

Operation Refugee: The Congo Crisis and the End of Humanitarian Imperialism in Southern Rhodesia, 1960

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Abstract

Thousands of whites fled the former Belgian Congo in the weeks after independence. This movement had a significant impact on the politics of Southern Rhodesia. Disquieted whites in Rhodesia feared they might face a similar fate. They apprehensively mobilised in an effort known as Operation Refugee to support the displaced. Conversely, black nationalists were energised by the disruption. Their ranks increased and their rhetoric became more confrontational. While the transnational Congo Crisis is routinely evaluated through the framework of the Cold War, in the region's white settler territories, the decolonisation imperative was another critical perspective through which the events in the Congo were perceived.

Key Words: Race, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Refugees, Decolonisation, Transnationalism

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Introduction

On 30 June 1960, the National Democratic Party (NDP), an organisation representing the anti-colonial nationalist movement in Southern Rhodesia, gathered in Highfield township in Salisbury, the colony's capital, to celebrate the independence of the Republic of Congo.¹ A five-hundred strong audience thundered cries of 'Freedom Now!' and 'Long Live Lumumba!' as George Silundika, a leading member of the Party exclaimed, 'if we...talk about Freedom Now, we shall be talking about something that has been demonstrated.'² The raucous meeting only concluded at 11pm, a far cry from the situation in 1957 when Ghana became independent, with no public commemoration in the colony.³

1960 is popularly known as the 'year of Africa' due to the large number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa that became independent that year. At the time, Southern Rhodesia was the preeminent member of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland – a grouping which also included Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.⁴ Via this expansive Federation, Southern Rhodesia shared a common border with the Congo. This connection increased the salience of Congolese affairs in Southern Rhodesia. As Daniel Madzimbamuto, a prominent nationalist wrote on the day of the Congo's independence, 'the cyclone is coming down at a very fast speed indeed.'⁵

Within a week, the impact of the 'Wind of Change' from the Congo accelerated exponentially. On 5 July, Congolese security forces mutinied against their Belgian officers and a period of chaos and tumult ensued. On 11 July, the situation deteriorated further when Katanga, the Congolese province closest to the Federation, seceded from the new country.

¹ Today's Democratic Republic of the Congo. Hereafter, the 'Congo'.

² 'Long Live Lumumba Cries at Meeting', *Central African Daily News* [hereafter 'ADN'], (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia), July 2, 1960.

³ John Reed Diary, July 2, 1960, Vol. 88, no page, Chetham's Library, Manchester, UK; 'Rhodesia Should Also Have Celebrated Ghana Independence', *Bantu Mirror* (Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia), March 23, 1957.

⁴ Contemporary Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, respectively.

⁵ Madzimbamuto to Ranger, June 30, 1960, S3330 T1/1/8A, National Archives of Zimbabwe (hereafter 'NAZ'), Harare.

Virtually overnight, the Congo became an unexpected Cold War battleground. The United Nations Operation in the Congo, a UN peacekeeping force (ONUC), was established almost immediately but initially hesitated to move against the Katangese rebels. At the end of July, Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese Prime Minister, requested military and logistical assistance from the Soviet Union.⁶ By that time the United States' Central Intelligence Agency likened the Prime Minister as a figure akin to Cuba's Fidel Castro.⁷

While anti-communist views had a long history in Rhodesian politics, unrest in the Congo marked the escalation of this sentiment.⁸ In early August 1960, Phil van Heerden, a MP from the opposition Dominion Party (DP) mused:

Who a few years ago would have thought that Russia considered Cuba and Congo as their natural spheres of influence? Now suddenly we find that remote communism, something thought of as operating in Asia, Europe, and possibly parts of Latin America, is now a direct threat in Central Africa and right on our border.⁹

As a result of this tumult, a large number of the white inhabitants of the Congo fled the country. While not considered a white settler haven, the Belgian Congo contained more white residents than colonies like Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, territories typically associated with white settlement. At independence, almost 100,000 whites resided in the Congo, roughly a third in Katanga, the region adjacent to the Federation.¹⁰ Within a roughly two-week period in July, about 40,000 of this total fled the country.¹¹ Southern Rhodesia received approximately 5,000 of these 'refugees,' with more than half being accommodated

⁶ Alessandro Iandolo, 'Imbalance of Power: The Soviet Union and the Congo Crisis, 1960-1961', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 2 (2014): 43.

⁷ Lise Namikas, *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo, 1960-1965* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2012), 79.

⁸ Donal Lowry, 'The Impact of Anti-communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture, ca. 1920s-1980', *Cold War History* 7, no. 2 (2007): 169-94.

⁹ *Southern Rhodesia Debates of the Legislative Assembly* (unrevised edition), August 3, 1960, col. 928.

¹⁰ Guy Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, 1885-1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 60.

¹¹ '40,000 European Refugees Have Left Congo - 50,000 Remain', *Rhodesia Herald* (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia), July 20, 1960.

in Salisbury, the Southern Rhodesian and Federal capital.¹² However, most major Rhodesian cities and towns hosted ‘refugees’ or saw their white community mobilise to support them. White Rhodesians dubbed this relief effort ‘Operation Refugee.’¹³

In the context of Southern Rhodesia’s limited white population, 5,000 was a major figure, more than half the annual immigration average for the colony in the period between 1961-65.¹⁴ This paper unpacks the impact of this sudden influx on both white settler society and black nationalist politics in Southern Rhodesia. In so doing, it advances the scholarship on Rhodesian politics in the age of decolonisation while simultaneously enriching perspectives on the multiple dimensions (national, regional, global) in which the Congo Crisis was an international issue. The reverberations of the Congo Crisis in southern Africa differed from elsewhere on the continent, which in turn varied from the considerations preoccupying the Cold War powers.

As a result of the fall-out from Operation Refugee, white Rhodesia’s backlash to Africa’s transformation accelerated. A deep-rooted, expansionist oriented white paternalism, or ‘humanitarian imperialism’, was fundamentally shaken.¹⁵ White Rhodesians had long been interested in projecting their influence and presence abroad.¹⁶ Amidst tumult on the continent, they sought to demonstrate to Western powers their ability to contribute solutions to regional challenges. Following Operation Refugee, this devotion to humanitarian imperialism within white society withered away. The settlers turned inward and a new party,

¹² ‘Refugees: 900 Cars Noted at Chirundu’, *African Weekly* (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia), July 20, 1960; ‘Salisbury Now Has About 2,500 Refugees’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 19, 1960. While most fleeing whites maintained direct ties to their countries of origin in the West, they were described as ‘refugees’ at the time. This paper follows that convention but deploys quotation marks to denote their tenuous ties to the Congo.

¹³ The relief effort was initially (and fleetingly) dubbed ‘Operation Mercy’. The dynamics behind the evolution of the nomenclature are unclear, but the terms likely originated from the Salisbury Mayor’s relief committee, which drew its membership from the capital’s municipality as well as numerous civic bodies.

¹⁴ Josiah Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia: Population Demographics and the Politics of Race* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 75.

¹⁵ I borrow the term from Anthony King, ‘Identity and Decolonisation: The Policy of Partnership in Southern Rhodesia, 1945-62’, (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2001), 14. King does not define the expression.

¹⁶ H. Iden Wetherell, “Settler Expansionism in Central Africa: The Imperial Response of 1931 and Subsequent Implications,” *African Affairs* 78, no. 311 (1979): 210-27.

opposed to this credo, came to power at the next general election. Conversely, the hypocrisy of massive white concern with the plight of the displaced further radicalised and internationalised the colony's black nationalists.

The next two sections of this paper illuminate the background to these developments. A literature review is followed by an overview of the rise and demise of humanitarian imperialism in Southern Rhodesia. The remainder of the paper turns to an examination of Operation Refugee itself. The bulk of the material focuses on three spheres of impact among white society. This includes an analysis of the influence of sensationalist press coverage about the 'refugees', the racialised nature of the relief response, and the manner in which white political parties sought to manipulate the crisis to their advantage. A final substantive section probes the role of Operation Refugee in kindling stronger anti-colonial views among black political figures.

Literature and Context: Broadening the Parameters of the Congo Crisis

Most studies of the Congo Crisis in transnational perspective adopt an analytical framework that privileges Cold War geopolitics or the diplomacy of Western figures.¹⁷ The most notable exception on the African scene has been the role of the Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah.¹⁸ Expanding upon that pan-African direction, this study recognises the recent claim of Lazlo Passemiers, "that as much as the Congo Crisis was a Cold War battleground, so too was it a

¹⁷ See for example: Madeleine Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa, from Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation: Cold War Conflict in the Congo* (London: Routledge, 2010); Alanna O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation: American, Britain and the United Nations During the Congo Crisis, 1960-1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Henning Melber, *Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations and the Decolonisation of Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 2019); Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956-1964* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Press, 2010); Stephen Weissman, *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

¹⁸ Alanna O'Malley, 'Ghana, India, and the Transnational Dynamics of the Congo Crisis at the United Nations, 1960-1', *The International History Review* 37, no. 5 (2015), 970-90; Jitendra Mohan, 'Ghana, the Congo, and the United Nations', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 3 (1969), 369-406; Ebere Nwaubani, 'Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis', *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 4 (2001), 599-622.

battleground for Southern Africa's decolonisation."¹⁹ For the minority white governments of southern Africa, the fear of a cascading domino effect from the end of empire was more immediate than ideological debates between the West and East. Conversely, black nationalists were inspired by the erosion of imperial infrastructure.

The impact of the fallout from the Congo's independence on Southern Rhodesia was multi-faceted. The secessionist Republic of Katanga fitfully endured until early 1963. Its breakaway unfolded synchronously with the 'refugee' flow to Southern Rhodesia. The deployment of ONUC, with troops from recently independent nations like India and Ghana, was deplored by Southern Rhodesian officials.²⁰ The assassination of the deposed Congolese Premier, Patrice Lumumba, and the death of the United Nations Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, both in 1961, also strongly reverberated in the colony. This paper focuses on the 'refugee' flow of July 1960. Of the multiple influences Congolese decolonisation exerted upon Southern Rhodesia, the 'refugees' were the most overtly visible and their impact was invoked most frequently (at least by whites) in the colony.

The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was informally known as the Central African Federation. This geographic appellation captures the extent to which the political and economic fortunes of the Congo (in the centre of the continent) and Southern Rhodesia (in its south) were then perceived to be connected. At independence, the Congo was the Federation's second largest trading partner in Africa.²¹ As Edgar Whitehead, Southern Rhodesia's Prime Minister (1958-62) noted, expanding those economic links was a priority.²²

However, these connections are often overlooked in the historiography. The emphasis in the wider literature on the Cold War in the Congo, which centres on the fall of

¹⁹ Lazlo Passemiers, *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics: South Africa and the "Congo Crisis", 1960-1965* (London: Routledge, 2019), 8.

²⁰ "'UN Congo Effort a Shambles" – Sir Edgar Whitehead', *Rhodesia Herald*, March 9, 1961.

²¹ 'Guidance Notes for HBM Vice – Consul for Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Elisabethville', 15 June 1960, CX/100/28/1, NAZ.

²² Edgar Whitehead, 'Southern Rhodesia', *International Affairs* 36, no. 2 (1960): 189.

Lumumba, East-West rivalry, and the role of the UN, has restricted the consideration of less recognised aspects of the Congo Crisis across the sub-region. As Josiah Brownell explained, after it was reincorporated into the Congo:

...Katanga became trapped in state-centered histories of the Congo, and its connections with Rhodesia and the rest of Africa were largely ignored or forgotten. When the [Federation] broke apart, the common political border between Elizabethville and Salisbury disappeared...Once Rhodesia's rebellion against Britain continued into the 1970s and its political orbit veered more towards White Africa, it was seen to be a part of Southern Africa, and its Central African existence largely disappeared.²³

Since the turn of the century, there have been gathering efforts to erode this chasm.

Matthew Hughes examined the Federation's support for the Republic of Katanga, led by Moise Tshombe.²⁴ Considering both black and white political bodies in Rhodesia against the backdrop of UN intervention in Katanga, Timothy Scarnecchia trod similar ground, adopting a stronger Cold War rubric.²⁵ Notably, neither considered the thousands of whites who streamed into Southern Rhodesia in July 1960 from the Congo. This flow was tangentially covered in Lazlo Passemiers' doctoral thesis, which focused on the Congo Crisis in South Africa. Passemiers concluded that 'the stream of white Congo refugees who ended up in South Africa...[were] met by a brief but intense period of support by the government and members of the [white] public,' an apt assessment for the Rhodesian situation as well.²⁶

The absence of a detailed study on the impact of the 'refugee' flow from the Congo is particularly notable as the literature is replete with asides pronouncing its importance. Martin

²³ Josiah Brownell, 'Diplomatic Lepers: The Katangan and Rhodesian Foreign Mission in the United States and the Politics of Nonrecognition', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014): 212.

²⁴ Matthew Hughes, 'Fighting for White Rule in Africa: The Central African Federation, Katanga, and the Congo Crisis, 1958-1965', *International History Review* 25, no. 3 (2003): 592-615.

²⁵ Timothy Scarnecchia, 'The Congo Crisis, the United Nations, and Zimbabwean Nationalism, 1960-1963', *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 11, no. 1 (2011): 63-86.

²⁶ Lazlo Patrick Christian Passemiers, 'South Africa and the 'Congo Crisis', 1960-1965', (PhD Diss., University of the Free State, 2016), 64.

Plaut's and Sue Onslow's passing ascription of the arrival of white 'refugees' in Salisbury as 'entrench[ing] white Rhodesian determination to ensure "responsible government" under white minority direction,' is representative of a swathe of similarly broad claims.²⁷

Academic observations are echoed by similar assertions in the memoirs of white political leaders like Federal Prime Minister Roy Welensky (1956-1963) and Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith (1964-1979). Both leaders attributed great importance to the plight of whites from the Congo but offered few details on how this impact was manifest. Smith sweepingly declared that the 'refugee' 'event had a profound impact on our people' while Welensky vaguely announced that it had 'far-reaching psychological and political consequences.'²⁸ More moderate white politicians like Mike Auret shared the belief that 'the horror stories arriving with the Belgian refugees...' served to reverse tentative signs of racial co-operation engendered by a ripple of post-war liberalism.²⁹

Notably, neither Rhodesian memoirs nor academic studies ascribe the arrival of white 'refugees' in Southern Rhodesia as exerting substantial influence on black political bodies in the colony. As this study shows however, such neglect is unjustified. As a major political development, the impact of white flight from the Congo was not confined to just one race. In a 1962 retrospective essay marking two years of Congolese independence, a prominent Zimbabwean nationalist observed, 'events which followed that independence are so well known even to children that I need not narrate them anymore.'³⁰ Blacks quickly perceived that humanitarian imperialism, the philosophy which undergirded Southern Rhodesia's position in the Federation, had been dealt a mortal blow.

²⁷ Sue and Martin Plaut. *Robert Mugabe* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018), 41.

²⁸ Ian Smith, *Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal* (London: Blake, 2001), 44; Roy Welensky, *Welensky's 4000 Days: The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London: Collins, 1964), 199.

²⁹ Michael Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insider's Account of Robert Mugabe's Descent into Tyranny* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2009), 5.

³⁰ Edson Sithole, 'Congo's Two Years of Self-Rule', *ADN*, June 30, 1962.

There have also been claims, such as by Frank Clements, a Rhodesian journalist and politician, and Luise White, a scholar of nationalist politics, which suggest that the importance of the Congo in Rhodesian politics only solidified in the mid-60s as the new Rhodesian Front (RF) government of Ian Smith became more overtly recalcitrant.³¹ This view does not withstand scrutiny. The arrival of dispossessed whites in Southern Rhodesia from the Congo was documented so extensively and in such alarmist tones that the impact was immediate. Edgar Whitehead was so panicked by the ‘refugee’ inflow that he wanted the Monckton Commission, a consultative body appointed by the UK to deliberate the future of the Federation, to return from the UK where it was preparing its report and assess the impact of the arrival of the ‘refugees’ in Salisbury.³²

The neglect of detailed study of white flight to Rhodesia from the Congo is mirrored by a paucity of scholarship on the wider aspects of the rapid withdrawal of the Congo’s white population. The country is the largest in sub-Saharan Africa and whites scrambled out of it via a multitude of routes, as disparate as Ghana on the Atlantic and Kenya on the Indian Ocean.³³ The Belgian national airline, Sabena, suspended most of its services in order to airlift ‘refugees’ to Brussels.³⁴ The exodus of whites from the Congo, an event which received significant international scrutiny at the time, was experienced first-hand in many African countries. However, the Congo’s white flight has not received attention commensurate to its impact at the time, either in the context of Southern Rhodesian politics, developments elsewhere on the continent, or in Belgium. This is a departure from the most comparable event in sub-Saharan Africa; a modest body of scholarship examines the

³¹ Frank Clements, *Rhodesia: A Study of the Deterioration of a White Society* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 175-6; Luise White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 69.

³² Wood, *The Welensky Papers: A History of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (Durban: Graham Publishing, 1983), 803.

³³ ‘75 More Arrive Here from the Congo’, *Daily Graphic* (Accra, Ghana), July 16, 1960; ‘Refugees Who Present a Problem’, *East African Standard* (Nairobi, Kenya), July 18, 1960.

³⁴ ‘All Sabena Planes for Refugees’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 11, 1960.

‘*retornados*,’ the much larger number of Portuguese who departed Angola and Mozambique following the overthrow of the Caetano regime in April 1974.³⁵

This study is weighted toward white settler politics (where the reverberations of Operation Refugee were strongest), but also includes the response of black nationalists in an aim to achieve a holistic understanding of the impact of Operation Refugee. It draws on a wide swathe of sources to uncover the impact of white flight from the Congo on Rhodesian society. Newspaper accounts constitute the largest primary source material. They are complemented by the proceedings of the Rhodesian and Federal parliaments and archival collections in the UK and Zimbabwe which illuminate the work of both governmental bodies and civic organisations during Operation Refugee.

Humanitarian Imperialism in Southern Rhodesia

A haughty, self-serving humanitarian imperialism underpinned white Rhodesia’s mobilisation for Operation Refugee. Rhodesians long justified their desired expansion of territorial control by articulating the benefits of diffusing the ‘British way of life and Western civilization...in all Central Africa...between the Limpopo and the Abyssinian border’, as Roy Welensky wrote.³⁶ These sentiments reached their apotheosis in the aftermath of World War II. The establishment of the Federation in 1953 under Southern Rhodesian dominance became their most explicit manifestation. The Federation’s motto, ‘Let Us Be Great,’ denoted this ambition. Unable to accede to a request from Tshombe to provide overt military support to Katanga due to pressure from the British, the ignominious white retreat from the Belgian Congo in 1960 provided Rhodesians with an ultimate opportunity to demonstrate a defensive form of humanitarian imperialism and project relevance to prospective Western

³⁵ One of the more recent studies in English is: Elsa Peralta, ‘The Return from Africa: Illegitimacy, Concealment, and the Non-memory of Portugal’s Imperial Collapse’, *Memory Studies*, (2019): 1-18.

³⁶ Roy Welensky, ‘Development of Central Africa through Federation’, *Optima* 2, no. 4 (1952): 5.

partners as an international crisis flared in the region.³⁷ This shift from an expansionist paternalist humanitarianism that entailed the domination of blacks to the guarded provision of succour for whites heralded the transformation of white settler rule across the region.

From the latter half of the 1940s, an array of public and civic infrastructure emerged to facilitate support for the outward spread of Rhodesian humanitarian imperialism, culminating with the formation of the Federation under its vague guiding principle, racial ‘partnership.’ The ideal was never thoroughly explicated, but according to the mainstream Rhodesian press, represented the best means for Africa’s development, a supposedly ‘happy’ medium between the extremes of Apartheid and pan-African nationalism.³⁸ Ultimately, ‘partnership’ in practice (despite some cosmetic reforms) was much closer to the segregationist environment south of the Limpopo. Southern Rhodesia and South Africa responded to the wider Congo Crisis in roughly the same manner.³⁹ However, the ideological backdrop of ‘partnership’ and humanitarian imperialism, coupled with the Federation’s geographic proximity to the Congo and smaller white population, ensured that the Congo’s white ‘refugee’ crisis exerted a particularly intense influence on the Rhodesias.

Two civic organisations established in Salisbury after World War II point to the ascendancy of humanitarian imperialism in Southern Rhodesia at the time. Founded around 1946, the Rhodesia National Affairs Association (RNAA) educated individuals in Salisbury of all races about developments across the subregion through lunch hour lectures. A 1948 talk examined ‘Native Labour in Belgian Congo,’ while others explored various anglophone neighbours to the north.⁴⁰ The following year, the Capricorn Africa Society, a pan-African

³⁷ Welensky, *Welensky’s 4000 Days*, 210-1; ‘Katanga Leaves the Congo Republic’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 12, 1960.

³⁸ ‘Bulwark or Bridge?’ *Rhodesia Herald*, March 6, 1952.

³⁹ Passemiers, *Decolonisation and Regional Geopolitics*, 225; Brooks Marmon, ‘Pan-Africanism Versus Partnership: African Decolonisation in Southern Rhodesian Politics’ (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2020), 178.

⁴⁰ ‘Rhodesia National Affairs Association – Lectures’, RH 20/7/1, NAZ.

organisation centred in Southern Rhodesia, was formed. Capricorn sought “to establish an Africanism which would induce loyalty...[and] become the expression of our common citizenship.”⁴¹ For most of its existence the Society’s definition of ‘Capricorn Africa’ was limited to the territories of the Federation and Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika, but it originally included the Belgian Congo as well.⁴²

A Capricorn pamphlet, invoking the voice of Cecil Rhodes in support of Federation, proclaimed, ‘this is the first step towards a great British dominion in Central Africa. You alone can supply the knowledge and leadership required.’⁴³ In 1952, at the peak of campaigning for the Federation, Capricorn temporarily merged with the United Central Africa Association, a pro-Federation lobbying group helmed by Southern Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins.⁴⁴ Both Federation, and Capricorn’s ‘Africanism’ aligned with Huggins’ belief that ‘for Africa to pull its weight in the world there will have to be a United States of Africa...’⁴⁵ Huggins’ government sought to engage with the imperial powers (including Belgium) via the Commission for Technical Cooperation in Africa (CCTA), a continental development organisation, of which it was a founding member in 1950.⁴⁶ The CCTA was one of the primary vehicles through which Southern Rhodesia (and the Federation) engaged with Africa as decolonisation approached.⁴⁷

However, Southern Rhodesians preferred explicit territorial control over technical assistance. The 1958 principles of the United Federal Party (UFP), which controlled both the

⁴¹ Capricorn Africa Society, *Handbook for Speakers*, Capricorn Africa Society, 1955, ICS 8/1-17, CAS 6, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London.

⁴² Ian Hancock, “The Capricorn Africa Society in Southern Rhodesia,” *Rhodesian History: Journal of the Central Africa Historical Association*, 9 (1978): 51.

⁴³ “What Would Rhodes Have Done?” (Salisbury, Capricorn Africa Society, undated pamphlet), Box 1s, MK/1/1/54, Peter Mackay Archive, University of Stirling, Scotland.

⁴⁴ Robert Rotberg, ‘The “Partnership” Hoax: How the British Government Deprived Central Africans of their Rights’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 45, no. 1 (2019): 102; Wood, *Welensky Papers*, 244.

⁴⁵ ‘St. Andrew’s Night Dinner – Gatooma and District Caledonian Society’, December 3, 1949, Box 91, Folder 8, Roy Welensky Papers (Mss. Welensky), Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, UK.

⁴⁶ Isebill V. Gruhn, ‘The Commission for Technical Co-Operation in Africa, 1950-65’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9, no. 3 (1971): 459.

⁴⁷ Nick McNally, interview by author, Johannesburg, South Africa, June 26, 2018.

Southern Rhodesian and Federal parliaments in 1960, committed the Party ‘to keep open the possibility of neighbouring countries becoming part of the Federation.’⁴⁸ Weary of overtly meddling in the internal affairs of other states, this desire, rarely met direct expression. After Belgium announced a date for the Congo’s independence in late January 1960, the copper rich Katanga province became an exception. In an interview with a British tabloid a month later, Welensky indicated interest in incorporating Katanga into the Federation.⁴⁹ The comments generated significant controversy. Welensky subsequently backed away from the statement after it was attacked by the settler opposition and he also drew criticism from the NDP and a leading nationalist, Joshua Nkomo, for his designs on Katanga’s riches.⁵⁰

Ultimately, little else was said (at least publicly) about the desire to bring Katanga into the orbit of the Federation and Southern Rhodesia. More perceptive politicians acknowledged that the imperial status quo was changing. As Federal MP, Humphrey Wightwick announced after denouncing Belgium’s then impending withdrawal from the Congo, ‘the retreat from Africa of the European powers is almost complete, and when it is complete then the whole of this continent is going to be thrown into...a state of chaos.’⁵¹ The changing dynamic became clear when the Congolese Chamber of Deputies passed a resolution condemning Belgium’s invitation to the Federation to attend the independence celebrations, prompting the cancellation of the Federal delegation.⁵²

Although the Federation undertook no overt action inside the Congo to defend its interests, the Congo’s white ‘refugees’ provided the Southern Rhodesian government with a last gasp opportunity to perform a circumscribed variant of humanitarian imperialism.

⁴⁸ ‘The United Federal Party: Our Political Principles’, undated (handwritten note indicates prepared for 1958 by-election), SR/11/2/4, NAZ.

⁴⁹ ‘Rene MacColl Interviews Sir Roy Welensky’, *Daily Express* (London, UK), March 2, 1960.

⁵⁰ *Debates of the Federal Assembly*, March 29, 1960, col. 37; ‘Editorial,’ *Democratic Voice* (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia), July 2, 1960; HGM Bass to FAK Harrison, July 2, 1960, DO 35/7694, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁵¹ *Debates of the Federal Assembly*, March 29, 1960, col. 41.

⁵² ‘The Congo – Our New Neighbour’, *Samkange Newsletter* (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia), June 27, 1960. The publication appears to have been backdated.

However, while Operation Refugee effectively mobilised the local white community, it did nothing to enhance Southern Rhodesia's international stature. As the political map of Africa changed, Rhodesia became a pariah state with its apprehensive rulers focused on 'holding what they had.' Peter Charles, a centrist white politician captured this rising unease in a letter to his sister. He combined a burst of pragmatic admiration for the execution of Operation Refugee with fear for the future of white settlement in Rhodesia: 'Salisbury and the Federation generally put on a magnificent show in caring for the refugees...I hope we are as well received when we have to flee this country.'⁵³

Operation Refugee and White Backlash

On the eve of Congolese independence, a 'refugee' crisis was not entirely unanticipated. As Wightwick's and Charles' worries indicated, anxious whites were braced for ferment. Deadly riots in Leopoldville, the Congolese capital, in early 1959 set the colony on the path to independence and were invoked by Whitehead when he declared a state of emergency shortly thereafter.⁵⁴ Weeks before independence, Welensky raised the 'possib[ility] of refugees...[as] reprisals of one kind and another may occur...'⁵⁵ A feature in *The Citizen*, aligned to the right-wing opposition Dominion Party, published the day after independence (but before tumult emerged), invoked the spectre of white 'refugees' and quoted a departing Belgian *colon* who believed, 'the Federation will go like the Congo in the next ten years.'⁵⁶

Within weeks the Federation's army was put on 24-hour standby and units were dispatched to Northern Rhodesia's Katanga border in response to the crisis.⁵⁷ The alarmist outlook of the more reactionary whites began to seem prescient to the wider white population.

⁵³ Peter Charles to Lorraine Charles, 30 July, 1960. RHO I, File 15, Borthwick Institute, University of York, UK.

⁵⁴ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, April 16, 1959, col. 3166.

⁵⁵ 'Federal Prime Minister Gives Interview', *Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland Newsletter*, June 17, 1960.

⁵⁶ 'Your Turn Next Said Congo Refugees', *The Citizen* (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia), July 1, 1960.

⁵⁷ 'Federal Territorials Put on Stand-by', *Rhodesia Herald*, July 13, 1960; Michael Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insider's Account of Robert Mugabe's Descent into Tyranny* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2009), 3.

This shift swiftly manifested itself in several ways – through the rise of sensationalist media coverage in the mainstream white press, first-hand interactions with the ‘refugees’ via the relief effort, and the contentious political debates that emerged over ‘the lessons of the Congo.’

Press Sensationalism

The Rhodesian media was the greatest culprit stoking the anxieties of white Rhodesians as unrest in the Congo erupted. Stanlake Samkange, a leading black intellectual wrote, ‘the press in the Federation has been carrying stories of strife, trouble and tribalism following the [upcoming] granting of independence to the Congo. They have shown everyday how Europeans are running away from the Congo, etc., etc.’⁵⁸ As scaremongering predictions appeared to be fulfilled, negative press coverage ratcheted up. On 8 July, *The Rhodesia Herald* ran the lead headline, ‘Congo Whites Stoned – Refugees Tell of Terror.’⁵⁹ Over the next two weeks the front page of *The Rhodesia Herald* was inundated with alarmist coverage of the ‘refugees.’ The first ‘refugees’ appeared in Salisbury on 11 July and to the south, in Bulawayo, the colony’s second city, on 13 July.⁶⁰ Within four days, 1,500 ‘refugees’ had arrived in Salisbury.⁶¹

‘Refugees’ travelling by air and car were generally directed to Salisbury while those fleeing via train journeyed to Bulawayo.⁶² The Federal government actively promoted Southern Rhodesia as a destination for the ‘refugees.’ There was concern that Northern Rhodesia lacked the requisite transportation and accommodation facilities to ensure a smooth evacuation.⁶³ Officials may also have been concerned by the prospect of the ‘refugees’

⁵⁸ ‘The Congo – Our New Neighbour’, *Samkange Newsletter*, June 27, 1960.

⁵⁹ ‘Congo Whites Stoned – Refugees Tell of Terror’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 8, 1960.

⁶⁰ ‘Tired, Baffled They Flock to Salisbury’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 12, 1960; ‘Rebel Road Block’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 14, 1960.

⁶¹ ‘Salisbury Has More Than 1,500 Refugees’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 14, 1960.

⁶² ‘SR Expects Many More Refugees’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 11, 1960. Virtually all of those travelling by car and train arrived in Southern Rhodesia overland via Northern Rhodesia.

⁶³ ‘Exinform No. 91, The Congo Situation’, July 14, 1960, CX100/28/1, NAZ.

enflaming anti-white sentiment in Northern Rhodesia, which had a more limited white presence.⁶⁴

On 13 July, both *The Rhodesia Herald* and *The Chronicle*, the colony's most circulated newspapers, began to print short bulletins on their front pages in French, further conveying a sense of disruption.⁶⁵ Shocking stories in the press were not sourced to journalistic standards, relying on unattributed hearsay from 'refugees' passing through the Federation.⁶⁶ The coverage was clearly intended to appeal to 'shock and awe' sentiments, highlighting the plight of women and children. Eugene Wason, a British journalist and sub-editor of *The Rhodesia Herald's* weekend publication, *The Sunday Mail*, lamented the sensationalism of the paper's coverage in a memoir of his Rhodesian years, noting that stories focused on 'harrowing atrocities committed on the Belgians; how they had been forced to leave their homes at gun-point in the middle of the night, how many had been murdered, tortured and raped...'⁶⁷ Ivor Benson, a reactionary South African journalist was contracted to produce material to meet the massive interest in the plight of the white 'refugees.'⁶⁸ Benson reappeared in Rhodesia several years later, playing a significant role in crafting reactionary propaganda that built-up white support for the 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).⁶⁹

The angst of women and children was a particularly prominent theme in this shrill coverage. A picture of a forlorn looking family was captioned by *The Citizen* as 'a Belgian family group that the "Wind of Change" blew out of their home, into the cold of the uncertain future.'⁷⁰ While *The Citizen* was associated with tabloid style coverage, the tenor of the

⁶⁴ 'Stone Kills Child', *Rhodesia Herald*, July 15, 1960.

⁶⁵ The sister papers were produced in Salisbury and Bulawayo, respectively.

⁶⁶ 'Congo Whites Stoned', is one such example.

⁶⁷ Eugene Wason, *Banned: The Story of the African Daily News, Southern Rhodesia, 1964* (London: Hamilton, 1976), 26.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Elaine Windrich, 'Rhodesian Censorship: The Role of the Media in the Making of a One-Party State', *African Affairs* 78, no. 13 (1979): 526.

⁷⁰ 'The Congo Refugees', *The Citizen*, July 15, 1960.

mainstream press was not markedly different. In just one daily issue, *The Rhodesia Herald's* coverage contained vague allegations of widespread European fatalities in Elisabethville (the Katangese capital), unsubstantiated reports of a missing train full of white 'refugees', and a thinly-sourced report of a frantic SOS over shortwave radio from whites in a Congolese agricultural station who claimed to have been surrounded by 10,000 blacks threatening their lives.⁷¹ *The Chronicle* featured photos of 'babies in arms, bewildered children...and the unsmiling faces of people who suddenly have no homes, no money – only uncertainty.'⁷²

This reporting induced an air of hysteria among the urban white population in Southern Rhodesia. Concerned Rhodesians with friends and relatives in the Congo flocked to *The Rhodesia Herald's* Salisbury office for news.⁷³ The telephone exchange was inundated. At the height of the 'refugee' crisis, the harried wife of the Belgian Consul in Salisbury reported that she fielded 400 calls in one day.⁷⁴ It also affected readers of *The Rhodesia Herald*.

Whereas the Federation conveyed to the incoming Congolese government on independence day that it wished to 'establish friendly relations' and open a diplomatic mission in Leopoldville, letter writers just weeks later were overtly hostile to their neighbour.⁷⁵ One representative *Herald* reader, citing 'the disastrous results of the last week in the Congo,' announced that he was 'sick and tired of this ideal of partnership' and sought a party of white nationalists that would proclaim 'Europeans first.'⁷⁶ Others urged stronger relations with Portugal to protect the eastern border and 'avoid all the confusion, hardship and bloodshed which has recently happened in the Congo.'⁷⁷ The rise of such sentiments had critical ramifications. Overt expressions of white supremacy and support for the consolidation of ties

⁷¹ 'The Fighting: A Picture of Confusion'; 'Train "Lost" on Way to Border'; and "'Mass Murder" SOS Heard in Rhodesia', *Rhodesia Herald*, all July 11, 1960.

⁷² 'Refugees Arrive', *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia), July 14, 1960.

⁷³ 'Desperate Relatives Seek News', *Rhodesia Herald*, July 11, 1960.

⁷⁴ 'Her Home Phone Rang 400 Times in One Day', *Rhodesia Herald*, July 19, 1960.

⁷⁵ Telegram, External, Salisbury to Britain, June 29, 1960, CX/100/28/1, NAZ; Towsey to Welensky, March 19, 1963, F136/CX100/28F, NAZ.

⁷⁶ R. Hill, letter to the editor, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 14, 1960.

⁷⁷ Nigel Philip, letter to the editor, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 28, 1960.

with Portugal were necessary prerequisites for the (temporarily) successful UDI proclamation several years later.

Notably, while the mass hysteria appeared to justify white predictions of chaos following decolonisation, it was not desired by either the Belgian or Federal governments. The Belgian Consulate in Salisbury tried in vain to counter the panicked view being disseminated by the media. Most of the 'refugees' in Rhodesia arrived via Katanga, which remained one of the most stable regions in the country thanks to Tshombe's collaboration with Belgian mining interests. Continued normality was key to the success of Katanga's secession. Belgian consular staff pleaded with the 'refugees' in Salisbury to return home, but were shouted down and accused of downplaying the level of insecurity.⁷⁸ The Federal Government also drafted messages for the Katangese government to disseminate to encourage the return of 'refugees.'⁷⁹

While the tensions were primarily covert, the UFP was caught between divergent impulses – seizing upon a case that seemingly highlighted whites' greatest fears of rapid decolonisation, or promoting regional stability and maintaining economic ties. The efforts of the UFP Government to stoke fears of black sovereignty while also buttressing Tshombe's Katanga and even simultaneously seeking diplomatic relations with Leopoldville was but one step on a tenuous decolonisation tightrope that the party walked.⁸⁰ Its opposition on the right, which condemned black majority rule more consistently, was poised to reap dividends as the wider white public became fixated with the aftershocks of decolonisation. In 1962, the UFP was voted out of power as white society opted for a new government. The RF took a notably more intransigent position on racial issues and more ardently rejected co-operation with new African governments.

⁷⁸ 'Refugees Shout Down Appeal for Return to Congo', *Rhodesia Herald*, July 18, 1960.

⁷⁹ 'Message from Mr. Tshombe, Head of the Katanga Provincial Government, to the British Consul Elisabethville: 14th July, 1960', CX100/28/1, NAZ.

⁸⁰ Marmon, 'Pan-Africanism Versus Partnership', 207.

Racialised and Localised Relief Response

On 10 July 1960, Welensky dashed back to Salisbury from a holiday at Lake Kariba on the Northern Rhodesian border to confer with his military and security chiefs about the unfolding ‘refugee’ flow. He announced that black refugees would be welcome as well, but Operation Refugee was almost entirely confined to hospitality extended by, and to, whites.⁸¹ As the inflow of whites from the Congo accelerated, the role of the Federal and Rhodesian governments gave way to the local municipalities and civic bodies which dominated the relief effort. On 11 July, the Mayor of Salisbury, HJ Posselt, established a Committee to co-ordinate ‘refugee’ relief and launched an appeal to obtain cash donations for the ‘refugees.’ More than 100 representatives of civil organisations attended the meeting at Salisbury’s town hall.⁸² The Vice-Chair of this Committee was Dennis Divaris, a Salisbury city councillor who subsequently became a prominent MP during the administration of Ian Smith.⁸³ Shortly thereafter, Posselt’s counterpart in Bulawayo, Sydney Millar, announced that the second city would jointly contribute to the fund.⁸⁴ In 10 days, over £11,000 was raised.⁸⁵ This response denoted the rapid and widespread mobilisation in the colony’s white community to provide relief for the ‘refugees.’

Notably, a wide section of Southern Rhodesia’s population was exposed to the displaced. While many of the ‘refugees’ arrived directly by air or via train, a significant number travelled to Salisbury by car. Those arriving overland made several pitstops. Chirundu, Karoi, and Sinoia were the most frequent rest stops on the route to Salisbury and volunteers provided refreshments at each town.⁸⁶ The Federal government also provided

⁸¹ ‘Welensky Dashes from Kariba – Ministers Meet’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 11, 1960.

⁸² ‘Volunteers Tackle Refugee Flood’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 12, 1960.

⁸³ ‘Mayor’s Congo Refugee Fund: Minutes of a Meeting of the Interim Finance Committee Held in the Committee Room, Town House, on 20th July, 1960 at 5PM’, SA 18/2/1, NAZ.

⁸⁴ ‘Congo Fund Launched by Mayors’, *The Chronicle*, July 13, 1960.

⁸⁵ ‘Mayor’s Congo Refugee Committee’, archival finding aid summary, SA 18/2/1, NAZ.

⁸⁶ ‘“Marvellous” Help for Refugees’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 15, 1960.

petrol vouchers to ‘refugees’ travelling to Salisbury by road.⁸⁷ Automotive travel also provided opportunities for motoring enthusiasts and members of groups like the Mashonaland Motor Car Club to assist in the evacuation of ‘refugees.’⁸⁸

While most of the arriving whites were accommodated in Bulawayo or Salisbury, virtually all corridors of urban settlement in Rhodesia saw some form of direct activity as part of Operation Refugee, maximising the impact of the crisis. Several hundred ‘refugees’ were housed at Gwelo (situated between Salisbury and Bulawayo) which had long-distance air facilities, while dozens passed Salisbury to temporarily lodge at Marandellas, a farming community east of the capital.⁸⁹ Umtali, on the far eastern border with Mozambique, also prepared a ‘refugee’ reception centre, although it does not appear to have been used.⁹⁰ Gatooma, a conservative town on the Salisbury – Bulawayo corridor did not host a substantive number of ‘refugees’ but raised funds to support them during their stay in Southern Rhodesia.⁹¹

In Salisbury, the ‘refugees’ were dispersed across the city, maximising their visibility in the centre of Rhodesian political life. Large families were generally housed in private homes. Others were dispersed across three locations – a block of flats in the western Belvedere Suburb, the Showgrounds just west of downtown, and the Cranborne Hostel, south of the city centre.⁹² The latter two locations were particularly notable. The central location of the Showgrounds ensured that many whites passing through town saw the ‘refugees’ first-hand. The Cranborne Hostel was situated in a part of town home to less well-heeled whites and near several non-white suburbs. Many of the city’s non-white residents would have

⁸⁷ ‘Convoys Heading South’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 12, 1960.

⁸⁸ “‘Marvellous’ Help”.

⁸⁹ “‘Marandellas Farmer’s Wife “Distributed” Refugees to Homes’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 22, 1960; ‘Viscount Stop at Gwelo’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 20, 1960.

⁹⁰ ‘Congo Flashes’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 16, 1960.

⁹¹ ‘More Than 1,500 Refugees’.

⁹² “‘Magnificent Work’ Says Minister’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 19, 1960.

witnessed relief activity there. Combined with the widespread press coverage, opportunities to physically encounter the ‘refugees’ ensured that the reverberations of the Congo’s independence were deeply felt in Southern Rhodesia.

Men dominated politics in white Rhodesia, but Operation Refugee assembled a more representative cross-section of white society. Women and youth were particularly active in providing relief support. In Salisbury, the bulk of the relief effort was split between three women’s organisations. The Loyal Women’s Guild coordinated clothing donations, the Salisbury Branch of the Federated Women’s Institute of Southern Rhodesia took the lead in arranging accommodation, while the Women’s Voluntary Services oversaw the provision of food and groceries.⁹³ The Girl Guides, Catholic Women’s League, Child Protection Society, and a number of other female dominated civic organizations also provided additional assistance.⁹⁴ Muriel Rosin, the lone female MP in the Federal Parliament, flippantly expressed her appreciation ‘for the large number of gentlemen who seem to have joined women’s organizations in order to help the excellent work which the women’s organizations are doing.’⁹⁵

Youth organizations were also actively involved in the effort. The Boy Scouts worked closely with local officials in Salisbury to assist Operation Refugee efforts. The city’s French-speaking youth mayor, Elliot Galanti, was celebrated for his interpretation assistance.⁹⁶ High schoolers studying French were also used as interpreters. One of them, Isaac Benatar, noted in his memoirs that he was flown from Salisbury to the Northern Rhodesia border with the Congo to provide interpretation services.⁹⁷ The Youth Council of Rhodesia opened the doors of its centres to ‘refugee’ youth and Benatar recalled a fleeting

⁹³ ‘Volunteer Teams Swing into Relief Action’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 12, 1960.

⁹⁴ Gertrude Cripwell, letter to the editor, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 25, 1960.

⁹⁵ *Debates of the Federal Assembly*, July 19, 1960, col. 1527.

⁹⁶ ‘Magnificent Response by Salisbury to Refugee Aid’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 13, 1960.

⁹⁷ Isaac Benatar, *Song of Africa* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2000), 33.

moment of romance with the ‘most stunningly beautiful’ ‘refugee’ girl in Salisbury before he was dispatched to Northern Rhodesia.⁹⁸ A number of youth groups across the colony held dances with funds raised supporting Operation Refugee.⁹⁹

The compassion for the whites of the Congo was almost exclusively on the basis of racial solidarity. The Bulawayo Loyal Women’s Guild announced that none of the surplus donated clothing left over from Operation Refugee would be distributed to blacks.¹⁰⁰ The Women’s Voluntary Service issued its first newsletter in August 1960, noting that it was non-political but supported actions to suppress black political expression, including the ban of the nationalist Southern Rhodesian African National Congress (SRANC) in 1959.¹⁰¹ Mollie Millar, wife of the Bulawayo mayor, played a leading role in that city’s relief effort and compared the sense of (white) camaraderie to what she believed the city’s early settlers felt in 1896 when confronted with violent black resistance to white rule.¹⁰² Despite this blatant racism, the DP’s Clifford Dupont lamented that the BBC had not, as far as he was aware, commented on the Federation’s hospitality for the ‘refugees’ in a single overseas broadcast.¹⁰³

Charged Political Debates

The DP and ruling UFP both sought to manipulate the fraught situation to their advantage. In early July, (before the Katanga secession), the Dominion Party bought a no confidence motion in parliament against the UFP government. Defending his party, Prime Minister Whitehead sarcastically proclaimed, ‘there is anxiety at the present time in the country over

⁹⁸ ‘Magnificent Response’; Benatar, *Song of Africa*, 31.

⁹⁹ ‘More Than 1,500 Refugees’.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Clothes Surplus’, *The Chronicle*, July 20, 1960.

¹⁰¹ ‘Newsletter No. 1: Women’s Voluntary Services of Central Africa’, August 1960, Capricorn Africa Society, File 37, Borthwick Institute. The NDP was SRANC’s spiritual successor.

¹⁰² ‘Bulawayo Will Remember Day of Help to Congo Refugees’, *The Chronicle*, July 13, 1960.

¹⁰³ *Debates of the Federal Assembly*, July 19, 1960, col. 1529.

the course of events, for instance, in the Congo, which have created great concern in this country, so it must be the Southern Rhodesia's government's fault.'¹⁰⁴

As the situation in the Congo deteriorated further, parliamentarians increasingly sparred over the 'lessons of the Congo,' a discourse that lingered for years and spanned well beyond the scope of the 'refugee' influx. Many whites were newcomers and not solidly ensconced in the colony, their numbers had nearly doubled over the past decade.¹⁰⁵ A number of parliamentarians were products of the large post-war immigration boom, which may have rendered them particularly unnerved by the 'refugee' flow. Several MPs in both the federal and territorial parliaments had previously resided in Asia and experienced the end of empire in the east. Other MPs, like Stewart Aitken-Cade, who had recently led the DP, hosted 'refugees' in their homes.¹⁰⁶

In parliamentary debate, Wynn Starling, a member of the DP, stated that the lesson of the Congo was that Africans were not interested in 'partnership', but rather 'exterminating the Europeans.'¹⁰⁷ Starling was born in Burma and his family had lost considerable wealth when Asian colonies became independent.¹⁰⁸ This personal background may have made him particularly concerned by developments in the Congo. He continued, 'events in the Congo have crystallized opinion in Southern Rhodesia. These Congo refugees coming down here have given our people first-hand reports, and they will be long remembered. Now we have a new situation in this country.'¹⁰⁹ Starling suggested that the best way to counter the new situation was through an alliance with South Africa and Portugal.¹¹⁰ He concluded his speech by asking what UFP and Whitehead would do 'to counter that fifth column activity which

¹⁰⁴ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, July 6, 1960, col. 240.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Blake, *History of Rhodesia* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 274.

¹⁰⁶ Philip Aitken-Cade, interview by author, Locust Grove, Virginia, United States, October 30, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, July 19, 1960, col. 360.

¹⁰⁸ William Joseph John Cary, interviewed by D. Hartridge, September 1971 – February 1972, 44, Oral/CA4, NAZ.

¹⁰⁹ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, July 19, 1960, col. 360.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

might – or which will – filter down from the Congo, this fifth column activity guided by Russian communism?’¹¹¹ This language foreshadowed the trajectory of developments in Rhodesia in the years to come. After UDI, the RF increasingly cultivated relations with South Africa and Portugal and invoked the spectre of communist plots to leverage local and international support.¹¹²

Starling was buttressed by a member of the UFP, Harry Pichanick, who condemned Belgium’s decision to transfer sovereignty in the Congo as ‘sheer stupidity and madness.’¹¹³ For Pichanick:

The Congo has proved that if such a thing [majority rule] happens in any territory, here is anarchy and murder, because African nationalism has not yet shown that it can undertake democratic government. It has also proved that it is essential that the control of the Government in this country and in the Federation should be in the hands of Europeans for the foreseeable future.¹¹⁴

However, the UFP’s hard-line position was not unanimous. Some of the party’s MPs remained committed to the supposed humanitarianism that embodied the differences Rhodesians saw between their governing principles and that of Apartheid South Africa. John Desmond Burrows argued that in order to stave off the violence the Congo had experienced, white Rhodesians ‘must as soon as possible give the African a larger stake in the country.’¹¹⁵ While the Dominion Party experienced an internal split just days after the independence of the Congo that temporarily weakened it, seeds of dissension within the UFP also emerged

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² On the ‘unholy alliance’ of Rhodesia, South Africa, and Portugal see: Filipe Riberio De Meneses and Robert McNamara, *The White Redoubt, the Great Powers and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1960–1980* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹¹³ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, July 19, 1960, col. , 373.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 375.

¹¹⁵ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, July 20, 1960, col. 415.

during Operation Refugee.¹¹⁶ In general however, the impact of the ‘refugee’ crisis pushed most whites toward more reactionary and isolationist views.

This disadvantaged the UFP, the party most strongly associated with ‘partnership’ and humanitarian imperialism. In an attempt to outflank the right-wing opposition, the UFP sought to create distance from its former rhetoric. However, these attempts caused the party to lose credibility as they were either a blatant reversal of recent discourse, or were abandoned in the face of international pressure. An editorial in the UFP newsletter repudiated the ‘partnership’ vision, stating that the Congo Crisis showed that there was greater danger in ‘too much too soon’ than in ‘too little too late.’¹¹⁷ The Federal Government used the presence of ‘refugees’ in Salisbury to collect information about atrocities they allegedly witnessed. An ensuing propaganda booklet was printed, but never disseminated following British pressure.¹¹⁸ The UK’s standing in the colony and its leverage rapidly deteriorated. Within months, the First Secretary of the British Mission in Salisbury complained, ‘the British are just about as unpopular as they can be at the moment, and it is a daily job trying to convince people that we aren’t downright monsters.’¹¹⁹

However, with over two years until the next election, the nuances of white debate over ‘the lessons of the Congo’ became subsumed by increased black unrest domestically. If white politicians were generally emboldened by the Congo example to resist majority rule, their nationalist opponents took the obverse lesson.

¹¹⁶ ‘Split in Dominion Party’, *Rhodesia Herald*, July 6, 1960.

¹¹⁷ ‘Lessons of the Congo’, *Federal Outlook* (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia), August/September 1960.

¹¹⁸ Athol Evans, interviewed by EG Gibbons, April 1978 – September 1979, 62, ORAL/E1, NAZ.

¹¹⁹ Margaret West, *Catching the Bag: Who’d Be a Woman Diplomat* (Durham: Pentland Press, 2000), 207.

Operation Refugee and Black Radicalisation and Internationalisation

Some blacks supported 'refugee' relief efforts, making cash or in-kind donations to relief funds or volunteering at the 'refugee' reception centre at the Salisbury Showgrounds.¹²⁰ In general however, the Congo Crisis marked the death knell of the vestiges of 'partnership' in Southern Rhodesia. The ranks of the anti-colonial nationalist movement were greatly bolstered in mid-1960 and black discontent violently flared in Salisbury and Bulawayo, the main sites of 'refugee' activity, before the end of July. The Rhodesian authorities responded harshly.

Indicative of the deepening divide between the races, Terence Ranger, a university lecturer who subsequently became a leading historian of Zimbabwe, sought to engage an integrated body, the Christian Action Group, to undertake 'refugee' relief.¹²¹ Characteristic of the unease the situation engendered in the white community, Ranger, one of the Colony's more liberal whites, issued a press release urging blacks 'to perform a truly Christian act' and support the displaced whites.¹²² Nathan Shamuyarira, a prominent black journalist and Christian Action member then nominally unaligned politically, refused to support the call, citing the Federation's lack of support for political refugees from South Africa.¹²³ His attitude was indicative of black opinion. A number of elite blacks in the colony like the advocate Herbert Chitepo, physician Edward Pswarayi, and educators Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe, joined the NDP around the time of the Congo's independence.¹²⁴ While it is difficult to track the most immediate rationale behind their decisions, the timing was probably not coincidental.

¹²⁰ 'Refugees: Africans Also Help', *ADN*, July 16, 1960; 'Africans Give £5 to Fund', *The Chronicle*, July 22, 1960.

¹²¹ Reed Diary, July 12, 1960, Vol. 88, no page.

¹²² 'Africans Called on to Help Refugees', *ADN*, July 13, 1960.

¹²³ Reed Diary, July 12, 1960, Vol. 88, no page.

¹²⁴ 'Mugabe Joins NDP Ranks', *African Weekly*, July 6, 1960; 'Chitepo and Rev. Sithole Have Joined the NDP', *ADN*, June 6, 1960.

Over the past decade, Southern Rhodesian nationalists saw increasing chinks in the imperial armour. In the early 1950s, blacks in the colony closely tracked the Mau Mau revolt in Kenya.¹²⁵ The establishment of the Federation in 1953 also provided impetus for regional anti-colonial activity, particularly in Nyasaland, where Rhodesian security forces were called up amidst deadly protests.¹²⁶ In the latter part of the 1950s, Southern Rhodesian nationalists were exposed to pan-African movements like the All-Africa Peoples' Congress and the Pan African Freedom Movement for Central Africa.¹²⁷ This accelerating anti-colonial push and the emergence of new continental networks spurred greater numbers of black Rhodesians toward an embrace of nationalism. More than any previous external incident, the massive international attention the Congo Crisis generated likely encouraged the black intelligentsia's direct political engagement. The dominant role of African nations in ONUC, where eight of the initial 10 states contributing personnel were African, with Ghanaian troops constituting the largest single contingent, vividly illustrated the continent's changing dynamics.¹²⁸

Operation Refugee became an arena for nationalists to express frustration with the turn of events in the Congo and the disruption of Africa's decolonisation momentum following the Katanga secession. NDP President Michael Mawema expressed contempt that the Federal government allowed whites from the Congo entry when assistance for black South African political refugees had been refused in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre earlier that year.¹²⁹ Leopold Takawira, a prominent nationalist then employed by

¹²⁵ Terence Ranger, "The Reception of Mau Mau in Southern Rhodesia, 1952-61," In *Trajectories de Liberation en Afrique Contemporaine: Homage a Robert Buijtenhuijs*, eds. Piet Konings, Wim van Binsbergen, and Gerti Hesselning (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

¹²⁶ Joey Power, 'Building Relevance: The Blantyre Congress, 1953 to 1956', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002): 46.

¹²⁷ John Day, *International Nationalism: The Extra-territorial Relations of Southern Rhodesian Nationalists* (New York: Humanities Press, 1967), 55; Gikonyo Kiano, 'The Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa', *Africa Today* 6, no. 4 (1959): 11-4.

¹²⁸ Sergey Mazov, "'A Fragile Alliance': The Congo Crisis and Soviet-Ghanaian Relations, 1960-61", *Twentieth Century Communism* 15 (2018): 14.

¹²⁹ 'Mawema Back From Nyasaland Trip', *ADN*, July 12, 1960.

the Capricorn Africa Society, issued a similar statement which diagnosed the hypocrisy of Rhodesian humanitarian imperialism:

The presence of refugees from the Congo Republic in S. Rhodesia poses a political embarrassment to the African People...a few African and European refugees managed to get out of S. Africa [after the Sharpeville massacre]. They received no welcome from any organisation or individuals in S. Rhodesia...now almost a similar situation has arisen in the Congo. The reason as to why the refugees are here is not known nor is it quite clear to Africans here. These people from the Congo have not only been permitted to enter S. Rhodesia without passports but they have been accommodated at the expense of the state. One does not object to the humanitarian aspect of it, but one is at a loss to understand why those people who actually escaped from being shot down by the S. African police were not encouraged to come here and were not shown any hospitality when they managed to come on their own.¹³⁰

Takawira concluded by wondering if the exodus was conceived in conjunction with white mining interests in Katanga as 'a planned political manoeuvre to show the world the immaturity and inability of the African to govern?'¹³¹

Like many nationalists newly transfixed by the pan-African surge, Takawira closely followed the Congo's march toward sovereignty. In a trip report for the Capricorn Africa Society, following an official visit to Northern Rhodesia in April 1960, he commented on the different political trajectory prevailing in the Federation versus its northern neighbours, specifically the Congo.¹³² His concern and attention to the Congo situation magnified as instability mounted in the new country. Takawira encouraged blacks to refrain from contributing to 'refugee' relief funds and authored an article which stated that the lesson of the Congo was to give the blacks a larger say in government and that 'majority-rule is on the way whether Europeans like it or not.'¹³³ Days later, at an NDP meeting in Highfield, he

¹³⁰ 'Belgian Refugees "An Embarrassment"', *ADN*, July 15, 1960.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Richard Hughes, *Capricorn: David Stirling's Second African Campaign* (London: Radcliffe Press, 2003), 152.

¹³³ Leopold Takawira, 'Congo Lessons', *Central African Examiner* (Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia), July 30, 1960.

slammed the headmasters of two schools in Harare over their pupils' performance at a charity concert for the 'refugees.'¹³⁴

Enos Nkala, the NDP's Deputy Secretary-General, condemned the Federal Government for backing Tshombe at a rally in Gwelo. He warned that the Congo 'refugees' were 'jumping out of the frying pan [and] into the fire' and exhorted, 'what they were running away from in the Congo will come about here much earlier than if they had stayed away.'¹³⁵ Nkala was charged with violating the public order act for these remarks, but continued to repeat them.¹³⁶ Antagonistic voices emerged from labour circles as the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress issued a statement expressing concern that the 'refugees' might remain in the country and threaten black employment.¹³⁷ Mawema most succinctly stoked white fears with his proclamation that 'I must tell you when we get freedom there will be more Europeans leaving this country than refugees from the Congo.'¹³⁸

Frightened by the chaos in the Congo and unnerved by the NDP's radicalisation, rising international consciousness, and growing membership, the Rhodesian authorities struck back. On 7 July, the police raided the NDP's office, making away with virtually 'everything.'¹³⁹ On the morning of 19 July, three leading members of the NDP were arrested. An international analyst saw the arrests of Harare Branch Chair Leopold Takawira, President Michael Mawema, and Secretary Sketchley Samkange, 'as a reaction to the events in the Congo.'¹⁴⁰ All had recently been vocal about developments in the newly independent country.¹⁴¹ In the Rhodesian Parliament that day, Harry Pichanick prophetically mused that the situation in the Congo, 'has brought Central Africa to the brink of another possible

¹³⁴ 'Takawira Raps Headmasters', *ADN*, July 19, 1960.

¹³⁵ 'NDP Says Participation in Government Only Solution to Problems', *ADN*, July 19, 1960.

¹³⁶ 'NDP Meeting on Sunday, August 28th, 1960 at Highfields (sic)', undated, Box 51, Terence Ranger Papers, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

¹³⁷ 'Congo Refugees May Worsen Unemployment, Says Congress', *ADN*, July 19, 1960.

¹³⁸ 'July 19 Meeting: NDP', undated, Box 51, Terence Ranger Papers.

¹³⁹ 'Police Take Equipment and Files in Swoop on NDP Office', *Rhodesia Herald*, July 8, 1960.

¹⁴⁰ 'Central Africa: Clearing for Action?' *The Economist*, July 23, 1960.

¹⁴¹ 'Samkange Spoke of the Congolese Not SR Africans – Defence', *ADN*, August 24, 1960.

Korean war. I am hoping nothing more desperate and terrible will happen in the next few weeks, but who can say?’¹⁴² The action against the NDP, situated amidst the unease engendered by the Congo Crisis, ensured that turmoil would arrive in Southern Rhodesia within hours of Pichanick’s comments.

According to Nathan Shamuyarira, the NDP’s efforts to meet with Prime Minister Whitehead following the arrests were rebuffed because he was too busy dealing with Congo ‘refugees.’¹⁴³ This curt treatment prompted a thwarted protest march to Salisbury city centre on the night of the 19th and unrest in Salisbury and Bulawayo, where a dozen fatalities during disturbances days later marked a scale of violence unprecedented since the 1896-97 rising against white occupation at the beginning of colonial conquest.¹⁴⁴ The position continued to deteriorate amidst the lingering milieu of the Congo Crisis. Labour unrest erupted in Gatooma in September and Salisbury saw its own lethal violence (seven deaths) on 8 October 1960.¹⁴⁵ Press reports on the deadly Salisbury incident claimed that the protestors shouted ‘Congo.’¹⁴⁶ Another major urban centre, Gwelo, which housed the largest number of Congo ‘refugees’ after Salisbury and Bulawayo, was wracked by protest the following day.¹⁴⁷

While it is impractical to apportion the extent to which those behind the unrest were motivated by developments in the Congo, whites believed it was considerable. Speaking on the July unrest, Ahrn Palley, an independent MP in the territorial parliament opined, ‘the unfortunate events in the Congo have a direct bearing on what has happened here in Salisbury.’¹⁴⁸ The political establishment responded forcefully to the protests, making

¹⁴² *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, July 19, 1960, col. 373.

¹⁴³ Nathan Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1965), 64-5.

¹⁴⁴ Francis Nehwati, ‘The Social and Communal Background to “Zhi”’: The African Riots in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia in 1960’, *African Affairs* 69, no. 276 (1970): 253.

¹⁴⁵ ‘SR Police Use Tear Gas on Riot Gangs’, *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg, South Africa), September 8, 1960.

¹⁴⁶ ‘New Rioting Breaks Out in Rhodesia’, *Rand Daily Mail*, October 10, 1960.

¹⁴⁷ Jocelyn Alexander, ‘“Hooligans, Spivs and Loafers”? The Politics of Vagrancy in 1960s Southern Rhodesia’, *Journal of African History* 53, no. 3 (2012): 349-50.

¹⁴⁸ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, July 22, 1960, col. 564.

hundreds of arrests and adopting the notorious Law and Order Maintenance Act later that year. In introducing the Act, the Minister of Justice referred to the destabilising role of ‘external influences.’¹⁴⁹ From the beginning of Operation Refugee, Welensky pushed for measures to strengthen the Federal military. These assets were primarily inherited by Southern Rhodesia after the Federation broke up in 1963 and provided a position of strength that eased the path to UDI.¹⁵⁰ Ultimately, the UFP’s overriding reaction to the Congo Crisis and Operation Refugee – an emphasis on the need for a hard-line response – played to the DP’s strengths. It undermined the lingering commitment to ‘partnership’ and thus the basis for the Federation itself. Humanitarian imperialism and international diplomacy were subsumed by the desire to preserve white dominance, contributing to the swing to the newly formed RF in the 1962 election.¹⁵¹

Fall-out from the unrest in Bulawayo and Salisbury also sounded the death knell of black participation in liberal white political bodies and the collapse of the political career of Garfield Todd, an increasingly liberal former Prime Minister (1953-58). At the end of July 1960, Todd was in London, where he joined Nkomo and two other NDP leaders to demand that the UK government suspend Southern Rhodesia’s constitution and send troops to restore order.¹⁵² At the press conference urging this action, Todd accused white Rhodesians of failing to heed ‘the lessons of the Congo.’¹⁵³ Whites were infuriated by this repudiation of humanitarian imperialism from their former Prime Minister. Todd was forced to resign from the leadership of the Central Africa Party (CAP), a group with significant black membership. Todd’s removal accelerated the departure of blacks from CAP, culminating in Vice-President

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., October 27, 1960, col. 2516.

¹⁵⁰ Hughes, ‘Fighting for White Rule’, 602.

¹⁵¹ The RF was established in March 1962 following an amalgamation of the two wings of the Dominion Party, the Southern Rhodesia Association, and the Rhodesia Reform Party.

¹⁵² Ruth Weiss with Jane Parpart, *Sir Garfield Todd and the Making of Zimbabwe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 141.

¹⁵³ Susan Woodhouse, *Garfield Todd: The End of the Liberal Dream in Rhodesia* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2018), 306.

Stanlake Samkange, Chairman SM Mbirimi, and seven other leading blacks leaving the party in early September, 1960.¹⁵⁴

Ongoing Cold War intrigue in the Congo solidified the nationalists' significant continued interest in Congolese affairs. Operation Refugee primed the NDP for vehement condemnation of subsequent developments in the Congo. The very name of Tshombe, the Katangese secessionist leader, became an insult in nationalist circles.¹⁵⁵ When news of Patrice Lumumba's assassination broke in early 1961, the NDP announced a day of mourning and convened at least seven protest rallies across the colony. The party believed the Western powers and the United Nations, under the leadership of Dag Hammarskjöld, a Swede, bore responsibility.¹⁵⁶ One member of the NDP executive announced that following independence, the US Consulate in Salisbury would be closed as part of a retaliatory action.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

This article has shown the importance of one of the most visible early manifestations of the transnational nature of the Congo Crisis, the displacement of the Congo's white inhabitants, on Southern Rhodesian politics. While the colony's political figures were alarmed by the abrupt injection of their neighbour into broader Cold War struggles, the most immediate framework with which they assessed Operation Refugee was the decolonisation imperative. Constraints on Rhodesian action in the Congo marked the end of a longstanding brand of northward-oriented humanitarian imperialist rhetoric and bolstered the development of a more parochial white solidarity. The colony's black nationalists were energised by this

¹⁵⁴ 'Mass Resignation from CAP: End of Party in Sight', *ADN*, September 2, 1960.

¹⁵⁵ Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, 164.

¹⁵⁶ Brooks Marmon, "'One Who Preferred Death to Imperialism'", *Review of African Political Economy (Blog)*, <http://roape.net/2020/01/17/one-who-preferred-death-to-imperialism/> (accessed December 19, 2020).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

collapse in the imperial infrastructure and sought to capitalise on the tumult. NDP leaders stoked white fears by raising the spectre of similar developments occurring in Southern Rhodesia.

Delineating the impact of the Congo's white 'refugee' crisis on Southern Rhodesian politics highlights how Cold War-centric considerations of the Congo's post-independence turmoil, typically centred on matters pertinent to great power competition (the Katanga secession, Lumumba murder), have restricted the emergence of scholarship that more fully considers the multiple dimensions by which the Crisis impacted those in the subregion and the continent at-large. In Southern Rhodesia, Operation Refugee exacerbated racial polarisation. It spurred realignments in both white and black politics; while whites became more isolationist amidst imperial withdrawal, their black opponents increasingly situated their struggle as part of a wider international anti-imperial movement.

Following the invocation of Ghana to justify Whitehead's declaration of a state of emergency in early 1959 and banning of SRANC, Belgium's departure from the Congo marked the second case of African liberation exerting a significant influence over Southern Rhodesian politics.¹⁵⁸ However, the impact from the Congo's independence was felt much more directly and immediately. Rhodesians of all races personally witnessed white flight from the Congo and became captivated by events in their northern neighbour as it became a centre of Cold War intrigue. The emergence of a Cold War battleground on their doorstep made it absolutely clear that the 'wind of change', previously dismissed by some as a remote west African phenomenon, was now gusting across the subregion.

The events described here unfolded almost entirely over the space of a few weeks following the independence of the Congo. Although a number of external developments

¹⁵⁸ 'Letter SP-16', March 21, 1959, Box 6, Folder 19, George Loft Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University; Marmon, 'Pan-Africanism Versus Partnership', 141-6.

around this time played a prominent role in transforming Rhodesian society, such as the Nyasaland Constitutional Conference in London that set the path for Malawi's independence, none were as dramatic or received as much attention as the white flight from the Congo. While the Congo's status as a major Cold War crisis increased its relevance in Rhodesia, that was not the leading lens with which it was viewed within the region. Superseding considerations of great power competition, Rhodesia's politicians sought to shape the discourse on the Congo's independence to advance their own interests vis-a-vis maintaining or altering the political status quo.

While a rapid succession of events in the early 1960s progressively polarised Rhodesian politics, the case of the Congo 'refugees' remained prominent. William Harper, the leader of the Southern Rhodesian Dominion Party who emigrated from India at independence, invoked the spectre of Operation Refugee while campaigning against a proposed new constitution in July 1961.¹⁵⁹ Prominent members of the RF cited the Congo's white 'refugees' and the new country's chaos in books intended to solidify support for the party in the aftermath of UDI.¹⁶⁰ While no one event was the catalyst for the dramatic UDI rupture and ensuing military struggle, the July 1960 'refugee' flow was a major shock that set Rhodesia onto a more confrontational path. The perceptible demise of humanitarian imperialism constituted a major bridge in the transformation of Southern Rhodesia's political affairs.

This shift highlights the multiple levels on which the Congo Crisis shaped international politics. While they rarely feature in the 'great power' scholarship on the Congo Crisis, the sudden emergence of tens of thousands of white 'refugees' ruptured the

¹⁵⁹ 'Southern Rhodesia Political Press Notes: Referendum Public Meetings', July 14, 1961, Box 1692, 745c.00/7-361, Record Group 59, Department of State Central File, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, USA.

¹⁶⁰ Examples include: Desmond Lardner-Burke, *Rhodesia: The Story of the Crisis* (London: Oldbourne, 1966), 79; Andrew Skeen, *Prelude to Independence: Skeen's 115 Days* (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1966), 4.

status quo in southern Africa. This vivid demonstration of white precarity made it clear that the age of decolonisation had arrived. Although Jeffrey James Byrne argued that ‘Africa’s Cold War’ was characterised by the imposition of significant constraints on both white minority governments and their nationalist opponents as they courted superpowers, viewing Operation Refugee via a decolonisation framework rather than a Cold War rubric, shows how the Congo Crisis encouraged political groups in Southern Rhodesia to move closer to unilateralism.¹⁶¹

The events of July 1960 accelerated white opposition to decolonisation. White settlers discarded their northward gaze and the grandiose impulse of humanitarian imperialism that shaped paternalist conceptions of their place in Africa. Rhodesia’s leadership increasingly criticised British foreign policy and contemplated more insular alliances with South Africa and Portugal. The Federation and its policy of ‘partnership’ became suspect among an uneasy white community edging towards isolation. Conversely, the ranks of the NDP were bolstered as the party became emboldened by the existence of an independent neighbour and witnessed a dramatic disruption of the repressive hierarchy created by whites. Black elites repudiated white-led political bodies, evinced anti-western sentiments, and entered nationalist politics not as a moderating force, but a radicalising one. While ‘the lessons of the Congo’ were vehemently debated, the intensity of the dialogue undeniably deepened the divide between settler officials and their nationalist opponents.

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¹⁶¹ Jeffrey James Byrne, ‘Africa’s Cold War’, in *The Cold War in the Third World*, ed. Robert J. McMahon, 112 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

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