Rhodesian UDI

edited by
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ICBH Oral History Programme

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Rhodesian UDI

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Institute of Contemporary British History

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> **Sir Teddy Taylor, in 'Rhodesian UDI', seminar held 6 September 2000 (Institute of Contemporary British History, 2002, http://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/groups/ich/witness/diplomatic/RhodesiaUDI.aspx), p.58.**

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The British Government and Rhodesian UDI[1]

Richard Coggins

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Southern Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in November 1965 created arguably the most intractable problem in British foreign and colonial policy in the post-war period. For 15 years successive UK governments sought to end the rebellion by the white settler regime entrenched in Salisbury. Economic sanctions and political initiatives failed to convince the regime of Ian Smith to agree to concede power to the black majority in the country now known as Zimbabwe.[2] While decolonisation of other British African colonies had proceeded along a relatively linear constitutional path in the 1960s, Rhodesia's independence as Zimbabwe did not arrive until 1980 after a protracted guerrilla war and the loss of tens of thousands of lives.

Rhodesian independence raised several conflicting problems for Harold Wilson's Labour government. When Wilson assumed office on 16 October 1964, the only remaining African colonies of any significance were Northern Rhodesia (independent as Zambia twelve days after the British general election), Southern Rhodesia and Bechuanaland. By 1966 the last-named had gained independence as Botswana, and only Rhodesia remained to vex Wilson's government until the end of its term. Beset by ongoing economic crisis, the government had to reconcile backbench opinion, sceptical (if not hostile) criticism from the African Commonwealth, and pressure at the United Nations, with the need to dispose of the problem in a practicable way, taking into account essential economic interests in South Africa and Zambia. The principle dilemma for British policy makers was a classic one: balancing considerations of *Realpolitik* against fundamental principles of democracy for the black majority in Rhodesia.

The Rhodesian issue should not be divorced from the broader context of British imperial policy in the 1960s. Major international problems including the war in Vietnam, the Six Days' War in the Middle East, 'confrontation' between Britain, Malaysia and Indonesia in the Far East, war between India and Pakistan, and the development of nuclear weapons by the Chinese meant that Rhodesia was not always of the most immediate importance. Longer-term trends also mitigated the importance of UDI: the constant economic pressure on the government, committed to the defence of sterling within the fixed exchange rate system, eventually forced the withdrawal from East of Suez, the cancellation of major defence orders and a reduction of the overseas aid budget. The British government was concerned by the perceived increase in Communist, especially Chinese, influence in Africa. This fear was conditioned by the experience of the collapse of the Belgian Congo in 1960-5 and the danger that the USSR and China would exploit the declining influence of Britain to their own ends. Rhodesia played its part in this process by symbolising a new phenomenon in international politics: non-racial democracy became gradually more entrenched as a norm of international politics. This development was a logical outcome of the process of decolonisation itself as more and more African states gained representation at the UN and pressed for those areas of the continent still under colonial rule to be freed.

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1 This is a work in progress; please do not cite without permission.

2 For the sake of historical rather than political correctness, 'Rhodesia' refers to the British Colony of Southern Rhodesia before 1980, and 'Zimbabwe' to the Republic of Zimbabwe established on 18 April 1980. After Zambian independence on 27 Oct. 1964 Southern Rhodesia was almost always abbreviated to Rhodesia.

The central question to be addressed is, then, the attitude the British government took towards the Rhodesian problem, both in terms of its particular complexities and the wider world in which the problem arose. The aim of this paper and witness seminar is to assess the influences and constraints on British policy towards Rhodesia in the immediate post-decolonisation era.

With many conflicting demands to reconcile, what were the priorities of policy-makers? Did they change over time?

From the answers to this follow several important questions concerning the various measures taken to try to bring the rebellion to an end. Just how committed was Whitehall to non-racial democracy in southern Africa?

Would Harold Wilson have accepted a settlement short of 'No Independence Before Majority Rule'?

Were there tensions in Whitehall between, for example, the Commonwealth Relations Office (formally responsible for Rhodesia up to 1968) and the Foreign Office (responsible for the handling of the United Nations side and then the whole of Rhodesian policy after 1968)? Were divisions within the Cabinet a significant influence on policy?

Without losing sight of this essential issue, six or seven more specific areas can be identified as the most pressing issues for the government. The *political nature* of the problem, reconciling black and white African nationalism with their competing visions of the future of black political development, is the crux of the matter. At the same time, Rhodesia was an issue in British parliamentary politics, especially between the 1964 and 1966 general elections when Wilson had a tiny majority. Rhodesia was also a *regional and strategic* problem: both South Africa and Portugal, through Mozambique, took a close interest in political developments. Zambia was crucially involved from the beginning because of her economic dependence on Rhodesia, especially for her energy supplies, and because her copper exports were an essential raw material for Britain's export manufacturing industries. There was a *military* dimension to the problem, with frequent calls from African states for Britain to use force to end the rebellion at Commonwealth, United Nations and Organisation of African Unity meetings. While this pressure was always resisted, smaller-scale plans for military intervention were considered from time to time; the only practical upshot from this was the dispatch of a squadron of RAF Javelin fighters to Zambia to provide air defence. *Economic sanctions*, Britain's chosen method of confronting UDI, marked a new departure for the United Nations. Sanctions against Rhodesia involved the first application of measures under Chapter VII of the UN charter. *Intelligence* also played a role, with close links between the British MI6 and the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation. British perceptions of *African Nationalism* both within and outside Rhodesia were important. Neither ZAPU nor ZANU were prepared to work together to oppose the Rhodesian regime, severely weakening not only their ability to campaign against Ian Smith, but also their credibility in the eyes of British policy makers. Internationally UDI called into question the previously warm relationship between Britain and those to whom it had granted independence; manifestly in the case of relations between Wilson and leaders such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. Finally, Rhodesia was also a major *international* problem for the UK government, involving tactful diplomacy at both the United Nations and Commonwealth and management of the forthright denunciations of British policy at the OAU.

Political and Constitutional Issues

Rhodesia was a difficult issue politically for two reasons. Firstly, it was not a colony in the normal sense of the term. Since 1923 the territory had had internal self-government. There was not the direct Colonial Office control of the government and armed forces as was the case elsewhere in the colonial empire. Secondly, the colony's constitution, as amended in 1961, provided for elections on a restricted property franchise that effectively confined political power to the white settler minority. Not only that, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 debarred the black majority from

owning half the land in the country; the best land was reserved for white farmers. Blacks' access to urban areas was restricted by laws requiring the carrying of passes and was only allowed for employment and not for residence. In addition, in the period 1959-61 the Rhodesian government passed a series of laws, of which the most notorious was the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act, controlling political activity by black nationalists. From April 1964, indeed, the principal leaders of the two most prominent nationalist parties, ZANU and ZAPU, were detained and their organisations banned.

The Rhodesian social contract therefore rested on a *de facto* segregation of the races. It differed from South African *apartheid* in that the 1961 constitution was intended to offer the prospect of unimpeded progress towards majority rule. This meant that as Africans acquired the vote by economic progress on the lower-qualification 'B-roll' they would gain increasing political influence. Ian Smith, later Prime Minister of Rhodesia, resigned from the establishment United Federal party in 1961 on the grounds that the 1961 constitution was 'racialist', though he was later to claim that the same constitution was the basis for independence and indeed had been intended as such by the British government. Independence was an emotive issue for white Rhodesians precisely because of spirit of the 1961 constitution provided for gradual African political advance. There were residual powers for the appeal of constitutional amendments (but not existing laws) to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London if they contravened the Declaration of Rights that accompanied the new constitution. In addition Britain remained responsible for Rhodesia's external affairs. These two impediments to the full control of African advance by white Rhodesians left open the possibility, at least in the minds of whites, that the British government might intervene to accelerate the pace of black political advance.

In this context, UDI was not just a declaration that Rhodesia would refuse to accept the principle of unimpeded progress to majority rule. It was also an international statement that white Rhodesians were determined to resist the spread of Communism through the African continent. Paradoxically of course, the long-term effect of UDI was to strengthen the links between the nationalist movements and Chinese and Russian communism, as the political struggle became armed conflict in the 1970s. Yet it seemed to the Rhodesian Front at least that by declaring independence they refused to allow the vacuum left by British withdrawal from being filled by forces hostile to 'civilised standards'. The Rhodesian response to the 'wind of change' was resist the forces of democracy, not bend with it.

The singular characteristic of all of the Labour government's negotiations with the Rhodesian regime was the failure to agree on a constitutional formula that could provide a basis for independence. The famous 'five principles,'[3] were evolved in April 1965 and augmented by a sixth in January 1966,[4] but to accept the first was always to great a concession for the Rhodesians to make. The Rhodesian Front had been created and elected to retain white control of the pace of African advance, and the party would not concede on its very *raison d'être*. From the first negotiations in February and March 1965, to the frantic last-minute shuttle diplomacy leading up to UDI, to the 'talks about talks', and finally in the two major attempts to settle on board *HMS Tiger* and *Fearless*,

3 Viz.: 'the principle and intention of unimpeded progress to majority rule already enshrined in the 1961 constitution would have to be maintained and guaranteed; there would also have to be guarantees against retrogressive amendment of the Constitution; there would have to be immediate improvement in the political status of the African population; there would have to be progress towards ending racial discrimination; the British Government would need to be satisfied that any basis proposed for independence was acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole'. Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1978), pp.41-2.

4 By Wilson in a statement to the House of Commons on 25 Jan. The sixth principle stated that in any independence settlement there could be no oppression of the majority by the minority or of the minority by the majority.

the gap could not be bridged. Smith would not give up control of the pace of African advance, and Wilson would not grant that power to the regime.

How then did the British government machine view the problem? Was Rhodesia seen as a fag-end of empire, to be disposed of in the most expedient way possible? Or was it a matter of principle for politicians to acquit themselves with honour by creating a functioning multi-racial democracy in Central Africa? In the October 1964 election campaign, Wilson wrote to Dr Edwin Mutasa, Publicity Secretary of ZAPU, saying that 'The Labour party is totally opposed to granting independence to Southern Rhodesia so long as the government of that country remains under the control of a white minority.'[5] Yet the even after Wilson had withdrawn any offers of settlement short of NIBMAR in the aftermath of the *Tiger* talks, there can be little doubt that if the talks on board Fearless had reached agreement, independence for Rhodesia would have been offered before majority rule had been achieved. Indeed, it was inherent in the Six Principles that independence would come before majority rule: the second principle's reference to safeguards against retrogressive amendment presupposed that Rhodesia's black population needed constitutional protection against a white minority government wanting to thwart its political advance.

What then were the internal dynamics of British policy-making? It appears from the documentary record that most of the important decisions with respect to Rhodesia were not taken by Cabinet, or even by the most important committees thereof. The Defence and Overseas Policy Committee was important in the lead-up to UDI, but from April 1966 policy-making was restricted to the notorious Rhodesia (X) Committee, and telegrams and memoranda concerning talks with the regime were subject to a greatly restricted distribution. Rhodesia (X) did not include left-wingers like, for example, Barbara Castle (though Dick Crossman did attend).[6] However, although Wilson appears to have controlled access to Rhodesian policy fairly well, when it came to agreeing the *Tiger* terms, Castle was the only one formally to oppose.[7]

What of the influence of Whitehall and the Commonwealth Relations Office? Up until the merger of the Commonwealth and Foreign Offices in 1968, responsibility was divided between the two departments, with the CRO having the lead role but the Foreign Office taking responsibility for the United Nations side of the problem. The CRO was not the highest-profile department in the civil service and indeed has been criticised for failing to give proper advice to politicians.[8] In June 1965, Michael Stewart, then Foreign Secretary, wrote a forthright minute arguing for the transfer of responsibility for Rhodesia to the United Nations on the lines of the handover of the Palestine Mandate in 1948. While Stewart's argument for this was not explicitly framed in terms of departmental responsibility, this would of course have had the practical effect of removing Rhodesia entirely from the purview of the CRO. However, it is not clear that any interdepartmental rivalry reflected actual differences of opinion on how to resolve the Rhodesian crisis.

Parliamentary tactics also played an important part in limiting Wilson's freedom of action. Elected in 1964 with a majority of just 5, the government was always under pressure, especially after Foreign Secretary Patrick Gordon Walker's loss of the Leyton bye-election. However, while parliamentary arithmetic was certainly an overriding influence in ruling out full-scale military

5 Quoted in Windrich *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, p. 31.

6 See Barbara Castle *The Castle Diaries 1964-76* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 93 and Public Record Office, Kew [henceforward PRO] PREM 13/1120, Sir Burke Trend to Wilson 'Rhodesia (X) Committee', 3 May 1966.

7 See Castle, *The Castle Diaries* pp. 98-9.

8 See for example Kenneth Young, *Rhodesia and Independence: A Study in British Colonial Policy* (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1967), pp. 370, 505. In defence of the CRO, I have found no evidence at the PRO that Wilson's notorious 'weeks not months' pledge on the efficacy of sanctions was made on direct advice of civil servants. Nevertheless, it was in accord with the general expectation in senior Whitehall circles at the time.

action, it also helped maintain discipline on the Labour benches, in contrast with Edward Heath's difficulties in managing Conservative backbench opinion on the issue. In December 1965 in the vote in the Commons on the Order in Council imposing oil sanctions on Rhodesia, the Conservatives split three ways: the majority toed the party line and abstained, while about fifty voted against and some thirty voted for the government. After the March 1966 election the backbenches were less of an immediate concern for Wilson, though fears of a 'sell-out' to Smith conditioned the presentation of policy. It does not appear to have influenced the willingness of the government to accept the *Tiger* terms, for example.

Finally, there is the influence of the Rhodesian Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, to consider. While constitutionally he was the Queen's representative in Rhodesia (and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces), he was also the figurehead on which the British rested hopes of a return to legality after UDI. It was convenient for the British government to us Government House as a conduit for talks, especially in early 1966 when the official line was that there could be no parleying with rebels. Yet despite Gibbs constitutionally correct aloofness, he still exercised some political influence, perhaps most notably with respect to military action to end the rebellion, which would undoubtedly resulted in his resignation. However, in a more subtle way Gibbs' stoic exasperation played its part in pressing the British into talking with Smith; holed up in Government House and without telephone for a long period, reinforcing Gibbs' morale was a long-running concern for the British.

Regional and Strategic Issues

Of course, Rhodesian policy was never merely a bilateral affair. Rhodesia was only a part of the southern African sub-continent dominated by Henrik Verwoerd's South Africa. Portugal retained her 'overseas provinces' of Mozambique and Angola, and was determined to hold on to them, waging a guerrilla war against FRELIMO from 1961 in Mozambique. The whole region was interdependent in terms of its economic networks and transport infrastructure. Not only that, South Africa was Britain's third largest export market and the recipient of one third of British overseas investment in the 1960s. White opinion in South Africa was overwhelmingly in favour of UDI, and indeed the leader of the opposition, Sir de Villiers Graaff, criticised Verwoerd for giving insufficient help to Rhodesia. The British government was extremely wary of approaching the United Nations for mandatory sanctions against Rhodesia for fear of losing control of the issue and generating momentum for sanctions against South Africa too. The harm that this would do to the vulnerable British economy was too great to contemplate. Yet the problem cut both ways. By drawing the attention of the United Nations to southern Africa in an unfavourable light, Rhodesia damaged South African interests in other fields, particularly regarding the question of South West Africa, now Namibia.

Officially, the South African government maintained a policy of non-intervention, and non-compliance with sanctions, merely allowing 'normal levels of trade' to continue. Traditional South African foreign policy under Verwoerd had been characterised by non-interference with other countries domestic affairs, on the grounds that South Africa wished to prevent others intervening in the policy of *apartheid*. This was certainly the case when it came to formal diplomatic exchanges.[9] But behind the scenes South Africa did play a crucial role. First, 'normal levels of trade' did not mean that the South African government intervened to maintain trade at levels prevailing before UDI; instead, trade was allowed to find its natural level, especially when it came to oil. Second, discreet pressure was applied to induce Smith to talk to the British government.[10]

9 PRO PREM 13/1119, see for example Verwoerd to Wilson 26 April 1966.

10 PRO PREM 13/1120, see Salisbury to CRO, 4 May 1966 telegram 424.

However, the South Africans were not prepared to take so militant a stance that Smith's domestic position was undermined, let alone a black African state promoted.

Two inter-related questions then arise from South Africa's attitude:

1. Why did the British government not attempt to use the South African government sooner to prevent or reverse UDI (the first formal approach was not until April 1966)?

2. And how did British economic interests in South Africa affect the making of Rhodesian policy?

The other important regional problem arising from UDI was the position of Zambia. Zambia was extremely dependent on Rhodesia for access to the sea for its imports and for exporting her copper, for power from the Kariba hydroelectric station for the copper mines, and for coal from Wankie, also for the mines. The United Kingdom imported approximately 40 per cent of her copper from Zambia in the early 1960s and many important British export industries, especially electrical engineering, were dependent on Zambian copper to survive. In what ways did this economic dependence affect policy towards Rhodesia? It certainly affected Zambia's ability to impose sanctions on Rhodesia, but it is not clear how it affected British policy. On the one hand, full implementation of sanctions by Zambia would have hastened the downfall of the Rhodesian regime (the so-called 'quick kill'), but on the other the premature closure of the border would have left Zambia in dire economic straits, and very likely dependent on British support for the duration of the crisis.

Military Options

Most of the British Empire had been conquered, subdued and occupied at one time or another by military force, not least Rhodesia itself in the 1890s. Yet the UK government was, in the final analysis, unwilling to end the rebellion by the use of military force.

Why was this?

In other parts of the Commonwealth in the 1960s, Britain was not averse to fighting limited wars in support of its interests: in Malaysia (in its 'confrontation' with Indonesia), in Tanzania (where British troops helped restore order after army mutinies in 1964), in Aden and South Arabia after 1965. It is true that invading Rhodesia would have been a major military operation, on a much bigger scale than the other episodes listed, but straightforward military considerations were not the whole story.

The Labour Cabinet considered the use of force on two occasions: once in October 1965 and once in October 1966. On the recommendation of the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, which had met earlier that same day, the Cabinet ruled out the use of force in most contingencies at their meeting on 7 October 1965. While there could be no question of unilateral military action by the UK, or even a UK contribution to a multilateral UN force aimed at restoring constitutional government, the Cabinet would allow British troops to be used at the request of the Governor in the event of 'a general breakdown of law and order'. Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia, also made a request for British forces to be used to capture and guard the power station at Kariba (on the Rhodesian bank of the Zambesi) in order to pre-empt the denial of electricity to Zambia by Rhodesia. When the Cabinet considered this request on 30 November 1965, they agreed that the loss of Kariba power supplies would justify limited military action to retake the power station, despite the risk that it had been mined by the Rhodesians.[11] British Javelin fighter aircraft were sent to Zambia at the same time to provide Kaunda with air cover, not only to defend Zambia but also to preclude others from doing the same: memories of the potential Soviet military involve-

11 PRO CAB 128/39/CC (65)/66th meeting, 30 Nov. 1965. See also Martin Rupiya, *Landmines in Zimbabwe: A Deadly Legacy* (Harare: SAPES Books, 1998), ch. 2, which tells how the Federal Government had established the first minefield in the country to guard Kariba.

ment in the Congo a few years before meant that Britain was keen to deny others any opportunity by monopolising Zambian airfields.[12]

Any British operation would have faced obstacles other than the military ones however. British chiefs of staff were reluctant to contemplate military operations given the strength of the opposition, but also perhaps because of intangible factors such as a loyalty to 'kith and kin' in the Rhodesian forces. Certainly this was the accusation made by African Commonwealth leaders (Nkrumah being one of the more vehement exponents of British military intervention), but it is difficult to evaluate such intangible factors with any degree of certainty from the official record. It is true that in the report of the British Military mission to Lusaka to assess Zambian defence needs, officers stressed the large-scale undertaking that armed intervention would entail: a huge bombing campaign would be necessary to neutralise the RRAF and any invasion force would have to be of divisional strength.[13] At a time when Labour were trying in their defence review to cut defence spending and commitments, the prospect of withdrawing forces from Germany to take part in an operation the success of which could not be assured and whose long-run purpose was uncertain. The capacity of Zambian airfields was limited, and any carrier-borne helicopter force operating from the Madagascar strait would have had fuel enough to transport paratroops to Salisbury but not to fly them out again if things went wrong. On the other side of the coin, links between the British and Rhodesian armed forces went back decades and went to the very top - for example, the South African-born Assistant Chief of the British Air Staff (Policy and Plans), Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Fletcher, had been educated in Southern Rhodesia, trained in the Southern Rhodesian Air Force and worked for the RAF training school at Belvedere in Rhodesia during the second world war.[14] Invading Rhodesia would have been a major undertaking even if the loyalty of British forces could have been assured beyond all doubt.

The Cabinet again considered using force to end the rebellion on 13 October 1966. Denis Healey, the Defence Secretary, described the impracticability of mounting any sufficiently powerful mission based in Aden and with forward bases in Nairobi, Lusaka and Blantyre (in Malawi). There was no possibility of surprise as it would take ten weeks to move three brigades, and this long lag time would foster the opportunity for South African opposition to mount, not to mention increasing the likelihood that Kariba power supplies would be cut off. Even if the initial invasion were successful, Britain would be committed to occupying a country with a bitterly hostile European population with extended supply lines. The Cabinet discussed more limited measures to enforce mandatory UN sanctions more strictly, but even a full blockade of Mozambique would be a massive undertaking.[15]

What then kept Britain from invading Rhodesia? Was it a straightforward military impossibility? Were considerations of loyalty and morale paramount? Why were smaller-scale military options discounted, such as the occupation of the Kariba power station? How concerned was the British government by prospective military action by others, such as the OAU or the Russian- or Chinese-backed African Nationalists?

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12 The Javelins were sent on the condition that no other country would be permitted by Kaunda to send aircraft without British government approval. They were withdrawn in Aug. 1966.

13 PRO DEFE 5/165/12, *Report of the British Military Mission to Lusaka*, Jan. 1966.

14 Obituary in *The Independent*, 6 Jan 1999.

15 PRO CAB 128/46/CC (66)/ 50th meeting, 13 Oct. 1966, confidential annex.

Sanctions[16]

Given that military force was not an option, Britain's chosen method of dealing with the rebellion was economic sanctions. Immediately UDI was declared, the government took powers to impose sanctions with the Southern Rhodesia Act 1965. Straight away, Rhodesia was removed from the Commonwealth Preference Area and the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement, and bans placed on imports of tobacco and other important Rhodesian primary products such as iron ore, asbestos and chrome. In December the import of oil was banned, and in April 1966, following the resolution in the United Nations, Britain began the Beira patrol off Mozambique to blockade oil for Rhodesia by that route. After the failure of the *Tiger* talks, in December 1966 Britain applied at the UN for selective mandatory sanctions, which were made comprehensive in May 1968 after the Rhodesian regime carried out death sentences on three black murderers despite the prerogative of mercy being exercised by the Queen.

The British government did not have a great deal of experience in successfully applying economic sanctions in peacetime. The closest parallels were the non-oil sanctions in 1935 against Italy to protest the occupation of Abyssinia and the arms embargo during the Spanish Civil War. Neither example was auspicious; indeed, as both previous blockades had been closer to home, they were arguably easier to enforce. Nevertheless, there were arguments on the other side. The Rhodesian economy, or at least that part of it run by whites, was heavily dependent on exports of tobacco for foreign exchange earnings. Financially too the banking system was reliant on the seasonal rolling-over of farmers' credit, and British financial sanctions were intended to put the squeeze on the farming sector by denying them credit. Manufacturing industry was reliant on foreign, especially British, components. Most importantly, Rhodesia imported all its oil, mainly through a new pipeline from Beira on the Mozambique coast to a refinery at Feruka near Umtali. On the other hand, Rhodesia was not entirely dependent on oil for its energy needs: the Kariba hydroelectric station and coal from Wankie also played an important part in sustaining the white economy and way of life.

Sanctions were not successful in the short term, though they did contribute to the eventual demise of the regime in 1978-80. Why then were they resorted to? Was there a serious expectation that they could be effective, given the foreknowledge that South Africa and Portugal would not comply? Or were they just a fig-leaf to appease those calling for the use of force? If not, why was so little done to deter sanctions-breaking, for example by vigorous prosecution of blockade-runners? What explains the disastrous attempt to block government pensions payments to British citizens in Rhodesia?

The involvement of business interests in the whole question is indeed important. Most of those involved in commerce and manufacturing in Rhodesia were dismayed by UDI, the sanctions it entailed, and the higher costs imposed. But although small private initiatives were launched by various businessmen, there was never a willingness to oppose Smith publicly and form a nucleus of opposition to the Rhodesian Front that could form an alternative government. Evan Campbell, former Rhodesian High Commissioner in London and Chairman of the Standard Bank, was often spoken of as a candidate for an alternative government. With others such as Bob Newsom, Brian O'Connell and Hardwicke Holderness, business interests appear to have exerted a discreet but inconclusive influence on Smith to negotiate after UDI. On the other hand, the interests of smaller businesses, particularly farmers, may well have been more decisive as far as Smith was concerned.

But it was not just in Britain and Rhodesia that business interests were concerned by UDI. Important mining interests in Zambia and South Africa were affected by the crisis, and figures

16 For this sections I am indebted to Evan Fountain, 'Purposes of Economic Sanctions: British Objectives in the Rhodesian Crisis 1964-1966' University of Oxford DPhil thesis (forthcoming).

such as Sir Ronald Prain, Sir Albert Robinson, Harry Oppenheimer and not least Tiny Rowland all made discreet contact with the British government. It would be interesting to know how influential the British government considered these interests to be compared to the internal dynamics of UDI. Especially important are Lonrho's interests in the Beira pipeline episode in early 1966.

Role of Intelligence

As always in contemporary political history, it is difficult to assess the importance of intelligence and the secret 'para-political' world. One of the most important accounts of UDI was written by the head of the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation, Ken Flower.[17] This revealed some of the links between Rhodesian, South African, Portuguese and indeed British intelligence services in the 1960s. But it is not the whole picture. Other fragments include the allegation that Rhodesia had an agent in Kenneth Kaunda's private office[18] until April 1966 and also that there was a Rhodesian mole in the Cabinet Office typing pool[19] for nine months in 1966-7. If these stories are true, then Rhodesian intelligence had good information on British government intentions at critical times, at least insofar as they were communicated to the Zambian government.

However, information on British intelligence on the Rhodesians is scanty. The minutes of the Cabinet Joint Intelligence Committee are still closed to researchers, but there is evidence that Flower visited London at least once and actually met Wilson and Sir Burke Trend, if not others too.[20] It would be interesting to know how well-informed the British government was from secret sources and what those sources were. In particular, the British government appeared to lack sources within the Rhodesian Front, to the extent that rumours of Rhodesian Cabinet splits and disagreements may have given rise to false expectations of the effects of sanctions. How good was British intelligence on the inner workings of white Rhodesian politics? Did it ever create false optimism that sanctions were working better than they were?

African Nationalism and the Commonwealth, UN and OAU

In the years of opposition before the general election of 1964, Labour, and in particular Wilson and Callaghan (the Colonial Affairs spokesman from 1957 to 1961) had established warm relations with African Nationalist leaders, including Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia. Labour identified broadly identified itself with the accelerated decolonisation programme begun by Iain Macleod in Macmillan's last Cabinet, but opposed concessions to white minority rule in southern Africa. But UDI threatened this progressive stance and the relationship with newly-independent black Africa. It was a direct challenge to the ethos of black nationalism and Pan-Africanism's creed of the ending of colonialism throughout Africa. Britain's perceived equivocation over Rhodesia was to cost it dear in its hopes and aspirations for the Commonwealth as an inclusive multi-racial organisation capable of spanning the world's North-South divide.

Britain repeatedly opposed resolutions at the United Nations calling for the use of force, and at meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers (in June 1965, January 1966, September 1966, and January 1969) worked hard to limit the terms of the final (by convention unanimous) communiqué to support for British policy. The OAU was less amenable to British influence however, and was

17 Ken Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record. Rhodesia into Zimbabwe 1964-1981* (London: John Murray, 1987).

18 Roy Christie, *For the President's Eyes Only: The Story of John Brumer, Agent Extraordinary* (Johannesburg: Hugh Keartland Publishers, 1971).

19 Nigel West, *A Matter of Trust: MI5 1945-72* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1982), pp.158-9.

20 PRO PREM 13/1116, see Sir Burke Trend to Wilson, 10 Feb. 1966, 'We must not forget that during our recent secret meeting with Flower he told us that the senior members of the Armed Forces were perhaps more "reliable" than we had hitherto supposed…'

much more condemnatory of the British refusal to use force. Indeed, in December 1965 the OAU Council of Foreign Ministers went so far as to pass a resolution calling on all members to break off diplomatic relations with Britain if the rebellion was not ended within two weeks. Diallo Telli, Secretary-General of the OAU, was something of a bugbear for the Foreign Office for his militancy.

What then was the attitude of the British government to pressure at the United Nations? In what circumstances would the veto have been used in the Security Council? Why did it take so long to apply for mandatory sanctions, when arguably their earlier imposition could have greatly increased the impact of the sanctions policy generally?

Politically, the attitude of the Commonwealth played a major role in influencing the presentation of British policy. It is less clear whether it was regarded more seriously than as a hindrance to the successful disposal of the Rhodesian problem. Wilson set great store by the Commonwealth when he came into office. The creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, for example, owed a great deal to his interest and initiative. Nevertheless, UDI played its part in fostering disillusion with the ideals of the Commonwealth. It would be interesting to know the general attitude of the British governmental machine to the demands of African leaders within the Commonwealth.

Within Rhodesia, the African leaders of ZAPU and ZANU appeared irreconcilable. ZANU had broken away from ZAPU in August 1963, and during Wilson's visit in October 1965 it was all British diplomats could do to get Nkomo and Sithole to meet Wilson at the same time. Were Rhodesian nationalists ever seen as serious political players by the British government? Or were they dismissed as irreconcilables? What of the position of the constitutional nationalist party, the United People's Party, which contested the limited-franchise elections on the B-roll?

Recapitulation

Briefly, then, the main questions can be restated.

Was UDI just a 'nine-days'-wonder' to be managed as an awkward problem for international diplomacy?

Or was it a fundamental challenge to British policy and interests in southern Africa?

Was there ever a serious expectation that sanctions would do the trick and bring the Smith regime to its knees?

Was the Commonwealth nothing more than the guilty conscience of the British government more concerned by developments elsewhere in the world? Was it more important to keep South Africa sweet and thereby safeguard British economic interests?

Or was it really true that Rhodesia was beyond the capacity of the British government to resolve?

The Conservative Party and Rhodesian UDI[1]

Sue Onslow

London School of Economics

From this distance in time, the debate within the Conservative Party over the future of Southern Rhodesia seems like an internal war. As Southern Rhodesia was part of Britain's transference of power in Africa, on one level the crucial factors appear to have been Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech in Cape Town in January 1960 and the subsequent dissolution of the ill-fated Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. However, for the Tories, the issue of Southern Rhodesia went deeper than disagreements over African decolonisation and concerns over Britain's strategic and economic interests in the region. This unique colony appears to have been inextricably bound up with the evolution of the Conservative Party, its philosophy and its identity. In my research I have tried to look at three main questions:

I) To What Extent Did the Party Influence Rhodesian UDI?

II) Why? and

III) What was the Impact of UDI on the Party?

Thus far, I have consulted the primary sources of the Conservative Party archives at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (the minutes of the 1922 Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee and the Conservative Commonwealth Affairs Committee, as well as Conservative Commonwealth Council, and Conservative Research Department), *Hansard* (Commons and Lords debates); the extensive archive of that tireless correspondent, Sir Roy Welensky, at the Rhodes Library, as well as the broadsheets and autobiographies of leading politicians. The backbench committee minutes for the '22 are tantalisingly concise, and the archive for Conservative Commonwealth Affairs Committee frustratingly ends in 1962, so this witness seminar is particularly welcome for those who seek to add depth to our knowledge of this issue.

To What Extent Did the Party Influence Rhodesian UDI?

How much *did* the Conservative Party influence the course and outcome of the tortuous negotiations between London and Southern Rhodesia between 1960 and 1965?

Two distinct wings of the Party had decided views on the issue. I am not going to label these 'right' and 'left' as I think this terminology is simplistic and misleading. Instead, those resisting the rapid transition to African majority rule in Southern Rhodesia could more usefully be referred to as the **Status Quo faction** – at the time known as the Rhodesia Lobby; and their opponents, the **Progressives** or Modernisers.

The archival evidence strongly suggests the Rhodesia Lobby sought to pressure policymakers in Whitehall into making concessions to Salisbury before the Conservatives lost power in October 1964. It seems that, individually and as a group, they had consistently attempted to create a climate of opinion that they hoped would limit the options open to the Macmillan and Douglas-Home administrations between 1960-64.

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1 This is a work in progress; please do not cite without permission.

Did they also, implicitly or explicitly, encouraged the Salisbury governments of Winston Field and Ian Smith in their resistance to **any** changes in the franchise and land ownership that might have led to legal independence?

The Rhodesia Lobby vociferously criticised policymakers in Whitehall for not understanding the 'colonial mentality'. But did the Rhodesia Lobby themselves misread the political mindset in Southern Rhodesia, and inadvertently encourage political extremism?

But was the predominantly younger, 'progressive' wing of the Conservative Party also an unwitting, ultimate contributor to UDI?

Fear of splitting the Party in the House and in the country appears to have constricted the Tory Party leadership on the issue – both when in and out of power. The threat of schism may have prevented both concessions to Sir Roy Welensky with his demands for Central African Federation independence, which would mean Southern Rhodesian domination; and successive Rhodesian prime ministers' demands for autonomy for the Crown colony.

The issue of empire was at the heart of this internal party war. Julian Amery described empire as 'the religion of the Tory Party'. Empire, and its evolutionary successor, the Commonwealth, represented to many Conservatives the quintessence of the United Kingdom's role in the post-Second World War world, her continued global responsibilities, her international trading patterns and her emotional ties. The underlying principle of imperial possession was guidance of subject peoples towards self-government and independence when they were deemed to be responsible and wise. Was this a long-term goal? Or an active policy? There, Conservatives seem divided. Fundamentally, for each of these discrete sections of the Party, the issue of Rhodesian independence appears to have been the litmus test of 'right-thinking Conservativism'. It was nothing less than the continuing battle for the identity of the Tory Party in the 1960s, its philosophy and future direction.

The Status Quo Faction

The Status Quo faction was referred to by various names: the Friends of Rhodesia, the Rhodesia Lobby, or the Rhodesia-Katanga Lobby. As far as the history of the Party is concerned, their attitudes, organisation, and outside links form part of what may be described as a 'continuum within the Party', stretching as far back as the convulsions over Tariff Reform in 1902-4 and imperial preference, to the question of independence of India, and more recently to the Suez group of the 1950s. This section of the Party enjoyed hard-core support within the House of Commons, with sympathisers within the wider parliamentary party (such as John Morrison, the chairman of key backbench committees), sizeable support in the Lords from senior and influential peers, and within the rank and file in the country. In this regard, the role of the Conservative Commonwealth Council is particularly interesting and comments from the witnesses on its role would be useful.

The Rhodesia Lobby had been firm supporters of South African membership of the Commonwealth (South Africa withdrew in 1961) and of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The latter was regarded as the optimum political model for future multi-racial society and harmony in southern Africa. This faction had approved of Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd's gradualist policy towards African independence in the late 1950s and was appalled at Macmillan's 'Winds of Change' speech. These men rapidly became deeply distrustful of Iain Macleod's decolonisation policy and negotiation style – indeed all he represented. They harboured less personal dislike for Reginald Maudling and 'Rab' Butler. However, their animosity towards the direction of British decolonisation policy in Africa remained constant.

For their opponents, this group's attitude towards Southern Rhodesia was a last 'hurrah of empire'. However, for these Tories, empire was not simply a jingoistic sentiment; it was an integral part of the bedrock of Conservative political culture and it was also an active, practical, responsible policy. Educated in the literature of Kipling and imbued with the culture of heroes, their frame of reference was paternalistic and hierarchical. To these predominantly, but not exclusively, older

MPs, empire possessed a validity and relevance in the modern world of the early 1960s. Africa was not regarded as being comparable to India in terms of past civilisations and political and economic development. They believed that subject peoples should continue to reap the benefits of enlightened British rule. This would lead to the introduction of political stability based on the Westminster model, the advantages of economic development and improved standards of living – thanks to injections of British capital, local European enterprise and expertise. For them, it was a question of responsibility, a moral duty, which should not be rushed.

In the eyes of the Status Quo faction, the whole policy of Britain managing the pace of change appeared to have been thrown into turmoil following the 'Winds of Change' speech. They thought Macleod's subsequent policy to be flawed in its acceleration of the pace of African independence before the majority of Africans had achieved levels of political and social equality and maturity through education. They associated African nationalism – indeed nationalism generally – with violence, disorder and the breakdown of civic life. They felt 'that positions were slipping away' – which they believed boiled down to a lack of willpower to govern. Thus, for them, the great debate was over the pace of change, not the end goal.

Underpinning their resistance to accelerated decolonisation was a fierce opposition for what they regarded as British appeasement. This appeasement was seen to take a variety of forms: towards the new Commonwealth, the United Nations Organisation (UNO), and the United States of America. At one level there was hostility towards the new Afro-Asian members of the Commonwealth at the UNO: Macleod's policy was regarded as pandering to this increasingly vocal *bloc* in New York. The Status Quo Faction questioned in private the value of the Commonwealth in its then present form. Parallel to this was their intense dislike and distrust of the UNO – stoked up by the intervention in Katanga (during the civil war in the Congo (1960-65), following rapid Belgian decolonisation).

Their perception of British appeasement was also fostered by a strong, deep-seated antagonism towards America and her long-professed policy of anti-imperialism. This long-simmering distrust of US policy had been brought to a head by the 1956 Suez crisis, when they believed that the Americans had pulled the rug from beneath Britain's feet – which, of course, was what Washington had done.

The unravelling of the Central African Federation between 1959 and its official dissolution on 31 December 1963 aroused intense opposition within the party in both the Houses of Parliament and in Tory circles outside Westminster. Both the Monday Club, founded by Paul Bristol, and Lord Salisbury's associated confidential Watching Committee were direct products of this internal dissent: these two groups had been formed with the expressed policy of monitoring developments and to exert pressure to re-form official government policy. Through Lord Salisbury there was close co-ordination between the two committees. Additionally, the leading dissidents maintained close links with Sir Roy Welensky. Patrick Wall appointed himself as the liaison officer between the Federal government in Salisbury and its sympathisers in Westminster, feeding Welensky information about Conservative backbench opinion and arranging for the Federal Prime Minister to address the Conservative Commonwealth Affairs Committee whenever he was in London. Together they fought a coordinated rear-guard action against Nyasaland's and Northern Rhodesia's moves to independence and inevitable secession from the Federation. The East and Central Africa Committee of the Conservative Commonwealth Council was another active body; its position seems somewhat anomalous. Affiliated to, but nominally independent of, Central Office, its deliberations and pronouncements carried a quasi-official stamp.

Were party managers using this organisation as a useful 'safety valve' of party opinion?

Following the Rhodesia Front's victory in the Southern Rhodesia elections in December 1962, Patrick Wall privately acknowledged to Welensky that federation was dead. The fight shifted to supporting independence for Southern Rhodesia, based on the revised 1961 Constitution of strictly limited African franchise. For the Friends of Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia was the distilla-

tion of wider concerns: fear and animosity to the notion of UNO interference (based on the Katanga experience); subservience to Washington, black racial domination (Kenya) – and the anticipated accompanying economic decline (Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia); the erosion of democracy and political stability (Nigeria and Ghana); and danger of communist infiltration (Tanganyika and Somalia).

After Harold Macmillan's departure as prime minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home's government was consistently pressed to be more supportive and sympathetic to the Salisbury regime: Whitehall had to be made to understand that for the white Europeans in Southern Rhodesia their and their children's lives were at stake. Minor modifications of the 1961 constitution would consequently be necessary – some change in the upper electoral 'A' roll, advances in African education, and repeal or modification of the Land Apportionment Act. – but no more. This section of the party did not regard themselves as racialist and publicly deplored policies of white supremacy. They repeatedly called for greater expenditure on African education to increase the number of Africans who satisfied the electoral roll qualification requirements. Prime Minister Douglas-Home was particularly supportive of such ideas.

The basic, emotional, message of the Rhodesia Lobby was constant and undimmed: Southern Rhodesia, built with British enterprise, stocked with 'kith and kin', active defender of the empire in her hour of need, was the last white dominion which needed the active support of the government of the United Kingdom. They claimed she had already proved her capacity to govern since 1923 and her worth in war. Compared to the politically and economically immature nations elsewhere in Africa, they believed that the Southern Rhodesia more than deserved her independence.

As far as tactics went, the Rhodesia Lobby would appear to be the 'new, improved Suez Group', and its is possible to argue that its impact was significant on the climate of debate inside and outside Parliament, on political developments and opportunities. Their Labour opponents certainly admitted them to be a political force to be reckoned with.

Did they also connive at UDI?

The Progressives

The supporters of Colonial Secretary Iain Macleod's policy of accelerated decolonisation in Africa represented the younger, modernising trend within the party. The group was not large – between 30 and 40 strong on the backbenches. They tended to be the younger, more progressive Tory MPs, primarily elected since 1959, with the notable exceptions of Nigel Fisher and Sir Godfrey Nicholson.

These MPs reflected the shifting social structure of the party's candidates and moves towards meritocracy since the Maxwell-Fyfe Reforms of the party organisation in the late-1940s. They spanned those who took a passionate interest in African affairs and had a clear vision of the end result, even if they were not always sure how this could be achieved, and those who favoured more rapid decolonisation on grounds of general principle. With the grant of independence of former British possessions in West Africa, the United Kingdom had a corresponding responsibility to fulfil this commitment in East and Southern Africa. There was a firm belief in the need for speed to avoid antagonising increasingly large sections of African opinion, and alienating the newly independent countries in the Commonwealth. Cynically, this could be taken as acting in Britain's best interests, not on the basis of recognition of the equality of man and viability of democracy in the African context.

In the Progressives' view, the Rhodesia Lobby's gradualist policy of transferring power only when Africans were responsible and wise, if implemented, was bound to stimulate further extremism and communal unrest. Force was not an option to maintain extended British control of the colony in the face of growing African unrest: if France could not achieve this in Algeria by 1962 after 15 years and using at least 75,000 men, the United Kingdom could not even consider it. A former member of the Bow Group in the early 1960s told me that African nationalism seemed to

be a cohesive and sizeable movement - an irresistible force on the march. Thus British interests would be best served by a policy of compromise and managed concession.

To these MPs the paramount need was to ensure the cohesion of the Commonwealth, and the United Kingdom's role at the head of this expanding international club. Instead of the original hierarchical concept of British leadership, the UK was now to be *primus inter pares*. If it came to a choice between Southern Rhodesia and the Commonwealth, there could be no doubt where Britain's duty lay. Significantly, these MPs also tended to be more enthusiastic for British involvement in the Common Market. Their attitudes towards the United States were more benign – indeed enthusiastic – and they possessed a greater respect for the moral authority and international role of the UNO.

As far as Southern Rhodesia was concerned, this wing of the party repeatedly urged the Macmillan and Douglas-Home governments to maintain the pace of African independence in Southern Africa, and specifically to resist the Salisbury government's growing demands for independence on the basis of the 1961 Southern Rhodesian constitution. It was quite unacceptable to contemplate giving independence to a country with a parliament elected by 90,000 voters – a trivial percentage of the country's total population, and an electorate formed almost entirely by the white minority. This would irrevocably harm Britain's international reputation and prestige. That said, they did not believe that power could be handed over in the *immediate* future to the African Nationalists in Southern Rhodesia, whom they thought had not shown themselves fit and ready to assume control.

Well-represented in the Bow Group and the parliamentary Young Conservative Backbenchers Group, the Progressives' object was to draw the large, uncommitted centre of the party towards their views and to bolster the leadership against the blandishments of the Rhodesia Lobby. The pragmatic mainstream of the party might not like the speed of events, nor the constitutional contortions over Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia. And not all Tories were as absorbed in international affairs; I am not suggesting that all Conservatives were aspiring foreign or colonial secretaries. However, there was a general appreciation of the need not to delay and of the leadership's dilemma as it sought to umpire between increasingly strident African nationalism and the increasingly obstinate white dominant minority in Southern Rhodesia. There was also a clear appreciation of the fragility of democracy as a practical political model in Africa. However, to these mainstream MPs, the balance in Southern Rhodesia was between growing African civil unrest and a defiant declaration of independence by the white minority government. There was consequent support of their front bench's policy for Southern Rhodesian independence: autonomy only on the basis of an amended Constitution, granting greater political rights and equality to the African majority.

Should the Progressives then be seen as a vital prop to the Macmillan-Douglas-Home governments' stout resistance to independence for the unrepresentative government in Southern Rhodesia?

Or less benignly – as a crucial domestic limitation that prevented the Conservatives leadership from offering concessions to Southern Rhodesia, which could have led to legal independence?

Southern Rhodesia's failure to achieve independence either in the form of the Federation or on the 1961 Constitution at the same time as her former federal 'partners' did stimulate growing resentment in the colony towards Britain. This was reflected in the electoral victory of the Rhodesia Front in December 1962, a corresponding increased resistance to any concession from the 1961 Constitution, before Smith's sweeping electoral triumph in mid-1964.

Had the Progressives, in fact, inadvertently strengthened the reactionary forces in Rhodesia?

What was the impact of UDI on the Tories?

The issue of Southern Rhodesian independence proved a long slow-burning crisis for the Conservatives. The party was in incipient revolt on the issue from October 1960, with subsequent

periodic public displays of anger and frustration over pace and policy. This tendency to backbench dissent was heightened by the leadership crisis of 1963, the issue of the Common Market, the battle over the repeal of the Retail Price Mechanism in 1964, and another leadership contest the following year, after losing the October 1964 general election. These years were traumatic ones for the Conservative Party and Southern Rhodesia exacerbated existing tensions. Party managers had had to pay assiduous attention to lacerated backbench feelings on Southern Rhodesia when in power to maintain party unity. The 1964 Conservative Party election manifesto was suitably anodyne on the issue: it merely stated that

> of our remaining dependencies many are well on the road to sovereignty. A number have multi-racial populations presenting special problems… In each case we shall work for a fair and practical solution which will protect the interests of the peoples concerned.

It will be interesting to learn from the witnesses what each side thought they were supporting in campaigning on the basis of this document.

The evidence suggests that Labour's victory at the polls in October 1964 dramatically compounded the Conservatives' problem. The stage was set for confrontation between London and Southern Rhodesia, while at Westminster every issue was fought against the background of a possible snap election as Labour had only a knife-edge majority. Although there were 'no votes' to be won on Southern Rhodesia, the problem made political cohesion more difficult for the Tories. This was blatantly exposed in the row over sanctions at the October 1965 party conference.

What measures did the party leadership use to gag the dissidents before November 1965?

When the long expected announcement of UDI finally came, the reaction of the party was entirely predictable: UDI was universally deplored as a tragedy although its inevitability was disputed. UDI was a British problem, and the use of force, either British or by the UNO, would start 'a forest fire'. But the appropriate response to this 'senseless and stupid act' divided the party, with the public and highly damaging three-way split on oil sanctions in December 1965.

Why did the party's leadership fail to secure a united front?

The net result was a Conservative Party in public disarray, with Labour riding high in the opinion polls. The lengthy election manifesto in March 1966 stated the Conservative intention to

> Break the deadlock … by initiating talks with Mr Smith and his colleagues for the purpose of obtaining a constitutional settlement, without any prior conditions on either side.

However, the issue appears to have contributed to the party's defeat in the March election.

Officially, the Conservatives remained committed to negotiations without prior conditions until 1970. Hence, in public the party held aloof from the *Tiger* talks.

How much internal party disagreement was there on the preferred constitutional settlement between 1966-1970?

Conclusion

There appears to have been a crucial interaction between the politics of the party and those of the colony. But just how far did the Conservatives influence the course of developments in Whitehall, and attitudes to autonomy in the white settler population? To my mind, the debate over Southern Rhodesian independence both affected and reflected Conservative attitudes to international affairs, the party's political thought, party management, and the party's electoral fortunes. Can it also be said that the issue was inextricably bound up with the party's philosophy and identity – the role of 'national purpose'? The essence of politics is the identification of party and national interest. Differing Tory interpretations of the role of empire versus the process of decolonisation do appear to have had a profound impact on Conservative thought and behaviour. So the issue of Southern Rhodesian independence seems to have been the paradigm of the fundamental Conservative battle about what constituted 'sound' politics.

Rhodesian UDI
Session I: Labour Government and Party

This witness seminar, organised by Dr M. D. Kandiah, Institute of Contemporary British History, London, and Richard Coggins, the Queen's College, Oxford, was held on 6 September 2000, in the Conference Room at the Public Record Office, Kew, Surrey. In the chair was Professor Robert Holland of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London. The paper-giver was Richard Coggins.

ROBERT HOLLAND The PRO recognises that there are so many nuances and truths about policy making that are not contained in the great wealth of paper record that we have within this wonderful institution, and which can only be teased out and elucidated through witnesses. There has of course been a great growth in witness history in recent years in many contexts and the Institute of Contemporary British History has played a leading part in organising those kinds of events, and Michael Kandiah in particular. So we are grateful to him and to the ICBH for organising this particular meeting, which I think will be extremely valuable. Of course we are grateful too to the PRO for co-hosting it.

The other kind of very brief preliminary remark I should make is that the discussion today is not according to strict Chatham House rules, in other words contributions will be identified in a final text. However, it is very important to point out that no text will ever be diffused or published until it has been agreed by all contributors and an opportunity of course will be there to amend according to proper recall. So that is the basis on which we are proceeding. The other point to make is that when we do get to contributions, not so much by witnesses but from the floor, would people identify themselves clearly in terms of who they are and if they think it is relevant where they come from.

Now before our witnesses have a chance to address their own memories and recall to that, let me go round the table and say who our witnesses are. We have Mr George Cunningham, who worked in the Commonwealth Relations Office 1956-63 …

GEORGE CUNNINGHAM But not on Rhodesia.

HOLLAND He was Commonwealth Officer of the Labour Party, 1963-66, and an MP, 1970-83. We then have Dr David Kerr, who was a leading Labour councillor in Wandsworth, later MP for Wandsworth and PPS to the Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1967-69. We then have, going round the table, Michael

Moriarty, who was a civil servant and in the Cabinet Office between 1965 and 1967. Sir Albert Robinson, who was president of the Cambridge Footlights Club in 1936, which I would like to remind him of, and who was resident in Southern Rhodesia from 1953 to 1981, was a member of the Monckton Commission* in 1960, was High Commissioner for the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in London between 1961 and 1963 and had a prominent business career in Southern Africa during the period that we will be discussing. We have Sir John Pestell, who joined the British South Africa Police back in 1939, who I think retired from that in the mid-1960s and who was then Secretary and Comptroller to Sir Humphrey Gibbs* as Governor of Southern Rhodesia 1965-69. Finally we have Sir Oliver Wright, whose long diplomatic career I won't dilate upon other than to say that he was Private Secretary to the Prime Minister 1964-66, first to Sir Alec Douglas Home* and then to Mr Wilson.*

Monckton Advisory Commission on Central Africa; Report published Oct 1960 supported the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasalan but advocated 'positive steps to win African support'.

Sir Humphrey Gibbs (1902-90), Governor of Rhodesia 1959-69.

Sir Alec Douglas-Home (Lord Home of the Hirsel (14th Earl of Home, disclaimed peerage 1963), 1903-98), Conservative politician.

Harold Wilson (Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, 1916-97), Labour politician, Prime Minister 1964-70 and 1974-6.

It is now open to them, and the floor will involve themselves as our reminiscences develop.

CUNNINGHAM

My involvement was as Commonwealth Officer of the Labour Party, that is the member of staff of the party who dealt with Commonwealth and colonial affairs from 1963 to 1966. From the time that I went there in 1963 Rhodesia was obviously a very active issue, but it was far, far from being the only issue. From the beginning of my time I was putting up papers which argued that it was highly unlikely that the Rhodesian government would make concessions to Britain's demands only by means of negotiation, and that economic sanctions against Rhodesia would not be likely to work: firstly because economic sanctions normally don't work; and secondly because in Rhodesia's situation, despite its dependence upon tobacco, her needs were so small in relation to the total economy of southern Africa that it would always be possible (and this was of course what happened) for such needs to be met via South Africa and nobody – or certainly nobody of any importance – thought that we were going to be able to get sanctions imposed on South Africa. But one had to realise that there were political difficulties about doing what then followed, namely the use of troops, which was of course the absolutely natural thing for the sovereign power to do.

Ian Smith, Rhodesian politician. Following the disintegration of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (in the parliament of), Smith became in 1962 a founder member of the Rhodesia Front Party, which opposed majority African rule, in 1962. He became Prime Minister in 1964 and on 11 Nov 1965 he made a 'unilateral declaration of independence', which was rejected by the British Government. He remained Prime Minister until 1979 when he gave way to majority rule.

I had to recognise that there was a political problem over the issue of force. My recommendation was that we should certainly threaten to use troops and should be willing to do so if the threat in itself was not successful. I therefore submitted a draft message to go from Harold Wilson. This was about April 1965. Smith* had called an election, which took place in May, with a view to getting a mandate for UDI. So I drafted a telegram, which is not normally something that a party official would dream of doing and, if he did, no civil servant would pay much attention to. It would have said: right, we see that you have threatened UDI, let's get quite clear

what would happen if you do, because terrible mistakes can happen if people don't know the consequences of what they are going to do. We would make clear that in that event we would have to intervene with such force as was necessary to take out the illegal government and put in a legal government. And then as a means of getting that more acceptable than it would otherwise be, the message said: But we would not use that to take over government of Rhodesia. We would in fact withdraw if at all possible after having taken out the illegal government and put in a legal government, and would resume the negotiations with that legal government, without Rhodesia therefore being subject to intolerable duress in subsequent negotiations. This of course – me being a party official – was not sent through the civil servants, but through Lady Falkender,* as she is now, on the political side of Number 10. And after a week or two I got the predictable reply from Harold Wilson via Marcia [Lady Falkender]: 'Tell him to burn it'. From the beginning there was really no likelihood that Harold Wilson was going to use force in Rhodesia.

Baroness Falkender (Marcia Williams). Private and political secretary to Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, 1956-83.

In October that year at the Party Conference in Blackpool, I was seeing Harold Wilson about something else and we got down to Rhodesia and he was then, even at that stage – this was only a month say before UDI but well before sanctions – very full of the idea of a naval blockade of Beira* and you could not persuade him that this was a daft idea. It was in his mind as early as that. So from the beginning I think Wilson was not inclined to use force, and could not be persuaded to the contrary. He felt that a naval blockade would do the trick. Denis Healey,* Defence Secretary, of course was also dead against the use of force. Indeed at one time Healey said, 'Anyone with school certificate geography would know that we could not possibly use force in Rhodesia'. Arthur Bottomley,* Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, took Wilson's view and was not inclined to use force.

Beira, a Mozambique port.

Denis Healey (Lord Healey), Labour politician. Secretary of State for Defence 1964-70.

Arthur Bottomley (Lord Bottomley), Labour politician. Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations 1964-6.

You cannot of course say the Labour Party thought this or that, or the Labour government thought this or that, because different people thought different things, but there was no great opposition to that 'no use of force' line. And that continued throughout. As a party official I published a pamphlet in 1966* arguing that nothing else would do but the use of force and it was our duty to use force, but that fell like a pebble in a tar barrel and nothing of that kind happened. I think many thousands of lives would have been saved and we would have been doing our duty, instead of behaving decadently, if we had been willing to take that action. But there was no inclination to do so.

George Cunningham, *Rhodesia: The Last Chance* (London: Fabian Society, Sept 1966).

HOLLAND

All kinds of questions emerged from that particular contribution, but I think we should probably go on for the moment at least with witnesses' recollections.

M. J. MORIARTY

I explained to Dr Kandiah when approached that my involvement in all this was really quite limited. I was, during the time of UDI and for a couple of years afterwards, a fairly junior member of the Cabinet Office secretariat, mainly on the defence and overseas policy side, so I was involved in this in two ways. Along with a Cabinet Office colleague I kept the semi-verbatim record of the discussions on the *Tiger** and at that stage I knew rather more about all this certainly than I know now. And then after UDI the Cabinet Office coordinated a lot of the work on sanctions through a working group of officials, for which for a time I was one of the secretaries. So those are my two perceptions.

HMS Tiger was the location of talks in Dec 1966 between Ian Smith and Harold Wilson and his delegation, attempting to resolve the situation arising from Rhodesian UDI.

I have, since being invited to this witness seminar, refreshed my memory from some of the political recollections: Harold Wilson's own,* the Crossman recollections* and Barbara Castle's.* They are all quite full, and give collectively quite a good impression of what those ministers thought, or what they later thought they thought, about it all. It is unfortunate that the Institute [ICBH] hasn't been able to get together more of the people who were the principal players at the time. A number of them of course are no longer alive and others are presumably not reachable for one reason or another.

Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government, 1964-70: A Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971).

R. H. S. Crossman (1907-74), Labour politician. Lord President of the Coucil, 1966-8. *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, vols. I-III (London: Hamilton & Cape, 1977).

Barbara Castle (Baroness Castle of Blackburn), Labour politician. Overseas Development Minister, 1964-5; Minister of Transport, 1965-8. See *The Castle Diaries*, vols. I & II (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984 and 1980).

Drawing upon that limited experience, I think I would say first of all that it was my impression that both ministers were sincerely behind the sanctions policy after UDI and that they did believe, rightly or wrongly, that it would have an effect. There were, as everyone knows, all sorts of problems about how far it was practicable to go with sanctions. A particular constraint was our own economic position, which was a cause of great anxiety to the government at the time. The balance of payments was a chronic worry and could have been affected by certain moves in the sanctions field. There was the position of South Africa, there was the position of Zambia: all those things complicated what could be done. But within those limitations ministers urged officials on, and officials, though they had to reflect the realities of their departmental perceptions, did their best to make sanctions work. And indeed the sanctions did work up to a point, but not as fast or as effectively as some had expected.

The discussions on the *Tiger* were of course fascinating. I think all I would say – and this picks up Richard Coggins's point: he asks was this all *realpolitik* expediency or was it an issue of principle – is that in my perception it was both in a way, and the interplay among ministers was really where the balance was struck. I don't think anyone saw no issue of principle here: some saw the practical problems more keenly than others, whether they were practical problems of using troops or any others. I certainly had the strong impression that, by the time of the *Tiger* talks (this was the end of 1966), ministers were very anxious to get a settlement and believed it was important to bring the situation to an end, if possible, on terms that both were acceptable to the various constituencies, and at the same

H. W. Bowden (Lord Aylestone, 1905-94), Labour politician. Lord President of the Council 1964-6; Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, 1966-7.

Sir F. Elwyn Jones (Lord Elwyn-Jones, 1908-89), Labour politician. Attorney General, 1964-70; Lord Chancellor, 1974-9.

time were realistic. During the *Tiger* talks the Prime Minister, it seemed to me, had a genuine expectation that he and his colleagues – that is to say Herbert Bowden,* who was Commonwealth Secretary, and Elwyn Jones,* who was the Attorney General – were close to a settlement, and certainly things said by Ian Smith on the *Tiger* did imply that he both wanted to reach a settlement which could have been accepted by both sides and believed he could deliver that. All this is very well documented I think in the Wilson 1964-70 record of the Labour Government.

What happened was that either Mr Smith was insincere all along or, as the moment of truth came, he began to realise the problems of getting his hard-line colleagues back in Salisbury to sign up to what he was proposing, and so he gradually backtracked on whether he could accept and commend the draft agreement reached, whether he would have to go back to Salisbury, how he would get on there. There were times when he was very bullish about the likelihood that he would deliver a settlement. But all that fell away and, as we all know, the end result was that he turned it down, after the British Cabinet had accepted, not without some misgivings, that they would accept and commend the settlement provisionally reached on the *Tiger*. I think it is pretty clear both from the Cabinet minute of the immediate post-*Tiger* discussion, which I was re-reading this morning, and indeed from the Barbara Castle memoirs, that some members of the Cabinet were more unhappy about that than others. But in the end there was virtual unanimity that the *Tiger* settlement should be accepted by the British government and could have been sold, as it were, to the various elements to whom the government would have had to sell it. But it turned out otherwise, because the Rhodesians themselves didn't accept it.

HOLLAND

That is very clear and helpful indeed, thank you.

SIR ALBERT ROBINSON

Sir Roy Welensky (1907-92), Rhodesian politician. Prime Minister of Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1956-63.

Jan Christian Smuts (1870-1950), South African politician. Prime Minister of South Africa, 1919-24 and 1939-48.

Pieter K. van der Byl (1923-99), Rhodesian politician. Held various portfolios in the Smith Government including Minister of Information, Immigration and Tourism and Minsiter of Foreign Affairs. Son of Major P. van der Byl, a South African MP and minister under Smuts in World War II.

Let me say right away that I was opposed to Ian Smith. I was a Welensky* man, and I make that declaration so that you can evaluate the contribution that I make for what it is worth.

First of all I would like to congratulate Richard Coggins on his introductory paper. I think it is very well prepared and covers the story at that time extremely well.

When the Rhodesian Front came into power in 1962, many of its ministers were determined to embrace the South African Nationalist Party policy of white supremacy. The Rhodesian Front actually imported a man called F. Benson to Rhodesia who was an organiser of the Nationalist Party in South Africa. I spent some years in the South African parliament, so I knew something about the tactics of the Nationalist Party. I was a member of the opposition United Party under General Smuts.* It was P. K. van der Byl,* the Rhodesian Minister of Information who brought Benson to Rhodesia. The Rhodesian Front decided to do something that had never been

done in Rhodesia before, and that was to organise the country on the basis that the government and the party should be one, and this, with the help of Benson, they very largely achieved over some period of time. What I wish to emphasise is that *apartheid* or white supremacy – the RF didn't call it *apartheid* – was quite clearly in the minds of the Rhodesian Front when they took power in December 1962.

Ian Smith & Co. never believed that the British government would use force. The story about 'kith and kin' is a very real one. There were many British officers who made it quite clear that if there was any attempt to use force they would resist, if not actually take the part of the Rhodesians. The Rhodesians had trained in Britain over the years, many of their young men were at Sandhurst, many of their young men trained with different army units in Britain, so there was a very strong bond in the military between the British army and the Rhodesian army. To what extent that this might have influenced events is difficult to say. However, the British government must have had these facts in mind when people were talking about force. It would have been too risky to follow that route.

Now there is one thing I would like to emphasise about UDI. UDI was put in place in 1965, and in 1972 the civil war started. 30,000 people died in that war and it was fought by the Rhodesian Front government so as to maintain white supremacy in Rhodesia in the manner in which the South African Nationalist Party had achieved it in South Africa. They were helped by what happened in the Congo* – the pouring out of refugees, the raping of women and nuns and so on. All of this had a profound effect upon public opinion. But the war was fought to maintain white supremacy in Southern Rhodesia.

The Congo Crises 1960-5, continuing state of internecine warfare and anarchy evolving from independence from Belgium in June 1960, secession of the rich mining province of Katanga under Moise Tschombe in July 1960 and the murder of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in Jan 1961. UN troops were sent in but failed to clarify the tangled power struggles or to quell the rebellion.

Now let me refer to *Tiger*. Those of us in opposition to Smith – and although we were not in parliament we spoke out, we addressed public meetings, we were in opposition to the policies of the government. This was not to support the British government but in opposition to what was happening in our own country. When the *Tiger* Settlement proposals were made known, we felt they were unacceptable. They meant abdication by the government of Rhodesia in order to put what was proposed in *Tiger* in its place. There was no possibility of the hard-liners, and they were the overwhelming majority of the Cabinet, accepting any such proposal.

HMS Fearless, location of further talks in Oct 1968 between Ian Smith and a British delegation led by Harold Wilson.

But *Fearless** was different. Those of us in the opposition camp thought that *Fearless* had a great deal going for it and there was a real possibility that *Fearless* and the policies then enunciated might with some adjustments have brought an end to UDI. This did not happen because once again the right-wingers in the Cabinet like P. K. van der Byl and Lord Graham* rejected the proposals. Smith never resisted the hard-line attitude of his colleagues. He often expressed his sympathy for the idea of a settlement, but in fact he

The 7th Duke of Montrose (1902-92), Rhodesian politician. Styled for most of his life as the Marquis of Graham, the courtesy title used by the eldest son and heir to the dukedom of Montrose.

was fully at one with his Cabinet who were determined to hold out to the end.

There is so much that can't be dealt with it in a short time like this. The imposition of sanctions was ridiculous without the support of South Africa. South Africa took the official line they would not increase their contribution economically or financially, but they would maintain the position as it was as at the declaration of UDI. And so they did. So the borders were open. Smith also knew that if there was any attempt by the British government either to intervene or to impose further sanctions, he could bring Zambia to its knees. Zambia was totally defenceless, there is no question about that, so the British government had this to consider when they were considering the policies to be adopted. Eventually international pressure – which was Kissinger* representing America and South Africa's Prime Minister B. J. Vorster* – that pulled the rug and so Smith capitulated.

Henry Kissinger, American politician. Special Adviser to US President on National Security, 1969-73 and Secretary of State, 1973-7.

B. J. Vorster, South African politician. Prime Minister of South Africa, 1966-78; then President of the South African Republic to 1979.

So all I can say is, that I was one of those who believed that, that if we had followed the 1961 Constitution, then over a period of some ten years we would have had an African majority in parliament.

There is one other matter to which I would like to refer. When the break-up of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland took place, I was High Commissioner in Britain at the time. The Secretary of State for Central African Affairs, Rab Butler,* was playing a very devious game, encouraging people to invest whilst at the same time working actively behind the scene to destroy the Federation. In 1963 the British government arranged a conference at the Victoria Falls to agree the terms and conditions for the break-up of the Federation. Delegates were invited from the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland.* I informed the Federal government that in my view the British government was totally committed to the African nationalist leaders in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and so there was no way that they could stop the process of self-government being given to those two territories. I also advised that if the Southern Rhodesian government were to give certain undertakings about progress towards majority rule, they too would be granted independence. I am convinced that would have happened. The important thing was to refuse to participate in the conference until such time as Southern Rhodesia was promised independence. However Rab Butler received a message from the British High Commissioner in Salisbury, Lord Alport,* that Winston Field,* the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, at that time had told him that he would go to the Victoria Falls without any pre-conditions, despite our trying to stop him and despite Welensky's efforts to prevent him from going. Rab sent for me and I went to see him in his enormous office. He got up and picked up a piece of paper. I said to him, on the authority of the deputy leader of the Rhodesian Front, Dupont,* who was in London at the time, that Southern Rhodesia would not go to the Victoria Falls for a peaceful break-up

R. A. B. Butler (Lord Butler of Saffron Walden, 1902-82), Conservative politician. First Secretary of State, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in Charge of Central African Office 1962-4, Foreign Secretary 1963-4.

Malawi was known as Nyasaland until it gained its independence in July 1964.

Lord Alport, Conservative politician and diplomat. Under-Secretary of State at the Commonwealth Relations Office, 1957-9.

Winston Field (1904-69), Rhodesian politician. Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia 1962-4 and President of Rhodesian Front Party 1962-5.

Clifford Dupont (1905-78), Rhodesian politician.

of the Federation unless they were granted independence and on terms to be negotiated. I remember so well that Rab got up from his chair, waved a piece of paper at me and said, 'You know, all you have said now is irrelevant. Here is a message from Alport that Winston Field is prepared to go and sign the dissolution of the Federation without any preconditions.' So there was no independence for Southern Rhodesia and that was the key factor in my opinion that led eventually to UDI and all that happened in Rhodesia after that.

So there are many, many questions and many, many answers, but basically it was the determination of the Rhodesian Front to maintain white supremacy that led to the tragic civil war that followed.

HOLLAND That was a telling summary from the Rhodesian authority, which will plainly form part of our discussions as we carry on. The view from Government House is always an important part of colonial history, so perhaps we might have a particular view from a particular Government House.

SIR JOHN PESTELL Could I say that it is very difficult for me to follow Sir Albert Robinson, because what he has said was known to many Rhodesians. Not what happened in the UK, but the build-up of the Rhodesian Front in Rhodesia. He has put it far better than I could and what he has said reiterates what I would just like to mention first.

The witness seminar's briefing document, which I don't want to knock, seems to miss out a lot – the chronology goes from 1934 to 1956 and I think that ought to be broadened out to include a lot of what Sir Albert [Robinson] has said about what was going on before UDI. Particularly, I rocked back a bit when he mentioned the name, Benson. Because Benson, it was well known what he was like and what his influence was, coming from South Africa. I have never met the gentleman, but he was bad medicine.

ROBINSON He was.

PESTELL I thought particularly the Rhodesians get knocked a lot really, but I think there are various factors which might be included in the paper to show really the mix of white Rhodesians and what happened after the Second World War. Before the war there were only about 90,000 Europeans, some figure like that, very few, and they were sparsely spread, mostly in the small towns and in the country areas, farming areas. But after the war there was a tremendous influx of people from England, South Africa. Lots of the South Africans having lived with *apartheid* down there, they brought their views with them. Lots of the whites had never had it so good, they were in England and fought through the war, they went to Rhodesia, the sun shone all day, there were cheap servants, there were swimming baths, and the population increased tremendously. They did realise

that this was tremendous and the idea of giving this up and bringing the Africans, who were paid a pittance, up to that standard, this was something that really wasn't on. And that was another factor.

Sir Edgar Whitehead (1905-71), Rhodesian politician. Prime Minister and leader of Southern Rhodesian Government delegation to the Salisbury Constitutional Conference of Feb 1961.

The unfairness of the pay of whites and blacks, just to give you an example, was that the most senior African police, who had gone up through the ranks with probably 30 years service, were paid less than the newest white recruit. What happened was Sir Edgar Whitehead* made an improvement in the Police Act in the law for that pay barrier to be broken, so that the black African police could come through into the European scales of pay, but when the Rhodesian Front (RF) took over the minister, Lardner-Burke,* who was a good right-winger, or a bad right-winger should I say perhaps...

Desmond Lardner-Burke, Rhodesian politician. Minister of Law and Order in Smith's Rhodesian Front Government.

ROBINSON Ultra right ...

PESTELL He instructed a compliant Commissioner of Police not to implement the new law. So that was just a small example of what was going on. The granting of independence to the northern territories of course, which has been mentioned, was a tremendous blow to the Rhodesians really, because they had gone into the Federation – three countries – and when it was broken up the two northern territories got their independence and Southern Rhodesia was left out. The man in the street really couldn't understand all the shenanigans that went on and the reasons for this. The reason in a nutshell I think was because they didn't trust Ian Smith and his party.

Secondly, there was a tremendous influence on the white population by radio and television, which I think should get a mention really, because people were indoctrinated by these, which were really taken over by the government. They denied that they had taken over, but there is no doubt the influence and the placements that were there were all RF. Everything was geared to the right wing and the RF and the things that were going on in Africa to the North. The Congo, the raping of nuns in the Congo, for two days that was given on the radio and television, pumping it out, pumping it out. And then of course lots of the people from the Congo came down through Rhodesia and they were photographed and they were on the box, telling you how terrible it was up there. All this influenced the mind of the Europeans, many of whom were not anti-black, who did not see where this RF propaganda was leading the country.

Speech by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to both Houses of the South African Parliament, 3 Feb 1960, in which he stated that 'the wind of change is blowing through this continent [Africa]'.

The Winds of Change speech,* it doesn't get a mention, but it did not really have much influence I think in Rhodesia at all. I saw in a quotation of Sir Roy Welensky he said that one thing that he never realised was that the British government was getting rid of the whole of the empire. The whole of the empire was going, and he was supposed to have said that he didn't realise that this was it. When you look at the list of countries that had been granted their independence – *Scramble Out of Africa,** excellent book – it started in

Thomas Pakenham, *Scramble Out of Africa* (London: Random House, 1991).

1956 and went through 1957, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963 – the Sudan, Gold Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Kenya, and then Zambia and Malawi; the Belgian Congo in 1960; France: Morocco, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal, Equatorial Africa, Algeria – all those places had been going, but they really didn't have any impact on the Rhodesians. That is my view. These places were a long way away, we were content in Southern Rhodesia, we were running a very excellent country. Sir Roy Welensky is said not to have realised the extent of this 'Scramble out of Africa', and so it was not surprising that the man on the street was not aware of it either.

As far as Government House is concerned, I was very fortunate to be working under Sir Humphrey Gibbs, who was a tremendous chap, who knew everybody worth knowing in Rhodesia. He knew the ins and outs of the country, the bankers, the important people in the country, he knew all of them and all about them, and he had done a lot of work for charities and schools and churches. So he was a terrific chap to work for.

Smith had arranged that F. E. Barfoot, the Commissioner of Police, should swear an affidavit to the effect that a State of Emergency should be declared because there were ammunition dumps on the Zambian border. This affidavit was the basis of Smith's request to the Governor that he should declare a State of Emergency. The Governor put it to Smith that this was the forerunner to the Declaration of Independence (UDI), but he had replied that the request came from the Commissioner and not from himself. On that assurance the Governor signed the Declaration. Emergency regulations were published, followed shortly afterwards by more draconian regulations just before UDI was declared on 11 November 1965. The Governor had no doubts that Mr Smith had lied to him barefaced, and being a man of his word, was angry and disgusted at Smith's behaviour. But ever after that he treated Smith just the same as he treated everybody else: he was a wonderful chap.

HOLLAND

Perhaps we can hear from our final two witnesses before we have a group discussion. Would Dr Kerr like to comment?

DR DAVID KERR

George Thomson (Lord Thomson of Monifieth), Labour politician. Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs 1967-8.

Dame Judith Hart (Baroness Hart, 1924-91), Labour politician. Commonwealth Affairs Minister 1966-7; Overseas Development Minister 1968-9.

My role this afternoon is in marked contradistinction to what we have heard already. I am sad to think that I am the only person in the room who was actually in the Parliamentary Labour Party when these events were occurring. It would have been nice if George Thomson* for example, or even Barbara Castle, had come to testify and to record their recollections. I was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Judith Hart,* who was a Minister of State at the Commonwealth Office, and those of you who are familiar with Parliament, and I see a number of my colleagues here who will be familiar and who will no doubt confirm that the only form of life that is lower than a Parliamentary Private Secretary is an Assistant

Whip.

So I can't offer myself as a great central authority in what was happening, but I do offer you a different perspective from the ones that we have heard. These have been testimonies which were very central in very authoritative circles to what was going on. But what goes on in authoritative circles either reflects what is going on outside, or if it doesn't, if it fails to do that, then it is probably going to come adrift. One of the first things, if I can just remind you of George Cunningham's testimony about the use of force, it was very apparent in the Parliamentary Labour Party that there was no instinct for the use of force at all. There were, exceptionally, parliamentary Labour members who shared George's view, but if I may remind you of one of the overriding contemporary scenes when UDI was declared: what was happening in Vietnam.* Vietnam rather captured the left wing of the Labour Party, both inside and outside the House, and the events were not going in Vietnam in such a way as to persuade the left wing of the Labour Party that similar incursions into Rhodesia, however morally justified, was a practical proposition. I think Harold Wilson and his colleagues at government level were aware that there was that gap, and so the idea of using force was never one that caught on in such a way as to require the government to adopt it as the appropriate policy. Indeed, with the events which have happened in the interim, in the 30 years beginning of course with Vietnam and continuing right up to the events in the Gulf* and Kosovo,* it is quite apparent that the use of force is a policy which Clausewitz, with his dictum that war is the continuation of politics by other means, would regard with a raised eyebrow if not something more. I don't want to spend too long on that, but I did want to emphasise that Rhodesia was happening in the context of world events and I think it is very important that we shouldn't overlook that.

1965 saw the intensification of US military efforts to defend South Vietnam from infiltration and attack by North Vietnamese forces, which escalated into all-out war.

Gulf War, Feb 1990: liberation of Kuwait by a UN coalition, led by the USA, from occupation by Saddam Hussein's Iraqi military forces.

A Balkan state, formerly part of Yugoslavia, which became the subject of defence by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces against Serbian aggression in June 1999.

I went to Rhodesia because the only other occasion, other than when Bottomley and Bowden and others went officially, on which Labour backbench members had attempted to enter Rhodesia and discover some signs of opposition to Ian Smith had been I think in 1965. Three newly elected members, whose names to my great sadness I cannot recall, one of them was the newly elected member for Cambridge. They were inexperienced, very gung-ho and mostly middle-of-the-road. They thought that they should go to Rhodesia in order to allow a backbench voice to be heard there and a backbench report to be made when they came back. They didn't make any impact, they were laughed at, and their trip to Rhodesia came to an ignominious end when they were trying to chat with RF members in a pub and finished up having beer poured all over them. I didn't think that augured well. Their visit was followed by a steady stream of visits by members of the Conservative benches, and this became more and more a matter of criticism and questioned in the Parliamentary Labour Party and outside. There was no way in which anybody was disposed to stop people, and I think there are

one or two with us this afternoon; there was no saying, 'Well, we have got to stop them going, we'll take away their passports or give the police the right to accuse them of hooliganism'. Rather there was a feeling that there was an imbalance here. But there was no disposition, and certainly a great reluctance on the part of the government, to send a backbench deputation into Rhodesia. So for better or for worse I found myself in a position to make a single-handed venture into the interior.

As a general practitioner I had among my patients a family whose daughter had gone to Rhodesia as a missionary. I was in touch with her through her parents and I put it to her that I would like to come to Rhodesia, and would she be prepared either to accommodate me or to find me accommodation where I would be able to do the things that I thought needed to be done. She complied, which was very nice and it gave me hope. In fact I found myself in Rhodesia as the guest of a very distinguished opponent of Ian Smith. His name was A. P. 'Knotty' Knottenbelt. He had been the head of a large quasi-public school for boys in Rhodesia and had refused to raise the Rhodesian flag and to haul down the Union Jack. As a result of that he was sacked and he finished up as Warden of the University of Rhodesia, but he did not take a high profile politically.

I was staying in South Africa, and this I think gives a dimension to the whole adventure which is of interest. I was staying with my sister and I arranged to fly on to Salisbury. There were no direct flights at that time between London and Salisbury, one of the few ways to get there was to go to Johannesburg and then fly north. I arranged to do that and in common courtesy I did advise the British Ambassador in Johannesburg of my intentions. I thought nothing more about it. Two nights before I was due to fly out I received a phone call virtually instructing me to present myself to the Ambassador the following morning, 24 hours before I was due to fly out. I, of course, did so and found myself confronted not only by His Excellency but by the First Secretary, who between them spent well over an hour explaining to me that once I had arrived in Salisbury I would be beyond any help by the Embassy, that there was no British representation that could represent me if I got into trouble, and would I please cancel my arrangements.

CUNNINGHAM What time was this?

KERR This was 1969. Well, it was a mishandling. I am a soft touch and if they had rung me up a week before I might have had time to think about it, but 24 hours before I was due to fly north I didn't have time to think about it. I said, 'I am terribly sorry, I am going', and in the end they shrugged and said, 'Well, as long as you realise that you won't be able to call on us to help'. I said, 'Okay'. Now I think that is important, because they went to a lot of trouble to persuade one very powerless backbencher not to go to Rhodesia. One can see

reasons why that should be so, but it did seem a bit high-powered and from that day onwards I assumed that it wasn't just the British government – I never had a message from Harold Wilson or from Denis Healey that I shouldn't go – but I think that this was a clear sign that the South African government was very touchy about it. It didn't want to be involved, even by implication, in what might have been a troublesome adventure on my part. So I think that has to be taken into account.

It was all of course a bit of an anticlimax. I trembled as I got off the plane, waiting for the tap on the shoulder. Nobody took the slightest notice of me all. Whether that was because they didn't know I was coming or, what is much more likely, they knew and they did the equivalent of laughing, as they had done on the visit by my three colleagues several years before. I was not important. What was important however, and which perhaps they may have overlooked, was that I was fortunate enough, partly through Knottenbelt, partly through my friend Mary Austin who although she was a missionary was occupied teaching mathematics in Rhodesia, I was able to make contact with a number of people who would have fallen foul, if they had had the opportunity, of the Smith government. They included among others Guy Clutton-Brock.* His name is no longer written in the fiery letters that it deserves, but he was a very important focus of opposition at that time and was very much a man who commanded the respect and the co-operation of the black Africans in Rhodesia. I visited him at Cold Comfort Farm and it remains in my memory as one of the most wonderful experiences of my political life. At Cold Comfort Farm one of the first people I met was Didymus Mutasa, who subsequently became the Speaker of Mugabe's parliament, but who at that time had just been released from prison and was showing most distressing signs of a long and no doubt very arduous passage through his life. It was very sad, because here was a man with great capacity, who had been reduced by his imprisonment. That was a great occasion.

Guy Clutton-Brock (1906-95), agronomist and radical. He entered Southern Rhodesia to work among deprived Africans. He identified with them, becoming one of the first members of the African National Congress, and with the militant anti-Smith movement. His home, Cold Comfort Farm, became a haven for resisters of UDI. He and his wife were widely known among liberal circles in the UK and elsewhere, and Cold Comfort Farm became something of an icon for anti-Smith campaigners. He was deported back to the UK by the Smith regime in 1971.

I also was helped to drive from Salisbury to Bulawayo, where a doctor (whose medical qualification promoted a certain masonic co-operation) was very active politically. He was well to the left of Smith, but that still left him well to the right of yours truly. As so often happens, I am ashamed to say among doctors, they tend to be a bit muddled: they are very highly motivated, but not very skilful at the political act, and this chap in particular was one of them. He was a nice fellow, he was motivated too. He adopted the same rather patronising attitude towards African politicians, but he was prepared to accommodate their point of view in a way which, as you have already heard from previous speakers, the Rhodesian Front was not persuaded to do. So that was another illustration.

My final point, and I will finish here, is also important, because it does display (I have to confess to a certain measure of shame as I say this) that the British government under Wilson at that time –

you have only got to look at the names of the people who went out there, they were very well motivated, very sincere, and they thought they were doing the right thing – had not yet emerged from amateur politics. A week or so after I returned from Rhodesia, George Thomson asked me to attend a meeting with Harold Wilson at Number 10 Downing Street, so that I could bring updated news of what I had found in Rhodesia. I listened for a long time to Harold, who was busy expatiating on his Rhodesia policy, and the more I listened the more ill-judged and uninformed I thought it was. In the end George said, 'Perhaps we could hear from David Kerr, Harold, he has just come back from Rhodesia'; and at that point Harold had just been lecturing us on how all the white liberals in Rhodesia were bound to rise up in unison once they knew that the British government was with them, and Smith would be overthrown. As you hear, that was not my experience and I ruined all hopes of ever becoming Foreign Secretary by telling Harold Wilson that there were no bloody liberals in Rhodesia worth talking about! That brought the meeting to a rather sad end. But it was important, it was illustrative and, as in so much else, I fear that Harold Wilson – I may say that I was always, right up to the end in 1970, a great admirer of his, but I began to recognise his faults; he misjudged things and he was carried along by his own enormous self-confidence: he was a brilliant man and he went in a very sad way. But his contribution to the solution of the Rhodesia problem, viewed by a backbencher, was not positive.

HOLLAND In this story all roads lead back to the Foreign Office, so finally, Sir Oliver, you will have another chance later on to come back on the second panel, but you might like to comment on what you have heard so far and then we can open it up.

SIR OLIVER WRIGHT There is a sort of cumulative effect, isn't there, when everybody gives their different points of view according to their differing experiences. So I will not repeat what other people have said, but just give my own view from Number 10, where I was Private Secretary to Alec Home during his year at Number 10 and then I stayed on at Harold Wilson's request for another two years. So I came into it at the end of 1963 and I left the problem about midway in 1966, after UDI and after I and a couple of colleagues, one from the Foreign Office and one from the Commonwealth Relations Office, had participated in these talks about talks. I would certainly endorse what Dr Kerr has said. I agree the briefing document is a splendid paper but I think it does need to be put in its context.

After 40 years in diplomacy I have come to one very firm conclusion, and that is, in politics, the supremacy of the domestic over the foreign. Foreign policy is really a function of what is domestically possible to achieve. And secondly, following from that, is the overriding importance of the economic situation at the time. Certainly when Harold Wilson came in, in October 1964, the economic situ-

ation at home was his main preoccupation. There was a run on sterling; some of the first foreign visitors to meet him were his colleagues from the EFTA* countries because we had had to impose import quotas and they waxed wrathful about this. The economic performance of our country was a constant preoccupation in my experience ever since the Attlee government.* Ernie Bevin* famously remarked, 'Give me another million tons of coal and I will give you a foreign policy'. And that did not cease, in my opinion, until the Thatcher revolution which started in 1979.

European Free Trade Area.

The administrations led by Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee between 1945-51.

Ernest Bevin (1881-1951), Labour politician. Foreign Secretary 1945-51.

So it was a question of managing home opinion in general which determined our policy, during my time at Number 10, towards this problem. And there were a lot of other things, as Dr Kerr has mentioned, going on at the same time. Rhodesia was only one of many problems facing the government. There was the run on sterling, there was the defence review,* there was Vietnam, there was the EFTA crisis* too. Included in the defence review was the question of our independent nuclear deterrent. Rhodesia in this context obviously was a neuralgic point, but in comparison with the other things that the Prime Minister had to deal with at Number 10 at the time not of overwhelming importance. It was a challenge certainly, but there were other things which really engaged his attention much more. To give one example. When I was in Salisbury with my Foreign and Commonwealth [Office] colleagues, Martin Le Quesne* and Duncan Watson* in June 1966, there was a seamen's strike at home. We were left totally without instructions for about 10 days. First things first.

The 1966 Defence Review called for a reduction in Britain's defence spending and was the precursor of the 1967 Defence Review which 'thought the unthinkable' about Britain's withdrawal of defence capabilities from east of Suez.

The 1966 EFTA crisis precipitated by Britain's imposition of import surcharges.

Sir Martin Le Quesne, diplomat. Foreign Office, 1964-8.

Sir Duncan Watson, diplomat. Assistant Under-Secretary of State, Commonwealth Office, and Commonwealth Relations Office, 1964-7.

As far as Rhodesia is concerned, one thing that hasn't been mentioned is the degree of continuity between Conservative policy under Alec Home and Labour Party policy under Harold Wilson. I happen to know that, when the problem was coming up during the course of Alec Home's year at Number 10 he made a point of keeping Harold Wilson informed. When there was a change of government Harold Wilson adopted the same tactic and until things had developed too far within the Conservative Party, which we will come to later. It was the objective of both Prime Ministers, Alec Home and Harold Wilson, to have as bipartisan a policy over Rhodesia as possible, because it was understood that this was quite neuralgic.

To emphasise the point of the outside world, I found in my papers when I was trying to prepare what is laughingly known as my brain for this endeavour: October 15/16 1964, when government was changed. On that very date Mr Khrushchev was deposed in Moscow* and the Chinese loosed off their first atom bomb.* And I have a note here that says that news of the Chinese bomb reached Number 10 Downing Street at 3.30 p.m. on October 16, at the precise moment when there was no government, because Sir Alec Douglas Home had gone to Buckingham Palace to tender his resignation to the Queen and Harold Wilson hadn't yet come back from

Nikita Krushchev (1894-1971), Soviet politician. Soviet premier 1955-64, deposed in a bloodless coup 15 Oct 1964.

The People's Republic of China exploded their first atom bomb on 15 Oct 1964.

the palace to take over the government. So there were other things happening in the world, in addition to Rhodesia.

So I would emphasise the continuity, and I think it is in the context of what public opinion across the whole nation – Conservative, Liberal, Labour – would stand, which determined the nature of Harold Wilson's policy and he knew it all very well. The two governments, the two parties, were agreed on the key issue that there was no independence without unimpeded progress to majority rule. That altered later on.

As far as sanctions are concerned, again I think it all needs to be brought together a bit better. There was support for modified sanctions. We knew that we couldn't afford to allow sanctions to be effective, because if they were, if they were to bring Rhodesia to heel, Zambia would have died first. Zambia was always exempt from sanctions and there was a hole as big as your fist in the sanctions policy. The same with armed force. Harold Wilson has been accused, not of not using armed force, but of saying that he wouldn't use it. That is not in the paper as far as I know, but I think that was quite an important aspect at the time. I wouldn't like to make a judgement on that, but I know that Harold Wilson himself thought: he had no intention of using force, why not say it. That was rather blunt, wasn't it, really, but that is how things were at the time; it helped to keep domestic opinion steady.

I would like to say one or two things from our assessment of the Rhodesia position. I think it is not without some interest that as the rest of black Africa or Africa south of the Sahara, John Pestell has drawn attention to this, became independent and more and more countries to the north of Rhodesia became independent, so Rhodesia policy slid to the right. You start with Garfield Todd,* then Edgar Whitehead, then Winston Field and finally Ian Smith, and it was a reaction to what was happening to the north of them. But worse things were happening to the north. I was sent by Harold Wilson to South Africa to talk to our Ambassador there and see Verwoerd,* see what he could do to help, but I got a message in mid-air, 'Get off in Salisbury and await instructions'. So I got off when we arrived in Salisbury and waited for instructions. Quite clearly Mr Justice Beadle* had a role to play, it is not mentioned there, and it seems to me that that was the first feeler after UDI that the Smith government was putting out, or Hugh Beadle on his own initiative – I don't know. But one of the things that became very clear to me was that, not only had Rhodesian politics moved to the right in response to events in the north, but there were some very horrible events to the north. And I think a little research will show that, in not less than nine countries to the north, Prime Ministers were assassinated etc. The one that sticks in my mind of course was in January 1966, two days after Harold Wilson and his party left Lagos, after a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference, that great and saintly man Abubakar* was found in a ditch

R. S. Garfield Todd, Rhodesian politician. Leader of United Rhodesia Party and Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia 1953-8.

Hendrik F. Verwoerd (1901-66), South African politician. Prime Minister of South Africa 1958-66 when South Africa became a republic in 1961.

Sir T. Hugh W. Beadle, Rhodesian judge. Chief Justice of Rhodesia 1961-77.

Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tefawa Balewa (1912-66), Nigerian politician. Prime Minister of Nigeria 1957-66, when he was assassinated.

with 20 machete gashes in his head. And Ian Smith said to me, 'Oh I see what Britain's plan for Rhodesia is, is it that we should go like these countries to the north? Well I can tell you that in Rhodesia we have not had a single Prime Minister assassinated'.

HOLLAND There is one pressing question or remark from the front row.

CARL WATTS It follows on from what Sir Oliver [Wright] was saying. Elsewhere you have called Rhodesia a problem of the second order, that was in your interview to the Diplomatic Oral History Project.*

The Diplomatic Oral History Project transcripts are deposited at the Churchill Archive Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge.

WRIGHT Did I say that? Well, if I was reported as saying that, I said it, and in fact I do believe that it was a second order problem.

WATTS Yet there are many Foreign Office files deposited in the Public Record Office that indicate the exasperation of Foreign Office officials that Rhodesia was not given the priority that it ought to have been given and that the contingency planning, although very thorough, did not really amount to an effective policy. How would you respond to that?

WRIGHT My response to that, is that my dear colleagues at the Foreign Office were rightly concerned about the consequences for foreign policy of the problem, but they didn't understand the domestic constraints. I can only repeat that I think in any given circumstance, and Sir Albert [Robinson] may want to come in on this, a policy is the result of a parallelogram of all the forces brought to bear, and predominantly domestic forces. Because no democratically elected Prime Minister can pursue a policy which doesn't have the broad support, not only of his own party and that is very important indeed, but in foreign affairs broad support of the country. If my colleagues at the Foreign Office said that, and I haven't been privy to what they were saying at the time, they didn't know what made things work. One of the great things about being at Number 10 which I did discover is that this is the most fascinating place on earth to be, because you see all the pressures coming to bear on the Prime Minister, all the constituencies he has to take account of: the pressures from the domestic world; departments in Whitehall; from his own political party in Parliament, which is very, very important; but also from the outside world – from the Commonwealth, the United Nations – and, in particular the pressure on sterling – the inability until about 1980 to have that extra million tons of coal which would have given us a foreign policy.

MORIARTY I am not at all surprised at what the questioner has found out. It seems to me part of the professionalism of government departments that people become involved in their task and put all they

can into it and see it as the most important thing. But it does all go into a cauldron. The cauldron, as it were, is the centre of government and things there find their level. So I think the Foreign Office people were right, but so were the government to see this in the context of other possibly more weighty preoccupations.

WRIGHT Can I just add to that that, in fact, Duncan Watson, who was the senior Commonwealth Relations official, and Martin Le Quesne, who was the senior Foreign Office official, and I, who were sort of conducting the talks about talks both in London and in Salisbury, got on just fine. I don't believe for one second that there was, in our reporting back to our respective masters, a tobacco paper between us, but they did get uneasy when I was despatched on errands without them.

KERR I wonder if I might take one minute to reinforce what Sir Oliver [Wright] has said, but from a different angle.

We are talking about public opinion. If I could take you back to those times, there was a very worrying amount of pressure and even a certain amount of rumour that Britain was being asked and pressurised to send a contingent to Vietnam. Now that may not seem directly related to the Rhodesian problem, but the bearing it had on it arose from the distraction which those rumours produced among those of us who might have been pressing harder on the Rhodesian question. The thought that a British army contingent, or part of the RAF, might find itself in Vietnam at that particular moment was very abhorrent and I think, as I recall, most of the left-wing Labour members and a good many middle-of-the-road Labour members were very busy rebutting that particular idea.

CUNNINGHAM I would strongly support that. I used to send messages to Andrew Forbes, who was the sort of chap who you might have thought would take a great interest in Rhodesia and be very active on Rhodesia. But actually he was much more interested in Vietnam. As David Kerr says, backbenchers generally were. I used to refer him to [George Bernard] Shaw, if you know your Shaw's *Saint Joan*, when during the trial Courcelles says, 'Were you in a state of grace when you stole the bishop's horse?': introducing something entirely irrelevant. So I used to accuse Andrew of going for something like Vietnam, take an interest in Vietnam, where we could not have any conceivable interest and which was not our direct responsibility, instead of giving his attention to Rhodesia, where we could be effective in my view and which was absolutely our responsibility. But there was little response of that kind from most backbenchers.

ROBINSON I just want to say, in support of your view about the influence of domestic policy on foreign policy that there was a very considerable body of opinion in the United Kingdom that supported Smith, and

does so to this day. In my personal dealings either with the Conservative Party or the Labour Party, there was little difference between the two Parties in relation to the future of Southern Rhodesia. However, there was a very considerable undercurrent of support in Britain for the policy of white supremacy.

HOLLAND Can I assure the floor there will be more of an opportunity in the second half to participate, because I can see that various points have arisen that people wish to take up

Rhodesian UDI
Session II: Conservatives and UDI

This witness seminar, organised by Dr M. D. Kandiah, Institute of Contemporary British History, London, and Sue Onslow, London School of Economics, was held on 6 September 2000, in the Conference Room at the Public Record Office, Kew, Surrey. In the chair was Professor Robert Holland of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London. The paper-giver was Sue Onslow.

ROBERT HOLLAND

Iain Macleod (1913-70), Conservative politician. Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1959-61.

See introductory paper by Sue Onslow.

If I can go round the table of our witnesses, giving very brief descriptions of very full careers. Mr Charles Longbottom, Conservative MP for York, 1959-66, and more particularly Parliamentary Private Secretary to Iain Macleod.* Sir Ian Lloyd, Conservative MP for Portsmouth Langstone through the later 1960s and early 1970s, and an economic adviser to British and Commonwealth Shipping, which I think is obviously relevant too. Thirdly Sir Douglas Dodds-Parker, who joined the Sudan political service in 1930. He was MP for Cheltenham 1964-74 and associated with the Conservative Commonwealth Council. Fourthly, Mr James Lemkin, active in the Conservative Party, particularly the Bow and Crossbow Groups,* and who wrote on issues of race and power through this period. Fifthly, Sir Peregrine Worsthorne, known to us all, and in this period writing for *The Sunday Telegraph* as deputy editor 1961-76 and obviously well beyond that. Sixthly, Sir Teddy Taylor, currently MP for Rochford and Southend East – as I am native Southendian I am pleased to see him here. In the period we are going to discuss Sir Teddy was MP for Glasgow Cathcart. Seventhly, Sir John Page, who was Conservative MP for Harrow West through the period. And finally Sir Oliver Wright, whom we have already heard from and will hear from again.

So those are our witnesses. I hope to give lots of opportunity to the floor as we proceed. Perhaps we can go round in the same circle with reminiscences.

CHARLES LONGBOTTOM

See introductory paper by Sue Onslow.

When I first saw a number of people here from the Conservative Party and having read the paper which talked about the Status Quo Group and the Progressive Group, I felt that as a Progressive I was in a severe minority, but I see that some of the Status Quo Group* have stayed *status quo* and not come today.

My background was really as chairman of the Young Conservative International Committee. I became very heavily involved in youth and student politics and the World Assembly of Youth. I was chairman of the European Youth Campaign and of the Commonwealth Youth Council. I only mention this because during those youth and

student conferences, I met many of the emerging African leaders as one of the only means for them to travel was to go to a youth or student conference. Therefore I got to know, long before I got into Parliament, and had known for a number of years, a number of these emerging leaders in Africa, among them relevant to this issue today being Kenneth Kaunda* and Joshua Nkomo.* I was involved in the background with Iain Macleod with some of the independence talks, particularly on Kenya,* Zambia, and Malawi.* I travelled in these and other then African colonies and knew what was happening in the political movements seeking decolonisation of those territories.

Kenneth Kaunda, Zambian politician. First President of Zambia; appointed first Prime Minister of Northern Rhodesia in 1964 which became the independent Republic of Zambia in 1965.

Joshua Nkomo (1917-99), Zimbabwean politician. Leader of ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union) and rival of Robert Mugabe, leader of ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union).

Kenya: East African republic within the Commonwealth that achieved self-government in June 1963, under the presidency of Jomo Kenyatta.

Malawi, known as Nyasaland until it gained its independence in July 1964.

It is absolutely true that we have got to look again at this whole issue against the background of world opinion at that time. We lived in an age of one-man one vote and self-determination. You have to look back to the leadership of John Kennedy*: one man one vote, and majority rule, were the cornerstones of his policy. It would have been, in my view, very difficult for the British government to buck that trend, which was universally supported by the United Nations, the Commonwealth and American policy so far as force is concerned. I was interested in what George Cunningham* said, but I do actually believe force would have been both logistically and, because of 'kith and kin', totally impractical.

John F. Kennedy (1917-63), American politician. President 1961-3.

Participant in the first session of the witness seminar.

So the argument in the Conservative Party was not necessarily about whether there should be change, but what should be the pace of change. Now I do actually believe that some of those in the Conservative Party who went, on numerous occasions by invitation of the Rhodesian Front, to Southern Rhodesia did give comfort and succour to the Rhodesian Front and led them to believe that British public opinion was behind them. I wouldn't put this as a point other than there were individuals who were doing that. I am not saying everybody who believed strongly and was proud about the Rhodesian situation was involved in it, but some were definitely giving comfort and succour. I wouldn't wish to name them, they will know who they were.

On the other side, I think the Progressives tried to play a positive role; at least those of us who knew the emerging African leaders. Sir Albert Robinson* was absolutely right. The real kernel of all these discussions was at what pace one moved to majority rule. Despite Sir Roy Welensky's* influence and that of South Africa, there was a big body of opinion which said that the pace of change was the crucial question. Now the pace was never ideal for any of the colonies which we did decolonise, but it was a pace which had its own momentum. Three times I had discussions with Joshua Nkomo to try to persuade him, at the behest of the government, to accept a limit towards majority rule. Not to have it immediately, not necessarily to have it in three, four or even five years' time, but to have it against a programme which the British government was keen to implement. That entailed rapid training programmes for the civil

Participant in the first session of the witness seminar.

Sir Roy Welensky (1907-92), Rhodesian politician. Prime Minister of Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 1956-63.

servants, the politicians, the judiciary, and everybody else who would need to be involved. And three times he said no he couldn't do that, because all his friends had got independence. I also know that Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere* and Hastings Banda* all tried to persuade him to go for limited majority rule, but he wouldn't be persuaded.

Julius Nyerere (1922-99), Tanzanian politician. Leader of Tanganyika African National Union, Prime Minister of Tanganyika May 1961; elected President of Tanganyika Republic Nov 1962 and of the United Republic of Tanzania April 1964 when Tanganyika united with Zanzibar, retired 1985.

Dr Hastings Banda (?1902-97), Malawian politician. President of Malawi 1966-94.

Oliver Wright* is quite right in saying that Rhodesia has to be put in its proper context. Although one looks back today and is studying this issue, to my mind it was not an issue that was ever really the main issue of the day. To answer Sue Onslow's question if there was a major policy split in this serious debate between the Status Quo Group and the Progressives in the Parliamentary Party, at least in those days it was conducted in a civilised and friendly manner, unlike some of the debates I hear that are currently taking place in the House of Commons on Europe.

Participant in the first session of the witness seminar.

SIR IAN LLOYD

I am not quite sure that I can add very much to this fascinating debate. I will start with the phrase which Sue Onslow used about whether or not the opponents of the official Conservative policy in the early 1960s were in any way gagged by the party, and I can only tell you what my personal experience was.

Having been born in South Africa, having lived there for 25 years, I had a pretty informed view of the practicality of sanctions.* And having returned from a visit to Rhodesia in 1966, I think it was, with my eldest son to meet his grandparents (I may say his grandfather had been Speaker of the Rhodesian House) I came back with a pretty clear view about what was and what was not practical. I remember seeking an interview with the then Chief Whip of the Tory Party, Willie Whitelaw,* who realised, I think probably from a speech I had made in the chamber, that I was unsympathetic to the general line of the party. I remember saying to him, 'Look Willie, I know the situation: the [River] Limpopo is about three hundred miles long, it is a common border with South Africa, and I know from everything in my being that sanctions will not work and therefore as a Conservative member I cannot possibly support them'. Willie Whitelaw sat back and said, 'Well, if that is how you feel Ian, that's how you feel, go ahead.' On that day I probably sacrificed any political career I might have had in the Conservative Party!

Britain imposed sanctions after UDI in Nov 1965, trade restrictions and an oil embargo, though the S. African Government helped Smith with sanctions breaking.

William Whitelaw (the Viscount Whitelaw 1918-99), Conservative politician. Chief Whip 1964-70.

But then, let's go on to Sue Onslow's very fascinating paper. I went through this, ticking what I agreed with and most of the pages are ticked all the way down, and on one page I have ticked the thing three times and that I think is going to form the theme of what I am going to say very briefly. What she said was, 'Thus for them the great debate was over the pace of change, not the end goal.' I think throughout this twentieth century controversy, which started a long time before Rhodesian sanctions, it goes right back to the early controversy between the Boers and Britain in South Africa itself* and it continued in South Africa under the *apartheid* regime, which I

Boer War 1899-1901 between the British and the Boers, who were Dutch settler descendants in southern Africa.

deplored – it was one of the reasons I left South Africa – continued under the Rhodesian question. What really is the heart of it is this: what is an ideal rate of change in a community where you have two widely different standards of everything? As my very great headmaster once told me, 'When we arrived in South Africa the indigenous people had not yet built a stone bridge'. And as [Ian] Smith* said in his book,* which some of you may or may not have read and I don't expect many of you agree with, 'In Rhodesia, when we arrived there, there were no hospitals, no roads, no rail, no electricity, nothing whatever.' There is no doubt whatever in my mind that the great contribution of the Europeans in Rhodesia and in southern Africa has been this civilised infrastructure.

Ian Smith, Rhodesian politician. Following the disintegration of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (in the parliament of), Smith became in 1962 a founder member of the Rhodesia Front Party, which opposed majority African rule, in 1962. He became Prime Minister in 1964 and on 11 Nov 1965 he made a 'unilateral declaration of independence', which was rejected by the British Government. He remained Prime Minister until 1979 when he gave way to majority rule.

Ian Smith, *The Great Betrayal* (London: Blake, 1997).

I accept at once that what the Nationalists* did in South Africa, and possibly what some elements of the Rhodesian Front advocated in Rhodesia, was a retrogressive step, because it attempted to entrench a *status quo* which had to continue changing. And therefore we come back to this essential thing: what was the pace of change which was practical, which was ideal, which was acceptable and which could be enforced? I think the great tragedy about Rhodesia was that it was at least arguable that the British government under R. A. B. Butler* and successive Cabinets (and this comes out very clearly in Smith's tragic book, *The Great Betrayal*) had given a clear indication that we would support a government in Southern Rhodesia and indeed give it independence, which we didn't do, provided it went on continuously improving the standard of life of all races, of all communities, not concentrating exclusively on one or the other. This, I think, is where the situation unfolded because, if you like, of the complexity which Oliver Wright emphasised of all governments in Britain having to recognise what was happening elsewhere.

The South African National Party, favouring Afrikaaner dominance, was formed 1914-5. The Nationalist successfully engineered South African secession from the Commonwealth and established an Afrikaaner republic in May 1961.

R. A. B. Butler (Lord Butler of Saffron Walden, 1902-82), Conservative politician. First Secretary of State, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in Charge of Central African Office 1962-4, Foreign Secretary 1963-4.

If I have one major criticism to make I would say that all governments of all parties tended to favour the views of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU),* despite everything that evidence was suggesting was producing a series of disasters in Africa. Nonetheless, because they were the OAU, because they had political influence internationally, we had to give more scope to their views than we had to give to the views of the Europeans, if you like to put it that way, in Rhodesia. I think this was a very great shame and was very largely responsible for the course of events which has followed on.

The Organisation of African Unity is an anti-colonialist, pan-African body formed in May 1963 to encourage and reinforce solidarity between African states.

Very briefly, on one other point, which is the possibility of the use of force. Butler in very many statements, which are forgotten, paid very great tribute to a fact which I think has been only too easily forgotten, which was that Rhodesia gave the greatest contribution to the British war effort in the Second World War of any single colony in the empire. This also emphasises what somebody else said about the close relationships between the British armed forces and the Rhodesian armed forces. Indeed I think there was an occasion when Wilson* addressed, and this I think comes out in Smith's book, some meeting in Salisbury and he was the only member

Harold Wilson (Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, 1916-97), Labour politician, Prime Minister 1964-70 and 1974-6.

present, who had not served in any of the British forces during the Second World War. It is this kind of thing which I think underlay a lot of the support that some of us in the Conservative Party felt that we had to give to those who were likely to suffer under what we then assumed to be a mistaken foreign policy on the part of successive British governments.

SIR DOUGLAS DODDS-PARKER

I will be as quick as I can. I remember the 1945 Parliament, when I represented North Oxfordshire. There was a Suez disaster and if Dr Kerr is still here: if you do not think there is anything lower than a Parliamentary Private Secretary and an Assistant Whip, it is a junior minister in a government, who is responsible for the government policy although he has no way of joining in the decisions taken by Cabinet. I was left for ten weeks, virtually alone, with four of my colleagues, at the [Despatch] Box [in the House of Commons] without any support from senior Cabinet Ministers over the Suez disaster and then shown the door, which they had every right to do. So cheer up Dr Kerr, you had not the worst of the luck!

When I came into Parliament, I was elected as the Secretary and later Chairman of the Imperial Affairs Committee as it was, which covered a quarter of the world. I knew all the founding fathers of all those countries, and couldn't do much more than giving them a cup of tea and putting them in the gallery. They all wanted to know what was going to happen in the future and I always stressed what Ian [Lloyd] has talked about: the infrastructure – the medical service, the judicial service, the health service, the education and so on. It takes time, but those people all wanted to be what they called 'free' and we always called 'independent'.

I have been inextricably interwoven with the military, the political, the government side as well as the party side. Cranley Onslow,* Sue's father, was an early member of the Conservative Commonwealth Council that established a strong Central African group who intermeshed with the party Imperial Affairs Committee for the first 40 years. It is not as strong today, but that is another matter. In 1953, I went to the Foreign Office (Mr Churchill* put me there); then I changed to the Commonwealth Office and I talked to him about what he wanted it to do about Central Africa. Among other things he said, 'Go and see Lord Malvern* and Mr Welensky and tell them that we have set up the Federation* and we will not damage it in any way or destroy it without consulting you'. That was when I went to the Commonwealth Office in 1955. In 1956 Anthony Eden* brought me back to the Foreign Office, where I had been his Under Secretary, and where, as I just said, I faced that Suez disaster. I sat that Parliament out on Mr Churchill's advice. He said, 'You seem to have got in the same position I was, you haven't left the party, the party has left you'. So, on his advice, I withdrew and was lucky to be invited to join again and re-elected for Cheltenham.

Sir Cranley Onslow (Lord Onslow of Woking, 1926-2000), Conservative politician.

Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965), Conservative politician. Prime Minister, 1940-5, 1951-5.

The 1st Viscount Malvern of Rhodesia (Sir Godfrey Huggins, 1883-1971), Rhodesian politician. Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia 1933-53 and of the Central African Federation 1953-6.

The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

Sir Anthony Eden (the Earl of Avon, 1897-1977), Conservative politician. Prime Minister 1955-7.

I went back and was Chairman of the Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Committee for the next ten years and spent those years largely at international gatherings, but also was in the background when the build-up to UDI happened. I had personal good relations always with Harold Wilson and with Jim Callaghan* afterwards. Iain Macleod was made Colonial Secretary when I was chairman of the Commonwealth Council but out of Parliament. Macleod mentioned that he was very anxious to speed up the transfer of power, which I had seen in 1956 in the Sudan. But, with great respect, those people who were with him weren't so conscious of the realities of the situation of the infrastructure, without which these countries cannot work properly. There was a top secret Smaller Territories Committee that Lord Attlee* put me on in 1947, looking at the 42 smaller territories that could never be independent politically because they could never be able to support themselves.

James Callaghan (Lord Callaghan of Cardiff), Labour politician. Prime Minister 1976-9.

Clement R. Attlee (the Earl Attlee, 1883-1967), Labour politician. Prime Minister 1945-51.

But in the time when I was out of Parliament, Mr Macmillan* passed the poisoned chalice to Mr Butler, making him not Deputy Prime Minister but First Minister. And going back on that instruction which Mr Churchill had given me about consulting Southern Rhodesia, Mr Butler announced at a press conference that Malawi and Zambia should be independent, but not Southern Rhodesia. I took the Central African group of the Conservative Commonwealth Council to see Mr Butler to put the case for giving it at the same time to Southern Rhodesia. He listened very kindly, as he always did, and said he would consider our view. Colin Legum, a journalist much interested in Africa for many years, was around in those days. He is not of the same political persuasion as I am. I saw him the other day, I am glad to see he is still about, and he said, 'You know, I think you were probably right to have let Southern Rhodesia "have a go" under Edgar Whitehead* as Prime Minister.' And that was the crucial point, one of the signposts in what was happening in Rhodesia. After that, UDI came. I don't think anybody I knew seriously thought of using force. Sanctions – obviously for anybody who knows what went on in the Second World War when we busted a lot of German sanctions – do not work. Also they were wide open to abuse by countries like Japan and Germany, who will abuse any sanctions that are ever put up.

Harold Macmillan (the Earl of Stockton, 1894-1986), Conservative politician. Prime Minister 1957-63.

Sir Edgar Whitehead (1905-71), Rhodesian politician. Prime Minister and leader of Southern Rhodesian Government delegation to the Salisbury Constitutional Conference of Feb 1961.

But those are the facts that face Africa. Devoted as I am to Africa, and still am, having spent so many happy years there, I feel nothing but a grim time is ahead. I am afraid that UDI was inevitable. The only thing about it was the pace at which it would come, and in what circumstances. I was unhappy that we weren't able, with all our skill in politics, to make it so that we didn't have to suffer, on both sides, the 30,000 casualties that somebody mentioned.

JAMES LEMKIN

I came into this question of Africa through the Bow Group and the Conservative Commonwealth Council East and Central African Group. Philip Murphy has written a very good book about the Conservative policies in the 1950s and the 1960s in sub-tropical

Philip Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonisation: the Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951-1964* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).

The Capricorn Society was founded by Sir David Stirling (1916-90). It was driven by his idealism and attracted many in east and central Africa and the UK who wanted a staged constitutional transfer of power.

Africa,* the Conservative Commonwealth Council East and Central African Group looked hard at fancy franchises. The Capricorn Society,* which is not in the book, also looked at the whole question of fancy franchises, in order to bridge the gap between what was and what was to be. The real problem I think, as Charles Longbottom has mentioned, was that there was a shrinking of the period before independence. I remember meeting Julius Nyerere in Dares-Salaam in October 1957 and we talked about independence for Tanganyika in 12 or 15 years' time. By the early 1960s of course that period had, in the minds of Africans who were pressing for independence, shrunk.

I think that the real influence that I saw was over the debate and the discussions and negotiations about Kenya. There Iain Macleod took on the Europeans in Kenya and much to the concern, I know, of some members of the Conservative Party he put Kenya on the road to very rapid independence. Patrick Wall,* who I thought quite a bit of, and at that time of course was very well known to some of you around the table, argued very strongly against a rapid move to independence in Kenya, but Macleod took him on and beat him. So this is a point, I think, which has to be borne in mind in terms of the internal politics.

Sir Patrick Wall, Conservative politician. Chairman of the Conservative Party East and Central Africa Committee 1956-9, Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Commonwealth Affairs Committee 1960-8, and on the Join East and Central Africa Board 1965-75.

I will take up just two or three other points. Somebody I think has written that Zambia could have imposed sanctions and brought Southern Rhodesia to heel. I think that is nonsense. I think, if anything, the Zambians were terribly frightened of sanctions and you can see that in the case of the export of copper from Zambia before the Chinese built the railway linking Kapiri Mposhi and Dares-Salaam* and before the great lorry fiasco where General Motors said they were going to bring in five hundred lorries in order to transport copper. But there was a battle about tokenism earlier, in 1964, when the government of Zambia was determined to unstool, as it were, South Africa. There was a great battle between the industrialists, Colonel Ellis, President of the Chartered Company (British South Africa Company*) – successor to Rhodes* and Dougal Malcolm* – and Gerald Percy, Secretary of the said company and supporter of UNIP (United Nationalist Independence Party in Zambia). Colonel Ellis lost out and the valuable mineral rights in Zambia were bought by the UNIP government, financially aided by HMG.

Known as the Tanzania-Zambia Railway (TAZARA).

The British South Africa Company, founded by Cecil Rhodes in 1887 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1898, administered the territories in central Africa and acquired mining rights from local chieftains. The company ceased operations in the mid-1920s.

Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902). Founder of the de Beers Mining Company and member of Cape Colony legislature. Founder of the British Cape-to-Cairo expansionist ideal, and Prime Minister of the Cape Colony July 1890-Jan 1896. Instrumental in the establishment of settlements in Masonaland (now in Zimbabwe) and Barotseland (now Zambia).

Sir Dougal Malcolm (1877-1955)

So these, Chairman, are some of the things I remember about that period.

SIR PEREGRINE WORSTHORNE

I think there are two points arising from the discussion before tea, two personal reminiscences which throw some light.

Firstly I remember going out to Rhodesia as it then was just after UDI and asking the Prime Minister, Mr Wilson, whether I could go and see him. It was very, very shortly after UDI and he let me go and see him for a talk before going out there. I remember him say-

Lord North (2nd Earl of Guilford, 1732-92), politician. Prime Minister 1770-82.

At the time of the American Declaration of Independence.

There is a picture not of Lord North but of Sir Robert Walpole (Earl of Orford, 1676-1745), the first Prime Minister, in the Cabinet Room at No. 10 Downing Street.

ing, putting on rather his great English patriot-statesman hat, that nobody since Lord North* sat in Downing Street with a decision as momentous as he was now faced with, whether he should do what Lord North did in 1776,* or whether he should avoid this calamity, and he made it absolutely clear that he wasn't going to send the redcoats in to fight another UDI. It was completely clear that there was never, in his mind, from that day on, which was just after UDI, any intention. I seem to remember there was a picture of Lord North, is that possible, in Downing Street, him pointing at it?

SIR OLIVER WRIGHT A very inappropriate picture.*

WORSTHORNE I felt very proud to be myself, through him, vicariously taking part in this great enormous historical episode, which incidentally doesn't, I think, bear remotely any great serious implications either for the Tory Party in the long term, or indeed for Britain then or now. So to go to Sue Onslow's paper, my answer would be, that it didn't arise from any profound division in the Tory party, nor did it in fact have any long-term consequences in the subsequent disastrous history of the Tory Party, which has to be put down to other reasons: Europe.

Pieter K van der Byl (1923-99), Rhodesian politician. Held various portfolios in the Smith Government, including Minister of Information, Immigration and Tourism and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Son of Major P. van der Byle, a South African MP and minister under Smuts in World War II.

Mein Kampf, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler's published explanation of his hopes and beliefs, written in prison in 1923.

The second point, arising out of this trip to the embattled, rebellious colony of Rhodesia. When I arrived at Salisbury, I rang up, dare I say it, but I suppose I ought to admit it, my old friend P. K. Van der Byl,* whose name has been already mentioned. I said, 'PK, here I am, visiting the colony in rebellion, can you put me up for a few nights?' And he said, drawling down the telephone, 'I hope you have brought a black tie'. I said, 'Well, as a matter of fact I didn't think a black tie was appropriate for a visit to a colony in rebellion against the Crown, PK'. And he said, 'Well that is a bit difficult, because I have got a dinner party.' In any case, I did arrive without my black tie and I remember being shocked to find open on the coffee table in PK's house, who was then Minister of Information (I am not sure even if he had such a grand title, he ultimately of course became Foreign Minister, war minister to all intents and purposes) a recently perused copy of *Mein Kampf*.* This bears out your comment about the fascist element, which cannot be overlooked. I was fond of PK, but he was a racial supremacist admirer of Hitler.

And that was the atmosphere if you like, racial supremacy out and out, of the Rhodesian Front in those days. Of course in many ways they were an extremely rum lot and completely out of the modern world. That was why I was quite fond of them in a way, but that is what they were and there was never any chance in my view, long before the Rhodesian Front, of the whites in Rhodesia accepting, except in the far, far distant future which none of them would be alive to see, any idea in their minds of being ruled by black Rhodesians. This was out of the possibility in their mind. It couldn't be put off, it was talked about so gradually, as I say. I think Smith said,

'A thousand years'. But let us say a hundred years. In those days very few people lived to a hundred. But there was never any question; the British politicians did not really have any idea if they thought that they could get an agreement that was going to, in the fairly short run, turn the white Rhodesians over to a black majority rule. That was not, I believe, ever on the cards for Southern Rhodesia. Of course, as everybody has said, the *realpolitik* of the time made it extremely embarrassing for Britain to be associated with people who in fact didn't go along with the idea of majority rule for Africans in areas where there was a substantial white minority.

Julian Amery (Lord Amery of Lustleigh, 1919-97), Conservative politician. Air Minister 1960-2, Aviation 1962-4, Minister for Housing and Construction 1970-2, Minister of State at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office 1972-4.

The question of what was the rationale or the emotional impulse behind the white resistance and the relationship of the Status Quo British Tory Julian Amery* crowd, of which I was I suppose a minor part. I think it was this, and it is really very simple: we had encouraged a large number of whites to go to Rhodesia, in the general view then that the actuality of putting whites under black rule was something that to those white Rhodesians would have been regarded as an enormous betrayal. I took the view, and I don't know how many of my colleagues of the Status Quo Group would have taken the view, but I think quite a number of them would, that although there was no chance of Britain in the long run saving them from what was seen as a fate, it was not within the political morality of the period right to abandon them to this fate. We could abandon them, but to prevent them actually taking their own fate into their own hands? We probably recognised that the whites wouldn't be able to stay more than ten years, governing themselves, without the blacks taking over, but at least we were not going to be party in accelerating this process. If they wanted to and felt they could stop it themselves, let them get on with it. We had encouraged them to go there, we didn't wish to say, and to moralise about it, 'You have a duty to give up the ghost'. We didn't think we could save them, but we thought at least we cannot push them like sheep to the slaughter. That was the feeling – that it was immoral to stop them doing their best to postpone the inevitable, which indeed they did. They postponed it in effect longer than ten years, because the actual fate that they thought was going to happen at the moment of majority rule has in fact been postponed how many, thirty years or something? The farms are being taken away now: they thought it would happen much faster. In any case, they kept ten years with their servants and we were not going to abbreviate that in so far as we could help it. That, I think, was the sort of thinking behind the group. I don't think we ever thought we could stop the process of history marching on, but that I think was the sort of morality; that was why the passions and the emotions ran quite high in this group and why we even put up with Ian Smith and P. K. Van der Byl.

Sir Ahmadu Bello, The Sardauna of Sokoto (1910-66), Nigerian statesman. Premier of the Northern Region 1954-66.

Somebody at some point has to mention, in any discussion of British politics, snobbery and class. I remember travelling and reporting on the 'Wind of Change' speech. We went to stay on the last bit, just before going on to Salisbury, was it the Sardauna of Sokoto,*

who was he the premier of the Northern Nigerian region. Macmillan talked to us after he had seen him, he was flying on to Welensky the next day. Macmillan used to have a sundowner with the correspondents covering his trip, and over whisky and sodas he told us how much more at home he felt with the Sardauna, who reminded him of the Duke of Argyll – 'a kind of black highland chieftain' – than he would feel in Salisbury as the guest of a former railwayman, Sir Roy Welensky. Snobbery, pure snobbery. Incidentally the Rhodesian whites were Sergeants Mess; the Kenyan, the Officers Mess. How different it would all have been if Ian Smith had been a gentleman.

SIR TEDDY TAYLOR

Rhodesia was sad for me, because it brought me into conflict with the Young Progressive Group of the Conservative Party, where I didn't have any wish to cause trouble and they told me that the reason for the policy was to save democracy. In fairness it's this same Young Progressive group I have been fighting ever since, because they want to throw away our democracy by joining the European Union.

I think the point I just want to make here is that the idea that there was some great issue of principle is one which worries me. I was one of the so-called Rhodesian rebels. I also went out to visit Rhodesia and see Mr Smith, although I paid for it myself, every penny. I never got a penny from any political organisation, although lots of people do get lots of money from political organisations to do lots of exciting things. I went out to Angola and then went for a visit to Rhodesia, then went to see Mr Smith and saw lots of other people. I was also, for many years until he died, a great friend of Joshua Nkomo. What was the kind of thing which motivated the so-called rebels? First of all, the crucial thing to remember is the Conservative Party didn't have a policy on Rhodesia at all. On anything controversial we don't have a policy. Basically, the majority are not terribly interested. They don't have a view; you have a little group on either side. It is the same in Europe. You have a small group of people who don't like it; and a small group on the other side called the H-block, whose names all begin with H. The same is true about Rhodesia. If you look at the key votes and look at facts, instead of looking at daft opinions, you see, number one, in most of the key votes like oil sanctions, the Conservative Party didn't vote at all. We abstained, to show our fear of opinion. A small group voted against it; a small group voted for it. So I think the crucial thing to remember here is that this idea that the parties were tearing themselves apart on the issue is a load of codswallop. There were a few people who felt the issue passionately; the great majority said, 'Please don't talk about it at all'. So in the same way as we don't want to talk about Europe, it is the kind of thing that upsets people.

What motivated me was in fact a feeling of anger and frustration and rage that no-one was really thinking about what the people in Rhodesia were telling me about, which was, 'If we go ahead with

your bright ideas to bring in democracy and young trendy ideas, what happens to the people?'. And quite frankly, when you looked at other countries where the Western powers do their own madness: had taken over these countries as colonies and then given them their independence too early, that created not just a shambles but an appalling shambles. In the same way as we have some of our idiots in the Foreign Office still, who tell us what we have to do about Kashmir.* I always say, 'Remember, that was the problem we created, not a problem created by India and Pakistan'. So that upset me hugely, that we were in fact saying to the Rhodesians and saying to Mr Smith and all these people who certainly weren't gentlemen I appreciated, 'You have got to do this', when in fact they took the view, as I took the view, that it was going to be madness and simply create an appalling situation.

During the 1997 royal visit to the Indian sub-continent, the Foreign Secretary (1997-2000) Robin Cook offered to mediate in the disupte between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, but this is deemd by both countries to be an internal matter.

The second thing I think we should think about, and it probably is a cheeky thing to say and I will stop talking after this, it is the first time for years I have felt rather angry – has anyone ever thought, including all these wise people who are telling us all the great things that happened, what has actually happened in Rhodesia since in fact we adopted our policies? All the clever people tell us let's go for liberal democratic ideas. What has actually happened there? What we know has happened in Rhodesia is that the country has become a dreadful economic mess, a shambles and a place where democracy is little more than a sick joke. And I honestly think that the one thing that Rhodesia should tell us, whether I am right or anybody else is right or anyone is wrong, what has happened to the people? I think the one thing we should remember is that we didn't do it very well. We made a mess of things and people are suffering hugely. I think this is one thing that should matter to all of us more than anything else; not who was right and who was wrong.

The final point about the gentlemanly behaviour. I am afraid what Peregrine [Worsthorne] said is terribly right. I was told time and time again, 'You have got to be a Rhodes, Mr Smith is not a gentleman.' But I can tell you, having gone there, having seen Rhodesia, and having spoken to the people, the fears they had were genuine fears. You might have some mad people around putting forward mad ideas, but most people's fears were genuine and their fears unfortunately were true. I think, if we look round at other countries, I think in particular about Angola. This is a country which I think is the only one I can honestly say I have gone to which I love. It is a country with fantastic potential; a country with what appeared to be, at that time, nice people. They got on well with each other, no racial tension – no nothing. And now that country is a total shambles with a few armed gangs going round running things. So I hope that, whatever we think about who was right or who was wrong, we should think about our responsibility for what has happened to decent, honourable people. We made a terrible mess and people have suffered in consequence.

SIR JOHN PAGE

The trouble about following Teddy [Taylor], which I have done so much, having been at one time the unpaid secretary of the Teddy Taylor fan club, particularly because at every election which Teddy won including the first at Southend I spoke for him (that is the reason you lost Cathcart the second time, you didn't have me), is that it makes me feel such a tremendous wet. But there we are.

Just three snapshots from my mind, as the person here who knows least about Rhodesia. The moment I felt the greatest shame in the Conservative Party was the day after Roy Welensky came to speak to the Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Committee. When he got up he got a standing ovation, we banged the desks and he must have gone and thought, 'I have won over the whole of the Conservative Party.' About the next day – and Douglas [Dodds-Parker] will say if I am wrong – he had the carpet pulled from under him by Harold Macmillan and none of us made a bloody squeak. I said to someone, 'Isn't it ghastly, what are we going to do about Rhodesia. Do you think everybody in the Smoking Room is worried like this?'. He said, 'Oh no Jack, they are all wondering about trivial matters.'

Sir Lionel Heald (1897-1981), Conservative politician. MP for Chertsey 1950-70.

On that second evening I sat on the back benches waiting for a 12 o'clock division or something with Lionel Heald,* who had been a member of the Monckton Commission* – Sir Albert [Robinson] knew him well. He was an old friend of mine and he said, 'Walter Monckton* and the Monckton Commission agree that, if any of the three parts of the Federation should be given independence, all three should be. That was the deal'. And he said, 'I feel very ashamed and horrified by the fact that it didn't come off.'

Monckton Advisory Commission on Central Africa. Their report, published Oct 1960, supported the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland but advocated 'positive steps to win African support'.

The Viscount Monckton of Brenchley (1891-1965), Conservative politician. Headed Monckton Commission.

The third snapshot, which I learned really from Sir Albert [Robinson] and then from Perry [Peregrine Worsthorne] this afternoon. I personally didn't realise how hard right the Rhodesian Front was and I liked Robbie's [Sir Albert Robinson's] description of Smith always leading from behind. But it occurs to me now, Harold Wilson said a week was a long time in politics. Am I right in saying that, on [HMS] *Fearless** there was on offer a 12-year movement towards majority rule? Oh my God! If a week is a long time in politics, 12 years is infinite. And I would have thought that would count as a hundred years really, because almost anything can happen in twelve years, and I have always been disappointed that Smith didn't accept *Fearless*. But now I know why he didn't, because his Cabinet and close friends wouldn't have accepted it.

HMS Fearless, location of further talks in Oct 1968 between Ian Smith and a British delegation led by Harold Wilson.

Lastly, as a child of the Raj who spent his childhood in India, I am terribly interested in what Teddy [Taylor] reminded us of: what an awful place Africa has become under various graft-ridden governments, instead of sort of half a million square miles being run by [Sir Douglas] Dodds-Parker and you chaps. I am just reminded of my cousin in Kenya. I was with him in a car and he showed me the British Library and he said, 'I ran the whole of Nairobi from half that single-storey building; it is now run from two skyscrapers'. I

agree. I don't think that a lot of people in the Conservative Party minded. A few were very keen on one way; a few were very keen on the other, but to the majority it didn't matter so much. But I have always felt that if only Ian Smith had been able to pick up the *Fearless* deal, that at least would have made one feel less responsible.

WRIGHT

As a former public servant I don't think I should meddle in the affairs of the political parties. But I would like to offer them, if I could, some comfort.

Talking about the pace of change, it takes two to tango and when you had the situation, as we did in sub-Saharan Africa, where there were independence movements, policy was not dictated by what was desirable but what was possible. We were very conscious that the African nationalists wanted to govern themselves and this is a very natural thing. All the federations in the world have broken up, because people want to govern themselves. We formed three federations: the Federation of Central Africa, the West Indian Federation [1958-62] and the Federation of Malaysia and Singapore [1963]. They all bust up and the merit of them was that they enabled us to get out from under. Later, the Soviet Union busted up because the people of the constituent republics wanted to govern themselves.

In sub-Saharan Africa the pace of change was not dictated by what was desirable, but by what was possible. Because African nationalism, while perhaps it was not ready to govern itself, could stop us governing. I believe that, in the real world, there was the possibility of a pace of change which would have left everybody happy. Obviously it was too fast for ideal government, but the pace of change was dictated by the parallelogram of forces operative at that time. And the Conservatives shouldn't feel too badly about that, because they are great believers in the exercise of power and they know that the action and reaction was equal and opposite. And we gave way through sub-Saharan Africa with the consequences we all know. I think the people who lived there, and grabbed the power, and prevented us from choosing our own pace must take the responsibility for what has happened, and not the Conservative Party.

WORSTHORNE

Shouldn't we call it the exercise of impotence? To be more truthful.

WRIGHT

If you wish to. But I don't think it really corresponds to reality.

WORSTHORNE

We had no power.

WRIGHT

Nikita Krushchev (1894-1971), Soviet politician. Soviet premier, 1955-64, deposed in a bloodless coup 15 Oct 1964.

We had enough power to delay this happening for as long as it was delayed. We had not the power to hand over at a time of our own choosing. And whether it was good for the people who had the power to take the power, real life, as Mr Khrushchev* used to say, demonstrates what happens. A final word here. Just because there is

a problem, do not think that there is a solution to it.

HOLLAND

The issue we have arrived at, in that final exchange, is not only the heart of the Rhodesian problem, but the heart of decolonisation since 1945, not only in the British sense, but in the French sense and also in the Portuguese sense. It is the classic definition of what that problem is. Let me try and open it now to the floor.

CHRISTABEL GURNEY

I am from the Archives Committee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Before the break I was going to say that I felt it was a pity that nobody had been invited here today to put the African nationalist point of view of the events surrounding UDI, from Zimbabwe or the African Commonwealth countries. And I was going to say that I thought it was very important to see what had happened in the long run, and the fact is that the *Fearless* proposals were unacceptable to Africans in Zimbabwe and would probably not have prevented the guerrilla war taking off. I think that the Pearson Commission* was a key moment. The unexpected thing was that without very strong leadership the people of Zimbabwe at that point rejected proposals that were more favourable to them than *Fearless*. We shouldn't forget that the 'internal solution' of handing power over to Muzorewa* was a non-starter and that in 1980 ZANU* won a free election overwhelmingly.

The Commission on International Development, known as the Pearson Commission after its chairman, Lester B Pearson (1897-1972), former Prime Minister of Canada. Set up to investigate the causes of third world poverty. Produced a report in 1969 which linked growing poverty to export credits and the use of international credits.

Able Muzorewa, Zimbabwean politician and Bishop of the Methodist Church. Prime Minister of Zimbabwe 1978-80.

Zimbabwe African National Union, formed in 1963 and led since 1975 by Robert Mugabe.

Having listened to the second part of this conference, I now realise that saying this would have been inappropriate and misguided, because it clearly is the point of view of many people here today that actually it would have been much better if parts of Africa were still British colonies. I find this distressing – it is very hard to believe in this happy situation in the 1930s and 1940s and 1950s, where the people were really well off, with a wonderful infrastructure of health and education for the majority of Africans. I don't see that as relevant, or not a substitute for majority rule. You can't stop people's desire to govern themselves. I realise that you can't blame everything on other people and Africans of course must bear some responsibility for the casualties that sub-Saharan countries have become, but it is not entirely their fault. There are important issues like artificial borders, debt and terms of trade. Western countries were glad enough to buy primary products when they needed them, but are not so happy to open up their markets to products that compete at home. The fate of Angola in the 1970s and 1980s was far from being of its own making. The government was pushed into a phoney peace process by the West and the UN. And, also in my view in Zimbabwe, the 1980s were largely a period of prosperity and racial harmony.

DR S. ADEYINKA ODUBENA

I have spent over 15 years studying the extent of European interests in Africa, the Near and Far East, and indeed in the wider world

during the period described by Professor William Langer* as the Age of Diplomacy of Imperialism.* At no time was the interest of indigenous peoples allowed to stand in the way of the 'grand schemes' prescribed by their colonial masters.

William L Langer (1896-1977), American academic.

William L Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* (1935).

What we have heard here today echoed the views of colonial satraps who pandered to party political determination to prolong the agony of a dwindling Empire by emphasising the lack of 'infrastructure' and the unreadiness of Africans to cope with their independence – even in the 1960s, when Ghana and Nigeria had secured their freedom.

It is significant of the double standards adopted by the Tory Party that Teddy Taylor, an avowed anti-European, should retain the mantra of the so-called 'Rhodesian Rebels' that Rhodesian Africans required a thousand years before they could liberate themselves. The racial supremacists whom he upheld as 'decent, honourable' people are still in control of the Zimbabwean economy; the mining, agriculture and primary industries were said, in a recent survey by the *Observer* to reflect dominant interests of members of the British Conservative Party.

Sir Peregrine Worsthorne was able to identify one African – the Sardauna of Sokoto – whom Macmillan was able to acknowledge as an 'equal'. Sokoto was, of course, part of the vast and culturally diverse regions of West Africa, which Lugard's future wife christened 'Nigeria'. And as a Nigerian British, I can vouch for at least a thousand other 'Sardaunas', even though supporters of racial supremacy remain happy with the ideas of roping all sub-Saharan Africans together as 'bloody awful place under various graft-ridden governments'.

Professor Norman Stone* once advocated a recolonisation of Africa, which might ease his attempted history of the world. But the Empire is finished forever.

Norman Stone, academic. Formerly Regius Professor of Modern History, University of Oxford.

Black may be 'beautiful' and white 'elegant'. But neither is the colour for humans. Whiteness of a master race and blackness for sub-humans – concepts arising from sanitised Christianity as instruments of world domination – should no longer be paramount in world politics. But they are powerful in the retention of the myth of Empire. I do not call myself black' no need to do so. It suits the British tabloids (and regrettably Sir Teddy speaks their language) to regard the problems of Zimbabwe as the fault of the demented 'blacks'. Hence perhaps a discreet acceptance of Peter Tatchell's* attempted citizen's arrest of President Mugabe.* *Quam Furor.*

Peter Tatchell, gay rights activist and politician.

In Nov 1999 Tatchell and other members of the gay activist group OutRage! attempted to make a citizen's arrest of Mugabe during a visit to London on a charge of torture of two Zimbabwean journalists.

Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwean politician. Prime Minister of Zimbabwe since 1981.

WATTS

There seems to be a misapprehension, both in the current session and in the previous session, that Harold Wilson would not have considered the use of force under any circumstances. But in January 1966 he asked Denis Healey* to produce a range of military plans, including a plan to meet circumstances 'in which we might have to

Denis Healey (Lord Healey), Labour politician. Secretary of State for Defence 1964-70.

contemplate the virtual invasion of the country against both political and military opposition, followed by a period of what could be, in effect, military occupation and administration'. The question I would like to put to this panel is, what do you think the reaction of the Conservative Party would have been in those circumstances, because there is a tradition, is there not, of 'getting behind the boys once they go in'.

HOLLAND That is a concrete question.

PAGE I don't think the boys would have gone in.

LEMKIN Remember the Curragh*?

Curragh Mutiny 1914, when British army officers stationed at Curragh, nr Dublin, stated they would resign their commissions rather than fire on Ulstermen, should they be ordered to do so.

PAGE Exactly.

GEORGE CUNNINGHAM That would have depended very much on the manner in which it was done and the presentation of it. That is why I was of the opinion that it should be presented as a very, very limited endeavour. Now frankly I am surprised to hear that Harold Wilson made such a request of Denis Healey and I don't know what the determining circumstances were, but I really do not believe that it was a serious request. I don't think there is anything that people knew about the general attitude of Harold Wilson and Denis Healey that suggest that he was seriously interested in mounting a military force. But I do think that had we done so, in a sensible manner, there would not have been the degree of opposition that everyone here is assuming.

TAYLOR You asked the question what would the Conservatives have said. I think what some of them would have asked is what would you intend to do with the troops after you have moved in and shot some Rhodesians and taken over, what would you do then. I think that is a thing people should always ask if they are thinking of using troops. Assuming that you win, assuming all goes well, what do you do then? I think that is what a sensible Conservative would have asked.

WATTS Can I just make one observation on the 'kith and kin' factor. Let's remember that this would have worked both ways. Not only did the British feel at this point that they were 'kith and kin' of Rhodesians, but the Rhodesians also felt that they were the kith and kin of the British. If you read the reports of, say, the RAF Liaison Officer in Salisbury, he was writing back to Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter

Sir Peter Fletcher, soldier. Then Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Policy and Plans).

Fletcher* and saying that in the event of a UDI he had full confidence that the reaction of the high command in Rhodesia would be not to issue any illegal orders. In other words a confrontation between Rhodesian troops and British troops would have been highly unlikely.

CUNNINGHAM

Unchecked information.

And it is worth adding, as someone has mentioned, the number of white Rhodesians who fought in the Second World War, but they were greatly outnumbered by the number of black Rhodesians who had fought in the Second World War.*

WRIGHT

Could I just comment on what you have said there. Whatever this guy in Salisbury may have said, and he is entitled to his opinion, when a government is contemplating the use of force one of the first things that the Chief of Defence Staff asks his political masters is: should we plan for an unopposed landing or an opposed landing. I have yet to believe that there is a politician in any position of responsibility or power who would say 'assume an unopposed landing'. That being so, the magnitude of the military effort necessarily escalates. Obviously planning was done round about that, that is the normal thing that planners do, but a successful – it would have to be an opposed landing – thing would have meant taking out of operation every airport, every aerodrome, in Zambia for something like three months, in order to get the three brigades or whatever was thought necessary to do the job, on the ground. That would cut off Zambia completely from the outside world. And that is only the beginning.

WATTS

There were perfectly valid logistical arguments against military intervention, but having said that, previous plans that had been drawn up by the Joint Planning Staff had allowed for those very great logistical obstacles. Plans therefore did exist and they could have been modified to insert a British force, either large or small, depending on the circumstances.

WRIGHT

I simply don't believe that any politician would take the responsibility, or any Chief of Defence Staff would fail to put in a bid for anything but overwhelming force. So there isn't an alternative. Planning is planning, no more; it is not policy.

DODDS-PARKER

Sir Henley Coussey (1895-1958), lawyer. Chaired committee on new Gold Coast constitution. Report, 1949, recommended including Africans in government and was the basis of the 1951 constitution.

Perhaps it is not entirely irrelevant that at the end of the Labour government after the war Mr Justice Coussey* was sent out to Ghana, which was called the Gold Coast then, to look into constitutional developments. His recommendations were in fact amounting to independence in quite a short time. And the Governor reported, I think the papers have all been published, that if this was not accepted he would ask for a division of British troops to come to hold the country down. I made enquiries of the Secretary

Oliver Stanley (1896-1950), Conservative politician. Colonial Secretary 1942-5.

of the Tory Imperial Affairs Committee and it went to Oliver Stanley* Colonial Secretary of the Shadow Cabinet and there was not a single person who was going to support that.

KAYE WHITEMAN

I have two hypothetical questions. One is that if the Conservatives had won the 1964 election, would UDI still have taken place? The second one is, if Sir Alec [Douglas-Home] had won the 1964 election, would the Labour opposition have rallied round George Cunningham in supporting the use of force in post-UDI Rhodesia?

HOLLAND

Would someone like to respond, the question has been posed.

WRIGHT

F D Roosevelt (1882-1945), American politician. US President 1935-45.

Yes, but it is an 'iffy' question to answer. My great hero Franklin Delano Roosevelt* always used to refuse to answer 'iffy' questions. That being so, I will venture a forecast on what Alec [Douglas-Home] would have done had he been re-elected, and he only lost by four seats. I think he would have been totally consistent with what he had been while he was still Prime Minister, and that is there would be no independence for Rhodesia under the 1961 Constitution, except with marked, unimpeded progress to majority rule. Now what the consequence of that in Rhodesia would have been, that I don't know.

PESTELL

Just one comment on what Carl Watts said. I think he suggested that the Rhodesian troops wouldn't have opposed the British troops coming in, is that right?

WATTS

Yes, I have got written testimony from men who served the Rhodesian Arm and British South Africa Police which says that is so.

PESTELL

That I don't believe at all. I knew lots of army and airforce, they were on excellent terms – before the British aircraft could take off from Lusaka they had to get permission from Salisbury, they were good buddies – but I don't believe that when the balloon went up the Rhodesian forces would not have opposed vehemently.

HOLLAND

I haven't been able to say anything of any substance, but I will say one thing. It seems to me the essential secret of British decolonisation by the early 1960s was: you play ahead of the game. Ahead of the game, you don't get behind the game, you can only win if you are ahead of the game. And in Southern Rhodesia, you are confronted with the problem that you had to deal with Smith, you led from behind the front and these things simply don't match. It seems to me that is something that appears quite central to some things we have discussed.

Commentary

Colin Legum

written 8 August 2001

My knowledge of Southern Rhodesia goes back to 1941 when I became Secretary of the Southern African Labour Congress, of which Roy Welensky was Chairman. Over the years I witnessed the steady rightward change of the size and attitudes of the white electorate from the days of the Prime Minister, Sir Godfrey Huggins (later Lord Malvern) followed by Sir Garfield Todd, Sir Edgar Whitehead, Sir Roy Welensky, Winston Field, down to Ian Smith.

The crucial factor in this slide to illegality was the change in the composition and attitudes of the white minority. Until World War Two, its size was about 85,000; by the time of UDI it was over 235,000. The old Rhodesian families – many descendants of pioneer families with a strong loyalty to the British Crown and many of them with liberal if paternalistic sentiments – were swamped by the newcomers, most of whom had left their own countries for economic or political reasons. They included demobilised British soldiers (mainly non-officers), and artisans who acquired a standard of living beyond anything they could aspire to at home; tax exiles from Attlee's socialist government, such as the so-called 'Suez rebels' led by Captain Charles Waterhouse; Britons leaving India after its independence', and South Africans, both right-wing liberals and hard-line reactionaries.

This change in the white population was reflected in the supporters and opponents of UDI. Among principal opponents were the Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibb; Sir Robert Tredgold, the former Chief Justice, and his sister; the second in command of the Rhodesian Army, General Campbell; Sir Garfield and Lady Todd and their daughter Judy; successful professionals and businessmen who were descendants of old Rhodesian families. They became an isolated, frustrated, minority critical of Britain's 'abandonment' of its responsibilities. For example, in a number of conversations with Sir Robert Tredgold, he repeatedly told me that Smith should be declared a 'traitor to the British Crown', even though it was not possible at the time to prosecute him. He also felt that the judges who, on ascending the bench, had sworn an oath of loyalty to the Queen, should be indicted.

On the other hand, many of the more prominent supporters of Smith were newcomers with no deep roots in Rhodesia. They included hard-line ministers like P. K. van der Byl and the Rev. R. Cronje (South African émigrés); Harper, a former civil servant from India; Charles Lardner-Burke, a lawyer from South West Africa; and the UDI governor, Sir Mark Clifford, a recent immigrant from Britain.

Smith's supporters were united on two main issues: opposition to the British proposal for a ten-year transition to African enfranchisement, adopted by Whitehead; and insistence on maintaining majority white rule indefinitely ('For a century', proclaimed Smith).

This unequal polarisation of the white electorate (and, of course, the political powerlessness of the black majority) was the central reality of the challenge to Westminster.

The heated early arguments over whether Britain should have intervened militarily to stifle UDI at the beginning ignored two political factors as well as assumptions about the willingness of the army to obey an order to go to Rhodesia, and possible South African reactions.

One political reality was that when UDI was proclaimed the Wilson Government had a majority of only four MPs. While two Labour MPs had said publicly they would vote against any military action, thus ensuring the Government's defeat. (A few months later in a general election Labour's majority was substantially increased.) Another political factor was that a military decision would

not only have divided parliament between Labour and the Conservatives but would also have polarised the British electorate over 'kith and kin' sentiments.

The anti-military interventionist made an issue about the possibility that South Africa would intervene militarily, directly or indirectly.

Much was made of the assumption that the army would refuse an order to fight against 'kith and kin'. At the time I was engaged in lecturing at the four UK regional commands. At the Southern Command, the commanding officer at a mess lunch said emphatically that most of his senior officers would resign rather than accept an order to go to Rhodesia. On the other hand, the commanding officer at Scottish command was equally emphatic that it was unthinkable that the British Army would refuse a legal command. General Henry Alexander, who had experience in Ghana, Nigeria and the Congo, told me that he was prepared personally to take a brigade to Salisbury to take over and establish control over the international airport which would give the British Government a bargaining position to discuss terms with Smith.

Contrary to official denials that a contingency plan for military intervention was ever prepared, I met an army team in Southern Command who had worked on a contingency plan, the outline of which was given to me.

South Africa's Role

President Verwoerd told diplomats and journalists in private that UDI was a mistake because he believed that Rhodesia, unlike South Africa, was destined to become ruled by Africans. He expressed his opposition to UDI, when it was first mooted, to Sir Roy Welensky and Smith's predecessor, Winston Field.

South Africa did not grant diplomatic recognition to the Smith regime – nor, in fact, did any other country. UDI Rhodesia, for its entire duration, remained internationally isolated.

South Africa's 'neutrality' took a sharply different direction when international sanctions were approved. Since the Pretoria regime was itself fighting against a campaign to apply sanctions against apartheid, it had an obvious interest to ensure that sanctions did not work against Rhodesia. Whereas before it had closed its eyes to trade across the Limpopo, it began openly to facilitate the breaking of sanctions. What Pretoria wanted was to see the end of UDI as soon as possible. As Verwoerd's successor, B. J. Vorster, told Donald Woods, editor of the *Daily Dispatch*, 'Smith is a liability'.

Portugal's Role

Portugal resisted all overtures from the UK to withhold support from the Smith regime. When Tiny Rowland, head of Lonrho, was forced to close down the oil pipeline from Beira which his company owned, the Mozambique authorities arranged for it to be operated by a Portuguese and British company. And when Wilson instituted the 'Beira Patrol' with the ostensible purpose of stopping sanctions-breaking ships, Lisbon treated this as an act of hostility against Portuguese sovereignty. Britain's 'oldest ally' proved to be Smith's greatest ally.

The Role of the Commonwealth

In the early days of the Rhodesian crisis, Britain paid little regard to the attitudes of the Commonwealth members; but in the end it was Commonwealth pressure that put an end to UDI.

Zambia, as the member most immediately affected, increasingly felt its security threatened. This was at first allayed by Britain providing it with the Rapier missile defence system that proved disappointing. President Kaunda offered an air 'base' for RAF planes to counter any military action by the Rhodesian forces. This offer was refused by Wilson. Zambia next entered into secret negotiations with Portugal, with the offer of economic rights in Zambia in exchange for Lisbon's support of sanctions – a proposal favoured by Portugal's then 'liberal' foreign minister. When this initiative failed, Kaunda took the brave step of closing Zambia's border with Rhodesia, plunging

his country into economic decline.

A change in government in Nigeria brought a more militant stand over UDI, including a threat to nationalise a major British oil company. This naturally caused serious concern in London.

After 1970, Commonwealth summit conferences began to focus increasingly on the Rhodesian issue. Criticism, led by Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere, Sierra Leone's President, Albert Magara, and Uganda's President Milton Obote, condemned Wilson's negotiations with Smith on board *Tiger* and *Fearless*, fearing a sell-out. They invented the slogan NIBMAR – No Independence Before Majority Rule.

The Commonwealth factor became increasingly important to the point where, under a Nigerian threat, Wilson' Foreign Secretary, James Callaghan, flew to Nigeria for a meeting, the result of which was Wilson's astonishing statement that sanctions would succeed in 'a matter of weeks'. At the time I was in close touch with W. A. W. Clarke, the official in the Commonwealth Office responsible for monitoring the progress of the sanctions programme; he told me that Wilson's statement disregarded all reports submitted to him and was devoid of reality.

When Australia and Canada joined the African and Asian demand for NIBMAR, the Thatcher government was finally forced before the Commonwealth's Lusaka Conference in 1979 to set a time limit for what turn out to be the Lancaster House conference in 1979 and the final erosion of UDI.

The Side-show:

One British action that has received little attention was its decision to set up a secret anti-UDI radio station in Botswana under a professional staff. It broadcast daily programmes directly to Rhodesian listeners attacking the Smith regime.

Document

Unilateral Declaration of Independence
11 November 1965

Whereas in the course of human affairs history has shown that it may become necessary for a people to resolve the political affiliations which have connected them with another people and to assume amongst other nations the separate and equal status to which they are entitled:

And whereas in such event a respect for the opinions of mankind requires them to declare to other nations the causes which impel them to assume full responsibility for their own affairs:

Now therefore, we, the Government of Rhodesia, do hereby declare:

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

That the people of Rhodesia having demonstrated their loyalty to the Crown and to their kith and kin in the United Kingdom and elsewhere through two world wars, and having been prepared to shed their blood and give of their substance in what they believed to be the mutual interests of freedom-loving people, now see all that they have cherished about to be shattered on the rocks of expediency;

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

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

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

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

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

Now therefore, we the Government of Rhodesia, in humble submission to Almighty God who controls the destinies of nations, conscious that the people of Rhodesia have always shown unswerving loyalty and devotion to Her Majesty the Queen and earnestly praying that we and the people of Rhodesia will not be hindered in our determination to continue exercising our undoubted right to demonstrate the same loyalty and devotion, and seeking to promote the

common good so that the dignity and freedom of all men may be assured, do, by this proclamation, adopt enact and give to the people of Rhodesia the constitution annexed hereto;

God Save The Queen.

Given under Our Hand at Salisbury this eleventh day of November in the Year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and sixty five.

Chronology

1923		UK government granted limited self-government to Southern Rhodesia, but retained veto over legislation that concerned African majority in Rhodesia – resented by dominant white minority.
1934-56		Paternalistic government of Sir Godfrey Higgins. Supported formation of Federation of Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.
1960	OCT	Monckton Report condemned discriminatory legislation against Africans and recommended they should participate more in Federal assembly
1961		Rhodesian Constitutional Conference exposed major divergences between three component territories.
1962		Rhodesian Front party (RF) formed, Winston Field as leader DEC. RF wins working majority in restricted-franchise general election, defeating the United Federal Party led by Sir Edgar Whitehead
1963	JUNE	Field attends Victoria Falls conference on dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, with a pledge from R. A. Butler that talks on Southern Rhodesia's independence will follow dissolution
	AUG	ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union led by Ndabaningi Sithole) splits from ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union led by Joshua Nkomo)
	OCT	Sir Alec Douglas-Home becomes British Prime Minister
	DEC 31	End of Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland
1964	APR	Following failed talks in London on Rhodesian independence, Field is replaced as Prime Minister by Ian Smith. Nationalist leaders Nkomo and Sithole arrested and detained with approximately 200 of their followers; ZANU & ZAPU banned
	JULY	Malawi (formerly Nyasaland) gains independence
	SEPT	Smith comes to London for talks on independence with Douglas-Home and Duncan Sandys
	OCT 1	Sir Roy Welensky defeated in by-election for Rhodesian parliament
	OCT 15	British General election won by Labour, led by Harold Wilson
	OCT 20-21	Smith holds *indaba* of Rhodesian chiefs, who endorse RF calls for independence on the basis of the country's 1961 constitution
	OCT 24	Major-General Anderson replaced as head of Rhodesian Army by Major-General Putterill
	OCT 27	British government issues warning, threatening economic sanctions if UDI is declared Zambia gains independence

	NOV 5	Referendum of (almost all) white electorate results in similar endorsement of independence. Both claims rejected as insufficiently representative by British government
1965	FEB-MAR	Arthur Bottomley and Lord Gardiner (Commonwealth Relations Secretary and Lord Chancellor respectively) visit Rhodesia
	MAY 7	RF wins all 50 A-roll (mainly white electorate) seats in general election, eliminating white opposition from parliament
	JUNE	Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in London
	JULY	Cledwyn Hughes (Minister of State, CRO) visits Rhodesia
	SEPT	RF Congress: great pressure on Smith to declare UDI
	Oct. 5-11	Smith flies to London for talks on independence
	Oct. 25-30	Wilson flies to Salisbury for last-minute talks
	NOV 5	State of emergency declared in Rhodesia
	NOV 11	UDI declared; Rhodesian ministers dismissed
	NOV 12	Southern Rhodesia Act 1965 passed, conferring power to impose sanctions. Governor Sir Humphrey Gibbs recognised as legal government of Rhodesia. Rhodesian parliament dissolved.
	NOV 16	British government imposes sanctions on Rhodesian exports
	DEC 7	OAU passes resolution calling on member states to break off diplomatic relations with the UK if UDI is not ended by DEC 15
	DEC 15	Tanzania and Ghana are the only Commonwealth states to break off diplomatic relations (others include Algeria, Mali and Sudan)
	DEC 16	British government imposes oil embargo & begins oil airlift to Zambia
1966	JAN 10	Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in Lagos: Wilson pledges sanctions will end UDI in 'weeks not months'
	FEB 28	British general election called
	MAR 31	Labour wins increased majority in election
	APR 9	United Nations Security Council passes Chapter VII resolution prohibiting supply of oil to Rhodesia via Beira in Mozambique and authorising UK to use force to enforce blockade
	APR 19	Smith approaches Gibbs to request talks
	MAY	Rhodesian civil servants in London for exploratory talks
	JUNE	British team makes return visit to Salisbury
	SEPT	Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in London: Wilson makes pledge that if UDI is not ended in next few months, there will be No

		Independence Before Majority Rule
	NOV	Commonwealth Secretary Herbert Bowden visits Salisbury
	DEC 2-4	Smith and Gibbs fly to Gibraltar for talks on board HMS *Tiger*
	DEC 5	On Smith's return to Salisbury, Rhodesian Cabinet reject Tiger terms for settlement (despite acceptance by British Cabinet)
	DEC 16	UN imposes selective mandatory sanctions under Chp. VII
	DEC 20	Wilson pledges NIBMAR to the House of Commons
1967	FEB	Smith appoints Whaley Commission to examine a new constitution for Rhodesia
	JUNE	Lord Alport visits Rhodesia for talks with representatives of Rhodesian opinion
	AUG	George Thomson, newly appointed Commonwealth Secretary, visits Salisbury
1968	MAR 6	Rhodesian regime hangs five black Rhodesians convicted of murder before UDI, despite the prerogative of mercy being exercised by the Queen
	APR	Rhodesian Whaley Commission recommends Republic status for Rhodesia
	MAY 29	UN imposes comprehensive mandatory sanctions
	AUG	Lord Goodman and Sir Max Aitken meet Smith secretly in Salisbury
	SEPT	James Bottomley, CRO official, in Salisbury
	OCT 9-13	Smith and Wilson meet on board *HMS Fearless* at Gibraltar; Smith rejects terms of settlement on grounds that the proposed right of appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council detracts from Rhodesia's sovereignty
	OCT 17	CRO merges with Foreign Office
1969	JUNE 20	Referendum in Rhodesia approves new constitution, including Republic; Sir Humphrey Gibbs leaves Government House. Smith declares the new Constitution 'sounds the death-knell of majority rule'. British Residual Mission withdrawn and Rhodesia House in London closed
1970	MAR	Britain vetoes UN Security Council resolution criticising Britain's failure to use force to end the rebellion
	JUNE	Labour loses general election