

REVIEW ARTICLES

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TOWARDS A HISTORY OF INSURGENCY IN RHODESIA

by R. W. Baldock

Changes in Southern Africa are swift, and writing on it is rapidly overtaken by events. The leisureed pace of academic publication retards criticism of such writing still further: seven of the nine books considered in this essay were written before the April 1974 coup d'etat in Portugal and all precede the latest moves towards detente in Southern Africa. But delayed consideration is not without value. In the first place, time permits the testing of the author's assessment and forecasts against subsequent events, and in the second, enables scrutiny of books' worth as historical records rather than transitory reportage.

For a general political history of the liberation movements throughout white dominated Africa, viewed separately, one can turn first to Gibson's book.^[1] Here I consider principally Section 4, which deals with nationalist resistance in Rhodesia, referred to as Zimbabwe. After briefly sketching the background to racial conflict in Rhodesia, Gibson chronicles, not uncritically, the development of African nationalist movements within Rhodesia and in exile between 1960 and 1972. He traces and explains the mutation of black political parties from the N.D.P., through the P.C.C., to ZANU, ZAPU and FROLIZI; he points to milestones such as the rejection of 'jet-set diplomacy' in favour of guerrilla action, and adequately covers the role of Zambia, the O.A.U. and U.N. in nationalist politics. Gibson, a black American, makes no pretensions to impartiality in his account, which is ideologically committed and written 'without shame or apology from the viewpoint of a black man'. This, which should be its strength, helps to make it a curious disappointing book. Though Gibson's sources are exciting - the records of ten years' travel and research in Africa and the notes of an unnamed but apparently experienced Afro-American correspondent - this is not an authentic account of the struggle as seen from Lusaka or Dar es Salaam. It is a bland chronicle of events, revealing little new information, and emphasises the difference between being 'committed' and being 'involved'. The outline of nationalist development suffers too through the omission of the dynamic of British and world politics. Gibson, and he is not the first, gives vent to that particular sense of outrage against Westminster that stems from ignorance of what is made clear in the memoirs of Harold Wilson and indeed in the recently published diaries of Richard Crossman, that Rhodesia at the time of U.D.I. was but one element in a network of conflicting British international and domestic priorities. Gibson has performed a valuable service in bringing together information from a variety of sources. It is because the book reads like the informed journalism it is - having originated as articles in the newspaper of the London Institute of Race Relations, *Race Today*, that it will be rapidly superseded as a standard text.

The charge of quality journalism could also be levelled at Wilkinson's pamphlet;^[2] many of Gibson's sources are his too, though this is altogether a more tightly researched and argued essay. Wilkinson looks at insurgency and counter-insurgency in Rhodesia over the period of a decade and a half against the background of political, economic and social change in the country, and seeks to place his conclusions in a framework of the theory of political violence, which contrasts pleasantly with Gibson's occasional self-conscious references to Mao. He too begins with a brief review of white politics of the 1950s and early 1960s and here one must register a wish that writers on contemporary Rhodesia did not feel obliged to include potted histories of what is covered more fully and satisfactorily elsewhere. Then Wilkinson concisely and skilfully plots the progress of insurgency in Rhodesia in the context of local and international politics, and draws attention - with useful maps and tables - to relevant geographical and economic factors. He analyses the role of South Africa in the geo-politics of the sub-continent and

neatly reviews the military strength and potential of the Rhodesian armed forces, concluding broadly that white Rhodesia will not have 'the human and material resources to maintain, in the long run, credible resistance to the mounting pressures for majority rule.' If one is to identify a weakness in this paper it must be that the author does not appear wholly sure whether he is writing a factual history or a theoretical treatise on political violence: he spends valuable pages on a comparative survey of ideology and administration in Rhodesia, South Africa and the former Portuguese territories. The two may perhaps be more effectively combined in the larger thesis of which this paper is a distillation. It is, at any rate, the best short account we have of post-U.D.I. Rhodesia.

At this stage it becomes clear there are a number of aspects of the attempt to provide a history of insurgency in Rhodesia that require careful attention. One is the desire, inchoate in the writing of both Gibson and Wilkinson, to thrust upon the racial struggle a strait-jacket of fashionable revolutionary theory. Until we have a more detailed knowledge of Southern African guerrilla movements and the circumstances in which they operate, comparison with insurgency theory of South America or the Middle East is hazardous. A recent article in fact is one of the few micro-studies of a Rhodesian guerrilla campaign and this reveals the role of localised political and personal factors and the importance of circumstances unconnected with traditional insurgency theory.^[3] Bell too has written a detailed study of a single guerrilla incursion, that by ZAPU in July 1968 and the counter-insurgency operation code-named 'Griffin', but his point is rather different:^[4] his theme here and in his wider study^[5] is the apparent hopelessness of the guerrilla effort in the face of the Rhodesian intelligence network and military efficiency.

The Myth of the Guerrilla is a sceptical look at the record and potential of guerrilla insurgency in Southern Africa, Bolivia and Palestine. Bell is not antagonistic to the aims of insurgents, but challenges the metier of the guerrilla-revolutionary, his chance of success against established regimes and the applicability of revolutionary theory to the areas of his case-study: 'guerrilla theories often bear only marginally on guerrilla-practice and guerrilla-practice wedded firmly to theory has at times led directly to disaster'. Rhodesia is the scene of one such disaster, and Bell provides an astringent - and in places simplistic - criticism of the strategy of black nationalism in Rhodesia. Writing in 1970, he could discern no cracks in the political security of white Southern Africa and saw the Rhodesian guerrilla movements as defeated and divided and with little support within the country, having alienated it during the internecine struggles of 1963-4. The myth is that insurgency has much practical chance of victory; the reality that, for the participants, the existence of a war of liberation gives meaning and justification to the cause. As a prophet however, Bell was no better than anyone else, and his book has been thoroughly superseded by events. On one hand guerrilla insurgents have become far more effective on the ground since 1971. On the other, as the collapse of the Portuguese colonies shows, guerrilla success does not depend wholly on an armed victory. Bell's major weakness is his failure to place sufficient weight on the potential of non-military aspects of insurgency.

A further hazard in the writing of the history of insurgency is the problem of sources. The best way to conduct research into contemporary events is to supplement documentation with evidence supplied directly by those involved. In the circumstances of Southern Africa, the presupposed commitment which provides access to one side of the struggle by definition forecloses the other. For the sort of book that Gibson intended to write this did not matter. But the price paid by Wilkinson for his attempt to steer a middle way and present an unprejudiced account is a total reliance upon published sources. It will be interesting to discover, from his chapter in the forthcoming Penguin Special on Southern African liberation movements, whether he was able to overcome this difficulty during his recent fieldwork in Rhodesia and Mozambique. Bell does not declare his sources.

Next to direct experience of the armed struggle, the best source is an intelligent use of reports, communiques and information produced by both sides. In a continuing conflict, however, key information is obviously kept secret, and what is revealed is often in the nature of propaganda: the historian is dependent upon the selectivity of the combatants. Until recently the nationalists published little and reconstructions of the military conflict have been based on white Rhodesian sources. These have tended to underestimate guerrilla effectiveness since unsuccessful forays receive the best, and

possibly the only, publicity. A full and clear account of the armed conflict in Rhodesia since U.D.I. is nevertheless achieved in Maxey's recent booklet written substantially from official publications and news media reports of guerrilla incursions and terrorist trials.^[6] The Rhodesia Herald is his major single source, but he has cross-checked with nationalist accounts and other published works where possible, and draws attention throughout to the endemic and deliberate unreliability of casualty figures and the reported location of engagements. There is no question where Maxey's sympathies lie though he has assiduously sought to present factual accuracy; where in doubt he has strung together conflicting accounts of a single incident, with the result that the book reads somewhat tediously in places of index-cards in prose. The book originated as a duplicated pamphlet in 1973 and has obviously been updated and expanded in a rush.

The quality is uneven, varying from a most useful chapter on the constitution and cost of the Rhodesian Security Forces to a very poor section on black and white morale in Rhodesia, clearly difficult to assess in five pages and from outside the country. But patchiness and some printing errors are a tolerable sacrifice for a remarkably up-to-date account. The publisher deserves congratulation for a speedy and inexpensive publication. As yet there is no better guide to Rhodesian insurgency after 1971.

The most disappointing book on the subject is Morris's large volume which reflects intensive coverage of the full range of secondary literature and printed sources on the guerrilla campaigns throughout Southern Africa and the former Portuguese Guinea admirably; he has no doubt also consulted original material, though footnotes that refer simply to 'primary sources' are no help to the reader.^[7] As well as chapters on the area of conflict, Morris deals unusually fully with the effects of the colonial wars on Metropolitan Portugal and the ramifications of insurgency on the foreign policies of Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana and Malawi; although he too was taken by surprise by the Lisbon coup Morris manages a section of preliminary comment, based on research in Portugal itself. The book as a whole and the Rhodesian section in particular, however, is marred by the author's lack of historical objectivity. For him all guerrilla action is indefensible from the start, and the conflict is a clear case of authority against the forces of violence. The chronological catalogue of guerrilla incursions, many highly trivial and culled indiscriminately from newspapers, Government publications and Keesing's Contemporary Archives is treated to Morris's blanket condemnation. Plainly there is no objection to the expression of an author's ideological commitment, rationally argued with supporting evidence, but this sort of rigidity of view, the 'cops and robbers' view of history, cannot but be impervious to the complex dynamics of human and political action. In his foreword Morris claims a determination to be 'scrupulously fair and impartial' but his consistent use of an emotive and question-begging vocabulary belies his purported disinterest. This, with his circuitous and laboured style makes the book very difficult to take up, once put down, and makes the publisher's suggestion that 'the average man-in-the-street needs to read and re-read it' the more astonishing. Used with care the bibliography and some factual details are valuable. But the book is a missed opportunity to make an important contribution to the history of insurgency in the sub-continent.

In a chapter on research problems, Morris criticises the conspicuous unhelpfulness of the Rhodesian, South African and Portuguese Governments in providing information on terrorist movements, though this is hardly surprising. One answer to the problem of sources is simply to study peripheral aspects of insurgency. Marcum, in his chapter in a volume of essays on Southern Africa does just this;^[8] he provides a generalised study, based predominantly on published sources, of black political radicals in exile, and the factors which affect them; although not in the main-stream of the study of insurgency, it is nevertheless useful, not least because it elucidates just which power is backing which guerrilla group. Marcum looks at the external affiliations of liberation groups and the possible sources of their finance and comes to no surprising conclusion: exile liberation movements, by reason of their most necessary attachment to one or more major sponsoring power, are dragged into international disputes unrelated to the struggle in Southern Africa, such as the Sino-Soviet power conflict and the divisions following the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Marcum considers, quite reasonably, that the strong psychological pressures on exile African political leaders goes some way to explain the volatility and factionalism characteristic of political movements forced to operate from abroad. What he does not consider is to what extent these divisions reflect conflicting views on the nature of the envisaged post-revolutionary society, rather than mere financial or strategic considerations of the guerrilla phase.

The aim of the editors of *Southern Africa in Perspective* has been to remedy shortcomings they discern in literature on the area. They have sought to place Southern African politics in the perspective of a sub-continent within which individual units interact with each other as well as with powers outside the subsystem. And they have aimed to present it through balanced writings of African nationalist spokesmen, government officials and academics, omitting polemics, apologies and special pleading. The range of British, American and Southern African authors is impressive, though the contributions are not of a uniformly high standard. A volume of this size - there are twenty-two contributors - clearly poses difficulties for the editors, and some overlap and repetition will slip through. But here there is a surfeit of wordy rhetoric and a number of careless errors (Welensky is presented as Prime Minister of Rhodesia, p.304) which should have been excised. Of the chapters which deal with Rhodesia, 'African nationalism in South Africa and Zimbabwe' by I. S. Reid gives a straightforward account of liberation movements. C. W. Petersen's essay 'The military balance in Southern Africa' is undistinguished: the logistics of the armed struggle are seen in terms of counting heads, with little consideration of vital economic and political factors with a bearing on military action. Y. Tandon's survey, 'The Organisation of African Unity and the liberation of South Africa', however, is an interesting and helpful study.

Also of value is Turok's booklet;^[9] it is concerned with Rhodesia only in so far as it constitutes a geographical obstacle between Azanian liberation movements and South Africa itself, but it is appropriate to draw attention to it as a possible model for the future historiography of Rhodesian insurgency. Unlike the authors of the books considered above, Turok presupposes a knowledge in his reader of the detailed chronological history of black nationalism, and presents an uncluttered intellectual analysis of familiar events. Despite the apparent decline in activity (or the publicity given to it) of South African black nationalism over the past decade, it has of course a longer tradition of resistance than its Rhodesian counterpart and supports a more sophisticated critical analysis. Turok discusses the development of black consciousness and black political movements from the 1920s and such aspects as the nature of black political leadership, the influence and costs of white radicalism and theories of non-racialism. He traces stages of development from A.N.C. demands for a simple extension to Africans of white democratic privileges to the rejection in the early 1960s of non-violence as a means of protest. It is a committed work, aimed at participants in the liberation struggle as well as academic observers and seeks to provide practical advice based on a critical review of past campaigns. The author is out of sympathy with the principal popular explanations of the nature of South African society and his interpretation is bound to be controversial. But whatever reservations one may have as to his analysis and his style - and this is not the place to discuss these - his attempt at a constructive practical approach, rather than the tentative prognostication of the historian, is rare amongst academic writing on insurgency.

The growth of interest in the history of insurgency in Southern Africa has created the need for source material and bibliographical aids, and the last two works considered in this essay are of this sort. Roder has produced a xeroxed edition of a pamphlet prepared for the African Studies Association of America.^[10] It seeks to present to the academic community statements of guerrilla leaders which, it is claimed, are suppressed by commercial news media. Since the statements are extracted from such publications as *Sechaba* and *Objective: Justice*, generally familiar to academics, this claim is doubtful though it is no bad idea to bring together in one volume particularly luminous or informative pieces. Extracts relate to all the Southern African territories in which guerrillas were active in 1972, and venom is directed against British and American involvement as well as against the white Governments. The Rhodesian section includes an interview with George Nyandoro, Secretary General of ZAPU, an article by Bishop Muzorewa on the role of the Church in the liberation struggle, and an assessment of ZAPU-in-exile by George Silundika.

Ansari has produced a bibliography of source material on liberation movements in Rhodesia, South-West Africa (Namibia) and the former Portuguese territories;^[11] a separate volume dealing with South Africa is being compiled. There is a short foreword by Basil Davidson. Ansari, who is the Documentation Librarian at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, has put together a convenient list of books, articles and what he terms 'documents' from a wide range of publications, many of them extremely obscure periodicals. The index to documents on Rhodesian liberation movements lists

published testimonials of guerrilla leaders, official statements on policy towards Rhodesia by the Governments of India, China, the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., and relevant resolutions of the U.N. General Assembly. This is a helpful guide to sources available for research, even though few libraries could afford to stock more than a fraction of those listed.

By any criterion the books considered in this review provide a limited picture of Southern African insurgency. Only when the racial problems of the sub-continent are resolved and the liberation phase becomes history will detailed and comprehensive accounts become possible and historians' questions satisfactorily answered. What is the structure and size of nationalist movements? How are they financed and what constraints do funding bodies place on their freedom of action? What are the patterns of guerrilla leadership? What proportion of guerrillas return safely to base following incursions across the Zambezi? How successful have insurgents been in infiltrating Rhodesian African society? These are questions to which none of these books provide adequate answers.

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TOWARDS A HISTORY OF RHODESIA'S ARMED FORCES

by R.S. Roberts

It is not surprising in time of a state of emergency and armed insurgency that more attention than hitherto should be paid to the history and development of Rhodesia's police and military forces. There have, of course, been works on the subject before the 1970s, but by and large these fell into two, not mutually exclusive categories: personal accounts of campaigns in the Pioneer period written by participants, and pious histories of the police by policemen. In the first category, one thinks immediately of the works by Leonard, Alderson and Selous all of which, incidentally, have been reprinted in Rhodesia recently;[\[12\]](#) in the second come the works of Harding and Hickman,[\[13\]](#) and numerous articles in *Outpost* and *Rhodesiana*.

Recent years, however, have seen more detached work, notably by Hamley and Gibbs,[\[14\]](#) which cover the history of the police force in particular and much of the general campaigning in the years 1890-1902. Gibbs's two volumes were commissioned by the B.S.A.P. but they bring the history to a close in 1939 because the author was apparently not given any special access to documents. As an official history, Gibbs's work is also rather unusual in its irreverent if not flippant approach to his subject, although it must be said that the tone becomes less facetious the nearer he approaches the present; nevertheless some readers may find the humour rather heavy-handed. The history of the police is covered competently enough, in the context of the limited sources used; but it is not easy to grasp the growth and the changes of organization down to 1909, because of the emphasis given by the author to the various military campaigns that punctuate the period 1890-1902. Hamley's book by contrast is severely factual and very brief, being essentially a series of illustrations of uniforms which explicate the many different changes in the name and organization of the police forces. This may seem a very limited approach but it does have the advantage of making it as easy to understand as the confusion of names and lack of fundamental research in the subject allows. For nothing could be farther from the truth than the commonly accepted idea that Rhodes in 1889-90 formed for Southern Rhodesia the British South Africa Police which has continued to this day.

In the first place there is the complication of Bechuanaland which as Dachs[\[15\]](#) has stressed was more closely involved in Rhodesian history than is often remembered. The British South African Company's Police (to give it its full title) was in origin part of the Bechuanaland Border Police (itself the successor of the Bechuanaland Mounted Police) which was run down in 1889-90 and finally disbanded and taken

over by the British South Africa Company in 1895; then after the Jameson Raid the British South Africa Police was constituted by the British High Commissioner, not the Company, and under the command of a British, not a Company, official, to police Bechuanaland and the countryside (but not the towns) of Matabeleland, Mashonaland and 'North Zambesi' (meaning Barotseland and North-West Rhodesia, it seems, and not the Mount Darwin area, as Gibbs (p.209) has it, this fourth division disappeared in 1899 on the creation of the Barotse Native Police).^[16] Between these divisions there was little real connection, other than British control. The Bechuanaland division was finally constituted in its own right as the Bechuanaland Protectorate Police in 1903, when the possibility of uniting the Bechuanaland Protectorate and Southern Rhodesia had at last passed. Only in 1909 were the Mashonaland and the Matabeleland divisions of the B.S.A.P. handed over to Company control and combined into one force. The reason for this retention of British control was not only the Company's misdemeanours but also the essentially military nature of the BSAP - as witness its role in the Boer War.

In the second place there are the bewildering changes of title and organization of the police into several different forces. To save money the BSACP was drastically run down in 1892 and replaced by a volunteer force, the Mashonaland Horse, by a nucleus force termed 'civil' but organised as a cavalry regiment with a troop of artillery, the Mashonaland Mounted Police, and by municipal civil police, the Mashonaland Constabulary. This was further complicated after the occupation of Matabeleland by the emergence of two parallel forces, the Matabeleland Mounted Police and the Matabeleland Constabulary. During the Rebellion the 'military' police forces, the Mashonaland Mounted Police and the Matabeleland Mounted Police were amalgamated to become, briefly, the Rhodesia Mounted Police under British control before being amalgamated by the British authorities into the new British South Africa Police which, as has been explained, covered Bechuanaland and Southern Rhodesia, and for a couple of years North West Rhodesia. Then in 1903 the two 'civil' municipal police forces, the Mashonaland Constabulary and the Matabeleland Constabulary were amalgamated to form the Southern Rhodesia Constabulary which was then handed back to B.S.A. Company control. When the two separate divisions of the B.S.A.P. were handed back, and united, in 1909, as has been explained, the Southern Rhodesia Constabulary also was merged with it as the 'Town Branch' of the force. Thus it was only in 1909 that a combined force for the whole of Southern Rhodesia (and only Southern Rhodesia) was formed; before then there had been some continuity and co-operation between forces but there had been no stable organization and the forces that have been described had fluctuated greatly in size, organization and function due to the exigencies of four short but sharp periods of military activity (1893-4, 1895-6, 1896-1897, 1899-1902) when indeed the picture was even more complicated than I have described, because of the raising of volunteer forces as well.

The period after 1909 is inevitably less attractive to those who seek stories of stirring adventure, and relatively little has been written of the more prosaic aspects of the growth and functioning of a police force, which if not entirely a civil one, was at least not remarkably different from the Royal Irish Constabulary or the Cape Mounted Police.^[17] Some of the most interesting parts of Gibbs's two volumes, in fact, are those that deal (rather superficially, admittedly) with the social context in which the police operated: a sparsely populated country unevenly policed, with Black Peril scares, perverse juries, difficulties in implementing the Masters and Servants Act, and problems not only in recruiting police from Britain, the main source of supply, but in keeping them in face of the attractions of becoming a settler in a society dominated by a tiny white elite; indeed in few countries can so many policemen, even down to the present day, have gone on to success in such a variety of occupations as in Rhodesia.

For the history of the police force since 1939, one has to rely on Hamley's illustrated topics which nevertheless do give a clear but brief synopsis of the process of modernisation - of the introduction of motor-cycles, a Traffic Branch, an expanded C.I.D., a Police Section, a Support Unit, a riot stand-by party, the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit and increasingly sophisticated equipment and armoury. A little more detail on some of these aspects can be gleaned from two recent publications which, however, are propagandist morale-boosters rather than detached serious studies.^[18] Nevertheless they do have some information not found elsewhere on the Special Branch, the Forensic Science Laboratory and the Police Reserve.

When all is said, however, we know remarkably little about the history and development of Rhodesia's police and its role in society. We know even less of course about the nature of crime in Rhodesia; and a study of 'thieves and thief-taking' in a plural society might well be worth the efforts of a social historian. But far more important is the vaster question of the role of the police in a colonial state. The police in Rhodesia long retained the nature of a cavalry regiment, but little is known of the impact of this force on the African population. Military patrols through large sweeps of the country were periodically made, particularly in the period between the so-called Nuanetsi Rising in 1918 and the Rand Rebellion in 1922; and intervention in African strikes, like that at Shamva in 1927, had all the appearances of military actions.^[19] Such overt actions, however, are but the visible 'tip of the iceberg'. What is below the surface, firstly, is the nature of police co-operation with the Native Commissioners who virtually ruled the African population; and this is an aspect of administrative history that is almost totally untouched by historians, who by concentrating on political debates and diplomatic exchanges with Whitehall ignore both the reality and the mechanism of European power. What lies even deeper, perhaps, is the nature and degree of African co-operation in the maintenance of this power; for, since the 1920s, if not before, Europeans have made up only about one third of the total number of policemen.

What has been written about the maintenance of law and order in mine compounds^[20] is probably true of the wider society but little is actually known except the bare outline. At the end of 1893, when the Matabeleland Mounted Police was established, the Matabeleland Native Police was recruited from the 'defeated' Ndebele, but this force was disbanded in 1896 because of doubt about its reliability and loyalty. When the B.S.A.P. was then formed under British control a Native Contingent of 300 men was authorised and recruited from Bechuanaland, the Cape and Zululand. In 1898 the Mashonaland Native Police was formed but it is not clear whether this included the Native Contingent. The commander of this new force then recruited, more by accident than design, a Reserve Company of 150 Angoni who had just been defeated;^[21] these Angoni were given military training and held in Salisbury, where, despite their amalgamation into other organisations, they retained a certain separateness. In 1903 a District Native Police was formed which recruited 450 local Africans and this force was soon reorganised as the British South African Native Police. Whether this force was a part only of the B.S.A.P. (i.e. only outside towns) or whether it was a national force which supplied African police to the town police (the Southern Rhodesia Constabulary which, as has been seen, remained separate from the B.S.A.P. until 1909) is not clear; certainly the Constabulary did have African members by 1905 when in Bulawayo they constituted two fifths of the total force there. What is clear is that since the unification of police forces in 1909, Africans have played an increasingly important role, in town and country, not only as constables but also as detectives; and until the 1930s it was a unit of Mounted District Native Constables that patrolled Rhodesia's borders. These police appear to be recruited fairly widely in Rhodesia and not from particular regions. The position in 1964 was that Africans constituted 71 per cent of the regular police (4,394 out of 6,120); official figures are no longer available but the total size of the police force has probably risen to about 8.000 and the proportion of Africans risen slightly. There is some evidence of African police trying to avoid military duties in the northeast, but this is no reason to doubt the Government's confidence in its African police, who nevertheless are a mere one per thousand of the African population.^[22]

Another neglected aspect of the question of how law and order and political control is maintained in a settler society is the degree and nature of involvement of ordinary citizens as police reservists. The origin of this system lay in the fact (to be discussed in more detail below) that the B.S.A.P., although a 'civil' force, long continued as the colony's only armed, military force. Yet perhaps owing to fear of denuding the country of police as in 1895-6, the forces sent to fight the Germans in East Africa in the First World War were largely volunteers and new recruits with only a small stiffening of regular police. There were obvious disadvantages in such a procedure and therefore the Defence Act (No. 23 of 1926) provided for Reserves which, in time of war, could free the regular police for their military duties which might be outside the colony. Nothing was done, however, until the outbreak of the Second World War when Reserves and a Women's Auxiliary Police Service were raised. These were disbanded at the end of the War, but were resuscitated in 1948 in view of the strikes and first evidence of political mobilisation among urban Africans. Since then the Reserve system has grown greatly in organisation and strength, so that in time of emergency the effective strength of the Police can be quintupled by

reservists whose proportions racially in 1964 were almost exactly in reverse proportion to that of the Regulars (i.e. 75 per cent Europeans- a percentage that may also have risen since then). Since 1972 certain types of Reserve have increasingly been used in the 'operational area' to free the Army and the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit for the more pressing duties of pursuit.

This survey, as it has progressed, has increasingly referred to military activities, and indeed the reader may well have asked why, in a survey of Rhodesia's armed forces, priority was not given to a discussion of the army. The reason for this is simply that an army, in the sense of armed professional troops trained for fighting, and not police work as well, came into being as late as 1951-4; and until then the police was the military (or at least the para-military) force.

The British South Africa Company Police was formed as a cavalry regiment to protect the Pioneers against attack from the Ndebele, and its essentially military functions were inherited by the nucleus force, the Mashonaland Mounted Police, and the volunteer Mashonaland Horse (civil duties in towns being left to the Mashonaland Constabulary). When it was decided to attack the Ndebele in 1893, these two forces were used but, of course, supplemented by other specially raised volunteer forces, the Salisbury Horse, the Victoria Rangers and Raaff's Rangers. At the end of the campaign these volunteers were disbanded and replaced in Matabeleland by a new force, the Matabeleland Mounted Police, to protect the new settlements and complete 'mopping-up' operations (the towns being left to the new Matabeleland Constabulary).

The Mounted Police of both provinces (sometimes referred to conjointly as the Rhodesia Mounted Police) were, of course, used for the Jameson Raid their place to be taken, to some extent at least, by a new volunteer force, the Rhodesia Horse, which appears to be a successor to the Mashonaland Horse and some of the 1893 volunteer units. The outbreak of the Rebellion, nevertheless found Rhodesia largely denuded of police and new volunteer forces were quickly raised: the Bulawayo Field Force, Beal's Column, the Burgher Force, the Salisbury Horse, the Gwelo Field Force, the Belingwe Field Force, the Umtali Rifles, the Umtali Artillery and the Mashonaland Field Force; and some of these became merged in the Rhodesia Horse, which despite some contradictory evidence, seems to have survived to become the Southern Rhodesia Volunteers in 1898 and then a squadron of the Rhodesia Regiment which was raised (largely outside Rhodesia) for service in the Boer War.

It was this volunteer force, the S.R.V., that is the ancestor of the Rhodesian army, for, unlike its ephemeral predecessors, it remained in being and in 1914 formed the basis of the 1st and 2nd Rhodesia Regiments that were raised for service in German South West and East Africa.^[23] After the War the S.R.V. continued only in the form of Rifle Companies but with the passing of the Defence Act in 1926 a fully fledged Territorial Force was set up; and by 1929 this had effectively become the resuscitated Rhodesia Regiment Off the First World War. At the same time, the B.S.A.P. set up at headquarters an instructional and administrative staff for all military and defence matters; this soon emerged as the Permanent Staff Corps which can be taken as the beginning of a professional army in Rhodesia, as yet without combatant troops. The Second World War saw a great expansion and diversification of the army^[24] and many of the specialist units were retained after the War; but it was only with the coming of a measure of National Service in 1951 and then a Federal Army that a modern standing army really came into being.^[25] At the break-up of Federation, all units in Southern Rhodesia reverted to Southern Rhodesia and underwent considerable reorganization. The army is now organised on a three brigade basis and numbers some 4,000 men augmented by perhaps another 11,000 European, Asian and Coloured National Servicemen and Territorials.^[26]

As with the Police, it is the African involvement in this process of military expansion that is the most interesting. Also it is perhaps the most important in that it is only from the African population that a massive increase in military establishment can now be obtained; a modest step has already been taken in this direction in the decision to raise another battalion of some 1,200 men for the Rhodesian African Rifles.

In some ways it can be argued that the 1st Battalion of the Rhodesian African Rifles not only is the

oldest unit in the Rhodesian Army but also has the most direct line of descent and continuity back into the nineteenth century. The Reserve Company of 150 Angoni recruited in 1898 remained the only armed Africans in the police, and consequently they took part in the military action in the Caprivi Strip in 1914 and then formed the nucleus of the Rhodesia Native Regiment that was raised in 1916. After the War this Regiment was disbanded but some members were recruited back into the Police to form an askari unit at headquarters. From this nucleus came the N.C.O.s for the Rhodesian African Rifles which was established in 1940. Again at the end of the War, complete disbandment came very near, but it was finally decided to retain a nucleus under the Staff Corps which soon became operational. Thus, in a way, there were regular professional African troops in peacetime before there were European. The battalion was trained in counter-insurgency in Malaya in 1956-8 and some of the European officers then are now the most senior in the Rhodesian Army.[\[27\]](#)

This African battalion is now the only askari regiment in Africa, as south Africa and independent Africa have for their different reasons ended the askari tradition of African troops being officered by Europeans.[\[28\]](#) As with the Police, not much is known about the pattern of recruitment of African soldiers although it is generally believed that a disproportionate number come from the Fort Victoria region. Even less, of course, is known about their attitudes and morale, although the Pearce Commission found that African soldiers denounced the proposed settlement. Nevertheless, despite some court martial proceedings for refusing orders in the implementation of collectiveness,[\[29\]](#) the Government in raising a second battalion can have little doubt of their loyalty; and there may soon be twice as many African as European soldiers.

This brief historical survey of a surprisingly neglected field is not the place to analyse more fully the current military situation, but there are two aspects of the undoubted strength of Rhodesia's armed forces today that have historical roots that may repay research.

One is the very close relationship and co-operation, until 1965, between the British and Rhodesian forces. It was largely as a part of British defence policy - which still provided for an eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern strategy in 1963 - that Southern Rhodesia took most of the Federal Air Force at the end of Federation.[\[30\]](#) And there is some evidence that Britain had always seen Southern Rhodesia as its military bastion in Southern, Central and even East Africa (it was Southern Rhodesian police that were sent to the Copperbelt in 1935, to Bechuanaland during the Seretse Khama crisis in 1950-2, and to Nyasaland in 1953[\[31\]](#)); however, the fact that Southern Rhodesia rejected a joint imperial command for the two Rhodesias in the Second World War and so made the Zambezi the boundary between the South African and East African commands was perhaps a clearer indication of the realities of the situation.[\[32\]](#)

The other aspect (which indeed may partly account for the first) is the degree to which Southern Rhodesia has always been a highly military, if not militaristic, society. The European police have always been few in relation to the total population but have at certain periods constituted quite a high proportion of the European population, and so, it appears, the amount of money spent on police and military matters has at times been high, although still minute compared with what Portugal was devoting to its wars in Angola and Mozambique. Similarly, the proportion of the population which has engaged directly in war (1899-1902, 1914-18, 1939-45, and 1967 to the present) has been higher than in other 'western' societies. Gann, in describing recent events, speaks of the armed forces being 'the white electorate in arms';[\[33\]](#) but there is a sense in which this has always been so, ever since the Pioneers entered the country.[\[34\]](#)

R.S.R.

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- [1] R. Gibson, *African Liberation Movements: Contemporary Struggles against White Minority Rule* (London, Oxford Univ. Press for the Inst. of Race Relations, 1972), 350pp. £3,50
- [2] A. R. Wilkinson, *Insurgency in Rhodesia, 1957-1973: An Account and Assessment* (London International Inst. for Strategic Studies, 1973), 47pp. £0,35p.
- [3] T. Kirk, 'Politics and violence in Rhodesia', *African Affairs* (1975), 74, 3-38.
- [4] J. Bowyer Bell, 'The frustration of insurgency: The Rhodesian example in the sixties', *Military Affairs* (1971), 35, 1-5.
- [5] J. Bowyer Bell, *The Myth of the Guerrilla: Revolutionary Theory and Malpractice* (New York, A. Knopf, 1971), xiv, 285pp. no price stated.
- [6] K. Maxey, *The Fight for Zimbabwe* (London, R. Collings, 1975), 196pp. £0,95p
- [7] M. Morris, *Armed Conflict in Southern Africa* (Cape Town, J. Spence, 1974), x, 371pp. no price stated.
- [8] J. A. Marcum, 'The exile condition and revolutionary effectiveness- Southern African liberation movements', in C. P. Potholm and R. Dale (eds), *Southern Africa in Perspective: Essays in Regional Politics* (New York, The Free Press, 1972), xiii, 418pp. no price stated.
- [9] B. Turok, *Strategic Problems in South Africa's Liberation Struggle* (Richmond (Canada), Liberation Support Movement Press, 1974), 67pp. Cdn \$1,00.
- [10] W. Roder (ed.), *Voices of Liberation in Southern Africa* (Waltham (Mass.), African Studies Association, 1972), 95pp. no price stated.
- [11] S. Ansari (ed.) *Liberation Struggle in Southern Africa* (Gurgaon (India), Indian Documentation Service, 1972), 118pp. no price stated.
- [12] A. G. Leonard, *How We Made Rhodesia* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, reprint [1896], 1973); E. A.H. Alderson, *With the Mounted Infantry and the Mashonaland Field Force* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, reprint [1898], 1971); F. C. Selous, *Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, reprint [1896], 1968).
- [13] Harding, *Far Bugles* (London, Simpkin Marshall, 1933); *Frontier Patrols* (London. G. Bell, 1936). S. Hickman, *Men Who Made Rhodesia* (Salisbury, British South Africa Co., 1960); *Rhodesia Served the Queen* (Salisbury, Govt Printer, 1970).
- [14] R. Hamley, *The Regiment: An Outline of the History and Uniforms of the British South Africa Police* (Cape Town, Bulpin, 1971), 120 pp. R12,00; P. Gibbs, *The History of the BSAP: Vol. 1, 1889-1903; Vol. 2 1903-1939* (Salisbury, Kingstons for British South Africa Police, 1972-4) ix, 266 pp. Rh\$6,00; xv, 244 pp. Rh\$7,00. See also L. H. Gann, 'The development of Southern Rhodesia's military system, 1890-1953', in *National Archives of Rhodesia, Occasional Papers: No. I* (Salisbury, Govt Printer, 1965), 60-79; 'Rhodesia and the prophets', *African Affairs* (1972), 71, 131-4.
- [15] A. J. Dachs, 'Rhodes's grasp for Bechuanaland, 1889-1896', *Rhodesian History* (1971), 2, 1-9.
- [16] See W. V. Brelsford (ed.), *The Story of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment* (Lusaka, Govt Printer, 1954), 16-18; I am indebted to Dr P. R. Warhurst for this point.

- [17] The organisation of the police became more 'civil' in 1913 when the district commands were made to coincide with magisterial districts, and the High Commissioner's control was relaxed, Gann, 'The development of Southern Rhodesia's military system, 1890-1953', 67-8.
- [18] C. Black, *Fighting Forces of Rhodesia* (Salisbury, H. C. P. Andersen, 2 Numbers, 1974-5), 95 pp; 70 pp. Rh\$0,75 each.
- [19] I. R. Phimister, 'The Shamva Mine strike of 1927 . . .', *Rhodesian History* (1971), 2, 73-5; cf. the army's action at Wankie in 1954.
- [20] C. van Onselen, 'The role of collaborators in the Rhodesian mining industry 1900-1935'. *African Affairs* (1973), 72, 405.
- [21] Harding, *Far Bugles*, 75-6.
- [22] It can, however, be argued that the District Administration of Rhodesia is partly militarized in that more than 1,000 African District Assistants have been trained to lead an African militia and European national servicemen and reservists can do their 'military' service in Internal Affairs, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 22 Feb., 27 June and 3 Sept. 1974. There is also a new Guard Force being formed.
- [23] See A. E. Capell, *The 2nd Rhodesia Regiment in East Africa* (London, Simson, 1923) .
- [24] See J. F. MacDonald, *The War History of Southern Rhodesia* ([Salisbury] by authority of the Government, 2 vols, 1947-50).
- [25] At the same time the Royal Rhodesian Air Force was made a separate service from the Army. The Air Force had begun as part of the Territorial Force (Rhodesia Regiment) in 1935 as a training unit. During the War there was vast expansion both in the training programme and in fighter squadrons, but this all took place within the structure of the Royal Air Force; consequently at the end of the War, there was no Rhodesia Air Force. There were, however, a few ex-Air Force men in the Southern Rhodesia Staff Corps (the former Permanent Staff Corps) and they finally persuaded the Government to re-establish the Air Force as a Permanent Unit. This, as mentioned, grew into the separate Federal Royal Rhodesian Air Force which, after considerable expansion, reverted almost entirely to Southern Rhodesia at the break-up of Federation.
- [26] There is little available on the development and size of the Rhodesian Army but for what is known see, K. Booth, *The Armed Forces of African States, 1970* (London Inst. for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper No. 67, 1970), 19-20. Gann, 'Rhodesia and the prophets', 131-4; K. Maxey, *The Fight for Zimbabwe* (London, R. Collings, 1975), 30-53. For local propagandists, see Black, *Fighting Forces of Rhodesia*; and B. Whyte *A Pride of Men* (Salisbury, Graham Publishing, Supplement to *Illustrated Life Rhodesia*, 7 Aug. 1975), 144 pp.
- [27] C. Owen, *The Rhodesian African Rifles* (London, L. Cooper, 1970).
- [28] There is now the hint of its re-emergence in the 'Homelands' of South West Africa.
- [29] *Guardian*, 23 Nov. 1973.
- [30] Cf. the Federal Air Force involvement in Southern Arabia and Kuwait from 1958-61.
- [31] Some police also went to Kenya on secondment in 1953; the Rhodesian African Rifles also gave help in Egypt in 1952 after the abrogation of the Treaty as well as going to Malaya in 1956.
- [32] Gann, 'The development of Southern Rhodesia's military system, 1890-1953', 75-6.

[\[33\]](#) Gann, 'Rhodesia and the prophets', 132.

[\[34\]](#) An interesting sidelight on this is that the Minister of Justice in Southern Rhodesia was also Minister of Defence until 1943.