

Dave Kipling

Parents emigrated to Rhodesia from Britain early 1950s. In (British) Royal Air Force from 1954 during (British) National Service. Married in Britain 1957. Moved to Rhodesia and joined Royal Rhodesian Air Force 1958. Joined BSAP 1970 (Reconnaissance Unit, PATU). Also in Guard Force. To South Africa 1980. Joined South African Army. Came to Britain in 2007.

This is Annie Berry interviewing Dave Kipling on Friday the 14th of August 2009 in Bristol. Thank you very much for travelling all the way here today to be interviewed. Can we start perhaps by talking about how you came to be in Rhodesia initially?

The situation was that my parents emigrated to Rhodesia in the early fifties. I was still in the UK because of national service so I went into the Air Force in 1954. I was still in the Air Force in 1957 when my father contacted me and said “why don’t you come into the Air Force out in Rhodesia?” There was a Royal Air Force station in Rhodesia, a place called Thornhill in Gwelo. When I applied for that, the usual rule is, in the Royal Air Force in national service, if you apply to go overseas you don’t go because all the people that applied to stay at home were mummy’s boys and they get sent as far away as they can. So I didn’t get to the Royal Air Force at Thornhill but the Rhodesian Air Force at that time were recruiting. So I went along to Rhodesia House in the Strand, before it got a bad name and enrolled there and we went over to Rhodesia in 1958 I think. So that’s how we got there.

So this was as part of the Rhodesian Air Force?

In the Royal Rhodesian Air Force

Which was Royal at that point?

Yes

How long did you stay with the Royal Rhodesian Air Force?

I stayed with the Royal Rhodesian Air Force for nearly seven years I think, because at that time it was part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland as it was called then, and Northern Rhodesia, so that is now Zambia isn’t it?

Yes.

And Malawi of course a bit further up. So that Federation was broken up by the UK government and at that time we all had options as to what we wanted to do; whether we wanted to stay in Southern Rhodesia, go to Northern Rhodesia or up to Malawi. Now the point about Northern Rhodesia is, although it was a federal force, all the military power was in Southern Rhodesia so they wanted people to go up and start an Air Force in Northern Rhodesia, which initially became the Northern Rhodesia Air Wing. Then it

became the Zambia Air Wing and then it was commissioned as the Zambia Air Force. So about 35 of us, if my memory serves me correctly, went up from the Royal Rhodesian Air Force and we transferred to the (00:03:07) Northern Rhodesia Air Wing. So that's how that all worked out, that was at the breakup of Federation, which was in 1963 I think.

So you were in Northern Rhodesia for its independence as well?

Yes.

And helped to establish its Air Force.

Yes, we were part of the independence ceremony with the pulling down of the Union Jack and old Doctor Kaunda's flag going up there, it was a good time.

What did your parents think of your involvement in the Air Force first of all, but then also being in independent Zambia?

Well first of all, Air Force wise, great, because my family generally has a history of military. My father's brother in fact was killed in the Royal Air Force during the war. My father was in the Army himself and his second brother served with the Intelligence Corps in Burma. My brother was in the British Army, Royal Corps of Signals and me in the Air Force. So that was no worry. Going up to Northern Rhodesia wasn't too bad at the time because one wasn't certain that it was all going to go 'pear shaped,' is I think the expression these days. There was a chance that everything would go well and if we look back on that and think about Zambia, there was no terrorism or freedom fighting in Zambia, it didn't happen like that. It was a peaceful transition although later on a lot of the Rhodesian terrorists used Zambia as a jump off base. So there was no real difficulty at these times. Everybody was happy, you didn't need a passport, you had a sort of identity card that you just showed between the borders and you came and went as you liked. All things were happy, until things gradually began to change, all was happy at that stage.

Prior to going out to Rhodesia, had you been schooled in the UK if your family had gone out in the 1950s?

Yes, we all did our normal schooling but I'm long in the tooth don't forget, so this was at a time when the bombing was going on and all that sort of thing. In our way we were quite pleased – even 10 years after the big war – to get out of the UK then because it was very depressed and very depressing. So yes, we did normal schooling and into the national service and then out to Rhodesia.

Did you have much sense of what you were going out to? Did you know about Rhodesia?

Only in the sense from the parents and my sisters who were out there, a sort of utopia you know, clean and beautiful and nice people and no bomb sites

and open country. A place to bring children up in, as opposed to an urban environment. (00:06:36)

So a lot of hope in what it could become and provide for the family?

Yes and although we Rhodesians overrated ourselves greatly, we really thought that we would show the world how to make a beautiful country and we thought the world would be watching us and all that sort of thing. In fact nobody gave a damn, looking back on it that is. But at the time, we were very patriotic Rhodesians because remember Rhodesia was part of Britain, so we were doing our bit for the Queen and country.

What did you think of the Queen?

Well we were all royalists you see, so we don't like any sort of...anything else, I suppose most military people are like that so we are 100% royalist. One of the difficulties I had of course is that when I joined the Royal Air Force, I swore allegiance to the Queen, and that applied in the Rhodesian Air Force of course and also in the Zambian Air Force. But later on when the Rhodesians did their own thing, declared their UDI and broke with the Queen, then I was not in a position to accept that, although I was asked to join their regular forces, the military and so on, and Air Force. They came back to me because they needed some, I suppose you could say 'expertise,' but it meant that I'd have to swear an oath to somebody else and I couldn't do that. You can't change that horse in midstream, so that caused a bit of a problem.

Was that something that you noticed amongst other family and friends as well?

No, my family, all of them were pro the Independence thing, including my father, so he and I were very much opposed to each other, but nicely.

A friendly battle.

Yes, he didn't see it like that, he saw – and most people in Rhodesia thought – that Britain had let them down and that they were doing the right thing and preserving a decent way of life, not for whiteys, for the country. You know the black guys in those days were subject very much to whoever's got the biggest hatchet and whoever's got the biggest knobkerrie and the thought was that western civilisation was good for them. It turns out it isn't good for them but they genuinely believed, they honestly believed that, and they wanted to keep a much firmer hand, where I felt that...we had a Prime Minister in Southern Rhodesia called Garfield Todd and under him, things were progressing, you know, we had a couple of cabinet secretaries come in that were black. Generally speaking steps were being made to a gradual full integration and then they pulled the whole foundation out from that, and that to me was senseless.

He became quite a controversial figure subsequently didn't he?

(00:09:56) He became a figure of hate, because of those that went very right wing. I'm right wing myself but there's a line and they were very right wing. And then he was lampooned as a figure of hate, all sorts of revolting stories were made up about his daughter and what she did with the local people and things like that. Nobody knows the truth about this and I didn't say anything either but it was a story like that. But by the same token, anybody who didn't toe that violent right wing line was a coward and a traitor, so it was a very difficult life to lead there. To state your views, you were better off in fact not stating your views, you know, because that only led you into serious arguments. There was a lot of intimidation where the thugs would go round and break up political meetings. Right wing thugs I'm talking about, white right wing, not the black guys. The black guys hadn't had their turn by then. So there was a lot went on and it was a shame to see it all ruined.

Were you in Northern Rhodesia/Zambia at UDI?

Yes, not at UDI, we came back in 1970, UDI was when?

'65.

We had left Rhodesia in at the end of '63, that was the breakup of the Federation. They declared UDI in '65 but we came back in '70 to Rhodesia. Not because we agreed with UDI but because I don't agree with terrorism and my family was there. So there was wrong on one side but also wrong on the other. You can't condone butchery and murder, whatever your political view of the thing.

So you decided to leave Northern Rhodesia?

Yes, it was Zambia by then.

Yes, Zambia.

In 1970.

So what triggered your decision to leave Zambia?

It was specifically the terrorism.

And was this terrorism that was going on in Zambia?

In Rhodesia.

So you knew that the country was having a difficult time?

Well yes, Zambia itself asked for protection of the British because the Rhodesians had said, this was the UDI Rhodesia, that Zambia was harbouring terrorists, which indeed they were, so they threatened to come and put a military presence into Zambia until the problem was settled. So Zambia then called on the Brits, the Brits sent out the Royal Air Force, so (00:12:59)

again, most of my time in the Zambia Air Force was spent with the Royal Air Force on that and I did six years' contract with the Zambia Air Force. The job there was to train, what I call 'side-saddle' training. You took a guy with no experience and then you led him up and led him up until he could take your chair over and that's how that system worked.

In fact it worked quite well, although sometimes you didn't quite have the material, it wasn't exactly the way you would like to have done it but the guy could just about handle the job. But we had some very fine black pilots up there, very fine. In fact one of the guys was an A-plus Royal Air Force rating pilot and that is like gold dust, and several of them were A rating pilots, which is above the norm, and then we had plenty that were A-minus. So we had a good dozen black pilots that were first class pilots. The problem is that many blacks have a blood problem which doesn't suit them for flying because they can black out and things like that, it's not because they're racially unable to fly, it's a simple DNA or something like that. But all the same, we had a good dozen black pilots. But then the wheels fell off between Zambia and Southern Rhodesia and the terrorism started and that was that.

Can I take you back a bit to your own training and what you remember of that?

The Royal Air Force?

Yes, so you had gone out to Gwelo initially?

In the Royal Air Force or the Rhodesia Air Force? The Royal Air Force training I did at Padgate, which is in Yorkshire, a hellhole. People hung themselves there, it was very very tough training. People think the Air Force are the Brylcreem boys, the training was exceedingly tough. Then as a matter of interest, the Royal Air Force, they had a thing in those days called the Earls Court Tattoo with the brigade of guards and all the other regiments, the Royal Marines and the rest of them. Five years running, the Royal Air Force drill unit won the drill competition cup. That showed you our standard, so we weren't just a bunch of sissies. But it was a very tough training, yes and some didn't make it. One, I think, killed himself when I was there, and one later on. It's a question of growing up. The other very interesting thing I found was that many of the people who were brought in to national service were from what are now called deprived backgrounds, what we used to call lower class, but didn't know anything about personal hygiene and it was forced upon them. We used to have to march them into the showers, force them in, scrub their teeth forcibly with lifebuoy soap, they didn't clean their teeth. Clean their nails, clean their feet, it was all done forcibly to them if they didn't do it themselves. Six weeks later they walked out changed people, absolutely changed people, smart, proud of themselves, so I was proud of that. Not that I did it, it was part of the system, but I'm proud that it worked like that.

Part of the system that you knew was working, and for the better of people?

(00:16:45) Exactly, yes.

How did your Royal Rhodesian Air Force training compare? Did you have to do some training?

No, Royal Rhodesian Air Force very much worked on Royal Air Force lines so all the structures are the same. Different in size of course, but all the structures are the same. My job, not that I went out to do that, but it's ok in that changes were coming, so it sounds years ago and it was years ago, I went from manual accounting, and I put it on to machine accounting. Of course that was before we used to get a punch card out and then we went to machine accounting, then from there it went to computers. It's many years ago, so the job was to evolve the system. I'm only talking about the finance side now, to evolve the system so that it. A) it was efficient and cost effective but also B) so that it was more up with the times. Meanwhile, the real people who run the Air Force, the pilots and the technicians and everything, got on with the job.

So this was the work that you were doing in Rhodesia, in Gwelo?

No, I was most of the time in Salisbury although I was detached to Gwelo for some time. All of those who are ex-Rhodesian Air Force are really proud because it was a magnificent little outfit. When we went up to Aden in the desert there, we outperformed the Royal Air Force with regards to serviceability, whereas we only had half the number of people to do the job. We were well regarded by the Royal Air Force as well until it all went pear shaped.

I've also heard that there was quite a bit of friendship between the different air forces although officially there shouldn't have been. Because of course you were using the same air space and often having to cross each other's paths...

We used to come down from Zambia back to New Sarum airport it was, so we often paid visits down there. But it wasn't so easy for them to come the other way, from Rhodesia up to Zambia, because they couldn't really find a good reason for so doing. But of course the Royal Air Force used to fly into Zambia and also into Salisbury as a training thing called lone ranger flights. And the American Air Force of course because the Americans had a satellite tracking station with the Rhodesia Air Force. So yes, we had a very good rapport with them and a few hangovers as well.

If we move into the period of the seventies, when was it that you actually came back into Rhodesia because of the terrorism that was going on?

(00:19:55) Yes, I came back down, I got myself a job as an accountant there and then at the same time I joined the BSAP in a thing that was being regenerated called the Reconnaissance Unit. Then we had some old scout cars from pre-World War, which didn't work. But they got a bunch of us together and I think in the end we got about six of them working and used to go out on patrol with these things, something like the war of the worlds, and that worked very well.

And you would have been volunteers?

Yes.

What did you think of the voluntary effort and national service would have been there as well?

In Rhodesia?

Yes.

Oh magnificent. You know, one really nice thing about it was they used a lot of disabled people. The disabled people were keen to do service so they were utilised in all sorts of ways, which for a start makes you very proud of them, but it's also good for them. In the main the guys were really good, both volunteers and national service guys. You will always get the odd few but in the main, they were absolutely stunning.

So your work in the Reconnaissance Unit must have differed a lot to your Air Force work?

Yes, well I eventually became a commander on one of these tanks, which is a bit like a soapbox on wheels with a little turret on the top.

Was this modified then? Because they were very inventive the Rhodesians weren't they?

We modified it a bit but I'm not going to tell you how. It wasn't a fighting vehicle, it didn't come loaded with guns and ammunition or anything like that, the idea was to close the tin lid and go and sort out some riots or go and see what was all going on. But it didn't work too well because if you wanted to be nasty about it, the thing leaked like a sieve and you'd just got to bang out a petrol bomb on the side of it and it was frying day so to speak. So they didn't work all that well but it was great fun running them and we used to take them out around the roads and out in the streets and let the public see the BSAP on patrol.

Where were these patrols going on?

Well all these armoured cars, mine was AC2, landed up in a museum in Gwelo, not because of me, and they were all used around the local districts of Mashonaland, particularly the Salisbury area.

(00:22:50) Nicely looked after?

Yes, mine was bought by an enthusiast, a guy called Larry Critten. Anyway, the point about it is that they were all based in Salisbury so out and about in the Salisbury area and into the close bundu areas around there as well, just to show the flag really but, they weren't greatly effective. So I changed over to the anti terrorist unit.

PATU?

Yes, don't think I'm denigrating the Reconnaissance Unit at all, they were fine guys, but these old vehicles weren't really what was necessary.

You didn't feel that you were doing what needed to be done I suppose?

Yes.

PATU operated in sticks didn't it?

Yes, you operated in sticks of five.

Again, this was still voluntary? Would you be going in and out; you would go in for a couple of weeks and then out again?

There were regular BSAP PATU sticks but many of us were entirely volunteer sticks. Sometimes we would take a regular BSAP guy with us, especially if he was a black guy from a certain area you'd go to operate in. Contrary to what people think, we were policemen and we obeyed the rule of the law and we applied the rule of the law and we respected people's property. So if we were going to a certain tribal area, we would take a guy with us and before we got there, he would explain to us all the niceties. So you didn't go in and clout the headman around and boot his chicken and all this sort of thing, as people tend to think. You went in and you introduced yourself and asked him how he was getting on, how his family was, how's it going with the kids and their schooling and then gradually round to the problem, if they have a problem with terrorism and so on. So in the main, we operated as volunteers.

Later on the farmers in the outlying districts became PATU members. My view, although they were great guys, many of them weren't properly trained. They were good guys and they were brave and they did a job but they weren't really trained as PATU guys, whereas those of us lucky enough to be in Salisbury district were trained by the famous Reggie Seekings.¹ They had to be on the farm and so they were, I think of it in my mind as sort of PATU auxiliaries, but that's not to denigrate them because they did magnificent work. They're stuck out miles from anywhere – after all, a farm can be miles apart from another one – and to get a group of three or four farmers to react to an attack, all in a short time, and have good results, which they often did, was great. In my view, it would have been better to have more fully-trained people there available to give adequate area protections, whilst the farmer concentrated on 'home and hearth' protection.

(00:26:20) It sounds like maybe it was more of a sticking plaster on the problem. It didn't really address the whole problem; it just dealt with the situation in its immediacy.

¹ Reginald Seekings was an ex WW2 Special Forces corporal with David Stirling's Long Range Desert Group. For further information see letter from Dave Kennedy about Reg Seekings, also in this collection, reference roh-oh-ken-da2.

Yes it's a view of mine because the farmer had so much work to do. I mean he's up at four o'clock in the morning, he's got his farm to run, he's got his family to look after and everything else. He cannot be doing all the things that he had to be, so he always had to react when there was an attack and notify the other people on the alarm system we had, or he was notified on the alarm system. Whereas more people should have been going on the ground to prevent the attack ever reaching him. But that's my view of it; and of course we had limited manpower. I say again, if anybody ever listens to this, a lot of farmers are my great friends and I mean no disrespect at all. You've got to be careful to give credit where it is due, but to recognise weaknesses.

It also sounded like these patrols involved a lot of awareness of local customs?

Yes absolutely.

Did you familiarise yourself with any languages as well?

Only in so far as being able to do the niceties. Some of the guys of course were fully bilingual but in my case and in a lot of cases, just so far as saying "good morning, how are you, good evening" and that sort of thing, but just enough to be polite.

How long were you on these sticks generally?

It all depended what the situation was, but generally speaking you would spend possibly ten days to two weeks out, could even be three weeks. It would depend on the situation because in the main, in PATU, your job was to go out on reconnaissance. You were tracking, looking for the guys, but your main job wasn't to take them on. Your main job was to find them and report it, but you often did take them on because you would bump up against them, so to speak. But the main job was to find them. So most of us travelled very light and you would take minimum rations with you and most of us didn't carry things like sleeping bags and tents and stuff like that; we just lived in the bush. There were guys who went more standardised with more kit, but most of us went very minimally.

At that stage, what was your perception of how things were escalating? You said you were aware that things were starting to go pear shaped in the north, did you perceive any change in the threat and how it was escalating?

Well they had two different things, ZIPRA and ZANLA. The one, ZANLA I think, if memory serves me right, that was more a conventional thing, it's even got a few tanks up in Zambia and stuff like that and I think that was run by Joshua Nkomo. The idea was that they would roll across the Zambezi and (00:29:45) put paid to these whiteys. Then the other was a more guerrilla force in ZIPRA. But in fact now, because obviously they couldn't utilise their weaponry, the attacks just got heavier and heavier you know and more and more of them became involved in 'on-foot' terrorist operations. Even looking

back from here, the people who suffered most in the attacks were blacks. The black guy who lived in his village, he took far more of the brunt of it than the average white farmer. We did lose farmers of course, we lost guys in the Army and guys in Police but in the main, the white population didn't have half the problems to face that the black person in the village did, because of coercion.

Often their kids were abducted, the girls were abducted to become sex slaves, the boys were abducted to become front line guys, the idea being that they chase 8 or 9 year old boys at you firing AKs, on the grounds that there's no way you're going to shoot a young kid. So they used them as a front line thing; luckily they don't all shoot very straight. Then the girls were taken away for sex slaves and if the headman didn't agree to them coming in and giving their special talks and their little sing-songs at night, you know, to sing Chimurenga songs they called them. The same sort of brain washing as Soviet Russia, because most of the senior cadres were trained in Russia or Cuba so they came back with that same ideas; and China come to that. So they came back with that same mentality. And if the headman there didn't agree or didn't want them to do it, then he was probably slaughtered and if he wasn't slaughtered, they slaughtered his wives and his kids just to teach him a lesson or to teach the guy next door a lesson. So the black population very much bore the brunt of it. In the end it was the situation where they weren't happy to see you – although in the main they knew you'd come to help them – but you're no help when you step away and then somebody else comes in and does the business. It was very tough on them.

So who or what did you really think you were fighting against in this?

Terrorists.

And you've mentioned then Russia and China, how did you see it fitting into the Cold War environment?

Well I'm not really a "red under the bed" theorist, I didn't think the Russian people as a whole were a murderous set of communist thugs but politically, that's a different matter. Politically, obviously, I'm more western orientated than that, what we might say Christian western, before that became a bad word. So yes, obviously anti-communist but not rabidly anti-communist. A person who wants to be a communist can be a communist, so long as he doesn't go round butchering people; but in those days both the Russians and Chinese had (and possibly still have) a real disregard for human life, and encouraged the barbarities.

Did you discuss these issues with your fellow BSAP or PATU people?

Not in the main. We discussed it a lot at home but when you're going out on the job, you get your date of moving out, you go and collect your kit, polish up your weapon, get your kit on and then you get out and then you're on patrol. On patrol you're not talking or chatting or anything else; in (00:33:39) the main you're keeping your eyes and ears open. When you came back in Salisbury

PATU, you always landed up in a pub called the Copper Pot, which was at the Police Depot. You would come back and talk about things but it was more about what you'd done or what you'd seen out there or what you were going to do the next night, you know, have a braai or a barbeque as it's called now and a few beers and things like that. Within the environment as I knew it, we didn't talk politics or anything else. As far as we were concerned a terrorist was a terrorist and not because he was black either, it didn't matter what he is, could have been a Cuban or a Russian or whatever but it's the terrorism that's the thing.

What about with commanding officers and so on, did you hear any discussion of politics?

Of course, it was a continuous thing. Then we all went to briefings and so on about the 'red menace' and things like that and "the communists are coming" and those sorts of things. There was truth in it because had Rhodesia weakened, then you could see the dangers. Remember already the Chinese, not troops, but Chinese influence was heavy in Zambia. They were building a link railway up to Tanzania and so on, so another foothold. And on the other side in Angola and so on, things were going on with a heavy Soviet presence. So it was very important from a stability point of view, not to let it go communist, absolutely.

What sort of value or did you place on African Nationalism?

I think the sad thing for me is that we didn't channel it properly and the opportunity was there. Instead of embracing the opportunity, we resisted it, too much so, which is easy to say now looking back, but at the time, most people, us whiteys and then the blacks, you have a complete gap in the mind, in the mentality. So you don't understand them, their depth of feeling, and they don't understand you at all. So you are thinking only that you must help these people to a civilised western way of life and they are thinking only, "why don't you go home?" because you're applying your laws to them and a lot of the time they don't understand it. It has been necessary for instance on occasion to go and shoot a man's cattle because its got foot and mouth. But to an African, that is his life and you tell him, "listen your cattle have got foot and mouth, you must not let them cross this line, because if you do, we will have to kill them. You must not, it's going to infect all the other cattle," but he can't see that. There's no grazing on his land, so he pushes them off to the nearest bit of grazing and the next thing, herds and herds are infected so those cattle have got to be killed. You see these old guys in there just crying their eyes out, you know, and it's the gap in understanding. Whereas we're more...I don't know what the word is, but we're more prepared to say to ourselves, "this is a necessity, I've got to do it," but you do it, whilst you alienate them. You can explain all the science as much as you like but his cows are now dead. So the mind gap, if you like, is enormous and there was no bridge between the two. The little bit we'd gone towards it had fallen away and now it was totally polarised. If you're black, you're a terrorist and if you're white, you're an evil white master.

(00:38:10) So you saw that gap almost prevented any agreements, prevented any shared progress being made?

Yes because we would say that it's no good...a nice old chap there Bishop Muzorewa, a very nice old chap and doing his best but because he was black, nobody trusted him. Nobody on the black side trusted the whiteys and you couldn't find any neutral ground really. Black was black and white was white. Although a vast number of people on both sides had a vast amount of goodwill, but they had a lot of people pulling the strings.

You mentioned a bit about those African belief systems and so on. Did you see any of that being used in the security services? Particularly for example with spirit mediums and so on?

You mean to try and use it to...

To the advantage of either side I mean?

Yes of course, and we used African trackers who were absolutely brilliant. Then we would take, it has been done, the spirit medium and would go into a village and put your point of view. But of course the other side had spirit mediums as well and what's more, they also had weapons that they were prepared to use on the black villagers.

So there were some that were prepared to work with the security services?

Oh yes, don't forget that we had the black battalions, Rhodesian African Rifles, absolutely superb, and probably more than half of the BSAP was black, so it wasn't all an 'us and them' situation, it was an 'us and those.' Us and the others. The old thought was, from a white point of view, if we could just get rid of 'those,' all the rest of 'us' could get on, we would carry on governing and they would gradually be brought along and up through the process. But Smithy made one of those lunatic statements "never in my lifetime," and that alienated many who were previously on sides.

Speaking about the structure of the services, what did you think of the hierarchies within the BSAP or other arms of the security services? Some were all white but like you say, many were majority black or a very large percentage.

Yes, a black battalion commander for instance would not have a great say anywhere further up the line you know. As far as my own opinion of it goes, in many cases the senior staff of the Rhodesian forces were over promoted. The reason is they were in a smaller environment. Just an example for instance, the Rhodesian Air Force had an Air Vice Marshal. Now you put the whole Rhodesian Air Force together and it wouldn't make a good RAF station, of those days. And we had Major Generals falling over themselves, whereas, where is an army group? So everybody was over promoted in my (00:41:48) view, for the job they had to do. And that in a way led to the fact that, well

now, "I'm going to be the next Brigadier General and you're going to be that," and more effort put into that than put to where it should be, which is fighting on the ground. That again is a personal opinion but we didn't need that number of Generals or Air Vice Marshalls. In the police a little bit different I think because the police were much more home-grown, where they, for instance General Walls and guys like that, had come from British forces, Harry Hawkins in the Rhodesian Air Force came from Australia and things like that, so they'd come from outside and reached the top ranks. BSAP were much more sort of home-grown although of course they came from Ireland and England and all the Dominions.

Yes, there was a lot of recruitment, I see what you're saying.

Absolutely, but they became more assimilated into the BSAP as Rhodesian policemen than we were as Rhodesian Air Force; you know we still felt ourselves a bit elite and we followed these ideas from 'home,' whereas the BSAP had to use very different methods. For example, it was Roman-Dutch law, not English, that was used, and they had to do extensive horse patrols into tribal areas etc, so it was a very different world for them.

Do you think that's also something to do with...I mean a lot of BSAP people have referred to being there to maintain the law and order of the country and their mission in a way was a slightly different one, more of an everyday one, though it did have this paramilitary element to it as well. Whereas I suppose the Air Force didn't have that sort of everyday law and order?

Well they did with trooping of course and with the chopper squadrons, things like that, so they were involved in, you might say, the war effort, but not in the day to day congress you might say, with the African people on the ground. There were plenty of Africans in the Rhodesian Air Force but generally in the lower ranks.

You've said a bit about the battle between the whites amongst the forces and did you see any division in terms of the black forces?

No, you must remember that although mostly black people were in the RAR, if you look at the structure of the forces, here's a structure of the force, there's a commander and now you've got this one battalion here and one battalion there and one battalion there, so all those people work across this structure and go up, then the line...

But there was a highest level that the black...

Yes, generally the battalions, yes.

And the same within the BSAP, they couldn't reach a...

Not in the BSAP, the BSAP wasn't like that. They could have, had there been one considered satisfactory and had it not been almost unthinkable. I should

say it was probably thought they couldn't handle the top echelon I would say but there was no actual bar (00:45:23) there whatsoever. They could have gone up because the structure is very different in a police force to the military. When you've got a battalion you might have five or six hundred men that you are going to have to put in death's way and the police is not quite like that. So there was a different possibility there but it didn't in the main, whiteys on all sides – Air Force, Police, Military – held the control. But there was an effort to bring people up.

If I could ask about your time on these sticks. These would have been originally in the early seventies and you've mentioned that there were some times when you came into contact with the opposition. Were there particular contacts then that happened?

Your job was reconnaissance so if the opportunity arose where you were likely to be successful, irrespective of the size of the group – you were a five man group but you might easily see 10/15 or more terrorists – but depending on the lie of the land and where you were and where they were, you could possibly take them on without much of a problem. On the other hand it might have been a circumstance where it wouldn't be wise to take them on. Firstly you're going to lose, that is very bad for morale in your side but also it's very good for their morale. So you try, whatever you do, not to lose that. It doesn't mean to avoid it but to be careful to pick the right thing.

And maybe falling back after.

Yes, dead right, so your job then is to say right, we've got this map reference for you, this thing is happening, this is the number of people, these are the weapons and so on and then they would call in maybe the RLI or if you had another stick nearby, you could ask them to act as a stop gap. Let us assume a group of terrorists are moving towards the west, you put your stop gap in their way and as they encounter that stop gap then you've come in behind or downside, and that was quite a common occurrence. But really in PATU it wasn't your job to do that. Your job was to find them.

You must have had contact to some extent with the other branches of the security services?

Yes.

What did you think of them?

Well I operated with them on quite a few occasions. The RLI...now we were very fit in PATU, we had a very very strenuous regime of training, we were in fact trained by a famous SAS guy from the Second World War, a guy called Reggie Seekings so we were very tough and very fit, well I think so. But these [RLI] guys were a different world, all these youngsters, and to keep up with them and operate with them was absolutely amazing. Those guys cover ground and do things that the average human being wouldn't like to do but they were specialised, that's the RLI. On the other side, I worked with the

African battalions as well and they all do very fine work, very fine work, all highly (00:49:04) professional, that's the great thing. Don't hold me to this but I have seen an RLI guy take a swig out of a cane bottle when he's been running up a hill and that takes strength to do that, you've got to be good.² That's just an aside. Yes, they were very good and very professional. Their view of us wasn't quite so because most of us were a bit older and so on. Also, because we were police, anything that was not right would either get stopped on the spot or would get reported because you've got the old policeman with you, you know, and you would have to say to the commander, "that is not on," because you got your little briefing first so "I'm sorry, that is not on, that cannot be done." For instance "let's go and burn down those huts" "no you can't do that" "but the buggers are firing at us" "yes but you still can't go and burn down the huts." So there's a bit of animosity there.

Did you encounter many situations like that where people were trying to do things that you, as a police officer, didn't agree with?

Not a lot, no. There were a few occasions for sure. In one case, one of our Guard Force commanders did precisely that, he torched a village because he had been enfiladed by the terrorists there. So he went in the next morning, mounted and torched the huts and the chief came to see us at our Guard Force headquarters in the Victoria District and he came and said "this man here, he has set my house on fire and all my houses on fire" and we said "what did you do?" "I didn't do anything, he just set my house on fire." It happened to be an American guy actually so we called him in and said "what happened?" He said "well I spent 3 days being shot out by this blicksem,³ so I scattered them and set fire so they couldn't come back" and he was taken to court and he got the 2,000 fine, in those days the Rhodesian dollar or whatever it was, and he and his stick had to cough up to pay it. So the law was applied to some degree, yes, we tried to.

When did you move into the Guard Force then? Can you tell me about that process?

Well I did both things at the same time. Because I knew a lot of people in the Rhodesian military, when I came back from Zambia they asked me to go back to the Rhodesian Air Force. I refused that because they wouldn't give me the rank that I wanted and they wanted me to work under some inefficient people who had worked for me before, so I told them no way. Three of those people landed up in jail for theft in the end, dipped their fingers in the till because of lack of control, so that indicated the reason I wasn't prepared to go and serve in that sort of circumstance. Then a guy from the military who was previously a colonel in the Army and he had retired, they had asked him to come back to start off this new number 4 arm of the defence force and he asked me "would I go and help him with it?" So I said, "it's a bit difficult at the time but if you will agree that I can carry on with PATU, I will come in full time to you and do my

² 'Cane' is a clear white spirit, a type of rum. It is quite powerful, but since it is clear, it might have been water!

³ 'Blicksem' is a derogatory Afrikaans expression in common use, and can be used in a very insulting way.

job here, but you must give me every six or eight weeks, whatever it is, two or three weeks to go off and do that and I will make sure that I recruit people into the Guard Force that can keep it running whilst I'm away." And that's what we did.

(00:53:15) **So this meant stopping your work as an accountant?**

Yes.

The Guard Force was established through Internal Affairs wasn't it?

No.

But it was a separate arm?

Completely separate arm of the defence forces, the fourth Arm and gazetted as such.

Did it have any link with...

With Intaf? No, but we all worked together. But we were not part of Intaf, they weren't part of us. Just the same as Police, Army, Air Force, Guard Force.

So you were involved in setting it up?

No, it had already been set up when they asked me to join. They were having difficulties in the administration of it because there were only a few people. I think there were about ten people in the headquarters and they just couldn't cope with the thing so he asked me, "can I come and assist him with that?" which is what I did.

Can you tell me a bit more about the Guard Force and its recruitment and so on?

Well the Guard Force was very badly regarded by the other arms of force. One of the reasons was that some of the people in the Guard Force got promoted above the ranks that they had in the Army and that caused bad feeling. However, it isn't always so in a military environment that the right person gets promoted. There are a lot of things that go on in the Army or any defence force for that matter. For instance what we call creeping, buttering up to your superior, being a "yes" man. If you're a guy who states your view and sticks by it, you are not likely to climb that ladder so fast as those that always agree "yes sir, yes sir." So many of those who remained a rank below where they should have been were there because in fact they deserved the higher rank but didn't have the skills to play-act toadying around their superiors. So some of those came over and they were promoted, that caused a very bad feeling.

Also some of the people that were very difficult to handle and the Army was glad to get rid of, came over. So the Guard Force started off with a very bad name. Then we only operated in farm protection basically and what were called protected villages, well that was more Intaf, but again, they operated sticks of five at a time. Every piece of outdated equipment that could be shovelled off on the Guard Force, we shovelled off, and yet my office, which was a few times bigger than this, was stacked, piled high with files from farmers and their wives and families, writing to say "thank you for what your guys have done and they have saved our lives." And this was in virtually every case, one white guy with four black guys and no (00:56:40) backup at all. Not like PATU, who were on the radar and called for backup; they were on their own miles from anywhere, so they did a really good job.

You've mentioned that some of the people came from the Army and so on but were there any particular areas that Guard Force recruited in as well?

No, we worked in area headquarters, so we were in every area, we had about seven area headquarters dotted about. In each one we had an area commander; virtually all of them were white. It was very interesting because we had people coming from America to fight against the communists; we had people coming from Germany to fight against the communists, so three of our area commanders were Germans, two were SAS and three were Americans. One of the Americans was Tom Lester, a great guy and a courageous fighter, but he was a Texan and insisted on flying the Confederate flag outside his HQ, so we turned a blind eye to that. So we had a very interesting mix. We had five guys from the British SAS come over and all those guys became area commanders. At the same time as that, everybody who worked back in a safe place in Salisbury, in the office, was made to go out into an area headquarters. He had to do a stint out there so he knew what the guys in the local headquarters were facing and the difficulties. And he went out in the sticks and he knew what it was like to get shot at and blown up and things like that. So we did a lot of things that the Army themselves would never dream of doing and consequently there was rivalry, but a very bitter feeling, which was sad because the guys did a good job and now they've more or less become the butt. When everything went wrong, it was the Guard Force, you know, but it wasn't true.

You mentioned that it could have been difficult to control some of them initially. How was discipline handled in the Guard Force?

Well the most difficult guys are often the best in difficult circumstances. So if you leave them around idle, they will be difficult and they'll be trouble makers. When you let them get into the mess and get drunk and things like that, they will, but you put them out in the sticks chasing after bandits and having a really tough time, and lay sleeping rough, then they come through as absolute stars. We had one chap, a whitey this one, they called on me from the Army in fact and he was in a special place where they looked after the invalids. I don't want to go into that but they contacted me and said "this man is absolutely suicidal, is there anything you can do?" So they sent him in to me

and I said to him “look, you’ve got two things, you can pop yourself now if you want to, but why don’t you go out into the sticks where other people are going to try and do your job for you? And if when it’s all over you still feel the way you do, that’s a different matter,” and I convinced myself that that would be the way to go. He went out, he did an absolutely stunning job for us for three years and as soon as the peace came, he sat down and blew his brains out, isn’t that strange? So there are things you can achieve with a person and things you can’t but in the (01:00:27) main, the troublemakers, you give them trouble to attend to and they turn out good.

So these were perhaps people who were just not coping in the other areas of the forces?

Yes, whatever it is, there’s man management problems. Difficult superiors, 99% of the trouble was of their own making and not from some fault in the Army or anything like that, but if you can find a way to handle that trouble and channel it into energy, then it’s good. I’m not suggesting for a minute that I’m a better man manager than anybody else, it’s just it works or it doesn’t work, you know.

Towards the end of the seventies, was there some link with the auxiliary troops, Sithole’s auxiliary troops and the Guard Force?

Sithole?

There were some auxiliary troops that came in.

Ndabagingi Sithole?

Yes, did you have any contact with them?

No, all these factions, Nkomo and Sithole – Mugabe was much in the background – both sides would sort of try and put out feelers and say “well you deal only with me and I’ll stop the terrorist war,” whatever they called it, the freedom fighting. So Nkomo would come and say “deal only with me, don’t worry about this Sithole man, deal with me and we will make a joint government and all will be well.” Then the Reverend Ndabagingi Sithole would come along and say “I’m the bull of Africa and you deal with me and we won’t worry about Nkomo.” So often there were factions and often they were offering to do certain things, but we didn’t have them in the Guard Force, despite what people say.

I didn’t know if you had encountered them, or Muzorewa’s as well?

Well Bishop Muzorewa was a different kettle of fish. He wasn’t involved in the terrorist situation as far as I know. He was just a peaceful loving preacher but not the sort of hard man that could really do the job with these guys.

What did you think of the protected villages effort and so on? You mentioned that you did see a bit of it.

It was seen by the nationalists – and they portrayed it internationally – as being concentration camps. It wasn't, it was to protect the local people from being attacked by freedom fighters, terrorists, call them what you will. It was to give the local people a bit of freedom of movement and a bit of freedom of mind that they could sleep peacefully at night, so these (01:03:54) were by no means concentration camps. But it's been portrayed completely the other way.

Did you have to work at any of these?

No, we had nothing to do with protected villages. When I say "nothing to do" I'm talking about my side of the picture. I didn't patrol protected villages and things like that. I had been there with Intaf people because by that time my father was Intaf so I know of the places and I know of the way that the inhabitants viewed them, which was in the main positive, but it naturally gave them some restrictions on life. Do you want to be restricted to an area where you're not going to get shot or do you want to go and run over the hills and get shot? sort of thing. That's not so easy when you're used to letting your cows and your cattle and your goats roam free all over the place. If I had to vote on it, I would say definitely it was a plus for the local people, not for government because of course it took a lot of resources to do that. But for the local people, I think it was a plus.

Were you involved in any of the operational areas?

All of them, I did every operational area, there were about five or six of them I think, Hurricane, Thrasher and so on. I was actually operating in all those. At one time Mashonaland was an operational area so just outside the Salisbury area was also an operational area, which is quite interesting.

Was this operating from the base that you said the Guard Force had its headquarters in?

Yes.

So in the Guard Force were you in the bases of the operational areas?

Yes I would go out and visit them and then go out with them. Quite interesting because sometimes I might know the area better than them, from PATU. But very often they knew the area better than me, from continually being there on the ground, so it was quite an interesting thing both ways. But then I would go to all these different areas either as Guard Force or as PATU so it was quite an interesting life.

How much were you moving around and where were you actually based?

I was based at Salisbury, the Guard Force headquarters was about a mile from police headquarters, both in Salisbury. So the police headquarters, what we called Salisbury province PATU was housed at the main police barracks,

also in Salisbury and the Guard Force main headquarters was just down the road from there. So I could swap between the two, you've just got to change your uniform.

(01:07:13) But how much were you moving around as well?

Quite often, yes, but less often out with the Guard Force than in headquarters. But in PATU almost never in headquarters, out in the bush. The reason being there were people in there, police, to run the administration, but there was nobody in the Guard Force.

And when you were working in your Guard Force period, would you have come into any engagements or contacts?

I never had a contact in the Guard Force, although there were many.

It was all PATU?

We have been in contacts, for instance driving through an ambush or something like that, but I have never physically been jumping out and doing the business in the Guard Force. Some of the other headquarters guys who went out, as I said, we all had to get in the bush and do that, they did get involved in contacts. It's good for them because then they know it's one thing to sit in headquarters and say "send those guys this, there and everywhere" or "we've heard there's terrorists there, go and sort them out." It's another thing going yourself, it gives you a bit of appreciation.

But I guess you had that appreciation from your PATU work, which you were insisting on carrying on?

In PATU, that's different, that's another one, yes, that's a different side of it.

I'm just conscious of the time because you said you needed to leave... what happened towards the end of the seventies for you? When did you actually stay on until?

There became the peace process and that was a very difficult time for the Guard Force because the freedom fighters wanted to take over all the bases there and we were quite often surrounded in those bases.

Were these assembly points?

Yes, and we were ordered not to take any action. In fact, one of our guys was abducted out of the base and tortured by them. They had a thing called the Fifth Brigade, which were trained by North Koreans and their job was to instil terror on anybody and everybody they met. But we weren't allowed to take any punitive action at all and they had monitors from Britain and Europe, some English policemen, you know, wandering round a crowd of terrorists, going "ere, 'ere, 'ere, what's all this then?" sort of business. They were lovely people but completely out of their depth. Never mind, they did the job, so the

peace process came along and then it became apparent out of (01:10:17) nowhere really that Mugabe was going to be the man. Now my wife and I of course had the little children and although Mugabe made all the right noises at the beginning and for the first five or six years, we couldn't see that education wise, it was going to be a good thing for our children because all my children were girls at that time.

Now we knew from Zambia that when you have 8, 9, 10 year old girls in school in the same class as 15 and 16 and 17 year old boys, it leads to disaster and it did many times, so there was no way we could risk that. It's a case that many were denied or had not the capability financially or otherwise even to reach the schools that would have given them the necessary standard of education. It doesn't mean that they didn't have the brain power necessary, they didn't have the opportunity, so whereas a white kindergarten child would be two years old, you would have six and seven years olds because that's the first chance they'd had. So consequently further up the stage, when the puberty situation was coming into it, many, many of these girls were interfered with and many of them were made pregnant and so on. So the option was to take them back to England or bring them down to South Africa, but my parents were still in Rhodesia, so we took the shortest hop down to South Africa.

What time had you been married then?

Oh years ago.

Was it in Rhodesia?

No, no, we were married before we came out, I was only a young boy then, I was cradle snatched. We got married in 1957.

So your wife had been moving with you all this time?

Yes.

And what did she think about the situation and what was going on?

Well she's Scottish and you know Scottish people make great colonists, they are very adaptable people and so she completely loved it. But she was worried about the children's situation.

And when you were away on sticks and so on, was she near your family, your parents?

Well all within the area of Salisbury, yes, probably five miles from here and five miles from there and so on.

I also failed to ask you at the start where you felt your home was? I mean you'd gone out from the UK...?

It's an interesting question isn't it? We're 100% Rhodesians but home is still Britain, that's your heritage. So if we could distance heritage from home, (01:13:24) home was Rhodesia until it changed. Heritage wise, it's Britain, and that encompasses all the colonial things that we did because you did them for the purpose that you were British and you were going to bring A) it's a better life for you of course, but B) you are developing things. Britain has now got this colony and you're one of the little cogs that's helping to turn this colony into the breadbasket of Africa and civilised community and showing what can be done. So home was one thing and heritage another, so really like a split personality.

And what was a good Rhodesian for you?

If I can just digress a little bit, I won't tell you what it means but Afrikaners call English people 'souties' and it's a contractual of the word 'soutpiel' and it means that you have one foot in South Africa and the other foot in England.

I have heard the...

The whole thing, yes, ok, but it sums up the situation.

Yes, it's really interesting. I suppose they're saying that they were grounded in just one place whereas the English always had this British background...

Yes, you will find the Afrikaner is not keen to go back to Holland, he doesn't regard Holland at all. He's there, he is born and bred Africa, he has no interest in Holland whatsoever, in fact, sometimes it's funny, he despises them. But the Brit has always got, not always, my type of Brit always got...

One foot in each place, yes. So what do you think made a good Rhodesian? What sort of values?

Got a white face? No, the great thing about Rhodesia for me was that people were more educated and more civilised in the way that they dealt with other people. So it doesn't matter whether you were black, white or anything else, everybody was polite, everybody was polite. Service was polite, society was polite. It all changed of course and not only from a black perspective but things went very much downhill when a big South African element got in. But in general it was a pleasure to be somewhere where you could say you were, if you like, a little bit outside of the mainstream of the world and people acted in a way that might be more based on old ideas. Not that the country was backward, but the way you acted was some 20 years different.

Were those values that were shared across the races or were there particular attributes that a black Rhodesian might have?

I can't answer that for a black Rhodesian. My view of it is that they always felt under the yolk, however much we felt we were doing the best. I mean, we had massive Tribal Trust Lands where a white was not allowed to build or set

up a business or anything but once again, that's been portrayed as something different where they were given the worst land available and (01:17:09) made to go and exist on that and it isn't always true. There is some truth in it but it's not always true. I feel sad that the Rhodesian black people embraced this new world so much and it's completely turned against them. You will often hear black people say today "I wish Mr Smith was back" and not just to please you but they're in that situation. But if push comes to shove, the black person will never side with a white person, even though they know the black person that they're talking to is pushing them the wrong way, they still have the idea that we must keep solidarity against the white folks.

What do you think that the war was doing for Rhodesian identity and the Rhodesian cause and values?

You might say that it cemented them. I think a lot of people say that, that it cemented them. If so, it was only for a very short period of time in history wasn't it? You don't cement so well when... I know one family lost three boys in the thing and of course on the African side, a lot more. People thought they were fighting for their values, many of them, but there were also a number of them who had a more Afrikaans outlook on things. The Afrikaner is always, from his upbringing, believed the blacks were the, so to speak, *undermenschen*,⁴ or as the bible calls it, the hewers of wood and drawers of water, and they never saw them as ever being allowed to be anything but that. No more did communist Russia and no more did Germany. In fact, that's how they saw them, so there's no way that they would have the same view as the average English person thinking he was trying to bring a completely different set of values to what the Afrikaner wanted to bring.

So there was a very big, very strong Afrikaner mentality in the time of the UDI. Our president Cliff DuPont was a very nice man and I had the pleasure of meeting him a few times but he was an Afrikaner and many many of the policies were Afrikaans and many of the people in the government were Afrikaners. So they had a different view entirely to, for instance, Garfield Todd. So that view that I'm telling you now would have been and was looked on as traitorous during the fight for independence. If you said anything like that, you were a traitor and you were yellow. They used to call it a 'yellow rat' or something like that. But my view of it is that there were two distinct different types of white in Rhodesia and the one was down the very strict stern attitude, you might even call... I wouldn't like to give that a name, but on the other side, the English side, more in the nature of trying to be a father figure. Your African would often say to you "you're my dad, sir, you're my father, sir, can I do this or that or the other," so we saw a sort of patriarchal role.

And it sounds like the popularity of them changed throughout the period. You said some people were seen as very bad whereas ten, five years earlier everyone was behind them.

⁴ Hitler's idea of a sub-species.

Yes, it's a fluid situation. And many people know, even though they won't admit it, that some of the most vehement anti-black, anti-everything and "God bless Rhodesia, I'm here 'til I die," were the first people to run (01:21:34) away, the first people, including cabinet ministers and so on, making sure that their funds and everything were out of the country and then they took off. Almost invariably, they were the people most vehement about "down with the Queen" and "up with the country" and "we'll fight to the last man," but they were first out, which is a very interesting psychological thing to do. This included very senior military, public servants, MPs and Cabinet Ministers. One, who had made a final brave address to the RLI, had already been to South Africa to arrange his quick departure.

What sort of media and so on did you have access to and how did that affect your outlook?

Well it would depend if you were susceptible, wouldn't it, to propaganda. But of course the Rhodesian Broadcasting Company was giving you a daily update on the news and on the war against terrorism and so on and on the fight against the 'rooigevaar' which is the Afrikaans for the 'red dangers' and things like that. The Rhodesia Herald, very patriotic but a more balanced view, but very patriotic and of course one or two African newspapers as well. So if you wanted to, you could read between the lines and get a fairly balanced view but in the main, if you listened to what you were told or if you toed the line...

If you toed the line you could have a very one sided view?

Yes, and most people did toe the line, not only because it was the easy way to go but because you put somebody on television with an honest face and a decent demeanour and he's believable.

To tie things up, could I ask what sort of war you felt was being fought? A racial war, civil war or an ideological war, they're all different things that it's been called.

I think there are strands of every bit of that, there's a strand of each of that. In certain circumstances, definitely it was a racial war, black against white, certainly from their side, whereas the whiteys tend to say "we tried to preserve civilised government and we've nothing against the black person at all but we're against terrorists." Whereas mostly on the black side terrorism was definitely anti-white, so racial, yes. Ideological because definitely on the white side, anti-communist, whereas most of the terrorists had been backed and supplied and paid by the communists. What were the others you were thinking of?

Well really just racial, civil or ideological, or some have said tribal war as well.

Yes, the tribal wars were carried on, for instance when Mugabe got in power he murdered thousands upon thousands of Matabeles.

This Fifth Brigade?

Using the Fifth Brigade, yes, to great shame. One of our Rhodesian white soldiers was leading the Fifth Brigade at that time. As an aside from that, (01:24:45) when Robert Mugabe won the election, several of us were called in to the police headquarters and we were asked if we would become Mugabe's bodyguard. Now there were about eight of us there, two of us refused point blank, two said they would think about it and four, again, the most vociferous four, 'last man, last bullet,' immediately said they'd do it. So it gives you an indication that people weren't always true in their own minds. So on one side it was an ideological war, we'll never be communist, on the next minute, I'm going to be a bodyguard for that communist dictator. So I would say there are strings, all of it leads in, but the centre core was the fight to maintain a civilised government.

So what happened to you come 1980? Am I allowed to know which one of those eight you were within? Did you say that you were one of the people called in?

To be asked for Mugabe's bodyguard?

Yes.

Myself and one other guy absolutely refused on the spot. That was like turning a face completely wasn't it, instantly?

And so what happened to you after that?

Well I then went down to South Africa with the kids in the South African Army and there I stayed until I came back here.

Did you formally have to resign?

Yes, I was asked to join two things, I was asked by Mugabe's government to go to into their intelligence section, but intelligence is a nasty place and our white intelligence section did, in my view, some very wicked things, which you can't justify. You can't always justify the means taking you to whatever ends you're aiming for, but I didn't want to get involved in that. But they did ask me and I went for interviews and it was still run by a whitey but I said "no I can't be part of that." Then they asked me to go to the barracks and take over the administration of the new black army because I'd done that up in Zambia with the Air Force. But we looked at it and needless to say, there was a lot of money in it but we looked at that and again, with the children and also with some of the savagery that had gone on within those terrorist forces which were now supposed to be the Rhodesian Armed Forces, so we couldn't accept that.

What was it like going to South Africa?

Dreadful, foreign country, everybody in the Army is Afrikaans, Afrikaans is the language, mostly the whiteys are hated. When I say 'whiteys' I'm talking about British because they still remember the Boer War and what happened to their wives and families in the concentration camps. The climate has changed absolutely completely now in South Africa. People all get on well, (01:28:17) black, white, Afrikaans, English, it's completely different but when we went down, it was still absolute Afrikaner supremacy, so it was a very difficult life especially in the military. But I hope I brought some civilisation to them.

How long were you in South Africa for? When did you finally come to the UK?

Well we only came back in 2007, so quite a long spin. Sorry, I need to say that in the meantime, they educated all my children extremely well and they've all done their thing properly so I owe a great debt of gratitude to South Africa, it was good.

What was it like coming to the UK finally?

Can you say 'home?' Well beautiful because all the family is here, so it's great and also the level of crime, which here is disgusting and appalling for a civilised country, but it is still far less than South Africa for various reasons. According to the papers we are now worse crime rate than South Africa but it's not such dreadful violence. So I feel safer with the kids here and safer with the wife here and also it's a beautiful country, so yes, it's great.

How did you feel that other British citizens looked at your past? Did they notice that you'd come from afar?

Well previously when I came over before it was absolutely appalling, many of them have no experience of going beyond Totnes for a bag of chips and yet they understand everything that makes the world right and they know exactly what you should have done and what you shouldn't have done. And they will also accuse you, to your face, of murdering people, you know, they just have no perception whatsoever, so that is very hard to take. But since we've come back more recently we don't discuss it at all because one can get very aggravated with the ignorances displayed and the accusations. I was once accused of wholesale murder by the fact that my aunty looked at a picture of some Africans sleeping in Cecil Square in Salisbury. The headline in a British newspaper was that they were Africans that had been mown down in Johannesburg by the police and it was absolute tripe! But people don't understand, they haven't been there, they don't understand the world outside fish and chips; or they might go to Ibiza and make absolute hooligans of themselves.

So was this your family in the UK who were saying that?

Yes.

I've heard that the coverage in the UK was very tainted.

Yes but the thing about it is that it was more readily believed than your own situation. So I said "how do you think I would be involved in murder?" (01:31:35) "Oh, well it said it in the paper." I can't talk about it, I cannot discuss it really.

It's difficult for your own family to not even listen to your side of it.

Yes, because they've been totally brainwashed to be politically correct, that's the thing. Now we might see and we do see now a bit of a change of opinion when people see what is going on in Africa and particularly in Zimbabwe. I'm not saying all was white and right in Zimbabwe but it would be a damn sight better place for an African to live in now, had Mugabe not got hold of it.

One final question I want to ask is, looking back now, do you think that it was worth it, the war and your part within it?

I think even if we look at the First and Second World Wars, in the end, they're not worth it, in the end. History can look at it and judge it, it's too close at the moment to judge it but if I look on a purely contemporary basis and I look at what Mugabe has done to that country, it was worth it, it was worth the fight, it wasn't worth the giving up. So we did something right. Now here's another little thing, you might want to switch that off. My belief in this business in Zimbabwe and the whole of British Africa is it's deliberately organised to turn Africa back to a bush state so that it just becomes a vast area where the wealth can be plundered so the west doesn't really care about all that's going on in Africa. What it does care is whilst it's all collapsing, they get in first and get their fingers on the wealth. That's my belief and I don't believe that's a new thing; that was the policy made fifty years ago, when they saw how difficult it was to maintain the Empire and what can we get out of it. So there we are, what can we say? I don't care if they put me in prison.

I suppose there are still links with previous communist countries, aren't there, with Russia and China?

That's true but I'm specifically referring to...

Do you mean Britain and America?

Well America didn't have a big hand in Africa but it had to hide behind Britain didn't it? But I believe it was a deliberate Foreign Office policy that was made all those years ago, that things are getting beyond us, we can't handle it, what is the good we can get out of it? The best we can get out of it is to keep it depressed and ensure that we have all the trading rights, by which time now they've lost it to China as you say, and Russia and Taiwan and America.

Well thank you very much Mr Kipling.

End of interview