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# Geraint Jones

*Geraint's family is from South Wales, where he was born. He was brought up in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) where his parents lived until the 1950s. They then returned to Uganda. Started University in South Africa and soon after was recruited into the BSAP in 1974. Moved into Special Branch in 1977. Volunteered for PATU at some stage. Briefly left Rhodesia at the end of his first contract in 1978, however returned shortly afterwards. Left Rhodesia for South Africa in 1980 and joined the SA Police Reserve there at the time. Came to the UK for a working holiday in 1981 and returned again in 1988 to join the RAF in 1989. Left the RAF in 1993 and returned to South Africa, where he joined the SA Police Reserve again. Moved to Spain in 2000 and finally returned to the UK in 2001. Still travels a lot with his work.*

**This is Annie Berry interviewing Geraint Jones on Monday the 29th of June 2009 in Bristol. Thank you very much for travelling all the way to Bristol today.**

You're welcome.

**Perhaps we could just start with you saying how you came to be in Rhodesia initially?**

My family's roots, my family is from South Wales but I was brought up in Africa. My first memory in fact is in what's now Zambia, Northern Rhodesia. My parents lived there in the late fifties and then came back to the UK for a couple of years and went back to Africa to Uganda in the early sixties. They lived there for a few years, my father got lost once and did a contract in Malaysia but for the rest of his life, he worked mostly in Africa. In 1968, I think this is relevant to this; my father got very disillusioned with the British government and what was happening in Britain at the time and he'd run out of commonwealth countries to go to, so he went to South Africa, which was interesting because he was quite liberal. I went to school and had the first part of an abortive university career in South Africa and in 1974 I wrote to the British Army, the Rhodesian police – the British South Africa Police – and the Israeli army. I didn't hear from the Israelis at all, got a brochure from the British Army telling me about Sandhurst and got a brochure and an application form from the Rhodesians. I filled in the application form and a few weeks later I got a telegram saying "we're interviewing in Salisbury on this day, this day and this day; when can you come and we'll send you an air ticket?" So I went there in November '74 and went through the interview, went through the selection process, got accepted and the next day found myself in Morris Depot.

**You had been in Northern Rhodesia but had you been in Southern Rhodesia during your childhood at all?**

I don't think so, no. I don't remember but and I don't believe so, no.

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**Can you tell me a bit more about your schooling? Would you have travelled with your parents all that time or were you in a boarding school?**

Steadfastly refusing to follow his sisters to boarding school in Britain, Jones was educated in Zambia, Uganda, Malaysia and South Africa. My sisters both went to school in this country and came back with stories about places that were like concentration camps and I was having a ball as a child. So when my parents turned round to me at the age of eleven and said "well don't you want to go back to England to school?" I said, "I don't think so, I quite like it here," so I just carried on following them around.

(00:03:25) **So it was a childhood full of moving…**

I had an absolutely magic childhood, yes. It backfired on me a bit because I have incredible wanderlust. I'm sure you've found that when you've spoken to lots of other ex-Rhodesians as well. A lot of them went there out of idle curiosity.

**And many still have an element of that as well, to this day. What sort of work was your father doing? How did he come to leave Britain?**

He was a civil engineer and I do know that in Uganda and in Malaysia he was with what was then called the Overseas Development Agency. It's called DFID now, you probably know that. And that's probably another part of the reason I liked South Africa, I loved South Africa; it was a great place to grow up. But I didn't like apartheid and Durban where I was living was a very contradictory city. It was English speaking mostly, fairly liberal by South African standards, but there was constantly this bugbear of Afrikaner nationalism. It sort of hung over everybody's head so while life was good, you were constantly aware of this, just this tension. And I had a sense of, not impending disaster, but I used to get quite pessimistic about how things were going to go in South Africa. God knows why I thought things would go better in Rhodesia; but at the time I did. And as I said to you in the questionnaire, the Rhodesians I came across just seemed more sort of outgoing, open, more like me, so I thought I'd fit in better there. Also, I wanted to be a journalist originally and I decided I didn't know enough about life so I thought, "well, how I'm going to find out about life, I know, there's a war just next door, I'll go out there." And I also wanted some adventure.

**So you were recruited by the BSAP from South Africa?**

From South Africa, yes. Historically the BSAP recruited in commonwealth countries. We had a few Australians, and 70% of the guys in the BSAP were British. They were also recruiting American citizens and South Africans; so their recruiting policy was British, British Commonwealth, America or South Africa. So they joined from all over the place. When I joined, I went through training with an American, somebody from the Seychelles, a Belgian…. How he got in…? Oh yes, that's right, because he was in the Belgian Congo and his parents moved on to Rhodesia. There were lots of ex-Belgians, I think it's

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part of the background as well to Rhodesia, they were from all over the place. But I'm pre-empting you aren't I?

**No, not at all.**

And the rest were either British, native born Rhodesian or South African.

**What sort of ideals did your childhood instil in you? It sounds like you must have had quite an awareness of the wider world and so on?**

I was aware of…I saw the flag go down, I can remember watching the Union Flag go down at a ceremony in a place called Mbale in Uganda when Uganda (00:07:18) was given independence. I can vividly remember one flag going down and the other flag going up. We lived in Malaysia shortly after independence so there was still the kind of sense of – it wasn't called the Raj in Malaysia, I can't remember what it was called – but there was still that sense that the British had been there. They had done an awful lot to develop it and as I said, I watched my father building hospitals and dams and clinics and roads and things like that. I had a sense that – you've got to put this in place and time – that the white man still had a role to play in developing. Even at the age of eighteen I could reckon that we de-colonised too fast, that we'd left too much undone and we'd landed the people that we'd abandoned. I took no views on colonialism and I still have just a time-slice view of colonialism. It's what happened: I can't remember who I was reading about yesterday, Isaiah Berlin, "it's the way it happened, it's the way it is." So I took colonialism as a given, took it as not a bad thing, and I still don't think it was an unmitigatedly bad thing. I just reckoned that we'd left too much undone.

The other thing, talking about my worldview, is that I remember my father in Malaysia coming back one day and sitting at the head of the table. We used to have very formal lunches and he sat down and said, I can't remember whether he said "white" or "British" but he looked at us and said, "you kids are so lucky you were born…," I think he said "white" but he might have said "British." In our minds at that stage they were practically one and the same thing. We saw Americans, we saw Australians, we met them, but it was still in the era when the British thought that we were top nation. Have you read *1066* and All That?

**Yes.**

Anyway, I found out later what he'd actually meant was that one of his men had been killed that day, a machine operator, and he had gone to see the wife. He used to tell this story again and again and again and she had said to him "apa bule buat," "what can you do?" And that's what he'd been talking about. We had safety nets and we could come back to where it was safe, life was ok for us, yes, generally we were safe. And in most parts of the world he saw people whose lives were precarious, who had no safety nets, who were defenceless. I grew up with a sense of that. So it's part of the reason I didn't like the way things were in South Africa and it's entirely the reason I didn't for example join the South African Police. So fair play was central to my value

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system but at the same time, there was an assumption that…not that white people were better than black people because…have you been to South Africa?

**I haven't myself, no.**

It's got a very large white proletariat and it's pretty much like…if you went to Joubert Park, the sort of social milieu wouldn't be very different from council estates in this country, with the same kind of problems and the same…. So my racial assumptions weren't that white people are better but my racial assumptions were that people like me had a place and that place was somewhere near the top of the pyramid, does that make sense?
(00:11:17) **Yes, it very much fits in with what I understand of views at the time and reflecting of that period.**

The other side of it of course was that – and I'm not sure how much of it was mythology – but I kept getting fed…there was the South African propaganda you got exposed to, I got exposed to at school, you couldn't help it. You turned on the radio and there was a particular programme called "Current Affairs" which I used to listen to avidly and I knew it was twaddle, I knew it was government propaganda, but you can't help but get infected by it. So things like…oh, they loved Idi Amin, they thought he was just great because in their eyes at least, he made South Africa look good. And anything else that went wrong in black Africa, the corruption, the genocides; Biafra, they delighted in it. It kind of rubbed off, that kind of thing inevitably rubbed off.

**But you saw your movement to Rhodesia a very different place; so although that South African propaganda had an effect on you, you still wanted to differentiate yourself from that?**

Yes and I think part of the reason for that as well was actually growing up…. I've spoken to other colleagues about this. Have you spoken to, I won't name them, but just talking to some people who've had similar upbringings to me, the ones who were brought up in South Africa were brought up with apartheid, with those racial assumptions. The ones who were brought up in other parts of Africa, I do know a couple of guys, I keep looking at the map, who were brought up in Uganda like me – brought up in Kenya, Malawi, Nyasaland – and their assumptions were different. They had no ill-will towards black people. Yes, there was the sort of, did you ever read *The Race-Class Debate* by a man called Martin Legassick, a South African Marxist, he wrote in the seventies and eighties, very interesting. Anyway, he talked about race-class and I sort of had the idea that although black people were nice, Africans were good; they still needed to be led and governed.

**You said that you had a hatred of apartheid but what sense of awareness did you have of apartheid, and how did that fit in?**

Oh it was everywhere. Even though they resisted it in Durban City, eventually it simply got ordered to put whites only on bus stop benches, blacks only, and I have a vivid memory of walking down the station – I can't remember why I

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got the train – Umbilo station. The University of Durban was high up on a hill, the nearest railway station was Umbilo so I got off at Umbilo railway station and I was with my sister, Jackie. I'm just giving you an image, and I remember two black blokes walked up the wrong stairway, the stairway that had "whites only" on it and railway policemen running after them and grabbing them and knocking their heads together. They were both quite big strapping lads but they didn't resist, he had a gun, they didn't have a gun, so they took their 'punishment.'

(00:15:28) **I realise that Rhodesia wouldn't have had the same sort of formal apartheid as South Africa, but some called it "petty apartheid." Did you see any of that in Rhodesia?**

Absolutely, but I didn't think it was strange because that's what I'd grown up with. When I'd lived in Uganda as a child there was the colour bar; when I lived in Malaysia there was still a sense of 'us and them.' We'd go and visit Indian friends, Malay friends, Chinese friends but when it came to socialising and who was in the club, it was 99% white faces and the odd token Asian face. My father in Uganda, just after independence, invited one of his, I think it was his head clerk, an African, to the club. And Drummond dived in the swimming pool and half a dozen whites got out and these were British people in newly independent Uganda. So the sense of 'otherness' and the sense of divide, I was conscious of it. For example, it didn't seem strange to me that an African policeman joining the BSAP, he was a constable; I joined, I was a patrol officer. Did Rhodesia have petty apartheid? Certainly it had the colour bar and it had, I'm sure you've researched the Land Tenure Act?

**Yes.**

Which effectively was a kind of geographic apartheid. For example, South Africa had a thing called 'job reservation.' Anything that had any degree of skill, panel beating, was a reserved occupation. So blacks, except in the 'homelands,' couldn't go and train, couldn't take an apprenticeship, couldn't train to be a panel beater, couldn't be a draughtsman, couldn't be any of those semi-skilled or skilled things; whereas in Rhodesia they could. Although Ian Smith said "there won't be any change in my lifetime," at the same time there was this kind of sub-rhetoric where he was talking about African development. So whereas South Africa was entrenched and static, apartheid wasn't going to go away; in Rhodesia there was…sub-rhetoric is the way I would express it.

**Perhaps it was seen as more of a path to progress and change rather than being entrenched in law and that being the end of it.**

That was the way I saw it anyway. You've got to bear in mind though that there I am, as a supposed liberal, and I've got this kind of internal discourse going on at the same time because I've got to legitimise to myself why I'm going to fight for a white minority government instead of coming back to Britain and joining the army.

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**It's very complex isn't it, the conflict between those views and the internal dialogue.**

Yes, I met a few other guys with the same sort of thing. And another quite interesting thing is, I said that probably the most intelligent people I came across were territorial officers but in fact, on reflection, that's wrong. We also had national servicemen in the police, have you spoken to any of them?

(00:19:16) **Do you mean people who were doing their national service?**

It's ok getting called up into the army or the Air Force…

**They chose to…**

Yes, extra men were taken into the police and a lot of those were just graduated from university. I found a lot of like minded guys amongst that bunch, a bit of an unfortunate term but…I remember sitting in the police club with a whole bunch of them one evening and we were talking about a lecture we'd had that day on police assaults. Police assault people everywhere in the world and it was happening in Rhodesia and basically we had the riot act read to us and we were told in no uncertain terms that if we were caught assaulting a suspect, we'd be charged with assault. We were talking about it in the police club and I can see the guy's face as plain as day – can't remember his name, that's an age thing – he was saying exactly the same thing, if he came across it, he would do everything, and I'll never forget, his words were "I would do everything in my limited power to stop it."

**And has that stuck with you because you feel that it may have changed throughout the course of the conflict?**

It definitely changed throughout the course of the conflict, yes, it got nasty.

**So there were these strong ideals at the outset and very strong emotive views about it but perhaps…**

That's part of the reason I sent you that thing about the battle of Chesa Keep and the school teacher [refers to written contributions from Geraint Jones] because you could watch the process taking place but right at the end, you would never have, for example, in the streets of Salisbury, seen…I told you about the Afrikaner policeman beating two black heads together on a railway station; that simply would not have happened in Rhodesia. The public wouldn't have tolerated it, the police wouldn't have tolerated it and frankly I don't think the Africans would have tolerated it either. No, absolutely, it wouldn't have happened, it couldn't have happened.

**So in terms of this talk on police assault, are you saying that perhaps people in the police force were worn down to behave in ways that they actually wouldn't have tolerated initially?**

Yes, but it never became permissible.

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**No.**

I'm just trying to think of the last time I heard of a policeman getting charged with assault. It would have been sometime in 1979 and I can't remember who (00:22:20) it was. But yes, it was never part of policy; it was never condoned. Whereas in South Africa it was simply accepted, the police beat people up regularly.

**I wanted to also ask about your view of where your "home" was? I'm going back a bit but you gave an interesting answer to that in your written response.**

My father used to say – he didn't form my whole life but he was an important influence – and he used to say "my home is where I hang my hat." Because he obviously travelled all over the place and I'm pretty much the same. I liked Rhodesia and thought of it for a while as potentially home. In fact, if Mugabe hadn't come to power, I might still be there. I don't know, I don't have a sense of anywhere as "home."

**Was it the place that you were for the longest in one period?**

No, the longest I've lived anywhere was in Johannesburg during the nineties. I was in Rhodesia for five years and a bit of change. In fact, I actually left; I resigned from the police and rejoined and that was because I got nagged by my family because I'd promised them I would go to Rhodesia and do a three year contract and then go back to Durban and go back to university. I did in fact resign; in fact my folks were living in Zululand at the time and I went back to stay with them for a bit, got thoroughly bored and when it came to being time to sign up for the years term, I realised I didn't want to. I felt very guilty about having left Rhodesia in the lurch and I went back. I'll never forget walking back into Salisbury Central into the recruiting office, I think it was January 1979, and saying "can I have my job back please?" I did like it, it's a physically beautiful country and the BSAP was a superb regiment. Have you noticed we keep calling it 'the regiment?' Just the camaraderie, it was just superb. How long that would have gone on for, I don't know.

**And you've touched a bit, just then for example, on your family's views. What did they think of you joining the BSAP initially in the seventies?**

They were horrified, their little boy becoming a policeman, nothing like that had ever happened to the family before. I think my old man was fairly philosophical about it. My mother was beside herself, my sisters had begged me not to go and my good friend Dave said – bear in mind this is the seventies – thought it was "far out man." So it was a surprise to everybody and it was quite funny actually because when I'd arrived at my first station, I was sitting there talking to a friend one night and I remember saying "my God, we're the fuzz." It was a bit of a shock to me. Yes, it was a complete departure from anything I'd…as a child I'd liked to play soldiers and I had thought about joining the British Army; but then in my teens I decided being a journalist was probably going to be a better option and that was kind of what I

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was working towards. So yes, it was a complete curve ball [i.e. unexpected] to everybody, including me I think. (00:26:19)

**Could you explain a bit about what motivated you to take this decision since it even surprised you? Because Rhodesia had been through a lot of change up until the mid-seventies; you would have seen the end of the federation and then the declaration of UDI. How did you perceive what was happening and what did you think you were going into?**

I didn't think Rhodesia was going to lose the war obviously. I thought I was going into a country that was…have you read Peter Godwin's book *Mukiwa*?

**Yes.**

Almost exactly the same dialogue was taking place: "We'll hold the line while the politicians sort things out." I've changed my views since then. Again, my parents and the discussions that took place at home had a lot to do with this. I'm getting back from Malaysia in late 1966 and watching on television, I can't remember if it was BBC or ITV, or if it was the UDI celebrations or whether it was New Year. It was New Year in Rhodesia, they did a sort of documentary on it and they were talking about how things were in Rhodesia. At the time everybody seemed to be perfectly happy, lots of petrol, always food. My parents taught me about precisely that, federation and the break-up of federation, how Zambia was crumbling and how Zambia, Northern Rhodesia, was much richer than southern Rhodesia in its heyday. And what were the dynamics of Kenneth Kaunda's governments? I think he was just horribly under-resourced, couldn't govern, didn't have the people to govern, and Africanised too fast. But I can remember that dialogue taking place and my father getting quite bitter about it. So yes, that was how I formed my views on what was Rhodesia. But also, it was the contrast between Rhodesia, which I saw as relatively progressive; and South Africa, which I saw as just mired in apartheid and going to stay there.

**So maybe you wanted to take a part in the direction it could have gone in?**

Yes, I also thought, and I still do think, that Britain's behaviour towards Rhodesia was a disgrace. I think that they could have been a lot more constructive. But having said that, when the chips were down in 1979 it was pointed out that Rhodesia was worse off than it would have been if Ian Smith had accepted Harold Wilson's proposals on Tiger and Fearless. But that is 20/20 hindsight. At the time I thought Rhodesia was survivable, I thought there was a synthetic process taking place and I thought that it would very, very slowly revert to African majority rule, yes, some kind of qualified franchise. Talking about South African liberalism, I saw a parallel between them and what was then called the Progressive Party, Helen Suzman's Progressive Party, where they were talking about a qualified franchise and a gradual evolution. So yes, I got caught a bit by the rhetoric. But then again, you have to want to believe it to get taken in by it.

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(00:30:30) **I also wonder whether your family maintained any contact with Wales and with Britain?**

Yes.

**So perhaps they felt very annoyed with how things had gone?**

Is this relevant to…? The actual schism of Britain, I shall never forget my father coming in one afternoon in 1968 and saying "that's it, I'm packing up, we're leaving," because I can't remember what he was paying in tax but he reckoned it was much too much. He was paying more than half of what he earned and one of his guys had come to him on site during the day. He was building a multi-storey car park in Newport and one of his guys had come in and demanded to be fired. Dad hadn't wanted to fire him because he was a good worker and he said, "well I've just found out that if I work for you, I'm on…(I can't remember what he said)…£15.00 a week and if I go on the dole I'm on £13.00 a week. So in fact I'm working for £2.00 a week and that's ridiculous." And so the old man had fired him because if he hadn't fired him he would have started sabotaging him at work. So that was the great schism. His company begged him to stay, at least he says his company begged him to stay and I'm inclined to believe it. Our family, well, we did remain in touch because aunts used to come out and visit us in South Africa and my grandfather moved out with us; he was widowed.

**I wonder how that affected your decision to move there now and if maintaining contact with Wales impacted on your decision to move there in later life?**

To move to Wales?

**Yes.**

Oh no, I moved to Wales by accident because of bad homework. I went to Aberystwyth to do a post-grad course, thinking that I was going to the home of political realists. Spot the mistake here; I hadn't read anything for a while, six or seven years. The political realists had all moved on and the theorists moved in and so I did the RT [Research Training] masters because I'd already invested a load of money and I bought a house and moved away. So in fact I'm living in Wales kind of by accident. So the connection…I've always considered myself Welsh. If you'd asked me anywhere, at any time in my life what I was, I would tell you "I'm Welsh." In fact, I'd say "I'm British but I'm not English" and I got that from my mother; she always used to say "we're Welsh." Because Peace Corps types, American Peace Corps, they were all over the place and they would always call us English. And I remember my mother just giving these great long lectures and Peace Corps people…I always admired the Peace Corps and that might have been part of the reason as well. But you're asking about connections with Wales. Yes, we always kept connections with Wales; I always knew where my grandparents were and great aunt Morfwyn and all the rest of them. I had a sense of being Welsh. I actually put a Welsh flag up on (00:34:22) my Land Rover aerial once and

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drove around Kandeya Tribal Trust Land, much to the bemusement of the locals and that was part of…. Yes, I have a tender memory of in depot, I can't remember what I'd done but my squad instructor, Malcolm Marsh, said "you stupid little English bastard" and I said "correction – Welsh bastard," because I'd heard it in a movie somewhere.

**Maybe you were able to diffuse the situation?**

He was just flabbergasted and stormed off.

**So can you tell me a bit about your arrival in Morris depot then and the training you had; this was '74?**

Yes, November '74 I went into training. I arrived in Salisbury on November the 22nd and started training on November the 24th. That was superb. The first person I met, I got off the plane at Salisbury airport and I was met by a woman patrol officer Rosie Marks. She won't mind me mentioning her name as she was the 2IC of recruiting, who put me in a little Renault and drove me to police headquarters where I met Superintendent Fred Mason, then an Inspector. Nice bloke, showed us a movie, put us in front of a board of officers, gave us some quite basic PT test just to make sure we could tell left from right. I was as unfit as hell and he said "don't worry, by the time you've finished here, you'll be a copper and dead eye dick to boot." Then an African sergeant put a whole lot of us into a Commer van and took us to the Selous Hotel where we spent the night and that was their practice, to put people who were up for selection in hotels dotted around the city. I had two pints of Rhodesian pilsner beer, which was revolting, never drank it again. And the next morning, went in front of a board of officers who asked me some interesting questions about why I was there and what I wanted to do and why I was so pale, which was a bit odd, because I'd spent the previous six months lounging round on Durban beach.

From there we were driven…Rosie came in and said "Mr Jones you're in…." We were all sitting in a room awaiting our fate and then were taken back to the Selous Hotel. My kit was picked up and we were put into our…taken back to Morris depot and the first person I met was my batman. As I got off the van with my suitcase, a black bloke called Thomas said "let me help you with that." And for the next six months, he did my washing and ironing and cleaning and I thought, "this is a very good idea, this was the right move." Until… they didn't start beasting us straight away. Do you know the term 'beasting?' Just hard PT, a British Army expression. My next memory is quite funny, in PT shorts, vest and boots. My extremely hairy coarse khaki socks gave me blisters, so for some reason I had a pair of silk evening socks, so I put these inside and they marched us around. Chief Inspector Pearce marched us around and…Have you heard mention of Chief Inspector Pearce?

**I can't remember if I have.**

One of life's more interesting characters. He was the head of equitation and they taught us all to ride. I think that's part of the reason I joined as well

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because they said it was a cavalry outfit. Anyway, they were marching us (00:39:00) around depot, showing us what was where and Pearce said "that over there is the police jail. If you drop in the shit, it's where we marry you and if you drop deeper in the shit, it's where we bury you." And I remember thinking "oh my God, what have I done?" Then the rest of depot, the first six weeks of depot, for me, were absolute hell because I was unfit. I'd been hanging around nightclubs by night and lounging round the beach by day. I had a job but I decided I wasn't going to go to university and while I was waiting to see what I was going to do, I got a job as a clerk in an office in Durban, which was good. It was quite good fun but it meant that I was horrendously unfit. So as I said, my first six weeks in depot were hell but I was young and within about six weeks I was reasonably fit, could keep up with the rest of the squad when running and then depot became ok.
You got used to the routine; you had a batman so life was easy. The food was good, the beer in the recruits' canteen was 13 cents a pint, so you can imagine for the first few nights we just went crazy and drank like a fish, but then realised the next morning at PT that you would be suffering because of it, and so you moderated it. But you were encouraged to drink. It's quite interesting but I've noticed that in every service that I've been in, the alcohol is institutional. And you were expected to hold it as well, you were expected not to get falling down drunk and you were expected to be on parade and clean and shaven the next morning.

**You mentioned asking what you'd got yourself into?**

Yes.

**How did that link to your awareness of what was going on with the insurgency?**

You had no sense of it; it was very much like being in training in depot. It wasn't much different from…I joined the Air Force in 1990 and going through Cranwell was not much different, except it was slightly easier than going through Morris depot. You were insulated right up until…. At the same time as they were teaching you to be a policeman, they were teaching you to be an infantryman as well. Every Rhodesian policeman was trained to be a mounted infantryman. So at the same time as they were teaching you law and police powers and typing – we were all taught to type – and how to ride a horse, they were teaching us musketry and they were teaching us infantry tactics and they were teaching us drills. So there was a sense of that but…. Have you interviewed any of the guys who've been to Iraq or Afghanistan or anybody in the British Army?

**No.**

While you were in training, you know that your training is purpose built. You're training for a purpose, you're training to be a soldier, a policeman, and the nature of the enemy is there. You're told about it but it's in the form of…not even formal lectures: "You will be going out towards the end of this course, you will be doing a two week counter-insurgency course, you will be

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going into…," we went to a place called Inyanga, "and you will be patrolling in a camouflaged uniform and you will be carrying a rifle and you will be live armed." So there (00:42:39) was the consciousness there, but the only time that I was ever made aware of the fact that there was a war going on was one evening, after about six weeks in depot, you started to do guard duty. I was in the guard room standing behind the desk, pretending to know what I was doing and it was at the time of the ceasefire. They called it the détente exercise, Ian Smith called it the détente exercise; and if you remember it was about the time when the South African police began to withdraw from Rhodesia and Mugabe and Nkomo were released from Prison and Sithole. And so two things happened: One, we were all put into uniform and put on the streets to flood the streets of Salisbury with policemen. But the public weren't fooled because all of these policemen were incredibly young, fresh-faced and all the rest of it. We were put under the care of a senior patrol officer so we couldn't do too much harm and if anybody asked us any questions, he would come in and kind of do it instead. And then I was IC picket they called it, in charge of the picket, and in came a burly-bearded bloke in a camouflage uniform and he said "I don't know about this détente exercise because I've just been in a…did he say "punch-up" or "contact?" He said "contact," he was showing off a bit, probably his first contact. But yes, there was a war going on out there and I didn't know how far away; I didn't know how intense. We talked about it in mess, in the canteen, in the club, but it actually didn't impinge on us, we just knew it was there and we knew it was something that we were going to go out to. The last time I can remember talking about it before going out was in the Royal Salisbury Club, there was a disco and I was talking to a Canadian girl and talking about how life, for policemen or members of the security forces, or for anybody living in Africa, it was a toss-up between pragmatism and morality. I actually still think about her, come to think of it, we were going on about value systems and what I'd got from my parents and again, that question of pragmatism and morality.

**It was either one or the other, do you mean?**

No, I mean it was a kind of synthetic process of you reconcile your morality with what's pragmatic; and you try to make what's pragmatic fit in with your moral system. Which is one of the things that war does, is it's like a Venn diagram…

**And perhaps one moves over slightly more as you get more…**

Embroiled in it.

**…and absorbed in it. And inevitably they change and they have to adjust to one another.**

Yes, and that becomes a very subjective and individual process, how much you adjust and what you're prepared to do and how far you're prepared to go.

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**And I'm sure it's affected by the kinds of things that you're seeing, living through and witnessing, as it were. That would affect the pragmatic way that you have to deal with it. That's a really good way of describing it.**

(00:46:39) Probably.

**It's a good visual way of describing it. You just mentioned then the security services, what were your opinions of other members of the security services?**

As a recruit, your activities are directed and you don't spend much time assessing the people that you're being directed by because you're so busy just trying to comply, trying to get things done, trying to keep your nose clean. That's part of it, but also, you're trying to do the best that you can. You want to pass out of depot with flying colours, you want to have the choice of…you knew that if you did well in depot, the better you did, the more likely you were to go where you wanted to go to. So most of it was just trying to do it right, keep them happy. That sounds a bit cynical and as if…it was actually a very benign training environment. Yes you got sworn at, yes you got shouted at. I was late for parade once and spent a weekend cleaning out stables. But it wasn't…people seem to have an impression…. I spoke to blokes who did their national service in South Africa and they were just messed around from dawn till dusk, especially the English speakers. I never had the sense in depot, and I don't think any of us ever had the sense that we'd been messed around. You could see the reason behind everything that was done. And so yes, it was a benign environment and you just got on with it. You were getting paid, it was a job and you were getting developed, you were there because you wanted to be there. It was 100%...well it wasn't because of national service but my unit was an all-volunteer unit and we had the sense that we were volunteers. The other thing that we had a sense of, it was quickly inculcated into you, was that we told ourselves we were the best; we believed we'd win this. We took the right of the line in the parade, do you understand that term?

**Yes.**

The police were the equivalent of…we did the ceremonial duties in the capital city. We guarded the president; we had the same status as the guards in this country. Did we? We liked to think we did.

**Yes, I have come across that; the tradition and the history behind the BSAP. They did have that high status in parades and so on, yes.**

We might have had a sort of exaggerated sense of our own importance, but it worked for us.

**Did you have a sense of what you were fighting against at that stage?**

Yes, I think mine was stronger than most of my colleagues with a couple of possible exceptions. The American I was talking about, was he a Christian

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Fundamentalist? I don't know, but he was certainly a very devout Christian and believed he was there defending white Christian civilisation against the (00:50:08) communist heathen hordes, sort of thing. The rest of us had different things that were kind of all points in between. And there were a couple of guys who were in the police just because they wanted to…some were there because it was a job. It looked good, the uniform was nice, you got to ride around town on a motorbike and that's what attracted a lot of them, lovely uniform. So we had guys there who were there with no sense of calling, no sense of purpose, they were just there because in Rhodesia in the sixties and seventies, being a policeman was considered a good job.

**You've mentioned the national servicemen as well; they would have specifically wanted to be in the police if they were in the police, whereas perhaps in the army and other parts of the security services they may not have made that decision.**

By default, national servicemen went into the army; Rhodesia didn't have a navy, it was landlocked. The Air Force was very small and they did take national servicemen but they took national servicemen for the ground trades. No, they took national servicemen for pilots as well I think, but most of the pilots were volunteers. The police was…I don't think Rhodesia was a particularly corrupt country but I do know that a friend of mine in particular – because I heard his mother telling him – got into the police because his father was the general manager of one of the biggest building societies in the country. He'd done a bit of lobbying and he'd met a couple of senior officers and so my friend was, the Arab term is 'wasta;' he got into the police through influence. In fact, there was a bit of tension at one stage between the police and the army because the army reckoned that we were robbing them of their officer material. An enormously high percentage, probably 70% of the national servicemen who were in training at the same time as me had just graduated from university, but that was possibly because it was right at the end of the academic year. But I did meet an awful lot of graduates and very high-calibre national servicemen. The police effectively got first pick.

They were a pretty different kettle of fish though, a lot of them remained in the police, they signed on as regulars, did their one year/eighteen months whatever and then joined the police as regular members, including graduates. But that might have had something to do with the fact that the Rhodesian economy was affected by sanctions, so there probably weren't as many jobs in civilian life as there would normally have been. So the police, like in this country when there's a recession, the police and the army recruit more, I think that's what was happening in Rhodesia. Their motivation? A lot of them were very highly motivated, a lot of them obviously agreed with Rhodesian Front policies so they were quite happy to do their national service and quite happy to do it in the police and enforce whatever laws they were called upon to enforce: Go into the support unit, go into the anti-terrorist unit, do whatever they were called upon to do. But their motivation was, they were national servicemen, they were there under quite different circumstances. Yes, they were there because they wanted to be but they had to do their national service anyway and the alternative was the army and the army, as far as I can

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make out, national service was a lot rougher than the training they got in the police.

(00:24:04) **Did you have much awareness of people, I think you may have mentioned in your questionnaire, 'taking the gap,' and of the numbers that were leaving Rhodesia?**

It started to get, the first time I heard about it getting serious was in about '77, or was it in 1976. The war began to hot up quite seriously and we heard about the indefinite call-ups.

**Yes, so it was for any length of time.**

For any length of time, they said it was going to carry on until the end of the emergency, and it did. They cut back on it a little and I've an idea, but someone like Fred Punter would be able to give you a clearer picture. They began to recruit more black troops, they formed a second battalion of the Rhodesian African Rifles, they formed, I can't remember what it was called, Rhodesian Protection Unit or something, they formed the Guard Force, have you heard about the Guard Force?

**Yes.**

And I think that they began to recruit greater numbers of black people because whites, they got fatigued. You had people who were doing six weeks in the army or the police or whatever and then they were going home for six weeks and then they got called up for another six weeks and that led to an awful lot of frustration. Funnily enough, I was talking to a bloke in a country club in a place called Marandellas who was complaining because he was losing out on promotion and a black man had got promoted over his head because he was spending half of his life in the army, which struck me as pretty ironic at the time. Taking the gap, they just got tired of getting called up. Others didn't believe in Smith's policies, others that I spoke to reckoned that we were going to lose the war and they saw no point in risking their lives for a foregone conclusion; and a thousand other different reasons in between. Others, I came across people who left simply because, a friend of mine got offered a better job in Swaziland than he had in Rhodesia, so it was just a natural economic move for him and it had nothing to do with political conditions. It had nothing to do with the war, he just got offered a better job and took it, and I'm sure that there were quite a few like that.

**And he was able to leave?**

Yes, completely free to leave, I'm just trying to remember what the defence act said. I think once you had done your national service and once you had done 'X' amount of call-ups, you were free to go, but you'd have to confirm that with somebody else. I was a volunteer, it didn't affect me and when I decided to leave Rhodesia at the end of my first contract in 1978, I wasn't in any way encumbered. I was told that I'd have to report for reserve duties and then I told them I was emigrating and that was it. They gave me a tax rebate

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and off I went and, as I said, came back a couple of months later with my cap in my hand. The reasons for taking the gap, all of the things I've said to you; and a lot of it was just economic migration.

(00:57:46) **What do you think was forming your outlook? Did you have much access to media and radio, papers and so on?**

I kept myself very well informed. Before I went to Rhodesia I spent a lot of time in the library. I always used to…I can't remember what I used to get, I used to get *Time*, I used to get *Newsweek*, what else? I would read anything that came my way. I had friends at the university doing political science and I used to get stuff off them. When I went up to Rhodesia I found it quite difficult, my folks would send me stuff, they used to send me either *Time* or *Newsweek*, I can't remember which, but my access to things sort of wound down quite well. Wherever I went on leave I would hoover up as many books as I could. So I went down to South Africa with as little as I could carry and came back with as many books as I could carry.

It's an interesting thing about South Africa that although it had a right-wing government, although it had very strict censorship, with access to books, you could get just about anything that you wanted. I bought *Kapital*, not in the central news agency but in the university bookshop in Durban I think, in a country that was avowedly anti-Marxist too. You'd think that it would have been like trying to buy *Mein Kampf* in Tel Aviv kind of thing, but it wasn't. There was a lot of stuff you could not get and I'm not sure if it was the same during the seventies, but when I was at Wits [University of Witwatersrand] in 1983 or '84, there were banned books. Oh, the prime example was the organ of the ANC; I think it's called *Sechaba*. It was held in Jan Smuts house library and I had to actually sign and register to be able to get *Sechaba* out and I had to sit in the library and read it. I couldn't take it out because it was a banned publication, but as a student I could read it.

**So you were aware of the censorship and banning but found ways around it? Quite actively sought ways around it?**

Yes. And then when I was put into Special Branch in Rhodesia, we used to get everything. We used to get the *Times of Zambia*, we used to get *Frontline* magazine. *Frontline* magazine was published in, I can't remember where, but it was an African liberation magazine. And again, access to things like *Time*, *Newsweek* and anything that would be of interest to us. I had a full set of *Kim Il Sung's Juche Thought* in Salisbury, it kind of fell into my hands and all sorts of stuff like that.

**How did your active effort to seek this knowledge, as it were, fit in with other friends in the police force? What did they think of your curious streak?**

Actually, it was shortly after I went into Special Branch, I got a bit of gipsy's warning from a bloke I didn't get on terribly well with. I think that he thought that my wide reading was dangerous and he said "well you want to be careful

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because people are starting to ask questions about the amount of questions that you are asking." I found out later that it was twaddle and he was just not a particularly nice guy and I didn't like him, he didn't like me, it happens in any organisation. He just didn't like what I was doing and tried to keep me in line. He outranked me and felt that it was his chance to keep (01:02:02) me on the straight and narrow and all that. I should have been reading the bible instead of reading *Juche Thought* or whatever. But that was very, very isolated; I didn't come across that a lot.

I think most of my colleagues were vaguely bemused and amused by it. I had a copy of Plato's *Republic* and a friend of mine said to me "do you understand this shit?" and I said "well yes" and he said "well why did you join the police?" It made me the butt end of a few jokes but I don't think they were particularly concerned. I did have a very amusing…in the questionnaire I told you about a particular officer. No names, no pack drill, but I managed to get on the wrong side of him and one night, in a pub called 'The 234' of the police, the police mess in Mount Darwin, this guy turned round to me when I was expounding some particular theme, a bizarre idea at the time, and he said "I'm not bollocking you PO Jones but we've got enough pseudo-intellectuals cocking up this war effort without your help," which caused general hilarity.

**So some thought of it as rubbish, but some thought of you as trying to understand the psychology, of the opposition?**

Yes, and I got tasked also to write quite a lot of…in fact, at one stage, I got tasked to make a study of Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania, specifically because of that. They figured out that I could read, write and count and could actually synthesize an idea, so they got me to do the odd bits of appraisal. Nothing particularly spectacular, but it tells you something about the nature of the organisation; that it was an old fashioned police force in the middle of nowhere with very set ways of doing things, but with enough imagination to be able to use some of the resources that it had. That was another part of the use of the national servicemen, their particular talents and other academic training. A lot of them were given jobs at…again, no names, no pack drill, but I bumped into quite a few graduates at a little place called…have people spoken to you about Redbricks?

**I don't know…**

Coghlan House, Redbricks, that was the sort of nerve centre, the head shed of Special Branch. And I bumped into a few of my graduate friends sitting behind desks when they were doing their call-ups and they'd finished their national service; they were called back as police reservists. And this is where you'd find them or you'd find them in JOCs. Were their brains being used? Yes, I never thought about it quite like that but yes, it was an interesting sort of synthetic process.

**So people were quite specifically selected for different elements of the services?**

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Yes, which is not to say…. I used to work with, when I went up to Mount Darwin, my last…no, it wasn't my last year in the force, my last year in the force I was at Mount Darwin all the time. When I was in Special Branch in Salisbury, I used to work a month in Salisbury and a month at Mount Darwin and I shared an office with a bloke from the intelligence (01:06:07) corps and they would do the same thing, they would work on rotation. And they were usually fairly high calibre, about 50/50 graduates and non graduates and a lot, interestingly, had a business management background. A lot of the graduates were usually business managers. I was about to lie to you and say they were in marketing, but most of the marketing guys went into the psychological operations unit…I'm digressing aren't I?

**I was going to ask, actually, about Psy. Ops. Did you see use of, or knowledge of African culture and things like Spirit Mediums within that?**

Yes, we were introduced to it very basically in depot. We were given a few lectures on culture, our instructors were mostly ex-district policemen; we used the term 'district,' but loosely. If you were in the bush, you were termed district and it used to be a separate branch, the district branch. And if you were in town there was a separate town branch. Most of our instructors were ex-district policemen, so they'd become kind of acculturated. A large part of that was actually given to you by African policemen. When you went out to your first station when you were in depot, you were told, "listen, we're just teaching you the basics. You're going to learn the job when you get out there." And we were also told that "the first thing that's going to happen to you is you're going to be given a senior African constable and he's going to be your mentor." It didn't quite work like that but certainly you had two separate structures: You had what we termed the EP, the European Police – us – and AP, African Policemen. Their structure was much more rigid than European Police. We still had a rank and a disciplinary structure, but, for example, I called my Section Officer, as a Patrol Officer, Patrol Officer one bar. Senior Patrol Officer, two bars on your shoulder; Section Officer, three bars on his shoulder. You called him by his first name, he called you by your first name, but you called an Inspector "Sir." And it was up to the Inspector whether he was going to call you by your first name or call you by your surname.

The kingpin in the…I've mentioned it in the book, hopefully you'll get a sense of it, the kingpin was the African Sergeant Major in the station and if you got on the wrong side of the African Sergeant Major, life could become quite difficult for you. For example, you wouldn't get a good African policeman to go out on enquiries with you, so you learnt a lot from him. You were told from the very beginning that you would treat African policemen with respect. Yes, I came across colleagues who would call African policeman a 'kaffir' to their face, very few and far between, and they didn't get away with it very often. You treated your African colleagues with respect because you depended on them; but not just because you depended on them, because there was an awful lot of…I'm sure the other guys have told you the same thing, there was an awful lot of mutual respect. It wasn't the case entirely, it was possibly because there just wasn't the need for the intimacy; there wasn't the need for communication.

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But going out on patrol with African policemen, as a uniformed branch patrol officer, was an absolutely fascinating process. I have a particularly tender memory of driving through, we called them kraals, and village is not an accurate description of an African kraal because it was too far-flung. They were subsistence farmers so you'd have a homestead consisting of a set of mud huts and then perhaps the (01:10:26) next one would be thirty acres away, something like that. You'd drive through with an African policeman and I can picture this guy now, superb lad – well he wasn't a lad, he was a man in this thirties and I was in my late teens, early twenties – and him talking to me about…. The narrative went "I remember walking through or coming through this place with Sergeant so and so and he told me…" and he would recite what the sergeant told him about a certain man who lives in those huts over there "who in 1956 was arrested on a charge of…and he subsequently did five years in jail but when he came out again, he did the same thing." They were giving this sort of rolling narrative, "over there, if you go over that hill there, there lives a Spirit Medium, the Spirit Medium specialises in this… it's rumoured that…," and they'd give you this huge sort of verbal picture. Most of the things you picked up, and they would tell you about custom. "Eat with your right hand if you're invited to eat. If you're at a beer drink and somebody passes you the gourd, don't wipe the top of the gourd, it's rude," and a thousand little things like that, so much so that you took things on subconsciously. Years ago in South Africa I remember watching a programme about American Missionaries in Zimbabwe, it was mainly during the eighties I think and I'll never forget the scene. I'm telling you this because you don't know what you pick up and in the scene, one of the missionaries greets an African woman by clapping his hands like that, and she began to laugh. And he said "why are you laughing?" And my then wife was sitting next to me and I said, with an African accent, "because that is for a man" [shows hands crossed one way] and then I said "and that is for a woman" [shows hands crossed the other way]. And at the same time the actor on the screen said "and that is for a woman," which caused Louise to roll around with laughter.

But you did, you learned about…were we taught this? Yes, we were told it in depot: "When you approach a kraal, you don't just go into the kraal, you certainly don't drive up to the huts, you stop a hundred yards away and you send your African constable in," because you have to be invited into the kraal because that's going into his front room. And so we had it instilled into us that we weren't there to ride roughshod over these people.

It's quite interesting that in the nineties, when I went back to South Africa and I joined the reserve police there, they were just buying into the idea of 'community policing.' And we didn't have the term 'community policing' in Rhodesia but thinking back on it, in fact what we practiced before things got nasty was community policing. Nobody was afraid of the police, we didn't carry guns. I remember going to make my first arrest for murder thinking that I was going to have a fight on my hands, but when I arrived, there was the accused sitting there, there were the two witnesses sitting there and there was the kraal head sitting and sort of waiting for me to come, so he could hand this guy over into my custody. Was it because there was a paternalistic

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government and he knew he had no choice? Was he just trying to keep his nose clean because he was trying to carry favour? I don't know; it could have been any of those. But at the time, I liked to think and I still do think – part of me does – that it was just straight respect for the rules, they accepted the status quo. They knew that the chief had been usurped in some way and he no longer had absolute writ, but instead he gave it to these white guys. He would be given a trial, the trial would be fair, he might go to prison, he might not; he might get hanged, he might not. There was a kind of acceptance of it.

(01:14:47) **What about Spirit Mediums? Did you see them or were you aware of those at all?**

Yes, I had a reasonable amount to do with the Spirit Mediums. A lot of them were just quacks. A lot of them I think did have quite a lot of power. I'm just trying to think of my first exposure to a spirit medium. It was as a uniformed branch policeman going to see a Spirit Medium about…it wasn't anything particularly profound…and I certainly remember having a sense of another worldly power. No, the first time I ever had anything to do with a Spirit Medium was when we got a radio message from a station at a place called Mrewa. We got a radio message from Marandellas, which was our district headquarters, to tell us that a child had been abducted, an infant from a place called the Waddilove Institute in Chihota tribal trustland, and that the child was being taken to a sacred mountain in Mozambique where it was going to be cut up for body parts for muti. We worked with Internal Affairs and some trackers and because we knew where he was going, we took a kind of guess on the route he'd take and we caught him in a place called Uzumba, or it might have been Maramba, and he was furious with us. The child was unharmed, we nabbed him, and he wanted to know who the hell we thought we were because we were interfering with a very important spiritual religious task that he was undertaking. We disagreed and he went to jail but there you go.

After that, the only one that comes to mind is when I went out to arrest a Spirit Medium in 1979. I went out at night with two African policemen, sneaked up to the huts that she was living in, and it had this most bizarre smell. Have you ever been into the cat house at a zoo? It was that sort of rank ammonia smell, and when you get close to a leopard it's got the same smell. And I bottled out. We got to the door of a hut and there was this immense darkness and growling and it was completely irrational, I thought "bloody hell, there is a leopard in there." So I just turned to my lads and said "sod it, we'll come back and get her in the morning in the daylight." And when we went back in the morning, the huts were empty, there was no sign of any habitation, it looked as if they'd been deserted for ever, it was most bizarre. If you talk to blokes, I thought that was pretty unique. And as I tell it, I feel a bit foolish because I don't expect you to believe it, but you can talk to one in ten Rhodesian policemen who'll tell you a similar story.

**I have heard something similar actually about people making leopard-like noises. They were behaving like a leopard and the sound they were making was just like a leopard when it happened in someone's station. They also said it was just unexplainable.**

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Yes, it was bizarre.

**That's the most similar story I can think of.**

If you spent a long time…you've probably heard the expression "to go bush." And you would find, for example, at one stage, I didn't develop an irrational fear of chameleons but I didn't like handling them because the Africans attribute them with great metaphysical power and you'd get a bit taken in by (01:19:18) that. Having said that though, I was never…. Have you heard the guys talking about mushonga?

**I don't think so**

Mushonga is a form of medicine, it's a charm. A strong mushonga, it would take the form of…. Well there are two terms, mushonga and there's muti; but muti literally means medicine. Mushonga is a charm. And I used to have a particular bloke, when I was still a civil policeman, just a straight uniform branch bloke on the station. About once every three months, this particular bloke, his name I can't remember, would come in with a charm. And one particular one I remember was an owl pellet, a snake's jaw, I can't remember what else. But there was snake in there, which he claimed that his wife and son were using to try and make him mad. So I took him round to the back of the mess, chucked this thing in the bin, a thing called a Rhodesian boiler, a hot water heater, and inhaled the smoke to show him that it was harmless. And to the African constable who came with me to witness the whole thing, I said "well am I mad?" He kind of looked at me a bit dubiously and I said "it doesn't work, does it?" And he said it was "because you're not an African."

Experiences with witch doctors, yes, I spent a while chasing round after a particular witch doctor as well. We wanted to bring him in for questioning, I can't remember his name and anyway, we never managed to find him. Another time I went to arrest a bloke who claimed to be…we knew he was a terrorist collaborator, he claimed spirit protection and when we went to his village to arrest him, I don't know whether he was having a fit or what but six of us couldn't restrain him, it was quite bizarre. But then again, that might have been some kind of fit.

Other incidences? It was one of those givens. I'm just trying to think, I can think of half a dozen other incidences where you'd come face to face with a Zvikirwo, they called them. There were two kinds of witch doctors, there was the Zvikirwo who were the spirit mediums and then Ngangas who were herbalists. But having said that, again, you often got the sense, dealing with the Mashona, that they were a very spiritual people. Their whole life is centred around ancestor worship and the belief that in fact they're cohabiting with their ancestors. So when I go to sleep at night, all of my ancestors are there with me unless there's been some kind of abomination and the spirit is alienated or the spirit is angry or whatever. It was almost as if dealing with them was textured and sometimes it used to be quite strange. Night operations, I quite often used to get a sense of the heebie-jeebies because you knew that they were steeped in contact with the spirit mediums; they had

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spirit mediums, like the incarnation of Mbuya Nehanda. I'm sure you've heard this term, I can't remember whether she was at Chimoyo or at Tembgwe but she was at one of their training camps and used to, 'bless' is the wrong term, but she used to do her stuff on detachments as they were coming through. I'm sure you've heard of her; have you read *Guns and Rain* by David Lan?

**I have seen it, on the library shelf actually, and scanned through it.**

(01:24:00) It's superb, it's very, very good. And the way that he writes gels exactly with the kind of experiences that we had as district policemen. It's superbly researched and it's very well written as well.

**So this was an undercurrent going on in your everyday work and occasionally would it have entered into the way you handled operations?**

Yes, quite often we'd try to turn it around on them.

**I've heard, for example, of chameleons being used when questioning people and things like that.**

Yes, we had some lunatic who tried it with snakes as well, non poisonous snakes I hasten to add, but that was just bizarre, how not to do it. I was pretty much opposed to that. Why? Because if you do it wrong…. It's like for example pseudo-terrorist operations, if you do it wrong – and this used to drive the Selous Scouts mad – you'd have some amateur who'd come in and try impersonating a terrorist and he wouldn't know. Have the guys told you about the ceremony? If a terrorist group met with another terrorist group, there were protocols that had to be gone through and there were tests and there were signs and there were signals and there were code words. And if you did it wrong, one of two things: Well, you could get yourself involved in a nasty unintended punch-up; and the other thing that would happen is that you would ruin the scene for the Selous Scouts when they came in to do it properly. So that kind of stuff, no, you would shy away from it. Or if you were involved, conscientiously you would shy away from it.

**So perhaps the more operative use of it was being done by other groups such as the Selous Scouts?**

Yes, they knew what they were doing, absolutely steeped in it. And I can't remember what percentage of their personnel, 60% I think, were what we called TTs; tamed terrorists. Have you spoken to any Selous Scouts?

**No I haven't myself, no.**

Do you want to?

**If you have some people we could contact, that would be fantastic**

I will give your contact details to a friend of mine, he may or he may not…

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**That would be fantastic, we'd really appreciate that.**

Because when you're talking about spirit mediums, he actually saw, he says – I'm talking about a spirit medium called Parangeta, who was a very powerful spirit medium on the Zambezi Valley – he tells the story about Parangeta pulling a hairy catfish out of the pool. I can't remember what the significance was because we were all drunk at the time but Parangeta is worth looking up. Eventually (01:27:16) the ZANU and ZANLA decided that he was a government stooge; well they must have, because they shot him.

**I haven't asked you much about where you moved around since your training finished. Were you based in mainly rural areas?**

My first station was at a placed called Murewa, which was 86.2 kilometres north east of Salisbury. The reason why that's indelibly etched in my mind was because some nights you could see the light over Salisbury. It used to drive me mad and I spent a year there as a uniform policeman doing the kind of things that I was telling you about just now. Just absolutely routine police work, or as routine as it could be in a place like that. Absolutely fascinating experience, particularly as a district policeman because, for example, I investigated my first murder in my first week of duty, about one month out of training, and went out to the scene of the murder. It was quite…how much detail do you want?

**Well as much as you think you can give.**

It was an informed process; it gave me a kind of insight into the Shona psyche I think. I was lounging around in the charge office and the charge office orderly called me over and asked me to speak to two men who'd appeared, one of whom was a kraal head and the other showed me a little nick on his hand; and the kraal head had a penknife. They'd come in to report that a school teacher had been attacked with a knife and there was this little tiny nick and this little tiny penknife. He was a school teacher who still lived in his village and there'd been what they call a beer-drink. Beer-drinks are absolutely central to Shona culture, have you picked up on that?

**Yes.**

Anyway, at this particular beer-drink, he'd got into a bit of a scuffle with two of the local roughs and one of them had pulled out his penknife and sort of jabbed him in the hand with it. So I kind of smelt a rat and I said "well ok, now where's the suspect?" "Oh he's back at the kraal." And then it came out that perhaps we'd better go and have a look because last time he'd been seen, he was lying on the floor of the hut unconscious. So I called a local district hospital and got an ambulance to follow me out to the village where we found the suspect stone dead, because the complainant with the nick in his hand had then picked up a pounding pole, a pestle, which was about four and a half feet of very solid timber, and he'd hit him over the head with it. That was my first murder, so I radioed back to the station to my section officer and said

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"well I've got a murder here." And he came back to me and said "well sort it out." So that was my first murder, just one month out of training.

He went down for what we called culpable homicide, you'd call it manslaughter. He went into jail for three years, which I thought was manifestly unfair because he'd just been defending himself, but there you go. What did that tell me? That told me that the Mashona are very good at being very diplomatic, very good at telling you the things that they think you want to hear and very good (01:31:24) at couching things. They will try to couch things, I suppose as anybody else would try to keep themselves out of trouble. And apart from that, all points in between. Cattle theft, murder, rape, robbery, arson, breaking curfew, no registration certificate or pass.

**And to what extent did you see these acts against the law as linked to the war and what was going on?**

Not at all. In fact, it was almost the exact opposite. You knew when terrorists were coming into an area because reported crime went down. The first thing they would do when they arrived in an area was say "right, we're the law now, you don't go to the police" and it was a very brave tribesperson who did. The core of the police station was a thing called the crime register and when I went to Murewa, a registered crime was a crime that you were going to take to court. They call it a report of offence in this country and it went down from round about a hundred reported serious crimes a month, to about three. And that told you straight away that the terrorists were in the area and it was time to send the boys in to go and do a bit of snooping. That was a straight and honest fact of the matter. Crime goes down, terrs in the area.

**How did you become involved in operations?**

I told you about the first terrorist murder, do you want that on tape?[1]

**If it's something that you can talk about?**

Yes, it was an important…. I shouldn't have been there, I was sticking my nose into somebody else's business, somebody else was dealing with it and I was just curious. That sounds a bit…what's the word I'm looking for? It wasn't prurience, it was something I felt I had to do, I had to go and see. And I saw this corpse of a young woman tied together with barbed wire to her little girl and set on fire. It was nasty and it was a shock so I put my name down for the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit, which was not a full-time unit. Uniformed branch people were taken, you were given a bit of enhanced training and you were then sent off to do an infantryman's job or a reconnaissance job.

So having seen that, I volunteered for PATU, went into PATU, and did a couple of PATU stints. My first one was in that thing, the Battle of Chesa Keep, where I didn't see any atrocities.[2] All I saw was, as I said, the young

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[1] *First Terrorist Murder* is a written piece contributed by Geraint Jones.
[2] Geraint Jones has also contributed a letter written by him about the Battle of Chesa Keep.

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woman and the huge fear on her face, which was a bit of a reality check for me. Did we see anything else? No, nothing at all horrific. But just the sight of that, of the woman and child, it did spark an element of anger in me. You've probably noticed I still use the word 'terrorist' and in direct speech I will very seldom use the word 'guerrilla' as I didn't see much guerrilla warfare, but I did see an awful lot of terrorism and it kind of went from there.

The next thing that happened, the police formed reconnaissance units. Policemen have to investigate everything so they were called the Special Investigation Sections. And again, I didn't see much particularly horrific there. We saw a few murders. The first one that I went to was a dip attendant who was a government employee, so he was singled out when he came into an area. I can't remember (01:35:55) whether he was…very common modus operandi, quite often they would just shoot them. Quite often they would bayonet them to death and quite often they were beaten to death. It's difficult to single them out but you see one, you see two and you become kind of committed and these people become a tangible enemy. You've seen their handiwork; you hate them, that really is the only way to describe it. It was a kind of…gradual is the wrong word, but it was a kind of consolidated process.

**Would it be right to say that that sort of pure hatred which you describe was part of a coping mechanism; in a sense that you had to do something about the horrors that you were seeing?**

Possibly. Professional soldiers are taught not to hate their enemy but that's an enemy who's over there and shooting at you and you're exchanging fire. I'm sure if you spoke to lads who come back from Afghanistan, they would tell you they learned quickly to hate Taliban. Part of the coping mechanism? No, I think just an inevitable process. It doesn't make it easier to cope. Yes, it probably does because if you channel the anger, anger can be quite a positive force. But then it becomes extremely frustrating because you hate them. You want to kill them but it's virtually impossible to catch them. You have to get up to all sorts of tricks and subterfuge and all sorts of unpalatable things, because you're dealing with an enemy who will not stand and fight.

**Do you think that was some of your motivation, if you can call it that, for joining PATU; to have some opportunity to catch the enemy?**

Yes, absolutely, and certainly it's why I went into SIS and it was why I was delighted when I was attached to Special Branch. Although when I was attached to Special Branch, the swines put me in a desk job in Salisbury so I used to hate my months in Salisbury and love my months in the bush.

**So what year did you go into Special Branch?**

1977. After SIS, I was sent to Marandellas, the district headquarters in an outfit called Ground Coverage. Have the guys told you about ground coverage?

**Yes.**

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Which was, we took our orders from Special Branch, but were uniform branch strength. And I spent a very happy, interesting six months opening up a base in a place called the Soswe Tribal Trust Land. Again, ZANLA were moving into the area then, that's why they moved us down to open up the base. And one of the things that they did when they moved into an area was, they were Maoist orientated, they exercised good old fashioned – straight out of Mao's book – revolutionary discipline, and revolutionary discipline was to get compliance from the tribes people. And yes, an awful lot of the tribes people were absolutely delighted when a detachment moved into an area and collaborated with them wholeheartedly and happily. But probably, in the initial stages, as many of them were not compliant. Whether it was because they were loyal to Smith's (01:39:50) government, which I'm not sure about, or whether they were just conditioned: Remember I was talking about the way that the murder would be dealt with, the tribe's people obeyed the law and they recognised you as the custodians and discharges and whatever of the law; you must read Ullyses, it's a great poem.

So the first thing that a terrorist detachment had to do was break down the grip of the law and if they had to do it by bayoneting people to death…. I've got an image in my mind now of the dip attendant, whose name I should be able to remember, who, one dip day…. They used to have weekly dip days, it was a government service but it was also imposed, it was obligatory for the tribes people to take their cattle to get dipped against tick fever. Anyway, one particular morning, we went down to the dip and we found the dip attendant pummelled, beaten to death and face-down in the dip and that was the sign that…. They in fact called themselves the 'touch-me-not' group. They moved into the area and they were going to impose their will. The next thing they did was they went to Mupazviriwo School and bayoneted the headmaster to death. The message is clear to the tribes people and it's like the story about the school teacher: "Yes Mr Jones, you can tell me that I've got to report them. But you go back behind your wire with your lights, with your guns. You're safe, and I'm not."

**You've got quite an understanding of the actions and ways the opposition were operating. To what extent did you differentiate between ZANLA and ZIPRA?**

I never operated against ZIPRA. I had the impression from talking to blokes who operated against ZIPRA that 1) they were much more dangerous, they would stand and fight, they would even come and engage you. They fought like soldiers, they fought in platoon strength. ZANLA, I got ambushed a few times; we all got ambushed a few times. I got blown up a few times too, but it really was shoot and scoot, that's what we used to call it. You'd drive down a stretch of road and half a dozen, or the biggest ambush was twenty I think; twenty of them would open fire on you. You'd drive through the killing area, that was the drill, and then you'd stop and you'd de-bus and you'd go back. And by the time you got back, they'd scarpered. ZIPRA, as I said, I never operated against them. The blokes I knew who operated against them had a degree of respect for them. ZANLA, bearing in mind, remember, I was talking about the slightly spooky sensation that you had when you tried to deal with

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them; but always there was just this contempt for them as well. The contempt was in part because they wouldn't stand and fight; but also, because they were bullies. Really lethal, really nasty, sadistic bullies: Worse than bullies.

**Did you attach any importance to African Nationalism or see what they were doing as part of an African Nationalist project?**

In part, yes, but I think the vast majority…ok, they were indoctrinated when they got to the camps, but I think the vast majority of them who left to go for training, left just because they'd had enough of being second-class citizens. But I believed Abel Muzorewa probably was an African Nationalist. I think Sithole certainly was. I don't know about Nkomo; but I really believe that (01:44:21) Mugabe from the outset just wanted power for himself, absolutely from the outset. If you look at the purges that he executed within ZANLA, within ZANU, the way that he ousted Ndabagingi Sithole. I think Mugabe is Mugabe's man and he was going to be: He saw himself as president, king in waiting, and simply used African Nationalism as a vehicle to do that. Whether I'm right or wrong about him…I think I'm right. But I think that the alliance with China was – in spite of the Maoist doctrine, in spite of the Maoist rhetoric – it was just a marriage of convenience for him. I don't think there's much difference frankly between Mugabe and Mobutu Sésé Seko. I think they were very much carved in the same mould. That's a bit of a mixed metaphor, isn't it?

**Mentioning Maoism, you wrote about this as well, could you tell me more about how you saw this in terms of the Cold War environment at the time? You also made an interesting point about Malaya and Kenya.**

I saw them as just part of a continuum. Ok, you do need to separate them out because I don't think that Mugabe saw himself as part of a global Maoist movement. I think Mugabe simply saw Maoism and Mao's methodology as a means to an end and also a way to source resources for his war. But yes, it's quite interesting that I mention a continuum and I mention it in the context of the Cold War because I do think it was. What happened in Malaya, it wasn't a usurpation of white political power, well yes it was in the very beginning, but the handover to the formation of the Malayan Federation, that kind of fell away. Kenya, Mau Mau, yes, the withdrawal, I didn't buy into it. But there was a man called Schoeman who wrote a book in the sixties called *The Abdication of the White Man* and I kind of saw this as a process; the abdication of the white man and the use of patience by the black man, which makes me sound like a raving fascist but there you go. Now, wait a minute, what was the underlying issue behind your question? Because this could go…

**I suppose how you saw your part in the war in Rhodesia in terms of the Cold War environment?**

I saw myself as one little soldier. Have you seen the Rhodesian Army poster 'Communism Stops Here?' It's half a dozen RLI troopies at a bridge over a little stream. So that was part of my thinking. And I mentioned proxy wars

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didn't I and I thought that ours was a proxy war and I thought that we were getting very badly let down by our puppet masters who I kind of assumed were the Yanks through the South Africans. That's kind of a big conspiracy theory I know, but that's where I saw us. I saw us actually in the front line. And while I saw Mugabe as cynically using what China had to offer, I also saw the Chinese as cynically using what Mugabe had to offer and using him as their proxy soldier in that particular part of Africa. The same as…I'm just trying to think of other conflicts that were going on at the time. Angola; the Portuguese quitting Mozambique; to a degree South Africa, and that's part of the reason my sympathies with South Africa were kind of mixed because I didn't like apartheid, but I could understand Afrikaner Nationalism. And I could understand Rhodesian…could you call it Rhodesian Nationalism? Yes, I think so because (01:49:09) we saw ourselves firmly in that context. We saw ourselves as being in the front line of a hot part of the Cold War.

**What do you think the war was doing for Rhodesian identity? Was it firming that up?**

No, it created a kind of…it created a propaganda machine if anything. Sanctions had much more to do with creating a Rhodesian identity. I'm just trying to remember if my parents ever talked about going to Rhodesia in the sixties? They might have, but I do know lots of people who did and a particular family comes to mind. They were from Yorkshire and they became particularly disgusted, about the same time as my parents did, they were horrified at what was happening in Britain. They saw Britain as a country hugely in decline and so they decided to go to Rhodesia during the period of sanctions and I know a few other people who did the same thing. They liked the idea of this little…do you know, people like a rebel kind of thing and they liked this rebellious little colony that had turned on and told the mother country where to get off, and was preparing to fight its little war, as they saw it.

The war itself, in the beginning, yes, it created lots of camaraderie. Blokes loved going off to their regiments, appearing at the drill hall and getting into convoys and driving off to the bush with people clapping. But as the war progressed, it just became more and more commonplace and there weren't people standing on the roadside and clapping any more, there was just another convoy pulling out and they were going up to the sharp end. It became tedious and the funerals started to mount and the divorces began to quadruple I think. So if anything, the war actually wore down…it's again, this business of, it's kind of Pareto Rule: You have twenty percent who are going to be fanatical and forty percent a little, and another twenty percent a little less fanatical and the other twenty percent at the other end who couldn't give a damn. So when they got their call-up papers, they got on a plane and left.

**So maybe for some it strengthened that identity and fed it; but for others, you can see that it also really had a detrimental effect on the population.**

Yes, and right in the middle, again, thinking about the Pareto rule, right in the middle of the bulbous there, were about twenty percent of the Rhodesian

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population: It used to be absolutely bizarre, you would go back to town from the bush and it would only be about two hours drive, maybe three hours drive and there was a firm band of suburban Rhodesian middle class who had no idea what was going on at all. There's a parallel in South Africa. A friend down in the South African middle class had no idea what apartheid meant for millions of people. I used to love to go and visit one particular family who, although their son was a national serviceman in the police and a reservist who stayed until the end, if you went to their house in Gun Hill, a very upmarket suburb in Salisbury, you'd swear that you were walking into an untroubled home in a suburb anywhere where it was nice and warm and the sun shone. There was no sense whatsoever that there was a war on out there. But he wore the Rhodesian T-shirts and had "I love Rhodesia" amongst all the rest of it, the (01:53:12) same as the rest of us. But actually he had no idea of what was going on or what it was all about.

**What do you think made a good Rhodesian at the time? Are there certain qualities that they would have had?**

We were expected to support Ian Smith. I never had the T-shirt that said "I support Smithy" or something like that, but I had friends who did. You were expected at one stage, I'm just trying to remember at which point, you were expected to call black people kaffirs by some people; by others, you were not. At the same time, you were expected to be fair to your servants. If anybody says to you that there is a particular quality that outlines somebody as being a good Rhodesian, I would suggest that they're actually talking twaddle. They were just ordinary people trying to get on with their life who had to, yes, give their time, go to the bush; the wives had to be supportive and darn their socks and knit them balaclavas and that kind of thing. And you were expected to operate on a certain rhetorical level and you were expected to hate Mugabe and love Ian Smith and if you didn't…yes, I hated Mugabe, no I didn't love Ian Smith, you would be not ostracised, but you would run into the odd bod who would cause trouble over it.

**As you said, you did on a few occasions.**

Yes, apart from that, it was a kind of obedience to orders. I don't think it was like Nazi Germany but I do think it was like any other sort of normative society. It would be a bit like living in Britain during the Second World War, a kind of monumental toeing of the line. Yes, you were at war, you were under siege; you were expected to love your country and hate your enemy even though…. During 1978 they began to interview soldiers for television and one of the things that kept coming up is "what are you fighting for?" "the Rhodesian way of life." And the immediate question is "well what's the Rhodesian way of life?" In the 80s, just after I came to this country, it might have been the 90s…no, it must have been in the 80s because it was in the context of the Cold War, they were interviewing RAF pilots. One of them was asked what he was fighting for in the Cold War and he said "oh I don't know, I think I've got an image of a little pub in Somerset or something." And the parallel was very strong.

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**Was this for Rhodesian Front films or what were the soldiers interviewed for?**

It was a documentary, it was a newsreel.

**So it would have been something pro-government?**

Yes, you wouldn't have got anything anti-government on Rhodesian television. What was considered not to be good was, when I was in SB, I was doing my job in town. I'd described it as a desk job, but it wasn't actually a desk job, it was a bit like the kind of thing that operatives in the security services do in this country. I was paid to know what people were up to, know what was going on. And one of the things I used to do for example was, there was an (01:57:22) outfit called The Rhodesian National Affairs Association, I think, and they were a kind of debating society who used to meet in a large hall in Salisbury. One of their dons was a man called Allan Savory who had actually founded the psychological operations unit, and then he'd had a re-think. His policies were actually very close to the kind of policies of Helen Suzman's progressive party in South Africa and because he did speak out, because he did question Smith, he was pretty much vilified in the press. We certainly kept tabs on him and he wasn't harmed, he wasn't threatened, he was just monitored and criticised, but I don't think it got any worse than that.

I did once ask the question, on a Special Branch course, I did ask the question of whether we had a white fifth column in Rhodesia, and I was told we didn't, and I don't think we did. But we certainly had dissenting voices. We had, for example, have you heard of Janice McLaughlin? Interesting woman, she was a nun who was in direct contact with…she's worth looking at. In fact, I had a degree of respect for her at the time and I still have a degree of respect for her because she did speak out about…. I was a bit antipathetic towards her because I knew that she had direct contact with terrorist groups. In the day, my rhetoric would have been, I'd have happily shot her, I'm sure I wouldn't have shot an unarmed woman but when they put her on a plane and threw her out of the country, I was four-square behind them. I only came across a few people…I came across one bloke I investigated, it was a period of limitations, but I came across a couple of whites in Salisbury who were actively spying for the Zambian government. Now why they were spying for the Zambian government when the Zambians couldn't actually do anything, I don't know but I think it was more to do with the economics than the war effort. So yes, we did have dissenting voices and we had people who would be labelled 'bad Rhodesians.' So that kind of answers your question in the negative.

**It's interesting. And this must have been quite reinforced in Special Branch?**

Funnily enough, Special branch was…. Ok, we had a serious job to do, we had a desk that was dedicated to monitoring the activities of the European community. Funnily enough, we spent more time monitoring the extreme right than we did…we didn't have an extreme left, we had a kind of woolly left. And

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we considered them to be bad; I'm talking about the rabid right wing. We considered them a threat to national security, that's a claim isn't it? and we monitored them closely. Did we consider them bad Rhodesians? Certainly we considered them dysfunctional and dangerous and kept monitoring them.

**Can I ask about your sense of what sort of war you were fighting and whether it was racial, ideological, civil?**

I think I said to you that yes, it was certainly racial: One side was entirely black. But having said that, sixty percent of the Rhodesian security forces were black as well. Tribal, yes definitely. Now tribal is an interesting one; tribal is a multi-layered thing. It can be inter-tribal, it can be intra-tribal. Tribalism can transcend tribalism; I mean there's black and white tribalism. So yes, tribal war: When a terrorist group came into an area, they very seldom came from (02:02:01) that area.

For example, when I was working in the Murewa area, the tribe there are all Mashona, although the Mashona are more correctly referred to as a nation. The sub-tribe was Muzezeru and I found that the gooks, we used to call them, on one particular detachment I came across, all seemed to be Korekores from the north east around Mount Darwin area. And when I was operating in Mount Darwin, one of the first things that you'd ask when you went in and you questioned tribes people after a confirmed terrorist presence, you'd start getting as much on them as you could. One of the questions you'd ask was "what were they carrying?" and obviously, "what were they wearing? Where were they going? What dialect did they speak?" Up around Mount Darwin, the majority of the gooks who came in were Karanga from the south east of the country.

There was also in-fighting within ZANLA itself, probably Mugabe is a Muzezeru and Nkomo was an Ndau from the south east. And there was large-scale in-fighting between various tribal groups within ZANLA. The group that prevailed, if I remember rightly, was a kind of…the Muzezeru were sort of at the top of it. The Muzezeru are very articulate, very intelligent people and in the slip stream were Karangas and a tribe called Manyika. They're all Shona affiliates. You or I listening to them wouldn't be able to tell them apart but they can tell each other apart, so it was tribal at several levels.

**And ideological, or not?**

I think that we thought we were fighting…you can't get away from it, what we were fighting for in fact was to maintain what we, and was I one of them…the war was about who was going to run the country and who was going to enjoy the lion's share of the spoils?. Who was going to be the most comfortable and economically secure? I think the rhetoric, yes, we were fighting the Cold War, we were fighting the red peril and you were all going to be very sorry if you let us go because the reds will get a toe hold in Africa, blah blah. No, I don't think I was ever seduced by that. The ideology that I believed I was fighting for was sort of the white man's burden thing. I didn't believe the blacks were equipped to rule. Looking around, with all the maturity that a

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twenty year old was going to muster, I just saw Zimbabwe as descending into the same kind of chaos as you saw in Zambia, in the Congo. Choose a point on the map and at that stage, it certainly looked like chaos and internecine warfare. Yes, that's what I thought I was fighting against, I thought, our little white administration would do a better job than a black administration.

**Where were you towards the end, in '79? You mentioned what you saw as the abomination of the monitoring forces?**

I do think that was abominable. In '79, let me see, I rejoined and I was immediately sent to a place called Rushinga, which was an intelligence gathering base. I once put in a report that as far as I was concerned we were violating Zimbabwe's territorial integrity by being there because we were just swamped with terrorists. There must have been about four or five hundred operating around the area, pretty much with impunity. If we saw them, a plane would go and fly a sortie, bomb them, we would go out and try to (02:06:50) ambush them and catch them out as much as we could; and monumentally failed. Why they didn't just wipe us out, I actually don't know. Then I was…I'm putting this in chronological order so as to refresh my memory, I went to run another intelligence base where actually things were going quite well; we were actually managing to turn things around. And then I was attached to the auxiliary forces, I spent six or seven months with the auxiliary forces. Have you studied the auxiliary forces?

**Yes, is this Sithole's…?**

Well these guys were actually loyal to Abel Muzorewa in my bunch. But yes, there were groups loyal to Sithole. Six months there and then I was sent to Mount Darwin as an intelligence coordinator. And that was when the monitoring group came in. They presented themselves as being objective. We had Australians in our particular area and I did once have a run-in with a REME Major. When we came across ceasefire violations, we would present as much evidence as we could and there were ceasefire violations left, right and centre. My particular assembly point, assembly point Charlie at a place called Marymount, was probably about fifty/fifty actual terrorists and terrorist collaborators, and the rest of the lads were running round in the bush carrying on with mobilising the masses, which meant that there were murders taking place, there was intimidation taking place, it was absolutely wholesale. I sound like a propagandist now, trust me when I tell you this, it was absolutely wholesale, and I used, well not just me, we used everything at our disposal to try and scotch it.

There was one particular night when we had two Australian officers at Rushinga. I had 1RR, One Rhodesian Regiment there and they wouldn't believe us that the terrorists were infiltrating from assembly point Charlie, so we said "well, ok, we'll prove it. We will put out stop groups on the routes that we know they come out through and maybe we'll give you some live ones and maybe we'll give you some bodies," and the Australians told them. Maybe if you're there, trying to…well they were there as a monitoring group, but what they did effectively was…there would have been evidence. And this makes

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me sound hard line – I suppose I was – but I just couldn't believe it. I was absolutely outraged when the next day, our lads came in empty handed and what's his name, the Australian Lieutenant said, "well we knew that you weren't going to catch anybody because we told them." We recorded cases of intimidation when there were terrorist murders which were still taking place under the noses of the monitoring group and we'd present them with the evidence and they'd ignore it. They knew exactly what tactics ZANLA were using, they knew precisely how Mugabe was going to come to power and they turned a blind eye to it. Am I still angry about it? I'm certainly sounding still angry about it, aren't I?

**But it must have been incredibly frustrating to have been in contact with these people who were what must have seemed at the time, pretty much part of it; almost involved in the perpetrations?**

(02:11:11) Yes, I'm not sure how long afterwards I sat down and thought about it, but if you look at it from their perspective, what they would have turned round and said was "well we averted bloodshed." And I guess they did. We estimated about a hundred coming out a night. If you just do a rule of thumb thing, they probably stopped twenty or thirty people being killed or captured that night. Some would say "job well done" and I said "then I can't give you any evidence because you've just scotched it." There's a certain irony to what I'm saying isn't there because yes, they did stop thirty odd people getting killed and maybe that was the right thing to do; but that was just one particular episode.

**It's very different seeing it now, isn't it? It's great that you are able to rationalise it from both sides now, but at the time, I can see it must have been very frustrating to have had your work scotched in that way. What was your opinion of Muzorewa's auxiliaries?**

Dreadful, absolutely awful. Actually, some of them were quite good. I had a couple of very good detachment commanders, a lot of them actually weren't genuine terrorists, they had just been…God knows how they got aboard. They'd found out they were getting paid $20 a month, they found out that they had free uniforms, free food and all the cigarettes you could smoke, and a lot of them just declared themselves ex-combatants and along they came. Well ex-combatants, they were party thugs; it was a good way for the UANC, Muzorewa's outfit, to create some employment. So out of 625, I had about three or four hundred actual genuine terrorists and a couple of hundred who were just, as I call it, stone-throwers from Harare. A couple, in fact, I recruited myself. They'd been, they called them Mujibas, have you heard the term Mujiba?

**Yes.**

These guys were Mujibas and I gave them the option, they could either go in jail and probably be hanged for collaborating with terrorists; or they could join Pfumo Re Vanhu with me. And quite a few of them opted to do that and they were actually quite good lads. I had in a little detachment I used to drag

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around with me everywhere who were very loyal. The actual returned terrorists varied from…I've got a picture of a couple in my head right now who were first class blokes and others who were just dreadful. I got my admin wrong once and had 125 of them in my camp on one particular day and on that day we had 25 negligent discharges where they'd fired their rifle by mistake, by accident. And yes, I was quite subjective by the end of that particular day.

**Was that an idea of yours to recruit the Mujibas; or was it something that you were encouraged to do?**

At one stage, there was…what was it called? There was actually an operation where, in fact it was press-gang. It was well reported. One particular day I got a radio instruction to go to a particular Protected Village, as (02:15:15) it was called, and nab every male of military age. So I went and nabbed every bloke from 18 to 28 ish and I thought it was a kind of containment exercise. But when I went back – at that stage I was running a ground coverage base – and when I went to the auxiliary forces, I saw all these lads who I recognised as local lads wearing uniforms, doing drill and getting paid $20 a month. And that was absolutely shameful at that stage really. Yes, you can record that, I don't care because it is worth recording. But the idea of doing the trade-off, you either go to jail or – I don't think I ever actually threatened to shoot anybody – you can either do that or you can go to Pfumo Re Vanhu, obviously they'd opt for Pfumo Re Vanhu.

I think I said to you, by 1977, I was quite a callous little sod. It was a physic thing. I'm not making excuses for myself; I watched the process with lots of people. Going back to 1975 when I had my first station, I was sitting with some more senior blokes, one of whom was the guy I was talking about with the first terrorist murder. I remember saying to him and a couple of others who were laughing about a particular sudden death they'd been to or something. Policemen form a kind of protective…there are two kinds of tough – well there are several kinds of tough – but the extremes are, the reed that bends in the wind tough, that's kind of resilient and would come back again; and there's carapace tough. And the carapace tough are the guys who actually would most probably crumble when it gets really rough; the ones who would be prone to depression, the ones who'd commit suicide. But I remember saying to them, "I will never be as callous as you lot." A year later, a national serviceman turned round to me in fact, and he never, ever succumbed to becoming callous and he said, "remember in the mess one day you told so and so that you would never be like him." That's right, we picked up a body, a murder or an accident victim and we put him in the body box and we were driving back to the police station and it had just become "there's a body in the body box," it didn't matter. And I was making some kind of joke and he said "remember you said you'd never be like them, well you are." And that caused a bit of a reality check.

**It makes me think of what you said at the start, that in war you have to…I can't remember the word that you used.**

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The pragmatism or morality.

**Yes, exactly. Maybe it was a pragmatic way of coping with or dealing with what you were seeing?**

Yes. I found it, the next time I saw it on any sort of scale was in Johannesburg. Johannesburg police officers project an image of being tough but the reason they project the image of being tough is because it's tough being a policeman in Johannesburg and it is a kind of coping mechanism.

**Maybe if we could start to touch on your decision to leave Rhodesia? You were there during the vote?**

I was there during Muzorewa's vote and I was there during Mugabe's vote. Yes, and we just watched what was happening with Mugabe. I threw quite a few ZANLA, well they weren't called ZANLA, they were called ZANU, ZANU (02:19:26) operatives off election sites. Our information that came back, sort of ex-post factor, told us that we hadn't touched the tip of the iceberg. But remember I told you they were coming out of the assembly points and that's one of the things that we pointed out to the monitoring group, or tried to point out…it's the funniest thing I've ever seen in my life, a British Bobby standing outside a polling station in the middle of the African bush. Again, this business of image and self image because they thought that deploying British Bobbies would reassure the African population because the British Bobby is a symbol of order and stability. These are tribes people who've never seen a Bobby in their life, there's just this bloke there with a funny hat on.

**It was quite surreal.**

Yes, it was surreal. And they used to stand there, the Bobbies used to stand there and just look bewildered and we made life tolerable by taking them down to the club and getting them drunk every night because we actually felt sorry for them. But yes, our African operatives kept feeding back to us that it was being reported to them, the tribes people were saying, "well you know, there was a guy standing there yesterday or the day before." He couldn't come and tell you there and then actually who was "comrade so and so from the Texas Platoon, or from Nehanda B-Sector," or "I know because he's been operating here for the last two years and we've been feeding him." You'd tell the monitoring group and they'd say "can you prove it?" I'm trying to remember how many days the election exercise was held over, I think it was three. Anyway we had a fairly firm picture by the end of it that that's what had happened but as I said, we didn't get the tip of the iceberg.

**And then that led to your decision to resign?**

Well a few things. I can't remember the name of what the operation was supposed to be called. We were told there were contingency plans which were shorthand for "there's going to be a military coup," if Robert Mugabe wins. We were also told that the monitoring group were there with one object in mind; and that was to hand the country over to one of the black national

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leaders. Our intelligence told us that preferably it was to be Nkomo but if it had to be Mugabe, then it had to be Mugabe; and either way, they were going to hand over to black majority rule and leave. So I waited, the election results came out, was it March the 27th? I can't remember.

Anyway, I radioed Mount Darwin the Joint Operations Centre and asked for orders, and I had sixty African soldiers so I gave them 100% resupply of ammunition and got ready to go. I was absolutely committed to the idea of a coup, I was determined Robert Mugabe was not…. But what was my position? I was a junior commander running a small intelligence-gathering base with a platoon of soldiers, so I wasn't going to hope I was going to stage a coup by myself. So I radioed for orders on day one, and got told to standby. I radioed for orders on day two, and got told to standby. Day three, jumped in my Land Rover, drove down to Mount Darwin and went and saw the OC and I said "well there aren't any orders coming are there?" and he said "no, I'm afraid there aren't." So I said "well, right, I want my form 71," which was the application for discharge. It was quite funny in retrospect because it got given back to me because you had to give a reason (02:23:23) for leaving and I put "I resign." I suppose it wasn't very funny but it amused me at the time perversely. So I got called back in again and told to write something a bit more sort of meaningful, so I gave them some spiel about how I thought my job was done and it was time to go back to university.

Then, I was never formally on Special Branch strength; I was always only attached to Special Branch. So I found myself second-in-command of a police station. I was a section officer by then and a section officer notionally ran a section. So I went to Shamva police station, which was a lovely rural town with a mine and a township and a tribal area and it was great. I ran into a whole lot of African policemen I'd worked with before who'd stayed in uniform branch and a couple of lads I'd known who'd been constables. And a sergeant, a very good sergeant, he was our station sergeant major, remember I told you? He was kind of God on the station. So yes, the whole thing was great. I didn't have a clue what I was doing and I used to wander around with Standing Orders in this hand and the manual in this hand and if anything happened, I'd frantically page through to see what the hell I was supposed to do, but it was good.

One of the first things that happened when I arrived there was, there was a witchcraft-related murder, which was a fascinating case to investigate. Some poor girl got herself raped, so I put together a docket for that and it was back to being…I sort of went back five years to being a policeman and doing what policeman do, it was absolutely wonderful. And about six weeks into it – my notice period was three months – about six weeks in, I was seriously thinking of withdrawing my notice and if you remember Robert Mugabe was making all the right noises. I thought, "well, maybe things will work out after all."

Then, and I can't remember which order it was in, but I got two mentions in parliament. The local ZANU-PF youth suddenly emerged from the woodwork and started…for example, Saturday nights, they would descend on the beer hall and beat everybody up and reckoned this was revolutionary discipline and

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they were doing it at the behest of the party. So I got on to our local district headquarters and said "what's going on here?" and "I'm going to start running these people in" and got a message back from the OC saying "well what they're doing is illegal and yes, you should be policing it accordingly." So I formed a riot unit, about a dozen or so lads, and every time the ZANU-PF youths started doing this, I would put the lads in a Land Rover. We'd go down to the beer hall or wherever it was they were doing it, round them up and throw them in the slammer and put them in front of the magistrate on Monday morning, which got me mentioned in parliament for harassment of ZANU-PF youth in Shamva. So I carried on doing it; I couldn't not do it. Did they actually beat anybody to death? No, I don't think they did, but they put a couple of people in hospital. So there was no way I was going to stop what I was doing but I was still toying with the idea of withdrawing my resignation.

Then we got a report, we had a tribal area, that what was called a ZANU-PF liaison team were operating in the Bushu Tribal Trust Land and they weren't calling it revolutionary discipline – yes, they were calling it revolutionary discipline – literally, what they were doing was going into the villages, taking out UANC supporters, Muzorewa supporters, and doing one of two things: They'd beaten a couple of people to death, we found the bodies and opened murder dockets; and the other thing we found out they were doing was abducting people and taking them back to ZANU-PF headquarters in Salisbury and they just weren't heard (02:28:02) of again. So somewhere around Salisbury, there's a mine shaft which has got unrecovered bodies in it somewhere. That's a bit of guesswork on my part.

Anyway, I got information that on a particular day that one of the ZANU-PF liaison teams was actually in Bushu, they had abducted a whole lot of people, old tribes people. I can't remember why I did it quite that way, I must have stood the lads down or it must have been a Sunday, but I took the duty African sergeant and myself and a Land Rover and put it across the one road that led in to and out of Bushu Tribal Trust Land. And sure enough, after I'd been there for about half an hour, a Mazda pick-up van arrived so I flagged it down. They stopped and they were…God knows what they'd got all these bodies in this van for but I think there were six of them in this liaison team. Did they have weapons? No I don't think they did have weapons. They had five or six very bewildered looking elderly tribesmen that they had "arrested" and they were taking them back to Salisbury for discipline or re-education, I can't remember the term they used. So I arrested them and I don't know to this day how the sergeant and I managed to do it. Oh that's right, I made a radio call. There was a Support Unit training camp just outside Shamva, and I told them that the Support Unit were on the way and if they didn't want to get badly sorted out, they'd better come back with me to the police station, which they did and we threw them in the slammer. The charge, in Roman Dutch law, I think was man-stealing. It was kidnapping, so that's what we charged them with, which got me a second mention in parliament for harassment of ZANU-PF youth.

Then the final thing, the last straw, I was at a place called Madziwa mine and I can't remember what I was doing there but I was standing in the mine

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compound. And a truck…have you ever heard African children singing? It's absolutely beautiful.

**Yes.**

A truck, a lorry came back, drove into the compound and was bringing the kids back from the mine school and these beautiful voices were singing. And as they got closer, they were singing "viva chimurenga," forward with the war, "pasi ne dzako tzako, pasi ne dzako tzako." 'Dzako tzako' means 'ANC supporters,' 'pasi ne' means 'down with.' And that was a very common slogan, "pasi ne this, pasi ne that," down with anybody you don't like. And these were little kids of five and anywhere between six and twelve and they had the kids singing these songs. And I just had a sense of the absolute hopelessness of it and I think I had about two weeks to go in the force and when my time came to go, I left with an immense sadness.

**So the first time you nearly left, in the mid seventies, you said that you thought you were leaving Rhodesia in the lurch?**

Yes.

**But this time, it felt kind of like the right thing. But you were quite ambivalent about it?**

(02:32:03) Well I remember, as I drove over…. Actually it's quite a funny story: I had to wait around in Harare for about a month to get…well, administratively they'd lost me, so I couldn't get my final salary cheque and I couldn't get my pensions. And I found out that eventually a superb African clerk of what they called the Salary Service Bureau, I can't remember his name now, did some really serious detective work to find me in the system. According to them, eventually he found me as a uniformed branch section officer and I was stationed at a place called Mangula. I've never been to Mangula in my life, which was quite strange because the Rhodesia government was actually quite efficient; it was smaller so it was efficient.

**Do you think that it was a deliberate mixing up?**

I've often asked people about it and all I get is blank looks. So if it was a security measure, it was a pretty good one. Anyway, I got my final salary cheque and my final pension cheque and spent a month in Salisbury just drinking it away. And then about two days before I was due to leave, I got a telephone call. I was staying with some friends and I got a telephone call and the call went like this: "Listen, you've got to get out of the country quickly and don't go through the airport, they're coming to get you." I thought this sounded bizarre but I thought well, I'm not going to take any chances here; I'm not going to ask any questions round the place. Because of my conduct, because I'd made it quite plain I was antipathetic towards ZANU-PF, in fact, an officer who'd decided he was going to stay on, actually tried to fit me up. So I was a bit cautious. It was very crude, but it was obviously an attempt to get me to do something that could be deemed as subversive so that I could

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be charged and framed and so on, so I was being careful. So I 'phoned my folks in Durban and asked my father to come up by road and pick me up and take me back so that I didn't have to get an air ticket, which would have been traceable, and if I'd gone out through the airport, I could have been got. So I left Rhodesia as a sort of fly-by-night, it was already Zimbabwe. I remember, as I drove over Beitbridge thinking well that's it, you haven't got Rhodesia to scuttle back to anymore. Subsequently I found out from another ex-Special Branch mate that the bloke in question had had a kind of paranoid episode and phoned half of the Special Branch and told them exactly the same thing.

**So you don't know quite whether you should have taken it with a pinch of salt?**

Oh it was absolute twaddle; I could have gone out through the airport without any trouble at all. But it was quite a nice drive down.

**Maybe that demonstrates the sort of, well, not exactly fear, but the sort of suspicion and worry that existed amongst people who did stay on?**

Yes, there was a lot of bitterness, a lot of anger and a lot of divisiveness. A lot of people thought that they'd be able to stay on and they would be able to (02:35:47) help transform Zimbabwe into a rehabilitated…. A lot of us at the other extreme were people like me who just foresaw absolute chaos. I thought it would take Mugabe five years to destroy the country rather than about fifteen. And there are all the points in between. There were other people who just, it was that twenty percent, remember I was telling you about, who even during the war didn't have any idea what was going on. Well they weren't going anywhere anyway because they were running nice successful little businesses. Life for them did not change at all. Fred will give you a better idea because I left straight away, but he would be able to give you an idea of how long it took the police force to actually begin to disintegrate.

One of my memories, an abiding memory, is about two weeks before I left. The Commissioner of Police did a flying visit and I mean literally a flying visit; he and his ADC in a little Cessna. I don't know how many police stations they visited but anyway, we had him in the office, gave him tea and sandwiches, and he started giving me this little pep talk. And I thought, well this is strange, the poor bloke obviously hasn't been briefed that I'm leaving. Anyway, we took him down to the airstrip and I'd been talking to his ADC and told him that I was going to go back to university and study journalism and the ADC sort of shook my hand and said "well good luck with your journalism" and the commissioner said "what was that about journalism?" and I said "well I've only got two weeks to go in the force, I'm off." And you could see the man actually visibly crumple, because the same thing was obviously happening to him at every station: He was running into his young officers who were just leaving and did leave in droves; about thirty percent of the police force left in the first year.

**So you went to South Africa immediately after that?**

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At first. Yes, I drove down. My parents lived in a place called Pietermaritzburg, that's where I went. I looked for, and well, found a couple of jobs. Went up to north Natal and blew holes out of the side of hills looking for coal and got a job as a traffic policeman in a little coastal town, which was superb. But I was extremely unhappy and I came across to Europe for a bit. I worked for a week, went off for two weeks, came back, worked for a week, went off for another two weeks or whatever. I had a reasonably good kind of working holiday. I think I told you, I walked into an army recruiting office, funnily enough, in Salisbury in this country and it looked like a good idea. But I just couldn't bring myself to. I was still very, very angry with my mother country and just couldn't.

**What was it like returning to Britain? It was 2001, was it?**

When I finally came back. Well I've come back a couple of times. I came back in 1981 for that working holiday. I came back again in 1988 when I joined the RAF. When I came back in 1981, it was like coming to a foreign (02:39:34) country and it was not a very pleasant experience because, don't take this the wrong way, but were you alive in 1981?

**I was, yes.**

It was grim. God, the country was depressed, it was run down, it was scruffy and it wasn't a whole nice place to be. So I stayed here for a few months and went back. I came back again in 1988, saw the country as pretty much transformed, quite liked it, but then again, I was in a different kind of emotional environment if you like, as well.

**This was in the RAF?**

Well when I came back to join the RAF, yes. I left the RAF when the defence cuts came round. I've got a superb sense of timing: I joined in '89 and left in '93 because the defence cuts thing cut the RAF in half just about, so I watched my career go out the window. I went back to South Africa and ran a business there which worked very well, in spite of me. I got very heavily involved in community policing. It was very, very different; South Africa after apartheid was nothing like Zimbabwe after Smith. It was extremely optimistic, extremely hopeful and it was a great place to be. And then when I finally came back to this country, well I didn't come back to this country, first of all I went to Spain. My then wife turned round to me in 1999 – we used to come to Europe and go to the states for holidays, and one year we'd been visiting my in-laws in Spain and when we got back to South Africa, we'd been back for about two weeks – she said "I don't want to live here anymore." She had a couple of nasty experiences and so we finally left South Africa in March 2000. I lived in Spain for just under a year and came back to this country in January 2001, much more adjusted.

**Did you still feel very different to British citizens?**

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Not terribly, no. I'd spent time here; I'd spent time in the forces. Although it's quite funny, I worked for a year before the RAF would take an application from me. They wanted me to live in this country, what was it the branch sponsor said, to "become accustomed to our Judeo-Christian value system" or something. So I worked in Essex for a year, very pleasant time. So when I came back in 2001, well, I used to come back to this country most years on holiday anyway, so it wasn't a foreign country to me anymore. Also, I think I had a very dark image of this country, possibly because of South African propaganda, possibly because of Rhodesian propaganda but also I spent…. It's quite an amusing story: I'd spent eighteen months at a secondary modern school here in South Wales because I was an idle little sod and my father felt this would be a good formative experience. He wouldn't send me to his old school when I crashed and burned on my eleven plus at the age of eleven; I went off to the secondary modern school where I learnt how to fight. I didn't learn anything else, so my image of the UK was very, very jaundiced and particularly my image of Wales. I didn't like Wales, I didn't like Welshmen.

(02:43:39) **But you've ended up there, nonetheless!**

Yes, well I mean it's a very different set up.

**And you said that you had different emotional support in a way; perhaps having the career in Britain had helped as well?**

Probably.

**You see it in a different light.**

Yes, also you've got beyond the propaganda, you've got beyond…. What else? I'm just trying to picture Britain in the sixties and apart from a slightly unfortunate experience at school, I actually can't think of anything wrong with the country. So I don't know why I had such a…I must have just been taken in by South African propaganda.

**One final question I want to ask is, looking back at the war now, the struggle during the seventies, do you feel that it was worth it? I realise it's a very big question…**

No, no it wasn't. In fact if anything…. I could do either a kind of short answer for you out of this and I could say, well, the one upshot of it was that we were proven right. And quite often, people pull out this trite wisdom when they find out you have a Zimbabwean connection, and people will say "well it's terrible what's happening on Zimbabwe." And I have a slightly perverse sense of humour. I will turn round and say "well in the 1970's we tried to tell you and you wouldn't listen." From my point of view, I had some awful times but I had some great times; mostly I had great times. I don't know what the other blokes will tell you but the BSAP was a great regiment and it was a great outfit and we had great times and life was…our material life was superb. We weren't hugely well paid but we weren't badly paid. We were certainly very well looked after and the only sort of down side was occasionally people tried

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to shoot you. But apart from that, life was absolutely wonderful. So do I regret having gone there? Do I regret having served in the BSAP? No, I don't. And you've probably already detected that it's a very important part of my identity and I'm sure from the people you've spoken to over the weeks, it's a very important part of their identity.

**Absolutely.**

And we've quite often asked what it was that made it that fundamental to us all? A million answers. If you would ask me if I would do the same thing again, I would have to turn around and say I actually don't know. Certainly lots of adventure, lots of fun, lots of formative experiences and I'm sure that the other blokes you've spoken to will tell you the same thing. This is going to sound a bit conceited, but when I go anywhere…I'm just trying to picture the pub that I sometimes go to in the village where I live and I think about my life, my experience, what I am and look at the people around me and they haven't (02:47:15) lived. So would I do it again? Probably. Do I think I achieved anything? I've witnessed lots of human suffering, inflicted lots of human suffering, whether it was advertent or inadvertent, and it was just a very sad episode and I don't think I did achieve anything to the greater good. Yes I did, I did, I've helped people out as a civil policeman. Are people's lives better because of anything I did? Yes, probably, I delivered a couple of babies, that was quite an interesting experience, so the answer is I don't know, I don't think so.

**I don't think there is *an* answer to that question, it's just exploring it from many different sides. There are lots of different answers, aren't there, from now and then. You've done a very good job of verbalising some of those, thank you.**

I'm sure you've got lots of notes.

**I think we should finish there, if that's ok?**

<u>End of interview</u>

In correspondence from 30/06/2009, Geraint Jones also added:

"I forgot to mention that in later life I thanked God that the Commander of the Army did not give the order to launch a coup. It would have been an absolute bloodbath from which no-one would have emerged as the winner. It's also highly probable that many African soldiers would have mutinied."