

Questions for ex-Rhodesian combatants

Background info:

1. Where were you born. *South Africa*

- If not in Rhodesia, why did you decide to emigrate? *My parents emigrated from SA because of the dominating National Party politics when I was a baby.*
- And why Rhodesia? *My grandparents were British and this was a British dominion / colony.*
- What were your family links with Southern Rhodesia? *My maternal grandparents, various uncles / aunts and cousins were resident there.*
- What is your nationality? *I consider myself a Rhodesian as this was where I grew up, went to school and served in the security forces.*

2. What were your family links with the UK (emigration from the UK; length of time in Rhodesia; schooling/university/profession). *Our family lived in Rhodesia from 1955 to 1979. I went to school in Umtali as did my sister and brother. My brother was born in Rhodesia.*

3. Where did you consider to be 'home'? *Home is where you live and home right now is Great Britain.*

4. What were your formative experiences? (family/school/environment/peer group). *My late father worked for Rhodesia Railways and then became a police officer there. My late mother worked for the Ministry of Internal Affairs. My sister was a civilian in the BSAP and my brother was a scholar. I come from a close family with strong ties to the military. Both my parents served in the armed forces during World War Two*

5. What did you think of white immigration/immigrants (post war? Post 1965?) *White immigrants to Rhodesia post 1965 were welcome as they generally contributed to the well being of the country. White immigrants to Rhodesia post war were very few. Most wanted to get out as they did not want to live under Mugabes rule!*

How did you view South Africa? *We viewed South Africa as a benevolent big brother despite their own internal politics. When pressure was put on SA to cut off imports of fuel and other commodities it was disappointing.*

And Afrikaner residents in Rhodesia? *Several of my school friends were of Afrikaans descent. They were Rhodesians just like the rest of us.*

However there were not that many Afrikaners as to have a major influence on the country.

6. When did you join the Rhodesian security forces (RLI; RAR; RAF; BSA Police or Reserve?) Why did you join? What did your family think?

I joined the Ministry of Internal Affairs in January 1968. It became a paramilitary organisation shortly thereafter and was considered a member of the security forces. I joined because I enjoyed the great outdoors, the people and nature. My family were quite happy for me to do so. Please look at the following website -

<http://www.freewebs.com/dudleywall/> for an in depth look at the role of the Ministry of Internal Affairs during the war. It is run by myself with contributions from many former members.

As combatants:

5. What/whom did you think you were fighting for? *We were fighting for Rhodesians of all colours and creeds who knew what the end result of domination by Mugabe would be like. History has proved us right!*

What values/'standards'? *(Western? European? British?) The standards were those of any person who wanted to live in peace maintaining decent standards of living and having a chance to progress.*

6. What/whom did you think you were fighting against? *We were fighting against Communist Chinese (and later USSR) inspired Rhodesians supported by similarly minded countries who blatantly ignored the fact that all Rhodesians already had the vote (qualified franchise), were allowed to own their own property and businesses and had a good chance at success in life.*

What formed your outlook? *Most Rhodesians were intelligent people who saw the influence of radicals on the rural population. I worked in the rural and remote areas of Rhodesia (Sipolilo, Mtoko etc) and could see the influence of infiltrating terrorists intimidating and persuading the people to follow their ideology. Mugabe used a classic Maoist strategy to achieve what he wanted. He still does it today! Only one country has ever been successful against this type of warfare – Britain, and they did it twice – the Anglo Boer War and in Malaya in the 1950s!*

Media/friends/music/religion? *The media always attempts to influence the people of any country to sell their services. They sensationalise events to sell newspapers. The media in Rhodesia tended to be pro government / Ian Smith and therefore gave a viewpoint from that angle. Most of my school friends served in the regular and part time forces. As*

examples - One classmate (Reggie Binks of the RLI) left school early and was killed in action before I had even left school. Another classmate was Bruce Thompson who was awarded the Silver Cross for bravery and was also killed in action.

The music of John Edmond was catchy and somewhat inspiring. It promoted pride. I am a Christian and know that my faith kept me safe Even having being wounded (GSW) and during many contacts with the enemy, including being blown up by landmines on three separate occasions.

Was there political indoctrination/regular discussions from your commanding officers. *There was never any political indoctrination. Training included the methodology used by the enemy and we studied their ways to be able to counter them.*

Political discussions with your mates? *For most of my security forces career I was in a small unit and was often the only white person there. I speak fluent Shona and most of my men were Shona. We discussed the progress of the war and looked at the reasons for Mugabes atrocities towards innocent civilians as well as their armed attacks on farmers and military installations. We all felt that we were fighting for the same thing – peace.*

7. How much understanding did you have of the war? *I had a good understanding of low level tactics, the motivation of the enemy and the day to day impact on the population. (I was wounded in action so knew exactly what it was like!).*

What were your sources of information? *Formal briefings from senior officers, training sessions and personal study of strategy etc.*

How important do you think the international environment (Cold War) was in shaping your attitudes to the war/liberation struggle? *The Cold War did have a strategic impact on the war in Rhodesia. We were made aware of this by senior officers. My attitude was one of patriotism, loyalty to my men and my family and a general positive outlook.*

What did you think of your commanding officers? *My commanding officers were excellent, capable, knowledgeable and approachable.*

What did you think of the ‘protected villages’ scheme? *I was closely involved with the scheme and was directly responsible for the establishment, protection and movement of people in the Mtoko area. The PVs were effective in separating the community from the terrorists. Having said that, it was difficult with minimal resources and manpower to make the scheme work as well as possible. The local population were not always co-operative because they were caught in the middle. We wanted them inside and the terrorists wanted them outside and therefore they became a pawn in the struggle.*

8. How far do you think that the war helped to create – and sustain a sense of Rhodesian identity? *It did exactly that. I will always remain a Rhodesian!*

What other factors do you think were important? *We were fighting against an evil oppressive system led by Mugabe. At the risk of saying “I told you so” history has proved this right!*

How much had you travelled outside Rhodesia? *At the time I had been to Zambia (lived there for 7 years), Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa.*

9. How much importance did you (and your family) attach to African nationalism? *We knew it was a very strong feeling amongst some black people and realised that this was an emotional topic that could influence the country.*

How far did you differentiate between black Rhodesians and the ‘terrorists’? *To be honest I saw only Rhodesians (black, white, Asian and mixed race) and terrorists.*

What was your relationship/contact with Rhodesian black troops? *I mainly served with black Rhodesians. (For a while I was a platoon commander with Pfumo re Vanhu and was the only white in the platoon)*

How far did you feel it to be a tribal war? Racial war? Civil War?

Ideological war? *I did not see the war in Rhodesia as a racial war.*

Approximately 80% of all Rhodesian soldiers were black! I did see it as an ideological war between communists and “us”.

At the time why did you think the ‘terrorists’ were fighting? How far did you differentiate between ZIPRA/ZANLA & UANC? *I knew the difference between ZANLA (Chinese backed) and ZIPRA (USSR backed) and their strategies (rural verses urban etc). They both had the same end state in mind despite having their own differences which sometimes resulted in them fighting between themselves. The UANC formed the mainstay of the Security Forces Auxiliaries / SFAs (Pfumo re Vanhu) and I served with Pfumo re Vanhu for a while as a platoon commander in the Marandellas area. Pfumo re Vanhu was a good concept and began to have a real effect on the war but it was “too little too late”. They were not the best soldiers we had but they did have an impact on the people. If they were better disciplined the effect would have been much better.*

How far do you think this affected HOW the war was fought? *The security forces took this into consideration and introduced a strategy of aggressive external operations combined with various methods used in internal operations.*

Leaving:

10. When did you leave the security forces? Rhodesian security forces in 1979 to join the South African army.

Did you leave Rhodesia/Zimbabwe? Yes

Where did you go to? Was this temporary or permanent? I moved to South Africa. It was a permanent move at the time.

When did you settle in the country you now live in? I now live in the UK and moved here in September 2006

How did you find conditions and the situation of the country you settled in? South Africa was difficult to begin with. It was overly racist towards black people and I did not experience this in Rhodesia. I also struggled to get used to the Afrikaans language. When I moved to the UK it was as if I had come home!

How different did you feel from the other residents? Why? I stood out because I got on with black people and actually took the time to talk to them! This changed as they were integrated into the bigger society and especially when the military started to recruit blacks into the armed forces more and more. (I served in the SA military).

What did you think of the 'end of empire'? It was a sad but true state of affairs that I had no influence over!

With hindsight what is your view of the struggle in the 1970s? I enjoyed the camaraderie of my fellow soldiers and soldiering in general. I know that what we did was the right thing to do. It saddens me that the rest of the world was too naïve to see what was going on and in fact directly contributed to the mess that Zimbabwe is in now! It is ironic that Mugabe is now considered one of the worlds "baddies" but in the 1970s was considered a hero of the people. We fight in Iraq and Afghanistan and have been fighting the exact same type of tyrant that Mugabe is, but the world does nothing about him and he is allowed to carry on with his oppression. I always believed that "what was good for the goose was good for the gander"!

11. After leaving Rhodesia did you join any other Police or Military service? Yes I did. I took a commission in the SA Army in November 1979 and saw active service in Namibia and Angola. When the government changed in South Africa in 1994 I continued to serve and was deployed as part of the intervention forces in Lesotho and also saw service in Burundi and the Congo. I was fortunate to have participated in multinational exercises in Botswana and Mozambique. I retired as a colonel in June 2006 when I moved to the UK to take up a lecturers' position at a local college, teaching a two year diploma in uniformed public services.