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TRANSCRIPTION

Speaker	Dialogue
MNd	This is an interview with Meeting Nkala, conducted by Mary Ndlovu and Zephaniah Nkomo on behalf of Mafela Trust and SAHA. This recording is taking place in Bulawayo, on the 20 th April, 2011 Mr Nkala I think we'll start by asking you if you can just give us some of your background. How did you join ZAPU and get into the refugee camp in Zambia?
MNk	Yes. I was working as a qualified teacher in Tsholotsho, that is from '68 and then up to '77. Now the liberation struggle was getting hot at that time. Yes, now there were guerillas all over the area but I decided to leave because the situation wasn't palatable at that time, so I decided to leave for the liberation struggle through Botswana. So I went with about four of the school children that I was teaching in Tsholotsho. Then we crossed and went to Merui - that was the Receiving Camp in Botswana, then we were taken from there to Francistown - that was the transit camp in Botswana. So I was there in Botswana for a month. During that time there were no planes taking the refugees to Zambia. There was a long spell without the aeroplanes taking. So I was there, then when the time came I ... I was flown to Zambia with the other refugees and we taken to Nampundwe Transit Camp and we were there for a period of time, yes, and then it happened that the little children that were in the Camp were transferred from Nampundwe Transit Camp to J.Z.1. A place had been found in that Moyo's farm to house the children, so we remained. I remained with other refugees at Nampundwe. I was in the ... in the Camp in the group of the first guerillas to be trained in Angola.
MN	So you were trained at the...
MNk	No I wasn't trained.
MNd	Oh you were with the others...okay.
MNk	I was with the others but in the group that is being prepared to go to training in Angola, yes. One

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	day the President, Joshua Nkomo, ZAPU President Joshua Nkomo came with Ambrose Mutinhiri and then asked for all the qualified teachers in Rhodesia, by then - those who had come from Rhodesia and they are qualified teachers. We didn't know where we were being sent to, and then we were put in a special group that was called S.B.1, then we stayed there for some time, then word came that we were to follow the children at J.Z.1; some of ... some of our members, they never identified themselves as teachers, so they went with the group that was going to military training.
MNd	They didn't want to teach, they wanted to train.
MNk	No, they wanted to train. So ...
MNd	And you, did you want to teach or you wanted to train?
MNk	I wanted anything and that was the policy of ZAPU - that you go where the Command says ... you go, so we left ... we were 15 trained teachers, qualified teachers and we were taken, transported to J.Z.1 and then we met those children now. Those children were from other camps, like there were only boys, they came ... some came from V.C where there were ladies. So the boys were transferred to ... to J.Z.1 and then others from other camps ... I don't know where ... some came from all over; and then there were also Zimbabweans ... Rhodesians who were already in Zambia , now they wanted to join the struggle so some of them came with their families and then the children were sent to J.Z.1. So that is how it started ...
MNd	This was the one close to Lusaka.
MNk	Close to Lusaka, yes, that was close to Lusaka.
MN	So you weren't too disappointed to be placed as a teacher?
MNk	No, I wasn't disappointed because what the President said, he said " All are fighting for one cause, the liberation of Rhodesia" by then, so he says "No matter you are a driver , you are a builder , you are a teacher, you are anybody, you are fighting for one cause, yes so I wasn't disappointed.
MNd	OK ...So, so you went straight to J.Z.?
MNk	Yes, I went straight to J.Z ... J.Z.1
MNd	But you also spent some time at Victory Camp?
MNk	No, during the course of time, we were asked again as male teachers to go and augment the female staff at V.C. when the school was opened at V.C. So some of us were chosen to go and be with the ladies at V.C. as teachers.
MNd	So was the school at J.Z. started before the school at V.C.?
MNk	I'm sure they might ... they must have started at the same time but at V.C. there were only female teachers, yes, then all male were at J.Z.1.
MNd	But there weren't enough women then, trained teachers?
MNk	I'm sure that was the reason why we were transferred to V.C
MNd	So when you were at J.Z. was this a typical classroom. This photograph here with theoutside? [4A-06-30]
MNk	Yes, yes we were just under trees, we had classes under trees, even when we went to V.C., classes were still held under trees, yes. Then the permanent structures at V.C. were built whilst the school

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	was going on.
MNd	So was it something like this here ... they seem to be using the wall of a building? [1E-04-30]
MNk	Yes, but I'm sure during this time they had completed most of the dormitories and now the structures were already there. Now the dormitories were built and classrooms were built.
MNd	So this would be before they got the classrooms built
MNk	Yes, yes
ZN	What was the material like, the teaching material that you were using there?
MNk	Yes, the teaching material that we used, one: some guerillas ... freedom fighters ... smuggled some books from Zimbabwe, so we used those, and the Zambian government had a hand, a helping hand in providing text books and other things. Then the UNICEF came in, the United Nations came in also to help us with the teaching-learning materials.
ZN	How organized was this arrangement for teaching?
MNk	It was well organized, because I'm sure we never ran short of any teaching and learning material.
MNd	What syllabus were you following, were you following the one from back home?
MNk	Yes, we were finding that the Rhodesian type of syllabus ...that was what we were following because during that time I'm sure education in ... in Rhodesia was high, yes was of high standard.
MNd	But when you came to teaching things like History, were you not teaching it differently than you would have taught it at home?
MNk	Yes, mostly when we came to History, I'm sure what ...is what we were opposing , we wouldn't teach what we were opposing; now we were unveiling these little ones into this one now what we were fighting for, yes, now that our country came from this colonialism and now we want. ...
MNd	So this became part of the syllabus?
MNk	Yes, it became part of the syllabus, yes
MNd	How did you arrange them in classes, because some of them might have not gone to school before, some of them might have been further advanced for their age. So how ... did you give them a test or group them by ages...?
MNk	Mostly we grouped them by the standard they came from here in Zimbabwe
MNd	OK
MNk	Yah, most of ... some of them ... those who had no proper formal education, we had to teach them with the little ones, grade 1. We taught them in their respective grades.
MNd	Did you get some older ones say 10-12 who had never been to school?
MNk	Yes, yes
MNd	So you would just group them with the younger ones?
MNk	Yes, but I'm sure at J.Z. ... mostly at J.Z. most of the children there were of school going age.
MNd	What was the youngest?
MNk	The youngest could be six.

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MNd	So they had them that young?
MNk	Yes, yes we had them
MNd	And then at J.Z. there were no proper classrooms ... there were no structures?
MNk	No structures.
MNd	And where did they sleep?
MNk	We had tents.
MNd	You had tents.
MNk	Tents, yes
MNd	And how ... how did you manage the small children, you know with six, seven, eight year olds. They just were put in tents or were they ...
MNk	In tents the older ... I mean some teachers arranged to have teachers in their respective tents.
MNd	The teachers slept with the boys, or had their own tents?
MNk	They had their own tents, but around a certain ... these tents were clustered ... so the teachers were part of the cluster
MNd	I was interested ... The teachers there, they were all qualified teachers from home.
MNk	Yes, and they came in numbers. When we were already ... I'm sure transportation of these teachers from Botswana was accelerated when the school had started in J.Z. because a number of them came, a good number of them came and there was no shortage of teachers.
MNd	I was interested in this one...this... because I understood the school was separate from the military. [4A-31-02]
MNk	Yes.
MNd	And yet here there is a uniformed guerilla teaching the boys.
MNk	These were Commissioners not teachers but Commissioners, yes ¹ .
MNd	So why were they there at the school?
MNk	In the school for security, for security reasons, they were there, and then for the Political Science. These were the people, the trained personnel, so they could teach well the history of what you wanted to.....
MNd	So they were teaching History mostly?
MNk	Yes, mostly Political Science.
MNd	Did they know how to teach the small children?
MNk	Ah well, very well...we always called the political economy, political economy, so these were well trained

¹ Presumably he means commissars

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MNd	So what were they trying to ... what were they trying to get the boys to understand?
MNk	To understand the liberation of the country, the liberation struggle, why were they in such a terrible condition because the Zambians used to say , “ You Zimbabweans, you have everything in your country, you have everything, no shortages, and what, now why are you fighting, what are you fighting for”. Right we wanted to inculcate into these children that it’s not the food that we have or the material things that we have but the ownership and the rule, the right rule. Yes.
MNd	Did they understand, the children?
MNk	I’m sure they understood the little there. It was brought to their level, not ... their level and they understood.
ZN	What difficulties did you encounter during the period?
MNk	Yes, there were a lot of problems like shortage of food, sometimes we went without food for some time because some of the areas were inaccessible by these “amacras” those big lorries where during, especially during the rainy season, ah it was not right, it was not easy to transport food to the camps.
MNd	Did...just to get this in order, I noticed this one is quite exposed [4A-35-15], I noticed this one is in the trees [4A-06-30], these ones are in the trees but this one seems to be quite exposed in the open air. Was it not necessary to hide these classes from the enemy air attack.
MNk	I seem not to understand this one because we didn’t have such a J.Z. is a closed place with trees. [4A-35-15]
MNd	So most of them were like these? [4A-060-30]
MNk	Yes, most of them were under the trees but I...
ZN	Probably that might have come in when we were looking at what was also happening at Victory Camp.
MNk	Yes.
ZN	Because here we are trying to understand the education both in J.Z. and in Victory Camp (VC) and the other trades that probably ... that fell under education.
MNd	I wanted first, before we go to the others ... so this one you are not sure why they were in the open there?
MNk	Yes, I’m not sure.
MNd	Did you ever experience air attacks there, at the school?
MNk	At the school I’m sure, yes, we experienced this attack when ... yes when they bombed that J.Z1, [inaudible], in that place where they camped because the place was just close. So the day they bombed that area
MNd	Another camp nearby?

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MNk	Yes
ZN	Works camp?
MNk	In Works when I was in V.C., yes J.Z. was also attacked when I was there, because our residential area was at J.Z. then we went to V.C.
MNd	Okay as teachers, so you remained living at J.Z.
MNk	Yes, remained.
MNd	... teaching at V.C. but was J.Z. ever attacked, it was a school, the boys school, was it ever attacked?
MNk	No, it wasn't attacked. It was attacked when the boys had moved to Solwezi, yes, I remember now.
MNd	Did you go to Solwezi?
MNk	No, I didn't go, I remained at J.Z. but teaching at V.C.
MNd	Why did they move the boys to Solwezi?
MNk	That one I wouldn't know.
MNd	It's not because of the attacks?
MNk	No, because it had not been attacked
MNd	So, it was the nearby camps that had been attacked, maybe they were affected.
MNk	No, not in J.Z.1, I think V.C. was affected when the Works Camp was attacked.
ZN	But I believe in the late ... 1978 onwards ... the attacks were becoming more frequent and there's a likelihood that any of these camps can be attacked and more so, security had identified a lot of loopholes.... in fact what they call the decoys, Ian Smith decoys, intelligence gatherers, moving around.
MNk	Yes.
MNd	So it was for security reasons?
MNk	I'm sure it was for security reasons that they went further.
MNd	So then you went to....one more question I wanted to ask you about the boys. At what age did they leave there and go to join the army; did they take the older ones to go and join the army then to be trained.
MNk	Not in my lifetime when I was there, I didn't see them.
MNd	You didn't see that.
MNk	I didn't see that.
MNd	So what did they do when they got ... you know ... when they finished their schooling?
MNk	I'm sure this J.Z was ...had primary and a secondary education , yes, some of those who

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	could have gone past Form Four(4) could be fused into various sectors of education either in Zambia or overseas for scholarships and so forth.
MNd	So they didn't go on from there to join ZPRA, they went on with their education?
MNk	Yah, they went on with their education. I don't remember any of the group being taken to the army.
ZN	Probably you might have forgotten something, some of these boys were taken to Ethiopia to do pilots , so after Form Fours and those... in fact they were being considered for various disciplines.
MNk	Yes, that is what I said.
MNd	Were they writing examinations; which examinations did they write?
MNk	I'm sure we were seconded to Zambia
MNd	Oh, so they were writing Zambian exams which were the grade 7 and
MNk	I mean the Form Fours, I'm sure, I mean it was Zambian
MNd	OK In Zambia, they did Form Five, they did O level.
MNk	Yes.
MNd	OK So it became a Zambian Examination Center
MNk	Yes.
MNd	So when you went to V.C. then, you found something ...a little bit better structures?
MNk	Yes, there were houses, there were classrooms and other things, the amenities there were improved.
MNd	Was it easier to teach there?
MNk	It was easier, we were trained teachers and we knew how to handle classes.
MNd	But it was easier to teach in classrooms than outside under the trees?
MNk	Yes, it was easier, yes, very easy
ZN	Have all these people who went to do some further education received their awards, certificates and what have you?
MNk	Yes, they did.
ZN	Did they have them?
MNk	I'm sure, yes I'm sure, they have them because some who were re patriated here, some of them had finished their Form Fours and some of them had finished their... because here we had secretariat, I mean Pitman ² and so forth. They wrote all those subjects when they were outside.

² He means secretarial qualifications from Pitman's

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MNd	Is that what these girls are doing here? [4A-75-07]
MNk	Yah, I'm sure this is Mkushi, I mean Kafue. I'm sure this is Kafue
MNd	How were they ... how were they selected for this, what were they doing, secretarial?
MNk	Secretarial, stenography, Pitman, shorthand, whatever.
MN	How were they selected for this?
MNk	I'm sure according to their attainments in Form Fours, Form Four upwards.
MNd	They had finished Form Four?
MNk	Yes, they had finished Form Four yes. There is a lady I should remember here, it was... I remember that woman with a Germany Mr Chatler (?), Mrs Chatler(?) from Germany is the one who was in charge of this secretariat training, yes.
MNd	OK So there were some expatriates in the camp?
MNk	Yes. There were.
MNd	Was she the only one or were there others?
MNk	There could be others but I still remember this one, this lady, this German lady.
MNd	I think are there other things there you wanted to talk about that we haven't asked you?
MNk	Now the ... I mean the administration of these was just the same administration we had here. We had the headmaster, yes, like J.Z. I mean V.C. We had J. Dupute, J. Dupute he was from Thekwane. He was heading secondary and then primary. Also we had others who were in charge of primary education....I had written them here...
MNd	There was a man by the name Mothobi
MNk	No, Mothobi wasn't featuring in these refugee camps, No
MNd	Not Buzwani, there was another man.
MNk	Mothobi, I'm sure when he came ...he was a teacher, when he came here and then he went to Harare under the education department
ZN	What about Mabi?
MNk	Yes, that is another sound man who was also there, then C.G. Patimile. Those are some of our heads ... our leaders and Dube.
MNd	And Nare ... Matshaka ?
MNk	Yes, Matshaka, Matshalaga were in the education directory in Lusaka ... he was one of the overseers of education in these schools. And then we had Sikhanyiso Ndlovu came , he was also in the directorate. We had also....
ZN	You mentioned Mothobi?
MNk	Yes, Mothobi was one of them. Nare, you had said Nare and then Valela. Valela was in

	charge of handicraft in J.Z.; he was responsible for the leather products, yes, he was a well trained man.
MNd	This was part of the education, part of the schooling and they did that.
MNk	Yes, Mr Valela had a lot of leather products produced and they were sellable in Zambia that was...
MNd	What kind of leather products did they make?
MNk	Handbags, purses and many other things.
MNd	It was done during the school timetable?
MNk	Yes, during the school timetable.
ZN	What happened to the boys that were so ... discovered to have the know- how of manufacturing even firing weapons?
MNk	Yes, I'm sure some of them might have pursued this when they came back. I'm sure they must have pursued these projects when they came back in Zimbabwe. And then you know this Nare you were talking about, with the choir, LMG choir... Nare is one of the personalities and then this Skuza, you know Solomon Skuza provided entertainment with singing there and so forth.
MNd	He was there in the camp?
MNk	Yes, he was there. He came to the camps and then giving other people...giving us entertainment and all that and then ...
ZN	The matches, football matches that were being conducted there?
MNk	Matches in the boys' ...yes, were just isolated, confined to the camps but in V.C. we had terrible ... two netball teams that went and competed with the Zambians.
ZN	Where they any exchange programs with some organizations like ANC, SWAPO and others?
MNk	No, not, but we had some of our pupils going to some of the Nkumbi College ... I'm sure you know Nkumbi College that was for both ... for all liberation movements. It's where the SWAPOs, ANCs, ZAPUs and so forth cadres went to learn. Some were doing Form Four there, and so forth, academic subjects and so forth and some of these places where ...Then there was time when there was a group picked ... that is when our V.C. students and some adults went to Havana, Cuba for the ... for this international festival. Ah they had a nice time there, they had a nice time. So from Havana, they went to Soviet Union. Then they spent some days there, and they said they liked the cruising in this Santana Maria ship in the Soviet Union and so forth. Those are some of....
MNd	They went by boat to Cuba?
MNk	Yes, I'm sure it was a ship; they say it was a ship. It was called Santana Maria, so these are some of the things that we could say ... the programme of exchange
ZN	Is there any one memorable moment that you can recall during this period when you were

	in the struggle as a teacher?
MNk	Not really.
ZN	When you came back, did you come back with the children or you came separately?
MNk	I came separately. I had been chosen to go to Morogoro before independence. I was at Morogoro training for a medical man, medicine.
ZN	You were being trained?
MNk	No, I had not been trained.
ZN	Had you gone to Morogoro to be trained?
MNd	Yes, to be trained in this medical man then soon after that I came back to Zambia.
ZN	You completed your training?
MNd	No, I did not complete it
ZN	Why?
MNk	What happened was that when independence was declared we asked some of our comrades, some who had already been repatriated back to Zimbabwe. Then we asked how valuable this course we were doing was and some said "It is not recognized, we have gone back to teaching". So we went to our rep. in Dar -Es-Salaam. "I'm sure we as the qualified teachers, we find this course too elemental. So the country has been liberated, we are not going to practice this anywhere" ... because we had got information from friends in Zimbabwe who said it is not recognized so come back, the same with those who were in Chainama ... you know Chainama ... it's where, some were training there in nursing and others. Some of those had also heard the information that those courses are not recognized in Zimbabwe here, so they abandoned the ship on the way and then came back home.
ZN	So you came home, you went back to teaching?
MNk	Yes, when we returned to Zambia, I'm sure that Sam in Dar- Es -Salaam understood our cause and said come back. We found the children ...most children had already been repatriated back to Zimbabwe.
MNd	They were already in Zimbabwe
MNk	Yes
MNd	Okay, anything else you wanted to tell us or talk about?
MNk	Yes, of course I have mentioned this band of Solomon Skhuza, choir LMG, netball in Zambia, volleyball, football and one other thing: news - we were very much interested in news all the time. We had a commissar to listen to the radio every time there was news and then brief us what is happening in the struggle. That one was very interesting.
MNd	Yes ...this commissar was from the army or it was one of the teachers?
MNk	Yah, it could be anybody, it could be any body, yes. He would tell us. We made sure that

even if there are any activities but when time for news comes, please be there to listen to the news.

MNd Which news did you listen to ...which news did they listen to, which radio station now were they listening to, RBC?

MNk I'm sure RBC, yes. RBC, yes. One memorable day was the day when this F.C. was bombed, that was....

MN Where were you then?

MNk I was at V.C.

MNd Then what happened, how was the reaction?

MNk The reaction, the camp was just deserted and the people were all over.

MNd Really ?

MNk Yes

MNd They ran away from the camp?

MNk Yes, they ran away from the camp because the aeroplanes, I mean the jets were over flying that area when they bombed. We could see them, we could hear the sound and then everyone was frightened and then we had to desert the camp, yes, that was a terrible day.

ZN Do you think those who deserted the camp all returned?

MNk Yes, I'm sure effort was made to bring them back, effort was made, yes. Ah, that was a terrible day.

MNd So it was kind of like a loss in discipline was it, I mean it just ... the systems broke down?

MNk Yes, the system broke down because the sounds were deafening and then you could see the aeroplanes just flying, overflying. That was a terrible day yes, and the day when J.Z. was bombed ... because there were no children but we teachers who were in the camp. Yes, it was a weekend and we were just relaxing and then the nearby armory was bombed and all the aeroplanes flying all over and even our kitchen was bombed ,was bombed ah that was also terrible day.

MNd What kind of aeroplanes were flying?

MNk Jets

MNd They were fighter jets, Hawker?

MNk Yes.

MNd And what kind of bombs were they dropping?

MNk Napalm wasn't dropped at J.Z. but those ... axes....

MNd They were cluster bombs?

MNk Yes

MNd The ones that burst above the ground?

MNk Yes, everything at this level was wiped out. That was another terrible day. Yes

MNd So you had terrible experiences? But you think the education you were giving these children was up to standard?

MNk It was very up to standard. You see our boys came, when our boys and girls came and then our receiving reception camp was this Remand at Luveve.

MNd When they came home,

MNk When we came home. Then we were told "Now teachers you can look for jobs and then children you can fuse yourself into what ...normal schools". We were happy because most of our children were excelling. So one of the boys, one of the boys I taught myself Joshua Muhambi, yes, he was in my class and then when they came here, they excelled. Yes, most of them excelled. Some of them became nurses, some of them became this and that. They just went into their respective grades or forms.

MNd What grade were you teaching, you were teaching primary?

MNk I was in the primary, yes, I was in the primary, I taught Joshua Muhambi in grade six, yes, in grade six. So you now you need your forms to [inaudible] okay

MNd So now you meet your former students

MNk Yes

MNd OK, I think we've covered most of the things, unless you think there are some things we've forgotten.

MNk It's covered, it's covered.

MNd Thank you very much, then, thank you very much.

