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OPPOSING TYRANNY: WHITE RESISTANCE AGAINST THE RHODESIAN FRONT (1965-1977)

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the History

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All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
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Opposing Tyranny: White Resistance against the Rhodesian Front (1965–1977)

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Submitted to the Department of
History of the University of Iowa
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

Advisor: Dr. James Giblin

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Introduction

In November 1965, the government of Southern Rhodesia unilaterally declared itself independent from Britain. It was an extreme response to the British directive that there would be “no independence before majority rule.” The ruling political party during this time, the Rhodesian Front, feared the consequences of relinquishing power. Born out of imperialist beliefs and anti-communist sentiment, this ultra-conservative political party sought to maintain minority rule and asserted that Rhodesia would “never in a thousand years” be ruled by the Black majority. While many Whites supported minority rule, my paper will focus on the efforts of select groups within the White African community to subvert the Rhodesian Front led government and initiate majority rule within what would become the state of Zimbabwe. I am looking specifically at two groups of people who have different philosophies, yet share the same goal of majority rule. This paper will discuss notable members from each group including Judith Todd, an equal rights activist and daughter of a former Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, and Bishop Donal Lamont, an Irish missionary who defied an emergency governmental order and assisted the Black resistance.

Background

The British colony of Rhodesia was founded in 1889 due in major part to one man, Cecil John Rhodes¹. An Oxford graduate, Rhodes had come to South Africa in the mid-19th century to improve his health. It was there that he first made his fortune in diamond mining—becoming a millionaire by his mid-twenties. He then invested in the gold mines of South Africa—making himself a multi-millionaire by the time he was thirty.² Without the need to increase his income,

¹ S. Hopewell, *From Colonies to Commonwealth* (London: Cassell & Company, 1967), 126–127.

² Brian Lapping, *End of Empire* (London: Granada Publishing, 1985), 447.

Rhodes set about achieving his political aspirations. Heavily influenced by the rhetoric of the time and most especially by John Ruskin, Rhodes endeavored to “[seize] every piece of fruitful waste ground...and advance the power of England.”³ He did this by attempting to fulfill the vision of a British empire in Africa that stretched from “Cape to Cairo”, or South Africa to Egypt, encompassing an entire portion of the north to south expanse of the continent.⁴ This goal would increase not only Rhodes’ wealth and influence, but England’s as well. It was during the ‘scramble for Africa’ that Rhodes was able to achieve this goal.

In the 1880’s, European countries began to “scramble” for control of colonies in Africa. Each country drew the borders of their new colonies in Europe and then sent agents to the ground to seek ‘concessions’ or treaties from native peoples in those areas. These concessions served as agreements by native peoples to European involvement in those areas, no matter how dubious the terms or untrustworthy the interpreter. Rhodes was not the one traveling into remote areas and gaining the trust of tribal chiefs. Instead he bought small concessions from many people and combined them together into one claim. The first place Rhodes attempted to do this was in the land he called Zambesia, for the river that flowed to its north. Later known as Rhodesia and now finally, as Zimbabwe. Rhodes obtained the Rudd Concession, named for the British agent Charles Dunnell Rudd, by deceiving the Matabele king Lobengula. Rhodes promised rifles, ammunition, a monthly salary, and most fantastically, an armed steamboat on the Zambezi River to Lobengula if he signed the treaty. Exactly what he agreed to is unclear. It is certain that Lobengula conceded mining rights, but one of the stipulations may have been that

³ Quoted in Robert Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 35.

⁴ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 448.

Rhodes would not allow more than ten white men into his country—a promise Rhodes had as much intention of keeping as he did of giving Lobengula a steamboat.⁵

Once Rhodes had his concession, he needed to buy all other competing concessions and persuade the colonial authorities in London to authorize the charter. It took more than a year, but in October 1889, Queen Victoria signed a royal charter assigning Rhodes' British South Africa Company the governance of the new colony. The charter would mean the British South Africa Company would hold a monopoly on all mining rights in the new colony. It also gave the company authority to govern, build roads, allocate land to settlers, and police the population.⁶ In essence, the British South Africa Company was able to act as a small government within the British colonial system, not unlike others chartered companies in the British Empire. Once Rhodes received the charter, he began to actively recruit investors and white settlers for his new colony. Contrary to the agreement made with Lobengula, Rhodes had the full intention of making the new colony, then termed Zambesia, a settler state. At the same time, he was also attempting to expand the territory he owned by buying land concession from chiefs in the area that would eventually become Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Although these areas were also obtained by Rhodes, neither Northern Rhodesia nor Nyasaland ever came under the control of the British South Africa Company in the same manner Southern Rhodesia had.⁷ Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland became areas of colonial exploitation rather than white settlement; this resulted in much a lower white population in these countries at the time of their independence than in Rhodesia.

⁵ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 450.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 452.

Rhodes and his company worried many Europeans living in the new colony who were fearful of the effect that Rhodes and his company would have on native Africans.⁸ These fears were realized only a few years after the founding of the colony when the first Matabele War began.⁹ By 1893, the relationship between the settlers and the native Africans had become increasingly strained and was headed toward conflict.¹⁰ The Matabele leader, Lobengula, sensed the superiority of the European forces and hoped for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, as did the British government. The leaders of Rhodes' new colony, however, had other ideas. With their well-armed war parties, the European settlers were able to easily overtake and defeat the Matabele people. The settlers divided the Matabele land among themselves and any remaining land was divided up into allotments for white immigrants. Natives who stayed were in effect trespassing on what Rhodes had by then declared "white man's country."¹¹

There is a popular exception to this colonial narrative of overwhelming European settler victories. In December 1893, the British South Africa security force sent a group of fifteen men on a reconnaissance mission to scout out the location of Lobengula's camp which was situated across the Shangani River. The Major in command of the scouting patrol chose to disobey orders and attempted to seize Lobengula. He sent word back to camp asking for reinforcements and twenty-one men were sent to assist him. Unsuccessful in their attempt to capture the Matabele leader, all thirty-six men were killed. Evidence found at the scene later revealed the men had fought until their ammunition ran out. In later years, especially during the Ian Smith regime, the men of the Shangani Patrol became a preeminent symbol of Rhodesia. The men who sacrificed their lives epitomized the Rhodesian ideals of courage, heroism, and persistence. They also stood

⁸ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 450.

⁹ Hopewell, *From Colonies to Commonwealth*, 128.

¹⁰ Ian Smith *The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith* (London: Blake Publishing, 1997), 2.

¹¹ Lapping *End of Empire*, 454.

as a representation of civilization in midst of savagery and the plight the white man; severely outnumbered—and surrounded by Africans.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Charter Company became financially unstable. The British realized that a change needed to be made. Therefore, in 1923, Rhodesians were given the choice between merging with South Africa as its fifth province or becoming a “Responsible Government”.¹² The second option was an unusual offer and essentially gave Rhodesia a “quasi-dominion” status. Rhodesia was still a colony, but due to Britain’s previous laxity and absence of oversight, the British were open to the idea of allowing Rhodesia more freedom than it had yet given to any of their other colonies. For Rhodesia, this meant that they were able to enjoy the benefits of dominion status without the burden of financing foreign affairs and diplomatic missions which the British government would fund.¹³ When Rhodesians went to the polls, they voted for Responsible Government.

Rhodesia had nineteen thousand registered voters in 1923 and nearly fifteen-thousand votes were cast in the decision for or against Responsible Government. It is interesting to note that at the time there were also eight-hundred and fifty thousand Africans who were not allowed to vote.¹⁴ In the 1923 election all British citizens were able to vote as was anyone who pledged allegiance to the British as long as they were over twenty-one, could fill out the application forms by themselves in English, owned property worth one-hundred and fifty pounds sterling, or had an income of one-hundred pounds sterling a year. At this time there were no racial restriction; the voter’s role for the 1923 Referendum included sixty Africans.¹⁵

¹² Lapping *End of Empire*, 456.

¹³ Smith *The Great Betrayal*, 3.

¹⁴ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 456.

¹⁵ John Parker, *Rhodesia: Little White Island* (London: Pitman Publishing, 1972), 23.

In his memoir, the former president of the self-liberated country of Rhodesia, Ian Smith, saw the election of 1923 as one of the great failings of the Rhodesian people. He believed that the benefits of joining South Africa would only have elevated the Rhodesian people to a greater economic and political degree.¹⁶ Although Rhodesian voters chose not to merge with South Africa, the political policies of these two countries would begin to align in the second half of the twentieth century.

In the years following their achievement of Responsible Government, the white voting populace consistently voted for laws which substantially disenfranchised Africans and began a movement toward more separatist policies. The British government became increasingly uncomfortable with these policies as they aligned Rhodesia with South Africa and the budding Apartheid movement more than the British would have liked. Additionally, the idea of “amalgamation” kept the “spirit of Cecil Rhodes” alive. It was Rhodes’ dream to connect both Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland into one republic ruled by whites. This idea gained support in the 1930’s and 1940’s and eventually came to fruition with the founding of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953.¹⁷

The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, also known as the Central African Federation, or simply Federation, was conceived in Britain and established in 1953 as a way for the British to exert more influence in Southern Africa.¹⁸ The increase of industrialization in the 1940s gave birth to the African working class as well as African Nationalism. The same period also witnessed the simultaneous rise in Afrikaner apartheid-esque policies and the alignment of Southern Rhodesians to South African politics. The British believed that the influence of

¹⁶ Smith *The Great Betrayal*, 4.

¹⁷ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 459.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 460.

Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland would be a mediating force between the two political extremes in Southern Rhodesia. Blacks from Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland opposed Federation on the grounds that it was only beneficial to whites who gleaned political and economic benefit from the union. It was also feared by some Blacks that Federation would be used to attempt to destabilize the African Nationalist movement in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.¹⁹ Upon the creation of Federation, Godfrey Huggins, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia since 1933, became the Federal Prime Minister. This led to the elevation of Garfield Todd as Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia. Through his years as Prime Minister, Todd would earn a reputation for extreme liberalism, but at the time of his promotion to Prime Minister, the United Party members viewed Todd as the embodiment of moderate liberal sentiment characteristic of their party. In his first years as Prime Minister, Todd supported the party line of reduced African voting enrollment. Later, as the political climate gradually changed, so did Todd's agreement with his party.²⁰ During his tenure as Prime Minister, Parliament amended the Land Apportionment Act to allow restaurants and hotels to become multi-racial as well as allowing African professionals to have their businesses in European areas. By 1956 Todd's cabinet had also passed the Liquor Amendment Bill which allowed Africans to drink European beer and wine—though nothing harder.²¹ Nineteen fifty-six was also the year that the white electorate of Southern Rhodesia began to realize that Garfield Todd was pursuing a more liberal agenda than they had anticipated. As a missionary, voters already considered Todd suspect. He did not fit the “red-blooded Rhodesian” personality as had his predecessor, Godfrey Huggins. Though Todd was a rancher, his missionary work was what brought him to Rhodesia. He cared

¹⁹ Ruth Weiss and Jane L. Parpart. *Sir Garfield Todd and the Making of Zimbabwe* (London: British Academic Press, 1999), 67.

²⁰ Blake, *History of Rhodesia*, 287.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 290.

more about African education and health care than he did about his golf swing—something which alienated him from other White Rhodesians.²² As Todd introduced more liberal legislation, fear and resentment grew toward him from his White electorate—as well as from his cabinet.²³ This mix of “personal antagonism and rejection of his policies” came to a head in 1957.²⁴ The Southern Rhodesian Parliament raised a motion to add an amendment to the Immorality Suppression Act of 1903. Originally designed to “protect” White women from the sexual advances of African men, the motion of 1957 sought to criminalize relations between White men and African women as well—making all sexual relations between races illegal. While miscegenation was socially taboo, the government was attempting to make it a criminal offense. This was, at the time, the newest law added to an existing corpus of legislation intended to separate Black and White Rhodesians. There was already separatism in public buildings like restaurants, hotels, swimming pools, schools, and hospitals. Blacks were not allowed to drink wine or spirits, only “Kaffir Beer” and could not move from one area to another without passes and certificates.²⁵ While the motion would further separate Africans from the White population, many White Southern Rhodesians saw this motion as one of the utmost importance to their nation’s morality. Many Whites viewed miscegenation as immoral and Todd’s refusal to vote for the bill made him a villain who appeared to have gone out of way to defend immorality.²⁶ As his reputation was crumbling, Todd’s family was not immune from the slander and ill-will directed toward him. Judith Todd, one of Garfield’s three daughters, recounts how at a dinner party her host declared how *awful* it must be for her to have the last name Todd because “Don’t people

²² Weiss and Parpart, *Sir Garfield Todd*, 124.

²³ *Ibid.*, 90, 109.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

²⁵ Blake, *History of Rhodesia*, 281.

²⁶ Weiss and Parpart, *Sir Garfield Todd*, 101-103.

automatically associate you [Judith] with that perfectly *dreadful* man Garfield Todd?”²⁷ A continued lack of confidence in his leadership combined with his newfound vigor for the advancement and enfranchisement of Africans led to Todd’s political demise. Members of his own party resented that his liberalism “[strode] beyond the limits of the electorate’s tolerance.”²⁸ When he returned from holiday leave in January 1958, he was welcomed on the tarmac with news that his entire cabinet was calling for his resignation.²⁹

Following Todd’s defeat in the race for Prime Minister in the spring of 1958, he was succeeded by another liberal from the United Federal Party, Edgar Whitehead. A bachelor and recluse, the far-right regarded his elevation to Prime Minister as a “panic measure” by the United Federal Party in order to replace Todd in haste.³⁰ Like Todd, he was not the “red-blooded Rhodesian”: an Oxford educated, partially deaf and blind Whitehead was not the representation of the “hearty Rhodesian” that many voters wanted to be the face of their government.³¹ Nevertheless, the British High Commissioner believed that the “future [of Southern Rhodesia] depends on Sir Edgar Whitehead’s ability to find a rapprochement with the Africans and lead the country through a peaceful transition to an African majority government” this was seen especially difficult as the High Commissioner believed Whitehead was “faced with the immense problem of governing a country in which the vast majority of the population are voiceless and resentful.”³² Given this enormous challenge, Whitehead was not able to find rapprochement and Rhodesia was handed over to a party who would bring the opposite of reconciliation and understanding to race relations in Southern Rhodesia.

²⁷ Judith Todd, *An Act of Treason: Rhodesia 1965* (Harare: Longman, 1982), 47.

²⁸ Ian Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1984), 71.

²⁹ Weiss, *Sir Garfield Todd*, 109.

³⁰ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 35.

³¹ Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates, and Radicals*, 82.

³² The National Archives (TNA): DO 183/29 Rhodesian Front Party

Despite the change of Prime Minister, many Whites remained dissatisfied with the political leadership of the Liberal Prime Minister. The ultimate dissolution of Federation and therefore Federal politics led to the demise of the Dominion Party. In 1962, all three member countries opposed Federation and it was officially dissolved in July 1963, preceding the independence of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland the following year.³³ While the Dominion Party remained intact within the countries of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, where there was a smaller white population and a more moderate electorate; in Southern Rhodesia former Dominion Party members banded together to form a new party that embraced “Rhodesian values” and put “Rhodesia first”.³⁴ This new party was the Rhodesian Front.

The Rhodesian Front

The Rhodesian Front came out of obscurity in April 1962 to sweep the polls and obtain the two-thirds votes necessary to gain the Prime Ministership in their first election. The Rhodesian Front was the successor to the Federal Dominion Party and the first Prime Minister of the Rhodesian Front was Winston Field, the former leader of the Dominion Party. The Rhodesian Front was a far-right political party built on settler colonial ideology of European superiority. It brought together the divided right-wing parties of South Rhodesia with an adamant stance in favor of preserving the Land Apportionment Act which enabled racial segregation by defining where Blacks and Whites could live and creating African reserves. The Rhodesian Front also promoted the idea of “community development” a policy that encouraged the development of segregated communities and the preservation of “cultural differences.” Opponents of the party argued that “community development” was code for Rhodesian Apartheid. The Rhodesian Front

³³ Blake, *History of Rhodesia*, 345.

³⁴ Weiss and Parpart, *Sir Garfield Todd*, 151.

insistence on a stronger political relationship with South Africa strengthened these allegations. The British who carefully watched Rhodesian politics for signs of possible secession from the Empire, did not consider the Rhodesian Front a threat to the liberal United Federal Party in the 1962 elections. They regarded it as a party “whose leadership lacks dynamism and whose policies are directed towards ensuring the firmly entrenched position of the European.”³⁵ British observers believed that the overwhelming number of moderate voters would render whatever support The Rhodesian Front had null. This would, however, unfortunately not be correct. The Rhodesian Front won the 1962 Parliamentary elections by a landslide and in doing so would control Rhodesian politics—and the course of history for the next eighteen years.

Winston Field became the first Rhodesian Front Prime Minister in 1962, but many people within his party quickly realized that he did not have the temperament for such a contentious political office. When combined with his softer stance on racial issues and most especially his refusal to back a measure of independence from Britain, his positions led many members of the Rhodesian Front to feel they deserved someone whose political views were more closely aligned with their own.³⁶ Thus, in 1964 after only two years in office, Ian Smith replaced Winston Field as Prime Minister and would go on to declare Rhodesia independent and sovereign in the face of growing pressure from Britain to grant majority rule. In 1965, Ian Smith declared a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain and became the most notable face of the Rhodesian Front and the poster child for resistance against majority rule in Africa.

Unlike their liberal predecessors, White Rhodesians saw Field and Smith as being imbued with the “Rhodesian Spirit”. Characters built on solid moral foundations with the tenants of loyalty, community support, and a solid familial foundation because “great nations are built on

³⁵ The National Archives (TNA): DO 183/29 Rhodesian Front Party

³⁶ Blake, *History of Rhodesia*, 360.

the foundation of great families”.³⁷ The Rhodesian Front promoted themselves as standing for traditional family values and encompassing the hard-working spirit of the Rhodesian settler who made “something out of nothing” in their new homeland. When voters went to the polls, they chose candidates who they believed embodied these virtues. Winston Field had been a railroad man before he entered politics and Ian Smith was the embodiment of what it meant to be a red-blooded Rhodesian. An avid sportsman and rancher, Smith had spent the second world war first at Rhodes University active in rugby and rowing and then as a pilot in the Royal Air Force.³⁸ In his memoir, Smith makes reference numerous times to the loyalty of Rhodesians and how they are “more British than the British”³⁹. The settlers who left Britain to start a new life in Southern Africa were more hard-working and patriotic, he claimed, than the citizens of Britain. Many Rhodesians shared these beliefs which would be a recurrent theme in negotiations with the British in the early-1960s. Rhodesians saw themselves as the “torch...of Western Christian Civilization...[across] the dark continent”⁴⁰ and the British as a force attempting to extinguish the flame by acting against Rhodesia’s best interests. As Russian forces attempted to gain influence in Africa and the number of African countries gaining independence and establishing majority rule grew, Smith and other Rhodesians like him, claimed the flame was growing smaller. For those backing the Rhodesian Front, to allow and encourage majority rule was the same as initiating a coup and undermining the government. They saw Rhodesia as “God’s own country,”⁴¹ and the last ember of Western Christian Civilization in Africa.⁴²

³⁷ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3, 9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴² Peter Godwin, Peter and Ian Hancock. *‘Rhodesians Never Die’: The Impact of War and Political Change on White Rhodesia, c.1970–1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9.

Rhodesians believed their greatest opponent was Communism. The Rhodesian Front classified many groups and people who disagreed their stances as communists, but the most notable and vilified group of people were the African Nationalists fighting for majority rule. Believed it to be acting intentionally to undermine the government, in 1962 the Rhodesian Front outlawed the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the dominant political party opposing the Rhodesian Front at the time.⁴³ The White Rhodesian considered the African Nationalists "communist terrorists" and believed that their only goal was to bring chaos and destruction to Rhodesia. Often referencing the events that followed independence in the Belgian Congo and other newly sovereign nations as examples of the horrors of transferring power into the hands of African nationalists, the Rhodesian Front believed that it was in the best interest of Africans to be ruled by whites as the system of democracy was foreign to them.⁴⁴ Believed to be "still fairly primitive," Africans were regarded by the Rhodesian Front as children who did not know what was good for them, and whose disagreement with policies was due to ignorance of governmental matters.⁴⁵ While he did not believe in their mission or their ability to lead Rhodesia, in his memoir Smith attempted to make himself seem empathetic to the motives of the Black Rhodesians. "No matter how misguided, [African politicians] were at least trying to gain for themselves benefits that they had failed to achieve through their own efforts."⁴⁶ African Nationalists, therefore, was regarded by the Rhodesian Front as rabble-rousers who sought to breed conflict in an otherwise peaceful country.

In the year following the dissolution of Federation, Britain granted both Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland their independence to become Zambia and Malawi, respectively.

⁴³ The National Archives (TNA): DO 183/29 The Rhodesian Front Party

⁴⁴ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 108.

⁴⁵ The National Archives (TNA): FCO 36/359 Speeches of Ian Smith

⁴⁶ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 144.

Southern Rhodesia was not granted their independence due to British concerns about the lack of African enfranchisement. The political right in Southern Rhodesia saw it as an intentional act of disrespect which angered them as they believed their country was more deserving of independence than the other nations in Federation. This most especially upset the newly elected Prime Minister Ian Smith, who believed that the “British solutions for Africa went wrong”.⁴⁷ Instead of Britain’s solution of independence which immediately instituted a system of “one man one vote”, the Rhodesian Front believed that a system of gradualism was necessary “to ensure that people fully understood the complicated democratic system”.⁴⁸ This was at odds with the British directive of “No Independence before Majority Rule” which was the backbone of their argument against South Rhodesian sovereignty in the early 1960s. Nevertheless, the Rhodesian Front negotiated, unsuccessfully, for several years with Britain for independence and sovereignty. This continued disagreement over what was considered a “sufficiently representative institution” for voting continued up until Southern Rhodesia declared itself independent in November of 1965.⁴⁹ Rhodesian politicians resisted the British requirement of “One Man, One Vote” and argued that in setting majority rule as a condition for independence the British were forcefully imposing it on them.⁵⁰ Smith and many others in the Rhodesian Front perceived themselves as members of their own Shangani Patrol surrounded by hostile forces who plotted their downfall.

In an attempt to appease the British need for representative voting, the Rhodesian Front set up an Indaba, or meeting of elder Chiefs, District Headmen and Kraalheads, leaders of small

⁴⁷ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 108.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ The National Archives (TNA): DO 183/294 Visit to London by Ian Smith, Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia: Records of Meetings.

⁵⁰ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 88.

rural communities, to discuss the issue of the 1961 Constitution..⁵¹ Six-hundred and twenty-two people gathered in Salisbury on October 22, 1964 to participate in the Indaba. The Rhodesian Front recorded the results of the nearly week long meeting as overwhelming support for the 1961 Constitution.⁵² It is important to note, however, that there is no voting or taking sides in a traditional Indaba. It is a discussion between leaders and a general consensus is taken at the end, but was not considered a “system” of establishing opinion. What most worried the British was the overly simple choice given to the chiefs to decide between an African Nationalist Government or a government on the basis of the 1961 Constitution. They believed this to be unfair as the tribal heads had “no love for the nationalists” and skewed the outcome.⁵³ The 1961 Constitution, written by a majority Rhodesian Front Parliament, was opposed by many Africans as well as the British who argued that the Five Principles necessary for Rhodesian independence were not fulfilled by the Constitution. These Five Principles were:

- 1) Unimpeded progress towards majority rule
- 2) Guarantee against retrogressive amendments to the constitution
- 3) Immediate improvements to the political status of the African population
- 4) Progress towards the end of racial discrimination
- 5) The basis of independence needs to be acceptable for all people of Rhodesia⁵⁴

Voters in Rhodesia were divided into two categories, or rolls in which votes were weighted differently. The A-roll controlled eighty percent of the total weight while the B-roll controlled only twenty percent. Most White voters were on the A-roll because they were able to meet the high income, property, and educational requirements. B-roll voters had lower requirements to

⁵¹ The National Archives (TNA): DO 183/504 Ian Smith’s Proposals for Consulting Rhodesian Africans.

⁵² Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 81–82.

⁵³ The National Archives (TNA): DO 183/504 Ian Smith’s Proposals for Consulting Rhodesian Africans.

⁵⁴ The National Archives (TNA): FCO 36/1434 The Vatican’s Attitude towards Rhodesia

meet and this roll was overwhelmingly populated by Blacks. While theoretically, the 1961 Constitution would eventually allow more Africans would be on the A-roll, this was only if the government kept the voting requirements the same. The risk was that independence would be given immediately to the white minority government who might overturn the British requirements once independence was granted and enact stricter laws that prohibited blacks from voting at all. Because the constitution violated nearly all of the five principles the British set forth, it was not well supported by others outside of the Rhodesian Front.⁵⁵

When another round of negotiation failed in October of 1965, the Rhodesian Front saw the position of the Liberal Labour party Prime Minister, Harold Wilson as immovable towards their cause. The Rhodesian Front decided if the British would not grant them independence, they would declare it themselves.⁵⁶ This measure was adopted by the Rhodesian Parliament on November 11, 1965 and termed the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). Ian Smith announced the proclamation in a radio broadcast to the entire nation which outlined his party's grievances and rationale.

Whereas in the course of human affairs history has shown that it may become necessary for a people to resolve the political affiliations which have connected them with another people and to assume among other nations the separate and equal status to which they are entitled: And whereas in such event a respect for the opinions of mankind requires them to declare to other nations the causes which impel them to assume full responsibility for their affairs

Now Therefore, We, The Government of Rhodesia, Do Hereby Declare:

That it is an indisputable and accepted historic fact that since 1923 the Government of Rhodesia have exercised the powers of self-government and have been responsible for the progress, development and welfare of their people;

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

⁵⁵ Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals*, 94.

⁵⁶ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 104.

the mutual interests of freedom-loving people, now see all that they have cherished about to be shattered on the rocks of expediency;

That the people of Rhodesia have witnessed a process which is destructive of those very precepts upon which civilization in a primitive country has been built, they have seen the principles of Western democracy, responsible government and moral standards crumble elsewhere, nevertheless they have remained steadfast;

That the people of Rhodesia fully support the requests of their government for sovereign independence but have witnessed the consistent refusal of the Government of the United Kingdom to accede to their entreaties;

That the Government of the United Kingdom have thus demonstrated that they are not prepared to grant sovereign independence to Rhodesia on terms acceptable to the people of Rhodesia, thereby persisting in maintaining an unwarrantable jurisdiction over Rhodesia, obstructing laws and treaties with other states and the conduct of affairs with other nations and refusing assent to laws necessary for the public good, all this to the detriment of the future peace, prosperity and good government of Rhodesia;

That the Government of Rhodesia have for a long period patiently and in good faith negotiated with the Government of the United Kingdom for the removal of the remaining limitations placed upon them and for the grant of sovereign independence;

That in the belief that procrastination and delay strike at and injure the very life of the nation, the Government of Rhodesia consider it essential that Rhodesia should attain, without delay, sovereign independence, the justice of which is beyond question;

Now Therefore, We The Government of Rhodesia, in humble submission to Almighty God who controls the destinies of nations, conscious that the people of Rhodesia have always shown unswerving loyalty and devotion to Her Majesty the Queen and earnestly praying that we and the people of Rhodesia will not be hindered in our determination to continue exercising our undoubted right to demonstrate the same loyalty and devotion, and seeking to promote the common good so that the dignity and freedom of all men may be assured, Do, By This Proclamation, adopt, enact and give to the people of Rhodesia the Constitution annexed hereto;

God Save The Queen⁵⁷

The British immediately reacted with disbelief and swift action. Harold Wilson referred to Rhodesia as a “rebel regime” and the British referred to the action as “IDI” for Illegal Declaration of Independence. The British had prepared for the possibility of a Rhodesian declaration of independence and in a 1964 memo instructed Humphrey Gibbs, the governor of Rhodesia, to ignore the new government and condemn their actions. “[C]onsider treating the

⁵⁷ Quoted from: J.R.T Wood, *So Far and No Further! Rhodesia's Bid For Independence During the Retreat From Empire 1959–1965* (Victoria, British Columbia: Trafford Publishing, 2012), 472.

Southern Rhodesian Government, after a declaration of independence, and supposing that Mr. Smith and his Ministers have been dismissed but had remained in charge, as non-existent, ‘dead’.”⁵⁸ This is exactly what happened. Gibbs informed Smith and his cabinet that their actions were considered treason to which they responded that he no longer held any power. On the 12th of November the United Nations issued Resolution 216 which condemned UDI and called upon all states to recognize Rhodesia as a “illegal racist minority regime”.⁵⁹ They reaffirmed this resolution on the 20th of November with Resolution 217 which condemned the “usurpation of power by a racist settler minority” and called for the swift end to the regime whose “continuance in time constitutes a threat to international peace and security”.⁶⁰ The Smith regime would not be overturned so quickly. The Rhodesian Front would continue to hold power in Rhodesia for another fifteen years and catapult the country into a civil war that would claim the lives of thousands. While many white Rhodesians sided with the Rhodesian Front, there was a small minority—consisting of around five percent of the voting population—that did not.⁶¹ Although the political conflict in this period worsened the division between Whites and Africans, there were a small handful of whites who defied this dichotomy to fight for equal treatment and civil rights for their African neighbors and countrymen.

Judith Todd

After coming into power, the Rhodesian Front began a concerted effort to control the news and media reporting about them. The Rhodesian Front also partnered with a Film Company, Dragon Films, which was hired to create “highly professional propaganda

⁵⁸ The National Archives (TNA): DO 183/497 Advice to Governor

⁵⁹ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 216 (1965)*.

⁶⁰ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 217 (1965)*.

⁶¹ The National Archives (TNA): FO 371/187958 Internal Political Situation Sanctions

documentaries”. They also established an Intelligence Bureau which was tasked to investigate the extent of communist infiltration as well as recommending the best course of action regarding counter-propaganda. The Rhodesian Front also established their own journal, *Newsfront*.⁶² Beyond production of their own media, the Rhodesian Front also sought to control what was said of them externally. This was achieved through extreme censorship. Among the leaders of opposition parties arrested were Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe and other African Nationalists whom Ian Smith and the Rhodesian Front considered terrorists.⁶³ Among these was Ndabaningi Sithole whose publications were banned by 1970. The Rhodesian Front also banned academic publications critical of the party, as well as publications with sexual or drug connotations which were believed to be signs of “Communist conspiracy.”⁶⁴ Journalists and speakers who criticized the government were almost guaranteed to face censorship. Judith Todd was one such person greatly affected by government censorship.

Judith Todd was born on the Dadaya Mission in Southern Rhodesia in 1943. Her parents, Grace and the aforementioned Garfield Todd, had immigrated to Southern Rhodesia from New Zealand as missionaries in 1934.⁶⁵ Judith spent her earliest years surrounded by African people; her earliest friends were all black. This unique upbringing outside of the “little white island” most White Rhodesians lived in afforded her the unique experience of seeing and knowing Africans outside of their role as servants and farmhands.⁶⁶ This upbringing gave Judith a very different perspective than that of other whites in Rhodesia at the time. Because of their proximity to Africans and role in African education, missionaries were often regarded by many white

⁶² The National Archives (TNA): DO 191/30 Southern Rhodesia Information Activities

⁶³ Smith, *The Great Betrayal*, 35.

⁶⁴ Godwin and Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, 39–40.

⁶⁵ Judith Todd, *Through the Darkness: A Life in Zimbabwe* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2007), 1.

⁶⁶ Parker, *Rhodesia: Little White Island*.

Rhodesian as “kaffir-lovers.”⁶⁷ It was not until she began attending an all-white school that she realized the extent of racism and discrimination that was so pervasive in Rhodesia.⁶⁸ Influenced by the experiences of her childhood and the liberal views of her parents, Judith Todd became an outspoken opponent of the Rhodesian Front at a very young age. In 1964, she was arrested and found guilty of contravening the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act by organizing a demonstration against the banning of a newspaper, *The Daily News*.⁶⁹ Shortly after the declaration of UDI, she attempted to publish a scathing denunciation of the regime in a book entitled *An Act of Treason: Rhodesia 1965*. Although finished in early 1966, it was quickly banned from Rhodesia until 1982.⁷⁰ She remained an active voice of opposition to the Rhodesian Front through Ian Smith’s tenure as president.

Judith’s earliest memories of her childhood were feelings of empathy for the Africans who were treated as less than human.⁷¹ While their school years imbued many of Judith’s peers with patriotism and national pride, it filled her instead with a sense of skepticism towards the stories of beloved national heroes.

White Rhodesian children are all acquainted with the history of the brave white pioneers who at great personal cost brought the wonders of Christian civilization to a dark, barbaric land...undoubtedly many of the pioneers were fine men, who performed gallant, selfless, courageous deeds and they deserve our honour and respect. But towering over them stands the figure of Cecil John Rhodes, urged on by a vision of the Union Jack fluttering over the entire African continent, ruthlessly crushing any individual or people who threatened the realization of his dreams, and leaving a legacy of questionable desires and dark deeds to brood over this land.⁷²

⁶⁷ Todd, *An Act of Treason*, 48.

⁶⁸ S.G. Mpofu, Introduction to *An Act of Treason: Rhodesia 1965*, Judith Todd (Harare, Mambo Press, 1982), 4.

⁶⁹ Todd, *Through the Darkness*, 3.

⁷⁰ Todd, *An Act of Treason*.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 32–33.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 14.

Judith attended her first political meeting with her father when she was nine years old.⁷³ As she grew older, Judith became increasingly involved in politics and eventually joined the African National Congress (ANC), one of the first white members to do so. The ANC was the first fully fledged African Nationalist political party in Rhodesia dedicated to African welfare. The Rhodesian government saw them as a threat and they were labeled a “subversive movement” by Edgar Whitehead in 1959, as part of the Unlawful Organization Act.⁷⁴ Her political participation distanced Judith from many in the white Rhodesian community who already saw her and her family as the antithesis of what it meant to be a Rhodesian. She felt ostracized because white Rhodesians were not reluctant to voice their opinions. Whilst on house arrest in November 1965, Garfield Todd received a letter regarding his daughter Judith. “We are not aware of the precise upbringing of your daughter and nor are we interested; but it is obvious that she is certainly *not* a Rhodesian, and therefore this woman should be warned to keep out of affairs appertaining to Rhodesia to whom—like you—she is in fact nothing less than a traitor.”⁷⁵ Judith herself addressed these rumors in a speech at Cambridge University while in exile in 1973: “There is a Rhodesian Front myth that my family are doing all we can to sabotage our own white tribe. On the contrary, my family’s effort has been directed for years towards the creation of a country where tribe and race are unimportant. I think I can say we will go on trying.”⁷⁶

Judith saw that the Rhodesian Front was becoming more oppressive and authoritarian as it continued to evade sanctions and pass more restrictive laws to secure its power. Yet she did not blame all Whites for the actions of the Rhodesian Front, but instead viewed them as having been led astray by propaganda and the irrational fear of people who are not White. “Many whites are

⁷³ Judith Todd, *The Right to Say No* (New York: The Third Press), 66.

⁷⁴ Todd, *An Act of Treason*, 66, 68.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷⁶ The National Archives (TNA): FCO 36/1356 Leading Personalities: Judith Todd

innocent of the deeds that are attributed in general terms to the white government, the security forces, and individual settlers,” she declared. “Their guilt is that they lent their support to a regime which over the years has repressed the legitimate aspirations of the people as a whole.”⁷⁷ Judith instead placed at least part of the blame on the British for the lack of colonial oversight and for allowing the Rhodesians to be the “judges of [their] own cause” and “creat[ing] their own justifications” for the mistreatment of Africans, disregarding their wants and “blindly pursued the bitter destiny [the Rhodesians] had chosen.”⁷⁸ She also correctly assumed that time would show the moral reprehensibility of the Rhodesian Front regime as the racist movement of the minority who were unwilling to give up their power.⁷⁹

Judith never stopped trying to make Rhodesia a better place for everyone in the country. Her political actions attracted the attention of the Rhodesian security forces and in January 1972 she was arrested with her father under the pretense that they were “likely to commit or to incite the commission of acts in Rhodesia which would endanger the public safety or disturb or interfere with the maintenance of public order.”⁸⁰ Judith underwent a hunger-strike to protest her imprisonment and was released five weeks later after much international criticism of her detention. Garfield was not so lucky and would remain in house arrest on his ranch until 1976. After her release from jail, Judith went into a political exile abroad. Her name was banned from publication and her writings were outlawed. In the event she returned to Rhodesia, she was informed, the police would escort her straight back to jail.⁸¹ Although she was out of Rhodesia, she was not completely removed from the political scene. Judith took up residence in London

⁷⁷ Todd, *An Act of Treason*, 86–87.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁹ Todd, *The Right to Say No*, 183.

⁸⁰ Todd, *Through the Darkness*, 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

where she acted as the London Representative for the ANC and lobbied for the British to become more involved in removing the Rhodesian Front from power and establishing equal voting in Rhodesia. Additionally, she met with the Prime Minister of New Zealand and asked for his help in releasing her father, Garfield, from house arrest. Judith would eventually become the Special Representative of the African National Congress to the United Nations.⁸² Judith was not able to safely return to Rhodesia until February 1980, shortly before the first free elections were held and Rhodesia became Zimbabwe in April 1980.⁸³

Bishop Donal Lamont

In 1976, Irish missionary Bishop Donal Lamont was found guilty of aiding insurgency for “failing to report nationalist guerillas”. The maximum sentence for this offense was death. At the time of Bishop Lamont’s sentencing, the death penalty was deemed unlikely and ultimately the courts only sentenced Bishop Lamont to ten years.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the severity of the maximum punishment shows how significant the Rhodesian Front deemed subversion to their regime.⁸⁵ Bishop Lamont was not merely a Catholic missionary who sought to help all those who walked through his mission’s doors. He was one of the most vocal and internationally prominent figures in opposition to the minority government of Rhodesia.

Just as the extreme, overly racist policies of the Rhodesian government came into existence over many decades and through a number of forces, likewise the politicization of Bishop Lamont’s sermons and views evolved with the political climate. He came to the Umtali

⁸² The National Archives (TNA): FCO 36/1353 Leading Personalities Judith Todd

⁸³ Todd, *The Right to Say No*, 3.

⁸⁴ New York Times, “Rhodesia Strips Bishop of Citizenship, Deports Him as ‘Undesirable’,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), Mar. 24, 1977.

⁸⁵ John Darnton, “Rhodesia Charges a Catholic Bishop,” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Aug. 27, 1976.

mission in 1946⁸⁶, but it was not until 1959 that his first letter of Pastoral Instruction was circulated denouncing racism and segregation within Rhodesia.⁸⁷ This was not only the first letter written by Bishop Lamont dealing with Rhodesia's problem with race, but the first Pastoral Letter to ever be written on this topic in Rhodesia.⁸⁸ After UDI, as the Rhodesian Front-led government became increasingly conservative and racist, Bishop Lamont felt morally compelled to renounce the "political absurdity"⁸⁹ of the government's actions and rebuff their claims of Christian authority.⁹⁰

In "Purchased People," his seminal Pastoral Letter, Bishop Lamont described racial discrimination not as the "fundamental problem" concerning Rhodesia, but as a consequence of men straying from the instructions laid out for them in the Bible--the true problem with Rhodesian society. Bishop Lamont further asserts:

Our Divine Lord's doctrine of justice and charity can alone provide the basis for mutual understanding and ultimate peace. That doctrine has in other ages proved successful in reconciling the varied social conditions of men, has civilized barbarous races, has made clear how master and servant can live in the peace of the one great Christian family. That doctrine has lost nothing in its original power for good, and if put into daily practice, can accomplish as much today as it did in ages past.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Míceál, O'Neill, *A Bishop Could Not Do Otherwise: The Life and Witness of Bishop Donal Lamont (1911–2003)*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2013), 7.

⁸⁷ Albert B. Plangger, (Annotated). *Rhodesia-The Moral Issue: Pastoral Letters of the Catholic Bishops* (Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1968), 6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸⁹ Bishop Donal Lamont, quoted in Israel Shenker, "Bishop Denounces Rhodesian Policy." *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Oct. 3, 1974.

⁹⁰ Shenker, "Bishop Denounces Rhodesian Policy." *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Oct. 3, 1974.

⁹¹ Plangger, *Rhodesia-The Moral Issue*, 18-20.

Bishop Lamont believed that black and white Rhodesians could come to a compromise as long as they were both committed to putting the laws of God, which call for charity and equal rights for all people, above the laws of man.⁹²

Whereas many political analysts believed that Bishop Lamont's strong opinions were due to his Northern Irish heritage and his dislike of British politics,⁹³ Bishop Lamont would disagree with the assertion that his speeches were overtly political. He was quoted as saying: "I have little feeling for these matters. I am not a politician. I have tried to make that clear. But I am concerned with social justice, and where there is no observance of social justice, you prepare the way for Communism."⁹⁴ It was his intention not to involve himself in secular affairs but to bridge the gap between the teachings of the Church and current events in an effort to benefit his congregation.⁹⁵ He taught directly from the Bible and mainstream Catholic-orthodox thought.⁹⁶ This belief can be seen in Lamont's initial refusal to leave Rhodesia before his superiors in the Church instructed him to do so. "[A]s a Bishop, I have a duty to remain in charge of my diocese until the supreme authority of the Roman Catholic Church informs me that I may leave. When I do leave, there will be no doubt about who made the decision. I must obey God rather than men."⁹⁷

As a Bishop, Lamont believed it was his duty to preach the message of the Gospel with the authority bestowed upon him as a successor of St. Peter.⁹⁸ It was within this authority that he

⁹² K.R. Sundar Rajan and Donal R. Lamont, "After Prison (in India), and Before (in Rhodesia)," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Mar. 18, 1977.

⁹³ The National Archives (TNA): FCO 36/1434 The Vatican's Attitude towards Rhodesia

⁹⁴ John Burns, "Judge Nearing Rhodesian Bishop's Appeal Says Insurgents Pose Communist Threat to Church and Country," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Feb. 15, 1977.

⁹⁵ O'Neill, *A Bishop Could Not Do Otherwise*, 18.

⁹⁶ Sheehy and Sudworth, "Introduction to 'Speech from the Dock' in Plangger, *Rhodesia—The Moral Issue*," 55.

⁹⁷ K.R. Sundar Rajan and Donal R. Lamont, "After Prison (in India), and Before (in Rhodesia)," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Mar. 18, 1977.

⁹⁸ Plangger, *Rhodesia-The Moral Issue*, 16.

preached racial equality within the bounds of natural law which he saw as “[God’s] Eternal Law and its manifestation in human nature”.⁹⁹ Bishop Lamont believed that all laws that were not first built on the foundation of Natural Law were not morally sound. This belief pervaded his life and was the main factor in his willingness to disregard the laws he deemed incongruent with his Christian faith. “Not all the legislation in the world can make right what is morally wrong. The racist laws of Rhodesia are such that I cannot in conscience either condone or obey them.”¹⁰⁰ It was Bishop Lamont’s philosophy that state authority is valid only if reinforced by natural law that led to his arrest. “[I]n these trying times it is exceedingly important that the state examine carefully its function, and thence recognize its limitations. It has no real claim to *absolute* autonomy, nor can it in justice sponsor or serve the interests of one particular race or group of people to the detriment of another.”¹⁰¹ He also believed in the ability of the ruled to usurp unjust, unrestricted power—with a caveat:

[E]ven in the case of unjust conquest by a usurping Power, if the new rulers do in fact fulfill the functions of government and administration; and if through custom and lapse of time and the tacit consent of the governed, their so-called authority remains unquestioned, the principle of prescription may be applied and although the new rulers have objectively no true claim to the allegiance of the people, rebellion even against that imperfect authority is still unjustifiable, unless the conditions for it as already described, are simultaneously fulfilled.¹⁰²

These statements and many others like it angered the Rhodesian Government who put Bishop Lamont on their radar. This malice precipitated his arrest and may have led to the extreme length

⁹⁹ Plangger, *Rhodesia-The Moral Issue*, 24.

¹⁰⁰ Rajan, K.R. Sundar and Lamont, Donal. “After Prison (in India), and Before (in Rhodesia).” *The New York Times* (New York, NY), Mar. 18, 1977.

¹⁰¹ Plangger, *Rhodesia-The Moral Issue*, 34.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 29.

of his sentence. Though the courts originally sentenced him to ten years for aiding black insurgents and refusing to contact authorities when they came to his mission seeking help, Bishop Lamont's sentence was reduced to four years during an appeal—three of which were immediately suspended. Shortly thereafter, the Rhodesian government stripped Bishop Lamont of his citizenship and deported him back to Ireland.¹⁰³

Conclusion

The declaration of UDI in 1965 signaled the end of peaceful negotiations for the implementation of majority rule. The next fifteen years were a struggle between the African Nationalists and the far-right wing political party, the Rhodesian Front, to establish political dominance. This struggle culminated in the 1980 election of Robert Mugabe, who remained in power until November 2017. While this conflict has largely been seen as having been between races, there were some exceptions to this rule. Yet, it is interesting to note that both of the White Rhodesians discussed in this paper were from outside of mainstream Rhodesian society; both were from missionary backgrounds and interacted with Africans in ways that most White Rhodesians did not.

The Rhodesian Front years represent not only a breakdown of the British colonial system, but also the domination of a racist government and racist ideals which were detrimental to free-will and the establishment of an equal human rights. The history of Ian Smith and the Rhodesian Front is not the history of some obscure tidbit in a dusty history book. Just as the Rhodesian Front co-opted the story of the Shangani Patrol in order to fit their narrative of African savagery and barbarism, so have far-right wing White supremacists taken the narrative of Rhodesia's

¹⁰³ New York Times, "Rhodesia Strips Bishop of Citizenship, Deports Him as 'Undesirable'," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Mar. 24, 1977.

collapse as a symbol of the oppression of Christian morals in a morally bankrupt, liberal world. The impact of the Rhodesian Front did not end with the resignation of Ian Smith in 1979. The after-shocks of both the colonial imposition of Europeans and White rule during the 1960's and 1970's can be felt in Zimbabwe—and around the world, to this day.

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