

# FLAG OF DEFIANCE – THE INTERNATIONAL USE OF THE RHODESIAN FLAG FOLLOWING UDI

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## **Abstract**

The international response to Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) was to proclaim the colony to be in a state of rebellion, the government in Salisbury to be illegal, and to request the United Nations to apply sanctions against the 'rebel regime'. The ensuing political impasse resulted in the need to promote a more distinctive national identity and the symbols to reflect this newfound independence. The first, and most obvious, change came with the adoption of a new national flag on the third anniversary of UDI on 11 November 1968. As the most visible symbol of post-UDI Rhodesia, the international use and display of the new flag became the subject of demonstration and controversy. This paper shows how the green and white Rhodesian flag came to highlight Rhodesia's contested statehood when flown outside the country during the UDI period. Rhodesia's new flag became a symbol of the country's defiance, and the emotion it evoked, and continues to evoke, causes controversy even to this day.

Keywords:

Rhodesia, symbols, flags

## 1. INTRODUCTION

After years of fruitless negotiations on the issue of independence, at 11 a.m. on 11 November 1965 (the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month) Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith and his Cabinet signed a Proclamation of Independence from the British Parliament, whilst retaining loyalty to the person of the Monarch as the Queen of Rhodesia.<sup>1</sup> The immediate response by the British Government to this Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) was to proclaim Rhodesia to be in a state of rebellion, the Government in Salisbury to be illegal and to request the United Nations to apply sanctions against the 'rebel regime'.

At the time of UDI Rhodesia was a British Colony with Responsible Government. Responsible Government had been granted on 13 September 1923 after the European settlers had voted for self-government in a referendum rather than to become a fifth province of the then Union of South Africa. The settlers had established themselves in the territory in 1890 following the granting of a Royal Charter by Queen Victoria to the British South Africa Company (BSAC) on 29 October 1889. This was the brainchild of Cecil John Rhodes, the British imperialist and financier whose ambition was to exploit the mineral wealth of Mashonaland and expand the sphere of British influence from the 'Cape to Cairo'.<sup>2</sup>

Responsible Government was a unique constitutional arrangement in that while the Colony had gained wide powers, Britain retained powers of veto to protect African rights and although Britain had full power to legislate for Southern Rhodesia, it would not do so without the consent of the Southern Rhodesia

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<sup>1</sup> A. Skeen, *Prelude to Independence – Skeen's 115 Days* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1966); J.R.T. Wood, *So Far and No Further! Rhodesia's bid for independence during the retreat from Empire 1959-1965* (Johannesburg: 30° South Publishers, 2005), 471 and D. Lowry, 'Rhodesia 1890-1980 'The Lost Dominion'', in R. Bickers (ed), *Settlers and Expatriates: Britons over the seas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 112-113.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive history of the establishment of the Colony see, for example, L.H. Gann, *A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early days to 1934* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1965), R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), P. Baxter, *Rhodesia – Last Outpost of the British Empire 1890-1980* (Alberton, Galago, 2010), C.J.M. Zvobgo, *A History of Zimbabwe and Postscript: Zimbabwe, 2001-2008* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009) and A.S. Mlambo, *A History of Zimbabwe* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Legislative Assembly.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Colony found itself in a “twilight zone between dependence and independence – being neither colony nor dominion” with Britain still its legal albeit not actual sovereign.<sup>4</sup> Although executive and legislative power was subordinated to that of the United Kingdom, the British parliament in Westminster never exercised its right to legislate, even in areas from which the Southern Rhodesia Assembly was excluded in legislating.<sup>5</sup> This constitutional arrangement was perpetuated after 1953 when Southern Rhodesia (later Rhodesia and now Zimbabwe) joined in a federation with the British protectorates of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Nyasaland (now Malawi). Established as a liberal counterpoise to the growth of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa<sup>6</sup> based on the policy of ‘Partnership’ between Europeans and Africans,<sup>7</sup> the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland only lasted a decade with the British succumbing to political pressure from the African nationalists for self-determination in the two protectorates and the politically dominant whites in Southern Rhodesia also demanding independence on the premise that the Colony had had virtual political autonomy since it had been granted self-government in 1923.

To many observers the most striking aspect of Rhodesia during the colonial period remained its Britishness, with most whites identifying themselves primarily as British rather than Rhodesian up until the break-up of the Federation<sup>8</sup> and this identity was reflected in the symbols, including the flags, of the Colony. As proud members of the wider British community, British flags, songs and other symbolic displays of the Empire were thus part and parcel of Rhodesian life<sup>9</sup> with the white

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<sup>3</sup> Wood, ‘So Far and No Further!’, 9.

<sup>4</sup> H. R. Strack, *Sanctions: The Case of Rhodesia* (Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1978), 8-9 and quoted in D. Geldenhuys, *Isolated States: A Comparative Analysis* (Johannesburg, Jonathan Ball, 1990), 62.

<sup>5</sup> Blake, ‘A History of Rhodesia’, 192-193.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>7</sup> G. Huggins, ‘Southern Rhodesia’, *African Affairs*, 51, 203 (1952), 144; Zvobgo, *A History of Zimbabwe*, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Lowry, ‘Rhodesia – The Lost Dominion’, 128.

<sup>9</sup> A.K. Shutt and T. King, ‘Imperial Rhodesians: The 1953 Rhodes Centenary Exhibition in Southern Rhodesia’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31, 2 (2005), 363.

Rhodesians having, what Leys called an 'exceptional attachment' to the British Crown.<sup>10</sup>

The ensuing political impasse following the declaration of UDI resulted in the need to promote a more distinctive national identity. The first, and most obvious, change came with the adoption of a new national flag on the third anniversary of UDI. As the most visible symbol of post-UDI Rhodesia, the international use and display of the new flag became the subject of demonstration and controversy.

This paper shows how the new Rhodesian flag came to highlight Rhodesia's contested statehood when flown outside the country during the UDI period and how its use continues to stir up emotions even today.

## 2. COLONIAL RHODESIAN FLAGS

At the time of UDI, Rhodesia followed the traditional British colonial practice and flew an 'ensign-based' flag with the Union Jack in the canton and the shield from its Coat of Arms in the fly.<sup>11</sup> However, since 08 April 1964 this had had a light blue (plumbago) background rather than the traditional dark blue and was unique in being the only non-armed service British colonial flag in this colour at the time.<sup>12</sup> The change in the flag highlighted the political changes which had taken place following the dissolution of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.<sup>13</sup> When the Federation formally ceased to exist at midnight on 31 December 1963, Southern Rhodesia reverted to its pre-federal colonial flag which followed the same pattern but with the traditional dark blue background. The flag of the Federation

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<sup>10</sup> C. Leys, *European Politics in Southern Rhodesia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 250.

<sup>11</sup> The 'canton' is the vexillological term for the top-left hand corner of a flag, with the 'fly' being that half of the flag furthest from the pole.

<sup>12</sup> Later Fiji and Tuvalu, in 1970 and 1978 respectively, also adopted British ensign-based national flags with light blue backgrounds.

<sup>13</sup> R. Allport, 'Flags and Symbols of Rhodesia 1890 – 1980', *SAVA Journal*, 5/96 (1996), 26 and B.B. Berry, 'Flying in the Winds of Change: Flags from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe', *The Flag Bulletin*, XXXIV: 2/163 (1995), 54.

was also in the same colonial ensign pattern but with the shield from the Federal Arms in the fly (Figure 1).<sup>14</sup>

The first flag of sovereignty flown in the country was the British Union Jack which was hoisted on 13 September 1890, the day after the Pioneer Column<sup>15</sup> had reached Mount Hampden. This marked the formal European occupation of the country and the beginning of the administration by the British South Africa Company (BSAC). The Company's own flag, being a Union Jack defaced with the BSAC badge in the centre, had not been received from England when the Column set out, so a Union Jack was carried instead - the first Company flag only arriving in Fort Salisbury in 1892.<sup>16</sup> With the end of the BSAC Administration following a referendum in October 1922 in which the European settlers voted in favour of becoming a self-governing Colony with Responsible Government rather than to join the Union of South Africa, the Company flag was lowered on 29 September 1923. On 01 October 1923 the British Union Jack was raised again to symbolise the change in administration to the newly elected Legislative Assembly. On this date there were no colonial Arms and also no distinctive colonial flag. The Southern Rhodesia Coat of Arms were granted by Royal Warrant in the following year on 11 August 1924 and this was followed by a 13 year period of confusion and misunderstanding as to what was the flag of the Colony.<sup>17</sup>

In response to questions about what flag to use on such occasions as the British Empire Exhibition, etc., correspondence between the Rhodesian High Commission in London and the Colonial Office shows that the latter answered "...

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<sup>14</sup> Allport, 'Flags and Symbols of Rhodesia', 27-29 and Berry, 'Flying in the Winds of Change', 52-54.

<sup>15</sup> The Pioneer Column is the name given to the expeditionary force organized by British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes whose aim was to occupy and colonise Mashonaland following the granting of the Royal Charter by Queen Victoria on 29 October 1889 which established the British South Africa Company. The Column, consisting of 380 men and 212 South African policemen, left the Cape Colony for Mashonaland on 27 June 1890.

<sup>16</sup> B.B. Berry, 'The flags of the British South Africa Company, 1890-1923' in *Fahnen, Flags, Drapeaux – Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Vexillology* (Zollikofen: Swiss Society of Vexillology, 1999), 70 and G.H. Tanser, *A Scantling of Time – The story of Salisbury, Rhodesia 1890-1900*, (Salisbury: Pioneer Head, 1965), 27.

<sup>17</sup> For further details see M. Faul, 'Just what is the Rhodesian Flag?', *Rhodesians Worldwide*, 11, 4 (1996), 25-26 and M. Faul, 'The Genesis of a Colonial Flag: Southern Rhodesia 1890-1937' in *Fahnen, Flags Drapeaux – Proceedings of the 15<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Vexillology* (Zollikofen: Swiss Society of Vexillology, 1999), 105-108.

following the course adopted by other colonies last year, it is thought that the Blue Ensign with the Arms (or Flag Badge) of Southern Rhodesia in the fly might be used for this purpose”.<sup>18</sup> What was clear, however, and later confirmed in a letter from the Colonial Secretary in Salisbury to the Rhodesian High Commission in March 1928 on the question of what was the *official* flag of the Colony, was that “the Union Jack is the flag of Southern Rhodesia”.<sup>19</sup>

While the general public seemed content to fly the Union Jack, the need for a distinctive flag to distinguish the Colony abroad was still a matter of some consternation. In November 1934 the Rhodesian High Commission purchased some Union Jacks with green pennants below emblazoned with “SOUTHERN RHODESIA” in white letters to be used as car flags at the wedding of Prince George, Duke of Kent, to Princess Marina of Greece and Denmark.<sup>20</sup>

The forthcoming coronation of King Edward VIII brought matters to a head. The adoption of a flag was an Act related to foreign affairs and due to the Colony’s unique constitutional status, this was a matter controlled from London. Following further communications between the Prime Minister, the Rhodesian High Commission and the Dominions Office, in January 1937 the Prime Minister indicated his preference for a flag based on the blue ensign with shield in the fly to be used *outside* the Colony – commenting that “it would not necessarily be used here [i.e. within the country] at all, except as bunting or in combination with the Union Jack.”<sup>21</sup> However, despite the lack of any legislative prescription, this flag did come into general usage within the Colony where it flew alongside the Union Jack. This dual flag arrangement<sup>22</sup> continued during the Federal period and later

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<sup>18</sup> Faul, ‘The Genesis’, 105.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

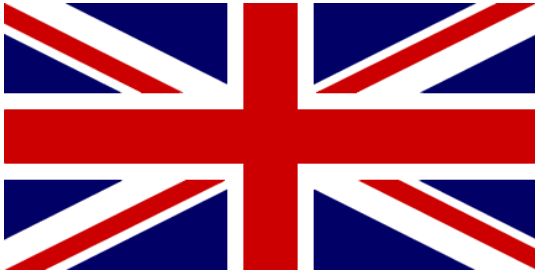
<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>22</sup> In terms of the *Union Nationality and Flags Act* (Act No. 40 of 1927), the Union of South Africa also had a dual flag arrangement between 1928 and 1961.

with the light blue ensign until the new Rhodesian flag was adopted in November 1968.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 1 : Colonial Rhodesian flags prior to UDI

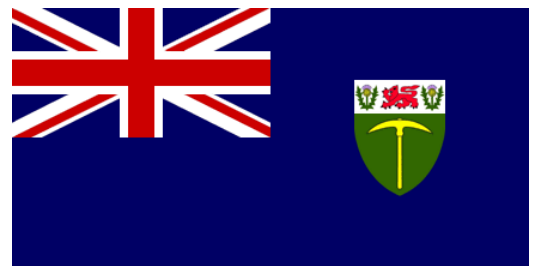


The British Union Flag (*commonly referred to as the Union Jack*) was initially raised at Fort Salisbury on 13 September 1890. It was the official national flag of Rhodesia from 01 October 1923 until 10 November 1968.

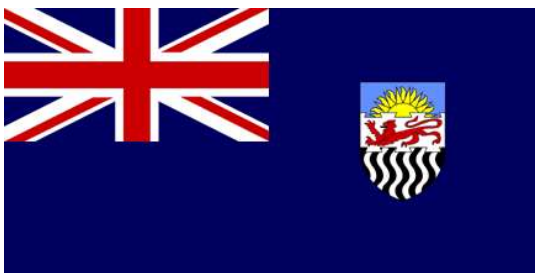


The British South Africa Company flag was flown from 1890 until 30 September 1923.

Another version without the red ring around the badge was also used.

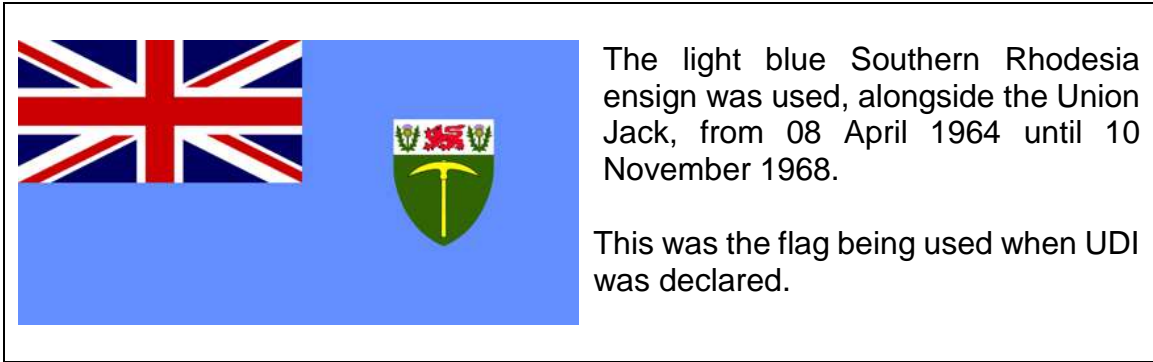


The Southern Rhodesia dark blue ensign was flown *outside* the Colony from circa. 1937 until 30 September 1953. When used within the Colony during the Federal period it was flown alongside the Union Jack.



The dark blue ensign of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was flown, alongside the Union Jack, between 01 September 1953 and 31 December 1963.

<sup>23</sup> Allport, 'Flags and Symbols of Rhodesia', 26; Berry, 'Flying in the Winds of Change', 52 and M. Faul, 'The Vexillology of UDI', *Rhodesians Worldwide*, 11, 2 (1995), 22-23.



The lack of a distinctive colonial flag, and the fact that the issue came to be settled somewhat informally, is indicative of the predominant settler identity in the Colony at that time.

### 3. POST UDI DEVELOPMENTS

The Proclamation of UDI recalled the country's loyalty to the Crown, to "kith and kin" in Britain and to the Commonwealth and concluded with the conventional salutation "God Save the Queen" to whom allegiance was pledged as "Queen of Rhodesia". "What the declaration was intended to convey was that UDI did not extricate Rhodesia from the British Empire, but instead unilaterally declared itself to be a Dominion *within* the British Empire".<sup>24</sup>

Thus there was no need to change the flag, or the existing rule that it be flown side-by-side with the Union Jack. Indeed, in a radio broadcast by Prime Minister Ian Smith immediately after signing UDI, he reassured Rhodesians that

"... we in this country stand second to none in our loyalty to the Queen, and whatever else other countries may have done or may yet do, it is our intention that the Union Jack will continue to fly in Rhodesia and the National Anthem continue to be sung."<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> J. Brownell, 'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand: Rhodesia House during the UDI Rebellion (1965-1980)', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38, 3 (2010), 11.

<sup>25</sup> Skeen, 'Prelude to independence', 153 and quoted in D. Kenrick, *These Colours Don't Run: Changing the Rhodesian Flag, 1968'* (Stellenbosch: Paper presented at the Southern African Historical Society Biennial Conference, 02 July 2015).



However, following UDI Britain found itself under increasing pressure from the United Nations and the so-called new “Afro-Asian bloc” in the Commonwealth to do more to resolve the political crisis. This led to the imposition of mandatory economic sanctions against Rhodesia by the United Nations and a further deterioration in relations between the two countries despite repeated attempts at negotiation to resolve the impasse.

Within the country rising anti-British propaganda and increasingly bitter feelings over sanctions and their impact, the presence of the Union Jack on the Rhodesian flag became increasingly pointless. In January 1967 the Rhodesian Cabinet established a Committee on Honours and Awards. The remit of this Committee was to investigate the possibility of creating new civil and military honours for Rhodesia, and to devise a new flag and national anthem. At the Second Reading of the Flag of Rhodesia Bill in Parliament on 03 September 1968, the Minister of Justice and of Law and Order, Mr Desmond Lardner-Burke, explained the need for a new flag by saying that although Rhodesia,

“... has, until now, been quite willing to keep the Union Flag ... [t]hings have changed and we must accept that change, just as others must accept it. Rhodesia is a nation justly proud of her essentially British heritage but independent nonetheless ...”.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore he argued, the need for the change in flag was a choice which had been forced upon Rhodesia by the British Government as a result of the changed relationship between the two countries. “... It is because of this clearly identifiable character which we have acquired which makes it desirable and necessary to have our own separate and clearly identifiable flag ...”.<sup>27</sup>

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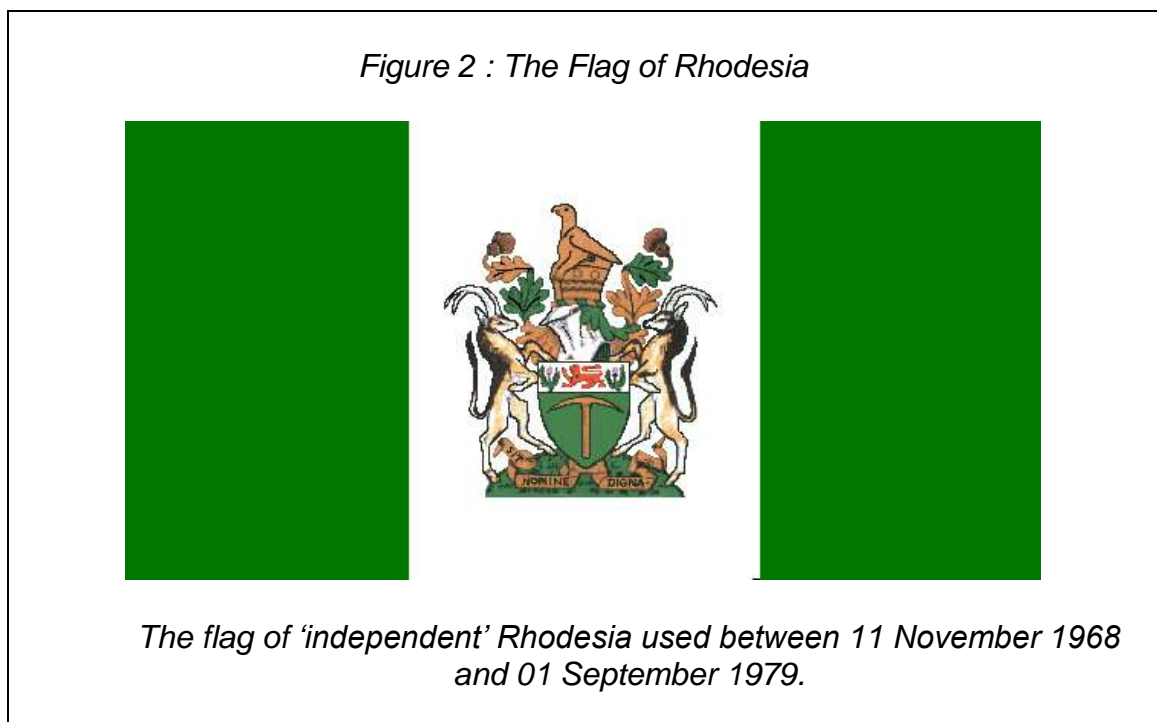
<sup>26</sup> Government of Rhodesia, *Parliamentary Debates (Fourth Session, Eleventh Parliament)* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1968), 72, 933.

<sup>27</sup> Government of Rhodesia, *Parliamentary Debates*, 938.

The details and the design of the proposed new flag of Rhodesia were outlined in the Flag of Rhodesia Bill and published in the *Government Gazette* of 09 August 1968. The general public got their first sight of the proposed design when an illustration and a description of the flag featured on the front page of the main daily newspaper, *The Rhodesia Herald*, the following day 11 August 1968, under the headline “No Union Jack on proposed new flag”.<sup>28</sup>

The new flag of an ‘independent’ Rhodesia (Figure 2) was raised for the first time at 9 a.m. on the third anniversary of UDI, Monday, 11 November 1968 and was officially described as:

- “... consisting of three vertical stripes of equal width, green, white and green, on which there appears in the centre of the white stripe the coat of arms of Rhodesia, with –
- a) the length of the flag equal to twice the width of the flag; and
  - b) the coat of arms of Rhodesia equal in height to three-fifths of the height of the flag”.<sup>29</sup>



<sup>28</sup> The Rhodesia Herald, ‘No Union Jack on proposed new flag’ (Salisbury: 11 August 1968), 1.

<sup>29</sup> Government of Rhodesia, *The Flag of Rhodesia Act* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1968), 1-2.

As can be seen from the final design, there was no change to the Coat of Arms adopted in 1924. The Arms were placed, unchanged, in the centre of the new flag to distinguish it from the flag of Nigeria which also comprises three vertical stripes of green, white and green, but without any defacement.<sup>30</sup>

A pamphlet with an illustration and a description of the new flag was later published by the Government and widely distributed. The explanation of the symbolism of the flag was given as follows:

“The Flag of Rhodesia consists of three vertical panels, green, white and green. Superimposed centrally on the white panel is the Coat of Arms of Rhodesia. Green is the predominant colour of the Coat of Arms. It is a bold colour and has the advantage of comparative lightfastness in Rhodesia’s sunny climate.

The Arms were granted by Royal Warrant of King George V in August, 1924. The gold pick symbolises the importance of the mining industry and, in particular (at the time of its adoption), the mining of gold. The pick is set on a green field, representing the agricultural background of the country. The bird which surmounts the Arms is a representation of the soapstone bird found at the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, and serves as a reminder of the country’s past, including its prehistory. The lion and thistles are from the Arms of Cecil John Rhodes, the Founder, to whom allusion is also made in the motto: *Sit Nomine Digna* – “May she (Rhodesia) be worthy of the name”.<sup>31</sup>

The inclusion of the Arms addressed the principle that the flag “should preserve a reminder of the former administration of the country”<sup>32</sup> The Arms were granted by Royal Warrant shortly after the introduction of Responsible Government on 11 August 1924 with the following blazon:<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> B.B. Berry, ‘*The Beloved Green and White: (White) Rhodesia’s search for a unique symbol of identity*’ (London: Paper presented at the 27th International Congress of Vexillology, August 2017), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Government of Rhodesia, *The Flag of Rhodesia* (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1968), 5.

<sup>32</sup> Cabinet Memoranda, *Rhodesian Flag* (1968), 92 as quoted in D.W. Kenrick, ‘Pioneers and Progress: White Rhodesian Nation-Building c.1964-1979’ (D.Phil thesis, University of Oxford, Oxford, 2016), 67.

<sup>33</sup> A *blazon* is the verbal or written description for describing a coat of arms using heraldic conventions and terminology.

Vert a Pick Or on a Chief Argent a Lion passant Gules between two Thistles leaved and slipped proper. For the Crest: On a Wreath Or and Vert, a representation of the bird carved in soapstone and discovered at Great Zimbabwe (otherwise the Great Zimbabwe Bird) Gold. And for Supporters on either side, a Sable Anthelope proper: with the Motto "Sit Nomine Digna".<sup>34</sup>

The inclusion of the Great Zimbabwe Bird was a classic case of what Kenrick (2016) calls the settler appropriation of indigenous symbolism.<sup>35</sup> The crest of the Arms was based on the soapstone birds found at Great Zimbabwe, the ruins of what was southern Africa's first city, the imposing set of stone structures found in the centre of the country near modern-day Masvingo.<sup>36</sup> Most researchers agree that the bird represents a bird of prey and although difficult to identify specifically which species, the general consensus is that it represents some type of eagle.<sup>37</sup>

A Zimbabwe Bird first became a symbol for the new country after the hunter and explorer, Willie Posselt, became the first white man to see one and remove it in August 1889.<sup>38</sup> He later sold it to Cecil John Rhodes who became obsessed with the birds and is the only private individual to have owned one of them. Rhodes even went to the extent of having the symbol incorporated into his house, Groote Schuur, in Cape Town and is rumoured to have regarded it as a personal totem and made major decisions in its presence.<sup>39</sup> More importantly, he used the bird to great effect to convince sceptical investors that there was more to the northern

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<sup>34</sup> Government of Rhodesia, *Arms of Rhodesia* (Salisbury: Government Printer, nd).

<sup>35</sup> Kenrick, 'Pioneers and Progress', 72.

<sup>36</sup> Detail on the ruins and specifically the Zimbabwe Bird can be found in P.S. Garlake, *Great Zimbabwe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973); T.N. Huffman, *Symbols in Stone: unravelling the mystery of Great Zimbabwe* (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 1987); P. Hubbard, 'The Zimbabwe Bird: Interpretation and Symbolism', *Honeyguide*, 55, 2 (2009), 109-116 and E. Matenga, 'The Soapstone Birds of Great Zimbabwe', *Studies in Global Archeology*, 16 (2011), 1-261.

<sup>37</sup> Hubbard, 'The Zimbabwe Bird', 111-113.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 109

<sup>39</sup> R. Brown-Lowe, *The Lost City of Solomon and Sheba: an African mystery* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2003) as quoted in Hubbard, 'The Zimbabwe Bird', 110.

territory than met the eye<sup>40</sup> and his fascination is further highlighted by their prominent incorporation in the design of Rhodes House in Oxford.<sup>41</sup>

The Zimbabwe Bird became a prominent symbol in Rhodesian national iconography. It featured on coins and banknotes, on stamps, on medals and in a variety of government and private company logos. It later became the definitive icon of independent Zimbabwe with Matenga (2001) listing over 100 organisations which incorporated the Bird in their logo.<sup>42</sup>

The shield in the Arms was the only element to be retained from the previous flags. The shield contained the pick representing mining, the *raison d'être* for the initial European occupation and colonisation of the country, together with the lion and thistles which came directly from Rhodes' personal Arms,<sup>43</sup> providing further symbolism to the country's past.

The predominance of green in the Arms was also responsible for its choice as the 'national colour'.<sup>44</sup> Green and white were the country's sporting colours, having been used since at least 1924 by the Rhodesian Rugby Football Union and formally adopted as such on 30 May 1927.<sup>45</sup> These were the colours under which the country had competed at the Tokyo Summer Olympic Games in 1964.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Hubbard, 'The Zimbabwe Bird', 114

<sup>41</sup> Kenrick, 'Pioneers and Progress', 72.

<sup>42</sup> Matenga, 'The Soapstone Birds of Great Zimbabwe', 255-258.

<sup>43</sup> Rhodes' personal Arms are illustrated in Allport, 'Flags and Symbols of Rhodesia', 46. The lion and thistle from these Arms also feature in the shields of the former civic Arms of Grahamstown (South Africa) and that of Rhodes University (Makhanda).

<sup>44</sup> Cabinet Memoranda, 'Rhodesian Flag', 3.

<sup>45</sup> Parliamentary Debates, *Fourth Session, Eleventh Parliament*, Vol 72 (Salisbury: Government Printer, 1968), 934 and J. de L. Thompson, *The Story of Rhodesian Sport (Vol. 1 1889-1935)*, (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1976), 10.

<sup>46</sup> A. Novak, 'Rhodesia's 'Rebel and Racist' Olympic Team: Athletic Glory, National Legitimacy and the Clash of Politics and Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 23, 8 (2006), 1375.

#### 4. THE FIRST SIGNS OF DEFIANCE AND REBELLION

As is the case in other countries following the adoption of a new national flag, there was initially a lukewarm response to the new design. Most of the criticism levelled at the new flag stemmed from the exclusion of the Union Jack, which it was claimed was an insult to the Pioneers, its similarity to the Nigerian flag<sup>47</sup> and that the colour choice was solely a product of the Ministers' love for rugby – the new design being dubbed 'Lardner-Burke's jersey'.<sup>48</sup>

It is not clear whether any black or non-white groups had been consulted during the design process, but this is unlikely and most of the debates at the time of its adoption were confined to the white population. The new flag thus had little resonance with the African population and became considered a symbol of oppression. This was highlighted shortly after its adoption when the headmaster at a school for Coloured (mixed-race) children was reported as saying that after he had raised the new flag as instructed, he had washed his hands with carbolic soap and had left it up to rot!<sup>49</sup> The new flag was essentially a white man's flag and public displays against the flag amongst whites were rare. There was, however, one case reported soon after its adoption where twelve whites tried to take down the new flag flying in the capital and who were arrested by the police.<sup>50</sup>

As the constitutional stalemate continued, there were limited opportunities for the formal flying of the Rhodesian flag outside the country.

Prior to UDI, the responsibility for external relations was vested in the British Government. Although also responsible for the external affairs of the Federation, the British Government gave certain entrustments through a 1957 Act of

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<sup>47</sup> 'Joy, remorse as Rhodesia furls the Union Jack' *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg) 25 September 1968; 'The egg-bound bird on the nest of UDI', *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg) 08 November 1968.

<sup>48</sup> Brownell, 'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand', 485 and 'Joy, remorse as Rhodesia furls the Union Jack'.

<sup>49</sup> Personal recollection.

<sup>50</sup> Brownell, 'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand', 485.

Parliament whereby the Federation was permitted to open direct relations with any Commonwealth country and exchange High Commissioners provided it informed Britain when it was doing so. In addition, the Federation could open diplomatic offices within British missions abroad. Following the demise of the Federation, these entrustments were transferred to Southern Rhodesia in December 1963.<sup>51</sup> The diplomatic representation of the Federation comprised a High Commissioner in the United Kingdom, a High Commissioner and Trade Commissioner in South Africa and a Commissioner in East Africa. Outside of the Commonwealth, Federal Offices operated from within British diplomatic missions in the United States, Portugal, (West) Germany and Japan. A stand-alone diplomatic mission also operated in Mozambique with a Consul-General in Lourenço Marques and a Consul in Beira.<sup>52</sup>

When South Africa became a republic and withdrew from the Commonwealth in 1961, an ‘accredited diplomatic representative’ was established in Pretoria independent of the British diplomatic mission there<sup>53</sup> and later a Trade Commission was established in Johannesburg and an Information Office in Cape Town.<sup>54</sup>

The issue of flying flags at its diplomatic missions surfaced as early in August 1965 when it was decided that the Union Jack would no longer fly alongside the Rhodesian flag outside the Rhodesian diplomatic mission on Church Square in Pretoria. An editorial in *The Rhodesia Herald* of 25 August 1965 questioned on whose instruction the Union Jack had been removed as this was contrary to the official dual flag policy. The reply from Rhodesia’s Accredited Diplomatic Representative in South Africa, Mr John Gaunt, was that the decision to fly only the Rhodesian flag was to “symbolise the fact that the Rhodesian Mission (in South Africa) is unconnected with the British Embassy ...” and – much more far reaching

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<sup>51</sup> J.R.T. Wood, ‘So far and no further!’, 355.

<sup>52</sup> W.V. Brelsford (ed.), *Handbook to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Cassell, 1960), 801.

<sup>53</sup> Wood, ‘So far and no further!’, 344.

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism, *Rhodesia in Brief* (Salisbury: Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism, 1968).

– “After all we only have one flag, the Rhodesian one”.<sup>55</sup> The Union Jack was only to be flown in future on special occasions such as the Queen’s birthday.<sup>56</sup> In response to a question in parliament by opposition member Dr Ahrn Palley, the Minister of External Affairs, Mr Clifford Dupont, stated that no instructions had been issued regarding the flying of flags on Rhodesian diplomatic and consular buildings. When pressed whether in the absence of any specific instructions it was then the decision of the individual representative on which flag to fly, the Minister said “no” and that “normal diplomatic practice” would be followed.<sup>57</sup> Attempting to clarify the situation, Mr Dupont said that in London and Lourenço Marques the Rhodesia flag was flown on its own, while in Washington no flag was flown as the Rhodesian mission was located within the British Embassy.<sup>58</sup>

Within the wider context of the dispute surrounding the independence issue and speculation on the status of its diplomatic missions, Rhodesia succeeded, despite British objections, in appointing an ‘accredited representative’ in Lisbon in September 1965. Portugal’s acceptance of Harry Reedman as ‘Chief of the Rhodesian Mission’ was regarded as a major diplomatic victory by the Rhodesians with historian J.R.T. Wood calling this “Rhodesia's first independent and indeed unilateral act — the veritable straw in the wind”.<sup>59</sup> Notwithstanding the political importance of the establishment of the Lisbon Mission, its significance was highlighted when it hoisted the new Rhodesian flag almost immediately after it was adopted<sup>60</sup> in what was the first international display of the flag beyond southern Africa.

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<sup>55</sup> ‘Under two flags?’, *The Rhodesia Herald* (Salisbury) 25 August 1965.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Gaunt: No responsibility for Union Jack decision’, *The Rhodesia Herald*, (Salisbury) 24 August 1965.

<sup>57</sup> DO 183/808, *Southern Rhodesia Diplomatic and Consular Representation in South Africa – flying of Union Jack together with Rhodesian flag*, (September 1965).

<sup>58</sup> ‘Gondo queries policy on flying of flags – Dupont replies’, *The Rhodesia Herald* (Salisbury) 25 August 1965.

<sup>59</sup> Wood, ‘So far and no further!’, 344.

<sup>60</sup> ‘New flag in Lisbon’, *The Rhodesia Herald* (Salisbury) 11 November 1968.



## 5. FLYING THE FLAG OF DEFIANCE

While the sanctions imposed by the United Nations after UDI in 1965 and early 1966 were voluntary, neither these actions nor the intermittent negotiations between the Rhodesian and British Governments succeeded in settling the crisis. On 16 December 1966, for the first time in its history, the UN invoked mandatory comprehensive sanctions against Rhodesia, with Geldenhuys (1990) arguing that “Rhodesia was certainly the most ostracized country [the 20<sup>th</sup> century had] witnessed in peacetime”.<sup>61</sup>

While the new Rhodesian flag gained some acceptance within the country, especially amongst the white population, this was not the case when it was flown internationally. The first major incident around the flying of the flag outside the country occurred in London. The new flag was raised over Rhodesia House, the offices of the Rhodesian High Commission on The Strand, on 31 December 1968. The flag had not been flown there earlier because the flag-pole had been undergoing repair.<sup>62</sup>

Although not easily seen from street level, the flag immediately caused a ruckus in the popular press and within the British Government at Whitehall. Two days later the British Cabinet held a meeting to discuss the flying of the flag by Rhodesia House. It was agreed that the hoisting of the flag was timed to correspond with the eve of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, from which Rhodesia was now excluded, and was intended to be “highly provocative”.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Geldenhuys, *‘Isolated States’*, 59.

<sup>62</sup> Confidential Cabinet Memorandum, (London: FCO 36/519, 14 January 1969) and The Rhodesia Herald, *Undiplomatic Hoisting in London* (Salisbury: 06 January 1969).

<sup>63</sup> Brownell, ‘A Sordid Tussle on the Strand’, 21.

That the hoisting of the flag should arouse such attention was due in part to the fact that the status of Rhodesia House itself following UDI was mired in controversy.<sup>64</sup>

Three options were discussed as being available to the British Government regarding the flying of the flag – do nothing, remove it by force if necessary or arrange a compromise whereby the British Residual Mission in Salisbury would lower the Union Jack simultaneously with Rhodesia House lowering the Rhodesian flag. The second option was discounted as flying the flag contravened no law and Rhodesia House was protected by certain diplomatic privileges. Furthermore, a forceful removal might invite reprisals against the British Residual Mission in Rhodesia. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson commented that everyone disliked the compromise solution and so there was no official response.<sup>65</sup>

The British Government, frustrated by the lack of any legal recourse to remove the flag, prepared a Statutory Instrument entitled the “Southern Rhodesia (Illegal Flag) Order 1969”, the purpose of which was to prohibit the flying or display of the “illegal flag at any public meeting or in any public place.”<sup>66</sup> Although never promulgated, the seriousness in which the matter was viewed by Whitehall is reflected in the provisions of the proposed Instrument which would have given the police the authority to “remove and take possession of any flag” contravening the Order and offenders to be given a fine not exceeding £100.<sup>67</sup>

However, the “insignificant piece of bunting”<sup>68</sup> as the flag was referred to, continued to court controversy. It was the topic of a 50-second British Movietone News newsreel entitled “Smith Shows the Flag” which ended with the comment; “Shades of rebellion in the heart of the Commonwealth and shades of the toothless

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<sup>64</sup> A detailed overview on the status of Rhodesia House after UDI can be found in Brownell, ‘A Sordid Tussle on the Strand’.

<sup>65</sup> Brownell, ‘A Sordid Tussle on the Strand’, 22.

<sup>66</sup> The Southern Rhodesia (Illegal Flag) Order 1969 (London: PREM 131/2893).

<sup>67</sup> The Southern Rhodesia (Illegal Flag) Order 1969 (London: PREM 131/2893).

<sup>68</sup> Brownell, ‘A Sordid Tussle on the Strand’, 22.

bulldog if it wasn't taken down!"<sup>69</sup> Various "flag raiders" began to periodically climb the flag pole of Rhodesia House and remove it. On two occasions, students removed the Rhodesian flag and replaced it with a Union Jack, one of which flew above Rhodesia House for 17 hours. The attempts to remove the flag and the demonstrations around the continued operation of Rhodesia House was the feature of another newsreel aptly entitled "The Battle of the Strand"<sup>70</sup> which again highlights the news worthiness of the flag flying incident. Throughout January 1969, British newspaper cartoonists had a field day with the entire episode, lampooning the apparent powerlessness of the British Government to have the offending flag removed while highlighting the high-flying antics of the various flag pole raiders (Figure 3).

The defiant flying of the new Rhodesian flag over Rhodesia House and the subsequent protests which it caused were a great embarrassment to Britain internationally to the extent that the American embassy in London reported to Washington that "Everybody in London it appears has seen [the UDI flag above Rhodesia House] except [the] British Government", concluding that "HMG's attitude toward the flag-flying episode [is a] humiliating reminder of British impotence...".<sup>71</sup>

Ironically, it was neither the British Government nor the protestors which finally resulted in the flag coming down from Rhodesia House. Instead it was the Rhodesians themselves, as following the vote in favour of a Republican Constitution in a referendum held in June 1969, Rhodesia House finally closed its doors on 14 July 1969 and the flag was lowered for the last time.<sup>72</sup>

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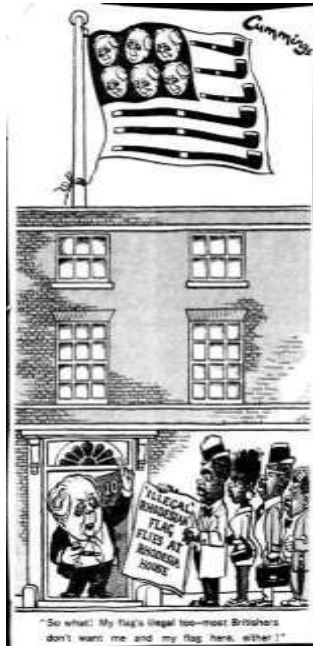
<sup>69</sup> See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8gDsBKN\\_XQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8gDsBKN_XQ), accessed 10 March 2018.

<sup>70</sup> See <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/5a9bbef6998a4f69a2b7665447669b25>, accessed 10 March 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Telegram from American Embassy in London to the State Department in Washington D.C. (07 January 1969) quoted in Brownell, 'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand', 23.

<sup>72</sup> Brownell, 'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand', 25.

Figure 3 : Cartoons in the British press relating to the Rhodesian flag flying over Rhodesia House (January 1969)<sup>73</sup>



Cummings – Sunday Express  
(04/01/1969)



Giles – Daily Express  
(04/01/1969)



Cummings – Daily Express (05/01/1969)

<sup>73</sup> See the British Cartoon Archive at [www.cartoons.ac.uk](http://www.cartoons.ac.uk) for the actual cartoons shown in Figure 3.



Papas - Guardian  
(13/01/1969)



Musgrave Wood – Daily Mail  
(14/01/1969)



Waite – The Sun (28/01/1969)

The removal of the Union Jack from the national flag was the symbolic precursor to the declaration of the republic in March 1970. While the national flag (and Arms) remained unchanged, the formal severance of links to the Crown resulted in changes to some military and regimental flags. The 'Royal' prefix was dropped, the Crown removed and Regimental Colours based on the Union Jack were replaced.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the Queen's head no longer appeared on the country's stamps and banknotes.<sup>75</sup> A new system of Honours and Awards was announced in November 1970 with the Coat of Arms being used instead of the Head of the Sovereign on many of the country's new medals and decorations.<sup>76</sup>

The declaration of the republic also resulted in further diplomatic isolation as the remaining foreign diplomatic missions in Salisbury closed, leaving only Portugal and South Africa with representatives in the country.<sup>77</sup>

Although not the flag itself, other symbols of the regime which caused major international controversy were the status and operations of Rhodesia's foreign missions after UDI, just as in the case of Rhodesia House in London.

Despite British pressure, Rhodesia continued to maintain several overseas missions after UDI and these took various forms. The Southern Rhodesia Affairs Office within the British embassy in Washington D.C. became the Rhodesia Information Office (RIO) and operated throughout the UDI period despite diplomatic pressure on the United States to close it. The RIO operated out of a modest house in a quiet neighbourhood and did not fly a Rhodesian flag or even have the name of the office on the door.<sup>78</sup> However,

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<sup>74</sup> See for example Allport, 'Flags and Symbols of Rhodesia', 1996.

<sup>75</sup> R.C. Smith, *Supplement to Rhodesia A Postal History – its stamps posts & telegraphs* (Salisbury: Mardon Printers, 1970), 40 and J. Brownell, "The Visual Rhetoric of Stamps: Rhodesia and the Projection of Sovereignty (1965-80)", (Seattle: Paper presented at the American Comparative Literature Association Annual Conference, 2015), 15-16.

<sup>76</sup> Rhodesian Commentary, *Our own Honours and Awards*, (Salisbury: Government Printer, November 1970), 6-7 and *Rhodesian Honours and Awards* (Salisbury: City Printers and Stationers, 1975).

<sup>77</sup> Brownell, 'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand', 488.

<sup>78</sup> J.J. Kilpatrick, 'Rhodesian Information Office: Victims of Carter's Decency', *Human Events*, 37, 36 (25 June 1977), 485.

“In many ways the RIO staff held themselves out as diplomats – they were ... driven around in a chauffeured black car around Washington, albeit one that was stripped of its diplomatic plates. Sensitive to what they perceived as diplomatic slights from the official Washington diplomatic crowd, the RIO staff described themselves as ‘diplomatic lepers’”.<sup>79</sup>

In Australia, the Rhodesian Information Centre in Sydney opened after UDI and operated under the jurisdiction of the state of New South Wales.<sup>80</sup> In 1973, the Labour government of Gough Whitlam cut post and telephone links to the Centre, but this was ruled illegal by the Australian High Court<sup>81</sup> and it continued to operate until it was deregistered in the following year.<sup>82</sup>

The commitment to the principle of “non-interference” is evident in the French response to the Rhodesian independence issue. After UDI, a Rhodesian Information Office was opened in Paris in 1968 for the dissemination of tourist and cultural news and the development of cultural links between France and Rhodesia.<sup>83</sup> The RIO operated throughout the 1970s until it was forced to close by the French Government in January 1977.<sup>84</sup> In a similar vein, ‘reduced level’ representatives were also maintained in Madrid, Athens, Rome, Brussels, Munich, Libreville and Kinshasa<sup>85</sup> at various times during the post-UDI period.

The Rhodesian flag flew in its official capacity, without any notoriety, over the Rhodesian diplomatic missions in Lisbon and Lourenço Marques until the Carnation Revolution in 1974 resulted in the end of the dictatorship in Portugal and the granting of independence to its African colonies. It also flew at the missions in

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<sup>79</sup> J. Brownell, “Diplomatic Lepers: The Katangan and Rhodesian Foreign Missions in the United States and the Politics of Nonrecognition, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 47, 2 (2014), 230.

<sup>80</sup> P. Davey, *The Nationals: The Progressive, Country, and National Party in New South Wales 1919–2006* (Sydney, Federation Press, 2006), 223.

<sup>81</sup> C. Legum, *Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents*, Volume 6 (New York, Africana Publishing Company, 1974), B506.

<sup>82</sup> Geldenhuys, *Isolated States*, 63.

<sup>83</sup> J. Warson, ‘France in Rhodesia: French Policy and Perceptions throughout the era of decolonization’ (PhD thesis, University of Portsmouth, 2013), 201, 230.

<sup>84</sup> Warson, ‘France in Rhodesia’, 232.

<sup>85</sup> Geldenhuys, *Isolated States*, 63.

Pretoria and Cape Town until September 1979 when it was replaced with the flag of Zimbabwe Rhodesia. There is no evidence that the flag flew from the trade missions in Luanda (Angola) or Johannesburg, both of which operated from offices in multi-story buildings.<sup>86</sup>

Like the controversy surrounding Rhodesia House, Rhodesia's post-UDI stamps also caused a major dilemma for the British Government. After UDI several countries suspended all mail services with Rhodesia but Britain did not. Rather, specific stamp issues were targeted as being particularly provocative, such as the 1965 Independence overprints and the UDI commemorative issue, and these were declared invalid for postage within the United Kingdom.<sup>87</sup> On Britain's request the Universal Postal Union, of which Rhodesia remained a member,<sup>88</sup> declared these issues invalid. However, few members followed Britain's lead and Rhodesian stamps were for the most part accepted as postage paid.<sup>89</sup>

Further controversies relating to the flag revolved around Rhodesia's participation at the few international sports and cultural events to which the country was invited or able to participate in. After UDI Rhodesian participation in international sports events increasingly drew international attention and condemnation, with Little (2013) arguing that unlike in the case of apartheid South Africa at the time, the campaign against Rhodesia in international sport was focused solely on the nature of the Rhodesian Government and not on the racial issues within Rhodesian sport itself.<sup>90</sup> The sanctions against Rhodesia were imposed by the United Nations Security Council and thus subject to greater enforceability than those imposed by the General Assembly against South African sporting contacts. And while sporting contacts were not specifically included amongst the targets of the sanctions

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<sup>86</sup> 'Rhodesia in Brief' <https://rhodesianheritage.blogspot.co.za/2010/05/rhodesia-in-brief-1968.html>, accessed on 18 May 2018. Originally published by the Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism, Salisbury, 1968.

<sup>87</sup> Brownell, 'The Visual Rhetoric of Stamps', 16.

<sup>88</sup> D. A. Mitchell and H. T. Tring, *The Surcharging of Rhodesia's Mail* (Bulawayo: Mardon Printers, 1978), 9.

<sup>89</sup> Brownell, 'The Visual Rhetoric of Stamps', 13.

<sup>90</sup> C. Little, "The Sports Boycott against Rhodesia reconsidered", in P. Gilchrist, *The Politics of Sport, Community, Mobility* (London: Russell Holden, 2013), 44.



resolutions, the breadth of their coverage ensured they could be used for this purpose.<sup>91</sup> The British Government argued in 1967 that sporting contacts were a form of “comfort to the illegal regime in Rhodesia” and was initially successful in preventing an international tour by the Rhodesian hockey team and dissuading British football and cricket teams from touring Rhodesia. However, the Oldham Athletic Football Club and the French and British Lions rugby union teams ignored the pressure and visited the country.<sup>92</sup>

Two Rhodesian delegates attended the world congress of the Junior Chamber International in Mar del Plata in Argentina at the end of November 1968 just after the new flag was introduced. *The Rhodesia Herald* carried a photograph of one of the delegates saluting the new flag and commented that a highlight for the Rhodesians was seeing the new flag being carried amongst the over two thousand delegates for the first time.<sup>93</sup>

The country was barred from participating in the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City after concerted British diplomatic pressure against the Mexicans, but in 1971 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) offered Rhodesia the opportunity to compete in the upcoming 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich (West Germany) if it did so as the “Colony of Southern Rhodesia” with a British identity – the so-called ‘Tokyo Conditions’.<sup>94</sup> This included using the old ensign type flag, using “God Save the Queen” as the anthem and having Olympic identity cards listing the athletes as British subjects, as it had done prior to UDI at the Tokyo Games in 1964. To the astonishment of the international community, and the horror of right wing elements within the country, the Rhodesian Olympic Committee unconditionally accepted the compromise.<sup>95</sup> The matter was discussed by the Rhodesian Cabinet

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Rhodesia delegates home again’, *The Rhodesia Herald* (Salisbury) 30 November 1968.

<sup>94</sup> A. Novak, Rhodesia’s rebel and racist Olympic team: athletic glory, national legitimacy and the clash of politics and sport’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26 (8), 2007, 1378 and A. Novak, ‘Rhodesia and the Olympic Games: representations of masculinity, war and Empire, 1965-1980’, *Sport in Society*, 18 (7), 2015, 861.

<sup>95</sup> Novak, ‘Rhodesia’s racist and rebel Olympic team’, 1378.

and despite the influence of sport in the design and choice of colours of the new flag, approval was given for a team to participate under the IOC imposed conditions.<sup>96</sup> A racially mixed team of 44 athletes arrived in Munich in August 1972 and, interestingly, it was the pre-1964 Southern Rhodesia *dark* blue ensign that was raised at the Olympic Village to represent the country<sup>97</sup> (Figure 4). However, following objections and threats from 42 nations to boycott the Games if the Rhodesians participated, the IOC voted 36 to 31 (with three abstentions) to exclude Rhodesia. The athletes were allowed to remain in the Olympic Village and attend their events, but were forbidden from participating. Nevertheless, during the closing ceremony hockey player Reg Bennett carried a Rhodesian flag aloft much to the delight of the 80,000 strong crowd.<sup>98</sup>

*Figure 4 : The Southern Rhodesian colonial ensign is hoisted at the Munich Olympic Games on 15 August 1972*



Although eventually denied the opportunity to compete, the invitation from the IOC was conditional on the team from the Colony of Southern Rhodesia using the pre-independence flag and British national anthem.

<sup>96</sup> Kenrick, 'These Colours Don't Run', 12.

<sup>97</sup> AP Archive, 'Rhodesian Olympic Flag Raising at Munich Olympic Village', [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pP\\_agDlx7aM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pP_agDlx7aM), accessed 13 May 2017.

<sup>98</sup> <http://swimhistory.org/pools/item/380-rhodesian-swimming-articles>, accessed 01 June 2017.

Unlike the political furore which surrounded their able-bodied counterparts, Rhodesian Paralympic Teams competed in both the 1968 and 1972 Paralympics in Tel Aviv and Heidelberg respectively. Little (2008) contends that the discrepancy in the treatment between the Olympic and Paralympic Teams was due mainly because of a deliberate decision by politicians not to invoke sanctions against disabled athletes.<sup>99</sup> The Tel Aviv Games were held between 05 and 14 November 1968 and there is no evidence suggesting that the Rhodesian team, although winning 20 medals, used the new flag during the tournament after it was adopted.<sup>100</sup>

The Heidelberg Paralympic Games were held before the Munich Olympic Games at the beginning of August 1972 and thus before the IOC decision to exclude Rhodesian participation, with the team competing in Heidelberg under the 'Tokyo Conditions'.

The use of the Rhodesian flag was also forbidden at the Maccabi Games in Tel Aviv in July 1973 and the Rhodesian team was asked to participate under the Union Jack instead. The team ignored this request and marched under the Rhodesian Maccabi banner at the opening ceremony and did not participate in those parts of the ceremony which required the presentation of a national flag.<sup>101</sup> Following UN condemnation for allowing the Rhodesians to participate, Israel was pressured into excluding Rhodesia from subsequent Maccabi tournaments.<sup>102</sup>

The Rhodesian men's hockey team played matches without controversy in Belgium, France, Spain and West Germany in 1975 and Switzerland (then not a UN member and thus not obliged to adhere to sanctions) allowed a Rhodesian

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<sup>99</sup> C. Little, 'The Paralympic Protest Paradox: The Politics of Rhodesian Participation in the Paralympic Games, 1960-1980', *Proceedings: International Symposium for Olympic Research*, 2008, 125.

<sup>100</sup> The official Paralympic Games website at [www.paralympic.org/sdms/hira/web/medalStandings/tel-aviv-1968](http://www.paralympic.org/sdms/hira/web/medalStandings/tel-aviv-1968) (accessed 28 May 2018) shows the Southern Rhodesia light blue ensign only.

<sup>101</sup> No UK flag for us – Rhodesian Maccabi Team, *The Chronicle*, (Bulawayo) 08 July 1973; and 'Rhodesia marches in Games Opening', *The Chronicle*, (Bulawayo), 10 July 1973).

<sup>102</sup> Little, 'The Sports Boycott against Rhodesia reconsidered', 48.

team to compete in the World Championships in archery and combat pistol shooting. France allowed entry of Rhodesian teams for the World Yachting Championships and for the tennis Federation Cup and the Boy Scouts attended an international jamboree in Norway.<sup>103</sup>

Significantly, the flag flew high when Rhodesians Denis Watson and George Harvey won the World Pairs Golf Championship in Bogota, Colombia, in August 1975.<sup>104</sup>

Thereafter, the opportunities for the international display of the Rhodesian flag, other than at the diplomatic missions already mentioned, were limited to South Africa where teams from Rhodesia competed alongside South African provincial sporting sides. The flag could also be seen flying alongside various other national flags at hotels on the Durban beach front, a popular destination for Rhodesian holiday makers and an Air Rhodesia destination, and at the Rhodesian exhibit at the annual Rand Show in Johannesburg.<sup>105</sup> The flag was also displayed on the tail fin of Air Rhodesia aircraft and it was the main motif on the \$2 stamp of the first decimal definitive issue used between 1970 and 1974.<sup>106</sup>

The Rhodesian flag was not displayed at the constitutional conferences held in Geneva at the end of 1976 nor at Lancaster House at the end of 1979. In the case of Geneva, all delegations had the same status and the Rhodesian Government was represented as Mr. Smith's 13-man delegation.<sup>107</sup> At the time of the all-party conference at Lancaster House, the Rhodesian flag had been replaced with the flag of Zimbabwe Rhodesia.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>104</sup> 'Rhodesia on top of the World', *The Rhodesia Herald*, (Salisbury) 19 August 1975.

<sup>105</sup> Personal recollection.

<sup>106</sup> Smith, 'Rhodesia: A Postal History', 49; Brownell, 'The Visual Rhetoric of Stamps', 16.

<sup>107</sup> 'Conference splutters into life', *The Rhodesia Herald*, (Salisbury) 29 October 1976.

There was no formal public ceremony to mark the lowering of the Rhodesian flag for the last time on 01 September 1979. Indeed, save for a photograph in (the newly renamed) *The Herald* daily newspaper of the flag being lowered at Cecil Square in Salisbury, the event went largely unnoticed<sup>108</sup> (Figure 5). The country had been renamed Zimbabwe Rhodesia, with Bishop Abel Muzorewa as the first black African Prime Minister, on 01 June 1979. A new flag to reflect the political changes in the country, and specifically its multiracial character, was raised for the first time at ceremonies across the country on 02 September 1979. It replaced the Rhodesian flag at the office of the 'Accredited Diplomatic Representative' in Pretoria, the country's only remaining diplomatic mission.<sup>109</sup> Despite the majority of black Africans in parliament, the exclusion of the externally based African nationalists and the over-representation of whites, denied Zimbabwe Rhodesia international recognition and the lifting of sanctions. The guerilla war continued, white attrition increased and the faltering economy finally led to British-sponsored talks at Lancaster House in London towards the end of 1979. This was attended by all political parties, including the externally based Patriotic Front, and culminated in the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement. The Agreement brought about the lifting of sanctions, the country's return to legality under its former status as a British Colony and the re-instatement of the Union Jack as the national flag<sup>110</sup> when Lord Christopher Soames arrived as the new Governor on 12 December 1979 to oversee the transition process. This was followed by a ceasefire on 28 December 1979, the holding of internationally supervised elections early in 1980 and the establishment of the independent Republic of Zimbabwe on 18 April 1980.

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<sup>108</sup> *The Herald* (Salisbury, 03 September 1979) as reproduced in The Transvaal Outpost, 1/2015 (February 2015) <http://www.bsap.org/pdfbin/TransvaalOutpostFebruary2015.pdf>, accessed 27 March 2018.

<sup>109</sup> 'ZimRho hoists new flag', *Pretoria News* (Pretoria) 03 September 1979.

<sup>110</sup> Berry, 'Flying in the Winds of Change', 58. Although the Union Jack was reinstated as the official national flag, in contrast to the pre-UDI period it was rarely flown during the transition and the flag of Zimbabwe Rhodesia continued to be used until the independence of Zimbabwe.

*Figure 5 : Lowering the Rhodesian Flag for the last time at Cecil Square*



Constable Laimon Ngirazi lowers the Rhodesian flag for the last time from the Cecil Square flagpole in central Salisbury at 17h30 on 01 September 1979 (*The Herald*, 02/09/1979).

The flagpole at Cecil Square (since renamed Africa Unity Square) is near the spot where members of the Pioneer Column first raised the Union Jack on 13 September 1890.

## **6. DOWN BUT NOT OUT – AFTER THE DEMISE OF RHODESIA**

With the move to majority rule and shortly after the independence of Zimbabwe in April 1980, most whites left the country. The situation regarding the display of the Rhodesian flag is now reversed as its use is restricted within Zimbabwe, while it has become the focal point of many Rhodesian “Contact Organisations” throughout the world. It features prominently at reunions, at events to commemorate those who fell in defence of the country during UDI and at Remembrance Day parades. It is also on the cover of *Rhodesians Worldwide*, the main Rhodesian contact magazine, and it is a popular item for collectors of Southern African militaria.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Berry, ‘The Beloved Green and White’, 21.

Yet, to outsiders, this symbol of Rhodesia represents racial solidarity in defence of privilege and white rule. The flag once again became the centre of controversy after Dylann Roof, the shooter of nine worshippers at a historic black church in Charleston (South Carolina, USA) on 17 June 2015, was photographed wearing a jacket emblazoned with the old flags of South Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>112</sup>

Reflecting on why Roof, a 21-year old American, would display the Rhodesian flag in particular, a number of commentators argued that despite its obscurity in American political discourse, Rhodesia is well known to white (American) racists and Rhodesian flag patches are often sold at extreme right-wing events.<sup>113</sup> “The Rhodesian flag is important in terms of symbolism, for Rhodesia subscribed to white supremacy” explains a lecturer in African history at Oxford University.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, such (Rhodesian and the old South African) flags are popular in some white supremacist circles as a way to advertise to like-minded individuals without being as obvious as wearing a swastika.<sup>115</sup> Together with these flags, it was listed as one of the world’s most controversial and divisive flags following the Charleston shooting in 2015.<sup>116</sup> Such sentiments are echoed by Foldy (2015) who commented that “Few flags represent racialised violence quite as sharply as that of white Rhodesia, a flag whose historical implications belong alongside the swastika”<sup>117</sup> (Figure 6).

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<sup>112</sup> See for example Z. Beauchamp, ‘The racist flags on Dylann Roof’s jacket, explained’, *Vox*, 18 June 2015, <https://www.vox.com/2015/6/18/8806633/charleston-shooter-flags-dylann-roof>, accessed 20 May 2017 and Baumann, N., ‘Dylann Roof Had A Rhodesian Flag On His Jacket - Here’s What That Tells Us’, *Huffington Post*, 18 June 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.za/entry/dylann-roof-rhodesian-flag\\_n\\_7616752](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.za/entry/dylann-roof-rhodesian-flag_n_7616752), accessed 12 May 2017.

<sup>113</sup> Todd Blodgett, quoted in Baumann, ‘Dylann Roof Had A Rhodesian Flag On His Jacket’.

<sup>114</sup> Blessing-Miles Tendi, quoted in Baumann, ‘Dylann Roof Had A Rhodesian Flag On His Jacket’.

<sup>115</sup> D. Murphy, ‘Why would an American white supremacist be fond of Rhodesia?’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18 June 2015, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Security-Watch/Backchannels/2015/0618/Why-would-an-American-white-supremacist-be-fond-of-Rhodesia-video>, accessed 12 May 2017.

<sup>116</sup> D. MacGuill, ‘The world’s most divisive and controversial flags’, *The Journal*, 28 June 2015, <http://www.thejournal.ie/the-worlds-most-controversial-divisive-flags-2181689-Jun2015>, accessed 14 May 2017.

<sup>117</sup> B. Foldy, ‘Rhodesian Flag, Confederate Flag: Roof & the Legacies of Racial Hate’, *Informed Comment*, 20 June 2015, <https://www.juancole.com/2015/06/rhodesian-confederate-legacies.html>, accessed 12 May 2017.



Most white ex-Rhodesians are indignant, and indeed horrified, that “their” flag should now come to represent the worst excesses of white supremacy.<sup>118</sup> To them it represents the nostalgia of the past, the years of resistance, the comradeship of the war and the perfidy of supposed friends who helped bring Rhodesia down.<sup>119</sup>

Figure 6 : The Rhodesian flag is now being shown along with some of the world’s most controversial flags



## 7. CONCLUSION

The Rhodesian flag is the symbol most associated with the post-UDI period following the country’s dramatic break from Britain and its desire to create a unique identity. Given Rhodesia’s contested statehood and status as a pariah state as a result of UDI, its use outside the country was limited and controversial. It was, and still is, essentially a white man’s flag which flew over an African country with a predominately black population. It never gained acceptance amongst Africans, either locally or internationally, except as a symbol of what they considered to be an oppressive and illegal regime. In short, the ‘flag had nothing to do with blacks,

<sup>118</sup> Berry, “The Beloved Green and White’, 23; A. Simon, ‘Rhodesian Immigrants in South Africa: Government, Media and a lesson for South Africa, *African Affairs*, 87, 346 (1988), 64.

<sup>119</sup> P. Godwin and I. Hancock, *Rhodesians Never Die* (Northlands, MacMillan, 1993), 316.



was contested amongst at least some whites, and was rejected out of hand by the international community.<sup>120</sup> Thus the international reaction to the flag gave the lie to Rhodesia's comparisons with other newly independent states, whose autonomy and independence was not in doubt, whatever flags they flew. So whereas the new flags of other ex-colonies flew proudly at the United Nations and at global sporting events like the Olympic Games,<sup>121</sup> the same could not be said of the Rhodesian flag as the post-UDI regime failed to secure any form of international recognition.

Ironically, today the flag's international presence is much wider as it is displayed across the internet and it is used as a rallying point for white ex-Rhodesians who are now scattered around the world, while it is completely ignored within the country over which it once flew since it represents the colonial past and particularly the attempt to delay the transfer to black majority rule.

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<sup>120</sup> Kenrick, 'Pioneers and Progress', 95.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.