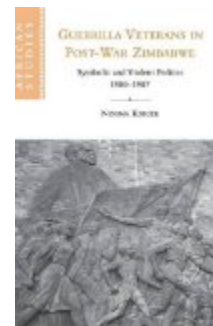


Norma Kriger. *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980-1987*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xx + 293 pp. \$65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-81823-0.

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## Guerrilla Voices and Their Discontents

### Guerrilla Voices and Their Discontents

As a study of the guerrilla veterans in post-war Zimbabwe, this book is a continuation of the author's doctoral dissertation on the guerrillas (amidst "peasant voices") during the war against white settler rule in the 1970s. But its coverage of the post-war years is limited to the period 1980-87 (presumably because the guerrillas's privileged status ceased thereafter), its comparison of the past and the present appears only in the epilogue (1997-2001), and the intervening (or "missing") years (1988-96) are mentioned only in an appendix of a few pages on "the ex-combatants' special status." This emphasis on the early period may also have been determined by the completion of the fieldwork (more than one hundred interviews) in 1992, a decade before the travails of the present, including the presidential election in which the former guerrillas were deployed to ensure a Mugabe "victory" by means of intimidation, violence and massive fraud. Pity, though, that this prize example of collaboration in violence was not accommodated in the timetable for publication of this book.

Four main subjects are considered during the years 1980-87: first, the peace settlement, which includes the Lancaster House negotiations (actually in 1979: September-December), the implementation of the settlement and the aftermath of the independence election. Next, the "assembly phase," during which the guerrillas awaiting demobilization or integration into the security forces collaborated with the ruling party

(ZANU) to ensure future power and privilege but also clashed with them when their expectations were not met. Third, the military integration of the former ZANU and ZAPU guerrillas led, respectively, by Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, into the mostly black Rhodesian army, which created the Zimbabwe National Army and allegedly put an end to the "multiple sovereignty" impeding ZANU control of the armed forces (p. 104). Finally, the programs for the demobilized—employment, education and training—which provided the guerrillas (especially ZANU's forces) with privileged access to the cooperatives, the state bureaucracy and the private sector, "thereby building power and legitimacy" for the ruling party (p. 141).

So much has been written on the Lancaster House peace settlement that there would appear to be little left unsaid. But this author maintains that her approach is unique or "revisionist" because, unlike the frequently invoked "PBS" (peace-building studies), it does not rely upon allegedly "externally imposed criteria for success" (i.e., peace, stability and democracy). Instead, it is based upon Zimbabwe's domestic concerns—the struggle for power pursued by the ruling party and its guerrillas which, in effect, often negated the alleged gains of the peace settlement, as in the prolonged conflict between ZANU and ZAPU in Matabeleland.

However, pronouncing the Lancaster House settlement a "success," because it did in fact bring about peace, stability and democracy in the precariously balanced

Zimbabwe of 1980, was never intended as an assurance of “success” in the long run, as the early writing and reporting on the subject made clear.[1] Nor should it be claimed that the Lancaster House constitution was “imposed” (p. 29) because none of the parties to the negotiations, and certainly not the British, had the power or the will to do so. The ZANU (PF) leadership may have threatened to walk out over some of the decisions made by “The Good Lord” (as they called the British Foreign Secretary) but Lord Carrington always balanced his bullying with timely concessions to ensure ZANU (PF) acceptance because this was the only way to end the war and rid Britain of responsibility for a colony it never governed. It was similarly the case with the other “Good Lord,” Christopher Soames, who began as “Governor of Southern Rhodesia” with an alleged plot to keep Mugabe out of power by installing his rivals (Nkomo and Bishop Abel Muzorewa) but ended up, on the eve of the election two months later, as a confidante and lifelong friend of the ZANU leader.

Although the author also calls for an analysis of the international “actors” involved in the peace-building, claiming to do so for Soames and various foreign observers and monitors, the motivations and behavior of individual leaders (including Carrington and Soames) receive little attention in this book. Even on the domestic front, Mugabe emerges as somewhat of a cipher, appearing only as the leader of a party determined to achieve a monopoly of power. And Nkomo, once regarded as “father of his country” is scarcely seen at all as a rival guerrilla leader. Nor is much notice taken of the self-imposed leader of the war veteran’s association, who never served in the war: the Polish-trained medical doctor, Chenjerai “Hitler” Hunzi, whose surgery was used by the guerrillas to torture political opponents in the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). It was his reawakening of veteran demands for increased gratuities, pensions and other payouts, in 1997, threatening Mugabe with a return to war if the exorbitant demands were not forthcoming, that marked the beginning of the end for Zimbabwe’s already faltering economy.

Unfortunately, and surprisingly for Cambridge Uni-

versity Press, the editing of this book allowed a profusion of unnecessary commas before the word “and,” indefinite antecedents (e.g., “they”) in multiple subject sentences, repetition of jargon such as “actors” (up to five times in one paragraph) and incomplete references to people’s names, leaving many Africans as simply “Mr.” so-and-so and others with only titles (e.g., “Minister”) preceding surnames in both the text and the index. In addition, much of the introduction reads too much like a doctoral dissertation, citing the titles of “PSB” journals and “war to peace transitions literature” as well as the thoughts of authors who contribute to them and similar publications.

But the book is an important contribution to the subject in its own right, not requiring a “revisionist” label or an apology to the political scientists for the “case studies.” If the author’s conclusions are that the guerrillas remain a disgruntled lot prone to violence to achieve their own and their party’s ambitions (e.g., in the land seizures and the attacks on the MDC), then this is because most of them remain unemployed or in poorly paid jobs reflecting their low level of education or training. They may have thought that they deserved better for having abandoned schooling to liberate their country, but many of them squandered their veterans’s benefits and others simply became victims of an ever shrinking economy fueled by their party’s mismanagement and corruption on a grand scale. To ask what went wrong for the guerrillas in post-war Zimbabwe would also require asking what went wrong for the Zimbabwean people under Mugabe’s rule. And that would certainly be outside the framework of this special study.

Note:

[1]. See, David Smith et al., *Mugabe* (Sphere Books, 1981).

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