

**“Other People’s Sons:”****Conscription, Citizenship, and Families 1970-80**

Jack Howman, Rhodesia’s minister of defence in 1973, was both a Rhodesian Front stalwart – he was a law partner of William Whaley who had headed the 1968 constitutional commission that brought about what was arguably the most retrogressive constitution on earth in 1969 – and an old guard Rhodesian, a man born in the country to a family with deep roots in its service, a genealogy similar to the liberal whites who had opposed UDI. Indeed, his brother, Roger Howman, retired from internal affairs, as native affairs was now called, because of the 1969 constitution. As minister of defence Howman struggled to raise soldiers’ pay. It was traditional “especially in frontier societies” like Rhodesia or South Africa that citizens had a duty to defend the state. A citizen force should be given “adequate remuneration for comparatively short periods of service” which “young and developing countries” that could not afford a standing army required. But now the country mobilized large numbers of young men for rates of pay that had the same purchasing power as they had in 1955. Not only was this too low, but the differential between what men in different regiments were paid was too great for effective service. While the principles that determined policies of different pay and allowances for regular and short term auxiliary forces was justified, it was time for Rhodesia “to accept the financial and economic consequences of putting the country on a war footing.” Raising soldiers’ pay was only part of the problem, however. There was also the “X factor:” the young men on call-up duty – then not as onerous as it was to become -- who had no real job mobility and had the emotional upheaval of separation from family and friends should be compensated as well. Howman

also sought a gratuity for soldiers of twenty and thirty years' service, almost all of whom were Africans in the Rhodesian African Rifles. The treasury however could see no justification in paying additional allowances to men on call-ups, nor could they justify the extra payment to African troops.<sup>1</sup>

This is a good introduction to the history of conscription in Rhodesia as I could wish for. What began as a straightforward appeal to citizenship and national defense became obsessed not with the obligations of citizens but the fate of young men called upon to do the work of soldiering, work that had already been done for over a generation by African volunteers. This particular history is not an easy fit with most histories of conscription in which the ability to command the full-time labor of young men, citizens or residents, describes the expanding power of national states. Citizenship was an imprecise category in Rhodesia even in the best of times, and the state's power to command its citizens was at best uneven. Historians of World War I in particular have argued that conscription – and resistance thereto – allowed for the extension of state powers that first impacted citizens (by birth or naturalization) and second loyal resident aliens but almost always impacted poorer. In the twentieth century, conscription expanded state power not only by drafting young men but by expanding the apparatus and organizations of surveillance that could distinguish ineligible young men from draft dodgers and conscientious

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<sup>1</sup> J. H. Howman, National Servicemen: Pay and Allowances 23 March 1973; Extended Service Gratuity Scheme for Security Forces, 10 April 1973, Cabinet Memoranda, CL/Smith/27.

objectors, and find and prosecute deserters.<sup>2</sup> Conscription in Rhodesia, especially after UDI, tells a different story, of state power that did not expand beyond the mailing of call up papers, and of a military increasingly frustrated by the state's inability to secure it more manpower even as it understood it could not effectively use. The questions of who to conscript and how much to pay them were debated in cabinet offices and the headquarters of combined operations (Comops), while national servicemen wrote of being pressured by their families to go to war. Family stories -- about conscription, foreign soldiers, or the conduct of the war -- disclosed the weakness of the coercive power of the state just as they exposed the complexities of belonging in Rhodesia.

#### **National Service for which nation?**

Rhodesian conscription began before Rhodesian independence. In the last years of the Central African Federation conscription was considered necessary to address the new contingencies of African nationalism. In 1960, the first conscripts were sent to the border Northern Rhodesia shared with the newly independent Congo, where young white Southern

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<sup>2</sup> Jeanette Keith, *Rich Man's War, Poor Man's Fight: Race, Class, and Power in the Rural South during the First World War* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Sascha Auerbach, "Negotiating Nationalism: Jewish Conscription and Russian Repatriation in London's East End, 1916-1918," *J. British Studies* 46. 3 (2007), 594-620. For resistance to national conscription efforts see Adrian Cook, *Armies of the Night: The New York City Draft Riots of 1863* (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1974); Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1990); Beth Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2009).

Rhodesians were said to have watched in horror as Belgians fled for their lives.<sup>3</sup> At the time of UDI national service for whites, Indians and Coloureds was four and a half months. Coloureds and Indians served in two units, the Reinforcement Holding Unit and its supplementary Protection Companies, which primarily provided transport and supply. In 1978 these units were combined into the Rhodesia Defence Regiment. Once the guerrilla war began, and certainly by 1972, conscription of white Rhodesian youths intensified. The basic outlines are that by 1972, all white males 18-25 were required to undertake nine months “service training” in the army or the police. After their initial service, these men could then be called up over the next three years to serve in the Territorial Army, a force made up of civilians who had completed their military training commanded by regular officers. After much debate in mid-1975, national service was extended to one year, and all white males aged 25-30 were liable to call ups for fifty-nine days; this was extended to eighty-four days almost at once. Men 30-38 were liable to call ups for shorter periods. In 1976 conscription was first increased to a year, and then to eighteen months by the year’s end; the age limit was raised from 30 to 34.<sup>4</sup> The men aged 18-34 who had fulfilled their national service obligation were now placed on “continuous call up” for the territorial army: they could be redeployed for unspecified intervals. This was so disastrous for morale and administration that the army sought ways to get men to stay longer or to rationalize reserve duty. In 1977 national servicemen were offered bonuses if they stayed on an extra

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<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Bond, *The Incredibles: The Story of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Rhodesian Light Infantry* (Salisbury, Sarum Imprint, 1977), 10-11; Alexandre Binda, *The Saints: The Rhodesian Light Infantry* (Johannesburg, 30 Degrees South, 2007), 22-23 and *idem.*, *The Rhodesia Regiment: From Boer War to Bush War 1899-1980* (ALberton, Galago, 2012), 148-52. Some conscripts may have both joined the mercenaries and then decamped to South Africa, see Mike Hoare, *Mercenary* (London, Corgi Books, 1978 [1967]), 66-67.

<sup>4</sup> J. K. Seirils, “Undoing the United Front? Coloured Soliders in Rhodesia 1939-1980,” *African Studies* 63, 1 (2004), 80; Bond, *The Incredibles*, 10-16; Chris Cocks, *Fireforce: One Man’s War in the Rhodesian Light Infantry* (Weltevreden Park, South Africa, Covos Day 1997 [1988]), 111.

year. Starting in 1978 territorials and police reservists under 38 were required to serve a maximum of 190 days per year, although half the younger group did not report for duty. Men 38-49 were called up for ten weeks in periods of two to four weeks at a time, but only the most experienced soldiers in that age group were placed on active duty. By then the Rhodesian Front was desperate enough to entertain ideas about how to expand the professional army and abolish the call up altogether, but by January 1979 this was impossible. In preparation for the April election, the manpower requirements were such that men 50-60 were called up to serve as guards in urban areas. This last call up was designed to find those trained former regular soldiers who had avoided call ups since their retirements; it was not very successful as only twenty per cent of the men called up came forward.<sup>5</sup>

All of the above, and every emendation to it, was contested. The question that undergirded conscription was the one that undergirded the nation – who belonged to it and what rights and obligations did they have? In 1966, Lord Graham, then minister of defence, made policy from the longtime practice that national service was based on residency, not citizenship. Rhodesian citizens, South African citizens, and British subjects resident in Rhodesia had to register; all other males had to register after they had resided in the country for three years. Graham cited and dismissed international law, in which citizens of another country could not be conscripted without the consent of that country. This was often abandoned in wartime, he

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<sup>5</sup> Cauter, *Under the Skin*, 135-37; Brownell, *Collapse*, 82; Peter Godwin and Ian Hancock, 'Rhodesians Never Die,' 88, 113, 135, 158-59, 254; Binda, *Rhodesia Regiment*, 192, 228; Anti-Apartheid Movement, *Fireforce Exposed: The Rhodesian Security Forces and their Role in Defending White Supremacy* (London, Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1979), 8; J. K. Cilliers, *Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia* (London, Croom Helm, 1985), 43-44; Commanders' Secretariat, Operations Coordinating Committee, Minutes, 29 April 1976, Rhodesian Army Association Papers [RAA] 2001/086/241/159, British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol,; Joint Operating Command Minutes, 26 June 1978, RAA 2001/086/015/892; Secretary for Law and Order, Usage of 50-60 Age Group, 9 March 1979, RAA 2001/086/147/927.

wrote, as Australia had done during World War II. There was such a thing as “national law” which did not limit a state’s power to conscript the population that resides within its borders. Under emergency powers draft-age aliens could be directed to any industry that was of national importance. Several cabinet ministers opposed this: it might limit further immigration or cause families with young men to go to South Africa or Australia. Of the 4,000 aliens in Rhodesia there were only 252 of draft age, Graham reported, so the disadvantages of conscripting aliens clearly outweighed the advantages.<sup>6</sup>

### **Citizens, aliens, and rates of pay**

When Rhodesia became a republic in 1970 the population became one of citizens and aliens and the question of who to conscript became acute, even though citizenship was one of several forms of belonging to Rhodesia. The only group that had routinely invoked the language of citizenship was the Coloured population. Coloured was broad category that denoted peoples of mixed race; in Rhodesia it was a diverse composite that numbered perhaps 24,000 in 1965, or slightly less than ten per cent of the white population.<sup>7</sup> Coloured soldiers, whether volunteers or conscripts, appealed to the rights and obligations of citizenship to describe their service and the benefits that all too often failed to accrue from it. Coloured volunteers in World War II served as drivers in East Africa; they, avowed they were “Citizens in the New Order” of the British empire. After UDI – and after more than a decade of conscription – Coloured activists demanded the “full rights of citizens” in exchange for military service. In 1977 Coloured soldiers petitioned the army that they upheld “the legal and moral duty of all citizens” to defend the country -- despite the contempt Rhodesian white soldiers had for them - - but they believed the current war was unjust and racist. Nevertheless, they had “no objection”

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<sup>6</sup> Angus Graham, Minister of Defence, Compulsory Military Service for Aliens, 28 October 1966, and 15 February 1967; Cabinet memoranda/4 1966; Cabinet memoranda/1, 1967, CL/Smith/21.

<sup>7</sup> Brownell, *Collapse*, 14-15. There were 11,000 Indians in 1965.

to fighting in it.<sup>8</sup>

When Rhodesia became a republic the older, federal practice of requiring of South Africans citizens and British subjects resident in Rhodesia to fulfill the same obligations as citizens became muddled. Although Britain had treaties with many countries that their nationals could not serve in another country's army, Rhodesia had been calling up British subjects for years. The policy was already in place, but by 1970 there were renewed worries that it would hinder immigration. The larger question, which was never fully resolved, was that of the rights and obligations of citizens relative to those of residents and aliens? This question, the cabinet was told, was all too often conveyed by the "ill-will" national servicemen had to young aliens, whose families' immigration to Rhodesia had been generously subsidized in the first years of UDI. The cabinet debated how to make national service fair, or at least something that did not "discriminate." It would be simplest to conscript only Rhodesian citizens, but there were not enough of them to meet Rhodesia's manpower needs, and to do so might discourage aliens from becoming Rhodesian citizens. The ministry of defence wanted to continue as before, to call up Rhodesian citizens, Irish and South African citizens and British subjects resident in the country. But this, the cabinet pointed out, would discriminate against the Greek or German or Portuguese citizens who were not called up. Several cabinet ministers proposed a system that was fair to young Rhodesians and did not discriminate within the alien community: all males would be called up regardless of their nationality. Aliens were now required to register after one year's residence in the country or at the age of sixteen, whatever came first. Anxious headmasters and officials complained that well-off parents sent their children to secondary school abroad so they would avoid registration. Anyone, citizen or resident, who was called up

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<sup>8</sup> 3 Protection Company, Mt. Darwin to Brig. A. B. Campling, 20 May 1977, Survey of army morale, RAA 2001/086/263/997; Seirlis, "Coloured Soldiers," 84-89. See also Bill Nasson, "Why They Fought: Black Cape Colonists and Imperial Wars, 1899-1918," *Int. J. African Hist. Studies* 37, 1 (2004), 55-70.

could volunteer for a period of service shorter than that for which they would be conscripted. The age for conscription was set at 18-23, but because of university deferments the “functional age limit” was 25.<sup>9</sup>

This did not so much make conscription routine as it made belonging to Rhodesia boundless, a perpetual status that carried the same taint Rhodesian chrome did. Karl Greenberg, for example, was British citizen brought up in Rhodesia. He went to England as soon as he completed high school, in 1976, where he could only get menial jobs and he found Britons coarse. He decided to join the Royal Navy. He passed the exam to become a trainee officer only to be rejected “when they found out I was from Rhodesia.” He then wrote to the BSAP, knowing they recruited from Britain and paid the passage of new recruits. The BSAP wrote back that he had registered at sixteen and would be considered a deserter if he did not return at once. Greenberg was baffled: he left Rhodesia as a minor and a British citizen, but he had to return to join the Rhodesian police.<sup>10</sup>

The question of who was required to serve was joined by the question of how long they were required to do so. Every extended month of service was struggled over by bureaucracies terrified of driving young men out of the country, and by a military insistent that national service be increased to two years.<sup>11</sup> Added to the struggle was elastic nature of Rhodesia’s white population. How, and at what point, to call up the sons of emigrating parents was a vexing question throughout the 1970s. If parents were in the process of preparing to emigrate but had

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<sup>9</sup> The treaties tended to be over a hundred years old and were with “banana republics of no concern to us...” J. H. Howman, Minister of Defence, Rhodesian Citizens and Aliens, 11 June 1970; Military Training: Age limits, 13 August 1970, Cabinet memoranda/2, CL/Smith/24; Hancock and Godwin, *Rhodesians Never Die*, 160.

<sup>10</sup> Karl Greenberg, *The Gokwe Kid: Dick of the Bushveld* (n.p., Karl Greenberg, 2012), 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> Commanders’ Secretariat, Operations Coordinating Committee, Minutes, 13 May 1975, RAA 2001/086/172(A)/146; Ministry of Defence, Memo on Extension of National Service, 29 July 1977, RAA 2001/086/021/1152.



not completed all the formalities, sons were liable for national service; if a son had registered for national service and he was called up after his parents completed the paperwork for emigration, he was liable as well.<sup>12</sup> Industries and commercial organizations complained bitterly that the call up gave the military a monopoly on white youth; they had no access to the labor of young men. The call up of men between 38 and 50 made matters worse. Many of these men occupied critical positions in commerce and industry, and for businesses charged with making up the difference between military pay and what a man normally earned, conscription was expensive.<sup>13</sup>

Questions about the length of service became questions about soldiers' pay. This was a contentious and expensive issue for whites, Coloureds and Africans. In 1965 soldiers' pay was based on federal rates which had been for a small, regular army but in a few years it was especially complicated by the number of men on reserve duty. Haphazard committees with occasional recommendations to adjust soldiers' pay had created even greater disjunctures, in which conscripts and territorials sometimes earned forty per cent less than regular troops of the same rank. As of 1973 pay rates for conscripts were rationalized across the services. National servicemen earned \$4.50 a day with a \$1 allowance for married men including 75 cents for the first child and 55 cents for each additional one. National servicemen who re-engaged as regulars received a \$150 bonus. African and white soldiers received a bonus for parachute qualifications. The pay of men on reserve duty was raised to \$1.50 per day in 1973. The marriage allowance was raised to \$3.30 but the allowances for children remained the same as for national servicemen. Reservists received an extra \$1 a day for every day of duty after the first fourteen days. Most reservists had civilian jobs but there was no legal requirement for employers to make up the difference between the reservists' pay and their

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<sup>12</sup> Manpower Committee, 15 September 1977, RAA 2001/086/007/882.

<sup>13</sup> Caute, *Under the Skin*, 136-37; Godwin and Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, 254.

salaries, however: some employers did and some did not. Those who did not found it easier to hire white women or cheaper to hire Africans and this, everyone agreed, intensified the anxiety of white Rhodesian youths.<sup>14</sup>

The army had argued for years that the pay offered African or Coloured, Asian and Eurasian (CAE) troops was based on political calculations, not military ones; commanders argued that increasing the pay for CAE national servicemen was a way to get fewer “layabout types.” When it was decided to use a CAE unit as riflemen in the northeast the army wanted them paid the same as European troops. It would cost \$3,000 but that was a small price to pay for lessening the burden on the white community. It also turned them into motivated “front line soldiers who are killing terrorists...”<sup>15</sup> In 1977 African regulars – mainly RAR – complained about the wage gap between African and white troops at similar ranks. “If a black officer gets the same pay as a white officer, why then should not an African soldier have the same pay as a white soldier?” The army turned this into a complaint about the number of African officers, not the remuneration for African soldiers. It apologized: the RAR had not been able to commission as many officers as it would have liked – they were too busy making war – but the Africans awarded field commissions were free to use officers’ amenities. There could be “no second

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<sup>14</sup> J. H. Howman, minister of defence, National Servicemen: Pay and Allowances, 2 May 1973; Minister of Finance, Report of the committee set up to examine the question of make-up pay for territorials, 8 August 1973, CL/Smith/26; Paul French, *Shadows of a Forgotten Past: To the Edge with the Rhodesian SAS and Selous Scouts* (Solihull, Helion, 2012), 58; Army Counter Intelligence, Morale throughout the Territorial Army, 1 June 1977, typescript, RAA 2001/086/263/997. Occupations requiring apprenticeships were especially hard hit, see Hancock and Godwin, ‘*Rhodesians Never Die*,’ 159-60.

<sup>15</sup> J. H. Howman, National Service: Equal Pay for Coloured, Asian and Eur-Asian (CAE) members of the territorial forces and the reserves, 5 December 1973, CL/Smith/26; Brig. A. B. Campling to 3 Protection Company, Mt Darwin, 20 May 1977, RAA 2001/086/263/997.

class officers.” in the Rhodesian army.<sup>16</sup>

Whatever the military wanted, and whoever complained about it, did conscription work? Like much in the history of war, it depends on what you read. Many Rhodesian authors relished the notion of loyal and stoic conscripts: “For white Rhodesia, being male meant armed service without exception: from eighteen years old to sixty-five, everybody served in the army, or the police, or the police reserve...”<sup>17</sup> Historians and policy makers took the same sentiment and turned it into a strategic virtue. Arguing that there simply weren’t enough whites in Rhodesia to fight a war and run a country, the army was “mainly the white electorate in arms” and the resulting demographic constraints meant that the war was fought with special forces, small, elite, regular and often bi-racial units that gathered the intelligence on which counter-insurgency was based.<sup>18</sup> Many of those units, however, included turned guerrillas, men whose new loyalties were to each other, in a classic “a band of brothers...” a story of families rather than one of a white-ruled nation claiming its own independence.<sup>19</sup> Other authors, especially those opposed to white rule in southern Africa, insisted that the war was unpopular among whites, produced statistics to show how many white males did not serve, that half the eligible 3,000 men evaded conscription in 1973, and 6,500 evaded it in 1976.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> D. T. Hosking, AS Morale –top secret, typescript, 7 September 1977, RAA 2001/086/263/997; Advancement of Africans in the Defence Forces, Cabinet Minutes, 25 May 1976, CL/Smith/37.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Thrush, *Of Land and Spirits* (Guernsey, Transition Publishing, 1997), 242. A deserter echoed this in 1979: arriving in England the first things that struck him was “the lack of army trucks and people in camo.” Anonymous, letter to the editor, *Zimbabwe Democrat* 2, 1 (January 1979), 6, Terence Ranger papers, Rhodes House, Oxford.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis H. Gann, “From Ox Wagon to Armored Car in Rhodesia,” *Military Review* 48, 4 (1968), 63-72; Bruce Hoffman, Jennifer M. Tauw, and David Arnold, *Lessons for Contemporary Counter-insurgencies: Lessons from Rhodesia* (Santa Monica, RAND, 1991), 47.

<sup>19</sup> Reid-Daly, *Selous Scouts*, pp. 176-79. FIX THIS

<sup>20</sup> ‘*Rhodesians Never Die*’, 113-14, 136, 160; *Fire Force Exposed*, 7-8.

Whether exaggerated or not, these figures suggest an inflexible binary in which young men either do the state's bidding or resist it. This is not only too simple, it is troubled by the extent that some branches of the service opposed the call up altogether. The police did not think army reservists could be good policemen, for example, and the air force rejected reservists for anything other than guarding their planes: its work was too specialized for anyone to do occasionally.<sup>21</sup> By 1977, however, conscription was a nightmare to administer. Branches of the service were at least as worried about the size of the call up as they were about the number of draft dodgers. The police did not have enough transport, weapons, ammunition or radios for half the number of men they could call up at any one time. Any "increase in call-up levels would therefore be quite meaningless and serve no useful purpose." The number of protection companies increased faster than there were officers available to command them, and the guard force did not have enough staff to administer a call up every thirty days.<sup>22</sup> A common complaint was that more time was spent administering the call up than fighting the war.<sup>23</sup> National servicemen were horrified by the inefficiency of a war fought with a reserve army. One was "filled with dread" at "actually having to serve in a demoralized, half-baked territorial

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<sup>21</sup> Interim debriefing, Joint Planning Staff, Operation Hurricane, 12 February 1974, RAA 2001/086/222/147; Joint Operating Command [hereafter JOC] Minutes, 6 April 1978, RAA 2001/086/007/082. A former RAF pilot, now a professor of law at the University College of Rhodesia, told Jan Morris he loved spending one week in four pilot younger troopies to remote areas. It was a "renewal of youth for him." Jan Morris, *Destinations. Essays from Rolling Stone* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1982 [1980]), 127-28.

<sup>22</sup> Major Mike Williams as told to Robin Moore, *Major Mike* (New York, Ace, 1981 [1978]), 16; British South Africa Police, HQ, Salisbury, to Comops, Utilization of Manpower, 22 August 1977; Guard Force HQ, Salisbury to Comops HQ, Re: Sixty Days In-Thirty Days Out Call Up, 23 August 1977, RAA 2001/086/147/927.

<sup>23</sup> Operations Co-ordinating Committee [hereafter OCC] Minutes, 7 September 1977, RAA Papers, 2001/086/233/245.

outfit.”<sup>24</sup> Reservists did not like it either. A man on patrol with Dan Wylie complained that he had often had to re-write orders. “No sanity. No pragmatism. But is it really surprising? We’re part-timers. Chemists. Editors. Musicians. We have to make this transition, become aggressive, tactical.... How can we cope with that?”<sup>25</sup>

### Family stories

Perhaps the most intense struggle over the fate of young men took place in their families where the homilies about citizenship and obligation were coupled with anger and disappointment, at sons and at the regime. If Rhodesians were ambivalent about conscription they were equally ambivalent about evading it. As is fairly common in war memoirs, many young men could not fully articulate their reasons for volunteering.<sup>26</sup> When young Rhodesian men recalled their being called up, however, their writings took a very specific form. Conscription seemed to be an issue of family membership rather than one of national membership, although that family membership constituted a notion of the rights and obligations of citizenship. Parents expected their sons to do their national service; the consequences of draft dodging were grave, and they were articulated in the home. Graham Doke was a national serviceman who later wrote a novel in which the protagonist had been accepted to Oxford before he got his call-up papers. He desperately wanted to go, but it was too late to postpone his admission. His father was adamant that he stay and fight. “You’ll never be able to come

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<sup>24</sup> Chris Cocks, *Survival Course* (Weltrevreden Park, Covos-Day, 1999), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Dan Wylie, *Dead Leaves: Two Years in the Rhodesia War* (Scottsville, University of Natal Press, 2000), 128.

<sup>26</sup> Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers’ Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York, Penguin, 1998), 45-51; Charlie Warren, *Stick Leader RLI* (Durban, Just Done Productions, 2007), 1-2; Stu Taylor, *Lost in Africa* (Johannesburg, 30 Degrees South, 2007), 16-19; Jake Harper-Ronald as told to Greg Budd, *Sunday, Bloody Sunday: A Soldier’s War in Northern Ireland, Rhodesia, Mozambique and Iraq* (Alberton, Galago, 2009), 23.

back, you know. You've got your call up papers -- you can't go now." This was a "recurring theme for everyone," Doke noted, although his father added that national service was "what a man should do."<sup>27</sup> Progressive families were no less adamant that their sons to do their national service. Peter Godwin wanted to leave the country when he was drafted, but his father lectured him on how "dishonorable" that would be. "The way I see it, Pete," his father said, "we've been kept safe all these years by other peoples' sons, yet when it comes our turn you're a scarper. It's not really on, is it?" Godwin's father explained that the war was neither about patriotism nor a Rhodesian way of life: it was about strategy. If his son were to serve, he'd "only be holding the line while the politicians negotiate. We have to keep the war under control why they hammer out a settlement. We can't let the future of the country be dictated on the battlefield." Godwin's mother took another, more inclusive, line: "You'll be serving for blacks as well as for whites, just keeping people safe," she said. Besides, "it'll stand you good in later life."<sup>28</sup> Chris Cocks planned to leave the country when he was called up. He didn't really believe in the Rhodesian cause, either: his parents voted against the Rhodesian Front and he had gone to a multi-racial private school and had African friends. He had organized the necessary visas to leave the country, but when he said goodbye to his sisters, they were shocked—"not so much for national honor but for the shame it would bring to our parents" and so through "pleading, cajoling and sound 'common sense'" they persuaded him to stay. Or, as he put it years later, "I got cold feet, succumbing to a fear of the system and my parents more than anything else." Cocks fought for Rhodesia, but he never got over his doubts, "and I was certainly no patriot."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Graham Doke, *First Born* (Cape Town, Book, 2000), 75; Conrad K, *In the Shadow of the Tokolosh* (Chelmsford, Silverling Inspired Publishing, 2010), 200.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Godwin, *Mukiwa. A White Boy in Africa* (London, Macmillan, 1996), 208; Doke, *First Born*, 75.

<sup>29</sup> Cocks, *Fireforce*, 7; Chris Cocks, *Survival Course* (Weltevreden Park, Covos Day, 1999), 54.

When sons did emigrate, fathers took it personally. In one wartime novel, the son of a Rhodesian bureaucrat – a district commissioner – has emigrated to the peaceful suburbia of Connecticut, where “where the last dangerous Redskin had been attended to a hundred years ago.” He had “turned his back on the country that bred him, to lead a normal life and rear his family in a less troubled environment. ‘And who can blame him?’” his father asks himself, knowing that his son’s departure “was a personal hurt, a rejection to all he had worked for and believed in. If young men weren’t prepared to fight when things got tough, then it was a pretty poor look-out for the world...”<sup>30</sup> Non-fictional parents -- or at least the non-fictional parents who complained to about their sons’ service assignment -- weren’t quite so judicious, nor did they all think that national service was simply about protecting other families. Neil Jackson’s father was delighted when his son was called up, hoping the RLI would teach him discipline and cleanliness. Stu Taylor’s parents wanted him to enlist in the BSAP or the SAS, “socially stable” units with fewer misfits than the RLI in which he enlisted.<sup>31</sup> Other parents wanted their sons in glamorous regiments, misfits and all. In 1979 parents of sons called up in the most recent intake complained that their sons were sent to the guard force. The minister of manpower said he would look into it, but promised that these young men “would not be taking a ‘back seat’ in the war and that their role would be active, important, responsible and open to initiative as their counterparts in the SAS or RLI.”<sup>32</sup>

National service was not enforced. It was not illegal to ignore a call-up notice nor was there the will or the manpower to track down men who did not report for duty.<sup>33</sup> Less than one

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<sup>30</sup> C. E. Dibb, *Spotted Soldiers* (Salisbury, Leo Publications, 1978), 51-52.

<sup>31</sup> Jackson was immediately seconded to his unit’s rugby team. Binda, *Rhodesia Regiment*, 220; Taylor, *Lost*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> JOC Minutes, 18 January 1979; RAA 2001/086/004/895. Special Air Services and Rhodesian Light Infantry were two of Rhodesia’s three all-white units.

<sup>33</sup> Compos HQ, Salisbury, Exemptions, 15 December 1978, RAA 2001/086/017/919.

hundred Jehovah's Witnesses were prosecuted for failing to register between 1968 and 1975, but they were fined, not put to other work.<sup>34</sup> Young men thought it "unthinkable" to become a conscientious objector, but many left country. Of these, many went to South Africa and at least as many went to the UK, where they could get asylum or a place at university after a lengthy process. There was an occasional draft resisters' newsletter published in London in the late 1970s, *The Zimbabwe Democrat*.<sup>35</sup> By 1979 men went absent without leave from the elite regiments of the SAS or Selous Scouts, and from all ranks of the RAR.<sup>36</sup>

Familial articulations of citizenship did not seem to extend beyond the period of the call up, however. Cocks was flattered by the camaraderie the regulars offered him; he enlisted -- "perversely" he later wrote -- for another three years rather than serve the additional six months now required of conscripts. His parents "were utterly mortified that I had forsaken a university degree for the doubtful privilege of another two years in the army." It was his "dubious mates" who had talked him into joining a commando battalion. Such an interest in such service, they insisted, was "a transitory fad."<sup>37</sup> Godwin, on the other hand, had no interest in extended service, either for the state or to shock his parents. He was devastated when his national service commitment was increased by six months: he had been accepted to Cambridge for the coming year only; if he could not come, he would have to reapply. He secured his demobilization by signing a document that promised he would go back into the security forces

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<sup>34</sup> J. R. Howman, minister of defence, Military Service: Jehovah's Witnesses, 18 May 1971, cabinet memoranda, CL/Smith/25. Proposals that Jehovah's Witnesses be put to work in the tobacco industry were dismissed because smoking was against their religion, but this turned out not to be true. D. W. Lardner-Burke, minister of law and order, Jehovah's Witnesses, 3 May 1974; cabinet memoranda, CL/Smith/27.

<sup>35</sup> Author's field notes, Harare, 29 July 1995; Anthony Trethowan, *Delta Scout: Ground Coverage Operator* (Johannesburg, 30 Degrees South, 2008), 35;

<sup>36</sup> Caute, *Under the Skin*, 363; author's field notes, Durban, 21 August 2006..

<sup>37</sup> Cocks, *Fireforce*, 110-12, *Survival Course*, 54; see also Taylor, *Lost*, 47, 50-51.



“whenever, and as soon as, I returned... They were that desperate for manpower.” Godwin was called up when he returned a year later for his sister’s funeral. She had been killed when she and her fiancé drove into a Rhodesian army ambush, so Godwin was especially furious: “I was particularly disinclined to return to uniform under the circumstances.”<sup>38</sup> For parents, and for a few sons, conscription was fine. It defined a national loyalty that was socially and legally limited; it mapped a space in which families did some of the work of states, briefly, and it put limits on the bonds of soldiering that might have an allure for young men. The professional soldier, the volunteers, the unorthodox regiments -- even when they were not bi-racial -- were in practice less appealing to Rhodesian families in need of protection. Rhodesians who belonged to the nation whether or not they believed in its project would fight for it as required, after which they would -- as Cocks’, Godwin’s and Doke’s parents planned -- send their sons abroad for university.

Conscription may be a legal relationship between citizens and states, but its practice was in part shaped by relations between conscripts and regular soldiers. Young conscripts, particularly those in the Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI) -- the all-white regiment of Cocks, Shaw, Taylor and Warren -- recalled their exclusion by regular soldiers.<sup>39</sup> Regular soldiers in almost all branches of the security forces complained bitterly of the preferential treatment given to the young men who were released early so they could begin their studies at university.<sup>40</sup> Men in elite regiments complained about how much time was lost on the drill national servicemen required. In Angus Shaw’s novel *Peter Walls*, the non-fictional commander in chief of the Rhodesian army, addressed a group of RLI national servicemen. “The general wanted us to know it was a fallacy that the regulars sneered at conscripts like us. To prove it, he adopted an

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<sup>38</sup> Godwin, *Mukiwa*, 261-62.

<sup>39</sup> See also Binda, *The Saints*, 187.

<sup>40</sup> Army Counter-Intelligence, *Morale throughout the Rhodesian Army*, 1 June 1977, typescript, RAA 2001/086/263/997.

air of confidentiality and began telling us about the latest intelligence reports.... He was letting us in on something big...he trusted us, he valued us.... we weren't just cannon fodder..."<sup>41</sup>

The call ups of older men made the obligations of citizenship and resistance thereto less familial and more economic. In mid-1978, for example, 85% of men in the 38-49 age group registered, but only 25% of retired regulars – a small group to begin with -- who were over fifty did so.<sup>42</sup> Men over forty, David Caute wrote, had very little morale and short tempers. They complained about having to bring their own torches and batteries; those who used their own vehicles while on duty were furious that they were not reimbursed for petrol. Rhodesia's attempts to increase what it demanded of its citizens, in terms of age and time served, miscarried badly: businessmen left their offices only to be given menial tasks in the lower ranks of the armed forces, and the sheer number of older men called up caused many people to believe the war was already lost.<sup>43</sup> The idea that the state's claim on adult males should have limits, and those limits, as Godwin's family firmly believed, could and should be set by personal considerations. When a demobilized Chris Cocks was called up for service in the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit (PATU) his wife complained; he'd "done enough fighting for this bloody country." And indeed, as a PATU stick leader, Cocks soon learned that while "on paper" each stick should have six to eight members, in practice it was five at the most: some were away, or

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<sup>41</sup> Dennis Croukamp, *Only My Friends Call Me 'Crouks'* (Cape Town, Pseudo Publishing, 2006), 172-76; Angus Shaw, *Kandaya: Another Time, Another Place* (Harare, Baobab Books, 1993), 3-4.

<sup>42</sup> National Joint Operating Command [JOC] Minutes, 28 June 1978, RAA 2001/086/015/892; Secretary for Law and Order to National Manpower Board, Usage of 50-60 Age Group, 9 March 1979, RAA 2001/086/147/927.

<sup>43</sup> Caute, *Under the Skin*, 362-63; *Fireforce Exposed*, 7-9; Thrush, *Land and Spirits*, 242, 286-87.

sick, or “just plain didn’t feel like it.”<sup>44</sup>

### **National service and national bureaucracies**

How do we explain this? That national service was anything but national and that the obligations of citizenship were an extension of the nagging and moral authority of the family and the ability of older men to control, and contain, their sons at a specific moment? The Rhodesian army might not have put it quite this way, but they were aware of the tension; they repeated a saying among young men, “we don’t mind dying for Rhodesia, but not for the RF.”<sup>45</sup> The full persuasive authority of fathers was applied to the army and manpower boards as men tried to get their sons exemptions from national service, or to arrange a call up so a young man can get into one of “the four crack regiments” of the army, or barring that, find him a desk job.<sup>46</sup> Not only did everyone lobby on behalf of sons and nephews, but the ministries of manpower and defense took these entreaties very seriously. The question of how to call up farmers, and what to do with farmers’ families when they were away from their homes was never fully resolved. Men who were the sole proprietors of businesses were the subject of much debate; it was only in 1977 that they were required to do short periods of duty in the police reserve.<sup>47</sup> Admission to university, particularly those in South Africa or England, bedeviled Rhodesian

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<sup>44</sup> Chris Cocks, *Survival Course*, 11, 13. PATU training usually consisted of a day’s lectures on how to handle road blocks, shooting and some target practice, see David Craven, *Mapolisa: Some Reminiscences of a Rhodesian Policeman* (Weltevreden Park, South Africa, Covos Day Books, 1998), 126-27.

<sup>45</sup> Commanders’ Secretariat, Operations Coordinating Committee [OCC] Minutes, 18 August 1976, RAA 2001/0086/241/159.

<sup>46</sup> Doke, *First Born*, pp. 5-6; B. H. Mussett, Joint Minister of Lands, Natural Resources, and Rural Development to Secretary for Defence, 27 January 1979; RAA 2001/086/147/927.

<sup>47</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> draft, Statement by the Min of Combined Operations, 24 May 1977, Manpower Committee Minutes 29 April 1977 to 29 March 1978, RAA 2001/086/007/882.

manpower administrators. Some young men were released from national service to study abroad, others were not. When an angry father pointed out that young men going to universities in South Africa had to do six months more national service than those going to the University College of Rhodesia, the policy was changed. All students, wherever they were going to university, had to complete two years of national service before starting their studies, but students going to overseas universities could be released after twenty-one months so they could be there at the start of term.<sup>48</sup>

Personal situations received more sympathy than the rhetoric of massive white mobilization would suggest. Rob Wells, a garage owner, had evaded the draft until 1978. When he was called up he was advised to go into the police reserve as that would give him the most flexible schedule.<sup>49</sup> Thomas Bassett was twenty-five when he was called up. He replied that he had a wife, two children and a job in South Africa; the expense and inconvenience of national service would be too great for him to serve at this time, but he would like to do so at a later, more suitable time. If he did not return now, he asked, would he be blacklisted? Not at all, wrote Combined Operations: he showed his willingness to serve and that was what counted. The department of security manpower was outraged that the army had so casually released a man from his service obligations: as it stood, “we are told that there is a crying need for manpower in the services and that we are too lenient with our exceptions” and the young man should serve. Comops did not immediately call him up, however; they asked him to write directly to the department.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cate, *Under the Skin*, 136-37; H. W. Markham, Midlands, to Comops HQ, Salisbury, 19 August 1977; Comops HQ, Early Release of University Students, 30 September 1977, RAA 2001/086/147/927; Manpower Committee, Minutes, 25 October 1977, RAA 2001/086/007/882.

<sup>49</sup> Rob Wells, *The Part-Time War* (Cambridge, Fern House, 2011), 5.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas W. Bassett to Army HQ, Salisbury, 27 September 1978; Comops to Bassett, 27 October 1978; Dept of Security Manpower to Comops, 24 January 1979; Secretary, Comops to Bassett, 2 February 1979, RAA 2001/086/147/927.

This anecdote maps the fault line of Rhodesian conscription. Repeated conflict between the army and civilian authorities meant that conscription and continual call ups generated an uneven and often diffident expansion of state power. We have already seen that families did some of the work of conscription, but by 1978 the weakness of the state's coercive power was of great concern to security forces. The military complained about lax government bodies in charge of manpower and defence exemptions, both of which complained that the army was unable to use manpower efficiently. In finger pointing correspondence from December 1978, when both the army and the government understood that the April 1979 election would require an increase in manpower, Comops' frustration and disappointment with government agencies was obvious. In the last year, defence exemption boards had given exemptions and deferments to over 2,400 men without consulting the security forces. They gave into pressure from individuals or groups; anyone who could claim they provided an essential economic service was exempted. They did not send the police after men who did not report for duty. Comops recommended that both the defence exemption and national manpower boards be abolished so that the security forces could take sole responsibility for deferments and exemptions. Government should make it illegal to ignore a call up notice and that the military and BSAP be allowed to arrest non-reporters: unit commanders could issue arrest warrants. Immigrants should only be exempt from conscription for eighteen months; reserve banks should be charged with stopping external payments for those who left the country to evade their duty. The working hours in private business and government offices should be extended as well. The minister of manpower was outraged. The real problem was not the conflicting demands of the economy and security, but that the army did not make the best use of the manpower it had called up. It was his finding that security forces gave far more exemptions than the manpower board did. The army had already been offered at least a dozen manpower plans none of which had been utilized. What was needed was an investigation of army practices to understand why

manpower was used so badly, but of course that would require more manpower. The final compromise was that the manpower and defence exemptions boards needed a better appreciation of the needs of security forces, which they were to obtain by including retired military officers on each board.<sup>51</sup>

### **National service and nationalism**

So who was willing to fight, or even register to fight, for the Rhodesian Front, for the idea of white privilege maintained against majority rule? Many Rhodesians believed that it was the new arrivals – recent immigrants who had benefitted from the assistance packages of the first years of UDI -- who would risk life and limb for the privileges Rhodesia offered. Rhodesian-born Angus Shaw was scathing: the men who had exchanged council housing in the East End of London for a house in the sun with servants were willing to pay the price, even if it meant “burning down the odd village” when they were called up. This was a wartime version of ideas that circulated in the country well before UDI in which new immigrants were worthy of contempt. After UDI those immigrants who had received the assistance packages of the late 1960s were considered too quick to become racist or too complacent about

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<sup>51</sup> Comops Headquarters, Salisbury, Manpower, 7 December 1978; Exemptions, 15 December 1978, RAA 2001/086/017/919.

racist policies because they themselves were now prospering.<sup>52</sup> It was also an overstatement. An annual average of over 13,000 people left their servants and moved to Britain or Australia or South Africa beginning in 1973.<sup>53</sup> These were the people, Rhodesian politicians across the political spectrum complained, who did not put down roots: they came for the servants and swimming pools and left when they had to defend them, because, as van der Byl intoned, “they are tired of being called up, or because of the inconvenience and indeed the danger of living in Rhodesia during her present time of trouble.”<sup>54</sup>

Outside the country, the issue of new immigrants was eclipsed by that of foreign soldiers. These men were, according to most writings on the war, professional soldiers from Great Britain and large numbers of Vietnam veterans from the US, Australia and New Zealand and few ex-legionnaires from continental Europe who came to fight for Rhodesia. Some came because they wanted adventure; others found it the best career option available to them.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Shaw, *Kandaya*, 26. He was repeating the conventional wisdom of social science and journalists. One study found that after five years new immigrants were as opposed to social contact between Africans as Europeans as were Rhodesians had lived there thirty years. Charles Frantz and Cyril A. Rogers, “Length of Residence and Race Attitudes in Southern Rhodesia,” *Race* 3 (1962), 46-54. In 1963 a journalist claimed that the Rhodesian electorate included people who would have voted Labour at home, but were now “the miners in their Jaguars, the thousands of households where cheap black labour makes living so easy, the take-home pay thirty to fifty per cent higher than Britain.” Patrick Keatley, *The Politics of Partnership* (Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1963), 226, 328.

<sup>53</sup> Brownell, *Collapse*, 75-79.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Paul A. Moorcraft, *A Short Thousand Years: The End of Rhodesia's Rebellion* (Salisbury, Galaxie, 1980), 3; Hills, *Rebel People*, 204-5.

<sup>55</sup> J. R. T. Wood, *The War Diaries of Andre Dennison* (Gibraltar, Ashanti Publishing, 1989), 4-5; Peter McAleese, *No Mean Soldier. The Story of the Ultimate Professional Soldier in the SAS and Other Forces* (London, Cassell, 2000 [1993]), 76.

Jake Harper-Ronald, SAS, thought foreign soldiers “had come along for the ride.” Some clearly did: Angus Shaw thought otherwise. If these men “went around looking for other peoples’ nasty little wars to fight in” they were the same as mercenaries: “it wasn’t their war...”<sup>56</sup>

Whose war was it? The actual number of foreign soldiers is almost impossible to ascertain, since almost everyone who provided one had a reason to distort it. Most sources claim there were 1,500 foreign soldiers, of whom perhaps 400 were American; the Rhodesian army thought there were perhaps 1000 foreign soldiers, of whom 100 were American.<sup>57</sup> Even within the disputed figures, there was little attempt to distinguish who what foreign actually meant: it is not clear if the figure of 1,500 includes South African nationals resident in Rhodesia. Nor was there any concerted effort to distinguish who was foreign and who was mercenary, a term used most often for political effect. The British press, progressive and not so progressive, loved the idea of Rhodesia’s mercenary force. The *Sunday Times* claimed that 40 per cent of Rhodesian Army regulars were foreign-born, a figure that seems perfectly accurate, if meaningless, given that more than 40 per cent of white Rhodesian males had been born in another country.<sup>58</sup> The Rhodesian Army -- which had every reason to dissemble -- seemed baffled that anyone would accuse it of using mercenaries, and made light of news reports about recruiting mercenaries, but it rejected any idea that might look mercenary as well. In 1976 Operations Coordinating Committee rejected Portugal’s offer to send them 200 white soldiers who had fought in Angola. Another one hundred white Portuguese were in South Africa, but

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<sup>56</sup> Harper-Ronald, *Bloody Sunday*, 82; Shaw, *Kandaya*, 182.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Lobban, “American Mercenaries in Rhodesia, *Journal of Southern African Affairs* 3 (1978), 319-25; Operations Coordinating Committee, Minutes, 30 August 1977, 7 September 1977, RAA 2001/086/233/1245.

<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Bloch, Britain’s Contribution to Rhodesia’s War Effort, typescript London 29 August 1979, NAZ/IDAF/MS 589/9.



would be willing to fight for Rhodesia if Rhodesia could pay their passage.<sup>59</sup> A month later Col. Mike Hoare, who had raised Moise Tshombe's mercenary force in Katanga fifteen years before, proposed an international brigade that would counter Russians or Cubans invading Rhodesia. This would be the Rhodesian Foreign Legion that would have a "mystique similar to that of the French Foreign Legion," and would be multi-racial, recruited from Europe and Africa (but not Rhodesia or South Africa), have French as its official language and "be motivated by a genuine anti-Communist conviction." They would have to be single men, paid in Rhodesian currency, who could be granted Rhodesian citizenship after a year's service. Hoare had worked out the two phases of recruitment and had ideas about the color of the uniforms. The army's joint planning staff all but laughed: any international brigade would be called a 'mercenary force' and this one sounded expensive and ineffective.<sup>60</sup> Commanders were slightly more gracious to the exiled King Zog of Albania. As Prince Lekka he had been to Sandhurst with several Rhodesian officers, all of whom declined his offer of 500 men who would come and fight for Rhodesia while being trained as an expeditionary force to liberate his kingdom.<sup>61</sup>

With the exception of a group of French paratroopers who formed the incompetent 7<sup>th</sup> Company of the Rhodesia Regiment, most foreign soldiers came as individuals. Most learned of opportunities in Rhodesia through ads in military magazines or recruitment meetings.<sup>62</sup> All foreign (as opposed to foreign born) soldiers fought under decidedly un-mercenary conditions: they were, at the military's insistence, paid and taxed at local rates, in Rhodesian currency,

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<sup>59</sup> Commander's Secretariat, Operations Coordinating Committee, 12 and 25 March 1976, RAA 2001/086/241/159.

<sup>60</sup> International Brigade, Joint Planning Staff, Ministry of Defence, Salisbury, 13 April 1976, RAA 2001/086/227/122

<sup>61</sup> Minutes, OCC, 16 September 1977, RAA 2001/086/223/248; author's field notes, Pretoria, 22 May 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Caute, *Under the Skin*, 107, 137-40; Wood, *Andre Dennison*, 5; McAleese, *Soldier*, 76-77.

which were substantially higher for enlisted men than conscript soldiers.<sup>63</sup> Foreign soldiers in the RLI and the SAS complained bitterly about the way they were treated; European nationals in the SAS deserted in large numbers, usually leaving the country.<sup>64</sup> In Rhodesia, talk of foreign soldiers seemed to be a way to talk about Rhodesians and the difference between Rhodesians and foreigners, or at least Britons. Citizenship did not itself make good soldiers but belonging to the country – a sense of place, of history -- did. Jake Harper-Ronald joined the SAS after returning to Rhodesia after years in Britain's parachute regiment. His new commanding officer was certain he could learn new tactics and techniques "without any problems as he knew I was Rhodesian born."<sup>65</sup> David Lemon, a British-born BSAP, had been in Rhodesia nine years when his superintendent called him "lily-livered.... When you've been here for five years, Sonny – if you last that long – your views will change."<sup>66</sup>

Some foreign soldiers just happened to pitch up in Rhodesia in wartime. Timothy Bax was a British subject. He was born in Tanganyika; he grew up there and in Canada. He took a job in South Africa after finishing school. In 1970 he drove to Rhodesia for a holiday; he had car trouble but could not afford the repairs. Drinking in a bar with RLI he asked if anyone knew of a job he could get on a tourist visa. An RLI called the recruiting officer over: he could easily arrange a permanent residence permit if he was willing to join "a fighting man's army."<sup>68</sup> Others had stories that recalled the depth and breadth of the British empire. A few were lined to

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<sup>63</sup> Joint Planning Staff, Ministry of Defence, International Brigade, 12 April 1976, RAA 2001/086/227/122; Cocks, *Fireforce*, 87-88; Cauter, *Under the Skin*, 107; Barry Cohen, "The War in Rhodesia: A Dissenter's View, *African Affairs* 76 (1977), 492-93.

<sup>64</sup> Army Counterintelligence, Morale survey conducted with RLI 19 July 1977, RAA 2001/086/263/997; McAleese, *No Mean Soldier*, 158; French, *Forgotten Past*, 37-38. The SAS hierarchy was mortified: "in no other SAS unit in the world did soldiers desert...in such numbers."

<sup>65</sup> Harper-Ronald, *Bloody Sunday*, 81.

<sup>66</sup> David Lemon, *Never Quite a Soldier*, 67.

Rhodesia, as was the great grandson of Lord Salisbury, for whom Rhodesia's capital was named. He came because he was frustrated with his frustration at British counter-insurgency in Ulster where he was an officer in the Grenadier Guards. In Rhodesia he wrote for the *Daily Telegraph* and went on patrol with the RLI.<sup>67</sup> Nowhere were family bonds were richer and more racially entangled than in fiction. In Richard Gledhill's novel about the RLI the hero, like the author, was born in Kenya and arrived in Rhodesia via England and Australia. The novel begins with the hero-as-a-child hiding in the attic while a Mau Mau gang, led by the house servant, raped his mother and killed his father. As the novel progresses, the hero's learns that the ZANLA he is hunting is the grandson of a man who, years before, worked in Kenya and married a local woman; he fathered a son who grew up to become the very house servant who led the attack on the hero's parents. These two soldiers, black and white, are locked in a struggle that is as familial as it is transnational. Why did Gledhill's hero join the RLI, someone asks. Regimental or national loyalty, let alone a sense of place, had nothing to do with it. "My parents were killed by Mau Mau when I was a kid. It has nothing to do with politics. It's a personal thing."<sup>68</sup>

But if fighting for Rhodesia was such a personal thing, how could it serve a nation, even a renegade one that was not fully served by its citizens' belief in national service? How do we understand the will to go to war if young men were not willing to die for their country but were willing to delay going to Oxford to serve the nation? How do we understand parents insisting their sons report for national service because it was a way to manage defeat, not to

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<sup>67</sup> Caute, *Under the Skin*, 49-52; Wood, *Andre Dennison*, 3-5; *Fireforce Exposed*, 28; Reid-Daly, *Selous Scouts*, *passim*; Cocks, *Fireforce*, 86-87; Wessels, *PK*, 239.

<sup>68</sup> Tim Bax, *Three Sips of Gin: Dominating the Battlespace with Rhodesia's Elite Selous Scouts* (Solihull, Helion, 2012), 105-13

<sup>68</sup> Gledhill, *One Commando*, 1-16, 38, 58-59, 73.

ensure victory?<sup>69</sup> Rhodesians officials were well aware of their citizens' desire for limited participation in the war, but they were far more uneasy about the number of foreign soldiers – however small or large it was -- who fought for the cause. On the one hand, foreign soldiers proved that “kith and kin” was real, that the world was full of people who agreed with them, who could “feel more like a Rhodesian” than members of the countries they came from.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, it made being Rhodesia little more than a default nationality, thinking oneself Rhodesian because no other country fit the bill: the state that imagined its own independence now had soldiers who imagined themselves to be Rhodesian. Rhodesia's struggle against African nationalists – politely called the bush war in Rhodesia – encouraged some men to come who had no real interest in the country they defended. Robin Moore, an American novelist and the amanuensis of the Green Berets, arrived in Rhodesia in the early 1970s and often called himself the unofficial American ambassador. He founded an organization for US, the Crippled Eagles, so named because they were crippled by US government harassment. Some of the younger Americans were happy to explain why they came to the journalists Moore invited to for Sunday afternoons by the swimming pool in 1977. One told David Cauter that he had answered an ad in *Soldier of Fortune* because after Vietnam and Angola “we can't afford to lose any more countries.” Another cheerfully informed Christopher Hitchens that he didn't care “about the rich white guys and their farms and their dough. But I'm fighting for them because they're white, and the white man is running out all over.”<sup>71</sup> In a book published in 1977 specifically to inform the American public of the situation in Rhodesia and the importance of ending sanctions, Moore

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<sup>69</sup> I take this point from Michael Geyer, “Insurrectionary Warfare: The German Debate about *Levée en Masse* in October 1918,” *J. Modern History* 73, 3 (2001), 459-527.

<sup>70</sup> Robin Moore, *The White Tribe* (Publishers Encampment, WY, Affiliated Writers of America, 1991), 23, 187.

<sup>71</sup> Cauter, *Under the Skin*, 138. See also interview with David Crowley, Marine, Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, who claimed that many Americans were attracted by the romance of the Rhodesian army: they had a cavalry.

presented eight vignettes about individual Crippled Eagles. One man explained why he came to Rhodesia with a question about Angola, which seems to have had all the power for these young men that Sparta had for a generation of Rhodesian Front party hacks. Others said they came out of loyalty to “other Anglo-Saxons” or because they feared the direction the US was heading.<sup>72</sup>

These statements problematized the notion of nationality beyond all recognition, and they threw citizenship into high relief. What did it mean to be willing to die for Rhodesia while thinking about Angola? If one’s obligation to a nation could be based on white men white “running out,” or an almost laughable kith and kin in the “we” that mourned the loss of Vietnam, how meaningful could belonging be, and how important were the constitutional guarantees of citizenship? Foreign soldiers raise questions that are beyond citizenship, questions about what might link place and warfare: patria is not the issue, politics is. And the politics are queerly utopian: *somewhere* communism had to be stopped; *somewhere* men had to stand up against terrorism; *somewhere* the western world had to stand fast against the eastern hordes. All these tropes, of course, meant race: it was a black government that these men came to fight against. And race, as Benedict Anderson pointed out years ago, is decidedly un-national: the various terminologies used to disparage the guerrillas -- gooks, or terrorists, or CTs -- “*erases nation-ness*” from the enemy, who becomes a racial or political embodiment.<sup>73</sup> Rhodesia suggests that the opposite is also true, that fighting for all the tropes that meant white rule was also without any loyalty to a nation, without any historical specificity or any reference to place. Rhodesia just happened to be in the right place at the right time for these soldiers. For white national servicemen, whether citizen or resident in Rhodesia, the question of nation-ness was inverted.

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<sup>72</sup> Robin Moore, *Rhodesia* (New York, 1977), 201, 208, 217, 232.

<sup>73</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, Verso, 1983), 135; italics in the original.

However much Rhodesia was imagined as Thermopylae, however much independence was to give its transient white population a bogus place in history, the cause for which young men fought was most often depicted as intimate and familial; when it was not it was without reference to the continent or its history. The struggle over national service took place in the vocabularies of “other peoples’ sons,” of belonging, of community, of something separate from political histories or dying for the Rhodesian Front. And that belonging was even vaguer than Rhodesian puffery. In 1977 Jan Morris wrote an eerie observation of young Rhodesian soldiers on leave around the hotel pool where she took her lunch. “Stripped to their trunks and sun-bleached hair, they seem to have lost all ethnic identity. They might have been moon men.” She guessed some were mercenaries from Europe but all of them were “subtly changed in posture and physique; all seemed to me specific not simply to the place, but to the time, to the prospect.”<sup>74</sup>

What made Rhodesian conscripts so rooted in time and space was the same thing that made national service so contradictory for whites: Rhodesian was an African country ruled by

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<sup>74</sup> Morris, *Destinations*, 136. Morris could not hear them over the hubbub of the terrace, but she would not have been surprised “to hear them conversing in some unintelligible tongue, an ad hoc vernacular evolved especially for white Rhodesia, 1977.” She must have already known about Taal, the RLI slang that was originally Coloured slang – hence its Afrikaans elements – that became a patois that national servicemen were supposed to use. A regimental history of the RLI has a glossary with examples of how to use Taal in a variety of situations and sentences, from seeing a crocodile to wanting to have dinner, Bond, *Incredibles*, 151-53. There are several glossaries of taal, see Shaw, *Kandaya*, 206-9; Binda, *The Saints*, 124; Bax, *Three Sips*, 111. One war novel is written entirely in taal, see Paul Hotz, *Muzukuru. A Guerrilla’s Story* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1990), while in another the heroine comments on the way the war has changed language, Sylvia Bond-Smith, *Ginette* (Bulawayo, Black Eagle Press, 1980), 120-21. According to Stu Taylor, speaking in taal could keep a man out of the SAS however well he had done on the selection course. The SAS was wanted men “with a bit more finesse,” see *Lost*, 63-65.

its white minority. The rhetoric of responsible government, a way of life, of standards, of civilization, or even of a negotiated settlement meant, as Peter Godwin's mother had stressed, that young white conscripts fought for white and black alike. This was as national as conscription got, and it was the source of constant, and imaginative, tension. If familial rhetoric defined the nation as bi-racial, the mixing of races and the entangled, convoluted impossibilities thereof, were addressed in Rhodesian wartime novels. Several portrayed the war as a struggle within families where racial boundaries were already breached. All of these ended in death, but some not as horribly as others. In Michael Hartmann's *Game for Vultures*, a reservist has married a Coloured woman, much to the consternation of friends and family. On patrol with a "puffing quintet of businessmen," he is wounded by a guerrilla who turns out to be his brother-in-law. This drama is sandwiched between the larger plot, in which the reservists' sanction-busting brother double crosses ZAPU in its purchase of small aircraft, but before the newly purchased planes are destroyed by Rhodesian operatives the Coloured guerrilla escapes, breaks into the reservist's flat, kills his sister and is killed by the reservist himself.<sup>75</sup> William Rayner's *The Day of Chaminuka* begins with the death of a Rhodesian man who has lived in England for years; he had gone there as much to escape a domineering father as to evade the draft. The woman he lived with is bereft and goes to Rhodesia possibly to tell his father of his son's death or to confront him about how much he harmed him. Once on the family farm she learns that the father was not so terrible or ungenerous after all; he had supported his son in Britain for years. She finds herself attracted to the father but before anything can be consummated, or resolved, guerrillas break into the house and hold her and the farmer at gun point. The leader of the guerrilla gang is particularly enraged: years ago, his pregnant mother, a servant in that house, had been sent away by the master. The farmer is stunned. The servant was the love of his life. He did not know she was pregnant, and the master who sent

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Hartmann, *Game for Vultures* (London, Pan Books 1976 [1975]).

her away was his not him but his son: the guerrilla who holds a gun to his head is his son. The farmer is thrilled that he has a son and embraces the guerrilla who is horrified he got things so wrong. The farmer and his servant are reunited and with their son try to fight off guerrillas attacking the farm, but the farmer is shot and dies.<sup>76</sup>

### National service and African nationalism

The imaginary that produced the entanglements of these novels, even if no character lived long enough to resolve them, imagined Rhodesia's African volunteer regiment as a kind of parallel to all-white ones. The Rhodesian African Rifles (RAR) were not entirely black, however. It was what was called an *askari* regiment, in which black soldiers were commanded by white officers.<sup>77</sup> It was also far and away the most experienced infantry unit in the country, having done storied service in World War II and Malaysia.<sup>78</sup> 1RAR was the most effective fighting force in Rhodesia throughout the 1970s.<sup>79</sup> As white Rhodesians told it, however, the RAR was a regiment shaped by familial concerns. The "black Rhodesian army," one wrote, was "patriarchal in that a man will probably join the army to follow his father's footsteps; there's a lot of pride involved."<sup>80</sup> David Coute claimed RAR came from the same areas the hardcore

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<sup>76</sup> William Rayner, *The Day of Chaminuka* (New York, Atheneum, 1977 [1976]).

<sup>77</sup> This generated a variety of intimate jokes: a woman says her boyfriend is in the RAR. Is he an African, someone asks. No, she replies, but he has African privates. See Shaw, *Kandaya*, 90.

<sup>78</sup> Alexandre Binda, *Masodja. The History of the Rhodesian African Rifles and its forerunner the Rhodesia Native Regiment* (Johannesburg, 30 Degrees South, 2007), 64-81, 126-68; Timothy Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1913-80* (Rochester, University of Rochester Press, 2011), 183-97.

<sup>79</sup> Author's field notes, Harare, 2 August 2006; Stapleton, *Police and Soldiers*, 201.

<sup>80</sup> Cohen, "Dissenter's View," 484.



guerrillas came from.<sup>81</sup> Later, police superintendents claimed many RAR supported Mugabe's election because of pressure from their wives who wanted an end to the long war.<sup>82</sup>

The idea of national service for Africans had been the source of disheartened debates in the ministries of defense and manpower for years, but it was considered "fraught with danger." Increasing unemployment in 1977 increased the number of Africans enlisting in the RAR: "one should never refuse volunteers." There was not enough equipment for these new soldiers but African troops were a bargain for the army: 3,200 African soldiers cost as much as 640 white territorials, and fought at least as well.<sup>83</sup> By 1977 repeated call ups had led any number of civilian firms to employ only Africans or white women, and this added to general anxiety about white emigration: in a survey of army morale, one-third of those interviewed said they would leave the country when they had completed their national service.<sup>84</sup> Everyone agreed that in theory African university students and articled clerks and apprentices should be conscripted, and on the same basis that white young men served -- more than half the white male students at the university had completed their national service -- but almost everyone agreed it was impossible. The army took several positions on the conscription of African university students. It had assessed that twelve percent of students backed Nkomo and the rest Muzorerwa, and "if a package deal could be sold on the basis of a white plus Muzorewa fight against Nkomo/Mugabe" perhaps there would be "no major problems." Rhodesian officials disagreed. Local whites however might see this as the last gasp of Rhodesia and it would lower

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<sup>81</sup> Caute, *Under the Skin*, 190.

<sup>82</sup> Stapleton, *African Police and Soldiers*, 181. The superintendant claimed that Mugabe stood in the 1979 election, which he did not.

<sup>83</sup> Comops to Ministry of Defence, Case for Additional African Soldiers, 27 November 1977, RAA 2001/086/263/997.

<sup>84</sup> Army Counterintelligence, Morale throughout the Rhodesian Army, typescript., 1 June 1977, RAA 2001/086/263/997.

morale and increase emigration even further. African students – unlike Indian or Coloured ones – would react with outrage: “they were all nationalists to a man.”<sup>85</sup> Army intelligence officers admitted that any group of young, educated Africans would include the governments “most virulent enemies” who should not serve: there was the inevitable security problem of conscripting men sympathetic to guerrillas, and the more important possibility that they would undermine the morale of other African soldiers “whenever possible” by discrediting African officers and exaggerating “tribal differences.” Such men would “exaggerate each and every grievance.” Some army officers suggested that African conscripts, like white ones, could be reformed by special training and Spartan conditions, but most army officers refused to devote any specific funds for this as “it would be a great folly to risk the Army’s good race relations, high morale and fighting efficiency and the security of the country, for the sake of having to employ 560 unwilling malcontents who are most unlikely to make useful soldiers.”<sup>86</sup>

The internal settlement of 1978, and the election of a Muzorewa-headed government in 1979, brought these issues to a head. The gradual conscription of Africans – not university students – did not relieve whites from continual call-ups, however, as the army now considered it necessary to have access to the experience of older men (38-50) because “this leadership element is essential.”<sup>87</sup> Graham Atkins of the Rhodesia Regiment, the most integrated of national service regiments, was pleased that the army “had fully embraced non-racialism”

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<sup>85</sup> So were white students, apparently. In 1976 the BSAP was called to the university to look at graffiti: “Close this Ter camp;” “Let RLI loose, we’ll clean the country;” “Join the army, Mt. Pleasant Kaffir High School;” “We want control, let us loose, RLI.” BSAP liaised with special May 1976, RAA 2001/086/050/1001.

<sup>86</sup> Carbon of paper, labeled ‘secret’ Training of African University Aspirants and African Apprentices’ nd but filed with late 1977 papers. RAA 2001/086/263/997.

<sup>87</sup> OCC Minutes, 23 August 1977, RAA 2001/086/223/245; JOC Minutes, 6 April 1978, RAA 2001 branch to see if this was an attempt to discredit the RLI. Intelligence reports: casual sources, 27 May 1976, RAA 2001/086/007/882.

although Rhodesian civilian life lagged far behind. One Saturday afternoon he and some friends were out on a rare day pass. Dressed in jackets and ties, they came upon a wedding reception and wanted to join in, to drink and meet young women. The problem was Moses “our good humored comrade-in-arms” who was African. It would be impossible to sneak him into the wedding and while Moses was willing to wait outside, Atkins went to bar and returned with a silver tray and white napkin. “Your ticket in,” he told Moses. “Just do your best impersonation of a waiter, and you’ll blend in perfectly.” Moses did, but not without occasional jests from his comrades, “six beers. *Checha!* Quick.”<sup>88</sup>

Aside from turning national servicemen into domestic workers, there was the larger question of how young white men saw their still-extended national service for a government that had blacks at its head, even if it was a figurehead? Was fighting for an African government the within the domain of familial authority? Did fathers’ ability to control their sons make them willing to do what African families did not do? White soldiers, especially those ambivalent about the Rhodesian Front, had every reason to want Africans to serve alongside them, and in other regiments. Chris Cocks, for example, found the racial exclusivity of elite regiments laughable. The SAS did not admit black soldiers into its ranks, he wrote. “There were no black soldiers in the Long Range Desert Group, the forerunner of the SAS, during World War II. There had been no black soldiers in Malaya, so for what sane reason would anyone think it necessary to have

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<sup>88</sup> Atkins, *White Man*, 79-80. He was not alone. In the second version of his memoirs, Ron Reid-Daly recalled a visit from a South African general in his quarters. When Reid-Daly sent his major-domo for more ice, the general asked if he could “really trust these black soldiers of yours?” Reid-Daly was indignant: the man he sent for ice was a high ranking insurgent. “He is now my butler and he could off me at any time if he chose to do so. If I can trust him I can sure as hell trust my own soldiers.” Ron Reid-Daly, *Pamwe Chete: The Legend of the Selous Scouts* (Weltrevden Park, Covos-Day, 1998), 472.

black troops in an African SAS?”<sup>89</sup> After the internal settlement of 1978, national servicemen complained that they did not know what they were fighting for if there was going to be majority rule.<sup>90</sup> A fictional RLI, coming off patrol, went to his commanding officer and removed the strap that held his MAG. “If you’re going to give it to the kaffirs, get the kaffirs to carry this.”<sup>91</sup> The young Dan Wylie wrote in his diary, “A lot of guys are ratty about serving a black government, but in the last resort they’ll fight because they’re told to. Personally, I’m fighting for a way of life; if the government starts wrecking those standards, I’ll fight the government instead. Or go to Spain...”<sup>92</sup>

Rhodesia or Spain? Lead a rebellion or relax in a warm climate? There’s clearly not much patriotism here, and even less sense of loyalty to a specific place, but by then the place had changed its name to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. There were papers and reports about how to remake national service so as to involve both black and white. These reports contained dire warnings to an unspecified audience. “The white population will no longer accept the main burden. Any imbalance...will lead to further emigration of whites.” There was nothing left to do but call up Africans.<sup>93</sup> Questions of citizens and residents gave way to broad racial terminologies, and vocabularies of leadership and discipline were expressed in numbers and ratios. There were 2,300 whites available for national service and 470,000 Africans, but the new army could not have a ratio of 2,300 to 470,000, of course. The generals thought a ratio of

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<sup>89</sup> Cocks, *Survival Course*, 104.

<sup>90</sup> Consolidated report from the Main JOCs on the state of morale in the Rhodesian Army, 1 June 1977, RAA 2001/086/263/997.

<sup>91</sup> Shaw, *Kandaya*, 81-82.

<sup>92</sup> Wylie, *Dead Leaves*, 39.

<sup>93</sup> JOC Minutes, Movement of African Security Forces from African Areas to European Areas, 25 August 1978, RAA 2001/086/015/892; Comops Headquarters, The Future of National Service, mimeo., 26 March 1979, RAA 2001/086/147/927.

20:1 as “acceptable to whites.” That ratio, however, could not provide enough leadership or specialists, and so they recommended a “realistic ratio” of 15:1. This too was a fantasy and was never implemented. The older men who made up Comops instead wrote that they hoped that the Africans and whites currently doing national service would sign on as regulars, and that 5,000 Africans and whites might be called up for protection duties. The increase in manpower was not necessarily for the waning war effort, but another performance for a specific audience: it would have a “favourable effect” on the white population “who will be aware of the greater participation of Africans in NS.”<sup>94</sup> White citizenry were to become spectators.

Such an army never came into being because Zimbabwe-Rhodesia gave way to Zimbabwe in the election of late February 1980. Soldiers supporting Muzorewa, ill-disciplined as they were, came as close to being a loyalist army as the country had ever had. The Joint Operating Command had several plans ready to revise national service, of course, and to discontinue the call-ups which now seemed meaningless and expensive. They were surprised when the prime minister-elect, Robert Mugabe, insisted on keeping the call-up at least “until the outstanding dissident element had been rounded up.”<sup>95</sup> The suggestion that was to prove true was that the call up no longer about disciplining young men, but about disciplining a population.

The linear political narrative and the false starts around the inclusion of Africans before 1980 does not tell the entire story, which is one of the uneven expansion of state power and the frequency with which military and civilian authorities were at odds with each other. Much of my evidence for the conflict between them seems almost amusing – who allowed for more exemptions, who should be working longer hours, who had the wherewithal to arrest deserters -- but taken together, this evidence provides a window into the very real antagonism between

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<sup>94</sup> Comops HQ, Salisbury, The Future of National Service, mimeo. 26 March 1979, RAA 2001/086/147/927.

<sup>95</sup> JOC Minutes, 7 March 1980, 10 March 1980, 14 March 1980, RAA 2001/086/101/159.

the Rhodesian security forces and the Rhodesian Front government. As the following chapters show, that antagonism was never to be resolved, and would end in the security forces literally capturing the role of the state in early 1980.