

ESSAY REVIEW

THE THIN WHITE LINE: RHODESIA'S ARMED FORCES SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

FOR SO YOUNG a country Rhodesia has a rich military heritage. Settler rule was forged in war, and in the country's eighty-eight year history Rhodesian armed forces have been involved in internal security operations or external conflicts during forty-seven of those years.

White Rhodesians are proud of their early military history, especially of the 1890s, but the myth of the Second World War looms more immediately in their consciousness, particularly at a time when their country is once more in a war situation. Many look back nostalgically to a time when the Colony and the 'Home Country' fought side by side. It was an era for Southern Rhodesia in which 'England's wars were her wars'; the transformation of this relationship over the past two decades has drawn the resentment of White Rhodesians who fought in either British units or colonial forces.¹ The re-publication of *The War History of Southern Rhodesia 1939-1945*² shows how much has changed in that Imperial connection; and how little has changed in Rhodesia since the Second World War.

The genealogy of the present Rhodesian armed forces can be traced back to the 1890s, but it was during the Second World War and its aftermath that the foundations of the modern army and air force were established. Before then, apart from periods of national emergency such as the Boer War and the Great War, the British South Africa Police, with its paramilitary structure, was the country's standing defence force, and to this day the police force remains the 'senior service'.³

The Colony of Southern Rhodesia was a minute part of the British Empire and Commonwealth in 1939, but it quickly threw its meagre resources into the war as a natural ally of the United Kingdom. It is often repeated in Rhodesia that the Colony made one of the largest, if not the

¹ Britain's 'debt' to Rhodesia is a constant theme of white political perceptions; see, for example, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 3rd Apr. 1976.

² J. F. MacDonald, *The War History of Southern Rhodesia 1939-1945* ([Salisbury] by authority of the Government, 2 vols, 1947-50; facsimile reprint, Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, Rhodesiana Reprint Library, Silver Series, Vols. 10 and 11, 1976), xiv, 353pp., Rh\$14.65; 318, xxx pp., Rh\$15.75.

³ For the evolution of the Rhodesian armed forces see L. H. Gann 'The development of Southern Rhodesia's military system, 1890-1953', in National Archives of Rhodesia, *Occasional Papers No. 1* (Salisbury, Govt Printer, 1965), 60-79; 'Rhodesia and the prophets', *African Affairs* (1972), LXXI, 125-143; R. S. Roberts, 'Towards a history of Rhodesia's armed forces', *Rhodesian History* (1974), V, 103-10; K. Maxey, *The Fight for Zimbabwe* (London, Rex Collings, 1975). For the British South Africa Police see P. Gibbs, *The History of the B.S.A.P.: Vol. 1 1889-1903; Vol. 2 1903-1939* (Salisbury, Kingstons for B.S.A.P., 1972-4); R. Hamley, *The Regiment: An Outline of the History and Uniforms of the British South Africa Police* (Cape Town, Bulpin, 1971).

largest, manpower contributions of any Commonwealth country, and this assertion forms a significant part of the country's modern folklore.⁴

There is, however, a little sleight-of-hand involved in this claim, a by-product of the curious White Rhodesian tendency to visualize 'Rhodesians' as White, with Africans having some indeterminate status in national self-images. The White manpower contribution was 15 per cent of its population, ten thousand of sixty-seven thousand Whites serving in the forces. Of the total African population some 1.2 per cent served in various units. The overall contribution of the Colony's manpower was only about 2 per cent of the total population. The high White contribution is possibly attributable more to the nature of the Southern Rhodesian economy (i.e. predominantly agricultural and extractive), from which it was easier to withdraw manpower, than, say, the industrial economy of Britain,⁵ than to overwhelming patriotism. This is not to belittle the Colony's efforts, which were indeed prodigious for so small a territory, but to put them into a broader perspective than that of narrow White nationalist perceptions.

The Colony's servicemen served in a broad spectrum of British, colonial and national units. In manpower allocation the small colony faced a cruel dilemma. Experience of the Great War had shown that entire battalions could be annihilated in single actions, which argued against the creation of homogeneous Southern Rhodesian units for which military disaster would mean a national catastrophe for the small population. However, the pride and nascent nationalism of the self-governing colony were at issue as well, and a balance of homogeneous Southern Rhodesian units and dispersion to other British and Imperial units was struck.⁶ As the war progressed and fears of a Rhodesian Passchendaele receded there was some consolidation of manpower to Southern Rhodesian formations.⁷

Servicemen from the Colony fought in all services, arms of services and all theatres of the war, and MacDonald often wanders, almost inevitably, into a general history of the war in an effort to keep track of them. The bulk of Southern Rhodesian units served in the 'underbelly' theatre of East Africa, the Western Desert and Italy. The other major theatres were South-East Asia and the skies of Western Europe. The Rhodesia Regiment, the non-regular unit which had served abroad in the Great War, remained in the Colony for home defence, and the national banner was carried abroad by new formations. Arguably the most significant contribution came in the training of 10 000 air crew at Southern Rhodesia's expense under the Empire Air Training Scheme, the Southern Rhodesian Air Training Group being the first to be launched. The breadth of the Colony's military experiences was to prove invaluable after the war in constructing the Southern Rhodesian Air Force and the Federal Army, and in providing a core of tradition, so important to the military psyche, for the fledgling forces.

MacDonald's work suffers the disability of being an official history by a soldier who served the country in the period he chronicles; an official

⁴ See, for example, J. Lovett, *Contact* (Salisbury, Galaxie Press, 1977), 240pp., Rh\$12.50; 20.

⁵ By way of comparison, Britain's armed forces absorbed 11 per cent of the population, Canada's 9.6 per cent, Australia's 13.6 per cent, the Gold Coast's 1.8 per cent.

⁶ MacDonald, *The War History*, (I) 8, 9.

⁷ *Ibid.*, (II) 405, 406.

history of the old genre, eulogistic and heavily patriotic,⁸ and a victor's history. There is the unmistakeable ambience of Biggles about it. The general tone of the work is perhaps best illustrated by quoting a letter from a student pilot cited by MacDonald:

Since writing last, two things have made me devilishly keen to get cracking at the Hun. One is that I have done my first dive-bombing with practice bombs, and fired a 'Browning' in the air for the first time⁹

Yet *The War History* is of more value than as a quaint period piece, for MacDonald enjoyed the status of 'official' historian which gained him access to documents and records which are still not available to researchers in the 1970s. Although MacDonald was a jingoist whose use of the material at his disposal was extremely limited, *The War History* will have to stand as the 'definitive' work until a major revision becomes possible.

The re-publication of MacDonald's work coincides with a crop of publications examining Rhodesian defence forces over the past two decades. The most 'historical' of these is a regimental history, the third of its type dealing with a Rhodesian army unit,¹⁰ the first to deal with a White regular formation.¹¹ Unfortunately *The Incredibles* is in the same mould as *The War History*, written under the aegis of the armed forces by a writer intimately connected with them.¹² Its 'historical' approach confines it to the period from the formation of the Rhodesian Light Infantry (R.L.I.) in 1961 to the start of Operation Hurricane and the escalation of the war in late 1972, the current ongoing conflict being excluded.

The R.L.I. has been intimately connected with the maintenance of White supremacy in Rhodesia since the early 1960s, when it was formed as a counter-balance to the four regular African battalions of the Federal Army (one battalion each of the Rhodesian African Rifles and the Northern Rhodesia Regiment, and two battalions of the King's African Rifles). Bond's book circumspectly describes the rationale for the formation of the R.L.I. (and other all-White units, the Special Air Service paratroop squadron and the first Selous Scouts, an armoured car unit) as 'helping to strike the balance between the European [i.e. Territorials] and African units'.¹³ In other words, besides taking pressure off the European part-time battalions of the Royal Rhodesia Regiment at a time of political instability, the new White regular army would be available should the African units prove disloyal or unreliable in a political crisis. There was traditional White suspicion of

⁸ For a contrasting example of the 'new' official history see N. Frankland and G. Webster, *Strategic Air Offensive against Germany 1939-1945* (London, H.M.S.O., 4 vols, 1961). Unlike that history, MacDonald, is convinced of the effectiveness of mass bombing, and Rhodesians' part in it, in bringing about Germany's defeat.

⁹ MacDonald, *The War History*, (i) 176.

¹⁰ A. E. Capell, *The 2nd Rhodesia Regiment in East Africa* (London, Simson, 1923) and G. Owen, *The Rhodesian African Rifles* (London, L. Cooper, 1970). The latter study is confined to the Second World War years, before the R.A.R. entered a more 'political' era.

¹¹ G. Bond, *The Incredibles: The Story of The 1st Battalion, The Rhodesian Light Infantry* (Salisbury, Sarum Imprint, 1977), 159 pp., Rh\$4.80.

¹² In recent years Bond has served as Army Public Relations Officer.

¹³ Bond, *The Incredibles*, 10.

Black troops and the creation of more Black units as a potential Pandora's Box,¹⁴ even though these troops have been consistently loyal throughout the country's history. The mustering of these White units was to give Rhodesia its first White regular army to supplement the regular paramilitary police force, with the R.L.I. as the largest and most potent single unit.

Recruiting was carried out principally in South Africa and Britain, with the smallest contingent coming from the Federation itself. The haste of the recruiting campaign brought in many low-calibre recruits, many of whom deserted and who gave the unit an often poor reputation with the Rhodesian public, even down to the late 1960s.¹⁵ With the break-up of the Federation many soldiers opted for 'golden handshakes' and emigrated, taking the battalion's strength from over six hundred down to about two hundred in a short time. The battalion was to remain under strength until the outbreak of the current phase of the war boosted regular recruitment (and the unit's public image), and brought drafts of national servicemen to bring it up to establishment.¹⁶ The increasing focus of international attention on the Rhodesian war has seen the enlistment of large numbers of foreigners into the three commando structure of the R.L.I., though the army authorities strenuously deny that they are 'mercenaries'.¹⁷ Their numbers in the unit are a matter of pure speculation, estimates ranging from about 200 to a highly unlikely 1 500,¹⁸ though the R.L.I. has definitely become a kind of Southern African Foreign Legion.¹⁹

As Bond's record ends in 1972 there is little information as to how the unit has been changed by the war. The composition of personnel has certainly changed, while the role of the battalion seems to have shifted from patrolling to a more aggressive role of being airlifted to known insurgent presences and of raiding into Mozambique. Its commandos have been trained as paratroops to make them more versatile in this respect.

Bond's book is light on the sort of information valuable to the academic researcher. Although there are some interesting accounts of skirmishes and operations, a large part of the work is devoted to anecdotes which give the unit the tone of an enlarged rugby club.²⁰ There is an atmosphere of flippant racism, including within its compass not only Blacks but also Portuguese troops in Mozambique and even Swedes of the United Nations peace-keeping

¹⁴ See, for example, Owen, *The Rhodesian African Rifles*, 1, 2.

¹⁵ Bond, *The Incredibles*, 30, 47.

¹⁶ The first national servicemen were sent to the previously all-regular R.L.I. in 1973-4.

¹⁷ Interesting light is thrown on the 'mercenary' question by the amount of publicity given to the conflict in the international mercenary community. See, for example the journal for mercenaries, *Soldier of Fortune* (1976), I, iv, which contains several letters to the editor about Rhodesia, an interview with Lt-Gen. G. P. Walls and an advertisement offering for sale Rhodesian army recruiting posters, pictured in full detail. See also *The Rhodesia Herald*, 2 Nov. 1977.

¹⁸ See C. Legum, *Southern Africa: The Year of the Whirlwind* (London, Rex Collings, 1977), 54, for a fuller discussion of this issue.

¹⁹ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 7 Jan. 1977 gives a serving soldier's views on this.

²⁰ For an enlightening study of the military ethos, especially of the British army, from which much in the Rhodesian armed forces is derived, see N. Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (London, Cape, 1976).

force in the Congo.²¹ In this respect little has changed since MacDonald's work was published with its casual, almost innocent, racism.²² In many ways Bond, ironically, does a disservice to what has become a highly efficient and professional counter-insurgency force by dwelling on what he considers the 'human' side of the R.L.I. As with *The War History*, however, it fills a gap until a more serious study can be produced, as well as being a valuable, if unwitting, work of military sociology and politics.

The character of the war in Rhodesia was dramatically transformed in late 1972 when the insurgents mounted a far more sophisticated campaign than that of the late 1960s. A second major turning point came in 1976 with the opening up of new battle fronts on the eastern, south-east and western borders as a corollary to Mozambique's gaining independence, Zambia's renewed belligerent attitude to the Rhodesian state, and Botswana's less neutral position *vis-à-vis* the war.

The intensification of the war and the proliferation of war zones has led to the massive expansion of the Rhodesian military establishment. The existing regular units have grown in size — the Rhodesian African Rifles from one battalion to three, the Special Air Service to roughly three squadron strength, the R.L.I. up to planned strength, and the Air Force has acquired new combat and utility aircraft with a consequent increase in personnel.²³ These already established units were joined by new units created specifically in response to the insurgency problem: the Selous Scouts for tracking and clandestine operations, the Grey's Scouts mounted infantry unit and the Rhodesian Intelligence Corps.

History has brought the British South Africa Police full cycle from the period 1890-c.1910 when its primary role was the crushing of internal resistance to the establishment of settler rule. When insurgency began in the 1960s the police played a major role in operations from the start, the army backing up what was considered a policing action, and this role has grown with the conflict. All police recruits have some degree of counter-insurgency training, but specialist units concerned solely with counter-insurgency operations have been formed — the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit (PATU), established in the 1960s but since expanded, the predominantly Black Support Unit, the Police Mounted Infantry Unit, a revival of the cavalry role of the old B.S.A.P., and a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) section for urban warfare. The Special Branch has increased the scope of its activities to cover counter-insurgency field intelligence. The devotion of such a large proportion of police resources to the war has affected its supposed primary function of combating civil crime, and a Special Reserve has been formed to bolster the waning police presence in urban areas. The increasingly military role of the police, particularly in the rural areas, is bound to have

²¹ Bond, *The Incredibles*, 41, 42, 122. At the passing-out of an R.L.I. intake in 1976 the Commander of the battalion, Lt-Col. Rich commented in his speech: 'There is a new catchphrase in the battalion, they just want to go out and slay houts.' Bond's glossary of R.L.I. colloquialisms denotes 'hout' as 'An African', though at the time there was an effort to cover up the *faux pas* by denoting the word's meaning as 'terrorist'.

²² MacDonald, *The War History*, (I) 40 and *passim*.

²³ *The Military Balance 1977-1978* (London, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1977), 46.

profoundly affected its original function and ethos as a civil police force, though the extent of this is difficult to assess.

The territorial and reserve forces have come to play a vital role in the Rhodesian armed forces. Theirs is a more passive role than that of the regular and national service units, much of the routine patrolling and guarding being carried out by these formations. Paradoxically, the regular units were originally raised to take pressure off the territorial forces, but the latter are now indispensable in taking pressure off the former. Their role has been increased through an ever-widening call-up of age groups and manpower categories previously untouched and by an increase in the periods for which these servicemen are called up.²⁴ The territorial and reserve army now comprise eight regionally-based White battalions of the Rhodesia Regiment, the lineal descendant of the non-regular units of the First and Second World Wars, with a strength in the region of fifteen thousand. Weapons procurements have increased the conventional war capacity of the armoured car unit and the artillery, the latter receiving training in anti-tank tactics, primarily in response to the acquisition of heavy weapons by Mozambique.²⁵ These army units are backed by approximately 35 000 predominantly White B.S.A.P. reservists, whose role is essentially static.

The manpower problem has been a chronic one for the Rhodesian forces, and exposes the contradictions of Rhodesian society. An extremely small minority is burdened with providing the manpower to maintain the economy on which White privilege is based, while simultaneously drawing on the same body of manpower to defend the system of privilege. This is a unique situation (though likely to be repeated in South Africa in the future) and one which has led to the creation of a Ministry of Manpower²⁶ and a Joint Services Computer section to handle the vexing problem of balancing economic needs with military requirements, of juggling a force of part-time soldiers with a part-time labour force.

An escape from this conundrum has been sought in the expansion of Black units, although these have remained essentially askari units, i.e. White-officered. The Rhodesian African Rifles has grown three-fold, while the Police Support Unit is predominantly Black in composition. In addition large numbers of Africans have been recruited as regulars, nominally into the R.A.R., but who serve in 'integrated' companies of the Rhodesia Regiment.²⁷ After a short training of three months these soldiers are sent to White units to gain experience and confidence. A Guard Force, the 'fourth arm', similar in function to the Popular Force militia units of the former South Vietnamese Army, has been established for local guard duties, notably in

²⁴ National service training has been extended from 4½ months in the early 1960s to 18 months and in some cases 24 months as of 1976, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 6 May 1976. Territorials and reservists usually serve between 70 and 180 days a year, depending on their status.

²⁵ This despite the assertion of the then Commander of 3 Brigade, Brigadier A.N.O. McIntyre, in 1976, that eastern Rhodesia was poor tank country, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 3 Apr. 1976.

²⁶ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 29 May 1976; 16 Feb. 1977.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 Jan., 1978. In November 1977 it was announced that about 400 recruits would be trained each month 'for the next few months', *The Rhodesia Herald*, 10 Nov. 1977.

protected villages.²⁸ African District Assistants are the para-military backbone of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.²⁹ A major departure from previous defence policy is that certain categories of Blacks have become eligible for conscription, whereas previously they were specifically excluded in terms of the Defence Act.³⁰

As in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, Black troops have become indispensable to the Rhodesian war effort. Little is yet understood about Black servicemen, particularly their motives for joining the White-led security forces in ever-increasing numbers. As in the First and Second World Wars they have given loyal service over the past decade or so.

In spite of this vast expansion of the Rhodesian military, little is known about this process. Sources published outside the country suffer from lack of access to documentary material and from distance.³¹ The elements of the armed forces have been described and eulogized in numerous local publications, but these are of more value to the armed forces' recruiting organizations than to the researcher.³² However, they cannot be totally dismissed as sources as some useful information can be gleaned from their rather bare bones, and there are few alternative sources from which to gain a picture of the armed forces.

The only recent academic studies of the development of the war machine and the militarization of Rhodesian society are those by A. R. Wilkinson, notably his piece on Rhodesia in *Southern Africa: The Politics of Revolution*,³³ a three-part examination of South Africa, the Portuguese empire in Africa and Rhodesia. Wilkinson's study is an extension and updating of an earlier paper,³⁴ but he still suffers from the bane of the contemporary historian — the time lag between academic publication and galloping events. Although he gives some valuable insights into the development of the war, the growth of the Rhodesian military and the impact of the conflict on Rhodesian society, his analysis has been overtaken by movements in Southern Africa, which render some of his comments spurious.³⁵ His study excludes the carrying of the war to insurgent bases outside Rhodesia as a major plank of counter-insurgency strategy, the development of virtually the whole country into an operational zone, the breakdown of White Rhodesian resolve to oppose any African participation in government, and the alliance of the nationalist leaders Mugabe and Nkomo under the Patriotic Front umbrella. Indeed, in this analysis figures like Sithole and Chikerema

²⁸ Ibid., 4 Feb., 1977.

²⁹ Ibid., 22 Feb., 27 June and 3 Sept. 1974.

³⁰ Ibid., 18 May 1976

³¹ e.g. Maxey, *The Fight for Zimbabwe*.

³² e.g. *Fighting Forces of Rhodesia* (Salisbury, H. C. P. Andersen, 5 Numbers, 1974-1977), 95pp.; 70pp.; 80pp.; 87pp., 80pp.; Rh\$0.75 each; B. Whyte, *A Pride of Men* (Salisbury, Graham Publishing, Supplement to *Illustrated Life Rhodesia*, 7 Aug. 1975); *A Pride of Eagles* (Salisbury, Graham Publishing, Supplement to *Illustrated Life Rhodesia*, 22 July 1976); Lovett, *Contact*.

³³ B. Davidson, J. Slovo, A. R. Wilkinson, *Southern Africa: The New Politics of Revolution* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976), 374pp., £1.25.

³⁴ A. R. Wilkinson, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Rhodesia, 1957-1973: An Account and Assessment* (London, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Papers No. 100, 1973).

³⁵ e.g. remarks about the Smith government's opposition to majority rule, Wilkinson, *The New Politics of Revolution*, 340.

are at the heart of the revolution;³⁶ Mugabe's name does not appear at all. If anything Wilkinson's work is a reminder of how much more complex the war in Rhodesia has become over the past two years.

In a subsequent piece Wilkinson further revises his account, though Sisyphus-like he is condemned to see his efforts to be up-to-date frustrated by the march of events.³⁷ While he corrects some of the aforementioned omissions, his introduction and conclusion to *Black Fire* add little new to an understanding of the Rhodesian armed forces, though he gives a sound analysis of the financial burden of the military establishment on the economy. Some of his comments on the armed forces are highly conjectural and certain of his predictions a little too confident.³⁸ As with his earlier works, and in common with other researchers in this field, he is forced to rely on secondary sources, particularly press reports.

A large field that Wilkinson neglects is that of civil-military relations, which have tipped firmly in favour of the military. The armed forces have become the central 'fact' in Rhodesian society. Senior Rhodesian officers and officials are apt to talk of their forces as being apolitical and loyal only to the state.³⁹ When the state has a structure like Rhodesia's, with the majority of the population politically, socially and economically disadvantaged, then declarations of loyalty to it are ideological and political in content. Indeed an understanding of politics and the role of the military in the Rhodesian political structure, has been the armed forces' weakest point. Fundamental to this weak point is a failure to see the war as a civil war, and not foremost as a fight against Soviet imperialism and Western decadence. The armed forces have always been associated with the maintenance of White supremacy. Their rapid expansion in the late 1950s and early 1960s was a direct response to the 'winds of change' in Africa.

The fact that the current war can be won only through political action, aided by military action, has sunk into the policymakers' and strategists' consciousness only in the last two to three years.⁴⁰ White Rhodesians, as

³⁶ Ibid., 245, 261. Since 1976-7 both these men have become arch-traitors to the revolution in the eyes of much of the insurgent movement; see *Zimbabwe News* (Maputo, Zimbabwe African National Union Dept. of Information and Publicity, 1977), IX, iv.

³⁷ M. Raeburn, *Black Fire! Accounts of the Guerilla War in Rhodesia: [With an Analysis by Anthony R. Wilkinson]* (London, Julian Friedmann, 1978), x, 243pp., £6.95. Wilkinson's Adelphi Paper was published shortly before the Lisbon coup in 1974 transformed Rhodesia's strategic position, his 1976 piece before the Kissinger shuttle and Geneva conference (which is still not included in the 1977 reprint), and his latest study before the 'internal settlement' in Rhodesia.

³⁸ e.g. his suggestion that the growth in the number of Africans in the regular forces casts doubt on the future reliability of the armed forces. He may prove to be correct in this assumption, but he rather skates over the Byzantine complexities of Rhodesian politics which cannot be simply explained in terms of Black-White antipathy, particularly since the signing of the Salisbury Agreement in 1978 has added one further dimension to the problem.

³⁹ The President of Rhodesia, J. Wrathall, succinctly summarized this belief in a speech in 1977 when he said: 'The Rhodesian army has always, quite properly, remained aloof from any involvement in politics.' The fact that the armed forces solidly accepted U.D.I. in 1965, and were prepared to defend it against possible armed British intervention is one of the many actions seen as 'apolitical'; see Bond, *The Incredibles*, 83-6.

⁴⁰ As early as 1974 there was some not very clearly defined talk of a 'hearts and minds' campaign, but it was slowly developed; see, for example, Brigadier J. S. V. Hickman's statement in *The Rhodesia Herald*, 9 Nov. 1974.

with the Americans in Vietnam, have shown a preoccupation with body counts as a barometer of the progress of the war, while political action to win over the African population has been neglected.⁴¹ In MacDonald's *The War History* a Rhodesian serviceman comments in his journal after a bloody action in East Africa: 'We have done all we can for three obscure soldiers of the King who went into battle at our bidding and died for the Empire. Surely their race deserve better at our hands than it has heretofore received.'⁴² Thirty years after that Rhodesian Blacks were still waiting. Even in the military field it was not until 1977 that the loyal service of Blacks to the state was recognized by the commissioning of the first Black officers.

The establishment of a protected village system and the formation of a Psychological Action group have been steps towards a recognition of the political nature of the war. But it has been only from 1976, in response to a desperate military and economic situation, that a positive effort has been made to win the war through macro-political action, to deprive the insurgents of popular support.

The increasing prominence of the military in Rhodesia has been reflected in the growing proportion of government expenditure and national wealth devoted to defence. The defence budget by itself is a deceptive indicator of this as the bulk of the votes for the B.S.A.P., the Ministry of Internal Affairs and even the Ministries of Roads and Water Development have gone to pay for personnel and equipment involved in the multi-faceted counter-insurgency operations.⁴³ Other government agencies have borne the expense of making up the salaries of those on periodic call-ups. These 'hidden' expenditures roughly double the Ministry of Defence vote proper. Despite the growing burden of the war on the exchequer and the taxpayer⁴⁴ Rhodesian defence spending has run at relatively low levels compared with other contemporary parallels (see Table I).

Yet it is clear that the Rhodesian exchequer's capacity to pay for the war is reaching its limits. Crushing taxation of the Israeli pattern or severe cutbacks in other ministries' spending and services would probably have the effect of boosting White emigration, a chronic problem in any event.

The involvement of so many ministries in the war effort has caused difficulties in the co-ordination of overall politico-military strategy. The co-ordination of the armed forces involved in operations had previously taken place on an *ad hoc* basis, the centre of co-operation in the field being the JOC (Joint Operations Command), a local command post with representatives from all services. This worked well enough, but the growth in size of the war effort necessitated a more formal co-ordinating agency. In 1977 a supreme commander, titled Commander of Combined Operations, was

⁴¹ In 1969 Maj-Gen. R. J. R. Putterill, Commander of the Army during the campaign of the late 1960s, pointed out the necessity for political action at a national level when he joined the Centre Party, but his prognosis for winning the war was generally ignored, *The Sunday Mail*, 1 June 1969.

⁴² McDonald, *The War History*, (I), 111.

⁴³ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 1 Nov. 1974.

⁴⁴ An effort has been made to bring the African population more fully into the taxpaying nexus by including indirect taxes, notably sales tax, which rose to 15 per cent in 1977. Any further rise in sales tax would be likely to prove counter-productive by dampening demand. The other major tax measure resorted to is a percentage surcharge on income tax, see *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24, 25 Feb. 1977.

Table I

COMPARATIVE DEFENCE EXPENDITURES: 1974-7

	Rhodesia*				Portugal				S. Africa				Israel			
	'74	'75	'76	'77	'74	'75	'76	'77	'74	'75	'76	'77	'74	'75	'76	'77
Total US\$ (millions)	80	102	130	159	1000	1088	748	508	1052	1332	1494	1897	3 869	3 552	4 214	4 268
US\$ per head	13	16	21	23	114	124	85	52	43	53	57	70	1 173	1 045	1 201	1 178
% of Government expenditure	11,1	12,3	14,1	20,0	47,3	35,2	n.a.v.	19,2	16,0	18,5	16,4	n.a.v.	51,0	50,1	56,7	32,4

*The total expenditure on the Rhodesian war is roughly double these figures; even so, comparisons with South Africa's and Israel's 'peacetime' expenditures are telling.

Sources: *The Military Balance 1977-1978*, 82, 83.

appointed to plan overall strategy.⁴⁵ The political counterparts were to be the Ministry of Combined Operations and a small 'war council' designed to co-ordinate, at Cabinet level, the ministries involved in the war. There are currently five ministries preoccupied with the war: the Ministry of Defence, dealing with the army, air force and Guard Force; the Ministry of Law and Order covering the police; and the Ministries of Manpower, Health and Social Services, Internal Affairs, and Combined Operations. This hierarchy has been heavily influenced by British organization and experience in Malaya during the Emergency, a campaign in which the Rhodesian armed forces have drawn extensively for strategy and tactics.⁴⁶

The growth in the power of the military is reflected not only in huge increases in defence-related expenditures and the proliferation of the military-orientated bureaucracy, but also in the control over the population which can be exercised by the armed forces. They can impose curfews, initiate population movements to consolidated villages, and establish *cordons sanitaires*; an indemnity act covers them against suit for loss of life or property as a result of military operations. Control over the exit of White males has been strengthened to prevent draft evasion, desertion or emigration without the permission of the military.⁴⁷

The militarization of White government and society has run deep. The war has become the centre of national life, affecting all its aspects. The involvement of virtually every male from 18 to 50 (and many beyond the latter age as well) has touched most families in Rhodesia, as have the casualties which weigh heavily on the small White community. In many ways the Whites are reliving the 1890s with an anxious laager mentality dominating.

The Black population has been even more deeply disrupted. The protected village system has involved the movement of hundreds of thousands of people in rural areas from dispersed settlements to collective villages.⁴⁸ Many mistakes were made in the initiation of this process, but it appears that experience has been gained and implementation of the scheme is more rationally planned. These villages have become the linchpin of the armed forces' counter-insurgency strategy.

As well as disrupting long-established patterns of rural settlement and life, the war has caused a flow of refugees to the urban centres where unemployment is a risk preferred to the vicissitudes of life in the war zones.⁴⁹ An aspect of the war warranting study is the effect it has had on the traditional flow of migrant labour between the rural and urban areas. The disruption of transport and the risks of movement in operational zones must

⁴⁵ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 24 Mar. 1977. The appointee was Lt-Gen. G. P. Walls, then Commander of the Army, a popular and experienced soldier whose impending retirement was circumvented by his new posting.

⁴⁶ See R. Clutterbuck, *Riot and Revolution in Singapore and Malaya, 1945-1963* (London, Faber & Faber, 1973); J. Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning* (London Faber & Faber, 1967).

⁴⁷ For the impact of the war on Rhodesian law see G. Feltoe, 'Rhodesia: Management of the nation's behaviour by the law', *Zambia* (1975), IV, i, 41-51; 'Hearts and minds: A policy of counter-intimidation', *The Rhodesian Law Journal* (1976), XVI, i, 47-63; 'War law in Rhodesia', *The Rhodesian Law Journal* (1977), XVII, i, 29-52.

⁴⁸ In 1977 it was reported that there were 250 000 people in protected villages, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 7 Apr. 1977.

⁴⁹ See *The Man in the Middle: Torture, Resettlement and Eviction* (Salisbury, Christian Institute for International Relations, 1975) for one view of life in the war zones.

have cut the frequency of visits to families living any distance from the towns.

The precise nature of civil-military relations is hard to gauge. Clearly the military hierarchy is in a strong position compared to its political counterpart. While there has been frequent Cabinet reshuffling of politicians involved in running the war, the military command has remained remarkably stable. Sackings have been conspicuous by their absence, even in the face of manifest failure, such as that of the mobilization on 'indefinite call-up' of certain categories of territorial soldiers in 1976, with the avowed intention of totally eliminating the insurgents.⁵⁰

As in most war situations control over information has been extremely strict, with the military playing a strong role in determining the nature of information disseminated.⁵¹ The picture of the war which has emerged has been shaped largely by the demands of military censorship and national security requirements. This accounts for the blandness and shallowness of most of the works published on the Rhodesian war. Only those writers who can be trusted to present the armed forces in a favourable light and to avoid criticism are blessed with official sanction. Other researchers are reduced to relying largely on official communiqués, hearsay and intelligent guess-work.⁵²

A good example of an officially blessed work is *Contact*, subtitled 'A tribute to those who serve Rhodesia'. This is an extremely well-produced pictorial essay, very popular with the White Rhodesian public, but which adds nothing to an understanding of the war. As with all the other local publications cited here, the photographs are training studies or posed representations of action; they are of almost no value to the historian. Information control is such that there will be no Ernie Pyles emerging from the war, no documentary film to illuminate the conflict. The only photographs which have given an insight into the bitter reality of the war were those of Associated Press photographer, J. R. Baughman;⁵³ it is unlikely that such an incident will recur.

The prospects for the researcher in the field of recent Rhodesian military history are depressing. Official archives are closed to all but those who will make poor history from them.⁵⁴ It is also clear that as there will be no swift collapse of the Rhodesian regime and there has been ample warning of a transition to majority rule, much documentation will be 'weeded' and destroyed. Even if it is inclined to release documents, a future Black government is unlikely to find much to disclose. Although a picture of sorts can be made out for the past three decades of Rhodesian military experience, it is likely that the military history of the post-Second World War era will remain forever in some historical twilight zone.

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⁵⁰ This mobilization was preceded by a considerable publicity fanfare, probably to minimize the adverse effect it was bound to have on white morale, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 10 Apr. 1976; *The Sunday Mail*, 8, 22 Jan. 1978.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 27 Apr. 1976; *The Sunday Mail*, 8, 22 Jan. 1978.

⁵² The handling of information by the Rhodesian armed forces is sophisticated in comparison with that of the insurgents, which is so riddled with illogicalities and inconsistencies as to be worthless, or of curiosity value at best.

⁵³ See *Newsweek*, 2 Jan. 1978, 20.

⁵⁴ An official history of the current war is being compiled by S. R. S. Bristow, a former Commissioner of the B.S.A.P.