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COLLABORATORS, MERCENARIES OR PATRIOTS?

THE 'PROBLEM' OF AFRICAN TROOPS IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA

DURING THE FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WARS

by

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'...it is a characteristic of empires that they turn their victims into their defenders.' (E.J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, p.266)

The use of indigenous peoples for military purposes was common to most imperialist powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Indian subcontinent had been a proving ground for this policy in the eighteenth century when both the British and French East India Companies had deployed sepoys to overcome the Indian principalities, to fight alongside European units in their struggle for supremacy and then, in the case of Britain, to police the vast region.

The problem of providing sufficient white manpower to extend and police the British Empire was a chronic one, and 'native' manpower was the obvious answer, the concomitant of the exploitation of potentially vast quantities of cheap labour in the commercial sphere. The perils of this policy for the maintenance of British supremacy and the problem of 'policing the policemen' were made bloodily clear in the Indian Mutiny. Despite this setback to the policy of using native levies the principle nonetheless remained intact. Indigenous troops were used throughout the Empire, including Africa, as in the Zulu War, the campaigns in Egypt and the Sudan in the 1880s and 1890s and in East Africa and Nyasaland in the 1890s. In the latter case the disparate territorial units which came to make up the King's African Rifles in the early 1900s were first formed in the 1890s to aid in the imposition and consolidation of colonial rule.

In Southern Rhodesia the employment of African troops by Europeans dated back to the conquest period of the 1890s. In the Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893 Africans fought alongside the settler forces, either directly under their control as auxiliaries or as independently formed units under their pre-colonial leaders and organisation, operating as allies.¹ Similarly, in the risings of 1896-7 African forces played a minor role in the suppression of the insurrections, both as allies of the British South Africa Company forces² and as members of the Native Police.³

The role of these forces in the establishment and consolidation of settler dominance is a sensitive one in the historiography of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. The use of the term 'collaborators' to describe these people, even if technically correct, is an unfortunate one⁴ as it projects on to them late twentieth century experiences and concepts which have overlaid the strict definition of the word. The motives of the allied polities had more to do with local and

traditional power politics than with the establishment and maintenance of white supremacy.⁵ That in the long run these people could be said to have made an unfortunate or unwise choice is irrelevant when their nineteenth century perspective is considered. To them the European settlers would have appeared as merely another intrusive group, albeit somewhat different and more powerful than in the past, of which there had been numerous in the distant past and some within living memory.⁶ The Europeans would have been seen as another factor to be considered and used in the constantly shifting power structure of the region. The long-term implications of co-operation with the Company forces could not have been crystal clear, if at all apparent, at the time.

This issue is of some importance in analysing African troops in the Southern Rhodesian armed forces in the twentieth century. The motives of Africans in aiding the B.S.A. Company during the imposition of colonial rule are relatively clear, but once the political, social and economic structure of Rhodesia had been laid down the motives of those who joined the Rhodesian armed forces become less easily explicable. At first sight it appears anomalous that people who were disadvantaged in the civilian world by the settler power structure and who were also discriminated against within the armed forces in terms of pay, conditions of service and promotion, should voluntarily serve in the forces which maintained this system. The major purpose of this paper is to explore why Africans behaved in this way and to take a few first steps in explaining the apparent contradiction of the African volunteer serviceman.

A secondary purpose is to explain why the white governments in both the period of Company rule and under self-government employed African troops. The answer is not as straightforward as it would appear, for the events of the 1890s had profoundly affected white thinking on a variety of matters, of which defence was one. The risings of 1896-7 made it clear that a large part of the African population was disaffected and that control was regained and maintained only through force of arms. The spectre of another series of risings permeated defence planning until the 1930s, and even into the 1940s the risings had an influence,⁷ after which the emergence of African nationalism regenerated the fear with a different complexion. The experience of the risings made the raising of African troops psychologically difficult for the settlers, the B.S.A. Company and subsequently the governments of the self-governing colony. They all feared that arming and training African troops would create a 'Trojan horse' which could form the core of local or nation-wide risings. This fear was not built wholly on the extravagant imaginings of anxious white minds, for the defection of large numbers of the Native Police in 1896 was a concrete case for those who were suspicious of the concept of arming and training indigenous Africans.⁸ The failure of the B.S.A. Company to raise African levies for service in the Boer War was not a product of neglect, but of a conscious policy originating, among other factors, in vivid memories of events a few years previously.⁹

Until the First World War the question of recruiting Africans for military units did not arise as a significant issue. Despite the vicissitudes of the 1890s Africans were still an important element in the British South Africa Police; in 1913 there were 600 African policemen in a total of 1150.¹⁰ As the B.S.A.P. was *de facto* the first line of defence for the territory Africans played an important role in its internal security. But the risings still exerted a tremendous influence on their training and equipment. The sight of African policemen training with firearms in Bulawayo in 1903 drew hysterical outbursts from the settlers, forcing the Company to restrict the

use of firearms to Europeans and 150 Ngoni 'scouts'. The indigenous police were armed with knobkerries.¹¹

The 'problem' of raising African troops for the armed forces had to be squarely confronted in the First World War. Despite the large proportion of the white population which went to the battle fronts or served in internal security units, the manpower needs of the East African front exceeded the capacity of the white community to supply them.

Africans were employed in limited numbers in a non-combatant role from 1915 both within Rhodesia and in East Africa.¹² As the war progressed the logistics system for the war effort required ever larger numbers of carriers, but the vast majority of these were recruited from outside Southern Rhodesia.¹³ In 1915 thirty African 'scouts' were recruited for service with the all-white 2nd Rhodesia Regiment in German East Africa.¹⁴

But while African recruits were eagerly sought after elsewhere in Africa the issue of arming large numbers of Africans and training them in modern warfare was not finally confronted in Southern Rhodesia until 1916. By then it was clear that the ability of the white population to sustain singlehandedly the combat effort was rapidly diminishing. However, it is evident that given the general labour shortage which prevailed before and during the First World War even the African manpower sector would be difficult to tap. The possible consequence of disrupting the settler economy by competing for scarce labour had to be considered by the Administration. In 1917 Chaplin, the Administrator, wrote of the difficult manpower situation which had already arisen by 1916:

I am afraid we have about come to the end of the men whom we can send to the war from this Territory. We shall be able to raise another native contingent, and we may get a platoon or two for the 2nd Rhodesia Regiment, but that is about all. We must keep the mines going and retain adequate protection or something like it, to deal with any possible local trouble.¹⁵

Despite the 'risings psychosis' there was, surprisingly, no great opposition to the formation of an African regiment, probably because their numbers were to be strictly limited. Recruitment took place against a background of South African disapproval of employing Africans in a combatant role,¹⁶ but within Southern Rhodesia there was general acquiescence. There were allusions to 'opposition in some quarters' in official correspondence on the raising of the regiment,¹⁷ but this was muted and not publicly discussed. Sir Lewis Michell, one of the B.S.A. Company directors, wrote: 'I am surprised that while its cost and feasibility have been discussed by the Board no-one has questioned its policy. For my part I dislike the idea of arming and drilling so warlike a tribe [i.e. the Ndebele].'¹⁸ Although Michell may have been articulating what many of the settlers thought, the exigencies of the military situation over-rode any forebodings as to the wisdom of creating a 'Trojan horse' of future rebellion.

There was some delay in raising the Rhodesia Native Regiment. This arose, not from any opposition, but from B.S.A. Company foot-dragging while the vexed question of responsibility for war expenditure was still unresolved. By 1916 the Company was no longer prepared to raise units on its own initiative,

as it had done with the 1st and 2nd Rhodesia Regiments, until it was clear that the Imperial authorities would pay for them.¹⁹ When the War Office undertook to cover expenditure on the Rhodesia Native Regiment the Company moved quickly to recruit the unit. The original plan had been to raise five hundred 'native police' to reinforce the hard-pressed Rhodesia-Nyasaland Field Force in East Africa.²⁰ Their role was to have been essentially that of general protective duties. It had been hoped to raise these paramilitary police from tribes north of the Zambezi, specifically the Bemba and the Ngoni, but the physique and general quality of those who came forward was not considered adequate for a combatant role.²¹ In any event recruitment of Africans for the war effort had become difficult in Northern Rhodesia for a number of reasons.²² In raising a unit of foreign Africans the Company hoped to avoid the possible post-war problem of a trained body of indigenous veterans forming the core of a resistance movement. This attempt to recruit 'aliens' rather than indigenous Africans is a recurrent theme in Southern Rhodesian defence policy. In the late 1890s the Mashonaland Native Police was formed with recruits who came only from north of the Zambezi.

In the face of these difficulties plans were modified to raise a force of five hundred Ndebele, this tribal group having a reputation for being warlike among whites, based on their experiences of the 1890s. While it was being raised the regiment was labelled the 'Matabele Regiment' and this designation persisted for some months even though recruits were obtained from other tribes from both within and outside Rhodesia.²³ In the eyes of the Administration and its recruiters the non-Ndebele peoples of Southern Rhodesia were poor material for combat. This myth of Shona pusillanimity was again a throwover from white perceptions of the nineteenth century history of the region,²⁴ and was largely responsible for the planned initial focus of the recruiting campaign on the Ndebele.

The Native Department was given the major responsibility of recruiting the regiment, it being considered to have the most efficient apparatus for the purpose.²⁵ Once plans for recruiting were set in train it was decided that the recruiting net should be wider. Consequently recruiting drives encompassed other tribal groups in Rhodesia and 'alien natives' resident in Southern Rhodesia. Veterans of the King's African Rifles were particularly sought after.²⁶ By the time the second drive for recruits, for a second battalion for the regiment, began in 1917 'alien natives' were particularly sought after. They were considered more warlike than Southern Zambezi peoples, and of course their local loyalties would not be highly developed, thereby reducing their potential as a source of assistance to any future insurrectionary force arising in Southern Rhodesia.²⁷

Curiously, the response of Africans to the recruiting campaign seemed to underscore official convictions of Shona pusillanimity and Ndebele pugnacity. At the end of the first recruiting campaign the Chief Native Commissioner reported that the Native Department had secured 428 of the 500 recruits required, 'the Matabele being represented by over 300'. He added that recruiting was halted at a time when the Ndebele were volunteering in rapidly increasing numbers.²⁸ The appendix to this paper discusses the distribution by district of recruits for the R.N.R. obtained in 1916. There was a striking imbalance in favour of Matabeleland with a concentration in a few districts. In addition, of those non-Ndebele recruits obtained a large proportion were 'alien natives', that is labour migrants from outside Southern Rhodesia. By 1918, the Commandant General of the Southern Rhodesian forces reported, the proportion of 'aliens' to indigenous Africans in the

R.N.R. was three to one,²⁹ indicating a major shift away from indigenous Africans as a source of recruits.

In both 1916, when the 1st R.N.R. was being formed, and in 1917, when the 2nd R.N.R. was raised, the non-Ndebele indigenous peoples of Southern Rhodesia were largely apathetic to calls to volunteer, and in some cases resisted recruitment, albeit passively. In Mashonaland the response to the 1916 drive was very poor, except for the Salisbury and Charter districts which produced 56 recruits between them.³⁰ While there is no direct evidence to show that recruiters used force or overt threats in recruiting, it is clear that Africans in some Mashonaland districts felt that they were being heavily pressured to volunteer. In Charter there is evidence to suggest (but not to confirm) that in 1917 strong persuasive tactics may have been used.³¹ Whether these pressures were real or imagined on the part of Africans is often difficult to establish from official correspondence, but in Mashonaland they responded as if they were going to be conscripted. Large numbers of young males slept in the bush at night to avoid anticipated conscription raids and many absconded from their districts.³² There is a pathetic incident showing African fears in the Hartley district where the chiefs offered £30 to the Administration to buy exemption from recruiting for their people.³³ The chiefs, as so often in Southern Rhodesian history, were in an invidious position, for they were used by the Administration to persuade their peoples to volunteer. In Matabeleland many chiefs seemed to co-operate readily with the Native Department, but in Mashonaland they were keenly aware of the conflicting expectations of the Administration and of their people.³⁴ This was reinforced by expressions of displeasure by the Native Department when the chiefs failed to find recruits.³⁵ In 1917 the response was even poorer in Mashonaland: only fifteen Africans from that region responded to the initial drive for recruits for the 2nd R.N.R. This was taken as evidence by the Native Department that force was not being used to bring in recruits for the regiment's two battalions.³⁶

The recruiting campaign in the Eastern Districts in 1916 was disastrous (see Appendix). There the number of recruits was negligible though the Superintendent of Natives for the Umtali Circle had entertained hopes of at least fifty recruits from his administrative area.³⁷ In the south-east of the country the response was virtually non-existent.³⁸

It would be adventurous, given the evidence available, to see the poverty of the response to the recruiting drives as an articulated African nationalist phenomenon within a Rangerian framework. There is evidence to show that there was political agitation against recruiting by Africans, but this was on a minute scale and was centred in Matabeleland, the area in which recruiting was most successful.³⁹ The African response was clearly a spontaneous movement against a specific settler initiative, albeit against a wider background of alienation from the régime. The evidence available would also suggest that responses were shaped by specifically regional experiences. The reasons for which Africans resisted recruitment or enlisted in the regiment varied widely according to local conditions and recent history. For example, in the Ndanga and Melsetter districts, where no recruits were obtained in 1916, there was a background of organised passive resistance to payment of tax in the pre-war years.⁴⁰ This would have made it very difficult for the Native Department, responsible for tax collection, to operate effectively as a recruiting agent for the armed forces.

The Native Department correspondence on recruitment does not blame political opposition for the apathy to recruitment in Mashonaland. Rather

the Native Department saw the major reason behind the negative response as the lack of warlike virtues in those approached. Clichés about idleness and cowardice were bandied about by Native Department officials,⁴¹ and there was little surprise (although there was disappointment) at the regional pattern which emerged from the recruiting campaign. In some districts the Shona people themselves went to great lengths to reinforce these impressions, readily admitting to their lack of warlike virtues and refusing to be shamed into service.⁴²

Fear was clearly at the root of the African response outside Matabeleland and in those parts of Matabeleland where it was also poor. The behaviour of young males was reminiscent of their response to forced labour drives in the 1890s.⁴³ During both the First and Second World Wars it is evident that Africans feared that they would be conscripted and that if they volunteered they would be used for purposes other than those stated to them by recruiters.⁴⁴ There was a deep mistrust of what they were told by officials, no doubt fuelled by the labour history of previous decades. In any event they had no real reason to trust the officials who sought to enlist them into the armed forces.

A second fear was that of being sent abroad. The case of recruiting in the Melssetter district is particularly illuminating in this respect. There thirty potential recruits appeared before the Assistant Native Commissioner, but when they heard that they would have to fight in German East Africa they demurred. The Assistant Native Commissioner wrote: 'The martial spirit of these men was not sufficient to induce them to go so far from their homes in search of glory and after they had heard their destination they all found that they had urgent affairs requiring their presence at their homes.'⁴⁵ The recruiting drive in Melssetter produced no recruits. It is not clear whether their fears of German East Africa were based on the reports of anti-British and pro-German elements in the area⁴⁶ or on fear of the unknown, but in this instance the major consideration of the recruits was the destination. A similar type of response was reported for the Inyanga and Rusape districts.⁴⁷ A further factor influencing recruitment was a lack of information and understanding by Africans as to the nature of the First World War. There was no immediate threat to Southern Rhodesia throughout the war and Africans naturally tended to see the conflict as a remote white man's war which did not concern them.⁴⁸ There was no readily apparent, compelling reason for Africans to fight Germans. To many Africans the war simply meant a seemingly inexplicable rise in prices. The remoteness of the conflict and its battle zones had other side effects. During the recruiting drive of 1917 for the 2nd R.N.R. many Africans were convinced that the 1st R.N.R. had been annihilated. Reports of deaths from German East Africa and the fact that the first battalion had not returned confirmed suspicions. Rumours were rife in many districts that the Germans were beating the British and that they would soon arrive in Southern Rhodesia to replace the Company régime. Abstaining from the conflict may have been a display of prudence.⁴⁹

The motives of those who joined the two battalions of the R.N.R. are perhaps less clear than the motives of those who did not. There are no extant diaries or reminiscences of Africans who served in the R.N.R., most of whom were illiterate.⁵⁰ The collection of oral evidence, along the lines of M.E. Page's studies of Nyasaland in the First World War,⁵¹ is clearly a priority for the future, but political and military conditions within Rhodesia at present render such a project all but impossible.

A solid body of documentary evidence on this problem does not exist, but some insights can be gleaned from the fragments available. It is apparent that there was a wide gulf between whites' motives for serving and those of Africans who joined up. While the more public official documents and press reports spoke of African 'loyalty' in responding to the call to arms,⁵² it is unlikely that the majority of Africans volunteered from feelings of commitment to the B.S.A. Company or the Crown. Whites volunteered from feelings of patriotism and under moral pressure from the white community, but patriotic resolutions, spontaneous volunteering and the multitude of manifestations of a positive emotional or spiritual commitment to the British cause are not evident in Southern Rhodesian Africans. Contributions to the National War Funds are perhaps some barometer of African feelings towards the war,⁵³ but these were small compared to those of the white community and may have been of the nature of the Hartley chiefs' £30 - an attempt to buy off the Administration. Certainly in some cases a monetary contribution was considered enough. Payment of cash, i.e. taxes, fines and dipping fees, was traditionally and obviously a way of remaining in favour with the settler government - this seemed to be all that was required of Africans in the way of 'civic duties' by the Administration.

Some of the recruits appear to have been impressed into service, not in the tradition of the naval press gang or forced labour of the 1890s, but through more subtle and less obvious pressures. Many were pressured by their chiefs, themselves under pressure from the Native Department to perform well and forward as many recruits as possible.⁵⁴ Native Department officials would also appear to have been under pressure, or felt themselves to be, to perform satisfactorily; they were eager to show their competence by forwarding large batches of recruits. Poor recruiting figures were felt to be an adverse reflection of the district administration, of the Native Commissioner's 'grip' on the district.⁵⁵ There were cases of strong persuasive tactics being used by chiefs, which did produce recruits.⁵⁶ Although the Administration denied using any pressure whatsoever, there were allegations about the exertion of undue influence levelled at the Native Department.⁵⁷ However, from the evidence available it would be fair to say that, despite abuses and the use of a wide variety of indirect pressures, the bulk of the recruits were genuine volunteers and not forced levies. The Company would have been aware that after the publicity and investigations following the 1896-7 risings it could not easily use force. Certainly the type and scale of abuses and upheavals which accompanied recruiting elsewhere in Africa did not exist to anything like that extent in Southern Rhodesia.⁵⁸

In the case of the Ndebele strong appeals were made to the warrior traditions of that people by recruiters.⁵⁹ This appeal to warrior machismo operated on individual and group levels. Individuals came forward in response to appeals to uphold the warrior tradition and there was competition between different intra-tribal groups. The numbers sent forward to the R.N.R. were considered a reflection on the manliness or cowardice of groups of people, stimulating chiefs to pressure males into signing up.⁶⁰ This sort of appeal was clearly effective in some documented cases, but evidence is not wide enough to allow any firm conclusions as to its responsibility for inducing the bulk of recruits to join.

Service in the R.N.R. was one of a range of economic opportunities open to Africans in Southern Rhodesia. There are indications that economic motives and experiences were predominant in some of the colony's districts. Recruiting was most successful among those who had a 'tradition' of labour migration. Matabeleland, particularly the Bulalima-Mangwe district, was

an area from which there had been considerable labour migration south of the Limpopo, especially to Johannesburg.⁶¹ Similarly the good response from 'aliens' would indicate that those who had made long journeys in search of work were less fearful of joining up for service which would entail a move to Salisbury for training and beyond Southern Rhodesia's borders for combat.⁶² The previously mentioned reaction of the potential recruits from the Melsetter region would seem to reinforce this observation. The Native Department appeared to bear this in mind in its recruiting, for in the campaign to raise 2nd R.N.R. permission was sought from the Chamber of Mines to recruit from those already employed on mines; that is, from people who had already taken the leap into the labour market and labour migration.⁶³ In this way seventy recruits were obtained from the Falcon Mine alone.⁶⁴

However, there must be a note of caution here. Evidence would indicate that economic motives and pressures and a past history of labour migration were not enough to over-ride other prejudices against signing on with the R.N.R. For example, in the Victoria District, from which labour did migrate southwards and which was suffering drought conditions in 1916 and 1917, very few Africans joined the services.⁶⁵ Clearly motivations operated in a complex manner.

Wages and conditions of service were roughly comparable to those obtainable in the civil sector. Privates were paid 25/- a month, 10/- of that paid monthly, the remaining 15/- being deferred pay paid out as a lump sum on termination of service.⁶⁶ Rations, quarters and uniforms were provided free. As far as labour contracts went in Southern Rhodesia at that time that covering service in the forces was not untypical. Certainly, for an indigenous African wishing or having to enter the labour market or wanting to change employment service with the R.N.R. would not be an especially unattractive option compared with, say, mining. For 'alien natives' the problem is somewhat different. Van Onselen has shown that they were generally paid higher wages than Shona or Ndebele labourers so that for them the material attractions of service in the R.N.R. would be minimized.⁶⁷ The fact that large numbers of 'aliens' were recruited from mines may indicate that the 'push' of appalling conditions of service in mining over-rode the minimal 'pull' of the material benefits of military service.⁶⁸ During the war wage rates generally declined while prices generally rose, putting a double squeeze on real incomes, and this may have made service in the R.N.R. more attractive. It is important to note, however, that recruiting took place against a background of general labour shortage,⁶⁸ so that the R.N.R. cannot be characterised as the last resort of the desperately unemployed. While economic motives may have been dominant for some individuals and may have been important in some districts as a whole, it is not possible to pinpoint the need or desire to earn money as the major factor prompting volunteers.

The R.N.R., not surprisingly considering the settlers' and Administration's attitudes towards it, was demobilised very soon after hostilities ceased. The value of the regiment's service in German East Africa was widely acclaimed, but the pre-war reservations about the existence of a body of trained Africans in Southern Rhodesia quickly surfaced again. Africans were not called on to participate in the schemes of defence for Southern Rhodesia devised in the inter-war period, and the 1926 Defence Act, introducing selective compulsory service for the first time, excluded Africans from its provisions. There was some vague discussion of the possibility of raising a regular battalion of 'alien' natives to take the burden of providing the first line of defence off the British South Africa Police.⁶⁹ This came to nothing, although forty Ngoni 'scouts' were part of the permanent establishment of the B.S.A.P.⁷⁰

The African responses to recruiting drives during the Second World War were broadly similar in nature to those of the First World War. In looking at the raising of African troops in Southern Rhodesia between 1941 and 1945 the official documentary data available is considerably more sketchy than that available for the First World War. To date the files of the Ministry of Defence for this period are not available at the National Archives of Rhodesia. Material has therefore to be gleaned from more obscure sources.⁷¹

The decision to raise or resurrect African units was taken in 1940 as a result of an Empire-wide effort to find new sources of manpower for the growing global conflict. In Africa this became an official 'Africanisation' programme,⁷² the initial aim of which was, in Southern Rhodesia, to train Africans for non-combatant roles to relieve Europeans for combat. The attractiveness of the scheme was obvious - the Empire had vast reserves of non-white manpower, and they had proved their military usefulness during the First World War. All that was required to exploit them for the war effort was the political will. The raising of non-white troops was certainly less expensive than raising white troops, for the former's lower civilian standard of living was reflected in a lower military standard of living.⁷³ There was a great deal of enthusiasm for the scheme at the outset, which was, in the case of Southern Rhodesia, to be found to be misplaced. By 1943 it was realized that Africanisation was not going to be the answer to the manpower problem in the colony. This was explicitly stated in the annual report of the Secretary for Defence for 1943:

The establishment for the Battalion [the Rhodesian African Rifles], together with first line reinforcements, proved to be a very heavy one, and in order that the unit should proceed at full strength, the policy of Africanisation referred to in the last annual report had to be reversed...

In order that future reinforcements to the R.A.R. should be ensured, arrangements were made to stimulate African recruiting, and an important step in this direction was the opening of the R.A.R. Depot in Matabeleland. By the provision of this depot it was hoped that the Matabele would be more easily induced to come forward for military service. Towards the end of the year there were indications that African recruiting, which had previously been somewhat disappointing was definitely improved.⁷⁴

Later in the war the Commander, Military Forces, wrote:

The term 'Africanisation' seems to be generally held to be the panacea for all our problems. Nothing could be more dangerous as it is essential in my opinion to preserve a fair balance between European and Native troops in the Colony...

Native recruiting for the military forces is at a low ebb and to raise two additional African Infantry Battalions at the present rate of recruiting will take two years.⁷⁵

This statement neatly illustrates the twin problems of raising African troops in Southern Rhodesia - European reluctance to raise large numbers of African troops, and African reluctance to join up.

It was suggested earlier in this paper that the apathy of Africans towards 'calls to the colours' in the First World War was not positively African nationalist in content. This cannot be said to be the case for the Second World War. There is evidence that much resistance to recruiting was more consciously political in content and that many Africans were more politically informed in their decisions not to join the Rhodesian African Rifles or Rhodesian Air Askari Corps, the two African units raised.

The nature of responses during the Second World War was similar, but the pattern different from that of the First World War. Of those Rhodesian Africans who joined, the extent of the response in Mashonaland and Matabeleland was more even than during the First World War,⁷⁶ with the conspicuous Ndebele domination of 1916-18 absent. At the time this was attributed to Ndebele antipathy towards what was seen by them as a predominantly Shona enterprise since at the outset the training depot was in Salisbury and Shona was reported to be the main medium of instruction.⁷⁷ In contrast to the First World War, most districts in Southern Rhodesia produced some recruits, but only a few produced what could be called 'satisfactory' results from the recruiters' point of view. This wider response can probably be attributed to improvements in communications and to more widespread labour migration, giving recruiters better access to African males than was possible during the First World War. Once again there was a considerable element of 'alien' African recruits, especially from north of the Zambezi.⁷⁸

On the whole, however, it was accepted by the authorities that the African response was extremely poor.⁷⁹ Only 4,5% of the African adult male population went forward for service, compared with approximately 36% of the white adult male population.⁸⁰

In addition to the use of various news media to recruit Africans, pressure was applied to the chiefs, as in 1916 and 1917, to persuade recruits to come forward.⁸¹ It appears that each district had a quota of recruits.⁸² A new tactic was also tried in the 1940s. Demonstration platoons of trained recruits were sent on recruiting tours of many districts.⁸³ Many hundreds of African people attended the demonstrations, but although they reportedly expressed universal enthusiasm for the R.A.R. very few recruits actually attested as a result of the demonstrations.⁸⁴

Various Native Department officials offered explanations for this (to them) irrational behaviour in refusing to volunteer for the forces. Accusations of cowardice and idleness were once more mooted. A sharp contrast was drawn between dynamic, smart, eager R.A.R. recruits and 'lazy loafers' in the towns and kraals.⁸⁵ Others suggested that parochialism was the major problem. That is, this war was also a remote conflict, like the First World War considered essentially a white man's war with which Africans had very little to do.⁸⁶ Africans often went to great lengths to reinforce Native Department perceptions of pusillanimity, obviously hoping that this would give the impression that they would be useless as soldiers. Some pointed out the lethality of modern weapons, notably the apparently omnipotent aircraft, and (perhaps sensibly) declined the invitation to face them.⁸⁷ Tribalism was seen to be the reason for the relatively poor response from Matabeleland.⁸⁸ There may have been some substance in these claims and Africans took no great pains to gainsay them, either because they accepted them or because it suited them.

However, some of the more observant (and perhaps more honest) Native Commissioners saw other, more political, root causes of African apathy.

The Native Department intelligence reports for 1940 and 1941 give glimpses of an African people who were politically disaffected from the white régime in many districts and therefore unwilling to serve in the armed forces. While there is little evidence of pro-Axis sympathy, Africans en masse were clearly unwilling to make positive, voluntary commitments towards the settler government.⁸⁹

By the outbreak of the Second World War the racial lines of the politico-economic structure of Southern Rhodesia were clearly defined. The inter-war period had seen the development of an economic system which clearly favoured whites and relegated Africans to the status of second class citizens in their own country. Recruitment in the 1940s took place against a background of the Land Apportionment Act, the Maize Control Act, the introduction of destocking programmes and diverse discriminatory legislation. Some Native Commissioners specifically mentioned issues like land alienation and the Maize Control Act as being the nub of the recruitment problem. In 1940 the Native Commissioner for Chipinga reported: 'There can be little doubt that some of the more intelligent /Africans/ resent their being "squeezed" out of the greater part of the high land in this area in the early days.'⁹⁰ The Native Commissioner for Matobo advised against the Government's making any further large scale movements of people at the same time as it was trying to mobilize Africans for the war effort.⁹¹ In explaining African resistance to recruiting the Native Commissioner for Gwelo saw the poor response as largely attributable to the deleterious effect the Maize Control Act had had on local markets for African production.⁹² At a time when more Africans were becoming better educated and more politically aware through better communications, labour migration and urbanization, grievances against the settler government were more clearly formulated and better articulated than during the First World War.

African resistance to recruiting was not entirely limited to the passive form. There is evidence of agitation and rumour-mongering aimed against military service and military construction labour by Africans. Direct political agitation did not appear to be on a large scale,⁹³ but rumour-mongering was rife and did adversely affect attempts to mobilize Africans for the war effort.⁹⁴ Many Africans migrated (or 'deserted' in Native Department parlance) south of the Limpopo or into Bechuanaland to avoid what they feared would become conscription.⁹⁵ An atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust surrounded approaches by the Government. African males feared that any involvement with the Government would lead to conscription into the R.A.R. and this adversely affected drives to obtain labour for aerodrome construction.⁹⁶ Many Africans offered money, livestock and grain to the Government war effort in what was clearly recognized by the Native Department as a way out of military service.⁹⁷

The problem was never satisfactorily resolved by the military authorities, and indeed could not be solved in the context of the Southern Rhodesian political, economic and social structure without resort to conscription. There were instances of Africans requesting some sort of part-time military training for internal defence on the same basis as Europeans, and even conscription, but on the whole the positive stimuli to attract Africans into the military machine were lacking. Whites enlisted or accepted conscription from feelings of commitment and through a clear understanding that they had a stake in the defence of the colony and of the Empire. Africans, on the whole, could not feel the same way. In fact, a massive positive response by Africans to recruiting would have been irrational, given the context.

Conversely, the negative stimuli were also lacking. The Government balked at conscription of blacks even though some chiefs reportedly requested it.⁹⁸ Conscription would have brought in large numbers of black recruits, but the training establishment would have had difficulty in handling them. Consciousness of retaining a 'racial balance' (i.e. more whites than blacks) in the armed forces of the colony made conscription undesirable in the eyes of the Government. The heavy pressure, in some cases tantamount to coercion, which was brought to bear on Africans to 'volunteer' for paid labour on construction of military installations⁹⁹ was not, apparently, used in recruiting for the armed forces. Other negative stimuli, such as massive unemployment, were not evident. The Rhodesian Agricultural Union complained that the raising of African units would adversely affect the supply of labour for the agricultural sector.¹⁰⁰ It would appear that there were no compelling economic reasons for joining the services. Wages in the armed forces were both lower and higher than what could be obtained in the civil sector. A domestic servant could earn more than the 1/- a day (plus rations and quarters) given to privates in the R.A.R. Those employed on labour-hungry military construction projects started at 15/- a month, which was considered too low to attract sufficient volunteers.¹⁰¹ The basic military wage, the daily 'King's Shilling', was considered inadequate by the people of the Mtoko district. At that time unskilled labourers could start at 17/6d. a month, plus quarters and rations, on mines and farms.¹⁰² Those who were intent on entering the labour market would have had to balance the possible dangers and disadvantages of military service with its material offerings which did not greatly outstrip the norm in the labour market, and in some instances were poorer. There were options open to those in the labour market, of which military service was only one; there was no need for a man to volunteer simply because he was unemployed.

Given the negative attitude of the broad mass of the African population, why then did several thousand Africans join the armed forces? The reasons given for the First World War were almost certainly partially valid for the Second World War. The same complex of internal and external pressures would have come into play. The 'glory of war' cannot be discounted as an attraction into the services. The soldier's life had a status appeal for many recruits,¹⁰³ and the very strong positive attitude displayed towards African soldiers by whites may have attracted some. The R.A.R. was the recipient of extravagant praise and was given an élite status not enjoyed by other Africans. The military life appeals to many, if not most, people, and Africans are surely no exception.

There is evidence to suggest that the example of relations was responsible for some recruits coming forward and that service ran in some families.¹⁰⁴ This evidence is too narrow to talk of a 'military tradition' in some families and there is at present no way of telling if the sons or grandsons of soldiers of the Rhodesia Native Regiment provided a disproportionate percentage of recruits, or even any at all. This notwithstanding, the example of relations in the forces could have been a powerful stimulus to a potential recruit. The concept of a strong family and even tribal tradition of service in the white-led armed forces is mooted as being important in the recruitment of African troops in recent decades, but the evidence is not strong enough to allow definite conclusions regarding the Second World War period.

Official publications were full of praise for the loyalty and sacrificial attitude of Africans who joined the services. It would be difficult to deny that some, even many, Africans joined the services out of feelings of patriotism or loyalty to the paternalistic régime. Africans,

like other racial and national groups, are not homogenous in their experiences, attitudes and behaviour, and many may have had reason, despite the generally negative attitude of their peers, to feel a commitment to the Government and Crown. Earlier remarks about the disaffection of the mass of the African people do not exclude the possibility that some individuals reacted positively to patriotic appeals. Certainly during the Second World War contributions to the National War Fund were considerably larger than during the First World War, even though wages and incomes had not grown considerably.¹⁰⁵

Taking the proportionately small numbers of Africans who did offer themselves for service, and given the attitude of the mass of the African people towards the idea of military service under the settler régime, it would be pertinent to ask the question whether it is possible to characterise African troops as a 'deviant' group. Certainly, volunteering for military service was exceptional behaviour for Africans. Not only was there the settler government to provide a poor socio-economic environment for volunteering, but the reaction of the bulk of Africans was present as a strong dissuasive force. There were incidents during the Second World War to show that Africans in the forces often had poor relations with the civilians around them.¹⁰⁶ In addition to periodic expressions of hostility from their own people Africans were discriminated against within the services even though they were accorded more status than the bulk of blacks. Their pay was markedly inferior to that of white servicemen; there were no commissioned Africans; in the early days of the war African soldiers were subjected to corporal punishment while European soldiers were not.¹⁰⁷

There seems to be no really suitable label, no neat category, for those Africans who joined the Southern Rhodesian armed forces. The term 'deviants', which implies some sort of psychological aberration, is too strong to describe their behaviour. Similarly, the use of emotion-charged labels like 'mercenaries' or 'collaborators' is not acceptable. Inherent in the term 'collaborator', through usage, there is the idea of repudiation of one's own people and conscious co-operation with a clearly recognized enemy. Although there was racial tension and political disaffection among Africans the racial battle lines were not as clearly drawn as they became with the post-Second World War rise of African nationalism. To call them 'mercenaries' does not accord with the circumstances in which the African units were raised, were paid and fought. Yet it is certain that during the First and Second World Wars the accepted norm of behaviour was not to serve in the white government's armed forces. In serving, African troops departed from this norm.

This paper has probed some aspects of this exceptional behaviour, but it may have thrown up more questions than it has answered. However, the evidence which is available for the post-1890 military history and military sociology of Africans in Southern Rhodesia is so fragmentary that no definitive and satisfactory answers are yet possible. What does emerge from the material available to date is that local social, economic and political conditions were vitally important in determining the shape of the African response to military recruiting. It is also abundantly clear that an oral history programme is indispensable to a fuller understanding of this historical problem. The 'African voice' is muted or totally silent in the bulk of material already available. There is no body of memoirs and reminiscences like that which flooded from European participants in the wars almost as soon as hostilities ceased. It will be only through direct contact with those who did serve in the armed forces that a satisfactory answer will be found to a problem which has perplexed historians and a wider public, particularly Africans themselves, for decades.¹⁰⁸

Appendix - Review of Statistical Data

It was stressed in the main body of this paper that statistical data relevant to African soldiers are either unavailable to the researcher or else are fragmentary. However, these fragments do enable a rough picture of the origins of black soldiers to be sketched.

For the First World War there are only two collated sets of statistics available. The first is a register of those Africans from each district who were exempted from tax while away on active service as drivers with Southern Rhodesian forces in German East Africa.¹⁰⁹ Table I shows their origins by district. The other is a series of returns made by Superintendents of Circles to the Chief Native Commissioner with respect to the performance of individual districts in obtaining recruits for the 1st Rhodesia Native Regiment in 1916.¹¹⁰ These are also presented in Table I.

In a letter to the Secretary, Department of the Administrator, the Chief Native Commissioner reported that in the first recruiting campaign the Native Department had obtained 428 of the 500 recruits required, the Ndebele being represented by over 300.¹¹¹ The rest came from the Native Police. There is, however, some conflicting evidence. Writing in 1919, the then Commandant General, Brigadier-General A.H.M. Edwards, stated that of the initial body of recruits only 113 were indigenous, and those were predominantly Ndebele.¹¹² This does not tally with the Chief Native Commissioner's 1916 analysis. Given the detailed breakdown provided by the Native Commissioners it is more probable that the Chief Native Commissioner was correct and that Edwards' figures were either inaccurate or misprinted. Apart from this body of evidence there is no record of the composition of reinforcements sent to 1st R.N.R. from Southern Rhodesia during 1916 and 1917. In addition, information relating to the campaign to recruit 2nd R.N.R. is virtually non-existent; one of the few figures available is that a mere 15 recruits were obtained in Mashonaland.¹¹³

Evidence relating to the origins of 'alien' natives is also highly fragmentary. In the district returns for 1916 there is some reference to the origins of 'alien natives' recruited by the Native Department. Edwards was to report that by the end of the war the ratio of 'alien' to indigenous Africans in the R.N.R. was an astonishing three to one.¹¹⁴ The 1911 Census estimated that 'alien' Africans made up only 6-7% of the total population of Southern Rhodesia.¹¹⁵ Although Edwards' figures may be exaggerated or inaccurate there were large numbers of 'aliens' in the R.N.R., for it is recorded that virtually the whole of one company, 'C' Company, was demobilized in Nyasaland as most of its members were of Yao origin. M. E. Page estimates that about 1 000 Africans from Nyasaland served in the R.N.R., which roughly tallies with Edwards' estimated ratio.¹¹⁶ The evidence available is statistically too unsound to allow any absolute conclusions to be made, but there is enough material to come to three broad conclusions:

(i) Among indigenous Africans recruiting was far more successful among the Ndebele than among the other peoples of Southern Rhodesia. While the districts of Matabeleland had only 32% of males on the 1917 tax register they provided 73% of indigenous recruits for 1st R.N.R. in 1916. Within Matabeleland the bulk of the recruits came from three districts - Bulawayo, Bulalima-Mangwe and Nyamandhlovu.

(ii) Given their small proportion of the total population recruiting was vastly more successful among 'aliens' than among the indigenous Africans of Southern Rhodesia. By 1917 there was a clear preference on the part of the military authorities for Africans from outside Southern Rhodesia,¹¹⁷ so much so that the R.N.R. lost its essentially 'Rhodesian' character. This was in accord with precedents set in the late 1890s when the Mashonaland Native Police consisted entirely of Africans from north of the Zambezi.¹¹⁸

(iii) There was a high proportion of districts which produced such small numbers of recruits as to be insignificant. The data are not full enough to permit a statement that any district produced no recruits at all during the First World War, but that many districts produced a negligible number of recruits is clear.

For the Second World War the only distribution data available are for the Rhodesian African Rifles. The Rhodesian Air Askari Corps has virtually disappeared from a documentary point of view. The sample for the Second World War in Table I was constructed from apparently near-random mentions of names of soldiers in connection with their home districts in newsletters to and from the R.A.R. when it was in Burma. Only those who could be conclusively tied to a district were included in the sample. This represents 2,5% of the total number of Africans who served in the Southern Rhodesian forces, either in combat arms or in the Rhodesian Air Askari Labour Corps, and 8,3% of those who attested into and passed through the R.A.R. It may be argued that this sample is statistically unviable, but its apparently near-random nature does make it valuable. Certainly, Matabeleland lost the marked ascendancy it had in the 1916-18 period. Most districts in the colony produced some recruits, and recruiting was very good in some Mashonaland districts. The size of the sample is approximately the same as that for 1916 and the difference in the distribution pattern is marked.

The R.A.R. newsletters specifically mention a number of districts in which there had been a poor response to recruiting for the R.A.R. These were Hartley, Insiza, Selukwe, Belingwe, Zaka (Bikita), Chipinga, Melsetter, Sebungwe and Wankie. This is reflected in the relative picture arrived at from the sample and would tend to reinforce the belief that it does give a fair proportionate distribution.

The contingent from north of the Zambezi was again considerable, especially from Nyasaland. Although the R.A.R. newsletters give the names of only fourteen soldiers from Nyasaland, nine from Northern Rhodesia and two from Tanganyika it would appear that there were considerably more. The newsletters to the R.A.R. included news information from virtually every district in Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia.

Although strictly outside the time period of this paper there are some interesting figures relating to the early post-war R.A.R. The regiment was demobilized in early 1946, but reformed soon afterwards. The recruiting pattern shown in Table II gives some idea of the importance of 'alien' Africans in the R.A.R. While it cannot be argued that the post-war proportions of 'aliens' to indigenous Africans exactly reflects the proportions during the war years, the R.A.R. newsletters give the impression that these proportions were broadly similar. Although they were an important element it is clear that the position in the First World War, when 'alien' Africans formed the bulk of the 'Rhodesia' Native Regiment, did not apply to the R.A.R.

These data do throw some light on the widely held belief that the traditional recruiting ground for African troops in Southern Rhodesia and Rhodesia is the 'Fort Victoria district'.¹¹⁹ While this may possibly be true for recent years (although there is no evidence to confirm this), evidence for the period up to 1945 shows that there was no marked imbalance in favour of either Victoria District proper or districts surrounding the town of Fort Victoria. In fact the evidence available would seem to support the view that this area was least yielding of recruits. If there is any truth in the assertion that the bulk of African troops in the current Rhodesian armed forces come from the 'Fort Victoria' district then this would indicate an interesting, but probably coincidental historical pattern. That area was the one from which the B.S.A. Company's allies in the Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893,¹²⁰ and many of those who remained neutral or actively co-operated with the Company in the 1896-7 risings,¹²¹ originated. In the First and Second World War periods, when the settler governments sought troops to fight foreign wars, that area produced poor numbers for the Southern Rhodesian armed forces. If reports are correct, it would appear that now that internal warfare has once more broken out large numbers of people from that region are once again co-operating with the white-led armed forces.

TABLE I

Comparison by district of numbers recruited in Southern Rhodesia, 1915, 1916 and 1940-1945

<u>District</u>	<u>1915</u> (Drivers for East Africa)	<u>1916</u> (1st R.N.R.)	<u>1940-5</u> (R.A.R.)
Salisbury	3	20	10
Charter	1	36	16
Darwin	0	0	9
Hartley	1	5	2
Lomagundi	0	0	23
Marandellas	4	0	15
Mazoe	0	3	33
Mrewa	0	0	26
Mtoko	1	5	8
Sebungwe	0	0	2
Victoria	0	3	1
Chibi	1	0	10
Chilimanzi	0	10 (1 local, 9 'alien')	21
Gutu	0	1	15
Ndanga	1	0	0
Bikita	1	0	13
Umtali	1	2	21
Inyanga	1	0	5
Makoni	0	0	40
Melsetter	4	0	0
Bulawayo	0	133	9
Bubi	23	44	16
Bulalima-Mangwe	0	53	46
Gwanda	0	0	3
Matobo	0	2	3
Nyamandhlovu	5	39	14
Wankie	0	15	7
Gwelo	0	30 (14 local, 16 'alien')	9
Belingwe	0	0	13
Insiza	0	0	15
Umzingwane	0	3	-
Nyasaland	-	-	14
Northern Rhodesia	-	-	9
Tanganyika	-	-	2

TABLE II

Recruiting into the R.A.R., 1946 and 1947

<u>Origin of recruits</u>	<u>To 31.12.46</u>	<u>1.1.47 - 31.12.47</u>	<u>Total</u>
Indigenous	455	704	1159
Nyasaland	72	84	156
Northern Rhodesia	104	77	181
Others	2	2	4
	<u>633</u>	<u>867</u>	<u>1500</u>

FOOTNOTES

Unless otherwise stated all archives and historical manuscript references relate to the National Archives of Rhodesia.

1. See D.N. Beach, 'The Rising in South-western Mashonaland 1896-7' (University of London, unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1971) and S. Glass, The Matabele War (London, Longmans, 1968), Ch.XVII.
2. D.N. Beach, 'The politics of collaboration' (South Mashonaland 1896-7)' (Salisbury, UCR, Henderson Seminar Paper No.9, 1969) and 'Chimurenga: the organization of the Shona rising of 1896-7' (Salisbury, UR, Henderson Seminar Paper No.42, 1978), 15, 16.
3. After the defection of a large part of the Matabeleland Native Police those ostensibly remaining loyal to the B.S.A. Company were disarmed, but performed auxiliary tasks. See F.C. Selous, Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, Rhodesiana Reprint Library, vol.2, 1968), 50, 53, 93.
4. As used, for example, by D.N. Beach, 'The politics of collaboration' and 'Chimurenga'.
5. See D.N. Beach, 'The Rising in South western Mashonaland', 'The politics of collaboration'.
6. See D.N. Beach, 'The rising in South-western Mashonaland' and An Outline of Shona History 900-1850 (Gwelo and London, forthcoming), and J.R.D. Cobbing, 'The Ndebele under the Khumalos, 1820-1896' (Univ. of Lancaster, unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1976), 318-346.
7. See, for example, S/outhern/ Rhod/esia/, Report on Defence for the Year 1930 / C.S.R. 16 - 1931/ and S.Rhod., Annual Report: Defence and Aviation: 1932 (Salisbury, Defence Headquarters, March 1933). Also see intelligence reports to collate information on the state of the African population prepared for each district by N/ative/ C/ommissioner/s in 1940 and 1941, S 1542/12 (C/hief/ N/ative/ C/ommissioner/, Appendix C Correspondence and other papers, General: 1914-1943: Intelligence: 1940-1941).
8. On the outbreak of the risings Rhodes had stated, 'The real fact is the NCs were deceived and we have been training the Matabele to shoot ourselves; it's a police revolt,' A1/12/9, Rhodes to Duncan, telegram, 30.iii.1896. Of the 330 members of the Matabeleland Native Police, 172 defected and 126 remained loyal. The remainder were considered to be of doubtful loyalty by Selous. Selous, Sunshine and Storm, Appendix F. See also A3/11/20/4, Resident Commissioner, Salisbury, to High Commissioner, Johannesburg, telegram, 24.i.17.
9. The Anglo-Boer War was also considered to be an exclusively white man's war. B/ritish/ S/outh/ A/frica/ C/ompany/, Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia 1898-1900 (London, B.S.A.C., no date), 26. In the instance cited here, Gambo, a chief in the Bulalima-Mangwe area asked that his people be allowed to fight the Boers, which request was rejected. The Bulalima-Mangwe district provided large numbers of recruits to the Southern Rhodesian armed forces during both the First and Second World Wars.
10. S.Rhod., Report on the British South Africa Police for the Year 1913 by the Commissioner /A10-1914/, 1.
11. P. Gibbs, The History of the British South Africa Police, Vol.Two, The Right of the Line, 1903-1939 (Salisbury, Kingstons for B.S.A.P., 1974), 54-6.

12. N3/29/4 (CNC: Correspondence: Taxes and taxation: Exemption of Natives on Active Service: 1915 August 6 - October 15). Also A3/11/21, (Administrator's Office: Correspondence: Great War: Rhodesia, Part played by: 1918 April 5 - 1923 August 1), 2.
13. B2/2/7, Commandant General to High Commissioner, 25.v.16, 19, 20, and A3/11/20/3, Military Labour Bureau, P.L.A. Section, to Administrator, S.Rhod., 13.x.17.
14. A3/11/20/2, Capt. J.C. Jesse-Coope, 2 Rhod. Regt. to Acting Chief Staff Officer, Defence Force, Salisbury, 22.ix.15, and Assistant Secretary, BSAC, London office, to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 22.i.16.
15. H/SS CH 8/2/2/8, Chaplin to Long, 11.ii.17.
16. M. Chanock, Unconsummated Union: Britain, Rhodesia and South Africa 1900-45 (Manchester, Manchester Univ. Press, 1977), 24, and B.P. Willan, 'The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918', The Journal of African History (1978), XIX, 1, 61-86.
17. A3/11/20/2, Millar, London, to Administrator, S.Rhodesia, cable no.231, 8.x.15, and A3/11/20/4, Resident Commissioner, Salisbury, to High Commissioner, Johannesburg, telegram, 24.i.17.
18. H/SS CH 8/2/2/12, Michell to Chaplin, 15.v.16.
19. A3/11/20/2, Chaplin to Edwards, 30.xi.15.
20. Ibid, B.B. Cubitt, War Office, to Under Secretary of State, Colonial Office, 18.iv.16.
21. Ibid, Commandant General, Salisbury, to Administrator, Bulawayo, 29.xi.15.
22. Ibid, Cubitt, War Office, to Under Sec., Colonial Office, 18.iv.16, and Chaplin to Edwards, 30.xi.15. Also B2/2/7, Commandant General to High Commissioner, 25.v.16, and Commandant General to High Commissioner, 14.i.18. The Major reasons were the general shortage of labour in Northern Rhodesia through the enormous demand for carriers for the war effort and the low rates of military pay in Northern Rhodesia at a time when higher wages were available elsewhere in conditions of labour shortage.
23. A3/11/20/3 (Administrator's Office: Correspondence: Great War: Rhodesia Native Regiment: Orders: 1916 June 6 - 1921 February 18), Orders No. 1, 6.vi.16. The unit was officially known as the Matabele Regiment until 26.v.16.
24. D.N. Beach, 'The Rising in South-western Mashonaland' shows that the Shona peoples were capable of fierce resistance to Ndebele military power. Also on this question see D.N. Beach, 'Ndebele Raiders and Shona power', J.A.H. (1974), XV, 4, 633-651.
25. A3/11/20/2, Commandant General to Secretary, Dept. of Administrator, 27.iv.16. In the second recruiting campaign it appears that the Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau was also used to obtain recruits. R.H.M. Langham, 'Memories of the 1914-18 Campaign', Northern Rhodesia Journal, III, 3, 257.
26. A3/11/20/4, Commandant General to Administrator, 14.ii.17, and NUE 3/1/1, Superintendent of Natives, Umtali, to Native Commissioner, Melsetter, 13.v.16, enclosure, CNC to Superintendent of Natives, Umtali, 9.v.16.
27. A3/11/20/4, Commandant General to Administrator, 14.ii.17.
28. N3/32/4, CNC to Secretary, Dept. of Administrator, 7.viii.16.
29. B2/2/7, Commandant General to High Commissioner, 14.i.18, 2, 3, 5. In Edwards' despatches he mentioned that of the 1st R.N.R. 113 were indigenous and 290 were aliens, mainly Bemba and Angoni. He further stated that of the 1000 Africans recruited for the two battalions in 1916 and 1917 there were three 'aliens' for every indigenous recruit.

30. N3/32/4, CNC to Secretary, Dept. of the Administrator, 7.viii.16.
31. A3/11/19/2, Superintendent of Natives, Salisbury, to CNC, 20.iv.17, and A.S. Cripps to Resident Commissioner, 28.iii.17 with Resident Commissioner to A.S. Cripps, 9.v.17. Also A3/11/20/1, Superintendent of Natives, Salisbury, to CNC, 16.v.17.
32. A3/11/19/2, A.S. Cripps to Resident Commissioner, 28.iii.17.
33. A3/11/20/1, Superintendent of Natives, Salisbury, to CNC, 16.v.17.
34. Ibid.
35. A3/11/20/4, Superintendent of Natives, Pulawayo, to CNC, 3.iv.17.
36. A3/11/19/2, CNC to Secretary, Department of Administrator, 21.iv.17.
37. NUE 3/1/1, CNC, Salisbury, to Superintendent of Natives, Umtali, 9.v.16.
38. Ibid., Assistant NC, Chipinga, to NC, Melsetter, 27.v.16.
39. See A3/11/19/2 for correspondence relating to disruption of recruiting for 2nd R.N.R.
40. LO 4/1/20 (London Office: Departmental Reports: Annual), Report of CNC, Mashonaland, for year ending 31 March 1905.
41. e.g. A3/11/20/4, Resident Commissioner to High Commissioner, 17.v.17.
42. NVA 4/1/1 (NC, Fort Victoria and Superintendent of Natives, Victoria Circle: Reports: Monthly and Annual: 1907 August 31 - 1918 November 31), report for Victoria District for year ending 31.xii.17.
43. On the question of forced labour see C. van Onselen, Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933 (London, Pluto Press, 1976). For a vivid account of the forced labour atmosphere prevailing in Southern Rhodesia after the 1890s see an article by Gertrude Page in The Rhodesia Herald, 7 July, 1909.
44. S1542/12, 12/2/Mtoko/40, Intelligence report, NC Mtoko, 4.xi.40.
45. NUE 3/1/1, Assistant NC, Chipinga, to NC, Melsetter, 27.v.16.
46. H/SS CH 8/2/2/8, Chaplin to Long, 13.iii.17. Chaplin felt that 'Dutchmen' in Southern Rhodesia, who were 'as disloyal as they dare to be', were exerting an adverse influence on recruiting for the R.N.R.
47. A3/11/20/1, Superintendent of Natives, Umtali Circle, to CNC, 10.v.17.
48. A3/11/20/4, OC, 2nd R.N.R. to CNC, 11.v.17, and A3/11/20/1, Superintendent of Natives, Umtali Circle, to CNC, 10.v.17.
49. A3/11/20/4, Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo Circle, to CNC, 3.iv.17, and S.N.G. Jackson to CNC, 11.v.17. During the Second World War the Native Department suggested that African soldiers be sent round the districts to dispel rumours, reassure Africans and draw in recruits. See S 1542/12, I2/1/Gwaai/40, Assistant NC, Gwaai, 27.vii.40. Also NSA 2/1/1, NC, Hartley, to Superintendent of Natives, Salisbury Circle, 20.v.15 and NC, Mrewa, to Superintendent of Natives, Salisbury Circle, 21.v.15.
50. Evidently literates were a rarity in the R.N.R. and were especially sought after to act as leaders of reconnaissance patrols as they could write intelligence messages for transmission to HQs. H/SS TO 1/2/1/1 (war diaries of the 1st Rhodesia Native Regiment: 1916 July 18 - October 8), entry for Saturday, 30 Sept., 1916.
51. M.E. Page, 'The war of thangata: Nyasaland and the East African campaign, 1914-1918', Journal of African History (1978), XIX, 1, 87-100.

52. e.g. S.Rhod., Report of the CNC for the Year 1917 /A9-1918/, 1, and The Rhodesia Herald, 10 June, 1916, which reported, 'Natives accustomed to life in the bush were wanted to meet similarly skilled natives acting in concert with the Germans, and in response to a demand for such men the natives of Rhodesia flocked willingly to the colours anxious to show their loyalty to the King...'
53. S.Rhod., Report of the CNC for the Year 1917, 2. In 1917 Africans contributed £880 9s.6d.
54. A3/11/20/4, Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo Circle, to CNC, 3.iv.17.
55. NUE 3/1/1, Superintendent of Natives, Umtali, to NC, Melsetter, 13.v.16. Enclosure, letter from CNC, Salisbury, to Superintendent of Natives, Umtali, 9.v.16.
56. A3/11/19/2, Moodie, NC, Matobo, to Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo, 8.iii.17.
57. See correspondence in A3/11/19/2.
58. See, by way of comparison, M.E. Page, 'The war of thangata'.
59. A3/11/20/4, Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo, to CNC, 3.iv.17, and A3/11/19/2, NC, Matobo, to Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo, 8.iii.17, and NC, Umzingwane, to Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo, 19.ii.17.
60. A3/11/20/1, Superintendent of Natives, Umtali, to CNC, 10.v.17. The situation was similar during the recruiting campaigns of the Second World War, S 1542/I2, I2/2/Que Que/40, Assistant NC, Que Que, 5.x.40.
61. A3/11/20/4, Superintendent of Natives, Bulawayo, to CNC, 3.iv.17.
62. Ibid., Commandant General to Administrator, 14.ii.17. A major attraction of 'alien natives' was that they were less of a risk politically as their local political allegiances would be weaker than those of 'indigenous natives'.
63. Ibid., Secretary, Dept. of the Administrator, to Secretary, Chamber of Mines, 15.ii.17.
64. A3/11/19/2, Lieut. A.H. Bowker, 2nd R.N.R., to Adjutant, R.N.R., 13.v.17.
65. NVA 4/1/1, Reports for Victoria District, years ending 31.xii.16, 31.xii.17.
66. NUE 3/1/1, Superintendent of Natives, Umtali, to NC, Melsetter, 13.v.16, enclosure, notice entitled 'Recruiting Matabeleland Regiment'.
67. Van Onselen, Chibaro, 92-94, 117-118.
68. See, for example, S.Rhod., Report of the Director of Agriculture for the Year 1918 /A12-1919/, 4.
69. S.Rhod., Report on Defence for the Year 1921 by the Commandant General /A11-1922/, 3.
70. S.Rhod., Report of the Commissioner, British South Africa Police, for the Year 1924 /C.S.R. 11-1925/, 5, 8. Also B1/1/2, 'Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Cost of Administration of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia', para.349.
71. The major sources of official and semi-official information for the Rhodesian African Rifles in this paper were Rhodesia, Ministry of Defence, Letters to Our Families and Friends at Home (Salisbury, the Ministry), Nos.1-5, Nov.1944 - Sept.1945; Rhodesian African Rifles Newsletter (Salisbury, the Ministry), Nos.1-48, Mar.1944 - Mar.1946, and S 1542/I2.

72. S.Rhod., Reports of the Secretary of Defence for the Years 1939-1945 /C.S.R. 16-1947/, 38.

73. R.A.R. recruits had to build their own mud huts at the Salisbury training depot before training could commence. One can imagine the reaction of white recruits had they to do the same. S.Rhod., Reports of the Secretary of Defence 1939-45, 13.

74. Ibid., 73.

75. J.F. MacDonald, The War History of Southern Rhodesia 1939-1945 (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1976), II, 442-3.

76. See Appendix.

77. S 1542/I2, I2/2/Byo/40, Superintendent of Natives, 6.ix.40 and I2/3/Matobo/40, NC, Matobo, 4.xi.40.

78. R.A.R. Newsletters, No.4, 9.v.44; S 1542/I2, I2/4/Mtoko/Acting NC, 15.viii.40; I2/2/Que Que/41, Assistant NC, Que Que, 7.iii.41; I2/4/Que Que/40, Assistant NC, Que Que, 7.xii.40; I2/3/Que Que/40, Assistant Commissioner, Que Que, 6.xi.40, in which report the Assistant NC attempted to explain the relative imbalance between 'alien' and 'indigenous' recruits, '...the latter [indigenous Africans] adopt a querulous and even argumentative attitude to the call for military service. I feel certain that the reason lies very largely in the fact that the idea of military service has been systematically suppressed in this colony, whereas regular battalions have been maintained in the Northern territories and the Natives encouraged to serve. The difference is, I think, psychological more than fundamental...'

79. S.Rhod., Reports of the Secretary of Defence 1939-45, 73.

80. Based on 1941 census returns for Europeans and Native Dept. estimates of African population.

81. S 1542/I2, I2/4/Charter/40, NC, Charter, 6.xi.40, and I2/1/Que Que/40, Assistant NC, Que Que, 4.ix.40.

82. S 1542/I2, I2/4/Rixon/40, NC, Gutu, 14.xi.40.

83. R.A.R. Newsletters, No.8, 4.vii.44.

84. Ibid., Nos 9, 18.viii.44, 10, 1.viii.44 and 16, 24.x.44; S 1542/I2, I2/3/Gwelo/40, NC, Gwelo, 30.x.40.

85. R.A.R. Newsletters, No.6, 6.vi.44.

86. Ibid., No.9, 18.vii.44 and S1542/I2, I2/2/Buhera/40, Assistant NC, no date.

87. S1542/I2, I2/3/Matobo/40, NC, Matobo, 4.ix.40.

88. Ibid., I2/2/Byo/40, Superintendent of Natives, 6.ix.40.

89. However, see *ibid.*, I2/1/Bikita/40, NC, Bikita, 15.viii.40. In this report there is mention of a Gutu African 'boosting the Germans'. In 1941 the Assistant NC for Que Que wrote of the presence of an 'Oxford Group' movement among more educated Africans in the town, I2/2/Que Que/41, Assistant NC, Que Que, 7.iii.41.

90. Ibid., 404/40, NC, Chipinga, 13.xi.40.

91. Ibid., I2/3/Matobo/40, NC, Matobo, 4.ix.40.

92. Ibid., I2/1/Gwelo/40, NC, Gwelo, 15.viii.40.

93. Ibid., I2/1/Nyama/40, NC, Nyamandhlovu, 22.viii.40. In this report the NC mentioned the case of one J.M. Nkomo who was spreading rumours to undermine recruitment of Africans. He had gone to South Africa and attempts were made to locate him through the South African authorities.

94. Ibid., Intelligence Report, NC, Mtoko, 4.xi.40.
95. Ibid., I2/2/Melsetter/40, Assistant NC, Melsetter, 9.ix.40 and I2/5/Matobo/40, NC, Matobo, 3.xii.40 in which it was reported that several hundred Africans fled into Bechuanaland on being called to work on the aerodromes around Bulawayo. The NC added, ominously, that they would be 'dealt with' if and when they returned.
96. Ibid., Intelligence Report, NC, Mtoko, 4.xi.40.
97. Ibid., I2/3/Gwelo/40, NC, Gwelo, 30.x.40.
98. R.A.R. Newsletters, No.21, 2.i.45.
99. S1542/I2, I2/2/Selukwe/40, NC, Selukwe, 8.xi.40. Africans in Selukwe had been threatened with prosecution under the Native Affairs Act if they refused to 'volunteer' to work on military installations.
100. C. Owen, The Rhodesian African Rifles (London, Leo Cooper, 1970), 3, 4.
101. S1542/I2, I2/2/Mtoko/40, NC, Mtoko, to CNC, Salisbury, 12.xi.40.
102. Ibid.
103. R.A.R. Newsletters, No.22, 16.i.45 and S1542/I2, I2/2/Que Que/41, Assistant NC, Que Que, to NC, Gwelo, 26.ii.41.
104. R.A.R. Newsletters, No.21, 2.i.45, which mentions seven soldiers from the same Mrewa father, and No.8, 4.vii.44.
105. S.Rhod., Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and CNC for the Years 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1945 /C.S.R. 10-1947/, 110. In the year ending 31.12.43 £11 500 19s.6d. was donated by Africans.
106. S1542/I2, I2/2/Que Que/41, Assistant NC, Que Que, 7.ii.41 mentions that men in uniform were ridiculed. Also I2/1/Sby/40, NC, Salisbury, 24.viii.40. In this report the NC refers to 'younger and less responsible natives (Majoki)' taunting R.A.R. soldiers for being 'Hitler's meat'. See also R.A.R. Newsletters, Nos 7, 20.vi.44 and 9, 18.vii.44.
107. Maj.-Gen. S. Garlake, 'Early days of the Rhodesian African Rifles', Assegai, XIII, 9, 15 January 1974.
108. African perplexity is reflected in a question by Mr. P.E. Chigogo (UPP, Gokwe) in Parliament in 1967 in which he stated that the Government encouraged foreign Africans to become citizens so that they could be recruited for the armed forces. Lord Graham, the Minister of Defence, denied that it was Government policy to recruit foreign Africans. Mr Chigogo stated that Africans volunteered for the armed forces only for the pay; that is, they were, in effect, mercenaries, The Rhodesia Herald, 2 Sept., 1967.
109. N3/29/3 (Chief Native Commissioner: Correspondence: Taxes and taxation: Exemption of natives on active service: 1915 August 6 - October 15).
110. N3/32/4, CNC to Secretary, Dept. of Administrator, 7.viii.16.
111. Ibid.
112. B2/2/7, Commandant General to High Commissioner, 14.i.18.
113. A3/11/19/2, CNC to Secretary, Dept. of Administrator, 21.iv.17.
114. B2/2/7, Commandant General to High Commissioner, 14.i.18.
115. S.Rhod., Report of the Director of Census regarding the Census taken on 7th May, 1911 /A7 - 1912/, 24.
116. H. Bugler, 'C Company Rhodesia Native Regiment', The Outpost, XVI, 1, January 1939, 13-17; M.E. Page, 'Malawians in the Great War and After' (Michigan State Univ., unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, 1977), 101, 104.

117. A3/11/20/4, Commandant General to Administrator, 14.ii.17.
118. B.S.A. Co., Reports on the Administration 1898-1900, 48.
119. See, for example, R.S. Roberts, 'Towards a history of Rhodesia's armed forces', Rhodesian History (1974), 5, 109.
120. D.N. Beach 'The Rising in South-western Mashonaland'.
121. D.N. Beach, 'Chimurenga', 15, 16.
122. S.Rhod., Report on Defence for the Years 1945 and 1946 [C.S.R.35 - 1947], 9.



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