

## **James Ley**

*Grandparents had been in Tanganyika since around 1923. His father had moved there with the family, aged around two, and then trained for the RAF in Southern Rhodesia, where he met his future (Rhodesian) wife, later returning to Tanganyika. James was born in Tanganyika in December 1945. They left Tanganyika for Rhodesia in around 1950. James's parents divorced in around 1955/6, so he grew up with his mother. His mother and two brothers emigrated to Australia in 1963. But he remained having joined the Rhodesian Army in April 1962 (forging his age). Worked in signals in various areas, including with the Selous Scouts. Left Zimbabwe for South Africa in 1980. Married a second time and after that divorce left South Africa for the UK in 2006.*

**This is Dr Sue Onslow talking to Mr James Ley in Aylesford, the Royal British Legion Village, in Kent on Thursday, 6 August 2009. Jimmy, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to talk to me. I wonder if you could begin by saying, please, where were you born?**

I was born in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika which is now known as Tanzania in 1945, 27 December 1945. My father was brought up there. My grandfather, being an accountant, was sent there after the First World War to take over the breweries and his job was to run that. At that stage, that was about 1923, my father was then two years old but he was eventually sent to school in Nairobi. I understand that he went to a senior school there and then did a mining course in Southern Rhodesia where he got his blasting certificate. Eventually, when the war broke out, he joined the RAF and did his training at Heany in Bulawayo.

**So during the war then, he stayed in Southern Rhodesia?**

He did his training in Southern Rhodesia, at Hini in Bulawayo, and then returned. He told me that he was stationed in Karachi which would have been part of India. Now I don't really know the significance of that but there was certainly more than (?) India. But from there, he told me that he'd flown Dakotas in Burma; in the war that happened in the sort of Malaysian/Burmese type of scene over there. He flew there for the last eighteen months of his career.

**Was your mother Rhodesian?**

My mother was Rhodesian. My mother was born in Rhodesia, in Beatrice, just outside Salisbury. She'd joined the Pay Corps and was a pay clerk at Hini and my father met her at the stage he was doing his training in Hini. They met and were married in Salisbury and then my mother moved up to Dar es Salaam...

**While your father went to Karachi?**

Whilst my father was in Karachi; but he returned and when the war ended, they continued to live in Tanganyika. I was born in Dar es Salaam and I've a brother that was also born there.

**So when did your parents leave Tanzania? Or Tanganyika, as it was then**

We'd left in about 1950. I don't recall living there. I would have been about four and a half, five years old, and I don't have any early memories of Tanganyika. But I have very early memories of when we arrived in Salisbury and stayed in one of the pee-ze houses. These were what they called "no fine houses". They were built of concrete with slate roofs and they were quite (00:03:50) big two and three bedroomed houses for ex-servicemen returning after the war. They were housed in these pee-ze houses.

**Did your father count as an honorary Rhodesian at this time?**

No, from my father's side, we had no ties in Rhodesia at all. It was my mother's side and my mother's father was a Hollander who I understand came up to Salisbury by ox wagon. They travelled by train as far as it would go and then it was by ox wagon through Fort Tuli and eventually up to Salisbury. So they would have been early Pioneer stock.

**But your father went back there to be an engineer, or to be a mining engineer? You talk about getting his blasting certificate.**

He never actually ever went back to the mines. He went back as a salesman and sold tractors to the farming community. I always remember the big trucks he had, with the Massey Ferguson tractors on. He would travel around and that was his job, as a salesman.

**But your family were based in Salisbury at the time?**

My family were based in Salisbury, yes.

**So where did you go to school?**

The first school I went to was David Livingstone, which was in The Avenues in Salisbury. I was there for probably six months before being sent to Springvale which was a small school run by the Church of England outside of Marandellas; it was really the junior school to a school called Peterhouse which was also in Marandellas.

**So you went on to Peterhouse afterwards?**

I didn't go on to Peterhouse, no. I stayed at Springvale for about three years.

**Was it boarding?**

It was a boarding school, yes.

### **How little were you?**

I was probably seven years old at that stage and in fact what is interesting, because in 1953, whilst I was at Springvale, I received my Coronation medal with the Queen, being a British subject and I still have it today.

### **So all British subjects got a Coronation medal?**

All British subjects in Rhodesia got a Coronation medal in 1953.

### **What sort of values were being instilled in you at Springvale?**

(00:06:21) From a church point of view, it was quite high Church of England type of religion but my mother was very English because her mother was a Londoner, having been born in London of Jewish parents. Their surname was Schiff and I understand that she was a cockney although she never seemed to have the cockney accent. But she certainly had very, very strong heritage and so my mother grew up knowing all the old nursery rhymes from England.

### **So you were a little Englishman in the bush then?**

I was a little Englishman in the bush, you're quite right. And my father of course was born in Middlesbrough in England so my father's side of the family goes back a long, long way.

### **How fair is it to say that Rhodesia in the 1950's was more British than British, if you understand what I'm saying?**

I think because the values were held on to and kept as something that was very, very important. We were mixing with foreigners from South Africa, foreigners from Portugal, foreigners from Italy and there were quite a few foreigners coming in; and the British people were deeply conscious of having just won the Second World War and made a fight for freedom. We were very proud of that and so all the little heritages, all the little nursery rhymes and all of the history of England was there and it was taught right the way through school.

### **But were you taught Rhodesian history?**

Yes we were, but it was not a very old history and it really started from the time Mzilikazi first went through to the bottom part of Matabeleland and then Lobengula took over from him; so just prior to the days of when Rhodes arrived there. But the history of the Shona and how they arrived through Manicaland and Mashonaland was not that well taught. But there wasn't as much depth to Rhodesian history as there was to European and especially British history.

### **But you still would have been taught, let's face it, Rhodesian myths: the heroic Rhodesian, the Pioneer Column, the myth of Rhodes and Livingstone, those parallel constructs?**

Absolutely. We were taught about that, but of course they were Englishmen and we looked on it as being...so although it was a history of Rhodesia, it was also a history of England. They were Englishmen come out to Africa.

**Were you aware that Rhodesian white society was changing and expanding through the late fifties and the early sixties?**

Not really, no. I think I was too young to have been aware of that.

(00:09:53) **I'm just thinking when it was UDI, you were twenty.**

Yes, oh at that stage I was politically aware but in the 1950's, apart from the population growing naturally, I was not really aware of the growth of the European population. Certainly in the 1960's, I became politically aware of what was happening.

**Ok, so living still in Salisbury, in a suburb of Salisbury, how much contact as a teenager did you have with Africans?**

We grew up with them, totally. The contact would have been, apart from being in school, we didn't have blacks in our school but outside of that, they were our cooks, they were our friends, they were our playmates, they were people that we could trust if we got into trouble. The local policeman was generally an African and not a white person and he had his hat on and they were our protectors. So on a daily basis, we grew up with them and knew them very well.

**At what point do you think you became politically aware?**

I think at the point that UDI was declared. That I began to think about what was it that we stood for and why did we have this black/white divide that people...it seemed to be apparent but it didn't appear to be apparent to us then.

**Did you have political discussions with your parents?**

No, I stayed with my mother during the years of the divorce. She divorced my father in about 1955/'56 and so I grew up with my mother and she was not politically minded.

**Did your father stay in Rhodesia?**

My father remained in Rhodesia; my mother emigrated to Australia in December 1963 and my two brothers went with her, to Australia. I'd been in the army at the time and she half heartedly offered me a ticket across but it certainly wasn't as good as the offer that I had from the Rhodesian Army at the break-up of Federation.

**So when did you join the army? As a volunteer?**

On 14 April 1962. Now, at that stage I was sixteen years and four months old. Now that was wrong, I was not really allowed. You had to be sixteen and a half to join the army, but my mother wanted me to join and I wanted to join. I'd had enough of schooling and so she wrote to the army and said that because I was born in Tanganyika, they couldn't get hold of a birth certificate but I was born on 25 September which allowed me to join the army and that's how it went on. And so consequently my army records show my birthday as 25 September.

**(00:13:31) So you're like the Queen, you've got two birthdays?**

I've got two birthdays! But I joined up at the age of sixteen years and four months.

**What did you join?**

That was a strange story because at the time, I was at senior school at Mount Pleasant and the vice headmaster was a bloke called Bill Bennetts who was a small person who wore glasses, but he was also Major in the corps of signals in the territorial force. When I went to him and told him that I was going to join the corps, he said "not a chance". He was very happy that I was going to join the army and directed me towards RLI; and when I joined up, I actually joined the staff corps to go into RLI but I ended up working at army headquarters doing amendments for various directorates. This is because a recruit course had not yet started at RLI and so rather than have me sitting twiddling my thumbs across there, they kept me at army headquarters, putting amendments into defence acts and that sort of thing. And there was another young lad by the name of Roger Whittingham who was with me at that stage, and we did the amendments there. One of the directorates that we did the amendments for was the signals directorate and they were suitably impressed by the way we looked after their acts and their defence acts that they offered us a chance of crossing over from the RLI into the corps of signals. So by about June/July 1962 we had rebadged as the corps of signals.

**You were twenty at UDI. Do you remember that day?**

I remember it incredibly well because it was coming across the radio. I'd gone into town with an African called Sergeant Major Runesu and him and myself and a bloke called Dickie Monckton had gone for a beer at the Meikles Hotel and we went across the road to Kingstons, where they were going to broadcast Ian Smith's speech. We listened to the speech with a beer in our hands from the Meikles Hotel outside of Kingstons, the corner and that's where we heard the UDI. And I always remember Sergeant Major Runesu saying to me that this is the best thing that could happen; that we've had too much interference from the outside world and this was an African. I, at that stage, was a corporal and he was a Sergeant Major so it was interesting that came from him.

**Did that strike you as being unusual?**

It did, very much so because generally politics is not talked about in the army at all and we were working at army headquarters at that stage, in the communications centre and so we would not have ever mentioned any politics. Sergeant Major Runesu also is not an outspoken person but he certainly was pleased.

**So that really struck you? He was normally quite reticent?**

Absolutely, yes

**(00:17:26) Did you think that Britain might invade? I mean, was there talk that Britain would send in the troops, send in the Marines, the RAF was coming?**

There was a lot of talk that force might be used and at that stage, I wasn't quite sure what sort of force would be used or how it would be used and so on. I wasn't into the realms of how divisions were worked out and I was a little clerk at army headquarters, so when they said "force" I mean they might have sent a police force across. I didn't really know but yes, there was the possibility of it happening but there was also the fact that we had a lot of English people that had been seconded to the Rhodesian Army working with us and all of them said with one voice that it would never happen, that the British Forces would never invade. They were staff sergeants and sergeants, that sort of rank.

**Did you know of people, or did you know people who said "this is a disaster, UDI should never have been declared, we're now in rebellion against the Queen"?**

No, I only ever heard of one person that thought that way and it was perhaps a few years later and his name was Bob Prentice from Bulawayo, Brigadier Prentice who in fact resigned from the Rhodesian Army because he believed that it was wrong to do that. But other than that, I never met anybody and certainly the army was fiercely loyal to the Rhodesian government and I don't recall any person that resigned because of their believing that it was illegal.

**Jimmy, at that point, what did you think of African nationalism?**

It was something that worried me and I'm not quite sure why it worried me at that stage. Again, not being into politics but it worried us from the point of view of losing not only our heritage but the way of life and of course one always talked about – if the blacks came into power, there would be a down grading of the living standards of the people around. Now, quite why and exactly how it would happen, we don't know but that was what we were scared of, is that our living standards would be down graded.

**The way you explain it then, it seems to me there's a large element of fear. Fear of the unknown, a sense of threat rather than a reality of threat.**

There was that side to it, yes. The reality? It wasn't real, I mean we didn't see anyone, we didn't hear anything and reality to us is if there was a British force situated in Zambia and Mozambique that was due to come across, but that never happened and even when the boats came to enforce the embargo off at Beira, it was also "well they're quite far away, they're doing too much and can they shoot from there into Rhodesia? No they can't! Well, you know, what really can they do to harm us?" So it almost wasn't real, and yet the boats were there, I know that but they couldn't do us any harm.

**(00:21:14) So from that point in 1965, what course did the war take for you? What was your professional advancement? At what point did you start to be aware that Rhodesia was at war?**

I actually became aware that Rhodesia was at war, was in 1972. However, in the late 1960's during Operation Nickel when the first terrorists came across from Zambia and were in the Sinoia area, we became aware that there was an incursion of people that were armed, that were out to harm the local population. When I say local population, I mean the white population, and to cause dissent amongst them. It didn't appear that they were doing anything amongst the blacks at that stage. There didn't appear to be a lot of recruiting; it seemed that they had come perhaps to murder the odd farmer and cause fear amongst the white population.

**That sounds like an echo of Mau Mau?**

Yes, again I don't know a lot about the Mau Mau.

**I just wondered if that's all part of a sort of folk history for Rhodesians. If there's an element of black violence against white farmers (from Kenya).**

I'm sure there was a lot of that. I don't remember about it being spoken specifically but there's no doubt, I mean, my father ought to have known a lot about it. We would have lived, to a certain extent in Tanganyika when the Mau Mau uprising was taking place. So there was certainly a fear

**It's a backdrop?**

There was a backdrop to it, yes, but there was the fear of the persecution of the whites by the blacks.

**Was that also stemming from the Congo crisis and people coming through Rhodesia fleeing violence?**

I think, again, if I talk about my own experience, the Congo crisis gave a crisis of Africa and the problems that could be caused if Africans came into government and were not trained in the running of a country. Therefore, there would be some sort of upheaval, fighting amongst themselves and eventually people would have to leave until it quietened down again. And of course I remember seeing the people coming through from Katanga and living in the

Salisbury show grounds and taking food to them because they needed to be fed and as they progressed down towards South Africa.

**So Congo then becomes an important reference point?**

It does, but the Congo that I remember at that stage would have been about 1960/'61 in that sort of era.

**Yes, ok. What did you think motivated the guerrillas who were involved in that incursion in Sinoia? So what did you see African Nationalism (00:24:36) violence being precipitated by? What was driving it? In your view, by the late sixties.**

It seemed to be the radical part of the Africans that had lived in Zimbabwe. We honestly believed the great majority of Africans were good and harmless people and that they were happy to grow with the country; and if it's going to take things thirty years, it would be fine, as long as they had a job and their food and they have a kaya, somewhere to live or their family. But it seemed to be radicals and very much a minority. We always thought that because we thought that if there was an honest vote, that the vote would go against them. However, it didn't of course as you know during Mugabe's days.

**So in the late '60's and the 1970's, how did you and your colleagues, that you remember, view the black African politicians? The sixteen African MP's: were they the acceptable side of African nationalism to you, or did you not see it in quite that way?**

They were acceptable because they were very quiet and you hardly ever saw them. They didn't come to the front, they didn't visit the border areas, they didn't visit the army units so consequently we didn't really have time to talk to them and get to know them. They were on the 'B' roll and not the 'A' roll and so consequently they couldn't do anything to do any harm to anyone.

**So you didn't take them seriously?**

No we didn't, not really.

**Going back to the war as it began to accelerate, what did you think you were fighting against? You've made reference to radical nationalists, very much the minority but did you have an idea of what you were fighting against?**

We certainly knew, again, when I say "we certainly" I eventually came to know because serving in the Selous Scouts, those people were our enemies. (Some) were used by the Selous Scouts, they turned and we worked and played with them.

**When did you join the Selous Scouts, Jimmy?**

In 1975

**Ok, so relatively soon after it was raised?**

It was, yes, I was there in the very early stages.

**So you joined again as a signals officer?**

As the signals officer, yes

**And is that principally how you stayed, in signals, in intelligence, that side of things?**

(00:27:41) It was not intelligence, it was purely signals and providing communications because it was a difficult task whereas most signals officers would provide communications within a localised area, the Selous Scouts were spread out over the whole of Rhodesia. So we had to provide comms. virtually to the whole of Rhodesia. That was a very difficult task.

**But Selous Scouts also operated outside Rhodesia?**

Oh yes and that was a different type of communication that we'd be looking at from those points of view, but yes, they did operate outside.

**Well that caused some friction with the SAS, didn't it?**

I don't ever recall, ever, any friction between the SAS and the Selous Scouts. I understand that at the higher level of the CO, there might have been some sort of friction between him and Brian Robbie because Ron Reid-Daly had got his half colonel before Brian Robbie had; but there were some tasks that the SAS thought they should do and some type. But to me, that appeared to be a competition rather than friction and whenever we had to work together, we worked very, very well. Not only that but the vast majority of the Selous Scouts operators had passed through the SAS so...

**Had they?**

Yes

**So that was a natural recruitment?**

It was a natural recruitment for the Selous Scouts.

**What percentage of Selous Scouts were white, what percentage African?**

It's very hard to say. I know that we ended up, at one stage with about 1300 people. You see, the regular force operators were far less than the territorial force. Our great majority of white members of the Selous Scouts came from the territorial force and would be used either in tracking units or to supplement some of the columns that we had going into Mozambique. Or to supplement various other on-going operations that we had but the infiltration into the terrorists was done mainly by black Africans controlled by white operators

who were white people. I've never really tried to work out that percentage but it would certainly be round about one tenth, about 10% whites to 90% black.

**So how much of the Selous Scouts counter insurgency psychological operations, ideas and training drew upon the Malayan campaign? Drew upon Kenya? I'm just thinking of ideas that fed into...**

(00:30:49) I think a vast amount came from Malaya. Certainly Ron Reid-Daly served in Malaya and was originally with the Scouts and that was the reason for appointing him as CO. We do know of the odd person and policeman who came through from Kenya that had brought knowledge of working with them. But yes, I would say quite a lot.

**I've heard it said that the Selous Scouts developed a remarkable technique for turning captured guerrillas into operatives for the Selous Scouts. Were you involved in that at all?**

I was never involved in it, but I'd heard...you see I was mainly at headquarters so people...what happened is that they would capture the terrorists, they would be taken back to a base camp which we call the fort where if they were deemed suitable by Special Branch, they would be turned somehow, re-equipped with weapons...

**Did you know about the turning technique?**

No I didn't. I don't really know about it but what I do know is that the weapons that they were given had the firing pins taken out of them, so that if ever they decided once reaching the field again to turn on their white controllers, that the weapons they had would not work. So although it didn't guarantee that they wouldn't find weapons, it happened... it just meant that it would happen and as far as I know, we never, ever had a backlash of terrorists that had been turned that actually tried to wipe out their controller or to do something against them.

**After that point where Selous Scouts developed the technique of turning captured guerrillas, was there a field practice of captured guerrillas were principally shot, rather than handed over to be processed through the criminal justice system?**

As far as I know not. The reason they were not shot was because each and every one of them had intelligence to give and the minute you shot and killed them, their intelligence was killed that was in them. So the longer we had them, to keep them alive and the longer that they remained with us, under the police, the more information we could get from them. As far as I know, very few were actually taken and shot. I had heard of the odd one.

**Another question that was put to me, so I'm going to put it to you, was; was there a conscious treatment of dead bodies in a certain way to send a particular political message? So if guerrillas were shot and killed, that**

**their bodies would be dumped or put into mass graves, that there was certainly no process of honouring the dead?**

No, there was not a process of honouring the dead. However they would have been buried in a grave, not in a suitable manner but in a proper manner. There may not have been any religious content to it but as far as mass graves go and that sort of thing, I've never heard of that and they were taken away and even the dead ones were...that had been killed as a result of an (00:34:32) enemy action, would have been buried properly and I'm almost certain of that.

**During your time in the Selous Scouts, what was the relationship that you saw between Rhodesia and South Africa? South African counter insurgency forces? The South African military?**

It was very good. The South Africans were very keen at the lower rank level to learn from us from about a Lieutenant Colonel downwards. Some of the more senior ones showed keenness in giving us equipment but the learning of our techniques and what we were doing was mainly the younger, more brighter type of person that was there.

**Was there a regular process of assigning South Africans to Selous Scouts? To the RAR? To the RLI?**

There was not a regular process, no and I think that that was also politically unacceptable at that...The South Africans didn't want to be seen openly supporting us although they were. They had the police in...

**Pilots as well**

But they said that they were trying to stop their own ANC terrorists from coming through, that they were not there to counter the Rhodesian effort but for them to have attached people to the Rhodesian army would have been a direct sign that they were supporting us.

**Ok, but they might come out on a short term attachment, rather than a long term secondment?**

We often had them on short term attachments. In fact do you remember Bantu Holimisa?

**Yes**

You know that he did a lot of training at the school of infantry in Gwelo?

**Did he now?**

And I think he did a company commander's course there.

**Ok, but that would be...was it much more on an ad-hoc basis, that you saw?**

Absolutely, it was ad-hoc, yes

**What about Rhodesians going down to South Africa for military training?**

(00:36:31) Well to start off with, the staff college in South Africa was used extensively by Rhodesians and Rhodesians went down to that. We had a military attaché in Pretoria and one of those people are still alive, Brigadier Orsment who lives and works in Pretoria, Norman Orsment, and he was military attaché in Pretoria during the latter part of the late 1970's. But as for Rhodesians attached to any of the South African units, now we always believed that they could learn from us insofar as the terrorist war had to be fought. Conventionally yes, I'm sure that we could learn a lot from them and I'm sure the artillery would have attached people to South Africa but I don't know of it as such. As I say, what I do know is that we would have two or three or up to four officers attending a staff course every year in Pretoria.

**How about your position in signals? In communications? Did you ever have South Africans attached to you so that they could learn? After all, they were fighting their own war in Angola, their own border war.**

No, I never had any of them attached to us but I do know that they had units in Rhodesia, on the border monitoring the radio communications from outside of Rhodesia and those units were regular units of the South African defence force, but they never ever had anything to do with Selous Scouts.

**What about the relationship between Selous Scouts and the BSAP?**

It was very good

**That's interesting. Commissioner Allum was rather critical of the Selous Scouts.**

He was, but Reid-Daly's counterpart in the Selous Scouts was a bloke called Mac McGuinness who was a Chief Superintendent. His team used to mix completely and totally with the Selous Scouts and we got on with them very very well and certainly the odd policeman that we had to deal with in Salisbury or elsewhere, we got on with very very well.

**In your particular job, you talked about maintaining communications for the network of Selous Scouts?**

Yes

**Operations, both within Rhodesia and also on the periphery. Were you also involved in the purchase of technical equipment?**

Never, not at all, which is...I know of two lots of equipment that were purchased, the B31s and at one stage, they tried to change us from using a VHF set up for the A63 and move us on to the A30s which was an FM type of radio. It didn't work very well and the troops in the field were totally against it so we had to go back to borrowing A63s.

**Where did you get them from?**

(00:39:49) From South Africa. They were built at Racale Electronics and those were bought and made to our specification and one of the reasons we went away from them originally was because they were operating within their aircraft band and it was...

**Interference**

Well, there wasn't interference but we were taking up frequencies that could have been allocated to a ground to air or air (?) and so on but of course every person that had an A63 knew that if they were in trouble, there was someone up there who was going to listen to them; so consequently they were very happy with the way they worked, and that was also a very good mobile set.

**How about monitoring African guerrilla radio networks? Was that also part of your remit?**

It was not but it was done, I know that.

**Who did that?**

That was done by a unit based in Salisbury and it was their specific task.

**So when you joined Selous Scouts in 1975, you were based in Salisbury?**

No, I was at the school of signals as the wing commander of a wing called the communication and tactics wing and that's where I was.

**And where was that?**

The school of signals in Bulawayo, at Brady Barracks.

**So you were at Brady Barracks for the remainder of the war essentially?**

No, no, I was there after I'd first been commissioned in 1974 and I'd worked at the Brigade headquarters of 2Brigade in the field up at Centenary when the war...when Op Hurricane first started and I was then sent on an officer's course by my OC, Major Jaarback. I did a six months officer's course and once I'd been commissioned, I was sent to the school of signals because of my qualifications as an ordinary signalman and so I went to the school of signals. But having worked with some of the officers that were in the Selous Scouts, specifically one Neil Kriel, he recommended me to Ron Reid-Daly and

they came down to Bulawayo and interviewed me and 24 hours later I was on the train up to the Selous Scouts.

**Really?**

Yes, in those days when they wanted you, it didn't take too long.

**(00:42:22) So as the person in charge of signals, you were intimately aware of all aspects of Selous Scouts operations then?**

No, no, not intimately. I was aware and had a basic knowledge of what was happening but I didn't know the intricacies of it at all. I didn't know how big they were and I didn't know how they were infiltrating into the terrorists and so on. But I did know that they were a very important part and it was only when Ron Reid-Daly and Neil Kriel arrived down and interviewed me that I became aware of the enormity of the problem and how they needed someone to come down and...

**After Ron Reid-Daly's departure which you briefly outlined the true facts of it, did the Selous Scouts go through something of a crisis of morale with the departure, after all, of their founding officer?**

I think there might have been but at that stage, I was based in Johannesburg looking after the Mike Borlace scene and in fact, at the time that Reid-Daly's departure came up, I had also been posted out of the Selous Scouts to 4Brigade Signal Squadron in Fort Victoria. But because I was out of the country and because nobody at army headquarters knew where I was, Reid-Daly was able to keep me hidden and I stayed on until we determined that there was nothing more that we could do for Mike Borlace. I then returned to the Selous Scouts and I went on leave with the 2IC, we came across to England; I got hold of Mike Borlace's parents and we spoke to Special Branch and MI5 about getting him released which eventually happened. But directly getting back from that leave, I went through to Fort Victoria where I took up my post as OC 4Brigade Signal Squadron.

**So just to backtrack, you were responsible then for – to use English words – “running” Mike Borlace up in Lusaka?**

Yes

**Had that been your idea?**

No, not at all. It came about because we needed to give them some form of communication to allow them to communicate, but the idea of Mike Borlace being in Lusaka was to pinpoint the whereabouts of Nkomo. Once we had established that he was in a place, that he was not going to move from for a period of time, six or eight or hours, like the house he had opposite, the presidential house in Lusaka, then a number of Selous Scouts would go in by helicopter and land on the golf course or wherever it was, close to the house, go in, take out Nkomo and come back. Obviously it was a reprisal for the

shooting down of the Viscounts and Mike Borlace's job was to establish when Nkomo was in residence, so to speak. So he didn't need to do too much outside of that. But after he had been captured, I stayed on in Johannesburg, a) to employ lawyers and b) to have communication open so that should he be allowed out, should he be allowed on bail and should he be required to get any message through, I was the one and the last link that he had. So they were keen to maintain that link for as long as possible, so I remained on in (00:46:18) Johannesburg although Mike Borlace wasn't coming back, for those reasons, until we established that Mike had now been caught, he was going to be put through trial and lawyers had been appointed to represent him. Then they decided that it was time that I could now return back to Salisbury.

**Were there any such Selous Scouts operations to try and assassinate Mugabe?**

I'd heard of an operation to assassinate Mugabe of his people that were shipped up outside of Lourenço Marques in a submarine and were then going to go across and assassinate him. What happened to it, what went wrong, I don't know; however, at the time of the election, there was a definite attempt on Mugabe's life in Fort Victoria right outside my signals squadron and I was actually involved to a large extent in that, and that was to assassinate Mugabe.

**So you were involved in the planning? The logistics? The identification of the site?**

Yes

**And the sourcing of the explosives?**

No, a lot of the explosives were brought down, were flown down in aircraft, a bloke called Clive Nichol came down from Salisbury who brought two SAS operatives with them and they operated from my signal squadron. They needed somewhere secure or someone who had been involved in...of top secret operations that they could trust, so that's why they based at my squadron and in fact, used my motor car which was a Renault, to drive round and place the explosives under the culvert. So I was involved in a) the selection of the site where the explosives should go and b) in how they would get away and how we'd get them back and so on.

**Did you have any back-up or liaison with the South African military intelligence with that?**

None whatsoever

**Not that one?**

Not that one

**I have lots of questions about the growing military collaboration with the South Africans in '78 and '79, but just to take it back to the war in the 1970's, what did you think you were fighting for?**

You know, we would say we were fighting for our country, Rhodesia and for our heritage and for our homes. For our way of life, for a type of civilisation (00:49:31) that appeared to us to be better than anywhere else in the world. You know, we'd go on holiday in South Africa but it wasn't the same. To get home to Rhodesia was just so much better.

**In what way?**

The type of people, the English... the honesty of the people that lived there. You just felt, to me anyway, and not just because they were mainly British but that they just were a different type. The Rhodesian was an honest, hardworking and a person you could trust. And when you moved out of it, out of that and you were into another country and not specifically South Africa. I travelled to Australia a couple of times and I always felt that they would be on the side of the bread which was buttered and it didn't matter which side that was providing it. But they seemed to be more worldly-wise than us, but we were fighting for a way of life that we had grown used to and it was blacks and whites together and the coming together, when the black would reach parity of the white, was not something we looked at in great detail. Whether it took 10 or 20 years, it was going to happen but it needed to take that time and it needed to be an integration for it to happen.

**So you were fighting a multi-racial Rhodesia?**

Oh yes, very much so

**But you used the word "parity". Now did you see that as political parity so that the whites would always maintain 50% control of the country?**

No, I'm talking about parity in the way we lived, in that if I pulled out my wallet and it had 100 dollars in it, an African could also have 100 dollars. That if he wanted to buy a house next to mine, he could also buy a house next to mine. If he wanted to go to the same schools as me, he would be able to do that same thing. So that was the parity I looked...it was a way and type of living together.

**But Jimmy, that wasn't the Rhodesia that you lived in?**

No it wasn't

**Because there were, let's face it, restrictions on residence?**

Yes

**Restrictions on purchase of land? Restrictions on political rights?**

Yes

**Restrictions on access to education?**

Yes

**(00:51:56) So in a way, you were fighting for an idealised Rhodesia that didn't exist?**

You know, it was an idea that was probably forced on us by the outside world which we all grew to accept and to be quite happy with. We were never anti the blacks. You know, the first thing that happened to me when I reached Johannesburg and was walking in the streets because I was working at a mining house in the middle, was the hatred that was there. There was so much hatred. In Rhodesia we never had that hatred. If an African bumped you in the street you'd both turn and say "sorry, are you alright?" and you'd walk on. In Johannesburg, you're waiting for a knife to be pulled out and stabbed into you and whether it was white and white or black and white, there was so much hatred. We never had that there, so when the world said "hang on, you've got to have parity. You've got to bring them into your schools" we said yes, maybe we have to and yes, that's ok, we don't mind providing if he comes to school, he must have the same clothing as we have. He must be able to operate in the same way. If he can't then he needs to grow through that period of getting there. How it would be done and whether we would be the ones supplying the money for it, I'm not quite sure. I hadn't yet reached the political awareness of that, but we certainly accepted that they had to be. When I was at the Selous Scouts, we had blocks of flats built for these people and we put them in with great gusto and said "right, here's furniture" and we found three of the flats within 24 hours had the stoves burnt out because they'd taken their wood and lit it underneath in the oven and set fire to it; we suddenly realised that they didn't know how to operate and it wasn't their fault. So we took a whole bunch of them into the Monomatapa Hotel and put them through a course which was called – I forget now – but it was like a 'How do you work in a home with the lights, the water, the toilets. Do you have to use a bucket of water to flush it? Can you use the handle?' And they just didn't know how to do it and so there were things like that but we were happy for them to go into these places. So Rhodesians were very ignorant to a large extent in what needed to be done.

**You said that you travelled outside, you went to Australia, you'd been down to South Africa?**

Yes

**What were your sources of information about the outside world? Did you listen to the BBC? Did you read, what did you read when you were in Rhodesia?**

I actually listened to the BBC every night and I always continued to do it, even when I was across here for the first couple of years. The BBC World Service

is something that I've listened to for many, many years and that has certainly given me a deep insight into what is happening in the world.

**Did you recognise your country? The way it was described on the BBC World Service?**

(00:54:59) Absolutely and we could often tell of the misrepresentations that were happening as well. You know, for instance, we had a bunch of reporters that came in and threw some 'tickies' into a dustbin in Cecil Square and all the pickinins, the young Africans that were around there...that was silly. They had flowers that they were selling, threw them down and dived into the dustbins to collect these tickies because it meant they would buy them a loaf of bread or a pint of milk. It looked and was made out to be starving people that are diving into dustbins to get food that is thrown away by the whites. That never happened: it wasn't that, it was a set up thing. Every lunchtime in Cecil Square, the Africans go there and they lie on the lawns and they will take a newspaper and put it over their head, or they will read a book or they will chat and they've don't it for years. Photographs were taken of them, of the murder of African blacks in Cecil Square by Rhodesian forces and that never happened. So we got to know and we knew what did happen and what didn't happen; but I must say, the BBC were pretty fair in their reporting of Rhodesia from what I can remember. You know, it was mainly the Tiger Talks or the other talks or Harold Wilson talking about...and Margaret Thatcher and so on. So to me, the BBC were great to listen to and I still found them to be very impartial in their broadcasting.

**How much did you feel, at the time, in the seventies, that Rhodesia was losing the propaganda war and actually the African, the radical African nationalists in relative terms, were winning it?**

You know, we never got that because of the censorship of the papers in Rhodesia. So we didn't know that and we certainly never felt that.

**So in fact there was a discontinuity between what you knew about the war, and actually what was being reported?**

Absolutely, yes, because we didn't see it. There was a huge amount of censorship in the newspapers. However, I went to Australia once and I was sitting watching one of the cricket tests and a bloke next to me said "where are you from?" So I said "well from central Africa" he said "no, where are you from?" I said "from Rhodesia". "Oh", he says "I've heard of it" he said "that'll be black inside a couple of years" I said "never, never ever, we've got South Africa to our south and we've got a great politician. It can't happen, you don't know what you're talking about". He said "you know, when the world says to you that it's going to happen, it's going to happen. A country like yours is going to listen eventually". Within two years, Mugabe was in power and then I realised how little we knew about what was going on or how powerful political opinion was outside of our own country.

**Well in the 1960's and 1970's, Rhodesia was going against the international community in declaring UDI and did end up fighting, let's face it, the Eastern Bloc as well.**

Yes

(00:58:14) **So did the thought ever cross your mind that the military capability of the Rhodesian state of Rhodesians was actually removing the pressure on the politicians to reach an accommodation?**

No...

**Do you see what I'm asking?**

I see what you're asking and it just seemed, to me, that the politician was totally on side of the military in that whichever politician came and visited our units, whether they be in the field or outside the field, they always did their best to make us feel good and wanted. You know, if there were ever pay rises that came, we kind of got it before most of the others. I don't know, they made us feel as though we were very important.

**Well, you were**

So we didn't really question their side. If they were looking after us and it's not a side, again, that we really got to know about. Once again, the censorship...

**But just given the size of the Rhodesian white community, everybody knew a politician, everybody knew an MP.**

That's right, yes and personally

**Yes**

Absolutely and we actually had them serving with us in the Selous Scouts, a bloke called Goddard, I've got a picture of him. He was murdered after Mugabe took power, up in Inyanga. Somebody Goddard...

**Not to worry. But I just find this so paradoxical: it's the military prowess of the Rhodesian State removes the necessity on the politicians to compromise when they could have reached a settlement with Nkomo, and it could have prevented the rise of Mugabe.**

You know, I always remember when Ian Smith came back and he said that at the Tiger Talks, they wanted a transitional government to be in within five years and we said "no that is not possible, it's got to take ten years" and that is where the talks broke down. Our thoughts were absolutely right, we agree with you.

**When you say "our thoughts"?**

Our thoughts in the army. They were totally behind the agreement that had not been reached that the British were being totally unrealistic in enforcing a way of change far too soon.

**Jimmy, from your vantage point in the Selous Scouts, the violence that was used by both ZIPRA but particularly ZANLA forces, did you see it as (01:01:06) actually a political language? That it was trying to up the stakes of intimidation so that the African population would fear the terrorists more than they would fear you?**

Oh yes, we did see this. I saw it continually from 1972 onwards when they would virtually abduct people and take them out for training. At the time of the elections in 1979 or 1980 when Mugabe took power, there was a huge amount of intimidation that took place. So it continued from the war into that period. I mean, we saw evidence several times of people who had their ears cut off or their fingers cut off; and we had reports of these bits and pieces being shown to the Africans and told "There we are, this is what's going to happen to you if you don't vote for the chicken. That's where you put your cross". So we saw and knew that intimidation, but it actually was an accepted way of life. You see, the African believes in strength and in discipline. The minute you show ill-discipline or no discipline at all, their whole society falls to pieces; in a way, a lot of Africa is happening that way right at the moment because the discipline of the family had fallen away and you've got tribal things that are tribal so you've got crime happening in the townships which is out of all proportion compared to anywhere else in the world.

**But the level of violence, that went beyond discipline. Was there an attitude in the Selous Scouts of upping the violence or how do you counteract it? How do you counteract that?**

No, no we didn't, not that I know, we didn't up the violence at all. Again, it was a matter of trying to infiltrate into them and then pinpoint who they were and bring in the security forces to eliminate them.

**Did it ever cross your mind at the time that by focusing on a military solution to a political problem, that this was radicalising the opposition? That this was creating greater African radicalism? Greater African resistance?**

It didn't actually. I must admit that we were suitably indoctrinated to follow the government of the day. Well, that's what we thought we were doing and if they said "listen, it is not working and this is what we need to do..."

**Did you have much liaison with Portugal before April '74 in your activities?**

I never had any liaison with Portugal, I actually spent...

**Or in Mozambique?**

I spent six months in Tete as a radio operator in 1969 and 1970.

**So you were liaising with your Portuguese...?**

No I wasn't, I was a radio operator but liaison was taking place between – there were actually intelligence officers from the Prime Minister's office, now I (01:04:58) don't know why they call it the Prime Minister's office...and these Special Branch officers were sent to Tete which was the little town on the Zambezi River that provides the bridge and the road crossing between Rhodesia, Mozambique and the bottom part of Malawi, Nyasaland and Tete. At that stage, the bridge, it was being built and Caborra Bassa was in the process of being built; and of course there was a lot of FRELIMO activity taken on and I think their task was to liaise with the Portuguese military and Special Branch and find out how much or how many of the Rhodesian nationalist terrorists were coming through with the FRELIMO and what sort of help they were getting. But my job was purely to take the signals that they wrote out, encrypt them and send it back to Salisbury. So I wasn't part of any gathering of intelligence.

**How about when the CIO started to support RENAMO or to create the MNR in Mozambique after the fall of the Portuguese colonial empire? Were you involved in that at all?**

I was never involved in it. I was involved at one stage in advising a South African Special Branch Officer in 1980 after the election where troops had been deployed on the Mozambique and Zimbabwean border down near, where the railway crossing is...

**Beitbridge?**

No, not at Beitbridge, further along, it goes to Lourenço Marques. Anyway, because they had taken over the control of RENAMO and were busy supplying them by helicopter and I was able to give them some information on where the troops were at that stage, Malvernia was the terminal.

**So do you remember how many RENAMO troops there were at that point?**

I don't know, I've no idea

**And you don't know...were they trained in Rhodesia and then they went across the border?**

I don't know where they were trained or how they were trained. I never, ever dealt with RENAMO other than the fact that the South Africans needed at that stage to supply and wanted to do it at night-time; so they wanted to be able to fly over an area where there were no Rhodesian and Zimbabwe troops deployed so I was able to help them with that. But how many people they were going to supply, I've no idea.

**Jimmy, during the 1970's, how much do you feel that the Rhodesian war helped to create a sense of Rhodesian identity?**

I think it brought us all very much closer together because during the normal period or period of normality when there was no war, you would have your friends from a certain class or sect of people, whereas the war brought bankers, (01:08:54) scholars, doctors, you know, shoemakers, everyone together in different environments. You got to know them. I mean, somebody said "did you have so and so in Bulawayo?" and I think at the height of the white population in Zimbabwe, there were about 280, maybe 290 thousand but no more than that. Well I could almost say that, of course I may be one of them, but the people...if you lived in Rhodesia "did you know so and so?" and they'd say "well no I didn't know (?)" and certainly two times out of ten, there would be somebody that I knew so because of that, you had a sense of belonging and you know where that would have been very prevalent is when it came to an election. They just voted for Ian Smith in their droves and so...

**Never lost an election**

Never lost. And so that was their community, they did it as a whole.

**Do you think communism had anything to do with the battle or the Rhodesian Bush War?**

It certainly was a fear that was pumped into us: that communism was bad, it restricted people from being able to expand. It certainly imposed on their freedom and so on. And it was painted in a very bad light.

**Did you feel that Rhodesia was at the front line of the cold war in Southern Africa?**

Absolutely

**So you felt you were fighting the Soviets?**

Oh yes, oh yes and in fact we had, at stages, heard rumours that the odd Soviet advisor had been – certainly in the Selous Scouts we had people that had been trained in Russia and Moscow that had been turned and became Selous Scouts operatives. So we certainly knew of people that had been trained.

**How did you regard Cuba?**

Cuba was a communist state that had got involved in Angola. We certainly didn't have any link with any Cubans, or any fear of Cubans operating in Zambia or Mozambique or anything like that.

**That's interesting because from 1977, they were training 600 ZIPRA fighters a year at Luso Boma.**

Really?

### **In south western Angola**

I must admit that I didn't know that and the general, army populace anyway, may not have been aware of that.

(01:11:42) **How about China?**

The Chinese we know were very involved and specifically in Zambia and the building of the rail link between Lusaka and Dar es Salaam. So we know that they were involved and we certainly knew that a lot of training was taking place of the Africans in China as well. In communism, Mao Tse Tung was a name and certainly his teachings were thrown around quite a lot in talking about communism and anti-Chinese type of propaganda.

### **What did you think of people who left?**

Well those who left before me, we often thought had a yellow streak down their back. What are they doing down in South Africa, when they should be staying and helping. There was the odd person we didn't have a problem...but I had to deal with, as the OC of the Signal's Squadron, many youngsters who didn't want to do their call-ups. Well, not that they didn't want but parents didn't want them to do it. Didn't want them to get hurt or maimed or injured in any way.

### **Fair enough**

Absolutely, but it was very difficult and quite often they would leave the country to go and do whatever schooling or post graduate work that they needed to do. Those sort of people worried me that our loyalty to the country seemed to be of prime importance at that stage. You served your country first and then looked after yourself secondly.

### **Did you ever consider leaving before 1980?**

No, never, never. In fact, I may not have left, apart from a fight that happened. A bloke called Henton Jaaback who was the director of signals at that stage had had his name used in the Nkomo operation, although he was never involved. I called him down and showed him the documents where his name had been; he said "ok" and I photostatted those copies of the documents that he needed with his name on and he went back to Salisbury and within 24 hours, he was posted to Pretoria and they said they needed to do it for his own safety. But they didn't do anything for me and I thought "hang on, if he's in trouble because they used his name, what sort of trouble am I in?", because my name appears throughout those documents as being this controller in South Africa and the person that he would report to. So in 1980, after the elections, I resigned and I wanted to leave in as normal a way as possible but certainly that worried me, that they would come back and say "hey, you were involved in trying to assassinate Nkomo. We're now going to put you on trial or whatever". But I left and I went to South Africa, but if

Jaaback had stayed, I don't think it would have entered my mind and I may have remained on in Zimbabwe.

**Well, other people were getting out and...**

(01:15:20) They were, but I was still very patriotic and to me, even today, Rhodesia has just got to be the best country in the world. It's been a long time since I've been back but I have friends that are still farming there.

**So do you feel yourself to be Rhodesian?**

Yes, but one can have...

**Obviously sixties and seventies Rhodesia was home**

Rhodesia was home and had everything worked out well, I might not be here in England today. But my English heritage is very important to me.

**But you left in 1980 to go down to South Africa?**

Yes because my wife, at that stage, my second wife was a South African and any thought of coming to England was a no-no. She wanted to be near to her parents.

**Was she Afrikaner?**

She was born in Zambia, her father and mother were Afrikaner, so yes.

**So how long did you stay in South Africa for?**

For 25 years. I was married for 20 years to her and then came the stage, I went through a divorce and I was actually ready to leave but I had a little dog, that had got to the age of fifteen and I thought, well, Pinto's going to die shortly and then I'll come across. But Pinto lived for another four years and so I kind of lingered on there; otherwise I might have been across here, probably in 2002/2001.

**So you came here in 2005?**

2006

**And you came to here, Kent?**

No, I went through to Westminster, London. I didn't actually come to Kent at all. I didn't know about this place when I first arrived here and I actually arrived with £2000 which very soon emptied and I found myself living in the back of a church until a Brigadier, a friend of mine arrived from South Africa and said "what are you doing there?" I then applied to come here and so I arrived at the British Legion here at Mountbatten Pavilion where I stayed for eight months before going to live in Hadlow.

### **Why did you go to Hadlow?**

We wanted to stay in Kent and the housing people had a small one bedroom flat there with a nice garden; and it was in the countryside and we really (01:18:18) wanted to be in quite big open grounds. We didn't want to be in a town living on top of people; it was something we'd got used to and so Hadlow provided that opportunity. It was really ten miles from the place where we had found security. It's amazing when you come to a new country, how a place can give you security. This did give it to us and we didn't want to go too far from here, although they were encouraging us to go to Somerset, to go to Scotland, to go wherever, we wanted to be...

### **This is your known world then?**

This was our known world and Kent and Hadlow, which is just outside Tonbridge, is a lovely little town. We loved it there and we would certainly be there today if this job of the Warden hadn't come up. Because I'd lived here before and they've known me, they said, "come on Jimmy, come back and take..." and so we've moved into...

### **Jimmy, how did you find moving back to the UK? You made mention that your English heritage is very strong, your sense of identity with this country even though you weren't born here and you spent, let's face it, pretty much all of your formative years and your adulthood in Southern Africa?**

I actually felt as though I was coming home. I really felt that and I was really pleased to be here. I was apprehensive, I was scared because I didn't know what was going on. I'd only just reached the age of sixty so I wasn't sure that I was entitled to any benefit or anything at all. All I wanted was a job and I had people that had promised me work. People like Mike Borlace, people like Tim Callow, people from the Selous Scouts that when I got here said "sorry we can't do anything to help you, you're on your own".

### **So you were stuffed?**

Yes I was stuffed and Tim Callow, as a person, I was the best man at his wedding. Mike Borlace was a person who was in prison that I was instrumental in getting him out, where he may have been put to death because the sentence for espionage in Zambia is a death sentence and I thought that he would have said, "yes, ok, I'll give you...no matter what I do, I'll find a place for you to work". They were not interested, in fact, the only person that gave me any help in those days was Albert Wiederman and he may be someone you need to talk to. He was in the Rhodesian Army and he also became a member of the MDC, of the political party that's in opposition at the moment.

### **But just going back Jimmy, what seems so familiar about Britain? You said you felt a...**

No, there was nothing that was familiar. It was to do with the way I was brought up. My father and my mother...my mother used to say "I don't want you speaking like a bloody "Jappie", you're an English person". She used to say to me "speak English properly or don't speak it at all". She used to say to (01:21:33) me "your grandmother's from London and if she heard you speak like that, she would turn over in her grave". And she taught me all the nursery rhymes. She was the person that used to sing the old Vera Lynn songs and things from the war so she gave me a true sense of the heritage. Then of course, my father who was born in Middlesbrough and grew up... and although he went to school in Nairobi, he also went to school in England at some stage, he was fiercely proud of being an Englishman. And then I started to go into the history of my family tree and that goes back very deeply. For instance, the first Earl of Marlborough was a Ley and before it went across to the Churchill family and his name was James Ley in 1577. So those sort of things which I started to come across; probably in the early 1980's as I started to dig up documents, began to make me realise that if Rhodesia was a country that I could not go back to, then I had to go where my heritage had come from, where the roots of my family had been.

**So you don't feel as if you are a member of the Rhodesian diaspora?  
You said you felt as if you were coming home.**

Yes, I don't and very much so. As a result of that, I've been down to Cornwall to see where the Ley family had their heritage. In Surrey, where my grandfather was born and places like that. So you see, those things, and I look at it and I think, jeepers, this is part of me, and it is.

**Jimmy, do you know of other Rhodesians who've done this pilgrimage?**

I know of other Rhodesians that would like to, that want to do it and would live to do it, that are here at the moment but I don't know of any that have done what I've done. They kind of looked and said "no, that's too much work". But I think, whenever they see my documents, they will say, "gee, I would love to do that. How long did it take you?" thinking that I said "five or six months" - twenty two years.

**Family history's your passion. Jimmy, just going back to the 1970's,  
two broad questions; what did you think of the Muzorewa internal  
settlement? Did you think it was a runner?**

I in fact did. He actually attended a dining invite with us in Fort Victoria and although very little politics were spoken, he showed a great interest in what was happening around, in the Rhodesian Forces both black and white and my opinion at that stage was; well, if this person can be as interested in me and my fellow men as that, then I'm quite happy that he's the Prime Minister of Rhodesia. So Muzorewa made quite an impression on me when we had this dining in night.

**But how about the security situation in 1978/'79 because at that point, it  
seems that it was a civil war with ZIPRA fighting ZANLA, Selous Scouts**

**helping to stir the pot between them. You've got now, a black-led government with its army, the RAR and RLI and the auxiliary forces with Sithole's' element within that?**

(01:25:18) Yes, you know, the powers that be, managed to separate the forces as much as they possibly could, and it only really happened after the Lancaster House conference, that we started to get, what we called Liaison Officers from the various ZIPRA and ZANLA forces into our brigade headquarters and into our signal squadrons. But prior to that, Muzorewa was in power, we didn't have it and we didn't really have a lot to do with what was going out then; but if we got a message from army headquarters that said "this liaison officer was arriving and he is to be treated and put up at the officer's mess", then we did that and we certainly wouldn't have argued.

**Did you have much contact with ZIPRA and ZANLA leaders after the ceasefire?**

Yes, quite a lot

**In what way?**

In that they were serving on the brigade and one of them was in my signal's squadron and although he didn't have any rank as such, he was treated as an officer. The people that I had with me were ZIPRA and they just seemed to be far better trained than the ZANLA, from a military point of view and they seemed to understand a lot more of what is going on when we explained. But of course, there were certain things that were not taken to them; they were certainly never, ever taken to any of the cipher officers but they were allowed to see the basic communication structure that we had around. We worked with them and they would work with us, and when I produced the brigade plan for the communications during the period of the election and when we had the monitoring forces around, I mean, he was there to help me. Although he did very little work, certainly, his input was quite important, specifically from the point of view of liaison between the assembly points and the brigade headquarters, and what sort of communications they had within.

**Had you known about ZIPRA's idea of a conventional invasion of Rhodesia?**

We'd heard about that. We'd heard that they had tanks up in the Livingstone area. However, if you've ever been to Livingstone and seen either the bridge or the Zambezi River in that area, for them to have crossed would have been almost impossible. There were two places that they could have attempted. One was the bridge across the Victoria Falls and that is just so easy to...

**Take out**

To take out and the other place would have been the ferry at Kasangula and again, that ferry was constantly under watchful eye and could easily have been taken out. And that was one of the reasons for me putting a telephone

tap on the telephone lines between Livingstone and Kasangula, was to monitor the telephone traffic because even ZIPRA didn't have a communications set-up between the border which they used to use to cross at (01:28:43) Kasangula and to send terrorists down. It all used to be by telephone and they used to get on to the telephone and say "we have a truck that is coming down". It was all done in English as well because the ZIPRA would speak Matabele but the Zambians on that side was a little bit of a Batonka type of language which was...

### **Well, they can speak Bemba**

Or Bemba, yes, so it wasn't safe so the communication between the two was done in English, which often happens in Africa. You'll have, even in South Africa, where people don't understand the two languages, the most common language is English...

### **Lingua Franca**

And that's the way it goes

### **So when did you set up that telephone tap?**

That was done in 1977 and it was the only time that I ever did an external or went on operations because Reid-Daly said to me "you're my signals officer and you'll be here at these headquarters. I don't want for me to have a problem somewhere and for you to be sitting out on operations". But my technicians and I developed a telephone tap which would work off of an FM 30 watt radio which give us a distance of about 30 kilometres so that we could monitor them. And of course Reid-Daly said "fine, give it to me and I'll have one of my operators put it in" and I said "no, no, either I put it in or it doesn't go in at all because it's got to be done by a technical man". And so, he agreed to let me go on operations. I spent months, training and doing canoe work and then I crossed the Zambezi river and put this telephone tap on the line between Livingstone and Kasangula and in the end, I received a decoration for it. But I do know that it provided a lot of information, but at that stage, we knew, when working out intelligence of where was the best place to put a telephone tap. The reason I mention that is because we knew that ZIPRA had the start of conventional forces building up on the other side of Livingstone, and we needed to be able to monitor as much of what was going on across there as possible and monitoring the telephones was one way of doing it.

### **Was that a piece of information you passed on to the South Africans?**

No, it would have been information that was passed back to our own security personnel but they may have passed it on to the South Africans.

### **I'm just thinking that, interesting**

I think they may have done.

**Jimmy, looking back on the struggle in the sixties and the seventies, do you think it was worth it?**

(01:31:30) Oh yes, you know, I've often asked myself that question and I think the best way of answering is; if I had to choose my life again, would I do it again? And yes, I would. So therefore, it had to be worth it. The comradeship that I got out of it, the sense of belonging to a country, the sense of being part of a larger scheme of things, of going in the direction that I would like to go, I would do it again, without any hesitation.

**Did you think you were nation building? You were building a country?**

You know, that's kind of put it in a (?) sense of it. I mean, a nation is a place like, to me, a place like Great Britain.

**But you were building Rhodesia?**

Zimbabwe was a country, we were country building, we were building a people and yes, it was a nation, I agree with you, I'm just telling you the thoughts that are going through my mind. So we didn't see it as a huge thing, we were building a country of people that belonged to itself and yes, Zimbabwe/Rhodesians were a nation and we referred to ourselves as a nation but it wasn't quite in the same way as we looked at other places.

**But the reason I suggest 'nation building' is because, let's face it, white Rhodesians you said, when we started talking, came from all over the place. You mentioned...**

They did, oh yes

**From within Rhodesia, from outside, Portuguese, Greek, you mentioned Italian. Then the disparate elements of black Rhodesians, different tribes/clans, even if divided into two broad language groups, and yet, you talked about 'fighting for Rhodesia'? Well, that in a way is...**

Is nation building, yes I agree with you, I agree with you. I just wanted to point out that we looked at ourselves as something small without it being...we didn't see it affecting the rest of the world. We saw it as affecting our own country whereas nation building in the context of Great Britain was sending out ships and we're going to colonise South Africa and we'll colonise Australia and we're building a big nation. So what I'm trying to...that wasn't that. We were actually building our nation within the four walls of our country.

**It's interesting that you use that British Imperial reference point as "we're not doing that". But in a way, Rhodesia was still, let's face it, an exercise in empire building.**

Absolutely

## **And you can't understand Rhodesia unless you understand that great imperial project**

(01:34:30) No, no, I hear and understand what you're saying but that is... I just see it as, it was something more personal than just nation building and I don't think there was a person who didn't know Ian Smith's face. I don't think there was a person who didn't know the minister of defence or the minister of finance or even the president or even Muzorewa when he came on the scene. They just, from the schoolchildren, they all knew and at some stage, most of them had actually been and touched and had shook his hands or had been in close quarters.

## **My last question is; how did you explain to yourself why black Rhodesians fought and died on the side of the white led state? How did you explain that to yourself?**

I think it seemed to me that their values were the same as the values that I had and that it was about. They wanted to live their lives in the same way that we did. They knew somewhere deep inside them that if a black nationalist government came to power, they were going to go backwards, they were going to end up starving, they were going to put money in the pockets of a few and that it was going to be the rule of the strongest that would win. You must remember that, not less than 150 years before that, it actually was... Lobengula used to march his Impis off of the side of a hill called Ndabayezinduna and this would happen if they had not gone far enough into Mashonaland to go and beat up the Shona and get wives and cattle back for him. And so he would take an Impi and march them off; I've actually been on top of this hill, just outside Bulawayo and it's not a rumour, the Africans have told me that themselves. So it wasn't long ago before that happened. So now you say to them "we've actually grown since then and we've educated ourselves and we don't have that sort of thing". If somebody does something wrong, we shake their hands and say "don't worry about it"...

## **You don't march them off a cliff?**

No, of course we don't march them off a cliff! Don't we? What does Mugabe do? He's marching them off a cliff, he's killing them by the thousands. What happened in Bulawayo with all the people that were killed just after he took over? It's the same as marching them off a cliff. They will say exactly the same and of course, the Rhodesian Africans in South Africa, they will tell you, that's exactly what has happened. And they understand it, they say that the African lives by the rule of the sword, even today and it's going to take a while for them to go through that and they see that as being the strongest and I think you see the election of Zuma in South Africa. By any means, any normal thinking person would say "hang on, I like the bloke, I mean, I'm not against him, but we're not going to put him in there, I mean, look at his view on Aids and look how many wives he's got, I mean..." But they don't, he's power and he is the one who's the strongest and not only because he's the strongest that he will punish us if we do something wrong but he will protect us when we do something wrong.

**(01:38:04) My last question; given what's going on in Zimbabwe now and has been going on since 2000, do you think in a strange way it's as if the war of the 1960's and '70s hasn't ended? It's still echoing?**

It would then have to be for the same sort of reasons but I don't think it is. I really don't. I think that Mugabe, to have taken power, has committed atrocities that for him to let go and say "ok, we're now a democratic nation, let me hand over to someone else". That someone else is going to say "you have got to face the consequences of your action" as is happening in Czechoslovakia and other countries in the world, that he would have to step down. And therefore, he cannot let go and most Rhodesians believe that is why Mugabe will not let go. I mean, across here, people have tried to have him arrested but certainly, if he was to be voted out of power, there's no country in the world that would give him amnesty and say "come and sit here, we'll look after you". So he would have to face up to these crimes that he is supposed to have committed.

**Jimmy Ley, thank you very much indeed for talking to me.**

End of interview