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RESEARCH ARTICLE



# From Federation to 'White Redoubt': Africa and the Global Radical-Right in the Geographical Imagination of UDI-Era Rhodesian Propaganda, 1962–1970

Niels Boender

University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

## ABSTRACT

This article argues that, in the wake of decolonisation across most of Sub-Saharan Africa, white Rhodesia's rulers shifted their political allegiances to a new Southern African bloc, allied to right-radical actors across the Cold War world. It examines the discourses emanating from Rhodesia's Department of Information, identifying the new mental map of affinity and identity that was forged throughout the 1960s. After briefly explaining information policy under the Central African Federation, it illustrates how an influx of radical right-wing actors, embedded in transnational white supremacist networks, used the Department to transform the rebel colony's global orientation. Taking control of the formerly independent media, the Rhodesian Front embarked on a project to remould white political culture in the years surrounding UDI in 1965. In the discourses they produced, Rhodesia's geographical identification with a British-controlled Central Africa was replaced with the avowedly white-supremacist Southern Africa. This study is at the heart of important innovations in the transformative study of Africa's Cold War and late-colonial ideology. It hopes to facilitate the growing, transnational study of settler resistance in Southern Africa, the counter-revolution against the wave of decolonisation that broke on the Zambezi in the mid-1960s.

## KEYWORDS

Rhodesia; Zimbabwe; Cold War; Southern Africa; settler colonialism; propaganda; anti-communism

On 20th August 1964, Southern Rhodesia's Legislative Assembly, faded jewel in the crown of a decade of official 'multiracialism' in the self-governing colony, experienced one of its most vociferous debates. Since 1962, the narrow right-wing pro-independence Rhodesian Front majority had used the chamber to make the unapologetic case for white minority-rule against its more 'moderate' opponents. However, that day's debate did not concern the question of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) or of widening Rhodesia's restrictive franchise. Instead, it concerned a seemingly harmless hiring decision. The man

**CONTACT** Niels Boender  [Niels.boender@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Niels.boender@warwick.ac.uk)

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to be employed was Ivor Benson, a South African journalist, who had just been appointed Information Advisor to P.K van der Byl, the Parliamentary Secretary for Information in the Rhodesian Front government of Ian Smith. The opposition rained down accusations: Benson was a 'Mosley-ite sympathiser' and close associate of the British extremist A.K Chesterton, founder of the League of Empire Loyalists (LEL).<sup>1</sup> Benson had allegedly bragged about taking pot-shots at fleeing Africans while a reporter in the Congo, expressed a disdain for a free press, and was an open supporter of the National Party in South Africa.<sup>2</sup> Now he was to be in charge of what hitherto had been primarily a 'technical' department for information provision to Rhodesia's black majority.<sup>3</sup> What change in Rhodesia's ruling ideology led to the hiring of a man like Benson, and what impact it would have on the white minority's identity and affinity, are the focus of this article.

Figures like Benson were central to the process whereby, in the wake of decolonisation across most of Sub-Saharan Africa, white Rhodesia's rulers shifted their political allegiances to a new Southern African bloc, allied to right-radical actors across the Cold War world. The colony's roughly 250,000 whites, after the 1962 election of the right-wing Rhodesian Front party, began to move substantially from the ideological precepts upon which the Central African Federation (CAF) had been based.<sup>4</sup> Through publications and propaganda campaigns, Rhodesia mobilised transnational support networks, both material and ideological, and positioned itself at the heart of 1960s debates about the Cold War and post-imperial identity. The hackneyed phrases and unspoken assumptions, which populated Rhodesia's official discourses, transformed the colony's geographical identification with a British-controlled Central Africa, fostered since the 1890s by its British-descended settler elite, with the avowedly white-supremacist 'Southern Africa'. Economic and military reliance on the apartheid neighbour to the South, and on the *Estado Novo* Portuguese colony of Mozambique, was hereby accompanied by the weakening of ties of 'kith and kin' with the former metropole.<sup>5</sup> By constantly smearing independent African states, and positing rebellion against Britain as authentic decolonisation, Rhodesia's ideologues hoped to make white supremacy palatable in the post-'Winds of Change' moment.<sup>6</sup> While the process was never complete, and many whites retained affection for the Queen and Britain, propaganda efforts successfully imbued the white minority with a potent *laager* mentality. Simultaneously the Rhodesian Department of Information failed to win over the state's overwhelming black majority, facilitating the project's eventual demise.

This argument is at the heart of important innovations in the transformative study of Africa's Cold War and late-colonial ideology. It hopes to facilitate the growing study of the transnational history of settler resistance in Southern Africa, the counter-revolution against the wave of decolonisation that broke on the Zambezi in the mid-1960s. This work hereby attempts to overthrow

the methodological separation of Cold War and decolonisation by studying it in a 'single analytical frame' as Anthony Hopkins has called for.<sup>7</sup> It also takes to heart Odd Arne Westad's invocation that historians of the Global Cold War must indicate how ideological conflict shaped 'international and domestic frameworks within which political, social and cultural changes in Third World countries took place'.<sup>8</sup> While the study of transnational communist and pan-African networks blossoms, anti-communist efforts have been broadly disregarded.<sup>9</sup> However, crucial work in the field has begun with Filipe Ribeiro de Meneses and Robert McNamara's study of the military intelligence cooperation between Portugal, South Africa and Rhodesia as part of Operation ALCORA.<sup>10</sup> However, they do not explore how Rhodesia's identity itself was transformed by its self-adopted 'frontline' status and its engagement with the transnational flows of ideas that underpinned the cooperation. A further key work emphasising the continental ambitions of the white regimes of Southern Africa has been Jamie Miller's *An African Volk*, which this study hopes to supplement by engaging with the ideological networks that underpinned attempts to shore up white supremacy.<sup>11</sup> Whereas Miller shows that South Africa often kept the Rhodesians at arms-length, unwilling to sacrifice their budding relationships with post-colonial African states, this study illustrates how Rhodesian propaganda hoped to overcome this reluctance by declaring new affinities and break with decades of Afrikaner-phobia among Rhodesia's settlers.

There have been several key studies that have engaged with Rhodesian information policy. Ennocent Msindo, James Zaffiro and Elaine Windrich have produced studies that engage with the technical practicalities of the Information Department, particularly in the realm of censorship.<sup>12</sup> However, only a small set of scholars have studied the content of Rhodesia's propaganda, which this study hopes to build on. The work of Donal Lowry has crucially illustrated that, even after UDI, the relationship between white Rhodesians and the British Crown remained intimate and complex, characterised by the paradoxical Ulster-style 'loyal rebellion' of the declaration of UDI, replete with a portrait of Elizabeth II and God Save The Queen.<sup>13</sup> This article hopes to chart precisely how these attachments were weakened by right-radical elements within the Rhodesian Front, who saw the imperial loyalty of their countrymen as hampering the project of white Rhodesian nationalism. The work of Josiah Brownell has been particularly important in opening the study of the project of Rhodesian nationhood. Crucially, Brownell identifies an alternative temporality projected in the RF's propaganda discourses, identifying with broader world historical narrative of global settler-dom.<sup>14</sup> Temporally linking the white rebels with the America of 1776, and Africans with primordial barbarians, the legitimacy of the rebellion was projected both domestically and abroad.<sup>15</sup> Brownell argues that 'through redefining *when* they were in historical time, the Rhodesians were redefining who they were in the modern world', which this article hopes to supplement by illustrating the creative process by

which the *where* was also crucial.<sup>16</sup> Space and the reckoning with Rhodesia's place in Africa, unmoored from the old Empire and relying on the regimes in Portugal and South Africa, was crucial to the project of Rhodesian independence.

David Kenrick has charted this process from the perspective of the fashioning of the (white) Rhodesian nation, introducing the concept of 'symbolic decolonisation' to describe the fashioning of national symbols to fabricate Rhodesian nationalism.<sup>17</sup> He admirably rejects Rhodesian exceptionalism by placing the RF's national project in the immediate context of Africa-wide decolonisation. Just as Africa 'north of the Zambezi' saw its geographical imagination transformed by the struggle for independence, identifying with Pan-Africanism and more global networks like those at the Bandung Conference, the counter-revolution against the 'Winds of Change' in Rhodesia also aspired to new geographical identities. By building on Kenrick's work, and on that of Alison Shutt and Ruramisai Charumbira, the article hopes to contribute to the growing study of Rhodesian and Zimbabwean nationalism.<sup>18</sup> In particular Charumbira's exploration of the historical construction of an exclusionary white nationalism across the twentieth century can be capped with a study of its apotheosis in the 1960s. Her findings regarding the American Howell Wright whose archival work showed him to be, before even setting foot on the territory, as the 'quintessential ideological Rhodesian'.<sup>19</sup> This capacity, for Rhodesian-ness to be a global, redemptive (and eventually anti-communist) identity would be a key thread that carried forward and was elaborated during the UDI-era.

This study also goes beyond those cited above by synthesising a number of under-utilised documents. It combines the physical output of the Department of Information, publications like *Rhodesian Commentary*, with the records of the British Commonwealth (Relations) Office's Rhodesia Political Department. The latter believed themselves to be caught in a 'propaganda war' with the Rhodesian Front and painstakingly investigated its efforts both foreign and domestic.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the memoirs and legislative record of the Rhodesian Front's opponents illustrate how the shift in Rhodesia's global orientation was palpable to those painted as domestic enemies. Crucially, these sources primarily reflect on how *official* attitudes changed, using their immense control of public media to try and change the minds of white Rhodesia, although transformations were never total or complete. The lingering loyalty to the Queen identified by Lowry is perhaps the most palpable evidence of this, but this does not mean substantial changes did not occur as white Rhodesians, overall, accepted the RF view of the world. The oral histories conducted by Sue Onslow and Annie Berry, as well as contemporary interviews with white Rhodesians indicate the anti-communist *laager* identity was fairly ubiquitous by the 1970s.<sup>21</sup> Rhodesian propaganda reflects what Lorenzo Veracini has called the 'discursive erasure' of the indigenous Other in settler colonial

discourse, instrumentalising them in comparisons with the rest of Africa.<sup>22</sup> Despite this erasure, it is crucial to consider Rhodesia's overwhelming black majority in their refusal of the propaganda gambit, and the consequences thereof for the future of the settler-state.

### **The Rhodesian Front and the 'War of Men's Minds'**

While conquered by South African colonists working for Cecil Rhodes' British South African Company in the 1890s, balancing on the bones of the Ndebele Kingdom, Southern Rhodesia soon fixed its gaze northward, to the riches of the Copperbelt and further to the Imperial metropole. Before 1962, Southern Rhodesia had been governed by a succession of parties that cherished a British-oriented, gradualist view of African development. The elite coalition originated from the 1922 Referendum (among whites) that chose 'responsible government' over joining South Africa, embracing an existential fear of Afrikaner nationalism.<sup>23</sup> As Lowry has explored, Ethel Jollie, a key activist in the 1922 Referendum, wanted Southern Rhodesia to be a 'loyal imperial barracks', which tethered settler identity to the wider Empire.<sup>24</sup> The notion of civilisational standards, upon which minority rule was predicated, echoed high-imperial British colonial ideology, what Cecil Rhodes himself called 'equal rights for every civilised man south of the Zambezi'.<sup>25</sup> By the 1950s, as self-rule by Africans became a realistic prospect, this establishment accepted the British-brokered compromise of Federation with Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland to gain access to the extractive wealth of the Copperbelt.<sup>26</sup> The official doctrine was one of multi-racial partnership, slowly giving more rights to the African majority as they became wealthier and more educated while entrenching white power for generations. White identities remained a form of composite Britishness, best represented by Roy Welensky, the Federal Prime Minister, who described himself as half-Afrikaner, half-Jewish but 'a hundred-percent British'.<sup>27</sup>

Federal propaganda efforts reflected this reliance on 'Greater British' affinities, but also its self-proclaimed developmental mission towards its black majority. A tentative influence-building operation, aimed at Britain, was constructed during the 1950s. Philip Murphy has examined how this was done through personal correspondence with British MPs, spearheaded by Welensky himself.<sup>28</sup> From 1960 they also employed the Voice & Vision public-relations agency to lobby business and place adverts in British newspapers which, as Andrew Cohen has shown, tended to emphasise the Federation's progress in development and 'kith and kin' rhetoric.<sup>29</sup> These efforts struggled during the 'Winds of Change' years as Africa pulsed with constitutional negotiations to end colonial rule, coupled with criticism of atrocities committed during the Kenya and Nyasaland Emergencies.<sup>30</sup> Just as 'kith and kin' rhetoric lost its potency in Britain, the Federation's claim to be a developmental leader in Africa, the only exponent of multiracial 'partnership', felt hollow in light of

African Nationalist decolonisation. As Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Salisbury's recalcitrant partners in the Federation, moved inexorably toward independence, fear of black rule, supplemented by events in the Congo, gripped Southern Rhodesia's white electorate. The Rhodesian Front would attempt to salve these fears and fill what Stuart Ward has called the 'civic void for settler populations who had believed uncritically in the benevolent myth of empire'.<sup>31</sup>

The Rhodesian Front represented an alliance in favour of immediate minority-rule independence and rejecting racial 'integration'.<sup>32</sup> The leadership remained dominated by 'ethnic' Britons, including 'an English county solicitor and an accountant, an ex-Hussar officer, and a leading Scottish duke', but was significantly less dedicated to an imperial mindset.<sup>33</sup> They swept to a narrow electoral victory in 1962, led by the comparably moderate Winston Field, soon replaced by Ian Smith.<sup>34</sup> Comprising an alliance between ranchers and artisans, those most dependent on land apportionment and employment discrimination, the grassroots shaped Front policy, as the combative minutes of party congresses illustrate.<sup>35</sup> While domestic policy shifted to a Rhodesian version of apartheid, Community Development, the Front branches also called for 'a military pact and the closest economic ties with South Africa'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, they passed resolutions 'deploring the inaccuracies, misstatements and malicious representations perpetuated by the Press, Federal Broadcasting Cooperation and Rhodesia Television'.<sup>37</sup> With the victory of this party, the white political culture of the colony was profoundly transformed. A 'discursive threshold' was passed, with every white Rhodesian seemingly forced choose to follow the Front 'into the *laager*' or leave the country altogether.<sup>38</sup> Brownell has shown an exodus took place between 1962 and 1965, predominately among the white urban middle-class that were most likely to support the Front's liberal opponents.<sup>39</sup> The stage was set for a propaganda offensive which would transform Rhodesia's worldview, especially *vis-à-vis* the rest of Africa.

Rhodesia's media landscape, dominated by the urban establishment and owned by 'liberal' South African financiers, became a key battleground in the years leading up to UDI. The Rhodesia Broadcasting Cooperation (RBC), monopolised radio broadcasting in the colony; a statutory body modelled on the nominally apolitical BBC.<sup>40</sup> A 'liberal' commitment in broadcasting, imbued by developmental ideology, was inherited from Northern Rhodesian colonial governance, emphasising tutelage of Africans. Rhodesia Television (RTV) was the sole television channel, majority-owned by the South African Argus Press.<sup>41</sup> Argus was a relatively, to use the parlance of the time, 'liberal' media company which dominated the English-speaking South African newspaper industry, and opposed to the apartheid-government in Pretoria.<sup>42</sup> Crucially, Argus also owned the Rhodesian dailies, the *Rhodesia Herald* and *Bulawayo Chronicle*, whose editorials supported gradualism and lambasted 'government by intimidation'.<sup>43</sup> On these three fronts, radio, television and print, the Front inherited a pro-partnership landscape, which retained the Federation's



developmental, northward-looking stance. These would be the first target in the 'war of men's minds' declared by P.K van der Byl.<sup>44</sup>

It is worth considering the career of Van der Byl, a junior member of the Government during the early 1960s but key to this story as Parliamentary Secretary for Information. Son of a South African Cabinet Minister in the government of Jan Smuts, he had set up in Rhodesia as a tobacco farmer in the 1950s and become embroiled in the febrile right-wing of settler politics. Ideologically, Van der Byl was above all a Cold Warrior and despite his exaggerated upper-class drawl, unapologetically anti-British, insisting in his parliamentary maiden-speech that Britain had lost its place in the world, with geopolitical dynamism passing to the two super-powers.<sup>45</sup> From 1963 he would direct the Department of Information, whose purpose hitherto was courting immigration while leaving propaganda to the Native and Foreign Affairs ministries.<sup>46</sup> This does not mean that British-aligned voices were absent from the political scene, even from the RF front-bench, but it was the radical-right anti-communist mind-set which would guide propaganda policy.

The Department's first consequential act was appointing a new RBC Board of Governors. Malcolm Smith, editor of the *Herald*, found that the appointees 'were rabid RF supporters, including the party's constitutional advisor and two future MPs'.<sup>47</sup> The new RBC Board was spearheaded by Harvey Ward, an experienced journalist who had left the *Herald* for its opposition to the Front, and who would henceforth lead the newsroom, facilitating a politicisation of broadcasting and growing the Front's capacity to direct public opinion.<sup>48</sup> Ward together with Benson, were close associates of the leader of the LEL, A.K Chesterton, and themselves founders of a far-right pressure group the Candour League, the Rhodesian spin-off of Chesterton's organisation.<sup>49</sup> With their hold in the RBC and the Department of Information, transnational far-right ideology was projected into every white Rhodesian home. The 1963 takeover was seen by liberal commentator Frank Clements as the moment when the RBC came to be 'occupied with variants of the theme of hostile world conspiracy' inspired by Candour League eccentrics.<sup>50</sup> Ward precipitated a 1965 purge of the RBC newsroom, proclaiming: 'we are the official national radio and outside sources can quote us as the voice of the government', while Van der Byl justified the exclusion of moderate opposition in the name of 'public safety'.<sup>51</sup> By 1964 the RBC dropped BBC news-bulletins in favour of their South African Broadcasting Cooperation equivalent; much to the horror of the British-oriented professional classes.<sup>52</sup>

The hamstrung RBC was soon mobilised to take hold of RTV, in what Clifford Dupont, the Minister of Justice, called 'little UDI'.<sup>53</sup> Claims that RTV was owned by foreign business interests, in the form of Argus, which the Front saw as the liberal appeasers of Communism, were used to justify the purchase of fifty-one percent of RTV by the RBC and the merging of the two newsrooms in December 1964.<sup>54</sup> Progressive ideas from South Africa or



Britain were painted as anti-Rhodesian, emphasising a patriotic identity that legitimated authoritarian measures. Van der Byl went further, claiming: 'If television is able to be used as a brain-washing medium or one of indoctrination then ... the highest authority in the land should have a say in it.'<sup>55</sup> Media control was accompanied by a chorus of McCarthyite fear, as it became 'difficult to distinguish between the enemy of the State, and the Government's legitimate political opponents', according to Smith, necessitating a crackdown on the Communists 'in our midst' that in reality signified liberals and African Nationalists that opposed the government.<sup>56</sup> Now controlling all electronic media, the Front's ideologues could begin grafting their ideology onto populist Rhodesian nationalism, delegitimising the formerly dominant liberal opposition. According to contemporary observers Paul Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, by the time of UDI in November 1965, Rhodesian whites had fallen: 'hook, line and sinker for the RBC's view of the world. The TV and radio hypnotically harped on a few basic themes: the chaos in black states, the disorders elsewhere in the world, and the monolithic communist threat'.<sup>57</sup>

The veracity of this claim is supported by the fact that in the 1965 election, the Front swept to victory in all fifty of Rhodesia's A-Roll (white) seats.<sup>58</sup> After negotiations with the United Kingdom broke down in November 1965, and Rhodesia declared its independence, the rebel colony became a pariah state. Thereafter, the Department of Information had to go ever further to inoculate the population against 'world opinion'. What Kenrick has called 'symbolic decolonisation' in the post-UDI moment was thus partially a coercive endeavour, as alternative views of white Rhodesian nationhood were unapologetically censored by the government.<sup>59</sup> Rhodesia hereby moved closer to their southern neighbour, who in the name of the 'Suppression of Communism', had pursued similar measures.<sup>60</sup>

To prepare for UDI the Emergency Powers (Censorship of Publications) Order was rushed through parliament in October 1965, requiring the supply of pre-publication proofs by newspapers for approval, reinforced by a State of Emergency in early November.<sup>61</sup> The unique mode by which censorship would operate was through so-called 'blank spaces', where censors would strike out articles and editors refused to replace them, leaving the columns empty.<sup>62</sup> The first articles that were censored, in the *Herald* edition that reported on UDI, concerned the Governor Sir Humphrey Gibbs, who had *de jure* dismissed Smith's government.<sup>63</sup> Gibbs became an effective 'non-person' in Rhodesian discourse, with any reference to him censored.<sup>64</sup> The Dutch consul referred to the unreal 'Alice in Wonderland' feeling that hung over Salisbury as interactions with the Governor became a key symbolic battleground, with the British requiring all diplomats to keep paying homage to Gibbs.<sup>65</sup> This censorship effort, intimately enforced by officials such as Benson who personally 'strolled' into the offices of the *Chronicle* five minutes after UDI to censor its content, was designed to weaken symbolic attachments to Britain

and create an atmosphere where notions of truth became muddled and politicised.<sup>66</sup>

As oral histories of white Rhodesians show, this period created a genuine distrust of the media and feeling that 'a propaganda battle did exist on the home front'.<sup>67</sup> Liberal whites despaired at relentless assault, seeing their countrymen 'punch-drunk from the continuing, contrived political crisis'.<sup>68</sup> Many gave up. In April 1965 *Pointers*, a liberal magazine, stopped publication, arguing 'we feel that in the present circumstances we cannot maintain the publication of *Pointers* as an independent, objective review'.<sup>69</sup> Only in 1968 did official press censorship slacken, with Malcolm Smith admitting he had 'to produce a paper that pays its way, satisfies the bulk of the readers and does not pursue lost causes', with blank spaces reduced to token size.<sup>70</sup> Self-censorship, universally identified by observers after 1968, reflected the success of information efforts and changes in Rhodesian media culture.<sup>71</sup>

And what about Rhodesia's black majority? Information provisions for Africans critically lagged, as minority-rule was predicated on European approval while only courting Africans to the extent of isolating them in 'remote tribal areas'.<sup>72</sup> With nationalist publications banned and most of its leaders detained or abroad, only 'moderate' pro-partnership African criticism was publicly aired, most prominently in parliament, where a handful of black politicians held on to B-Roll seats. These parliamentarians saw the ever increasing budget of the Department of Information only increasing government control, with provision for Africans becoming purely political, rather than the social tutelage which would aid development.<sup>73</sup> Government claims of communist influence were 'made over and over again in public, and on the wireless and on television', even if the greatest weapon against communism was increasing living standards according to the Opposition.<sup>74</sup> They cited the 'broken, hopeless English' of African-oriented propaganda.<sup>75</sup> By choosing community development as the tool for propagandising the African majority, the urban black middle-classes, who were experiencing a decline in living standards in the 1960s, could only be appealed to by a limited set of anti-communist imaginaries. Hereby, the war for African 'hearts and minds' was surrendered to the interests of the Front's radical-right represented by the Department of Information. While by 1970 a substantial propaganda campaign was geared at Africans, with 350,000 copies of the *African Times* being read a fortnight, it was entirely ineffective as it did not mesh with the lived realities of Rhodesian Africans.<sup>76</sup> Most would rather just wrap their 'fish and chips in the *African Times*' or, more dangerously, 'tune into Zambia', according to black parliamentarians.<sup>77</sup>

While white Rhodesia was drawn into the *laager*, African Nationalists looked more and more across the country's borders for inspiration, drawing the country ever closer to the military clash which would seal its fate and guarantee the transition to majority-rule. Siege mentality and anti-communist conspiracy

could only strengthen the bifurcation already characteristic of settler-colonial societies. However, the story of the Department of Information's attempts to seal off Rhodesians from liberal mentalities and hostile 'world opinion' remains only one side of the coin, the other being what replaced that void. This is dealt with in the next two sections.

### **Filling the Post-Imperial Void and Far-Right Entanglements**

Ian Smith confided to Alec Douglas-Home in 1964 that, without minority-rule independence, Europeans might collectively emigrate and 'end [Rhodesia] by writing it off completely'.<sup>78</sup> This is indicative of how, for the Front's leaders, the discursive commitment of the Federal establishment to 'kith and kin' and a developmentalist tutelary colonialism had become a roadblock to Rhodesia's survival as white-supremacist project. Discursive loyalty to Britain kept open the possibility of eventual 'return', while committing the Government to further concessions to the black majority.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, breeding an emotional attachment to a new Rhodesian nationalism, entrenched in a fortified 'White Redoubt', was central to the project of UDI. New identities, as identified by Anthony Chennells in white Rhodesian literature, filtered down to the ideological 'middle' of Rhodesian society through control of broadcasting and suspicion regarding alternative sources.<sup>80</sup> What Andrew Cohen calls 'settler mentalities' thus shifted significantly, albeit never completely, a process which must be understood in the context of the interplay between African decolonisation and the Cold War.

The Rhodesian Front consistently emphasised the newness of its project, embracing the state-capitalist modernity advertised by the 'Free World' and South Africa in particular, with British identity relegated to a signifier for Rhodesia's past. This argument runs alongside Brownell's assertion that UDI was legitimised by locating Rhodesia in a discursive past, with its closest contemporaries being the 'sturdy imperialists' of 1930s Britain.<sup>81</sup> Allusions to 1930s Britain emphasised appeasement of Nazi Germany as equivalent to majority-rule decolonisation. Communists (and by extension African Nationalists) were equated to Nazis as part of the legitimising strategy that linked the collective sacrifice of Rhodesians in the World War, and the particular sacrifice of Smith who served in the Royal Air Force and operated with partisans in Italy, to the contemporary right to independence.<sup>82</sup> A 1967 propaganda film sees Smith speak straight to the camera and accuse Britain, using the 'Cold War tactics applied by Russia', of: '*appeasing* the forces of world communism in their attack on the bastion of freedom and democracy in Africa situated in the southern part of the continent'.<sup>83</sup> Rhodesia is thus discursively linked not to a generic Britishness but to the specific 1930s resistance of Winston Churchill and Lord Salisbury's Watching Committee, re-founded in defence of minority rule.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the specific geographic referent to Southern Africa

explicitly illustrates how the 'White Redoubt' was constructed by Rhodesian propaganda.

Propaganda emphasised a perceived decline in Britain, utilising discourses developed concomitantly by Enoch Powell, of British 'ethno-masochism' and fear of racial mixing.<sup>85</sup> As Bill Schwarz identifies, ideas of a British past entered the Rhodesian present as functions of that present.<sup>86</sup> A pantheon of heroes was constructed in the Rhodesian worldview, including Churchill, Smuts and Salazar, as well as a demonology of traitors: from R.A Butler to Wilson and eventually John Vorster.<sup>87</sup> While temporalising rhetoric was used, for instance by locating Africans back in civilisational time, references to Britain tended to explicitly disassociate it from Rhodesia, especially when attracting migrants disillusioned with 'grim, grey, decadent and socialist' Britain.<sup>88</sup>

The politics of Britain, particularly in regard to the 'permissive society' and the dirigisme of the post-war consensus, became a key trope in propaganda which disassociated Rhodesia from modern Britain. The central phrase of Southern African propaganda, 'Western Christian Civilisation', was contrasted with social change and secularisation in Britain. Harvey Ward argued that 'the Beatles, international finance groups and colonial freedom agitators are all agents of the communist plot to achieve world domination' while the Reverend Wright, on the Rhodesian National Day of Prayer, asked for deliverance against 'the fifth column propagators of permissiveness in morality, pornography and drug addiction'.<sup>89</sup> Race was central to this dynamic, with Smith echoing Powellite claims. He commented that the British 1968 Race Relations Act forced 'people's hearts to move in a certain way' which would only aggravate racial bitterness by outlawing discrimination.<sup>90</sup> Far from embracing multiracial partnership, Rhodesia was hereby positioned as a repository of 'white values' that were being forcibly changed in the former imperial metropole.

Veracini has claimed that colonial narratives are predicated on a circular narrative structure, interactions with barbarism followed by a return to civilisation, while settler colonialism is predicated on the 'teleological expectation of irreversible transformation'.<sup>91</sup> The moment of UDI and the discursive severance of links with Britain removed the capacity for return, often literally with British restrictions on Rhodesian passports.<sup>92</sup> Van der Byl summarised the turn away from Britain as: 'in the Days of the Federation there was a philosophy that Rhodesia had to be kept as a preserve for the British way of life' but now they 'reject[ed] that completely'.<sup>93</sup> Ian Smith himself articulated in 1969 that Rhodesians had 'acclimatised' to a future outside the Commonwealth, a return to which would be 'living in the past, a dreamland'.<sup>94</sup> As recounted by Kenrick, this was not entirely voluntary: the Crown's attempt in 1968 to block the hanging of Zimbabwean nationalist 'terrorists' and the Queen's speech to the Jamaican parliament in 1966 supporting majority rule fed

alienation of white Rhodesians from the Commonwealth.<sup>95</sup> The future instead was to be in a white-dominated Southern Africa.

Key to this transition were the new transnational networks which were tapped into by the Department of Information. Rhodesia's diplomatic missions abroad, limited by non-recognition, became key sites of contestation, as studied by Eddie Michel, but also represented conduits for propaganda distribution and nodal points for new networks that dominated the Rhodesian imagination.<sup>96</sup> While maintaining links with British supporters in the Conservative Monday Club and the Anglo-Rhodesian Society through the mission at Rhodesia House on the Strand, from 1962 key shifts began to appear.<sup>97</sup> Efforts expanded across the globe, opening up Rhodesia Information Offices in Washington DC, Paris and Cape Town.<sup>98</sup> Accredited Diplomatic Representatives (ADR) were furthermore appointed in Pretoria and Lisbon, all providing the global 'Rhodesia Lobby' with her ideological toolkit.<sup>99</sup> A range of 'Friends of Rhodesia' groups were established across the world while journalists, editors and politicians were invited for tours of the country. Propaganda efforts were uniquely anxiety-inducing for the British Government, desperate to throw up a *cordon sanitaire* around its embarrassing rebel colony. A letter from the Canberra High Commission warned of 'the activities of Mr Alan Izod of the Rhodesian Government Information Services', speaking to meetings of the Rhodesia/Australia Association and showing a film which accused Britain of 'psychological warfare'.<sup>100</sup> Van der Byl made a tour of Europe in 1966, playing the *enfant terrible* of many diplomatic receptions. In one instance, Van der Byl contacted a public relations firm in Paris for 'some project he had for putting over the points of view of the present Rhodesian regime'.<sup>101</sup> British civil servants were sent scrambling when he was to make a social call in Britain, even considering a 'quick Order in Council' to bar him.<sup>102</sup> According to Van der Byl's biographer and unbeknownst to the officials that tracked his movements, he associated freely with aristocratic and conservative networks, including the exiled Albanian Prince Leka and the Bavarian Premier Franz Joseph Strauss.<sup>103</sup>

The transnational networks that official Rhodesian efforts established mirrored the unofficial far-right network of support established by Benson, Ward and their Candour League. In the 1970s, after his Rhodesian sojourn, where besides his work as censor he also wrote Ian Smith's key speeches at the time of UDI, Benson would head the South African chapter of the World Anti-Communist League. Moreover, he was the local correspondent of the Commonwealth League of Rights, both radical-right networks central to positioning Rhodesia in global far-right circles.<sup>104</sup> Chesterton had personally founded the worldwide network of organisations, including the diverse branches of the Commonwealth League of Rights, that transformed far-right ideology across the former empire from imperial nostalgia to a militant, racist, anticommunism dedicated to the defence of white rule in Southern

Africa.<sup>105</sup> Crucially, the Candour League was the Rhodesian affiliate of the World Anti-Communist League.<sup>106</sup>

Far-right propaganda painted Rhodesia as the victim of global conspiracy. Chesterton himself wrote that:

The Devil ... has been busy alerting his political, financial, diplomatic and propaganda forces in every part of the world to coerce the White population of Rhodesia into the acceptance of a policy which would soon replace civilized rule by a regime of barbaric obscenity.<sup>107</sup>

Such eschatological rhetoric saw Rhodesia in a racialised global struggle that combined tropes of the African post-colony with a global Zionist and/or Communist conspiracy to promote the decline of White Christian Civilisation. The Candour League was critical for transplanting these ideas and is held by Lowry to be at the forefront of a 'social revolution against the Rhodesian establishment', labelling the former British elite as communist compradors.<sup>108</sup> The League's *Rhodesia: Myths and Facts* painted the world's Press as 'largely [having] been taken over by the Left', combining a shocking racism, Africans 'who look upon reasonableness as weakness, concessions as surrender, and who have celebrated victory with orgies of slaughter, rape and pillage', with the geopolitical claim that Russia was after Rhodesia's '13 strategic minerals'.<sup>109</sup> British diplomats recorded that the League's *Bulletin* had only a worldwide circulation of 5000, but supplied far-right groups across the world with Rhodesia as an early example of contemporary 'White Genocide' tropes.<sup>110</sup> For example *The Privateer* pamphlet, distributed among far-right circles in the UK, reprinted extracts from the League's *Candour Bulletin* while Ward's *World Survey* on the RBC liberally quoted from it.<sup>111</sup> One such publication, the Belgian far-right *Jeune Europe* echoed the Candour League by suggestion Rhodesia's settlers were '240,000 White Sentries' of the Free World.<sup>112</sup>

What the Candour League, and by extension the Department of Information, achieved was a re-tethering of Rhodesian identity in the wake of the 'betrayal' by the former imperial metropole. But a transnational, globally redemptive role could not fuel Rhodesia's war machine, nor attract more white migrants, and to this end rhetorical linkages with the neighbouring, white-controlled states were sought. The two processes were intimately connected, as the 'white sentries' were depicted as being on the frontline against a black 'tide' of communism from the North, shielding South Africa from direct attacks by the exiled liberation movements.

What this section has shown is that Rhodesia's propagandists, both materially and discursively reoriented Rhodesian identities from an affiliation with British 'kith and kin' to a 'frontline' nationalism, or *laager* mentality, that claimed to be an integral part of a 'white redoubt' at the tip of the continent. Trans-national right-wing networks provided white Rhodesians a redemptive *raison d'être* while at once cutting off the regime from rapprochement with



the local black majority. This did not prevent the Department of Information from attempting to claim an authentic form of decolonisation that was in the best interests of its 'tribal' African subjects. The next section looks at how comparative positioning within Africa was central to this process.

### **'We Are Rhodesian, and of Africa'**

Rhodesia's very existence had been based on fear of the Afrikanerdom, decades of scepticism on both sides which propaganda had to overcome. Propaganda efforts in South Africa were of great significance, especially as an icy anglo-scepticism among the Afrikaner bosses had to be overcome to facilitate Rhodesian survival.<sup>113</sup> Sue Onslow demonstrates that South Africa fine-tuned a position of 'studious non-committal', but gave material aid and was fearful that if international sanctions succeeded, they could be extended southwards.<sup>114</sup> Rhodesia softened scepticism and strengthened domestic morale by tapping into the groundswell of support among South African Europeans, appealing to a common 'whiteness' that reflected on shifting Rhodesian identity itself. While much has been made of 'kith and kin' linkages between Britain and Rhodesia, they were also prominent with South Africa. Opposition leader De Villiers Graaf made the appeal that: 'the people of South Africa will never forgive the Prime Minister [Verwoerd] if he sits idly by while civilised government and stability are destroyed in Rhodesia'.<sup>115</sup> Verwoerd further admitted that 'we have blood relations over the border'.<sup>116</sup>

These emotive bonds were actively encouraged by the Rhodesian ADR, John Gaunt, a Front-stalwart who would later serve as Chief Censor, and propaganda that fostered support-groups like the Save Rhodesia Campaign.<sup>117</sup> These campaigns projected Rhodesia as 'Moscow's missing African link', T-shirts printed saying 'fight terrorism', while pens were sold made from spent Rhodesian cartridges.<sup>118</sup> An Afrikaans-language Campaign registration card warned 'Support Rhodesia today ... protect your future tomorrow'.<sup>119</sup> When Gaunt left his post in 1969 and the diplomatic corps shunned his departure party, Afrikaans newspapers attacked 'this insulating behaviour' and encouraged readers to support the Friends of Rhodesia's alternative event, recognising a link between Rhodesia's present and South Africa's potential isolation.<sup>120</sup> These efforts were reciprocated, with *Rhodesian Commentary* reporting on 'Dankie Suid Afrika' (Thank you, South Africa) signs put up at the Beit Bridge border and seen across Rhodesia.<sup>121</sup> These emotional links are also evidenced by tourism across the Limpopo: by 1969 118,000 South Africans visited annually, and 122,000 Rhodesians, half the white population, visited South Africa.<sup>122</sup>

Links with Portugal were also critical and a substantial reorientation for both sides, undoing Portuguese mistrust of British settlers and Rhodesian dislike of perceived miscegenation in Mozambique.<sup>123</sup> Smith formalised links with Lisbon in 1964, personally impressed by the strongman Salazar and explicitly



recognising their 'shared concern about the Russian plan for world domination'.<sup>124</sup> Over time, these affinities became critical to Rhodesia's survival, with illegal trade flowing through Mozambican ports and rhetorical links emphasising the collective project of settler rule in Africa.<sup>125</sup> Altogether, emotional linkages between the three states of the 'white bastion' in Southern Africa were fostered by an active campaign, paralleling the South African development whereby ethnic distinctions faded in the 1960s in favour of an all-embracing 'whiteness' motivated by global decolonisation.<sup>126</sup>

For 'territories in Africa to the North of us', Smith stated in a television interview, that: '[the British made it] clear that when they conferred independence at one minute past midnight ... all the British people were out at one minute before midnight so they didn't have to live in the conditions that would flow'.<sup>127</sup> It was not having this 'luxury' that was a post-facto justification for UDI, indicating how white Rhodesians contended with the location of their new nation within Africa and their rule over a black majority attracted by the discourses of pan-Africanism emanating from Accra and Arusha. Kenrick has illustrated how Rhodesians participated in 'African-style nation-building' but has not identified how differentiation was produced and how Rhodesia's geographic identity was central to its nationalism.<sup>128</sup> What Bill Schwarz has called an ideology of 'white Pan-Africanism', or Meneses and McNamara the strategic 'White Redoubt', filled the post-British void.<sup>129</sup> In the space of a few short years, Rhodesian propaganda claimed a form of 'acquired indigeneity', the term used to describe Afrikaner nationalism by Saul Dubow, legitimising minority rule as an authentically African mode of decolonisation.<sup>130</sup> Both tenets of Rhodesia's African imagination, settler-solidarity and authentic decolonisation, emerged over the course of the 1960s in response to the opprobrium of world-opinion and hostility from African neighbours. Geographical imagination was central to this process as Africa became discursively bifurcated, with the North essentialised to certain characteristics used to justify Rhodesia's exceptionalism.

A persistent idea in the DI's many publications was chronic instability in Africa 'to the North' for which communists, Britain and 'deracinated' Africans, alienated from their customs, were blamed and to which Rhodesia provided an alternative. Smith, in an interview with prominent American conservative William F. Buckley Jr., stated 'countries to the North of us, they started with one man, one vote, they only had it once, because thereafter it became a one-party state'.<sup>131</sup> 'One-man, one-vote', centrepiece to all demands of African Nationalism, was countered by the supposed inability of democratic governance on a 'western' model among Africans locked in tribal mentalities. Rhodesian Africans were claimed to be 'the happiest black faces in the world' due to tutelary development policies and re-tribalisation.<sup>132</sup> Propaganda harped on post-colonial Africa's coups to delegitimise the Commonwealth and, by extension, Britain's demands for majority rule. Smith commented on the 1966

Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference, the first one held on the African continent in Lagos, that African nations 'more lacking in civilisation and maturity would settle Rhodesia's affairs the same way as they have always settled their problems, that is by resorting to force and if need be ... by murdering thousands of decent, innocent people'.<sup>133</sup> Rhodesian rhetoric thus hoped to present majority-rule decolonisation as fundamentally flawed, to which 'standards of civilisation and behaviour' were the necessary antidote.<sup>134</sup>

Just as a constellation of friendly nations in the 'Pan-European World' were elevated, pamphlets demarcated a series of geographic icons as totemic of communist-inspired barbarism, such as the Congolese Simba Rebellion and the massacres of the Zanzibar Revolution.<sup>135</sup> Richard Haw, writing in a Department of Information pamphlet, claiming Rhodesia as the *Jewel of Africa*, stated:

Africa north of the Zambezi seems to be enacting a drama that may revert it for a time to a mixture of primitivism and modernism. The new concepts of democracy and civilisation, struggling against the forces of tribalism, witchcraft, ignorance and poverty are being stirred by the intrigues of Communism to produce a witches' brew that may boil off the flesh of freedom and democracy; and leave the bare bones of autocracy as the mocking symbol of misguided hope.<sup>136</sup>

This lurid imagery depicts the incompatibility of majority-rule decolonisation with the African 'character', only recently lifted from 'savagery' by colonialism.<sup>137</sup> Personal biographies were key as many of the most right-wing settlers came directly from Kenya, with lurid tales of a 'savage, tribal uprising' presented in anti-Mau Mau propaganda augmented with a belief in the presence of communist *agents provocateurs* among the Gikuyu.<sup>138</sup> Violence across Africa was described as the 'preconceived patter of Communist take-over'.<sup>139</sup> 'Nightmarish tales' of Congo refugees presented the Belgian Congo as a 'peaceful and prosperous country' now governed by 'black racist rule', using discourses of white victimhood to map spatial fears of black disorder onto the continent.<sup>140</sup> Sexualised and gendered racial fears were further inscribed onto Africa, for instance in propaganda citing a specific European woman: 'For Shelia Maddocks majority rule means pillage and rape, such as occurred in the Congo, or, more likely, the petty humiliations and indignities suffered by a woman friend of hers in Zambia'.<sup>141</sup> Hereby, the Rhodesian global imagination was indelibly marked by the vivid imagery of decolonisation to its North, utilised to justify retribalisation and fostering an identification with the remaining settlers in Africa.

The abhorrence of world opinion towards minority rule necessitated legitimising strategies, which hoped to revitalise colonial ideology by using contemporary evidence about majority-ruled Africa, attempting to argue that Rhodesian-style decolonisation was most appropriate for the African 'condition'.<sup>142</sup> A sharp contrast was drawn with non-settler colonies, where

imperialists 'exploit Africa' without making an existential commitment to the land, to which the Chinese communists were the contemporary heir according to the *Rhodesian Commentary* newsletter.<sup>143</sup> The notion that exploitative colonialism had bred communistic nationalism, aligned with far-right discourses such as those of the LEL, that elevated a Southern African alternative based on a 'trusteeship on behalf of White civilisation'.<sup>144</sup>

In the run-up to UDI, the rhetoric became more explicitly comparative. DI publications elevated a series of metrics as evidence of UDI's munificence, for instance *This is Rhodesia* states that hospital 'provision far outstrips the rest of Africa', with the example of one hospital bed for every 250 Africans, compared to 660 in Kenya, 1100 in Ghana and 4000 in Liberia.<sup>145</sup> Critically these were in segregated hospitals, but the central claim was that, even with segregated facilities, they were superior to those in 'Black Africa', just as an electoral system that discriminated was better than communistic dictatorships.<sup>146</sup> For Smith, independence had to be earned through studious growth: 'countries to the North of us' had to go 'cap in hand' for aid from their imperial ex-overlords, while Rhodesia had 'real independence' due to self-government experience.<sup>147</sup> DI-produced films emphasise the educational system and African dancing halls in Rhodesia, juxtaposed with stories of famines and coups north of the Zambezi.<sup>148</sup>

Besides proving 'the evils of Pan-Africanism' through illustrating the instability of countries to the North, Zimbabwean nationalists were presented as fundamentally foreign, communist, and antithetical to an essentialised African personality. A totemic phrase, used to explain the unwillingness of Africans to enrol electorally, was 'intimidation' to which 'African psychology' was supposedly susceptible.<sup>149</sup> Smith recounted that early-1960s urban tension was caused by 'gangs of intimidators led by well-trained terrorists recently returned from indoctrination camps in Russia, China, Libya and North Korea'.<sup>150</sup> This was mobilised in meetings with British officials, for instance when Smith claimed to Douglas-Home that: 'World opinion is not sufficiently aware of the political inexperience of the average Africans, particularly in the rural areas, or the extent to which the majority of Africans are intimidated by the African political parties'.<sup>151</sup> Quotations such as these inflect anti-communist appeals with a delegitimisation of African Nationalism as proof for the impossibility of African majority rule, while tribal chiefs are painted as representatives for African support for UDI.

While Europeans were polled in a 1965 referendum on the question of UDI; an *Indaba*, a gathering of several hundred tribal chiefs, was held to find African consent.<sup>152</sup> The *Indaba* would become the symbolic basis of domestic policy as local decision-making was devolved to state-appointed Chiefs across the 1960s and hereby the government claimed African consent. Propaganda asserted that ninety percent of Africans were 'wrapped up in the life of the community', while 'nationalist opinion [was] artificially generated by lavishly financed

agents' and won by 'intimidation in the circumstances which often prevail in urban centres'.<sup>153</sup> The communion between Chiefs and Ministers was reinforced through elaborate installation ceremonies, and seats for Chiefs in Rhodesia's post-1970 Senate.<sup>154</sup> Simultaneously, there was a focus on 'law and order' as a benefit of 'responsible' rule, a rhetorical referent shrouding white security control. Smith argued that Africans would suffer most upon the 'breakdown of law and order' which would occur under majority rule as had happened elsewhere in Africa.<sup>155</sup> For a European businessman interviewed by David Caute in 1979, Rhodesia meant 'law and order and ... civilisation as we know it' when this existed nowhere else in Africa, citing the 'Caligula'-like Idi Amin and Stalinist atrocities in Tanzanian collective farms.<sup>156</sup> This evidence illustrates that, in line with the new Cold War imaginary propounded by the Front, African Nationalism was presented as alien to the continent and therefore, paradoxically, settler-decolonisation was more authentically African.

Southern Rhodesia's existence after 1923 had been predicated on the rejection of Jan Smuts' idea of a 'federation of white-controlled states'.<sup>157</sup> Thus it was remarkable when the radical-right government in the 1960s turned to a mode of 'white pan-Africanism' that embraced an affinity with the settlers of Southern Africa, accompanied by the imagined 'white bastion'. The notion of Africa 'south of the Zambezi', the dividing line between 'stability and chaos', emerged in propaganda discourse.<sup>158</sup> The earlier imposition of 'a set of imaginary boundaries on the continent', the creation of Central Africa as a liminal space between trusteeship in East Africa and settler-control in South Africa, influenced by the struggle against an expanding Afrikanerdom, was thus reversed by a new 'Southern African' identity.<sup>159</sup> For Stuart Cloete, writing in *White Africans Are Also People*, a 'worldwide conspiracy' was 'dedicated to the destruction of the white-man in Africa south of the Zambezi, the only area where there is still law, order and progress'.<sup>160</sup> In this rhetoric, Europeans were positioned as integral to Africa and part of a collective settler project.

As Portugal, South Africa and Rhodesia drew closer, UDI was encouraged by a genuine belief in a 'solid South African bloc' that was constantly emphasised in propaganda.<sup>161</sup> DI-produced films show celebrations of Portuguese culture in order to raise money for 'victims of terrorism' in Mozambique, as well as large South African and Portuguese pavilions at the annual Bulawayo trade fair.<sup>162</sup> Smith is pictured attending a fête at a Dutch Reformed Church, while commending rapprochement between Afrikaner and English-speaking South Africans in the face of the common external enemy, 'international communism'.<sup>163</sup> Portugal reciprocally commended Rhodesia for its 'gallant fight for the cause of Western Civilisation in Africa'.<sup>164</sup> Portuguese history was mobilised to justify white indigeneity in Africa, as the Shona settled in Rhodesia 'at the same time as Portuguese settlement in Mozambique', claiming African and European arrival as contemporaneous through a Pan-European lens.<sup>165</sup> Crucially, this emphasis in propaganda was trying to overcome existing

attitudes, which never entirely withered. Older fears of Afrikaner domination and Portuguese miscegenation remained, and had to be exorcised to shore up the white laager.<sup>166</sup> Communism in Africa was also geographically inflected, visualised as ‘march[ing] down the African continent’, now held at the Zambezi.<sup>167</sup> The constant references to a North/South distinction within Africa were deeply racialised, reflecting how a spatial imagination of Africa emerged during the 1960s, demarcated into zones characteristic of the Land Apportionment Act or its South African Group Areas equivalent.<sup>168</sup>

In 1975 the Deputy Minister of Information Andre Holland, one of the Afrikaners that gained positions of prominence in the Front, stated of white Rhodesians: ‘we are not English, Belgian, or Portuguese. We are Rhodesian, and of Africa’.<sup>169</sup> In this turn of phrase, Holland expressed the manufactured indigeneity of Rhodesian nationhood, moving beyond imperial identifications and inextricably bound to a conception of being white in Africa. Kenrick’s focus on symbolic decolonisation can thus be supplemented by considering how Rhodesia’s propaganda discourses differentiated themselves from ‘Black Africa’, and constructed for themselves an alternative post-colony, a vision that universally failed to gain traction among the African majority. Concomitantly the Zambezi became a loaded Cold War space, a natural equivalent to the Berlin Wall. Van der Byl clearly expressed this when he said: ‘Africa from the Mediterranean to the Zambezi, with a few isolated exceptions is, to all intents and purposes, Communist’.<sup>170</sup> Thereby, Africa became a continent bifurcated by two modes of decolonisation, one that was subject to communist re-colonisation, antithetical to ‘the man and his ways’, and its Southern alternative, where ‘Western, Christian civilisation’ prevailed.

### ‘Certain Countries to the North of Us’

Charting the changes in Rhodesia’s global positioning and identities through its propaganda provides only a limited perspective, but convincing evidence is perhaps best provided by white Rhodesian humour. A 1974 comedic picture book, *Meet the Rhodesians*, summarised their attitude to the world:

‘Most of all we value our independence,  
And we don’t give a damn  
What anyone thinks of us –  
Least of all  
Certain countries to the north of us’<sup>171</sup>

This last phrase, constantly repeated in Rhodesia’s official propaganda, is more than a racially charged euphemism for African countries governed by their black majorities, but shorthand for the imagined boundary erected across the continent, encapsulating the essence of the settler experience: defiantly being *in* Africa, but not comfortably *of* it. Following Charumbira, the Rhodesian

national project was always global, and when an imperial identity linked to the Crown failed to fulfil the needs of the national project, global radical-right anti-communist networks were tapped into. It is crucial to stress that this happened in stages. Brownell aptly describes Rhodesia's transformation from 1965 onwards as a 'serialised independence', as the symbols of Britishness were dismantled one-by-one over the years. The propaganda efforts described above offered the study rhetorical drum-beat that accompanied this process.<sup>172</sup>

Positioning Rhodesia on the frontline of the Cold War won it enough friends to survive the onslaught of sanctions and to declare a Republic in 1970, but the failure to incorporate Africans meant the Rhodesian national project could never be consummated. During the late-1960s propagandists spoke of a 'Golden Age', genuinely believing that they could become the 'hub of Africa' and minority-rule could continue indefinitely: Smith's millenarian 'thousand years'.<sup>173</sup> The irony of this was that, as a result of successful propagandising, Smith found it increasingly difficult to make necessary concessions during the 1970s. Propagandists had so successfully created a siege mentality, so slandered majority rule in 'certain countries to the North of us' and so pervasively labelled moderate African Nationalists puppets of Beijing, that a devastating war was preferable to minor concessions. Europeans simply could not understand why 'the happiest Africans in the world' would provide succour to the guerrillas, unless explained by communist 'intimidation'. After the collapse of Rhodesian exceptionalism in 1980 many Europeans accommodated DI-spun fictions by migrating South, with the Limpopo replacing the Zambezi as the barrier against international communism. Those that remained in Zimbabwe 'settled into a *laager* of home video, sports and *braai*', from which they were only be shaken by 2000s land reform.<sup>174</sup>

This study has hoped to do is indicate to future scholars of post- 'Winds of Change' Zimbabwe that the spatial and global dimension of rebel Rhodesia cannot be ignored. As Phil Henderson has argued, settler colonialism relies on transmogrifying space, demarcating certain areas as white and domesticated, and through her propaganda, the Front Government elevated this to a continental scale.<sup>175</sup> Actors that may seem peripheral from Europe, like A.K Chesberton, were at the heart of Africa's 1960s. This story however has significance beyond Zimbabwe. It lays at the heart of the burgeoning study of the transnational right during the Cold War, born in the 'Winds of Change' moment with significant implications on political spheres across both the Global North *and* South. The study of the 'apartheid modern' can be enriched by an engagement with the transnational influences that transformed ideologies of settler colonialism in the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>176</sup> Narratives of decolonisation that solely emphasise Nationalist triumphs distance our present from the succour given to white supremacy by groups and ideologies present to this day. Decolonising history must include a critical reading of settler ideology, considering how disenfranchisement was justified in terms that seem eerily

familiar to modern audiences. In an era where the relationship between mass media and political radicalisation is ever more discussed, relatively small case studies like white Rhodesia can illustrate far greater trends. Media manipulation and disinformation with the power to sway minds into a *laager* mentality, long before the era of news cycles and twitter-bots; racial hatred's linkage to a wider set of ideologies that can make authoritarianism palatable; and a geographic mentality that erects civilisational boundaries, are all prominent features of contemporary politics. The 'world's first pariah state' thus remains of abiding relevance in understanding the coming of the twenty-first-century world.<sup>177</sup>

## Notes

1. The LEL were a pro-imperial and neo-fascist organisation in the UK who adopted agitation-style tactics and concerned with the fate of white settlers in Africa. In 1967 they would transform into the National Front; Rhodesia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 57, 1595; 1597.
2. Ibid., 1593; 1587.
3. Ibid., 1605.
4. By 1968 this had grown to 270,000 whites alongside five million indigenous Africans; Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia*, 2.
5. Onslow, "A Question of Timing"; Barroso, "The Independence of Rhodesia in Salazar's Strategy for Southern Africa."
6. Irwin, "A Wind of Change?"
7. Hopkins, "Globalisation and Decolonisation," 736.
8. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 3.
9. For two key exceptions see: van Dongen, Roulin and Scott-Smith, eds. *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War*; Durham and Power, eds. *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right*.
10. Meneses and McNamara, *The White Redoubt*.
11. Miller, *An African Volk*.
12. Msindo, "Winning Hearts and Minds"; Zaffiro, *Media & Democracy in Zimbabwe*; Windrich, *Mass Media in the Struggle for Zimbabwe*.
13. Lowry, "Ulster Resistance and Loyalist Rebellion in the Empire."
14. Brownell, "Out of Time," 806.
15. Ibid. 818.
16. Ibid. 806.
17. Kenrick, *Decolonisation, Identity and Nation in Rhodesia*.
18. Both these authors crucially discuss the gendered nature of Rhodesian nationalism, emphasising the masculine 'Pioneer' idea which legitimated the repression of both female and African memories; Shutt, *Manners Make a Nation*; Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation*.
19. Charumbira, *Imagining a Nation*, 90.
20. Note by C. E. King, Rhodesia Department, Commonwealth Relations Office (16/03/1966) in The National Archives at Kew, London [henceforth TNA] FO 371/188046.
21. Onslow and Berry, "Why Did You Fight?"
22. Veracini, "Introducing," 6.
23. Lowry, "White Woman's Country," 270.



24. Ibid.
25. *Rhodesia ... The Facts*, 10.
26. Rotberg, "The 'Partnership' Hoax," 90.
27. Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization*, 50.
28. Ibid., 92.
29. Cohen, "Voice and Vision," 121; 123.
30. McNeil, "The Rivers of Zimbabwe Will Run Red with Blood," 733.
31. Ward, "Whirlwind, Hurricane, Howling Tempest," 62.
32. Newsletter – Federation of Rhodesia & Nyasaland, 23 March 1962, 2.
33. Lowry, "Rhodesia 1890-1980," 113.
34. Field was ousted by an internal coup in 1964 for his willingness to compromise with the British; Moorcraft, *A Short Thousand Years*, 10.
35. Howman, *Provincialisation in Rhodesia 1968-1969*, 10.
36. Central Africa Office Report on 1962 Rhodesian Front Congress in TNA DO 183/29.
37. Rhodesian Front Party Programme, 21st September 1963, 9 in Institute of Commonwealth Studies PP.ZW.RF.
38. Pilosof and Rivett, "Imagining Change, Imaginary Futures," 249; Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia*, 106.
39. Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia*, 16.
40. Head, *Broadcasting in Africa*, 107.
41. *Pointers*, 3 December 1964, 4.
42. Sanders, *South Africa and the International Media*, 190.
43. Hancock, *White Liberals, Moderates and Radicals in Rhodesia*, 122.
44. *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 59, 802.
45. For a rather hagiographic biographical overview, written by a former Rhodesian SAS officer, of his early years see: Wessels, *PK Van Der Byl; Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 52, 851.
46. The Department of Information was moved to the Office of the Prime Minister in 1964, and by 1968 made a component department of the Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism (which would then become Van der Byl's Ministry); Cohen, "Voice and Vision," 128.
47. Zaffiro, *Media & Democracy in Zimbabwe*, 52.
48. Ibid., 54.
49. Named for *Candour*, the magazine of the LEL; Parker, *Rhodesia*, 123.
50. Clements, *Rhodesia*, 211.
51. Zaffiro, *Media & Democracy in Zimbabwe*, 57.
52. *Pointers*, 6 January 1965, 4.
53. Benson, *The Opinion Makers*, 135.
54. *Pointers*, 3 December 1964, 4; Parker, *Rhodesia*, 121.
55. *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 59, 852.
56. *Southern Rhodesia Newsletter*, 3 July 1964, 1.
57. Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War*, 129.
58. *Pointers*, 1 June 1965, 1.
59. Kenrick, *Decolonisation, Identity and Nation in Rhodesia*.
60. Phelan, *Apartheid Media*, 35.
61. *Rhodesia Herald*, 12 November 1965, 1.
62. Smith, "Censorship in Rhodesia," 64.
63. Levick, *Rhodesia*, 1.
64. Smith, "Censorship in Rhodesia," 63.

65. Memorandum from Netherlands Consulate in Salisbury, August 1968, in Dutch National Archives 131/Z190.
66. Parker, *Rhodesia*, 110.
67. Onslow and Annie Berry, "Why Did You Fight?"
68. Parker, *Rhodesia*, 115.
69. *Pointers*, 2 April 1965.
70. Paper on 'Censorship by the Illegal Regime', Rhodesia Department, Commonwealth Relations Office (8/04/1968) in TNA FCO 36/274.
71. Cousins, "State, Ideology, and Power in Rhodesia," 56.
72. Moore, *Suffering for Territory*, 85.
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 62, 211.
75. *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 63, 223.
76. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and the Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, 195.
77. *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 84, 1683; 1670.
78. PREM 11/5049, 7 September 1964, Record of meeting between Ian Smith and Lord Home in Murphy, *Central Africa, Part II: Crisis and Dissolution*, 469.
79. Godwin and Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, 7.
80. Chennells, "Rhodesian Discourse, Rhodesian Novels and the Zimbabwe Liberation War."
81. Brownell, "Out of Time," 806.
82. Newsletter – Federation of Rhodesia & Nyasaland, 4 October 1963, 8.
83. My italics; Rhodesia Information Services, *Independence 1967*.
84. Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonization*, 208.
85. McNeil, "The Rivers of Zimbabwe Will Run Red with Blood," 741; 743.
86. Schwarz, *The White Man's World*, 406.
87. *Ibid.*, 402.
88. Onslow and Berry, "Why Did You Fight?," 6.
89. Frederikse, *None but Ourselves*, 30; 48.
90. AP Archive, SYND 10/11/69.
91. Veracini, "Telling the End of Settler Colonial Story," 207.
92. Mlambo, "Honoured More in the Breach Than in the Observance," 2.
93. *Rhodesian Commentary*, 10 November 1969, 5.
94. AP Archive, SYND 22-06-69.
95. Kenrick, "Settler-Soul Searching and Sovereign Independence," 1086.
96. Michel, "Those Bothersome Rho-Dents."
97. See: Brownell, "A Sordid Tussle on the Strand."
98. Berry, "Flag of Defiance," 16.
99. ADRs were quasi-ambassadors in Pretoria and Lisbon, while Portugal and South Africa simultaneously had ADRs in Salisbury; *Senate Debates*, Vol. 1, 614.
100. Note from the Canberra High Commission to the Rhodesia Department, Commonwealth Relations Office (October 1966) in TNA DO 207/220.
101. Correspondence regarding Van der Byl's attempted visit to UK, 1966 in TNA DO 207/179.
102. *Ibid.*
103. Wessels, *PK Van Der Byl*.
104. Bellant, *Old Nazis, the New Right, and the Republican Party*, 83.
105. Mulhall, "From Apathy to Obsession."
106. Macklin, "Transatlantic Connections and Conspiracies."
107. Mulhall, "From Apathy to Obsession," 471.

108. Lowry, "The Impact of Anti-Communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture," 177.
109. Anderson, *Rhodesia*, 1; 8; 9.
110. Note on the Candour League, Rhodesia Political Department, 1966, Commonwealth Relations Office in TNA DO 207/220.
111. Ibid.
112. Cited in *Rhodesian Commentary*, 7 March 1966, 2.
113. Miller, *An African Volk*, 98.
114. Onslow, "A Question of Timing," 134.
115. Mlambo, "We Have Blood Relations over the Border," 12.
116. Ibid., 11.
117. Godwin and Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die*, 39.
118. Letter from Brendan Willmer, National Director of the Save Rhodesia Campaign in Institute of Commonwealth Studies, PG.ZW.SRC.
119. Letter from Save Rhodesia Campaign, 'Steun Rhodesië vandag ... beveilig u toekomst môre' in Institute of Commonwealth Studies, PG.ZW.SRC.
120. Letter from British High Commission in Pretoria (1/06/1969), TNA FCO 36/585.
121. *Rhodesia Commentary*, 30 May 1966, 4.
122. Sprack, *Rhodesia, South Africa's Sixth Province*, 74.
123. Jean Marie Penvenne, "Settling against the Tide," 82.
124. Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 71.
125. Nyamunda, "In Defence of White Rule in Southern Africa," 409.
126. Lambert, "An Unknown People," 611.
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128. Kenrick, *Decolonisation, Identity and Nation in Rhodesia*, 8.
129. Schwarz, *The White Man's World*, 306; Meneses and McNamara, *The White Redoubt*.
130. Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 14.
131. Firing Line with William F. Buckley Jr.: *The Question of Rhodesia*.
132. Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War*, 61.
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136. Haw, *Rhodesia*, 19.
137. *Southern Rhodesia Newsletter*, 3 October 1965, 3.
138. Parker, *Rhodesia*, 124.
139. *Southern Rhodesia Newsletter*, 20 March 1964, 4.
140. Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia*, 15.
141. Caute, *Under the Skin*, 120.
142. *Rhodesian Front: Principles and Policies*, 11.
143. *Rhodesian Commentary*, December 1974, 1.
144. Stocker, "The Postwar British Extreme Right and Empire," 167.
145. *This is Rhodesia*, 24 August 1964, 1; 2.
146. *Focus on Rhodesia*, June 1976, 10.
147. AP Archive, SYND 1/10/1967.
148. Rhodesia Information Services, *Face of Rhodesia*.
149. Niesewand, *In Camera*, 67.
150. Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 80.
151. PREM 11/5049 in Murphy, *Central Africa, Part II: Crisis and Dissolution*, 469.

152. *Southern Rhodesia Newsletter*, 29 January 1965, 2.
153. *This is Rhodesia*, February 1965, 1; 2.
154. Rhodesia Information Service, *Rhodesian Roundup* 1967.
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156. Cauter, *Under the Skin*, 27; 28.
157. Hancock, *Smuts*, 223.
158. *Rhodesian Commentary*, November 1974, 4.
159. Wisnicki, "Interstitial Cartographer," 267.
160. Cloete, "The Conspiracy," 140.
161. Minute by C. M. Le Quesne, 27 October 1965 in FO 71/176527 in Murphy, *Central Africa, Part II: Crisis and Dissolution*, 492.
162. Rhodesia Information Service, "Rhodesian Roundup 1973"; "Rhodesian Roundup 1967."
163. *Rhodesian Commentary*, 11 July 1966, 2.
164. Meneses and McNamara, *The White Redoubt*, 50.
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166. Kenrick, *Decolonisation, Identity and Nation in Rhodesia*, 39.
167. *Southern Rhodesia Newsletter*, 15 May 1964, 4.
168. *Focus on Rhodesia*, June 1976, 2; Alexander, *The Unsettled Land*, 73.
169. *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, vol. 90, 310.
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171. Martin, *Meet the Rhodesians*, 10.
172. Brownell, "The Magical Hour of Midnight," 253.
173. Haw, *Golden Age for Rhodesia*, 5; Moorcraft, *A Short Thousand Years*, 75.
174. Schwarz, *The White Man's World*, 415.
175. Henderson, "Imagined Communities," 49.
176. Dubow, "New Approaches to High Apartheid and Anti-Apartheid," 7.
177. White, *Unpopular Sovereignty*, 12.

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## ORCID

Niels Boender <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6735-1396>

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