

Mike Mould

Joined the British Army in 1947. Was desperate to return to Africa, and aged 31/2 decided to join the Rhodesian Army instead in 1962. He and his family travelled out to Rhodesia (and he divorced at a later point). Stayed in the Rhodesian Army until 1979/80 and then joined the Zimbabwe National Army. Left Zimbabwe for the UK in 2001. In 2009 was aged around 80 years old.

This is Dr Sue Onslow talking to Mr Mike Mould, formerly of the Grenadier Guards and then Rhodesian Light Infantry in Wimbledon on Tuesday, 6 October 2009. Mike, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to talk to me. I wonder if you could begin by saying please, when and why did you decide to go to Rhodesia?

Well I was in, as I say, the British Army and I was posted with my regiment to the Cameroons in West Africa and I loved Africa so very, very much that when I came home, I decided I wanted to be back there. I was only 32/31 and I decided I wanted to go to Africa and although I only had six years to go for pension, I decided I'd buy myself out. I had to wait six months before they let me go but they finally let me go and I went to Rhodesia House and I joined the Rhodesian Army. I was posted to Llewellyn Barracks as a platoon commander of soldiers who were coming in to do their four and a half months that they did then, from all over the Rhodesias, Northern Rhodesia, former Malawi, or what it was and Southern Rhodesia. We saw them up at Llewellyn Barracks and we used to meet them and then they used to do their four and a half months military training which was later extended to nine months when the bush war started hotting up.

So you say that you left the British Army with a mere six years to go. Where had you grown up? When had you joined the Grenadier Guards? What had been your service?

In 1947 I joined the Grenadier Guards. I served in Palestine before it became Israel and Egypt, and the Middle East and of course in Germany, Berlin and finally in the Cameroons.

So what rank had you reached by the time you decided to leave?

I reached the Company Quartermaster Sergeant, which is the first rank in the Guards you call "sir". I'm just stating that and I enjoyed it but I wanted to see Africa and Africa was my aim. I was taken out to Africa in early 1962.

Did you come with anyone else from your family?

No, no I didn't. My wife followed me later on, about two months later on. It was a great life, you know, training all these guys coming in. They were farmers, firemen, scholars all lumped together. You had to build them into, mould them – my name – into a good fighting unit.

So this was when?

1962

(00:03:13) **1962, ok, so just after the formation of the RLI then?**

Yes, in 1966, General Walls who was a colonel then, decided he wanted me posted to 1 Commando in the RLI. Yes 1 Commando, 2 Commando, 3 Commando and support and what have you. So I went to 1 Commando as company sergeant major. My company commander was a fabulous man, a guy called Major Rich who was ex-SAS and we got on extremely well; and I went to the bush and into the Zambezi Valley. When we first went there of course, we didn't have all these refrigerators and things such as that and we were on pack rations. We took two days rations fresh with us and then we lived on that, and 5-day pack rations.

Mike, what was Rhodesian life and society like when you first got there in 1962?

It was very, very good

In what way?

It was a very combined, easy way. You see, in this country there are barriers. In Rhodesia, none.

What sort of barriers?

Well you could be in Meikles Hotel, you could be talking to a director of a company. You could be talking to a coal miner, you could be talking to anyone and you were all on the same level, if you get what I mean. It was good that way. There was no class, you know, in that country. In Rhodesia, you just talked to anybody and so that's what I like about it. Of course they welcomed us to their country because I was a good non commissioned officer and I loved training my soldiers. I used to get up in the morning at about six o'clock, go down to my barracks and see my troops out. I used to go home for lunch then in the evening I'd go over about five o'clock to do shining parades and various other aspects that you need to do when you're training troops. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

At what point did you realise there was a rising political challenge of African nationalism? What did you think of it at the time?

When I got there, in that particular time, there was Welensky. He was the big man, in the federation of the Rhodesias. I went to Welensky's farewell parade at the end of 1963 and 1964, the Federation finished and I was offered to go to either Malawi, to Zambia or back to the British Army or remain where I was. And I remained where I was, in the Rhodesian Army.

Did that take much soul searching, or was that quite an easy decision?

(00:06:45) No, it was a hard decision because I thought that things might not go well but I was willing to take that chance and there was no problem there really. We had the Nationalist movements but of course they weren't as strong as what they were later and they were in Mozambique. Well, they weren't even in Mozambique, they were up in Zambia and places like that and then when Mozambique got its independence, they moved into there of course, ZAPU and ZANU. ZAPU in Zambia and ZANU into Mozambique.

But going back to the 1960's, when UDI was declared, how much did that cause you a crisis of conscience?

Well it made a big crisis in my life

Because you described yourself earlier as a royalist

It made a very, very big crisis in my life because I was in the mess and people were saying "oh yes, good for the Afrikaners" and "we're going belong to South Africa now, so we don't want bloody Britain anymore, we're going to be, we're going to join South Africa".

Who was saying that?

Most of the people there, Rhodies and South Africans who were in the Rhodesian Army, in the mess and I was really unhappy. Unhappy about that but I couldn't see us becoming a member (of the South African Union); I couldn't see South Africa taking us on. So I remained in Rhodesia and I'm glad I did and I went right the way through until General Walls decided to post me to the RLI. I arrived in the RLI in 1966 just when the first incursion really had come through into Rhodesia and they'd hit a farm and killed a couple of people. My commando was out searching for those people and just about the same day I arrived, they returned and we started building up the units and then I went to Kariba. My commando was posted to Kariba on the heights and we did border duties; we sent platoons out to various places, focal points where terrorists would come through and then later on, we came back and were posted to Chirundu. Chirundu, we were below the police camp and strangely enough, they then decided to call it, after I'd been there, Pinky's Camp because that was my name in the Rhodesian Army, Pinky Mould because I used to get sunburnt. So they decided to call it Pinky's Camp. So we were there, actually at the time when the Rhodesian SAS were planning to go across I think, into Zambia, and through the plastic material, shirts they were wearing, it ignited a detonator and it blew up about three other guys and they were killed. My wife who heard this, that that accident had occurred; she didn't know it was an accident, but thought it was active service, went bonkers because she thought "good God, my husband is the only company sergeant major there" and there was another company sergeant major in the SAS who got killed. Then Chirundu finished, we started then going actually down the escarpment, into the Zambezi Valley. We'd go through with our three tonners and we'd set up camp there, just a tarpaulin strung out on the side of the vehicle and the company commander and myself and we'd be there, company clerk's etc. (00:11:40) Then the platoons would be out in various places, on

the river there, and in various places where we thought the terrors would come. As I say, we were all on pack rations in those days but then later on, we started getting fresh rations, so we, luckily were on fresh rations for the seven days and our platoons, one used to come in and rest for a week in our camp and they'd eat fresh rations. Then they'd go out into the bush onto their various positions where they'd take two days fresh rations and five days pack rations and of course they'd eat the fresh rations because it was very, very hot there and some stuff would go off.

Mike, during all of this, you're talking about obviously patrolling along the Zambezi, down into the Zambezi Valley. Did you feel Rhodesia was "home" by this point or do you still regard Britain as "home"?

I had mixed feelings. I had no idea that I would go back to the UK but the more I got into the Rhodesian scene, the more I became a Rhodesian, if you get what I mean.

In what way?

Well you know, I had more loyalty, strangely enough to Rhodesia than... I think they were badly used but in retrospect of course, now, I know that they weren't because it was only a matter of time before black rule would take over because we had maybe 50 people going in for GCE's and they had, the Africans had 1000 you know. So it was only a matter of time before, through that sort of thing that the African would actually take it over.

But had you maintained close links with the UK?

Oh yes, I did. I still had my mother and dad and my sister and brother there.

Where were they?

My mother and father lived in Woodford, which was Churchill's constituency and my sisters lived in Woodford. All my family lived in Woodford and that was my home.

Were they sending you messages saying "you really ought to come back. What are you doing?"

Well yes, yes they did and in fact, in about 1969 when they changed the Union Jack to the Rhodesian flag, my sister asked if I could come back and join the army and they said "yes, I could come back and join the British Army". I'd have to drop a rank to come back there; in other words I'd have to go back to sergeant but I had my wife and two daughters there in Rhodesia.

But your wife was British?

(00:15:29) No, she was German and had become British. My daughters: one was born in Germany, one was born in Guildford and then so I decided, no, I'll stick it out.

Did your wife, was she saying “I think we should go back” or was she saying “we should stay here”?

No, she was quite happy in Rhodesia and my kids were, at that time, getting on a bit, they were born '57 – '58. So they were getting on a bit and they had their own lives and they wanted to stay there so I decided to stay.

At what point do you think Rhodesia found itself at war with African nationalism?

1966

Right, ok

That was the time when my own 1 Commando, we had a platoon commander called Des Fountain and he later became much more than what he was then. He had a contact on the old Rhodesian/Zambian road, and he had this contact and recaptured a few of the terrors; they were ZANLA, and we brought them back to our base, and then we sent them back to the authorities who could interrogate them.

How did you treat them, as captured guerrillas? The emphasis was on capturing them at that point?

Yes, we'll we used to capture them if possible because they had vital information that they could give us. If we knocked them off, they couldn't give us the information that we required. I used to go up in the helicopter sometimes if we had an idea that there was an incursion and try and search and drop various sticks (we used to call them “sticks”) at various places where they'd patrol and try and contact the enemy.

What did you think you were fighting against?

Well I was fighting to maintain a standard of living that was extremely high in Rhodesia. I was fighting for my children and my family and I wasn't really fighting for the whites. I was fighting for that standard of living because I knew it would drop if the Africans took over at that particular stage.

So were you fighting against then, an accelerated transfer of power?

Yes I suppose I was, yes.

Did you think “I'm fighting for”, well to use the language of the time, “European values”?

(00:19:05) When you got to Rhodesia, you had a lot of Rhodesians there and a lot of South Africans who had a very low opinion of the African.

Were those principally urban people or were they farming people? Can you make that generalisation?

A generalisation, yes it was, yes and what happened, we automatically became the same, you know, we took over their views because we thought it was right.

So you acquired a low opinion of Africans too then?

Not really, no, because my children, when I was there, they used to say, their friends used to say “bloody kaffirs this and munts” and all this and I said “look, if I ever hear you talking like that, then I’ll reprimand you” you know what I mean? Because I didn’t like that and I had some decent African workers, who worked in my house who were decent people and so I never, ever allowed my children to use the word “munt” or “kaffir” or anything like that. I didn’t agree with it.

Did your wife back you up wholeheartedly on that?

Yes, yes she did. We had a houseboy first and then we had a maid and the maid was marvellous, in fact, my wife still sends her Zimbabwe pension, her Rhodesian/Zimbabwe pension, she lets the house girl we had, have that money.

Keeping her going

Yes

So you’ve described what you were fighting for, but what were you fighting against?

We were fighting against, well, an enemy who were cruel, basic and in our opinion, didn’t have the interests of a future for Rhodesia as a country.

When you say “cruel”?

Yes, well when they came over, they were intimidating all the African population because when we first had contacts, sometimes the African population used to come and tell us “look, we know there’s some in there, they’ve just passed through here” and we were able to set up stops and send out sticks to combat them and set up defensive positions and ambushes and kill them.

So kill them, not capture.

(00:22:05) Well, we captured them, but if you suddenly enter a contact where they’re firing back at you, you fire back at them and of course there are casualties.

How were the casualties treated? Did you then medi-vac them back or what?

No, I mean, we killed some Africans and I remember being at Makuti and we brought these guys back and had a look at them. They were dead and we took them into the bush, poured petrol over them, dug a pit, and burnt them, you know, which seems pretty horrendous to me now, at my age.

Did you have any understanding about the importance of how the dead are treated in Shona culture?

Yes, well, I went on a Shona course but that was at a later stage and I learnt the basic Shonas and their customs. In the seventies, it opened my eyes to what the African customs are and they're quite good.

When you say "quite good", elaborate.

Well, number one, their families are much stronger than our families. Number two, the children are much more respectful; a girl will come and kneel in front of you and clap her hands across wise like that, and a boy will kneel down in front of you and clap the normal way and they have great respect of their mothers and fathers and of course, their uncles, Sekurus and the Ambuyas, the older people in their custom, they're much, much more respectful than our children are.

Was it standard for RLI people then to have courses in Shona customs and also Ndebele custom?

Yes, well we had an education corps and they used to put up these courses and I thought, well let me go and see if I can take this and see what it's like. It opened my eyes to a lot of things about the African custom that I never knew before. So I became more sympathetic towards the Africans than what I had been before.

As the insurgency started to gather pace then, from December 1972...

Sorry?

The insurgency began to gather pace from December 1972, where were you then?

Well in 1972, I was in the Rhodesian Armoured Car Regiment. First of all I was at HQ1 Brigade and when the new regiment, the Rhodesian Armoured Car Regiment was formed in '73 it was, I was sent to them as (00:25:38) quartermaster in the newly formed regiment. We were first at 2Brigade, at Cranborne Barracks and then our own barracks was built in KGV1 and it was called the Blakeston Houston Barracks after some former wartime people who'd served in the armoured cars. So then, you see, when I was in RLI, I contacted skin cancer in 1968. The doctor said "no, he's got to have an inside job" so I joined the RLI in '66 and I left in '68. They posted me to the position of Intelligence Warrant Officer at army HQ and my job was to open letters that came from all over the world to African soldiers, steam them open and give them to my superiors to read and then re-seal them, put a small pinprick in the

corner of the envelope and send them off to where they were supposed to have gone, to their recipients.

What type of letters were these?

Well I read all kinds of letters, from all over the world to Rhodesian soldiers who had pen-pals and things like that. I never really found anything where we could use military action against anybody who was going to attack us or anything like that.

These were Rhodesian white soldiers and black soldiers?

No, only black soldiers. My job was also to go round and listen to various people talking: if it was anti-British or if it was pro-British. I said “no, I don’t like that, I’m British myself, I can’t do that. I can’t go and spy on my own people, I’m British born and I can’t do that” so I asked for a posting and they said “ok” and they posted me to 1RRR as their regimental quartermaster sergeant. Then of course I was commissioned and sent to HQ1 Brigade and then from HQ1 Brigade in 1973 the Rhodesian Armoured Car Regiment was born and I was posted there.

Why was a separate armoured car regiment formed?

Well, there was an armoured car regiment in the old Federal army which was called the Selous Scouts but they then called this one the Rhodesian Armoured Car Regiment and they formed it as a vehicle that could go into action, it had a 90mm gun on it and it could back up the troops in any action and that’s what it was formed for.

At this particular time, was there much of a hierarchy between the various regiments in the Rhodesian security forces?

What do you mean?

Well, the BSAP like to describe themselves as the senior service. They were a paramilitary organisation ‘on the right of the line’.

Well the thing is, we had the SAS which was a special force. We had the Rhodesian Light Infantry which was a special force.

(00:29:59) A special force?

We had the RAR which was a very very special force. We all had our individual customs and pride in regiment. You know, there was inter rivalry, yes but there wasn’t anything bad about it.

How much do you think the war was helping to create a sense of Rhodesian identity? Of fighting, pulling people together, helping to forge Rhodesians?

I remember in the early seventies, I mean, there was the South Africans used to say “let me get my houtie slayer” (an African is a ‘houtie’ and ‘slayer’ was his rifle.) “I’m going to go and I’m going to slay those houties”...but as the war went on, so they started dwindling and going down to South Africa and leaving the Rhodesians on our own, you know what I mean?

Yes

They could see then, their sons had to do nine months and there was a good chance that they might get killed in enemy action. I think some of them could see that Rhodesia couldn’t last so they all did a runner down to South Africa.

What did you think of people who took the gap?

I didn’t like them at all. I thought they were cowards and had run away and left us.

Not “the wise owl run”?

No, no, in retrospect, it probably was wise to run but in that time, no. Especially as the Afrikaners were so adamant about “I’ll get my houtie slayer with his rifle and I’m going to kill him and everything” and then they all disappeared down to South Africa.

Did you have much contact with South African policemen or with South Africans who...

Yes, I was quartermaster of HQ1 Brigade and I had all those, in Matabeleland, I had all the camps. I had to visit them with my brigade commander and everything like that and also help them set up their camps.

What did you think of them?

I thought they were quite good guys but it’s funny, they used to have pin-ups on their lockers or on the walls and everything like that, but when they knew the dominee was coming. They used to take them down (00:32:52) because oh dear, that dominee was a very, very powerful man but as soon as he’d gone, they used to put them back up again.

They didn’t want to be caught out! But just the fact of fighting, after all, the Second World War seems to have been a very important reference point for lots of people in Rhodesia. Lots of people had lived through it, they had then come out to Rhodesia as immigrants so there was a sense of pulling together, with rationing and then fighting again, supporting our boys in the bush.

Yes, there was a great deal of that, it was first class because you had people who came out... I mean, I watched a thing with Welensky who said “we’re building a new nation” and everything like that and I thought, well let me go out there because they wanted British residents to go out and become part of

the federation and I went out with that in mind also. But the people of Rhodesia I should say, were fantastic. They welded together, they set up canteens. If we were going on ops to Kariba or Chirundu or anywhere like that, in every major village there was a troops canteen and we used to just call in there and the ladies would be there making us tea, cakes, you know, kuukseisters, the Afrikaans sort of doughnut and things like that. They were fantastic, Sue, they really were, those people and then of course later on, the ZWS came, the women came into the army I think in the mid seventies and they were a great help because they relieved some of the people who could go and fight. "Rhodesians never die" and everything like that: it was fantastic, the best esprit de corps amongst the people and the troops. I had quite a lot of troops went away and they came back and found their wives with somebody else and things like that which happens of course, and there was a lot of broken marriages through this situation of sending our guys from jobs, from civilians out into the bush for a month or so and then coming back. A lot of marriages broke down.

You mentioned about the South Africans going back down to South Africa, what about families with young boys growing into men taking their adolescent boys out of Rhodesia to avoid the conscription?

That's what they did, yes

Yes, but what did you think of that? I mean, you had kids yourself?

I thought it was not good because they should have held on and fought for their country which was Rhodesia and their bread and butter was Rhodesia.

But Mike, being in the RLI, you were at the sharp end of things. You were seeing what that war was?

I did yes but you don't pick what kind of war you want to fight, do you? If it's your country and those boys were born in Rhodesia and brought up in Rhodesia, they had the best of Rhodesia in the early days then they should have carried on fighting for it.

(00:37:01) How important did you think was a sense of fighting against communism? How important was the Cold War?

We were fed that these were communists.

Fed by whom?

By the authorities, by the Smith government and what have you and they said these are communists. Let's face it, ZIPRA was in, I believe Russia and ZANLA did all their training in China so they were both communist countries so we immediately thought, well they're communists.

But you're saying "we thought" but then you also said...

No, we knew they were communists, let's put it that way

But you've also said "the government fed you a line"

No, they fed us the truth, that those actual ZANLA and ZIPRA had their bases in communist countries, trained by communists and so we automatically thought "they're communists".

So you felt you were fighting communism?

Yes

You didn't think that you were fighting African Nationalists who were using communist weapons, support and training to achieve a...?

No, I think we were fighting against communism but we were also fighting for our way of life, to maintain our way of life because we thought that the Africans who came into power would destroy the country.

Well, by 1978/1979 of course there was an internal settlement so...

Yes with Muzorewa, I can't tell you, it was still white and they were still calling the Africans "kaffirs". The first African commissioned in the Rhodesian Army was 1978 whereas in 1963, they brought all their people who were at Sandhurst, young officer cadet African federal people, they brought them back and made them lance corporals in the Rhodesian Army and they didn't commission the first black. You see, I started thinking, and I mean Smith, ok, but Smith hadn't brought anybody into the government. He's not tried to assimilate the African population into various jobs like members of parliament, in the Army, in the Air Force or anything, even the doctors into European Hospitals, you know, there's something wrong here, I started thinking that way.

When did you start thinking that?

(00:40:06) About '76/'77

So you identified that about that point, you started thinking "this isn't quite right, we need to..."

No, I thought "why didn't Smith bring them into the Government?" Then we wouldn't have had ZANLA and ZIPRA. We'd have had Africans who would have risen through into the civil service and to the Army and to the Air Force and they'd have been affiliated to us.

Smith, when asked though, and other leading politicians "why wasn't African promotion accelerated?" said "well the whites won't have it". Do you think that's fair?

No I don't, the thing is you see, as I say, Smith tried to do something too late. He should have brought people, as I say, into the government, into the police, army and everything and given them their training and also promoted them if they were up to standard.

But how much was there resistance within the white element of the population?

Yes there was, yes

So you can't just blame Smith

No, I can't just blame Smith, but Smith had probably had a lot to do with it.

Did you think that the war, which after all was getting increasingly vicious from 1977 onwards...?

You see there are various thoughts about this, that this massacre that occurred at some mission. It was perpetrated by the Rhodesian Army.

What did you think of that rumour?

And blamed on to the ZANLA and ZIPRA.

What did you think of that rumour?

I think maybe they were right.

So what was your opinion of the Selous Scouts?

I think they were a good unit but I think they were no better than the RLI, no better than the RAR, or SAS.

Well, did you know anything about their methods, shall we say, of counter insurgency?

(00:42:28) All I know is that they were formed at the later stage and they were given a hard training like the SAS and they were excellent troops. They would kill snakes and eat them to show that they could live off the land. They grew beards, and some of the African members pretended to be terrorists to get information from the African civilians. They were a good unit.

Did you ever privately have any qualms about what they were doing, if you heard about it?

Not really, I just thought, well it's warfare.

Ok, you didn't ask the question? Do you think the war became an ideological war? Do you think it was a race war? Do you think it was a tribal war?

It was a race war, yes, it was a race war.

In what way?

Well, black, we always...not 'we' but various people thought that Africans were not the same as us.

But I've talked to other people in the RAR and others who've said "no, no, in fact there were black Africans fighting alongside us, so it wasn't a race war".

In that respect, let's put it this way; the RAR is a good unit

But it wasn't an all white unit

But it was also a unit where Africans who weren't in employment or anything like that or had no chance of getting money, they joined the RAR.

It was a question of status and employment then?

Yes, to me it was

So you didn't think that they'd bought into the values of the white led Rhodesian state? They weren't anti-communist?

No I don't think they were anti-communist. I think they were brought in to fight and they fought and they fought well. I think it was just a matter of a living for them, pounds, shillings and pence.

(00:45:00) Did you know of people who justified though what they were doing in the war because of the role of the black Africans in the security forces? Who argued, "look, these people are fighting alongside us. Most people in the Rhodesian security forces are black, that means that this is a multi-racial unit, it's opposing communism. " Do you think that sort of thinking went on?

No I don't think so, no. I think the RAR as I say, was used the same as the RLI and the same as the Selous Scouts, the same as any of them, to fight the terrorist incursions.

What did you think of the transition to independence and Lancaster House?

Well, we all had high hopes

And did you think it was a sell-out in any way?

No, we all had high hopes and we all thought that Muzorewa would win, that's what we thought.

Were you involved in the policing of the election in any way?

No, I was just in the Rhodesian Armoured Car Regiment then and we watched events, we were taken up to Beit Hall and all in the big parade ground and we were lectured by our general who was then, at that particular time, saying this transition is happening and there's going to be a conference and this and that. And we think Muzorewa's going to win and Muzorewa had all the availability. He had aircraft that he used to go round with loudhailers "this is Muzorewa – vote for Muzorewa" and everything like that. But the people of Rhodesia, blacks, were sick and tired. They were at the receiving end of...the security forces used to treat them sometimes very, very badly.

In what way?

Well, they used to go into villages and get hold of people and beat them and things such as that. They say they didn't, but they bloody well did.

How widespread was that?

It was quite...not greatly widespread but they used to...in some ways you can't blame them because by that time, the African population was turning because the terrorists were coming in, or the freedom fighters, whatever you call them and they were subverting the civil population to their way of life. But this was our country, it's not a white country and everything like that and whereas in the old days, in the sixties, they would come and tell us that there was terrorists around, they wouldn't tell us, they'd assist the terrorists. Now they had Mujibas which were young boys, I'm sure you've heard, Mujibas, they used to go out and dig holes in the road and help so they could (00:48:16) plant explosives in the road and do everything to hamper the Rhodesian Forces.

So you think then it was a degree of inevitability, that the soldiers would start beating people to get information?

No, I think it was only one or two individuals who used to go and beat them in various units. I mean, if you lost your friend in a contact, sometimes you lost your head and you beat the people who captured them and things such as that.

Did the RLI try to deal with that through support? Through taking people out of the line, to try and make sure that, let's face it, a degree of military discipline was kept, or was there none of that sort of stuff?

No, I don't think the military superiors condoned that but they just looked the other way.

Did you ever witness it yourself?

Yes I did capture some terrorists, they were made to sit on tree stumps, you know, with jagged edges and smacked and hit and what have you, yes.

What happened to those terrorists?

Well they were sent back to the powers that be to interrogate them and later, a lot of them were hung. They were hung, you know.

Did you ever talk to any captured terrorists yourself?

I did yes, yes I had a conversation with them.

Did they explain why they were doing what they were?

No, I didn't actually ask them why they were doing this and everything, but I talked to them, "which area do you come from?" and "where do you come from in Zambia?" and why... well I did, I suppose, "why did you come here, to fight us?" and everything like that and they said because it's their country. "Our country". So I fell foul of the Rhodesians because I couldn't at the latter stages accept that we were superior.

Well, did you voice that?

Oh yes

And how was that received?

It wasn't received very well at all.

In what way?

(00:51:04) Well I mean between you and I: I was divorced and I had a black young lady who I'm afraid to say I had an affair with and I lived with her. As soon as they heard that, I was due for promotion in 1978, captain to major and this happened just before and they stopped my promotion. I had a European guy who had an African wife, he was in the army and his wife came back from the UK and I went to see her because I was friends with both of them and my RQMS was talking on the 'phone to somebody and he said "I bet I can get you as much butter as you'd like" because we dealt with that sort of thing and I didn't know this had happened and the SIB got this. They were tapping the 'phone and so they watched me and I went to visit this girl in Brayside, not my girlfriend or anything like that and she was going with a friend of mine who was in the army; and as soon as I just got there, they came in "what are you doing here? You shouldn't be here" and everything like that and from that day onwards, I was...whereas I was well thought of. Then I could see that things were going wrong and I'm just talking to you personally now, and I lived with this girl which was unheard of then. Then they found out I was living with a girl and they raided me, raided the house.

Was it against the law though?

Pardon?

It wasn't against the law, though?

In the army it was, that you couldn't...you can understand what I'm saying. So you were still treated as an inferior person if you were with an African. You were looked on as what they were and I found this girl very, very educated and very, very nice; and I was divorced from my wife anyway. We became quite good friends and in the end, I moved in there and people said "look, you're mad. Why did you do this?" Anyway, so they raided that home, they raided my former home where my daughters were and made my life very uncomfortable but I stood for what I believed in. In 1979, my company commander, my superior said to me "look Mike, you're the best quartermaster in the army but I've just seen the quartermaster general who says that you're never going to get promoted. You'll always remain a captain and that's it." So I thought, well let me take the fight to them. So I went home and said to Memory "get all your nice clothes on" and I drove up to the mess and took her into the anteroom and walked into the bar and said "good evening gentleman". It was like a Giles cartoon, they'd never seen an African girl in the mess. I said "good evening sir, two beers please" and took one back to her, the staff all came out of their place and were looking, the waiters couldn't believe it. Finally one of the officers who knew me, a colonel, came down and said "oh good evening Mike, good evening" and then I stopped there and then later went home, I had my own car and took her home. Then on the Monday morning, my battalion commander said "look Mike, what the bloody hell are you trying to do? What are you doing? You took an African girl into the mess" I said "yes". Next week, I'm bringing two. Because this was Muzorewa's government and we're supposed to be partners. We're (00:56:32) supposed to be over this nonsense and things like that. So, on the Wednesday, they sent for me at army HQ and said "look Mike, we're going to promote you up to Major but you must play by the rules and not take anybody else in the mess or anything like that".

Did they insist you stop your relationship, though?

No, but they'd already said before then that I must pack the relationship in and everything like that. But I think they had to accept it because of Muzorewa's government at that particular time. So maybe I was a bit of a crazy fool but you'd be surprised how many officers, when it became independent asked me "can you find me a black girlfriend?". I tell you, it's the truth. I left the Army in June 1980 and they asked me to join the Zimbabwe Army and went and set up the first integrated battalion of ZANLA and ZIPRA called 2.1 Battalion. I did at Elfrida Farm at Dombushawa and later was posted to the new 1 Commando Battalion to take over from the RLI in Harare.

That was a challenge, to get former combatants to merge. To get former warring factions to...?

Yes but strangely enough, they respected us greatly, us Rhodesians. Also I found I made one or two very very good friends in both my commanding officer ZIPRA and the 2IC of the battalion with ZANLA and they both became my great friends. And then of course during that time, the war (in

Matabeleland) started, because Nkomo set up camps and things like that. And Bob heard about this and then they raided these and then there was a small minor war in Bulawayo I was with the 1 Commando Battalion. Some of these guys who I served with, who were very, very good Ndebeles, they were put inside, they were jailed and Lookout Masuku was, well, he died in jail I think. So I've got different views about things that most whites have got.

How long did you stay in Zimbabwe?

I stopped until 2001 when I could see things. You see, I, like others thought that once it had become independent, it would be a good country but in retrospect Smith was right, they can't rule themselves with that corruption.

So looking back do you think the struggle in the sixties and the seventies was worth it?

No I don't. I think Smith should have, as I say, brought Africans into the government, into the police, into the army a long, long time before he did. There's no doubt about it. It would have become a good country, not like it is domineered now and everything like that.

How did you find coming back to the UK?

Disaster

(01:00:59) In what way?

Well I admit I was away for forty years.

Had you come back at all?

No, no and coming back here and just seeing the way the youngsters are nowadays, smoking and everything like that and they don't respect their parents; and they're beating old people up and then to see the women in the pubs, all falling about and drunk and I thought, I can't hack that here. But I've made my choice, I'm back and I can't go back there.

So has your experience been entirely negative though, coming back?

Sorry?

Has your experience of Britain, your view of Britain, yes it's changed but has it been entirely negative?

No, oh no, I mean without the National Health Service I'd be dead. I think it's fantastic, and my allotment's fantastic. There's a lot of people, when I go down to my pub, it's called the Horse and Groom, we call it the Horse and doom, they say "oh Colonel, how are you?" they treat me very, very well. I'm back in my regimental association as well and I'm a member of the Rhodesian Army Association.

How soon after coming back here did you link up with that?

I linked up straight away and you yourself, have you seen the booklets printed by the Rhodesian Army Association.

Yes I have

So all the names are in the back and everything like that and I had a call from Australia three days ago, a guy called Tich who was in the catering corps and he wrote me a card because he'd seen my name in that, said "hello Mike, how are you?" and so on. I sent him a letter back with my telephone number on and he's telephoned me and he spoke to me for about three quarters of an hour remembering the old days and remembering the old comrades and I've still got a lot of great Rhodesian friends here now.

Mike, do you feel yourself to be Rhodesian or Zimbabwean or British?

Oh British, but I will always have a place in my heart for Rhodesia.

But Britain's changed a great deal in that forty years, in your absence?

It has, it's changed in a huge way but when you come up here, you get on the bus, you know the next bus is coming in 5 minutes time. You go on (01:03:55) the underground, it works. You go to London and see the metropolitan sights and it's fantastic. You see a lot of good things here, the weather's bad. The women who get drunk and fall over are bad, the youngsters are bad, but there's a lot of good people about also.

What do you think of Rhodesia? Do you see it as a part of end of empire?

Yes, when I went to school, I was brought up in the war and I saw, they had maps out and three quarters of the world, well a quarter of the world was red, British and I was extremely proud. You can see I'm extremely proud to be British now, I am. I'm British and I've got my Queen and my country and I still stand up to listen, or when the national anthem is played. Last night at the Proms, I love it.

You've also got your troopie statue now too in Hatfield House.

Yes, well we saw that when we went down there, didn't we?

Yes

So we've got our troopie statue there and it was great to see all those Rhodies.

I was very struck, that when you were standing up to sing "I vow to thee my country" though, you weren't standing up singing that to Britain, you were singing that to Rhodesia?

Yes I was,. Yes because that's memories but I'm mentioned in the...what they printed out, The Stick Man, I don't know if you've read it?

No I haven't read 'The Stick Man'

Well afterwards, they had a dance, a dinner dance and nobody was getting up dancing so I thought well let me get up and dance, so just by myself, so I danced a bit like Michael Jackson and then suddenly people started coming on the floor and people, women were starting saying "can I dance with you?" You wouldn't believe it, I'll show you the thing that I've got now after we've talked now and you can see it. There's no fool like an old fool dear and being 80 years old...

Mike, thanks very much indeed for talking to me.

End of interview