

# Pioneers and Progress: White Rhodesian Nation-Building, c.1964-1979

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## Abstract

The thesis explores the white Rhodesian nationalist project led by the Rhodesian Front (RF) government in the UDI-period of 1965 to 1979. It seeks to examine the character and content of RF nation-building, arguing that it is important to consider the context of wider global and regional trends of nationalism at the time. Thus, it places the white Rhodesia within wider 'British World' studies of settler societies within the British Empire, but also compares it to other African nationalist movements in the 1960s and 1970s. It studies white Rhodesian nationalism on its own terms as a sincere, albeit unrealistic, alternative to majority-rule independence, and considers how the RF adapted over the period in its continuing attempts to justify minority-rule in an era of global decolonisation.

Two thematic sections examine the RF's nation-building project in systematic detail. The first section, on symbolism, considers Rhodesia's processes of 'symbolic decolonisation'. This involved white Rhodesians creating new national symbols not associated with Britain or the British Empire. Processes by which new national symbols were chosen are used as a lens to explore white Rhodesian debates about their 'new' nation after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) was taken in 1965. They reveal the ambiguities and complexities at the heart of the RF's nation-building project; a project that was frequently exclusionary and hotly contested at every opportunity. The second section explores how history was used to help create and defend the nation, adding to studies of the use of history in nationalist projects. It considers a range of non-professional sites of history-making, demonstrating the complicated relationships between these different sites and the state's wider nationalist agenda. It also explores how history was invoked to justify and defend minority-rule independence both before and after UDI.

## Abstract

This thesis explores the processes of white Rhodesian nation-building, as directed and implemented by the Rhodesian Front (RF) Party after it unilaterally declared independence (UDI) from the United Kingdom on 11 November 1965. It provides a study of specific key themes of the RF's nationalism from shortly before UDI in 1964, to the creation of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1978-79. It argues that the RF's nationalist project has a wider comparative value than has been previously acknowledged, sited as it was at a juncture between settler societies and ex-colonies. While seeming isolated and anomalous, white Rhodesian nationalism drew upon wider global and transnational trends. Further to this, it argues that the RF's nationalism shifted over time in response to the challenges which arose from trying to maintain a white-ruled state in a post-imperial age. Finally, it contends that the RF's nationalism relied on a symbiosis of 'invented tradition' and 'imagined communities' which constituted its short-term strength and its long-term weakness. Indeed, it questions the discrete nature and the ability of these two theoretical approaches to sufficiently explain nationalist phenomena, instead it argues that it is more useful to look at the relationship between top-down and bottom-up manifestations of nationalism.

UDI was declared in opposition to continental trends of majority-rule decolonisation, and the challenges of maintaining a white-ruled state in a post-imperial age provided the central tensions of the RF's nation-building project. The RF's nationalism was a reactive, hesitant and inconsistent nationalism that shifted to meet new demands and imperatives throughout the UDI-period. To reflect this, the chapters delineate the RF's nationalism into three separate, but overlapping, phases in which different visions of the nation were pursued through different nation-building strategies. The first phase, from the RF's creation in 1962 to approximately 1967, was one in which the RF sought to secure a negotiated, internationally-recognised, minority-rule independence within the Commonwealth, a similar position to the 'old dominions' of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada in

which Rhodesia would have complete autonomy but retain close links to Britain. The second phase, between 1967 and 1975 (though largely completed with the achievement of a republic in March 1970), was 'symbolic decolonisation'. Symbolic decolonisation reflected the essential continuity of settler power before and after UDI, but was born of a need to demonstrate Rhodesia's independent nationhood both domestically and internationally. The incomplete decolonisation of UDI meant the Rhodesian nation, and the RF's authority, were characterised by ambiguity and open to contestation. During the era of symbolic decolonisation, the RF sought to introduce new 'national' symbols — flags, constitutions, and anthems — to demonstrate that Rhodesia was no longer a British colony. This made the RF more akin to other post-colonial nationalist movements across the African continent than to dominions, as it sought to establish their independent statehood and demonstrate their national sovereignty. The final, terminal, phase of the nation-building project — Zimbabwe-Rhodesia — saw the RF jettison all of its previous national symbols in a desperate attempt to retain the substance, if not the style, of minority-rule, with fatal implications for its nationalist project.

This study takes white Rhodesian nationalism at face value. It looks beyond the anomalous colonial holdover that it was often portrayed as at the time to sift through the layers of the RF's national project. It considers how a small group of settlers tried to respond to the end of the British Empire and sought to find continued rationalisation for minority-rule, against the logic of continental trends of decolonisation. It examines how the RF tried to respond to domestic and international developments with new strategies for nation-building, and the strengths and weaknesses of these different strategies.

The thesis is split into two thematic sections. The first focuses largely upon the processes of symbolic decolonisation by which Rhodesians chose a new flag, a new head of state and constitution, and a new national anthem. These chapters illustrate how, despite the RF's best efforts, its visions of the nation remained contested at every step of the way — even from within its own party. They seek to illustrate the wider comparative value of the white Rhodesian nationalist case, by

highlighting its similarities to and differences from two broader global trends in nationalism during the era of decolonisation and imperial decline in the 1960s and 1970s: settler societies and non-settler ex-colonies. White Rhodesians occupied a strange demi-monde, not quite a settler society akin to Canada or Australia, but by no means a majority-ruled ex-colony either.

Consequently, the first section follows the RF's attempts to chart a course between these two nationalist alternatives and the implications for its nation-building project. It shows how the RF's repeated attempts to dispel ambiguity and foster white Rhodesian unity behind UDI and the maintenance of minority-rule were fundamentally undermined by the divided nature of white Rhodesian society. These divisions led to repeated contestations of national symbolism, symbolism that proved to be so brittle that it often failed to stand up to the sustained challenges of economic hardship, and warfare. The chapters also interrogate two central theories of nationalism – 'invented traditions' and 'imagined communities' – questioning the utility of such terms and the distinction between them. They demonstrate how the RF's nation-building project's short-term success relied on a symbiosis between top-down 'invention' and bottom-up 'imagination', but suggest that this short-term strength would be its long-term weakness.

The symbolic decolonisation process also shows the limited inclusivity of the new Rhodesian nation, particularly where the black population was concerned. The RF pursued a strategy of co-opting Rhodesian chiefs (an RF 'invention') and ignoring black political consciousness (bottom-up 'imagination') as expressed by blacks in Rhodesia through the growing African nationalist movements. The exclusive nature of the RF's nation-building project would have severe consequences for it, as it created a new nation whose success depended upon the morale of the white population and their loyalty to the 'nation' of Rhodesia rather than wider transnational symbols – like the British Monarchy, and the Union Jack, which still held some significance in other settler societies.

The second section of the thesis looks at the continuities and differences between the different phases of RF nation-building by exploring how history was used to serve the white Rhodesian nationalist agenda. It begins firmly in the first phase of the RF's nationalist project by examining how historical narratives of 'good governance' and a 'blood price' paid by Rhodesians during the First and Second World Wars were used to argue that Rhodesia 'deserved' minority-rule independence. These arguments relied upon older settler discourses which had been historically used in the larger settler societies to win concessions from Britain in return for imperial war service. They also marked out the RF's nationalism as a white alternative to the anticolonial majority-rule nationalist movements in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, as the RF compared itself favourably in terms of governance and civilisation to majority-rule states that had been granted independence. White Rhodesians argued that their historical record of 'good governance' stretching back to the 1920s demonstrated that they deserved independence as much if not more than the majority-ruled states to their north.

This section also explores the varied sites of historical discourse production in nationalist projects. It looks at the work of an amateur historical society – the Rhodesiana Society – and its complicated relationship to the RF government and state, Rhodesian academics, the National Archives, and white Rhodesian historical fiction to suggest the varied sources that nationalist movements can draw upon for histories to use in nation-building projects. This complements existing studies of nationalism by looking beyond the traditional sites of academia and the state to illustrate the importance of amateur historians to 'national' histories. Finally, this section shows how the built-in weaknesses of the RF's nationalism led to the death of white Rhodesia. It illustrates how the RF tried to use history in defence of its nation against challenges by Africans, and how these challenges and defences opened up new spaces for contestation within the white community. It argues that the third phase of the RF's nationalism, represented in its attempt to preserve white privilege while proclaiming 'majority-rule', led to confusion and disruption as the imaginations of

white Rhodesians ran wild. It abandoned all the symbolic trappings of statehood that Rhodesia had acquired since 1968 and replaced them with something which looked an awful lot like the majority-rule that the RF had been decrying since its creation in 1962. Challenge and confusion led to a disruption of the close relationship between 'invention' and 'imagination' that had made the RF's project so successful in the short-term, causing the nation to collapse.

In order to explore white Rhodesian nationalism in the making, the thesis makes use of a wide range of primary source material in an attempt to achieve both a 'bottom-up' and a 'top-down' perspective. It makes use of parliamentary debates, radio broadcasts, and propaganda to illustrate the public performance of nation and statehood. These sources demonstrate the way that the RF articulated its shifting visions of the Rhodesian nation in the UDI-period. They are augmented by a wide range of cabinet documents from Ian Smith's papers to give a elite political perspective on the RF's nation-building, particularly where the new flag and national anthem were concerned.

A wide range of contemporary popular cultural expressions are also scrutinised to look at contestations and affirmations of the RF's nation-building project, including historical fiction, folk songs, the journals of an amateur historical society and, most prevalently, letters sent to the editor of the country's most popular daily newspaper, *The Rhodesia Herald* (renamed *The Herald* in 1978). These sources are read both along and against the grain; while seeking to document and be alert to the concerns of the white population it studies, the thesis does not abandon a critical stance. Rather, it presents the varied and often contradictory responses of white Rhodesians to the RF's nation-building endeavours in the UDI-period.

With its multiple foci, the thesis allows for an exploration of the ways in which the national, regional, and global can intersect and influence ostensibly 'national' projects. In addition to making specific arguments about the content and character of the RF's nation-building project, examining the symbolic and historical aspects of that project in detail, the thesis contributes to broader arguments as well. It argues that where states are confronted with diverse and fragmented

populations and trying circumstances, an ambiguous and anodyne form of nation-building project can only meet with limited, short-term success. It challenges the theoretical devices of 'invented traditions' and 'imagined communities', arguing that neither can adequately explain nationalist phenomena, and that we can only begin to understand such phenomena by looking at the relationship between the two. At a national level, this thesis demonstrates the reductive nature of interpretations which see the history of Rhodesia as a neat progression from 'colonial' to 'independent', demonstrating that UDI era Rhodesia was not simply a transition or a colonial holdover but a serious attempt to create an alternative, white-ruled state in Africa during the period of decolonisation.

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# Introduction

Wednesday 12 December, 1979, appeared to be a momentous day in white Rhodesian history, the date on which the long-avoided process of decolonisation that would create Zimbabwe began. Fourteen years after the segregationist Rhodesian Front (RF) party had illegally declared independence from Britain on 11 November 1965 (UDI) colonial control was, briefly, resumed. After months of negotiations, the British government despatched Lord Soames to the capital, Salisbury, to resume British sovereignty over the rebel republic.<sup>1</sup> The country's most popular daily newspaper, *The Herald*, reported that: "The governor will step onto Zimbabwe Rhodesian soil soon after 2p.m. to bring the country under direct British rule for the first time in its history."<sup>2</sup> The next day, the paper reported that the changeover was relatively muted. Upon landing at Salisbury airport on a gloomy afternoon, Soames inspected a small guard of honour provided by the country's police force, the confusingly named British South Africa Police (BSAP), and then drove immediately to Government House, which had lain empty since the retirement of the previous British Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, in 1969.<sup>3</sup> Ian Smith, the man who, as Prime Minister and leader of the RF, had declared independence in 1965, was invited to greet Soames, but declined to do so.

Soames' arrival generated mixed reactions among white Rhodesians, reflecting their weariness after years of war and privation. After UDI's brief honeymoon period between 1965 and 1972 Rhodesians had been at the centre of an expanding and ever-bloodier civil war.<sup>4</sup> By 1979 thousands had 'gapped it', or taken the 'chicken run', as emigration was known to those who stayed behind.<sup>5</sup> Others were dead, disabled, or dispossessed. But their suffering was on a much smaller scale to that of the thousands of ordinary Africans in rural areas who often found themselves targets

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<sup>1</sup> See R. Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy in Southern Africa* (Basingstoke, 1997) for an insider's perspective.

<sup>2</sup> 'Soames Ends UDI Today', *The Herald*, December 12 1979, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> 'British rule in Rhodesia', *The Herald*, December 13 1979, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> P. Godwin & I. Hancock's *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia ca.1970-1980* (Northlands, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> C. Mears, *Goodbye Rhodesia* (Sussex, 2005), p. 222.

for horrific, tit-for-tat, coercion. Uprooted and dumped into protected villages (PVs), thousands of Africans in 1979 were 'behind the wire'; others were mutilated or killed by guerrillas or Rhodesian special forces posing as guerrillas.<sup>6</sup> While whites were the ones complaining about the hardships of conflict, it was mostly black Africans were taking part in a shadow war in which both sides sought to attribute the worst atrocities to each other. They were the ones reaping the bloody harvest the whites had sown with UDI.

In this context, in which the country had already been through an ostensible transition in terminology only – from white-ruled 'Rhodesia' to purportedly majority-ruled 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia' in 1978-9 - Soames had arrived to oversee the implementation of a ceasefire and independence elections in which all parties to the conflict could take part. The major externally-based nationalist organisations, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), had been proscribed by the government for well over a decade. At Lancaster House they had agreed to instruct their military wings – the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZANLA and ZIPRA respectively) to report to holding camps and lay down their arms. Additionally, the white-led Rhodesian armed forces were to remain in their barracks. All of this was to be overseen by a small contingent of troops from across the former British empire known as the Commonwealth Monitoring Force, along with a contingent of British 'bobbies' who came out to oversee the elections.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on PVs see J.K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (London, 1985), pp.79-103; A.K.H. Weinrich, 'Strategic Resettlement in Rhodesia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 3, 2 (1977), pp. 207-229. For the atrocities see J. Frederikse, *None But Ourselves: Masses versus the Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* (Harare, 1982). Other studies of the war include N. Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices* (Cambridge, 1992); T. Ranger & N. Bhebhe (eds.), *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (Oxford, 1996); D. Lan *Guns & Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (London, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> M. Tendi, 'Soldiers Contra Diplomats: Britain's Role in the Zimbabwe/Rhodesia Ceasefire (1979-1980) Reconsidered', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 26, 6 (2015), pp. 937-956; J. Mackinlay, 'The Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Zimbabwe/Rhodesia 1979-80', in T.G. Weiss (ed.), *Humanitarian Emergences and Military Help in Africa* (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 38-60.

Soames' return, and what it represented, caused resentment amongst some whites, who expressed their views to *The Herald* about being 'back under the Jack' in the days after his arrival.<sup>8</sup>

One such letter, from Miss A. Mitchell on 13 December, observed:

I note with utter amazement the preparations and in many cases the jubilation on the part of many Zimbabwe Rhodesians over the arrival of the British Governor to this country.

Have we all been so brainwashed over the last year or two that we have lost all our fight and are now ready to accept anything which is handed out to us by the double-dealing British Government?

I sincerely hope our memories are not that short.<sup>9</sup>

The same day P.M Taylor expressed hope that Soames was: 'not going to be accorded pomp and ceremony. Let him know just how greatly his imposition is resented.'<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile *The Herald* reported that a small crowd of supporters had gathered to welcome the Governor, singing 'God Save the Queen', and raising the Union Jack in a display which another letter-writer described as 'nauseating'.<sup>11</sup> Some white Rhodesians such as 'Wondering' jokingly asked if they were now eligible for British 'benefits' such as the NHS and state pension system.<sup>12</sup>

Joan Pohl, of Centenary, was more resigned in a Christmas Day letter pointedly titled 'Invaded – this city I used to love'. She described a remarkably unlucky visit to Salisbury on the same day Soames had arrived – her favourite dog had died at the vets ('Part of our security gone'), her car had been broken into, her drive home involved a large detour due to a 'contact' (engagement between armed forces), this was all the fault of the new regime.<sup>13</sup> She lamented '[t]he others, the ones from outside who have come to record our agony, and who gathered in chattering groups, managing our affairs...'<sup>14</sup> Finally, she remained confident in her support of the RF, which had ruled

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<sup>8</sup> The phrase is taken from Harry Garner, 'Back under the Jack', *The Herald*, 12 December 1979, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Miss A. Mitchell, 'Why the Jubilation?', *The Herald*, 13 December 1979, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> P.M. Taylor, 'Cut out the pomp', *The Herald*, 13 December 1979, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> 'God Save the Queen – and an old Union Jack', *The Herald*, 13 December 1979, p. 19; V.H. Van Cleefe, 'Singing was Nauseating', *The Herald*, 25 December 1979, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Wondering, 'British Benefits, Please', *The Herald*, 25 December 1979, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> J. Pohl, *The Herald*, 'Invaded – this city I used to love', 25 December 1979, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

Rhodesia uninterrupted for the last fourteen years, and what it had stood for: ‘in spite of all the awful things that have happened to us in the last 14 years I still think Ian Smith is the greatest.’<sup>15</sup> Other writers were fearful of the future. Lynald Pritchard urged readers to ‘Remember Kenya’ – Kenya’s Mau Mau Emergency was long a bogeyman of Rhodesia’s white settler community – and argued that: ‘After our independence Britain intends to desert us, even in the face of constant threats that the war will escalate.’<sup>16</sup> Some were more accommodating; D. Dur of Salisbury defended the singing of ‘God Save the Queen’, arguing that ‘Rhodesia is a British colony... [the Rhodesian national anthem] is widely regarded as the “RF anthem” and is eschewed by all who deplore the bloodshed unleashed against our country by the RF’s squalid objectives.’<sup>17</sup>

These white reactions: anger and fear of the war, ‘nausea’ at the prospect of majority rule, tired resignation, and quiet relief, reflected the complicated status of ‘Rhodesia’ as an entity in the minds of white settlers. To a few, Rhodesia had always been a British colony, in name if not in administrative minutiae, and the past fourteen years had simply been an unpleasant interlude. For others, a brave and vigorous experiment in settler rule in post-colonial Africa had been cruelly and unjustly cut short. Some were simply glad that their privations appeared to be over, whereas others were anxious about what the future would bring. The letters pages of *The Herald* in 1979 were suffused with notions of loyalty, identity, and nationality but they were a rehash of debates which had taken place earlier. The events that occurred in 1979 and 1980 as the ‘Rhodesia’ that most whites recognised collapsed demonstrates the messy and unsatisfactory resolution of these earlier debates about what ‘Rhodesia’ was and what it meant to be ‘Rhodesian’. In the mid-1960s, the RF embarked upon a remarkable attempt to freeze time in an aspic of white settler rule. It tried to build a new nation but found itself inextricably bound to its British colonial past. This thesis is about that nation-building project, its successes, failures, and implications for the viability of a white-ruled Rhodesia in the 1960s and 1970s.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> L. Pritchard, ‘Remember Kenya’, *The Herald*, 28 December 1979, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> D. Dur, ‘Rhodesia is a colony’, *The Herald*, December 25 1979, p. 8.

## The national, the comparative, and the theoretical

Rhodesia in the 1960s and 1970s was a place profoundly shaped by time, specifically continental and global processes of decolonisation and post-colonial nation-building. For a brief moment, white-ruled Rhodesia formed a nexus at which these wider phenomena intersected. This thesis explores how white Rhodesians responded to the end of the British Empire in Africa, and how they tried to build a post-colonial, but still white-ruled, nation on the African continent. In some respects this was far less remarkable at the time than it seems to recent observers. When Rhodesia illegally declared its independence on 11 November 1965 it was surrounded by friendly states – the Portuguese colonies of Mozambique, Angola, and white-ruled South Africa. Together, these states formed a white bloc in Southern Africa which seemed determined to buck continental trends of decolonisation. The rhetoric if not the substance of the Central African Federation, which had included Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) and dissolved in 1963, had until only recently suggested the possibility of new forms of multiracial co-operation within white-ruled states in Africa, alternatives to the much-maligned apartheid of the far south.<sup>18</sup> This meant that when UDI was declared, the RF and its supporters portrayed themselves as simply another independence movement taking power from a rapidly retreating British Empire, not as the bizarre colonial holdovers that opponents in Britain and around the world portrayed them as.<sup>19</sup>

Once UDI had been declared, and Rhodesia's 'first prize' of a negotiated settlement with Britain – which by and large refused to budge on the principal of No Independence Before Majority Rule (or NIBMAR) – seemed remote, the Rhodesians decided to go their own way and the RF's nation-building project entered a second phase of symbolic decolonisation. One by one, the symbolic links to Britain and its former empire which had been cherished parts of white Rhodesian culture – the Union Jack, God Save the Queen, the British Monarchy – were cut away and replaced.

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<sup>18</sup> A.R. King, 'Identity and Decolonisation: the Policy of Partnership in Southern Rhodesia 1945-62' (University of Oxford, DPhil Thesis, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> For examples see International Defence and Aid Fund, *Rhodesia: Why Minority Rule Survives* (London, 1969); R. Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: Rhodesia* (Paris, 1975).

By 1970, Rhodesia was a republic, with almost all the accoutrements of independent statehood (a national anthem was another five years away). This was a nation-building project of the type taking place all over the continent. This thesis seeks to highlight these recognisable parallels with the white Rhodesian nationalist project, arguing that it was more ordinary than many commentators have allowed. The debates which surrounded these transitions form the basis of the following chapters. I explore these debates on their own terms to show what Rhodesians thought about themselves and others in this period and how they made sense of their changing situation as the rebellion went on.

Arguments about Rhodesia's present and future were permeated by engagements with and understandings of, Rhodesia's past. At the heart of the thesis is an exploration of the way in which the RF and its supporters used the past in their nationalist project. It is a long-accepted truth at the heart of literature on the study of nationalism that history is a key component of any nationalist project, yet the literature on white Rhodesia in this period often overlooks this frequently employed tool. White Rhodesian debates about 'Rhodesia' almost invariably involved harking back to some form of mythologised past about the British Empire or Rhodesia's independence, about white competency and African savagery, about betrayed promises, referendums, and World War Two fighter squadrons. It was these disparate threads that, when woven together, created the fabric that was white Rhodesia, a place profoundly shaped by its remarkably brief history.

Looking at Rhodesia in this way, I engage with three broad historiographical literatures at three different levels: the national, the global, and the theoretical, all of which intersected in debates about a Rhodesian nation. At the national level the historiography of white Rhodesia has been growing apace in recent decades, invigorated by the declassification and release of important archival documents in Britain. This has seen a spate of studies in the past decade or so which focus upon the diplomatic and high-political aspects of the Rhodesian crisis. For instance, Philip Murphy and Carl Watts have written studies on the use of force to quell UDI and J.R.T. Wood has used Ian Smith's

personal papers to produce two monumental and broadly pro-settler studies of the negotiations between Britain and Rhodesia in the 1960s.<sup>20</sup>

Other studies such as those of Donal Lowry and Julian Francis have sought to reintegrate the white Rhodesian community into wider imperial trends, arguing that Rhodesians should be seen as part of a 'British World'.<sup>21</sup> Josiah Brownell has produced an incisive study of white demographics in the period, arguing that the 'war of numbers' waged to balance out racial population ratios was as important as the physical war being fought between the (mostly black) Rhodesian security forces and the liberation armies. He showed convincingly that transience was a hallmark of the white Rhodesian population, masked until the late 1970s by high population turnover, thus strengthening the impression of white Rhodesian society as fragmentary and ephemeral.<sup>22</sup> Luise White has explored Rhodesian statehood and sovereignty. She has argued that sanctions 'made' Rhodesia into a state, and also considered how notions of citizenship and obligation shaped what 'Rhodesia' meant for the settler population.<sup>23</sup> This recent literature combines with Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock's older

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<sup>20</sup> P. Murphy, 'An Intricate and Distasteful Subject': British Planning for the Use of Force Against the European Settlers of Central Africa, 1952-65', *English Historical Review*, 121, 492 (2006), pp. 746-777; C. Watts, 'Killing Kith and Kin: The Viability of British Military Intervention in Rhodesia, 1964-65', *Twentieth Century History*, 16, 4 (2005), pp. 382-415; J.R.T. Wood, *So Far and No Further!: Rhodesia's bid for independence during the retreat from empire 1959-1965* (Victoria, B.C., 2005) and *A matter of weeks rather than months: the impasse between Harold Wilson and Ian Smith: sanctions, aborted settlements, and war, 1965-1969* (Victoria, B.C., 2008).

<sup>21</sup> D. Lowry, 'Rhodesia 1890-1980, 'The Lost Dominion', in Bickers, R. (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 112-149. J. Francis, 'The Formation and Nature of Identity in Rhodesian Settler Society from Colonisation to UDI', (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, DPhil Thesis, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> J. Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia: Population Demographics and the Politics of Race* (London, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> L. White, 'Civic Virtue, Young Men, and the Family: Conscription in Rhodesia, 1974-1980', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37, 1 (2004), pp. 103-121; idem "'Heading for the Gun": Skills and Sophistication in an African Guerrilla War', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52, 2 (2009), pp. 236-259; idem 'Precarious Conditions: A Note on Counter-Insurgency in Africa after 1945', *Gender and History*, 16, 3 (2004), pp. 603-625; idem 'What Does it Take to be a State? Sovereignty and Sanctions in Rhodesia, 1965-1980', in L. White & D. Howland, eds., *State of Sovereignty: Territories, Laws, Populations* (Bloomington, 2009), pp. 148-168.

study on white society in the 1970s, and a vast corpus of material generated both at the time of UDI and shortly after.<sup>24</sup>

I adopt a different approach to much of the existing literature. My primary focus is not upon the social, economic, and coercive domination exercised by white Rhodesians in this period, but at the cultural and discursive dimensions of that domination in the form of the use of history. This thesis complements existing studies of white Rhodesians by seeking to disaggregate and problematise the very notion of a ‘white Rhodesian community’. It shows how a multiplicity of visions of what Rhodesia was, and what it meant, frustrated RF efforts to build a lasting, viable, nation in the UDI period. It builds upon the work reintegrating Rhodesia, often seen as anomalous and unique by both its supporters and opponents, into wider transnational and global trends. Carl Watts and Robin Good have both written ‘international’ histories of UDI, but they focused more on the diplomatic fallout of Rhodesia’s independence at the United Nations (UN), Organisation of African Unity (OAU), foreign capitals such as Washington, or the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM).<sup>25</sup> While these international histories accurately chart the course of the shockwaves generated by UDI, they often eschew the picture on the ground in Rhodesia itself in favour of a focus upon the debates which took place in the chambers of international organisations such as the UN, where Rhodesia had no representation in this period. This thesis is an international history of a different sort, focusing instead on the transnational aspects of ostensibly nation-centred projects.

In a transnational sense the thesis engages with scholarship on the British World. The British World, as delineated by two of its most prominent scholars, Kent Fedorovich and Carl Bridge, is a project to reintegrate colonies of settlement into the historiography of the British Empire, which had

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<sup>24</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*. Just a small selection of work produced during or before UDI includes: R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (London, 1977); D. Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford, 1970); C. Leys *European Politics in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford, 1959).

<sup>25</sup> C. Watts, *Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence: An International History* (New York, 2012); R.C. Good, *U.D.I.: the international politics of the Rhodesian rebellion* (London, 1973).

hitherto focused predominantly upon tropical colonies and the informal empire.<sup>26</sup> Stephen Howe has noted the vagueness of the term ‘British World’, and the potential for it to be employed in a kind of triumphalist, pro-imperialist history of the kind used by right-wing historians like Niall Ferguson.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, practitioners of British World studies, like Saul Dubow, have argued that historians must engage with these concepts with caution and qualification.<sup>28</sup> Since the turn of the century, many scholars have focused their efforts upon reconnecting the ‘colonies of settlement’ with the rest of the empire, bringing to light the shared social, economic, cultural and demographic characteristics which travelled around these ‘imperial networks’.<sup>29</sup> John Darwin and James Belich have explored these concepts at a global level. Darwin’s ‘British World System’, a particular historical context which was not synonymous with empire but which facilitated its spread, has demonstrated the fragility and flexibility of British imperialism.<sup>30</sup> James Belich, a participant in the British World debates through his studies of New Zealanders, has also looked at processes of European settlement on a wider scale – in America and Russia as well as ‘British’ regions such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa – as a way to account for the remarkable success of what he terms the ‘Angloworld’.<sup>31</sup> At a national level, historians such as Philip Buckner have looked at Canada, Saul Dubow and John Lambert have explored the position of South Africans in the British Empire, and Neville Meaney and Tara Brabazon have focused upon Australia.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> C. Bridge & K. Fedorowich, ‘Mapping the British World’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 13, 2 (2003), p. 1; C. Bridge & K. Fedorowich, (eds.), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003). J. Gallagher & R. Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’, *The Economic History Review*, 6, 1 (1953), pp. 1-15 remains the ‘classic’ study of informal empire.

<sup>27</sup> S. Howe, ‘British Worlds, Settler Worlds, World Systems and Killing Fields’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40, 4 (2012), p. 693.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 693.

<sup>29</sup> A. Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain* (London & New York, 2001)

<sup>30</sup> J. Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World System 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: Settlers and the Rise of the Angloworld* (Oxford, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> P. Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2010); P. Buckner & R.D. Francis (eds.), *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary, 2005); S. Dubow, ‘Colonial Nationalism, the Milner Kindergarten and the Rise of South Africanism, 1902-10’, *History Workshop Journal*, 43 (1997), pp. 53-85; J. Lambert, ‘An Unknown People: Reconstructing British South African Identity’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37, 4 (2009), pp.599-617; N. Meaney, ‘Britishness and Australian Identity: the Problem of

Whilst these scholars successfully brought settler colonies back into imperial historiography, they often failed to consider what Robert Bickers has called the ‘losers’ of empire, the smaller communities of Britons overseas in places like Kenya, China, and the Rhodesias.<sup>33</sup> Subsequently, Donal Lowry made the case for Rhodesia’s re-integration into British World studies.<sup>34</sup> Lowry’s work was augmented by Julian Francis in his 2012 doctoral thesis, in which Francis convincingly demonstrated how white Rhodesians believed themselves to be members of a British World and behaved as such.<sup>35</sup> However, Francis’ thesis ended with UDI. This thesis takes his work forward to explore how white Rhodesians came to terms with the collapse of the British World in the 1960s and 1970s.

Bringing smaller and unsuccessful communities back into the wider history of empire is an important task because, as Bickers noted: ‘[t]hey too developed new identities, or new inflections of familiar identities, as much as did the British-Australians, and the British-Canadians.’<sup>36</sup> Indeed, in many respects, the umbrella of British imperialism was even more important for these smaller and more precarious communities of settlers. In Southern Rhodesia, as it was known before 1964, a miniscule population of white settlers continued to justify their rule over millions of blacks in terms of imperial trusteeship. After UDI, they were forced to confront and adapt these justifications to suit a post-imperial age; the tension that resulted from this dilemma is a central theme of this thesis.

Indeed, I argue that far from being static and unchanging, the RF’s nationalist project went through three distinct, yet overlapping, phases in which different types of ‘Rhodesian’ nation were being pursued. The first, from UDI to around 1967, was an attempt to secure minority-rule independence within the Commonwealth, similar to the old dominions – completely autonomous

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Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography’, *Australian Historical Studies*, 31, 116 (2001), pp. 76-90; T. Brabazon, *Tracking the Jack: A Retracing of the Antipodes* (Sydney, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> R. Bickers, ‘Introduction: Britains and Britons over the Seas’, in R. Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and expatriates: Britons Over the Seas* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 1-17.

<sup>34</sup> Lowry, ‘The Lost Dominion’, pp. 112-149.

<sup>35</sup> Francis, ‘The Formation and Nature of Identity’.

<sup>36</sup> Bickers, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

but retaining strong links to the former colonial power. The second, from 1967 to 1975 (though mostly completed by the time a republic was declared in March 1970) was ‘symbolic decolonisation’, a period when the RF sought to demonstrate Rhodesia’s independence with new symbols and constitutional arrangements which emphasised its independence from Britain, like the former colonies to the north. The third, brief, phase was ‘Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’, a state which was ostensibly majority-ruled but was in fact designed to preserve white influence and privilege. I largely focus on the period of symbolic decolonisation, but also illustrate how these different phases of nation-building bled into one another, compromising the RF’s project time and again.

In this thesis, I view the ‘British World’ as a network of different communities of largely British-derived settlers who were seeking to make sense of decolonisation in the 1960s and 1970s. These settlers were people who talked about themselves and used each other as reference points: debates about new flags in Canada were referred to when Rhodesia was changing its own flag, the feelings of Australians and New Zealanders were invoked to discuss notions of new Rhodesian nationhood. In this way, a sense of membership of a ‘British World’ that was often referred to at the time by familial metaphors acted as a discursive frame of reference for white Rhodesians trying to build a new nation after UDI.

Reintegration of white Rhodesia into wider historical (and historiographical) trends brings us onto the final major field with which this thesis engages; the history of nationalism. For a long time, the history of ‘nationalism’ in Zimbabwe was the history of black nationalism.<sup>37</sup> Instead, I seek to build upon the relatively smaller number of studies exploring the white nationalist project which took place alongside the more conventionally recognisable nationalist struggles undertaken by ZANU and ZAPU. In an age of postmodernism and globalisation, scholars have increasingly questioned the nation as a unit of analysis. This thesis is ostensibly concerned with a nation and its

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<sup>37</sup> For ‘nationalist’ accounts see T. Ranger, *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1930* (London, 1970) or Kriger, *Peasant Consciousness*.

nation-building project but, as the previous section demonstrated, in fact seeks to highlight the wider transnational and global aspects of such ‘national’ projects.

I argue that the comparative potential of white Rhodesian nationalism does not begin and end with other settler communities in the crumbling British World. Instead, it takes an unconventional view of white Rhodesian nationalism, by noting its comparative potential with regard to other post-colonial nationalisms across Africa. After formal independence, new states – their borders bound by OAU convention – struggled to reconcile colonial boundaries and populations, seeking to establish new nations from former colonies. In this respect, Rhodesia’s government after UDI was faced with a remarkably similar set of problems. Indeed, for white Rhodesians these problems were exacerbated by their illegal seizure of independence, their awkward and elongated severing of ties with Britain, and their refusal to involve black people in their nation-building project except on highly circumscribed terms.

The comparison is not one that the Rhodesians themselves would have welcomed. When they spoke of their majority-ruled neighbours to the north it was in exclusively negative terms – whether it related to Rhodesia’s superior ability to design flags or national anthems, or its much-improved ‘standards’ and good governance. Nevertheless, I argue that it is one worth making. UDI-era Rhodesia is almost always marked out as an anomaly. I seek to dig deeper, sifting through the at times surreal and absurd layers of white Rhodesian nationalism to consider what white Rhodesia can tell us about post-colonial nation-building projects elsewhere. The lessons of Rhodesia are relevant to other studies of the processes of colonial independence and the narratives generated thereafter which raise the questions of for whom and for what purpose independence was won.<sup>38</sup> In the UDI-period it was the independence of a minority to continue to subjugate the majority which was at

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<sup>38</sup> C. Seecharan, ‘Whose Freedom at Midnight? Machinations towards Guyana’s Independence, May 1966’, T. Barringer, R. Holland & S. Williams (eds.), *The Iconography of Independence: Freedoms at Midnight* (London & New York, 2010), pp. 71-88.

stake. I argue that the seemingly anomalous nature, brevity, and ultimate failure of the RF's project should not obscure its wider comparative potential.

The history of nationalism is underpinned by several key methodological approaches which the following chapters adopt but also question, picking apart two important approaches which have been offered to explain the nationalist phenomenon: invention of tradition and imagined communities. The concept of 'invented traditions' was most famously introduced by Terence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm described invented traditions as: 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.'<sup>39</sup> Anthony Smith described this approach as a new departure in the study of nationalism which moved away from older interpretations focused on ideology or political economy, such as those of John Brueilly, Elie Kedourie or Ernest Gellner, and instead focused upon culture and employed a form of postmodernist deconstructionism alongside more conventional modernist analyses of 'the nation'.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the concept of invented tradition seemed particularly useful for explaining how nation-building projects took place. Flags, anthems, constitutions, and other cultural, social and political practices and symbols emerged as the result of processes of invention on the part of states, compliant historians, and political parties. However, what the theory of invented tradition actually did was nullify the 'masses' by reducing them to passive receivers of the traditions that were invented for them. The population became a *tabula rasa* onto which the nation would be inscribed. This early iteration of the theory took the state's ambition and self-conception of its power and capabilities at face value.

This concept could only go so far. Inventions of tradition were constantly being attempted, but in order for these attempts to succeed there had to be some give and take. Far from being inert,

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<sup>39</sup> E. Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions', in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> A.D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London & New York, 1998), p. 117.

blank spaces onto which nationality could be ascribed the populations of states were actively involved in the processes of invention and nation-building. Their ability to ‘imagine’ the nation was as much, if not more, important than a states’ ability to ‘invent’ one. Indeed Terence Ranger himself subsequently realised the limitations of the earlier theory, and offered up his own critique of ‘invented traditions’, particularly with regard to the assumptions they made about the degree of control that states could exercise over colonial societies in Africa.<sup>41</sup> It was from this realisation that perhaps the most influential study of nationalism in recent times, Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, arose.<sup>42</sup> Anderson’s work highlighted the importance of popular imagination in nationalism and linked this specifically to the rise of distance-eliminating technologies such as print culture. The emergence of newspapers, for instance, facilitated ideas of community among people who would previously have understood society on a much more intimate and reduced scale. In the historiography of the British Empire, Alan Lester has similarly argued that transnational networks centred on flows of information were essential in creating a British settler culture predicated upon discourses which transcended national boundaries.<sup>43</sup>

The problem with Anderson’s analysis, as Anthony Smith has observed, is that it ascribes too much power to popular imagination, reducing the nation to an immaterial concept bound only by the imaginations of its citizens. Consequently, other analyses have arisen which seek to bridge the gap between ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’. Consuelo Cruz has argued that identity politics is bound up within ‘a *collective field of imaginable possibilities*’.<sup>44</sup> In this framework, ‘invention’ by elites is bound by what large communities can effectively believe, which serves to limit the omnipotence of the ‘inventors’ and ascribes greater power to the people. Yinan He has demonstrated the practical

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<sup>41</sup> T. Ranger, ‘The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa’, in T. Ranger & O. Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A.H.M. Kirk-Greene* (Basingstoke, 1993), pp. 62-111.

<sup>42</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 2006)

<sup>43</sup> Lester, *Imperial Networks*; A. Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire’, *History Workshop Journal*, 54, 1 (2002), pp. 24-48; A. Lester, ‘Colonial Settlers and the Metropole: Racial Discourse in the Early 19<sup>th</sup>-century’, *Landscape Research*, 27, 1 (2002), pp. 39-49.

<sup>44</sup> C. Cruz, ‘Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make Their Futures’, *World Politics*, 52, 3 (2000), p. 277. Italics in original.

consequences of such an approach by highlighting how particular popular historical paradigms constrict elite ‘myth-making’ in Sino-Japanese foreign relations.<sup>45</sup> This thesis follows the work of Cruz and He, by illustrating the tensions and disruption which result from attempts to ‘invent’ and ‘imagine’ a nation into being. The chapters below show how the RF’s nationalist project relied on a close relationship between ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’ for its short-term success, and that when this relationship was disrupted, the nation began to collapse.

In conclusion, I study the RF’s nation-building project as a nationalist project which was not strictly bound by the geographical borders of a ‘nation’. I seek to reintegrate Rhodesia and small settler communities like it, into the wider fabric of global and imperial historiography focusing upon the ‘British World’. I also seek to illustrate the wider comparative value of white Rhodesian nationalism with other post-colonial nationalist movements, contributing to both theoretical literature on nationalism and national literature on Rhodesia/Zimbabwe by challenging the view of an ‘anomalous’ Rhodesia existing between 1965-1980 as an obstacle on the road to independent, majority-ruled Zimbabwe. It contributes to existing literature on white Rhodesia by approaching the period from a cultural and discursive direction rather a more traditional political or economic one. Finally, it questions and critiques the usefulness of important theories of nationalism – invented traditions and imagined communities – by applying them white Rhodesia’s nation-building project. It uses these different approaches to reflect how such trends intersected in the particular case study of white Rhodesian society between 1965 and 1978.

## **Methodology and sources**

Moving from theory to practice, this section explains several key aspects of the thesis itself: the choices regarding timescale, scope, and sources utilised. It highlights the boundaries of the

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<sup>45</sup> Y. He, ‘Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950-2006’, *History and Memory*, 19, 2 (2007), pp. 43-74; idem, ‘History, Chinese Nationalism and the Emerging Sino-Japanese Conflict’, *Journal of Contemporary China*, 16, 50 (2007), pp. 1-24; idem, ‘War, Myths, and National Identity Formation – Chinese attitudes towards Japan’, in G. Bouchard (ed.), *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents* (London, 2013), pp. 223-242.

project. The arrival of Lord Soames' as Rhodesia's final British governor has been cast as the end of an era, largely because this is how it was considered by many white Rhodesians at the time. Luise White has shown in several perceptive studies the problems of periodisation in the history of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. White 'writes against' the idea of a neat Rhodesia/Zimbabwe transition, arguing that the Rhodesian case instead disrupts narratives of decolonisation, showing how 'awkward and uneven' they are.<sup>46</sup> This thesis' first chapter demonstrates a level of continuity in white settler attitudes which pre-dated UDI. Furthermore, Bill Schwarz and Philip Murphy have shown how white settlers in Central Africa in the 1950s had already developed a dim image of post-war Britain, and discourses of betrayal and perfidy which would remain at front and centre in later decades were shaped by politicians such as Roy Welensky in the negotiations over the Central African Federation's construction and subsequent collapse.<sup>47</sup>

Despite this, this project is grounded temporally, rather than thematically. Its focus is firmly on what it terms the 'UDI-period' of Rhodesia's history. It begins in 1964, in the run up to UDI and, for the most part, ends in 1978 with the advent of Rhodesia-Zimbabwe. These dates have been chosen carefully and purposefully. David Lowenthal, in his magisterial study of the way we think about the past, observes: 'in forgoing dates and narrative much is lost; events are jumbled into a grab-bag of epochs and empire, significant figures and social movements cut adrift from any particular period.'<sup>48</sup> The projects the subsequent chapters explore were profoundly shaped by the period in which they took place. Indeed, I concur with Luise White's observation that the act of UDI and Rhodesia itself are meaningless when de-historicised.<sup>49</sup> I argue that the national context of

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<sup>46</sup> L. White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (Chicago, 2015), p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> B. Schwarz, *The White Man's World* (Oxford, 2011), pp.341- 392; P. Murphy, 'Government by Blackmail: The Origins of the Central African Federation Reconsidered', in M. Lynn (ed.), *The British Empire in the 1950s – Retreat or Revival?* (Basingstoke, 2006) pp. 53-71; R. Welensky, *Welensky's 4000 Days: the life and death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London, 1964).

<sup>48</sup> D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 224.

<sup>49</sup> L. White, 'The Utopia of Working Phones: Rhodesian Independence and the Place of Race in Decolonization', in M.D. Gordon, H. Tilley & G. Prakesh (eds.), *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility* (Princeton, 2010), pp. 94-109.

UDI and the global context of decolonisation created a particular set of circumstances to which white Rhodesians had to respond which were markedly different than those which came before.

The project is limited demographically in scope as well as temporally; it should be clear by now that the focus is overwhelmingly upon white Rhodesians because of the peculiar nature of their nationalist project. Their attempts to build a nation in a decolonising world allow for opportunities to explore how settlers reacted to the collapse of the British World, and also the range of alternative nationalist visions that existed in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. It is hoped that the work can then be used for comparative purposes alongside the extant studies of black African nationalism in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. When white Rhodesians talked about 'Rhodesia' they meant white Rhodesia, when they talked about 'Rhodesians' they almost always meant people of European descent. Due to the sources and nature of the debates it studies the thesis is overwhelmingly concerned with the white perspective in order to get at the way in which settlers saw themselves and others, allowing for the thesis to contribute to debates about white settlers in global and imperial history. Nevertheless, race was a central concern of white Rhodesian nation-building and the profoundly racialised nature of 'Rhodesia' permeated all phases of the RF's nation-building project.

I use certain key terms repeatedly in discussing white Rhodesian nationalism which it is worth defining here for the sake of clarity. The first is 'symbolic decolonisation', which I understand as the process by which a state removes colonial symbols such as flags, national anthems, and constitutions, and replaces them with its own in the process of becoming independent. Symbolic decolonisation is distinct from decolonisation proper, and used here because of the levels of continuity between pre- and post-UDI Rhodesia. The RF government already had control of the levers of military, economic and political power prior to declaring independence from Britain, so all that remained after UDI was to rid Rhodesia of the performative items of statehood which tied it into a wider British imperial 'family' at the point of UDI.

The second term is ‘Rhodesian’ itself, which I consider here to mean white settlers of European descent. As the RF’s rule went on, it was increasingly unusual for black people to consider themselves ‘Rhodesians’, since to them Rhodesians were an external oppressor. While some early nationalist and proto-nationalist organisations, such as the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress, did make use of the term, later nationalists typically referred to ‘Zimbabwe’ or ‘Zimbabweans’ when discussing their nationalist struggles.<sup>50</sup> By the same turn it was unusual, though not impossible, for white Rhodesians to call black Africans ‘Rhodesians’, preferring a whole range of more derogatory terms for the ‘natives’.

In order to tease out the general themes and specific arguments illustrated above, a wide range of source material has been consulted using close readings and borrowing techniques of critical discourse analysis from sociology and linguistics. According to Tuen Van Dijk, critical discourse analysis explores how discourses ‘might perpetuate, reproduce or justify a certain social status quo’.<sup>51</sup> This particular method of discourse analysis has been used to great effect in studies of nationalism by scholars such as Ruth Wodak, as a way to explore relationships between language, power, and ideology.<sup>52</sup>

To understand the intentions and rhetoric of the ‘nation-builders’ of the RF, the thesis makes use of Rhodesian cabinet documents which form part of Ian Smith’s papers. These documents include cabinet minutes and memoranda relating to Rhodesia’s new symbols and have been used to illustrate the process by which a new flag and new national anthem was chosen. These cabinet documents are supplemented by Rhodesian Legislative Assembly debates. Careful reading of these debates has furnished the thesis with much rich material detailing the rhetoric employed in support or opposition to the RF in this period. Though there is always an element of the theatrical in

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<sup>50</sup> M.O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe 1898-1965* (Bloomington, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> T.A. Van Dijk, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’, in H.E. Hamilton, D. Schiffen & D. Tannen (eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Oxford, 2003), p. 365.

<sup>52</sup> R. Wodak, ‘Discourse-analytic and Socio-linguistics: Approaches to the Study of Nation(alism)’, in D. Delanty & K. Kumar (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism* (London, 2006), pp. 104-117.

parliamentary proceedings, these debates have been useful in sketching out the way history was used in arguments about nationhood and give a sense of what we might call the public discourses of Rhodesian independence. They were reported upon widely not just by the news media in Rhodesia but by the Rhodesian Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism, an agency which carried out an active domestic and international 'counter-propaganda' role.

In an attempt to understand the thoughts and feelings of Rhodesians outside of politics and the civil service, wide use has been made of the reportage of one of the country's most popular daily newspapers: *The Rhodesia Herald* (*The Herald* from 1978). *The Rhodesia Herald*, owned by the South African Argus Press Group, was more 'liberal' than the RF government. Liberal is a term that should be used with caution, Alan Cousins has questioned it, arguing that the newspaper 'reinforced the assumptions... that supported the continuation of white domination.'<sup>53</sup> This is true, but in the context of this study that makes the *Herald* even more useful as an alternative mouthpiece of white Rhodesian society to the RF's own propaganda machine. Also, some RF party members continued to see the paper, perhaps a little fantastically, as a thorn in their side.<sup>54</sup> Shortly after UDI, the paper was heavily censored and closely monitored by the RF state, which led it to practise self-censorship for the remainder of the UDI-period. In spite of this the *Herald* remained pro-settlement and favoured a return to legality and independence through proper negotiated channels rather than the RF's unilateral declaration.

Another reason the thesis makes wide use of *The Rhodesia Herald* is for its window onto ordinary Rhodesians' beliefs as demonstrated in the letters they sent to the editor. Though Karin Wahl-Jorgensen has cautioned against the use of such material due to the processes of selection undertaken by the editors' themselves such letters can still act as interesting snapshots of public

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<sup>53</sup> A. Cousins, 'State, Ideology, and Power in Rhodesia, 1958-1972', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24, 1 (1991), p. 41.

<sup>54</sup> For academic evidence of this conflict see Frederikse, *None But Ourselves* and E. Windrich, *The Mass Media in the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (Gwelo, 1981).

opinion and provide a valuable source of views ‘from below’ as articulated at the time.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, in the context described above of a newspaper which was relatively liberal, the fact that the majority of the letters published were pro-Government suggests that the editors were trying to paint a relatively accurate picture of white Rhodesian public opinion based on the letters they received.

A wide range of other sources have been used to broaden the picture of white Rhodesian beliefs. Nationalism as expressed through popular culture is seen in the analysis of a number of folk songs in chapter four. This builds upon existing work by Anthony Chennells which has looked at visions and expressions of ‘Rhodesia’ through literature.<sup>56</sup> In chapter six, the journal *Rhodesiana* of the Rhodesiana Society, a group of amateur historians, is explored alongside historical fiction and the work of the National Archives of Rhodesia to look at how historical narratives were employed to reinforce the nation-building project in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of these sources have been read ‘against the grain’, following Ann Stoler, scrutinised as much for what they do not say as what they do.<sup>57</sup> As well as these diverse sources, which are discussed in much greater detail in the relevant chapters, the thesis makes use of pamphlets, books, radio broadcasts and other sources to help build up a picture of white Rhodesia in the UDI-period.

Except in a few isolated instances, memoirs written decades after the fact constitute a notable omission from the thesis. The same goes for interviews and the use of the diverse range of websites which now exist to celebrate and commemorate Rhodesia in one form or another. This distinguishes the project from more anthropological writing on white Rhodesians/Zimbabweans by scholars like Rory Pilosoff, who explores the position of white farmers in Zimbabwe and David

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<sup>55</sup> K. Wahl-Jorgensen, ‘Letters to the Editor as a Forum for Public Deliberation: Modes of Publicity and Democratic Debate’, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 18, 3 (2001), pp. 303-320.

<sup>56</sup> A.J. Chennells ‘Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War’, in N. Bhebe & T. Ranger (eds.), *Society in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 102-129.

<sup>57</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, ‘Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies’, *The Journal of American History*, 88, 3 (2001) pp. 829-865.

McDermott Hughes, whose work focuses upon the relationship between whites and the landscape.<sup>58</sup> Much fruitful work has been done on memoirs of white Rhodesians by these scholars and others, such as Luise White, and Tony King in his exploration of the phenomena of ‘Rhodesians on the internet’.<sup>59</sup> The omission of this type of source material is deliberate and considered. As has been argued above, timing is crucial to this thesis, and consequently it attempts to get at what white Rhodesians were saying and thinking about themselves and others at the time. For this same reason, a small number of contemporary memoirs and writings from the 1960s and 1970s are used to capture how people felt then. The passage of time and global and national changes have meant that a completely different set of pressures and dynamics operate upon present-day whites in Zimbabwe or the ‘Rhodesian diaspora’. I am seeking to capture whites in the moment of the RF’s nation-building project, when a whole range of possibilities and opportunities that have now passed were open to them.

## Structure

The thesis is composed of seven chapters. Chapter one is an introductory chapter that provides a brief overview of the context in which the RF’s nation-building projects of the 1960s and 1970s took place. This takes the form of a literature review with some use of original primary source material. The chapter takes up two key themes: demographics and politics, to illustrate the challenges that the RF faced in trying to reconcile a divided white society with its particular brand of white nationalism. It uses the primary and secondary source material to complement previous studies which have argued for the fractious nature of white society and questioned the myth of white Rhodesian unity.

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<sup>58</sup> R. Pilosoff, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers’ Voices from Zimbabwe* (Harare, 2012); D.M. Hughes, *Whiteness in Zimbabwe; Race, Landscape and the Problem of Belonging* (London, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> See particularly L. White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Cape Town, 2003); T. King, ‘Rhodesians in Hyperspace: The Maintenance of a National and Cultural Identity’, in K.H. Karim (ed.), *The Media of Diaspora* (London, 2003), pp. 177-188.

The subsequent chapters are split between two thematic sections which focus upon symbolism and history respectively. The first section charts the phenomenon of symbolic decolonisation as defined above. The second section is related specifically to white Rhodesian understanding and employment of the past for the purposes of the present. Section one also deals at length with history, as the debates about new Rhodesian symbolism were suffused with understandings of and engagements with the past. The chapters in this section chart white Rhodesians' engagement with their colonial past for much of the UDI period, as demonstrated through their discussions about elements key to the performance of statehood – new flags, constitutions and anthems. The chapters in section two focus specifically upon the way history was used in the nation-building project; as a justification for UDI and continued minority-rule in an era of decolonisation, as a means of providing lessons to whites in the 1960s and 1970s, and as a way to defend the RF's vision of the nation against black and white challenges.

Chapter two opens the section on symbolic decolonisation, the second phase of the RF's nationalism, by examining the debates which surrounded the adoption of a new Rhodesian flag in 1967-1968. These debates are used as a lens to explore how Rhodesians came to terms with independence in the early UDI period, making tentative moves toward symbolic decolonisation. It argues that attempts at symbolic decolonisation in the years following UDI revealed the ambivalent relationship between Rhodesia's imperial past and its imagined present and future. The chapter argues that although the new flag was designed for largely functional reasons, RF politicians and white Rhodesians subsequently imbued the flag with a range of ambiguous meanings. It also questions the concept of 'invented' tradition by illustrating how the so-called 'inventors' of the new flag, the RF, failed to agree on how Rhodesia should be represented.

Chapter three continues the exploration of symbolic decolonisation chronologically by focusing upon debates about Rhodesia's head of state, specifically the abandonment of the British monarchy. In doing this, it ties the Rhodesian example into a series of global debates about the

monarchy in former British settler colonies, and also demonstrates the operation of the concept of 'loyal rebellion' in the Rhodesian case. It shows the multiplicity of meanings that Rhodesians attached to the person of the Queen in this period, going beyond extant studies which tend to focus upon the Queen as a diplomatic bargaining chip.

Chapter four concludes the first section by focusing upon visions of the nation in white Rhodesian music. It does this in two ways. Firstly, it examines the long and tortuous process by which Rhodesia chose its new national anthem. Secondly, it explores some white Rhodesian folk music. Whilst the government sought to find an anodyne anthem which could represent Rhodesia through the ages, ordinary white Rhodesians listened to musical alternatives which celebrated Rhodesia's colonial past and conflict-ridden present. The chapter analyses these songs, how they changed over the period, and what they can tell us about the way white Rhodesians saw themselves and others.

Chapter five takes us back in time to 1964, just before UDI was declared, to examine the way in which history was deployed by supporters and opponents of an illegal seizure of independence. In particular, it explores two key discourses about 'good governance' and 'blood sacrifice', linking these specifically Rhodesian arguments into wider settler discourses in which colonial contributions in the First and Second World Wars were employed against Britain to secure greater independence and political concessions. This reinforces the wider aim of reintegrating white Rhodesia into the 'British World'.

Chapter six moves beyond the state and political elite to focus upon the way ordinary white Rhodesians understood history by looking at the work of the Rhodesiana Society, a popular amateur history society which flourished in Rhodesia. It seeks to explore the complicated links between state and non-state actors and different sites of historical discourse production in Rhodesia by highlighting the relationships between amateur historians in the Rhodesiana Society, the state's National Archives of Rhodesia, and academic historians in the University of Rhodesia's history

department. It explores how historical narratives were presented in such a way as to reinforce the wider nation-building effort, by providing historical lessons on how UDI-era whites should behave and demonstrating that minority-rule was justified based on what had happened in the past.

Chapter seven is a concluding chapter that explores the ways in which history was mobilised by the RF to defend the nation, and how black challenges to the nation opened up space for white contestations of the RF's vision, demonstrating how tensions and divisions in white society which arose during the period of symbolic decolonisation remained unresolved. It shows how 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia', the third and final phase of the RF's nationalist project, demonstrated that the RF was willing to jettison all the symbolic trappings of independent nationhood in order to preserve minority-rule. The RF's willingness to do this, and its secrecy over the true nature of 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia' (i.e. as a sham compromise to preserve white rule) led to a great deal of confusion among white Rhodesians, and the breaking of the links between 'invention' and 'imagination' which had made the RF's project so successful in the short term. Finally, it ties up the thesis by summarising its arguments and presenting its conclusions.

Collectively, these chapters examine the three major themes highlighted above, with significance for the history of Rhodesia, the history of the British Empire, and the history of nationalism. They seek to explain why the RF's nationalist project proved surprisingly successful in the short term but why it was doomed to failure in the long-term. It does this whilst remaining sensitive to the fact that – in the moment – some white Rhodesians believed that they could succeed in defying decolonisation as it was commonly understood across the continent, in terms of majority rule independence. They demonstrate how the RF's anomalous experiment in minority rule independence was not a narrow, nationally-bound anomaly but was instead both grounded in, and had wider implications for, global and transnational trends in the era of decolonisation.

# Chapter One

## White Rhodesian Society ca.1950s-1980

The years following the Second World War were ones of great change in Southern Rhodesia. They helped shape the socio-political context in which the events analysed in this thesis took place. This chapter explores the demographic and political context in which the Rhodesian Front (RF) operated after UDI, giving a sense of the imperatives underlying its nation-building project and the constituents to whom it was accountable. Here I sketch out the contours of post-war white Rhodesian society, demonstrating its fundamentally fractious nature, a key obstacle for the nationalist project to overcome. The chapter outlines the development of a small society whose fluidity of composition was reflected in the amorphous and elusive nature of what it meant to be 'Rhodesian'. It does so by exploring demographic change as a result of a huge wave of post-war migration, mainly from Britain, and the impact of these new immigrants upon Rhodesian political and social life. The chapter also reviews the literature on Rhodesia in this period and will build upon recent scholarship, disaggregating 'white Rhodesia' into a myriad of different economic, social, and ethnic groups.

Across Africa, newly-independent states faced a whole raft of challenges in reconciling disparate and divided populations. The nationalists leading these young nations were forced to confront unique demographic, economic, and political challenges in order to proceed with the work of nation-building. Kenyans sought to come to terms with the ethnic strife triggered by Mau Mau, Nigerians and Biafrans fought a bloody civil war at great cost to human life, and Congolese were enveloped in an escalating crisis of secession and conflict.<sup>1</sup> Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) was nowhere near as dramatic or costly (for whites at least), and was facilitated

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<sup>1</sup> B. Ogot, 'Mau Mau & Nationhood: The Untold Story', in E.S. Atieno Odhiambo & J. Lonsdale (eds.), *Mau Mau and Nationhood: Arms, Authority & Narration* (Oxford, Nairobi & Athens, Ohio, 2003), pp. 8-36; C. Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (London, 2013); I. Kabongo, 'The Catastrophe of Belgian Decolonization' in P. Gifford & Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *Decolonization and African Independence: The Transfers of Power, 1960-1980* (New Haven & London, 1988), pp. 381-400.

by the continuity of settler rule before and after 11 November 1965. Nevertheless, the RF did face challenges which resulted from the changing nature of Rhodesian society between the 1940s and 1960s.

## White Rhodesian Demography

The complicated and sometimes confusing demographics of white Rhodesia have been the focus of a number of studies. Josiah Brownell has explored Rhodesia's 'war of numbers', the Rhodesian government's battle to shore up its white population through immigration whilst promoting birth control amongst the African population as a way to reduce the racial 'imbalance' in the population in the UDI period.<sup>2</sup> Brownell's study illustrates the desperation of the white minority regime as this imbalance became particularly acute during the conflict of the 1960s and 1970s. In focussing on this conflict, however, Brownell eschews the opportunity to explore how changes in European immigration policy implemented by the RF might have impacted white society and the way whites understood the meaning and boundaries of the terms 'Rhodesia' and 'Rhodesian'. Barry Schutz has argued for the importance of demographics in shaping Rhodesian society but only speculates as to the motives behind the RF immigration policy.<sup>3</sup> Rhodesian cabinet papers from the period can shed new light on Schutz's theories about government policy.

Alois Mlambo has skilfully demonstrated the central tension in state immigration policy during the decade of 1953-1963. In these significant years, Southern Rhodesia was joined with its neighbours Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) as part of the Central African Federation. At this time the settler state found itself on the horns of a dilemma. It was caught between the need to attract more whites to create a 'white man's country' in Rhodesia and selective immigration policies that reflected a desire to attract the 'right sort' of immigrant.<sup>4</sup> In his account Mlambo demonstrates that such tension was born of an ethnic bias towards British immigrants on

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<sup>2</sup> J. Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia: Population Demographics and the Politics of Race* (London, 2011), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> B. M. Schutz, 'European Population Patterns, Cultural Persistence, and Political Change in Rhodesia', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 7, 1 (1973), p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> A.S. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to Federation* (Harare, 2000), p. 40.

the part of Rhodesia's ruling elite. These arguments are corroborated by Baxter Tavuyanago, Tasara Muguti, and James Hlongwana's research upon the experience of Polish refugees in Rhodesia during the Second World War. They show how 'British Rhodesians' were prejudiced against non-British whites in the colony: '[they saw] other whites as alien, with strange physiques, skin colours, customs and languages.'<sup>5</sup> Both these studies show that ethnic prejudices as enshrined in selective immigration policies may have actually hindered Rhodesia's development as a European settler colony by turning away non-British whites who could have increased the number of whites in the colony and, as skilled workers, played a role in its economic development.<sup>6</sup>

These highly selective immigration policies ensured that white Rhodesian society was heavily influenced both socially and culturally by Britain. These policies were relaxed by the RF government in the 1960s but few have explored why. Did the relaxed immigration policy reflect a change in attitudes in white Rhodesian society or simply state *realpolitik*? Was Rhodesia now a more cosmopolitan and assimilative nation than it had been before? What impact did these new non-British whites have upon society? As Brownell's work has highlighted, the RF's policy shift was likely borne from desperation to attract whatever immigrants they possibly could. The open solicitation of potential white emigrants became illegal in the United Kingdom after UDI, though the Rhodesian government still sought to entice people with clandestine methods.<sup>7</sup> A 1975 fact paper produced by a range of European anti-discrimination groups including the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, demonstrated that Rhodesia was also secretly soliciting immigrants from European countries such as Belgium, Germany and Switzerland in contravention of UN sanctions prohibiting emigration.<sup>8</sup> It also noted that a number of British emigrants to South Africa could then be moving onto Rhodesia, though this was difficult to prove.<sup>9</sup> The RF's less selective approach most likely stemmed from the

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<sup>5</sup> B. Tavuyanago, T. Muguti, J. Hlongwana, 'Victims of the Rhodesian Immigration Policy: Polish Refugees from the Second World War', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 38, 4 (2012), p. 953.

<sup>6</sup> Mlambo, *White Immigration*, pp. 70-1.

<sup>7</sup> Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika et al, *White Migration to Southern Africa* (Geneva, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69, p. 93, p. 226.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

increased restrictions placed on recruitment operations in the United Kingdom, rather than from an ideological shift against the desirability of British immigrants. Indeed, the UK remained the prime source for Rhodesian immigrants throughout the UDI period.<sup>10</sup>

In 1901 there were around 11,000 Europeans in Rhodesia.<sup>11</sup> This number steadily increased until the Second World War, and thereafter the population grew from 55,400 (in 1936) to 135,000 (in 1951).<sup>12</sup> By 1965 there were some 224,000 whites in Rhodesia and the population would reach a peak of around 277,000 by 1977, thereafter going into terminal decline.<sup>13</sup> The defining characteristic of this demographic change was not the rapidity of its growth but its impermanence.<sup>14</sup> Throughout the entire period there was a steady turnover of the European population. This is demonstrated by Mlambo's data for the post-War decades which shows, for example, that the breakup of the Central African Federation saw something of a mini-exodus among whites in the colony.

**Figure 1.1 - Net balance of European migration, 1941-1964<sup>15</sup>**

Period	Immigrants	Emigrants	Net Balance
1941-46	8,250	6,192	+2,058
1946-51	64,634	17,447	+47,187
1955-59	74,000	39,000	+35,000
1960-64	38,000	63,000	-25,000

<sup>10</sup> International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (hereafter IDAF), *Southern African: Immigration from Britain – A Fact Paper by the International Defence and Aid Fund* (London, 1975).

<sup>11</sup> L. Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia; White Power in an African State* (Cambridge Mass., 1973), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia*, p. 13; D. Lowry, 'Rhodesia 1890-1980 'The Lost Dominion'', in R. Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Overseas* (Oxford, 2010), p. 122.

<sup>14</sup> P. Godwin & I. Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia c. 1970-1980* (Northlands, 2007), p. 145.

<sup>15</sup> Adapted from Mlambo, *White Immigration*, p. 5. Table 5: Net Balance of Migration of Europeans, 1921-1964. It is possible that these are taken from Federal statistics, which would also include immigration to Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Nevertheless, the bulk of European immigrants would be going to Southern rather than Northern Rhodesia, where the settler population was small, or Nyasaland, where it was almost non-existent.

Both Brownell and Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock have theorised that such a high turnover made it difficult to instil a sense of loyalty and community spirit due to the transience of the population.<sup>16</sup> Many migrants barely had time to settle before they had left again, never mind becoming ardent ‘Rhodesians’. This presented a challenge to the RF, who had to ensure that Rhodesia was an attractive alternative to immigrants’ home destinations. The chapters below show that these attempts had mixed success.

Another notable feature of Rhodesia’s post-war demographics was that greater numbers of migrants were coming directly from Britain rather than via South Africa.<sup>17</sup> This sometimes created dilemmas for new migrants, who were unfamiliar with the dynamics of race in Rhodesia. In the 1960s there was much speculation about the attitudes of these new immigrants. One contemporary commentator, Frank Clements, a former mayor of the Rhodesian capital of Salisbury, posited a divide between ‘old’ Rhodesians and post-War migrants. He believed that the latter were more arrogant, and suggested that this affected race relations:

the new immigrant was acquiring a racial hatred which was very different from the paternalistic, severe, repressive but broadly human relationship which they [‘Old Rhodesians’], for the most part, had with the black man.<sup>18</sup>

Clements, unsurprisingly since he was an ‘old Rhodesian’ himself, did not feel the need to explain how behaving towards black people in a ‘paternalistic, severe, repressive but broadly human’ way was qualitatively better than being ‘arrogant’ towards them. His commentary suggests that there was some tension in white society, with some settlers feeling the new arrivals to be a disruptive influence. Clements’ thinking was firmly grounded in the settler colonial mode in which appearance and decorum was everything in race relations. This was, so the logic went, an innate knowledge settlers only acquired after generations, and newcomers could upset this order through their ignorance. Doris Lessing, raised in Rhodesia but subsequently locally reviled for her communist sympathies,

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<sup>16</sup> Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia*; Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*.

<sup>17</sup> IDAF, *Southern Africa: Immigration from Britain*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> F. Clements, *Rhodesia: The Course to Collision* (London, 1969) pp. 84-93, quote from p. 90.

illustrated these differences through the treatment of Tony Marston, a character newly arrived from England, in the novel, *The Grass is Singing*:

When old settlers say, ‘One has to understand the country,’ what they mean is, ‘You have to get used to our ideas about the native.’ They are saying, in effect, ‘Learn our ideas, or otherwise get out: we don’t want you.’<sup>19</sup>

Paradoxically, some ‘old Rhodesian’ fears about newcomers also centred upon the idea that they might be too liberal or familiar with black Africans. Fears of this sort had been voiced during the Second World War, when thousands of Commonwealth servicemen came to Rhodesia as part of the Air Training Scheme (see chapter five) bringing political views which Tony King has described as ‘a rude shock to Rhodesia’s sleepy colonial society.’<sup>20</sup>

In 1964 Peter McEwan noted that cultural and societal similarities between Britain and Rhodesia, ensured that racial attitudes and behaviour were often the most alienating issue for new immigrants. Despite this, most of them apparently managed to assimilate relatively quickly.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, a comfortable majority of white Rhodesians were always either of British, South African or, a distant third, Rhodesian origin.<sup>22</sup> According to McEwan this ensured a large measure of cultural homogeneity and familiarity for the incoming migrants from Britain and South Africa. This of course ignored any class or ethnic divisions which might have existed. The predominance of these two countries as a source of the white population is demonstrated in the tables below.

**Figure 1.2 - White population by country of birth, 1901-1956<sup>23</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>S. Rhodesia (%)</b>	<b>South Africa (%)</b>	<b>UK &amp; Eire (%)</b>	<b>Other Countries (%)</b>

<sup>19</sup> D. Lessing, *The Grass is Singing* (London, 2007), p. 17; idem, *Going Home* (London, 1968).

<sup>20</sup> A.R. King, ‘Identity and Decolonisation: the Policy of Partnership in Southern Rhodesia, 1945-62’ (Oxford University, DPhil Thesis, 2001), p. 97.

<sup>21</sup> P. McEwan, ‘European Assimilation in a non-European Context’, *International Migration*, 2, 2 (1964), p. 125.

<sup>22</sup> D. Lowry, “‘Shame Upon ‘Little England’ While ‘Greater England’ Stands!’” Southern Rhodesia and the Imperial Idea’, in A. Bosco & A. May (eds.), *The Round Table, The Empire/Commonwealth and British Foreign Policy* (London, 1997), p. 328.

<sup>23</sup> Table reproduced from Mlambo, *White Immigration*, p. 3.

1901	11,032	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1904	12,596	10.1	27.3	44.4	18.2
1911	23,606	13.6	30.7	40.9	14.8
1921	33,620	24.7	34.6	31.4	9.3
1926	39,174	29.1	32.6	29.2	9.1
1931	49,910	29.22	34.5	27.1	9.2
1936	55,408	34.1	32.8	23.8	9.3
1941	68,954	34.1	27.9	26.4	11.6
1946	82,386	37.7	26.4	18.3	17.6
1951	135,596	31.4	30.4	28.8	9.4
1956	177,124	32.5	28.9	28.1	10.5

**Figure 1.3 - White population by country of birth (Rhodesians, South Africans and Britons), 1956, 1961 and 1969<sup>24</sup>**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>Rhodesia</b>	<b>South Africa</b>	<b>UK</b>
1956	177,124	57,264	50,887	48,166
1961	221,504	77,453	57,987	57,714
1969	228,296	86,681	49,585	52,668

However, as Enocent Msindo has cautioned, Rhodesian demographic data can be inconsistent and often misleading.<sup>25</sup> Of particular note in this instance is that the bulk of emigrants from South Africa to Rhodesia were English-speaking South Africans, not Afrikaners. Similarly, as noted above, there was a trend amongst British-born emigrants to go first to South Africa and then subsequently move on to Rhodesia. It is likely that the social and cultural milieu of English-speaking South Africa and the experience of living in a racially divided society would have facilitated

<sup>24</sup> Adapted from data in *1961 Census of the European, Asian and Coloured Population* (Salisbury, 1962), pp.10-11; and *1969 Population Census (Interim Report) Volume I: The European, Asian and Coloured Population* (Salisbury, 1971), p.19.

<sup>25</sup> E. Msindo, 'Winning Hearts and Minds': Crisis and Propaganda in Colonial Zimbabwe 1962-1970', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 35, 3 (2009), p. 667.

acculturation towards Rhodesian social norms.<sup>26</sup> If some, like Frank Clements, grumbled at the new folk, most of Rhodesian society was welcoming. As McEwan observed; '[f]rom political policy to individual enterprise it [immigration] had been encouraged and facilitated at every level.'<sup>27</sup>

If Rhodesian society was easy to join, it was equally easy to leave. Another pertinent point demonstrated by these figures is the fact that at no point in its history did the proportion of Rhodesian-born individuals in the white population outnumber immigrants born elsewhere.<sup>28</sup> While it was possible to socialise the overwhelmingly young Rhodesian population and the children of immigrants through a high-quality European schooling system, most of the adult population came from elsewhere and thus had grown up within different social and cultural contexts.<sup>29</sup> Brownell speculates that the links retained by these immigrants facilitated their exit from Rhodesia and suggests only a superficial subscription to being 'Rhodesian'.<sup>30</sup> The relative shallowness of this connection with Rhodesia would prove to be a major problem for the RF's nation-building project.

McEwan's landmark sociological study of assimilation into European society is instructive for also dealing with the various groups of non-British whites in Rhodesian society. Citing 1956 census data and adding his own estimations, McEwan reckoned that by 1960 the main non-British/South African (including Afrikaners) and Rhodesian groups in the white population were Portuguese, Dutch, German, and American. He estimated a combined figure for these groups of c.16,464.<sup>31</sup> Census data from 1961 suggests that McEwan's estimates were somewhat generous, and

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<sup>26</sup> B. Schutz, 'Homeward Bound? A Survey Study of the Limits of White Rhodesian Nationalism and Permanence', *Ufahamu*, 5, 3 (1975), p. 86; P. Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire 1781-1997* (London, 2008), pp. 589-598.

<sup>27</sup> McEwan, 'European Assimilation', p. 121.

<sup>28</sup> Lowry, 'Shame on "Little England"', p. 328.

<sup>29</sup> J. Francis, 'The Formation and Nature of Identity in Rhodesian Settler Society from Colonisation to UDI' (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, PhD Thesis, 2012), pp. 99-153.

<sup>30</sup> J. Brownell, 'The Hole in Rhodesia's Bucket: White Emigration and the End of Settler Rule', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3 (2008), pp. 591-610.

<sup>31</sup> McEwan, 'European Assimilation', p. 108.

that the combined population of these nationalities stood at 7,136.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless these groups represented significant minorities within the white Rhodesian population.

McEwan noted that non-English speaking ethnic groups of European immigrants tended to stick together, as their group identities were already well defined. While they often did not bother to assimilate into Rhodesian society they were usually satisfied with it.<sup>33</sup> Susie Jacobs observed that the Jewish community's: 'role as middle-men invited (further) anti-Semitism from the British, who saw them along with Greeks as lowly and their sometimes informal contact with Africans as diminishing white prestige.'<sup>34</sup> Clements claimed that Greeks, owing to their inferior position within European society as shopkeepers, and often as rivals, to Asian traders meant they were even more racist and closely-knit, resentful of the British elite who denied them opportunities.<sup>35</sup> Doris Lessing's description of a small rural store reflected the stereotype of these marginal European communities:

The store is everywhere. Drive ten miles from one and you come on the next... every mine has its store, and many farms. It is always a low single-storeyed building divided into segments like a strip of chocolate, with grocery, butchery and bottle-store under one corrugated iron roof. It has a high dark wooden counter... Behind the counter is a Greek, or a Jew, or an Indian... this man... is invariably hated by the whole district as a profiteer and an alien...<sup>36</sup>

Christopher Lee has noted how similar attitudes were adopted by some members of the country's mixed-race communities, such as Euraficans, who sought to use racism as a 'weapon of the weak'.<sup>37</sup> This involved marginal societal groups claiming membership of the white community (and the privileges attendant upon that membership) as a way to alleviate the everyday discrimination they suffered.

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<sup>32</sup> Data from *1961 Census*, pp. 10-11 and *1969 Population Census*, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> McEwan, 'European Assimilation', p. 110.

<sup>34</sup> S. Jacobs, 'Gender Divisions and the Formation of Ethnicities in Zimbabwe', in D. Stasiulis & N. Yuval-Davis (eds.), *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (London, 1995), p. 252.

<sup>35</sup> Clements, *Rhodesia*, p. 73.

<sup>36</sup> Lessing, *The Grass is Singing*, p.31.

<sup>37</sup> C.J. Lee, *Unreasonable Histories: Nativism, Multiracial Lives, and the Genealogical Imagination in British Africa* (Durham & London, 2014), p. 205.

Afrikaners were a significant minority reluctant to assimilate into Rhodesian society. They typically settled in tight-knit communities in rural areas such as Marandellas and Enkeldoorn and often retained their own language, religion, and culture.<sup>38</sup> Alexandra Letcher has observed that this led to clashes with ‘British’ Rhodesians.<sup>39</sup> This cultural difference fed into long-standing fears about loyalty and subversion which stemmed back to the award of settler self-government in 1923. It was exacerbated by the disloyalty, pro-Nazi sentiments, and outright sabotage of some Afrikaners, such as the members of the *Ossewa Brandwag*, in the Second World War, along with the association of Afrikaners with apartheid. These fears of Afrikaners expressed by ‘British Rhodesians’ formed another problematising element for notions of an homogenous European society.<sup>40</sup>

Given the divided nature of white Rhodesian society on these national, ethnic and religious bases, to say little of class, occupation, age and gender, one can see the challenges facing the RF in its attempts to unite these disparate groups behind the abstract banner of ‘Rhodesia’ after UDI. The widening of immigration policy under the RF was more gradual and cautious than one may think given its ‘war of numbers’ precisely due to concerns about the homogeneity of white society and interracial sexual unions. In a Cabinet memorandum of 5 April 1967 Jack Howman, the Minister of Immigration, Information and Tourism, warned against an open door policy as it ‘could lead to the growth of a “white trash” element and could ultimately generate embarrassing problems in regard to segregation.’<sup>41</sup> However, Howman conceded that difficulties recruiting openly in Britain would mean widening the net somewhat even though: ‘[t]here... [was] no doubt that considerable numbers of immigrants could still be obtained from that country...’<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> R. Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia 1890-1965; A History of the Marandellas District* (London, 1983).

<sup>39</sup> A. Letcher, ‘You expected racialism and you found it?’ A Case Study of the Enkeldoorn and Schools Commission of Enquiry and its Framing of Juvenile Delinquency, 1944-1945’ (Oxford University, MSc Thesis, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> See chapter five.

<sup>41</sup> Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown (hereafter CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (67), 70, ‘Immigration Policy’, 5 April 1967.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

It was clear that some Rhodesians in the 1960s and 1970s still conceived of a racial hierarchy amongst Europeans and that new non-British groups continued to have trouble integrating. One particular ‘problem’ group was Portuguese immigrants, the number of whom coming into Rhodesia steadily increased during the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>43</sup> In February 1971 the Commissioner of Police and Officer Commanding, C.I.D., complained of a growing incidence of miscegenation and prostitution between Africans and new immigrants, particularly Germans and Portuguese, noting that: ‘new immigrants to this country who indulged [sic] freely in these practices were undesirable as permanent residents.’<sup>44</sup> That August, the matter was again raised in Cabinet, where it was noted that eleven per cent of immigrants in 1970 (1,326) had been Portuguese and that this number was likely to rise by as much as twenty per cent in 1971 based on current trends. It is not clear whether or not these Portuguese immigrants were coming directly from Portugal or from the nearby Portuguese colonies in Angola and Mozambique.<sup>45</sup> Some of these new Portuguese migrants made use of regional trends of labour migration, and moved on to South Africa or Rhodesia seeking better opportunities.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the 1970 figure represented a significant increase on 1967’s 542 Portuguese migrants.<sup>47</sup> A Cabinet Memorandum by I.F. McLean, Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, addressed the problem at length:

This increasing influx of a certain type of immigrant, but particularly of Portuguese immigrants can only aggravate the problems of prostitution and miscegenation and the growth of the Coloured population, which already has a high reproductive rate and which creates more social problems per head of population than any other sector of the community.

8. From accounts and observations it appears that the assimilation rate of the Portuguese into the Rhodesian way of life is the lowest of all national groups...

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<sup>43</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Minutes, RC(S) (71) Thirty-First Meeting, 24 August 1971.

<sup>44</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (71) 24, ‘Miscegenation and Allied Problems’, 12 February 1971.

<sup>45</sup> Jeanne Marie Pevenne, ‘Settling against the Tide: the Layered Contradictions of Twentieth-Century Portuguese Settlement in Mozambique’, in C. Elkins & S. Pedersen (eds.), *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century* (New York & Abingdon, 2005), pp. 79-94.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>47</sup> RC(S) (71), Thirty-First Meeting.

9. The position can only deteriorate if Government continues to encourage the importation of these low class immigrants, and I should like Cabinet to consider whether or not a greater measure of control and selectivity in this field is desirable.<sup>48</sup>

The Rhodesian government blamed the sexual proclivities of the Portuguese immigrants on the Portuguese colonial concept of the *assimilado*, which they erroneously believed was an officially endorsed policy of interracial sexual relations.<sup>49</sup> Unsurprisingly, these sorts of interracial relationships were seen by the Rhodesian cabinet as being ‘in direct contradiction to the Rhodesian way of life.’<sup>50</sup> This shows how the preservation of minority-rule and racial segregation were the guiding imperatives of the RF’s nationalist project throughout.

The continued solicitation and admittance of these ‘new’ immigrants and their attendant potential (in the RF’s view) for causing anxiety and moral panic within Rhodesian society illustrate the utilitarianism which informed the relaxation of immigration controls. In discussing McLean’s memorandum Cabinet noted: ‘Rhodesia had only been able to keep pace with building demands over the past few years as a consequence of immigration of lower class Portuguese artisans and that immigration of these persons would probably be necessary for some time to come.’<sup>51</sup> Thus, for short-term economic gain the RF were willing to continue accepting immigrants with low levels of ‘assimilation’ into the ‘Rhodesian way of life’, as McLean had put it. This was somewhat paradoxical. One on the one hand the RF had castigated Portuguese immigrants for the threat they posed to Rhodesia’s racial hierarchies. On the other, they preferred to bring in these same Portuguese migrants to fill skilled and semi-skilled jobs in the building industry rather than train, or permit, Rhodesia’s black population to do them. The actual threat to Rhodesia’s racially stratified economy, the maintenance of which was a key plank of the RF’s political platform, trumped the perceived

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<sup>48</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (71) 118, ‘Miscegenation, Prostitution and Allied Problems’, 15 August 1971.

<sup>49</sup> P. Duara, ‘Between Empire and Nation: Settler Colonialism in Manchukuo’, in S. Pedersen and C. Elkins, eds., *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century* (New York & Abingdon, 2005), p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> RC(S) (71), Thirty-First Meeting. Despite what the Rhodesians thought Jean Marie Pevenne has demonstrated that this policy, also known as Lusotropicalism, was actually warily received in metropolitan Portugal and its colonial possessions outside Brazil. Pevenne, ‘Settling against the Tide’, p. 88-91.

<sup>51</sup> RC(S) (71), Thirty-First Meeting.

threat of miscegenation. By the mid-1970s with the collapse of Portuguese colonial rule in Southern Africa, there was another influx of migrants from the newly independent nations of Angola and Mozambique. The Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism actively sought out refugees and sent a promotion official to a South African refugee camp for Angolans in September 1975, securing sixty-five new Portuguese immigrants including eleven diesel mechanics and one surveyor.<sup>52</sup>

The desperation of the mid to late 1970s is unsurprising given the wider context of white Rhodesian demography. It was in this period that the extent of Rhodesia's demographic impermanence finally began to show as Rhodesia began to make net losses in white population.<sup>53</sup> The high population turnover which had occurred throughout Rhodesia's history was no longer masked by a significant inflow of new immigrants, as the luxurious and comfortable lifestyle with which Rhodesia marketed itself to potential white immigrants was undermined by the escalating war against nationalist guerrillas.<sup>54</sup> One particular concern for white Rhodesians was conscription. Luise White has highlighted how state obligations regarding conscription became increasingly onerous over time, triggering emigration.<sup>55</sup> Conscription had pre-dated UDI, but was extended throughout the period, and by 1976 had been increased to a year's service (it was soon raised again to eighteen months) for men aged eighteen to thirty-four. Those who had done their national service were then put on 'continuous call up' for service with the territorial units.<sup>56</sup> These demands interrupted lives, studies, and the day-to-day operations of business and thus were much-resented by whites. Others, such as Chris Mears, chose to leave in 1978, unwilling to live under the nominally majority-rule government of Bishop Muzorewa.<sup>57</sup> Though much mockery was made of those who chose to take

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<sup>52</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), RC(S) (75), Thirty-Sixth Meeting, 2 September 1975.

<sup>53</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 149.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> L. White, 'Civic Virtue, Young Men, and the Family: Conscription in Rhodesia, 1974-1980', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37, 4 (2004), pp. 103-121.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.105.

<sup>57</sup> C. Mears, *Goodbye Rhodesia* (Sussex, 2005), p. 3.

the ‘chicken run’ or ‘gap it’ by those who stayed behind, it is revealing how pervasive this trend was.<sup>58</sup>

**Figure 1.4 - Net migration to Rhodesia, 1965-1979<sup>59</sup>**

Year	Total Net Immigration
1965	2,290
1966	-2,120
1967	2,130
1968	6,210
1969	5,070
1970	6,330
1971	9,460
1972	8,840
1973	1,640
1974	600
1975	1,920
1976	-7,023
1977	-10,825
1978	-13,560
1979 (to September)	-8,219

White Rhodesian demography in the period 1953-1980 was highly fluid. Key developments included massive immigration in the 1940s and 1950s (at least relative to pre-1939 Rhodesia); a relaxation of immigration controls which facilitated the arrival of non-British or South African European national groups; and a rise in the Rhodesian-born population which nevertheless failed to

<sup>58</sup> D. Pitman, *You Must Be New Around Here* (Bulawayo, 1979), p. 38; Mears, *Goodbye Rhodesia*, p. 222.

<sup>59</sup> Adapted from data in *Rhodesia. Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics for December, 1975* (Salisbury, 1976), p. 3; *Rhodesia – Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics for December, 1977* (Salisbury, 1978), p. 3; *Rhodesia – Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics for December 1978* (Salisbury, 1979), p. 3; *Zimbabwe-Rhodesia – Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics for September, 1979* (Salisbury, 1979), p. 3.

trump migration as the premier source of white population growth. New immigrants could bring new attitudes but more often than not were quickly assimilated into Rhodesian society. As McEwan suggests, this was facilitated by the fact that large numbers came from familiar social and cultural environments, and would continue to do so throughout the period. Indeed, the consistent predominance of British and English-speaking South Africans within the Rhodesian population perhaps accounted for the continuation of ethnic discrimination towards other groups of European immigrants such as Jews, Greeks, Afrikaners and Portuguese.

These divisions presented a significant obstacle to the success of attempts to promote a cohesive, homogenous, white Rhodesian national community as smaller ethnic communities established and reinforced their own group identities in response to discrimination. On the other hand, the RF faced an equally difficult problem with its British and South African immigrants, much more mobile than these smaller communities. For these larger, wealthier, communities, it was easy to go home or move down south in pursuit of job and lifestyle opportunities. British and South African immigrants often retained some form of connection to the societies in which many of them had grown up, complicating their willingness to embrace a 'Rhodesian' identity and facilitating their rejection of it in the late 1970s. In short, even though the RF largely narrowed the focus of its nation-building to the tiny white community, even there it had significant obstacles to overcome in its attempts to instil a sense of national commitment.

### **European Politics in Rhodesia, 1953-1980**

From a relatively early stage, a classic narrative of the history of European politics in Rhodesia emerged in academic literature. The 1950s saw the advent of the policy of multi-racial 'partnership', which became one of the key justifications for the founding of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953. The failure of African nationalist parties such as the National Democratic Party (NDP) to participate in politics under the 1961 Constitution and the subsequent electoral defeat of the United Federal Party (UFP) at the hands of the RF in December 1962

represented a rejection of multi-racial partnership by both Europeans and Africans and set the stage for the UDI and the subsequent bloody war of independence.<sup>60</sup> After comprehensively defeating the remnants of the UFP by winning all fifty 'European' seats in the Legislative Assembly in May 1965 the RF was returned to power on large majorities in the subsequent elections of 1970, 1974, and 1977. According to some commentators, the political dominance of the RF reflected the overwhelming unity and almost monolithic nature of white society in Rhodesia.<sup>61</sup>

However, politics, even in a society as small as white Rhodesia, is rarely this simple and studies such as Leys', which sought to explain unity in terms of race, Arrighi who cited class, and Hodder-Williams, who argued that 'cultural cleavage' was the crucial factor – all missed the point by taking the appearance of white unity at face value.<sup>62</sup> The divisions in Rhodesia's white population manifested themselves in the colony's political life. The election of the RF was undoubtedly a key development, but represented less of a break from Rhodesia's political past than some commentators have argued.<sup>63</sup>

It is worth briefly explaining Rhodesia's electoral system before proceeding. Rhodesian electors in the 1960s belonged to either the 'A' or 'B' Roll (figure 1.5). Voters on the 'A' Roll were white, though there were some black voters on the 'B' Roll. Membership of these rolls was determined by a series of property and income qualifications which allowed Rhodesians to claim that their politics was not, technically speaking, racially discriminatory while ensuring the electorate was overwhelmingly European. 'A' Roll voters elected representatives for fifty 'white' seats in the

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<sup>60</sup> J. Barber, *Rhodesia: The Road to Rebellion* (Oxford, 1967), p. 305.

<sup>61</sup> Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia*.

<sup>62</sup> C. Leys, *European Politics in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford, 1959); G. Arrighi, *The Political Economy of Rhodesia* (The Hague, 1967); R. Hodder-Williams, 'Party Allegiance among Europeans in Rural Rhodesia: A Research Note', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 10, 1 (1972), p. 135.

<sup>63</sup> As illustrated by Ian Henderson and Donal Lowry, who both noted that the RF appealed to a long-standing tradition of 'populism' in Rhodesian politics, especially amongst farmers. I. Henderson, 'White Populism in Southern Rhodesia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14, 4 (1972), pp. 387-399; D. Lowry, 'White Woman's Country': Ethel Tawse Jollie and the Making of White Rhodesia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23, 2 (1997), pp. 259-281.

legislature, whilst black representatives were partly elected, and partly nominated by Rhodesia's African chiefs, for sixteen parliamentary seats.<sup>64</sup>

From the granting of internal self-government in 1923 to the December 1962 elections, Rhodesia was ruled by the same party in one form or another which was named, consecutively, the Rhodesia Party, the United Party and finally the Southern Rhodesian branch of the UFP. Indeed, between 1933 and 1953 the country had the longest-serving prime minister in Commonwealth history in the person of Godfrey Huggins.<sup>65</sup> Though the longevity of its term of office suggests a political consistency in the colony, this was often not the case, and the party had to work hard to reconcile the interests of its varied constituencies.<sup>66</sup> As David Murray has shown, these included the major economic interest groups: the mining and agricultural sectors, commerce and industry and organised labour.<sup>67</sup> Murray observed that these broad economic sectors were themselves often divided between different, sometimes competing, interests. Consequently, it is better to think of Rhodesian governing parties as broad coalitions seeking to retain the support of a number of interests, more like the major American political parties than British ones. After the Second World War it became increasingly difficult for the 'government party' to retain the support of most of these varied interests which formed part of the white electorate.

**Figure 1.5 - The Rhodesian Electorate, 1962-1977<sup>68</sup>**

	1962	1965	1970	1974	1977
A Roll	90,391	97,224	87,020	83,656	83,762
B Roll	9,819	10,735	8,326	7,043	7,468

<sup>64</sup> See Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia* and A. Lemon, 'Electoral Machinery and Voting Patterns in Rhodesia, 1962-1977', *African Affairs*, 77, 309 (1978), pp. 511-530.

<sup>65</sup> T. Bull, ed., *Rhodesian Perspective* (London, 1967), p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> These struggles are demonstrated in some detail in Murray, *The Governmental System*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Reproduced from Table 2 in Lemon, 'Electoral Machinery', p. 513.

The UFP's loss of support was in part due to demographic changes, though it is important not to overstate the influence they had - the A Roll electoral system had a residency requirement which disqualified the most recent migrants.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the post-war migrants who came to Rhodesia to work in the country's developing secondary and tertiary industries brought with them new fears and attitudes about the consequences of minority- or majority-rule and it was logical for the political parties in Rhodesia to court these growing groups.

Similarly, economic change and urbanisation of the African population had created a nascent African middle class, which for the first time in the colony's history threatened to test the ostensibly non-racial rhetoric that constituted the crux of European justifications for the maintenance of their economic and social superiority.<sup>70</sup> The rise of African nationalism in Rhodesia coincided with the imminent end of European colonial empires elsewhere in Africa. Thus it became pertinent for the governing party to also court these middle class Africans in order to demonstrate a commitment to multi-racialism which it was hoped would form the basis for greater autonomy within the British Empire (as embodied by the Federation) and later for some form of minority-rule independence for Southern Rhodesia.

The basic dilemma for the Rhodesian government in the years of Federation, then, was a balancing act between the concerns of its European population, the aspirations of its African population, and the expectations of its (nominal) colonial overlords in Whitehall. A policy of multiracial 'partnership', a term intentionally kept vague, was enshrined but not defined, in the Federal constitution.<sup>71</sup> Militating against this, however, was the ineluctable fact that: 'the majority of settlers in the Federation were unwilling to view Africans, even potentially, as their equals.'<sup>72</sup> Despite the misgivings of many whites, the UFP's public acquiescence to 'partnership' represented an

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<sup>69</sup> I thank Duncan Money for making me aware of this point.

<sup>70</sup> A.S. Mlambo, 'From the Second World War to UDI, 1940-1965' in B. Raftopoulos & A. Mlambo (eds.), *Becoming Zimbabwe*, (Harare, 2009), p. 77.

<sup>71</sup> Leys, *European Politics*, pp. 272-3.

<sup>72</sup> A. Cohen, 'Settler power, African Nationalism, and British Interests in the Central African Federation 1957-1963' (University of Sheffield, PhD Thesis, 2008), p. 284.

acceptance that firstly, Africans had a place, albeit a heavily circumscribed one, within the national political system – something which had never been accepted before – and also that, consequently, some changes would have to be made in order for European rule to continue in Rhodesia.

The obverse of this approach formed the central tenet of the right-wing opposition – the Dominion Party (DP) – which stood firmly for white interests and demanded immediate Dominion status for most of the Federation (excluding Nyasaland and the Barotseland region of Northern Rhodesia) without any constitutional change as a prerequisite.<sup>73</sup> By taking this stance the DP obviated the UFP's difficult, almost impossible, position of having to court the tiny African electorate whilst convincing the much larger European one that it was acting in their best interests. However, the UFP was far from a bastion of non-racial liberalism. In 1958 elements in the party ousted their leader Garfield Todd on the grounds that he was too liberal and replaced him with Edgar Whitehead.<sup>74</sup> By advocating 'partnership' the UFP sought to preserve minority rule for the foreseeable future: it was merely more realistic about the need to co-opt a growing African middle class to achieve this. Indeed, by failing to implement partnership with a sincerity and speed that would have convinced its potential African allies, and thus stimulating the rise of African nationalism, the UFP actually became the victim of its own policy. Tony King notes that the late Federal period was typified by the dissonance between the actions of the political elite (the UFP) and the electorate in general, who would have elected the DP in 1958 were it not for the technicalities of the electoral system of preference voting.<sup>75</sup>

As the 1950s came to an end and the 1960s gusted in on 'winds of change', things went from bad to worse for the UFP. The Nyasaland Emergency in 1959 is widely acknowledged as the death knell of the Federation, though it struggled on for another three years through an interminable series

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<sup>73</sup> Winston Field Papers, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, Box 13, *Dominion Party Summary of Policy August 1958* (place of publication unknown, 1958), MSS.Afr.s.2344.

<sup>74</sup> Todd's fall is described from a first-hand perspective in H. Holderness, *Lost Chance: Southern Rhodesia 1945-1958* (Harare, 1985).

<sup>75</sup> King, *Identity and Decolonisation*, p. 221.

of conferences designed to dissolve it.<sup>76</sup> This coincided with a wave of decolonisation and armed challenges to white settler rule across Africa. Meanwhile Rhodesia in the early 1960s was wracked with major rural resistance to the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) amongst the African population, and severe civil disobedience in the towns, with rioting across the African locations (as Rhodesian townships were called) in Bulawayo and Salisbury.<sup>77</sup> Faced with what appeared to be the imminent collapse of European colonial rule across the continent, white fears reached fever pitch and the right-wing opposition, crystallised into the Rhodesian Front in mid-1962, was perfectly placed to exploit them in the upcoming December elections.

Despite a huge and costly drive to register African voters through its 'Build a Nation' campaign, the UFP failed spectacularly.<sup>78</sup> In November 1962 Whitehead promised the UFP's party convention that he would repeal the Land Apportionment Act, the cornerstone of white rule and segregation, if he won the election. This was all the indication farmers, already a major source of funding for the RF, needed that the governing party was no longer acting in their interests. This shift coincided with the growing economic insecurity of the growing number of working- and middle-class white Rhodesians and the fears of other whites concerned about decolonisation and violence. The policies of the UFP had caused a new coalition of interests to form on the right of Rhodesian politics. Consequently, there were only a few sections of white society still inclined to support them, such as the wealthier whites and business owners who were more economically secure and stood to benefit from a less rigidly racialised economy. At the polls the RF won a majority and set about on a more explicit path to independence than ever before under its new Prime Minister, Winston Field.

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<sup>76</sup> J. Darwin, 'The Central African Emergency, 1959', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21, 3 (1993), p. 219.

<sup>77</sup> See J. Alexander *The Unsettled Land: State Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003* (Oxford, 2006) for an account of African resistance to the NLHA and its consequences for Rhodesian policy.

<sup>78</sup> The activities and aims of the 'Build-a-Nation' campaign are well documented in Whitehead's Papers at Rhodes House Library, Oxford. See in particular Box 1, File P2/A.14 'United Federal Party "Build a Nation" Tour January 1962 (General & Follow-Up Enquiries) (27<sup>th</sup> January, 1962 onwards), MSS Afr.s.1482/1 and File P2/A3 – United Federal Party "Build a Nation Campaign" Press Cuttings (General), MSS Afr.s.1482/1.

Like Todd before him, Field was ousted in 1964 on account of appearing too moderate, probably because of his refusal to countenance an illegal declaration of independence from Great Britain. According to Bowman: '[Field] basically shared the beliefs and orientations of Huggins, Whitehead and Welensky that the British not only *had* to be dealt with but that they *could* be dealt with.'<sup>79</sup> His successor, Ian Smith (the first Rhodesian-born prime minister), had no such concerns. The election of 1965 saw the RF take all the European seats in the Legislative Assembly, destroying the remnants of the UFP, by then renamed the Rhodesia National Party. From this point forward the RF was the governing party until the country gained majority-rule independence as Zimbabwe in 1980.

Many have sought to account for the electoral dominance of the RF. Bowman and Godwin and Hancock have highlighted the high levels of grassroots activity within the RF, which ensured that it represented a broad range of interests and obviated a need for multi-party electoral politics.<sup>80</sup> Tony Kirk and Chris Sherwell suggested that a need to maintain white unity in the face of external pressures accounted for the electorates' repeated returning of the RF to power, though they also highlighted the intriguing fact that the white electorate was both relatively small and seemingly quite apathetic with as many as 50,000 white voters disenfranchised because they had not taken up Rhodesian citizenship or registered to vote.<sup>81</sup> In 1975, they noted: 'white Rhodesia is probably unique as an avowedly democratic community where the number of voters has actually declined over the past decade while the population has grown by some 23 per cent.'<sup>82</sup> Though it is not known for certain why so many potential white electors never registered, it is likely as a consequence of unwillingness to take up Rhodesian citizenship – which would mean renouncing pre-existing citizenship at a time when travel on Rhodesian passports was severely restricted due to sanctions. In 1978, when thousands of white Rhodesians were trying to leave the country, a cabinet memo noted

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<sup>79</sup> Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia*, p. 68.

<sup>80</sup> Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia*; Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 59.

<sup>81</sup> T. Kirk & C. Sherwell, 'The Rhodesian General Election of 1974', *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 13, 1(1975), p. 17.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

an increase of applications to renounce Rhodesian citizenship: 'from persons resident in the country who advance as their reason the wish to obtain the passport of a country which will allow them the freedom of travel which is presently denied to Rhodesian passport holders.'<sup>83</sup> The memo advised against allowing this to happen, pointing out that '[r]elaxation of the present policy could well result in a considerable reduction in Europeans on the voters roll'.<sup>84</sup>

One of the keys to the RF's electoral performance was the support it was given by elements within the farming and rural communities of Rhodesia. Larry Bowman noted that the party's grassroots system was skewed in favour of rural interests, with one hundred and two rural branches as opposed to sixty three urban ones.<sup>85</sup> Farmers constituted the bedrock of the RF's political machine, with key figures in the party such as chairmen Ralph Nilson and Desmond Frost and the two RF prime ministers – Winston Field and Ian Smith - being members of the farming community.<sup>86</sup> Under the RF government rural white Rhodesia enjoyed disproportionate levels of power. The RF won seventeen of the country's nineteen rural constituencies in 1962.<sup>87</sup> Support for the RF among was not universal among farmers, however. Angus Selby and Rory Pilossoff have demonstrated that some farmers were very much in support of a settlement with the externally-based nationalist organisations, with delegations from their representative bodies the Rhodesia National Farmers Union (RNFU) and Rhodesian Tobacco Association (RTA) visiting Zambia in the 1970s to confer with the nationalists.<sup>88</sup> Even within this small element of the white population there were deep political divisions.

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<sup>83</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (78) 19, 'Citizenship of Rhodesia Act (Chapter 23): Renunciation of Rhodesian Citizenship', 17 March 1978.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-103.

<sup>87</sup> Lemon, 'Electoral Machinery', p. 520.

<sup>88</sup> A. Selby, 'Differentiating Commercial Farmers: Land Reform in Zimbabwe' (Oxford University, MPhil Thesis, 2002); R. Pilossoff, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices' from Zimbabwe* (Harare, 2012), p. 24.

Another key constituency for the RF were the white artisans, many of whom were more recent immigrants. These white artisans had the most to lose from the achievement of any sort of racial parity in the Rhodesian economy, and they flocked to the banner of the RF in order to ensure the preservation of their jobs and the luxurious lifestyles they had come to enjoy in Rhodesia.<sup>89</sup> Many of them had left behind the bomb-shattered terraces of post-war Britain for a new life full of sunshine, swimming pools, and servants. In a review of the recreational life of Salisbury's non-African population in the 1970s, P.A. Hardwick of the University of Rhodesia noted: '[a] detached single-storey house on a one-acre plot is the rule rather than the exception... Furthermore, a substantial proportion of properties had recreation improvements.'<sup>90</sup> Like the farmers, they had seen the UFP's courting of the African middle classes as a warning sign that things were about to change, probably to their detriment, and became the RF's other major support base. Barber summed up the economic division between the two parties in 1962 thus:

[t]he farmers and artisans... had the common overriding interest that their positions were challenged by African advancement. While business and commerce had interests in wider markets, in seeing that money flowed to all sections of the community, and had interests in the growth of an African artisan class to break the high labour costs of the white 'guild system', the farmers, anxious for their land and crop prices, the artisans, anxious for their jobs, drew together.<sup>91</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that business and commercial leaders were not well-disposed to the RF (though this did not preclude them, by and large, from co-operating with it). When commissioned to produce reports for the RF government determining the economic consequences of independence, they came out strongly against it. These findings were suppressed by the RF. John Parker, a journalist who came into possession of one of these incendiary documents, was promptly arrested and then deported.<sup>92</sup> Businessmen, already losing profits due to the segregated economy, were hit harder by the effect of sanctions and, later, conscription which robbed them of their white

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<sup>89</sup> C. Legum in 'Rhodesian UDI', seminar held 6 September 2000 (Institute of Contemporary British History, 2002), p. 69.

<sup>90</sup> P.A. Hardwick, *Aspects of Recreation Amongst Salisbury's Non-African Population* (Salisbury, 1978), p. 18.

<sup>91</sup> Barber, *Rhodesia*, p. 162.

<sup>92</sup> See Parker's account of this in J. Parker, *Rhodesia: Little White Island* (London, 1972).

employees. Consequently they were constantly agitating for a settlement with the British government which would grant Rhodesia legally recognised independence. Likewise, wealthier constituencies in Rhodesia typically showed less support for the RF than others. The more affluent northern suburbs of Salisbury, such as Mount Pleasant, Arundel, and Borrowdale offered the most support to the RF's main rival, the Rhodesia Party (RP).<sup>93</sup>

Rhodesia after 1962 was not without a small number of 'liberal' whites either, as Ian Hancock has shown.<sup>94</sup> While it was often difficult for these disparate few to agree on anything, one of the most prominent groups was the Centre Party (CP) led by the farmer Pat Bashford, which contested the 1965, 1970, and 1974 elections (though it only contested a single European seat in the latter).<sup>95</sup> However the CP, whose only elected MPs were Africans, was caught in a similar situation to the UFP before it. Namely, they had to contend with the fact that the RF had captured the electorate on the promise of security for white rule, and had delivered on it. *Blueprint for Rhodesia*, the 1969 manifesto of the CP, was a model of cautious compromise; it called for the eventual removal of racial discrimination but also promised that 'Europeans must be guaranteed permanent security, maintenance of standards, firm government.'<sup>96</sup> This was merely a watered-down version of what the RF claimed to be offering and therefore doomed to have limited electoral appeal.

The RF was also skilful in its use of propaganda. Frank Clements noted that the party's rhetoric was so strong that '[i]t became difficult to challenge the Rhodesian Front without also appearing to resist the struggle for Rhodesian sovereignty...'<sup>97</sup> In contrast to previous accounts by Elaine Windrich and Julie Frederiske which emphasised the strength of the RF propaganda machine, Enocent Msindo has argued that the sheer volume of RF propaganda was a sign of weakness rather than strength. He argues that the RF put too much stock in propaganda, and that the messages that

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<sup>93</sup> Lemon, 'Electoral Machinery', p. 526.

<sup>94</sup> I. Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia 1953-1980* (London & Sydney, 1984).

<sup>95</sup> Lemon, 'Electoral Machinery', p. 526.

<sup>96</sup> The Centre Party, *Blueprint for Rhodesia* (Salisbury, 1969), p. 2, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> Clements, *Rhodesia*, p. 206.

the RF tried to spread about Rhodesia for both domestic and international audiences failed to take hold.<sup>98</sup> While the impact of RF propaganda has been overstated, it clearly helped define UDI-era Rhodesia's political landscape. An opposition party (the Rhodesia Party) pamphlet of 1974 felt obliged to begin with an exhortation that; '[w]e acknowledge that Europeans must remain united to enable us to survive as a minority. Unity amongst the Europeans does not, however, mean everyone must be RF.'<sup>99</sup>

Mirroring white society, the RF itself was riven with internal divisions, which have been best explored by Godwin and Hancock.<sup>100</sup> As early as the late 1960s the RF was divided on the 'fundamental' issue of the maintenance of majority rule and what UDI represented.<sup>101</sup> Hard right-wingers, often former DP members like W.J. Cary, and William Harper, believed that blacks were so civilisationally backward that whites should rule Rhodesia forever. To them UDI was a bulwark against the existential threat of majority rule, heralding the implementation of complete political and social segregation on apartheid lines.<sup>102</sup> On the other hand Ian Smith and others like Andrew Dunlop – a former soldier with many close connections to the British establishment – came from the Rhodesia Reform Party which had advocated separate facilities for the races and opposed 'forced integration' but was not as stridently racist as the DP.<sup>103</sup> They initially saw UDI as a tactic in a battle with the British government for independence. These internal party divisions meant that the very character of the future Rhodesian nation was at stake. What imperatives would drive the nation-building project? Even within the governing party there were contested visions of the nation: a Rhodesia devoted to quasi-apartheid separation of the races and permanent minority-rule and a

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<sup>98</sup> Msindo, 'Winning Hearts and Minds', pp. 677-681. For the accounts Msindo criticises, see E. Windrich, *The Mass Media in the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (Gwelo, 1981) and J. Frederikse, *None But Ourselves: Masses Versus the Media in the Making of Zimbabwe* (Harare, 1982).

<sup>99</sup> Rhodesia Party, *'If You're Planning to Stay': A Guide to Some of the Important Principles and Policies of the Rhodesia Party and a Contrast with RF attitudes* (Salisbury, 1974).

<sup>100</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, pp. 53-84.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

more gradualist (but still exclusionary and discriminatory) policy of white rule for the foreseeable future.

This fractious coalition was held together by a combination of self-interest and the skilful politicking of the party leadership. Yet throughout the 1970s the RF faced a number of challenges from the ‘white right’ of Rhodesian politics, which were often more significant than those from the ‘left’ because of their potential to capture the RF voting base. In 1977 twelve RF MPs crossed the floor over amendments to the Land Tenure Act (the RF’s successor to the Land Apportionment Act) and formed the Rhodesia Action Party (RAP). They gained some measure of support amongst the RF grassroots, particularly white artisans, and some of its more extreme supporters.<sup>104</sup> Smith, his position threatened, was forced to call a general election to reassert his authority. Though the party won easily, with all twelve of the RAP rebels losing their seats, the challenge clearly unsettled the RF.<sup>105</sup> It considered these small right-wing organisations to be such a threat to it that it mobilised Special Branch in support of its campaign, and the British South Africa Police also worked against extreme right-wing organisations such as the Southern African Solidarity Conference (SASCON) and the Candour League, who were vocal critics of the RF and Smith in particular in the late 1970s, with their views finding voice in periodicals such as *The Rhodesian Patriot*.<sup>106</sup> Writing in the *Patriot* in November 1977, ‘A Political Analyst’ mused on ‘the only way’ to settle Rhodesia’s problems:

[I]t will be necessary for the White man to announce quite firmly that policy has changed and that he, and he alone, will henceforth rule. It will have to be made clear that the word “Rule” means what it says and excludes such nonsensical concepts as “power-sharing” and even such confusing euphemisms as “An African voice at top governmental level” – and any other confusions of thought that cloud the issue and prevent everyone from knowing exactly where he stands. As the country was created by the White man, exists because of the White man, and can continue only if the White

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 193-198.

<sup>105</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 204; Lemon, ‘Electoral Machinery’, p. 529. The RAP contested forty-six of the fifty white seats, winning 9.7% of the vote there.

<sup>106</sup> H. Ellert, ‘The Rhodesian Security and Intelligence Community 1960-1980: A Brief Overview of the Structure and Operational Role of the Military, Civilian, and Police Security and Intelligence Organizations which Served the Rhodesian Government during the Zimbabwean Liberation War’, in N. Bhebe & T. Ranger (eds.), *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War* (London, 1991), p. 91.

man rules, there must be no havoring over the argument that the preservation of white interests is for the good of all – *and that those interests must prevail*.<sup>107</sup>

Thus, contrary to appearances at the time, the RF was not the invincible monolith that it appeared to be and that Rhodesian politics was more divided than the continued electoral success of the RF seemed to suggest. The rule of the Front was less of a radical departure in the country's politics than some have argued. It was an expression of the populism which Ian Henderson has noted was a hallmark of Rhodesian politics in times of crisis.<sup>108</sup> This was an old tactic adapted to meet a new situation: the collapse of Federation and the European colonial withdrawal in Africa. Though it was a product of the wider context of the late 1950s and 1960s, the RF was another broad-based coalition united primarily by its resistance to immediate majority rule and divided on innumerable other things. After a few years these divisions began to tell as struggles erupted in the party, forcing it to be more responsive and adaptable than the classic narrative suggests.

Similarly, the Rhodesian electorate was less monolithic than it was mutable. Wealthier and more liberal Rhodesians saw their best interests lying in a less-rigidly segregated society. The captains of Rhodesian industry saw a way to save money by hiring African workers willing to work for less, and so they supported the parties they felt would best deliver on this. Some of the old RF stalwarts, the farmers and artisans, were willing to desert the RF in the end in favour of more extreme right-wing political parties like the RAP, or considered coming to accommodation with the nationalist movements when they felt that minority-rule was finished. Indeed, rather than the unchallenged dominance of the RF, the UDI period was characterised by the party's attempts to quell internal party disturbances over policy direction and unite as much of the white population of Rhodesia as possible behind it. As the 1970s dragged on and the nature of these tasks became increasingly Sisyphean, the seemingly impermeable edifice of white rule began to crumble.

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<sup>107</sup> *The Rhodesian Patriot*, 4 (Nov., 1977), p. 7. Italics in original.

<sup>108</sup> Henderson, 'White Populism', p. 389.

## Conclusion

The sections above have revealed the fractious nature of white Rhodesian society, the origins of the RF's nation-building project and the difficulties it faced in carrying it out successfully, uniting a divided white society behind its vision of minority-rule independence. It is impossible to understand the RF's approach without first appreciating the society it was trying to shape and mould in the 1960s and 1970s. 'White' Rhodesia was a society in flux after the Second World War. In a relatively short period of time the country underwent considerable change. Demographically, the European population of Rhodesia grew exponentially (though it remained tiny compared to the African population) as large numbers of new immigrants arrived from South Africa and Britain. This left white Rhodesians with a much greater number of people to attempt to assimilate and 'Rhodesianise' and it did so with varying levels of success. As the UDI period dragged on, the Rhodesians widened their traditionally rather stringent immigration criteria in order to accept previously less "desirable" Europeans such as the Portuguese. However, the way they were viewed by the Cabinet and the authorities shows that intra-European discrimination, long a problem in Rhodesia, was still as prevalent as ever and acted as an obstacle to a wider sense of community. On the obverse side the desire of individuals among the smaller groups like Jews and Greeks to assimilate into white Rhodesian society often meant that the predominant British/English-speaking South African basis of white Rhodesian society and culture was never seriously challenged.

Politically, the RF seemed to rule the roost from its initial electoral victory in 1962 until the of majority rule independence in 1980. However, its electoral dominance belied the fractious nature of white Rhodesia. Like the political parties before it, the RF was a broad coalition of interests, whose attitudes towards African advancement were a product of the geopolitical context in which it appeared, namely decolonisation. The RF faced challenges from the right and left throughout its lifetime and the party could only head them off by having a shifting set of priorities in an attempt to present as broad of an appeal to the white Rhodesian electorate as possible. The RF, far from the

monolith some see it as, had to be fluid and adaptable in order to accommodate a range of people (and exclude others like the liberals and the far-right) whose only common ground was the immediate preservation of white rule.

It was in the context of these major developments that white Rhodesians sought to make sense of their place in the world. In the era of decolonisation period the need to create a white Rhodesian nation became more urgent – the white minority government had to justify its rule not just to the world at large, which refused to grant it official recognition, but to its own people in order to retain their electoral support. The challenges it faced in attempting to do this were a consequence of maintaining a continued commitment to minority rule in the face of Rhodesia's shifting demography and fractious politics.

## Chapter Two

### These Colours Don't Fade: Changing Rhodesia's Flag, 1967-1968

Shortly after Rhodesia unilaterally declared its independence (UDI) from Britain on 11 November 1965 the Prime Minister, Ian Smith, sought to reassure his white electorate as to the nature of his nascent rebellion. In a broadcast to the nation he stated:

Let there be no doubt that we in this country stand second to none in our loyalty to the Queen, and whatever else other countries may have done or may yet do, it is our intention that the Union Jack will continue to fly in Rhodesia and the National Anthem continue to be sung.<sup>1</sup>

The idea that white Rhodesians were defending the Union Jack at a time when African countries all around them were scrambling to pull it down upon their independence was a powerful one. The sentiment was conveyed in a cartoon published by *The Rhodesia Herald*, on 15 November 1965. The cartoon showed four stout, white, Rhodesian men in traditional settler garb of bush hats, shorts and long socks, tightening their belts around a flagpole proudly flying the Union Jack, backed by a crown and a cross (symbolising Rhodesia's monarchism and Christianity). Around them, to the north, a series of Union Jacks had fallen in African countries.<sup>2</sup>

In the context of the British Empire, the Union Jack was a key signifier of white Rhodesians' place in the world. It served to legitimate their rule in accordance with the tenets of British and European imperialism: discourses of European superiority, paternalistic notions of development, and civilising missions. The flag became a signifier of a transnational British community of settlers around the globe and in their 'home' country. It was a way of generating support for UDI amongst the British public by showing that Rhodesians were truly 'kith and kin', with their shared flag a symbol of much wider social and cultural ties. As the *Herald's* cartoon showed, this was something

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<sup>1</sup> Anon., *Rhodesia's Finest Hour* (Salisbury, 1965).

<sup>2</sup> Cartoon from *The Rhodesia Herald*, 15 November 1965, p. 9.

Rhodesians claimed to be proud of and prepared to fight to defend. Indeed, as Josiah Brownell has argued, what white Rhodesians initially wanted was a form of independence within the British Empire, the dominion status of the type enjoyed by Canada, Australia and New Zealand, rather than to leave it altogether.<sup>3</sup> However, the rebellion started on 11 November overwhelmed these early desires, and in a decolonising world the Union Jack began to lose its wider significance for some white Rhodesians, not least many in the Rhodesian Front (RF) government. The changing meaning of ‘imperial symbols’, and the RF’s failure to secure negotiated, dominion-style independence (the first phase of its nation-building project) meant that consequently, the search began for a new symbol to replace it, representing white Rhodesia as an independent nation.

This chapter begins my exploration of processes of symbolic decolonisation in the UDI-era. I use these processes to interrogate the content and character of the RF’s nation-building project. The flag was the first of Rhodesia’s colonial British-imperial symbols to be replaced by the RF. Debates surrounding its replacement offer a window onto the different white Rhodesian visions of the nation that emerged in the years after UDI and how they frustrated neat attempts at nation-building. It begins my relocation of the Rhodesian case study into wider comparative literatures, specifically other dominions in the ‘British world’ and also other ex-colonies in Africa, to highlight Rhodesia’s peculiar place in between these two wider trends of decolonisation. White Rhodesian debates drew upon comparisons, both with settler societies and African ex-colonies, when it talked about the flag and the nation. Finally, on a theoretical level, the chapter questions concepts of nationalism, particularly theories of ‘invented traditions’, with a detailed case study of an attempt at top-down invention in which even the supposed inventors could not agree what they were producing.

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<sup>3</sup> J. Brownell, ‘A Sordid Tussle on the Strand’: Rhodesia House during the UDI Rebellion (1965-1980), *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38, 3 (2010), p. 478.

## Settler colonialism by any other name: comparative aspects

Rhodesia's processes of symbolic decolonisation were not an anomalous nationalist episode, but part of wider regional and global trends which helped to shape the character of the RF's nation-building project after UDI. The two broad comparisons – settler societies and African states - I use in this chapter had different but interrelated implications for white Rhodesian nation building. This comparative approach helps reveal a central challenge to the RF's nation-building project – the attempt to justify the maintenance of a colonial situation at a time of global decolonisation.

The RF's processes of nation-building came at a time when settler communities across the globe were beginning to reconsider their relationships with the former 'mother country'. There was a tension inherent in these attempts to demonstrate independent nationhood, moving away from longstanding social and cultural ties to Britain. In 1964, after a long and controversial debate, Canada changed its flag from a colonial one (see examples below) to the maple leaf design. Writing on this debate, Philip Buckner has described it as one between two types of nationalist: 'those who believed Canada was and ought to be a British nation and those who believed that Canada ought to redefine itself with symbols with which Canadians of all ethnic origins... could identify.'<sup>4</sup> Rhodesians were not ignorant of these wider trends, and indeed referred to them during their own flag debate, as Desmond Lardner-Burke, the notoriously right-wing Minister of Justice, argued when introducing the Flag Bill to Parliament:

Whatever the origins of this nation may have been, its own peculiar experiences have endowed it with its own distinctive character as subtly but undeniably different from its progenitors as that of Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, or any other member of the Commonwealth whose origins were so like our own.<sup>5</sup>

While Rhodesians invoked the 'old dominions' in their debates about independent nationhood, these arguments were complicated by the circumstances of Rhodesia's independence. In

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<sup>4</sup> P. Buckner, 'Canada and the End of Empire', in P. Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2011), p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 72, 1968, 936.

Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, debates about nationhood, identity, and symbolism could take place at relative leisure because little was at stake. The British were happy to acquiesce when countries chose to remove the Union Flag, like Canada, or retain it, like Australia and New Zealand. In the Rhodesian case significant white Rhodesian figures, not least most of the governing party, were actively trying to disassociate the country from its former colonial master. However, debates about being 'British' or 'Rhodesian' were still taking place, with passionate arguments from both supporters and opponents of the Union Jack citing the country's British heritage in their arguments. That these debates took place despite UDI is indicative of the great emotive connection between the rebel Rhodesians and the old 'home' country. It was a connection the RF and its supporters worked hard to wear down over subsequent years. Their failure to do so, however, accounted only partly for the failure of the wider nation-building project.

Indeed, Rhodesia's peculiar situation after UDI made it closer to some examples of settler colonialism than others. The significance of 'imperial' symbols had a particular salience in settler societies where small populations of settlers were outnumbered by indigenous inhabitants. On one level, symbols like the Union Jack represented the *raison d'être* of the white Rhodesian state (in which minority-rule had been justified by imperialist discourses). As older, imperially-grounded, justifications for minority rule fell away, settlers had to seek new ways to demonstrate their right to rule. This makes the Rhodesian case more like South Africa and Ireland than Canada or Australia.

The more fractious nature of these smaller, outnumbered settler communities ensured that nation-building attempts were frequently contested, as Leslie Witz's account of the Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary celebrations in South Africa has shown. Here, attempts to demonstrate white South Africa's nationhood in the wake of the National Party's (NP) 1948 electoral victory were contested by numerous other white and non-white groups claiming authority over the past and the nation and questioning the logic of the nascent apartheid policy and the nation the NP was trying to build.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> L. Witz, *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts* (Bloomington, 2003).

RF government after UDI faced a similar set of challenges to its southern neighbour: seeking to reconcile a disparate population of white settlers behind it in a united Rhodesian nationalism in the face of international opprobrium and black nationalist challenges. In the debates about the Rhodesian flag which took place in the late 1960s, leading figures in the RF developed a vague impression of the new flag's appearance and meaning, but found its views were often challenged, in some cases by its own hardliners and in others by its audience among the white minority.

The Rhodesian debates also illustrated the strange halfway-house that the country occupied. Rhodesia was not quite a settler colony where debates could be conducted at leisure - it was becoming farcical for the Rhodesians to continue to retain British symbols as their 'rebellion' dragged on. It was also denied the neat transition to independence accorded to other African countries in ceremonies of decolonisation and national independence. David Cannadine and others have demonstrated that such handovers created a false impression of unity, and that they were in fact hastily cobbled together pageants.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, they had great significance for nation-building movements. As James Gibbs writes of Kenya's Independence Day ceremonies, their 'symbolism was unambiguous; British rule had decisively and completely ceased, independent African rule had begun.'<sup>8</sup> Independence day events, at which the raising and lowering of flags was a central component, offered a launch-pad for nation-building projects in post-colonial Africa. The RF's illegal seizure of independence and retention of British imperial symbols for several years afterwards had exactly the opposite effect, creating a great deal of ambiguity about its own legitimacy and the nature of the Rhodesian nation. By 1968, years of failed negotiations had made it clear that Britain was reluctant to compromise on the terms of Rhodesian independence.<sup>9</sup> The former colonial power

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<sup>7</sup> D. Cannadine, 'Introduction: Independence Day Ceremonials in Historical Perspective', in T. Barringer, R. Holland & S. Williams (eds.), *The Iconography of Independence: 'Freedoms at Midnight'* (London & New York, 2010), pp. 1-17.

<sup>8</sup> J. Gibbs, 'Uhuru na Kenyatta: White Settlers and the Symbolism of Kenya's Independence Day Events', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42, 3 (2014), pp. 503-529.

<sup>9</sup> For accounts of these lengthy negotiations see E. Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London, 1978) and J.R.T. Wood, *A Matter of Weeks Rather than Months: the Impasse Between Harold Wilson and Ian Smith: Sanctions, Aborted Settlements and War, 1965-1969* (Victoria, B.C., 2008).

would only accept a settlement which led to majority-rule; legitimate independence would not be forthcoming so the RF was forced to strike out on a different path. The need to dispel the ambiguity surrounding Rhodesia's independence gave the RF's nation-building project an impetus not felt in the other old dominions.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the RF ironically found itself in a surprisingly similar position to the other African ex-colonies that it so despised in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite having cast UDI as a settler rejoinder to majority-rule independence the RF had the same imperatives to demonstrate independence (and its own authority) as the nationalist movements it regularly derided. This made it similar to other African polities with ambiguous and precarious independences, such as the short-lived secessionist state of Katanga. Miles Larmer and Eric Kennes have argued that Katanga should not be discounted from wider studies of African nationalism because of its reputation as a white man's puppet state. They show how Katangan politicians sincerely sought to 'project' and 'perform' statehood through symbols and traditions. I argue the same case can be made for white Rhodesia.<sup>11</sup> The Rhodesian case is a particularly illuminating example of the complications of nation building in this regard because the RF's attempts faced so many obstacles in spite of the continuity of RF and settler-dominated institutions between pre- and post-UDI Rhodesia. In Rhodesia, as elsewhere in Africa, the ruling party still needed to establish a domestic and international legitimacy and, like the Katangans and others, genuinely strove to demonstrate its independent statehood through symbolism, diplomacy, and propaganda. A focus upon the ultimate failure, and racist character, of the RF's nationalist project has tended to obscure this rich comparative potential.

Thus Rhodesia's flag debates can be located within two wider global trends. First, they were a subset of the debates in settler societies about what it meant to be 'British', 'Canadian', 'Australian', and so on. These debates were given an additional complexity in Rhodesia because the RF was

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<sup>11</sup> M. Larmer & E. Kennes 'Rethinking the Katanganese Secession', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42, 4 (2014), pp. 741-761.

attempting to continue to justify minority-rule in an era of decolonisation and also because it had illegally declared independence from Britain and was seen as illegitimate by the government of the former 'home' country. Secondly, they demonstrated the similarities between Rhodesia and other African ex-colonies, where governments were devising new symbolism to cement the legitimacy of their independence. Once again, however, UDI complicated things. Denied the symbolic legitimacy conferred by an independence day ceremony, the RF had to embark upon its own symbolic decolonisation as a way to assert its authority and Rhodesian independence. New Zealand could retain the Union Flag and still claim to be an autonomous, independent nation; countries like Ghana and, after UDI, Rhodesia could not.

### **Flagging up difference: Rhodesia's contested symbolism**

The ambiguous status of Rhodesian independence in the years immediately following UDI left the RF's interpretation of the Rhodesian nation up for contestation. This chapter also suggests the implications of this ambiguity and contestation for wider nationalist projects. Consequently, I engage with two major theories of nationalism, 'invented traditions' and 'imagined communities', and the amorphous and complicated relationship between them.

The design process of 'national' symbols such as flags aspires to encapsulate the essence of new states rendering them understandable to domestic and international audiences. National symbols seek to convey the pretence of unity and homogeneity where there often is none. Thus they provide a prime opportunity for states to 'invent' traditions, as discussed by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger.<sup>12</sup> Arguments for the importance of 'invented traditions' draw upon older theories of nationalism that focus upon the hegemonic power of 'the state' and its ability to promote a particular type of nationalism such as Ernest Gellner's thesis that state control of mass education inculcated a 'national culture'.<sup>13</sup> After UDI, the RF was forced to 'invent tradition' for Rhodesia as a

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<sup>12</sup> E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1997).

way to establish its independence. As in the former African colonies, new national symbols were needed to demonstrate Rhodesian independence from Britain and the RF set to work accordingly.

However, I question some of the tenets of the ‘invented tradition’ approach, arguing that it ascribes too much power to the state and removes agency from the nation’s citizens and subjects, as Terence Ranger himself subsequently conceded.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the concept of invention implies a united group of inventors imposing their handiwork upon society, whereas Rhodesia provides a case study in which the ‘inventors’ failed to agree precisely what it was they were inventing. Furthermore, their ‘invention’ still allowed for ambiguous interpretations of the nation, as will be seen below. Therefore, the theory of ‘invented tradition’ cannot adequately explain the process of the RF’s nation-building project after UDI.

Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’ offers an alternative interpretation of nationalist phenomena, whereby communities collectively ‘imagine’ a nation.<sup>15</sup> This chapter shows that popular ‘imagination’ was essential to the reception of the new Rhodesian flag. Processes of meaning-making which occurred *ex post facto* gave the flag a place in the imaginations of many white Rhodesians, who projected their own multivalent conceptions of Rhodesia onto its canvas. This suggests that we can locate the processes of nation-building projects in the complicated interactions which take place between top-down ‘inventions’ and bottom-up ‘imaginings’ or interpretation of elite traditions and symbolism. In some ways, however, this is a false binary, and the following chapters question the distinction between ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’, arguing that the reality was often much hazier and it is exceedingly difficult to pin down where one ends and the other begins.

The flag debates also give a clear impression of the philosophies underlying the RF’s nation-building agenda after UDI. Theories of ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’ did not simply underlie the

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<sup>14</sup> T. Ranger, ‘The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa’, in T. Ranger & O. Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A.H.M. Kirk-Greene* (Basingstoke, 1993), pp. 62-111.

<sup>15</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 2006).

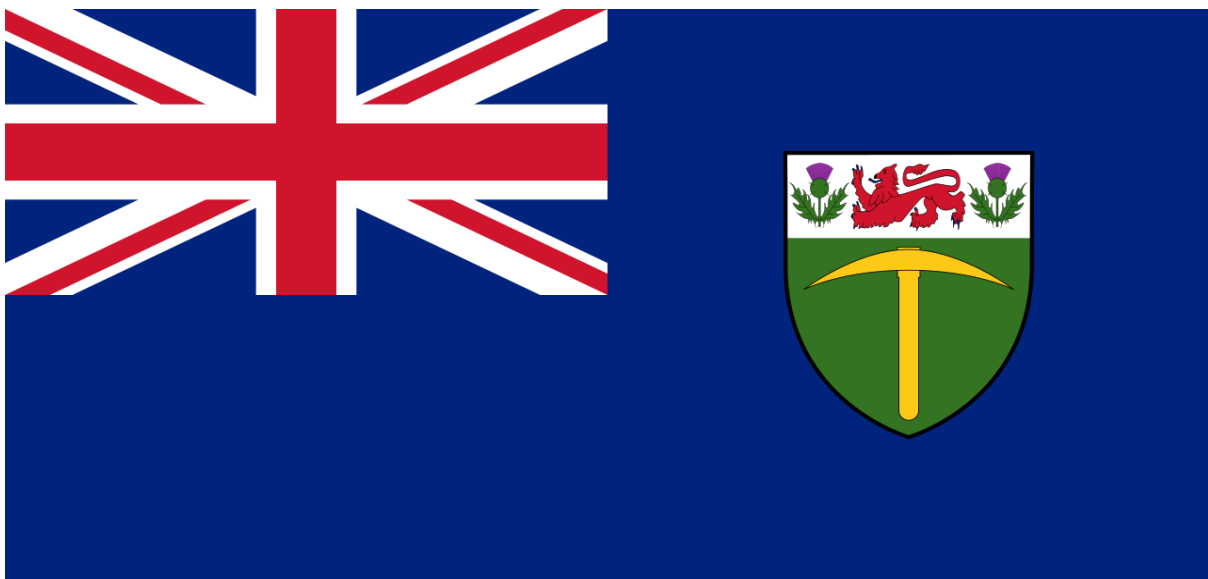
changing of the flag, but were actively interrogated by white Rhodesian parliamentarians who argued about the significance an ‘invented’ flag would have to Rhodesians. The debates make it clear that the RF itself subscribed to the false binary, believing that traditions could be invented and that, by implication, it enjoyed the power, legitimacy and authority to do so. At the same time, it couched its project in imaginative terms while failing to appreciate the fickle and fluid nature of imagination, especially in a population as fragmentary and transient as white Rhodesia’s.

The chapter begins with a brief introduction to Rhodesia’s flags from the granting of settler self-government in 1923 to 1965. It then follows a chronological narrative charting the evolution of rebel Rhodesia’s flag. I use cabinet documents to explore the ‘inventive’ process by which a new flag design was produced in 1967, examining some of the themes and symbolism which informed the new design. I then move on to explore the debates about the flag that took place in the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly in 1968. I use the political rhetoric in these debates as a lens to examine what supporters and opponents thought about the flag and, by association, the ‘new’ nation of Rhodesia. Finally, I attempt to obtain a ‘bottom-up’ perspective on popular ‘imagination’ by exploring how white Rhodesians reacted to the new flag in the national media after its unveiling on 11 November 1968, the third anniversary of independence.

## **Rhodesia and its Flags, 1953-1968**

The Union Jack was not the only flag used in Rhodesia. Indeed, between 1964 and 1980 the country known as ‘Rhodesia’ had as many flags as it had names. The colony of Southern Rhodesia had its Royal Air Force blue ensign; rebel Rhodesia its green and white flag; the short-lived Zimbabwe-Rhodesia its rather functional black, white, red and green flag; and finally the newly-independent Zimbabwe adopted the flag it retains to this day. Yet between 1890, when the Pioneer Column first established Fort Salisbury and 11 November 1968, the third anniversary of UDI, the British flag (the Union Flag, or Union Jack as it is more commonly known) was considered by many to be the flag of Rhodesia.

After the collapse of the Central African Federation in 1963, the self-governing colony of Southern Rhodesia reverted to its old pre-Federation flag. This was a blue ensign featuring the Union Flag in the top left corner and a heraldic design in the centre (figure 2.1). This style of flag is known by the technical term of ‘defaced ensign’, that is to say that the ensign has been ‘defaced’ by another symbol (usually a heraldic design). In the British imperial case colonial flags typically featured a heraldic design or symbol representing the colony (see figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 for examples of this).



**Figure 2.1 – Flag of Southern Rhodesia, 1923-53, 1963-4<sup>16</sup>**

The prominent display of the Union Jack and use of the defaced ensign design for the Southern Rhodesian flag thus placed Rhodesia firmly within the ambit of the British Empire. The design featured a shield bearing a gold mining pick on a green background, symbolising the country’s mineral and agricultural wealth. The red lion and thistles were elements borrowed from the personal

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Flag of Rhodesia’, created by user ‘Greentubing’, Wikipedia, accessed 2 January 2015 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag\\_of\\_Rhodesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Rhodesia).

heraldry of the country's founding father and namesake, the imperialist, businessman and politician Cecil Rhodes.<sup>17</sup>

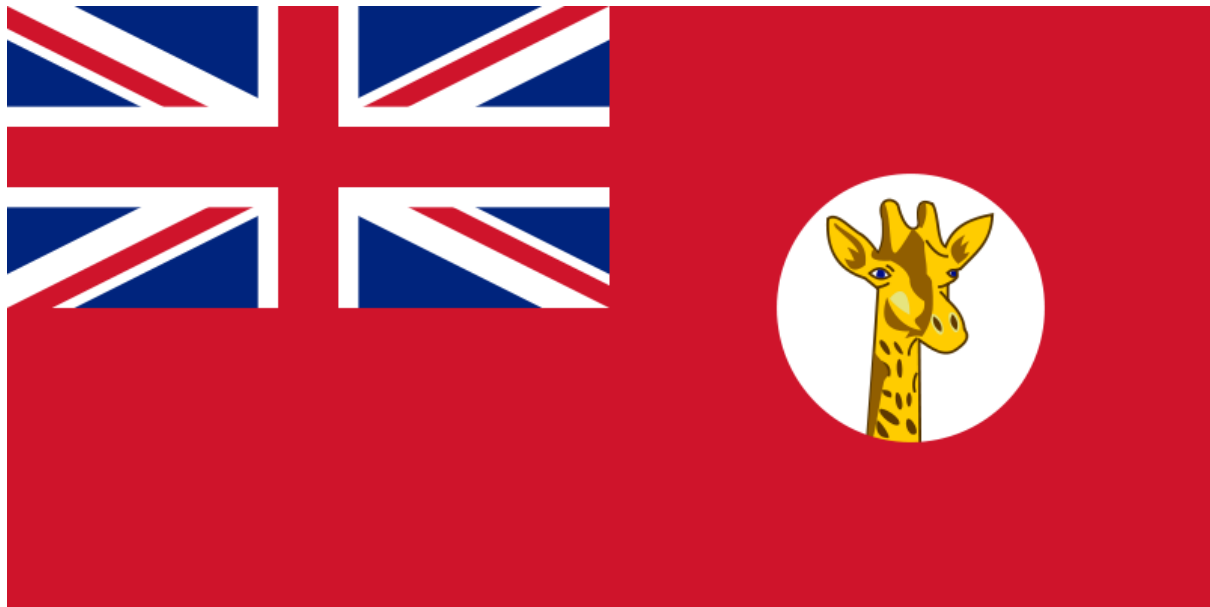


Figure 2.2 –Flag of Tanganyika Territory, 1919-1961<sup>18</sup>

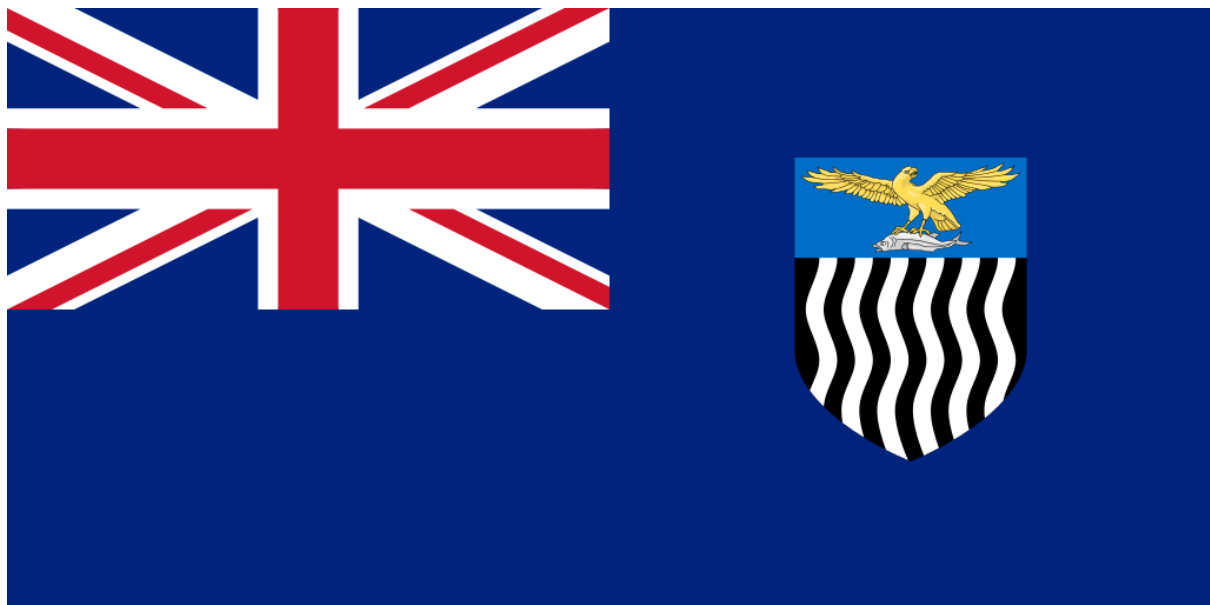


Figure 2.3 –Flag of Northern Rhodesia, 1939-1953<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> An image of Rhodes' crest can be found at: 'Armorial Bearings of Rhodesia', Rhodesia and South Africa: Military History accessed 17 April 2015 at <http://www.rhodesia.nl/armorial.htm>

<sup>18</sup> 'Tanganyika Territory', Wikipedia, accessed 27 February 2015 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag\\_of\\_Tanganyika\\_\(1919-1961\).svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Tanganyika_(1919-1961).svg).

<sup>19</sup> 'Northern Rhodesia', Wikipedia, accessed 27 February 2015 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag\\_of\\_Northern\\_Rhodesia\\_\(1939-1953\).svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Northern_Rhodesia_(1939-1953).svg).

The old Federal flag was itself a defaced blue ensign (see figure 2.4) and the return to Rhodesia's pre-Federal flag presented an element of continuity. Arguing for its re-adoption in November 1963 the Prime Minister, Winston Field, observed that the flag had already been used outside the country and was recognisable to others as the 'Rhodesian' flag.<sup>20</sup> On this basis it was re-adopted, with a slight amendment being made in 1964, changing the shade of blue to a lighter 'Royal Air Force' blue (figure 2.5). It is unclear why this change was made, though the close association of Rhodesians (not least the new Prime Minister Ian Smith) with the Royal Air Force may have played a role in the choice of colour. Another possible rationale was that some considered the Southern Rhodesian flag to be too similar to other imperial flags, as Field noted in November 1963: '[t]he only objection apparently is that the design of this flag is similar (with local variation) to that used by Australia and New Zealand and that what is required is a flag that will stand out among the national flags of the world.'<sup>21</sup> Regardless of the meaning behind the new colour of the ensign, all of the essential signifiers representing Rhodesia, Rhodes, and the British Empire, were retained.

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<sup>20</sup> Cory Library, Rhodesia University, Grahamstown (hereafter CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, S.R.C. (F) (63) 403 – 'Southern Rhodesia Flag' – 25 November 1963.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

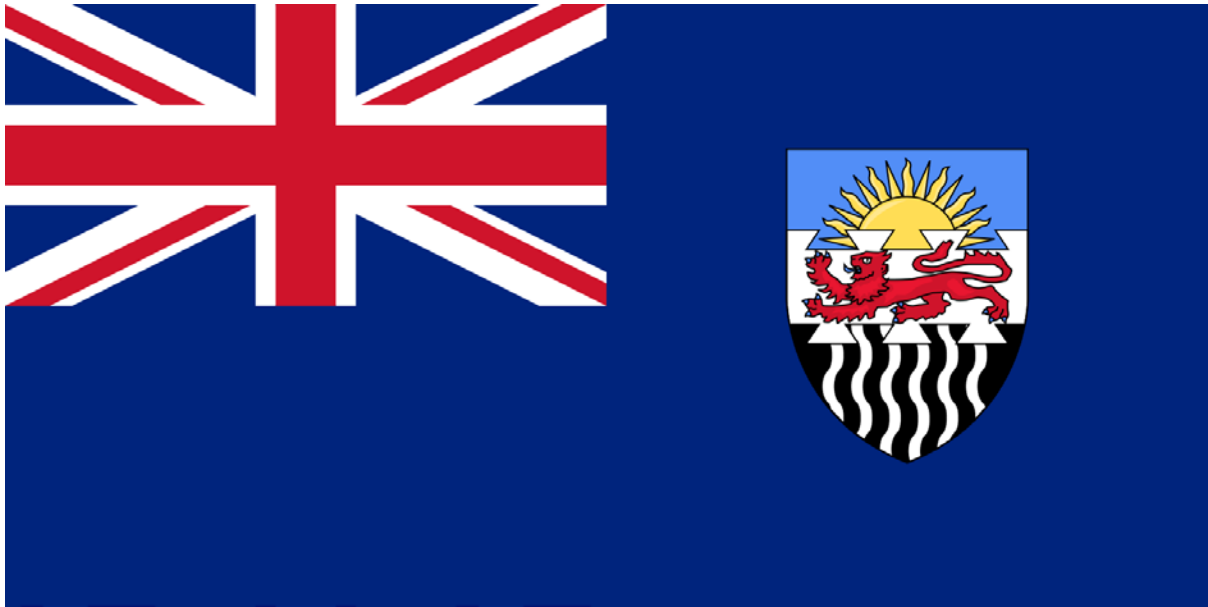


Figure 2.4 – Flag of the Central African Federation, 1953-1963<sup>22</sup>

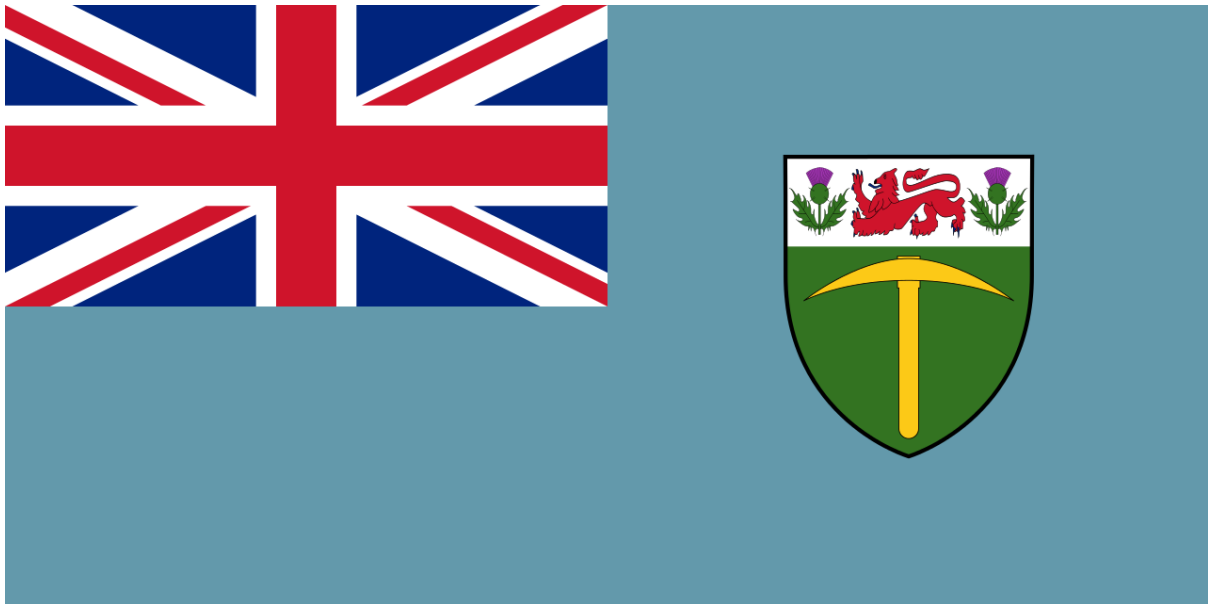


Figure 2.5 – Flag of Southern Rhodesia, 1964-5 and Rhodesia, 1965-8<sup>23</sup>

In 1967, as the Rhodesian rebellion entered its second year, the cabinet was looking to change the flag again. On 17 January 1967 it established a Committee on Honours and Awards. The committee included a number of high-ranking members of the RF government; chaired by the secretary to the cabinet, also present were the secretaries for law & order, internal affairs,

<sup>22</sup> 'Flag of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland', Wikipedia, accessed 18 November 2015, at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation\\_of\\_Rhodesia\\_and\\_Nyasaland#/media/File:Flag\\_of\\_the\\_Federation\\_of\\_Rhodesia\\_and\\_Nyasaland.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federation_of_Rhodesia_and_Nyasaland#/media/File:Flag_of_the_Federation_of_Rhodesia_and_Nyasaland.svg)

<sup>23</sup> Image from 'Flag of Rhodesia', Wikipedia, accessed 2 January 2015 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag\\_of\\_Rhodesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Rhodesia).

information, immigration and tourism, and defence. These men were given a remit: 'to go into the general question of honours and awards for Rhodesia.'<sup>24</sup> The three main responsibilities of the Committee were to investigate the institution of a new system of military and civil honours, and devise a new national anthem and flag, specifically: 'to consider the question of a special flag design for Rhodesia and to submit recommendations for the consideration of the government or suggestions for public competition on colours and design...'<sup>25</sup>

In its second report, which focused specifically upon the design of a new flag, the Committee noted that it had solicited flag designs from the public, and that over fifty submissions had been received. This method of flag design suggested an attempt on the RF's part at engaging the wider populace in some 'bottom-up' nation-building. This reflected its populist character as a political movement, but probably also a desire to save money.<sup>26</sup> A rather dull advert for the competition appeared in several issues of the *Herald*. Unfortunately the documents do not tell us whether there was a cash prize for the winning design or not (as there would be for the national anthem) or, most regrettably, include any of the submitted designs. To judge this competition the committee members had adopted a set of guiding principles, as follows:

- (a) the design should be as simple as possible;
- (b) the design should have unity and be agreeably composed;
- (c) colours should be harmonious, with the dominant colour being the national colour – dark green;
- (d) the design should preserve a reminder of the former administration of the country;
- (e) the design should indicate Rhodesia's independence by depicting some distinctive Rhodesian emblem.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, R.C. (S) (68) 92 – 'Rhodesian Flag – Second Report of the Committee on Honours and Awards' – 8 May 1968, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> I. Henderson, 'White Populism in Southern Rhodesia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14, 4 (1972), pp. 387-399.

<sup>27</sup> R.C. (S) (68) 92, 'Rhodesian Flag'.

Some of these guidelines were so vague as to be meaningless. The committee's report did not go into further detail as to what an 'agreeably composed' design with 'unity' and 'harmonious' colours might look like. Some key themes did emerge however.

Firstly, the committee believed that the flag should at least partially include 'the national colour' of dark green. The origins of this 'national' colour, are somewhat obscure. In the report itself the authors argued that it was because of its prominence on the existing arms of Rhodesia: 'bottle green has come to be generally accepted as the national colour, being the dominant colour in the Arms of Rhodesia...'<sup>28</sup> An alternative interpretation, which was subsequently offered in Parliament, was that the colour of the new design was derived from the traditional Rhodesian sporting colours of green and white, in which the country's Olympic team had recently competed at the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games.<sup>29</sup>

Eric Hobsbawm, writing on football, has noted the significance of sport in fostering national sentiments and identities, claiming that: '[t]he imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people'.<sup>30</sup> In this respect Rhodesia was like many other colonial societies 'which used sporting achievements to define and enhance national self-esteem'.<sup>31</sup> Sport was an important vehicle for white Rhodesians to interact with each other and develop a shared settler culture and identity on one of the distant peripheries of the British Empire.<sup>32</sup> It was relatively straightforward to transform this imperially grounded sense of community into a nationalistic one after UDI in 1965, as physical activity and 'the outdoors' continued to be a central part of the white Rhodesian self-image. Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock have argued that Rhodesia was 'an outdoor

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> B. Novak, 'Rhodesia's 'Rebel and Racist' Olympic Team: Athletic Glory, National Legitimacy and the Clash of Politics and Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 23, 8 (2006), p. 1375.

<sup>30</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1870: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> P. Godwin & I. Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c.1970-1980* (Northlands, 2007), p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> D. Keyworth Davis, *Race Relations in Rhodesia: A Survey for 1972-73* (London, 1975), pp. 335-348; B. Novak, 'Rhodesia and the Olympic Games: Representations of Masculinity, War and Empire, 1965-1980', *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 18, 7 (2015), pp. 853-867.

society'.<sup>33</sup> This was reflected in a 1967 glossy colour book, *Great Spaces Washed with Sun*, contributors from the National Federation of Women's Institutes of Rhodesia extolled the virtues of Rhodesian weather. It was a climate ideal for sports and outdoor activity: '[a]t week-ends and during holidays Rhodesians answer the call of the sunshine and unlimited space. They seek freedom on the open road, on the lakes and dams or wandering on the veld enjoying the wonders of nature.'<sup>34</sup>

Sports were also an important aspect of Rhodesia's regional identity. This was because the country had fostered close sporting links with its neighbour, the Republic of South Africa, and frequently competed as a province of South Africa in team sports such as rugby, cricket, hockey and swimming, in competitions such as the prestigious Currie Cup.<sup>35</sup> Rhodesians could, and did, represent South Africa in cricket and rugby in international matches.<sup>36</sup> In an era when Rhodesian athletes were often banned from wider competition outside the country, the sporting relationship with South Africa provided an opportunity for national sporting rivalries to emerge. While such regional aspects problematise the concept of a national Rhodesian identity they also suggest a level of instrumental flexibility within the national sporting identity, as the Southern African sporting community replaced the wider British imperial one.

Finally, Bill Schwarz contends that sport, which Ian Smith saw as 'clean' and a signifier of civilisation, was central to the Rhodesian premier's worldview.<sup>37</sup> Indeed the concept of 'fair play' was a key element of the RF's political discourse. It is possible that Smith and his colleagues were more predisposed to adopt Rhodesia's sporting colours as the 'national' colours given their own close associations with sport and the obvious enthusiasm of white Rhodesians for sport.

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<sup>33</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> Members of the Federated Women's Institutes of Rhodesia (hereafter FWIR), *Great Spaces Washed With Sun: Rhodesia* (Salisbury, 1967), p. 178.

<sup>35</sup> Leys, *European Politics*, p. 76; R. Hyam & P. Henshaw, *The Lion and the Springbok; Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 227; Godwin and Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> C. Little, 'Rebellion, Race and Rhodesia: International Cricketing Relations with Rhodesia During UDI', *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 12, 4-5 (2009), p. 525.

<sup>37</sup> B. Schwarz, *The White Man's World* (Oxford, 2011), p. 417; I. Smith, *Bitter Harvest: Zimbabwe and the Aftermath of its Independence* (London, 2008).

The committee's report also suggested a more practical aspect to the adoption of dark green; as a colour that was suitable to the Rhodesian climate. The report noted: '[t]he existing Rhodesian flag... is of a colour that does not take well in the dyeing and, therefore, fades badly'.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, green and white were hardier and could withstand the rigours of the much-vaunted Rhodesian sunshine.

The second key theme which emerged from the report on the new flag was the need to demonstrate Rhodesian independence with 'some distinctive Rhodesian emblem'.<sup>39</sup> Finally, the design had to include a reminder of the country's previous administration. Here was an acknowledgement of Rhodesia's awkward position between settler states and African ex-colonies. One of the simplest ways to do this would have been to retain the Union Jack somewhere on the design, as Australia and New Zealand had done. Even South Africa, which had broken off other symbolic ties with Britain by abandoning the monarchy and membership of the Commonwealth, had retained the Union Jack on its flag, perhaps as part of the National Party's attempts to unite white South Africans in its own nationalist project.<sup>40</sup> However, members of the Rhodesian committee specifically ruled this out, arguing that:

The Committee are of the opinion that whether or not Rhodesia retains a connection with the Crown, *the independence of the country must be seen to be a fact* [my emphasis]. Since the confrontation with Britain the Committee believe that sentiment in the country will be against the continued use of the Union flag. For these two reasons the Committee recommend that the Union flag should not be incorporated in the new Rhodesian flag.<sup>41</sup>

The committee recommended two similar designs of a three-panel green-and-white flag, which both featured the Rhodesian coat of arms, for several reasons. Firstly they reflected the 'national' colour. Secondly, their use of the Rhodesian arms would serve to 'commemorate the former connections with the mother country' and presumably simultaneously act as a distinctive

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<sup>38</sup> R.C. (S) (68) 92, 'Rhodesian Flag', p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> See Witz, *Festival of Apartheid*.

<sup>41</sup> R.C. (S) (68) 92, 'Rhodesian Flag', p. 2.

emblem signifying independence.<sup>42</sup> The designs were also considered to be more practically suitable since ‘the design is... easily produced and the colours are fast and will wear well, much better than the existing flag.’<sup>43</sup> Finally, the committee argued: ‘the design will be cheaper and easier to produce than the present flag’ and listed comparative retail prices for the old and new flag (which were £3.19.6. and £3.15.0 respectively).<sup>44</sup> This last criterion was perhaps given a particular salience in the context of economic sanctions. The Rhodesians would have their new flag, but only at a certain price. Specimens of these designs were brought to cabinet for viewing. Keen to start things as soon as possible the committee recommended that, if accepted, the flags should be ordered in time for hoisting just six months later on 11 November 1968, the third anniversary of independence.<sup>45</sup>

As far as the cabinet and its committee were concerned, this was the matter closed. The whole business of redesigning the Rhodesian flag had taken just seven months. Though the process had been opened up to public engagement with a competition for the flag’s design a relatively low number of entries were received and it later became clear that politicians had been submitting designs themselves. The cabinet documents do not reveal where the submissions came from or who the winner of the competition was. This may mean that none of these public designs were chosen and the committee members came up with the final version themselves. Indeed, the new design (figure 2.6) drew upon a number of themes that the RF government particularly cherished and the broad outlines of the design appear to have been envisioned from the very start of the process. With this new flag, and the wider project of symbolic decolonisation, the RF hoped to dispel any ambiguities about Rhodesia’s independence some three years after they had seized it.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 3.



**Figure 2.6 – Flag of Rhodesia, 1968-79<sup>46</sup>**

It is worth briefly considering the new design of the Rhodesian flag. The main colour was, as stipulated, the ‘national’ dark green, combined with a single white bar in the centre. On this white bar were the Rhodesian Arms – the somewhat unclear history of which was picked over with a fine toothcomb in the subsequent Legislative Assembly debate. The only element retained from the previous flags was the shield, pick, and heraldry of Rhodes, which was supported by two Sable antelope and topped with a Zimbabwe Bird, based on the soapstone artefacts found in the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, a place which became a key site both of academic controversy and white Rhodesian tourism.

The use of the Zimbabwe Bird was a classic case of settler appropriation of indigenous symbolism, justified in the context of minority rule by the white Rhodesians’ assertion that the ruins had been built, not by black Africans, but by Phoenicians.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the Zimbabwe bird had a particular association with Cecil Rhodes, who had been captivated by the artefacts.<sup>48</sup> The motto ‘Sit Nomine Digna’ roughly translated as ‘May She Be Worthy of the Name’. This was, of course, the name of Rhodes, which served to make the flag even more closely associated with Rhodes whilst

<sup>46</sup> Image from ‘Flag of Rhodesia’, Wikipedia, accessed 2 January 2015 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag\\_of\\_Rhodesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Rhodesia).

<sup>47</sup> D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 335.

<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, their prominent incorporation in the design of Rhodes House, Oxford.

eschewing any immediately recognisable symbols of the British imperial context in which he existed. The RF reconfigured its symbolism around a figure with British, Rhodesian and South African links who appealed to all the dominant strands of the white population. By incorporating Rhodes in the design the RF's inventions showed a party trying to have the best of both worlds. Proudly invoking its colonial heritage set Rhodesia apart from other African ex-colonies seeking to distance themselves from their imperial experiences, but reflected the same object of the symbolism of majority-rule states to establish a form of post-colonial independence from Britain. At the same time the RF made use of trends in other settler states, such as Canada, where new generations of Canadians and disgruntled immigrants advocated new national symbols since, for them, 'Britain was an increasingly remote place with a lower standard of living and an undesirable class system.'<sup>49</sup>

In abandoning the defaced blue ensign and the Union Jack (the two of which were used relatively interchangeably in Rhodesia prior to 1968) one of the primary concerns of the cabinet had been to demonstrate Rhodesian independence. Beyond this, the committee expressed a desire for functionality and cost-effectiveness. Consequently, the processes of meaning-making which transform flags from colourful pieces of cloth into highly emotive and representative symbols were almost entirely absent from the technical language used by the Committee on Honours and Awards in its report. The flag appeared to be a classic example of top-down invented tradition, having emerged from a relatively obscure bureaucratic process. However, the array of sentiments which emerged in the subsequent debates surrounding the new flag suggested something else. It soon emerged that even the 'inventors' in the RF could not agree amongst themselves as to the suitability of the new design. The flag's ambivalence became its strength and its weakness as Rhodesia's politicians debated what the change in symbolism meant for the 'new' Rhodesia in a way which would have implications for the RF's larger nation-building project.

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<sup>49</sup> Buckner, 'Canada and the End of Empire', p. 123.

## Colourful bunting or national banner? Parliamentary debates on the new flag, 1968

The language surrounding the new design shifted from the technical to the emotive in the chambers of Parliament. At the second reading of the Flag of Rhodesia Bill on 3 September 1968 the notoriously right-wing Minister of Justice - RF stalwart Desmond Lardner-Burke - argued that '[a] flag is essentially a symbol and symbols are sacred things and one which we should all hold dear is our national flag.'<sup>50</sup> Lardner-Burke observed the common traits that what he called the 'Southern Rhodesia flag' (figures 2.1 and 2.2) shared with the flags of other Commonwealth countries, but noted that many of these countries had changed their flags since independence. Recognising the history which lay behind the symbolism used in the 'Southern Rhodesia flag' Lardner-Burke presented the redesign as something that had been forced upon the Rhodesians by the British government:

The irony of the situation is that Rhodesia was quite as fitted as any to be granted independence, but was the only one to be denied it, and had to resort to assuming it and, notwithstanding the strictures placed upon her has, until now, been quite willing to keep the Union flag in her own. Things have changed and we must accept that change, just as others must accept it, Rhodesia is a nation justly proud of her essentially British heritage but independent nonetheless.<sup>51</sup>

Though Lardner-Burke was speaking for the government, the arguments he presented were somewhat paradoxical. Rhodesia was enthusiastically adopting a new flag as a show of independence, like other Commonwealth countries and it was reluctantly abandoning the union flag as a result of the same UDI rebellion which had made it independent. He went on to state that '[t]he colours were chosen for a Rhodesian motif', citing their history as popular Rhodesian sporting colours, and specifically dealt with the omission of the Union Jack.<sup>52</sup> Regarding the latter, he claimed that whilst Britain had been 'historically great', the Rhodesian nation had evolved beyond the need for such close historical associations.<sup>53</sup> The changing relationship between Rhodesia and Britain necessitated

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<sup>50</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 72, 1968, 925.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 933.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 934.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 935.

a renegotiation of the country's colonial past. Lardner-Burke argued: 'It is because of this clearly identifiable separate character which we have acquired which makes it desirable and necessary to have our own separate and clearly identifiable flag...' <sup>54</sup> His doublespeak was an attempt to rationalise the failure of the first phase of the RF's nationalist project to security minority-rule independence within the Commonwealth, and the move towards symbolic decolonisation. This dual message of Rhodesia's legitimate desire for a new flag, and a change of situation forced upon the Rhodesians by the British Government was a confusing attempt to reconcile those who still held some affection for the Union Jack and those who were happy to see it abandoned. It demonstrated the contrast between claiming independence and being made to claim it. It reflected the RF's rhetoric that British perfidy had forced their hand over UDI, whilst clearing the decks for its new nation-building endeavour.

### **Imagination versus Invention: Parliamentary Opposition**

In opening the debate, the Minister had failed to clearly state what exactly it was about the flag that made it clearly identifiable as Rhodesian besides its colours and the fact that it was not British. This was a point which was seized upon by several parliamentarians, including some RF ones, who took issue with the new design. A number of objections were raised by RF members relating to the design of the new flag which reflected a range of views about what Rhodesia meant and how it should be represented than those offered by the government. Lt-Col MacLeod (RF, Eastern) believed that the flag should have been more reflective of Rhodesia's nature as a Christian country. He proposed that it should include a cross, and colours which were commonly associated with Christianity such as scarlet, blue, white, and purple. <sup>55</sup> His appeal to Rhodesia's Christianity was based on an interpretation of Rhodesia as the last bastion of civilisation: '[o]ne by one on this continent of Africa the lights of Christianity are going out. The Christian countries of the still-free

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 935-36.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 937.

West are being subverted and Christianity is being diluted.<sup>56</sup> MacLeod then presented a list of complaints about the proposed design by a heraldic expert, Dr. Gayre.<sup>57</sup> Gayre's criticisms ranged from the fact that the flag was too similar to the Nigerian one, used the colours of Islam, had an amateurish design, and that the use of Rhodesia's 'royal' coat of arms was almost as bad as having the Union Flag on it.<sup>58</sup> Once again, he appealed to Rhodesia's European tradition and stressed its difference from the rest of post-colonial Africa:

Such colours in a flag therefore are such a departure from the European tradition and so reminiscent of the amateurish flag-making of many countries in Africa that we would have thought they would be undesirable in the manner in which they are used in the proposed new flag for Rhodesia.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed, as far as MacLeod was concerned: '[o]ur present flag would seem to me to be thoroughly Rhodesian, and I am satisfied with it.'<sup>60</sup>

Lt-Col Tanner (RF, Braeside) was similarly doubtful about the new design. He argued for a more cautious approach, noting that Rhodesia was still in the Commonwealth and that if it left and became a republic, then it would no longer be able to use the 'royal' coat of arms on its flag.<sup>61</sup> He disliked the design and argued for a different approach: 'I feel that our identity with Christendom and our present and past link with Britain could well be indicated in any new flag by the inclusion of a cross and the use of all or any of the colours red, white and blue.'<sup>62</sup>

These dissenters were joined from the far right by the former RF and now independent member for Salisbury City, Robin James. James' complaints about the aesthetics of the new flag stemmed from the fact that he himself had submitted a design which he felt was not being taken seriously. In response to MacLeod's discourse on heraldry James appeared to be arguing in favour of

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 937.

<sup>57</sup> Gayre had also written in support of the idea that the Zimbabwe ruins were built by the Phoenicians. White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, p. 153.

<sup>58</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 72, 1968, 938-940.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 938.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 941.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 947.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 947.

invented traditions: '[w]hat does it matter? We are inventing our own flag, which will only have any meaning to this country when people have identified themselves with the flag, it does not matter what it is whatsoever.'<sup>63</sup>

At the other end of the political spectrum was Dr Ahrn Palley, the independent white member for Highfield and long-standing liberal critic of the RF. Palley was a scourge of the government benches in almost every debate and he presented an alternative view of national symbolism which privileged its supposedly organic nature over its arbitrary invention. He believed that the changing of the flag was an exercise motivated by 'a specious, political approach'.<sup>64</sup> He saw it as a blatant attempt to deny Rhodesia's British heritage and pave the way for a republican constitution by abandoning the old flag, with its association with the British monarchy. His argument is worth quoting at length:

If a flag is to have any meaning whatsoever to a nation and a people, that flag must grow out of the history of the people, that flag must grow out of the loyalties and the sentiments and the honour of a nation. One cannot thrust aside a national flag and replace it by the equivalent of a piece of bunting and say that now represents the sentiments and the emotions of a people; that now is your new emblem of honour and loyalty and affection and esteem which a national flag represents. But that is what the Minister proposes...

Every nation must have its symbols... those symbols must reflect the feelings of the nation, they cannot be artificially created. Those symbols cannot be designed by somebody taking paint and saying this shall be the new representation, but that is all the Minister's speech suggests.<sup>65</sup>

Attributing the redesign to an 'almost neurotic... psycho-pathological state' of anti-British sentiment amongst some RF MPs, Palley railed against the government's argument that the new flag would demonstrate Rhodesian independence to the world.<sup>66</sup> He remained unconvinced by the RF's contention that the new, independent Rhodesia would require new symbolism to achieve the global recognition it craved, harshly critiquing the priorities and legitimacy of the RF's nation-building project: '[h]ow does the substitution of our present flag by this suggested new flag change the

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<sup>63</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 72, 969.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 943.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 943.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 945.

position one iota? It does not matter what flag we have, it makes not a scrap of difference to our independence, to our recognition by other countries...'<sup>67</sup> Palley's defence of the Union Flag reflected a particular understanding of Britain and British traditions, which derived from his view about the illegitimacy of the RF regime. Palley's arguments, and James' before them, are remarkable in their opposite conceptualisations of how to create national identity and symbolism. James' seemed to privilege invention above all else. Palley, on the other hand, staunchly opposed the idea of a flag imposed upon a people from above, instead offering a more organic explanation that is closer to theories of nationalist imagination.

Another argument was advanced by a former party heavyweight and signatory of UDI, Lord Graham (RF, Gwebi). Lord Graham, who had since fallen out of favour with the RF high echelons due to his support for a quasi-apartheid society in Rhodesia, argued that the Union Jack should be retained since: 'these people [settlers elsewhere in the world] and ourselves regard it as a symbol of the family to which, willy nilly, we belong.'<sup>68</sup> Like MacLeod, he approved of the current 'Southern Rhodesian flag'. He made a specific plea for the retention of the Union Jack in the flag based upon its historical significance to the country:

The whole history of our country is not very long but perhaps there has been no greater event since the arrival of the Pioneers than the assumption of independence, and this was the banner under which we took our independence.

Already in defence of our country, some of our soldiers... and policemen who have lost their lives have been buried under this flag. I think it is a very sad thing, while we are still in the heat of battle, so to speak, to abandon the flag – our present national flag.<sup>69</sup>

Lord Graham's familial metaphors reflected the strong pull that old imperial notions of community still had in Rhodesia. Indeed, he seemed to think that Rhodesia was in the same position as other settler states, free to pick and choose its symbolism at leisure. Denying that the Union Jack abrogated any sense of distinct nationality, arguing: 'I certainly do not – and I do not think any other

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 945.

<sup>68</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 72, 1762; G. Passmore (ed.), *H.R.G. Howman on Provincialisation in Rhodesia 1968-1969 and Rational and Irrational Elements* (Cambridge, 1986).

<sup>69</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 72, 1765.

Rhodesians or Australians or New Zealanders for that matter – regard this great old flag as in any way a symbol of subservience to anyone or to any person.’<sup>70</sup> This was a fantastical imagining of the nation that revealed the continuing ambiguity surrounding Rhodesia in the years after UDI, a place where some did not want new symbols demonstrating independence because that was what majority-rule states did. For Graham, the Union Flag, as the banner under which UDI had been taken, could continue to stand for old imperial notions which could continue to legitimate minority-rule in an era of decolonisation.

These differing interpretations showed the complicated relationship white Rhodesians had with the former colonial power, highlighting the problems faced by former settler colonies coming to terms with decolonisation in the 1960s and 1970s. Rhodesian debates about symbolism and nationhood, though framed in the specific context of UDI, were part of wider general trends in which settlers renegotiated their relationship with Britain. Rhodesia opponents of the new flag design, or the RF and its nation-building project, acknowledged this by invoking settler states as comparisons to make their various points. This revealed the fundamentally contested nature of the nation and the power of ‘imagination’ in these debates. Despite what James claimed about inventing new flags whose content was irrelevant, both Palley and Graham, arguing from opposite poles of the political spectrum, drew upon imaginations of what the Union Jack represented. Of what it meant to be ‘British’. Of what it meant to be part of a wider ‘family’ of settler communities around the globe. ‘Britain’ represented particular political and legal notions, but also a shared history of sacrifice and the dwindling glory of imperial endeavour. These vague, lofty-sounding, notions were the lodestone around which settler communities across the globe had formed their own national identities, which were intrinsically linked as part of an imperial ‘whole’. How to renegotiate this relationship had become the major task of settler populations in these former colonies of settlement, seeking to acknowledge this subservient past whilst suggesting an independent future. The problem was amplified in Rhodesia, where UDI was ‘sold’ as a repudiation of contemporary Britain.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 1762.

Other RF members, like Tanner, MacLeod and James, simply saw the proposed design as both ugly and not representative enough of Rhodesia because it excluded the fundamentally Christian character of the country and was too similar to the amateurish flags of Islamic and African countries. As Robin James bluntly complained during the debates: ‘it is the Nigerian flag with our own coat of arms superimposed in the centre.’<sup>71</sup> Through these derisive comparisons, they sought to mark out minority-ruled Rhodesia as a qualitatively different place from the African states with their poorly-designed flags. They wanted a new flag which showed Rhodesia’s essentially European character. Thus the debates highlighted the transnational aspects of ostensibly ‘national’ projects, repeatedly invoking other countries as a frame of reference.

### **Invention or Imagination? RF Support for the New Flag**

Unlike Graham, Tanner and McLeod, most RF members were eager to sing the praises of the proposed design, helping to imbue the ‘bunting’ with meaning. However, rather than merely endorse the technical aspects of the flag’s design – or even the specific symbolism and intention that underlay its invention – they offered a range of their own views of the flag and the nation it represented, in which imagination played an equally important role. Indeed, the way RF supporters talked about the flag in Parliament shows how both ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’ coalesced to enhance popularity of the flag, and in a wider sense, the RF’s nation-building project.

Some, like Mr Newington (RF, Hillcrest) acknowledged Rhodesia’s historical links with Britain but rejected any sort of continuing symbolic association. He claimed that the Britain Rhodesians had once loved no longer existed and the Britain of the present was not worth associating with. Newington argued:

There are many growing up to-day... who have no knowledge of the Britain that was great, of the Britain that was honest, of the Britain that was powerful and made her name known for righteousness in this world. They only know a Britain that is now corrupt and devious and uses her political power for her own purposes, not for decency, nor honesty. They look upon the Union Jack as a modern representation of

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<sup>71</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 72, 1760.

the great double-cross. I believe that these youngsters growing up have a place for one loyalty only, have a desire for one loyalty only, and that is for Rhodesia.<sup>72</sup>

Similarly, Mr Ellison (RF, Greenwood) claimed that he was ‘100 per cent’ behind the new design: ‘[w]hen one sees it, one will think of Rhodesia, of the sunny skies, of the people in it, of the living conditions – everything appertaining to Rhodesia – and thus very quickly it will find its way into the affections of the people.’<sup>73</sup> Here was a clear statement of the conception of the so-called ‘Rhodesian way of life’, the much-vaunted concept which Godwin and Hancock have claimed was essential to the success of white Rhodesia precisely because of its subjectivity.<sup>74</sup> ‘The Rhodesian Way of Life’ could mean anything to anybody, and thus was a quintessential example of nationalist ‘imagination’. It could mean racism and decolonisation denied, it could mean anticommunism, and it could mean having a swimming pool and servants instead of having a dreary post-war terrace in rainy England. Ellison went on to state that those wishing to retain the Union Jack were simply ‘ultra conservatives’ and as far as he was concerned: ‘we are a new country, we have not much history, but I think it is time that the newly independent country has its newly independent flag.’<sup>75</sup> This was exactly the sort of logic that underlay the pageantry of colonial independence ceremonies – a clear demonstration of national independence. Ellison went on to address Palley’s points: ‘It is time we had our own flag, and it is time it was differentiated from the British flag. This does not mean that I hate Britain; I do not. It does not mean that I detest everything the Union flag stands for; I do not. But I do support the things that Rhodesia stands for, and I am a Rhodesian first.’<sup>76</sup> Ellison disagreed with Palley’s more organic conception of national symbolism. Like James, he believed that the flag did not need to specifically represent anything at all: it could become associated with the ‘Rhodesian way of life’, defined as good weather, good people, and good living conditions.

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<sup>72</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 74, 1968, 18.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 955.

<sup>74</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*.

<sup>75</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 72, 955-6.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 956.

Some RF members made their own comparisons to other countries in support of the new flag. Mr Hawkins (RF, Charter) also offered a more inclusive (for whites) interpretation, presenting the new flag as a symbol that all could agree on. He pointed to Rhodesia's history as a nation of multinational white immigration to counter the argument made by some that white Rhodesians born under the Union Jack would resent its removal from the new national flag. He argued: '[i]n this country to-day there are many people who were born under many different flags, but this is immaterial. To-day they are one with each other, as citizens of Rhodesia. On the 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1965, we, too, gave birth to a new nation on this continent of Africa, and it is essential that, as a new nation, we should choose a new symbol.'<sup>77</sup> He cited the example of the United States of America, another country that had rebelled against Britain and a nation made up by diverse white immigrants, and that had removed the Union Jack from its flag. He argued that Rhodesia was now in the same position.<sup>78</sup>

The United States was a particularly beloved example for the RF, who had modelled the UDI proclamation on the American Declaration of Independence. The notions of rural, individualistic frontiersmen which held a central place in the mythology of the U.S. past resonated with white Rhodesians. This was particularly influential among the RF's white farmers and rural branch organisations (see chapter one). However, the rural image remained distant for the overwhelming majority of white Rhodesians, living in the two cities of Bulawayo and Salisbury.<sup>79</sup> Like Lardner-Burke and the other opponents of the new design, Hawkins' use of comparative examples served to locate the debate about the changing flag within global discourses of nationhood in addition to a national one focussing upon the RF's rebellion.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 979.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 979.

<sup>79</sup> In 1969 some 146,402 Europeans, Asians and Coloured lived in Salisbury and Bulawayo alone. The total population was 228,296. Data from *1969 Population Census (Interim Report) Volume I: The European, Asian and Coloured Population* (Salisbury, 1971), pp. 9-12.

In the end, parliamentary dissent proved futile as the RF easily won the vote on the new design. Finally closing the debates on 1 October 1968 Lardner-Burke argued that the green and white design presented by the government would not be changing. In reference to the Union Jack he argued that its exclusion reflected the fact that less than ten per cent of the two hundred or so submissions that the committee had received since first soliciting designs had included it. He neglected to mention that the Cabinet Committee had ruled its inclusion out from the start. As far as Lardner-Burke was concerned: ‘the position of the Union Jack is obvious, subservience to the British Government.’<sup>80</sup> The statement belied the wide range of opinions that had been revealed in the preceding debates. Nevertheless, Lardner-Burke used the public competition to legitimise the official RF view of what the Union Jack represented, rejecting the idea of loyalty without independence. The RF’s ‘inventive’ process masked a conscious, if haphazard, attempt at selecting appropriate national symbols which focused on the Rhodesian past without explicitly connecting it to Britain. The accuracy of the Commission’s argument that the old British flag was unpopular (and Palley and others’ counter arguments that it was) is difficult to gauge, but it was certainly an accurate reflection of sentiments of the RF-dominated Parliament.

Despite this, the debates threw up some interesting reflections on what parliamentarians thought it meant to be Rhodesian and the significance of national symbols as a way to demonstrate independence. Opponents expressed shock at the lack of Christian or British symbolism on the new design, or argued that they felt the current flag was ‘Rhodesian’ enough. Supporters of the new design, meanwhile, argued that the new flag representation Rhodesia’s changed situation or drew on alternative discourses of (white) inclusivity and nationhood. Whereas Palley, Graham and others argued for a link to the past, many RF members sought to employ a pick and mix of symbolism representing the future and the past. Their rhetoric reflected the fact that Rhodesia’s rebellion was

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<sup>80</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 73, 1968, 222.

no longer a risky negotiating tool, the ‘three-day wonder’ predicted by Ian Smith, but would involve an attempt to build a new, independent, white-ruled nation in central Africa.<sup>81</sup>

The RF inventors had selected certain elements which could bolster their new narrative of independence with an imperial heritage. Cecil Rhodes remained a prominent part of the new flag, because his relationship with Rhodesia could be reconfigured relatively easily as a personal one, associated with a particular imperial time and space which, in some ways, UDI-era Rhodesia existed to commemorate. Likewise, the adoption of Rhodesia’s sporting colours was an attempt to capitalise upon something which was a shared passion of white Rhodesians, particularly influential among RF leaders such as Ian Smith, and through its association with South Africa, a rare outlet in which Rhodesians could feel part of a wider world at a time when sanctions encouraged a sense of isolation. Similarly, it was almost inevitable that the so-called ‘Rhodesian way of life’ would be invoked in any debate about the flag.

In the end no single, easily-identifiable image of either Rhodesia or Britain, emerged from the flag debates. A series of different imaginative interpretations demonstrated that the flag could represent any number of things. Like settlers across the old dominions, and governments in the newly independent nations across the African continent the white Rhodesians were going through a process of post-imperial soul-searching. The Rhodesians’ dilemma was complicated by the need to reconcile their former status as British imperial subjects with their current situation as rebel Rhodesian ones. These debates did not end with the parliamentary vote and as the flag was revealed to the nation on the third anniversary of independence, they continued in the nation’s media.

### **The new flag unfurled, November 1968**

On the morning of 11 November 1968 *The Rhodesia Herald* described the lowering of the Union Jack for the final time the previous evening: ‘[u]nheralded and without fuss, the African sun

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<sup>81</sup> D. Rowe, *Manipulating the Market: Understanding Economic Sanctions, Institutional Change, and the Political Unity of White Rhodesia* (Ann Arbor, 2004), p. 60.

finally set on the Union Jack at 6.07 p.m. yesterday when two African constables belatedly lowered the flag in Salisbury's historic Cecil Square.<sup>82</sup> This, then, was Rhodesia's belated and muted 'flag lowering' ceremony, several years after independence proper had been seized. It also demonstrated the importance to the RF of 'performing statehood' with new symbolism but also highlighted the continuing ambiguities of UDI. Unlike the ex-colonies, Britain did not participate in this symbolic handover, meaning it had no international legitimacy. David Cannadine noted of independence ceremonies that: 'the consensus that characterized such independence celebrations was often little more than superficial, temporarily papering over significant disagreements and deep-rooted tensions and briefly erasing unhappy memories and bitter resentments.'<sup>83</sup> The flag debates had shown that Rhodesia had all the drawbacks of the simplifying independence ceremonies and none of the benefits.

Only a 'handful' of spectators came to watch the old flag come down, with the *Herald* quoting 'an elderly European woman' as saying the occasion was "desperately sad".<sup>84</sup> Elsewhere on the front page the paper reported that Ian Smith had watched the official lowering of the Union Jack and the 'Southern Rhodesian flag' at the British South Africa Police's Morris Depot at 5:30 p.m. Its report of that ceremony was similarly subdued: '[i]n spite of the pomp and the pageantry, it was a sombre occasion for many in the crowd, who had been born, fought and lived under the Union Jack and who had come to revere the Rhodesian Flag.'<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, the Rhodesian treasury promoted the new design by taking out a full page colour advert showing the new Rhodesian flag unfurled near the monument to the Shangani patrol, a group of pioneer heroes who had been wiped out during the

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<sup>82</sup> 'Flag in Square was Last', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 11 November 1968, p. 1.

<sup>83</sup> D. Cannadine, 'Introduction: Independence Day Ceremonials in Historical Perspective', in T. Barringer, R. Holdt & S. Williams (eds.), *The Iconography of Independence: Freedoms at Midnight* (London & New York, 2010), p. 10.

<sup>84</sup> 'Flag in Square was Last'.

<sup>85</sup> 'End of an Era as Crowd sees Union Jack Lowered', *The Rhodesia Herald*, , 11 November 1968, p. 1.

military conquest of the country in the 1890s, and encouraging readers to ‘Save’ and ‘Prosper with Rhodesia’.<sup>86</sup>

These reports were followed by others the following day detailing the large ceremonies that inaugurated the new Rhodesian flag on 11 November. Accompanied by photographs of the ‘thousands’ who had gathered in Salisbury to watch the flag-raising ceremony, the *Herald* reported that: ‘[s]pectators, some on rooftops, spontaneously applauded when the flag... fluttered in the breeze.’<sup>87</sup> Ceremonies were held across the country, with flag-raising in Umtali (with crowds of ‘several hundred’ to a thousand), Que Que (around three hundred), Wankie, Fort Victoria, Shabani, Belingwe, Selukwe and Gwanda.<sup>88</sup> Additionally ‘the most picturesque and informal of the day’s ceremonies’ was held at Rhodes’ grave in the Matopos Hills near Bulawayo, ‘where a crowd of 400 gathered in the rain to pray for Rhodesia.’<sup>89</sup> The RF was careful to associate itself closely with these ceremonies by having government ministers present to lead them.<sup>90</sup> The ministers all read out a speech given by the head of state, Clifford Dupont, at the main ceremony in Salisbury.

Dupont stated: “[t]oday when we fly our new flag for the first time, we reaffirm our determination to maintain our sovereign independence and to be responsible for our own affairs.’ In a speech at a flag-raising party in Pretoria John Gaunt, Rhodesia Accredited Diplomatic Representative to South Africa, made the claim that: ‘[t]he new Rhodesian flag was not the instrument to unite Rhodesians for the simple reason that the flag itself had grown from the desires of a united Rhodesian nation...’<sup>91</sup> Gaunt’s political triumphalism belied the genesis of a flag which had in fact mysteriously emerged from a relatively vague set of cabinet committee guidelines and deliberations. Both speeches denied the process of invention by which the new flag had been devised, instead couching it in populist, imaginative terms.

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<sup>86</sup> Treasury Advert, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 11 November 1968, p. 5.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Rhodesia Raises Her New Flag’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 12 November 1968, p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Clapping as Flag Flies in Umtali’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 12 November 1968, p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Rhodesia Raises Her New Flag’.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Clapping as Flag Flies in Umtali’.

<sup>91</sup> ‘End Product of Nation’ – Gaunt’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 12 November 1968, p. 2.

In amongst these triumphant speeches and images of thronging crowds were some voices of dissent. The *Herald* itself was one of them. On 12 November its leader adopted a cautious and more cynical tone akin to that of Dr Palley's in Parliament: '[a]s a political signal to the British Government, as much as to the people of Rhodesia, hoisting the new flag at this time is understandable. But it raises the question of how much more the British Government should be expected to stomach, after seeing the Union Jack lowered...'<sup>92</sup> The new flag was raised in the wake of negotiations between Smith and Harold Wilson on board H.M.S. *Fearless* which had fallen apart the previous month. Indeed, that very week a representative of the British government, George Thomson, had been in Salisbury negotiating with the RF. The *Herald* believed that the RF government's actions were jeopardising future chances of a negotiated independence with Britain at a time when such a settlement appeared more likely than ever before. This demonstrated how Rhodesia's independence remained ambiguous and contested years after UDI – with some still arguing that only a negotiated independence could be considered legitimate. It claimed that RF nation-building should take place at a time when the future was secure, not up in the air. It argued that 'UDI was not a logical step, but landed the country in a mesh of difficulties from which there is no escape without a settlement.'<sup>93</sup> The *Herald's* editorial line urged Rhodesians to be mindful of how close a settlement might be and not to 'allow the champagne to go their heads'.<sup>94</sup>

*The Rhodesia Herald's* warning went largely unheeded among the letter-writers to the newspaper that November. Correspondents such as Diana Flynn, who argued that the changing of the flag was a betrayal by Smith of his promises of loyalty to the Queen and the retention of the Union Jack, were very much in the minority.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile a range of arguments were advanced in support of the flag, often making comparisons with other countries, some of which touched upon themes raised in Parliament. J.R.N. Higgs of Umtali argued that Rhodesia was only doing what was

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<sup>92</sup> 'Rhodesia Not Yet Out of the Wood', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 12 November 1968, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Diana Flynn, 'Rhodesia's Word Tarnished', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 15 November 1968, p. 13.

being done elsewhere and argued that those opposing the change should be thankful that: ‘Rhodesia is one of the few countries in Africa which, having assumed its independence, has been able to progress without having to replace the Union Jack with a Chinese or Russian flag.’<sup>96</sup>

Later that month, C.S. Herud of Sinoia spoke in terms which would have no doubt pleased Mr Newington by claiming that, as a young Rhodesian: ‘I feel that I do not owe any loyalty to the Queen or the Union Jack.’<sup>97</sup> Whilst Herud appreciated the emotional links some older Rhodesians might have had with regards to the flag and Queen he argued: ‘I feel that these people should not try to influence the younger Rhodesian generation as they are to make up the independent Rhodesia of tomorrow.’<sup>98</sup> The divergence of views between younger Rhodesians and some older settlers suggested that the very nature of the term ‘white Rhodesian’ was constantly under contestation, particularly in the wake of UDI.

Domestic debates about the new flag, like the Parliamentary debates that had preceded them, were notable for the almost total exclusion of ‘non-whites’, reflecting the exclusive nature of the RF’s nation. At no stage had anyone in government seemed to seriously consider whether or not there should be some representation of the majority of Rhodesia’s population on the new flag. Most of the Parliamentary and media debates focussed on symbolism which was predominantly associated with whites: Cecil Rhodes, the Union Jack, and the white Rhodesian ‘way of life’. When blacks were mentioned it was usually as a function of white prejudices. Though some African MPs supported the idea of a new flag for Rhodesia, many of them were not in favour of the new design and it is unlikely that the cabinet committee saw any representatives of the ‘non-white’ communities during their deliberations. These oversights reflected the incredibly narrow nature of the RF’s vision of the nation after UDI - a nation designed to privilege whites and subjugate blacks. Even the RF had to eventually acknowledge the flag’s exclusionary nature. This led to the introduction of the Zimbabwe-

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<sup>96</sup> J.R.N. Higgs, ‘Europeans raised flag, entitled to lower it’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 18 November 1968, p. 7.

<sup>97</sup> C.S. Herud, ‘Younger view of new flag’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 25 November 1968, p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

Rhodesian flag in 1979 (figure 2.7), which was specifically designed to address issues of multiracialism by including the colours black and white.<sup>99</sup>



**Figure 2.7 – Flag of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, 1979-1980<sup>100</sup>**

### **International Responses**

If Rhodesian whites were the major domestic audience for the RF's new flag, the international community were equally important. The flag was, after all, intended to symbolise Rhodesian independence to others. However, the new national symbol failed to achieve any sort of international acceptance. This was due to the paradoxical nature of the flag: it was both a symbol of illegal independence and a diplomatic message in pursuit of legal independence.

In attempting to symbolise their new national reality the RF lost sight of the fact that they ruled over a pariah state from the start, an anachronistic throwback to settler colonialism which masqueraded as a bastion of enlightened freedom on the model of countries such as the United States. That such rhetoric was not convincing outside of Rhodesia was demonstrated in 1972 when Rhodesia was invited to compete in the Olympic Games in Munich. Rhodesian athletes were allowed to participate under the express provision that their team competed under: 'the same flag (the Union

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<sup>99</sup> See the debates on the Flag of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in *Zimbabwe Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 100, 1979, 1141 onwards.

<sup>100</sup>'Flag of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia', Wikipedia, accessed 17 April 2015 at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag\\_of\\_Rhodesia#/media/File:Flag\\_of\\_Zimbabwe\\_Rhodesia.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Rhodesia#/media/File:Flag_of_Zimbabwe_Rhodesia.svg)

Jack) and the same anthem (God Save the Queen) as it had done... in 1964.<sup>101</sup> Rather than protest the conditions, which had been designed so as not to appear to give Rhodesia recognition, the RF government acquiesced and allowed the team to go to Germany accordance with the IOC's conditions, though they were later disqualified from competing anyway due to international pressure.<sup>102</sup> Smith and his cabinet colleagues had rationalised this as part of 'a long-standing tradition in Rhodesia that politics should not interfere with sport' but either misjudged or failed to appreciate what message this might send out.<sup>103</sup> This was, of course, rather ironic given the centrality of sport in informing the very design of the new flag. Commenting on the RF's decision the British newspaper the *Sunday Times* argued that: 'by agreeing that their athletes should observe all the protocol – flag, national anthem and so on – which applied to the pre-U.D.I., colonial Rhodesia, the Smithites are emphasizing not their self-proclaimed independence but the lack of it...'<sup>104</sup>

The flag also generated controversy back in Britain, where Rhodesia still maintained a diplomatic mission, Rhodesia House, on The Strand. Josiah Brownell has examined the position of Rhodesia House as a microcosm for British and Rhodesian attitudes towards the Rhodesian rebellion in which the new flag occupied a central, if somewhat farcical, position.<sup>105</sup> On 9 December 1968 Sydney Brice, in charge of Rhodesia House, telephoned the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office telling them that he had been ordered by the RF government to fly the new flag in London. What transpired next is worth quoting at length:

Brice was informed that this was deemed unacceptable by the British and that, were the flag to be flown, the government would find a means to bring it down. The British further warned that the flying of the flag jeopardised the prospects for settlement talks. Following these warnings, Salisbury instructed Brice to hold off flying the flag for the time being and Brice subsequently sent his flag-pole away 'for repair'. During this

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<sup>101</sup> Davis, *Race Relations in Rhodesia*, pp. 336-8.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>103</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers) Rhodesian Cabinet Minutes, R.C. (S) (71), 'Thirty-Fifth Meeting', 21 September 1971.

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Davis, *Race Relations in Rhodesia*, p. 338.

<sup>105</sup> Brownell, 'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand', pp. 471-499.

waiting period, the Special Branch kept watch over Rhodesia House for any flag-related developments.<sup>106</sup>

After the flag was eventually raised on new years' eve, 1968, the British decided to ignore it. It did, however, become the target for a series of 'flag raiders' who would periodically shinny up Rhodesia Houses' flagpole to pull down the new flag or replace it with the Union Jack.<sup>107</sup>

Internationally speaking, Rhodesia's new flag acted as a symbol of its newfound independence, but for all the wrong reasons. It was the banner of a pariah state, determined to cling onto minority-rule at any cost. Whereas the new flags of ex-colonies flew proudly at the United Nations, the Rhodesians could not even ensure that theirs flew over their own diplomatic mission in London. The international reaction to the flag gave the lie to Rhodesia's comparisons with other settler colonies, whose autonomy and independence was not in doubt, whatever flags they flew.

## **Conclusion**

The RF's nation-building project had an unsteady start. The arguments which emerged from the flag debates illustrated the ambiguity of Rhodesian nationhood, and of what terms like 'Rhodesia', 'Rhodesian' and 'Britain' meant. This ambiguity would dog the RF's subsequent attempts at symbolic decolonisation and showed the contested nature of Rhodesian independence three years after it had been declared. Throughout these three years, the RF had been negotiating with the British in an attempt to achieve internationally-recognised independence, but the British had refused to budge on the sticking point of minority rule. Consequently, tired of fruitless negotiations, the RF's nationalist project moved into a second phase as it sought to pursue symbolic decolonisation to enhance its de facto independence. The new flag, then, represented a departure in the RF's nationalist project, as it moved beyond seeking a form of independence within the Commonwealth to independent nationhood outside it. This new approach created a range of challenges for the nation-building project to overcome – the chief one being how minority-rule was to be legitimated in

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 485.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 486.

an age of decolonisation. This remained the central tension at the heart of the RF's symbolic decolonisation – it sought to jettison the styles of imperial domination while retaining the substance of it.

While Rhodesia's debates were specific and peculiar, to say the least, they were taking place at a time of wider global reassessments of imperial pasts. This was particularly the case in settler societies such as South Africa, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. I have located Rhodesia's debates within these wider trends, showing how white Rhodesian parliamentarians spoke of this wider 'family' of nations when talking about their own nationalism. Rhodesia itself was a particular subset of these wider debates, a settler state in which the white settlers remained a tiny percentage of the total population, far outnumbered by black people. Historically, Rhodesia had positioned itself within wider imperial settler networks and, like them, drew upon imperial symbolism and rhetoric to justify their dominance. However, in the 1960s and 1970s this was no longer a viable strategy to pursue. Rhodesia's UDI set it apart from states like Canada and Australia because the legitimacy conferred by these symbols was instantly denied the rebel regime.

Despite this, the retention of cherished imperial symbols like the Union Jack shows how emotive and significant the British (and imperial) connection was for white Rhodesians. By 1968 it was absurd for white Rhodesians to be claiming to be part of a wider British 'family', yet the comments of figures at both ends of the political spectrum, such as Lord Graham and Dr. Palley, demonstrated the power that particular understandings of Britain, Britishness, and the idea of a global settler family still held in Rhodesia in 1968. RF ministers like Lardner-Burke couched their arguments in terms of the self-determination of New Zealanders and Australians. If Rhodesians had a similar distinct, separate, character, the argument went, they deserved similar, independent, national arrangements.

However, after symbolic decolonisation had begun in 1967 the RF's nationalist project was more like that of an ex-colony than an old dominion. Like the majority-ruled former colonies it so

despised, it was no longer sensible to retain symbols associated with the imperial past. With a new flag, the RF wanted a clear demonstration of Rhodesian independence, both at home and abroad. It sought to end the ambiguities surrounding the legitimacy of Rhodesia's independence (and, by association, the party that had declared it). Consequently, RF supporters of the flag often spoke in terms of the new nation and its right to independence. When comparisons with other African states were invoked, it was usually negatively – witness James and McLeod's objections. White politicians, recognising the path Rhodesia had set out on, argued for different symbols which would help distinguish Rhodesia from the majority-ruled states to the North – a more 'sophisticated' design, an emphasis on Christianity, and so on. The RF itself tried to address this by including a prominent reminder of Rhodesia's colonial heritage on the new design, with the heraldry of the arch-imperialist Cecil Rhodes. This attempt to mark out difference created even greater ambiguities about the RF's project. Unlike ex-colonies, where highly symbolic if falsely homogenising independence ceremonies made it clear that the new nation was independent, Rhodesia had to wait three years for its own, muted, flag-raising ceremony, years in which the nature of the Rhodesian nation remained hotly contested.

These comparative aspects of Rhodesian symbolic decolonisation have some wider implications for studies of nationalism, particularly in this period. In British world studies, the Rhodesian case demonstrates how membership of wider imperial networks was fundamental to smaller settler communities even as the empire began to fall apart in the 1960s and 1970s. It offered reassurance to small, outnumbered, populations of whites that they were part of something bigger (and that something bigger could back them up in their struggles against the majority). These networks were important to white Rhodesians' sense of place in the world. Whereas Canadians and Australians were free to search their souls over nationhood at their own leisure, the Rhodesians' hand was forced by UDI, and yet they still debated their colonial past. The flag debates show how difficult it was to create equally emotive alternatives to cherished imperial symbols like the Union

Jack. While Rhodesia's debates about nationhood were intrinsically related to its situation as a strange halfway-house between settler colony and independent nation, they were part of wider global and transnational trends taking place across the collapsing 'British world' at the same time. Rhodesians recognised this by using comparisons in their arguments for and against the new flag.

Another key point the chapter suggests about the RF's nationalist project was its essential contingency. The rapid nature of the RF nation-building illuminates the often reactive character of its nationalism. The RF had tried to retain imperial symbols for the first three years of its rebellion and, when it realised the increasing absurdity of doing so, embarked on an ambitious programme of symbolic decolonisation. Rather than the logical progression that RF rhetoric made it out to be, the shift towards symbolic decolonisation represented the failure of the RF's first phase of nation-building – an autonomous settler colony within the Commonwealth – and the start of a second phase in which the RF sought to build an independent nation outside it. These phases bled into each other, with consequences for the RF's nationalist project. Indeed, Rhodesians were marking out difference from Britain even prior to UDI, even though they had continued to negotiate with Britain for some form of legitimate independence in the years following UDI. The *Herald's* sombre leader was right, among other things the new flag was designed to send out a message.

The flag debates also show the challenge to nationalist projects of satisfying a wide range of audiences. For the RF's project to be successful it had to satisfy three audiences: Rhodesian whites, Rhodesian blacks, and the international community. Its refusal to compromise on minority-rule made this something of an uphill struggle. The new flag had nothing to say to blacks, was contested amongst at least some whites, and was rejected out of hand by the international community. In the RF's blinkered view, the apparently enthusiastic response from white Rhodesians was enough to consider the flag a success. This set the tone for the RF's subsequent nation-building project and, in doing so, almost immediately undermined it. It was a project in which the RF sought to speak to the international community in pursuit of friends and legitimacy, believed automatically in the support of

white Rhodesians, and assumed blacks could be ignored without consequences.

The chapter also questioned two popular theories of nationalism – invented traditions and imagined communities. It showed how these were not simply theories deployed by the historian, but were actively interrogated by participants in the flag debate. Proponents of ‘invented traditions’, including the RF, assumed that they could produce a flag and that it would be accepted. They rushed a design through a cabinet committee, briefly debated it, and introduced it, all in time for the third anniversary of independence. Yet, when speaking about the flag, the RF couched it in the sort of populist imaginative terms which had actually been used by opponents of the new design. Concepts like the ‘Britain’ of which Palley spoke, or the wider ‘family’ Lord Graham referred to were quite clearly examples of transnational ‘imagination’ – after all, the British world was not invented in London. At the same time, the ‘Rhodesian way of life’ invoked by RF parliamentarians lauding the new flag was also clearly an imagination, and one that was so subjective it was impossible to satisfactorily define. These hazy lines between ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’ problematise notions of the two terms as discrete concepts – the flag was a state invention but it was popular (and was even justified in terms of) imagination. It provided a canvas onto which white Rhodesians could project their imagined nations. In this sense it did nothing to address the outstanding ambiguities about Rhodesian independence. Furthermore, it seemed that the RF got lucky where the flag was concerned – as the case of the national anthem showed, its inventions of national symbols would not always be so popular.

## Chapter Three

# Sovereign Independence? Rhodesians and the Monarchy, 1965-70

Symbolic decolonisation represented a new phase in the RF's nation-building project. It reflected the failure of the RF's attempts to secure negotiated, internationally-recognised, minority-rule independence within the Commonwealth and a realisation that, if the Rhodesian nation was to be taken seriously, it had to appear independent. This chapter explores the RF's shift through these phases in the way it talked about the monarchy between 1965 and 1969-70.

Eight months after Rhodesia's new flag had been raised; Rhodesians went to the polls to vote in a referendum. As well as new constitutional proposals, the Rhodesian electorate was to decide whether or not Rhodesia would become a republic. This chapter explores the arguments that were mobilised around republicanism and constitutional change. This allows an opportunity to see how white Rhodesian views of the nation had developed since the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), in the context of a shift of focus in the RF's nation-building project. If it was possible for people to see the flag issue as insignificant, it was less easy to dismiss the significance of constitutional change. Indeed, after five years of failed negotiations with the British government, it was here that the RF was really making its case for a new and independent Rhodesia, supported by an entirely new constitution in the spirit of the RF's segregationist policies. Unlike in the case of the flag there was a public plebiscite over the new constitutional proposals, and the results of this referendum provide a clearer picture of the opinions of white society. Both supporters and opponents of a republic portrayed constitutional change as the cutting of the apron strings, the comprehensive break with Britain that would finally see Rhodesia emerge sovereign and independent. It was a point of no return which seemed to slam shut the door on a negotiated independence. That it was also something of a *fait accompli* given the events of the past four years

does not diminish the significance of the event, something which the impassioned arguments mobilised by both sides give testament to.

This chapter argues that Rhodesian debates about the Queen illustrate the imperatives and rhetorical techniques of the different phases of the RF's nation-building project. It uses the symbolic figure of the Queen as lens through which to explore white Rhodesian debates about identity and nationhood and the significance of context to these debates. In 1969-70 Rhodesia remained relatively stable despite five years of UDI; this gave the RF the opportunity to try to take nation-building in a new direction with a new constitution, removal of selected old colonial symbolism, and so forth. The transition between these phases was neither clear nor smooth, leaving many debates unresolved, and the chapter takes forward the analysis of the built-in strengths and weaknesses of RF's nationalist project by demonstrating how significant debates about nationhood and Rhodesian identity remained unresolved half a decade after UDI. The chapter also continues our exploration of the comparative value of the white Rhodesian case study, locating Rhodesia at a nexus between the 'old' settler colonies and non-settler ex-colonies. On the one hand it shows the way in which white Rhodesians made use of what might be called a rhetorical settler toolkit: a series of techniques and discourses about which settlers used to talk about themselves and their place in the world. Yet it also highlights how white Rhodesians were left with a problem familiar to many non-settler ex-colonies, how to end the relationship with the former colonial power. It tackles one of the key instances of 'invented tradition', the British Monarchy, questioning the validity of this description. Indeed, it argues that the way the RF dealt with the question of a republic provides an example of the way that top-down invented traditions can be influenced by popular imagination as described by Consuelo Cruz.<sup>1</sup> Finally, it continues our exploration of the symbolism of UDI-era Rhodesia itself, building upon existing literature concerning the Monarchy as a diplomatic bargaining chip to demonstrate its wider symbolic significance to white Rhodesian society. It argues that by moving away from its initial

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<sup>1</sup> C. Cruz, 'Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make Their Futures', *World Politics*, 52, 3 (2000), pp. 275-312.

aim of dominion-style independence and abandoning transnational imperial symbols, the RF increased the significance of the Rhodesian nation as a focus for loyalty; this had negative implications for its nation-building project because the 'nation' around which loyalty was meant to crystallise was narrow and exclusive.

The debates over the monarchy also explore the ways in which discourses about past and present were employed by politicians in their arguments about the Monarchy. In chapter two I demonstrated how temporal discourses were employed by parliamentarians debating the new flag design. In 1969-70 this language was ramped up as the referendum campaign became the battleground for Rhodesia's future. The use of these temporal discourses is an integral element of nationalism, but has a particular salience in settler cases like Rhodesia. Discourses of past and future demonstrated Rhodesia's ambiguous relationship with the 'home' country, a place it was attempting to reject and reflect at the same time. Time was invoked as a cushion between the contradiction of Rhodesia; a county which continued to practise white-minority rule and a form of British imperial settler colonialism whilst disavowing all connections with the Britain of the present-day. These temporal discourses also demonstrate how the RF's rhetoric changed over time, evolving from a distinctly settler colonial mode in which settler political discourses were appropriate tools to preserve white privilege, to a more universal rhetoric of independent nationhood.

The debates about the Monarchy in Rhodesia also give important insights into the character of the RF's nation-building project as it evolved from its tentative beginnings. It shows how the choices the RF made weakened their endeavour by focusing too much on their colonial past at the expense of a multiracial postcolonial future, as well the essentially reactive character of the RF's nation-building project as typified in its attempt to first retain the monarchy and then get rid of it. At all stages, the RF moved cautiously. It began by presenting the Rhodesian nation as staunchly monarchist, and then changed tack to argue that a republic was the only way forward. The RF's nationalism had all the ambitions of typical nationalist projects – it was exclusionary of a whole

range of 'others', it sought to unify (some of) the population behind it, and it helped legitimate the RF's authority by successfully associating the party with the nation. However, it was undermined by the fact that it was too narrow and exclusionary. It failed to unify even the tiny white community and had little appeal among Rhodesia's majority black population. It legitimated the RF's authority among some whites whilst simultaneously delegitimising anything to do with Rhodesia in the minds of most blacks. Also, the close association of the RF with the nation, which was cemented in 1969, meant that white perceptions of the success or failure of Rhodesia shaped how they supported the RF and its state in the 1970s, leading to its ultimate collapse. The 1969 constitution presented an opportunity for the RF to take a significant step on its nation-building path, but its blinkered worldview saw it retreat further into the segregationist laager and forestall a serious national crisis while the military and economic situations in the country were relatively favourable.

In examining these processes, the range of evidence allows a more explicit focus on the public nature of these debates, and how popular imagination constrained state invention where the Monarchy was concerned. The source material used in this chapter means that the emphasis is on the government and its political opponents, whose views are presented through speeches, radio broadcasts, propaganda publications, and parliamentary debates. This focus reflects the object of the chapter in seeking to interrogate how the RF sought to replace the Queen and constitution and how its political opponents sought to defend them. As with the previous chapter, views from outside Parliament come from the reportage and letters pages of *The Rhodesia Herald*, as well as analysis of the referendum results on the republic and constitution. First, however, I sketch out the historiography of the Monarchy in Rhodesian and wider imperial history.

## The Monarchy in Rhodesian Historiography

In 1983 David Cannadine argued that the British Monarchy was the quintessential example of an ‘invented tradition’.<sup>2</sup> The public image of the Monarchy, Cannadine argued, had undergone a ‘fundamental change’ between the late 1870s and the start of the First World War. He argued that the monarchy enjoyed unprecedented popularity because it was carefully cultivated so as to present ‘a unique expression of continuity in a period of unprecedented change.’<sup>3</sup> Royal ceremony was often a welcome rejoinder to rapid social and geopolitical change, especially after the Second World War, and Cannadine noted that national pageantry such as the 1977 silver jubilee of Elizabeth II was the ‘perfect tonic to Britain’s declining self-esteem.’<sup>4</sup> This chapter offers us an opportunity to explore how the Monarchy was perceived in Britain’s settler colonies during the period of post-war imperial decline. The debates surrounding a republic in Rhodesia call into question the extent to which the Monarchy was a top-down invented tradition, noting the importance of context and popular imagination, the ‘bottom-up’ visions of the nation held in the hearts and minds of its white residents in shaping ‘top down’ political activity. It argues that, even though it eventually successfully jettisoned it, the RF was forced to tread carefully around the issue of the monarchy after UDI.

There are two significant studies of the relationship between white Rhodesians and the British Monarchy. The first is Ben Pimlott’s biography of Elizabeth II.<sup>5</sup> In a short section Pimlott explains the Rhodesian crisis and the problems it raised for the Queen. Rhodesia, Pimlott argued, affected the Queen in a way that many other colonial matters did not ‘because of the fierce passions aroused in the new Commonwealth republics... and also – conversely – because of the old-fashioned ‘imperial’ loyalty many British settlers felt towards both the idea and the incarnation of the

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<sup>2</sup> D. Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition’, c.1820-1977’, in E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 101-164.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-9.

<sup>5</sup> B. Pimlott, *The Queen: A Biography of Elizabeth II* (London, 1996), pp. 345-354.

Crown.<sup>6</sup> He notes how both the British and Rhodesian governments sought to use the queen to serve their own cause and his focus is upon the diplomatic back-and-forth between the British and Rhodesian governments in the early UDI-era. He believed that Smith was cautious to move on establishing a republic due to potential opposition within the armed forces, and that once his regime became more secure the need for ‘such elaborations’ declined.<sup>7</sup> Pimlott’s analysis of Rhodesian royalism as an imperial hangover simplifies and decontextualises the Rhodesian debates. They were part of wider global reassessments of ‘imperial’ symbols taking place in other settler societies at the same time. This places the Rhodesian rebellion within wider global trends, rather than seeing it as an aberrant, isolated case. It provides a case study which demonstrates how smaller and less successful settler communities than those in countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand reacted to the end of the British world.

The second, more recent, exploration of the queen and Rhodesia is Philip Murphy’s work on the British Monarchy and the end of empire.<sup>8</sup> Murphy does locate the Rhodesian debates within a wider framework of reassessments of the Monarchy in countries like Canada and Australia but his narrative of the Queen’s role in Rhodesia largely follows that of Pimlott. Using British government documents released since the turn of the century Murphy argues that the British encouraged the Rhodesians to adopt republican status so as not to embarrass the queen with their political agenda.<sup>9</sup> This follows his previous work, which has highlighted how British officials sought to encourage non-settler African colonies to become republics after independence for the same reason.<sup>10</sup> Murphy’s study does not explore in any substantive detail the debates which took place about the Monarchy in Rhodesia itself and describes the Queen largely as a component within a series of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 351-2.

<sup>8</sup> P. Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire: The House of Windsor, the British Government, and the Postwar Commonwealth* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 88-106.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>10</sup> Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, p. 95; idem, ‘The African Queen? Republicanism and Defensive Decolonisation in British Tropical Africa, 1958-64’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 14, 3 (2003), pp. 243-263.

complex political manoeuvres in Anglo-Rhodesian settlement negotiations. Like Pimlott, this diplomatic-centric focus overlooks the views of the white Rhodesian population, obscuring the real (if fluid) symbolic value that the Monarchy possessed among white Rhodesians. The RF was aware of how crucial it was to obtain popular support for a republic even before it was noted by the Whaley Commission, the government commission tasked with producing new constitutional proposals.

This study therefore builds upon the existing diplomatically-focused works of by exploring the Rhodesian domestic debates which surrounded the role of the Queen. It continues Murphy's fruitful comparative work with other settler colonies to help reintegrate Rhodesia into 'British World' trends and also looks beyond the old settler colonies to highlight comparisons between Rhodesia and other ex-colonies that did not have settler populations. In order to understand the contradictions inherent in Rhodesia's retention of the Monarchy in its first four years of illegal independence, it is necessary to contextualise the subject both in the domestic context of early UDI-era Rhodesia and a much older international tradition of settler struggles for autonomy in the British Empire. Thus I now turn to a consideration of the significance of a comparative approach drawing on the concepts of the 'imperial monarchy' and 'loyal rebellion', as well as setting out the Rhodesian constitutional position between 1965 and 1969.

### **Loyal Rebels and the Imperial Monarchy**

Shortly after UDI Rhodesia enacted legislation to bring in a new constitution. This constitution was in fact almost exactly the same as the one it replaced, instituted in 1961, with the exception that it removed reserve powers from the government of the United Kingdom. One particularly significant piece of continuity was the retention of the British Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, as the head of the Rhodesian state. However, under the 1965 constitution, the Queen's representative in Rhodesia was no longer the governor – Sir Humphrey Gibbs, who was being kept

in a state of pseudo-house arrest.<sup>11</sup> Gibbs was replaced by the elderly RF stalwart Clifford Dupont, who was given the title of ‘officer administering the government’, a position traditionally used in the dominions to describe acting governors. The UDI proclamation was signed under a large portrait of the Queen and ended with the coda ‘God Save the Queen’. Ian Smith’s speech accompanying news of UDI promised Rhodesia’s continuing loyalty to the British sovereign, arguing: ‘[l]et there be no doubt that we in this country stand second to none in our loyalty to the Queen...’<sup>12</sup>

The seemingly paradoxical words and deeds of the RF government regarding the Queen were actually part of a global tradition of ‘loyal rebellion’ in the settler colonies of the British empire. Donal Lowry argues that this phenomenon began with the resistance of Ulster Protestants to Home Rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>13</sup> Paul Pickering has demonstrated a somewhat older precedent in mid-nineteenth-century Australasian opposition to the transportation of convicts.<sup>14</sup> On 25 August 1851 a group of settlers, angered by the policy of transportation, gathered in Hobart Town, Tasmania. Here, they burnt an effigy of the Tasmanian Governor and British secretary of state for Colonial Affairs whilst they cheered for Her Majesty and a band played ‘God Save the Queen’.<sup>15</sup> Loyalist resistance stemmed from the concept of a symbolic ‘imperial monarchy’. This imperial monarchy was able to simultaneously represent a transnational imperial identity and provide an impetus for more localised nationalistic sentiment. Andrew Thompson has argued that in southern Africa this duality translated into a dichotomy in which settlers made a distinction between the British government of the day and Britain itself. This ‘Britain’ was a settler version of an idealised notion of Britain and Britishness, in which the Monarchy often had a central

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<sup>11</sup> A. Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs Beleaguered Governor: Southern Rhodesia 1929-69* (Basingstoke, 1998) provides the most comprehensive account of Gibbs’ difficult tenure as Governor during the UDI years.

<sup>12</sup> *Rhodesia’s Finest Hour* (Salisbury, 1965). See chapter two for the full passage.

<sup>13</sup> D. Lowry, ‘Ulster Resistance and Loyalist Rebellion in the Empire’, in K. Jeffery (ed.), *‘An Irish Empire?’ Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 191-215.

<sup>14</sup> P. Pickering, ‘Loyalty and Rebellion in Colonial Politics: The Campaign Against Convict Transportation in Australia’, in P. Buckner & R.D. Francis (eds.) *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary, 2005), pp. 87-107.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-89.

place.<sup>16</sup> The subjectivity of these concepts is well-captured by Mark McKenna who, writing on Australian monarchism, explained: '[m]onarchy in the colonial setting was an act of imaginative recreation.'<sup>17</sup> The Monarchy, steeped as it was in tradition and history provided an opportunity for white settlers – with their relatively short-lived colonial histories – to tap into something broader, older, and often also a familiar reminder of home.<sup>18</sup> This suggests that, while the Monarchy was an 'invented tradition', it gained its salience from its multivalent imaginative potential. Furthermore, Darwin suggested that imaginations of the monarchy played a unifying role 'in bicultural communities such as Canada or South Africa the lack of any consensus on the nature of the 'state' made the Monarchy the only available focus of national loyalty.'<sup>19</sup>

Recourse to the Crown as a means of appeal against colonial injustice was not merely confined to whites, and was an oft-used tool of indigenous nationalist movements too. In Southern Africa black nationalist associations in the early twentieth century sought to take advantage of their position as 'subjects' of the Monarch to protest the abuses of white settlers. Writing on South Africa, Peter Limb noted that: 'Africans manipulated symbols of empire to play off imperial power against settler power...'<sup>20</sup> However, this form of protest differed from 'loyal rebellion', which was predicated on notions of 'kith and kin', a kind of global, racial, solidarity between those of 'British stock' in which the threat of rebellion had a special significance. An indigenous threat of rebellion would be viewed in an entirely different context to a settler one.

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<sup>16</sup> A. Thompson, 'The Languages of Loyalism in Southern Africa, c.1870-1939', *English Historical Review*, 118, 477 (2003) pp. 617-650.

<sup>17</sup> M. McKenna, 'Monarchy: From Reverence to Indifference', in D.M. Schreuder & S. Ward (eds.), *Australia's Empire* (Oxford, 2009), p. 262.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>19</sup> J. Darwin, 'A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in J. Brown & Wm. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume IV: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2001), p. 76; D. Lowry, 'The Crown, Empire Loyalism and the Assimilation of non-British White Subjects in the British World: An Argument Against Determinism', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 31, 2 (2003), pp. 96-120.

<sup>20</sup> P. Limb, 'The Empire Writes Back: African Challenges to the British Empire in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 3 (2015), p. 610.

Monarchism often lay at the heart of British settler identities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as has been demonstrated by Philip Buckner in the Canadian context, and John Lambert in his studies of English-speaking South Africans prior to the Second World War.<sup>21</sup> Lambert's work on is particularly significant for this study given the influence that English-speaking South Africans had upon Rhodesian culture and society. It also demonstrates the dualistic loyalties of English-speaking South Africans to a broad global/imperial project and a more localised 'South African' identity. Thus, there was a global tradition among British settlers for 'loyal rebellion': defiance of the colonial authorities which made vocal professions of loyalty to the British crown, over the heads of British colonial administrators and parliamentarians. Whether it was Australians trying to stop convict transportation, Ulster Protestants seeking to stave off Catholic demands of a united Ireland, or rebel Rhodesians seeking to justify UDI, loyal rebellion was a widely used resource for British settlers seeking greater autonomy during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Discourses of 'loyal rebellion' were central to RF rhetoric in the mid-1960s. Distinctions were repeatedly drawn between the Queen and 'her' government. Lowry noted that these discourses were part of a historical tradition whereby 'the Rhodesians believed that they had the right to disobey the decisions of British governments if they believed it was in the true interests of the British Empire.'<sup>22</sup> Despite drawing upon global settler traditions, this view tied into notions of Rhodesian exceptionalism in which Rhodesia was the last bastion of a distinctly imperial way of life which was fast disappearing in the 1960s and 1970s (see chapter five).

While comparable to other instances of settler loyal rebellion, UDI was novel in two senses. First, the threat of rebellion was actually carried through to its conclusion, leaving the RF in something of a quandary. Second, the timing of UDI showed how out of touch the RF was with the

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<sup>21</sup> P. Buckner, 'The Long Goodbye: English Canadians and the British World', in P. Buckner & R.D. Francis (eds.), *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary, 2005), pp. 181-207; J. Lambert, 'An Unknown People: Reconstructing British South African Identity', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 37, 4 (2009), p. 604; J. Lambert, 'Their Finest Hour?' English-speaking South Africans and World War II', *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 1 (2008), p. 61.

<sup>22</sup> Lowry, 'Ulster Resistance', p. 195.

realities of decolonisation for thinking it would work., The two factors combined to produce the peculiar situation of early UDI-era Rhodesia. Loyal rebellion was no longer a viable tool in 1965, when there was little at stake for a Britain committed to majority-rule independence elsewhere in Africa. As late as the 1950s the Rhodesians had been able to play up the threat of Afrikaner nationalism to provoke the British into creating the Central African Federation.<sup>23</sup> By the 1960s, however, the white dominions had been slowly ‘decolonising’ to various degrees to the extent that their retention or abandonment of the monarchy was a subject which could be considered at leisure. In mid-1960s Rhodesia, the RF tried to use loyal rebellion as a means to achieve a negotiated minority-rule independence settlement with Britain in the first phase of its nation-building project. Rhodesian autonomy and Harold Wilson’s publicly stated disavowal of the use of military force in Rhodesia meant that there was nothing that Britain could do to prevent UDI.<sup>24</sup> Between UDI and 1970, the RF moved into its second phase, shifting from using settler colonial rhetoric to talk about the Monarchy that of national independence.

Just as the settler communities of the British Empire shared a general concept of an ‘imperial monarchy’, albeit heavily modified for local purposes, many of them also shared a dilemma in the 1960s and 1970s. The post-war decades saw the erosion of the so-called ‘British World’ as settler communities began to look to their own national futures. These processes had roots stretching back to the First World War, when countries such as Canada sought greater autonomy from Britain. Changes within the wider English-speaking world were a result of evolving national and regional consciousness in Britain and its colonies which gave rise to a new set of priorities in the post-war period. This era, which John Darwin has called the ‘Fourth British Empire’, saw a brief attempt by Britain to adapt to a post-war world in which its power was severely curtailed by a shifting global

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<sup>23</sup> P. Murphy, ‘Government by Blackmail’: The Origins of the Central African Federation Reconsidered’, in M. Lynn (ed.), *The British Empire in the 1950s – Retreat or Revival?* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 53-57.

<sup>24</sup> P. Murphy, ‘An Intricate and Distasteful Subject’: British Planning for the Use of Force Against the European Settlers of Central Africa, 1952-65’, *English Historical Review*, 121, 492 (2006), pp. 746-777; C. Watts, ‘Killing Kith and Kin: The Viability of British Military Intervention in Rhodesia, 1964-65’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 16, 4 (2005), pp. 382-415.

situation which meant the 'British world system' could no longer operate as it had for almost a century and a half.<sup>25</sup> The decline and fall of the British Empire inevitably went some way towards undermining the significance and emotive effect of the 'imperial monarchy', which was fast reconstituting itself as a Commonwealth entity.

In 1960 white South Africans voted to become a republic. A significant number of South African whites, the Afrikaners, had always had an ambiguous attitude towards the British Monarchy. Leslie Witz noted a long-standing association among Afrikaners between imperial symbols like the Monarchy and the defeat of the Boer republics in the Anglo-South African wars.<sup>26</sup> From an electorate of 1,763,291 some 1,602,005 voted in the referendum, which produced a majority result (830,520 votes) in support of a republic in every province except Natal, then still a bastion of British imperial sentiment.<sup>27</sup> In South Africa the achievement of a republic had long been a central tenet of Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>28</sup> That it took the Nationalist Party twelve years to establish one in a country where there was strong anti-British sentiment suggests the power that symbolic links like the monarchy held in Britain's former settler colonies. Elsewhere, in Australia, a steady decline in support for the monarchy during the 1960s and 1970s resulted in the royals being satirised and the emergence of a serious republican movement.<sup>29</sup> In 1960s Canada, Prime Minister Lester Pearson, having changed the Canadian flag, now toyed with the idea of abandoning the monarchy altogether as a demonstration of Canada's new nationhood in the face of Quebecois separatism.<sup>30</sup> In this respect, Rhodesian debates about the retention of the monarchy were part of a trend of

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<sup>25</sup> J. Darwin, 'Was There a Fourth British Empire?', in M. Lynn (ed.), *The British Empire in the 1950s – Retreat or Revival?* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 16-31.

<sup>26</sup> L. Witz, *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts* (Bloomington, 2003), pp. 93-4. See also P. Buckner, 'The Royal Tour of 1901 and the Construction of an Imperial Identity in South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, 41, 1 (1999), pp. 324-348.

<sup>27</sup> Figures from P.S. Thompson, *Natalians First: Separatism in South Africa 1909-1961* (Johannesburg, 1990), p. 166; See also J. Lambert, 'The Last Outpost – The Natalians, South Africa, and the British Empire', in R. Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas* (Oxford, 2010), p. 173.

<sup>28</sup> See D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley, 1980), p. 111, p. 285

<sup>29</sup> McKenna, 'Monarchy: From Reverence to Indifference', pp. 279-281.

<sup>30</sup> Buckner, 'The Long Goodbye', p. 202.

reassessments taking place in settler societies and African colonies across the globe in the 1960s and 1970s as much as they were a purely Rhodesian issue.

Rhodesia's debates about the Monarchy were invariably framed in the context of UDI. The position of the Queen was problematic given her role as the British head of state. Ian Smith articulated the RF's position on the Monarchy in a debate on independence negotiations in September 1965, shortly before UDI:

As far as we are concerned the Queen [is Queen] of Rhodesia... not the Queen of anyone else. We accept her as the Queen of Rhodesia and we are loyal to her in that category, in that definition. But unfortunately the Queen... is a figurehead and she has to act on the advice of her Ministers... We have said, and I wish to repeat, we will never be bound by decisions made by governments in Britain, governments which might change from time to time.<sup>31</sup>

This distinction between the 'Queen of Rhodesia' and the 'Queen of anyone else' was known as 'divisibility of the Crown' and was an important one in settler societies after the Second World War in particular. It was a way for former settler colonies to retain symbolic ties with the United Kingdom while demonstrating their political autonomy. One of the earliest settler societies to promote divisibility of the Crown was, unsurprisingly, South Africa where the nascent National Party's 'two-stream policy' had promoted a distinct South African monarchy.<sup>32</sup> Divisibility of the Crown was later enshrined in the law of some countries. In Canada, Queen Elizabeth II became 'Queen of Canada', a role distinct from her position as 'Queen of the United Kingdom', upon her coronation in 1952.<sup>33</sup> This divisibility has remained significant today, and continues to provide an opportunity for British-derived settler societies and even some non-settler ex-colonies, now known as 'Commonwealth Realms', to celebrate their historic relationship with Great Britain whilst at the same time enjoying full autonomy.<sup>34</sup> Rhodesia was unable to do this because of its racist minority

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<sup>31</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 62, 1965, 991.

<sup>32</sup> Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p. 78.

<sup>33</sup> Buckner, 'Canada and the End of Empire', p. 115.

<sup>34</sup> See 'The Queen and the Commonwealth', accessed on 25 August 2015, at <http://www.royal.gov.uk/MonarchAndCommonwealth/Overview.aspx>, for explanations of the Queen's relationship with the individual Commonwealth Realms.

rule. As Carl Watts has shown, the increasingly African and Asian membership of the UN and Commonwealth of Nations was determined to exclude Rhodesia from these organisations, meaning that it could not reach the same sort of compromise as Canada or the Australasian dominions.<sup>35</sup>

For the newly independent African and Asian colonies, many of which adopted republican status, the problem of the old ‘imperial monarchy’ was generally moot. Most of these former colonies were keen to demonstrate their newfound independence with constitutional arrangements which eschewed overtones of imperialism or neo-colonialism. Murphy notes that the British government; ‘assumed that loyalty to the Crown was strongest amongst those of ‘British stock’; that it emerged not so much from an abstract identification with the Empire-Commonwealth as from a more concrete sense of racial-national identity.’<sup>36</sup> Rhodesia after UDI was caught somewhere in between these two broad trends of anticolonial republicanism and settler soul-searching. On the one hand it had historically made much of its ultra-loyalty to the British crown and had a large settler population some of which closely identified with the royal family. On the other, UDI had placed the settlers in a similar position to the Afro-Asian colonies that wanted to break all links with Britain. The lessons from each of these examples differed. In the settler case countries like Canada and Australia showed that it was possible to retain symbolic links like the monarchy without cost to national sovereignty. In African colonies it was often thought expedient to do without such symbols as they could be seen to represent a form of neo-colonialism. This is what differentiated the Rhodesian case from both of the broader trends it was part of; the white Rhodesians were much more closely associated with the Queen and the global relationship she represented than the non-settler colonies, but were unable to emulate the old settler colonies’ continuing close relationship with the Queen due to their adherence to the principles of minority rule. For the independent white Rhodesian nation to be established, the issue of the Monarchy had to be confronted somehow.

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<sup>35</sup> C. Watts, *Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence: An International History* (New York, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Murphy, ‘The African Queen’, p. 262.

Despite the changing international context of a decolonising world in which the RF took UDI they chose to present the UDI as a ‘loyal rebellion’. Their insistence that Rhodesia remained loyal to the Queen in the four years that followed marked out space for a debate on the Monarchy when the time came to introduce a republican constitution in 1969. In these debates, the Queen was depicted as a symbol of the country’s British past, in both negative and positive terms. The continuity which Cannadine observed that the monarchy provided in a turbulent post-war United Kingdom was now at issue in Rhodesia. Here we can see the limits of the ‘invented tradition’ of the British Monarchy, as its ostensible strength was turned against it by supporters of a republic who claimed that Rhodesia must buck the trend of most of the other white settler societies, following South Africa’s path by turning away from a global community which did not want it as a member. The way the RF spoke about the Queen was shaped by the demands of minority-rule and the shifting priorities of the nation-building project. First, in order to justify UDI they presented it as an act taken out of loyalty to the Queen and what the RF claimed she represented, then – when it became clear that the Queen would not associate herself with a minority-rule regime – they changed tack and began to openly argue for republicanism as the best constitutional method for preserving minority-rule.

## **A Rhodesian Republic?**

The issue of a ‘Rhodesian’ monarchy was raised shortly after UDI took place. On 17 November 1965 the RF Minister of Justice Desmond Lardner-Burke tried to explain the new constitution with its oaths of loyalty to the Queen in *The Rhodesia Herald*: “You are loyal to your country and you are loyal to *the person of Her Majesty the Queen* [my emphasis].” Lardner-Burke went on to state that ‘his loyalty was to the Queen and to Rhodesia.’<sup>37</sup> Others that month were less cautious. Eleven days after UDI, on November 22, Mrs A. Whatling displayed an indifference to the Queen, pledging herself instead to the prime minister: ‘As thousands of others, I am behind you all the way

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<sup>37</sup> ‘Constitution is ‘Interim’ – Lardner-Burke’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 17 November 1965, p. 1.

Mr. Smith, and as long as you say “God save the Queen” I will repeat it, but in my heart I will say God save our Prime Minister...<sup>38</sup> Some letter-writers advocated going the ‘whole hog’ and declaring Rhodesia a republic.<sup>39</sup> For ‘A Loyal Rhodesian’, the monarchy was redundant: ‘[o]ur Government has inherited a youthful, virile, modern country... It should also be realised that allegiance to the Crown is not to any person but to an outmoded form of monarchy, which by its very dependence on servility and rule by fear makes a mockery out of the accepted concepts and tenets of democracy.’<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile the anonymous correspondent ‘Shovel’ of Salisbury argued that many were ‘torn between conflicting loyalties’.<sup>41</sup> ‘Shovel’ wrote of a loyalty to Rhodesia which conflicted with a loyalty to ‘heritage and traditions of fair play and good faith’ which were being eroded by government censorship and suppression.<sup>42</sup> For Shovel and others, Britain and its figurehead the Queen represented a particular way of life and standard of conduct which UDI threatened to jeopardise. It showed that specific national loyalty to Rhodesia had been compatible with a wider imperial loyalty to Britain, but gives a sense of the tensions that resulted when the two identities were forcibly disassociated.

Iain Braid-Smith, who wanted to ‘go the whole hog’, argued a republic would be unifying, a way to end divisions between white Rhodesians torn between supporting the RF and those remaining loyal to the Queen or the British Government. He claimed that: ‘[w]ith a republic established we would only have to be loyal to Rhodesia, not any one person or group of people.’<sup>43</sup> However, Braid-Smith recognised that some Rhodesians still had strong feelings about the Queen and believed that UDI had been couched in terms of loyal rebellion: ‘because many Rhodesians did

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<sup>38</sup> Mrs A Whatling, ‘Let us show the world’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 22 November 1965, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Iain Braid-Smith, ‘Go whole hog and declare us an independent republic’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 25 November 1965, p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> ‘A Loyal Rhodesian’, ‘Monarchy outmoded’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 November 1965, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Shovel’, ‘Many are torn between conflicting loyalties’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 22 November 1965, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Braid-Smith, ‘Go whole hog’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, p. 13.

not want to break the bond of loyalty they felt towards the Queen, Mr Smith was not sure of their loyalty to him or the Queen in the event of a republican Rhodesia emerging from the declaration of November 11.<sup>44</sup> One apparent expression, derided by Braid-Smith, of this conflict of loyalties was encapsulated in the ‘battle of the books’. After UDI some white Rhodesians queued up to sign the visitors’ book at Government House in Salisbury as a public show of support to the now-deposed Governor Sir Humphry Gibbs and Britain in defiance of the RF’s actions. In response, the Rhodesian government set up their own visitors’ book in Parliament in attempt to attract a larger number of signatures than the Governor. Sir Humphrey, following British Government instructions, had declared the RF rebel government illegitimate, maintaining that he represented the Queen and the ‘legitimate government’ in Rhodesia. The reasons for signing these books were manifold and could even be contradictory, typical of early white Rhodesian responses to UDI. In the *Herald*, H Bendyshe Walton felt compelled to explain why he had signed Gibbs’ book, not out of disloyalty to Ian Smith ‘for whom I have the greatest respect and admiration’, but rather ‘purely to express my unswerving loyalty and devotion to my Queen (most emphatically not the British Government)’.<sup>45</sup> A day later ‘D.P.’ of Salisbury wrote to praise Sir Humphrey Gibbs and lament the ‘tragic conflict of loyalties’ existing in Rhodesia in late-1965:

We have produced a situation where this dichotomy now exists and while we print the head of the Queen on our new stamps and openly affirm our loyalty to her and yet remove all honour from the person of her chosen representative, no honest Rhodesian can know where his loyalty lies.

We are all Rhodesians with a tremendous history of loyalty to the Crown; we have reached this impasse in all sincerity, whichever road we have followed, but we must all come to terms with our own consciences in the end.<sup>46</sup>

The ‘removal of honour’ of which D.P. wrote is a complicating factor in determining public opinion on the Queen in the immediate aftermath of UDI. Technically, as the Governor, Sir Humphrey was the Queen’s representative in the country, but he was also Rhodesian-born and

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> H Bendyshe, ‘The Book – Why He Signed’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 26 November 1965, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> ‘D.P.’, ‘Tragic conflict of loyalties’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 27 November 1965, p. 7.

popular amongst white Rhodesians, even staunch right-wingers such as the writer and later biographer of Ian Smith, Philippa Berlyn. Berlyn, who knew Gibbs personally, called him ‘A knight in shining armour... a gentleman of the old school...’<sup>47</sup> After UDI Gibbs was ostracised by the RF Government; he swiftly lost his official car – which became the property of the officer administering the government, his telephones were cut off, and for four years he lived in a strange demi-monde as the RF censorship machine sought to erase him from existence.<sup>48</sup> It was unsurprising that some, like Bendyshe Walton, signed his book out of sympathy.

Despite the early exhortations from some white Rhodesians for republican status, the Government continued to profess its loyalty to the Queen; this was in keeping with its wider aim of seeking to secure independence within the Commonwealth. The question of loyalty was frequently addressed in both parliament and public interviews of RF politicians such as Smith. In early 1967, Smith was asked about his thoughts on the Queen in an interview with the state-owned Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) radio service. This interview was republished in the news magazine *Rhodesia Commentary*, a propaganda organ run by the Rhodesian Ministry of Information for international and domestic consumption. Smith repeated the position he had held in October 1965: “I would say that today Queen Elizabeth is our Queen under our Constitution”.<sup>49</sup> He went on to address the government-monarch dichotomy by condemning British Government officials for trying to bring the monarchy into disrepute but stressed the divisibility of the Crown, stating: “I am grateful that whenever I take my oath... I take it to the Queen of Rhodesia, not to the Queen of Britain.”<sup>50</sup>

Yet the same year the RF dropped an oath of loyalty to the Queen from its party constitution, and by October Smith was arguing for new symbolism for the country and claiming that: ‘[w]e have been denied the right to use this symbol and this person because the whole concept

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<sup>47</sup> See P. Berlyn, *Rhodesia: Beleaguered Country* (London, 1967) pp. 106-109; quote from p. 106.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>49</sup> *Rhodesian Commentary*, 1, 27, (27 January 1967), p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

of the Queen has been distorted by party politicians.<sup>51</sup> This was no doubt a snipe at the Labour government of Harold Wilson, which drew particular ire from white Rhodesians for its socialist and anti-colonial principles. Conversely, white Rhodesia could rely on the right wing of the Conservative Party for some of its staunchest support in Great Britain.<sup>52</sup> Like the continued use of the flag discussed above, the RF and some white Rhodesians were beginning to see the retention of the Queen as head of state as impractical. This was exacerbated by the behaviour of the Queen herself who, despite caution on the part of a Palace reluctant to see the Queen used by either side, made some public pronouncements in opposition to UDI which supported the British Government's negotiating position.<sup>53</sup>

Although for the most part the Queen remained studiously aloof from the Rhodesian issue, it was impossible for her to support minority rule, which remained the fundamental stumbling block to any sort of constitutional arrangement incorporating the Monarchy. Whenever she did mention Rhodesia in public it was widely reported in local media, and there were two particular instances which galled white Rhodesians. Firstly, in 1966 she gave a speech at the opening of the Jamaican parliament which expressed a desire to see majority rule independence in Rhodesia. This was seen as so provocative to white Rhodesians that Smith felt the need to comment upon it at length in a television broadcast on 27 March where he prepared the ground for a republic. Arguing that the British government was trying to 'provoke us into breaking these links [to the Crown]' he claimed that Rhodesians should 'not be stampeded into any hasty action over this, particularly if it plays into the hands of Britain's party politicians.'<sup>54</sup> However, he ended on a cautionary note, claiming that if the Queen was continually used in this way: 'we may reluctantly be forced to this line of thinking.'<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs*, p. 139; *Rhodesian Commentary*, 1, 45 (9 October 1967), p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> For a discussion of British party politics and the Rhodesian crisis see Sue Onslow and Richard Coggins' contributions to M. Kandiah (ed.), *Rhodesian UDI* (London, 2002).

<sup>53</sup> Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, pp. 101-2.

<sup>54</sup> Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown (hereafter CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, R.C. (S) (66) 107, 'Constitutional Advance', 28 March 1966, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Secondly, in 1968 the Queen, acting on Harold Wilson's constitutional advice, attempted to use the royal prerogative of mercy to commute the sentences of several Africans convicted of murder. The Africans, members the so-called 'Crocodile Gang', had been convicted of killing a farmer, Pieter Oberholzer, in 1964.<sup>56</sup> These cases were particularly important for the Rhodesian state, as in one of them – the *Madzimbamuto* case – it was ruled on 29 January 1968 that the RF government had *de facto* sovereignty in Rhodesia, which the government saw as a huge coup for its domestic legitimacy.<sup>57</sup> The Queen's attempt to stay the executions was overruled on 4 March 1968 by the Chief Justice Sir Hugh Beadle, who had travelled a curious road from keeping Sir Humphrey company in his isolation to granting judicial legitimation to UDI in 1968. Manuele Facchini claims that Beadle did this because, despite his personal loyalty to the Queen (he was a member of her Privy Council), he resented the way he felt she had been used by the British Government.<sup>58</sup>

Whilst these events went on, the position of the white Rhodesian population at large remained as difficult to gauge as ever and it was unclear where most peoples' loyalties lay though by 1968, the sort of resentment Beadle felt was becoming widespread. Facchini argues that it was uncertainty over the feelings of the military, who had sworn oaths of allegiance to the Queen, which stayed Smith's hand in declaring a republic.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, there were loyal elements in the Rhodesian officer corps, as evidenced immediately after UDI when four Army officers went to Humphrey Gibbs seeking a warrant to arrest Smith as a rebel.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, Watts, who has extensively interviewed former Rhodesian servicemen, claimed that there were large pro-RF elements within the Rhodesian Light Infantry, the Territorial Force and the reservists.<sup>61</sup> Larry Bowman, on the other hand, believed it was the recognition from the highest echelons of the judiciary that the RF had been

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<sup>56</sup> Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs*, p. 139, p. 145; T. Ranger, 'Violence Variousy Remembered: The Killing of Pieter Oberholzer in July 1964', *History in Africa*, 24 (1997), pp. 273-286.

<sup>57</sup> M. Facchini, 'The 'Evil Genius': Sir Hugh Beadle and the Rhodesian Crisis, 1965-1972', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33, 3 (Sep, 2007), p. 684

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 685.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 675.

<sup>60</sup> Watts, 'Killing Kith and Kin', p. 394.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 395.

holding out for, arguing that: '[b]y 1969 everyone had found one reason or another to support UDI'.<sup>62</sup> The RF's caution demonstrated the restrictions popular imagination placed upon its nation-building endeavour in the years following UDI. As Consuelo Cruz argues, collective imagination creates 'a restricted array of plausible scenarios of how the world can or cannot be changed and how the future ought to look'.<sup>63</sup> In the years between coming to terms with republicanism and the actual achievement of a republic, the RF had to test the waters of public and institutional opinion, making sure that the army, the judiciary, and the people were on its side before it began to argue for the idea Rhodesia as a republican nation.

This was reflected in continuing public ceremony surrounding the Monarchy. Despite the RF's republican turn in April 1967 the Monarchy was seen as popular enough that the Cabinet proposed to formally celebrate the Queen's birthday with a 21-gun salute and a flypast of Canberra jet bombers. Though a military parade had been ruled out by the chiefs of staff on the grounds that precious manpower and fuel could not be spared it was agreed that there would be receptions held by the officer administering the government in Salisbury. Other receptions were to be held in Bulawayo, Gwelo, Umtali, and Fort Victoria, arranged by provincial commissioners and attended by government ministers.<sup>64</sup> A year later, however, it was considered inappropriate to have a public holiday to celebrate on account of the security situation.<sup>65</sup>

These developments took place alongside what was to be the RF's largest political project since UDI, the drafting of a new constitution. In 1968 a constitutional commission, the Whaley Commission, reported after a year's research that many of its witnesses had favoured a republican constitution, arguing that the continuation of the Monarchy: 'would be seen as evidence that Britain still exercised some form of suzerainty over Rhodesia. Moreover, they [the respondents] contended that the Queen, by refusing to recognize the lawfully elected Government of Rhodesia, had in effect

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<sup>62</sup> L Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia: White Power in an African State* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 141.

<sup>63</sup> Cruz, 'Identity and Persuasion', p. 277.

<sup>64</sup> CL (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, R.C. (S) (67) 74 – 'Queen's Birthday, 1967' – 6 April 1967.

<sup>65</sup> CL (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, R.C. (S) (68) 75 – 'Queen's Birthday' – 8 April 1968.

repudiated the people of Rhodesia.’<sup>66</sup> This was a similar argument advanced by the new leaders of the African ex-colonies which had become republics immediately upon or shortly after independence, keen to shake off the symbolic shackles of colonial rule. This marked a shift away from the settler colonial arguments about loyal rebellion which had dominated political discourse since UDI. The Commission remained sensitive to the delicacy and emotiveness of the issue however (it dedicated a whole chapter to the question of the Monarchy in its report), and also stressed that many others it had heard from held the opposite opinion:

Many urged strongly that a movement to declare a republic would lose Rhodesia the friendship of many people, especially in the United Kingdom, whose first loyalty is to the Queen. Her Majesty, they said, provides a focal point for loyalty which transcends party political loyalties and a link between English-speaking people throughout the world. Furthermore traditional ties of loyalty to the Crown are still strong among many Rhodesians and the present is a most inopportune time to break these ties.<sup>67</sup>

In addition to these two poles, there were other interviewees who thought that the Queen should be offered an opportunity to recognise Rhodesia when the new constitution was brought in, and if she refused to do so then a republic could be declared. This was the sort of situation that Smith had hinted at, something the commission acknowledged: ‘[i]n support of this proposal it was also urged that this would have the effect of making the British Government responsible for breaking Rhodesia’s link with the Crown.’<sup>68</sup> Faced with a range of white Rhodesian opinions on the monarchy, the commission concluded that, if no agreement could be reached with the British government’s negotiators and: ‘no recognition by the Crown is forthcoming, the retention of the monarchy would in our view be impossible. We believe that if the breach with the United Kingdom becomes final, a republican form of government is inevitable.’<sup>69</sup> This differed from the former dominions, in whose public life the Monarchy played an active part through royal tours and patronage of organisations.

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<sup>66</sup> *Report of the Constitutional Commission 1968* (Salisbury, 1968), p. 119.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Whilst Smith's proclamations about his hand being forced on a republic betrayed the RF's growing confidence in its republicanism and shifting priorities of its nation-building project, the attitude of the white Rhodesian population remained unclear and the RF required popular sanction to act on such a sensitive topic. Consequently, the RF incorporated a question about republican status in the national referendum on its constitutional proposals. Mr Moseley (RF, Bulawayo District), explained the RF's thinking behind this test of opinion in April 1969:

we must come eventually to decide or acknowledge that the position of the Queen must one day be resolved. We cannot continue to claim that the Queen is our Queen when the Queen herself cannot acknowledge us. Therefore, Government is giving the electorate adequate opportunity to decide whether they want to cut the last apron string and come out in favour of a republic.<sup>70</sup>

Implicit in Moseley's talk of 'acknowledgement' was the fact that minority-rule remained the elephant in the room. Rhodesia's racist, exclusionary constitutional arrangements prevented it from receiving royal acknowledgement and enjoying a close relationship with the Monarchy as other former dominions like Australia and Canada did. The RF's belated realisation of this forced it to change its nation-building approach, shifting to rhetoric of sovereignty and breaks with Britain, more akin to non-settler ex-colonies.

In the debates which followed, the position of the Monarchy loomed large amongst the new constitutional proposals, with both sides turning to the past to reinforce their arguments for or against a republic. Mr Divaris (RF, Belvedere) believed that it was time for a break with the past. Drawing upon arguments about Rhodesia's war service which will be examined in greater detail in chapter five, he argued that Rhodesia had been tricked by Britain into joining the Federation and that all links with that country should be cut as soon as possible. For Divaris, the retention of the Monarchy would lead to an embarrassing symbolism which denied Rhodesian suzerainty: '[f]ar too many countries look upon the situation between ourselves and England as that of a mother, England having a squabble with one of her children, Rhodesia. They do not realize that the time has come

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<sup>70</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 73, 1968-69, 1146.

when Rhodesia has to branch out on its own and charter [sic] its own course...'<sup>71</sup> Such discourses of parenthood and childhood give a glimpse of the diverse influences the RF drew upon in its nation-building project, as they invoked much older philosophies comparing colonial dependency with childhood. David Lowenthal has shown how such language, influenced by the philosophy of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau was used by British and American and colonials in the late eighteenth century, and how 'South American revolts against Spain evinced similar resentment against an imposed permanent childhood.'<sup>72</sup> Colonel MacLeod agreed, arguing that Rhodesia had now 'come of age and... must go forward, take our destiny into our own hands.'<sup>73</sup> The Minister of Internal Affairs, Lance Smith, was blunter, stating: 'I myself was born in Britain and never believed the day would come when she would repudiate her kith and kin overseas but I am not such a fool as to hanker after a past that has disappeared.'<sup>74</sup>

To Lance Smith and his RF colleagues, a republic was a further repudiation of Rhodesia's British past, a past which had now 'disappeared'. The Monarchy, which had once been representative of shared values and culture, of bonds between 'kith and kin' thousands of miles apart, was now cast as just another marker of Britain's post-War degeneration. This change in position marked both the RF's belated recognition of how the world had changed, and also its growing confidence in its position as the rebellion went on. It shows white Rhodesia straddling a colonial/post-colonial divide, beginning its rebellion firmly in the mode of settler colonial loyal rebellion and then adapting its discourses to achieve a constitutional position akin to non-settler former colonies. Though there had been a brief but half-hearted attempt to 'Rhodesianise' the Queen as had been successfully done in Canada and Australia, her continued existence as Rhodesian head of state was seen as no longer tenable because of Rhodesia's retention of minority rule. As far as the British were concerned Rhodesian independence would only come with majority rule, which

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 1302.

<sup>72</sup> D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 106-108.

<sup>73</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 73, 1335.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 1488.

would involve a similar break with the Crown that had been seen elsewhere in majority-ruled Africa. It was unacceptable for the Queen to be associated with a state that refused to accept the rights of the majority of its population. Having spent years preparing ground the RF now believed that instead of 'Rhodesianising' the Queen, they could 'Rhodesianise' the nation by breaking the link with the Crown and, by association, Britain. They prepared a case in which a Rhodesian republic became the logical, if belated, conclusion of UDI.

Once again, the RF's domination of the Legislative Assembly made the result of these debates a foregone conclusion and a referendum was tabled. With the parliamentary battle over, Ian Smith went on the radio to lay out the RF's stall. Speaking on 20 May 1969, on the eve of the publication of the government's white paper on the constitutional proposals, Smith told RBC listeners that they were sharing 'a moment in history which finds Rhodesia poised to make one of the most far-reaching decisions in its short existence as a nation.'<sup>75</sup> Smith's speech focused mainly on the fact that Britain would not reach a settlement which did not include majority rule and that the Rhodesians were left with no alternative but to accept the RF's proposals. He painted the ultimate decision of the white electorate as 'momentous historically', arguing that the issues of the constitution and a republic were 'matters of national as well as international character' and would affect the lives of generations of future Rhodesians.<sup>76</sup>

The prime minister also dealt with the issue of a republic, and the prime minister acknowledged that 'there is a deep and sincere sentiment towards the monarchy amongst many sections in Rhodesia.'<sup>77</sup> In spite of this, Smith argued, the Rhodesians were left with no option but to sever the tie. He backed this contention up by claiming that the British had said that, even in the event of a settlement being reached, the Afro-Asian members of the Commonwealth would never allow Rhodesia to remain a member without majority rule. Given that minority rule was the

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<sup>75</sup> BBC Monitoring Archive, Caversham Park, Reading (hereafter BBCMA) (Summary of World Broadcasts) SE ME 3080/B/1-5, 'Ian Smith's 20.5.69 Broadcast to the Rhodesians', 22 May 1969.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

Rhodesian nation's *raison d'être*, Smith concluded, 'the choice has been taken out of our hands.'<sup>78</sup>

Having neatly absolved Rhodesians of any responsibility for the issue, Smith immediately seized on the prosperous future that a republic would, in his opinion, guarantee:

I have met many people from Europe, big industrialists and financiers, who claim that they are unable to comprehend the situation in which we say that the Queen is our Queen while she says that she is not. In all fairness I think we have to concede that such a position is difficult to understand. These friends of ours from the continent are trying to assist us, and indeed are running certain risks in doing so. They have no hesitation in saying that it would give them a greater feeling of security if we were to become a republic and completely sever our ties with Britain.<sup>79</sup>

Smith's speech sought to undermine the position of the Queen's supporters by claiming that there was, in fact, no choice in the matter. Nevertheless, the government recognised the potential significance that the issue still had among some white Rhodesians and so organised a specific separate referendum question on a republic rather than simply bundling it in with the vote on the constitutional proposals (which were, after all, republican). Smith's speech also sought to associate republican status with future economic prosperity, by making enigmatic pronouncements about skittish foreign businessmen who would only be placated once Rhodesia's constitutional position was fully resolved. It is unclear whether or not this was simply more of the fearmongering at which the RF was so adept, or represented genuine concerns which had been relayed to Smith by potential business partners though it is hard to see why Rhodesia being a republic would matter as its pseudo-monarchical era from 1965 to 1969 had not discouraged a wide range of countries (including Britain) from breaking United Nations sanctions to trade with it.<sup>80</sup> The RF remained tight-lipped on the issue. Smith closed the section of his speech dealing with republican status on the note that it would help the war against sanctions, where he explicitly made this point:

If we fail to take decisive action now, we will be guilty of showing weakness and vacillation at this critical moment in our history, and our efforts and sacrifices which we

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> H.R. Strack, *Sanctions The Case of Rhodesia* (Syracuse, 1978); L. White, 'What Does It Take to Be a State? Sovereignty and Sanctions in Rhodesia, 1965-1980', in L. White & D. Howland (eds), *State of Sovereignty: Territories, Laws, Populations* (Bloomington, 2009), pp. 148-168.

have made over the past years will all have been in vain. We cannot falter now that we are so near our goal.<sup>81</sup>

After further emphasising the RF's decisive role in saving the nation since it had come to power, warning voters about the apparently nefarious opponents of the proposals and the 'powerful forces' at their disposal, Smith offered the hope that this would be the last of 'our growing pains on our journey towards full nationhood.'<sup>82</sup> If 1965 was the birth of the new Rhodesia, 1969 would be its coming of age.

Smith also suggested that the constitution represented a sort of multi-racial compromise with Rhodesia's African chiefs when it effect provided for the establishment of a separate government for blacks. Indeed, the chiefs themselves represented a curious Rhodesian form of royalty, an ersatz pageantry which was restricted to Africans whilst white Rhodesians became republicans. It is instructive of the racist and exclusionary character of the RF's nation-building project that at the same time that they argued whites must 'go forward' into republicanism, they were sending Africans 'backward' by extending and consolidating the power of chiefs. Their prominence in RF thinking was wrapped up in language about tradition and timelessness but was in fact a consequence of 1960s policy orientation. The chiefs and their authority were invented tradition *par excellence*, a top-down mechanism for control which failed to account for the bottom-up popular impulses which were expressed by the African nationalist movements that the RF was so dismissive of. A 1964 draft white paper on consultation with tribal and traditional leaders had noted: 'A Tribal African lives in an intricate network of kinship bonds, of rights and duties assigned by that network and he does not exercise his freedom of choice as an individual to make his own self-interested judgements [sic] and choices.'<sup>83</sup> This conceptualisation of Africans was in fact a very recent invention which overturned the modernising rhetoric of the administrations of the 1950s, in which technological progress would ultimately bring Africans up to Europeans' civilizational level. This position was contrasted with the

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<sup>81</sup> SE ME 3080/B 1-5, 'Ian Smith's Broadcast'.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers) Cabinet Memoranda – S.R.C. (S) (64) 360 – 'Draft White Paper: Consultation with Tribal and Traditional Leaders: Chiefs and Headmen', 30 November 1964, p. 16.

European who was ‘master of his own fate’.<sup>84</sup> As far as RF policymakers were concerned, ‘tribal’ Africans could properly express themselves through the government-maintained system of chieftainship, and a granting of greater authority to these chiefs, ‘the chosen intermediaries of the state’, was a key element of the RF’s constitutional proposals.<sup>85</sup> The RF put an enormous amount of faith in chiefs as a panacea to what they considered highly dangerous changes in African society since the 1960s, as Terence Ranger noted: ‘In Rhodesia Front theory the chiefs would not only enforce regulations and combat nationalists and guerrillas but also win the whole-hearted support of their people.’<sup>86</sup> The practice was invariably different, and Jocelyn Alexander and Ranger have shown, the practice of chieftainship by chiefs was less about blind collaboration with the white state than it was about balancing a wide range of competing interests in order to retain power and authority, with varying degrees of success.<sup>87</sup>

Seizing upon the RF’s rhetoric of the final break with Britain, some Rhodesians were galvanised into opposition for a variety of reasons. On 12 June 1969 Mrs R. Archdale of Umvukwes wrote that: ‘I am English born and bred and very proud of the fact, as no doubt are many good Rhodesians like myself... Great Britain may be going through a bad time, but we can still call ourselves fortunate to be British.’<sup>88</sup> Godfrey Huggins, Rhodesian prime minister between 1933 and 1953, and Sir Roy Welensky, the former Federal prime minister, issued a joint statement opposing the constitutional proposals as a major break with the past. They appealed to Rhodesian voters to recognise the spirit of both Cecil Rhodes and Winston Churchill, colonial secretary at the time of the 1922 referendum and idol of white Rhodesians, and oppose the new constitution.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>85</sup> J. Alexander, *The Unsettled Land: State Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003* (Oxford, 2006), p. 9; T. Ranger, ‘Tradition and Travesty: Chiefs and the Administration in Makoni District, Zimbabwe, 1960-1980’, *Journal of the International African Institute*, 52, 3 (1982), pp. 20-41.

<sup>86</sup> Ranger, ‘Tradition and Travesty’, p. 23.

<sup>87</sup> Alexander, *The Unsettled Land*; Ranger, ‘Tradition and Travesty’.

<sup>88</sup> Mrs R Archdale, ‘Still Fortunate to be British’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 12 June 1969, p. 11.

<sup>89</sup> ‘A Break With the Past – Malvern, Welensky’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 13 June 1969, p. 2.

Sir Humphrey Gibbs, realising that the writing was possibly on the wall, was prompted to release a statement on 11 June 1969 which provoked further debate. Promising to resign from his post if the public voted in favour of a republican constitution, he announced:

In these circumstances it would in all probability be impossible for me to continue to be Governor of Rhodesia. I cannot predict what effect, if any, my going would have on the country's future: but it is possible that my departure, and the loss of what I stand for, could push us [Rhodesians] into even greater isolation from the rest of the world.<sup>90</sup>

In response to the statement the *Herald's* leader on 13 June 1969 suggested that the queen, communicating through Sir Humphrey, was in fact recognising her Rhodesian subjects: '[i]t is not the people of Rhodesia but Rhodesia's Government that the queen has declined to recognize.'<sup>91</sup>

Robert W. Fynn of Arundel took up the *Herald's* point the next day. He pointed to the regular Christmas and birthday messages that the Queen sent to the Rhodesians through the governor as proof that she had not abandoned them and condemned the hypocrisy of the RF's retention of royal symbols over the past few years.<sup>92</sup> E.G. Cook of Melfort went further, criticising the 'Nazi mentality' of the RF and claiming that its proposals would: 'insult the thousands of Rhodesians who are closely associated with the old country, with its proud heritage and traditions.'<sup>93</sup> These expressions of resistance showed that not all white Rhodesians were playing the RF's game where the monarchy was concerned.

It is important to remember the context in which these debates about the Monarchy took place, and to appreciate that they played a rather distant (if closely intertwined) second fiddle to the content and character of the constitutional proposals. Unsurprisingly the RF advertisements which peppered the *Herald* throughout June focussed on the question of constitutional sovereignty rather than the Monarchy, perhaps recognising that individuals' views on the Monarchy were so personal

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<sup>90</sup> Quoted in Megahey, *Humphrey Gibbs*, p. 167.

<sup>91</sup> 'Significance of Sir Humphrey', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 13 June 1969, p. 14.

<sup>92</sup> 'Despite difficulties Gibbs has pursued loyal way for good of Rhodesia', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 14 June 1969, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Eric G. Cook, 'Disastrous RF Policy has created fear complex, distrust and disharmony', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 18 June 1969, p. 18.

and varied that they would be more difficult to influence. RF advertisements tended to focus on how the new constitution would put an end to British prevarication over a settlement, with a liberal dose of scaremongering about majority rule thrown in for good measure. The old spectres of the Congo and Kenya were invoked as they had been seven years earlier in 1962, with appeals to peoples' personal safety and prosperity, as one advert warned: 'If you value your home, your family's future and the Rhodesian way of life, you must vote YES!'<sup>94</sup> The main opponents of the RF, the Centre Party (CP), countered this by claiming that the new constitution would be 'The Point of No Return' where a settlement with Britain was concerned.<sup>95</sup>

The referendum campaign was featured heavily on Rhodesia's government-owned media services: the RBC's radio network and Rhodesia Television (RTV). In May and June, a series of talks were broadcast in the RBC's 5pm slot from a number of individuals across the political spectrum. This was, of course, circumscribed and in keeping with Rhodesian censorship of the time the banned African nationalist parties were not given an opportunity to speak. Likewise, representatives of the government stated their case several times whereas opposing organisations' speeches were broadcast only once.<sup>96</sup>

These speeches engaged in a battle over Rhodesia's future, reinforcing or challenging the discourses the RF had set out earlier that year. The past was invoked frequently. Opponents of the constitutional proposals such as Bashford and P.H. Mkudu, leader of the official opposition in Parliament, both appealed to voters to continue in the 'spirit' of the Rhodesian past from 1923 onwards, arguing that the new constitution betrayed this spirit. Bashford, in his 18 June speech, argued that the republican issue was a matter for personal choice, but was unequivocal about its

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<sup>94</sup> 'No Fooling!', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 17 June, 1969, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> 'The Point of No Return', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 9 June, 1969, p. 4.

<sup>96</sup> These speakers included P.H. Mkudu, leader of the opposition in Parliament (28 May 1969); Minister of Agriculture David Smith (2 June 1969); Independent MP Robin James for the Conservative Association of Rhodesia (6 June 1969); P.K. van der Byl for the government (9 June 1969); GL Chavunduka for the Democratic Party (13 June 1969); Jack Howman for the government (16 June 1969) and Pat Bashford for the Centre Party (18 June 1969). (BBCMA) (Summary of World Broadcasts), SS ME 3086-3104, 30 May-20 June 1969.

wider effect on Rhodesia's status as an independent nation: 'I should like to make it quite clear that the declaration of a republic will not bring recognition by other states any closer... the declaration of a republic can only be just another step on the road to total isolation if we make the declaration before we get recognition. Recognition must come first.'<sup>97</sup> While recognition featured less heavily in the RF's arguments, which had positioned republican status as a route to new business opportunities, greater sovereignty, and avoidance of majority rule, it still argued that republican status would demonstrate Rhodesian independence and that its statehood would then be recognised as a *fait accompli* by other nations.

The RF ministers also looked backward, albeit in very different ways. David Smith spoke of an historical tradition of constitutional independence which had been used to justify UDI (see chapter five) 'in order that we may be better able to assess our present problems in their correct perspective.'<sup>98</sup> P.K. van der Byl demonstrated some of the RF's international influences when he offered a 'blood price' narrative comparing the sacrifices made by Rhodesian soldiers fighting guerrillas in the Zambesi valley to historic martial assertions of independence in the United States, Greece, the Boer republics and, interestingly, the then current conflict in Biafra.<sup>99</sup> J.H. Howman, the last government minister to speak, offered a racist rant about violence in post-colonial African states.<sup>100</sup>

All three RF ministers, and the various speakers opposing them and their constitutional proposals, framed the debate in terms of Rhodesia's future. Rhodesia was now at a turning point and the result of the forthcoming referendum would lead either to ruin or reward. The republican issue could be subsumed into the RF's inferno of majority rule or the CP's cold and lonely wasteland of

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<sup>97</sup> (BBCMA) (Summary of World Broadcasts) SS ME 3104/B 1-3, 'Rhodesia: Bashford's Referendum Campaign Broadcast', 20 June 1969.

<sup>98</sup> (BBCMA) (Summary of World Broadcasts), SS ME 3090, 'The Rhodesian Referendum: Agriculture Minister's Broadcast', 4 June 1969.

<sup>99</sup> (BBCMA) (Summary of World Broadcasts), SS ME 3096, 'Rhodesia: Van der Byl's Referendum Campaign Broadcast', 11 June 1969.

<sup>100</sup> (BBCMA) (Summary of World Broadcasts), SS ME 3102, 'Rhodesia: Howman's Referendum Campaign Broadcast', 18 June 1969.

permanent international pariah status and racial discord. Rhodesians required a national past that legitimated the nation, like the other settler and non-settler ex-colonies, but it required a specific understanding of history to account for its peculiar situation of minority-rule independence and strong cultural and social links with Britain. It required a relationship with the past that could unify whites who were fiercely proud of their British imperial heritage and those who exulted in independent Rhodesian nationhood, a past which allowed Rhodesia to continue claiming to be a 'better Britain' at a time of imperial decline when such rhetoric was losing its sway. The Monarchy issue constituted an important element of this debate about what Rhodesia, and Rhodesians themselves, were going to become. The Monarchy was a key aspect of the processes of symbolic decolonisation by which, so the RF claimed, Rhodesia would become a nation. The speeches demonstrated different parties' wider conceptions of this process. The CP and the African speakers warned the predominantly white electorate not to reject multi-racialism; the RF and Conservative Association of Rhodesia spoke of preventing black domination. All of them shared a focus upon Rhodesia's future, and associated the current constitution with the past, which they either implored people to uphold or encouraged people to reject. The Monarchy was a key symbolic part of this past but for the RF and its supporters, had no place in Rhodesia's future.

### **Referendum Result Roundly Repudiates Regent**

The referendum on 20 June 1969 was a resounding success for the RF. Some 54,724 (seventy-three per cent) voted in favour of the new constitutional proposals and 20,776 voters opposed them.<sup>101</sup> As for a republic 61,130 voters (eighty-nine per cent) favoured scrapping the monarchy and 14,372 voted to retain it.<sup>102</sup> Larry Bowman has speculated that this was because many whites saw republican status as 'true' independence, something which we have seen was eagerly

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<sup>101</sup> Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia*, p. 139.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

encouraged by RF propaganda.<sup>103</sup> Reporting the RF's 'Sweeping Victory' on June 21, the *Herald* reflected that:

The electoral verdict in favour of a Republic is so overwhelming that even dissident Rhodesians will feel there is little point in quarrelling with it... Loyalty to Crown and kinship die hard and can still be cherished in the heart. But to kick against the will of the voting majority would only perpetuate divisions, weakening Rhodesia and serving no purpose.<sup>104</sup>

A week later, Parliament was moving swiftly on. Long-time RF opponent Dr. Ahrn Palley's attempt to add an amendment to the speech from the throne that a republican government would reduce Rhodesia's chances of recognition was predictably overruled. In response, Lord Graham, who had appeared to have reassessed his position on certain symbols since the previous years' flag debates, noted: 'the Crown and the Union Jack had at one time stood for something in the World, but conditions in the World had changed, and he felt that the old loyalties should be put aside in the interest of the country.'<sup>105</sup> He made a clear distinction between colonial symbols which tied Rhodesia to Britain, and Rhodesia's new arrangements which reflected the RF's shift in focus during the symbolic decolonising phase of its nationalism. Though the RF's settler nationalism had been mobilised in opposition to decolonisation and majority rule former party grandees like Graham were now agitating for similar symbolic demonstrations of independence to those which were taking place in former African and Asian colonies.

Several months later, on 2 March 1970, Rhodesia followed the path of so many of the former colonies it disdained and officially became a republic. Godwin and Hancock described this as 'an event which passed almost without notice in the country.'<sup>106</sup> The *Herald* noted the business-like changing of symbolism: Clifford Dupont lost his clumsy title and became Rhodesia's inaugural president; legal cases were now decided in the name of 'the State' instead of 'the Queen'; and the

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>104</sup> 'Decisive on Both Counts', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 21 June 1969, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> 'In Parliament Yesterday', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 28 June 1969, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 51.

Royal Rhodesian Air Force altered its flag and symbol.<sup>107</sup> Rafts of legislative minutiae were changed in accordance with the new constitution which covered thirty-nine pages of small type in the government notice in which they were published.<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, the letters pages of the *Herald* focused on the banal issue of where Sir Humphrey Gibbs' loyalties lay and whether or not he would make a good President.<sup>109</sup> Sir Humphrey had no intention of serving as President and in response to the referendum results he carried out his promise and promptly resigned, moving back to his farm and ended five years of effective house arrest. The British closed down their residual diplomatic mission in Salisbury, and Rhodesia House, in London, was closed on 14 July 1969. For the time being at least, the door had closed on the possibility of an Anglo-Rhodesian settlement and legal independence.<sup>110</sup>

The muted response to the new constitutional status was perhaps a consequence of the fact that republican status was something of a *fait accompli* in Rhodesia. For some it had been almost four years coming. For the thousands of staunch monarchists who did support the queen's retention, the tone of the *Herald's* reportage on 21 June was a damning indictment of their loyalty, and they quietly faded away in the months after their defeat at the polls. The overwhelming opposition to the retention of the monarchy demonstrates how white Rhodesian understanding of the Queen and her position in Rhodesian society and as a component of Rhodesian identity had changed in the short time since UDI, an event the RF had been trumpeting as the 'birth' of the new Rhodesian nation. The RF had gone from thinking and speaking in imperial terms, through the discourses of loyal rebellion, to post-imperial ones of independence and nationhood. Prior to and immediately after UDI the Queen had been understood by many Rhodesians in the context of the 'imperial monarchy'. The RF government emphasised its loyalty to the person of the Queen and located UDI

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<sup>107</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, pp. 51-2; 'The State' not 'The Queen' is Prosecutor', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 4 March 1970, p. 1; 'RRAF Alters Flag, Signs', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 6 March 1970, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> 'Terms After Change to Republic', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 7 March 1970, p. 7.

<sup>109</sup> H.J.W. Roberts, 'As President, Gibbs would Carry out Duties Loyal', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 7 March 1970, p. 5.

<sup>110</sup> J. Brownell, 'A sordid tussle on the Strand': Rhodesia House During the UDI Rebellion (1965-1980), *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 38, 3 (2010), p. 487.

within a discourse of 'loyal rebellions' which had been invoked by settlers throughout the empire for a century. Like Australians, Canadians, and others before them, the Rhodesians sought to make the Queen their own. This failed because of the unique situation of UDI-era Rhodesia, a nation that existed as a repudiation of majority-rule independence and therefore could never be legally allowed to retain the Queen, now head of a largely non-white Commonwealth of Nations, as Head of State in the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike in Canada, Australia and even South Africa where debates about the role of the queen took place within a context of constitutional legality, the Rhodesians' rebellion, which made them traitors to the queen, and the existence of minority rule made the idea of retaining the monarch as head of state impossible. Indeed, Rhodesians found themselves in an odd halfway house between the old settler colonies and the newer African and Asian colonies and actually found themselves pursuing a similar course of complete symbolic independence from the former colonial power.

It was clear that Queen Elizabeth II would never recognise the Rhodesian regime and by doing so contradict her own government in the United Kingdom. To have done so would have jeopardised the concept of a constitutional monarchy. It would have raised questions about the viability of the Commonwealth, an organisation whose composition and character was profoundly altered by the inclusion of a large number of former colonies in an era of decolonisation. With so many potential ramifications for Britain's post-colonial global influence, tiny, isolated, Rhodesia was simply not worth the price that recognition would demand. It was a racist, exclusionary pariah state which desperately craved international legitimacy. In the latter years of the 1960s it was clear that the RF was waiting for an opportunity to state that its hand had been forced on the issue. It was in these terms that the RF government presented the issue to the white Rhodesian population: they had no choice but to declare a republic. Adapting the rhetoric used during the flag debates, the Queen became a symbol of subservience to Britain and a stumbling block on Rhodesia's progression to a

bright future. Like other African countries, the Rhodesians became an independent republic, even if some of them would have preferred a 'Queen of Rhodesia'.

Unlike the flag debates, no direct alternative was offered. Instead of a head of state like the Queen, the practical focus of Rhodesian loyalty became 'the nation'. Not the newly-instituted office of President, but the nation of Rhodesia itself. This shift achieved a similar effect to the RF's ambiguous flag design, as it was possible for white Rhodesians of all political persuasions to express a loyalty to 'Rhodesia' as a nation, by removing the Queen from the equation the RF believed it had eliminated a dual focus of loyalty which had existed at UDI. Furthermore, as the RF had worked hard to associate itself closely with 'Rhodesia', presenting its own party political interests as synonymous with those of the nation (see chapter one), it could potentially shore up its own legitimacy and power in the white community.

The seeds of this refocusing of loyalties had been sown even before UDI by the RF and its supporters, but they achieved their final codification with the new constitution and the declaration of a republic. It reflected an attempt to move from a broadly transnational British imperial settler identity to a more localised one focused around Rhodesia's national independence. Like the new flag, conceptions of what this meant were ambiguous and multifarious. This did not prevent triumphalism on the part of the victors, however, as the state-owned RBC reported in its celebration of the fourth anniversary of UDI in 1969:

*A nation consisting of both blacks and whites has been born. A new nation with its new flag and a new Rhodesian written Constitution... A nation with four years of history in its own right behind it. The battles have been won as they occurred, though no one can tell how long the war may last. But on those four years of history Rhodesia can look back in pride.*<sup>111</sup>

This celebration of Rhodesia's short history of nationhood was a marked contrast with other African nations. In these new states, rather than see independence as 'year zero', nationalist leaders

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<sup>111</sup> (BBCMA) (Summary of World Broadcasts) SS ME 3227/B/12, 'Rhodesia: "Look Back in Pride"', Commentary on UDI Anniversary, 10 November 1969.

attempted to hark back to a whole range of precolonial traditions (of varying authenticity and applicability) to mould the disparate cultures into something that could be called “Nigerian” or “Kenyan”.<sup>112</sup> One such example of the rows which erupted over the minutiae of national symbolism took place in nearby Botswana. The Botswanans introduced a new currency, the Pula, in the 1960s, which triggered a fierce debate over whether the shape of the shield in Botswana’s coat of arms was a Tswana one or actually based on a Zulu/Ndebele one.<sup>113</sup> Meanwhile, in neighbouring Rhodesia white nationalists were less concerned with the fine details of national symbolism as they were at getting rid of its British imperial predecessors. The implications of this ‘year zero’ approach and Rhodesia’s isolation was a particularly brittle nationalism which had shallow roots in a small section of the country’s population, hardly a recipe for sustainable nation-building.

After the referendum result Rhodesians were encouraged to look forward to the country’s supposedly shining future rather than backwards to the imperial past. Context was everything to this evolving nationalism. For whites, Rhodesia’s future seemed bright in 1969-70. The country had weathered sanctions well, the economy had suffered less than business leaders had feared and new trading partners rushed in to fill the gaps Britain had left in commerce. The Rhodesian military was able to easily combat the divided and disorganised nationalist armies making tentative forays across the Zambezi. This was a confident, prosperous, and relatively secure Rhodesia – what did it matter who the head of state was? I have questioned Cannadine’s interpretation of the monarchy as a top-down invented tradition but there is undoubtedly some truth in the argument that consistency and tradition provided a palliative to British people in a constantly changing world. In Rhodesia, as in the dominions, the Monarchy had been used to fudge definitions of nationhood which were less possible to avoid in republics. By declaring a republic the Rhodesians were forced to disassociate themselves from wider networks of shared Commonwealth symbolism, thus emphasising their isolation. Furthermore, by refocusing loyalty and devotion from the monarch onto the nation of

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<sup>112</sup> F. Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 89.

<sup>113</sup> C.J. Makgula, ‘Neil Parsons, National Coat of Arms, and Introduction of the Pula Currency in Botswana, 1975-1976’, *South African Historical Journal*, 66, 3 (2014), pp. 504-520.

Rhodesia, they sowed the seeds for the ultimate failure of their nationalist project. If Britons dissatisfied with the pace of post-war change could retreat into the comforts of pomp and ceremony as a means of understanding their shifting global and domestic identity, white Rhodesians in the 1970s had put all their eggs into one basket. Fealty to Rhodesia worked in the prosperous late sixties and early seventies, but in the mid to late 1970s, as the nation groaned under military and economic hardship, more and more of its white citizens, lost faith and voted with their feet. The monarchy issue also showed how the RF's nation-building project was a reactive one, reacting to the consequences of UDI, reacting to popular imaginations of the Rhodesian past, present, and future, a project formed of a synthesis between bottom-up and top-down nationalist impulses, not directed and managed by an omnipotent party machine but largely cobbled together on the hoof.

The RBC's proclamation of a united multiracial nation was typically disingenuous, as the 1969 Constitution took segregation between races further than ever before by enshrining in law the RF's agenda of separate development, or petty apartheid. Legislation like the much-maligned Land Tenure Act served to engender greater conflict in the ensuing years. This was clearly articulated by the African Parliamentarian Mr. Chipunza (CP, Bindura), who highlighted the problems of the RF's nation-building project during the debate to enact the new constitution:

If we stress division, how are we going to build a nation? How are we going to have people who will think first and foremost as Rhodesians? How can we instil the sense of patriotism when our whole trend in the Bill is division and disunity? I believe that these proposals will not assist in creating a political environment which will lead to racial co-operation. On the surface of it, everything looks well, but when we get down to the hard realities of the situation we are all in Rhodesia; we breathe the same air and therefore we may as well share in all these matters. I believe that unless we realize that racial co-operation here is essential without it we will get nowhere at all. Both races need each other and if they realize it then they may as well start working together... and not planning for other people and then forcing them to accept it.<sup>114</sup>

Like the debates over the flag, those about the constitution and the monarchy had been carried out in what was essentially a white Rhodesian echo chamber. Chipunza had put his finger on the bigger problem in Rhodesia in 1969-70. Questions about symbolism served as huge distractions

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<sup>114</sup> *Rhodesia Parliamentary Debates*, 75, 1969, 1118.

from the basic failure of Rhodesian nationalism to have any appeal whatsoever beyond the white population. Once again, the vast majority of the population had been excluded from consideration despite, or because of, the fact that it was they who would be most profoundly affected by the provisions of the new constitution. Though black nationalists by the mid-1960s had lost faith in the ability of the Crown as a route to protest grievances, and never accepted the legitimacy of the RF government, the switch to a republic removed that possibility altogether, along with the publicity that the nationalist cause received from events like the attempt to issue royal pardons for condemned prisoners.

More than this, the new Rhodesia which the white electorate had endorsed was more exclusive than ever before. If the RF had built in a weakness to its nationalist project by pinning loyalty to the fortunes of the nation where white people were concerned it had effectively removed the majority from the equation except for the ersatz pageantry embodied in the system of chieftainship, which the white government had bolstered even as it had sought to remove all traces of royalty from its constitution where Europeans were concerned. It took a further step back from the 1961/1965 constitution by eliminating the future potential for majority rule altogether, ensuring that Europeans would forever retain at least half the parliamentary seats purely by virtue of their skin colour.

The 1969 constitution severely circumscribed the possibility of truly multiracial nation-building on an equal footing. Though the RF was seriously invested in promoting the chiefs, giving them greater powers and authority than ever before and setting them up as representatives of the African people, its refusal to recognise the legitimacy of Rhodesia's African nationalist movements severely limited the new nation's appeal to the majority of its population. This made the success of the nation largely dependent upon the morale of Rhodesia's white population.

## Conclusion

Ostensibly, the 1969 constitution and the associated debates about the monarchy appear to be a logical break-point in Rhodesian history. It seemed like independence had finally come, after five years of debate and delay. Before the new constitution took effect in 1970 Rhodesia was a rebellious colony, afterwards it was an independent nation. This was, of course, exactly the image that the RF wanted to project. The reality was inevitably messier. In the first place the intervening years between had seen a discursive and political struggle among white Rhodesians trying to come to terms with their imperial past and define their post-colonial future. This was immeasurably complicated by Rhodesia's status as an international pariah state, which left it halfway between a settler society in the mould of Canada or Australia and an independent nation akin to Ghana or Burma. Whereas other settler societies were able to reach a form of compromise through the divisibility of the Monarchy, Rhodesia's white minority was forced to adopt the same route as many African and Asian colonies by undertaking a symbolic and constitutional break with the former colonial power. However, in the Rhodesian case, this break took place for a completely different reason, Rhodesia's continuation of minority rule, which left it far more isolated than these other former colonies, banding together in organisations like the United Nations (UN), Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and Commonwealth. For the pariah state of rebel Rhodesia, only a complete disassociation with the former head of state was possible.

This awkward position complicates neat narratives of decolonisation in which colonial 'Rhodesia' became post-colonial 'Zimbabwe', allowing us to recognise that rebel Rhodesia was something different than a mere colonial holdover. They were further complicated in 1979, as Britain briefly resumed control of what was by then Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in order to manage the transition to majority rule. The country was briefly officially renamed Southern Rhodesia (Britain had always referred to it as such during the UDI period) and the old symbols of colonial rule were re-adopted. The battles which took place amidst *The Herald's* letters pages over these arrangements

were highlighted in the introduction, with Rhodesians either resenting or welcoming the imposition of British sovereignty and the promised resolution to the conflict that it promised.<sup>115</sup> All this went to show that, despite the RF's best attempts, questions about what Rhodesia meant to whites were still unresolved even at the twilight of the nation.

Nevertheless, the fact remained that white Rhodesians had overwhelmingly voted to make the 'break with Britain'. In doing so they endorsed the new direction of the RF's nation-building project, and demonstrated an understanding that Rhodesia should now try to make it on its own rather than wait for the seal of approval of the British government. Negotiations would continue, but the constitutional change of 1970 reflected a white population growing in confidence. This was facilitated by the circumstances in which the referendum took place. It became increasingly clear during the economic decline and escalating conflict of the 1970s that white Rhodesians would accept any constitutional circumstances (except perhaps majority rule) if it led to peace and the return of some semblance of normality to their everyday lives.

Even though this change in direction further cemented Rhodesia's international isolation by comprehensively separating Rhodesia from the wider 'British World' of Commonwealth Realms, it further demonstrated how the nation-building project of the RF was influenced, consciously and unconsciously, by transnational and global trends, both in settler societies and also in former colonies. Rhodesia's belated final response to decolonisation was to essentially ignore it. The abandonment of the monarchy suggests the limits of seeing it as a top-down 'invented tradition', a concept with a clear meaning which was passively consumed by ordinary people. In the settler colonies, at least, the concept of loyal rebellion in particular made the monarchy much more a product of settler imagination. 'Loyalty' formed a useful element of a RF rhetoric that could be employed in order to win concessions and support in the United Kingdom. But the monarchy meant something more than that. It helped anchor settlers into political, social and cultural transnational

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<sup>115</sup> See the introduction for an indication of these differing views.

networks which boosted their power and influence locally and internationally. It was dear to many settlers' hearts, and it could be adapted and moulded to suit local settler agendas. This meant that the RF had been forced to move cautiously to remove the monarchy in the years following UDI, and its continued sensitivity to white popular opinion on the subject meant that it did not replace the Monarch with an equally powerful and emotive symbol.

1970 paved the way for a renewed, concerted effort in building and consolidating the Rhodesian nation as conceived of by the RF and its supporters. The very continuity and reliability which made the Monarchy so enduring elsewhere became its Achilles' heel in Rhodesia as it was successfully portrayed as a redundant holdover of the colonial past. The RF managed to convince white Rhodesian voters to realign what had been one of the major focuses of their loyalty away from what they considered an indifferent and outdated institution to a new nation. This had required a dialogue with and about a conception of the Rhodesian past and an interrogation of what had previously been a crucial focus of white identity. Yet many elements of British symbolism remained throughout the entire UDI period, demonstrating the new Rhodesia's ambiguous relationship with its imperial past. As Donal Lowry has noted, Rhodesia after 1970 was 'symbolically if strangely a very British-imperialist republic.'<sup>116</sup> This reflected the failure of the RF's nation-building project to create a sustainable and viable new nation after UDI. Like many other African colonies, Rhodesia's British legacy was preserved in the names of schools, libraries, museums, roads, and other public buildings. Perhaps most significantly the British South Africa Police force – Rhodesia's 'senior service' – which retained its odd name until Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. Despite these holdovers, many white Rhodesians felt they had now fully established themselves as 'not British' by breaking the final ties to the former mother country. The flag debates had shown that many in the RF believed the new nation should have new symbols. In 1970 Rhodesia had its new flag and its new constitution, but it would be another five years before it had its national anthem.

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<sup>116</sup> Lowry, 'The Lost Dominion', p. 115.

## Chapter Four

### **‘The Last Word in Rhodesian’: Visions of the Nation in White Rhodesian Music**

Seven years after Rhodesia had hoisted its new flag, and five years after becoming a republic, Rhodesia finally introduced its new national anthem. The processes of symbolic decolonisation which had begun in the wake of UDI finally came to an end just five years before the white-ruled state of Rhodesia was to disappear forever. In 1975 the new national anthem, called ‘Rise O Voices of Rhodesia’ appeared. The lyrics of the anthem were the result of a public competition which was won by Mrs Mary Bloom, a South-African born resident of Gwelo. The music for the new anthem was Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter draws the thesis’ exploration of Rhodesian symbolism to a close by analysing the new ‘official’ Rhodesian national anthem alongside a selection of white Rhodesian folk songs which were also released in the mid-to-late 1970s, a time when Rhodesia’s long-term survival was jeopardised by economic plight, regional decolonisation, and an increasingly bloody guerrilla war. White Rhodesian music provides a window into concepts of nationhood and identity in this context. It shows the limits and continued contestation of the RF’s second phase of nation-building, symbolic decolonisation. Whereas the previous chapters studied debates which took place when Rhodesia was still negotiating its colonial heritage, this chapter brings the narrative forward to the 1970s to explore how white Rhodesians had integrated the past into their national story and how this interacted with conceptualisations of the present and future during the heyday of the guerrilla war. This allows the chapter to consider how contingent and reactive the RF’s Rhodesian nation-building project was to new challenges. Looking at songs in this way also provides an excellent opportunity to further pick apart concepts of invention and imagination of tradition. Commonly, the national

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<sup>1</sup> ‘National Anthem of Rhodesia’, Youtube, accessed 26 November 2015 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xxKsjU5Q3A>.

anthem is a classic example of top-down state ‘invention’, and folk songs represent popular ‘imagination’. In practice, however, the distinction between the two is often hazier: in Rhodesia it was by no means clear who was inventing or imagining what.

The chapter also illustrates once more the comparative context of nature of nation-building projects by highlighting the similar problems faced by emerging regimes elsewhere in Africa, where new states were also forced to create ‘representative’ national anthems. In particular, it compares the travails of the Rhodesian regime to the new Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) government in neighbouring Mozambique. Ostensibly, the African nationalists of FRELIMO and the settler nationalists of the RF could not be more different. FRELIMO had been part of regional networks of nationalist liberation movements and allowed the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) to train in and operate from its territory. Rhodesia’s own regional relationships had been severely disrupted by Mozambican independence (the country had been landlocked as Rhodesia’s major route to the ocean had been via Mozambique, then a Portuguese colony). Despite these stark contrasts and this inharmonious relationship, both governments faced dilemmas over constructing their national anthems that represented the nation. Both governments sought recourse to public competitions in an attempt to involve the wider population in the nation-building effort and both found that population wanting when it came to producing a suitable national anthem. It shows that symbolic decolonisation left the RF facing problems more similar to former colonies than to the older settler societies, but how its worldview had failed to move beyond a narrow one which considered European culture inherently superior.

Maria-Benedita Basto, writing on the several different national anthems produced for Mozambique since its independence in 1975, notes how national anthems aim to represent ‘a... fiction of the people...’<sup>2</sup> Determining who the people of Rhodesia were was compounded by the contradictions inherent in a settler colony trying to reinvent itself as an independent nation. Notions

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<sup>2</sup> M. Basto, ‘The Writings of the National Anthem in Independent Mozambique: Fictions of the Subject-People’, *Kronos*, 39, 1 (2013), p. 185.

of the 'Rhodesian people' were also complicated by the RF's narrow view of 'Rhodesia'. Thomas Turino notes that: "To be recognized as a nation, nationalists must construct their new social entity to be recognizably like other nations – with national languages, anthems, flags, sports teams, dance companies, and similar state apparatuses."<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, the RF sought to pander to this notion of nationalism by attempting to find an 'official' national anthem which would suitably represent the Rhodesian people. At the same time, its relentless propaganda machine promoted an altogether brasher, and much more exclusive, vision of the Rhodesian nation. As we have seen in the preceding chapters on the flag and the constitution, the RF's inability, or unwillingness, to reconcile these visions of the nation accounted for the ultimate failure of its nation-building project.

The chapter unpacks the painstaking process of selecting a new 'official' national anthem. The guiding considerations of the Rhodesian experience reflect the enormous psychological and cohesive significance which Basto argues is often ascribed to national anthems. However, by spending so long trying to get the national anthem right and by simultaneously promoting different visions of Rhodesia which influenced popular cultural expressions of the nation, the RF undermined its own attempts to create an inclusive national anthem befitting of an independent state and designed to accommodate Rhodesia's black population. Meanwhile, with their focus overwhelmingly upon the present and a conceptualisation of the past which anchored the Rhodesian nation in a long history of conflict and struggle, popular songs represented Rhodesia as more of a shared, white, experience rather than a nation. Such a short-term imagining of the Rhodesian nation suggests the transience of white society, a characteristic underlined by Josiah Brownell.<sup>4</sup> It echoes analyses of white settlement elsewhere in Africa, notably John Stone's study of English migrants to South Africa in the 1970s, by illustrating the lack of deep investment that British-derived settlers made in their

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<sup>3</sup> T. Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago & London, 2000), p. 216.

<sup>4</sup> J. Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia: Population Demographics and the Politics of Race* (London, 2011); D. Lowry 'Rhodesia 1890-1980: 'The Lost Dominion' in R. Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 112-149; P. Godwin & I. Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia c.1970-1980* (Northlands, 2007); B. Schutz, 'Homeward Bound? A Survey Study of the Limits of White Rhodesian Nationalism and Permanence', *Ufahamu*, 5, 3 (1975), pp. 81-117.

adopted homes.<sup>5</sup> This impermanence and shallow investment in the nation had important consequences for settler nation-building projects like the RF's.

This chapter is split into two sections. The first considers the national anthem, and the process by which it was chosen. To do this it examines the extensive documentation of the various cabinet committees and the minutes of cabinet meetings to illustrate how and why the RF selected the national anthem. The second section explores several folk songs by two popular artists of the UDI-period: Clem Tholet and John Edmond. It considers the content of these songs within an historical context to suggest which themes resonated with white Rhodesians in the 1960s and 1970s and, where possible, the intentions of the songwriters. This focus upon music is intended to complement and build upon the small number of existing analyses of white Rhodesian popular culture.

## **Rhodesian Music in the Literature**

When mentioned at all, the story of the Rhodesian anthem typically appears as an amusing anecdote. For example, Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock noted the futility of 'an anthem which was meant to express and inspire a sense of national identity... [being] produced just before the nation itself was about to disappear.'<sup>6</sup> Luise White saw the anthem as an example of how Rhodesia did not always take the need to demonstrate its sovereign independence seriously.<sup>7</sup> The relevant cabinet documents are not short of farcical material where the national anthem is concerned, but it would be mistaken to suggest that this was not a 'serious' endeavour in the RF's efforts to achieve the symbols of nationhood, even so late in the day.

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<sup>5</sup> J. Stone, *Colonist or Uitlander? A Study of the British Immigrant in South Africa* (Oxford, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 146.

<sup>7</sup> L. White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (Chicago, 2015), pp. 124-5.

Alfred Musvoto undertook the most comprehensive study of Rhodesia's national anthem.<sup>8</sup> Musvoto applied discourse analysis to the lyrics of the national anthem, 'Rhodesians Never Die' (a popular white Rhodesian folk song), and post-independence poems by white Zimbabweans that reflected upon their Rhodesian experiences. He noted the anodyne nature of the songs, observing that their message was short-term and was focused upon universality of appeal among whites in order to 'stress the need to defend a racial nation state'.<sup>9</sup> Musvoto observed that the songs omitted significant historical events in white Rhodesian history, such as arrival of the Pioneer Column, and helped to serve the immediate white nationalist aims of securing white unity by 'papering over the diversity of histories behind the presence of an assortment of white people in the colony'.<sup>10</sup> While this is an astute analysis, Musvoto's conflation of the national anthem with other popular songs such as 'Rhodesians Never Die' into a single white Rhodesian discourse of identity is reductive. I argue that the national anthem and popular songs actually represent different, white, visions of Rhodesia, which illustrate the complicated relationship between nationalist 'invention' and 'imagination'.

The chapter explores how the broad consensus which had allowed whites to accept their new flag and constitutional status was challenged and eroded by the guerrilla war. White argued that the war intruded into Rhodesia's domestic politics less than is often acknowledged, and the idea of a white community under constant siege by the late 1970s is exaggerated by the overwhelming bias of memoirs toward soldiers and farmers, those whites worst affected by the war.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Rhodesians were not ones to let reality get in the way, as evidenced by their self-image as hardy rural people of the frontier. White Rhodesians certainly felt that they were at war and this was reflected in their cultural output. As Tara Brabazon noted when discussing the cultural phenomenon of Gallipoli in the Antipodes: '[p]erhaps the most obvious reason why this battle in thinking has been so significant

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<sup>8</sup> A. Musvoto, 'Filling the Void in Our National Life: The Search for a Song that Captures the Spirit of Rhodesian Nationalism and National Identity', *Muziki: Journal of Music Research in Africa*, 6, 2 (2009), pp. 154-162.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>11</sup> White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, p. 16.

is that Australian and New Zealand non-military populations have been largely untouched by bombs, guns and invasion. This lack of knowledge serves to fetishise the idea of war...'<sup>12</sup>

White's own work on memoir and fiction, as well as that of Anthony Chennells, has shown how pervasive the war was in Rhodesian popular culture, most notably in novels.<sup>13</sup> This chapter shows how the experience of the process of choosing a new anthem served to demonstrate the limits of the RF's power in building a Rhodesian nation. It highlights the way in which a more popular short-term vision of Rhodesia encouraged by the Ministry of Information and the military, rooted in the here-and-now of the conflict with nationalist guerrillas and a mythologised, militarised, past, challenged the cabinet and its committee's attempts to 'perform statehood', to use Miles Larmer and Eric Kennes' terminology, through its official national anthem.<sup>14</sup> Analysing music also allows us to highlight the fractured nature of the Rhodesian state – different elements of which pursued different visions of the nation through different types of songs. This sits alongside the work of White on how the fractured nature of the Rhodesian state frustrated its smooth day-to-day operation. Her study of conscription demonstrated how ambiguities and conflict between state organisations reduced attempts to extend the call-up among whites and Africans to farce.<sup>15</sup>

The events explored in this chapter seem to bear out the analysis of Consuelo Cruz, who has argued that identity politics is bound up within 'a *collective field of imaginable possibilities*'.<sup>16</sup> The folk songs were less hidebound by a need to seem timeless and appropriately 'national' and they reflected an identity relevant to the moment of UDI and war and to a narrow constituency of white

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<sup>12</sup> T. Brabazon, *Tracking the Jack: A Retracing of the Antipodes* (Sydney, 2000), p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, pp. 146-147; L. White, "'Heading for the Gun": Skills and Sophistication in an African Guerrilla War', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52, 2 (2009), pp. 236-259; A. Chennells, 'Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War', in N. Bhebe & T. Ranger (eds.), *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (Oxford, 1996), 102-129; A. Chennells, 'The Treatment of the Rhodesian War in Recent Rhodesian Novels', *Zambezia*, 5 (1977), pp. 177-202.

<sup>14</sup> E. Kennes & M. Larmer, 'Rethinking the Katanganese Secession', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42, 4 (2014), pp. 741-761.

<sup>15</sup> L. White, 'Civic Virtue, Young Men, and the Family: Conscription in Rhodesia, 1974-1980', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37, 1 (2004), 103-121.

<sup>16</sup> C. Cruz, 'Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make Their Futures', *World Politics*, 52, 3 (2000), p. 277. Italics in original.

Rhodesians. They complicate arguments about nation and identity and raise other questions. Where do such visions of the nation come from? What gives them their power? How can one locate where invention ends and imagination begins? Is such a division useful or merely arbitrary? The close connections between the folk singers and the Rhodesian government demonstrates just how hard these things can be to pin down and underline the state's intrusion in and shaping of both an official and a popular process of making the nation.

### **‘Guide us Lord, to Wise Decision’: The Search for a Rhodesian National Anthem, 1967-75**

The process of choosing a new national anthem to replace ‘God Save the Queen’ was a part of the RF’s wider agenda of ‘symbolic decolonisation’ traced above. The logic which underlay these processes was elucidated by the RF leader and Prime Minister, Ian Smith, as early as 1967. In an article in *Rhodesian Commentary* Smith stated:

The British national anthem has been used for many years. We were very happy. There weren’t any problems. We were proud.

But we have been through incredible experiences. We have been denied the right to use this symbol and this person because the whole concept of the Queen has been distorted by party politicians.

We have been patient and we will go on being patient. But while it was appropriate in the past – and even if we had not been through this bitter experience – the time would have come when Rhodesians would have thought of something more in spirit with the African continent.<sup>17</sup>

The search for a new Rhodesian national anthem was one of several attempts by the RF government after UDI to negotiate the transition from an imperial to a post-imperial settler state through attempts to create and promote a distinctly ‘Rhodesian’ nationhood and identity. Yet it took a decade for an anthem to appear long after many other ‘national’ symbols: the currency, flag, head of state, and honours and awards system had been replaced with Rhodesian alternatives.

Like the flag, the government decided to open the national anthem up to a public competition, with submissions for lyrics and music to be adjudicated by a panel. Such an approach

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<sup>17</sup> ‘New Anthem, Flag and Awards’, *Rhodesian Commentary*, 1, 45 (9 October 1967), p. 1.

was in keeping with the RF's populist character, and with its previous attempts to get the public on-side in the nation-building process. This was not a uniquely Rhodesian solution. Public competitions have historically been a relatively common strategy for nations seeking anthems.<sup>18</sup> On the African continent, besides Rhodesia and Mozambique, Nigeria was holding its own public competition in 1977.<sup>19</sup> A populist, 'imaginative', element was thus introduced into all of these states inventive processes from the very start. In the Rhodesian case, unlike the flag competition (see chapter two), the national anthem competition received a large number of submissions from the public.

Thus, the RF's methods were similar to other states in Africa undertaking their own post-colonial nation building projects. Just as the Rhodesian project drew to a close in the mid-1970s in neighbouring Mozambique, the FRELIMO leadership, having forced the Portuguese to hand over the reins of power, was advertising its own competition for a new national anthem in time for Independence Day. Unlike the RF, the FRELIMO government closely controlled the competition: submissions were managed through local party offices and a list of themes which were expected to be included in submissions was published. These themes were: Organisation and Unity, Armed Struggle, Social Victories of the Revolution, Liberation, Production, and The Struggle Continues.<sup>20</sup> Basto observes that the submissions received were judged to be so poor that FRELIMO had to produce its own anthem in order to have something ready for the Independence Day celebrations.<sup>21</sup>

Both FRELIMO and Rhodesia were seeking to find new anthems to demonstrate their independence, however the Rhodesian competition was undermined by the fact of minority rule and the RF's divisive social, political and economic policies which made its challenge of finding a song that would speak for its fundamentally divided people with one voice even greater. Year after year, hundreds of submissions were deemed to be inadequate. All of the Rhodesian public's musical compositions (some of them original, some suggesting other tunes) were ultimately eschewed in

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<sup>18</sup> A. Marshall, *Republic or Death! Travels in Search of National Anthems* (London, 2015), p. 203, p. 313.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>20</sup> Basto, 'The Writings of the National Anthem', pp.189-190.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

favour of 'Ode to Joy', selected on 26 August 1974. Mary Bloom's R\$500 prizewinning lyrics were chosen over a year later on 24 September 1975.<sup>22</sup>

Much had happened between 1969-70, when the debates about the Monarchy and constitution took place, and 1975. The defiance of many white Rhodesians masked fundamental shifts against the long term possibility of a white-ruled state in Africa. Between sanctions busting in a climate of increasing economic hardship, the fall of a trusted and much-needed ally in Portugal in 1974, and an escalating war it was clear that the anthem was rather low on the RF's agenda. However, the Rhodesian flag's genesis shows that the RF was capable of changing national symbols in relatively short order when it wanted to. What is more surprising, therefore, is that the cabinet took so long trying to get it right. It agonised over the music and lyrics of the anthem which it hoped would reliably represent the 'new' independent Rhodesia to the world whilst at the same time providing a focus of loyalty in a highly fractious and racially segregated community.

The responsibility for devising and implementing Rhodesia's new national symbolism initially lay with the Cabinet Committee on Honours and Awards, which was comprised of several high-level cabinet members.<sup>23</sup> The Committee's first report dedicated to the national anthem was seen by cabinet on 8 May 1968 and noted that submissions had been invited from the public in October 1967 with some thirty-eight potential anthems received. The Committee recommended proceeding with competitions for the words and music of the anthem. The winners should be awarded a cash prize and 'in order to attract the best talent in the respective fields the prizes should be substantial'.<sup>24</sup> The Committee asked for £900 for these purposes, arguing that 'this is a modest price to pay for something which will be of permanent value to the country'.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 145.

<sup>23</sup> Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, (hereafter CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (68) 92, 'Rhodesian flag – Second Report of the Committee on Honours and Awards', 8 May 1968.

<sup>24</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (68) 93, 'National Anthem: Third Report by the Committee on Honours and Awards', 8 May 1968.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

The report suggested the qualities that the judges should be looking for in the new anthem. It was suggested that the anthem be ‘completely’ non-political and non-racial, and that it ‘contain an element of prayer without being specifically related to any one religion.’<sup>26</sup> The judges were instructed to also look for something which could be sung by untrained voices, in English, and which would be ‘reasonably short’.<sup>27</sup> The Committee also hoped that ‘both words and music should express the sincere feelings of Rhodesians and confirm their aspirations for their country’.<sup>28</sup> However, these conditions were not communicated to the public in the adverts placed in *The Rhodesia Herald*.<sup>29</sup>

The conditions are revealing. The language of the anthem reflected Rhodesia’s British imperial heritage and long English-speaking tradition. The requirement duly ignored ChiShona and SiNdebele, the two major African languages spoken in Rhodesia which few whites ever bothered to learn. The only way many whites could communicate with their African servants or staff was through the pidgin ‘Chilapalapa’ or ‘kitchen kaffir’, which had long been used in the South African mining industry.<sup>30</sup> The other criteria for the anthem were as bland as the requirements for the new Rhodesian flag had been. The RF went in for a lowest-common-denominator form of nationalism that would be offensive to no one and as widely acceptable as possible. While its stipulation that it be ‘non-racial’ was in keeping with the RF’s propaganda line that their country was no pocket version of neighbouring South Africa but instead a place where cultural differences accounted for the distinction between the fortunes of white and black, it precluded any involvement from blacks while not explicitly excluding them from the competition.<sup>31</sup> Only whites could produce ‘aspirations for their country’ which would be acceptable to the RF and its mandarins. Thus, whilst the process of choosing Rhodesia’s national anthem seemed relatively laissez faire compared to that in Mozambique, it was in fact structured to cater exclusively for whites. The RF’s lack of inspiration

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<sup>26</sup> RC(S) (68) 93, ‘National Anthem’.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Appendix A

<sup>29</sup> Advertisement for Honours and Awards, *The Rhodesia Herald*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> J. Frederikse, *None But Ourselves: Masses versus the Media in the making of Zimbabwe* (Harare, 1982), p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> S. Onslow, ‘South Africa and the Owen/Vance Plan of 1977’, *South African Historical Journal*, 51, 1 (2004), p. 131.

ensured that the process was driving it towards another 'blank canvas' of a symbol and, like the flag, there was another attempt to integrate popular imagination with the state's attempt at invention.

In July 1969 the issue of the national anthem was being dealt with by its own committee. Some 492 entries had been received as part of the competition for the words of the anthem.<sup>32</sup> The committee produced a shortlist of five entries, of which the commissioners reported the following: 'none of the selections, in their present form, could be regarded as suitable texts for Rhodesia's National Anthem.'<sup>33</sup> The Rhodesians faced the same dilemma as their Mozambican neighbours: 'the postulate of an active, sovereign people coexisted with the presumption of its passivity, conceived as the inability to produce the anthem which would represent the people's very self.'<sup>34</sup> However, unlike Mozambique, their preconditions were already ensuring that most of the people were excluded from the process of choosing the anthem.

Realising the need to keep things moving, the commissioners argued that some of the submissions on the shortlist could be national anthems 'given a measure of modification and alteration beyond what was envisaged under the terms of reference'.<sup>35</sup> Hundreds of Rhodesians had failed to adequately represent themselves and their countrymen as desired by the RF government and so the committee offered to alter the submissions themselves. The hybrid text they produced was as follows:

Lift up your voices in praise of Rhodesia,  
Whose granite boulders lie warm in the sun,  
Tints of our trees when the leaves are unfolding,  
Splendid our skies when the daylight is done.

Proud are our hopes and worthy our labour,  
Shining our cities arise from the plains,  
May God be our help in the tasks that await us,  
Teach us the faith that inspires and sustains.  
Onward Rhodesia, go forward with pride,

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<sup>32</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), RC(S) (69) 130, 'The National Anthem', 23 July 1969.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2

<sup>34</sup> Basto, 'Writings of the National Anthem', p. 185.

<sup>35</sup> RC (S) (69) 130, 'The National Anthem', p. 2.

Clear be our vision as skies are above,  
Deep as a mine be our true understanding,  
Warm be our fellowship, perfect our love.

CHORUS:

Onward Rhodesia, go forward with pride,  
Glory your beacon and honour your guide,  
May you shine brighter yet,  
May your star never set,  
Onward, onward Rhodesia.<sup>36</sup>

The report included a draft press statement on behalf of the commission, explaining how and why the lyrics had been chosen:

In the view of the judges this “hybrid” has all the qualities which they were seeking for the national anthem. It has a charm of description most apt to Rhodesia. It includes the use of the word “Rhodesia” which the judges feel is important, although not essential. It has a refreshing depth of literary quality while at the same time it includes certain conventional qualities which the judges considered important. It is also full of the right sentiments and invocations.<sup>37</sup>

A number of key themes emerged from the committee’s ‘hybrid’. Firstly, the anthem praises the landscape, which helped locate the essentially European settler polity of Rhodesia within Africa. The centrality of the landscape to settler societies has long been established. Nicholas Thomas observed that pioneering discourse: ‘privileges the landscape as the raw material for a divinely ordained work, in which there is a kind of opportunity for growth and progress that seems lacking in the old world.’<sup>38</sup> The concept of empty lands which had to be tamed or developed by white settlers had provided a justification for initial conquest and land appropriation and for subsequent minority rule. It allowed white settlers to possess a guilt-free sense of place and purpose, privileging their relationship with landscape and nature over that with the indigenous population.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., Annex B.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., Annex C.

<sup>38</sup> N. Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Oxford, 1996), p. 156.

<sup>39</sup> Brabazon, *Tracking the Jack*, p. 55; C. Elkins & S. Pedersen, ‘Introduction – Settler Colonialism: A Concept and Its Uses’, in C. Elkins & S. Pedersen (eds.), *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century* (New York & Abingdon, 2005), pp. 1-20.

The hybrid anthem specifically mentions the ‘granite boulders’, which were scattered across the Rhodesian landscape, at Great Zimbabwe, and in the Matopos Hills in Matabeleland where Rhodes and early Rhodesian heroes such as the members of the Shangani patrol were buried in what has been described as a kind of Rhodesian Valhalla.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, the line ‘Deep as a mine be our true understanding’ recalls the pioneer era and early European settlement in Rhodesia as well as the central importance of mining to the Rhodesian economy. The image of shining cities rising from the plains evokes the modernity and progress that whites believed they brought to Rhodesia, a frequently cited justification for continued white rule in the UDI period. As the authors of a booklet by the National Federation of Women’s Institutes put it:

Less than 80 years ago the land now called Rhodesia was wild and primitive. Today it is prosperous, with beautiful clean towns and cities, flourishing businesses, thriving industries, well planned farms carved out of the virgin bush, and a growing European section of the community who by their courage, faith and perseverance have developed a fine progressive and modern state.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly by using the language of marching forward and noting ‘the tasks that await us’, the anthem echoes ministerial pronouncements that Rhodesia was a developing country with a bright future that needed to remain in the hands of responsible and civilised (white) people.

Finally, it invokes God, reflecting the professedly religious nature of Rhodesian society – this dovetailed neatly with the RF’s self-image in which it was the defender of ‘Western, Christian civilisation’ in a continent riven with atheistic communism. Father Arthur Lewis, called ‘the high priest of the RF’ by Godwin and Hancock, was one of the loudest voices of white Rhodesia’s discourses of religious legitimation. To him and others like him Rhodesia was a ‘lifeboat from the sinking ship of Christian civilisation.’<sup>42</sup> Indeed, as seen in the case of the new flag, the argument for including religion in national symbols had been made from the very start of the process of symbolic

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<sup>40</sup> D. Lowry, ‘White woman’s country: Ethel Tawse Jollie and the making of White Rhodesia’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23, 2 (1997), p. 256; T. Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture & History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe* (Oxford, 1999), p. 30, p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> Federation of Women’s Institutes of Rhodesia, *Great Spaces Washed with Sun: Rhodesia* (Salisbury, 1967), p. 33.

<sup>42</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 129; A. Lewis, *Rhodesia Live or Die* (Salisbury, 1973), p. 12.

decolonisation. Despite the RF not publicly issuing a list of approved themes, as FRELIMO had done in Mozambique, submissions to the national anthem competition were thus shaped informally through a series of shared settler discourses prevalent within white Rhodesian society.

While the committee tinkered with the words of the anthem, there was still the matter of what it would actually sound like. In a cabinet memo dated 23 September 1970, the committee noted that none of the ninety-four musical suggestions received since the original musical competition had closed had proved to be better than the original winner, by Mr G. Ascough of Fort Victoria.<sup>43</sup> It was suggested that the waters of public opinion be tested with Ascough's anthem by having the British South Africa Police (BSAP) Band record a version to be played on the radio and television.<sup>44</sup> Cabinet had unanimously agreed to this, but was concerned to 'avoid public criticism that an anthem is being forced upon Rhodesians'.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, they suggested that no official announcement about the anthem should be made. Instead, they rather timidly recommended that it be aired prior to the Independence Day parade on 11 November and at the end of Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation (RBC) and Rhodesian Television (RTV) transmissions. It was believed that this was the best way to gauge public opinion.<sup>46</sup> Like the issue of the Monarchy in chapter three, the cabinet's caution on the anthem showed how the RF's inventive processes were constrained by popular imagination. The commissioners remained optimistic, however, expressing confidence that 'after a few such playings the anthem will receive enthusiastic acceptance by the majority of Rhodesians.'<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that this did not prove to be the case because several months later the competition for lyrics for the anthem had been opened up again. A memo dated 3 December suggested contacting the seventeen contributors to the Rhodesian anthology of poetry as well as 'other well-

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<sup>43</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (70) 182, 'National Anthem', 23 September 1970.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

known poets' in an attempt to improve the quality of the entries.<sup>48</sup> This was a similar approach to FRELIMO's second attempt to produce a Mozambican national anthem. FRELIMO invited submissions from professional composers, and then sent a select group away to a retreat to listen to other national anthems in the hope of inspiring them.<sup>49</sup> While the RF did not quite go this far, the move to solicit professional poets suggests a further shift away from processes of popular, bottom-up, imagination to top-down, state directed invention.

The cabinet's new guidelines were brief: a short, English-language anthem which should 'express the aspirations of all Rhodesians as one people before God', with a simple, consistent (although not necessarily rhyming) metrical pattern.<sup>50</sup> Additionally it was noted that 'the verses should have a timeless quality and should not contain any reference to current affairs or depend upon topicality; the words should possess dignity and good taste.'<sup>51</sup> Whilst UDI, sanctions busting and the fight against 'communism' were all trotted out in RF propaganda on a daily basis, they were deemed unsuitable for a national anthem. This was not the case with other anthems. Marshall has noted that some of the best-known anthems such as France's '*La Marseillaise*' and the USA's 'The Star Spangled Banner', were written with conflict, or the imminent threat of conflict, in mind.<sup>52</sup> This perhaps reflected the fact that, while it strenuously denied it, the RF was engaged in a civil war against the nation's own inhabitants, not a marauding foreign power as France and the US had been when their anthems were composed. Indeed, given that the white Rhodesians themselves were the foreign invaders, as portrayed in black nationalist music, referring to the guerrilla war was simply too divisive. It could never be a national rallying cry, the RF's narrative of the war having no purchase beyond the white minority.

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<sup>48</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (70) 229, 'Guide Lines for the Lyrics of the Rhodesian National Anthem', 3 December 1970.

<sup>49</sup> Basto, 'The Writings of the National Anthem', p. 195.

<sup>50</sup> RC (S) (70) 229, 'Guide Lines for the Lyrics', pp. 1-2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Marshall, *Republic or Death!*, p. 14.

Despite these efforts the cabinet was still discussing the national anthem three years later. At a meeting on 3 July 1973 the cabinet remained unsatisfied with the best the Rhodesian public could produce and it was suggested that a classic hymn be used as a basis for the tune instead, since this was a hallmark of some of the most familiar anthems.<sup>53</sup> This went against a Smith's 1967 suggestion that the Rhodesians were looking for 'something more in spirit with the African continent' but ultimately reflected the predominantly European nature of white Rhodesian cultural expression.<sup>54</sup> Concerned at how long this process was taking, cabinet was reminded that 'there was some urgency in this matter since Rhodesia had now been without an anthem for seven years'.<sup>55</sup>

The prevarication of 1973 demonstrates not only the cabinet's musical incompetence, but suggests once again the caution inherent in the RF's search for an official anthem. The committee was so keen not to offend anyone that it had to continually reject public submissions as unsuitable. This suggested that the white Rhodesian populace possessed alternative visions of the nation, visions the RF itself was promoting elsewhere, but which were deemed inappropriate for an official 'national' anthem. The apparent musical shortcomings of white Rhodesia's amateur lyricists remind one of Robert Blake's withering description of Rhodesia as a 'cultural desert' where 'neither literature, music, nor the visual arts flourished in its arid soil'.<sup>56</sup> It also suggests how the RF's prejudices crept in to their otherwise cautious search for a national anthem. Their preference for a European-sounding anthem reflected their views about the superiority of European culture, and suggested that the black audiences they wanted the anthem to represent were supposed to appreciate this superiority.

By 1975 war and failed negotiations had made Rhodesia's fortunes somewhat less propitious and it still lacked a national anthem. In April, the panel of judges reported that they had by now received 793 different lyrics to accompany Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' as recorded by the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> 'New Anthem, Flag and Awards'. *Rhodesian Commentary*.

<sup>55</sup> RC(S) (73), 'Twenty-Sixth Meeting', p. 6.

<sup>56</sup> R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (London, 1977), p. 278.

South African Broadcasting Corporation Orchestra.<sup>57</sup> Ironically, given the white Rhodesian hatred of international organisations and unbeknownst to the RF, it was also an anthem Rhodesia shared with the European Council, which had adopted it three years earlier.<sup>58</sup> The exercise was becoming increasingly narrow and European as time wore on, with the cabinet casting around for whatever they could.

The committee had once again narrowed the lyrics submissions down to their fifteen favourites, citing their personal preference for No. 21 with some amendments (underlined below):

God almighty, bless Rhodesia,  
May her firm foundation be,  
Liberty for all her people,  
Justice and equality.  
May her children stand united,  
Striving for the common good,  
May their onward march be lighted,  
By the torch of brotherhood.

The judging panel said of the anthem; ‘This has the merits of simplicity, sincerity and directness, with an absence of sentimentality and lush poetic imagery. The word ‘Rhodesia’ is embodied in a completely natural manner and the poem displays a nobility of utterance...’<sup>59</sup> Unlike the previous submission this proposed anthem eschewed the merits of the Rhodesian landscape in favour of a heavy emphasis on national unity among Rhodesians, perhaps in a reflection of the more desperate internal situation, whilst retaining the religious tone. To white Rhodesians, words like ‘liberty’, ‘justice’ and ‘equality’ were code-words for minority-rule, anti-communism and anti-(black) nationalism. Though the primary focus shifts away from the land to the people it was still a narrow view predicated on white supremacy. Discourses of the Rhodesian nation in the mid-1970s, shaped

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<sup>57</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, RC(S) (75) 42, ‘National Anthem’, 3 April 1975; (CL) (Smith Papers) RC(S) (75) 35, ‘National Anthem’, 25 March 1975.

<sup>58</sup> ‘The European Anthem’, European Union Website, accessed 17 January 2014 at [europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/anthem/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/anthem/index_en.htm)

<sup>59</sup> RC(S) (75) 42, ‘National Anthem’.

as they were by war and isolation, were becoming increasingly exclusive in spite of the cabinet's best efforts at a unifying national anthem.

In the increasingly violent context of the guerrilla war, it is interesting to note one of the small changes made to the lyrics by the panel (which are underlined in the quote above). In the first instance 'her children' had replaced 'the races'. The panel argued that such a direct reference to race 'was inappropriate in a national anthem and could, in the future if not now, have a divisive effect.'<sup>60</sup> It also suggests, as Musvoto has argued, the aim of the anthem in uniting ethnically different groups of Europeans as well as having a cross-racial appeal.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the judges' recommendations, it was a truncated version of submission No. 498 which eventually became the Rhodesian national anthem:

Rise, O voices of Rhodesia,  
God may we Thy bounty share.  
Give us strength to face all danger,  
And where challenge is, to dare.

Guide us, Lord, to wise decision,  
Ever of Thy Grace aware.  
Oh, let our hearts beat bravely always,  
For this our land within Thy care.

Rise, O voices of Rhodesia,  
Bringing her your proud acclaim,  
Grandly echoing through the mountains,  
Rolling over far-flung plain.

Roaring in the mighty rivers,  
Joining in one grand refrain,  
Ascending to the sunlit heavens,  
Telling of her honoured name.<sup>62</sup>

This new anthem conformed to the tropes which have been identified above in a wide range of previous submissions. Like so many others, it was addressed to God, noted the beauty of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Musvoto, 'Filling the void', p. 156.

<sup>62</sup> Quoted in Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, pp. 145-6.

Rhodesian landscape. The first verse perhaps focuses more upon the ongoing civil war than the criterion for selection allowed – with its emphasis on facing ‘danger’ and ‘challenge’ rather than the promise of the future which existed in many other submissions. It ended with a reference to Rhodesia’s ‘honoured name’, unusual given the country’s international pariah status. Apart from a few extremist sympathisers scattered across the globe Rhodesia lacked any sort of diplomatic recognition even from its closest ally, South Africa, and was subject to blanket United Nations trading sanctions.<sup>63</sup>

By 1975 the national anthem had become something of a national joke. The long, drawn-out process had demonstrated the weaknesses of the RF’s vision for a white-ruled Rhodesian nation, maintained in the face of all logic and of changing global and regional contexts. Much like the flag and the constitution before it, the process of choosing a new national anthem had been relegated to white Rhodesians through a series of vague and unimaginative guidelines. Meanwhile, the African nationalist movements had their own musical traditions to draw upon and regional protest songs such as the church hymn *Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika* (known as *Ishe Komborera Africa* in Rhodesia and adopted as independent Zimbabwe’s national anthem until 1994) expressed black aspirations better than any Rhodesian anthem ever could.<sup>64</sup>

Indeed, music was central to the black African nationalist movements in Rhodesia at this time too. The cultural nationalist programme adopted by the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), one of the two major nationalist movements, of which ZANLA was the military wing, employed music as part of its strategy for winning over the rural black population in Rhodesia.<sup>65</sup> *Chimurenga* (struggle) songs about the war against the Rhodesians were broadcast on radio stations run by the nationalist movements in exile and singing and dancing formed an important part of

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<sup>63</sup> G.V. Stephenson, ‘The Impact of International Economic Sanctions on the Internal Viability of Rhodesia’, *Geographical Review*, 65, 3 (1975), pp. 277-389.

<sup>64</sup> M.O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe 1898-1965* (Bloomington, 2002), pp. 33-34. Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music*, pp.190-219.

<sup>65</sup> Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music*, pp. 190-219.

ZANLA's all-night *pungwes* (meetings) that it held in African settlements.<sup>66</sup> Music was an important facilitator of social and communal cohesion, providing morale boosts and entertainment on both sides of the conflict.

The torturous process of choosing a new national anthem had also shown the tensions between 'inventing' and 'imagining' in nationalism. Ostensibly, the public nature of the process meant that the RF state should simply have been anointing a popular 'imagination' of the nation as expressed through the lyrics of the anthem. What the documents actually show is that time and again the RF disliked how white Rhodesians represented themselves in verse. The RF's understanding of how Rhodesian nationhood should be represented in the national anthem gave the judges the Sisyphean task of finding an anthem which would offend no one but still manage to be emotive and meaningful for the domestic audience. This is a point worth emphasising. The RF rejected 792 possible lyrics for the Rhodesian national anthem, and even the one that was finally selected was modified. Likewise, it rejected every single musical composition submitted after much to-ing and fro-ing, instead opting to fall back on the work of Beethoven. What then does 'Rise O Voices of Rhodesia' represent? Is it an RF invention of tradition? Is it Mary Bloom's imagination? It was a synthesis of the two, a bowdlerised state version of a member of the public's lyrics.

Extrapolating from some of the terms of reference it is possible to speculate where ordinary Rhodesians kept going wrong. It is likely that many submissions fell down at the hurdle of making the lyrics apolitical, non-racial, and timeless. The rejections and constant revisions to the guidelines suggested that ordinary Rhodesians focused more on the divided present and particular understandings of the past than the country's shining future. These preoccupations had to find cultural outlets somewhere.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 203-7.

## Alternative Visions: Rhodesian Folk Songs of the 1970s

Whilst a succession of cabinet committees agonised over the national anthem's lyrics and musical compositions for a decade, other music offered different visions of the Rhodesian nation. This music reflected an entirely different set of priorities and self-conceptions from those which constrained the cabinet committee in its search for a timeless, inclusive, anthem. They suggested that, years after symbolic decolonisation had begun; the RF's nationalist vision remained contested, even within different arms of the state. These divisions highlighted the limits of symbolic decolonisation as a viable nation-building strategy.

White Rhodesian folk songs were unashamedly located in the realities of a divisive here-and-now, or in a particular teleological understanding of the settler past. They were closely linked to the guerrilla war, and some of them even proudly flaunted Rhodesia's pariah status. They represented a different type of Rhodesia, both domestically and internationally, than the national anthem: a masculine, militarised, and racialised Rhodesia, the existence of which was predicated on military tradition and success. Rhodesia was not so much an anodyne sunny landscape as it was a battleground on which a white minority fought against the forces of decolonisation, Communism, and permissiveness. Pete Shout, administrator of the website 'Rhodie Music' explained the role these songs played in white society:

The White population were desperately looking for encouragement and morale boosting and this came in the form of material written and recorded by artists such as Clem Tholet and John Edmond. Their songs spoke to the fears and aspirations of the population and added a strong "gung-ho" element of defiance and resilience. Rhodesians, denied such boosting from any other quarters, took the songs to their hearts and, for many, they became anthems of sorts.<sup>67</sup>

The themes of the songs were, of course, also central tenets of the propaganda circulated by the Rhodesian Ministry of Information. Rather than a disconnect between the RF and white Rhodesian society, the militarised folk songs show how the two sites of discourse production

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<sup>67</sup> Personal communication from Pete Shout to author, 26 November 2015.

interacted and influenced each other. They give a sense of the cultural context in which the RF's nation-building projects took place where, like Yinan He's studies of Sino-Japanese relations show, popular expectations served to structure the possibilities of state 'invention' of tradition.<sup>68</sup> This reflected the Janus-faced nature of the RF state, a state that needed to both 'perform' statehood through national symbols for an external and black audience, but also had to mobilise its narrow white constituency to fight to defend minority rule. The militarised folk songs represented a divisive and violent nationalism in which the 'official' national anthem was anomalous. They were not a case of popular 'imagination' pushing against state 'invention'. The songs represent the confluence between the RF's propaganda and popular understandings of Rhodesia and demonstrated how strongly their themes resonated in white Rhodesian society.

Many white Rhodesians greeted UDI with a sigh of relief, welcoming it as a fresh start. This was certainly the spin that the RF had put on it. It was accorded a mythic significance in RF propaganda. 1965 became Rhodesia's 1776, 11 November its 4 July. In the heady years following UDI, events in the phoney war against Great Britain and the actual war against nationalist guerrillas became legend in a short space of time. For some whites, being 'Rhodesian' at this time meant sharing in this experience. The cohesion fostered by the perception of adversity was, at first, very useful to the RF and its propaganda machine. The Ministry of Information's propaganda never ceased to remind Rhodesians of the struggle they faced, alone against the world. However, in the long-term this sense of community proved brittle as Rhodesia began to fall apart in the 1970s.

There are only passing references to popular folk songs in the literature on white Rhodesia. Donal Lowry noted that popular music gave an indication of the importance of anti-Communism in white Rhodesian political culture, but did not analyse any of it.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, in terms of cultural expressions of white Rhodesia much more scholarly focus has been upon Rhodesian literature, most

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<sup>68</sup> See Y. He, 'War, Myths, and National Identity Formation – Chinese attitudes towards Japan', in G. Bouchard (ed.), *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents* (London, 2013), pp. 223-242.

<sup>69</sup> D. Lowry, 'The Impact of Anti-communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture, ca. 1920s-1980', *Cold War History*, 7, 2 (2007), p. 186.

notably in the work of Anthony Chennells, whose literary analysis of Rhodesian war fiction sought to uncover the ‘particular denseness of the myths and prejudices of the white community.’<sup>70</sup> Indeed, through the work of David McDermott Hughes and Luise White, Rhodesian literature from the 1960s and 1970s has proven a particularly rich resource for studies on subjects as diverse as Lake Kariba and the African franchise.<sup>71</sup>

Despite a considerable overlap of themes with the war novels, songs constitute an important source for explorations of white self-perceptions and understandings of the nation. They shed light on the public performance of nationhood, expressed through music, a collective experience rather than the individualised, private readings people took from Rhodesian literature. Songs reached a wider domestic audience than literature, as they were often performed to civilians and soldiers and were played widely on the state-owned RBC radio network. As Brabazon has noted of popular music: ‘[occasionally] popular culture produces a text, a moment of feeling, that is so saturated with the space and time from which it was derived, that it provides a commentary that is far more valid than that of journalists, theorists and writers.’<sup>72</sup> Tholet and Edmond have been chosen as particularly popular representatives of a kind of song which showed a different white vision of the Rhodesian nation.

### **The Oeuvre of Clem Tholet**

The most famous of the militarised folk songs was Clem Tholet’s ‘Rhodesians Never Die’, released in 1973. Tholet was the son-in-law of Ian Smith, and along with Andy Dillon, was responsible for creating what Godwin and Hancock have described as Rhodesia’s unofficial national anthem.<sup>73</sup>

The story of Rhodesia, a land both fair and great.

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<sup>70</sup> Chennells, ‘The Treatment of the Rhodesian War’, p. 177.

<sup>71</sup> D.M. Hughes *Whiteness in Zimbabwe: Race, Landscape, and the Problem of Belonging* (London, 2010); White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*.

<sup>72</sup> Brabazon, *Tracking the Jack*, p. 105.

<sup>73</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 14.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, an independent state.  
This was much against the wishes  
Of certain governments  
Whose leaders tried to break us down  
And make us all repent.

Chorus

We're all Rhodesians  
And we'll fight through thick and thin,  
We'll keep our land a free land,  
Stop the enemy coming in,  
We'll keep them north of the Zambesi  
Till that river's running dry,  
And this mighty land will prosper  
For Rhodesians never die.

They can send their men to murder,  
And shout words of hate,  
But the cost of keeping this land free,  
Will never be too great,  
For our men and boys are fighting,  
For things that they hold dear,  
And this land and all its people will never disappear.

Chorus

We'll preserve this nation  
For our children's children,  
Once you're a Rhodesian no other land will do,  
We will stand tall in the sunshine  
With truth on our side.  
And if we have to go alone,  
We'll go alone with pride.<sup>74</sup>

'Rhodesians Never Die' was defiant, bullish, and militaristic. Though it spoke of the future its focus was on the present and the fight to preserve Rhodesia. It expressed the defiance with which many white Rhodesians responded to the early global condemnations of UDI. It lionised the contributions of the Rhodesian soldiers, out in the bush fighting (and often beating) nationalist guerrillas infiltrating across the Zambezi escarpment. It appeared long before call-ups, net emigration, economic downturn, and regional isolation. In the early 1970s, when the cost of maintaining white-rule was still low (for whites, of course) no cost was too great.

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<sup>74</sup> Frederiske, *None But Ourselves*, p. 51.

This was a song praising the actions of the RF. It endorsed their illegal act, reinforced their main propaganda tropes, and suggested white Rhodesians were not going anywhere. The great silence in the song, and others like it, was Rhodesia's black population. This was ironic given the crucial role that they played in the military itself where black soldiers, such as those in 1 Battalion, Rhodesian African Rifles (a unit that Luise White claims was the most effective in the Rhodesian military) were vital to the maintenance of minority rule.<sup>75</sup>

Clem Tholet himself was 'a hugely popular performer', prominent in the local Rhodesian music scene as the founder and runner of the Rhodesian Folk Music Club.<sup>76</sup> Through the Club, he helped other folk singers with their careers and 'was a local icon so had a ready made [sic] audience for his material.'<sup>77</sup> At the same time he was an active collaborator with the Rhodesian Ministry of Information and its propaganda apparatus. Tholet's close personal relationship to the prime minister meant that he had an intimacy with the white Rhodesian establishment which, combined with his advertising background, made him aware of the propagandistic merit of some of his songs. Julie Frederikse's interviews with Tholet and Rhodesian military psychological operations ('psyops') operatives demonstrate how atrocities were set to music and used as propaganda by the RF government. In June 1978, nine British missionaries and four children were murdered at the Elim Pentecostal Mission in the Vumba Mountains in Eastern Rhodesia. Soon after, the Rhodesian military was on the scene exploiting it for maximum propaganda value to show the justice of white Rhodesia's cause.<sup>78</sup> Tholet describes how he was writing a song at the time called 'Another Hitler':

I'm a white Rhodesian and that song [Another Hitler] was about white Rhodesians' feelings... this song... was used in a film we made to put across our view of our situation, and, the day I was recording that song I found out about the Elim Massacre... That's why the song sounds so angry. I was immediately told that the footage of the

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<sup>75</sup> White, "Heading for the Gun", p. 253.

<sup>76</sup> Pete Shout to author, 26 November 2015.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> D. Maxwell, 'Christianity and the War in Eastern Zimbabwe: The Case of Elim Mission', in N. Bhebe & T. Ranger (eds.), *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (London, 1996), pp. 58-90.

massacre would have to go in the movie, by a Ministry of Information guy. The decision was then made to use the song over that footage.<sup>79</sup>

This demonstrates the close relationship between the folk troubadours of Rhodesia and elements of the RF state. Tholet was being employed by the Ministry of Information to supply the soundtrack for a propaganda film. Yet there was a greater significance to the song, as an apt example of how white Rhodesian attitudes had changed since the war escalated in the late 1970s:

If the world had another Hitler  
Then where'd they go this time?  
Would they stand aside  
And let him roll on through?  
Would they keep their smug expressions  
Or hide trembling in the dark,  
While some little country  
Stood and fought for the truth?

Chorus

And yet the world attacks my country  
For keeping her people free,  
With all the brave young men.  
That she can find.  
There's 30,000 heroes  
Stand to fight the Russian tide:  
Will no one come  
And fight here by their side?

Well its forty years or so  
Since Britain gave the call,  
And without question  
We fought by her side:  
Will the battle that we're fighting  
Be the one history marks  
As the day when British honour finally died?

Chorus

And if another Joseph Stalin  
Or his big ol' daddy, Marx  
Should raise their heads  
In America the free,  
Would those down-home folks stand idle  
While the hammer-and-sickle flew  
Above the flame that burns on Liberty?

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<sup>79</sup> Frederikse, *None But Ourselves*, p. 133.

They forget about the evil  
That lies rampant and raging in their homes  
They forget about the ghettos and the bussing,  
And the Indian people that they tried to kill off.

Is it any wonder that we gag  
On the sanctimonious junk they try to feed us  
Through the barrel of a gun,  
While nations scrap and scramble  
For this piece of land we own:  
Do they ever stop  
To think of where it leads?

'Cuz this battle's not the last one,  
We're only stepping stones –  
And finally, democracy will bleed.<sup>80</sup>

Though 'Another Hitler' draws upon long established white Rhodesian discourses – most notably anticommunism but also a 'blood price' narrative of Rhodesian participation in conflict – it is tonally very different from 'Rhodesians Never Die'. Gone is the bullish defiance, replaced by a weary bitterness. The song almost desperately calls for international help for a now-beleaguered white Rhodesia. The idea that Rhodesia would last into the future disappears amidst the recriminations which pepper the lyrics. 'Another Hitler' also focused on the past, particularly the past as a series of conflicts. Meanwhile, Tholet, and by implication the Ministry of Information who had hired him, attacked Britain and America for their hypocrisy. These two countries were singled out for both their domestic race relations and for failing to help white Rhodesians in their struggle against communism.

This change in tone reflected a Rhodesia's changing situation as its rebellion wore on. The cost of maintaining white rule had increased significantly since 'Rhodesians Never Die' was penned. Given the tone of the RF's propaganda in the late 1970s it is unsurprising that 'Another Hitler' was chosen to appear in a Ministry of Information-made film. It suggests a state exulting in a kind of righteous martyrdom rather than attempting to make its national project less exclusive. It presents a

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 133-134.

message, not of hope, but of despair. It can hardly have raised the spirit of war-weary white Rhodesians.

Indeed, by June 1978 Rhodesia's days were numbered. On March 3, 1978, the Internal Settlement Agreement had been reached between the RF and a coterie of internally-based black leaders of limited popularity and credibility. As part of this settlement the RF was ostensibly giving up power and 'Rhodesia' was about to be replaced by the short-lived compromise state of 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia'. In a way 'Another Hitler' perfectly encapsulates the situation of the RF in the late 1970s – a moribund organisation which had long run out of ideas. By the time it was recorded, the nation-building project had come to a premature halt leaving something that neither whites nor blacks could invest in.

### **Total War Rhodesia: John Edmond's 'Troopiesongs'**

As our exploration of Clem Tholet has demonstrated, the Ministry of Information was actively commissioning and using popular musicians, the same went for the Rhodesian military. These were songs with different visions of the nation, for different audiences, sponsored by different arms of the state. While the folk songs and the national anthems were the products of both 'invention' and 'imagination', they were so in different ways and to different ends. In his work on the South African Border War, a conflict fought by South Africa's military between the 1960s and 1980s across the southern African region as a means of maintaining a buffer-zone around South Africa, Michael Drewett has noted how the military promoted an image of masculinity to generate support for its all-male conscription policy, and this image had been taken up in popular culture.<sup>81</sup> The same thing happened in Rhodesia in the 1970s, involving at least one of the same individuals: John Edmond. Edmond's songs offer particular visions of the place of gender and race in the nation.

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<sup>81</sup> M. Drewett, 'The Construction and Subversion of Gender Stereotypes in Popular Cultural Representations of the Border War', in G. Baines & P. Vale (eds.), *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern African's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (South Africa, 2008), pp. 94-119.

John Edmond, born in Northern Rhodesia, was a popular folk singer based in South Africa. A prolific singer-songwriter with some military background, Edmond was a star in South Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>82</sup> In the late 1970s he became white Rhodesia's military balladeer, releasing four albums of 'troopiesongs' between 1976 and 1979.<sup>83</sup> 'Troopie' was white Rhodesian slang for soldier. After Rhodesia's independence in 1980, Edmond began to release 'Troopiesongs RSA' albums for the soldiers of the South African Defence Force (SADF).<sup>84</sup> Writing from South Africa in 1982, Edmond explained the thinking behind these songs in a book he described as 'not a political work but only the truth'.<sup>85</sup>

Edmond's songs immortalised decades of violent colonial repression and Rhodesian masculinity as expressed through combat. They were rooted in a vision of Rhodesia's past as ceaseless conflict. In the fiery crucible of these wars the meanings of 'Rhodesian' and 'Rhodesia' had been forged. The song 'Daddy is a Trooper' described generations of military service. The narrator's great grandfather fought in the 1890s, his grandfather in the First World War, his father in the Second and himself in the 'Bush War' of the 1960s.<sup>86</sup> Edmond sang a song about the Shangani patrol in 1893, songs about UDI, Rhodesia's isolation ('We Stand Alone'), and what amounted to a personal paean to each individual unit of the Rhodesian military.<sup>87</sup> In several of these songs Edmond referred specifically to black soldiers in songs like 'Black Boots', a tribute to the white-officered Police Support Unit, or 'The Happy Safari', a song written in Chilapalapa, which Edmond claimed was the primary way for African and European troops to communicate.<sup>88</sup> In this sense his music reflected an idealised, white, view of Rhodesia in which Africans and whites fought side by side

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<sup>82</sup> Pete Shout to author, 26 November 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Troopiesongs Phase 1 was released on the M A P Label in 1976, Phase 2 also on the M A P Label in 1977, Phase 3 was released in 1978 on the Joburg Label, and Phase 4 in 1979 on the Phillips Label. Personal communication from John Edmond to author, 7 April 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Drewett, 'The Construction and Subversion of Gender Stereotypes', p. 97.

<sup>85</sup> J. Edmond, *The Story of Troopiesongs and the Rhodesian Bush War* (Johannesburg, 1982), p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup> More unit-based songs included 'Sweet Banana' for the Rhodesian African Rifles, 'The Incredibles' for the Rhodesian Light Infantry, and 'Let's Have a Hooley' for the Selous Scouts. A 'Hooley' was Rhodesian slang for a raucous party, for which the Scouts were infamous. *Ibid.*, p. 29, p. 31, p. 33.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

against a common, communist aggressor. Edmond believed that the African recruits to the Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR) joined out of revenge for families killed by nationalist soldiers.<sup>89</sup> Timothy Stapleton has shown that personal motivations of black soldiers were far more complicated than a simple desire for revenge.<sup>90</sup> Presenting the terms in which his vision of the nation allowed blacks to participate Edmond claimed: '[m]any critics, ignorantly labelled the Rhodesian struggle as a racial one. The struggle was fought against communism by Black and White side by side. The conflict was planned and engineered by White people in Moscow and carried out by Africans against united Rhodesians.'<sup>91</sup> This arguably reflected Edmond's the imperatives of military patrons, who would have wanted to promote cross-racial harmony in a combat environment to maintain discipline amongst Rhodesia's multiracial armed forces.

Edmond's songs also presented a highly gendered Rhodesia in which men and women had specific roles to perform in (military) service to the nation. As Drewett has noted in the South African case, popular cultural representations of militarised society ensured women's roles were highly circumscribed.<sup>92</sup> In Edmond's songs, they were sweethearts, wives, mothers, and daughters and, in one case, a gun. The song 'Mother, A Lady' was typical of these tropes of femininity, describing a stoic old woman waiting at home while her male sons served out in the Bush, the chorus intoned:

She's a Mother – a lady a friend and a wife  
Who silently suffers each day  
She's a Mother – a lady a friend and a wife  
That nobody dare take away.<sup>93</sup>

Anne McClintock observed that even where women play active roles in nationalist projects 'women's potential military power is muted and contained within an infantilized and sexualised

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

<sup>90</sup> See T. Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers in Colonial Zimbabwe 1923-80* (Rochester, 2011).

<sup>91</sup> Edmond, *The Story of Troopiesongs*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>92</sup> Drewett, 'The Construction and Subversion of Gender Stereotypes', p. 101.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

ideology of the family...<sup>94</sup> In the SADF, such women were known as 'Botha's Babes', in the Rhodesian military they were called 'Brown Birds' if in the army and 'Blue Birds' if in the air force. Edmonds noted that '[w]omen played a very important role in the Rhodesian war' and paid tribute to them in a song: 'Cammo Clad Angel'. In the song the eponymous 'angel' is portrayed in the various roles in which she supported the (male) Rhodesian soldiery and is ultimately considered to be an object of affection:

She's a Joan of Arc when the battle's on the go  
And her voice inspires on a soldier's radio  
She's a Helen of Troy when all the chips are down  
That cammo clad Angel is always around

Chorus

There's a Bluebird singin' in the sky  
There's a Brownbird on the telephone line  
And she don't dress all fancy and fine  
She's a cammo clad angel  
Angel of mine.

She's a Florence Nightingale besides a sick-bay bed  
With the soft hands of compassion gently on a soldier's head  
She's a guardian angel in the hour of need  
That cammo clad angel's a good friend indeed.

She's a guiding star in the blackness of the night  
And her smiling face seems to make the day go right  
She's a ray of sunshine in the shadows of my fear  
That cammo clad angel always seems to be near.<sup>95</sup>

During the war Edmond acted as an entertainer for the troops and recalls being issued with '[m]ock call up papers... and... a rifle'.<sup>96</sup> He worked with the state-owned Rhodesia Television on documentaries about the military, and his role as a forces entertainer gave him considerable access to the military at a time when movement around the operational areas into which the country had been

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<sup>94</sup> A. McClintock, "'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Women and Nationalism in South Africa", *Transition*, 51 (1991), p. 111.

<sup>95</sup> Edmond, *The Story of Troopiesongs*, p. 95.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

divided was strictly curtailed for other whites, such as journalists.<sup>97</sup> He was involved in key fundraising efforts for soldiers and those affected by the war, events such as Forces '73 (along with Clem Tholet, the SADF Band and others) where he was part of a line up which wowed a 22,000 strong crowd in Salisbury Police Grounds in aid of the 'Terrorist Victims' Relief Fund.<sup>98</sup>

The songs of John Edmond then, were a popular cultural expression of the military's vision of the nation. This was a nation where fighting was a cross-generational bond and masculine rite of passage for 'Rhodesian' men; a nation where black and white fought side-by-side against an external communist aggressor; a nation where women waited eagerly behind the lines to support the nation's (male) warriors. Like the military, this vision of the nation was strictly hierarchical. Everyone in it - white men, black men, white women – had a place and a function and they knew it.

The remainder of this section further explores this militaristic vision of the Rhodesian nation in Edmond's songs. It analyses three further Troopiesongs which demonstrate particularly well the alternative and exclusionary conceptualisations of Rhodesia which permeated white society: 'U.D.I. Song', 'The Green Leader Theme', and 'The Last Word in Rhodesian'.<sup>99</sup>

'The Last Word in Rhodesian', was the last Troopiesong Edmond wrote about Rhodesia and it provides a good impression of the way in which some whites looked at their fledgling nation even as it fell apart:

R is for the regiments who fight the winning fight  
H is for the homefires that the folks are keepin' bright  
O is for the other ranks, and officers as well  
And D is for the die-hards, who will even fight in Hell  
E is for the enemy that just won't ever win  
S is for the spirit of our men that won't grow dim  
I is for the independence that we have to share

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<sup>97</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice & Peace in Rhodesia, *Rhodesia – The Propaganda War* (London, 1977). Edmond, *The Story of Troopiesongs*, p. 94.

<sup>98</sup> *Outpost*, 51, 11 (November, 1973), pp. 14-15.

<sup>99</sup> These songs are available to listen to on Youtube. 'U.D.I. Song', Youtube, accessed 1 April 2015 at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpUoYgV\\_9SQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpUoYgV_9SQ); 'The Green Leader Theme', Youtube, accessed 1 April 2015 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXDoUYyeUEQ>; 'The Last Word in Rhodesian', Youtube, accessed 1 April 2015 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qlb41SW1iy0>,

And A is for the arms that we will always have to bear

Chorus

And the first word in Rhodesian is 'Rhodes', that's a name that everybody knows  
It may be as Rhodesian as the flag of white and green  
But the last word in Rhodesian is 'Ian'.<sup>100</sup>

The Rhodesia depicted in the 'Last Word in Rhodesian' is one defined entirely by military experience. While this is naturally in keeping with a genre of music called 'troopiesongs' it had a wider resonance in white Rhodesian society, which had a penchant for playing soldiers even before many were forced to actually go into the bush and fight. Out in the rural areas farming families transformed their homes into fortresses, and housewives went to urban supermarkets armed with automatic weapons.<sup>101</sup> Like many settler societies, white Rhodesian society was heavily armed and highly dependent upon coercion.

The perception of shared military experience and hardship proved to be a source of cohesion in white Rhodesian society. 'The Last Word in Rhodesian' briefly invoked the settler heritage of the country's founding father, Cecil Rhodes, linking him explicitly to the contemporary premier Ian Smith through the fortuitous structure of the word 'Rhodesian.' It had little to say about the rest of Rhodesia's history, however. Furthermore, it had absolutely nothing to say about what happened beyond the parameters of the conflict or when the fighting ended. The idea of history as an Orwellian perpetual conflict that defined the nation emerged in Edmond's other work, such as 'U.D.I. Song' which acted as another of (white) Rhodesia's 'unofficial' anthems and was remarkably similar in tone and sentiment to 'Rhodesians Never Die':

Since the wagon wheels rolled north, it has been many years  
The country has been built and run by hardy pioneers  
They fought the Matabele and many a hardship too  
With flag unfurled we'll tell the world and sing this song to you.

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<sup>100</sup> Lyrics from 'Last Word in Rhodesian', Youtube, accessed 1 April 2015 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qlb41SW1iy0>

<sup>101</sup> See Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 112.

Chorus

And you can call us rebels and you can call us rogues  
We were founded by an Englishman by the name of Cecil Rhodes  
We fought for this dear land of ours and many men did die  
And we may have to fight again so this is UDI.

In her time of need we stood behind the mother land  
Our soldiers fought in Flanders Field and in the desert sand  
In steaming jungles we have fought a common enemy  
But these things have been forgotten since the days of victory.

(Chorus)

And now the sun is setting upon a great regime  
The children are all leaving the nest where they were weaned  
And now the youngest child has left the parent and the home  
And it can prove its worth if it's only left alone.

(Chorus)

We may have to fight again so this is U.D.I.<sup>102</sup>

The main focus of 'U.D.I. Song' was on the military prowess of white settlers in Rhodesia, starting with the 'founding myths' of the late nineteenth century conflicts with Africans (see chapter six). The song cites the Matabele (Ndebele) as they were considered to be a typical imperial 'martial race', more warlike than the agglomeration of other polities referred to as 'the Mashona'.<sup>103</sup> It moves on to highlight Rhodesians' service in the First World War ('Flanders Field') and the 'desert sand' of North Africa in the Second World War, along with the Rhodesian contribution to the counterinsurgency campaign in the 'steaming jungles' of Malaya in the 1950s. The song then presents UDI as the next battle in a long line of battles fought by Rhodesian settlers. The Rhodesian past in 'U.D.I. Song' is little more than a series of unending wars. It was these wars that defined the (white) nation, demonstrating Luise White's point that UDI-era Rhodesia was 'more of a cause than a country'.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Edmond, *The Story of Troopiesongs*, p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> J. Alexander, *The Unsettled Land: State Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 16-19.

<sup>104</sup> White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, p. 28.

The national past presented in the song is also quite explicitly white. Rhodesia was founded by hardy (white) pioneers who fought black Africans, these whites 'built and run' the country and have defended it ever since. 'U.D.I. song' was a hymn to settler colonialism and European military might. The depiction of Rhodesia as a shared white military experience is the central theme of Edmond's troopiesongs but, like Tholet, his song-writing changed with the times, as demonstrated by the final song in this section.

On 20 October 1978 an air strike by the Rhodesian Air Force on a Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) camp in Zambia furnished one of the most infamous pieces of Rhodesian propaganda of the war. The strike was led by a pilot using the pseudonym 'Green Leader' and Frederikse described it as '[t]he ultimate in media-military collaboration.'<sup>105</sup> 'Green Leader' read out a prepared statement to Lusaka's air traffic control tower. This exchange was recorded and passed into Rhodesian legend after Edmond used the audio in the song 'The Green Leader Theme':

These are the thoughts that run through the sky-warrior's mind  
He is a man a very special kind

Our wings are a fortress to our land  
Today a special mission's planned  
Dear land today I'll serve thee well  
My mother land has gone through hell  
No one in the world to heed her  
Tomorrow the world will know Green Leader

Fight anywhere and everywhere  
Speed and courage and a prayer  
Seek and strike, strike from above  
Do it for the ones you love  
And as our sections now deploy  
A minute to run seek and destroy  
Swift to support men and machines  
Aspire to achieve our dreams

(music fades under a recording)  
Lusaka Tower, this is Green Leader. This is a message for the station commander at Mumbwa, from the Rhodesian Air Force. We are attacking the terrorist base at Westlands Farm at this time. This attack is against Rhodesian dissidents and not against Zambia. Rhodesia has no quarrel – repeat, no quarrel – with Zambia or her Security

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<sup>105</sup> Frederikse, *None But Ourselves*, p. 169.

Forces. We therefore ask you not to intervene or oppose our attack. However, we are orbiting your airfield at this time and are under orders to shoot down any Zambian Air Force aircraft which does not comply with this request and attempts to take off. Did you copy all that?

*(Reply:)* Copy.

*(Green Leader):* Roger. Thanks. Cheers.

(song resumes)

This is what God would have willed  
Kill or see the children killed  
My little country cries for peace  
No one will hear her case at least  
No one in the world to heed her  
Tomorrow the world will know Green Leader.<sup>106</sup>

This raid was seen by many whites as a triumph. Lauren St. John recalled years later that: ‘we listened to it [the recording] and laughed at the sheer daring of it and celebrated the way people in countries not at war celebrated the World Series or the FA Cup.’<sup>107</sup> T-shirts were printed and sold showing caricatures of African guerrillas running in panic on the front bearing the slogan ‘The Rhodesians Are Coming’, and a heap of rubble on the back saying ‘The Rhodesians Have Been’.<sup>108</sup>

This white triumphalism celebrated the deaths of hundreds of Africans, whose status as combatants was never confirmed, and the way in which the white pilots had exulted in the awesome and terrifying power they wielded in their bomb bays. It was a perfect crystallisation of the exclusive, bloodthirsty nature of white Rhodesian nationalism. It is also indicative of the stage-managed nature of Rhodesian warfare in which folk singers like Edmond actively collaborated with the Ministry of Information and the military to produce pro-settler propaganda.

While triumphal ‘The Green Leader Theme’ expresses a different view of combat to ‘U.D.I. Song’ which in some way presaged Rhodesia’s ultimate collapse. In it Edmond went through the

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<sup>106</sup> Adapted from Frederikse, *None But Ourselves*, p. 169 and Edmond, *The Story of Troopiesongs*, p. 27.

<sup>107</sup> L. St John, *Rainbow’s End: a Memoir of Childhood, War & an African Farm* (London, 2008), p. 134.

<sup>108</sup> Frederikse, *None But Ourselves*, p. 170.

same transformation that Clem Tholet had with 'Another Hitler'. Again, the artist was collaborating closely with the state, in this case the military, which made the cockpit recording available to Edmond. The song immortalises 'Green Leader' but at the same time carries a tone of weariness reflecting years of warfare. This reflected the increasing militarisation of white Rhodesian society. It describes a Rhodesia at its wits end, striking out viciously as part of a destructive and pointless kill or be killed philosophy. The shared, folksy image and determined tone of 'U.D.I Song' are nowhere to be seen. Instead, like 'Another Hitler', Edmond's 'Green Leader Theme' evokes a shared experience of isolation, betrayal, and despair among white Rhodesians. At the same time the whole thing was tinged with bitterness – as this same shared experience was causing whites to leave the country in ever-greater numbers by the late 1970s.

This section has tried to move beyond the RF and its nation-building project of symbolic decolonisation by highlighting some alternative interpretations of Rhodesia in popular music. It has argued that these songs, with their overwhelming focus in the present and a particular notion of the past as a chain of conflicts, presented different visions of the Rhodesian nation. Their focus suggests that it was easier to look backwards than forwards, and that 'Rhodesia' had become intimately associated with struggle and conflict. The songs used their particular interpretation of the past to make sense of the present and they changed over time– turning the shared experience from something ebullient and positive to a far wearier, isolated, negative one. The way the messages in these songs changed demonstrated the underlying frailty of white Rhodesian society in a post-colonial world.

## **Conclusion**

In December 1979, as Zimbabwe-Rhodesia once again became a British colony in preparation for the transition to independence as Zimbabwe, there was a strange clash of cultures in Salisbury. As Christopher Soames, the interim Governor, arrived at Government House, a small crowd of white Rhodesians welcomed him, waving Union Jacks. *The Herald* reported: 'When Lord

Soame's [sic] motorcade... passed by – the demonstrators cheered “legality at last” and then loudly and emotionally sang “God Save the Queen”.<sup>109</sup> At the same time, a ‘small group of young women passing by tried to drown the demonstrators’ singing with the Zimbabwe-Rhodesian national anthem’ (which was still ‘Rise O Voices of Rhodesia’).<sup>110</sup> It was like the debates of the late 1960s all over again.

The ‘battle of the anthems’ suggests, for some white Rhodesians, the processes of symbolic decolonisation remained as contested years after they had finished as they were when the original debates took place.<sup>111</sup> By 1975 Rhodesia had all the symbols of nationhood but little of the substance. When ordinary whites thought of Rhodesia in the 1960s and 1970s, they tended to see it as an experience shared. When things were good in the years after UDI, the comfort and affluence that most immigrants could never have afforded at home helped to make many white Rhodesians loud and proud advocates of the RF’s illegal rebellion. But as Brownell’s research has shown when the going got tough, plenty of the ‘tough’ got going, their departure facilitated by dual citizenship and social and cultural links elsewhere.<sup>112</sup>

The national anthem and the folk songs were two different, failed attempts to grapple with the same problem. The anthem tried to represent a ‘nation’ in a timeless and inclusive manner, which made it banal. Though hundreds of public submissions were received, the RF and the judging panel continually found the Rhodesian public’s efforts inadequate and perhaps too offensive or controversial. Likewise, despite seeking a unique Rhodesian musical composition, the RF eschewed the public’s efforts and fell back on a widely-recognised tune by a long-dead German composer. In its inventive process for this major outstanding national symbol the RF had tried to appeal to an international, multi-racial audience, thus diluting the invention. It suggested the precarious balancing

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<sup>109</sup> ‘God Save the Queen – and an Old Union Jack’, *The Herald*, 13 December 1979, p. 19.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> ‘Battle of the anthems’, *The Herald*, 19 December 1979, p. 12.

<sup>112</sup> J. Brownell, ‘The Hole in Rhodesia’s Bucket: White Emigration and the End of Settler Rule’, *The Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3 (2008), pp. 591-610.

act involved in inventing traditions: to succeed they had to have a clear targeted audience, like the flag, while still remaining plastic enough to accommodate differences within that audience.

While the anthem was supposed to be timeless, most white Rhodesians were unsurprisingly focused in the present, and this found cultural expression not just through Rhodesian war fiction, but also through songs like those of Tholet and Edmond. It was here that white Rhodesians could say things that were not acceptable for a 'national anthem' which had to satisfy the standards of an international and multiracial audience. It was here they could spit defiance in the face of the former colonial power and the rest of the Western world which had condemned UDI. It was here that they could exult in their individuality, and invented traditions of bravery and struggle, and their ideas of racial superiority. This music was far from anodyne. It presented alternative visions of white Rhodesia which were militarised, gendered, and racialised. The linkage of historical conflicts to present day ones was not unique to white musicians during the 'bush war'. Turino has argued that ZANLA cadres explicitly linked the very same conflicts of the 1890s that Edmond sang about (the first *chimurenga*) with their current fight against the Rhodesian state (the second *chimurenga*).<sup>113</sup> Both sides made use of understandings of the past were used to weave a national narrative and serve as an anchor for contemporary identities.

White Rhodesian songs also avoided looking forward to a future that proved impossible to imagine as other than an endless war (as far as many whites were concerned) by looking back upon a more comforting, if also intensely violent, imagining of the past as a chain of conflicts stretching back into the late nineteenth century. These pasts linked 'Rhodesia' intimately to the idea of conflict and struggles in which whites continually proved themselves and their worth in winnable wars. They were a way of making sense of the present whilst paradoxically denying blacks membership of a society that their military service was helping to preserve.

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<sup>113</sup> Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans and Popular Music*, p. 200.

These were all themes which resonated with the RF regime's domestic propaganda offensive. In the eyes of the RF, there were few better advertisements for UDI within Rhodesia than the likes of 'Rhodesians Never Die' and 'U.D.I. Song'. Among some parts of the white population they proved to be useful and remarkably popular rallying cries for an economically, socially and demographically diverse white community, many of whom had only been in the country for a short period of time. They helped promote a gendered, racialised, conceptualisation of Rhodesian society which was amenable to both ordinary Rhodesians and their RF rulers, but it was also an exclusionary message which had severe ramifications for the longevity and viability of the RF's nation-building project. Basto has noted the attempts of national anthems to capture and represent the 'fictive people' of a nation. The RF's own 'official' effort represented no one. Its intense propaganda operations and support of white folk songs about war, minority-rule and anticommunism showed that the RF's conceptualisation of the Rhodesian nation was based around the narrow white electorate and how it failed to move beyond this constituency even in imaginative terms.

This propaganda was both constitutive and reflective of popular imaginations of the Rhodesian nation that the songs drew upon. This makes it hard to categorise the songs as nationalist 'inventions' or 'imaginings'. Songs like 'Another Hitler' and 'The Green Leader Theme' were certainly invented by both the singers and elements of the RF state that supported them, but they also resonated strongly with the white population's imaginations and were successful because of it.

This narrow focus was all well and good when white rule was relatively secure in the mid-1960s and early 1970s. The songs of the latter 1970s tell a different story however, one of desperation, isolation and resignation, suggesting the limited success of the symbolic decolonisation process as a long-term strategy for viable nation-building. That the RF continued to endorse this message reflected the poverty of ideas it had for the long-term survival of Rhodesia as a nation. It failed to make a nation beyond the boundaries of the narrow white electorate that kept it in power. Its worldview, conditioned by former imperial glories in which Rhodesia had shared, prevented it

from generating solutions to the war and the raft of knock-on effects it had upon white society. Black Africans in Rhodesia remained excluded from any meaningful participation in the political process through the whole period of symbolic decolonisation. For all the rhetoric about the birth of a new nation, for Africans 1965 represented a dramatic change for the worse, an end to any possibility of the multi-racial ideas espoused in the 1950s, as problematic as those ideas had been. The lyrics of the new national anthem did nothing to assuage their fears or grievances because the true feelings of many white Rhodesians lay unabashed alongside them in the militaristic folk songs – white rule was a fact, and ‘Rhodesians’ were prepared to fight to maintain it as blacks who suffered the consequences in the rural areas or who joined the guerrilla armies were acutely aware.

## Chapter Five

### Blood and Referendums: the Historical Case for Independence, 1964-65

On October 17 1922 the tiny white Rhodesian electorate went to the polls to make one of the most important decisions in the colony's history.<sup>1</sup> The choice before them was settler self-government or the incorporation of the colony into the Union of South Africa as a fifth province. Previously, Rhodesia had been ruled under the charter of Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company (BSAC) - which is to say not directly by the imperial parliament in Britain - though with incremental increases in settler power. Two organisations advocated the different paths open to Rhodesia: the Rhodesia Unionist Association (RUA) favoured joining South Africa, and the Responsible Government Association (RGA) sought settler self-rule, or 'responsible government'.<sup>2</sup>

The RUA had been formed in 1919 by Afrikaner farmers and enjoyed powerful support in the form of the imperial government, the BSAC and the South African premier and imperial statesman Jan Smuts.<sup>3</sup> Smuts, who toured Rhodesia during the campaign, offered sweeteners in the form of almost seven million pounds 'compensation' to the BSAC for the loss of its charter, ten Rhodesian seats in the Union parliament and a promise to purchase the Rhodesian railway system (thus considerably reducing rates).<sup>4</sup> The Unionists made the case that Rhodesia's 'ultimate destiny' lay within the Union and that the facts supported this: Donal Lowry noted, '[t]he territory inherited its legal system, franchise and civil service traditions from the Cape Colony and, to a lesser extent, from Natal.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia; White Power in an African State* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> D. Lowry, 'White Woman's Country': Ethel Tawse Jollie and the making of White Rhodesia, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23, 2 (1997), pp. 259-281.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Mutambirwa, *The Rise of Settler Power in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) 1898-1923* (London, 1980), pp. 202-3, 206.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201, p. 206.

<sup>5</sup> Lowry, 'White Woman's Country', p. 264. B. Schutz, 'European Population Patterns, Cultural Persistence, and Political Change in Rhodesia', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 7, 1 (1973), pp. 3-25.

The RGA, meanwhile, was fronted by such figures as the Cape Irish lawyer Charles (later Rhodesia's first prime minister) and one of the empire's most remarkable female politicians, Ethel Tawsie Jollie.<sup>6</sup> The RGA had been formed in 1917 and was based on fears of 'Boer' domination of the 'British' Rhodesians. Indeed, anti-Afrikaner sentiment played a significant part in the RGA's referendum campaign, as Lowry explained, Jollie: 'wanted the settler community to be in effect a loyal imperial barracks in south-central Africa which could intervene to contain nationalist and socialist sedition on its southern flank.'<sup>7</sup>

On polling day, the fiery rhetoric of the RGA, which stressed the independent, but also British, spirit of Rhodesia, won out against the RUA, and Rhodesians chose self-government by 8,774 votes to 5,989.<sup>8</sup> On 1 October 1923, Rhodesia formally became a self-governing colony within the British Empire, with a Governor acting as the sole, and largely powerless, representative of Britain.<sup>9</sup> This was a constitutional arrangement unique within the British Empire. Despite the small number of white settlers involved in the 1923 referendum, it is hard to overstate the significance of this event not only for white rule in Rhodesia, but also for the development of a nascent Rhodesian identity. Lowry observed that:

the separate political identity of the country was by no means certain until the majority of the tiny... settler electorate voted in a referendum in 1922 to reject its incorporation as a fifth province of the Union and in favour of responsible government, thus setting the territory's autonomous course.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, the victory of the RGA in 1922 provides yet another example of the multiplicity of identities that white settlers possessed. On the one hand, the rhetoric of the RGA had played up themes of imperial loyalty and Britishness. On the other, these same themes combined to create

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<sup>6</sup> See Lowry, 'White Woman's Country', and D. Lowry 'Making Fresh Britains Across the Seas: Imperial Authority and Anti-Feminism and Rhodesia', in I.C. Fletcher, L.E.N. Mayall & P. Levine (eds.), *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, nation and race* (London, 2000), pp. 175-190.

<sup>7</sup> Lowry, 'White Woman's Country', p. 268, quote p. 271.

<sup>8</sup> Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Lowry, 'White Woman's Country', p. 260.

something which was considered to be uniquely 'Rhodesian'. Speaking of the Rhodesian 'national spirit' during the campaign Jollie tried to elucidate these overlapping identities:

Rhodesians put forward their freedom from racial [i.e. Afrikaner and British], Asiatic, colour and industrial problems which could not be shut out under Union [with South Africa]... and finally their desire to keep the essential quality conveyed in the word Rhodesian – a sort of super-British imperialism, a loyalty to the Flag and Empire which appears to be old-fashioned in Great Britain to-day, combined with conviction that Rhodesia is the finest spot in the Empire or under the Flag – in short, a local patriotism so strong and so disinterested as to merit the title of National.<sup>11</sup>

This was the image of Rhodesia that the white supporters of self-government found most appealing: not an ancillary of its southern neighbour with whom it shared so much, but a distinct bastion of 'super-British imperialism'. It was an idea that reflected in the prejudice expressed towards Afrikaners or 'Boers' and the fear of a 'poor white' problem which it was argued would result from joining the Union.<sup>12</sup>

A closer reading of Jollie's views tells a different story however. Already she marks out a trope which would become popular in later decades, of harking back to an idealised image of a past Britain where Rhodesian-style loyalty was not 'old-fashioned'. Jollie's vision of Rhodesian-ness also relies upon 'othering', the act of defining one's self in opposition to a vague, metaphysical, 'other', and one of the key tenets of any self-defined national identity. Ryszard Kapucinski observes: 'to understand ourselves better we have to understand Others, to compare ourselves to them, to measure ourselves against them.'<sup>13</sup> In this case the othering related to South Africa – Rhodesia was not South Africa with its racial problems, white poverty, and unrest. Like the loyal rebels of chapter three, even as Jollie asserted her loyalty to a wider imperial ideal, she bullishly promoted Rhodesian nationalism.

The events of 1922-23 echoed through Rhodesian history and gained a renewed salience for Rhodesians of all political persuasions in the late 1950s and early 1960s with the collapse of the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>12</sup> See chapter one.

<sup>13</sup> R. Kapucinski, *The Other* (London, 2006), p. 19.

Central African Federation. In the face of encroaching decolonisation, those advocating Dominion-style independence for Rhodesia would hark back to 1923 as justification for greater autonomy. As events came to a head in 1964-65 both opponents and supporters of an illegal unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) seized upon 1923 as the starting point in a teleological narrative of progress in which the ship of state had been steered by a succession of heroic (white) captains to create a modern, developed, nation.

This chapter explores the way that understandings of history were mobilised by Rhodesian parliamentarians in their debates over the content and form of Rhodesian independence in the period of 1964-65. In doing so, it takes us back to the first phase of the RF's nationalist project in which it was pursuing negotiated minority-rule independence within the Commonwealth, demonstrating the similarities and differences between the different phases of the RF's nation-building project in the UDI-period. In focusing on UDI, I build upon the historiography and documentary collections of the period leading up to the UDI on 11 November 1965. Much of this literature focuses upon constitutional minutiae, best demonstrated by the magisterial constitutional history of Claire Palley.<sup>14</sup> Others, such as the pro-settler historian J.R.T. Wood and Philip Murphy, have explored the negotiations which took place between the British government of Harold Wilson and Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front (RF) government in the mid-1960s. Wood's work with the Rhodesian archives has been supplemented by the 'British Documents at the End of Empire' series edited by Philip Murphy, which by definition focussed on inter- and intra-governmental communications.<sup>15</sup> These collections of primary documents are bolstered by the tranches of documents relating to these negotiations published by both the British and Rhodesians at the time.

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<sup>14</sup> C. Palley, *The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia 1888-1965 with Special Reference to Imperial Control* (Oxford, 1966).

<sup>15</sup> J.R.T. Wood, *So Far and No Further! Rhodesia's Bid for Independence During the Retreat from Empire 1959-1965* (Johannesburg, 2005); P. Murphy, *Central Africa Volume I: Closer Association, 1945-1958* (London, 2005); idem, *Central Africa Volume II: Crisis and Dissolution, 1959-1965* (London, 2005).

This chapter approaches the events of 1964-65 from a different perspective, looking at how the history of events such as the referendum of 1922-23 was invoked as a justification for a UDI. By the 1960s there was a broad political consensus in favour of greater Rhodesian independence, but there were deep divisions over the manner in which it was to be achieved – a negotiated settlement or a unilateral declaration of independence. For the pro-independence movement this required both a mobilisation of Jollie-esque rhetoric about Rhodesia's Britishness, and an articulation of what it meant to be Rhodesian and why this necessitated greater autonomy. This chapter focuses upon the pro-unilateral independence movement led by the RF as a window into the underlying philosophies of the RF's nation-building project. It introduces and analyses two key historical narratives which were used to make sense of the present, shaping RF policy and actions with consequences for the success of its dream of an independent white-led Rhodesian nation. The first of these was one of 'good governance', relating to the administrative record of whites since 1923 which, it was felt by the RF and its supporters, justified full minority-rule independence. It drew on older rhetoric of colonial development advanced by the British during decolonisation, about giving independence to colonies when they had demonstrated they were ready for it – and was inverted by the RF in the 1960s to say 'if them, why not us?' The second was a 'blood price' narrative in which Rhodesians argued they had earned independence by dint of their contributions to imperial wars – especially the World Wars. This was a belated invocation of a similar argument which had been used decades earlier by the larger settler societies to gain greater autonomy from Britain as a reward for war service. Together, these two narratives showed the RF straddling the boundaries between dependent colony and autonomous dominion as it tried to advance both arguments in its attempts to win independence.

Though contradictions between imperial and national loyalties were ameliorated by decolonisation and the end of empire which made the idea of a 'super-Imperial loyalty' somewhat redundant the idea of a teleological historical narrative of steady progress towards autonomy was still complicated by Rhodesia's cultural, social, and demographic closeness to the United Kingdom. In

her study of the Antipodes Tara Brabazon has shown the influence this cultural closeness can have upon settler societies.<sup>16</sup> Brabazon writes of an immense cultural baggage, making it difficult for former settler colonies to move forward as independent nations outside wider imperial frameworks. As we have seen above, this cultural baggage repeatedly frustrated the RF's early efforts at nation-building, and its later manifestations illustrated the limits of the white nationalist project as it began to crumble in the late 1970s. The previous chapters explored how, at UDI, this relationship was noticeably manifested in the retention of cherished quasi-imperial institutions and symbols and how these were subsequently dismantled and replaced. This chapter and those following it will explore how pro-independence advocates adapted historical discourses in support of UDI and continued minority rule and the questions this raised for what it meant to be 'Rhodesian' in the 1960s.

The chapter thus provides an exploration of the ways history is used in nation-building projects. What makes the Rhodesian example unusual is that there was barely any history to make use of. Another point to note is the remoteness of this history from so many white Rhodesians, a transient population whose natural-born numbers never outweighed those immigrating from abroad. This meant that many Rhodesian-born whites were far too young to remember any of the events described in these narratives and most of the adults were raised in different historical traditions with different personal experiences, particularly of events like the Second World War. It illustrated the challenge of trying to create an impression of permanence among a transient and fractious white community. That the RF and its allies were still able to mobilise 'memories' of the referendum and the wars as part of the campaign to generate support for independence, and were able to do so in such a short space of time, suggests the plasticity of the past as a resource for nation-building projects. However, it also suggests the dangers of visions of the nation grounded in narrow understandings of the past. The RF found it much easier to look backward to a time of imperial glory, when its discourses of racial superiority, loyal rebellion, and blood prices made sense, than to link these ideas in a meaningful way to an uncertain future in a post-colonial world.

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<sup>16</sup> T. Brabazon, *Tracking the Jack: A Retracing of the Antipodes* (Sydney, 2000).

## Talking about talks: Rhodesian independence in the Legislative Assembly

The question of Rhodesian independence was debated in the Legislative Assembly from the 1950s onwards. However, these debates took on a new salience after the dissolution of the Federation in 1963 and the impending independence of Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) under majority-rule governments. As the other constituent territories of the Federation were on their way to independence, the Rhodesian government was still locked in negotiations with Britain over their own independence.

On 26 July 1961 the then-United Federal Party (UFP) government had secured electoral support for a new constitution by emphasising the fact that it would mean greater independence from Britain. A UFP advertisement at the time of the constitutional referendum promised:

“Yes” the key to independence. Independence is a sign of maturity. Independence for our country means that we hold our heads among the nations of the world without glancing over our shoulders. The Reserve Powers of the United Kingdom over Southern Rhodesia are removed in the New Constitution. This makes our independence real.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1961 referendum Rhodesian voters supported the government’s constitutional proposals by 41,949 votes to 21,846. Barber notes that a widespread, though false, belief emerged amongst many Rhodesians that Britain had promised full independence based upon the 1961 constitution if the Federation ever broke up.<sup>18</sup>

This misconception led to a lingering resentment on the part of white Rhodesians, who came to see themselves as victims of a betrayal by the British government as Federation came to an end. This resentment was stirred up by figures such as Sir Roy Welensky, the former Federal prime minister, who wove a narrative of British treachery in his autobiography.<sup>19</sup> The right-wing Dominion Party (DP), meanwhile, were unconvinced by the UFP’s claims of independence, believing that the

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in J. Barber, *Rhodesia: The Road to Rebellion* (Oxford, 1967), p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>19</sup> R. Welensky, *Welensky’s 4000 Days: the Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London, 1964); B. Schwarz, *The White Man’s World* (Oxford, 2011), pp.341-393; Barber, *Rhodesia*, p. 86.

1961 constitution did not go far enough and desirous of dominion status for a Rhodesia that would be fully autonomous within the Commonwealth. Upon coming to power in December 1962 the RF, the successors of the DP, tried repeatedly to secure independence and the ability to amend or replace the 1961 constitution, which they believed made majority rule inevitable. Responding to the events in the other former federal territories, the RF and its supporters argued that if two former colonial office territories could be granted independence, then a white-ruled Rhodesia could too. A teleological interpretation of a Rhodesian tradition of 'good governance' became a central pillar of this argument.

Weeks turned to months, and months to years, and the RF had still failed to secure minority-rule independence on the basis of the 1961 constitution. Elements of the party had long ago made up their mind regarding a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI), and so Winston Field was ousted as prime minister in 1964. The new RF leader, Ian Smith, set up two cabinet committees on the subject, known euphemistically as 'Committee A' and 'Committee B'.<sup>20</sup> Committee A, consisting of the prime minister, deputy prime minister, and ministers of internal affairs, law and order, and trade, industry and development was 'to consider all aspects of a unilateral declaration of independence with a view to the eventual publication of a white paper for public information.'<sup>21</sup> In keeping with the clandestine nature of the exercise, minutes and papers of this committee would not be circulated, but a single copy would be available in the cabinet office 'for inspection by Members of the Committee and by Ministers who are not members...'<sup>22</sup> Committee B, comprising the ministers of finance, agriculture and trade, industry and development was to consider in detail the economic aspects of a UDI.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown (hereafter CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda S.R.C.(S) (64) 329 – 'Committees on Independence: Committee 'A'', 9 November 1964; (CL) (Smith Papers), S.R.C. (S) (64) 330 – 'Committees on Independence: Committee 'B'', 9 November 1964.

<sup>21</sup> S.R.C. (S) (64) 329 – 'Committees on Independence'.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> S.R.C. (S) (64) 330 – 'Committees on Independence'.

A broad agreement in the cabinet that a UDI was the way forward was only the first step, and it was still necessary for the RF to canvass and then demonstrate popular support among the white electorate for its position, if only to strengthen its hand at the negotiating table. In late 1964 the government introduced the Referendum Bill. The proposed referendum question asked voters: ‘Are you in favour of independence based on the 1961 Constitution?’<sup>24</sup> At the Bill’s second reading on 13 October 1964 William John Harper, the ultra-right-wing Minister of Internal Affairs who came from a family of Calcutta merchants still smarting from the decolonisation of India, opened the proceedings, arguing that the Bill would provide an opportunity for arguments in support of and opposition to unilateral independence to be heard.<sup>25</sup> In Harper’s opinion the Bill would ‘enable these two divergent views to be given effect, and to be put to the acid test.’<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Harper argued: ‘Government believes that it is the fervent wish of the people of this country that Southern Rhodesia should be independent, and I believe this feeling and desire for independence has been manifest since 1923 when the voting public took the decision to move towards self-government.’<sup>27</sup>

By invoking the decision of 1923 the Minister was presenting full independence as the next logical step in Rhodesia’s progression from a self-governing colony to an independent nation. This was white Rhodesia’s own peculiar version of the teleological nationalist histories being employed by nationalist movements across the continent as a form of legitimation. The elephant in the room throughout all the debates about independence was, of course, majority rule. Harper, a former leader of the Dominion Party, was a firm believer in the separate development of blacks and the restriction of their political representation to chiefs and headmen.<sup>28</sup> Since he had become the Minister for Internal Affairs (which had the responsibility for ‘African Affairs’) he had worked hard to strengthen the power of chiefs and headmen along with his deputy (and later successor) Hostes Nicolle.<sup>29</sup> For

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<sup>24</sup> Wood, *So Far and No Further!*, p. 249.

<sup>25</sup> Biographical detail from D. Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford, 1970), p. 361.

<sup>26</sup> *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 59, 1964–65, 1512

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> J. Alexander, *The Unsettled Land: State Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe* (Oxford, 2006), p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

Harper and others like him, the debate about independence was a debate predominantly by whites and for whites and if the chiefs assented to a UDI, the African people would follow. This view denied the existence of any other form of legitimate political expression amongst blacks, a view put into practice by the RF by banning all nationalist parties and detaining their leaders in advance of UDI.<sup>30</sup>

In the ensuing debate, it emerged that there was a general consensus that independence was desirable, but strong differences on how it should be achieved. These views reflected competing interpretations of what Rhodesia meant, both as a nation and as an identity for white settlers. One opposition member, Mr Nicholson (Rhodesia Party, Salisbury City) summed this up by noting what he considered to be the two key dates in Southern Rhodesia's moves towards independence: the 1922 referendum and the 1961 constitution. Giving voice to a 'decades of progress' discourse, he noted:

all national parties would have felt that after forty years of self-government the administrative record was at least as good, if not better than, many countries who had also been granted sovereign independence in British Africa in the late '50s and early '60s.<sup>31</sup>

The historical record was repeatedly invoked by government back benchers in the debates about independence. It acknowledged the growth of black nationalism elsewhere in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s only as a negative comparison and refused to accept that similar phenomena might exist in Rhodesia. Rhodesia's historical record of good governance was often wheeled out in response to criticism from opposition members about particular aspects of the referendum. One of the most common of these criticisms was the speed with which the referendum was to take place (it took place on 5 November 1964, less than a month after the second reading debate), which many opposition members found suspect as it would be too soon to properly organise an opposition campaign. In reply Mr Newington (RF, Hillcrest) echoed the sentiments of his Minister, arguing

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<sup>30</sup> J. Alexander, 'Hooligans, Spivs and Loafers?': The Politics of Vagrancy in 1960s Southern Rhodesia', *The Journal of African History*, 53 (2012), pp. 345-366.

<sup>31</sup> *Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly Debates*, 58, 1964, 1589-1590.

‘[w]e have been waiting 41 years for this and it is about time that we had it without any more time slipping by...’<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Mark Partridge, member for Greendale and RF stalwart later to hold several cabinet positions, believed that: ‘South Rhodesia – is entitled to independence; I think that we know that it is so entitled by virtue of its past history.’<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Partridge was so convinced of this, that he believed that independence ‘will be given, and should be given’ irrespective of the result of the referendum. Rhodesia had earned this ‘by right of our history, by right of our good Government...’<sup>34</sup>

‘Good government’ was a vague notion of Rhodesian entitlement based around two central pillars. Firstly: there was an historical understanding that settlers had developed Rhodesia as a country, and in doing so had provided well for the black population. This was a typical colonialist discourse of paternalism in which the European parent lifted the ‘child’ up from savagery, supplying the ‘benefits of modern civilisation’, such as healthcare, agricultural expertise, employment in a cash economy, and so on. The other aspect of ‘good government’ was linked to the historical narrative of the 1922 referendum, in which settlers had been awarded self-government because they were responsible and civilised enough to discharge it. This contrasted with other small settler societies like Kenya where a similarly influential settler population remained under imperial control. By the 1960s it also contrasted with former African colonies moving to majority-rule independence. This form of independence, the RF argued, was untried and liable to result in political instability. By contrast, the logic went, Rhodesia had been stable and relatively prosperous for four decades of settler self-government. This narrative conveniently overlooked the inherent violence of settler colonial rule, and the recent civil unrest which had seen rioting and violence break out in black communities across the country, and which had necessitated almost continuous Emergency Powers laws since the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 1609.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 1610.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 1610.

decade began.<sup>35</sup> ‘Good government’ then, was a notion intrinsically tied to the Rhodesian settler past and the decolonising present.

In the opinion of the RF, Rhodesia’s historical entitlement invalidated any concerns about the speed or nature of the upcoming referendum. The narrative they employed was so pervasive that even some opposition members were quick to concur. Mr Ellman-Brown (Rhodesia Party, Highlands North) agreed that ‘it is our inheritance to try and achieve independence.’<sup>36</sup> However, it was still too soon for the RF to pursue its policy of a UDI uninhibited and Ian Smith found himself repeatedly assuring white Rhodesians that a ‘yes’ vote was not going to be considered an endorsement for UDI and that anyone claiming otherwise was trying to ‘frighten Rhodesians’.<sup>37</sup>

In the event the referendum of 5 November was won by the RF. Sixty-one per cent of an electorate of 105,444 turned out, with eighty-nine per cent of these voters supporting independence on the basis of the 1961 Constitution.<sup>38</sup> Even the RF realised that this largely European endorsement of independence sentiment would not be sufficient, and so in keeping with the views of Harper and Nicolle at Internal Affairs, it consulted the country’s chiefs and headmen whom it had been building up as the sole representatives of black Africans in Rhodesia. As a preface to the referendum, Smith held an *indaba* (meeting) with hundreds of chiefs at Domboshawa between 22 and 26 October, resulting in a unanimous endorsement of independence by the chiefs. The British government disagreed with the RF’s contention that the result of the *indaba* could be taken as a legitimate expression of the will of Rhodesia’s African population, and declined to either send observers to the proceedings or to recognise the result.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> J. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 249.

<sup>36</sup> *Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly Debates*, 58, 1619.

<sup>37</sup> Wood, *So Far and No Further!*, p. 249.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>39</sup> J. Todd, *Rhodesia* (London, 1966), p. 133; Alexander, *The Unsettled Land* and A.K.H. Weinrich, *Chiefs and Councils in Rhodesia – Transition from Patriarchal to Bureaucratic Power* (London, 1971).

The Domboshawa *indaba* was not merely a shallow exercise on the part of the RF, but a logical consequence of their views about the black population, based on yet another constructed historical narrative used to justify white rule. Shortly after the British government's dismissal of the *indaba* a draft white paper dated 30 November 1964 set out this position in great detail. Summarising the history of the relationship between the settler state and "tribal leaders" in Rhodesia, which went back to an *indaba* that Rhodes himself was said to have held to end the war between settlers and the Ndebele in 1893 (see chapter six), the draft white paper argued:

The above clearly indicates that during the short history of Rhodesia it has been accepted practice to consult the traditional tribal leaders. It remains to show how and why the tribal structure works and to indicate why it is more appropriate as a method of consultation to test tribal feeling than alien practices that Britain and others desire to force the people to accept.<sup>40</sup>

The draft white paper went on to argue that African society was communistic and not individualistic. Africans had to have decisions made for them by "tribal leaders".<sup>41</sup> This meant, the RF logic continued, that a one-man, one-vote plebiscite of the type carried out among the European electorate was unsuitable. The memo then railed against 'ignorant' Europeans trying to import unsuitable systems of decision-making 'like crates of merchandise to be dumped on other countries', forced upon 'traditional' African societies which would not understand or value them:

tribal society cannot be regarded as an aggregate of individuals able, expecting or willing to draw their own independent conclusions and who, for voting purposes, can be given equal weight, as democratic theory accords to the individualistic societies of Europe and America.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the paper argued that the experience of other newly independent African states demonstrated the unsuitability of one-man, one-vote systems:

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<sup>40</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), S.R.C (S) (64) 360, 'Draft White Paper: Consultation with Tribal and Traditional Leaders: Chiefs and Headmen', 30 November 1964, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

‘the vote’ is likely to be a transitory device to install a party clique in power and thereafter either that clique will discard it and perpetuate the psychology of tribalism and chieftainship in a new political form or clamp a dictatorship on the people...<sup>43</sup>

The people who would lose out under this kind of system were not just the ‘Tribal Africans’ that the RF claimed to be so concerned about, but the privileged whites who had literally everything to lose. The implication was that Africans could not be trusted to express themselves in a manner appropriate with western notions of democracy if given equal voting rights. The RF’s policy on the franchise represented a rejection of elaborate franchise mechanisms tried out in the 1950s which had allowed some ‘civilised’ Africans onto the electoral rolls.<sup>44</sup> Notions of colonial paternalism and racial superiority masked as cultural difference were deployed as a way to demonstrate why Rhodesia was going to buck continental trends by denying majority-rule independence to its black population. This logic demonstrates how the UDI was a product of its time, a direct white nationalist response to decolonisation on the African continent. The memo set this out clearly:

we have had experience of the lack of consultation with the tribal people and their leaders. You have outstanding examples in the Congo, Tanganyika, Kenya and Ghana, all pointing to this very lack of correct procedure and consultation, and in the Congo, even to this day, they are still killing one another. We must make it clear that under no circumstances do we desire to have a similar set of circumstances arising in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>45</sup>

This was a serious attempt by the RF to present a case for the retention of minority rule independence, linked to its historical discourses of ‘good governance’. However its logic was anachronistic and unrealistic. The British government, at a time when it was granting majority-rule independence to all of its other African colonies, could not accept the RF’s view of ‘Tribal Africans’, a view which put any show of support for black nationalist parties down to coercion.<sup>46</sup> Yet this document, laying out the RF’s views on majority rule in the lead up to UDI, gives us a sense of the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>44</sup> See L. White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (Chicago, 2015) for a detailed overview of Rhodesian franchise mechanisms.

<sup>45</sup> S.R.C. (S) (64) 360, ‘Draft White Paper’, p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

echo chamber in which debates about the legitimacy of minority-rule Rhodesian independence took place and how it relied on selective tellings of history and observations of post-colonial Africa.

Responding publicly to the British government's dismissal of the Domboshawa proceedings a few days before the referendum took place, Smith brought a motion before the Legislative Assembly that 'the House takes note of the attitude of the British Government towards the independence issue'.<sup>47</sup> In this Smith argued once more for Rhodesia's right to independence based upon its historical record:

Our wish, our only wish, is to preserve what we believe is inherently ours in this country, never to interfere in the affairs of anyone else but just be left in peace to be able to settle our own affairs. We claim the right to be able to do this. This claim is based not so much on the principle of conquest but on the record of sound government that we have produced in this country over the last 40 years. Where else on the African continent can the record we have produced be bettered? At any rate, where in the African continent to the north of us? When one sees how much we have done for the Africans of this country there is no other country to the north of us on this continent who can compare, in any shape or form, with what we have done for the people of our own country.<sup>48</sup>

Dwelling further on the past and its legacy, Smith argued that the 'original contract' regarding independence had been established between Britain and Rhodesia in 1923.<sup>49</sup> By Smith's reckoning, it was this 'contract' which had formed the basis of the future development of European society in Rhodesia:

It was that decision on the part of the British Government which gave the Europeans, who were here then, confidence to settle, put down their roots and develop this country, and not only to those people who were here then but to all the other thousands of good British men and women who have subsequently come here and who have settled and put down their roots and have raised their families in this country. They all came because the British Government gave us an undertaking in 1923 that this was going to be our country and from then on we were going to make the decision in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>50</sup>

This argument drew upon a skewed settler-centric imagining of the colonisation of Rhodesia. As we have seen, the relative white population explosion took at least a further two

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<sup>47</sup> *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 59, 404.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

decades to materialise and was a consequence of employment and lifestyle factors rather than confidence in the constitutional minutiae of Rhodesia. Much more important, however, was the convenient opportunity that such a narrative provided for explaining the relationship between Britain and Rhodesia. Responding to the debate, Mr Wilmot (RF, Matobo) described the relationship between Britain and Rhodesia since 1923 as a ‘game’ in which the UK no longer played by ‘gentlemanly rules’.<sup>51</sup> Wilmot made the important and oft-stated distinction between the British people and the British Government. This was a convenient way for supporters of UDI to acknowledge Rhodesia’s British heritage whilst simultaneously advocating its abandonment and attempting to drum up popular support for Rhodesia’s cause in Britain.<sup>52</sup> As section one showed, this was a contradiction which would take years to address but as politicians contemplated UDI there were tentative forays into abandoning all ties between Rhodesia and the old ‘mother country’ showing how even early RF nationalism sought to mark out difference. Wilmot went on to state:

it has been ably demonstrated to us here that it is we who have in Southern Rhodesia to handle the affairs of all us Rhodesians in this country, and the time has come when I regret to say that the dependence upon what people call the “home country” is over. Sir, this is home, here, where we are. 6,000 miles across the sea, I regret, ceased to be “home” some time ago.<sup>53</sup>

Wilmot’s speech focused on the shifting nature of identity in settler colonies as British imperialism retracted across the globe, but it also highlighted another key part of the discourse which ran parallel to Rhodesia’s history of responsible self-government: the degeneration of Britain. Supporters of independence argued that whilst Rhodesia had been ably demonstrating her ability to rule herself, Britain was falling into a post-imperial malaise. This sat alongside the arguments above that the colonies she granted majority-rule independence to were descending into chaos and bloodshed. In his reply to the prime minister’s address, Mark Partridge adopted this historical perspective to illustrate how Britain’s claims to rule Rhodesia were defunct in a decolonising world. He believed that, since the First World War, a common ‘imperial’ loyalty had been superseded by the

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 496.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 496.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 498.

development of 'other loyalties' with a territorial basis.<sup>54</sup> Britain's behaviour towards the Rhodesians was 'in the very worst tradition of... colonialism... whereby a foreign and alien power exercises its so-called rights arbitrarily and without reference to the good of the people concerned.'<sup>55</sup> This language was quite remarkable in light of the RF's thoroughly colonialist denial of African political rights but it was another instance of the 'if them, why not us?' logic which underlay the good governance narrative. Objecting to British and opposition claims that to illegally declare independence would be treasonous and in a style evocative of the American revolutionaries over a century before, Partridge argued: 'How can we be treasonable to a country in whose Government we have no voice? How can we be treasonable to a country that has never spent any money here but merely claims prerogatives that reach back in history?'<sup>56</sup>

What Partridge and his fellow RF backbenchers were trying to claim was that Rhodesia's 'prerogatives', in the form understood and articulated by themselves, trumped British ones. Forty years of 'good governance' should have conclusively proved that Rhodesia deserved its independence. Rhodesia's British heritage was accepted but with the proviso that present-day Britain was no longer worthy of that heritage. This was not a new phenomenon, as seen in Jollie's response to the 1922 referendum decades earlier. James Belich has argued that the idea that British settlers (or settlers of British origin) were 'more British than the British' had common currency across the Empire.<sup>57</sup> Mr Newington articulated this view and in doing so demonstrated how the two parallel narratives joined up:

[i]t is odd that most of that determination which she [Britain] used to have is now emigrated to the colonies and to the dominions. And Britain to-day no longer has the will to rule or the capacity to rule, or the belief in herself to rule with justice and honesty...<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 615.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 616.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 617.

<sup>57</sup> J. Belich, 'The Rise of the Angloworld; Settlement in North America and Australasia, 1784-1918', in P. Buckner & R.D. Francis (eds.), *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary, 2005), p. 41. See also Schwarz, *The White Man's World*, pp. 341-438.

<sup>58</sup> *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 59, 636.

In September 1965, two months before the long-flirted-with UDI was finally declared, Mr Chipunza, MP for Bindura district and one of the handful of Africans in parliament (relics of Federal experiments in ‘multiracialism’), brought a motion before the house expressing a desire for wider, non-party, consultation on the independence negotiations.<sup>59</sup> Responding to the motion, Smith repeated his claim from the earlier debate:

Our case has been proved... How many times have I repeated... of how this is something that has been promised to this country going as far back as 1923 when we were first given responsible Government. At that time Britain made it clear to the people of this country that this was going to be our country and that the decisions henceforth would be in the hands of the people of this country... That was when a guarantee was given, and as a result of this, thousands of British men and women came to this country, reared their children and built their homes. This goes back as far as 1923.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, once again, a direct line was drawn between the events of 1922-23 and those of 1964-65 and UDI became the logical progression in the development of the Rhodesian nation, which had found its earliest expression in the vote for self-governance several decades before. The historical record since then, as far as the RF was concerned, was considered to be a significant part of Rhodesia’s case for gaining independence from the UK. The RF argued that this record showed that Africans had been well looked-after, meaning that there was no need to change the political situation prevailing in the country. It made explicit comparisons with other majority-rule countries in Africa as undesirable and unworkable, thus positioning UDI as a deliberate white settler response to the phenomenon of African decolonisation. As far as the RF were concerned, Britain owed Rhodesia its independence, not simply because of Rhodesia’s patient and competent development, but also because of the sacrifices it made in the World Wars, an argument that will now be explored in greater detail.

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<sup>59</sup> *Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 62, 1965, 966.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 997.

## **‘Rhodesia’s Finest Hour’: Rhodesia and the World Wars**

The concept of blood sacrifice is often an important one in nationalism. It gained particular salience in settler societies, where it helped to address a pressing need to explain why white settlers had ‘earned’ their dominant position in relation to indigenous populations. Dunbar Moodie has noted the importance of blood sacrifices to Afrikaner nationalist narratives, where massacres and battles took a central part in the ‘sacred saga of Afrikanerdom’.<sup>61</sup> The same logic applied to the histories of other settler colonies in the British Empire, as Will Jackson noted of Kenya: ‘For those who had sunk not their theories and fortunes but their own flesh and blood into making ‘white man’s country’ work... Attempting to rationalise their presence became the perennial colonial endeavour.’<sup>62</sup> War also tied settler communities to the wider British imperial project, especially minority settler communities. As John Lambert has noted of English-speaking South Africans, the memorialisation of conflict was a key part of their identity and that commemorations of the early wars of South African history ‘inextricably bound together the fact that those memorialised had died fighting not just for their South African homes but for the defence and protection of the British Empire.’<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, as John Lonsdale has noted in the Kenyan context ‘[w]ar was the handmaid of imperial reform as Britain repaid debts to colonial blood and treasure.’<sup>64</sup> In this respect the white Rhodesian nationalist project drew upon existing settler discourses about sacrifice and entitlement.

Notions of sacrifice are not merely nationalist rhetoric, but also lie at the heart of a problem which forms one of the central themes in studies of nationalism – why are people prepared to die, or kill, for their country? Anthony D. Smith has noted that warfare played a key role in creating ethnic

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<sup>61</sup> D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley, 1980).

<sup>62</sup> W. Jackson, ‘White Man’s Country: Kenya Colony and the Making of a Myth’, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5, 2 (2011), p. 347.

<sup>63</sup> J. Lambert, ‘Tell England, Ye Who Pass this Monument’: English-Speaking South Africans, Memory and War Remembrance until the Eve of the Second World War’, *South African Historical Journal*, 66, 4 (2014), p. 683.

<sup>64</sup> J. Lonsdale, ‘Kenya – Home Country and African Frontier’ in R. Bickers (ed.), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons Over the Seas* (Oxford, 2010), p. 94.

and national communities long before nationalism as a nineteenth century, western European, political phenomenon emerged, but conceded that it had had its greatest impact in the modern era.<sup>65</sup> The formative experience of shared suffering or threat tends to draw people closer together, if only for a time.

There were two points in the colony's short history which white settlers could have focused upon as constituting payment of a settler 'blood price' for Rhodesia and Empire. The first were at the very start of the history of settlement, the conflicts of 1893 and 1896-97. Though these were significant events in the colony's history, they were utilised more as a way to demonstrate European superiority over Africans and even as parallels with the conflicts against national guerrillas in the 1960s and 1970s, than they were to demonstrate Rhodesia's contribution to empire.<sup>66</sup> However, these conflicts had been controversial in Britain at the time, seen as an example of imperial excess and greed run rampant. They were also too localised and more appropriate to a nation-centred conception of a 'blood price' which the settlers had paid in order to dominate the country, which will be explored in the following chapter.

The Rhodesian contributions to the First and Second World War could be utilised in a different way. They constituted a transnational 'blood sacrifice' at the altar of the nation and the Empire. Here, the Rhodesians could essentially follow where other settler societies had led. There was a clear case to be made that Rhodesia had aided Britain and that, consequently, it deserved something in return. Not for nothing did RF stalwart Desmond Lardner-Burke open his narrative of the UDI crisis, published in 1966, by stating: 'Rhodesia gave her treasure and her men to die in both world wars fighting alongside Britain.'<sup>67</sup> This section explores how that case was made. It also illustrates the similarities between Rhodesia and other parts of the 'British World' in agitating for

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<sup>65</sup> A.D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (London, 1998), p. 79.

<sup>66</sup> See chapter six.

<sup>67</sup> D. Lardner-Burke, *Rhodesia, The Story of the Crisis* (London, 1966), p. 2.

greater autonomy through the use of a set of rhetorical and discursive techniques that were utilised by settlers across the world in the Twentieth Century.

The invocation of war sacrifice was not a tool exclusively used by whites. Indeed it was a particularly important method by which blacks and 'Coloureds' could highlight the contributions they had made to empire as part of their own struggles for rights within colonial settings.<sup>68</sup> However, this section focuses upon the RF's use of historical narratives, and so the discourses studied here are ones typically centred upon the white contribution to the war effort. For the RF ministers and white Rhodesians who had fought in these conflicts they were often deeply personal arguments in favour of independence.

Rhodesia's contribution to the First and Second World Wars was undoubtedly significant. Like their imperial brethren in New Zealand, Rhodesia's relatively small population of white settlers made a disproportionate contribution in terms of manpower, supported by thousands of African auxiliaries. Just over 8,000 troops from Southern Rhodesia fought in the First World War (5,500 whites and 2,700 Africans). Robert Blake commented that: 'the contribution of an intensely patriotic people was remarkable in the light of its slender resources.'<sup>69</sup> These troops fought mainly in Africa in Rhodesian units, but some fought with British and South African units too. A high proportion of the white troops (1,720) were officers.<sup>70</sup> Rhodesia itself was untouched by the war, in contrast to the settler populations in East Africa, where there was fighting with the German forces, and South Africa, where Botha and Smuts were forced to face down an Afrikaner rebellion before committing

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<sup>68</sup> For the way mixed-race communities used war service see C. Lee, *Unreasonable Histories: Nativism, Multiracial Lives, and the Genealogical Imagination in British Africa* (Durham & London, 2014), p. 180, pp. 193-194; for Africans in Rhodesia see T. Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1923-1980* (Rochester, 2011); for a West African example see T. Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of Colonial Military Service in the King's African Rifles, 1902-1964* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (London, 1977), p. 168.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

their forces to campaigns outside the Union. Indeed, the Rhodesians benefitted from an economic upturn during the conflict.<sup>71</sup>

In many of the dominions battles fought by local troops during the First World War became a foundational event in nationalistic narratives, and subsequent historiographies. In the national imaginations of settlers across the British World the ‘blood sacrifices’ of troops at Vimy Ridge, Gallipoli, and Delville Wood transformed colonial subjects into ‘Canadians’, ‘Australians’ and ‘New Zealanders’, and ‘South Africans’ respectively.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, the smaller and more diffuse contribution of Rhodesian settlers meant that their war narrative was not used by the settler government to mould national sentiment in the same way, at least until the mid-1960s.

The white Rhodesian experience of the Second World War seemed a much greater influence, perhaps unsurprisingly given its relative closeness to 1965. Blake’s complimentary account of Rhodesia’s contribution to the second global conflict, written in 1977, highlights its centrality in white mythology:

[n]o account of Southern Rhodesian history can omit the war. The attitudes engendered by it shaped much that lay ahead, and its memory has been a potent factor in the events of the last thirty years... At the end of it all Rhodesians could legitimately look back and feel that they ‘had done their bit’.<sup>73</sup>

Twelve small contingents of Rhodesians (both white and black) fought across many theatres in the Second World War, with their most notable and celebrated contribution coming in the air. Numerous individuals from the colony flew with the Royal Air Force, the most prominent example being UDI-era Rhodesia’s Prime Minister, Ian Douglas Smith, who was famously shot down and disfigured whilst flying a Hurricane fighter plane.<sup>74</sup> Indeed there were several Rhodesian squadrons

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>72</sup> Popular histories often eulogise these blood sacrifices as the birth of the nation, a notable example is Canadian historian Pierre Berton’s *Vimy* (Canada, 2001). For academic analysis of Delville Wood see Bill Nasson’s *Springboks on the Somme: South Africa in the Great War 1914-1918* (Johannesburg, 2007). For Gallipoli see M. Hearn, ‘Writing the Nation in Australia: Australian Historians and the Narrative Myths of Nation’, in S. Berger (ed.) *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 105.

<sup>73</sup> Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 235.

<sup>74</sup> F.R. Metrowich, *Rhodesia: Birth of a Nation* (Pretoria, 1969), p. 141.

in the Royal Air Force. Flying Officer Smith served with 237 (Rhodesia) Squadron, a fighter squadron. 266 (Rhodesia) Squadron was another fighter unit which supplied air cover to the Dunkirk withdrawal, fought in the Battle of Britain, and acted in a ground support role following the D-Day landings in 1944. Finally, 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron was a bomber squadron that flew raids over continental Europe.<sup>75</sup> Black soldiers fought in infantry roles, and the Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR) was formed in 1940 and later deployed against the Japanese in Burma.<sup>76</sup>

On the home front, the colony helped to train some 10,107 airmen as part of its Air Training Scheme (ATS). The ATS was based in the country due to its favourable climate and relative distance from the fighting.<sup>77</sup> Anthony King has noted that the advent of the ATS was a key event in Rhodesian history: the arrival of so many young servicemen from around the Commonwealth had a lasting impact on Rhodesian society.<sup>78</sup> African soldiers also made key domestic contributions, and in the face of audible white reservations, the Rhodesian Air Askari Corps was formed to guard airfields and the African Internment Camp Corps to guard POWs.<sup>79</sup> The Rhodesians' distance from the conflict also meant that they housed a small number of Polish refugees, who suffered harsh discrimination at the hands of their Rhodesian hosts.<sup>80</sup> White fears about Africans under arms ensured that the newly-raised African units were swiftly demobilised in 1946, though the RAR was hastily reformed as a guard and labour unit with the onset of the Cold War.<sup>81</sup>

The total Rhodesian manpower committed to the conflict was around 10,000 white men and women, and 14,000 Africans with fatalities of 693 and 126 respectively. Blake pointed out that: 'compared with that of the major, or even most of the minor combatants, the Southern Rhodesian

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<sup>75</sup> R. Conyers Nesbit & D. Cowderoy with A. Thomas, *Britain's Rebel Air Force: The War from the Air in Rhodesia 1965-1980* (London, 1998), pp. 7-11.

<sup>76</sup> Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers*, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> I.E. Johnston, 'The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and the Shaping of National Identities in the Second World War', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 43, 5 (2015), p. 918.

<sup>78</sup> A.R. King, 'Identity and Decolonisation: the policy of partnership in Southern Rhodesia 1945-62' (Oxford University, DPhil Thesis, 2001), pp. 94-97, quote from p. 97.

<sup>79</sup> Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers*, p. 8.

<sup>80</sup> See chapter one.

<sup>81</sup> Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers*, p. 9; P. McLaughlin, 'Victims as Defenders: African Troops in the Rhodesian Defence System 1890-1980', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 2, 2 (1991), p. 247, p. 259.

contribution to the war was miniscule...<sup>82</sup> However, as a proportion of the total white population, which stood at 68,954 in 1941, the number of Rhodesian combatants was quite significant.<sup>83</sup> The roles played by African soldiers were largely submerged beneath this narrative of heroic and disproportionate white endeavour.

Andrew Stewart has noted how the Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa used their contributions to the imperial war effort as a form of leverage to renegotiate their relationship with Britain, securing greater independence in the process.<sup>84</sup> In some ways this was a logical progression from the greater independence they had enjoyed since the First World War. Rhodesia's unique position within the British Empire was reflected in its inclusion in intra-Dominion negotiations on the wider imperial conduct of the war. In an effort on the part of the Dominions to distance themselves from the Imperial War Cabinet approach that had been taken in the First World War, intra-Dominion liaison was less formal in 1939-1945, and the Dominion heads of state met only once during the war, in April 1944. Godfrey Huggins, the long-serving Southern Rhodesian premier, was present at this conference.<sup>85</sup> Though at the time the Rhodesians gave the Dominions Office much less cause for concern than the other settler states, they too caught onto the trend of using military contributions as a bargaining chip in the game to gain greater autonomy. In the 1950s and 1960s Rhodesians increasingly began to hold up their war record as proof that they deserved greater autonomy within the British Empire, seemingly ignorant of changing international context in which they advanced these arguments.

The World Wars pervaded white Rhodesian political discourse in the 1960s and 1970s. Initially they served to cushion Rhodesians from the realities of imperial decline. Lowry notes that the conflict galvanised Rhodesians for years afterwards: '[t]he Second World War in particular had tied the white Rhodesians to imperial illusions. The great victory of 1945 heightened the Rhodesian

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<sup>82</sup> Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, p. 235.

<sup>83</sup> Mlambo, *White Immigration*, p. 3.

<sup>84</sup> A. Stewart, *Empire Lost: Britain, the Dominions and the Second World War* (London, 2008).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

belief that the Empire was still powerful, and into the early 1960s Rhodesia still lived off the memory of the Britain's [sic] "Finest hour".<sup>86</sup> However, this interpretation was becoming increasingly untenable in the 1960s, when assumptions of the bargaining position of settler superiority which the blood price narratives were based upon were being overtaken by the imperatives of majority rule. Consequently, the wars shaped white Rhodesians' understanding of global politics and teed up a subsequent 'decline' narrative. At the heart of this was the oft-cited belief that Britain had lost the will to govern, a notion related to the 'good governance' understanding of demonstrating the capability for independence before achieving it. As Desmond Lardner-Burke put it:

It became obvious that there had been a striking *volte-face* in Britain's policy towards Africa in that she seemed bent, in an endeavour to placate the demands of certain states, on ridding herself of her responsibilities in Africa; on granting independence, with hastily drafted constitutions, to the leaders of certain African countries who, through acts of terrorism and intimidation, had 'demonstrated' what Britain regarded as popular support.<sup>87</sup>

Coalescing with arguments about betrayal, Ian Smith argued that the Rhodesians had been offered independence during the Second World War but they had nobly refused it in order to focus on Allied victory:

I remember Sir Godfrey Huggins saying on so many occasions that Britain was so delighted with Southern Rhodesia and the standards that she had set, and the wonderful country that had been built up, that he had been told during the war that if we wanted our independence we could have it. But he had replied, why all this talk about independence, let us get on with the war, which is what we are interested in now.<sup>88</sup>

After the war, the story went, the Rhodesians had again put off independence to make try and make the Federation work. This turned the past two decades into a long story of repeated betrayals of the contribution and sacrifice the Rhodesians had made in service of the empire.

The Second World War also provided the white Rhodesians with an opportunity to easily socialise many of the country's new immigrants from Britain through their shared experiences of the

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<sup>86</sup> D. Lowry, "Shame Upon 'Little England' While 'Greater England' Stands! Southern Rhodesia and the Imperial Idea", in A. Bosco & A. May (eds.), *The Round Table, The Empire/Commonwealth and British Foreign Policy* (London, 1997), p. 327.

<sup>87</sup> Lardner-Burke, *Rhodesia*, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup> I.D. Smith, 'Southern Rhodesia and Its Future', *African Affairs*, 63, 250 (January, 1964), p. 18.

conflict. Rhodesian political life in 1965 was full of ex-servicemen, some of whom proudly retained their old military titles. In the eleventh parliament (the first after UDI was declared, and consisting of sixty-five members) there were two Brigadiers, two Lieutenant-Colonels, a Colonel, and holders of the Distinguished Conduct Medal and Air Force Cross.<sup>89</sup> At the same time the war generated some tensions in white society. As well as the discrimination suffered by the eastern European refugees in the Rhodesian camps, Alexandra Letcher has demonstrated how the war triggered ethnic tensions and fears of disloyalty between 'British' and 'Afrikaner' whites which manifested themselves at the local level in concerns about violence among schoolboys in the rural community of Enkeldoorn..<sup>90</sup>

Much like in the other Dominions, Rhodesia's war record took on a peculiar duality. It represented both kinship and imperial togetherness but also was used to justify self-assertion and independence. Along with the record of forty years of responsible government, war service was used to make independence seem like a just reward for sacrifice. In the RF propaganda pamphlet, *Rhodesia's Case for Independence*, issued in October 1965, the argument was stated succinctly: '[i]t hurts when people whose way of life is our way of life, people whose blood is our blood, people with whom we have stood in adversity and triumph – it hurts when our own family turns on us without fairly examining our case.'<sup>91</sup> This rhetoric of 'kith and kin' of course ignored the black contribution to the war effort. This argument was employed both internally and externally. In Britain, Rhodesia House erected a window display 'showing photographs of the Rhodesian Cabinet Ministers with biographical notes on their war records' which was singled out in the Secretary for Information, Immigration and Tourism's 1965 Report, as having been an especially popular piece of propaganda.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates* 63, 1966, iv-v.

<sup>90</sup> A. Letcher, "'You expected racialism and you found it?'" A Case Study of the Enkeldoorn and Schools Commission of Enquiry and its Framing of Juvenile Delinquency, 1944-1945' (Oxford University, MPhil Thesis, 2014).

<sup>91</sup> Rhodesian Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism, *Rhodesia's Case for Independence* (Salisbury, 1965), p. 2.

<sup>92</sup> *Report of the Secretary for Information, Immigration and Tourism for the Year 1965* (Salisbury, 1966), p. 10.

The conflict was particularly heavily invoked in the declaration of independence itself, the proclamation of which was taken at the highly symbolic time of 11am on 11 November, Armistice Day. At the time when two minutes silence was usually observed for British and Commonwealth war dead, the RF leaders of Rhodesia began their rebellion. The declaration they signed proclaimed:

That the people of Rhodesia having demonstrated their loyalty to the Crown and to their kith and kin in the United Kingdom and elsewhere through two world wars, and having been prepared to shed their blood and give of their substance in what they believed to be the mutual interests of freedom-loving people, now see all that they have cherished about to be shattered on the rocks of expediency...<sup>93</sup>

Not for nothing is the pamphlet from which this quote of the UDI is drawn called *Rhodesia's Finest Hour*. Borrowing the popular phrase from Churchill to describe the Battle of Britain, the pamphlet's author reconfigured British discourses of war heroism into Rhodesian ones of self-determination. Rhodesia's Battle of Britain became a Battle with Britain - or at the very least the British government. As Desmond Lardner-Burke explained in his account of UDI:

The attitude of Rhodesia today is the same as that adopted by Britain after Dunkirk. Then Sir Winston Churchill stated that the British would fight on the beaches and in the streets; we have no beaches, but we will fight in the streets, we will fight in the open, we will do everything in our power to overcome the petty and spiteful attitude of Mr. Wilson.<sup>94</sup>

At the same time the memories of the war were evoked in an attempt to defuse fears as to Rhodesians' intentions, no doubt for both domestic and international audiences. In Ian Smith's address to the nation which accompanied the news of the proclamation we see an example of this Rhodesian doublespeak. Discussing loyalty to the Queen, Smith argued: '[h]ow can anyone suggest that we would harbour hostile sentiments against those with whom we fought shoulder to shoulder against the common enemy in two world wars? Our admiration and friendship for the people of Great Britain is real and enduring.'<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Anon., *Rhodesia's Finest Hour* (Salisbury, 1965).

<sup>94</sup> Lardner-Burke, *Rhodesia*, p. 65.

<sup>95</sup> *Rhodesia's Finest Hour*.

Once UDI was declared, the war propaganda offensive went into overdrive. Highlighting that Britain had not sent a representative to the Rhodesian cenotaph on Armistice Day, a front page article in *The Rhodesia Herald* on Monday 15 November 1965 reported upon a speech given by John Gaunt, Rhodesia's Accredited Diplomatic Representative in South Africa, where he had argued that: '[t]hose Rhodesians who had fallen in the two World Wars while defending Britain and those who had survived had been ill-rewarded for their loyalty.'<sup>96</sup> On the same day W.H. Roberts of Avondale wrote to the *Herald* singing the praises of Ian Smith: 'our Rhodesian Churchill'.<sup>97</sup> On 24 November one Eleanor Laurie of Concession had spoken, like Gaunt, of her disgust at the betrayal of blood sacrifices that the British snub seemed to represent: '[o]ne can feel nothing but contempt for such a despicable act. This insult to the dead can never be forgotten.'<sup>98</sup> Not everyone was wholly convinced, however. Mrs J.F. Johnson found herself 'sick to death' of hearing about Rhodesia's blood sacrifice in the world wars and Britain's subsequent betrayal. She offered what she saw as a corrective interpretation: '[n]obody was fighting just from [sic] Britain, but for an ideal, a way of life, and if my memory serves me right I believe there were a few million British soldiers interspersed among the Rhodesians.'<sup>99</sup> However, in all of the letters published in the *The Rhodesia Herald* that November, Johnson was a lone voice among many repeating the war narratives highlighted above.

Past and present became intermeshed as Britain quickly discounted the use of military force to quell the rebellion and instead responded to UDI by imposing economic sanctions. Despite Harold Wilson's swift and final disavowal of a military resolution to the UDI Rhodesia moved onto a 'war' footing straight away, with the battle against sanctions being conflated with the Battle of Britain that had been fought thousands of miles away decades before. The engagement was consciously invoked by Rhodesians such as William J. Fanning, who believed UDI was a 'crushing

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<sup>96</sup> 'Rhodesians ill-rewarded, says Gaunt', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 15 November 1965, p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> W.H. Roberts, 'Rhodesia might become a new 'mother-country'', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 15 November 1965 p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> Eleanor Laurie, 'They died for England', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 November 1965, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> Mrs J.F. Johnson, 'Tired of reading about those who fought', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 30 November 1965, p. 9.

blow against the forces of evil'. He argued that '[t]he spirit of the Battle of Britain will once again... guarantee Rhodesia a safe and happy future.'<sup>100</sup> Here one of the most enduring myths of the British national Second World War narrative was being appropriated by some Rhodesians as they sought to transplant their imagining of the 'mother country' to 1960s central Africa. A couple of weeks later a letter from 'Rhodesia First' encouraged readers to 'Rally all Rhodesia in an effort to beat Britain' in the war against sanctions. The writer wanted the creation of a civilian corps of economic soldiers dedicated to fighting sanctions.<sup>101</sup> Mrs A Whatling, of Southerton, was similarly enthusiastic in her letter 'Let us show the world the true meaning of being an Englishman'.<sup>102</sup> Mrs Whatling believed that the blank spaces which appeared in newspapers such as the *Herald* immediately after UDI as a protest against emergency censorship laws would have been better filled: 'with articles on the prowess of our soldiers during the last war, the lives lost to the defence of our proud heritage and principles, so that those weak at heart could be well reminded that those principles are still upheld here in Rhodesia.'<sup>103</sup>

Together, these Rhodesians were articulating a new adaptation of the old settler discourse of being 'more British than the British'. In this case, white Rhodesians appropriated for themselves the legacy of the Second World War to justify their current 'battle' against Britain and the shadowy forces of communism and decolonisation, obscuring the contribution of the black and mixed-race populations of Rhodesia. This stemmed from the consequence of contemporary British policy on Rhodesia, which favoured majority rule and threatened the settlers' privileged existence. While they were able to retain control after UDI in the short term regardless of what Britain did due to their own coercive strength and the divided and weakened nature of their nationalist opposition, the presentation of these self-justifying discourses were important as a motivating factor to the white

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<sup>100</sup> William J Fanning, 'Crushing blow against the forces of evil', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 19 November 1965, p. 10.

<sup>101</sup> 'Rhodesia First', 'Rally All Rhodesia in an effort to Beat Britain', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 29 November 1965, p. 9.

<sup>102</sup> Mrs A Whatling, 'Let us show the world the true meaning of being an Englishman', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 22 November 1965, p. 9.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

population. Those Rhodesians who supported Smith and UDI needed to feel a sense of satisfaction that they were doing the right thing, hence their appropriation of the British Second World War discourses of standing alone against the enemy and the nation's 'finest hour'.

Many have explored the role of RF propaganda in creating and making enemies, be they communists, churchmen or the British Labour government but these studies often overlook how the white Rhodesian war machine was infused with the spirit of earlier World Wars as the European population sought an anchor and rationalisation for the economic and military conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>104</sup> The military fantasy expanded post-U.D.I. when, in 1966, the signatories of the independence proclamation were issued with a medal, the Independence Commemoration Decoration, for their service to the cause of Rhodesian independence. In discussing the first anniversary of independence in August 1966, a Cabinet memo suggested that the day 'be one of thanksgiving and dedication rather than of public celebration.'<sup>105</sup> The memo went on to stress how this could be achieved and also hinted at an RF conceptualisation of a militarised white Rhodesian society:

If this is accepted, then the only dedication necessary is that of the people to fight for their country and their freedom. The best way to instil this patriotic dedication is to declare the 11<sup>th</sup> November a public holiday and to hold military parades wherever possible. These parades should include not only the regular forces and territorials but also ex-servicemen who could be mustered on parade even in the smallest towns and inspected by some chosen V.I.P.<sup>106</sup>

After UDI Rhodesian society sought to idolise its veterans in a way it argued Britain had not. At the same time the RF sought to invoke memories of the World Wars as way to unite the white population behind it. It responded to decolonisation and Britain's imperial decline with spiteful accusations of betrayal, and then by seeking to appropriate what it claimed were abandoned national

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<sup>104</sup> D. Lowry, 'The Impact of Anti-Communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture, ca.1920s-1980', *Cold War History*, 7, 2 (2000), pp. 169-194.

<sup>105</sup> (CL) (Smith Papers), Cabinet Memoranda, R.C.(S) (66) 223, 'Independence Celebrations: 11<sup>th</sup> November 1966', 25 August 1966.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

characteristics of the former mother country. The 'Dunkirk Spirit' and the 'Battle of Britain Spirit' became part of the spiritual fuel on which Rhodesia's rebellion was to run.

## **Conclusion**

In the run-up to independence, some white Rhodesians looked to the past as a way to secure the future. The RF government invoked the referendum on self-government in 1922 as a step upon the path towards nationhood, in the process turning 1964-65 into the next step. This use of a teleological narrative of the past was not dissimilar to the nationalist histories of other colonies becoming nations in the 1960s and 1970s, seeking to use the past as an anchor for the present-day national project. However, UDI was different because it was a move in response to decolonisation and majority-rule independence. The RF sought to invert British discourses of development and colonial maturity to argue that they deserved independence as much as, if not more so than, other the African colonies being granted their independence. However, in the international context of decolonisation to majority-rule regimes across the African continent, the granting of independence to Rhodesia's white minority was in no way the inevitable act that these narratives implied: quite the contrary, in fact. Yet the RF's use of history made it seem like independence had to come next.

Another major historical narrative which the RF invoked to argue that Rhodesia had 'earned' its independence was that detailing the contributions made by Rhodesian servicemen during the First and Second World Wars. The Second World War in particular was an event in living memory for many Rhodesians and assumed a place of central importance in the RF's discourses about the legitimacy of white minority rule. The white population, and in many cases, the RF high echelons themselves, had contributed directly to the imperial defence and they felt justified in demanding independence. In making these demands, the Rhodesians were not so different than their settler counterparts in the Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Settlers in these countries exploited and invoked their contribution to the imperial war effort in the World Wars as a means to gain greater autonomy from Britain. White Rhodesian settlers thus made use of

wider settler discourses about service and loyalty on the periphery in an attempt to secure greater concessions from the centre, underlining the transnational influences on the white Rhodesian nationalist project. This was one of the clearest expressions of the RF's first-phase nationalism. White Rhodesians argued that they were more like a dominion than a colony, and deserved to be treated as such. This reflected the desire for dominion-style independence within the Commonwealth that had existed since the collapse of the Federation.

Narratives of conflict also acquired a new salience in the 1950s and 1960s as opponents of colonialism began to increasingly question why white settlers were in Central Africa in the first place. In the 1950s the settler rejoinder was that they deserved to be there as they constituted an important part of the empire's strategic networks, but as decolonisation gained pace they had to find new *raison d'être*. After UDI, Rhodesia's war service continued to be invoked as the government and some individuals actively sought to connect rebel Rhodesia's status as an international pariah with a state under siege, often making direct comparisons with Britain of 1940. In this respect, the wars became a means of socialising new post-war settlers – who often came from Britain – into a recognisable community with a shared past. These uses of past conflicts also demonstrate the mutability of historical narratives to suit different situations not just across time, but also space, as Rhodesia became a past Britain in the imagination of some white settlers.

The use of these narratives, and particularly those relating to the wars, presented a paradoxical situation where Rhodesians invoked their closeness and service to Britain in an attempt to achieve greater independence from it. Even in these early stages of the RF's nation-building project, politicians were seeking to mark out difference and threatening complete breaks with Britain. Simultaneously they sought to demonstrate a tradition of independence from the 'mother country' by pointing back to the granting of settler self-government in 1923. These seemingly conflicting narratives demonstrated the complicated nature of the British connection to white Rhodesians in the 1960s and call into question neat historical periodisations of Rhodesia in the era of

decolonisation. Could a Rhodesia which openly modelled itself on a past Britain truly be considered independent? Or decolonised? Or a nation? Here lay the conundrum at the heart of the white Rhodesian nationalist project. By relying on its status as a former colony, Rhodesia could assimilate new immigrants from the UK (and other former colonies) relatively easily as they moved into a largely familiar environment. Yet at the same time this preoccupation with the past inhibited the ability to portray Rhodesia as an independent, modern, nation. It proved easier to ask people to fight for a rose-tinted memory than it did for an increasingly isolated pariah state.

The RF and its supporters used history relatively successfully in the campaign for Rhodesian independence, winning support among many of the largely white Rhodesian electorate. This was particularly impressive given the relative paucity of ‘national’ history, the hostility of much of the academic establishment which had historically been an important supporter of history’s use in nationalist projects (see chapter six), and the fact that most white Rhodesians had grown up elsewhere.<sup>107</sup> In using history to argue for independence, the RF got around this by usurping British history and claiming themselves as its rightful inheritors. In the case of independence, where the international audience was arguably more important than the domestic one, the RF latched onto narratives which showed the international importance of white settlement in Rhodesia. At the same time, this understanding of history was used to deny the significance of continental developments, such as decolonisation, and Rhodesia’s own growing black nationalist movements. This might have sounded good to the RF and to its white Rhodesian supporters, but in the 1960s such interpretations were not viable as arguments against majority-rule independence, a principle to which both Britain and the international community were broadly committed. The ‘blood price’ narrative meanwhile, ignored the contributions that black soldiers had made to the Rhodesian war effort. If whites deserved independence based on their contribution, what of the blacks who had been brutally repressed and denied any form of legitimate political expression?

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<sup>107</sup> P. Lawrence, ‘Nationalism and Historical Writing’, in J. Brueilly (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 713-730.

## Chapter Six

# The Past is Our Country: The National History of Rhodesia

The historical narratives seen in previous chapters were an important part of the RF's case for minority-rule independence. This chapter seeks to highlight where some of these narratives came from, the sites of historical discourse production which, while not controlled by the RF, nevertheless furnished it with a 'Rhodesian national history' to draw upon in its nation-building project. In particular, this case study provides a much closer look at the foundations of the 'good governance' narrative of the previous chapter. These narratives, like those in chapter five, were selective, invoked in a particular way to justify a particular circumstance. Like so many other national histories, they evoke Ernest Renan's oft-quoted maxim that '[f]orgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation...'<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, these historical narratives were contested, not just by blacks, but also by different elements of the white community.

In focusing upon the way white historians talked about black people this chapter follows the approach of Terry Goldie, who explored the image of the indigene in the literatures of three settler cultures: Canada, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> Like Goldie, this chapter is concerned primarily with the settler 'image', not the reality it claims to represent, since: 'the image of the indigene... reveals very little about the indigenes or their cultures. It reveals a great deal about the whites and their cultures.'<sup>3</sup> In his analysis of Canadian literatures, Goldie uses the term 'Indian' with the qualification that this was the name given to the settler image of the indigene. Similarly this chapter refers to the

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<sup>1</sup> E. Renan, 'What is a Nation?' in H.K. Bhaba (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (Abingdon, 2006), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> T. Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canada, Australian and New Zealand Literatures* (Montreal, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

‘Shona’ and the ‘Matabele’ (in inverted commas) as this is how whites referred to Africans in their historical accounts.<sup>4</sup>

This approach allows a focus upon stereotypes within the imagination of Rhodesian whites. It does so whilst stressing that these stereotypes had a powerful impact on behaviour towards Africans. It focuses in particular upon the narratives of two historical conflicts in the 1960s: the 1893 invasion of Matabeleland and the 1896-7 conflicts between settlers and local African polities, referred to at the time as a ‘rebellion’. Because of the way they were presented in historical narratives many whites understood these conflicts as the fiery crucible in which the Rhodesian nation had been forged, since they involved the defeat of significant indigenous opposition and the imposition of settler rule across the territory which became Rhodesia. The tales of derring-do and heroism seen in the media, the schoolroom, in monuments, and indeed in everyday life in the names of schools, roads, and national holidays provided Rhodesians with a pantheon of ‘founding fathers’ and local heroes whose memory endured in white society in the 1960s and 1970s.

This chapter builds upon a growing number of studies of the psychology of Rhodesian settler society. It approaches race relations from a perspective similar to that of Jock McCulloch and Carol Summers’ works which examine the way social and cultural practices regarding race were undergirded by particular stereotypes and mentalities pervading white Rhodesian society.<sup>5</sup> It highlights the historical narratives the RF could draw upon to suggest what whites and blacks could and should do in the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, the chapter continues our exploration of the cultural expression of white Rhodesian nationalism begun with the folk songs of chapter four.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> J. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual Crime in Southern Rhodesia, 1902-1935* (Bloomington, 2000); C. Summers, *From Civilization to Segregation: Social Ideals and Social Control in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1934* (Athens, Ohio, 1994).

The chapter serves as a point of comparison with the work of those such as Terence Ranger and Miles Tendi on ‘patriotic history’ by demonstrating the contested nature of ‘national’ histories.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the 1890s conflicts formed a central part of the national historical narratives of both Rhodesia and Zimbabwe.<sup>7</sup> Stefan Berger has noted that settler nations typically constructed histories in which ‘omissions abounded... [including] violence against indigenous peoples, sectarian struggles... the emergence of new class distinctions and social differentiations...’<sup>8</sup> The chapter shows how different groups among the highly-divided white Rhodesian community engaged in battles over the past and what it represented in the UDI-period. The chapter also continues our exploration of the concepts of ‘invented traditions’ and ‘imagined communities’ – moving beyond the auspices of the state to look at how some white Rhodesians outside the RF sought to invent historical national traditions to shape a national imagination in an attempt to foster greater white unity at a tempestuous time for white Rhodesia.

The historical presentation of Africans by white Rhodesians is a topic which has not received a great deal of scholarly attention. One notable exception is the study of the ruins at Great Zimbabwe, a debate spanning disciplines and decades. The controversy which had long raged over the origins of the ruins had important implications for the arguments which justified minority rule in the 1960s and 1970s and showed that the divisions existing in white Rhodesian society extended to their interpretation of the past. In 1972 P.E.N. Tindall, writing in the academic journal *Rhodesian History* gave an overview of recent writings on the subject of the ruins’ origin.<sup>9</sup> Rhodesian opinion on the ruins in the 1960s and 1970s fell in to two broad camps. Many writers, especially those writing for the general reader, came up with fantastic theories of Arab or Phoenician builders, arguing it was

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<sup>6</sup> T. Ranger, ‘Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: The Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 2 (2004), pp. 215-234; M. Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe’s Zimbabwe: Politics, Intellectuals and the Media* (New York, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> See R. Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation: History and Memory in the Making of Zimbabwe* (London, 2015) for the Zimbabwean comparison.

<sup>8</sup> S. Berger, ‘Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Historiographies’, in S. Berger (ed.), *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 9-10.

<sup>9</sup> P.E.N. Tindall, ‘Review Article: Great Zimbabwe in Recent Literature’, *Rhodesian History*, 2 (1972), pp. 93-101.

impossible for the ‘bantu’ to have created something so sophisticated given their still-primitive stage of development. Others, usually academics, used carbon dating to prove the age of the ruins, which suggested that it was in fact Africans who had built them. However, as Tindall noted, a number of authors had rejected this evidence out of hand and still argued for Arab/Phoenician origins.<sup>10</sup> Both sides marshalled different pieces of rhetorical and archaeological evidence to prove their point and the ruins’ origins remained hotly debated throughout the period. In 1976, an official guidebook produced by the National Museums and Monuments Commission still referred to their origins as ‘mysterious’.<sup>11</sup> Decades later Joost Fontein wrote of the ‘silence’ surrounding the ruins – highlighting the views which either supported or opposed representations of Africans as backward, as well as the conflict over who had the authority to present the past.<sup>12</sup>

I take up Fontein’s theme of authority and legitimacy to explore white nationalist interpretations of the conflicts of 1893 and 1896-97. These conflicts created myths and heroes for the RF and its supporters and the black nationalists they opposed. Figures such as Blakiston and Routledge for the whites and the Nehanda medium for blacks, passed into legend and became founding figures for both the Rhodesian and later the Zimbabwean nation.<sup>13</sup> These wars involved most of the small white settler population and in the 1960s there were a small number of individuals who had lived through these events, ostensibly lending a greater authority to white historical accounts. The stereotypes and messages which emerged from selective narratives of these conflicts were a key part of arguments deployed by the RF to justify continued minority rule. As seen in chapter five, justifications of minority-rule were especially salient after UDI as Rhodesians sought to set out on a new path in defiance of continental trends of majority-rule independence. Additionally, after UDI it was easy to draw parallels between the threat to the white community in 1893-97 and in the 1960s-1970s.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>11</sup> T.N. Huffman, *A Guide to the Great Zimbabwe Ruins* (Salisbury, 1976), pp. 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> J. Fontein, ‘Silence, Destruction and Closure at Great Zimbabwe: Local Narratives of Desecration and Alienation’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 4 (2006), pp. 771-794.

<sup>13</sup> Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation*.

The way Africans were portrayed by whites in historical narratives of the 1960s and 1970s was profoundly shaped by the context in which these histories were told, a context of war and isolation dominated by the RF's racist political philosophy. In the 1950s history had been used in different ways. Tony King and Alison Shutt examined the 1953 Rhodes Centenary Exhibition, which occurred at a particularly portentous moment in Rhodesian history, on the eve of Federation.<sup>14</sup> They illustrated the ways in which history could be mobilised to reinforce racial inequality, but also discussed how a tentative hand was being offered to the African middle classes by stressing themes of partnership in keeping with the political thinking of the UFP government of the time (see chapter one).<sup>15</sup>

This chapter examines a particular white Rhodesian understanding of history as articulated by the Rhodesiana Society, an amateur historical society established in 1953, and the articles published in its periodical, *Rhodesiana*. It also looks at two examples of popular history books telling the story of the Mazoe Patrol – a key event in the 1896-97 uprisings. This focus upon amateur historians represents a departure from studies on the relationship between history and nationalism by those such as Paul Lawrence and Stefan Berger, which focus on the way in which 'national' historical narratives are created by academics and the state.<sup>16</sup> By concentrating upon amateur historians and their relationship with the state, the chapter explores alternative sites of historical discursive production, and how this bottom-up 'imaginative' work intersected with the top-down 'inventions' of the RF nation-building project that were explored in section one. It provides another example of the way the state's 'official' vision of Rhodesia co-opted 'unofficial' popular interpretations. The 'imagination' and 'invention' which produced nationalist historical narratives

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<sup>14</sup> T. King & A. Shutt, 'Imperial Rhodesians: The 1953 Rhodes Centenary Exhibition in Southern Rhodesia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31, 2 (2005), pp. 357-379.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378.

<sup>16</sup> P. Lawrence, 'Nationalism and Historical Writing', in J. Breuilly (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (Oxford, 2013), pp.713-730; S. Berger, 'The Power of National Pasts: Writing National History in Nineteenth- and Twentieth Century Europe', in S. Berger (ed.), *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 30-62.

helped to reinforce the new national symbolism by imbuing it with a sense of tradition and permanence. I argue that these histories provided an anchor for the white Rhodesian community, a sense of continuity between past and present which could be extended into the future. As was noted in chapter four that it was often easier for white Rhodesians to look back to find a sense of cohesion than it was to look forward. This chapter looks in much greater detail at some of the ways white Rhodesians harked back to the past in the UDI-period.

### **The Rhodesiana Society**

The conflicts of the 1890s, as understood by some white Rhodesians, were a key topic of nationalist histories in the UDI-period. The following sections explore how some amateur white historians understood and perpetuated an understanding of the conflicts which reinforced the RF's rhetoric about the continued value of minority-rule in an era of decolonisation. This interpretation was not uncontested, nor was it static. The history-writing of the Rhodesiana society explored below came in the early UDI-period, a time of relative optimism for pro-RF whites when the nation-building endeavour had its greatest momentum. Chapter four demonstrated how the grim realities of war, emigration, and economic hardship soon came to dominate a white imagination increasingly dominated by bitterness and isolation. White Rhodesian popular cultural expression was profoundly shaped by its context, and so it is unsurprising that the history told in the 1960s was shaped by the ideas of white victory, unity, and sacrifice for the nation.

The historians of the Rhodesiana Society provide us with another example of the interplay between invention and imagination which has undergirded the thesis. Like the popular folk singers of chapter four who worked with elements of the state whilst undermining others, these historians suggested the hazy lines between what is 'invented' by a state and what is 'imagined' by a people. Though they had a close relationship with state institutions, there is no evidence to suggest the hand of the RF's Ministry of Information was involved in the production of these historical narratives. They did, however, serve to reinforce the basic messages of RF propaganda and justify RF 'invented

traditions’, like the validity of chieftainship, the undeveloped nature of ‘the African’, and the continuing need for a steady white hand at the national tiller. They were also reinforced through social links between the historians and state employees at the National Archives.

The Rhodesiana Society was an amateur historical society founded in 1953 as the Rhodesia Africana Society and inspired by the South African van Riebeeck Society of Cape Town.<sup>17</sup> In 1956 it began to publish a periodical, *Rhodesiana*, which ran for forty issues until 1979. Membership lists published semi-regularly in *Rhodesiana* give an impression of the Society’s composition. These lists show that the membership was overwhelmingly Rhodesia-based, though there were subscribers from the United Kingdom, South Africa and the USA alongside a smattering of other countries.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 6.1 – Membership of the Rhodesiana Society, March 1956-October 1970<sup>19</sup>**

Date	Number of Members
15 March 1956	50
15 May 1963	287
20 November 1963	345
4 June 1964	453
1 July 1966	607
31 December 1966	587
December 1967	698
31 March 1968	789
31 December 1968	960
20 October 1970	1207

Despite a considerable increase in membership between 1956 and 1970, the figures are still quite small even considering the ‘European’ population of Rhodesia, which in 1969 (the nearest

<sup>17</sup> ‘Obituary, H.A. Cripwell and the Founding of the Rhodesiana Society’, *Rhodesiana*, 22 (July, 1970), p. 1. For the Jan Van Riebeeck Society, see L. Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival: Contesting South Africa’s National Past* (Bloomington, 2003), p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> *Rhodesiana*, 23 (December, 1970), pp. 89-98.

<sup>19</sup> From *Rhodesiana*, 1, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 23. Copies of the first 23 issues of *Rhodesiana* can be accessed online at ‘Publications of the Rhodesiana Society – Page 1’, Rhodesia.nl, accessed 28 May 2014 at <http://www.rhodesia.nl/rhodesiana/indexrhosoc.html> and ‘Publications of the Rhodesiana Society – Page 2’, Rhodesia.nl, <http://www.rhodesia.nl/rhodesiana/indexrhosoc2.html>. These pages also contain a list of tables of contents for issues 24-40, the complete copies of which were not available for access.

available census figure) was 228,296.<sup>20</sup> However, the fact that large numbers of educational and public institutions such as libraries were members of the society suggests that its impact and *Rhodesiana's* circulation may have gone far beyond the relatively small numbers of fully paid-up members. For instance, in March 1970 fifty-three schools and colleges in Rhodesia were members of the Society, including the Teachers Training College in Bulawayo. These were not merely concentrated in the major cities of Salisbury and Bulawayo but all over the country in smaller settlements too.<sup>21</sup> In addition there were eighteen public libraries subscribing in Rhodesia and South Africa and twenty-six university libraries, predominantly in the US. These included the university libraries of prestigious institutions such as Harvard, Stanford, and Columbia. The publisher Longmans of Rhodesia, which produced a number of history textbooks for Rhodesian schools, was also part of the Society.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to schools and libraries the Society also enjoyed the membership of key institutions and individuals associated with the nation. The military were keen subscribers, with both the School of Infantry at Gwelo, and the first battalion of the all-white elite commando unit, the Rhodesian Light Infantry on the membership list (Army Headquarters in Salisbury became a member two years earlier).<sup>23</sup> They were joined by Ken Flower, head of Rhodesia's intelligence service, the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), former Prime Ministers Godfrey Huggins and Garfield Todd. Other members included the former Federal Prime Minister Sir Roy Welensky, along with Sir Robert Tredgold, the former Chief Justice of the Federation, and the British Governor Sir Humphrey Gibbs.

Prominent national institutions with membership of the Rhodesiana Society included the Library of Parliament, the National Archives, the National Museums, the Natural and Historical

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<sup>20</sup> H. Strack, *Sanctions: The Case of Rhodesia* (Syracuse, 1978), p. 196.

<sup>21</sup> 'List of Members of the Rhodesiana Society, As At 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1968', *Rhodesiana*, 18 (July, 1968), pp. 125-131.

<sup>22</sup> *Rhodesia National Bibliography 1970* (Salisbury, 1971), p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> 'List of Members', p. 125.

Monuments Commission, the National Tourist Board, and the state-owned Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation. Sitting parliamentarians were surprisingly under-represented and only government front-bench regulars Mark Partridge and Lance Smith, future President John Wrathall, and A.P. Smith were listed as members in 1970. Local government representation included the City Council of Bulawayo, and the Town Management Boards of Greendale (in Salisbury) and Selukwe (Ian Smith's constituency). Finally, the Rhodesiana Society was also populated by a number of prominent clergymen, especially Catholics. This was likely because Catholic missionary activity had pre-dated white settlement in the region and been central to the colony's origin narrative. These included the Catholic Archbishop of Salisbury, F.W. Markall, the Jesuits of Sinoia, the Jesuit Novitiate at Mazoe, the Seminary of S.S. John Fisher and Thomas More in Salisbury and the prestigious Jesuit school, St George's College, in Salisbury.

Thus, closer analysis of the relatively modest membership figures suggests that the Rhodesiana Society potentially enjoyed an influence and exposure far in excess of its membership numbers, thanks to its relationship with public bodies and a number of universities around the world. Furthermore, this was an organisation dedicated to promoting the history of white settlement in Rhodesia beyond the boundaries of Society membership. It sought to make this history available to a wider audience through lectures held by the Society's branches which were based in Salisbury, Bulawayo and Umtali and made a claim to authority by presenting authoritative academic-style contributions with footnotes and bibliographies in *Rhodesiana*.<sup>24</sup>

The constitution of the Society, published regularly in *Rhodesiana*, gives a sense of the evolution of the organisation and its aims over the period. In the first issue of *Rhodesiana*, published in 1956, the constitution claimed:

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<sup>24</sup> Advertisement for the Rhodesiana Society, *Rhodesian History*, 2 (1972), p. 90.

The Rhodesia Africana Society has been founded to further the interests of collectors of Rhodesiana, and to assist in the preservation of books and documents relating to the Rhodesias and Nyasaland in particular.<sup>25</sup>

This intention of collecting and preserving 'Rhodesiana', which was understood as books relating to 'Rhodesia' (invariably written by Europeans) was demonstrated by W.V. Brelsford's article on 'Northern Rhodesiana' in the short first volume. This first issue also included the reproduction of a speech given by Sir Robert Tredgold on 18 July 1954 at the unveiling of a memorial at the Mangwe Pass, the route through which the pioneers had entered Rhodesia.<sup>26</sup> It is apt that *Rhodesiana* began with this, since from then on it would overwhelmingly focus upon the history of the colony as a narrative of European achievement and development.

*Rhodesiana's* second issue established what would become the enduring structure of the periodical with a series of short articles on different aspects of white history in Rhodesia – these covered topics such as police pioneer doctors by frequent contributor Col. A.S. Hickman, the reproduction of a first-hand account of the Mazoe Patrol by Hugh Pollet and a biography of a Rhodesian Victoria Cross winner, Frank William Baxter by H.A. Cripwell, a former Native Commissioner who was one of the Society's founders and its Chairman to 1969.<sup>27</sup> It was an article by Roger Howman, a prominent civil servant in the Department of Internal Affairs who would be one of the major proponents of the RF's 'Community Development' policy for Africans, 'The Effects of History on the African' which set the tone for the society's relationship with African history.<sup>28</sup> In the article, Howman claimed that Africans had lacked any concept of history until recently, and were now inventing traditions and legends in the service of African nationalism. Howman described the recent African relationship with their history as 'a fascinating opportunity to watch just how a people appropriate history for the emotional and political satisfaction it can give

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<sup>25</sup> *Rhodesiana*, 1 (1957), p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-6.

<sup>27</sup> *Rhodesiana*, 2 (1954), p. iii.

<sup>28</sup> R. Howman, 'The Effects of History on the African', *Rhodesiana* No. 2 (1957), pp. 1-2. For biographical detail see G. Passmore (ed.), *H.R.G. Howman on Provincialisation in Rhodesia, 1968-1969: and Rational and Irrational Elements* (Cambridge, 1986).

them.<sup>29</sup> This was insightful and ironic, given that the white historians of the Rhodesiana Society were doing exactly the same thing.

In 1958 the Rhodesia Africana Society became the Rhodesiana Society and a new mission statement appeared in the sixth issue of *Rhodesiana*, published in 1961:

The objects of our Society are to add to the pleasure and knowledge of those interested in the early history of Rhodesia and adjacent territories, to record personal experiences of those days, to preserve books and documents relating thereto, and to assist collectors of Rhodesiana.

The Society holds one or two meetings a year when papers are presented by experts, produces a publication called “Rhodesiana” at least once a year, and issues quarterly, and free to members, a newsletter which, apart from giving up-to-date information, serves to bring members together.<sup>30</sup>

Implicit in the new mission statement was the link between ‘history’ and European activity in Rhodesia, as even the small amount of pre-pioneer history featured in the early issues of the periodical concerned Europeans, particularly missionaries.<sup>31</sup> For instance, *Rhodesiana* number four (1959) was entirely devoted to ‘Diaries of the Jesuit Missionaries at Bulawayo 1879-1881’ and *Rhodesiana* number six (1961), recounted at length the story of a Portuguese missionary who was ‘martyred’ in the region in March 1561.

The members of the Rhodesiana Society were fully conscious of the wider significance of history to white Rhodesian society. This gained a new salience after the RF came to power in December 1962, seeking ways to foster unity in the white population. This imperative was reflected in the Society’s strident new mission statement at its first annual dinner on 2 June 1967 at the Ambassador Hotel in Salisbury. Over one hundred and fifty members were in attendance along with the Deputy Mayor, the Secretary for Internal Affairs, and the Director of the National Archives. W.V. Brelsford, who had been chosen to propose a toast to the Society, gave an explanation of the purpose of *Rhodesiana*:

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<sup>29</sup> Howman ‘The Effect of History’, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Rhodesiana*, 6 (1961), p. 41; *Rhodesiana*, 16 (July, 1967), p. 86.

<sup>31</sup> *Rhodesiana* 4 (1959); *Rhodesiana*, 6 (1961).

[T]he publication of a journal such as *Rhodesiana* is of inestimable value to a young country – especially one where a big proportion are newcomers. For it is essential to use every means in order... to try and build a nation. The journal helps show that Rhodesia is a country with a history, with traditions – that it is not just a collection of people from many parts of the world, that Rhodesia has its heroes, its legends, that in its creation there have been acts of bravery and gallantry, that hardships and dangers have been endured. To portray as much of this in word and picture is the task of *Rhodesiana* and the function of the Society is thus to help preserve for posterity the rich heritage of Rhodesia's past.<sup>32</sup>

Brelsford's summary demonstrates how the use of history was shaped by the national demands of the time. *Rhodesiana* was designed to emphasise historical unity and consistency in the white Rhodesian community, congruent with the aims of the RF's nation-building project in the difficult post-UDI moment. The Rhodesiana Society hoped that historical narratives about a small community of whites from across the world coming together in service of a common goal could inspire and motivate white Rhodesians in their present-day struggles to consolidate UDI. By seeking to provide inspiring historical analogues to the events after 1965 the Rhodesiana Society hitched its cart to the RF's nation-building project. Indeed, writing a review of *Rhodesiana* number thirty in 1974, the academic P.R. Warhurst noted that: 'The primary concern of the Rhodesiana Society has always been the story of the white community. Indeed the impressive membership achieved (1 300) can be attributed not only to the efforts of the Membership Secretary but also to the growth of white Rhodesian nationalism.'<sup>33</sup>

The Rhodesiana Society, with its wide accessibility to the white population through schools and public libraries across the country, formed a key medium through which particular historical narratives were disseminated throughout white Rhodesian society. In an observation which could equally be applied to the European population of Rhodesia, Michel-Rolph Trouillot noted: '[m]ost Europeans and North Americans learn their first history lessons through media that have not been subjected to the standards set by peer reviews, university presses, or doctoral committees.'<sup>34</sup> Despite this there have been no systematic studies of the Rhodesiana Society. The example the Society

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<sup>32</sup> *Rhodesiana*, 16, p. 86.

<sup>33</sup> P.R. Warhurst, 'Review of *Rhodesiana* 30', *Rhodesian History*, 5 (1974), p. 117.

<sup>34</sup> M.R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, 1995), p. 20.

provides, as is the case in Trouillot's ground-breaking study of the history of Haiti, raises questions about the relative importance of academic historians and their relationship with nationalism and national identities, as compared to non-academic, popular history, not instigated by the state or the academy. It also illustrates the relationship between these 'professional' and 'amateur' sources of 'national history', and between these historians and the government.

### **The 1890s conflicts in *Rhodesiana***

The conflicts between settlers and African polities in the 1890s played a crucial role in Rhodesia's national story. Julian Francis noted: '[t]he two wars provided a mythological justification for settler society's actions in the wake of 1896 and helped shape that society's outlook.'<sup>35</sup> They represented an important example of a 'blood price' paid by the early settlers, the cost by which domination of the country had been earned. This differed from the 'blood price' white Rhodesians claimed to have paid in service of the Empire in the previous chapter. They are both essential to understanding the imagined nation of Rhodesia as articulated by the RF, as well as one of the cultural roots of white attitudes towards blacks in the UDI-period.

Invariably, the risings did not occur as the subsequent historical narratives portrayed them. The simple dichotomies between 'settlers' and 'rebels', 'Shona' and 'Matabele' obscured the realities of pioneer life, which was characterised by much more complicated relationships. Jocelyn Alexander has described the landscape the early settlers entered as one in flux, a place where 'there was no fixed baseline of custom and identity, polity and economy.'<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the tales masked divisions among and between the settlers. Dane Kennedy has noted that early Rhodesian society was remarkably divided: 'the claim of a homogenous white society was little more than a myth... [but] it nevertheless

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<sup>35</sup> J. Francis, 'The Formation and Nature of Identity in Rhodesian Settler Society from Colonisation to UDI' (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, PhD Thesis, 2012), p. 61.

<sup>36</sup> J. Alexander, *The Unsettled Land: State-Making and the Politics of Land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003* (Oxford, 2006), p. 17.

proved an exceedingly potent one.<sup>37</sup> The conflicts of the 1890s caused serious disagreements among settlers, the British South Africa Company (BSAC) and its head Cecil Rhodes, and the imperial government in Britain over who was culpable for the violence. White settlers resented having to pay the price for what they saw as the rapacious freebooting of Rhodes and members of his clique such as Leander Starr Jameson, Administrator of Mashonaland and mastermind of the infamous 'Jameson Raid'. Together, Rhodes and his cronies were seen to be bringing the Empire into disrepute, with lethal consequences for some early settlers.

This section explores some of the historical narratives about these conflicts that permeated the periodicals of the Rhodesiana Society, examining how these narratives were constitutive and reflective of white nationalism. With their central place in the white Rhodesian historical canon, it is unsurprising that these early conflicts formed the basis for a many articles in issues of *Rhodesiana* published during the 1950s and 1960s. These narratives were chosen to show the foundations of the (white) Rhodesian nation, and demonstrate the need for unity against black violence. They reinforced the RF's invented traditions and provided fuel for Rhodesia's national 'imagination' after UDI.

One of the most common types of articles in *Rhodesiana* was reminiscences which had been supplied to the periodical by readers. These reminiscences, often diaries from the time or recollections years later, were sometimes prefaced with explanatory notes from the editor or an 'authority', an author who claimed to be an expert on the subject, and other times produced alone. These included the diary of Hugh Pollett, an early administrator in Mashonaland, describing the events of the Mazoe Patrol in the summer of 1896, which appeared in the second issue of the publication, Mrs M. Cripp's recollections of 'Umtali During the Rebellion, 1896' and the text of a

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<sup>37</sup> D. Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1939* (Durham, 1987), p. 186.

lecture originally given by D. Doyle on 'The Rise and Fall of the Matabele Nation' in Port Elizabeth in 1893.<sup>38</sup>

The reminiscences gave ample airing to white perspectives on the conflicts of the 1890s and were often presented by the magazine as useful evidence for further studies. In the case of Doyle's lecture, *Rhodesiana's* editor, E.E. Burke, wrote a short preface describing the article as having 'special value as source material' on Ndebele society in the nineteenth century because Doyle had lived with 'the Matabele' for several years and therefore 'knew them well'.<sup>39</sup> This was a claim to expertise via experience; Doyle 'knew' the natives and therefore was able to pronounce upon them. The idea of knowing Africans was an essential part of white settler discourses in Rhodesia. The RF's claim to 'know' Africans was often used to dismiss any sort of political expression of which it did not approve, such as the African rejection of the 1971 Anglo-Rhodesian settlement proposals (see chapter seven). This was also linked to the 'good governance' narratives explored in chapter five. Doyle's lecture appeared even as the conquest was taking place, when its brutality needed to be justified, and before the idea of the Ndebele as a sort of 'noble savage' took hold in Rhodesian discourses. He stated:

The whole career of the people is marked by deeds of carnage, blood and robbery. Little by little they have sunk in the scale of humanity until today, I know of no natives so utterly lost to all sense of right and virtue as the men and women of Matabeleland.<sup>40</sup>

*Rhodesiana* reproduced this view of the 'Ndebele' written in 1893 in 1966, at a time when the RF government was clamping down on African nationalists as violent, disobedient agitators. Doyle's account from seventy years earlier made an historical link to nationalist actions at that particular moment, suggesting that blacks had not really changed in the intervening period. The idea that blacks were not advanced enough to govern themselves properly had formed a central tenet of the

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<sup>38</sup> H. Pollett, 'The Mazoe Patrol', *Rhodesiana*, 2 (1957), pp. 29-38; M. Cripps, 'Umtali During the Rebellion', *Rhodesiana*, 9 (December, 1963), pp. 52-54; D. Doyle, 'The Rise and Fall of the Matabele Nation (1893)', *Rhodesiana*, 14 (July, 1966), pp.51-60.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

RF's case for UDI. Doyle's lecture implied that whites had always possessed the capacity to 'know', and thus to rule, Africans.

Through diary entries such as Peter Folk's recollections of the Gwelo Laager in 1896, readers could see the white pioneers of the country humanised at their most vulnerable moments.<sup>41</sup> They helped show how tough and hardy the early settlers had been, demonstrating their resilience in the face of mindless black violence. Folk's reminiscences, from a diary kept by his daughter, gave a picture of the calm in the face of adversity:

At 11 p.m. a sharp knock at the door and "into laager as good as you can", was the order. Wraps, rugs, pillows, etc. were hastily put together, and then for laager, which was composed of private offices and Govt. buildings which faced each other, and the wagons drawn across the open ends.

The excitement was intense, every face anxious, both of men and women, as they all knew the ammunition would only last 15 minutes if a rush were made by the natives.<sup>42</sup>

*Rhodesiana* provided numerous stories of murder, betrayal, and hardships which provided evidence of the sacrifices whites had made in 'winning' the country and offered lessons for new immigrants to learn about their historical 'forebears'. As the 'bush war' began to escalate in the 1970s Rhodesian whites, still an 'island' in a 'sea' of Africans, could claim to be repeating the heroics of their forefathers, despite most of them having no relationship whatsoever with the original pioneers.<sup>43</sup>

As well as this primary source material in the form of nineteenth-century accounts, or later reminiscences, *Rhodesiana* contained many articles written by contemporary authors claiming to be 'experts' on their topics. Colonel A.S. Hickman, M.B.E., *Rhodesiana's* assistant editor and a former deputy commissioner of the British South Africa Police, wrote several articles on the conflicts of the 1890s and prominent settler figures, usually policeman, who were involved in them. These articles are classic examples of selective settler historical narrative. While Hickman's 1958 article on Norton district during the 1896-7 conflict pre-dated the existence of the RF altogether, it appeared in the

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<sup>41</sup> P. Folk, 'The Gwelo Laager, 1896', *Rhodesiana* 22 (July, 1970), pp. 6-19.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>43</sup> A.S. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia; From Occupation to Federation* (Harare, 2002), p. 1.

same year one of its precursors, the Dominion Party, had narrowly lost an election to the UFP, mirroring a rise in white nationalist consciousness and fear of African violence. Its themes of violence, betrayal, struggle against impossible odds, and heroism were a central part of the DP's arguments for independence, and were adopted by the propaganda machine of its successor, the RF. The tale begins with unsuspecting whites in Mashonaland, who 'had so little fear that the craven Mashona would rise' that they despatched the local soldiery to fight the Ndebele.<sup>44</sup> Hickman contends that the rising was instigated by 'witchdoctors and agents of the Matabele rebels', who convinced the other 'Shona' that all the Europeans in Bulawayo had been killed. There follows an account of several Europeans being murdered. Hickman goes into great detail about the Norton family. The Nortons were white farmers who were all killed and for whom the district was subsequently named. The Norton family had arrived in Rhodesia in early 1896 to begin farming. The family's patriarch, Joseph Norton, was described as displaying a range of attributes that defined what a Rhodesian should be: individualistic, hard-working, fair but firm:

Though he was a man of wealth, he was a hard-working farmer, and most efficient. He never spared himself, and expected the same quality of work from his subordinates. For this reason the Mashona may have looked on him as a hard task master, though in fact he was fair and just.<sup>45</sup>

Hickman's description of African labourers viewing Norton as a 'hard task master' implied that the 'Shona' were inherently lazy and that work of any sort was inimical to them, and offers a cause – albeit an unjust one – for turning on their master. Another role played by the 'Shona' in narratives of the rebellion was that of the terrified servant or policeman. Referring to two murders on 16 July 1896, Hickman claims that news of the murders provoked Hugh Marshall Hole, of the Native Department of Mashonaland, to send a native policeman to warn the Nortons:

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<sup>44</sup> A.S. Hickman, 'Norton District in the Mashona Rebellion', *Rhodesiana* 3 (1958), p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[t]his man, a native detective, was never seen or heard of again, but there is a story that a native policeman arrived on the scene whilst the murders were taking place, and fled terrified.<sup>46</sup>

Hickman's narrative about Norton District presented the stereotype of the 'craven Mashona' to readers. These 'Shona' were disloyal, cowardly, unreliable and lazy. In contrast the whites in his article were rugged, hard-working and unjustly murdered. This created a sharp dichotomy which served to enhance the heroism of the settlers.

Hickman goes on to describe in detail the murders of the Norton family which illustrates once more the significance of 'blood price' narratives described above. He spends several pages hypothesising about how each member of the family and their white assistants (a governess and two farm assistants) were murdered.<sup>47</sup> In doing this Hickman humanises the whites and underlines the settlers' virtue and the Africans' predisposition to violence and bloodshed. These narratives of Africans in the era of colonisation served to confirm some white Rhodesians' fears about the violence of decolonisation. Violence in Kenya, the Congo and the Federation itself, which the RF exploited for electoral gain, was linked to historical narratives which demonstrated the essential savagery and violence of black men. Majority rule would equal chaos and bloodshed, as was being seen in nationalist unrest across Central Africa. This could be seen in a speech given by J.H. Howman on the eve of the constitutional referendum in 1969, when he argued that the white electorate should support the RF's constitutional proposals:

You are forgetting what happened in the Congo, when women and girls and nuns, let us note, were raped, not once but many times, by hordes of savages, people who only a short while before were regarded by the liberal elements of the Western world as responsible people capable of maintaining and carrying out the civilised responsibilities of government. Look at Tanzania. Look at Kenya. Look at Uganda. Look at Nigeria. Look at what is happening in Biafra. Look what is happening in Zambia. Lives violated, property seized.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> BBC Monitoring Archive, Caversham Park, Reading (Summary of World Broadcasts), SS ME 3102, 'Rhodesia: Howman's Referendum Campaign Broadcast', 18 June 1969.

Hickman's article culminates in the classic white story of the 1896-97 conflicts: the defence of a laager, at Hartley Hill. Unity was a central theme in the story of the laager defence and they often involved the coming-together of a motley band of prospectors, storekeepers and farmers and their eventual rescue. The story of white survival in 1896-97 was portrayed as one in which individuals of disparate origins came together to defend themselves. In the 1890s white settlers were scattered across the countryside and their survival was typically dependent upon the despatch of patrols of volunteers from larger settlements like Salisbury. In these narratives, the settlers' very survival depended upon them overcoming their differences, and pulling together to defeat a common enemy. One can see parallels between these tales from the late nineteenth century and the experience of white Rhodesians in the 1960s and 1970s. Due to the relative international isolation which resulted from UDI, from 1965 the entire country of Rhodesia possessed something of a 'laager mentality'. This became more pronounced as the guerrilla war escalated in the 1970s, when the landlocked Rhodesia lost its former allies in Mozambique (upon independence in 1975) and South Africa (after a re-alignment in that country's foreign policy objectives in the late 1970s) and became geographically as well as mentally 'surrounded'.<sup>49</sup>

The Rhodesiana Society, while not working at the behest of the RF, was thus dedicated to the use of history in nation-building in 1960s Rhodesia. As we have seen, the Society's members undertook and published research to help show contemporary Rhodesians, many of them relatively recent arrivals, the roots of the society that they were joining. The past furnished both inspiration and lessons for UDI-era Rhodesia, as well explaining the structures of Rhodesian race relations. However, not all contributions to Rhodesia were following a 'party line', and the pages of *Rhodesiana* could contain conflicting messages. To demonstrate this I will explore a particular issue of *Rhodesiana* in closer detail.

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<sup>49</sup> See R. Pfister, *Apartheid South Africa and African States: From Pariah to Middle Power, 1961-1994* (London & New York, 2005) and J. Miller, 'Africanising Apartheid: Identity, Ideology, and State-Building in Post-Colonial Africa', accessed 1 December 2014 at [https://www.academia.edu/9581587/Africanising\\_Apartheid\\_Identity\\_Ideology\\_and\\_State-Building\\_in\\_Post-Colonial\\_Africa](https://www.academia.edu/9581587/Africanising_Apartheid_Identity_Ideology_and_State-Building_in_Post-Colonial_Africa), pp. 20-28.

In July 1968, the Society published a special issue of *Rhodesiana* to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the occupation of Matabeleland which presents a more complicated picture of the work of the Rhodesiana Society. *Rhodesiana* number eighteen contained a range of articles dealing with the history of white settlement in Matabeleland, including G.L. Guy's pictorial journey through 'The Trees of Old Bulawayo'.<sup>50</sup> *Rhodesiana* number eighteen provides a clear example of the eclecticism of amateur history-writing. While it is clear that the focus of articles in *Rhodesiana* eighteen was upon the history the white city of Bulawayo, not the African settlement which preceded it, the issue highlights interesting visions of cross-racial relationships which emphasised the importance of co-operation between whites and blacks in early Rhodesian history. In his article "'White Man's Camp, Bulawayo' O.N. Ransford writes of the arrival of Jameson's column at Lobengula's capital of Bulawayo in November 1893. Ransford's article, when read 'against the grain', gives an impression of the nature of pre-colonial race relations in Matabeleland. The 'White Man's Camp' that Ransford describes was a settlement of white '[t]raders, concession-seekers, and hunters, as well as some general hangers-on' that Lobengula had allowed to live near to his kraal.<sup>51</sup> In an inversion of the racially segregated neighbourhoods in which urban blacks were forced to live by the RF he describes how Lobengula "allotted an area... as a concession where Europeans might live."<sup>52</sup> By the time Jameson and his soldiers arrived, some of these Europeans were quite well established and living in mud or brick dwellings, whilst others lived in their wagons.<sup>53</sup>

Ransford notes that, as war loomed, many of these whites 'slipped away to safety' and that one man, P.D. Crewe, 'set off to Cape Town on an official mission to carry Lobengula's case against the Chartered Company... and lay it before the British Government.'<sup>54</sup> Ransford's article paints the Ndebele as altogether more 'civilised' and responsible than their 'Shona' counterparts – noting that while some of these whites were held hostage by Lobengula, he 'went out of his way' to protect

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<sup>50</sup> 'Contents', *Rhodesiana*, 18 (July, 1968), p. ix.

<sup>51</sup> O.N Ransford, "'White Man's Camp", Bulawayo', *Rhodesiana*, 18, p. 13.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 13-14.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

them.<sup>55</sup> This served to emphasise the power and authority of ‘traditional’ African leaders and show the Ndebele in the stereotypical guises of ‘noble savage’ and ‘warrior race’. There was an honour and decency in Lobengula’s behaviour in 1893 that was lacking in the cowardly treachery of Hickman’s ‘Shona’. Whilst all this was submerged in an article which was largely about Ransford’s attempts to find a tree to which Jameson’s troops had nailed a BSAC flag to signify the occupation of Mashonaland, it proves inadvertently revealing for demonstrating that, as well as fighting together in the conflicts of the 1890s, blacks and whites co-existed peacefully and in close proximity to each other prior to colonisation.

J. Charles Shee contributed an article which detailed the story of Cecil Rhodes’ burial in the Matopos Hills in April 1902. Shee supplied a narrative account of Rhodes’ funeral cortege, and then made use of a long letter by the ubiquitous Hugh Marshall Hole, then Civil Commissioner of Bulawayo and in charge of the local proceedings:

We had arranged for the natives who wished to see the interment, to be stationed on the side of the mountain in a body, and they came to the number of 100 chiefs and about 3,000 of their men... As the coffin went slowly up [to the burial place] the principal chief – Mjaan – who was Lobengula’s Commander-in-Chief, stood up and gave the Royal Salute “Bayete” which was immediately taken up by the whole of the assembled multitude of natives. This salute has never been given since the death of Moselikatze, the father of Lobengula, and the founder of the Matabele race which he brought here from Zululand.<sup>56</sup>

Hole’s reminiscences, presented by Shee as ‘singularly appropriate’ went on to say that a skeleton found nearby was the Matabele leader ‘Moselikatze’ (Mzilikazi): ‘There sits Moselikatze and there rests Rhodes too, looking out over the country he won for us – if ever a man had a suitable resting place as this, and there may he and the old native chief rest in peace side by side!’<sup>57</sup> Thus, in Hole’s letter, the responsibility for the ‘nation’ passed from the Ndebele and their ‘founder’ to the whites and theirs. Hole’s description of the Ndebele chiefs respectfully saluting Rhodes’ coffin suggested their approval for the founding father and namesake of white Rhodesia in the same way

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-15.

<sup>56</sup> J.C. Shee, ‘The Burial of Cecil Rhodes’, *Rhodesiana*, 18, p.43

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.43.

the RF tried to demonstrate that their close relationship with the chiefs made them the natural inheritors' of Rhodes' mantle.

Other articles in the issue highlighted the development of Bulawayo after occupation in terms of a classic colonialist teleological narrative of the sort seen in chapter five. After the whites came development and progress. Louis W. Bolze illustrated how, shortly after the occupation, the railway came to Bulawayo. As the line was about to open Bolze notes:

Such a line had been the dream of many, who argued that it would bring the whole of the country south of the great river under the influence of civilising forces. Up to then missionaries had had very little success. The iron horse, it was claimed, was a more potent civilising instrument than the Bible among native tribes [sic]. It was well known, it was said, that natives were particularly fond of travelling in trains and this would break up their clannish instincts, and leave them to seek their livelihoods in other parts of the country than those in which they were born...

The Matabele was considered useless for underground work in the mines; they were too near their kraals, and the temptation to run away to see their wives and children was too strong for them to resist. The proposed line... was expected to divert the stream of [regional black labour] immigration, the running to the Rand and Kimberley, into Matabeleland.<sup>58</sup>

Like other authors before him, Bolze was helping create a narrative of African primitiveness and settler civilisation. Unusually, his vision of the Ndebele was more akin to that of Hickman's 'Shona' than it was of Ransford's Lobengula. His focus on the technological progress and economic development which attended settler rule shows how these narratives were both constitutive and reflective of white nationalism in the period. The stereotypes presented in Bolze's article supported the arguments about development and 'good governance' made by the RF to justify UDI, that the steady hand of European civilisation had lifted blacks from a primitive savagery to which, so the RF claimed, they were returning under decolonisation and majority rule.

Thus we can see encapsulated in a single issue a number of conflicting themes – a preoccupation with 'white' history that nevertheless revealed diverse relationships between pre-colonial whites and the Ndebele. On the whole, the Ndebele were described in a more respectful

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<sup>58</sup> L.W. Bolze, 'The Railway comes to Bulawayo', *Rhodesiana*, 18, pp. 73-74.

way than the 'Shona' were after 1896. A teleological narrative of white development and legitimate rule was offered – with the coming of the railway the country was opened up to 'civilisation' and economic development, and upon his death the Ndebele chiefs transferred their allegiance from Lobengula to Rhodes. These were historical discourses the RF could draw upon in its nationalist project of the 1960s and 1970s.

Stories of the conflicts of the 1890s, as portrayed by the amateur historians of the Rhodesiana Society, were a crucial cultural underpinning to white Rhodesian assumptions about the legitimacy of their right to rule in the UDI-period. They were invoked as historical analogues to the struggles of the present, replete with lessons for whites in the 1960s and 1970s about unity, bravery, and sacrifice. They suggested that if white Rhodesia was to survive as it did in the 1890s, whites needed to put aside their difference and join together in defence of the nation. They suggested an essential continuity of uniquely 'Rhodesian' qualities of endurance and endeavour stretching back to the arrival of the Pioneers decades earlier. They helped the RF explain its Internal Affairs policy, which privileged the 'historically legitimate' chiefs over the truculent African nationalist movement. They reinforced the RF's argument that blacks were stuck in a sort of primitive aspic and could not be trusted to run the country responsibly, and that whites deserved to stay in power by virtue of all they had done for the Africans.

In 1967, the Society had expressed its hopes these histories of the 1890s would provide an inspirational historical precedent for the fractious white community. However, like so many aspects of the RF's nationalist agenda, these amateur historical narratives about the white Rhodesian nation were frustrated by the fault lines within white society. At every step of the way the RF's nation-building project had been contested, sometimes by its own members, suggesting the limitations of nationalism reliant on attempts to invent homogenising traditions for a deeply divided community. Historical narratives were yet another contested terrain in the RF's struggles to build a nation after 1965.

*Rhodesiana* was not the only publication which was devoted to Rhodesian history in the period. From 1970 onwards the history faculty of the University College of Rhodesia produced the scholarly journal, *Rhodesian History*, which offers a glimpse of how some academics contested the history-writing of the Rhodesiana Society. *Rhodesian History* occasionally reviewed publications or events held by the Rhodesiana Society's branch organisations, providing an opportunity to explore how these two different sites of historical discourse production interacted with each other in the 1960s and 1970s.

Indeed, the RF was extremely hostile to Rhodesia's academic community. The University was seen as a hotbed of dissent and sedition by RF politicians, who disliked the liberal politics of the academics and also the racially-integrated residences which 'contradicted their determined efforts, since UDI, to promote separate development'.<sup>59</sup> Disdain for the University went wider than the RF and Paul Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin noted that 'a strong anti-intellectual tradition pervaded white society', who called the University of Rhodesia the 'Kremlin-on-the-hill'.<sup>60</sup> It was therefore unsurprising that Rhodesia's academic historians were often fierce critiques of the Rhodesiana Society's style of history-writing.

In *Rhodesian History*'s second volume John MacKenzie, who spent some time teaching at the University of Rhodesia in the late 1960s, reviewed *Rhodesiana*'s twenty-ninth volume. This particular issue was a special edition titled 'Lectures on Aspects of Rhodesian History' which reproduced a series of lectures given in Bulawayo by the Matabeleland Branch of the Society. MacKenzie was less than impressed by the academic rigour of these self-professed 'experts':

The result is an extraordinary rag-bag of ill-designed material, factual inaccuracies and prejudiced ignorance. Some of the contributions are appallingly written... It is difficult to have confidence in a contributor who adds 'I think' to every fact he utters, or in one who admits he could not find his subject in the nineteenth century works consulted

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<sup>59</sup> A.S. Mlambo, 'Student Protest and State Reaction in Colonial Rhodesia: The 1973 Chimukwembe Student Demonstrations at the University of Rhodesia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, 3 (1995), p. 475.

<sup>60</sup> P. Moorcraft & P. McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War: A Military History* (Mechanicsburg, 2010), p. 63.

because they had no indexes. It is equally difficult to escape the conclusion that publication of these lectures was a mistake...<sup>61</sup>

While MacKenzie prefaced his views with an acknowledgement that popularising history was a practice that professional historians should welcome he argued: ‘popular history must take account of the results of detailed professional research; it must be presented in a lively and elegant way; above all it must of course be factually accurate.’<sup>62</sup> He argued that some of the views presented in the lectures ‘[do] a disservice to the cause of Rhodesian history and will deter the serious reader.’<sup>63</sup> He singled out in particular the businessman Sir Keith Acutt, who had argued that Rhodesian history began with the missionary-explorer David Livingstone, not with African civilisations for which there was no written evidence. Thus despite its popularity and claims to expert status, the Rhodesiana Society’s work was questioned by some of the professional historians at the University of Rhodesia, illustrating the rival claims to authority made by the two bodies. It is notable that, as late as 1976, the Society had never invited an academic from the University of Rhodesia’s Faculty of History to give a paper before it.<sup>64</sup>

This was unusual given that academics have traditionally played an important role in the uses of history in nationalism. Stefan Berger noted that ‘national’ histories in Europe gained salience after the French Revolution as ‘an important means... to defend the specific and peculiar against the universal aspirations and imperial expansionism of France.’<sup>65</sup> Paul Lawrence has observed the importance of professional, academic, history to nationalist endeavours, arguing: ‘written history produced by acknowledged specialists has often been privileged in nationalist discourses’.<sup>66</sup> Lawrence observed that the 1960s turn toward social and cultural history, as well as the influence of interdisciplinary studies, encouraged many academic historians to turn away from histories of ‘the

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<sup>61</sup> J.M. MacKenzie, ‘Review of *Rhodesiana* 29’, *Rhodesian History*, 2 (1972), p. 121.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> P.R. Warhurst. ‘Review of Occasional Paper I: A Record of the Proceedings at a Series of 5 Lectures on Rhodesia 1896 to 1923 – Mashonaland Branch, the Rhodesiana Society, 1976’, *Rhodesian History*, 7 (1976), pp. 107-8.

<sup>65</sup> Berger, ‘The Power of National Pasts’, p. 34.

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence, ‘Nationalism and Historical Writing’, p. 714.

nation' and in any case many of the academics at the University of Rhodesia were held in disdain by the RF and its supporters.<sup>67</sup> In this context, the work of the amateurs in the Rhodesiana Society was more congruent with the RF's nation-building objectives. Furthermore, the academics' challenges to the amateurs' approach were much less widely known than the narratives of the sort produced by the Rhodesiana Society. It was these amateur histories which formed the basis of the white national Rhodesian national story.

### **The Amateurs and the Archivists: Interlinked Sites of Historical Discourse Production**

The previous section explored the historical narratives that were produced and reproduced by the Rhodesiana Society and integrated into the RF's case for minority-rule. While the RF was not directly involved in the work of the Society, the group did have close relationships with certain state institutions. Individuals like Roger Howman, Colonel Hickman, and Harry Cripwell clearly crossed back and forth between the two, or were both RF members and amateur historians simultaneously. Indeed, it was not only the 'experts' of the Rhodesiana Society whose stories could be related to contemporary claims to rule. The National Archives of Rhodesia was another potential resource for the RF to draw upon. Like the RF, the Archives were interested in collating and promoting a 'national' Rhodesian history, inventing stories for the national imagination. Tony King has argued that the archives played a key role in the RF's project to try and foment a Rhodesian sense of nationhood in the post-UDI period through their assiduous acquisition of 'Rhodesian' material.<sup>68</sup> The archivists and the amateurs intersected in their aims and output, demonstrating the close relationship between state and non-state actors in the creation of Rhodesia's 'national' history.

The National Archives were founded in 1935, established 'as the result of a general interest in the country's history which had been sparked by the celebrations to commemorate the fortieth

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<sup>67</sup> Lawrence, 'Nationalism and Historical Writing', p. 722.

<sup>68</sup> King, 'Identity and Decolonisation', p. 39.

anniversary, in 1933, of the occupation of Matabeleland.<sup>69</sup> Though the principal role of the Archives, the Director wrote in 1976, was ‘the selection and preservation of the public archives, those official documents worthy of permanent preservation for research and record’ it also contained a large number of private bequests and a bewildering array of pioneer artefacts.<sup>70</sup> This wide range of Rhodesian ‘artefacts’ provided a physical as well as a discursive resource for Rhodesia’s national story.

Much of the primary source material for articles in *Rhodesiana* was drawn from the collections of the National Archives of Rhodesia, as is evident from their bibliographies, but the relationship between the amateurs and the archives was personal as well as professional. A particularly illuminating article by E.E. Burke in *Rhodesiana*’s 1967 issue gives an impression of the relationship between *Rhodesiana*’s contributors and the National Archives. Burke’s article reflects Trouillot’s contention that archives, ‘convey authority and set the rules for credibility and interdependence, they help select the stories that matter.’<sup>71</sup> This is especially true of national archives, the archives of the state. Burke argued that ‘[a]n archival collection... has some special quality that distinguishes it from other collections of documents’ and believed that documents contained therein possessed ‘authenticity, and a certain impartiality’.<sup>72</sup> Admittedly, Burke had something of a vested interest given that he was the deputy director of the National Archives (he became director in 1970). He, along with several others, had a close connection to the Rhodesiana Society. The ‘notes’ in *Rhodesiana* number twenty-three (December, 1970) demonstrate just how close this connection was. They inform readers of a number of staff changes at the Archives. T.W. Baxter, the director who had ‘always been a good friend and supporter of the Rhodesiana Society, and encouraged his staff to take part in Society activities’, was retiring to be replaced by the deputy director E.E. Burke (editor of

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<sup>69</sup> *Report of the Director of National Archives for the Year 1976* (Salisbury, 1977), p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> E.E. Burke, ‘Archives and Archaeology’, *Rhodesiana*, 17 (December, 1967), pp. 64-70. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, p. 27.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 64- 65.

*Rhodesiana* between 1963 and 1967).<sup>73</sup> Burke himself was being replaced by the senior archivist, R.W.S. Turner, who was the Society's committee member in charge of advertising and membership and deputy chairman of the Mashonaland Branch, and the new senior archivist was C. Coggin, former librarian and frequent book reviewer for the publication.<sup>74</sup> Thus there was a particularly close relationship with the country's National Archives both as an important location of primary source material and through shared personnel at the highest levels. Both the Archives and the articles exhibited a skewed view of Rhodesia's past which was designed to emphasise a white Rhodesian 'national' story.

In addition to providing documents and facilities for historical researchers, the National Archives also hosted special exhibitions for visitors. The visitors often outnumbered the dedicated researchers who came into the archives; in 1971 the director of the Archives reported an annual total of 3,124 researchers as opposed to 6,175 visitors. These casual attendees included both Rhodesians and foreign visitors. For instance, 1971 saw a notable upsurge of American visitors. Thanks to a regular rotation of exhibitions, visitors could experience such varied historical events and artefacts as Rhodesia's UDI document (unveiled on 2 March 1971 by the prime minister), or a special exhibition that June commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mazoe patrol.<sup>75</sup> In 1973 special exhibitions were held for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of responsible government and on the explorer-missionary David Livingstone, an imperial hero who had been active in neighbouring Zambia and Malawi.<sup>76</sup> These selections of particular historical narratives, focusing upon the achievement of white settlers and imperial heroes, historicised the importance of whites in Rhodesia's national development.

Thus, much like *Rhodesiana*, the focus of the work of the National Archives was directed towards reinforcing the white nation-building project, and the two sites of historical discourse production were closely connected on a personal and professional level. They curated exhibitions to

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<sup>73</sup> 'Notes', *Rhodesian*, 23 (December, 1970), p. 70.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>75</sup> *Report of the Director, National Archives for the Year 1971* (Salisbury, 1972), p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> *Report of the Director, National Archives for the Year 1973* (Salisbury, 1974), p. 3.

fire the national imagination with stories of derring-do, sacrifice and white survival, seeking to paper over the cracks in white Rhodesian society to present Europeans with a united, historicised, identity and nationality grounded in the source material they displayed and collected. A National Federation of Women's Institutes booklet gave a sense of this in 1967:

Rhodesian history comes to life [in the archives] in such relics as the Union Jack planted by the Pioneers in Salisbury in 1890; some of David Livingstone's original diaries, Selous' elephant gun; an old chest in which the Moffat [Robert Moffat, an early missionary to Lobengula] papers were found; and an album of drawings by Lord Baden-Powell [Robert Baden-Powell, most famous for founding the scouting movement] who was in Rhodesia in 1896 as Chief Staff Officer of the Imperial Force which came to our assistance in the Matabele Rebellion of 1896.<sup>77</sup>

The National Archives of Rhodesia constituted another rich vein of selective historical narratives that the RF could mine to buttress its nation-building project. Like the Rhodesiana Society, they had a wide reach, attracting both domestic and foreign visitors who came to see exhibitions celebrating white achievement. Though the Archives were supposed to be 'national' in scope, the vast majority of Rhodesia's population were excluded from the story, throughout the 1960s and 1970s the Archive had a wide-ranging oral history project which only began to include African interviewees (and then sporadically) from 1974.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, dedicated research into African history did not take place until two posts were created in 1977, whereas there had long been a dedicated historian studying pioneer history.<sup>79</sup> The priorities of the Archives in the 1960s and 1970s reflected the RF's limited courting of blacks in its nation-building project as well as its construction of a specific white history politically useful to a minority-rule government in the era of decolonisation.

## White Rhodesian Historical Fiction

In 1974 Martin Southwood wrote a review article on two series of books which were particularly popular among white Rhodesians. These were a series of reprints produced by two

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<sup>77</sup> National Federation of Women's Institutes of Rhodesia, *Great Spaces Washed with Sun: Rhodesia* (Salisbury, 1967), p. 177.

<sup>78</sup> *Report of the Director of National Archives for the Year 1974* (Salisbury, 1975), p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Report of the Director of National Archives for the Year 1976* (Salisbury, 1977), p. 4.

publishing houses – Books of Rhodesia and Pioneer Head Press - which were both founded in 1968, when the ‘bush war’ was going relatively well for the Rhodesians.<sup>80</sup> Southwood reviewed the output of the two series and noted that seven of Books of Rhodesia’s thirty-one reprints were concerned with the 1896-7 risings.<sup>81</sup> This included such works as F.W. Sykes’ *With Plumer in Matabeleland*, originally published in 1897 and reproduced by Books of Rhodesia in 1972.<sup>82</sup>

The print runs of these books were typically quite small, usually a couple of thousand copies, with additional deluxe print runs. In the case of the Bulawayo-based publisher Books of Rhodesia, there were one-hundred and fifty deluxe leather-bound editions of books in the Rhodesiana Reprint Library series, which appeared to stop with the thirty-fifth instalment, a reproduction of Lionel Declé’s 1900 work *Three Years in Savage Africa*, in 1975.<sup>83</sup> After this a new line of standard and deluxe editions of historical reprints, called the Rhodesiana Reprint Library Silver Series, began, itself reaching twenty-four editions by 1979.<sup>84</sup> These historical reprints dealt with all manner of subjects – exploration, hunting, warfare – in early or immediately pre-colonial Rhodesia, and were all written by whites in various official and non-official capacities.

The Pioneer Head Press, which was based in Salisbury, published its own historical reprints – the Heritage Series. The print run was, however, much smaller, and appeared to end in 1975 with its seventh volume – having made available books by the prominent Rhodesian hunter Frederick Courteney Selous, the ‘great white hunter’ after whom the notorious Selous Scouts unit of the Rhodesian military was named, and a number of early pioneers and explorers who pre-dated the arrival of the Pioneer Column.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> M. Southwood, ‘The Rhodesian Past’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 12, 1 (1974), pp. 168-172.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>82</sup> *Rhodesia National Bibliography – 1972* (Salisbury, 1973), p. 11-13.

<sup>83</sup> *Rhodesia National Bibliography – 1975* (Salisbury, 1976), p. 22.

<sup>84</sup> *Rhodesia National Bibliography – 1979* (Salisbury, 1980), p. 20.

<sup>85</sup> *Rhodesia National Bibliography – 1973* (Salisbury, 1974), p. 16; *Rhodesia National Bibliography - 1975* (Salisbury, 1976) p. 24.

Looking at the way these books were marketed to potential customers can give us an impression of what the publishers intended by reintroducing such a large number of out-of-print historical texts to the Rhodesian market. Books of Rhodesia's advertisements are particularly interesting in this regard. The advertisements, which ran in *Rhodesiana* and *The Rhodesia Herald* amongst other places, reveal that editions of the Rhodesiana Reprint Library were available as part of a book club subscription. A particularly prevalent one explicitly made the connection between Rhodesians of the past and those of the future. Titled 'Our Youth – Our Greatest Asset', the advertisement showed a picture of a white boy sat on the arm of the chair, sharing a Rhodesiana Reprint Library edition with an elderly man (presumably his grandfather). It encouraged subscribers to 'Pass Rhodesia's Literary Heritage on to your Family through the Rhodesiana Reprint Library'.<sup>86</sup> The tone suggests that these historical reprints served a similar purpose to the work of the *Rhodesiana* society, as an educative tool which had important ramifications in contemporary Rhodesian society by allowing whites to feel they had an historical (and future) 'place' in their central African settler colony, and to help show them what that place was.

Alongside these historical reprint series, both of these publishers also produced individual historical reprints and history books. This section examines two of these books in greater detail, building upon the work of Anthony Chennells, who scrutinised white Rhodesian war fiction as a window onto white identity in the UDI-period.<sup>87</sup> I look in greater detail at narratives which deal with the more distant past, as another non-state source of historical discourse production. The two works studied here are Hylda Richards' *False Dawn: The Story of Dan Judson, Pioneer* (Books of Rhodesia, 1974) and Geoffrey Bond's *Remember Mazoe: The Reconstruction of an Incident* (Pioneer Head Press, 1973). Both books have been chosen because they focus upon the conflicts of the 1890s and

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<sup>86</sup> Advertisement for Books of Rhodesia Book Club, *Rhodesiana*, 20 (July, 1969), p. ii.

<sup>87</sup> A. Chennells, 'Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwean Liberation War', in N. Bhebe & T. Ranger (eds.) *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 102-129.; A. Chennells, 'The Treatment of the Rhodesian War in Recent Rhodesian Novels', *Zambezia*, 5, 2 (1977), pp. 177-202.

more specifically the story of the Mazoe patrol.<sup>88</sup> They provide an example of nationalist literary invention, explicitly in Bond's book and more subtly in Richards'. The Mazoe patrol was a relief column which rode out from Salisbury to rescue the inhabitants of the Alice Mine laager during the summer of 1896. It is notable that both of these books were released after a sharp escalation of the 'bush war', which resumed with the attack on Marc de Borchgrave's Altena Farm in Centenary, North-Eastern Rhodesia, in December 1972.<sup>89</sup> These works, like the war fiction explored by Chennells, offered explicit historical parallels of the then current conflict with nationalist guerrillas.

*Remember Mazoe* was closely related to the work of the Rhodesiana society. Bond notes in his preface that he had help from A.S. Hickman and E.E. Burke in compiling the work, demonstrating the small, closely-knit nature of the white Rhodesian amateur historical community.<sup>90</sup> He argued that the story of the Mazoe patrol was not as well-known as 'it deserves to be' and hoped that his work could do something to redress this.<sup>91</sup> Bond also claimed to eschew historical analysis in favour of a narrative account of the events of the patrol, to the extent that he had introduced some fictional elements, including dialogue.<sup>92</sup> Finally Bond warned the reader that: 'I have made frequent use of the word 'native', which is in no sense derogatory, but factually correct when applied to the indigenous population of any country.'<sup>93</sup> This term is more charged than Bond made it appear, as it was seen as a term of offence by middle-class Africans and in 1957 was replaced in official usage by 'African', as part of the token removal of some forms of discrimination which accompanied the UFP's 'partnership' policy.<sup>94</sup>

After setting the scene – a selfish Jameson weakening the country by using Rhodesia's paramilitary police for his infamous raid into the Transvaal, an indifferent Britain ignoring Rhodesia

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<sup>88</sup> Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation*, p. 117.

<sup>89</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, pp.85-86.

<sup>90</sup> G. Bond, *Remember Mazoe: The Reconstruction of an Incident* (Salisbury, 1973), p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>94</sup> West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class*, p. 30.

and enjoying its imperial domination and cricket, a duplicitious and warlike ‘Matabele’ sharpening their assegais – Bond launches full throttle into a tale of imperial intrigue worthy of H. Rider Haggard. The ‘Matabele’, seeing European weakness, rise, and then convince the ‘Shona’ race to join them. In this Bond draws upon the stereotypes of the ‘Shona’ seen above:

the Shona race... possessed little of the forthright military ability of their neighbours. If they fought at all it was not in open and proud array, but rather with the run-and-pull methods of wild dogs. And, like wild dogs, they felt much safer in the pack.<sup>95</sup>

Bond paints the ‘Shona race’ as lazy, and like A.S. Hickman in his *Rhodesiana* article, suggests that their grievance against the Europeans was that Europeans made them work. The flames of rebellion were fanned by evil witch doctors, the ‘witch’ Nyanda (the Nehanda medium, whose role in the conflict gained an almost mythical significance in both settler and guerrilla histories) and a treacherous policeman – Mhasvi.<sup>96</sup> It is between the latter two that one of the fictional dialogues of the work takes place (in a cave, no less) which touches on themes of African betrayal, theft (of weapons) and curious dieting habits (suggesting Africans ate rats). All of this excluded Africans from the notions of ‘civilisation’ by which the boundaries of Rhodesian-ness were policed. Whites were civilised, and thus ‘Rhodesian’, and blacks were savage and primordial. As Anthony King has noted, an ostensibly non-racial cultural concept of ‘civilisation’ was claimed as the qualification for full civil and political rights in Rhodesia, when in fact this was highly racialised and ‘civilised’ was essentially a code-word for ‘white’.<sup>97</sup>

In contrast to the Africans, largely nameless and faceless as they remained in the historical record (loyal Africans were always ‘boys’ and the enemy were always ‘rebels’) the lives of the small number of European settlers are brought into light. In an invented dialogue between John Blakiston and Harold Zimmerman, two volunteers who headed out from Salisbury to bring back the women

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<sup>95</sup> Bond, *Remember Mazoe*, p. 16.

<sup>96</sup> See Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation* for an in-depth exploration of the memorialisation of the Nehanda medium.

<sup>97</sup> King, ‘Identity and Decolonisation’, pp. 61-62.

from Alice Mine, demonstrates this. Here, Blakiston visits the storekeeper Zimmerman seeking company on his rescue mission:

“Anything wrong?”  
The proprietor read his answer in the other’s face.  
Blakiston shrugged.  
“Judge Vintcent has asked someone to go out to Mazoe with an ambulance to help bring in the women. Did you know there were women out there?”  
“And you volunteered?”  
“But I’ve got to have someone with me,” said Blakiston shyly. “I said I didn’t know the road very well.”  
Zimmerman understood.  
“I’ll come. But I don’t know the way much better than you!”  
They laughed together, sharing a plight.  
The pair next met at Judge Vintcent’s residence, ‘Maund’s House,’ at nine o’clock that night..  
A cluster of friends had gathered in the quiet street, clapping the two men on their backs and wishing them luck.  
“Come back soon,” said a voice.<sup>98</sup>

Unlike the Africans Nyanda and Mshavi, squatting and plotting in their cave, Blakiston and Zimmerman are portrayed as decent men, part of a united community which supports them and wishes for their safe return. Not all-knowing but doing the best with the knowledge they had to save the women of the mine, unassumingly heroic. This idea of white community in the face of adversity contrasts with statements elsewhere in the book about the divided rebels. Furthermore to those Rhodesians familiar with the story the exchange is tinged with a hint of tragedy, as Blakiston would famously never return. He was killed on the veldt after leaving the laager to telegraph for aid with a young telegraph operator named Thomas Routledge. Blakiston, Routledge, and the men and women of the Mazoe patrol swiftly passed into Rhodesia’s pantheon of pioneer heroes. This again demonstrates the high degree of interaction amongst a small group of amateurs and the state. Blakiston in particular was commemorated in street and school names and the Mazoe patrol were included in a panel of the ‘national tapestry’ of Rhodesia, embroidered by the Women’s Institutes of Rhodesia and hung in the Rhodesian parliament.<sup>99</sup> In 1968 the grave site of Blakiston and Routledge,

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<sup>98</sup> Bond, *Remember Mazoe*, p. 65.

<sup>99</sup> F. Clements, *Rhodesia: The Course to Collision* (London, 1969), p. 28; Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation*, pp.117-128; O. Ransford, *Rhodesian Tapestry: A History in Needlework* (Bulawayo, 1971), pp. 60-61.

located close to where they fell, was rediscovered, an event described by the Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics as ‘one of the greatest historic interest to the country.’<sup>100</sup> The graves were promptly gazetted as a national monument and a bronze plaque was erected by public subscription in 1970.<sup>101</sup>

Much of Bond’s narrative focused upon the white community of Mashonaland. While highlighting that the initially inept rebels became better at using the guns they had stolen he noted that ‘the rebels had reckoned without the people of Mazoe and their kind, who fought even better when the odds were stacked against them.’<sup>102</sup> The parallels with the contemporary ‘struggle’ of the white Rhodesians, internationally isolated and hit with sanctions, were obvious. The fact that the people of Mazoe eventually beat their African opponents offered a message of hope and encouragement for contemporary Rhodesians who were just beginning their own war against the guerrilla forces of ZANLA in the North-East of the country. After an action-packed description of the arrival of several relief patrols at Alice Mine and the ride back to Salisbury, Bond reassures the reader that: ‘[w]hen the Europeans took over control of the country again, there were no more wars, and everybody lived in peace. The assegais of the rebellion had been broken.’<sup>103</sup> He concludes with a telling reflection on Rhodesia’s history:

Of such tales is the Rhodesian past constructed. Black man’s magic and white man’s determination have each played their part. Stories remain in plenty, but none will ever be more worth the telling than that of the Mashona rebellion – and the Mazoe Patrol.<sup>104</sup>

Bond’s book was a paean to pioneering designed to inspire and instruct white Rhodesians in the 1970s. It also gives an impression of how white authors adapted historical narratives to suit the changing contexts in which they were written. Bond’s history completely ignores potential African

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<sup>100</sup> *Rhodesia Government: Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics: Annual Report for 1968* (Salisbury, 1969), p. 6.

<sup>101</sup> *Rhodesia Government: Commission for the Preservation of Natural and Historical Monuments and Relics: Annual Report for 1970* (Salisbury, 1971), pp. 4-5.

<sup>102</sup> Bond, *Remember Mazoe*, p. 80.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

grievances which might have driven them to conflict. He suggests that the ‘Matabele’ rose because they were warlike and saw weakness among the whites, and that the ‘Shona’ followed because they were easily manipulated by ‘Matabele’ agitators. This was a direct parallel with RF propaganda of the 1960s and 1970s which portrayed ordinary Africans as weak-minded stooges of communist exploitation.<sup>105</sup> The fictionalised dialogue between Mhasvi and Nyanda briefly mentions a white master whipping his workers, but does not explore it in any detail and Bond had already mentioned by this point that the Shona were lamentably lazy and hence probably deserved it.<sup>106</sup> Later, when speaking about whites who remained isolated at their properties rather than going into laager Bond argues that they did so because ‘they gave priority to the needs of their properties and native employees’.<sup>107</sup> In the end, the whites bring peace to the country, their ‘determination’ triumphing over the black man’s ‘magic’ and establishing an historical continuity both of European development and progress (justifying continued white rule) and African belligerence and pliability (reinforcing contemporary logic about the causes for the guerrilla war – that is, communist influence and not white misrule).<sup>108</sup> It also helped define a white Rhodesian identity that was grounded in sacrifice, endeavour against the odds, and determination to succeed. As in the folk songs explored in chapter four, these historical narratives presented a Rhodesian nation centred upon conflict.

Hylde Richards’ *False Dawn* approaches the same event from a more personal perspective, but contains many of the same themes which permeated *Rhodesiana* and *Remember Mazoe*. Her story is based primarily on the extensive diaries of Dan Judson, a telegraphist who arrived in Rhodesia in 1893 and led one of the relief patrols to the Alice Mine.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, the tale acts more as a snapshot of pioneer life, one of many popular accounts of the hardships faced by the first Europeans to arrive in the country in the late nineteenth century prior to the conflicts, the ‘False

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<sup>105</sup> See chapter five.

<sup>106</sup> Bond, *Remember Mazoe*, p. 20.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>108</sup> L.J. Macfarlane, ‘Justifying rebellion: Black and white nationalism in Rhodesia’, *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 6, 1 (1968), p. 59.

<sup>109</sup> H. Richards, *False Dawn: The Story of Dan Judson, Pioneer* (Bulawayo, 1974), p. 1, p. 4, p. 25.

Dawn' of the title.<sup>110</sup> The story is particularly interesting in the way it deals with a detail which might have compromised the legend of Blakiston and Routledge. It gives us an insight into the role these histories were intended to play in white Rhodesian society in the 1960s and 1970s:

The story of Blakiston and Routledge is a Rhodesian epic, but an important point must be made here. Many years ago when Dan Judson spoke of the heroism of these two young men, he told me that in a proposed book we must never mention the fact that Routledge at first refused to go back to the telegraph office. He, Salthouse and Zimmerman, in their reports to Judge Vintcent [the administrator of Salisbury], were careful to pass this over because they knew it would be impossible to give the facts clearly so that no doubts would be cast on a courageous young man... I hope I have made it clear that while Blakiston was fearless and brave, Routledge, knowing exactly what was before him, was equally courageous.<sup>111</sup>

Richards explained that she had reneged on her agreement with Judson because another historian had published a letter from another European in the laager, named Darling, which detailed Routledge's hesitancy. Richards rebutted Darling's letter, arguing that 'Darling is clearly prejudiced against Routledge.'<sup>112</sup> This attempt to restore the reputation of Routledge in the face of what the author considered a black mark upon Routledge's character provides a first-hand example of the inventive and imaginative processes that guided the presentation of these Rhodesian historical narratives. Indeed, Charumbira noted that: '[t]he memory of these two men [Blakiston and Routledge] is a quintessential example of history as imagination in the sense that the events recounted had, indeed, happened but the protagonists were not what was portrayed in the memorializations...'<sup>113</sup> The authors of these narratives felt that white Rhodesians in the 1960s and 1970s needed historical heroes to help make sense of their current struggles against nationalism, majority-rule, and decolonisation. The legacies of pioneers like Blakiston and Routledge provided part of the reason that whites were fighting – to preserve the 'civilisation' and nation that their efforts helped to establish.

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<sup>110</sup> Richards, *False Dawn*.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>113</sup> Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation*, p. 119.

## Conclusion

History was a powerful force in the white Rhodesian nationalist project. Utilised by the RF to make claims about the validity of minority-rule independence in an era of decolonisation, or by amateur white historians seeking to help foster a sense of nationhood, the past was an important cultural resource underpinning institutionalised social, legal, economic and political discrimination in the 1960s and 1970s. In order to make sense of the turbulence of the UDI-period, histories had to be told in specific ways. Some of white Rhodesia's amateur historians tried to paper over the cracks in white society with stories of unity, struggle, and triumph over adversity. The analogous nature of these narratives was explicit in the aims of the Rhodesiana Society, seeking to help the RF build its new Rhodesian nation. They offered a range of lessons for the disparate white community about who they should be, how they should behave, and why minority-rule remained appropriate in a time of decolonisation. They provided a sense of historical anchoring for incoming whites and those who had not been in the country for very long and they offered a message of hope in their conflicts with nationalist guerrillas. These narratives reinforced the RF's propaganda messages about the need for white unity to preserve UDI and minority-rule.

In contrast to the songs explored in the previous chapter, the relationship between the amateur historians and the RF was unclear. There is no evidence to suggest that the Ministry of Information loomed behind the work of the Rhodesiana Society, or the writers of historical fiction, even as it benefited from the stereotypes they perpetuated. There were, however, close links between the amateurs and the state, chiefly through the close personal relationship the Rhodesiana Society had with the National Archives, but also in terms of shared personnel and objectives across the RF and the Rhodesiana Society. These different sites of historical discourse production yielded plentiful material for the RF's nation-building rhetoric. They represented the cultural context in which the RF undertook its nation-building project, suggesting Consuelo Cruz's argument that the possibilities of

‘top-down’ nationalism are structured by what it is possible for the population to imagine.<sup>114</sup> The histories reflected the continuities and shifts in the nature of the imagined nation of Rhodesia, a mental space in which white Rhodesians tried to rationalise their situation in the era of decolonisation. Cumulatively, these stories represented an ‘imaginative’ process replete with ‘invented traditions’; heroes and myths intended to form the basis of a long, glorious Rhodesian national history. In this sense the historical narratives and the people who produced them represent another symbiosis of the two concepts of nationalist theory as a small number of individuals within the white community came together to use the past to help write the story of the national present and future.

Despite being highly selective and carefully presented to chime with the Society’s wider nationalist goals, like every other attempt to foster unity in the nation-building endeavour, historical narratives met with contestation. In this case, it came from an unusual quarter, a group normally intrinsically associated with ‘national histories’. Academics at the University of Rhodesia often savagely critiqued the work of the Rhodesiana Society, and while these academics enjoyed a sort of pariah status in white Rhodesia’s largely anti-intellectual climate, their contestation of the work of the Rhodesiana Society suggested the ultimate failure of the narratives to generate any sort of meaningful national unity amongst whites. Like Rhodesia’s new national symbols, white Rhodesian history was compromised by its narrow scope. The historical contributions of blacks to the nation were circumscribed, reflecting racial prejudices of the time. It is clear from the membership lists and the contents pages of *Rhodesiana* that black people were not contributing to these historical narratives. In the training camps and at the *pungwes*, nationalist soldiers were creating their own ‘national’ histories and legends for Zimbabwe, ironically centred on the very same conflicts mythologised by the whites.<sup>115</sup> Even more ironically, they could count on some support from professional historians in doing so, with texts like Terence Ranger’s *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia* (1967)

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<sup>114</sup> C. Cruz, ‘Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make Their Futures’, *World Politics*, 52, 3 (2000), pp. 275-312.

<sup>115</sup> Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation*.

providing their own instructive 'national' narratives to support African resistance.<sup>116</sup> Typically, the only Africans allowed to show any authority were chiefs, in accordance with the RF's African Affairs policy which recognised them as the legitimate representatives of the black population and denigrated the competence and ability of the nationalists, who were analogous to the 'rebels' of the 1890s.

These histories helped inform white perceptions of Africans in the 1960s and 1970s as immature and unchanging. Like the folk songs of John Edmond and Clem Tholet they also offered some reassurance of eventual white victory in the struggle against majority-rule independence. However, as we have seen above, this conceptualisation of Rhodesia was increasingly challenged in the escalating war of the 1970s. The challenges of the 1970s raised questions about the very character of the Rhodesian nation as the odds stacked up against its continued survival. I conclude by exploring how whites responded to these pressures.

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<sup>116</sup> Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*.

## Conclusion

### ‘Now as Then’? Race and the Rhodesian nation in the 1970s

The 1970s saw the Rhodesian Front’s (RF) vision of the Rhodesian nation repeatedly under threat. African opposition throughout the decade, either through political protest or guerrilla warfare, repeatedly gave the lie to the RF’s discourses and the historical narratives which underpinned them, as the exclusivity of the politicians’ nation-building project came back to haunt them. In the previous chapter, I showed the small, interconnected community from which many of the RF’s historical discourses were drawn. These discourses were deployed to provide lessons for white Rhodesians in the UDI-era, as well as messages of encouragement and hope that they would triumph in their contemporary struggles to preserve minority-rule. I illustrated a range of historical narratives about Africans and the stories they were used to tell about what it meant to be Rhodesian. In this chapter I explore in greater detail how these discourses were mobilised by the RF and its supporters to defend their vision of the nation and to rationalise African challenges to minority-rule. I also summarise the preceding chapters and offer the conclusions of my study of the RF’s nationalist project.

In this respect the first part of the chapter builds upon the foundations laid in the previous two chapters but also the work of Donal Lowry on the operation of white Rhodesian ideologies.<sup>1</sup> Whereas Lowry studied anti-communism in Rhodesian political culture, I continue my focus on the way historical narratives were deployed in service of the wider nationalist project. I argue that African challenges to the RF’s authority fractured the white community, creating spaces for white contestations of the nation, demonstrating the unresolved nature of the debates which took place in the late 1960s over the ‘new’ Rhodesian nation. The 1970s were characterised by the RF’s desperate

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<sup>1</sup> D. Lowry, ‘The Impact of Anti-communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture ca. 1920s-1980’, *Cold War History*, 7, 2 (2007), pp. 169-194.

attempts to retain control over what 'Rhodesia' meant, which led to the ultimately drastic action of redefining the nation altogether in a last-ditch attempt to preserve the substance if not the style of minority-rule. The phenomenon of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1978-9 demonstrated that the 'performance' of statehood as represented by the processes of symbolic decolonisation I explored in section one, was far less important to the RF than the maintenance of some form of white rule.

I have argued that the RF's nationalism was essentially reactive, a sort of 'will-we, won't we' nationalism in which the RF often hedged its bets and acted in response to outside events or triggers. Here, I seek to demonstrate even the character of the RF's nationalism was inconsistent over the course of the UDI-period. Symbolic decolonisation actually represented the failure of the RF's 'first, best, prize' of legally negotiated minority-rule independence within the Commonwealth, akin to the autonomous settler societies in the old dominions. Zimbabwe-Rhodesia was the apotheosis of the mutability of the RF's nationalist project, a testament to the abject failure of symbolic decolonisation to achieve its aim of a united, viable, white-ruled state in Central Africa. It also represented an explicit if very reluctant attempt by the RF to court the majority of the nation's population. Thirteen years after UDI, it was far too little and far too late. What is more, it cost the RF crucial support amongst the white community, leading to emigration, plummeting morale, and challenges from the right.

This chapter explores two key instances of African challenges to the Rhodesian nation. The first was an act of resistance, the African rejection of the Anglo-Rhodesian settlement proposals in 1972; the second was an act of co-option, the achievement of an 'internal settlement' in March 1978, which led to the creation of 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia'. In both cases, historical narratives were important parts of the RF's defence of the 'nation', the continuation of minority-rule, and the party itself. Both also elicited challenges to the RF's national narrative, showing the brittle nature of its invention versus the power of white popular imaginations of 'Rhodesia', 'Rhodesians' and 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia'.

## The African response to the Pearce Commission

In 1971, after years of failed negotiations seeking to attain minority rule independence, Rhodesian negotiators led by the Prime Minister, Ian Smith, came to an agreement with Edward Heath's Conservative government in Britain.<sup>2</sup> Legal independence for the white minority seemed at hand, along with an end to six years of international isolation and sanctions. However the acceptance and subsequent implementation of this agreement were subject to certain preconditions. There were five principles which had been imposed by Britain relating to any settlement between the two countries.<sup>3</sup> The most important principle in this case was the fifth, which stated that the proposals had to be acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole.<sup>4</sup> This included the African population, who had not been represented during the talks which produced the proposals.

To ensure the fifth principle was satisfied, the British despatched a commission of inquiry under Lord Pearce (the Pearce Commission) to determine the opinion of Rhodesians of all races and report back on the suitability of the proposals. In the event, Pearce and his commissioners found that while Europeans, Asians and 'Coloureds' largely supported the proposals a large majority of Africans rejected them. Pearce's report concluded; 'that the people of Rhodesia as a whole do not regard the Proposals as acceptable as a basis for independence.'<sup>5</sup> The result was a great shock to the white Rhodesians, Pearce's comments regarding white respondents demonstrate why:

Many Europeans accepted the Proposals in the hope that they would promote racial co-operation... But this view was often combined with the belief that the European was still, in the eyes of the African, a father, guide, doctor, friend. Such people said the rural African had a childlike and superstitious nature; "the white man's hand seems to offer the safest and surest guide for the time being"; "they have to be ruled and reasoning is a

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<sup>2</sup> See J.R.T. Wood, *A Matter of Weeks Rather than Months: the Impasse Between Harold Wilson and Ian Smith: Sanctions, Aborted Settlements and War, 1965-1969* (Victoria, B.C., 2008).

<sup>3</sup> *Rhodesia: Proposals for a Settlement* (London, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> E. Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London, 1978), pp. 40-1.

<sup>5</sup> *Rhodesia – Report of the Commission on Rhodesian Opinion Under the Chairmanship of the Right Honourable the Lord Pearce*, (London, 1972), p. 2.

sign of weakness”; “the only true natural resources of Rhodesia are white brains and black potential”.<sup>6</sup>

The views of these Europeans were shaped in part by RF propaganda which had drawn upon stereotypical portrayals of whites and blacks. This propaganda portrayed Africans as infantile, little better than the savage and primitive bogeymen who had threatened the pioneers in the 1890s. A typical example of this was the infamous pamphlet *The Man and His Ways: An Introduction to the Customs and Beliefs of Rhodesia's African People*, which appeared several years earlier in 1969.<sup>7</sup> The pamphlet, intended for domestic and foreign consumption, was based on a series of talks given by a ‘senior official’ of the Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism. It promised readers; ‘[i]t is published as your introduction to the man with whom you are in daily contact in your home and at work – the African’.<sup>8</sup> This received Ministry of Internal Affairs wisdom about Africans in Rhodesia drew upon historicised tropes that we have seen above: noting that Africans had a collective, rather than individual, conscience; that they were influenced heavily by the spirits of their ancestors, and that they were fatalistic and simple: ‘[t]he African loves laughter. His needs are few and simple and when he has satisfied them he is inclined to sit back.’<sup>9</sup>

*The Man and His Ways* dealt with African beliefs about spirits, marriage customs, and relationships with chiefs, nature, and his family, his manners and ‘fears’. The pamphlet painted Africans as highly superstitious and backward. In one example, it notes that witch doctors sometimes recommended remedies involving human body parts, describing cannibalism and infanticide which had taken place in the past and continued to the present day:

‘[w]hen these killings occur today it is more than likely that the motive behind them is to acquire a charm for gambling or business purposes... Only a few years ago a small African boy was found with his throat slashed and his genitals cut away. This brutality was committed, not so very far from the modern capital city of Salisbury, in order to acquire those parts for the making of a lucky mascot.’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> *The Man and His Ways: An Introduction to the Customs and Beliefs of Rhodesia's African People* (Salisbury, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

Rather than a reflection of a timeless, unchanging African people, the stereotypes seen in *The Man and His Ways* represented a re-definition of Africans as part of the RF's wider strategy of segregation and community development. This was a reversal of older settler discourses of modernisation from the era of 'partnership' in the 1950s, which suggested the potential for modernising and civilising blacks. Given the centrality of 'civilisation' to the extension of political and civil rights in Rhodesia, this older rhetoric allowed for (admittedly distant) parity for blacks. As was seen in chapter one, it was this sort of rhetoric, encapsulated in the UFP's 'Build a Nation' campaign, which had allowed the RF to win power in 1962. In contrast to the ideas of the 1950s, the RF's rhetoric accompanying its Internal Affairs strategy was to demonstrate the cultural and social differences between Africans and whites, holding these up as a justification for treating them differently and preserving minority-rule and separate development as the best way to guarantee the futures of all Rhodesia's inhabitants, white or black. This was the RF's definition of the Rhodesian nation, marking the boundaries between who could be 'Rhodesian' and who could not. Consequently, it was unsurprising that the pamphlet omitted any information about urban or middle-class Africans, a rapidly-growing section of the black population in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>11</sup> Instead, propaganda portrayed the African as a man apart, hence the reference to 'Rhodesia's African people' rather than black Rhodesians.

The RF's re-definition of the black population of Rhodesia was reinforced by the selective historical narratives seen in the previous chapter. Historical narratives and RF propaganda coalesced to demonstrate that Africans had always been the way they were. The corollary of this was the guarantee of European trusteeship for the foreseeable future. Africans were not considered 'responsible' or 'mature' enough to even have a share in the government of Rhodesia. To some whites, this was why UDI had been taken and why minority rule in Rhodesia continued, bucking continental trends of majority-rule independence. The histories examined in chapter six acted like a

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<sup>11</sup> M.O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class in Colonial Zimbabwe 1898-1965* (Bloomington, 1965); I. Phimister & B. Raftopoulos (eds.), *Keep on Knocking: A History of the Labour Movement in Zimbabwe 1900-97* (Harare, 1997).

steel reinforcing rod for the concrete of government propaganda, and the two acted in concert to create a historically grounded definition of the white-ruled Rhodesian nation.

The Pearce Commission, and the space it allowed for Africans to express themselves through ‘normal political activities’ represented a challenge to the RF’s conceptualisation of the nation.<sup>12</sup> The RF’s response to its verdict helps illustrate the wider philosophies that drove its nation-building-project and also how these philosophies – through historical narratives – were mobilised to try and defend the nation as well as create it. On 22 May 1972, with the official result still not released, *The Rhodesia Herald* reported that “The mood in Rhodesian Government circles ranges from anger over the result to resignation.”<sup>13</sup> Two days later the *Herald* was soliciting reactions from a range of prominent figures. Sir Ray Stockil, the chairman of Hippo Valley Estates Ltd, was dismissive about the test of acceptability, arguing that: “Generally speaking the African needs a certain amount of guidance and leadership and looks with some suspicion on people who are trying to ascertain his views.”<sup>14</sup> The *Herald*’s leader for that day lamented the parlous state of race relations in Rhodesia and observed that ‘the initiative for remedying the situation – and it is urgent that a remedy be found – must come from the Government.’<sup>15</sup>

As soon as Pearce’s verdict became known the RF went on the offensive. It issued a statement picking apart the Commission’s Report and assuring the public that it had never really been convinced of the Commission’s methods, arguing that it had not consulted enough Africans and that the reason given by most Africans for rejecting the proposals – a distrust of the Government – demonstrated that they had not correctly understood what was being asked of them.<sup>16</sup> Despite this, it was clear that the challenge had opened up a space for contestation within

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<sup>12</sup> See L. White, “Normal Political Activities’: Rhodesia, The Pearce Commission, and the African National Council’, *Journal of African History*, 52 (2011), pp. 321-340 for an exploration of the peculiarity of this phraseology in the Rhodesian context.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Little Doubt on Pearce ‘No’ Verdict’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 22 May 1972, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Reaction – What They Think’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 May 1972, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Hard Lessons from the Pearce Debacle’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 May 1972, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Government Queries Pearce Findings’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 May 1972, p. 7.

the white community. In the May 24 edition of the *Herald* an organisation an extreme right-wing organisation called the 'United Front' that felt the RF's opposition to majority-rule was not robust enough had advertised a meeting for 8pm that evening to 'UNITE AGAINST MAJORITY RULE'.<sup>17</sup> One-hundred and twenty people attended the meeting at Rhodes Memorial Hall in Salisbury to hear Wynn Starling, Organising Secretary of the United Front, rail against Ian Smith for being too conciliatory towards Africans.<sup>18</sup> The emergence of white challenges to the RF, and the divisions which opened up over the threat of majority-rule, threatened the very *raison d'être* of the party of its seizure of independence in 1965. In the face of these challenges it was important for the RF to try to keep its white constituents united.

The black rejection of the Anglo-Rhodesian settlement terms generated a range of responses amongst the white Rhodesian population which showed the RF under attack from the right and the left. Rather than seize the opportunity to address black grievances, some white Rhodesians withdrew further into the laager, and the right wing of the RF began clamouring for the implementation of an apartheid-style policy of provincialisation.<sup>19</sup> Some, like John Thompson of Highfields, blamed the African nationalist leaders 'who just want naked power'. He lamented the fact that 'moderates like me were hopelessly optimistic about the capacity of Africans to make sensible logical decisions and therefore to help govern our multiracial country.'<sup>20</sup> This sort of rhetoric suggested that for some Rhodesia could only be multiracial in highly circumscribed terms, a place where multiracialism meant that blacks behaved as whites expected them to.

In defence of minority-rule, historical narratives were directly invoked, and once again the RF's arguments drew upon wider imaginative resources from beyond the party rank-and-file. One

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<sup>17</sup> Advertisement for UNITE AGAINST MAJORITY RULE meeting, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 May 1972, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> *The Rhodesia Herald*, 25 May 1972, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> 'Race Politics Harden – Divisions on Pearce 'No'', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 27 May 1972, p. 2; See G. Passmore (ed.), *H.R.G. Howman on Provincialisation in Rhodesia 1968-1969 and Rational and Irrational Elements* (Cambridge, 1986) for a detailed explanation of debates within the RF surrounding provincialisation.

<sup>20</sup> J. Thompson, 'Half-educated Africans 'the real racialists'', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 29 May 1972, p. 12.

such convergence was seen on 27 January 1972, the *Herald* ran a story about Cecil Hulley and the statement he made to the Pearce Commission under the headline: ‘A pioneer remembers’.<sup>21</sup> Hulley had arrived in the country in 1895 and claimed that: ‘Africans have been well cared for ever since Europeans occupied the country’.<sup>22</sup> Hulley went on to lament the African desire for majority rule, which he believed would lead to inter-tribal bloodshed in the absence of white rule: ‘[n]ow they wish to take over, regardless of the development which has taken place entirely by the white settlers. So much effort has been made, so much money spent – and so little gratitude evinced.’<sup>23</sup> These sort of narratives about ungrateful Africans were both constitutive and reflective of the RF’s own responses to the Pearce Report, and explain some of the more indignant white responses to the Commission’s verdict.

The Parliamentary debate on the Commission’s verdict saw RF MPs direct a torrent of vitriol at the Africans who had rejected the settlement despite a number of moving speeches by the African members reiterating black grievances with minority-rule. The RF retreated to its mental laager and the blame was placed squarely upon the Africans. RF members such as Dr Barlow, MP for Avondale, noted: ‘I... think, like many other hon. members of this House, that the African population as a whole will live to regret most sincerely that they turned down these proposals.’<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, many RF MPs saw the whole exercise as a betrayal of white trust and goodwill – arguing that the whites had made great sacrifices in the national interest in order to support the proposals, such as this from Mr Newington, RF member for Hillcrest: ‘Rhodesian Europeans were quite prepared to give up so much of what they believed guaranteed their safety in order to reach a settlement... It showed our willingness to go just so far, only short of political suicide.’<sup>25</sup> Notions of sacrifice and ingratitude became central to the RF’s rebuttal of the result of the Pearce Commission result. In the RF’s eyes, its willingness to make concessions among whites was a huge step for the

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<sup>21</sup> ‘A Pioneer Remembers’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 27 January 1972, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 81, 1972, 74.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

previously uncompromising RF. It reinforced their view that Europeans governed in the interest of the black population. While this showed just how out of touch the RF was with African opinion, it is clear that some in the Front were genuinely aggrieved by the strength of the rejection. Ian Smith, in closing the debate, was clearly upset. He rejected out of hand all the reasons that had been cited for African grievances and placed responsibility squarely on Rhodesia's Africans to move forward:

it is now up to the African people of Rhodesia to show that the verdict of the Pearce Commission was incorrect and that on reflection they prefer the terms of the settlement to retaining the *status quo*. That is the only way that this can be changed. Failing that, they will have allowed the opportunity to pass, and I do not believe it will recur.<sup>26</sup>

This parliamentary rhetoric is revealing for its implicit definitions of the nation and the justifications of the minority-rule arrangements that the nation was created to preserve. The RF parliamentarians argued that the settlement proposals and legitimacy they would confer upon the rebel Rhodesians was an olive branch to blacks, which had been ungratefully rejected. It suggested that now blacks had rejected the settlement, they should suffer some form of punishment. This bizarre reasoning would have dire consequences for the long-term survival of the Rhodesian nation.

Even as the RF mobilised historical narratives to meet the black challenge to the nation, its defence was, in turn, contested by other whites. The challenge of 1972 opened up divisions in Parliament, noting the unresolved tensions of the 'second phase' nationalism of symbolic decolonisation. Allan Savory – a former soldier and RF MP who became a harsh critic of government policy in the 1970s, saw the rejection for the warning that it was and counselled for greater inclusion of Africans in Rhodesian national life. In Parliament Savory offered a point-by-point deconstruction of Smith's rejoinder to the Pearce Commission which was frequently interrupted by RF MPs such as Desmond Lardner-Burke yelling 'Whose side are you?'<sup>27</sup> Savory warned: 'I believe that the Government are – and this is a fact that must be faced for Rhodesia's

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 125.

good – out of touch with the majority of African thinking in this country, even moderate African thinking; completely out of touch with it.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly a number of letter writers to *The Rhodesia Herald* spoke out passionately against racial discrimination in the wake of the result, arguing for changes to be made. R.C. Haw, writing on 4 May 1972 lamented the everyday discrimination towards blacks in Rhodesia. He picked apart the RF's often-touted rhetoric about the provision of services by arguing: '[n]othing stirs up ill-feeling and hatred more than affronts to human dignity. Nothing can store up more trouble for us in the future, no matter how much we may do in other directions to provide housing, schools, medical services and the like for Africans.'<sup>29</sup> Hardwick Holderness, a former UFP politician who was a prominent 'white liberal' during the partnership era, wrote that whites would never learn from their mistakes. He wrote of the white population: '[h]aving, like our leaders, no first-hand contact whatever with Africans (except for our servants) we believed the official view: that the Africans were in the Government's pocket provided the Government had power to imprison "intimidators" without trial...'<sup>30</sup> These white writers, the journalists at *The Herald*, and prominent figures in the Rhodesian community who had lost out from UDI – such as the captains of Rhodesia's industries – all sought to press for some kind of political settlement to end Rhodesia's pariah status.

The range of white responses to the Pearce result showed that, in times of crisis, divisions in white Rhodesian society, divisions which the RF had struggled to overcome with its nation-building project, opened up again. To respond to the challenge that the Pearce verdict offered to their national project, the RF deployed some of historical discourses we saw in chapter six. However, in doing so, their actions opened themselves up to contestation from people on the right, who felt that the RF had offered too many concessions to blacks, as well as people on the left who argued for a

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>29</sup> R.C. Haw, 'Affronts to human dignity stir-up ill-feeling', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 4 May 1972, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> H.H.C. Holderness, 'Seems whites will ever [sic] learn by their mistakes', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 19 May 1972, p. 14. For a more detailed exploration of Holderness' life see his autobiography H. Holderness, *Lost Chance: Southern Rhodesia 1945-1958* (Harare, 1985).

more considered and sensitive response to the African rejection of the settlement proposals. It gave a glimpse of the fundamental problems that the RF's nation-building project failed to confront: black political consciousness and white divisions. In the white community, it was clear that the symbolic decolonisation process had failed to heal the suppurating sores of dissent; this would have major ramifications six years later when the RF's nationalist project entered its third, terminal, phase.

## **War and Settlement in the 1970s**

Ann Laura Stoler has illustrated the temporally and contextually-structured way in which settlers perceive indigenous protest and resistance.<sup>31</sup> She argued that when colonialism was in its infancy, its 'pioneering' period, some level of violence was seen as endemic to the process but later on, when the framework of the colonial state had been established; violence against Europeans was seen as much more serious. As we will see below, African violence and protest became increasingly unacceptable to the RF because it repeatedly highlighted the weaknesses of its nation-building project and opened up fractures in the white community over how to respond to such protest. It showed how, even at the death of its nation, the RF remained insecure, challenged by whites every step of the way.

This final section also further illustrates the essential contingency and reactive character of RF nationalism. Between 1965 and 1978 the RF's nation-building project was not a single, immutable, endeavour, but a rather a reactive, amorphous series of processes which consisted of three distinct yet overlapping phases. The first phase, from UDI to 1967-8, was an attempt to secure minority-rule independence within the Commonwealth, a similar arrangement to that enjoyed by the old dominions – total autonomy but a close relationship with the former colonial power. The second phase, of symbolic decolonisation, represented an attempt to cast Rhodesia as an independent ex-colony outside the Commonwealth with all the 'performative' aspects of statehood – flags, anthems,

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<sup>31</sup> A.L. Stoler, 'Perceptions of Protest: Defining the Dangerous in Colonial Sumatra', *American Ethnologist*, 12, 4 (1985), pp. 642-658.

constitutions - that nevertheless defied continental trends by preserving minority-rule and flaunting its imperial heritage. The final phase, a result of diplomatic pressure and economic and military fatigue, came with the Internal Settlement in 1978 in which the RF sought to present the style of majority-rule while retaining the substance of minority-rule. The Internal Settlement demonstrated that, to the RF, the preservation of minority-rule and white privilege was more important than the trappings of 'independent statehood', the process of symbolic decolonisation was undertaken again, even more rapidly, as 'Rhodesia' became 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia'.

The problem with this approach was that, while the Internal Settlement was a sham compromise, with the RF and white Rhodesians more generally retaining all of their power, it was not presented in that way. This had implications for the ambiguous symbolism and nationhood the RF had created for Rhodesia. The 'new' Rhodesia had proved broadly popular in the short-term because of an ambiguity that allowed whites to read their own meanings into it – it could stand for sunshine and swimming pools, or for warfare and decolonisation denied. A synthesis between 'invented traditions' and 'imagined communities' ensured the short-term success of Rhodesia in the years following UDI, years in which the RF had sought to remove older focuses of loyalty and encouraged whites to instead be loyal to 'the nation' (and by implication the RF). By comparison, their swift removal in 1978 appeared relatively unambiguous. Whatever those symbols had meant to whites, their replacement was something that looked a lot like the long-dreaded majority-rule. With its last surreptitious gamble to preserve minority-rule the RF opened up the fault lines of white society and precipitated the ultimate collapse of white Rhodesia.

In late 1972 the war with the nationalist guerrillas of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) began in earnest. ZANLA had spent much of the previous year infiltrating north-eastern Rhodesia, and sprang into action in December 1972 with attacks on white farmers. It took the whites, who had relied on rural Africans for intelligence about the guerrillas, completely by surprise. There are many detailed

histories of the conflict between the Rhodesian forces and the guerrilla armies, making it unnecessary to go into any great detail about the day-to-day conduct of operations between 1972 and 1978.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, it is important not to understate the effects of the war on the white community. As seen above, conflict shaped white Rhodesian nationalism through militaristic songs envisioning the past as a series of never-ending conflicts and historical narratives about national and transnational blood prices. These cultural expressions showed how shared experiences of conflict could have a cohesive potential for white Rhodesians but, as the experiences of the mid-to-late 1970s showed, they could also be highly divisive. The way the RF and other white Rhodesians spoke about conflict in the 1970s gives us an insight into the limitations and stresses on the nation-building project, and white responses to the internal settlement illustrates another unsuccessful attempt by the RF to mobilise history in defence of the nation.

One particularly interesting aspect of the war was how it allowed the RF to use historical discourses about multiracial co-operation as part of its propaganda offensive. The conflict with the guerrillas offered an opportunity for contact between the races within the armed forces. Of course, such contact was circumscribed by the existence of all-white units such as the Rhodesian Light Infantry and the Special Air Service and severe limits on African advancement in the armed forces, thus ensuring the broad reproduction of the master-servant relationship. Nevertheless, Rhodesian propaganda often played upon this theme to note that the conflict was not simply white against black – but a clash of the colour-blind ideologies of capitalism and communism. The Ministry of Information propaganda publication *Focus on Rhodesia*, produced for domestic and foreign circulation, repeatedly emphasised this theme in the late 1970s. In March 1976 its front cover featured a black and white soldier with the caption ‘Fighting Together’ and the next month showed a

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<sup>32</sup> These works include, but are not limited to, P. McLaughlin & P. Moorcraft, *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia 1965-1980* (Marshalltown, 1982); H. Ellert, *The Rhodesian Front War: Counter-insurgency and guerrilla war in Rhodesia 1962-1980* (Gwelo, 1989); J.K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (London, 1985) which offer the Rhodesian view. For perspectives which focus more on the guerrillas see P. Johnson & D. Martin, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (Harare, 1981) or N. Bhebe & T. Ranger, eds., *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War* (London, 1991).

black policeman helping white children cross a road with the slogan 'Towards Partnership'.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, the black soldiers and policemen in the employ of the Rhodesian state constituted a resource which could be mobilised to demonstrate to the outside world the inclusivity of Rhodesian society. Unlike, the historical narratives of chapter six, in which the white soldiers of the pioneer era were the true heroes, in Ministry of Information propaganda the presence of black soldiers and the job they were doing was often actively promoted, part of the wider 'good governance' narrative that emphasised the development that had taken place among the Rhodesian African population under the tutelage of the whites. Recruiting material appealed to these supposed Rhodesian ideals of multiracial co-operation while at the same time reinforcing the assumptions which were given historical precedent by the narratives of 1896 being produced in the same period. One 1970s poster, for example, showed an African scout in 'tribal' dress pointing out the enemy to a white man in a typical pioneer-era military uniform and bore the tagline: 'Now as then... co-operation is a feature of Rhodesian life.'<sup>34</sup>

However this explicit emphasis on racial co-operation was a showpiece for potential foreign audiences and perhaps also a reflection of the extent of the RF's delusion over the benefits of its minority-rule, rather than a sea-change in party attitudes. Nevertheless it represented an RF strategy for creating a viable Rhodesian nation and also demonstrated the vast shift in circumstances which had taken place since the escalation of the war in 1972. It represented a wartime evolution of the arguments offered to justify UDI, in which Rhodesia was not simply a racist colonial holdover, but a country making a stand for 'civilisation', 'justice' and 'fair play'. The propaganda emphasis on multiracial co-operation sought to demonstrate that both whites and blacks were prepared to die in defence of these ideals. In this propaganda the RF's long-cherished discourses of anti-communism came to the fore and the guerrilla war was portrayed as a colour-blind clash of ideologies – communism and western democracy – rather than the racialised civil war in defence of minority-rule

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<sup>33</sup> *Focus on Rhodesia*, 1, 1 (March, 1976); *Focus on Rhodesia*, 1, 2 (April, 1976).

<sup>34</sup> H. Schmidt, *Colonialism and Violence in Zimbabwe: A History of Suffering* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 169-170.

that it actually was. By highlighting the role Africans played in Rhodesian society, the Government and society at large sought to resist the arguments against white-minority rule rather than make any genuine moves towards multiracialism. All of the legal, economic, and social discrimination which made Africans second-class citizens in Rhodesia continued to chafe upon the black population, and provided an ever-increasing stream of recruits for the guerrilla armies. The conduct of the white-led Rhodesian military, typically heavy handed and obsessed with tactics over strategy, contributed to a general loss of faith among rural black people subject to curfews, collective punishment, mass resettlement and increasingly grim catalogue of atrocities.<sup>35</sup> Thus the war carried on and Rhodesia remained unrecognised, despite several further attempts at settlement. Then in 1978, according to the RF, everything changed.

On 3 March 1978, Ian Smith came to an agreement with three internally-based ‘moderate’ African leaders – the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, formerly leader of the major African nationalist party Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU, since 1975 led by Robert Mugabe); Bishop Abel Muzorewa, leader of the United African National Council (UANC) and the man who had been the figurehead of the African ‘No’ campaign in 1972; and Chief Jeremiah Chirau, leader of the Zimbabwe United People’s Organisation (ZUPO) and former RF government minister. Crucially the agreement excluded the Patriotic Front (PF), as the alliance between ZANU and the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU) was now known, who remained locked in conflict with the government. The black leaders with whom Smith had treated had been discredited in the eyes of many nationalist supporters. They commanded limited support among the black population and, crucially given that the Settlement was sold as a way to end the war, had no control over the guerrilla forces in the country and so were powerless to stop the fighting. Nevertheless, these four men formed the Executive Council of a new Transitional Government. This, then, was the last throw of the dice for the RF. It proved that it was willing to cast aside key elements of its nation-building

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<sup>35</sup> See Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace *The Man in the Middle: Torture Resettlement and Eviction* (London, 1975) and *Civil War in Rhodesia* (London, 1976).

project it had been undertaking for the last thirteen years in one fell swoop to try and preserve minority-rule. Despite what it had said, sincerely, in the past – by 1978 nothing about the new Rhodesian nation, up to and including its name, proved sacred. It was the third, terminal phase of the RF's nationalism, reflecting the failure of symbolic decolonisation to achieve its aim of international recognition and legitimacy.

The RF's rapid shift was compounded by the secrecy and confusion that surrounded its new approach. In public, the RF declared that a significant step had been taken towards the achievement of majority-rule. In reality, the whites actually retained control of politics, the economy, the armed forces, the judiciary, and the police force. The illusion of impending majority-rule proved to be more important than the reality of continued white privilege as far as the white response to the latest phase of the RF's nationalist project was concerned. In the President's speech from the throne at the opening of Parliament in June (the first session after the agreement was reached), the President promised that 'before the end of the year... a government truly representative of the majority will emerge.'<sup>36</sup> Several months earlier, reporting on the establishment of the Executive Council *The Rhodesia Herald's* front page proclaimed an 'End to White Rule'.<sup>37</sup> Exploring the responses of white Rhodesians to this event, illustrates the limits of the RF's nation-building endeavours since UDI.

The news of impending 'majority-rule' opened up another space for contestations of the nation. It was a case of the 'imaginative' power that the RF had harnessed during symbolic decolonisation kicking back against it. With the new symbols of Rhodesian statehood, the RF had overcome divisions and successfully co-opted popular 'imagination' in its 'inventive' processes of statehood. Zimbabwe-Rhodesia proved to be an imaginative leap too far. The agreement triggered off a whole series of debates about personal property, job security, the nature of a majority-rule state, and the name of the country. The whole gamut of early white responses to the internal settlement, can be seen in microcosm in the letters pages of *The Herald* (as the newspaper was

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<sup>36</sup> *Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 98, 1978, 2.

<sup>37</sup> 'End to White Rule', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 22 March 1978, p. 1.

renamed in 1978), suggested that many peoples' minds were on more mundane things than the concept of a multiracial community. T.G Wood, of Salisbury, was a typical exponent of this view, writing that with majority rule looming: 'history has shown that whites have every reason to be apprehensive, because all they have worked for in their lifetime, including their personal assets, could be at risk.'<sup>38</sup> Mrs D.B. Odendaal, who had been an ardent RF supporter for 12 years, now doubted her party and suggested that 'they are the fatal wave that sweeps the white electorate off their feet and pulls them into a very black sea... We realise that change must come, but must it come so fast? Help – I'm drrrowning! [sic].'<sup>39</sup> J.R. Haw of Salisbury wrote on another theme, warning that: 'I and many other [sic] like me will not fight for Zimbabwe, and it seems that paper guarantees and black majority rule may force me to become an emigrant.'<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere rebel Anglican priest and RF supporter Father Arthur Lewis was writing on the subject of potential new names for the country, arguing the case for the retention of 'Rhodesia' against what appeared to be the most popular alternative of Zimbabwe: 'Those of us who believe Rhodesia worth keeping do so not from any adulation of a super imperialist but because it represents achievement by white and black together.'<sup>41</sup>

This resigned tone from some white Rhodesians mirrored the changes to the nature of the folk songs explored in chapter four and, more broadly, the changes that had taken place in white society. Those whites who in the late 1970s had not joined the growing numbers of emigrants fleeing Rhodesia with whatever they could take had suffered enormously from the war: sons, husbands and even grandfathers away from home on call-up, shortages of essential goods in the shops, the need to travel in convoys on the roads, businesses failing for lack of staff. In rural areas farmers had turned their homes into fortresses with guard dogs, fencing, agric-alert communal radio networks, and arsenals of weaponry. Even urban whites were no longer safe. In 1978 South African firemen had to be flown in to help fight a huge blaze caused when Salisbury's oil reserves were attacked with rocket-

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<sup>38</sup> T.G. Wood, 'Guarantees should be supported', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 15 March 1978, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> D.B. Odendaal, 'No Chance to Catch Breath', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 10 March 1978, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> J.R. Haw, 'RAP and Military Service', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 15 March 1978, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Fr. Arthur Lewis, 'Rhodesia or Zimbabwe? There's lots in a name', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 23 March 1978, p. 8.

propelled grenades.<sup>42</sup> Umtali, near the border with Mozambique, was attacked with rockets and mortar bombs.<sup>43</sup> Denis Hills and David Caute, travelling around the country in the late 1970s, portrayed a society on the edge, its nerves frayed.<sup>44</sup> In this context growing numbers of whites simply wanted peace. Some white farmers, tired of being the RF's first line of defence against the guerrilla armies, turned a blind eye to guerrilla activity on their properties or approached other African mediators such as Kenneth Kaunda, president of neighbouring Zambia, in an attempt to sue for peace.<sup>45</sup> Defiant white voices were still shouting proudly about Rhodesia but for a growing number were coming to terms with the impending death of white Rhodesia.

In parliament, some white MPs of the RF engaged in extended eulogising for minority-rule, taking the opportunity to warn Africans not to spoil what they were shortly to inherit, reminding them that a 'majority rule' constitution would be subject to a referendum of the (predominantly white) electorate before being enacted. Mr Micklem (RF, Sinoia/Umvukwes) responded to comments that people had been fighting in Rhodesia for eighty-seven years (since the pioneers arrived) with a classic defence of white rule: 'over the last 87 years we have been striving to bring about development and prosperity to this country... [when the pioneers arrived] a large proportion of the population... through fear and through witnessing the bloodshed that had taken place over generations of intertribal warfare, lived and spent most of their time in caves...'<sup>46</sup> The importance of not denigrating white achievements in the country after majority rule had been achieved was a variant on the RF's narrative of black ingratitude, a prominent theme in the speeches of white parliamentarians over the next year and a half.

Other white MPs expressed consternation, not just about the physical existence of whites in a majority-rule country, but about what it would mean for white identity, implying that the two were

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<sup>42</sup> P. Stiff, *The Silent War: South African Recce Operations 1969-1994* (Alberton, 1999), p. 260.

<sup>43</sup> D. Hills, *The Last Days of White Rhodesia* (London, 1981), p. 30, p. 75.

<sup>44</sup> Hills, *The Last Days*; D. Caute, *Under The Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia* (London, 1981).

<sup>45</sup> R. Pilosoff, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe* (Harare, 2013), p. 24.

<sup>46</sup> *Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 98, 242.

somehow incompatible. These challenges from within the RF presented nightmare scenarios that would attend the end of minority-rule. In the debate on the President's Speech in June 1978, Mr de Klerk (RF, Shabani) observed that under the new constitution:

Tribalism will not be encouraged. So will all tribal societies that whites like to belong to have to be disbanded? I am prepared to do many things. I also wish to survive, but I am not prepared to surrender my identity in the process of survival.<sup>47</sup>

Later on in the debate Mr Andersen raised a similar point that: '[a]part from the maintenance of standards, white Rhodesians are concerned at the very question of the maintenance of their identity as a community, as a group...'<sup>48</sup>

Quite apart from these existential concerns, Mr Micklem succinctly summarised the more practical aspects of white fears, some of which were touched upon in the letters to the *Herald* seen above:

When is there likely to be a reduction in terrorism?... is the Civil Service going to be secure in the future? Are pensions going to be secure? Is tenure of office going to be secure? What is the future of our security services? Is justice, law and order going to be impartial in the future? Are the rights of the individual going to be safeguarded? Is there going to be the maintenance of standards... is Rhodesia worth fighting for indefinitely with all that has taken place recently?<sup>49</sup>

Of course debates about 'standards' had always been a coded way to talk about race without explicating mentioning 'race'. As we saw in chapter five, the RF had long claimed that African 'standards' were inferior to European ones and the way to resolve this was to allow the two communities to develop separately under white rule, justifying UDI. To RF politicians like Andersen, de Klerk, and Micklem, majority-rule was incompatible with racial harmony, the maintenance of 'standards', and stable government. It was a threat to the security whites enjoyed under an RF system which had enshrined their racial privilege in law.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 491.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 248.

The disruptive effect that the RF's third-phase nationalism had upon white society can be best seen in the way its own MPs reacted to debates about the call-up of Africans. In the 'new' nation of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, despite the doubts of some whites about their ability, black people were expected to pull their weight. Historically, white fears about having Africans under arms had prevented them from being conscripted into the Rhodesian military machine, but these reservations no longer made sense now that 'majority-rule' had been achieved.<sup>50</sup> It was assumed that black people would willingly want to fight to defend 'their' new nation. Furthermore, the increasing demands of the war against ZANLA and ZIPRA meant that by late 1978, almost all able-bodied whites were eligible for military service.<sup>51</sup> This had a ripple effect through white society, impinging upon the smooth operation of the economy and the very psychology of white Rhodesians. Furthermore, it was causing whites to leave the country in ever-growing numbers. This, combined with a lack of new immigrants due to the war, meant that the white Rhodesian population began to go into decline in the late 1970s. The effects of conscription, already a cause of great resentment, were exacerbated by the continuing intensification of the conflict after the internal settlement.<sup>52</sup> This was due to duplicity of the RF's high echelons for presenting the black leaders of the Transitional Council as individuals who had the capacity to stop the war. Because of the way the RF sold the internal settlement, some whites could not understand why the nationalist guerrillas were still fighting. After all, the logic went, had majority-rule not now been achieved? This confusion seemed to extend into the ranks of the RF itself, as the debates on African conscription demonstrate.

The debate was begun by a motion from an African MP, Mr Nyandoro, requesting that the call-up of Africans be delayed until majority-rule independence had been reached. The crux of the

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<sup>50</sup> See P. McLaughlin, 'Victims as Defenders: African Troops in the Rhodesian Defence System 1890-1980', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 2, 2 (1991), pp. 240-275 for an account of white reservations about calling up African troops.

<sup>51</sup> L. White, 'Civic Virtue, Young Men, and the Family: Conscription in Rhodesia, 1974-1980', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 37, 1 (2004), pp. 103-121.

<sup>52</sup> For analysis of the effect of conscription upon white Rhodesians see White, 'Civic Virtue', pp. 103-121 and J. Brownell, 'The Hole in Rhodesia's Bucket: White Emigration and the End of Settler Rule', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34, 3 (2008), pp. 591-610.

debate was upon the African contribution to Rhodesia. White MPs, many of whom like Mr Thrush (RF, Hillcrest) believed the motion to be ‘totally racialistic and completely unpatriotic’, argued that whites had made sacrifices to facilitate majority rule, and continued to make physical sacrifices daily in the conflict.<sup>53</sup> Wing Commander Gaunt (RF, Hatfield) once again drew on historical narratives of ‘good governance’ and development in his explanation of the nation: ‘[w]e [white Rhodesians] have had the responsibility of defending them [Africans] and their families and their kith and kin over the past six years, not to say the last ninety. When they came they were eating each other. They had not even thought about the wheel...’<sup>54</sup> These arguments were ironic, given that most of Rhodesia’s soldiers were already both black and volunteers.<sup>55</sup>

Gaunt’s views show the extent to which the RF was either deluded or duplicitous. Even though the Army had volunteers, black people could be expected to die defending a system which gave them nothing. Peter McLaughlin notes that while black soldiers had historically made up a majority of the armed forces, they still represented a tiny proportion of the black population of the country.<sup>56</sup> Black reasons for military or police service were complicated, and Timothy Stapleton has shown that they often reflected the material benefits provided by such a stable job, as well as excitement, family traditions of service, and notions of masculinity rather than any love for the nation.<sup>57</sup> The fact that the internal settlement did not prompt a surge of black volunteers was a sign of its shallowness. Indeed, the ‘military forces’ of the leaders of the Transitional Council were little more than private armies of thugs, which McLaughlin argues were lured or press-ganged from the rapidly growing population of urban unemployed in the townships.<sup>58</sup> These soldiers, initially called ‘Security Force Auxiliaries’ (SFAs) and later renamed *Pfumo re Vanhu* (chiShona for ‘Spear of the People’) caused even more confusion amongst whites who no longer knew why the war was

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<sup>53</sup> *Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 98, 1603.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 1612.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 1623.

<sup>56</sup> McLaughlin, ‘Victims as Defenders’, p. 264.

<sup>57</sup> T. Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers in Colonial Zimbabwe 1923-80* (Rochester, 2011), pp. 45-45.

<sup>58</sup> McLaughlin, ‘Victims as Defenders’, p. 268.

continuing or what they were fighting for. Propaganda designed to bolster the legitimacy of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia as a non-racial state sometimes caused white morale to plummet. One particularly famous case was that of 'Comrade Max', a supposed former guerrilla who had switched sides and now led a group of SFAs, who appeared on Rhodesian television declaring that he was now in charge of the Msana Tribal Trust Land (as the rural Africans-only areas were known). Godwin & Hancock explained the effect of this broadcast:

While the aim of the programme was to prove that the cease-fire was working, the effect was a public relations disaster. The government had not explained the policy of employing former 'terrorists', nor did the programme explain that Comrade Max was under the command of the Security Forces... [it led to] White fears that the internal settlement would install the likes of Comrade Max in power.<sup>59</sup>

The RF's belief that a viable internal settlement could be reached without involving the leaders of the PF was farcical, and their claims that majority-rule was impending led to confusion and demoralisation in the already fractured white community. This community had been the narrow base on which the new Rhodesian nation had been constructed in the 1960s. A decade later, this same base was fracturing more and more each day thanks to white flight and the demoralising war. Those whites who did not leave altogether were increasingly desperate for peace. Some tried to sue for peace with the guerrillas, some agitated ever more loudly for a settlement including the PF, whilst others still remained firmly behind 'Smithy', in the belief that he would come through for whites in the end. These divisions and the RF's inability to solve them spelled doom for Rhodesia in the late 1970s.

The legislative assembly debates and concerned letters to the *Rhodesia Herald* in 1978 and 1979 demonstrated just how far many white Rhodesians were prepared to go in including Africans in their nation. The numerous white protestations during the debates on the removal of racial discrimination and constitutional change saw endless variations on the same themes. These included the contention that Africans were irresponsible and that majority rule would ruin the country, or

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<sup>59</sup> Godwin & Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, p. 277.

indeed bring about the 'end of civilization' as it had elsewhere in Africa.<sup>60</sup> Another popular argument, which was surprising given the RF's redefinition of Africans described above, was the old UFP argument that the African standard of living had benefitted immensely from white technical expertise, which they had to secure in a majority rule country: 'the stable future of this country depends on the retention of the confidence of the white people... if one fails to retain the confidence of the white people... there can only be one thing that will follow and that is complete and absolute economic disaster and chaos.'<sup>61</sup> It seemed that white representatives were casting all about them for any way to justify their continued rule. These responses, ranging from condescension to resentment, were the superstructure on which the veneer of multiracial co-operation had been thinly applied by the white ministers of Transitional Government. All the qualifications and quibbles evident in Rhodesia's twilight years reified a dichotomy between white and black, between 'African' and 'Rhodesian'. Indeed, the very term 'black Rhodesian' was often used insincerely, as a means to demonstrate to the outside world that because blacks suffered in the guerrilla war the RF regime was not racist.

This chapter has demonstrated how challenges to the RF's nation from the black population, through war and political protest, opened up spaces for contestations from white voices to the left and right of the RF and how the RF tried to mobilise historical narratives in defence of the nation. It shows the precarious context of the RF's nation-building project and the difficulty of appealing to a divided white population, to say little of the international community from whom it sought recognition and the black population from whom, as the 1970s went on, it demanded an increasing contribution. It has shown the essentially contingent nature of the RF's nationalist project, which can be broken down into discrete but overlapping phases, of which 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia' was the third. This furthers my contention that RF nationalism was hesitant, reactive, and inconsistent. It has also shown the importance of a synthesis of top-down 'invention' and bottom-up 'imagination' to

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<sup>60</sup> *Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 99, 2540, 2490; Quote from 2543.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 2398.

the RF's nationalism. During the period of symbolic decolonisation this was the project's strength, as the RF produced ambiguous symbols for whites that could mean anything to anyone. The rhetoric, if not the substance, of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and impending 'majority-rule' helped to destroy the multifarious meanings of 'Rhodesia' that had taken root amongst the white population as it did away with all the trappings of independent, white, statehood. By centring the focus of white loyalty upon the 'nation', and by association the RF itself, the party sowed the seeds of its own destruction by trying to do away with that nation altogether, meaning that many whites began to question why they were fighting and what it was they were fighting for. Zimbabwe-Rhodesia and the RF's duplicity over it, ended the symbiosis between invention and imagination that had allowed Rhodesia to endure for so long after UDI, and the nation began to fall apart.

## **Conclusions**

This thesis has sought to relocate white Rhodesia's short-lived nationalist project between 1965 and 1978 within a series of global and transnational trends. It has examined the role of symbolism and history in nation-building projects using an apparently unusual case study of a white-ruled nation which sought to defy the end of empire in the 1960s and 1970s.

In retrospect, the abnormality of white Rhodesia appears to make the failure of the RF's nation-building project inevitable. At the time, however, the RF had regional and continental examples in its neighbours and allies South Africa, and the Portuguese colonial regimes in Mozambique and Angola, to suggest that it could pursue a path of minority-rule independence. That it managed to do so, in the face of nationalist guerrilla opposition, international economic sanctions, and its own fractious population, for almost two decades is remarkable considering how flimsy were the foundations upon which the RF tried to build its nation. Part of the reason for this was that the RF's nationalism was neither static nor unchanging; it was amorphous and reactive, responding to internal and external developments. The RF's nationalism in 1965-78 went through three distinct but overlapping phases: minority-rule independence within the Commonwealth, symbolic

decolonisation, and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. It was reliant upon a synthesis of top-down ‘invention’ and bottom-up ‘imagination’, with the relationship between the two often close and confusing, the boundaries between the two phenomena indistinguishable from one another.

One of the major problems for the RF was the fact that there appeared to be two nations within the territorial confines of Rhodesia. There was the black population, and the white one. The RF had divergent visions for these two nations – it pursued its more conventional nation-building project for whites, and sought to accommodate Africans through the institution of chieftainship and, later, the ‘majority-rule’ of the internal settlement. However, as chapter one demonstrated, even the white Rhodesian nation was fractured and divided, exponentially increasing the challenges the RF’s nation-building project faced. Furthermore, throughout the period, the RF wilfully ignored the black political consciousness as expressed by the nationalist movements, an ignorance which would have fateful consequences for the Rhodesian nation in the late 1970s. Section one demonstrated how the debates about Rhodesia’s new national symbolism were debates about and between the white population – a tortuous and prolonged effort to reconcile and renegotiate rebel Rhodesia’s relationship with its ‘ultra-loyal’ imperial past. These new Rhodesian symbols were associated with the Rhodesian ‘nation’ and, by implication the RF itself, they often excluded blacks and consequently meant very little to them beyond being symbols of an oppressive RF regime that they wanted to be rid of.

Section two illustrated the ways in which historical narratives were mobilised to justify and later defend white minority-rule. The stereotypes created and perpetuated by these exclusive imaginings of the Rhodesian past again served to exclude blacks, and continued to shape white attitudes of Africans as unworthy of a place by their side as rulers of Rhodesia. Chapter six moved away from analyses of histories produced by the state and academics to look at how important amateur history-making can be in national projects. It demonstrated the complicated relationships between different sites of historical discourse production. Selective tales about the past were told by

amateur historians in the Rhodesiana Society and state employees at the National Archives, providing encouragement and lessons to whites of the present day; lessons about unity, struggle, and victory over black violence. These histories were invoked by the RF to help make its case for minority-rule independence against continental trends of majority-rule decolonisation. Years later, the RF employed historically-grounded explanations of African incompetence and ingratitude to rebut black attempts to challenge the nation, but in doing so opened up contestations from within its core white constituency. Then, as Rhodesia came to an end, history became an important way for some to eulogise minority-rule, as it was used by parliamentarians to provide lessons for black politicians to do better. Finally, it showed the dangers of breaking the close links between invention and imagination, upon which the RF's national project had hitherto depended.

The consequence of the exclusivity of the RF's nation-building project was to limit the appeal of 'Rhodesia' after UDI to those members of the white community sympathetic to the RF. Chapter one demonstrated in detail just how fractious and fluid this small settler community really was. A whole range of alternative loyalties existed within the white Rhodesian community, which gave many whites somewhere to fall back to when Rhodesia no longer satisfied them. In an attempt to unify these divided whites, the RF created a series of plastic symbols which could mean anything to anyone. In the short term, when Rhodesia's rebellion appeared to be a success, whites flocked eagerly to these new symbols of independence, which could be imbued with a range of personal meanings. As we saw above, the advent of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia invalidated all of these symbols and their multifarious meanings and exacerbated the demise of the already crumbling edifice of minority-rule. The imaginations of whites started to run wild and they began to desert the country in droves.

However, these symbols had always been contested from their very inception. Chapter two showed a range of interpretations cropping up among the MPs of the governing party on the design of the new flag, and in chapter four the Cabinet Committee on the National Anthem and the Ministry of Information were simultaneously promoting different visions of the nation at the same

time. The relentless propaganda offensive of the RF, which promoted a racialised, exclusive, white-led nation to the delight of some white Rhodesians and their external supporters, sat uneasily alongside the RF's attempts to 'perform' nationhood through its new flag, constitution and anthem. The RF's nation-building project failed to win it any form of international diplomatic recognition, or provide any sort of appealing alternative to majority rule for blacks – always the elephant in the RF's room. Even when it gave the appearance of concessions to black political aspirations, as in 1972 and 1978, it found itself challenged and its vision of the nation contested.

Nevertheless, the fact that such a half-hearted attempt to build a nation did in fact manage to keep Rhodesia going for fifteen years does raise interesting questions about wider nationalist projects. The successes and failures of an anachronistic attempt to preserve white rule in an era of decolonisation may seem notable only for their eccentricity, but this thesis has argued for the wider relevance of UDI-era Rhodesia, with implications for several different literatures. In the first instance, the white Rhodesian debates surrounding new national symbols were clearly influenced by other debates taking place at the same time across the so-called 'British World'. The post-Second World War decline of the British Empire was a major event in the national histories of former settler colonies, undertaking their own peculiar and gradual processes of decolonisation alongside the more formalised, largely non-white, colonial empire. It was also a major event in the transnational history of the English-speaking world, as countries such as Australia, Canada and, eventually, reluctantly, New Zealand, became more independent and realigned their interests away from the former colonial power. The histories of this phenomenon often leave out those smaller communities of British settlers, those losers of empire among which the Rhodesians could certainly count themselves.

This thesis has sought to write Rhodesia back into these histories, showing how one small community of settlers tried to engage with the end of the British World in its own way – by defying decolonisation. For these smaller communities, imperial British identities had arguably been even more significant. At UDI white Rhodesians were faced with the monumental dilemma of how to

justify continued minority-rule without the discourses of imperialism. The thesis has shown how complicated it was to build a viable narrative of minority-rule in the face of imperial withdrawal across the African continent. The Rhodesians, despite their best efforts, were never able to truly disengage themselves from their imperialist past. It was, after all, the only the past they had.

Indeed, the temporal context of UDI and the subsequent nation-building project illustrates the comparative potential of UDI-era Rhodesia, a place that was both profoundly in time and out of it. UDI was an explicit repudiation of decolonisation and majority-rule. In November 1965 white Rhodesians, encouraged by South Africa, sought to draw a line in the sand at the Zambezi. Despite this, their debates about nationhood were suffused with comparisons with other nations on the African continent. White Rhodesian nationalism after 1965 was a series of attempts (among whites) to deal with the same challenges of independence that faced other ex-colonies across Africa. I have argued that, rather than mark off white Rhodesian nationalism as an anomalous hangover of the colonial period, the comparative value of Rhodesia with other post-colonial nationalisms should be recognised. Like other ex-colonies, white Rhodesians faced the problem of how to reconcile a disparate population (even if it was among a white minority), how to demonstrate independence and inculcate loyalties toward the new nation. The fact that the RF's nation-building project was exclusionary, inconsistent, and relatively short-lived does not make it worthy of compartmentalisation from comparison. It provides an example of a white nationalist alternative to majority-rule independence in the 1960s, problematising notions of a neat transition from colony of Rhodesia to post-colony of Zimbabwe, and in a more global sense it highlights the inherently transnational nature of even the most apparently insular national projects.

Finally the thesis has questioned traditional theories of nationalism, particularly the concepts of 'invented traditions' and 'imagined communities'. Sometimes the RF's nation-building project was a closely controlled 'hands on' affair, and occasionally distinctly 'hands off'. Even these distinctions fail to truly capture the chaotic and often contradictory nature of white nationalism in UDI-era

Rhodesia. The so-called ‘inventors’ of the new flag failed to agree on precisely what it was they were inventing. Different parts of the state were inventing different things. The success of the RF’s project was often to be found in the space between ‘invention’ and ‘imagination’, as the RF supplied empty symbols which the white populace could fill with their own meanings. ‘Invented traditions’ and ‘imagined communities’ were harnessed together to support the RF’s national project. The success of this project depended upon an intimate relationship between these seemingly opposed concepts, and when this relationship ended in 1978, the nation also collapsed.

The relevance of white Rhodesia to these three literatures: the global, the national and the theoretical, leaves many avenues open for further study. As noted in the introduction, the way that the black population in Rhodesia engaged with the limited number of opportunities for political participation (in local government, for instance) that the RF’s agenda made available to them would be particularly welcome. Similarly, further studies of the way Rhodesia is memorialised amongst the disparate expatriate community of whites across the globe would provide greater insights into how ex ‘colonials’ have come to terms with the end of empire. This would complement the small literature on what might be called ‘Rhodesians after Rhodesia’. In the 1990s, W.G. Eaton, a market researcher, undertook a study into the distribution and attitudes of expatriate white Rhodesians; Rory Pilosoff has studied white farmers since independence and in 2003 Tony King wrote a short, but fascinating, chapter on the maintenance of Rhodesian cultural and national identity on the internet, but there is much more work that could be done here.<sup>62</sup> The flags, anthems, songs and histories described in the chapters above have all found an afterlife in the digital spaces of the internet, where Rhodesia has been reconstituted as a kind of cyber-nation. If the RF failed to build a nation in central Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, this afterlife suggests that, to some extent at least, its

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<sup>62</sup> W.G. Eaton, *A Chronicle of Modern Sunlight: The Story of What Happened to the Rhodesia* (Rohnert Park, 1996); T. King, ‘Rhodesians in Hyperspace: The Maintenance of a National and Cultural Identity’, in K.H. Karim (ed.), *The Media of Diaspora* (London, 2003), pp. 177-188; R. Pilosoff, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers Voices from Zimbabwe* (Harare, 2012).

nation-building project helped to build a particular form of community which lasts to the present day.

# List of Illustrations

## Chapter One

**Figure 1.1** – Net balance of migration of Europeans, 1941-1964.

Source: Adapted from data in A.S. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to Federation* (Harare, 2002), p. 5.

**Figure 1.2** – White population by country of birth, 1901-1956.

Source: Reproduced from A.S. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia: From Occupation to Federation* (Harare, 2002), p. 3.

**Figure 1.3** – White population by country of birth – Rhodesians, South Africans and Britons – 1956, 1961 and 1969.

Source: Adapted from data in *1961 Census of the European, Asian and Coloured Population* (Salisbury, 1962), pp.10-11; and *1969 Population Census (Interim Report) Volume I: The European, Asian and Coloured Population* (Salisbury, 1971), p.19.

**Figure 1.4** – Net migration to Rhodesia, 1965-1979.

Source: Adapted from data in *Rhodesia. Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics for December, 1975* (Salisbury: 1976), p. 3; *Rhodesia – Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics for December, 1977* (Salisbury, 1978), p. 3; *Rhodesia – Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics for December 1978* (Salisbury, 1979), p. 3; *Zimbabwe-Rhodesia – Monthly Migration and Tourist Statistics for September, 1979* (Salisbury, 1979), p. 3.

**Figure 1.5** – The Rhodesian electorate, 1962-1977.

Source: Reproduced from Table 2 in A. Lemon, 'Electoral Machinery and Voting Patterns in Rhodesia, 1962-1977', *African Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 309 (1978), p. 513.

## Chapter Two

**Figure 2.1** – Flag of Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1954, 1963-4.

Source: 'Flag of Rhodesia', Wikipedia.org.

**Figure 2.2** – The defaced red ensign of Tanganyika Territory, 1919-1961.

Source: 'Tanganyika Territory', Wikipedia.org.

**Figure 2.3** – The defaced blue ensign of Northern Rhodesia, 1939-1953.

Source: 'Northern Rhodesia', Wikipedia.org.

**Figure 2.4** – Flag of the Central African Federation, 1953-63.

Source: 'Flag of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland', Wikipedia.org.

**Figure 2.5** – Southern Rhodesian flag 1964-5 and Rhodesian flag 1965-8.

Source: 'Flag of Rhodesia', Wikipedia.org.

**Figure 2.6** – Flag of Rhodesia, 1968-1979.

Source: 'Flag of Rhodesia', Wikipedia.org.

**Figure 2.7** – Flag of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, 1979-1980.

Source: 'Flag of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia', Wikipedia.org.

## **Chapter Six**

**Figure 6.1** – Membership of the Rhodesiana Society, March 1965-October 1970.

Source: Compiled from data in *Rhodesiana* numbers 1, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 and 23.

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