian instructors seconded under an agreement between Presidents Ahmed Ben Bella (only just still in power) and Gamal Abdel Nasser. Siwela believed this arrangement had been driven by the need to find a mutual language: 'Egyptians were instructors, because we could not say anything in French. They were the people who could at least speak to us in English.' Moffat Hadebe's group of 20 ZAPU cadres arrived in Bogari in 1966, where they joined 70 Angolan recruits from the MPLA (*Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola*). He remembered being trained by both Algerian and Egyptian instructors because, he explained, the Angolans could follow the French by drawing on their Portuguese.

In these linguistically difficult conditions, both men underwent infantry training, learned Soviet marching drill, and spent many hours performing the toyi-toyi. For them, the toyi-toyi was specifically Algerian: 'even *their* soldiers were doing toyi-toyi', explained Hadebe.²³ The toyi-toyi was accompanied by songs and call-and-response, all in a language that was incomprehensible, as Hadebe and Siwela agreed. Siwela: 'So this could have been an invented language, we don't know where it came from.' Hadebe: 'Because it's a military thing, we followed it, knees up here! ... You will be going like this sagah, shaa, up, so it's very ... very hard.' Both men stressed the importance the Algerians placed on achieving fitness through running and the high-kneed toyi-toyi, a reflection of the FLN's own experience of a brutal guerrilla war in harsh terrain. Hadebe held, 'The Algerians were much interested ... in running, because they will tell you in guerrilla warfare to survive is to run. If you could not run you were going to die.' From its inception, the toyi-toyi was thus associated with the harsh physical demands of survival in war and given authority through its association with the battlefield experience of veterans turned instructors.

Hadebe and Siwela held that the key to the introduction of the toyi-toyi to ZAPU more broadly was a group of 20 ZAPU cadres who were trained as officers

²¹ Tracing the origins of the toyi-toyi in the FLN's military genealogy is difficult. As with most liberation movement histories, the formation of military culture through training in the FLN is not addressed in detail in scholarly work, though a great range influences is identified, from the North African troops who fought with the French in Indochina, to the host countries of Tunisia, Mali, Morocco, and Egypt, and training from internationalist allies further afield (China, Cuba, Vietnam). See Ruth Ginio, *The French Army and its African Soldiers: The years of decolonization* (Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 2017), and Jeffrey James Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016).

²² Interview, Actwell Siwela and Moffat Hadebe, by Jocelyn Alexander and Zephaniah Nkomo, Bulawayo, 28 July 2017.

²³ Interview, Siwela and Hadebe.

and instructors at Cherchell Military Academy west of Algiers in 1965.²⁴ These cadres were chosen from among Siwela's group of 90 men on the basis of their higher educational qualifications. The group contained figures who would attain a legendary status, above all Rodgers 'Alfred Nikita' Mangena, ZIPRA's founding chief of staff and commander. In 1967, Mangena's cohort 'opened' the ZAPU camp at Morogoro in Tanzania to trainees, and served as instructors along with, initially, a handful of Egyptian trainers who continued the use of Arabic *toyi-toyi* lyrics.²⁵ Several groups of ZAPU trainees passed through this camp, and were introduced to the *toyi-toyi* and its distinctive bodily performance, songs and chants. Abel Sithole was one of the men trained in 1967.²⁶ A ZAPU member, he had been part of a musical band that raised funds for the party on tours of Congo and East Africa. They had performed at Uganda's independence celebration in 1962. The whole band joined the armed struggle in Tanzania instead of returning to Rhodesia. In our interview, Sithole sang one of the songs he had learned when he was first taught the 'way of running' known as the *toyi-toyi*. He thought that both the songs and the term *toyi-toyi* itself were Arabic. The lyrics were incomprehensible to him, but he nonetheless recalled the *toyi-toyi*'s morale-raising capacities: in this iteration, the *toyi-toyi* was a bodily vehicle for rhythm and sound, not for the meaning of words. Sithole considered that '*toyi-toyi*' may have meant 'run-run' in Arabic, but the only word in his rendering of the call and response decipherable to an Egyptian colleague was 'ghalaba', meaning power or victory.²⁷

Men such as Actwell Siwela and Moffat Hadebe did not linger in the Tanzanian camps: they were sent back to Zambia along with MK cadres and ZAPU men trained in Cuba to serve in the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns of 1967 and 1968.²⁸ These joint ANC/ZAPU operations took place in the northern and western regions of Zimbabwe and were by far the biggest military campaigns either army had undertaken to date, together involving some two hundred men. They expressed the close relations of the exiled ANC and ZAPU leadership, as well as the pressure both were under to send men onto the battlefield. The campaigns were intended to launch a new phase of war that would expand ZAPU's military operations in Rhodesia on the one hand, and establish a corridor for MK fighters into South Africa on the other. Both campaigns ended in military disaster and in their aftermath the ANC and ZAPU underwent crises that paralysed their military activities for years. ZAPU's war effort suffered a near total disruption, brought about by internal splits and defections, including the

²⁴ Interview, Siwela and Hadebe. This is commonly claimed among ZIPRA veterans. E.g., Interview, Marshall Mpofu, by Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Pathisa Nyathi, Bulawayo, 18 December 2017; 'A woman decides to go to war', *The Sunday Mail*, Harare, 13 November 2016.

²⁵ Interview, Mpofu. Also see Pathisa Nyathi, 'In Search of Freedom: Alfred Nikita Mangena', self-published booklet, 2010.

²⁶ Interview Abel Sithole, by Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Pathisa Nyathi, 19 August 2018.

²⁷ Pers comm., Dr Aya Nassar, Department of Geography, University of Sussex, April 2019.

²⁸ For a MK-centred view of the campaigns, see R. M. Ralinala, Jabulani Sithole, Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, 'The Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns', in SADET, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1 (1960-1970)* (Cape Town, Zebra Press, 2004), pp. 479-540. For a brief view from ZAPU's side, see Dumiso Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe war of national liberation', in Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (eds), *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's War of Liberation* (London, James Currey, 1995), pp. 27-29. Hadebe commanded the Sipolilo Campaign; Hadebe and Siwela were eventually captured and spent over a decade in prison.

loss of many cadres to its rival ZANU. Another large group was deported to Rhodesia; others to the UK.²⁹

This crisis did not bring an end to the story of the toyi-toyi, but it did change the language of its performance and its political meaning. As ZAPU struggled to rebuild, the toyi-toyi was increasingly linked not to its linguistically foreign and internationalist origins but to ZAPU's nationalism, and specifically loyalty to its detained president Joshua Nkomo whose leadership had come under threat, and Zimbabwe's main languages, isiNdebele and chiShona. Following the formation of ZIPRA in 1971 under the de facto command of the Algerian-trained Nikita Mangena, ZAPU's own military instructors spread the toyi-toyi through the Tanzanian camps where the movement slowly rebuilt its military capacity.³⁰ This phase of the toyi-toyi's journey can be traced through the accounts of cadres in the sequence of 'groups' through which ZAPU reconstructed its armed wing. The first of these was known as the 'group of ten'. These men had sat in camps during the crisis and only received military training in late 1971, a process enabled by the ongoing alliance with MK: they had been hosted, and in effect hidden, in a Zambian MK camp known as Chakwenga before moving to the ANC's Morogoro camp in Tanzania. Situlo Matiwaza, who was part of this group, recalled how, in Morogoro, they had to be 'treated as ANC cadres' at first, as ZAPU's relations with the Tanzanian government were so poor.³¹ As this relationship improved, ZAPU opened its own camps at Kongwa and Morogoro.

The Morogoro camp graduates of the early 1970s were key agents of a reimagined toyi-toyi. The group of ten underwent a six-month guerrilla training programme at Morogoro in 1971/72 in which the toyi-toyi was introduced to them by men who would become famous among veterans as instructors and commanders, characters such as Stanley Nleya and Eddie Sigoge. Situlo Matiwaza did not recall any Arabic words or associations linked to the toyi-toyi: toyi-toyi songs were sung in isiNdebele and chiShona. Chants and slogans praised ZAPU president Joshua Nkomo and looked forward to ZIPRA's military victory in Zimbabwe. Matiwaza remembered them as messages of encouragement that stressed the importance of loyalty to the party in the aftermath of division. He did not recall MK toyi-toying at all: for him, the toyi-toyi was an exclusively ZIPRA affair.

The second notable cohort of ZIPRA trainees – the 'group of fifty' – spent six months in Morogoro in 1973. Marshall Mpofo was part of this group, and vividly described his guerrilla training at the hands of many of the same storied instructors.³² The toyi-toyi songs he sang for us praised Joshua Nkomo in isiNdebele, again reinforcing loyalty to the party and its leader. As he explained, 'we would sing *singamasotsha kaNkomo* [we are Nkomo's soldiers] ... [he sings].

²⁹ This history is only beginning to be explored. See Eliakim M. Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union 1961-87* (Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, 2006); Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA'; and, for a view from the group deported to the UK, Joshua Mahlathini Mpofo, *My Life in the Struggle for the Liberation of Zimbabwe* (Bloomington, IN, AuthorHouse, 2014).

³⁰ Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA', p. 27; Nyathi, 'In Search of Freedom', chapter 7.

³¹ Interview, Situlo Matiwaza, by Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Zephaniah Nkomo, Bulawayo, 6 September 2018. On the rebuilding of ZIPRA, see 'Stanley Nleya: A guerrilla trainer who battled Israelis', *The Sunday News*, Bulawayo, 13 March 2016.

³² Interview, Mpofo. Also see the account of Peter Ndebele, another member of the group of 50, in 'ZIPRA Training was Hell on Earth', *The Sunday News*, Bulawayo, 5-11 November 2017.

It was intended to instill respect and know the leadership.... Nkomo was incarcerated in prison, but we did not want to lose that he was the leader.' Mpfu stressed the powerful sense of pride he felt knowing that the toyi-toyi linked his cohort to the earlier generation of Algerian-trained men and so to ZAPU's long history of revolutionary warfare. The most famous of Algerian graduates, Nikita Mangena, gave the group of fifty their final assessment, and emphasized, 'that you are going to be the backbone of ZIPRA, and we were happy to be told that': Mpfu described his group as 'very, very motivated.'³³

In the mid-1970s, the toyi-toyi spread south with these guerrillas to the fast-growing camps in Zambia, taking on yet another new guise as the thousands of youthful recruits of this era came to associate it with a notoriously harsh military induction and fitness regime. The reasons for the harshness of this regime were explained by camp instructors in terms of the acute insecurity they had themselves experienced in exile camps. Cetshwayo Sithole, who would become a renowned instructor and transmitter of the toyi-toyi, first encountered it as a new arrival at Nampundwe camp in Zambia in 1974, from a Mozambican ZIPRA cadre named Humpty.³⁴ Sithole was part of a stream of hundreds of recruits that would soon turn into a flood of thousands. His arrival coincided with yet another moment of political uncertainty, owing to the 'political squabbles', as he put it, occasioned by the Frontline States' attempts to unite the liberation movements and the pressures of international negotiations with the Rhodesian Front, both of which led to the creation of umbrella political and military bodies that threatened the political loyalties of trainees. Sithole recalled that the young men he was with in Nampundwe were steadfastly ZAPU, but were claimed by Abel Muzorewa, the titular head of one such umbrella organization, the United African National Congress (UANC).³⁵ After much wrangling, Sithole's group of some 300 joined up with a cohort of 500 untrained men who had in effect been held captive at Mboroma, a Zambian army base that had been used multiple times to hold contested or contesting groups of recruits from a number of liberation movements.³⁶ In 1975, they together formed what is known as the 'group of 800'.

The group of 800 was sent to a makeshift camp in eastern Zambia called Mwembeshi where they were met by well travelled graduates of Morogoro's training regime, among them the camp commander Sam Madondo and camp chief of staff, the ubiquitous Stanley Nleya.³⁷ At this camp, toyi-toyi songs were again sung in chiShona and isiNdebele. Pearson Moyo sang for us in chiShona: '*Ndatakura gidi, ndatakura gidi, ndoenda ku Zimbabwe*' ('I am carrying a gun, I am carrying a gun, I am going to Zimbabwe...').³⁸ The training was physically harsh and hurried, a result of both the threat of attacks by Rhodesian forces and the efforts of Frontline State leaders – Julius Nyerere above all – to force ZIPRA to

³³ Interview, Mpfu.

³⁴ Interview, Cetshwayo Sithole.

³⁵ The UANC had been useful in expressing opposition to the Rhodesian Front's efforts to legitimise its rule inside Rhodesia after the banning of the nationalist parties. On the failure of Muzorewa's attempts to unite all parties and create a single army, see Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA', p. 33.

³⁶ On the history and multiple uses of Mboroma, see Jocelyn Alexander, 'Loyalty and Liberation: The Political Life of Zephaniah Moyo', *Journal of East African Studies*, 11, 1, 2017, pp. 166-87.

³⁷ Interview, Sithole; Interview, Pearson Moyo, by Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Pathisa Nyathi, Bulawayo, 14 December 2017.

³⁸ Interview, Moyo.

unite with the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the armed wing of ZANU, in the camps in Tanzania. Cetschwayo Sithole remembered ZAPU leaders J. Z. Moyo and Edward Ndlovu visiting the camp and warning the young recruits of the existential threat that efforts to unify ZIPRA and ZANLA posed to the party and to Joshua Nkomo's leadership. Invoking the disastrous crisis of 1970/71, they appealed to the trainees to 'remain what you are, remain loyal to your organization.... We leave you with the power to remain the ambassadors of ZAPU wherever you are'.³⁹

The story of the Tanzanian clashes that followed played out not least in song and drill. Only three months into the group of 800's training, they made the arduous journey by truck to join ZANLA cadres at Mgagao.⁴⁰ In Sithole's account, their reception was hostile from the start: 'whilst the troops were still in the troop carriers our brothers came along and started singing ... "those that want to stay with us, come, we rule you".' A clash later followed in which some 50 unarmed ZIPRA trainees were killed. It is a bitterly remembered incident, stories of which have circulated among ZIPRA cadres for decades as a lesson in the treachery of ZANU and its Chinese and Tanzanian backers.⁴¹ For Sithole, the rigorous training at Mwembeshi had saved the lives of many of his comrades who would otherwise have been slaughtered. Despite being disarmed and denied food for days, the ZIPRA trainees had intimidated their ZANLA 'brothers': 'they feared us because when we were running, toyi-toying, around in the morning, you couldn't tell that these people had not eaten anything, when we were running they could see that these guys are fit, they are physically fit'. When the shooting started, the ZIPRA trainees responded with a disciplined retreat while their instructors – seasoned men such as Madondo and Nleya – 'stood their ground, commanded eloquently well. That is where we saw the repercussions of rigorous training that we underwent, that is where it helped us'.⁴²

Sithole completed his training in Morogoro and returned to Nampundwe in Zambia as an instructor in 1977, at the moment of ZIPRA's most rapid expansion. ZAPU's recruits peaked in 1977, when roughly half of all cadres arrived in Zambia, almost all of whom passed through Nampundwe's version of basic training.⁴³ Sithole's experience of the Tanzanian camps had left him with a

³⁹ The distrust between ZIPRA and ZANLA built on a long history of rivalry and clashes starting from the moment of ZANU's formation as a breakaway from ZAPU in 1963. These clashes initially involved civilian supporters but were later transferred into the exile camps, where they divided armed men, as well as the battlefield inside Zimbabwe. Successive attempts by the OAU and Frontline States to unite the two armies ended in failure. See accounts in Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA', pp. 34-5; Sibanda, *The Zimbabwe African People's Union*, pp. 179-182; Ngwabi Bhebe, *The ZANU and ZAPU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (Gweru, Mambo Press, 1999), pp. 60-64; and the ZANU point of view in David Martin and Phyllis Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1981), chapters 11 and 12.

⁴⁰ Interview, Cetschwayo Sithole.

⁴¹ We have heard many accounts of this incident in our interviews. See Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Terence Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One hundred years in the 'dark forests' of Matabeleland* (Oxford, James Currey, 2000), p. 147. ZIPRA veterans have also written about it. See Nicholas Nkomo, *Between the Hammer and the Anvil: The autobiography of Nicholas Nkomo*, ms, 1996. For a ZANLA view, see Wilfred Mhanda, *Dzino: Memories of a freedom fighter* (Harare, Weaver Press, 2011), pp. 108-9.

⁴² Interview, Cetschwayo Sithole.

⁴³ Brickhill, 'Daring to Storm', p. 66.

powerful belief in the toyi-toyi as a necessarily harsh instrument for preparing recruits with the physical toughness, loyalty and discipline necessary to survive the manifold dangers of war. He was not alone in bringing this experience to bear: a significant number of instructors and commanders at Nampundwe had survived the clashes in the Tanzanian camps. They developed a shared commitment to an unforgiving fitness regime framed in a masculinist language that rejected expressions of weakness and often cast complaint and dissent as traitorous.⁴⁴ Canaan Sibanda and Miclot Ncube remembered the physical training regime of this era as ‘very rough’: ‘they could remove the civilian mentality and make you ready for training, no matter how cunning you were. Some went to the party saying the instructors were rough. Yes, they were rough – to make sure people fell in line with the objectives of the struggle’.⁴⁵ Such accounts often shared an ambivalence about the physical demands of the Nampundwe regime. Veterans complained of its cruelties while also asserting its necessity as a means of remaking their minds and bodies through relentless drill, above all the high-kneed run of the toyi-toyi. A model of manhood and of soldiery was thus produced that exacted a price, but had also, they held, enabled them to meet the strenuous demands of further training, to conquer the gorges of the Zambezi river, and to excel on the battlefield: they looked back and considered that the experience of war itself had made sense of their suffering in training.⁴⁶

The period of this great surge of recruitment was also marked by new toyi-toyi songs and slogans, reflecting the rapid escalation of the war and the terrible suffering and atrocities it brought on the battlefield and as a result of the bombing of the Zambian camps, as well as the arrival of the long-detained nationalist leaders in Zambia. These shifts may have been responsible for the hardened and racialized depiction of the ‘enemy’ and changes to nationalist language. Recruits in this period recalled toyi-toyi songs that celebrated the greatness of ZAPU and ZIPRA and proclaimed that ‘Nkomo will lead us to liberate the country’, much as in the Tanzanian camps.⁴⁷ But others had a new tenor. Mark Mbayiwa recalled toyi-toyi slogans that associated Nkomo, now a war leader not a detainee, with violence: ‘Nkomo needs people who can kill – killers!’ He also remembered anti-Christian themes: ‘We used to insult Jesus! God is a thief – he took our land! Mai Maria is a sellout, a thief!’, slogans that were echoed in political education classes in which missionaries were blamed for colonization and Jesus was cast as ‘useless to black people’.⁴⁸ Canaan Sibanda and Miclot

⁴⁴ Interview, Cetshwayo Sithole. For further on Nampundwe’s regime as a whole, see Alexander and McGregor, *Adelante!*.

⁴⁵ Interview, Sibanda and Ncube. Also, Interview, Mangwende Madongo and Never Sibanda, by Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, Bulawayo, 7 September 2018.

⁴⁶ E.g., Group Interview, Bonus Hlabangana, Charles Makhuya and Green Mpfu, by Jocelyn Alexander, JoAnn McGregor and Zephaniah Nkomo, Bulawayo, 18 August 2016; Interview, Madongo and Sibanda; Interview, Cetshwayo Sithole; Nkomo, *Between the Hammer and the Anvil*.

⁴⁷ For example, Interview, Mark Mbayiwa, by Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, Bulawayo, 21 August 2016; Interview, Sibanda and Ncube.

⁴⁸ Interview, Mbayiwa. ZIPRA soldiers on the battlefield in Zimbabwe in this era regularly (and controversially in the eyes of rural nationalists) took an anti-missionary, anti-Christian line. See Alexander, McGregor and Ranger, *Violence and Memory*, pp. 169-70, in which we argue that the consistency of this attitude on the battlefield could only be explained by lessons learned in training.

Ncube recalled chanting the slogan 'freedom for the black man', and songs that included the refrain 'kill the boer'.⁴⁹

The guerrilla character of ZAPU's army had shaped almost all of ZIPRA's senior commanders and instructors into the mid-1970s, despite a profusion of military trainers and backers, and at times heated contestations over strategy and politics.⁵⁰ Within this army, the *toyi-toyi* had created a shared, performative identity that was widely held to boost morale, foster loyalty to ZAPU and Nkomo, and create (and create pride in) physical fitness. Underlying the unforgiving notion of masculinity it embodied was an imperative of survival, rooted in instructors' experience of violent division and war, from the trainers of the FLN in Algeria to those of ZIPRA in Nampundwe. The meanings of the *toyi-toyi* would shift once more in the last several years of the war, owing to the channeling of thousands of ZIPRA trainees into conventional units, a dramatic shift that reflected a new military strategy and remade the army as a whole within the space of a few years.⁵¹

The military expertise and materiel behind this extraordinary transformation vividly illustrated the transnational character of liberation armies.⁵² Three groups of over 2,000 men were trained in the eastern Angolan camps of Boma and Luso from 1977 to 1979 by Soviet and Cuban instructors in 'semi-conventional' warfare. Another cohort was trained by Soviet instructors in Ethiopia to use tanks and armoured vehicles. A further large group was trained by the Zambian National Defence Force at Mulungushi in conventional warfare; a smaller group underwent officer training at the Zambian military academy at Kohima. These latter drew on the British military traditions that dominated the Zambian army. The *toyi-toyi*'s status came under challenge in this context. The new cohorts identified with Soviet and British marching styles, attributing military and political meanings to them, and considered the *toyi-toyi* to belong to the less sophisticated guerrilla war-era of their senior commanders. They clashed with this older generation and at times rebelled against them when they returned from foreign training to Zambia's camps. These men had all learned to *toyi-toyi* on their arrival in Nampundwe camp in Zambia, but now some recast the *toyi-toyi* not as a celebration of physical prowess and political allegiance, but as redolent of the guerrilla mentality of a generation who still believed in a 'North African march' that really only suited 'sandy areas'.⁵³

Within ZIPRA, the *toyi-toyi* was thus told as a multi-generational story of international solidarities, party loyalty, and military expansion that traced a path across north and central Africa. It moved from a multi-lingual, internationalist practice to a nationalist symbol linked to ZAPU and Nkomo, capable in both guises of building the physical strength and political allegiances necessary for soldiering and survival among recruits faced with a terrible array of military threats and political dangers. By the late 1970s, it was also portrayed as an

⁴⁹ Interview, Sibanda and Ncube.

⁵⁰ See Dumiso Dabengwa, 'Relations between ZAPU and the USSR, 1960s-1970s: A Personal View', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 43, 1, 2017; Dabengwa, 'ZIPRA'; Brickhill, 'Daring to Storm'.

⁵¹ See Brickhill, 'Daring to Storm'.

⁵² We explore the late-1970s' shifts in ZIPRA's military culture in greater detail in Alexander and McGregor, '*Adelante!*'.

⁵³ Interview, Henry Sibasa, by Jocelyn Alexander, Bulawayo, 24 August 2016; Interview, Nico Ndlovu, by Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, Bulawayo, 3 September 2018.

outdated type of physical training associated with an older generation and politics – that of the archetypal guerrilla. These layered meanings of the *toyi-toyi*, made in everyday encounters through successive episodes in ZAPU's war, contrasted starkly with the memories of MK cadres.

The ANC's 'toyi-toyisation'

MK soldiers told strikingly different stories about the *toyi-toyi* than those of their ZIPRA comrades. In MK veterans' memoirs, the *toyi-toyi* was at times rendered as a symbol of mindless militarism that brought a destructive combination of anti-intellectualism and glorified physicality into MK's politically sophisticated ranks. This was an interpretation framed both by the collaboration with ZAPU and by the ANC's own experience of the daily dangers and frustrations of camps, above all in Angola. It reflected not least the dramatic divergence in military strategy between the two movements and the tensions that that created within and between them.

The extensive military collaboration between ZAPU and the ANC has recently been explored by Hugh Macmillan, and we rely on his groundbreaking work here.⁵⁴ He points out that, while the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns of 1967 and 1968 have received the lion's share of attention, they were only the first phase of a connection that was revived in the form of substantial shared training and fighting in the late 1970s. Macmillan is also the first writer to seek to evaluate the 'cultural impact' of this second phase of the alliance, which he refers to as the 'toyi-toyisation of MK', a phrase drawn from the memoir of MK veteran Stanley Manong.⁵⁵ Drawing on a number of MK memoirs, including Manong's, alongside contemporaneous sources, he focuses on the late 1970s' interactions of MK and ZIPRA and their aftermath.⁵⁶ For these MK men, the experience of the *toyi-toyi* came from two sources. The first was ZIPRA instructors in Zambian camps to which MK cadres were sent for training in the late 1970s. The second was MK cadres who had fought with ZIPRA inside Rhodesia in the late 1970s, and whose combat experience led to their appointment as trainers in MK camps in Angola following Zimbabwean independence. This latter was the most controversial source of 'toyi-toyisation', as it became embroiled in the search for explanations for the divisions, mutinies and repression in MK's Angolan camps in the first half of the 1980s.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Macmillan, "Past history". We also owe Macmillan many thanks for obtaining a copy of Wonga Welile Bottoman's difficult to find memoir from the author for us.

⁵⁵ Stanley Manong, *If we must die: An autobiography of a former commander of uMkhonto we Sizwe* (South Africa, Nkululeko Publishers, 2015), p. 186.

⁵⁶ The key contemporaneous source is the Stuart commission report, available in ANC, 'Report: Commission of Inquiry into Recent Developments in the People's Republic of Angola [Stuart Commission]', in G. M. Gerhart and C. L. Glaser, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 6, Challenge and Victory, 1980-90* (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2010). Memoirs include Manong, *If we must die*; James Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve: Recollections of an Umkhonto Soldier* (Cape Town, David Philip, 2009); Wonga Welile Bottoman, *The Making of an MK Cadre* (Pretoria, LiNc Publishers, 2010); and Ronnie Kasrils, *'Armed and Dangerous': An undercover struggle against Apartheid* (Oxford, Heinemann, 1993). Memoirs of MK veterans of the Wankie and Sipolilo campaigns have similar views on ZAPU as those of the post-Soweto generation regarding the greater political sophistication of MK. See Thula Bopela and Daluxolo Luthuli, *Umkhonto we Sizwe: Fighting for a divided people* (Alberton, Galago, 2005).

⁵⁷ This is a contested history. For one account, see Stephen Ellis, *External Mission: The ANC in Exile 1960-1990* (London, Hurst and Co., 2012), chapter 5. The key episodes were a widespread

The late 1970s' generation of MK cadres – many of them products of the 1976 Soweto uprising – mirrored the great boom in ZIPRA trainees in this same moment. Both arrived in the newly opened Angolan camps in their thousands. Early on, MK and ZIPRA cadres crossed paths in Luanda and in transit camps, one of the earliest of which was known as 'Engineering', though they went on to separate camps. MK veteran James Ngculu provided a thumbnail sketch of the mixed residents at Engineering: the Cubans were 'noisy' and 'lively', SWAPO (the South West African People's Organisation) cadres were 'reserved', while ZIPRA loved to toyi-toyi and sing.⁵⁸ Subsequently, many MK cadres were concentrated in Novo Catengue camp, opened in May 1977, where they were trained by MK and Cuban instructors. Much has been written about this camp, and specifically about the notorious incident of alleged poisoning known as Black September and the South African Air Force bombing that would close the camp in early 1979, both sources of great controversy and intrigue. Novo Catengue also looms large in MK memoirs as the source of a particular set of ideas, imparted in political classes, which would frame interpretations of the toyi-toyi, as we shall see.⁵⁹

The 1970s' parallels in MK and ZIPRA's expanding Angolan camps ends, however, with the story of the expansion itself. In late 1977, ZIPRA was sending thousands of soldiers into Rhodesia and was rapidly developing a formidable conventional capacity – as we have seen – and 'semi-liberated' zones across a great swathe of northern Rhodesia. It would enter by far the most intense point of its war in 1978 and 1979, only for the fighting to end in a negotiated ceasefire in December 1979. For MK, the joint ANC/ZAPU campaigns of 1967/68 would stand as the largest military undertaking of its 30-year history.⁶⁰ While ZIPRA soldiers' war boomed and then concluded, the vast majority of their MK counterparts sat in their exile camps, waiting, a source of tremendous frustration that fed a host of tensions. Wonga Welile Bottoman described the 'ennui' of the camp – 'ours was a displacement and dissolution that seared the soul and sucked our spirit'; James Ngculu identified waiting as the 'most traumatic thing in the camps'.⁶¹ The problem of waiting was in large part a result of a shift in ANC military strategy in 1978 in which MK came to be valued more for its role in 'armed propaganda' than for its fighting efficacy. The full import of this shift was not communicated to recruits in South Africa or to rank and file guerrillas in the

search for infiltrators known as 'Shishita' following the South African attack on the ANC in Matola, Maputo, in January 1981, and the protests, rebellions and mutinies of MK soldiers in Angolan camps in 1984 known as 'Mkatashinga'. In this period corporal punishment, imprisonment and executions were widely used in Angola, ostensibly in search of traitors, but often catching a much wider range of dissenters and unfavoured factions in its net.

⁵⁸ Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve*, p. 40.

⁵⁹ See Stephen Davis, *The ANC's War against Apartheid: Umkhonto we Sizwe and the Liberation of South Africa* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2018), pp. 85-126, for a fascinating interpretation of events at Novo Catengue. There were of course other training camps in this and later periods, though we do not discuss them in detail here.

⁶⁰ See Cherry, *Umkhonto weSizwe*, p. 45.

⁶¹ Bottoman, *The Making*, pp. 48, 51; Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve*, p. 50. The frustration of waiting is widely discussed in literature on MK. See, e.g., Davis, *The ANC's War*; Hugh Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia 1963 to 1994* (Jacana, Johannesburg 2013); Ellis, *External Mission*.

camps.⁶² In the late 1970s, recruits fully expected a rapid return from exile to fight in South Africa, just as had the 1960s' generation: as Ronnie Kasrils remembered, the Soweto generation headed into exile with a 'single wish: "To learn how to shoot, to get a gun and get back home to *moer* [finish] the Boers."⁶³ It is against this backdrop of diverging wars that MK and ZIPRA encountered each other in the stories told by MK cadres.

In their most negative form, MK memoirs described the ZIPRA training regime of the late 1970s as physically brutal, anti-intellectual, even racist. The *toyi-toyi* served as shorthand for and symbol of these characteristics. Stanley Manong, who published his memoir in 2015, is the most explicit and vehement of ZIPRA's critics in this moment, as Macmillan notes.⁶⁴ A member of the Soweto generation, he was trained in Novo Catengue in 1977 and then deployed to Botswana. He identifies himself as part of a politically sophisticated cohort, a claim that runs through and shapes his story as a whole. This status is owed not least to his graduation from the political classes run by the trade unionist Mark Shope and ANC intellectual Jack Simons at Novo Catengue.⁶⁵ Their classes had included the history of South African political movements and discussions of communism and historical materialism. Manong, along with MK veteran James Ngculu, stressed that their lessons had dwelt on the importance of a political army – Shope had used the slogan 'a soldier without politics is a mercenary' – and the meaning of non-racialism.⁶⁶

After a mission gone wrong in 1978, MK commander Joe Modise sent Manong and a handful of other MK cadres on a 'course in survival ... which is commonly called *toyi-toyi*' at a ZIPRA guerrilla training camp in Zambia, explicitly, in Manong's view, as punishment, though he writes that he looked forward to the training too.⁶⁷ The ZIPRA 'survival course' marked a sharp contrast to Novo Catengue: '[w]hat became clear to us from the beginning,' Manong wrote, 'was the fact that no politics was taught among the ranks of ZIPRA'. Politics of the ANC kind, such as the principles enshrined in the Freedom Charter, were dismissed by ZIPRA commanders.⁶⁸ Manong recalled – and reproduced in full – a *toyi-toyi* song, in which the refrain 'kill the boer, the farmer' and 'kill, kill everybody' expressed a political world at odds with what he had learned at Novo Catengue. In Angola, Manong held, 'MK relied on political persuasion to instill discipline, while ZIPRA solely relied on force (goading trainees with butts of AK47s)'. He described a regime of one meal a day combined with physical training, military instruction and *toyi-toyi* to the point of collapse: 'I had never imagined or thought that the human body could withstand such a physical onslaught'. One of Manong's colleagues, unable to carry on *toyi-toyi*, accused ZIPRA instructors of running a course 'meant for

⁶² See Ellis, *External Mission*, pp. 285-8, and for further on the rationale for the shifts in MK strategy, Howard Barrell, 'Conscripts to their Age: African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976-1986', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1993.

⁶³ Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, p. 122.

⁶⁴ See his discussion in Macmillan, "'Past history'", pp. 187-89.

⁶⁵ On Simons at Novo Catengue, see Davis, *The ANC's War*, pp. 85-126, and Hugh Macmillan, *Jack Simons: Teacher, Scholar, Comrade* (Auckland Park, Jacana, 2016), pp. 104-117.

⁶⁶ The quote is from Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve*, p. 55 – also see pp. 64-8, and see Manong, *If we must die*, chapter 7.

⁶⁷ Manong, *If we must die*, p. 126.

⁶⁸ Manong, *If we must die*, p. 128.

mercenaries and not for revolutionaries': 'soldiers should be able to think and analyse', not just run. The instructors chided him, 'telling him that the survival course was not [the] United Nations or rather they were not Kurt Waldheim..., who was inclined to entertain political discussions'.⁶⁹ ZIPRA believed, in Manong's words, that the ANC was 'a microcosm of the United Nations – big talk and bravado with no visible and tangible actions to show on the ground'.⁷⁰

The effects of ZIPRA's 'macho culture and physicality of *toyi-toyi*' became, for Manong, one of the central means of explaining the abuses in MK's Angolan camps in the first half of the 1980s, when he was himself detained for over a year, and in which 'politics played a secondary role to the barking sounds of *toyi-toyi*'.⁷¹ Several of his Zambian-trained cohort had gone on to command camps in Angola: 'What struck me the most', he wrote, 'was the aggression and the political intolerances displayed by the graduates of the ZIPRA survival course'.⁷² Manong cast the 'toyi-toyisation' of MK as a wholly negative contagion that undermined a prior, better politics. By toyi-toyisation he did not of course mean simply the toyi-toyi as training drill – in fact he credited the drill as an effective means of 'acclimatising MK soldiers to actual conditions of rural guerrilla warfare', and proudly described his own discipline and learning during the survival course. Rather, he conjured the 'toyi-toyi' as something diffuse and symbolic: it encapsulated ZIPRA's authoritarianism and 'suspicion of intellectuals'; it marked 'the beginning of the militaristic tendencies that were planted into MK ranks'; it changed men's minds.⁷³

Manong's description of the toyi-toyi is reflected in various ways in other memoirs, but interpretations of its meaning differ. Wonga Welile Bottoman's 2010 memoir notes many of the same elements of toyi-toyisation but is more positive. He had first encountered the toyi-toyi in Matola on the outskirts of Maputo in late 1980, where it was a source of excitement and intimation of war if not yet the real thing.⁷⁴ His next encounters were in the Angolan camps of Viana and Camalundi where the physical trainers were appointed from among MK veterans of Zimbabwe's war, owing to their direct experience of the physical demands of war.⁷⁵ Much as the ZAPU men had revered the FLN veterans who had first taught the toyi-toyi in Algeria, Bottoman felt in some awe of these 'senior veterans of the Rhodesian bush war'. He described two of Viana's instructors, Dilinger and Curtis, as follows: 'Both men's bodies cried out prime fitness. Curtis ... had the reserve, self-confidence and speech manners of the experienced. Dilinger told stories of actual confrontations with Ian Smith soldiers.'⁷⁶ These men and other MK veterans of ZIPRA's war spoke a 'lingo' known as *Sitshinda*, drawn from isiNdebele, and 'revealed that they developed endurance from practicing the toyi-toyi drill with ZIPRA soldiers.'⁷⁷ Such men

⁶⁹ Manong, *If we must die*, pp. 130-31.

⁷⁰ Manong, *If we must die*, p. 128.

⁷¹ Manong, *If we must die*, p. 186. According to Macmillan, "Past history", p. 189, Manong was accused of being an 'agent' by an actual agent and detained during the 'Shishita' round up of 'agents and suspects'.

⁷² Manong, *If we must die*, p. 133.

⁷³ Manong, *If we must die*, pp. 132-34.

⁷⁴ Bottoman, *The Making*, pp. 70-71, and pp. 60-63 on Matola.

⁷⁵ Bottoman, *The Making*, p. 71, and see pp. 65-79 on Viana and Camalundi generally.

⁷⁶ Bottoman, *The Making*, p. 70.

⁷⁷ Bottoman, *The Making*, p. 71.

'preferred toyi-toyi aligned exercises – frog jump and squat walking – and looked upon the Karate manoeuvres as some sort of whimsical techniques.' In an echo of Manong's description of ZIPRA instructors in Zambia, the *Sitshinda* 'lingo and style' was used in Camalundi camp to confront and ridicule those considered weak: 'The veterans who wanted to be known for their battle experience banked their reputation on [*Sitshinda*]. During a training session, a boastful veteran would approach a struggling older comrade and make jokes about his efforts, "What's the problem with the knees, *Mdala*, do they need *oyili*?" *Oyili* being a deliberate mispronunciation of the word oil in IsiNdebele.'⁷⁸

Bottoman's account is not without criticism of the MK physical trainers – he notes that they used the term 'intelekshuwa' as a form of abuse, and that they were quick to accuse those with grievances of having been 'sent here by Smith', a dangerous use of language amidst the purges of 'agents' of the time – but his account is primarily focused on the excitement produced by a military culture that expressed a masculinist physicality born of war, through language and performance.⁷⁹ He is at his most vivid when describing the 'fever of toyi-toyi veneration', the 'jumping and singing' that woke his comrades in the morning 'bright and fresh', calling on them to "NGIHLANYE" – Be mad! "HAWU HAWU": 'Soldiers would break ranks, spin in mid-air and throw their eyes to the heavens, displaying their attained mad status.' Bottoman would end a long day inspired to 'dream awake of our future as trained soldiers.'⁸⁰

While Bottoman embraced these elements of 'toyi-toyisation', Ronnie Kasrils' memoir more closely echoed the charges laid by Manong. Kasrils writes from a different position than Bottoman and Manong, having investigated the mutinies and their repercussions in the Angolan camps as head of MK's military intelligence, and published his memoir earlier, in 1993, when South Africa's political transition was in still train. While acknowledging a wide range of factors, he blamed a 'general deterioration of the running of our camps' in Angola from 1980 in part on what the toyi-toyi represented, specifically in terms of masculinity: he 'had heard, with regret, that a macho tendency had reappeared in the training. We had adopted many ZIPRA ... practices, which glorified lengthy *toyi-toying*, with full pack and weapons, and rigorous survival-training in the bush'.⁸¹ Such interpretations also formed part of contemporaneous accounts. The Stuart Commission report on conditions in MK's Angolan camps, which focused on the Viana camp mutiny in 1984, found widespread abuses of authority, and noted that 'many comrades feel that from the time we adopted the ZAPU methods (toyi toyi), the role of politics was consciously downgraded'.⁸² In this sentence, ZAPU as a whole and the entirety of its influence on MK is compressed into a parenthetical 'toyi-toyi'.

These texts are fascinating both for reducing ZIPRA's huge, diverse army and its decades' long relationship with MK to the singular symbol of a training drill, and for attributing to that drill the power to transform MK's culture in Angola. The toyi-toyi may occupy such an outsized role for two reasons. The first is instrumental: it laid the blame for the abuses and divisions in MK on a foreign

⁷⁸ Bottoman, *The Making*, pp. 77-8.

⁷⁹ Bottoman, *The Making*, p. 78.

⁸⁰ Bottoman, *The Making*, pp. 78-9.

⁸¹ Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, p. 249.

⁸² ANC, 'Report', p. 542, quoted in Macmillan, "Past history", p. 190.

force, something not true to MK's sense of itself. The second reason the toyi-toyi looms large may be because it was a glaring symbol of the disconnect between training and war in MK's strategy. It was taught by instructors whose authority lay in the fact that they had fought, it expressed an aspiration to be ready to fight, and, at the same time, it underlined the absence of a South African battlefield. For ZIPRA's veterans the masculinist physicality of the toyi-toyi had found efficacy at the front; for MK's memoirists it was a performance in search of a function. The toyi-toyi's rough demands thus came to encapsulate something both desired and denied.

Whose toyi-toyi?

What did ZIPRA veterans make of these MK views? As students of ZIPRA history for many years, we had often heard accounts of the alliance with MK. It was almost invariably couched in positive terms, as a meeting of two like-minded, 'authentic' liberation movements, in contrast to ZANU or the Pan-African Congress. The alliance with MK was also often linked to the heroic sacrifices required by solidarity. By allying militarily with MK in the campaigns of the late 1960s, ZAPU had laid itself open to charges of drawing the powerful South African state more directly into the Rhodesian war. In the crisis-ridden aftermath of Wankie and Sipolilo, the ANC's support had been crucial to ZAPU's capacity to rebuild its army in the Tanzanian camps. The revival of the military alliance in the late 1970s, when ZAPU's war had vastly expanded, was cast as another act of solidarity, in which ZAPU offered training and entry into ZIPRA's semi-liberated zones, and thus a chance of ending MK's oppressive waiting in the camps. In the early 1980s, when ZAPU was subject to violent repression by the newly elected ZANU(PF) government and MK was unwelcome in Zimbabwe, ZIPRA veterans emphasised their continued support for MK despite the wrath it earned them from both ZANU(PF) and the South African government. A widely told story is that the arms caches ZANU(PF) used to make a case of treason against ZAPU were in part MK's. ZIPRA nonetheless took the fall.⁸³

In the accounts of ZIPRA veterans, it was they who had assumed the role of protective big brother from the late 1970s, though they were often also willing to grant MK a political sophistication they sometimes lacked and to credit them with advanced technical training, especially in engineering, appropriate for urban warfare.⁸⁴ The big brother role helps to explain the mild, often bemused reactions of ZIPRA cadres to MK accounts of 'toyi-toyisation'. The older generation who had fought with MK in Wankie and Sipolilo refused to countenance criticism of MK, but noted that the South African cadres had hated the toyi-toyi even then. Moffat Hadebe, who commanded the Sipolilo campaign, remembered undertaking physical training with MK cadres in 1967. He was fresh from Algeria and an enthusiastic convert to the toyi-toyi but, 'the South Africans did not want it.... They would say, "these ZAPU boys are troublesome

⁸³ This is a common ZIPRA claim. See, e.g., Interview, Misheck Velaphi Ncube, Bulawayo, by Jocelyn Alexander and Pathisa Nyathi, 27 February 2009. Ncube was the only one convicted in the treason trial of ZIPRA leaders (for arms caching), and maintains he was protecting MK caches. Also see Macmillan, "Past history", p. 186.

⁸⁴ For example, Interview, Cetshwayo Sithole, by Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, Bulawayo, 7 September 2018.

with their toyi-toyi”, like that, ... they wanted physical training ... push-ups, weights, and not this toyi-toyi’.⁸⁵

ZIPRA veterans who had encountered MK in camps in the late 1970s often reacted to the toyi-toyisation story with a paternalist shrug: these were the views of men who had not fought on the battlefield as ZIPRA had. Such responses echoed in milder form the ZIPRA survival course instructors’ jibes about the ANC as little more than a United Nations’ talking shop, and reflected a pervasive pride in ZIPRA’s greater physical toughness, war experience, and discipline, as compared to MK.⁸⁶ There was in addition a running theme related to cultural differences that focused on South African township style. ZIPRA veterans joked about MK cadres’ love of fine clothing and watches, predilections that could not survive ZIPRA’s training regime. Their resistance to the toyi-toyi was cast not as a sign of ideological difference but of a reluctance to give up township finery.⁸⁷ This latter might seem like light-hearted teasing, but it was in fact a matter of some substance in MK accounts, touching on identity and masculinity. James Ngculu noted that one of the complaints made by MK trainees in the Angolan camps of the early 1980s was that, ‘Clothing from the socialist countries was not suitable for our conditions and to use as South Africans who were accustomed to style and brand names.’⁸⁸ Wonga Welile Bottoman’s account of the *Sitshinda* style and lingo was told as a tale of ZIPRA, but it also called on township models of masculinity. His Camalundi camp instructors preferred ‘toyi-toyi aligned exercises’ to karate in part because ‘their thinking was in line with the street toughies who saw karate as the sissies’ attempt to get back at them, or cowards’ sophisticated complex’.⁸⁹ Bottoman’s description of Camalundi’s commanders and instructors as a whole contains an extraordinary mix of physical attributes, dress, weapons, deportment, and reputations in which military and internationalist references sit alongside township associations: ‘a face full of scars like White City Jabavu knife-fighters’; the ‘handsome men; the compatriots of the playboys in the townships, the men who combine the feminine and masculine traits in style.’⁹⁰

Ultimately, ZIPRA and MK toyi-toyi stories need to be seen as at once inward and outward looking. They are commentary on one’s own liberation movement and one’s place within it, as well as its relationships to an international set of actors, made up of host countries, foreign instructors and fellow liberation movements. In soldiers’ accounts, the toyi-toyi serves as a powerful symbol of, and means of remembering and reflecting on, military strategy, politics and gendered bodily power. The entanglement of the toyi-toyi in the complex alliances and conflicts among Southern Africa’s liberation movements and their hosts and supporters underlines just how different ZIPRA and MK’s wars were, notwithstanding their mutual encounters and alliances – and how different were their military cultures too. Their stories also

⁸⁵ Interview, Siwela and Hadebe.

⁸⁶ For example, see the stories recounted in Abel Mazinyane, ‘MK’s Modise in awe of ZIPRA’s Izigebenga – Analysis’, *The Sunday News*, 30 July–5 August 2017.

⁸⁷ E.g., Interview, Jabulani Sibanda, by Jocelyn Alexander and Pathisa Nyathi, Nyamandhlovu, 26 August 2016; Interview, Cetshwayo Sithole, 7 September 2018; Interview, Charles Makhuya, by Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor, Bulawayo, 3 September 2018.

⁸⁸ Ngculu, *The Honour to Serve*, p. 48.

⁸⁹ Bottoman, *The Making*, p. 77.

⁹⁰ Bottoman, *The Making*, p. 74.

demonstrate how the performance of the toyi-toyi took on and shed meanings over time, as it moved within and between armies. Tracing the ‘translation of the transposition’ of a military drill in this way echoes the methods used by scholars of popular culture to trace histories and geographies of appropriation and influence. The military incarnations and mutations of the travelling toyi-toyi show how a training drill can not only embody discipline, masculinist identity, and military capacity, but may also create languages, visceral emotional attachments and political loyalties among soldiers, illuminating hitherto obscured aspects of liberation war history.

In the end of course, the toyi-toyi escaped the confines and contexts of war and militaries. Just as the *Beni* dances of an earlier era moved out of military institutions and shaped popular culture across a swathe of East and Central Africa at a time of rapid change, the toyi-toyi has become part of a turbulent Southern African cultural politics. Neither the ANC nor ZAPU could contain the toyi-toyi’s uses and meanings. In Zimbabwe, the toyi-toyi emerged as a central performance of the ZANU(PF)-backed land occupations after 2000. It has also been performed in opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) rallies. When the MDC requested permission for a rally to mark its 20th anniversary, permission was granted but the police letter specifically proscribed ‘toy toy [sic] and sloganeering’ to and from the venue.⁹¹ In South Africa the toyi-toyi might animate university students at a campus Fees Must Fall demonstration, or it might produce a terrifying spectacle in the context of township xenophobic violence. From its origins as a military training drill forged in North Africa, the toyi-toyi has travelled the length of the continent and emerged as the ultimate portmanteau performance of protest.

JOCELYN ALEXANDER

Department of International Development, University of Oxford, 3 Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TB, UK. E-mail: Jocelyn.alexander@qeh.ox.ac.uk

JOANN MCGREGOR

Department of Geography, School of Global Studies, University of Sussex, Falmer, Sussex BN1 9SJ, UK. E-mail: j.mcgregor@sussex.ac.uk

⁹¹ Zimbabwe Republic Police, Mbare, Harare, to The Organising Secretary, MDC, Harare, 3 September 2019.