

Rhodesian Insurgency

by Professor J.R.T. Wood

The Physical Setting

Zimbabwe (once Rhodesia or, more accurately, Southern Rhodesia) is situated in the southern limits of Africa's inter-tropical zone, between latitudes 15°30'S and 22°30'S.

Some 450 miles (725 km) long from north to south and 520 miles (835 km) wide, its area is 150 300 square miles (389 000 sq.km). It is roughly the size of the state of Montana.

The climate comprises two seasons: hot wet summers (October through to March) and dry mild winters. In the high altitudes there are a number of frosty nights. The long annual drought means most rivers dry up and therefore are not used for communication.

Boundaries:

1. **North:** the frontier with Zambia is bounded by the great Zambezi River and Lake Kariba. Apart from two bridges, at Victoria Falls and Chirundu, and the dam wall at Kariba, crossing can only be effected by boat.
2. **East:** the frontier with Mozambique was originally demarcated by a series of surveyors' pegs and a low wire fence. Much of this border would later be flanked by a fenced anti-personnel minefield.
3. **South:** the frontier with South Africa is bounded by the Limpopo River which, being mostly dry for much of the year, is easily crossed.
4. **West:** the semi-arid frontier with Botswana. This was open to easy penetration across the low wire fence linking the surveyors' pegs.

There are four main topographical areas:

Physical Setting

1. **The Eastern Highlands:** a narrow belt of mountains and high plateaux (the Nyanga and Vumba Mountains, the Melssetter Uplands and the Chimanimani Mountains, 6000-8500 feet high) along the eastern border, marking the border with Mozambique and the edge of Africa's great interior tableland. The rainfall here is the highest and the winters the coldest.
2. **The Highveld** - at altitudes of 4000-5000 feet (1220-1525 m) - provides the watershed for the rivers which flow north to the Zambezi River and south to the Limpopo River. It lies in a long belt of land from south and west of Bulawayo to north and east of Harare. It is the most productive farming area, particularly in the red soils of the arc north of Harare. It is hilly with great sweeps of granite hills. The vegetation is tree savannah - with canopies spreading up to 200 feet and with six foot high dense grass cover both of which make observation difficult.
3. **The Middleveld** flanks the Highveld on both sides - at altitudes of 3000-4000 feet (915-1220 m) - and is narrow in places and wide in others. For example, north of Bulawayo it provides an extensive plateau bordering on the Zambezi Basin. The rain is sparser but vegetation is tree savannah with thorn trees beginning to predominate.

4. **The Lowveld** - between 1500-3000 feet and flanking the middleveld - comprises, in the north, the southern flanks of the Zambezi Valley and, in the south, the northern flanks of the broad Sabi-Limpopo Valley. The vegetation is dominated by thorny species, responding to the semi-arid conditions.

The Economy and Society

With a population of approximately three million in 1965, Rhodesia had a mixed economy as well as a mixed and racially segregated society. The economy was based on tobacco, maize and cattle farming, the mining of asbestos, gold, coal, chrome, copper, cobalt, lithium and others and some manufacturing which would expand and diversify to meet the challenges of sanctions, including supplying the Security Forces with modified vehicles and some weapons. A major weakness was the need to import motor fuel and ammunition. This would be exploited by South Africa when it suited her. The economy was sophisticated enough to sustain merchant banks, a stock exchange and the like. Some 7000 white farmers farmed commercially while most other 270,000 whites lived in the towns. The African population of 2.5+ million mostly lived in the reserved tribal areas, living off subsistence farming, with approximately 500,000 living in townships surrounding the white towns. By 1980 the African population was some 6 million while the white population was rapidly declining through emigration to some 90,000.

Communications

1. Roads: a legacy of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was high standard tar roads on the main trunk routes. Roads elsewhere were dirt and varied in quality. The road traffic was vulnerable to attack, including mining, and measures such as mine detection and armed convoys were implemented.

2. Railways: there was a long-established rail network, serving the countries to the north as well. This was to be supplemented in the 1970s by a new line from Gwelo to South Africa. The railways were vulnerable to attack.

3. Air: There was a national airline which was supplemented by flights from South Africa and Mozambique. In the latter part of the war, the SAM-7 was to pose a problem which local ingenuity attempted to counter.

4. Telecommunications: there was a modern infrastructure.

Realities of the Rhodesian Insurgency

In combating their insurgency, the Rhodesians acquired a fearsome reputation. The former NATO commander, Sir Walter Walker, in a letter to The Times of London in January 1978, wrote:

'....there is no doubt that Rhodesia now has the most professional and battle worthy army in the world today for this particular type of warfare.'

Walker was not entirely deluded - the Rhodesian security forces were battle-hardened, resourceful and daring. 40 000 of their opponents died at a cost of 1,735 Rhodesian dead - a ratio of 23:1. With 1 400 men only in the field on the average day, they could not usually muster the classic 3:1 ratio in attack. After 1976, the Rhodesian security forces were seriously out-numbered. Time and again, little more than a reinforced company far from home would take on defensive positions held by hundreds, sometimes thousands of their opponents. On Operation Dingo, at Chimoio, Mozambique, in November 1977, 165 SAS and Rhodesian Light Infantry paratroops jumped into a camp complex holding 9 000-10 000 insurgents of whom 5 000 were killed.

However, Rhodesia as a COIN model is an anachronism, simply because the spectacle of a quarter of a

million white people trying to retain political dominance over 5-6 million is unlikely to reoccur in the near future in Africa. F.W. de Klerk of South Africa had the wit to realise that he had to concede power before he was faced with a full-blown insurgency.

There is much to be learnt from the history of the Rhodesian counter-insurgency effort. But, until a political solution was found in 1978-1979, it was only ever a reactive containment of a rebellion based in the rural areas. Before 1978 the insurgents of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) of Robert Gabriel Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) of his rival, Joshua Nkomo, held the initiative. Psychological warfare was impossible until there was a means to win the support of the people. The Rhodesian political structure was obsolete in the era of decolonisation when self-determination, beloved of President Woodrow Wilson, had become a creed.

In short, before African majority rule was not only conceded but implemented in 1978-1979, the counter-insurgency could not be won.

The point made by Robert Taber in *The War of Flea* is that the counter-revolutionary has to destroy the promise of the revolution by proving that it is unrealistic. In the Rhodesian case, that was impossible while the totally out-numbered whites denied the African majority full rights. The Rhodesians adopted bold tactics, opting for a version of the 'US-preferred' model of counter-insurgency, rather the 'traditional' approach most often employed in history. The often brutal methods of the 'traditional model' to dissuade the rural population from supporting the insurgents were unacceptable to the Rhodesians because their status as outcasts made them cautious about outraging world opinion. The 'traditional model' was also ruled inappropriate because it implies the liberal use of resources when the Rhodesians had to conserve their scarce assets (unlike their opponents) and being surrounded by safe havens for their enemies, meant that the Rhodesians could not employ static defence. The 'US-preferred model' prescribes political development, social reform, the use of rural self-defence militias and high mobility forces. It also carries a high financial price which eventually contributed to the pressure on Rhodesia to secure a political settlement. The Rhodesians developed 'Fire Force' or the use of helicopters as gunships and troop transports to envelop insurgent groups vertically and eliminate them. Fire Force was highly successful but too little attention was paid to avoiding injuring the rural people or of damaging their property. As will be seen, militias were employed at the end with some success. Before then, however, there was no one to consolidate after Fire Force had won ground. The essential economic development to sustain the parallel improvement in the life of the people flagged and political change was delayed too long.

On the revolutionary side, Herbert Chitepo, the assassinated ZANU leader, adopted the correct strategy in 1974. He and ZANLA had sufficient external finance, aid, weapons and young men to train to stretch the government's resources by creating sufficient pressure to force the security forces to deploy over the whole country. To do this the government would have to mobilise large numbers of civilians, causing serious problems in industry, commerce and agriculture and thereby psychologically destroying the morale of the whites. The spreading of the war after 1976, combined with other factors, did create such conditions, inducing whites to emigrate and forcing them to recognise political realities. Yet, we must not be misled for, in 1980, the most vulnerable of whites, the farmers, were still on the land except in the remoter parts of the eastern border.

The moment came with the election of the Muzorewa Government in April 1979 when African majority rule was a reality and success in the counter-insurgency became possible. In the event it was a close run thing, I believe. The Rhodesians, using air power, air mobility and their hardened troops, came nowhere near defeat. They lost at the conference table. Their opponents in ZANLA had a mass of ill-trained cadres bent really on politicising the masses but had no capacity for positional warfare. Nkomo's Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army based its strategy on a last minute thrust by conventional forces. That thrust never materialised. Instead, by 1979 its forces in Rhodesia were locked in a civil war with ZANLA which underlay the insurgency and which Mugabe, with North Korean aid, brutally crushed after independence in the early 1980s.

The real accomplishment of ZANLA was political. Its campaign ensured that Mugabe would win the first election. At the Lancaster House settlement conference in London in the second half of 1979, the commander of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) Josiah Tongogara conceded to Ian Smith and Francis Zindoga (a minister in the Government of Bishop Muzorewa), that the war was a stalemate. After Tongogara's death in 1980, his successor, Rex Nhongo, went further. Nhongo was a part of the cease-fire commission and told a fellow member that ZANLA would have been hard pressed to get through the next dry season because the Rhodesian forces had cut his lines of communications and, by taking the war into Mozambique, had so upset his FRELIMO hosts that they would abandon him. The Rhodesian Fire Force was killing his leaders and trained men at a rate than he could replace them while the Rhodesian auxiliary forces were beginning to supplant his men in their refuges amongst the tribes.

We will return to these issues but first it is necessary to establish the roots of the insurgency.

The African grievances - the underpinning of the insurgency

The governments supplied the fundamentals of the insurgency by creating African grievances. The main grievances were threefold:

1. **Land.** Africans' land was invaded and the rights of the invaders confirmed by conquest. To European eyes the land in 1890 was virtually empty. To the 200,000 Africans, unoccupied land was reserved for hunting.

The Company proclaimed tribal reserves - where the Africans lived communally under the loose control of their chiefs. In the 1923 Constitution the rights to the reserves were made inalienable.

In 1925 the whites were given rights to purchase 31 million acres outside the reserves and under the 1931 Land Apportionment Act a further 49 million acres, including the urban areas. The Act offered the one million Africans 7.4 million acres by contrast. There was no white land hunger - by 1965, whites had purchased only 32 million acres of the designated land. Yet they came to see the Land Apportionment Act as their Magna Carta - as the guarantee of their dominance.

In 1931 the Africans had adequate land but not for long. The African population grew by 45 times in the period 1890-1990 - from 200 000 to 9 million by 1990. By contrast the white population growth of 500 - 275 000 lagged far behind and relied heavily on immigration (but a selective immigration policy designed to avoid the 'poor white' problem experienced by South Africa).

Not only were the reserves too small but the age-old cattle culture and farming methods exhausted the soil. Attempts by the Government to protect the soil, including destocking, only fostered resentment. Yet, despite the overcrowding, most Africans remained in the tribal areas until the 1960s - forcing commercial farming, mining and industry to recruit foreign labour, mainly from Malawi. The hydro-electric dam at Kariba, for example, was built with foreign labour in the 1950s.

2. **Employment:** given their late Iron Age status in 1890 all that the Africans could offer was unskilled labour. This status was not improved by racial legislation which forbade African workers joining trade unions and excluded them from skilled employment even when qualified. Change only came in the Federal era when the economy expanded and segregation laws were progressively repealed.

3. **African education.** Like employment, education was segregated and much more was spent on the few white children than on the many Africans. The whites were given classical British schooling while the Africans enjoyed primary and trade education. Only after 1945 was secondary schooling available to Africans. Thus Mugabe's generation educated themselves through correspondence schools and then attended Fort Hare University in South Africa. In the Federal era, multi-racial university education was provided but education remained segregated until 1979.

The Roots of UDI: Dominion Status or Federation

Having governed Southern Rhodesia successfully for 25 years, in 1947 the whites believed that they had earned dominion status. They were blissfully unaware that Britain was bent on retreating from the Empire and not on acquiring another white-led Dominion. The Southern Rhodesians had a number of choices. They could join South Africa but this had been rejected in 1922 and few still advocated it. Further-more, the British Labour Government was unlikely to sanction it. The alternative was to seek dominion status or to amalgamate or federate with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the expectation creating a new British dominion.

Unification with the northern territories had often been advanced by: the Southern Rhodesians had never been enthusiastic; the Africans of all three territories had been cautiously suspicious and the British Labour Government had begun in March 1946 to decolonise.

Thus it is surprising that Clement Attlee's Government responded to demands for unity from the leader of the unofficial members in the Northern Rhodesian Legislative Council, Roy Welensky, and from Southern Rhodesia's prime minister, Sir Godfrey Huggins. Both aspired to create a great new dominion. Welensky rejected direct British rule while Huggins hoped to share in the north's copper boom. Welensky and Huggins proposed amalgamation under the Southern Rhodesia Constitution. This was unpalatable to the British because: in the post-war world, no British Government could abandon Africans in a protectorate to local white control; Northern African opinion union with the segregated south and feared perpetual white hegemony.

Nonetheless, under pressure from Welensky and Huggins, in 1946 the British Government created the inter-governmental Central Africa Council to coordinate migrant labour, civil aviation and hydro-electric power. In October 1948 it conceded that a federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was possible. In late 1951 after three conferences, it made a formal commitment to federation. The distinguished British historian, Lord Blake, has described the consequent federation of a self-governing colony and two directly ruled and administered British protectorates as 'an aberration of history - a curious deviation from the inevitable course of events, a backward eddy in the river of time.'

Why did Attlee's Government do this when African opinion was so opposed? There are various answers. It was shocked by the triumph of Afrikaner nationalism in the South African election of 28 May 1948 and saw the Federation as a liberal counterpoise to Afrikaner-state. Misreading their political mood, it also feared that the Southern Rhodesian whites might joint South Africa. After the British spy, Klaus Fuchs, had soured Anglo-American relations in the nuclear field, Britain needed Southern Rhodesia's chrome, lithium and other minerals for the production of her own atomic bomb. Lastly, Federation would be economically viable and relieve Britain of the financial burden of Nyasaland.

The Federation had a fatal flaw. The most crucial area of administration, that of the African affairs, was left in territorial hands because Britain would not relinquish her role as protector. This meant that Northern Rhodesian and Nyasaland Africans were ultimately ruled by London and Southern Rhodesian Africans by Salisbury. Divergent policies were guaranteed. In particular, London did not see federation as interrupting the march of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland in step with the Empire towards democratic self-government based on universal adult suffrage. The African nationalists quickly exploited this anomaly, demanding immediate change.

The Suez debacle of 1956 sounded the knell of Empire, but the new British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, waited to secure his position in the 'never had it so good' election of 1959, then liquidated the Empire as fast as he could. Territories were rushed to independence after brief experiences of self-government. In the process, Nyasaland (the least developed territory of the Federation) was allowed to secede in 1962. Northern Rhodesia's secession terminated the Federation's short life on 31 December 1963. Because self-determination was an unquestioned creed in the post-war world, the Rhodesias and Nyasaland simply swung out of Blake's 'backward eddy' into the mainstream of history.

Southern Rhodesia and Independence -The growth of African Nationalism

The African nationalists in Southern Rhodesia came a poor third to Banda of Nyasaland and Kaunda of Northern Rhodesia in the effort to break the Federation. It was more difficult for the southern nationalists to influence Britain because she did not directly govern Southern Rhodesia. Short of suspending the 1923 Constitution, there was little that she could do for them. The northern Africans had been the vanguard of African nationalism from the outset, sponsoring trade unionism and raising the levels of political awareness and agitation within Southern Rhodesia.

The Southern Rhodesian Africans, better provided for by their government than their northern brothers, were apathetic after the bloody uprisings of 1896-1897 and a brief armed rebellion by the Shona chief Mpondera in 1900. Thereafter, they eschewed violence and political protest until the 1950s, misleading the whites into believing that they were entirely content with their lot. There were only half-hearted attempts to politicise them before 1939 including the formation of the African National Congress. After 1945 there were small successes - a strike in 1945 secured African railway workers an increase in pay and recognition for their union. The feeble African National Congress was resuscitated by the Reverend Thomson Samkange in Bulawayo. There was a half-hearted general strike in 1948.

Then in 1951 the Government annoyed the rural majority by the rigorous implementation of soil conservation measures under the Land Husbandry Act. This reaction at last gave the African nationalists a chance of influence in the tribal reserves where the majority of the population lived and where hitherto the tribal chiefs and the Native Department held sway. The reserves became the battleground of the insurgency.

Copying their Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesian counterparts, the Southern Rhodesian African nationalists in 1956 adopted a new militancy and began the struggle which would end at Lancaster House in 1979. They sought likely supporters (Joshua Nkomo opened links with the Soviets as early as 1956). They exploited African outrage at the Land Husbandry Act and created the militant City Youth League in Salisbury (later the African National Youth League). Their first success was a bus boycott in Salisbury in September 1956 which led to a night of violence, giving Southern Rhodesia her first taste of civil commotion in almost sixty years. They merged the Youth League in September 1957 with the African National Congress to create a national movement with Nkomo as its president.

The re-invigorated ANC challenged the authority of the Southern Rhodesian Government and threatened the internal peace by encouraging the flouting of the law, intimidation, boycotts, the extortion of money.

The Liberal Response to African militancy

The first response to the African nationalists produced a cabinet revolt in early 1958 against the Southern Rhodesian Prime Minister, Garfield Todd. A former missionary, Todd began well, modifying the common roll in October 1957 to attract more African voters in the hope of securing African members of parliament for the first time. The Africans ignored him and the African nationalists wanted only universal suffrage.

Although the policy of multiracial partnership had been adopted, Todd then antagonised the whites by seeking to remove the Immorality Act, by his association with white liberals assisting the ANC, by his domineering style of leadership and other factors. His Cabinet rebelled in early 1958. Their removal of Todd shook African belief in white liberalism. Todd later threw in his lot with Nkomo and supported ZAPU through the coming struggle.

Todd's replacement, Sir Edgar Whitehead, a fellow reformer, was awkward, deaf, poor-sighted and unmarried, and also soon alarmed the voters. Sensing that the Federation might be short-lived, he aspired to see Southern Rhodesia gain virtual self-government as a fully multi-racial democracy, ready for independence. To this end he combined reform with security measures to curb African unrest. If his

policy looked like the carrot and the stick, it was un-intentional.

Whitehead removed many segregation practices including employment but he could do nothing about education - because white education was Federal - and when he threatened to abolish the Land Apportionment Act and promised to have a majority of Africans in his cabinet, he was voted out in 1962. His voters lacked his confidence in multi-racialism as the imperial experiments in Africa around them degenerated. The Belgian Congo collapsed into bloody chaos. They had little confidence in African rule or politicians as they watched the violence at home in the African townships where the nationalists strove to build support by fair means and foul. Whitehead's reform could never satisfy the demand for self-determination. In any case he did not have the opportunity to complete his programme of reform.

Whitehead did achieve a greater measure of autonomy for Southern Rhodesia in his lengthy negotiations with the British from 1959 to 1961 but he did not secure the quasi-dominion status he had promised. (Full dominion status, of course, implied the end of Federation.) By mid-January 1961 a constitutional formula was accepted by everyone, including Nkomo, but with the exception of the white opposition Dominion Party. The constitution contained a mechanism, through two rolls and cross-voting, to ensure a growing African influence in parliament. This formula was accepted by a referendum of the electorate in 1961. If Nkomo had stuck to his promise he could have been Zimbabwe's first president and the insurgency might not have happened.

Whitehead's effort to reform generated a coalition of white opposition in 1962. The Dominion Party and individual members from other parties, including Ian Douglas Smith, came together to form the Rhodesian Front, led by Winston field. The Rhodesian Front defeated Whitehead in 1962.

The potential popularity of Whitehead's multiracial ideals reforms also provoked violent African nationalist opposition. He was forced to respond but his actions only deepened the Africans' sense of grievance. After banning the ANC in February 1959 through declaring an emergency, he brought in security powers of preventive detention, banning and the like without the need to resort to emergency powers. His African opponents simply formed another party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), in December 1959 and demanded total emancipation. In mid-1960 the NDP's demands for power provoked violence in Salisbury and Bulawayo and the arrest of leaders. Whitehead's response was to strengthen his police force, the British South Africa Police (BSAP) and to establish a large multi-racial volunteer police reserve. Continuing violence bred increased militancy and the NDP, by then led by Joshua Nkomo, demanded immediate majority rule.

Violence in October 1960 was serious enough for the police to lose their enviable record of not having killed anyone in the course of their duties that century. Seven Africans died in prolonged unrest. Whitehead introduced the Law and Order (Maintenance) Bill which greatly increased police powers and laid down heavy penalties for arson, stoning and intimidation. The Bill's reception was so universally hostile that the Chief Justice of the Federation, Sir Robert Tredgold, resigned and proposed to head a national government. Whitehead modified the Bill but it remained draconian. He also accepted the African nationalists at his negotiations.

Because Whitehead and the British ignored Nkomo's repudiation of the new constitution in early 1961, the NDP decided to continue its resistance. More disorder provoked Whitehead to ban the NDP in December, whereupon, Nkomo created the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) pledged to secure majority rule.

A year later, in December 1962, Whitehead was ousted in the first election under the new constitution. The sense of outrage engendered by the new laws and promises of Whitehead's opponents, the Rhodesian Front, to defend the Land Apportionment Act, to reject African domination and to obtain independence, only convinced the nationalists that the only path to their goals was through violent revolution. Three months before the election - in early September - a 'General Chedu' of the Zimbabwe Liberation Army proclaimed the 'Zimbabwe Revolution' and ordered Africans to join his army. There was an outbreak of sabotage and arson (including setting fire to the BSA Company's forests near

Melsetter). Whitehead banned ZAPU and declared that it would not be allowed to reappear in another guise. Nkomo, who was out of the country, set up ZAPU as an external party in Dar-es Salaam under the care of the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole. There followed detentions, police raids and the first uncovering of stocks of explosives and weapons, including sub-machine guns and hand-guns. 1 094 persons were arrested. The war of liberation, or 'Chimurenga', could be said to have dated from this moment.

The Advent of the Rhodesian Front

The Rhodesian Front's first priority in 1963 was to secure independence, arguing with the British that the 1961 constitution with minor adjustments could serve as a basis for independence because it did not bar eventual African domination. It was logical, the Front argued, that, as the northern territories were moving rapidly to independence, Southern Rhodesia, being the most experienced in self-government, should do likewise. The British, however, could not contemplate giving a territory independence on any other basis than adult suffrage. Yet they kept holding out the hope that something slightly less than majority rule would suffice but would never give Field precise conditions for independence. The truth was that they regarded white rule, whatever its value, as an anachronism in the brave new days of independent Africa and they would not hazard offending the Afro-Asian members of the Commonwealth and the United Nations by sustaining it. Concentrating on dismantling the Federation and giving independence to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the British stalled Field with vague insinuations that Southern Rhodesia would be 'looked after.' Field's failure to make progress brought Ian Smith to power in April 1964. His opponents presumed that unilateral action was now intended.

Smith's advent was greeted with riots in the African townships over the detention of Nkomo and others. Prior to that, in 1963, a resurgence of urban violence had been quelled by mandatory death sentences for petrol bombing. Then in August 1963, the African nationalist movement split with Sithole leading the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), leaving Nkomo with the rump which he called the People's Caretaker Council (ZAPU in internal guise) until it, too, was banned. ZANU promptly dispatched young men for guerrilla training in China. The first of the terror killings was the murder at Melsetter of P.J.A. Oberholzer in July 1964. There was minor urban unrest but the new Government sought to secure the rural areas by enhancing the image of the tribal leaders and rural councils.

There was no progress on the independence issue. A British general election was due in 1964 and Macmillan's replacement as prime minister, Sir Alex Douglas-Home, was reluctant to take a decision which might break the Commonwealth. The British Labour Party was even more hostile to Rhodesian Front aspirations, leaving Smith with only the prospect of unilateral action on independence or constitutional change to bring in African majority rule. The idea of UDI was not new. It had been threatened by Huggins and Welensky in the recent past when the British had thwarted them.

The political uncertainty made a settlement imperative but Smith faced only rebuff. For the first time since its inception, Southern Rhodesia was not invited to the annual Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference where the Afro-Asians began to dictate terms. This drew more threats of UDI. In September 1964 Douglas-Home said he would accept the 1961 Constitution as a formula for independence if Smith could prove that the majority of the inhabitants of Rhodesia were in favour of it. Smith's response was to hold a referendum on the issue and to convene an indaba of tribal chiefs and headmen, arguing that, as eight of ten Africans lived in the tribal areas and as the membership of the African nationalist parties had been concentrated in the towns, the chiefs reflected tribal opinion. Both produced results favourable to Smith but were rejected by the new Labour Government of Harold Wilson which was elected on the 15 October. Wilson would not, and perhaps (given his narrow majority in the Commons) could not, allow the perpetuation of white rule. Stiff warnings from Wilson, half-hearted negotiations, the failure of the British to offer anything beyond six basic principles for independence offered Smith nothing to sell to his electorate. By 11 November 1965 Smith and Wilson were so far apart that Smith had nothing left to do but to declare UDI.

The Consequences of UDI

Britain recoiled in anger at this first rebellion by a British territory since the American revolution. Wilson dared not risk the use of force, despite vociferous demands from the Africans, because of his small majority and the possibility that his forces would not fight. Instead, Wilson applied sanctions and backed them by deploying two carrier task forces to cut off Rhodesia's supply of oil. Later, to secure international co-operation, Wilson secured selective United Nations' mandatory sanctions in 1966 and made them total in 1968.

On the surface the world co-operated with Wilson, but underneath its trade with Rhodesia continued through false bills of lading, barter and other means. The effects of sanctions were reduced by tight management of the economy. Tobacco growing continued, often subsidised, but the farmers diversified and fed the growing population. Local substitutes replaced imports where possible. Rhodesia had abundant coal but no motor fuel so imported supplies were eked out with sugar-derived ethanol. Rifle and other ammunition was not manufactured but aircraft bombs were. Small arms began to be made but most weapons had to be purchased abroad or captured. Fuel, arms and ammunition constituted Rhodesia's Achilles'heel and would be exploited when South Africa's prime minister, B.J. Vorster, wanted his way. Sanctions were also neutralised by the co-operation of Rhodesia's neighbours, Portuguese-ruled Mozambique and South Africa. Neither recognised Rhodesia but both kept her routes open to the sea, and, in South Africa's case, supplied many of her wants and later provided her with aid to keep her armies in the field.

Rhodesia's economy even grew until the mid-seventies when crippling drought, world depression, high oil prices, the cost of war and the loss of Mozambique as an ally, imposed severe strains. Never severe enough, nonetheless, to force a surrender.

If Rhodesia could weather sanctions, there had to be a political settlement. The Rhodesians clearly understood the constitutional issue could not be resolved on a battlefield. UDI was unacceptable to the world and any settlement would be invalid in international law until Britain sanctioned it. Britain would not shift her ground on majority rule. Anything less was unacceptable at home and, in addition she would not hazard the Commonwealth for Rhodesia or her standing with the United Nations.

Accordingly from 1966 to 1979 there were almost continual political negotiations. There were talks in 1966 and 1968 between Smith and the British on the warships, Tiger and Fearless, and even a settlement in 1972 which was thwarted by the African nationalists, led by Bishop Muzorewa, rejecting it. The British lost interest but the South Africans, worried by the consequences of the coup in Portugal in 1974, pressed Smith into futile negotiations with the African nationalists in 1974 and 1975. The introduction of pressure from the United States, in the person of Henry Kissinger, combined with growing economic problems and a widening of the war, both consequences of Mozambique's hostility, led Smith to accept majority rule as an immediate prospect. To persuade him, South Africa cut his fuel and ammunition supplies and removed vial helicopter pilots. All-party talks followed in Geneva in December 1976 but failed because of mutual intransigence. Smith then drew Muzorewa, Sithole (by then ousted from ZANU by Mugabe) and a tribal party into a settlement on the basis of majority rule. South Africa supported Smith's settlement of 3 March 1978 but the world refused to recognise the new constitution or the new prime minister, Muzorewa, and his government which was elected in April 1979. Margaret Thatcher was the key to such recognition but she allowed herself to be persuaded to offer instead a further attempt at settlement. Such a settlement was forthcoming from the conference at Lancaster House. The British hoped that it would produce a coalition of internal parties and the revolutionary movements but instead it allowed Mugabe to win.

The African Nationalist Insurgents

The **Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA)** of ZANU and the **Zimbabwe People's Liberation Army (ZIPRA)** of ZAPU based their campaigns on their interpretations of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory of bloody revolution. ZIPRA took advice from their Soviet instructors in formulating its version. ZANLA had Chinese instructors but never actually progressed very far through the Maoist phases of revolution. Unlike ZIPRA, ZANLA was incapable of mounting a

conventional threat. It had masses of ill-disciplined and barely trained guerrillas and was unable to seize and retain an objective. Training standards were so low that many cadres did not clean their rifles.

Neither movement was able to engender real support amongst the urban populations, sparing the Rhodesian security forces an urban insurgency. Good police work, based on intelligence, stamped out any urban threat. The insurgency was a rural one with both movements attempting to secure peasant support and to recruit fighters while harassing the administration and the white inhabitants. Unlike the town-dwellers, the rural whites faced danger and many were killed but in 1979 there were still 6 000 white farmers on the land even though it was simple enough to drive them off it. They were vulnerable every time they left the homestead. ZANLA, in the end, was present on a more or less permanent basis in over half the country and in addition was fighting a civil war against ZIPRA despite the union of their political parties after 1978. It was ZANLA's intention to occupy the ground, supplant the administration in rural areas and then mount the final conventional campaign.

ZIPRA, on the advice of Moscow, built up its conventional forces - motorised with Soviet armoured vehicles - in Zambia, intending to tear the prize of victory from ZANLA's grasp. ZIPRA's conventional threat in the event was to distract the Rhodesians from the primary task of drastically setting back, if not defeating, ZANLA's ambitions. So ZIPRA kept a light presence within Rhodesia, reconnoitering, keeping contact with the peasants (and sparring with ZANLA when they met).

ZANLA, aided by its FRELIMO Allies, bore the brunt of the Fire Force and the external camp attacks while establishing themselves amongst the rural people. Because Mugabe and his party won the election it has been assumed that he had universal support among the Shona. ZANLA concentrated on the politicisation of the rural areas using force, persuasion, ties of kinship and even the influence of the spirit mediums.

Nonetheless, the relief when ZANLA elements departed or were driven out was palpable. And modern research - by Norma Kriger, for example - has shown that in areas, to survive, ZANLA had to terrorise. This was certainly true after the Muzorewa election in April 1979 when the rural people defied ZANLA's orders to the contrary and turned out in great numbers to vote. The result of the election stunned the cadres until Thatcher's refusal to recognise its outcome enheartened them. To regain control, ZANLA returned to terrorism. None of this implies that the Rhodesian Front Government had any chance of retaining even the passive acceptance of the tribal people. Muzozewa, however, given international recognition, had every prospect of engendering support and loyalty.

The Rhodesian Security Forces

The security forces, including the police, had as early as 1956 recognised that the major problem confronting them was African unrest. Thus the security forces trained and prepared for counter-insurgency at home as well as reinforcing British efforts in Malaya and studying the counter-insurgency effort against the Mau Mau in Kenya. The Army devoted half its training to counter-insurgency, while the Air Force formed a counter-insurgency squadron. Because insurgency essentially challenges the law, the police took the lead with the military in support. Thus the counter-insurgency campaign began on a low key, led by the BSAP. But incursions of relatively large armed groups (initially from Zambia) into unpopulated areas, required military not police reaction.

To fight the counter-insurgency war, Rhodesia employed professional servicemen of all races and reinforced them with conscripted national servicemen (serving six months initially) and territorial and reserve forces drawn from the white, coloured (mixed race) and Asian populations.

There was an eight-squadron Air Force with a dozen Hawker Hunter fighter-bombers, a handful of de Havilland Vampire fighter-bombers, English Electric Canberra bombers, a dozen or so transport aircraft, numbers of light support aircraft and 50-odd Alouette III and Agusta-Bell 206 helicopters.

The Army comprised an armoured car regiment, an artillery regiment, a regular white infantry battalion

(the Rhodesian Light Infantry), a regular black regiment (the Rhodesian African Rifles) which would grow to three over-strength battalions. There was a squadron, and later a regiment, of Special Air Service and the unorthodox and controversial, if highly successful, 1 800 Selous Scouts. Another experimental regiment, the Grey Scouts, revived the art of using horses in bush warfare. There were engineering, signals, service, intelligence, psychological action, military police and medical units in support of the front-line troops. The administrative tail was commendably lean. The white, coloured and Asian national servicemen were to be found in all these units as well as in a series of independent infantry companies. The territorial and reserve troops provided eight battalions of the Rhodesia Regiment as well as serving in a variety of other corps.

Apart from their normal complement of uniformed and plain-clothes personnel serving I police stations throughout Rhodesia, the BSAP supplied the Special Branch (SB) which came under the Central Intelligence Organisation which had been created in 1963 to coordinate intelligence gathering and to supply evaluation through its Branch 1 which dealt with internal matters and Branch 2 which dealt with external affairs including running agents. The intelligence gathering was assisted by the BSAP ground coverage. To reinforce the military, the BSAP deployed a battalion-sized para-military support unit and small anti-terrorist units (PATU). Civilian volunteers, both black and white, served in the Police Reserve, manning road blocks, guarding farms, bridges etc. and providing escorts for civilian convoys.

The district administration, Internal Affairs, armed their staff and undertook similar functions while continuing to govern the tribal areas. The military role was eventually taken over by the Guard Force.

The white part-time servicemen were deployed by company rather than battalion but this did not lessen the disruption of their lives. This, plus boredom, discomfort, some danger and above all the lack of a certain political future, swelled the ranks of the young whites emigrating. By 1979 the dispersion of their manpower meant that some reserve infantry companies could muster less than thirty whites for a deployment (the numbers being made up by African professional soldiers). The performance in the field was undiminished by and large and being never defeated in the field, morale remained high. The Rhodesian forces believed themselves to be an elite force and, perhaps, they were. And it is worth remembering that eighty per cent of military and police manpower was African.

From 1967-1974 the Rhodesian forces were reinforced by the equivalent of a battalion of South African policemen deployed as infantrymen, helicopter and other pilots and later by Recce commandos and paratroopers.

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