

Ronald D. Marillier

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Note from Ronald Marillier: The footnotes made here under are made to clarify points arising from the interview below. I feel these are necessary in that there are several places in the interview where the transcript has become incoherent, mainly due to the colloquialisms used by myself and 'beating around the bush,' and I fear that the true meaning in many instances may have been lost. Additionally, it was not always possible in the interview to give the full picture or background relating to some of the questions asked. In other areas I felt it was necessary to support the transcript with explanatory notes and have done so where necessary.

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Parents born Southern Rhodesia. Born in Southern Rhodesia himself. Joined Rhodesian Army 1967. Left Army 1982. Moved to South Africa following divorce. Moved back to Zimbabwe and remarried. Moved to UK in 2006.

This is Annie Berry with Mr Ron Marillier on Wednesday the 30th of September 2009 in Bristol. Thank you very much Mr Marillier for your journey to Bristol today.

Thank you Annie, it's a pleasure to be here.

Could we begin by discussing how you came to be in Rhodesia initially; or would it have been Southern Rhodesia perhaps?

I was born in Southern Rhodesia; my parents were both born in Rhodesia as well. My grandparents came from South Africa, our roots on the Marillier side originally came from France. We were one of the Huguenots and they escaped to Great Britain during the persecutions that the Huguenots underwent. In due course, in the 1800s, a branch of the Marillier family took advantage of the British Government offer to come in with the 1820 settlers who were sent to Algoa Bay¹, and that's where the African branch of the Marillier family starts. My grandfather came to Rhodesia from South Africa, he was farming and he came by ox wagon in 1913 and came up to Southern Rhodesia to farm, and that's where the Marilliers start in Southern Rhodesia.

How interesting. Was your mother's family in Rhodesia as well?

My mother was born in Southern Rhodesia but I think her parents were either born in Southern Rhodesia or South Africa; that I'm not quite sure about.² But they were Rhodesian, they settled in Rhodesia and that's where her side of the family come from.

Which area did you grow up in, in Southern Rhodesia?

¹ Algoa Bay was a British colonial settlement in the Cape Colony of South Africa, located where Port Elizabeth stands today.

² I have since discovered that my mother's father was born in Braamfontein, South Africa.

I grew up in the area of Sinoia, now known as Chinhoyi, which is to the north west of the capital, then Salisbury now Harare. It was a farming area and I was brought up on a farm in my early years.

And what about your schooling, where was that?

We had to move from that area, we went to a little eastern border town called Chipinga and I started my junior schooling there. We then moved to a village in central Rhodesia called Umvuma and I did my primary schooling there. We then moved to the town of Que Que, again in central Rhodesia, and there I did my high schooling at Que Que High School. I did my GCE O-levels and then M-levels and I had always decided to join the Army. It was my ambition to become a professional soldier and I joined the Army as an officer cadet in 1967.

Was there any military background in your family? What had given you that inspiration to join the army?

(00:03:17) The only military background that I had was that my family had all done their bit, service speaking, in previous wars. My father fought in the Second World War with the British Forces. He was a signaller and he saw military action in North Africa and Italy and I had various uncles who did their bit. My grandfather served with the British Colonial forces in the Boer War, he fought on the British side as a young scout. He was 14 years old and lied about his age in order to get in and partake in that struggle.

Goodness, age 14?

Age 14, yes, and he gave the information he was 16 and they accepted him. He saw service with the British Forces in the Cape Colony as it was then. Apart from that, no, there was no real military background. I was just interested in the army. I did a lot of reading; it's what I wanted to be and what I set my sights on.

And what sort of values would you say that your Rhodesian schooling gave you?

We had an excellent schooling system in Rhodesia, the best teachers that you could ever find. In fact many were British, in fact I would say the majority were British. I think we had all those wonderful old world values of good manners, hard work, competition in the right sense of the word, and I value my experience at school. We had wonderful teachers and I'm forever thankful for what I received there. The education system that we had in Rhodesia was apparently one of the best in the world at that time.

With such a strong connection to Rhodesia you may not have had such a strong attachment to Britain but what was your sense of Britain and Rhodesia's relationship?

That's a very good question. I would say we felt that we were British but we were Rhodesian as well. I remember being brought up at school that whenever you went to the movies or anything like that, before the movie started they would play 'God save the Queen' and we all proudly stood up and we acknowledged that the Queen was our sovereign and the movie then went on. And it was the same at any important event.

We identified ourselves as British, so yes, we were very pro-British and very loyally British, but we were very proud to be Rhodesian as well.

And what did you think of the Queen for example?

Oh she was revered universally, we were very proud of her, she was very young at the time and I remember those days very well. She was revered, and even after what happened later on, always has been revered.

(00:06:15) Did you have much knowledge of the wider world at the time? What did you think of Rhodesia's place in the wider world?

Very, very complex. I personally have always been interested in the news and politics, and from an early age I used to read the newspapers. My mother was the first one to actually tell us that our time was up in Africa and she was the one who sounded the warnings that black rule was coming to our country. Everybody laughed at her but she proved to be 100% correct. We started feeling increasingly under threat I would say from 1961 when that infamous speech by Harold McMillan was made about the winds of change; and we felt increasingly threatened as the years rolled on. I would say we started feeling very angry with the attitude of certain British politicians who were prepared to just wipe out our place in Africa and basically just hand us over to forces that we knew would be very destructive for the country. That's about all I can say on that one.

What did your parents do during your schooling, did one of them work or both of them work?

My father was a government civil servant, he worked for the veterinary department and he used to travel a lot to the rural areas, white farmers, and to the tribal areas where the black people lived. He basically looked after the livestock on behalf of government. So he was the sole breadwinner at one time but then at one time my mother started working as well because we needed the extra money. She started working in town. I think she got a job at a shop somewhere and eventually she worked for the Rhodesian Police in a secretarial capacity.

It sounded like she had some views on politics and so on?

Yes, I would say she was probably my inspiration in that regard because she always used to read the newspapers herself and of course I got interested and that's why I became so interested in politics. In fact I think I missed my calling, I should have been a politician.

It would be interesting to draw out some of those links between politics and the military role later in the interview because sometimes I'm sure they were in tension.

Yes.

So where did you feel that your home was at the time?

Rhodesia, yes.

Did you ever refer to Britain as 'home'? I know some people did.

No because I'd never been here, for a start. No, it certainly wasn't home to me, but we knew about Britain, we saw films and we had a good idea of what the (00:09:37) country was like. My own views towards Britain were, I would say, in spite of the political side, I hated the left-wing type political stuff that was coming out from certain politicians, but for the ordinary British people, we were very much on side. I personally did a lot of military reading because the military was where I wanted to go. I read all the important military campaigns that British Forces had been involved in, especially World War Two, and I was very, very proud to feel that we were part of that. Our Rhodesian forces made a substantial contribution in both the world wars, and I was very proud and very, very pro-British. I remember reading American accounts where they were critical of British and I would be totally against them. You know, the British were better generals and that type of thing. So yes, we were pro-British as people, not politicians, that's another story.

I want to ask a bit about Rhodesian society at the time. I realise that there was no legal apartheid but it has been referred to as a sort of petty apartheid or social apartheid. Were you aware of any kind of racial tensions or divisions in your childhood?

We had a colour bar in Southern Rhodesia. It's a pity that it was there but I think it was just a natural progression. Our forefathers had taken over the country at a time when imperialism was a big thing. They'd had a couple of rebellions on their hands before I was born so obviously the tension was always there, that the blacks would rise up one day. But I would say that at grass roots level – and I can say that quite sincerely – race relations have always been very good in Southern Rhodesia. Throughout those days, yes there were aspirations that were being voiced by various black politicians – Joshua Nkomo was the main man during my time and various others – and we didn't know that nationalism was such a powerful force, but the tensions were there. But race relations I would say were pretty good, and in fact remain good to this day, and in fact I think have been the saving grace of Zimbabwe even to this day. There was no hatred between the races, if I could put it that way, no hatred. I think it's a pity we ever had a colour bar, or it should have been gradually foreseen and dealt with over the years, which it wasn't unfortunately, and it contributed towards the problem that came later.

And of course the society evolved a lot through the Federation days, the 50s and 60s, even early 70s as well. But what did you think of white immigration to Rhodesia; did you have a sense of that increasing at all?

I would say that white immigration was very welcome because our numbers were low. From what I understand, at the end of the Second World War, the total white Rhodesian population was about 65,000, somewhere round there, and there was massive immigration that came in after the war. A lot of people came from Great Britain into Rhodesia and especially when the Federation took place, there was massive immigration; there was such confidence at that particular time. Those people that came in all made their mark; they were good British working people of all classes. We had the more (00:13:41) wealthy coming in and investing their money and of course we had the working class people, railwaymen in particular who basically took over the railways, and various people in the steel industry. Farmers came out, I would say they were most welcome. Initially when they came they seemed to have these liberal-type ideas and they were irksome, but it wasn't long before they were even worse than we were, you know, whenever they saw the reality on the ground. Not that it was serious, but they came in with the idea that the poor blacks were downtrodden

and when they'd been here for a while, they began to see the real situation: They weren't so downtrodden after all and they could all...because they had their problems that could be pretty irksome, so they settled down well.³

You would have been then there for conscription age presumably?

Yes.

Did you eventually come to join the Army as a result of that or were you a volunteer or was it a case of being both?

No, there was conscription; every young man had to do national service. It didn't apply to me because I left straight from school and joined the Army as an officer cadet but I had one funny incident relating to that. When I'd long been in the Army, I was already a captain at that stage, and I was based in Salisbury. I was Adjutant up there of a battalion, and I can't remember what happened but basically a letter came through demanding that I report for immediate military service otherwise I was going to be prosecuted. And here I was in the regular forces already! Of course we had a good laugh at that, I think we wrote to them and they wrote back and said "we're very embarrassed by this, sorry about that."⁴

They must have got the wrong person.

Yes, they saw my name and didn't realise. They probably thought I'd been dodging the draft so to speak.

What did you and your family think of conscription and national service?

I think everybody realised it was something that had to be done. Both my brothers were conscripted and they did their time in the Army. Initially it was four and a half

³ Notes on white immigration to Rhodesia: Farmers were among the immigrants that came out to Rhodesia after World War 2, and they settled in well. Many immigrants had some misguided and liberal views when they first arrived. They believed that the black people of the country were oppressed and poor. However it did not take them long to realise that that they were not downtrodden at all, and were in fact quite contented with their lives. They would also soon realise that the African people had certain differences in cultural outlook and certain limitations, which could cause some frustration e.g. the African habit of not regarding timekeeping as an important work ethic.

⁴ Notes on conscription: There was conscription in the country, which carried on (I think), after the demobilisation after World War 2. Every young man was required to undergo National Service almost as soon as he left school, when he would have to report for Military training at Llewellyn Barracks, just outside Bulawayo. When his four and a half months basic training was completed, he would be required to join the Territorial Army Reserve and undergo various camps and a certain number of hours training every month for a certain number of years.

As the security situation in Rhodesia deteriorated, National Service was increased to nine months, later to a year, and later still to 18 months. After a man's basic training, he was sent to one of several 'Independent Companies' established in certain strategic border areas, or he could be attached to various Brigade support units e.g. Signals or Engineers. Later, men were attached to Regular Army units.

I was not called up for National Service, since I joined the Regular Army straight from school to undergo training as an Officer Cadet. I had a rather amusing incident a few years later, when I had already been in the Army for about six years, and was serving in the SAS. I received a letter from the Ministry of Defence ordering me to report for National Service training, and threatening dire consequences if I did not respond. I was at the 'sharp end,' i.e. on active service operations, when the letter arrived. When I informed the Ministry of the situation, I received a rather embarrassed apology.

months. It was then increased to nine months and eventually increased to eighteen months. I think they found it irksome to start off with, people hated the Army, but they knew it had to be done. In later years when the war took off, the amount of patriotism that came out, people basically wanted to join the Army and join the military forces and do their bit. Some of them proved to be very, very good soldiers, or many of them did. There were your shirkers of course; I dealt with a lot of them, especially when I was adjutant at that unit I was telling you about. I saw a lot of shirkers there who tried to get out of it and many left the country because they weren't prepared to do their bit.⁵

(00:16:48) **The chicken run?**

Yes the chicken run, that's right

Did your family believe in it as well?

Oh yes, without a doubt. I think the average Rhodesian family would look down on shirkers and people who didn't do their bit were very much looked down upon as you would have found in this country in the Second World War. The same sort of thing.

Was that something that remained towards the end of the war? Perhaps some families didn't want their children involved in the conflict later and so on.

Yes.

Do you think that's a view that changed, that people understood a bit more later on?

Yes, a lot of people didn't want their sons killed. You know we had quite a few casualties and a lot of deaths started coming out and naturally the mothers didn't want their sons going off to war and getting killed. Some people actually left the country as a result of that. When the children were approaching the end of their school days, they saw the writing on the wall for the country and thought, well, there's no future in this country and they left the country. I don't think anybody condemned people for that and it was understandable, but I think those who remained knew that they had to do their time in the Army and they basically accepted it.⁶

⁵ Notes on National Service: Everybody realised that National Service had to be accepted, and was a National duty. Most did not like it, but were accepting. Both my brothers were conscripted, and they did their 'time' in the Army. Some people hated it, others quite enjoyed it.

A sense of patriotism developed as the conflict began to take effect, and it was good to see the way that unit 'esprit de corp' began to develop in the Territorial Army battalions as men were called up out of their civilian jobs to do military service on the borders. These units consisted entirely of civilian men, including officers, on call up. Many conscripted men became very good soldiers.

There were some shirkers of course. I dealt with several of them, especially when I was Adjutant of a Territorial Army unit, i.e. 1st battalion Rhodesia Regiment, based in Salisbury. There were a lot of young men who left the country as soon as they had finished school, rather than face the call up.

⁶ Notes on the impact of conscription on families: Parents obviously did not want their sons their sons to get killed in action, and dreaded the knock on the door as the Army Padre came to give them the tragic news. As the war progressed, casualties increased, and there were deaths, i.e. killed in action. Many people left the country for that reason. They could not see an end to the conflict, and they did not feel it was worth the sacrifice to remain. One could not condemn anybody for this reason. Many people could see that we were fighting a no win war, especially with the international support given to the terrorist organisations, and the increasing isolation of Rhodesia. However, many people saw the conflict through to the end, and come what may, they intended to continue living in the country, which was the only home they knew.

Can you tell me when you first joined the Army, what year was it?

It was 1967 and at that time Rhodesia had just become really involved in the terrorist war. We'd had some incidents as early as 1964 before the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. So it was coming. We didn't realise how big it would become. When I joined in 1967, the first of the major incursions had come into Rhodesia and these occurred when I was doing my officer training.

Where were you actually at UDI in '65?

I was at school, I was in form 3 at school. I think that was when it took place.

Do you remember what you thought of it at the time?

Very well indeed, yes. (00:19:11) I remember the sort of lead up to all this. Ian Smith had taken over as Prime Minister at a time when national morale was very low and confidence was low. He was a very, very inspiring leader and he basically turned things around. The Federation was about to break up. They were giving independence to Zambia and Malawi as they are today, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland; and Rhodesia, which was far more advanced politically than the other two, was not being offered independence. So he was making demands, it's only right, we're more advanced than they were politically, and we had a great record of financial management and war service for the crown. We were entitled to independence and they weren't prepared to grant it, they basically wanted to hand us over. So he was saying that we would seize our independence, reluctantly, and so of course it was all very exciting. We had a lot of doubts that it was wise to do. My father certainly did and he was a very staunch Rhodesian, but he didn't think it was a good idea. But anyway, it went ahead, a referendum was held. I think the question that was put to the electorate "do you want your independence?" It was given "yes we do," and the implication was "even if we have to take it," although it wasn't put that clearly, and UDI was declared. I remember it very well at the time. We were at school and all this tension was in the air and the headmaster summoned the school and told us school was over for that day. We were to go home to listen to a very important broadcast at 11.00 on the 11th of November 1965, I remember that very well.⁷

⁷ Notes on UDI: I remember the event of UDI very well. I was still at school when it happened. Mr Ian Smith had taken over as Prime Minister at a time when national morale was very low. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland had just been broken up by the British Government, the two northern territories were being offered independence, increasingly strident demands were being made that Southern Rhodesia should submit to so called majority rule, i.e. black rule, by the local nationalist parties, the British Government, the Afro Asian block, the United Nations, and every other interfering body you could think of. We seemed to have a bleak future.

Ian Smith was a very inspiring leader. He insisted that Rhodesia should be given independence, based on promises made by certain British Government Ministers prior to the breakup of the Federation, and the fact that Rhodesia had been a self governing colony since 1923. It had an excellent record of good governance, a well managed economy, and an excellent war record for the two world wars, and of continued loyal service to the Crown. He did not believe in the concept of one man one vote, as this had already brought chaos to Africa, and he had no doubt that it would bring chaos to Rhodesia. We had the recent tragic example of the decolonisation of the Belgian Congo right on our doorstep, and the country was in dread of such a possibility happening in our own country. Moreover, the British colonies recently given independence in Africa were hardly inspiring examples of well governed countries. Corruption was already rife in them, and an intolerance of white people was already manifesting itself.

Ian Smith pressed for independence. A referendum had been held, and the electorate voted that it wanted independence. The British Government would agree to independence based only on NIBMAR i.e. no independence without majority rule. It is a long story. The result was UDI, [continued to page 8]

What were people like your father's hesitations about?

I think they had a sense that it would lead to bad things later on, isolation. I mean we didn't even know at that particular time whether Britain would invade us or not. The threat was there that they may come and quash the rebellion. That could have happened. In which case there was no way that we could have really stood up against a vastly superior, certainly in numbers, British Army, if they'd really wanted to do that. So it was fraught with risk and I think there was that dread that that could happen.

Was that put at ease? I know for example that a lot of border patrols were sent up and around and nothing happened. So was there a sense of relief after a few months?

Yes there was. When Ian Smith declared independence he actually said "it'll be a seven day wonder," and in a way it was.⁸ Although there was a lot of shouting and we were suddenly a threat to world peace: The Afro/Asian block raised all hell about it

[continued from previous page] i.e. Rhodesia declared independence unilaterally. I think this was bad mistake, as it infuriated the British Government, and put the country in a position of illegality.

The lead up to UDI was very tense. Many had their doubts about it. They felt that we had a moral right to independence, but that to seize independence in face of a hostile world was to court trouble. My father was one who doubted the wisdom of UDI for these reasons.

I was at school the day UDI was declared, i.e. on Thursday 11 November 1965. I was in class when our Headmaster called an emergency Assembly, where he announced that the Prime Minister would be making a broadcast to the nation at about 1PM that day. He told us that we were to go home and listen to the broadcast, as it was of vital national importance, and he dismissed school for the day. We all knew that UDI was "in the air", and we went home to listen to Ian Smith's momentous speech.

⁸ Notes on the events that followed UDI: At the time of UDI Ian Smith said it would be a "seven day wonder". In many ways it was. Before long the furore and the so called "threat to world peace" that Rhodesia posed was forgotten, as other far more pressing international problems came on to the world scene e.g. the Vietnam War, the Middle East crisis etc.

Naturally, UDI did cause a storm. The Afro Asian Block and the United Nations were in an uproar, and the British Government, being severely embarrassed, was infuriated. Rhodesia was branded as a threat to world peace, and the afro Asian Block demanded that international sanctions be implemented immediately, and that Britain should put the rebellion down via the force of arms without delay.

Zambia invited the British Government to use Zambia as a base to station its forces to attack Rhodesia. Britain did station some military presence there, in the form of a Royal Air Force (RAF) fighter bomber squadron. It was not long before we made contact with elements of these units, as their personnel crossed the Zambia border into Rhodesia as tourists, and to visit their friends in the Rhodesian Air Force!

The Rhodesian Army deployed troops to certain border points as a precaution, mainly to guard strategic installations e.g. plant at Kariba Dam.

If the British had invaded Rhodesia, it is possible that there could have been resistance, although I have my doubts if this would have happened. I think negotiations would have sorted the problem out. However, if they had been ordered to invade, Rhodesia would not have been able to resist for very long, as we simply would not have had the manpower or equipment.

I understand that British Army generals were not happy to attack Rhodesia, probably for reasons of kith and kin, friendships, mutual loyalty and regard. They must have been asked what their attitude was by the British Government, and I understand that they told Wilson that they were extremely reluctant to invade Rhodesia. Wilson was in a quandary, and he handed over the problem to the United Nations, which imposed compulsory international economic sanctions on the country, which was to last for the next fifteen years.

In spite of all this, Rhodesia doggedly pressed ahead, and the country prospered for the next 10 years or so.. Morale in the country soared, and the economy boomed. The country became very innovative, and ways were found to circumvent sanctions.

and went to the United Nations and demanded force; and Zambia invited the British forces to station their bases there and invade us and all that sort of thing. And they did, the British forces did actually come into Zambia, mainly the Royal Air Force, who had a base in Lusaka. But the funny thing about it is that those British pilots and so on who were there, were crossing the border, coming in for holidays and coming into our offices and messes to meet their friends in the Rhodesian Air Force. There was no way that they wanted to invade Rhodesia at all. They were very, very sympathetic to our (00:23:01) cause and it was a laugh, the whole thing was a laugh. Yes, we had border patrols, and I think there certainly would have been resistance if they had come, but we certainly wouldn't have lasted if they'd come seriously. Apparently the British Generals had actually told Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister, that there was a feeling in the British Army they did not want to do this, it was not what they wanted to do at all. If they had their orders to do it, they would have done it but they certainly wouldn't have the full support of the British forces. I think he was in a quandary, he didn't know what to do and he basically handed us over to the United Nations. Rhodesia prospered, for the next ten years we prospered. Sanctions were implemented against us but the country went ahead and prospered like we'd never prospered before.

Can you tell me about your training in 1967 and which battalion and so on you went into?

My training was done at the School of Infantry. We underwent an officers' course, which would have been virtually exactly the same as your Sandhurst trainees would have gone through. Bar a lot of academic stuff because your course was eighteen months, ours was only 1 year. But the military aspect would have been virtually identical. Many of our instructors were British who had signed on with the Rhodesian Army, and it was exactly the same. So I was trained at the School of Infantry. I was commissioned in February or March of the following year, February 1968, and I went into the RAR, the 1st battalion Rhodesian African Rifles as a Platoon Commander, commissioned as a Second Lieutenant.

What was it like going into a position of command?

It was a bit awesome because I was still very young. I was nineteen years old when I was commissioned and brought into this battalion. It had its own traditions and pride and it was awesome. Suddenly I had this big responsibility, and I was now a platoon commander. I needn't have worried too much because, as you have here in the British Army, when you get a young officer coming in; the real man who runs the platoon is the platoon Sergeant really. The officer is there under training anyway, and he's looked after and guided and so on. Yes, he's got to make critical decisions on the battlefield, but the old sergeant is there, and in our case we had two senior NCOs. We had a platoon Warrant Officer and a Sergeant, and they were there and saw us right.⁹

⁹ Notes on assuming command of a platoon: It was very challenging. I was very young. I was only nineteen years old when I was commissioned, still a schoolboy at heart I suppose. I was sent to the First Battalion the Rhodesian African Rifles as a Second Lieutenant (Subaltern). This unit had its own traditions and pride. I need not have worried. I was taken in hand by the Platoon Warrant Officer and the Platoon Sergeant, who looked after me well and soon got me settled in.

It was the same system that prevails in the British Army, where the senior NCOs run the platoons and keep the men under control. Naturally the young officer has to make the critical decisions in battle, but with lots of help from the senior NCOs.

To what extent were there any tensions between generations or areas of the country, people who'd come from different areas?

Amongst the black people?

Well actually I suppose both. Yes, that would be interesting but I also just mean amongst the ranks of white officers as well.

(00:26:28) Not really, we had the old rivalry where we felt that Salisbury, the capital, grabbed everything and grabbed all the glory. Everything good went to Salisbury, and we had that in the Army as well. We felt that they were grabbing for themselves all the time and in fact Salisbury became known as 'bamba zonke,' 'grab everything,' which is an Ndebele word. You'd often hear people talking about going to 'bamba zonke,' that was going to Salisbury, the people who grabbed everything. That was the only real rivalry we had amongst the whites. Added to this, Salisbury seemed to be the place where most investment was placed. Matabeleland, they felt they were relegated, but nothing serious really. Amongst the blacks I would say things were different. You did have definite differences between the tribes, I think under good rule, you know Pax Romana, you've heard of Pax Romana, the peace that the Romans basically held together by their power, it was the same thing in Rhodesia. With a strong government, these tensions weren't allowed to show themselves. But that did come later, they were there. There were underlying tensions, yes. But we had Matabeles and we had Mashonas in our battalion and they got on fine.

Did you notice any kind of recruiting trend within the RAR? Were there particular areas that they recruited in?

Yes there were, most of them came from the Mashona tribes. There were some Matabeles as well but the majority came from Mashona tribes, which I think in a way was right because the bulk of the population was Mashona. The official language of the battalion was Shona, so most of the recruits did come from there. But any Ndebele could join if he wanted to, there was no problem.

Did you personally learn any African languages, perhaps in your childhood or later on when you joined the Army?

I would say one of the shames of our country was that we didn't learn the African language as we should have, and it should have been really pushed as an agenda. It wasn't, and I'm ashamed to say that I cannot speak an ethnic African language. What we did have – people have probably told you this in your previous interviews – was a sort of a pidgin language, which we called chilapalapa. But you could make yourself understood, and in fact it's a very useful communication language, which I can speak to this day, and it served me well on many occasions. We weren't allowed to use it in the RAR. We could either speak Shona to the soldiers or English. We were not allowed to use it. But there were times we did anyway, and they used to have a good laugh about it. The African soldiers didn't mind.¹⁰

¹⁰ Notes on learning languages: I would say that it was a great shame that we did not learn our African languages. We certainly should have done, and we should have learnt them at school. It was not considered necessary, as most Africans had learnt English and could speak it quite well, and so we never bothered to learn their language. It was a great pity, and it would have saved us a lot of problems. [continued to page 11]

Was it difficult to work in a battalion who were speaking Shona that you perhaps couldn't understand?

No, not really.

(00:29:44) It wasn't an issue?

I would say that I could understand a lot of what they were saying because you pick it up. I used to speak a little bit of Shona to them but really I cannot say I could speak the language. They were loyal soldiers, they had their little conspiracies from time to time if they didn't like you, but generally speaking I would say it wasn't really a problem there. But it's our shame, it should have been pushed as an agenda from school, and I would say it contributed a lot towards our problems later on as a nation. We learnt French and things like that at school, and Afrikaans. I mean we should have been learning African languages, but that was one of the weaknesses of our country.

What did you think of other elements of the white-led security services? Did you come into contact with them at that stage early on, for example Special Branch or SAS which you joined later?

Yes, are you talking about my early days in the Army or generally?

Well generally, but perhaps you had experienced of them in the early days?

I did, even from early days, inevitably you came into contact with the police and the Air Force in particular, but they were all part and parcel of the security forces. We had excellent working relationships with all services of the security forces. The Rhodesian Air Force were excellent, the Rhodesian police, the BSAP as you called them, British South Africa Police, were excellent. SB, Special Branch, was a very good intelligence service, especially locally. They were our main intelligence service and we worked with them, even as a young platoon commander. It was inevitable for the type of low-level warfare that we were involved in, that you came into contact with them. In later years of course, when the war started, or whenever there was a major operation, the Army would establish what they called a JOC, Joint Operations Command. At the JOC, you'd have all your representatives, Police, Army, Special Branch and Air Force; those four, and later on Internal Affairs. They would all sit in the JOC and they would discuss operations in a particular area. The JOC concept came from experience serving with the British forces in Malaya, where a lot of our officers who became our generals in later years – Peter Walls, Sandy McLean and various other people – had all served with British Forces in Malaya as the Rhodesian contribution there. They knew all about the JOCs and the whole concept. In fact our training and tactics were

[continued from previous page] I cannot say that I can speak an African language of Rhodesia. I can only speak a sort of 'pigeon Native' known in Rhodesia as 'Chilapalapa,' or in South Africa as 'Fanakalo.' This was originally a southern African language that was used in the South African gold mines. Thousands of African men used to come from all over southern Africa to work as contract mineworkers. There was a myriad of languages to cope with i.e. several African languages from the region, English, Afrikaans and so on. A sort of a lingua franca developed, and was used all over southern Africa, on mines, in factories, on farms etc. It was a very useful medium of communication. However, black politicians derided it, and branded it racist.

We were not allowed to use this in the RAR. We were told that the official language was Shona, and we were only to talk to our troops Shona or English. However, there were times we used this language anyway, much to the amusement of our soldiers, who would playfully engage us in the same.

developed from the Malayan experience and brought out into the Rhodesian security forces.¹¹

Is that something that you felt worked and were you happy with its functioning?

Oh yes, without doubt, it worked very, very well indeed. I think we had a lot of pride in each other between the different branches of the security forces. Yes, you (00:32:56) had your disputes; you had some difficult characters on all sides who would try and dominate the proceedings. I would say, to the credit of the other services, that they tended to recognise that the Army would have the major say at the end of the day, because the Army of course constituted the majority of the forces serving on the ground, and the others fitted in very well indeed and gave the support that they required. But they were joint decisions. Yes, it worked extremely well and it was an idea copied from the British Army, of which we were a part at one time.

You mentioned that when you were in your training, there were some insurgencies going on?

Yes.

How did that affect you as a new recruit, having just started?

Well we were very eager to get in there and to tackle the insurgency. It was a low-level insurgency when I first joined. We'd had a few incursions as early as 1964, which was before UDI took place as I mentioned, and some nasty things happened there. If you've read Peter Godwin's first book, his neighbours were brutally murdered in the eastern part of Rhodesia, they were ambushed by the...

The Crocodile Gang?

The Crocodile Gang, that's right, and they were brutally murdered. So that was the start of it.¹² They were coming from Zambia and our forces were patrolling. They

¹¹ Notes on cooperation with other Security Forces: We inevitably came into contact or had to work in close so operation with other branches of the security forces, especially with the BSAP (British South Africa Police), SB (Special Branch), and the Rhodesian Air Force. Inter service co operation was of a very high standard in Rhodesia. Our different branches of the Security services worked well together, and we had a mutual high regard for each other. Many close friendships were formed between men of the different services. We worked well together at all levels of command.

This close co operation was developed from the JOC system, (Joint Operations Centre), which was established during the Malayan emergency during the fifties, and where several of our later senior Army and Air Force officers had served. Some of our generals were involved in the Malayan experience, and included men such as Generals Peter Walls, Sandy Mc Lean, and John Hickman, among others. They put the lessons of the Malayan experience to good use in the Rhodesian context long before the conflict started. Our tactics manuals included the establishment of JOCs in certain situations.

A JOC would be established to control and co ordinate anti terrorist operations in a designated area. Daily JOC meetings would be held at which the local senior officers representing the Army, Air Force, BSAP, SB, and Internal Affairs would attend, and their operations would be coordinated, intelligence would be shared, and joint operational plans formulated.

¹² Notes on the Crocodile Gang: They brutally murdered Mr Oberholzer and his wife one night in the Eastern Highlands in a car ambush. This was the start of the 'War of Liberation.' The gang came from Zambia in 1964, long before Rhodesia's UDI. Our security forces tracked the gang down eventually and eliminated it. Several incursions took place between 1964 and 1966. [continued to page 13]

caught most of those insurgents and sorted them out. So there'd been quite a bit of that going on during '64/'65/'66. When I was training, the first major crossing took place with Operation Nickel, when they crossed from Zambia. I think about 84 of them came across and that's when we started taking our first big casualties. They were a very determined gang that came through at that time, while I was still undergoing Officer Cadet training.

Did your training reflect that counter insurgency element at the time?

Yes. I would say that the major part of our training was COIN, counter insurgency, although we did learn classical war as well, which is what we would have fitted into if we'd been involved in a major war. But counter insurgency was very important and I think the training we received was realistic, yes, and was being upgraded all the time with experience, as the war went along.

It did develop a lot in latter years didn't it?

They developed a lot yes. In fact, I think new lessons were found out in our war, which we tried to pass on to the British Army. I don't know whether they're actually using them but we'll probably speak about more of that later (00:35:51) on. Certain concepts that came out that I know have been passed on.¹³

Yes, that's interesting. When did you sense that the war really started then? Which year would you say that things really...

I personally, because I've always been interested in politics, I sensed that this was it when we were training and that big operation took place. And the next big operation was the following year, just after I'd got commissioned, Operation Cauldron. I was personally involved in that and when I was personally involved in that first major contact, I actually knew that this was it, that this was not just going to go away. We were going to see more and more of that in my lifetime.¹⁴

[continued from previous page] When I was undergoing officer training 1967, the first major incursion took place in northern Matabeleland, from Zambia and across the Zambezi River. About 84 terrorists crossed the Zambezi. Among them was a contingent of South African ANC terrorists, whose intention was to get experience and to go on South Africa and begin the armed struggle there. That was why the South African Government sent companies of SAP (South African Police) to assist Rhodesia.

Rhodesian security forces established a JOC, and Operation Nickel was launched. Some heavy fighting ensued, and the gang fought some very determined actions. A number of casualties were inflicted on the Rhodesian security forces, including several killed in action. After about a month the gang was eliminated.

¹³ Notes on these developments: Some of our counter insurgency concepts were passed on the British Army probably during the conflict. We had many ex British military personnel who joined the Rhodesian Army as soon as they retired or left the British forces, and no doubt they must have passed on some of our tactics to their colleagues back home. After 1980, Zimbabwe's independence, several younger Rhodesian Army officers were able to join the British Army, and I know for a fact that a lot of our tactics and modus operandi was passed on. I would say that details of our MPV (Mine and ambush protected vehicles) would have been passed on, as well as the highly successful Fire Force concept.

¹⁴ Notes on the start of war: I sensed the war really started in March 1968, when I had my first contact with terrorists, shortly after I was commissioned. However, I suppose it started much earlier than that, as it was always the intention of the African nationalists to launch a 'liberation war' against us, and they were being egged on by the Afro Asian block, as well as the Communist powers viz Russia, China, Cuba etc.

I was involved in a major operation in 1968, shortly after I was commissioned. [continued to page 14]

Which area was it that it would have been in? Hurricane was one of the first...

No, Hurricane was the seventies.

They're split into areas aren't they?

Yes. That was in northern Mashonaland, to answer your question. I've got a document here if you're interested.

Yes, if you want to consult it now.

It was Mashonaland where the first major incursion of 1968 took place. That was in March 1968 and a major gang came in. As a brand new officer who had just been commissioned, nineteen years old, I had my first major contact with the enemy. I've just got a few photos over here. No I didn't bring the certificate for Operation Cauldron, sorry...

Oh I'd love to see some of those as well.

[Shows photographs]

When we were school cadets – school cadets was compulsory – that was me there, I was the school Second Lieutenant taking the salute. I think it was the Queen's birthday parade or something, so we honoured the Queen. You can see now that was after UDI, we still had the Queen's birthday parade. And that was probably the same parade there, when the general officer commanding was coming round and inspecting our cadet corps.

Very smart for cadets, yes, really smart uniforms

[00:38:44 to 00:39:05 looking at photographs]

(00:39:05) That was President Du Pont when I was being presented with my medal there in 1971. I was not badged SAS at that time, that's the SAS beret there, the same as you have here, exactly the same. That's another one there of the investiture, President Du Pont. These are pictures of me when we first got told that we were going to get our medals. He was a recipient of the Bronze Cross and so was Al Tourle, he was a wonderful soldier, absolutely wonderful soldier, he was killed by a lion in later years and he was a fantastic shot and very, very cool under fire. Tragically he was killed by a lion. He was leading a tracking course near Lake Kariba and it was a time of very, very high rainfall and what they didn't realise was that the old lions were able to ambush game at water points where the game would concentrate, you know, the water would be scattered. The water was now scattered all over the place, the old lions couldn't do that and one night, he was with the patrol that he was training and they had a big fire going and he was sitting on a rock and lion jumped over and took him and broke his neck. The chaps were in absolute pandemonium, they eventually

[continued from previous page] My platoon was sent to track down and eliminate a gang of terrorists that had crossed the Zambezi into northern Mashonaland, and which had established itself in a wilderness area in the Zambezi valley. About 120 terrorists had crossed. Tracks had been discovered by a game ranger of the Department of Wild Life and Parks, and he had alerted the security forces. A JOC was formed at the Police station at the town of Karoi, and Operation Cauldron was launched. I was put on the tracks of the gang; we had a four day follow-up, which resulted in a clash on the Maura River in the Zambezi valley.

shot, well they didn't shoot the lion because they were scared of shooting him, but the lion eventually ran off and he died the following morning at about five o'clock. He was a wonderful soldier. These were my final years in the Army, that's when I was taking over my final command from him, that's me there, and that was my farewell. That's me I think receiving my farewell gift of whatever it was, and that was just a parade that we had in Umtali of the battalion that I commanded at the end. That was a whole battalion there. So those were just a few random photographs that I brought, they might be of some interest.

That's brilliant, it's really interesting to see them. So Operation Cauldron that you were involved in was quite a serious one and you did have some contacts?

Yes, it was a major contact we had, I'd only just been commissioned and I took a train to Bulawayo where my battalion was based and I was told I was being posted to a company, which had been detached from us in the Mashonaland area at the other end of the country. So I took another train there back to Harare (Salisbury) and from there I was picked up by the Army. I then got back to where they were based, about thirty miles outside of Salisbury and was told that the company was out in the field on border patrol and the ration truck was coming in and would take me back to them. So I caught the ration truck and in due course, went out to join my company out in the bush. They were based at Chirundu which is right on the Zambian border and my platoon was deployed along the Zambezi River in ambush positions because terrorists used to come in and infiltrate and do a few things and go back again, so we used to ambush certain points. I remember I'd done one run to visit them the one day, and that night, the news came through that a major crossing had taken place and they'd found tracks about seventy miles away somewhere in northern Mashonaland and my platoon was to be sent out immediately. So I went out that night, picked up these ambush positions, got into our vehicles and went off to this place, to Sinoia where I was born, and spent the night there.

The next morning we took our vehicles into this game reserve and at a certain point we were taken out in helicopters and (00:43:42) put on the tracks of this gang. And some game ranger, it's all in the historical records, had actually done patrols and he'd seen these tracks and he was the one who gave the alert that there was a major gang in the area. So I was put on those tracks and we did a four-day follow up in March, intensely hot weather. I didn't even know the names of all my soldiers. Then on Thursday afternoon, just after we'd had our lunch break, as we crossed the river we came under very heavy fire and all the platoon battle drills that I'd learnt came in and we did a flanking attack and got beaten back. But what we didn't know was that by our aggression, we'd unnerved the terrorists, and that they actually pulled out of the position. We also called in a major air strike, Canberra bombers came in, they bombed the place and also bombed us in the process, killed one of my guys, took his head off. Then that evening we swept over it again, over the position, the terrorists had gone and we found the body of this poor chap. The bomb had landed right next to him and taken his head right off. So that was my first major encounter, I was still a schoolboy.¹⁵

¹⁵ Notes on Operation Cauldron 1968: In February 1968 I was commissioned after my officer cadet training. I was sent to Bulawayo, Methuen Barracks, where my regiment, the First Battalion the Rhodesian African Rifles was based, in order to meet my commanding officer, Lt Col Bill Godwin. He told me that I was to report to Inkoma Barracks, which is about 30 miles north of Salisbury, where I was to take command of 14 Platoon of E Company, which had been detached from the battalion for the year.

I was placed on a train that night, and I arrived at Salisbury station the next morning, where I was met by an NCO and driver from my company, and taken to Inkoma Barracks. [continued to page 15]

That's a very sudden position of responsibility you were in as well.

Yes, that's right, it was.

Having to command a group, who, like you say, you haven't even learnt all of their names.

I didn't even know their names, but that's what happens in war, I mean when you think of the British Army subalterns and what they went through in World War One. What I had was easy compared to what those poor guys went through. They assumed command and they were over the top and half the platoon would be wiped out, you know, I had nothing like that thank God.

[continued from previous page] When I arrived there, I found that the company was not in barracks, but deployed in the Zambezi valley at Chirundu, on the Zambezi River on border patrol operations. I caught the ration truck the next morning and made my way to Chirundu, arriving there in the evening.

When I arrived, I found that my platoon had been deployed in ambush positions along the river road east of Chirundu. Occasional terrorist crossings, probably for reconnaissance purposes, were the reason for these ambushes. Two days later I was sent for by the company commander, who told me that a large terrorist crossing had been discovered about 70 miles to the south east, in the Sinoia/Karoi area, and I was to proceed with my platoon that very night to Karoi, where I would get instructions. I had to collect my platoon by vehicle from its various ambush positions on the Zambezi road. I eventually left Chirundu at about 10 PM that night, and arrived in Karoi early the following morning.

After a briefing by a Police officer in Karoi, I was given a guide, and we headed for a military bush camp in the wilderness area, arriving late that afternoon. We were then helicoptered out to the scene of the tracks that evening, where I met a police officer, Inspector Eric Saul, with two of his constables, and the Game Ranger who had discovered the tracks, David Rushworth and his two trackers. We spent the night on the tracks.

Early the next morning we commenced an exhausting four day follow up in the searing heat and in the rugged terrain of the Zambezi Valley. When it became apparent that we were on the tracks of a large and well equipped gang, the JOC sent in a Troop of the Rhodesian Light Infantry (RLI) under the command of LT Dumpy Pearce. Since he was senior to me, he assumed command of the follow up.

The follow up resulted in contact with a gang of about 84 terrorists on the Maura River, about 40 miles north of Karoi, on the 18 March, at about 1430 in the afternoon. We had taken a midday lunch break on the banks of the river, and shortly after we had resumed the follow up, Dumpy's troop came under heavy fire from a Terrorist position on a small knoll beside the river, and his troop was pinned down. He radioed me and asked me for assistance. Having done a brief "recce", I told him I intended to do a right flanking attack. The battle drills we had so often and rigorously practiced in our training now clicked into place. I took my platoon to a right flanking position, following a small dry rivulette as a covered approach. As we launched our assault, we came under heavy fire, and were held up. It was decided to call in an air strike, and I withdrew my platoon to the start point.

The air strike duly went in. The Air Force used a Canberra Bomber on this run. One of the bombs overshot the position and landed amongst us with a terrific bang as we waited in the assembly area. Fortunately there were no casualties. When the air strike was over, I went onto the position with some of the RLI troops, and we discovered that one of my soldiers had been killed by the bombing.

When the position was finally cleared, it was discovered that we had hit a large gang of about 84 terrorists, and that they had abandoned their position, probably as a result of the aggression of our attack, and that they had left all their kit and equipment, and loads of ammunition. We spent the night on the Maura River, near the position. The next morning, further RLI reinforcements arrived, and they continued the follow up of the now scattered gang. My platoon was withdrawn, and returned to Chirundu to continue our tasks there.

Mopping up operations were continued by the RLI, who had to endure several fierce encounters with other elements of this gang along their elaborate system of base camps stretching from the Zambezi River to near the Tribal Trust Lands and White farming areas near Sinoia. This was the RLI's first "blooding" since its formation in 1961, and they were magnificent. They suffered a number of casualties, including several killed in action. Virtually all the terrorists were eliminated and accounted for after about four months of operations. Most were killed, and many were captured.

So you were the group deemed to be nearest and therefore in the most useful position to go in?

That's right, whilst they'd mobilised other forces in the area. Pretty soon after that, of course the whole area was saturated with troops and that gang was eventually wrapped up and dispatched. But by that action, what had happened was that the action of my group and also another group that was involved there with the RLI, a platoon commander, there were two platoons actually doing this, but actually we had a gang of eighty, which was quite a tough nut to crack. And by our combined aggression that unnerved that group of terrorists and they had abandoned the position with all their kit and equipment. So they were now without clothes and food and basically they starved for the next six weeks while they were being hounded and wrapped up by the security forces that were subsequently deployed.

Were they accounted for?

Yes, they were eventually. A few did escape back to Zambia but the majority were accounted for in some very, very fierce actions. Quite a few casualties were incurred by the Rhodesian security forces in later days, but the vast (00:46:59) majority of that gang was either killed or captured at the end of the day. It was quite a rude introduction to my military career.

Yes, absolutely.

That's what one gets paid to do, you go in for that sort of thing and that's what happens.

How did you cope, if I can ask, with that sort of sudden...?

Responsibility?

Yes and, for example, seeing your colleague bombed and so on. It must have been a lot to take in?

It was, I was traumatised, I'll be quite honest, I felt a bit traumatised. I felt personally responsible, I thought I was going to be court martialled about that, but of course I was just a young boy at the time and in fact, no, my officers were and the brigade officers who deployed us, they were very sympathetic and very supportive. But I felt a personal responsibility and that I shouldn't have called in the air strike at that time and making sure all my guys were accounted for because some of them, in the confusion of battle, we couldn't find anywhere. And we didn't realise that this poor chap was still on the position when we were through. And when the bombers came in, he was still there and so I really felt bad, I felt terrible.

You did feel that there was some support for you, in terms of talking about...

Oh yes, I was fully debriefed. We had a full operations de-brief and there was a lot of confusion as there inevitably is when you have a major contact with the enemy. And casualties do take place and it's not pleasant at all.

At that time, who did you feel that you were fighting against and what did you feel that you were fighting against?

We felt that we were fighting against communist insurgents that were under the influence of communists. I mean many had been trained in China and Tanzania, I think that was basically where the foot soldiers were trained, but the leaders were trained in communist China and Russia, Cuba as well. So the communists definitely had a very strong influence and interest in our contacts and we felt that we were now fighting for our country against the dangers of communism.

Looking at it another way, what did you think that you were fighting for, in terms of Rhodesia?

I think we felt that we were just fighting for our homes at the end of the day. A lot of people have said that we were fighting for our privileged positions. I don't think that was necessarily the case at all, no. I would say that we felt we (00:50:04) were fighting for our country at the end of the day, and for the government in power, regardless of who it would have been. But we did feel that if the communists took over, we would have no home, which is basically what happened at the end of the day, so that's what we felt we were fighting for.

And what sort of value would you place on the Cold War environment at the time? Do you think that was influencing things?

Yes very much so. The Cold War. Certainly the communists were making full use of attacking what they considered to be colonial possessions of the British Empire. Amongst other things that they were doing, such as making life very difficult for the Americans in Vietnam and places like that. They were trying to make as much capital as they could with newly independent African nations. And of course with Rhodesia as it was then, being a thorn in the side to the new African nations, the communists were in a very, very strong footing and they were supplying them with arms and ammunition. From the west's point of view, they actually wanted to ditch all the colonies, which is why all these African nations have been given their independence, very prematurely so too. They basically wanted to be rid of the problem and yes, there was a very, very strong Cold War influence there. The Western powers wanted nothing to do with Africa. All they wanted was the problem of Rhodesia and South Africa to go away – and the Portuguese colonies to go away as well – so that they could have some equal footing to the communists. The communists were trying to get influence there and they were winning influence very, very fast. Because the rest of Africa were going up against the so-called colonial possessions and the West wanted to get rid of the problem as fast as they could, which is why we had no support basically, not from the west. They didn't want to be seen to be supporting what the rest of Africa wanted out of the way.

What importance, if any, did you place on African nationalism? You mentioned earlier on with the politics and so on, what your mother had said, that there was some awareness of it. What importance would you place on it?

I would say that maybe we didn't understand enough about African nationalism. We certainly understood their aspirations, where they wanted to take control of the country. Basically we were very prejudiced against them. I suppose we were totally unsympathetic because it was a threat to us. We just felt that our country was very well run as it was and under white rule. We actually felt that if blacks wanted to participate, then they could come into the political process and perhaps even become members of the government. I think that in time they were invited to do that and be part of the political process, participate in the government, in a responsible

government. But the trouble with African nationalists is that they could not be seen to be cooperating with a white government; otherwise they would be considered to be Uncle Toms and traitors. So none of them would ever actually have the courage to actually come out and say “yes, we will come into Ian Smith’s government and we will participate and become a minister” or (00:54:07) whatever. They could not do that; otherwise they’d be Uncle Toms and forever branded to be traitors to their cause. So it was a no-win situation, I would say.

Were you able to discuss these political issues with your friends or colleagues at all?

There were discussions, and amongst the officer corps there were those who did not agree with what Ian Smith was doing. They felt it was wrong, that his policies were wrong. Yes, there was a lot of discussion on political issues but they were unofficial. We never discussed politics in a training session for example or anything like that. They were private conversations.

Did you have any input or discussions from seniors or superiors about the politics of it, and what sort of line did they take?

There were inevitable discussions of some sort when they would explain government policy and what government were thinking when certain orders and so on were given. But no, there was no political discussion as such. I think the army mantra was basically that politics is something that you don’t discuss in the military. You’re a civil servant when you’re in the army and you basically are loyal to the government of the day. You’re allowed your own political personal opinions but you were not to get involved in politics, and I think it’s the same here.

What would you say formed your outlook? What sort of influences were you able to access in terms of news or radio or other sources of information?

I would say most of our information came from the RBC, the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation, which people say was government controlled. Well to an extent it was but they were fairly free. The news they gave was fairly factual. But we had a joke amongst our generation where we did feel that we were being deprived of the real news and we would often, if we went to South Africa for example, get a lot more information as to what was going on, from there. There was a joke that we are the mushroom people, we are “kept in the dark and fed on shit.” So yes, I think it was a national thing that the government did actually try and suppress certain bad things that were happening, in order to keep national morale going. But we had a free press in the country, which was anti-government. The Rhodesia Herald and the Chronicle were the two main newspapers and they were vociferously anti-government and they used to really hammer Ian Smith and the Government. In the early days of UDI there was censorship, you probably know about that, and when you bought your newspaper every day you’d have these blanked out pages. They purposely did that to embarrass the government. Whenever any important talks would take place, like some British Minister would come out and Ian Smith would try and produce a picture that things are very stable here and they’d come along and (00:57:50) they’d see half the newspaper blanked out. Of course anyone looking at that would say “yeah, yeah” this is a free country, look at all that, look at all the censorship. But censorship didn’t include personal opinion or editorial comment for example, and eventually it went away all together.

Yes it's interesting how censorship actually became a tool to almost highlight the pressure there, and so they used it to...

It was there I think for the first two or three years after UDI but it became such an embarrassment for government that eventually they just left it altogether. They were purposely putting these gaps all over the newspapers, they were virtually shouting out "this is an oppressed country, look at our newspapers" you know.

Very interesting.

One particular incident, which I thought was very bad, of government suppressing bad news and that was in later years, even after we got our first black government, the Muzorewa government. Things were pretty grim in the country, they were very grim, and I think we were approaching the Easter holidays or something like that and we were expecting quite a big influx of tourists from South Africa. We knew that there was a big presence of terrorists in a certain area of the country in the southeastern border area. We knew terrorists were in the area and the government propaganda was blaring out that this area was "perfectly safe, security forces are in control." These South African tourists came in and I think a motorcycle got ambushed and two of them were shot in cold blood. I remember actually thinking at the time, how can they say these things? Then of course this awfully embarrassing incident took place where these men were gunned down in this so-called safe area that everything was "all fine and under control," when they knew very well that there was a possibility that people could be killed, and it happened.

Did you think that the general Rhodesian population had a sense of the seriousness of what was going on?

I would say increasingly so. Probably in the initial years, shortly after UDI, when the pressure was off and certainly the country was prospering economically, I think people became complacent. Everybody did, including the military. The military had wrapped up the problems. The first contact I was telling you about, the military very quickly wrapped up that incursion and they wrapped up the next incursions for the next three or four years but what we didn't realise was that there was a massive build up of resources to the terrorist forces, more isolation of our country, more isolation of South Africa. And of course the terrorists eventually came in with a new strategy where they weren't committing forces to battle. There was definitely more effective guerrilla warfare coming our way. So we became complacent I would say.

(01:01:04) You did leave the RAR at one point?

Yes.

And entered into the SAS?

The SAS, yes.

Could you tell me how that came about?

I was basically looking for new challenges and so I volunteered to join the SAS, who were based in Salisbury. The RAR were based in the Bulawayo area. So I went on an SAS selection course, passed that, then did the training, passed that, and I was with the SAS for about two and a half years or something, I think from 1970 to 1972 I

was with the SAS. At that stage I was now getting ready for promotion to Captain and I was then posted to a territorial battalion as adjutant, which was supposed to be my first staff posting. So I decided to keep my parent regiment, which was RAR. I didn't badge SAS once I left the SAS. So I removed that beret and left them and donned my bush hat and I re-badged my parent regiment. I became adjutant of this territorial battalion and then moved on in the Army, basically badged RAR. But I had a wonderful time with the SAS, they were a great unit to be with. While I was with them, we were going into that period where there was this big build up coming in. We could see the tactics changing; we spent a lot of time patrolling deep in Mozambique when the Portuguese were still there. We had a lot of contact with the Portuguese, a lot of liaison with them, and basically we took over a large area of Mozambique and we were virtually living in Mozambique at one time. It was a very interesting experience.¹⁶

Were you working with the Mozambique or Portuguese Army or it was particularly this SAS group?

No, we were just given areas to patrol in. We never actually did any operations in tandem with them, so to speak. We were just given an area and asked to look after that area. It was basically between the northern part of Rhodesia and the Zambezi River, it was known as the Tete Province and we actually looked after a lot of that area. We were virtually permanently in there for quite a long time and then the Portuguese eventually pulled out altogether and that's when our troubles really started, 1974 I think.

Did you have engagements or contacts in Mozambique?

Yes, we had several little contacts there, with little groups of terrorists. You see our terrorists actually learnt a great deal from the FRELIMO terrorists because what had happened was that our terrorists began to realise that to send large gangs into the country and try and confront us in big gangs was pointless because we would just take them apart. So they started infiltrating as small groups, the true way of conducting guerrilla warfare, small little groups, so they get into their own areas, set up little bases there, (01:04:32) little cells there and draw their food from the local population and their support from the local population, lose themselves amongst...you know, it's the typical fish in water scenario and they learnt their lessons well. The FRELIMO guerrillas had been doing this a lot with the Portuguese and our terrorists started coming through Mozambique into Rhodesia and they learnt a lot of these lessons from the FRELIMO terrorists and they started applying it in Rhodesia and it worked for them. They would terrorise the population, the population never had a choice: Support the Rhodesian Army, who may occasionally beat a few people up if they didn't get what they wanted; or if you cooperated with them, the terrorists would just murder you and commit atrocities which were absolutely hideous, on their own people. Who would you support in those circumstances? You're caught in the middle. So that's basically what happened there.

Did you see that support of the population changing? What was your perception of how successful the army was in gaining local support?

¹⁶ Notes on joining the SAS: I volunteered to serve with C Squadron the Rhodesian SAS, which was based in Salisbury in 1970. I passed the Selection course, and underwent their basic course, which culminated in the gruelling 'all in' exercise.

I served with the SAS between 1970 and 1972. I am very proud to have served with this excellent unit, and enjoyed some very interesting operations with it as the war intensified at the beginning of 1972.

Oh without a doubt, it worked. What had happened, with the increasing isolation of the Rhodesian security forces and the political interference that was put on the Rhodesian government, there were times when we definitely had the upper hand, that we were ordered to go back into base again because ceasefire talks were taking place and political talks were taking place. But the moment we pulled our forces out of the field and put them into bases, we knew very well that the terrorists wouldn't be doing the same. That they would be straight into the areas that were now free for them to operate, set up their cells and when talks broke down, as they inevitably do in these situations, even to this day, I'm not talking about Zimbabwe, I'm talking about other countries now, Afghanistan and all the rest of it. The moment you do that, the enemy are in there straight away and they're building up their support by basically getting in with the population and getting an iron grip. And that's what happened and yes, we definitely saw it. You'd move into an area and the population were so petrified, they were scattered all over the place, you weren't getting the information that you wanted because of the ominous presence of terrorists there. If they knew that we would move into an area and be there permanently, they would have willingly come on side. The trouble is we were so stretched out and thin on the ground.

A typical example towards the end of the war in '78, I was now a company commander and we moved into an area, again, northern Mashonaland, quite close to the Mozambique border and we were moved into a particular area which was considered to be a 'liberated' zone. You know, things were so bad that the terrorists basically just ran the place as though they owned it and there was little we could do, we didn't have the forces. My company went in there and we had a few fierce encounters to start off with, drove them out and we were there for a good six weeks and the locals, you could see were glad we were there; they were free of this menace of the terrorist. We also knew that we weren't going to be there much longer. We had to be pulled out, we had other areas that needed our presence more than this area and we knew that as soon as we were gone, the terrorists would be back in there again. So it was just becoming a no-win situation at the end of the day. We just didn't have enough troops on the ground.

(01:08:19) So quite frustrating in some senses that you felt you were doing good work but then you knew it was going to come to an end.

Well that's right, yes. There was just nothing we could do, I mean, during our war, there wasn't even one single skirmish that the other side could claim that they had beaten us in, militarily. Yet they won the war, at the end of the day. It became a political thing. We could have carried on indefinitely, if we'd had support we could have just mounted excursions and done what the Russians had done and be totally brutal. But end of the day, you can't look at yourself in the face if you've been carrying out brutalities to maintain a status quo, and I think at the end of the day, that's what eventually happened. It was pointless carrying on fighting a war like that and with the collapse of support from South Africa itself it became untenable. I remember when South Africa started cutting off our fuel and ammunition at one point, we could not carry on any longer and it went into talks and of course we all know what the result was.¹⁷

¹⁷ Notes on the frustrations: There was not a single skirmish that the Rhodesian Army lost to the terrorists. However, we did not win the war. It became a highly politicised matter. We had no support from the outside world, and we were becoming increasingly isolated.

Even South Africa distanced itself from us, as that Government began to experiment with its "detente" exercise with black Africa. [continued to page 23]

Perhaps, in Mozambique in particular, did you see the use of pseudo terrorist or pseudo gangs?

Yes.

Was that something that was going on in other branches of the forces, but that you encountered?

Yes, we didn't actually see them but we knew that they were there. There were certain areas that were no-go areas. They were demarcated and we were told that we were not allowed into those areas because these groups, the Selous Scouts were basically in those areas, dressed up as terrorists and doing their thing there. They were very good and very effective and we would patrol the fringes of those areas so that any terrorists coming out of there, we would deal with. They were called 'frozen areas;' you weren't allowed to go into them.

Did you see the use of protected villages at all?

Yes, we often came across protected villages.

And what did you think of them and how they worked?

Well the concept came from British experience in Malaya of course, where it worked exceptionally well. We tried to do the same thing in Rhodesia and I would say that given the problems that we had, logistical problems and so on, it worked. We moved the villagers out of areas where we couldn't control the terrorists any longer and we concentrated them into these protected villages. The locals were free to move within a certain area of these villages and grow their crops and so on and they would have various forces there to protect them, mainly the Internal Affairs armed detachments and a new unit that was created called Guard Force who were ex-military army personnel. (01:11:24) They would have a platoon at each one of these villages to protect the villagers and to patrol the area and to drive off any terrorists who were in the area. I would say it worked pretty well you know, on the whole, and if we'd had international support, it probably would have been a war winner at the end of the day. But we didn't have international support. I think the story was put out that we were setting up concentration camps and all that nonsense and it was nothing like that.

[continued from previous page] At one point, the South African Government stopped the movement of fuel and ammunition into Rhodesia in order to pressurise the Smith Government to accept black majority rule.

We had to cope with ever tightening economic sanctions, world isolation, and every conceivable discouragement, even after we had acceded to the demand to usher in majority rule. Free and fair elections were held in 1977, and still the world would not recognise the country, simply because the Afro Asian block were demanding that the hard-line, communist-leaning liberation movements had to be given the country.

The Nationalists and Liberation movements were getting ever increasing material and moral support from not only the Communist countries, but from western countries, and the terrorists were getting unlimited support in terms of arms, equipment and training from communist countries.

The Rhodesian security forces became stretched to the limit and too thin on the ground. We simply could not hold ground; we had insufficient forces to do that. With political, economic and moral support from the West, I believe we could have carried on indefinitely, and probably even have achieved victory.

In terms of your view of the opposition and who you were fighting against, did you differentiate between different factions such as ZANLA, ZIPRA or later UANC? Did you attach any meaning to those?

Yes, there were differences. The ZIPRA terrorists were the ones who were Russian trained and they tended to train them more or less as conventional fighters, where they'd come in the big groups. We just wished that they were all like that because we'd deal with that, we'd concentrate on them and wipe them out. They tended to be a bit cautious in coming in in small groups, which would dissipate our forces whereas ZANLA actually learnt their lesson more from the Chinese. The Chinese, from their experience of the great march in the thirties and forties, they'd passed on the lessons very well and so they had entirely different tactics. Both were ruthless when they dealt with their own kind in particular and with victims they made of people they came across. ZANLA were worse I must say, they were worse, they were a horrible lot, but they were more effective as guerrilla fighters. They really did dissipate us. Joshua Nkomo and the ZIPRA, their strategy towards the end of the war was that they were hoping we would become so widespread and thin on the ground that they had plans to actually mount a major strike, a concentrated force against our weakened forces; a conventional type of attack through Zambia and into Rhodesia when we were so down. At one time it became a real threat; I think at the beginning of 1979, end of 1978, it had become a real threat. The intelligence came through that they were getting ready for a major strike from Zambia and across the Zambezi. So there were differences in their strategy. ZANLA were more effective I would say at the end of the day. ZANLA was mainly the Mugabe faction and ZIPRA were mainly the Joshua Nkomo faction. There were two opposing groups within the Patriotic Front.

And the war has been called various things from a terrorist war to civil war to an ideological war. What would you say? What kind of war did you think it was?

Well it would have been politically incorrect of me to have said a civil war when I was there, when I was in Rhodesia. It's difficult to say. It certainly wasn't an ideological war, it was very much part of the cold war, as you asked the question earlier on, very much part of that. It was a civil war to some extent but it wasn't a black on white war either because most of our security forces were black and very loyal people too, in all the forces. It certainly was not black on black but I suppose you could call it a civil war, yes, in that it was fighting within. We were fighting each other, so that becomes a civil war doesn't it?

(01:15:41) **How do you think that affected how the war was fought?**

Sorry?

Do you think that affected how the war was fought, it being a civil war?

Civil wars are nasty things. They're nasty wars. If you think of the American civil war and the Spanish one and so on. No, from the Rhodesian security forces point of view, I would say we just fought the war; we were fighting terrorists as far as we were concerned. I suppose we could have had a strategy when we caught them, that we would have sort of put them into prisoner of war camps and treated them less as criminals and more as enemy combatants, maybe that would have been a better strategy, I don't know. But basically we viewed them as criminals and I would say that could have been a mistake. Maybe as the war progressed we should have captured them and put them in prisoner of war camps and treated them with a certain degree of

honour I suppose, maybe even could have turned some around. I was not in the of position to make those kind of decisions, but they were viewed as criminals, as criminal terrorists.

Did you personally encounter the terrorists, in terms of questioning or perhaps after contacts or so on?

Yes.

Were you able to ask, or did you get a feeling of what they were fighting for?

Yes, there were a few occasions when I did. I remember on one occasion when I was in the SAS and we were stumbling around early one morning, it had been raining day in day out for weeks and early one morning we came across this bundle of blankets in the pathway. At first we thought some terrorist had dropped his blankets. Then on looking around, there was a terrorist inside the blankets sleeping, fast asleep, so of course, this was like manna from heaven. We poked him with a couple of rifle butts and he woke up with five rifle barrels sticking in his face and he was horrified. So we took him prisoner and we radioed back to base. We got chatting to the guy because we had to wait a long time before the helicopter came and fetched him. We got chatting to the guy and he was actually quite a pleasant fellow and one wondered, well here we are killing each other and yet he's not actually a bad guy.

He was taken for questioning and he went through the process, I suppose he ended up in prison somewhere and I don't know what happened to him after that, he was taken away from us, flown away. And yes, we came across other prisoners, I saw them in cages where they'd been captured and have a chat to them through the cage and yes, they did feel that they had a cause to fight for, there's no doubt about that. After the war when I was reforming the (01:18:51) Zimbabwe Army and helping out with that, some of my colleague battalion commanders were ex-terrorists and some of them were very, very nice men who really did feel that they were fighting for a cause, no doubt about that. I could have been their friends, in fact we were friends while we were colleagues in the same brigade and I was helping re-training the Zimbabwe Army, which now consisted of ex-terrorists and my own battalion. That picture, I showed you, some of those were ex-terrorists and they did feel that they were fighting for a cause.

And of course during the war as well, some of them were re-trained, particularly in the Selous Scouts and so on, and did fight for Rhodesia in the end. Bringing me to the question of how far did you differentiate between black Rhodesians and the terrorists as it were?

Oh yes, black Rhodesians and terrorists. Well black Rhodesians of course were people we dealt with every day and they were in our forces and belonged to a black battalion and they were all wonderful guys, they were great. I actually personally trained a lot of ex-combatants, ex-terrorists Pfumo re Vanhu, have you heard about Pfumo re Vanhu?

Yes, so these auxiliary troops later on?

Yes that's right, they were the Muzorewa troops that you spoke of, they were known as Pfumo re Vanhu. And at one stage in my career I was a company commander with A company, 1RAR. I was back with my battalion now and I was deployed to the Fort

Victoria area, the Gaza Province as it's known now. And the new strategy was to get all these... Muzorewa had now come into the government, he was now our Prime Minister and all his supporters UANC, they were terrorists who had been turned now and I trained a whole group of these and we had some good times with them.¹⁸

What were they like? Did the reality of meeting them compare to how you'd expected them to be?

I knew that they were very raw, very raw, when I compared them with my African black soldiers who were thoroughly professional and trustworthy. And you dealt with these guys, you knew you were training them for a cause but you never knew when they would turn on you, you never quite knew. But it was part of the strategy and had to be done and these were the guys that we were now going to put in charge of the keeps or the protected villages, they were known as keeps at one point. They were going to be put in charge of the keeps and be used as part of the war strategy at that particular point in time. Apparently the real terrorists feared them more than they feared us, ideological you see, whereas these chaps would have been able to reach out to the black population better than even we could, better than even our black soldiers could because they were very much on the ground and they'd been one of them before. They feared them more than they feared us and they hated them more than us, which is why when the war was over, their identities had to be kept strictly secret, you know, when they were allowed to go and be dispersed and disbanded, but they had to be kept strictly (01:22:25) secret otherwise they would have been victimised by the new regime when they took over.

That's very interesting, yes, so they'd had both experiences...

Yes I had the experience of training them. [Deletion]

In terms of the war itself, how do you think it sustained a Rhodesian identity?

How it sustained the Rhodesian identity? I'm not sure how to answer that. I would just say that it sustained the Rhodesian identity as people of courage. I believe that as a beleaguered nation there was a tremendous amount of courage and initiative, to keep a country going in such appalling conditions of isolation, sanctions, world hostility. I think that the nation did exceptionally well and given a bit of international support, we could have actually won that conflict and Zimbabwe would be a far happier country

¹⁸ Notes on Pfumo Re Vanhu: Pfumo Re Vanhu were the Liberation War troops employed by Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who was the leader of the UANC, i.e. the United African National Congress. After a political settlement had been reached with Bishop Muzorewa, he became the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe/Rhodesia, and it was decided to integrate his forces into the Rhodesian security forces. They would come in as Auxiliaries. Their main task was to guard the protected villages or Keeps as they became known. Their task was to prevent the terrorists from interfering with the people in those villages.

On one occasion, when I was commanding A Company of 1 RAR, I was deployed to the south eastern border area, in the Operation Repulse zone of military operations. I was tasked to with the training of a few hundred of these Auxiliaries, to bring them into alignment with the Security Forces. I ran a month long "Battle Camp with these men. The purpose was to train them to take over the Protected Villages in the Repulse area, so that the present guards, Guard Force, could be released to protect the railway line in the south eastern part of the country.

We had a good camp with these men. They were very "raw" and unsophisticated, but they were keen and willing to learn. There was always the possibility that among them could be elements of the enemy- but it was a chance that had to be taken, and they were to prove very useful in the task of guarding the Protected Villages.

today than it is, if something like that had come out of it. It wouldn't have been the pathetic surrender that it eventually became at the end of the war.

Do you think that Rhodesia had a special culture?

Very much a British culture. I think that we always prided ourselves in being British, in fact many British people who came and met us Rhodesians, often used to say that we were more British than the British because we represented all the old values that people used to know that came from here. In fact if you met Rhodesians, I'm one of those who were born and bred there, second and third generation of Rhodesians, but many many Rhodesians were straight from here, they were part of that massive immigration I was telling you about that came out after the Second World War. Their parents came and they were born in Rhodesia themselves but their parents were very British. A lot of British were actually straight from Britain itself, we had a lot of British Army people who left the British Army and came and joined us, I don't know if you're aware of that?

Yes.

Substantial numbers of them who became fantastic Rhodesians. So we were a very, very British culture I would say. I suppose we had our own little culture, own little identity, that we were very proud to be Rhodesian.

(01:25:44) And what do you think made a good Rhodesian for both white and black Rhodesians or African Rhodesians? Would it be the same?

Yes, I think basically anybody who was honest and hardworking and had a patriotic feeling for the country constituted a good Rhodesian and I don't think colour really came into the equation at all. I mean, I have a lot of black friends who were part of our struggle and it's always wonderful meeting them. They were good Rhodesians, as good a Rhodesian as I could ever be; some even better, and they didn't have to be supporters of Ian Smith's government either. I knew a lot of Rhodesians who didn't support Ian Smith's policies, black and white and coloured and Indian but that didn't make them bad Rhodesians. But they did their bit; they fought for the country and contributed to the cause, whether it was militarily or economically or whatever.

If I could just return to two questions that I should perhaps have asked earlier on, about the conduct of war and so on. Did you see the use of the African belief system and things like spirit mediums and so on?

Oh yes, it was very, very important in their culture, they believe in the spirits, very firmly so, and I think all of us have had brushes with that. They even named their war sectors – I'm talking about the enemy now – by their spiritual mediums' names. There was a Chamanuka war sector and the Nehanda war sector and that's where they operated and they believed that their spirit medium influenced the spirits and gave them courage and confused the enemy forces. So very much so, that became very much part of the war effort.

How did you see the role of those in terms of how Rhodesia was fighting the war?

Well we never encouraged spirit-ism or anything like that from our point of view. We were aware of that in the briefings you passed on to the troops. I would say that our black soldiers were probably very much aware of it and maybe some of them were

even influenced by it to some extent, that they would have thought “oh this is awesome, we’ve got the spirits” and the spirits are supposed to be on their side. I don’t know but I would say that there could be some of that; there could have been the fear that came out from that. One of these spirit mediums was a witch called Nehanda. Now she originated from the end of the 19th century and she was part of the first Mashona rebellion and she was hanged because she’d caused a lot of trouble and caused them to rebel. They believed that they’d invoked her spirit to come in and start a second Chimurenga, the Chimurenga being a war of liberation. She was active in a second Chimurenga and they opened up a sector known as the Nehanda sector. So yes, it did play an important part I think on their side and no doubt it probably influenced some of our black troops. To me, it was a lot of nonsense, I don’t believe in that type of thing at all, but for the black troops, yes.

(01:29:29) So in terms of influencing how the Rhodesians fought, it was simply something to be aware of and brief troops on if that was influencing the opposition.

That’s right, I don’t know what else we could have done really but the influence of spirits is very, very strong on the African. I can give you one particular thing that happened when I was still a platoon commander. My platoon sergeant, a chap called Sergeant Frank, I remember this very well. He was very, very upset one day and he became totally non-effective and what had happened was that somebody was casting a spell on him. He didn’t know who it was but one day he came to his house and he found a rabbit’s foot had been cut off and dumped on his front doorstep. Now that, to him, frightened the hell out of him and later on, a cockerel’s head or something like that got chopped off and he found that. Obviously somebody didn’t like him and they were doing this sort of thing and it frightened the hell out of him. He had to take leave and he had to go to his witch doctor and pay a price and all sorts of things to be cleansed of this and to appease his family’s spirits and only when that was done was he effective again. This happened on numerous occasions that I know of, but that was one case that I know of personally. We had to send him on leave to go and sort the spirits out because it means something to them.

I have heard similar stories from other people actually, people having to go off...

Yes, it’s very, very strong in their culture but there were horrible scenes as well. Even after independence there was an African businessman who thought his profits weren’t very high so his witch doctor told him that he had to murder young girls and take their body parts and eat them or something like that. He was caught and he was hanged afterwards. I mean that’s how it can influence them. He felt that this boosted his profits. Weird, but they do believe that witchcraft is still important, even in this day and age.

We’ve discussed protected villages but did you see how they connected to Malaya and did you see the memory of Malaya or even Kenya coming into army operations and so on, in other ways?

Yes I think that the lessons were always there. In fact, as I say, our generals were actually participating in the Malayan campaign and a lot of them also participated in the Mau Mau campaign, old police commissioners who’d actually been there and done that work with the British forces. So yes, they did try to apply the lessons that they learned there and I suppose they had memories of it, I don’t know. I know I’ve done some reading on the Malayan campaign, the protected village system worked very

well there but they were different circumstances. In Malaya there was definitely the promise of independence coming to the ordinary Malaysians but you had this vast majority of the Malaya population being Malaysian people and the terrorists (01:33:06) were basically the Chinese element of the population. They were terrorising the majority so I think the British forces had a much easier task to separate the two. If they had a protected village, the villagers knew that it was for them, for Malaysians, and to protect them from the Chinese who were in the jungle, a much easier task. Whereas we were totally surrounded by hostile nations except for the border with South Africa and terrorists coming in en masse to areas that we just couldn't patrol. And trying to keep protected villages against people who could be on...the population may not have considered them really enemy and we were the enemy and so on; a much, much tougher task. But I will say this, that it was not an inhumane system that we had going there. It had its problems, yes, people were uprooted from where they had traditionally lived but it was the only way to actually isolate the terrorists and to concentrate the population. They were fed, I mean there was no starvation, they certainly didn't starve. They were fed, they were given areas where they could grow their food and I think it helps, personally.

You mentioned quite early on in the interview about passing techniques on to the British.

Yes.

Is that something, you wanted to say more about that?

Yes, we developed certain techniques in our conflict that hadn't come up in previous campaigns, where our senior officers had fought in Malaya and so on, where they were basically fighting very small groups of terrorists and they worked out some very valuable tactics which we used. But when we started getting big gangs coming in and very widespread and different types of terrain as well, the Rhodesian security forces came up with the concept of the Fire Force, which I'm sure you've heard about. Basically what this entailed was that you get small groups of security forces moving into an area and they were trained to basically set up concealed observation points; well, it involved ground/air cooperation techniques.

They would go into an area secretly, get to a higher point and just sit there for days on end observing. Especially if they knew that a particular village was known to feed terrorists or whatever. They would sit there very, very quietly and cover their tracks and just watch and then if a group of terrorists came into the village, they would then call in the Fire Force. The Fireforce were an air-based, helicopter-borne based group of troops who were on standby in base camps. The OPs would call in the Fire Force, they would talk the aircraft in onto the terrorist positions, surround them and then wipe them out. And it worked, it became very, very successful, highly successful and I would say it accounted for the vast majority of terrorist kills. We've tried to pass that on to British Forces I know because quite a few of our chaps at the end of our war came and joined the British Army and they held seminars with the British Army and passed these techniques on to them. I don't know if they're actually using these or if it applies in their situation. In Afghanistan for example, one tends to get the impression that they are sitting in bases and fighting the war from bases and maybe it's not practical to go out into the desert and put small patrols in and surround the gangs. I

don't know, I haven't been to Afghanistan, (01:36:45) I'd love to go and have a look, but they've been passed on to them, they know all about it.¹⁹

¹⁹ Notes on the Fire Force concept: This was a concept jointly developed by the Rhodesian Army and the Rhodesian Air Force. It was a combined ground-air mode of operations which became very successful, and accounted for more terrorist kills than any other type of operation.

The Fire Force consisted of a helicopter born unit of troops, which could vary in size from a platoon or troop to a company of troops. The Air Force element consisted of a number of troop carrying helicopters, which were known as 'G Cars,' and a number of "gunship" helicopters which were known as 'K Cars.' The number of helicopters varied according to the size of the Fire Force and to what the Air Force could provide. The K Car was armed with 20mm cannon, which could put down a devastating weight of firepower. The G Cars were troop carrying helicopters, which were also armed with one MAG 7.62 mm machine gun. The helicopters used by the Rhodesian Air Force were in the main the French Alouette 3, which could carry four or five fully equipped soldiers. Later on the Air Force were able to acquire the American Bell helicopter, which could carry more troops.

Some Fire Forces were beefed up with additional aircraft which could include ground attack aircraft, and/or troop carrying aircraft from which troops could be parachuted into action. The ground attack aircraft used would be either the pilot trainer Provost, or the Lynx (a light Cessna aircraft used for reconnaissance, light cargo, and also in the ground attack role in COIN operations). Both aircraft were armed and could be used in the ground attack role. Additional ground attack aircraft such as the Vampire or the Hawker Hunter could be used if necessary, depending upon the target or the size of the operation. The parachute troops would be carried in our ageing but still highly effective Dakota DC3 aircraft, some of which had been used in World War 2 in Europe.

The Fire Force would be based at a Forward Air Base in the operational area, and the troops would be on immediate standby. They could be deployed within minutes of call out. The standard of Army/ Air co operation developed to a very high degree. The Fire Force commander would usually be the commander of the troops, who worked very closely with the senior Air Force officer/pilot, who usually flew one of the 'K Cars'. The two would always fly together in the "K Car", and thus be in intimate contact. The Army commander would direct the troops on the ground once they were deployed-from the air, and the Air Force commander would direct his helicopters and/other aircraft used in the operation.

The Fire Force would be normally be deployed by a call from troops infiltrated by night into designated areas, and which would lay up there in Ops (observation points). Their task would be watching a particular target, e.g. a village. If terrorists were spotted e.g. coming to demand food from the villagers, the patrol commander would alert the Fire Force by radio, giving his position, and that of the enemy position. The Fire Force would then be 'scrambled,' and within minutes it could be airborne and on its way. The scrambling of Fire Forces were once described to me by an old Air Force officer, who had once served with the RAF, as something like the scrambling of fighter pilots in the battle of Britain.

Some distance out, and out of earshot of the scene, the 'K Car' pilot would make contact by radio with the OP patrol commander, telling him from which direction he was approaching and he would instruct him to tell him when he could see the helicopters. When helicopters were seen, the OP commander would direct the Helicopters on to the enemy position e.g. go left/ right etc, description of the target etc.

Once the target was identified by the Fire Force Commander, the action would begin. The "K Cars" would attack the target with its 20mm cannon, and the Fire force army commander would direct the pilot where he wanted the troops to be put down. The K Car 'team' would between them control the battle from there.

The Air Force commander could direct further air attacks on the enemy position using the other K Cars and their 20mm cannon, and/ or the G Cars using their machine guns. He could also direct the ground attack aircraft to attack the target if required. In the meantime the Army commander, still in the K Car, would be deploying his Fire Force troops on the ground, and giving them directions on to the enemy position, or into "stop lines" to deal with enemy escaping from the initial contact point. The K Car team could make a decision to deploy the parachute borne troops on to the position or more likely into stop line positions to cut off enemy escape lines.

Fire Force battles were very fluid operations, and called for a high standard of coordination and cooperation between the ground and air forces, or to quote an oft used colloquial term, between the 'brown jobs' and the 'blue jobs.' On occasion, if an action was likely to be prolonged, a joint decision could be made to deploy a "Land Tail" as soon as the Fire Force had been scrambled, or as a pre planned measure. [continued to page 31]

Another technique we had – and I believe that we can proudly say that we were the pioneers in this – 1972, when the first gangs started coming across and they started laying their landmines all over the place, a few vehicles got blown up, people killed and our engineers basically came up with the idea of mine protecting our vehicles. They ‘mine-proofed’ our existing trucks and they built landmine protected vehicles. The first ones were very primitive. Basically, what they did was put heavy steel under the truck, with a V shape, so when the vehicle hit a mine it would actually spilt the blast. So the troops would get a shock but they wouldn’t be crippled. I remember actually watching a vehicle that hit a landmine once and the poor guys who were in that vehicle were...it was horrible to see, the way they were butchered. Whereas this would disperse the blast and the troops inside would be unharmed, apart from maybe a few perforated eardrums or whatever, and that saved hundreds of lives. Our vehicles became more and more sophisticated as we built them up and the South Africans, with their vast industrial complex, started building very, very good vehicles and mine protected vehicles and I see that the Americans have got them now and the British have got them. But that came from the Rhodesian Army, which I’m very proud to say, it was from our era.

As you say, it must have saved an enormous number of lives over time.

An enormous number of lives, yes, and when you hear of these poor British troops now being killed in ambushes and these IEDs, I know that they have got some sort of protection but I pity them, it must be horrible.

There have been a lot of reports of that recently.

More of them have been killed by these IEDs than are being killed in contact with the enemy. The enemy have found a cheap way of killing their enemy in a very, very callous way, by just putting IEDs in, massive explosives, where British troops have to patrol. I pity them, I think it’s terrible, but they need to come up with something. But that seems to be more with explosives on the side of the road, rather than under the vehicle.

Yes so they need to develop something.

Yes, they need to come up with some sort of technology there and I think it’s these heavy vehicles that they’ve got to have, that the Americans have got and the government here have not given them the money to buy them and troops are dying, which is just totally unacceptable. I know that a couple of my countrymen have been killed in Afghanistan, fighting for the British Army there, where these IEDs...they’ve been killed just recently.

So can you tell me what happened towards the end of the war? You stayed with the RAR?

Yes.

(01:39:53) **But you were eventually training some of these auxiliary troops?**

[continued from previous page] The Land Tail would deploy by road to a base as close to the area of operation as possible, where additional troops could be picked up and deployed, and where helicopters could refuel and re- ammo if required, without having to fly all the way back to a far off base. A Land Tail would therefore take additional Fire Force troops and a logistics supply of ‘Avtur’ i.e. helicopter fuel, ammunition, water, rations etc.

Yes, we were deployed to an operational area and my company trained these auxiliary troops. See footnote 18 on page 26 for further explanation.

And what happened; what movements did you have through that interim government period and what were your views of the prospective future?

Oh you mean on the handover and the takeover?

Yes, did it rattle you in your postings or did you want to stay? What did you make of it all?

I knew that none of us could stay for long, that we would all have to go into civilian life ultimately. But when Mugabe took over the country, he came with a message of reconciliation, it was wonderful, he was the darling of the west. I didn't believe a damn thing he said, quite honestly, but anyway he came in and he had this wonderful reconciliation message, we were encouraged to stay in the Army, that's when I got my promotion and it came a bit sooner than it would have come otherwise. In the Rhodesian Army of course you've got the pyramid system and you would only be able to get the promotion when other people had gone out and you fit in the pyramid. So I would say that my promotion came in about two years before it should have really, I took over a battalion, became a Lieutenant Colonel and I was posted to Umtali.

I took over the old 3 RAR, third battalion of the Rhodesian African Rifles, which had just been formed by my predecessor, the chap in the picture I showed you. He'd formed it and now he'd seen the writing on the wall and he was going. I knew that I probably wouldn't be there much longer before I would have to leave, but I took over the battalion. We witnessed the breakup of that battalion as we had ex-terrorists coming in and filling the posts. All our officers were now black; there were very few whites, just a sprinkling of whites. The old black officers were the old Rhodesian ones and they had come up through the ranks, and they were good soldiers. They handled their positions very well. They had to be posted out to the new battalions of the army, which were mainly ex-combatants i.e. ex-terrorists and I had some of their officers coming in and take over my company command positions and so on. So it was an integration exercise, which we fully cooperated on. That's where I met some of these ex-commanders that I told you I became friends with. It was working quite well, but tensions started showing up.

You spoke about tensions within the Rhodesian Army, well now these ethnic tensions started coming out. Matabeles verses the Mashona, it was now the ZIPRA verses the ZANLA element within the Army on both sides. Both were ex-terrorist forces and our chaps, the one feared the other side. Pax Romana had gone and so the next thing, armouries were being burgled and whole batches of arms were going. A whole lot of ex-ZIPRA combatants (01:43:38) would desert and I suffered that in my own battalion. One of our armouries got bust into and a whole lot of arms went. Now I know when you look at people like ZANLA, they're forever suspicious and I just felt that next thing, the suspicion would be on me, that I was actually promoting this type of thing, I'm now taking sides. I just thought "it's time to move on, I cannot stay in an army like this." Plus the fact we were patrolling the border with Mozambique and FRELIMO [who were the ruling party governing Mozambique] were fighting RENAMO in Mozambique

Now FRELIMO and the present Zimbabwe government are close allies, they're friends and they were very friendly at the time. And they knew that the Rhodesian forces had actually formed that other group that were now fighting the Mozambique government.

They were now handed over to the South Africans and we were patrolling the border to contain the overflow from this fighting that was taking place, just on the other side of the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border. And they were starting to use my troops, without my knowledge, to arrest white farmers in the area. These white farmers were taking on labour to plant their fields and work their fields and so on, when you've got a border like that, you don't know where the chap comes from, if he's from Mozambique or if he's from Zimbabwe. He's a black guy and he wants a job, you give him a job. So these white farmers were being arrested on suspicion of supporting RENAMO in Mozambique and using my troops for that purpose. I just thought "I can't be part of this any longer here, where my own troops are arresting my people on spurious charges." So that's when I decided that I had to become a civilian and left the army.²⁰

So what year did you leave?

1982. I was prepared to give the Zimbabwe Army a fair chance. If the so-called reconciliation had really taken off, I think I would have followed through my career in the Zimbabwe Army and become a loyal Zimbabwean soldier. So that's when I decided it was time to actually just pack up, because I could see myself being arrested

²⁰ Notes on the interim period and the handover period: The interim period was quite tense. We were all apprehensive about what the future held for us. We all knew we would have to leave our military careers, and go into civilian life. However, there was relief that the war was over. I think everybody was glad that this terrible phase of the country's history was over.

When Robert Mugabe took over power, he offered reconciliation, and promised that there was a place in the sun for the white people of Zimbabwe, and that there would be no recriminations or prejudice. There was great relief, and people took him at his word. The white people of the country were prepared to be loyal subjects of the new Zimbabwe. I personally did not believe that there would be a future for white people—we had seen the precedents in all African countries, where on independence, very few white people had a future. It could hardly be different for Zimbabwe, which had just been through a bitter civil war.

I had recently been promoted, due to the huge outflow of white officers from the Army, and I was given command of the 3rd Battalion RAR, which was soon renamed 33 Infantry Battalion. Most of the officer posts were being filled with black NCOs of the old Rhodesian Army, and they took to their duties in a responsible and professional way. Very soon an integration exercise took place, whereby ex Guerrillas were to take company and platoon command posts in my battalion, and my loyal black officers were transferred to the new Zimbabwe Army battalions that were being formed. The exercise worked as well as it could, and we co operated fully.

I had the opportunity to meet and befriend some ex Guerrilla officers, and we built up very good relationships. However, there was inevitably a sudden drop in standards, in all fields, discipline, efficiency etc. We had to deploy troops to the eastern border areas, as there was a civil war going in Mozambique just across the border, between the Mozambique Government and Renamo, a guerrilla organisation that the old Rhodesian Army had helped form.

My troops were given orders without my knowledge to arrest certain white farmers who the new authorities suspected of supporting Renamo, because they were employing people who came across the border looking for work on the farms. I did not appreciate this at all, as I knew that the farmers were not involved in these activities at all. They had no cause to get involved in a conflict across the border.

It was not long before factionalism broke out in the new Army i.e. there were the two factions of the Patriotic Front. There were the ex combatants of Joshua Nkomo's ZIPRA, and Robert Mugabe's ZANLA, and they were vying for power. ZIPRA elements began to desert the Army, and whilst doing so, were breaking into armouries and stealing weapons and ammunition, and we all knew they planned to start another conflict. I felt that I could be caught up in this and be held responsible, if any one of my armouries got broken into. I felt that the time had come when I would have to leave the Army, and start a civilian career. Reluctantly, resigned from the Zimbabwe Army, and entered civilian life. I was prepared to give the Zimbabwe Army a chance, but I could see that I would never fit in, and would have no long term future.

on suspicion of supporting the Government's perceived enemies. They're habitually suspicious, and it was time to go.

You did stay in Zimbabwe though didn't you?

Yes, I helped to build up the new Army and as I say, I had to actually give up some of my good officers and take on their types and some of them were "something else." I mean really, I had company commanders going AWOL, company commanders, that's a Major, just not turning up for work, he'd just push off and there was nothing I could do about it.

Was this something, this was after you left in '82?

No, this was between '80 and '82 when I was commanding that battalion. I mean, to go AWOL in the army is a very serious offence and it's normally (01:47:01) associated with soldiers, with private soldiers and they normally go to military prison, for up to 28 days deprived of all their pay and everything. I had company commanders, Majors, these are men who command 100 men, they were just going AWOL. They were doing their own thing and you couldn't do anything about it because he was an ex-combatant as they called them. He used to push off when he felt like it and I was prepared to go along with that, in the interests of keeping the new Zimbabwean Army together and the new nation going. But when they started arresting my friends and the farmers and I knew some of them personally, I just thought "no, I can't be part of this, you cannot settle in," and that's when I took my decision to leave.

Did you have a family at that stage because you've mentioned to me previously that that affected your decision to move to the UK?

Yes I had a family.

Did that come into your decision to leave the Army as well?

Yes it did, because I knew that there was no future for me. At that stage I was married to my first wife, I had a daughter from that marriage and I just thought, "no, it's time to move," because with me arrested it's not going to be any good for the family anyway. I had to make a start while I was still young, to try and become a civilian and to start a civilian career for the sake of my family and myself and yes, that definitely influenced the decision to leave.

What work did you go into afterwards?

I went to South Africa and I joined the Edgars Stores Limited, which was a chain of retail clothing stores, into their distribution department.

So did you then move to South Africa?

Yes I moved to South Africa.

So you did actually leave Zimbabwe?

I left Zimbabwe for a couple of years and basically what happened, my predecessor had said to me, "come down and stay with me." He'd settled himself pretty well there, in South Africa, and he invited me to come to Johannesburg and he arranged a whole

lot of interviews for me and I went to them. I should have joined his company; I think I would have done better. So I went to Edgars Stores, which is a good company but when you get a break like that from a military career into a retail store, and I went into the distribution department. They were good to me but I just couldn't settle down, it was very, very hard to settle down. And I tried chicken farming after that, that didn't really work and in the meantime I'd got divorced because the war actually killed the marriage and came ironically when the war was over. I had my daughter still in Zimbabwe and it was too traumatic to be away so I (01:50:03) decided to come home. So I came back to Bulawayo where she was at school, to be a dad basically, to be near her, and got remarried to somebody else. I had another two kids from that and so I went back to Zimbabwe after two years, yes. I went into the transport industry initially, thoroughly enjoyed it but politically things started happening. It now became affirmative action, you know, where positions were given to blacks. I lost out on opportunities that I'd gone for. So I ended up at a girls' high school as the bursar, the administrator, which I thoroughly enjoyed actually. Toughest job I've ever been in, including the army, it really was challenging because I was now dealing again with politicians who were trying to...it's a long story; I was controlling the budget and trying to man a school.

The finances of keeping a school going...

Keeping a school going when the government are there, trying to grab all the foreign currency, which was vital for us. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was really very, very good. But a girls' school, can you imagine me in a girls' school?

Well I'm sure they would have benefitted from someone with discipline and so on.

Yes, I got on very well with the teachers and the girls as well; it was fantastic. My second daughter was at that same school and they need an administrator. The reason why I took the post was that I had basically been disadvantaged in a previous job I was in, I'd been promised to be made general manager of that branch in Bulawayo and it was given to a black guy because he had the right political connections and all the rest of it and that was my chances gone. Whilst I was able to keep my job, I could see them chipping away all the time and it was time to move. One of the things they did to chip away was withdraw the school fees benefit which I had. Now to educate your children in Zimbabwe, you need to put your children in a private school, which is expensive because the government schools, wonderful as they were in our day, were now rubbish. They were under-funded and standards had dropped and all the rest of it. So I had my kids at a private school paid for by the company. They withdrew that in a very clever, cynical way and the school was advertising for a post as administrator. So I applied for the job at my daughter's school and the privileges would have been that the education would have been sorted out for her education and my son's education. So that's why I went for that post and I was very happy there.

So you were able to sort two things out in one, in some ways.

That's right, yes. I actually got a very nice position, which I was very, very happy in, very challenging and I was able to see my children's education through to the end. I would like to be there now but I can't be, got to make a move on in life unfortunately.

When did you finally come to leave Zimbabwe then?

We left in July 2006.

(01:53:22) And what was it like moving to Britain? Had you been here previously?

I came here on holiday in about 1995 with my family.

Did it match what you'd seen about it?

Yes it did, I was fascinated, it was lovely, touring round London and we went to Oxford University and where Shakespeare was born and all that sort of thing, it was lovely, really great. We then went to America where I had a friend and we spent some time there and came back, spent another week in England. I've always known in my life funnily enough that I would end up living in England, even when I was a kid, being politically conscious. I knew that we would not live forever in my own country, Rhodesia, just knew it instinctively. One of the funny things is that we'd seen so much literature, films and pictures and lovely English villages and grimy cities and I thought, "I'd love to live in a lovely village, but I would end up in a grimy city" because I would come here with nothing, yet I'm living in a lovely village. It just worked out beautifully, so we really are blessed, we are really very, very lucky.

When you did come, did you feel that you were different to other British citizens in any way?

In many ways yes, but at the end of the day, I feel that we're the same. I mean, talking to you, I could have spoken to you in Rhodesia 15/20 years ago and you'd be exactly the same because we had so many recent British people who were in Rhodesia and had become Rhodesians. Same sense of humour, (01:56:49) same values, same sort of...attitudes can vary greatly because of circumstances amongst certain classes of people. Finding a job here was absolutely horrendous, it was very, very depressing. Even though I ended up in the job I could do, I'm way below where I should be, too old now in relevant experience, all sorts of things, which I can understand to some extent. What I couldn't understand, what I didn't like, was the attitude of certain people, work colleagues that I worked with. I had to come in much lower of my sort of standing in life from where I'd been before and doing menial-type work, for example reporting to young people who basically had a little boy attitude, the backbiting, I just didn't need that in my life at this stage. It was very, very hard to actually put up with that kind of attitude when...I mean I know that I've been something in my life before, I mean, I was a Lieutenant Colonel at one time in my life, which is some standing you know. And now, at one time, I was pushing barrows in Homebase, as a team leader and then having the shop manager telling me that I wasn't working properly when I knew I was doing my absolute best. I just said to him "it's impossible, you can't do more than I'm doing." "Oh, this other character does it all the time" and I said "well tell that character to come and work with me one night and see if he can do better than I am doing," you know, that type of attitude, I just don't need that in my life. But otherwise, I'm now working in a company where I come across people and they could be Rhodesians, they're just wonderful guys and women, wonderful people to work with, I get on very well with them.

And do you feel that people have understood where you've come from? Has that been an issue at all?

Some people do, some people just don't know, they don't have a clue. They're interested to a certain extent but it means so little to them, it's an experience that they just don't even know about and they're not really interested. Some people are very interested, it depends on their interests I suppose and where they've been. But the majority of people here I find are interested in their own lives and what's going on in their own lives and the football and things that interest them. It's understandable, I suppose we were the same there in our own way, sports mad people, we were a sports mad nation as well with our rugby and cricket and so on. Here it's football and cricket and especially football of course.

They take over, yes.

Yes, that's right, so it's understandable, but look, there was a bit of a culture shock to some extent but I've been fortunate as well, I've met some very, very nice people, good people here.

What do you think of the end of Empire? Of course your family had moved right through South Africa and up to Rhodesia? Did that mean something to you? You spoke earlier of the winds of change; looking back now, what does the end of the Empire mean to you?

(02:00:19) Yes, that's a very good question. I could say a lot about that. Look, I think Empire had to come to an end. There was no ways that the British Empire could carry on as it was; it's a great pity because it was good. British administration, wherever they went in the world, was always good and above board and Rhodesia was a typical example, it was an extremely well run country. Justice was there, good government, accountability, all the best of British was out there in the Empire, but of course the people want their own independence. Britain was basically broken in World Wars One and Two financially and they had lost their ability to hold an empire together because the people saw them being defeated in the outpost of empire and they realised time was up, they could move on. So they wanted to bring the empire to an end, which I can understand. But the way they went about it, I utterly condemn it, because I believe that they had a responsibility to history, to hand over the Empire to people who were worthy to actually run the empire, to do it in an accountable way. Not to ditch it just like that and to wash their hands of it.

India, I don't think they had much choice, in India and Pakistan, it was just too vast, they could not control that. And besides, there was quite an intelligent bunch of people who were taking over there, although the way they broke up as well was tragic, if you think of the enormous loss of life when India and Pakistan separated and so on. I can only really speak for my own country because here was an exceptionally well-run country and we knew that they wanted to ditch us. When Harold Macmillan made that speech of his, 'the winds of change,' in 1961, he was telling the Empire, all his colonies, all the whites of his colonies, "we are dumping you, so accept that." The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland had been set up by the British government in 1953 and they just ditched it like that. It was a wonderful experiment, it was good for everybody, they just broke it up in the most arrogant way imaginable. You should do some of the reading of Sir Roy Welensky, he was the Prime Minister at the time of Federation, and the way he was treated was appalling. And they gave Zambia and Malawi their independence, they were both disasters and yet they were both...Zambia was a particularly rich country. And they wanted the same thing to happen to Southern Rhodesia, just to hand us over like that.

The other thing about it is that not only did they want to hand them over, they weren't prepared to help us, the people they put in the Empire to keep it going. We were just left on our own. There was no "we'll compensate for you, we'll make sure...we'll bring you home to England, we'll help you." Nothing like that, nothing in the slightest, "you're on your own, hand over as fast as you can because we want to wash our hands clean of this, we want to go to Europe." That I have absolute contempt and hatred for, for the way they did that. The British politician I'm sorry to say, is the most devious animal God ever put on this earth and we see it today, they've actually ruined this country as well, the way I see it, with their duplicity and the way they've brought this country down, I can see it here as well.

Yes I have to agree with you on some points there.

But the people are wonderful people and they're exactly the same as we were, that's my private opinion. But look, there are good politicians here too but the end of empire, I reckon, they missed an (02:03:53) opportunity in history of handing it over in a responsible way. It would have meant, yes, they would have had to hang around, they probably would still be there now, but in the process of handing over in a structured responsible way, not to just give it to the first loud mouth who comes in and claims he represents the people of the country. Sorry I have gone on...

No, that's fine. I have one final question about looking back at the war now. We're posing this to everyone, but do you feel that the war was worth it?

No, no I suppose it wasn't, it wasn't. At the end of the day when you look at all that's happened, no, there was too much loss of life. Perhaps...I actually think that a big mistake was made with the UDI, Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Morally, I think Ian Smith was quite right. But practically, if he had had a sense of history, he wouldn't have done that because really the end of empire was coming, Britain was pulling out, there was no way that to go and declare UDI would have helped our cause. I think what he should have said at the time was "right, you won't accept us and our bid for independence, but don't interfere. Leave us, let us now run this country in the right way and hand over in the right way." He missed an opportunity as well I think. He should have told Britain "hands off, we're going to run our own affairs," because we were virtually independent anyway, we had a measure of self-government, which goes back to 1923. The other colonies didn't have that; Britain was able to just ditch them. So if we'd done that and actually brought in the African as best we could – we would have had difficulties because they wanted independence right away just like all the rest of them; we were up against African nationalism now – and with that on our side and on the British side, cooperation and assistance and help, I think all that could have been avoided, all that war and death and destruction and the dismal situation that Zimbabwe's in today. So there were mistakes on both sides.

Well I think we'll leave it there for now Mr Marillier, thank you very much.

End of interview