

1 *Historical Background*

1960–1970

The central focus of this book is on the complex, multiparty, and international diplomacy conducted primarily between 1976 and 1979 that resulted in Zimbabwean independence. However, to better understand the array of forces involved over time, the first two chapters explore the political rhetoric of Zimbabwean nationalists, and the history of internal politics in the main nationalist parties before 1976.

The politics of Zimbabwean nationalism was not only shaped as a response to Rhodesian politics. The global Cold War nature of the Congo crisis helped to develop and frame a regional language of African nationalism and white settlerism in the early 1960s. The rhetoric of anti-imperialism and decolonization in Southern Rhodesia was in many ways different from that of West and East Africa. Zimbabwean nationalists did participate in pan-African politics, but as the goal of a similar decolonization path became less and less achievable, the rhetoric and strategies used by the nationalists transformed into something uniquely southern African. It is important, therefore, to establish in this first chapter the rhetorical tropes and metaphors developed earlier in the 1960s, to help understand how they were deployed in the 1970s. One event in 1959 merits attention: In February of that year, the government of Prime Minister Edgar Whitehead in Southern Rhodesia began a campaign against African nationalists by instituting a state of emergency that banned the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress and resulted in the arrest and detentions of many of its key leaders. Throughout the period, global debates over race, liberation politics, and sovereignty that became operationalized in Cold War logics had an important impact on the political outcomes of decolonization and the rise of Mugabe and ZANU-PF in Zimbabwe in the 1980s. This chapter examines these issues chronologically in two five-year periods, 1960–65 and 1966–70. The first section, 1960–65, connects events in Southern Rhodesia, the first Congo crisis in the early 1960s, the diplomacy of an early Zimbabwean nationalist movement, and the recalcitrant diplomacy of the Rhodesian state.

1960–1965

Wider transformative events in Southern and Central Africa during 1960 must be considered in discussing “African nationalism” in Southern Rhodesia. One major intervention came in the form of British prime minister Harold Macmillan’s famous “Wind of Change” speech on February 3, 1960 to a joint session of the South African parliament. Macmillan provided a challenge to both white politicians and African nationalist politicians, as he claimed that “[t]he wind of change is blowing through the continent, and, whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact.”¹ White minority governments in southern Africa were not willing to accept Macmillan’s claim as a “political fact” as he intended; they preferred to see themselves during the rest of 1960 as exceptions to this African “wind of change.” Only seven weeks after Macmillan’s speech, the violence of South African apartheid became a global concern following the Sharpeville massacre on March 21, 1960. The Sharpeville massacre – where police officers overreacted and used deadly force out of proportion to the threat posed by the demonstration, killing sixty-nine people – was immediately followed by security campaigns against the leadership and operating structures of both the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and the Pan-African Congress in South Africa (PAC).²

On July 19, 1960, following a pattern similar to after Sharpeville in South Africa, the Whitehead government of Southern Rhodesia ordered a dawn sweep of African townships in Salisbury and Bulawayo to arrest and detain key leaders and activists in the National Democratic Party (NDP). The NDP had formed to continue the work of the banned Southern Rhodesian African National Congress. The government’s arrests were followed by mass action on the part of the nationalists and their urban supporters, as large crowds marched into Salisbury from the township of Harare to demand a meeting with Whitehead. The Whitehead government refused to

¹ Harold Macmillan, *Pointing the Way: 1959–61* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 156; speech cited in full in Ritchie Owendale, “Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957–1960,” *The Historical Journal* 38, no. 2 (June 1995), 455–77.

² Philip Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and Its Massacre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001); Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

meet with the protestors and instead responded with tear gas and baton charges. Subsequent riots in Bulawayo and Gwelu resulted in the killing of unarmed Africans by the police, the first such police killings since the 1896–98 uprisings of the Shona and Ndebele against the British South Africa Company.³ As in South Africa, the leaders of the Southern Rhodesian government were convinced that a strategy of direct confrontation and containment would be the most effective means to stop the development of mass political action from African nationalists.

The speed by which the Whitehead government produced legislation to back this strategy also corresponded with the politics of fear among the white electorate. Dr. Ahrn Palley, a vocal oppositional voice in parliament, suggested that the real reason for the successive waves of repressive legislation was because Southern Rhodesian African nationalists were now gaining a voice in London on the future of the Central African Federation. Like South Africa after Sharpeville, Palley charged, the Whitehead government hoped to use repression, arrests, and detentions to weaken African nationalism.⁴ The popular responses to the arrests in 1959 and 1960, and the riots that followed, demonstrated that African residents in Southern Rhodesia's main urban areas, with or without formal leadership, were willing to challenge the oppressive system and face long jail sentences and fines.

In fact, this “state of emergency” approach had galvanized more of the educated and moderate African elites to take leadership roles in the nationalist movement.⁵ After the arrest of the NDP leadership, a new group of politicians had emerged, including advocate Herbert Chitepo, Leopold Takawira, newspaper editor Nathan Shamuyarira, and Robert Mugabe, the latter a forty-one-year-old schoolteacher recently returned from Ghana. These intellectuals found themselves pushed into NDP leadership positions in 1960 following the arrests of other leaders. Such men had remained in multiracial organizations but the radicalization of the state and the quick pace toward recognition of African political rights in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland

³ See Francis Nehwati, “The Social and Communal Background to ‘Zhi’: The African Riots in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia in 1960,” *African Affairs* 69, no. 276 (July 1970), 250–66; and Terence Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning: The Social History of a Southern African City, 1893–1960* (London: James Currey, 2010), 221–40.

⁴ Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates, July 5, 1960, col. 181.

⁵ Palley noted this in Parliament: *Ibid.*

(Malawi) convinced them of the possibility of an equally quick transition to majority rule in Southern Rhodesia, based on British support for the “wind of change” in Africa.⁶ In 1956, Herbert Chitepo had written a prescient speech for a conference he was unable to attend. “Time is short and this is not only a unique opportunity for Africa, it is also the last,” he wrote, “for if we cannot succeed together, Africans will be driven to adopt open racist nationalism.”⁷ By 1960, the ability to continue to think in terms of a multiracial nationalism in Southern Rhodesia had all but evaporated. Later, living in exile in Lusaka, Zambia, Chitepo would become a key leader in the liberation war.

The new “fear” of African political participation that Palley decried was evident in the Whitehead government’s swift introduction of repressive legislation intended to slow the momentum of African nationalist parties and mass participation in nonviolent protests. The legislation was rationalized to white voters as assurance that Southern Rhodesia’s minority rule was not going to be challenged by moves from the British to break up the Central African Federation and to grant majority rule in all three territories. At the same time, the legislation was designed to convince the British that it was not discriminatory toward Africans in Southern Rhodesia. South Africa’s high commissioner in Salisbury in 1960, H. T. Taswell, pointed out this dual strategy: “Sir Edgar Whitehead is playing a political game of give and take, of mixing liberalism with toughness.” He predicted that Whitehead, who Taswell viewed as “more to the left than to the right,” might learn in the next elections that “he has underestimated the hardening strength of forces of the right in this country.”⁸ In 1962, the victorious Rhodesian Front brought Winston Field into office as prime minister. Field would carry white-minority rule further down the road, later taken further still by Prime Minister Ian Smith, toward the

⁶ On the transition of political moderate elites to nationalist politics, see Michael O. West, *The Rise of an African Middle Class: Colonial Zimbabwe, 1898–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 177–235; Timothy Scarnecchia, *The Urban Roots of Democracy and Political Violence in Zimbabwe: Harare and Highfield, 1940–1964* (New York: Rochester University Press, 2008), 69–114.

⁷ Richard Hughes, *Capricorn: David Stirling’s Second African Campaign* (London: The Radcliffe Press, 2003), 126.

⁸ H. T. Taswell to Secretary for External Affairs, Pretoria, November 12, 1960, External Affairs, 1/156/1 v3, Southern Rhodesia, Political Situation and Developments (11–10–60/30–1–61), South African National Archives, Pretoria.

1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) and direct violent confrontation with African nationalists.

Regional pressures on the Whitehead government were twofold. To the south, the South African apartheid government provided Whitehead with an example of how to respond against a restive urban township population with excessive police violence. To the north, Dr. Hastings Banda's negotiations with the British government had culminated in a Lancaster House agreement in August 1960 – leading to Nyasaland's (Malawi's) home rule and eventual majority rule. The agreement was seen by African nationalists in Southern Rhodesia as evidence that majority rule in a year's time was possible, just as many Rhodesian nationalists had optimistically predicted. The Whitehead government viewed the agreement as more justification for the use of state forces against African nationalists and their perceived supporters.⁹ A *London Times* article from March 1961 commented that

Sir Edgar Whitehead found himself in office at a time when, to borrow Dr. Banda's words, the Nyasaland African not only kicked 'but taught the Southern Rhodesian African to kick too.' Any Prime Minister would therefore have been under the same necessity to tighten up the security legislation, though it certainly seems that some of the new regulations went much too far.¹⁰

Britain's responses to protests in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia had given hope and inspiration to the Southern Rhodesian African nationalists, who were confident that in the near future they too would repeat the transition from a nationalist leadership to leaders in a majority rule independent state.

Fear of Another Congo

Equally important to the decolonizing of most of British Africa in 1960 was the lesson taught by violent conflict in the Belgian Congo, following the transfer of power to African nationalists upon independence on June 30, 1960.¹¹ The violence drove a stream of white refugees from

⁹ See John McCracken, "Labour in Nyasaland: An Assessment of the 1960 Railway Workers' Strike," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14, no. 2 (January 1988), 279–90, esp. 281; Zoë Groves, *Malawian Migration to Zimbabwe, 1900–1965: Tracing Machona* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

¹⁰ "A Crucial Vote for Rhodesia," *Times* (London), March 7, 1961.

¹¹ For details on how the Congo crisis impacted the Central Africa Federation, see Mathew Hughes, "Fighting for White Rule in Africa: The Central African

the Congo into Northern and Southern Rhodesia in July 1960; many arrived with nothing but what they could carry with them, in a hurried exodus. This became tangible “proof” for many whites in Southern Rhodesia that the question of African independence could go “terribly wrong” for whites in the Federation.¹² To both whites and blacks in Rhodesia, the violence and political crises in the Congo served as a framework for discussing what could go wrong without proper planning. More critically, the discussions focused on the preparation of African political, civil, and military personnel capable of conducting a successful transfer. It also demonstrated how American and Soviet intervention into an African decolonization process could occur; an outcome not welcomed by either white or African politicians in Southern Rhodesia.

The editors of the *Rhodesian Herald*, for example, opined that the violence was proof of the claims that Whitehead, Sir Roy Welensky, the Federation’s prime minister, and others, had been making for some time. In the weeks leading up to Congolese independence, Whitehead’s speech to the Rhodesia National Affairs Association on June 14 had predicted that “the possibility of the army in the Congo taking over after independence was achieved at the end of the month.” Whitehead criticized the Belgians for leaving the Congo without properly preparing the Congolese for independence, calling the decision to give independence in 1960 “the height of irresponsibility.” Whitehead continued to build his case that the speed at which so many former European controlled colonies became independent would overtake the Western powers’ ability to provide the needed aid and support, he believed. Such a deficiency would leave an opening for the communists, and what Whitehead saw as “the imminent danger of a backward slide to witchcraft and even slavery.”¹³ Welensky, with his usual penchant toward the hyperbolic, also warned of a communist takeover of the Congo one week before independence, warning “that the West is losing the battle for Africa.” Welensky went on to say that “states granted independence but left with a crippled economy would have to sell

Federation, Katanga, and the Congo Crisis, 1958–1965,” *International History Review* 25, no. 3 (2003), 596–615; John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation: Cold War Conflict in the Congo* (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹² “Congo Refugees Flee to Rhodesia; Hundreds Pour in by Ferry and Car – Americans Tell of Leopoldville Terror,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1960, 2.

¹³ “Take-over by Army Possible – Sir Edgar,” *Rhodesia Herald*, June 14, 1960.

themselves to the Communists as the price of their freedom.”¹⁴ He predicted that “communist regimes” would fragment Africa and withhold from the West “resources of both manpower and minerals.” This point of view of decolonization was typical among white leaders in Southern Rhodesia and the Federation.

As the Congolese crisis unfolded, the language became increasingly strident. For many whites in southern Africa, the behavior of the Belgians, including civilians who fled the violence immediately after independence, was interpreted as a sign of weakness. But it did not stop the same voices from developing a sense of shared “victimhood” with white settlers in the Congo. They were often portrayed as victims of American and United Nations-inspired imperialism. The day following Congolese independence, the *Rhodesian Herald* ran a short interview with the former Governor-General of Mozambique, Senor Gabriel Teixeira. He claimed the United States was to blame for black nationalism in Africa, and that “to combat American adverse influences, Senor Teixeira said white Africa will have to ‘stand together and shoot together’ to combat the rising tide of black nationalism.” Teixeira also had some unsympathetic words for the white Belgians who fled the Congo for the Federation and the Portuguese colonies. Teixeira charged that “the spectacle of the Belgians running like frightened hares was disgraceful. They saw the flash of a blade and they broke all the Olympic records running away.”¹⁵

After the assassination of the Congo’s first African leader, Patrice Lumumba, became known publicly in early 1961, the incorporation of the Congo crisis into Southern Rhodesian African nationalist rhetoric took a more strident tone. The assumption that the United States and Western powers had killed Lumumba to protect their interests in the mineral wealth of the Congo became a motif for attacking the Cold War aspects of the Congo crisis. By extension, the struggle for majority rule in Zimbabwe began to be compared to either the pan-Africanism of Lumumba or the “sell-out” of African interests by Moïse Tshombe in Katanga. An article in Zimbabwean African People’s Union’s publication *Radar* from April 5, 1961 began with a report about the Congo situation. Explaining the agenda for the upcoming All-African People’s Congress in Cairo, the

¹⁴ “West Losing Battle for Africa, Welensky Warns,” *Rhodesia Herald*, June 24, 1960, 1.

¹⁵ “‘Silly’ U.S. Policy May Turn Black Africa Red,” *Rhodesia Herald*, July 1, 1960.

article connected the Congo, South Africa, and the Southern Rhodesian situation: “Africa itself has urgent problems demanding the attention of her peoples. There is the Congo messed up by big power intrigues and subversion by imperialists.” Referring to Rhodesia, the author noted that “[t]here is the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland where Sir Roy Welensky, leader of some of the 300,000 settlers who are resisting the liberation of 8,000,000 Africans, is introducing laws that will force Africans to accept Federation for fear of Welensky’s white army.” The *Radar* article criticized the British government for not standing up to Welensky and others, and for not challenging their “kith and kin” in the Rhodesias. The article ends with a call to “encourage those brave Africans” who would “break through the stone-wall of Salazar’s dictators. Once Salazar has been blustered through and through, and Portuguese territories are won over to African Nationalism, Verwoerd’s South Africa will crumble like a pack of cards at the flicker of a child’s finger.”¹⁶



Figure 1 Photo of, left to right, Robert Mugabe, George Silundika, and Joshua Nkomo. 1960. Getty Images.

¹⁶ *Radar*, April 5, 1961, 1/156/1, vol. 4, BTS Southern Rhodesia, TS81, High Commissioner, Salisbury, 1960–63, National Archives of South Africa.

ZAPU and ZANU

The inability of the Zimbabwean nationalist movement to remain unified in the face of major state repression is writ large in the political history of the early 1960s. White politicians used the state, the judiciary in particular, to create a police state where arrests could be made on very little evidence. Individuals could be arrested if authorities believed they might do something against the state in the future. The Law and Order Maintenance Act (LOMA) from 1960 was targeted at African nationalists, and its passage was referred to by Chief Justice Tredgold as the “point of no return” for racial cooperation and liberal politics in Southern Rhodesia in 1960. In protest, Tredgold resigned as chief justice and tried unsuccessfully to start a new liberal political party. There is no doubt that LOMA was the most effective weapon white politicians used to suppress nationalist political activity inside Southern Rhodesia. As could be expected, LOMA helped exacerbate African nationalist hatred for the police state it created, and led many young men and women to commit themselves to leaving Southern Rhodesia to join the liberation war. Equally importantly, the LOMA detention policies meant that many nationalists spent ten years in detention camps and prisons, which became centers for education and political mobilization.¹⁷

Although the Rhodesian Front government had detained thousands of African nationalists by 1964 in anticipation of the UDI in 1965, the ability to arrest and detain nationalists was partly facilitated by the split in the nationalist movement that occurred officially in August 1963. The Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) broke away from the Zimbabwean African People’s Union (ZAPU), and the ensuing political violence between their followers inside Rhodesia in 1963 and 1964 made it easier for the police to arrest individuals and to do so under the justification of “restoring peace.” The rhetorical violence on the part of both parties, in their publications, show how irreconcilable the two groups of leaders became after having developed the nationalist movement together from the late 1950s into the early 1960s. The traditional narrative explaining the ZAPU–ZANU split

¹⁷ See Munyaradzi Munochiveyi, *Prisoners of Rhodesia: Inmates and Detainees in the Struggle for Zimbabwean Liberation, 1960–1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Jocelyn Alexander “The Productivity of Political Imprisonment: Stories from Rhodesia,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 47, no. 2 (2019), 300–24.

revolves around a group of intellectuals in ZANU who became increasingly frustrated with the direction of the movement under the leadership of Nkomo by 1962–63. The main accusations against Nkomo's leadership are assumed to be his initial support in London for the 1961 Southern Rhodesian Constitution, which he was later forced to reject; his continual travel outside of the country in pursuit of international solidarity for the nationalists; and his mishandling of the creation of a government in exile in Tanzania.¹⁸ While the latter issue is often seen as the most contentious, it is instrumental to later relations of ZANU and ZAPU with Julius Nyerere, the Tanzanian president. According to Nkomo, he was originally given the go ahead to form a Zimbabwean government in exile in Dar es Salaam, but by the time the rest of the ZAPU leadership managed to reach Dar es Salaam, Nyerere had changed his mind and told those leaders who were to form ZANU that he was opposed to the idea to form such a government in exile. After this, both Nkomo and his supporters, and those who would go on to form ZANU, rushed back to Rhodesia to organize themselves.¹⁹ This led to major problems for those who had left Rhodesia, especially for Robert Mugabe, who was out on bail at the time. In August 1963, ZANU was eventually formed at the home of Enos Nkala in Highfield Township in Salisbury. The Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole was chosen to lead ZANU at that time. According to a quote in Martin Meredith's biography of Mugabe, Enos Nkala was to have pronounced, "Now I am going to see to it that Joshua Nkomo is crushed."²⁰ To compete

¹⁸ For the NDP's own admission that their first major act of international diplomacy, participating in the constitutional talks in London in 1961, was a failure, see *Radar*, vol. 12, March 9, 1961, 1/156/1, vol. 4, BTS Southern Rhodesia, TS81, High Commissioner, Salisbury, 1960–63, National Archives of South Africa. "We make no bones about our part in the Southern Rhodesian Constitutional Conference, it was, to say the least, bad political performance." For a detailed discussion of the problems of this first act of major diplomacy by Nkomo, Reverend Sithole, Herbert Chitepo, and George Silundika, see John Day, "Southern Rhodesian African Nationalists and the 1961 Constitution," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 2 (1969), 221–47.

¹⁹ Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life* (London: Methuen, 1984), 109–19; For the most detailed ZANU version of the split, see Maurice Nyagumbo, *With the People: An Autobiography from the Zimbabwe Struggle* (Salisbury: Graham Publishing, 1980), 162–94; for the impact of the split on political violence, see Scarnecchia, *Urban Roots*, 134–56.

²⁰ Martin Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 32.

with the new ZANU party, ZAPU then formed the People's Caretaker Council as the ZAPU formation in Southern Rhodesia.

Examples of rhetorical violence in the publications of both ZANU and ZAPU at the time demonstrate the acrimonious nature of public discourse. An April 2, 1964 lead story in ZAPU publication *The Sun* claimed in its title, "Sithole runs into hiding as 6,000 people welcome Nkomo at Fort Victoria." Reverend Sithole and many of the ZANU leadership were from the Fort Victoria region, so the ZAPU perspective emphasized the popularity of Nkomo and the "tribalism" of ZANU: "While more than 6,000 singing, dancing, cheering and ululating sons and daughters of Mother Zimbabwe were giving the national president and lion of Zimbabwe, *Chibwechitedza* Joshua Nkomo, a hero's welcome into Fort Victoria, Ndabaningi Sithole, the self-styled leader of the insignificant, tribalistic and imperialistic ZANU ran into hiding with six non-Victorian mercenaries."²¹ The reference to "non-Victorian" referred to the idea that Sithole, who was from the Fort Victoria [Masvingo] area, needed outsiders to defend him on his home turf. The reference to Nkomo as *Chibwechitedza*, is based on a chiShona name for someone who is like a "slippery rock," or an escape artist; someone who could escape dangerous situations.²² In Nkomo's case, this label continued to apply as he would escape assassination attempts and arrests at many points in his political career. Not yet done, the author then goes on to disparage the other ZANU leaders, referring to them as "the Mugabes, Takawiras, Makombes, Mawemas, Zvobgos, Ziyambe, and a few other tribalistic stooges and power-hungry political rejects." Echoing a common insult used by both parties, the author described these leaders as "sell-outs" who had been "rejected by their own relatives who put national before tribal cause." The article ends by praising Nkomo "and his political policies of majority rule now under one man one vote and independence within this year."²³ As will be shown below, ZANU writers would be just as caustic in their criticisms of Nkomo and ZAPU.

²¹ *The Zimbabwe Sun*, vol. 1, no. 6, April 2, 1964, RG 84, Foreign posts of the DOS, Entry number P 847, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), File: U.S. Consulate General Subject files relating to labor matters, 1962–1969, Container 1, USNA.

²² For an interesting analysis of the political meanings of *Chibwechitedza* as a political label, see Clapperton Mavhunga, *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 173–200.

²³ *Ibid.*, n. 21.

Amendments to the Law and Order Maintenance Act by the Rhodesian Front Government, 1964–1965

In 1964, the Rhodesian minister of justice and law and order, Clifford Dupont, found a way around a constitutional challenge to the ongoing detentions of African nationalists, such as ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo and ZANU leaders Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe. Dupont combined restrictions in Section 44A of LOMA with provisions of the Protected Places Act of 1959. This allowed Dupont to restrict access to the detainees in the Wha Wha prison and Gonakudzingwa camps and to keep the media away from the African nationalist leadership by declaring their camps as “protected places.” Dupont also included a “hanging clause” to LOMA, requiring the death penalty for those charged with the use of petrol bombs, and extended detentions without trials from 90 to 265 days. Describing these changes in the *Central African Examiner*, “Zhuwawo,” a pen name for a nationalist leader, claims that all the amendments and restrictions eventually would fail. “But there is one thing which my colleague lawyer Dupont fails to realise: that there is a limit to repressive laws. You cannot go on indefinitely. Reaction breeds reaction; a repressive government would make its citizens react against it and the repressive laws become ineffective.” The author goes on to say that “you cannot defeat a man’s nationalist feelings by repressive measures. Nationalism is a religion. It is rooted in a man’s heart and in his mind. Once a man decides to free himself from oppression it becomes a mental case.” The writer concludes: “You can jail, restrict, hang, shoot, whip or burn him on the stake, but all the same he will continue. . . . Repressive measures, instead of curbing him or deterring him, give him the sense of martyrdom if he suffers the punishment.”²⁴

Even before November 11, 1965, when the Rhodesian Front’s UDI was issued, LOMA was the centerpiece of the Smith government’s suppression of African nationalists, Desmond Lardner-Burke, the government’s minister of justice and law and order, came to embody the injustices of LOMA, as he used the law to arrest and detain African leaders and the rank and file of the nationalist movement. Writing from the remote restriction area of Gonakudzingwa in March 1965, ZAPU’s leader Nkomo commented on Lardner-Burke’s new LOMA amendment

²⁴ “Zhuwawo’s Bush Lawyer says . . . Dupont is Wrong,” *Central African Examiner*, May 1964, 15–16.

that allowed him to restrict or detain Africans for five years rather than one year without a new hearing.²⁵ Nkomo wrote, “I am surprised by people like Lardner-Burke who think that they can stop the sun from rising by the mere act of legislation.” After repeating the claim that majority rule is the only possibility for the future, Nkomo declared, “Some of these laws may be used in reverse in the-not-too-distant future. Let that be clear to Mr. Lardner-Burke. Of course, as a majority Government we shall not need such stupid laws.”²⁶ The ZAPU publication, *African Home News*, reported some of the “unbelievably severe sentences” under LOMA, citing the example of a Mr. Joseph Shasha, who “was sentenced to four years in prison for picking a stone and threatening to throw it at a police officer during a scuffle. He did not throw the stone, and no one was hurt.” The same report described how Mr. Josiah Samuriwo was “sentenced to two-and-half years’ hard labor when he was found guilty of ‘assaulting, resisting and obstructing’ two white policemen.”²⁷ Samuriwo was charged with allegedly telling the constables “that they were ‘white skinned pigs’ who would go home bare footed.” Samuriwo claimed that he was beaten and arrested at the police charge office when he went there to report police abuse.²⁸

Diplomatic efforts around UDI were mostly limited to Commonwealth countries negotiating with Ian Smith and the Rhodesian Front government. There was not much hope at this stage that the African nationalists would have a meaningful say in the negotiations. In January 1965, American diplomats reported on a statement made by Ian Smith when he spoke to a crowd of 400 at Gwanda. He stated:

²⁵ Larry Bowman writes that the SR Government “detained 495 persons in 1959 and 1,791 from the beginning of 1964 to June 1965 . . . Under the original LOMA, restriction orders were for three months, but they now can be for terms up to five years and they are always renewable.” Larry Bowman, *Politics in Rhodesia* (Harvard University Press, 1973), 60.

²⁶ “Lardner-Burke Is a Desperate Man,” *African Home News*, March 20, 1965, “From Gonakudzingwa, Restricted Area,” Eileen Haddon Collection, Reel 2g, Center for Research Libraries, MF-2881, Reel 11.

²⁷ “Victims of ‘Law and Order,’” *African Home News*, May 22, 1965, p. 1, Eileen Haddon Collection, Reel 2g, CRL MF-2881, Reel 11.

²⁸ Samuriwo was charged with assault and resisting, or obstructing, two white constables. “Josiah Samuriwo Jailed for Two and Half Years,” in “Victims of ‘Law and Order,’” *African Home News*, May 22, 1965, p. 1, Eileen Haddon Collection, Reel 2g, CRL MF-2881, Reel 11.

If the British Government's attitude was that Rhodesia could only have independence when it had an African majority, then there was no need for him to go to London. Also if the British Government was serious in suggesting a constitutional conference at which Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole would be present, such a conference would not take place in his lifetime.²⁹

The road to the UDI on November 11, 1965 was therefore travelled without substantial interference from the nationalist movements, most of whose leaders had been arrested and detained. This suppression was not lost on African leaders in other countries, as particularly expressed at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah and Tanzania's Julius Nyerere. Kenya's Tom Mboya, a leading trade unionist and outspoken politician, issued a statement about the lack of British concern for Nkomo, who remained in detention in 1965. At the time of UDI, Mboya was Kenya's minister for justice and constitutional affairs and also the secretary general of KANU, Kenya's ruling party. Mboya chastised the British for accepting the Rhodesian government's illegal detention of Nkomo and other African leaders, declaring that "the present Rhodesian attitude . . . was a mockery of British justice and an attempt to undermine the judiciary." He went on: "It is significant that these are the actions of a British dependent territory. Had these same actions taken place in an independent African state, the world would have been told by the same minority European regime of Rhodesia how irresponsible and untrustworthy African leaders can be."³⁰ Stating this in November 1964, four years after most African colonies had gained their independence, and eleven months since Kenya's Independence, Mboya and others noted the hypocrisy in the different treatment of the new African "race state" versus the white, or European "race state" in southern Africa.

²⁹ AmConGen Salisbury, "Deemphasis of UDI in Referendum Campaign," November 2, 1964, A-365 POL 15-4, Rhod 1/1/6, USNA, General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Political and Defense: POL 14 RHOD to POL 16, Political Recognition RHOD, Box 2606, Declassified NND 959000.

³⁰ From AmEmbassy Nairobi to Department of State, "Kenyan Reaction to the Rhodesia and Mozambique Political Situations," November 27, 1964, A-381 POL 15-5 RHOD USNA RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1964-66, Political and Defense: POL 14 RHOD to POL 16, Political Recognition RHOD, Box 2606, Declassified NND 959000.

The Unilateral Declaration of Independence and Race States in Southern Africa, 1966–1970

A number of scholars have written detailed studies on the diplomacy around the UDI.³¹ One thing to note is that Zimbabwean nationalists were, in large part, ignored during that diplomacy. That absence, and what was seen as an acquiescence on the part of the British to the Rhodesian Front, contributed to the strong animosity – or perhaps visceral hatred would be a better way of putting it – shared among Zimbabwean nationalists toward the British for allowing the UDI to occur. Many nationalist leaders were hopeful in 1963 and 1964, when they were arrested and put into prison or detention under the LOMA provisions, that they would not have to wait too long for a transfer to majority rule and would be asked to negotiate their roles in a transitional government. The notion of “PGs” or “prison graduates” had been the common experience of nationalists in British India, and then in Africa starting with Kwame Nkrumah in the Gold Coast in 1951 when he was released directly from prison to the state house to assume leadership of domestic policies. Many other leaders in former African colonies had experienced similar paths from prison to state house, however the leaders of ZANU and ZAPU were not to be as fortunate. Nkomo, Sithole, and Mugabe, along with many other leaders, would spend the first ten years of the illegal UDI government in detention. While in detention, the leadership of both organizations did their best to stay in contact with their allies and supporters inside and outside of Rhodesia. They hoped that international pressure could force the collapse of the Smith regime based on its illegality and the sanctions designed and implemented by the British and the United Nations.

The Rhodesian Front government, from its own perspective, grew in confidence after the British and international community failed to act beyond economic sanctions. Almost a year after the UDI, Ian Smith

³¹ On the British response leading up to the UDI, see Carl P. Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence: A Study in International Crisis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Anthony Verrier, *The Road to Zimbabwe: 1890–1980* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986), 129–61; Kate Law, “Pattern, Puzzle, and Peculiarity: Rhodesia’s UDI and Decolonisation in Southern Africa,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 45, no. 5 (2017), 721–28; Zaki Laïdi, *The Super-Powers and Africa: The Constraints of a Rivalry: 1960–1990* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).

addressed the Rhodesian Front Congress in September 1966 with his usual “us against the world” rhetoric, suggesting that Rhodesia was building a wall between itself and its enemies: “Smith said that the seizure of independence had been ‘the most important operation of all, building the new wall, a wall which was to hold back the flood waters.’”³² Smith also criticized a recent Commonwealth prime minister’s conference, which he described as the “most unpleasant, racial-conscious, color-conscious PM’s conference ever held,” which had “impertinence to discuss our Rhodesian problems in our absence, a violation of the most fundamental rights not only of democracy but of law.”³³ Such statements characterized Smith’s hyperbolic style that diplomats tended to ignore, but which had a ready audience in the white settler world, including a sympathetic community among powerful lobbies in the United States.

Understanding that the struggle was now going to be a long-term conflict, capable African nationalist leaders such as Herbert Chitepo – who would go on to lead ZANU’s military efforts from outside Rhodesia while ZANU’s executives remained in detention in Rhodesia – increasingly focused their disdain on the British for their role in allowing the UDI to happen and for allowing Rhodesia to continue to function. In a 1967 interview, Chitepo, as the National Chairman of ZANU, responded to a question about the role of Britain in the Zimbabwean struggle. Chitepo was asked what he thought of those who claimed that “freedom fighters in Zimbabwe are fighting in order to create a situation which would compel Britain to intervene militarily.” “If that was the situation,” Chitepo replied, “it would be quite easy.” He emphasized that the British had said they would not intervene after the UDI “unless there was a breakdown of law and order.” According to Chitepo, there had been many examples afterward of the breakdown of law in order, including the illegality “of anything that is being done by Ian Smith.” His main point, however, was the racial element in what the British had in mind. What they meant, according to Chitepo, “was that they would consider it

³² Ian Smith speech to Rhodesian Front Congress, September 23, 1966, Salisbury to Secretary of State, Control 262, September 24, 1966, POL 12 RF, POL 24 RF, Box RG 0084, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Entry P 818, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe); US Consulate General, Salisbury, Unclassified Subject Files, 1966–70, 1966: CR to SP, Container 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

a breakdown of law and order the moment there are sufficient white necks or white throats cut. I think this is what they meant, and that they would intervene for that purpose.” Chitepo then suggested that if ZANU’s strategy had simply been to get the British to intervene, then “all we needed to do was to look for a few white throats to cut.” He argued that racial violence was not part of ZANU’s pattern, arguing that “[o]ur intention is a fairly simple and straight forward one – we want to establish in Zimbabwe an African Government, a government of the majority of the people who are by nature Africans. . . . [W]e are not going to try and get it by asking for aid of the British. In fact we are at war with Britain herself.” Chitepo concluded, “We are not regarding Britain as in any way different from Smith. They are two accomplices.”³⁴ Chitepo’s frustration with the British was shared among other nationalists. They felt that whatever claims the British could make to the universal ideals of justice and “fair play” were destroyed by the continued existence of an illegal Rhodesian government after the UDI. From the nationalists’ position, the only way for the British to regain their respect would be to support their efforts to remove Smith from power and turn the government over to leaders elected by majority rule.

An example of the disdain with which Zimbabwean nationalists held the British was expressed in the *ZANU News* of September 7, 1965, which criticized the British for not sufficiently challenging Smith over the UDI. The editorial pointed to a potential “race war” that would have extensive repercussions. “The moral here is that Britain is looking for other countries to associate with a solution which she well knows contains ill-concealed seeds of a racial conflagration potentially capable of engulfing the whole world.”³⁵ Such an argument pointed out that the “race war” concept was also very much on the minds of African nationalists, and the onus for such a war was placed on the

³⁴ Interview with Herbert Chitepo, *Zimbabwe News*, ZANU Lusaka, September 13, 1967 [no vol. or no. given on original], listed as “East Africa Edition,” 1967, RG 0084, Entry# P 818: Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]: US Consulate General, Salisbury: Unclassified Subject Files, 1966–70, 1967: ACC to 1968: PER Container 2, USNA.

³⁵ “Editorial: Britain Unmasks Her Own Hypocrisy over the Political Deadlock in Zimbabwe,” *ZANU News*, vol. 1, no. 6, September 7, 1965, p. 3, RG 0084, Entry P 818: Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]: US Consulate General, Salisbury: Unclassified Subject Files, 1966–70, 1967: ACC to 1968: PER, Container 2, USNA.

British in their acquiescence to Smith and the white settlers who had seemed to have got away with the UDI.

A week after this publication and a month before the UDI, on September 14, 1965, ZANU issued a “special bulletin” from Dar es Salaam. The report celebrates the first “direct confrontation with the enemy”:

the Party’s military wing the ‘Crocodile Group’ has with barely no sophisticated weapons but simply knives, bows and arrows, spears and axes and above all the dire determination to dare fight a heavily armed enemy, had implemented stage one of the Party’s five-point master-plan – OPERATION CONFRONTATION – commendably.”³⁶

These first attempts to infiltrate into Rhodesia by the first groups of liberation soldiers were not exceptionally successful from a military perspective, but these did have a major psychological and political impact. The ability to send fighters into Rhodesia and to engage with Rhodesian forces also permitted ZANU and ZAPU to claim a much more important legitimacy within the OAU and at the United Nations, for example. They were also in a better position to approach nations in the Eastern bloc and in Africa for military training and weapons. The Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) under ZAPU received initial support from the Soviet Union and Egypt, and the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) under ZANU received aid from China and Tanzania. Both armies would then receive significant assistance from Eastern European nations as well, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

The first major incursion into Rhodesian territory by a joint ZAPU and South African ANC group in July 1967 came under heavy criticism in ZANU publications where it was viewed to be an opportunistic alliance and mission designed to gain control of aid from the OAU’s Liberation Committee at the expense of ZANU’s ZANLA. In ZANU’s *Zimbabwe News*, an article entitled “Down with the Alliance” lambasted ZAPU and South African ANC leaders for orchestrating the mission. Calling ZAPU’s James Chikerema and South African ANC leader Oliver Tambo “careerists” and comparing them to the Katanga leader Moise Tshombe, the author made the point: “There exists within the Southern Africa nationalist movement a reactionary bunch

³⁶ Ibid.

whose ideas of revolution consists chiefly of sacrificing the precious blood of a few freedom fighters in order to create a favorable impression among their international backers.”³⁷ The author states that this new ZAPU–ANC military alliance was a major tactical error: “Here was irresponsible clowning at its best: James Chikerema and Oliver Tambo unwittingly granting South Africa a perfect diplomatic excuse for military intervention in Rhodesia. We have never for a moment accused PCC [People’s Caretaker Council] of being serious about anything, let alone about revolutionary affairs.”³⁸ The author noted that since an OAU summit was near, “A PCC–ANC alliance was announced and a batch of ANC youths were hastily sent across the Zambezi, the aim of it all being to impress the Liberation Committee and get more cash.” The article suggests that besides these issues, it was also the case that South African and Zimbabwean blacks had their differences, and it wasn’t clear that either would be able to fight for the other’s liberation. “The historical fact, if we must be honest with ourselves, does not allow us at this point to pretend that a Southern African, even though he may be black, can automatically find acceptance among the people of Zimbabwe.” The ZANU author concluded, “To shed our blood for our country and liberate ourselves is an honor which we Zimbabweans would never want to share with anybody at this stage Publicity stunts staged for no better purpose than to impress an impending international conference are a complete sell-out.”³⁹

This increased cooperation between the South African and Rhodesian militaries points to the dilemma created by ZAPU and ZIPRA’s cooperation with the South African ANC and its armed wing *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation). According to ZANU, the venture pointed out a potentially important problem confronting the liberation forces – the

³⁷ “Down with the Alliance,” *Zimbabwe News*, vol. 2, no. 19, October 6, 1967 USNA, April 2013, Day 1, file 2, RG 0084, Entry P 818: Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]: US Consulate General, Salisbury: Unclassified Subject Files, 1966–70, 1967: ACC to 1968: PER, Container 2, NARA II. Stephen Davies refers to this failed joint operation as “the last time the Congress would attempt military action against the South African government in the 1960s.” This failure was used by the South Africans as a rationale for supporting “white colonial buffer states.” Stephen Davies, *Apartheid’s Rebels: Inside South Africa’s Hidden War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 22–23.

³⁸ *Ibid.* The People’s Caretaker Council was what ZAPU was renamed within Rhodesia after being officially banned in Rhodesia, and after the 1963 split in ZAPU that led to the formation of ZANU.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

increased role of South African forces fighting to defend Rhodesia. After claiming that South Africa has added troops to “raise the strength of the fascist regular army in Rhodesia of 4,500 to nearly 10,000,” the author suggested “by admitting publicly that Vorster was sending troops to Rhodesia, Smith had conceded that the war raging in Rhodesia was of a scale too large for his tiny army to cope with.” But beyond this admission was a bigger potential danger that shaped much of the Cold War response to the Rhodesian military confrontation. There was always the possibility that Smith would try to use his forces to draw Zambia into a direct conflict and bring the South Africans and, more importantly, the Americans and their Western allies to support Smith against what would be “sold” as a communist-led invasion. The author argued that “Smith is now trying to blame the war of his own creation upon Zambia. . . . He has chosen to provoke Zambia in order to bolster up the fiction that Zambia is the source of his trouble and certain doom.” The author suggests that for Smith, in the “back of his mind is the burning desire to be recognized in imperialist circles He looks forward to an international imperialist army fighting for the salvation of his fascist regime. He is hankering after another Vietnam in Zimbabwe.”⁴⁰

Domestically, Smith continued to present an overconfident public position by assuring his supporters there was little to worry about militarily. For example, he commented in 1967 that “terrorist infiltration over the past months had passed off with very little concern . . . and we grow in strength every day.” He said he believed the guerrilla forces “have probably tried their strongest hand in the recent episode.” He thought that this “first joint effort of South African and Rhodesian terrorists working together” had been done to influence possible talks between the Rhodesians and the British. “Whenever these people feel there is a chance of Britain and Rhodesia coming to terms, they do this sort of thing because that is the last thing they want of course. Recognition of Rhodesia – this would be a serious blow to them.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ “Courting Trouble,” *Zimbabwe News*, vol. 2, no. 19, October 6, 1967, USNA, April 2013, Day 1, file 2, RG 0084, Entry# P 818: Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]: US Consulate General, Salisbury: Unclassified Subject Files, 1966–70, 1967: ACC to 1968: PER, Container 2, NARA II.

⁴¹ AmConsul Salisbury to SecState, POL 23, quoting interview with Ian Smith in *Rhodesia Herald*, September 7, 1967, RG 0084, Entry# P 818: Rhodesia [Zimbabwe]: US Consulate General, Salisbury: Unclassified Subject Files, 1966–70, 1967: ACC to 1968: PER, Container 2, NARA II.

These arguments and attitudes would persist into the 1970s and become an important part of negotiations that made the Western powers, specifically the United Kingdom and the United States, suspicious of Rhodesian claims of outside communist interference in the liberation war. This was the case before 1975 and the end of the Portuguese colonies in Southern Africa. Before the rapid decolonization of these colonies, the threat of communist intervention in Rhodesia seemed more imagined than real.⁴² As the next chapter will show, events in Angola and Mozambique quickly raised the stakes for a Cold War conflict in Rhodesia, and increased pressure for American and British diplomatic interventions with South Africa, the Frontline States, and Rhodesia itself. The next chapter will examine important trends in the period of 1970–75. The most important of these trends involve difficulties within ZANU and ZAPU to maintain unity within their individual organizations operating in Zambia and Tanzania and, later, in Mozambique. These internal troubles in ZAPU and ZANU would seriously impede the goal of unifying their military efforts to fight more effectively against the Rhodesian state in the early 1970s.

⁴² See Filipe Ribeiro de Menezes and Robert McNamara, *The White Redoubt, the Great Powers and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1960–1980* (London: Palgrave, 2018); Donal Lowry, “The Impact of Anti-communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture, ca. 1920s–1980,” *Cold War History* 7, no. 2 (2007), 169–94.