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Mud Pies and Msasa [Tree] Leaves: The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), International Sanctions and Settler Agriculture in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1965-1979

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This article examines the impact of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) sanctions on settler agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe between 1965, when UDI was declared, and 1979, when the Internal Settlement agreement ushered in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. Having witnessed a significant rise in the two decades after the Second World War, settler agriculture plummeted in subsequent years. UDI, this article argues, was a major reversal of fortunes for the white agricultural sector as it opened a new chapter in the colony's economic and social history characterised by biting international sanctions. A combination of sanctions-induced fuel shortages, loss of markets because of embargoes on Rhodesian products, falling international commodity prices, inability of government to continue to support agriculture at pre-UDI levels, African armed conflict, compulsory military "call-up", and insecurity in the countryside delivered a heavy blow not only to settler agriculture but also other sectors of the colonial economy. This article argues that UDI sanctions, which forced the Rhodesian economy to operate under austerity, triggered a decline in the settler agricultural sector and reduced a significant proportion of the white farming community to a position where a combination of insecurity and the prospect of subsisting on "mud pies" for food and "Msasa leaves" for clothes became a terrifying possibility. Hardship and insecurity prompted a significant number of disaffected settler farmers to trek to other countries, particularly South Africa, for greener pastures from 1976 onwards.

Key words: colonial Zimbabwe, Rhodesia, Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), sanctions, settler agriculture

Introduction

"Glazier [presumably, a farmer] voices a truism when he says farmers are given the smell of an oil rag and wants to know if farmers don't eat but go out to graze and live on mud pies and dress in Msasa leaves. No doubt this will be the case if prices of everything the farmer needs keep on reaching sky-high prices while everything we produce fetch prices almost below cost." (Que Que Farmer, *The Rhodesia Herald*, 25 May 1966, p. 7.)

On 11 November 1965, at 13:15 hours the Prime Minister of Rhodesia¹, Ian Douglas Smith, announced to the nation and the world, in a speech aired on state radio that his country was, with immediate effect, independent from British rule (Cohen, 2011). The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), as the move came to be internationally known, marked a new phase in Rhodesian history, which also happened to be the closing chapter of settler colonial dominance of the territory (Cohen, 2011). This article examines the efficacy of UDI sanctions on settler agriculture between 1965 and 1979. This subject was not one worth serious consideration in November 1965, at least as far as the press and public opinion in the West was concerned, as it was almost a foregone conclusion that the Rhodesian regime would not be able to hold for long. *The New York Times*, for example, reported on 12 November 1965, that the British government, in concert with the Commonwealth, could “strangle the Rhodesian economy over a period of months” (Gann, 1972, 46). Similarly, *The Economist* postulated in January 1966 that the only way the “rebellion” would be able to survive beyond a full month was “if the rebels are determined to hold out to the last drum of petrol” which, the publication argued, would be an exercise in futility as, either way, the endgame for the Smith administration was near (Gann, 1972, 83).

The media’s view of the imminent collapse of the Rhodesia Front-led government found its way into political opinion. The Rhodesian minority regime would be on its knees in “weeks, not months”, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson assured African heads of state in January 1966, at the Commonwealth Summit in Lagos, Nigeria (Bailey, 1979, 128-9). This assurance, it became clear with each month that passed, was off the mark as the Rhodesian government continued to hold effective power for another fourteen years. Although this was remarkable, it was not without cost for the economy. This article examines the efficacy of UDI sanctions on Rhodesia’s white agricultural sector and argues that sanctions delivered a fatal blow to the sector to the extent that the prospect of “grazing” on “mud pies” for food and dressing in “Msasa leaves” for clothes became a petrifying reality to significant numbers of farmers. This triggered emigration to other countries such as South Africa, from 1976 onwards, as it dawned on farmers and other segments of the white population that Rhodesia’s days were numbered.

The Efficacy of Sanctions Debate

White people in colonial Zimbabwe were, from the onset, determined to build what Maravanyika has termed a “neo-Britain” for their permanent settlement (Maravanyika, 2010). This second Britain, it was envisaged, would mirror Great Britain in terms of its economic health and demography. This mindset was boldly echoed by the Premier, Sir Charles Coghlan, when he told the all-white legislative

assembly in 1927 that Southern Rhodesia was “essentially a country where the white man [had] come and [desired] to [permanently] stay” (Machingaidze, 1991, 559). Permanency, explained the *Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry*, appointed to investigate the impact of the Great Depression on the colony’s agriculture which reported in 1934, could not be premised “on any other basis other than a white agricultural population” (Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry, 1934,1). Though many white farmers emigrated and took up farming in Southern Rhodesia, especially after the Second World War, the lofty ambition to mirror Britain in demographic terms was never realised as, in David Hughes’ words, “whites never approached demographic superiority *vis-a-vis* native peoples, as [their] population never exceeded five percent of the national total” (Hughes, 2006, 269).

On the economic front, however, in the post-Second World War period – particularly the Federal decade when the colony’s GDP almost doubled – Rhodesia registered significant milestones. A number of factors drove growth in the agricultural sector from the mid-1940s, among them a wave of mainly ex-servicemen who immigrated to the colony and took up land and invested significantly in farming, increased inflow of capital from external sources, expanding tobacco exports, improved fortunes of the mining sector and the rise of manufacturing as a third pillar of the economy, which provided an extended market for agricultural products. Government efforts through the Natural Resources Board (NRB) and the Department of Conservation and Extension (CONEX) to spearhead soil and water conservation programmes in white farming districts and government intervention in pulling farmers out of indebtedness and in marketing through the creation of agricultural marketing parastatals (Maravanyika, 2014). Good mineral prices, particularly gold after the devaluation of sterling in 1939 and handsome returns from copper, also accounted for the surge in the Rhodesian economy (Phimister, 1988).

It was in such a context of a thriving economy that the Smith regime was, in spite of repeated warnings from London, emboldened to declare UDI, seemingly convinced that Rhodesia, with support from her powerful southern neighbour, South Africa, would weather the storm of anticipated economic reprisals. Rhodesian thinking was not without basis as scholars, such as Strack, also characterised sanctions as not only “ineffective”, but also “counter-productive” (Strack, 1978, 237-8). There are two schools of thought on the efficacy of economic sanctions. One argues that sanctions were ineffective while the other counter-argues that it was a combination of the weight of sanctions and armed conflict that brought an end to minority rule in Rhodesia. Davidow

has argued that isolation of Rhodesia and its minority settlers “encouraged insularity and reinforced unrealistically hard positions” (Davidow, 1983, 6). Doxey characterises the impact of sanctions as having been generally “limited” (Doxey, 1980) while Gann, also sceptical of the efficacy of sanctions, argued, in 1972, that prophecies that Rhodesia would collapse as a result of sanctions were nothing more than “the futurology of the past” (Gann, 1972, 143). Renwick has also taken Gann’s view, concluding that it was not sanctions that brought down the Rhodesian regime, but “the world economic recession, and, increasingly the war” (Renwick, 1981,91). Rowe concurs and classifies Rhodesia as “a compelling example of the futility of using economic sanctions to pursue important foreign policy goals” (Rowe, 2004, 207, 256).

The other school of thought has argued that sanctions achieved what they were intended to (Minter and Schmidt, 1988; Baldwin, 1985). These scholars premise their view on two levels; that sanctions work outright, even in the absence of other policy instruments, and that they were a very powerful symbol that often gave support to other dynamics that combined to work towards the intended goal (Morgan and Schwebach,1997). Minter and Schmidt have argued that sanctions against Rhodesia had the direct effect of isolating Ian Smith’s regime, a factor which affected the regime’s capacity at the war front (Minter and Schmidt, 1988). There is evidence that Zimbabwe’s two liberation movements, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU), leveraged on the sanctions discourse by supporting them and utilising them to court international attention and support in spite of the fact that the sanctions also had an effect on the African population. ZANU actually called for tighter enforcement (Minter and Schmidt, 1988).

The Road to UDI Sanctions

Richard Coggins has characterized the Federation of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, between 1953 and 1963, as having been a period of economic consolidation for Southern Rhodesia. The colony’s economy had begun to expand at a phenomenal pace after the Second World War, resulting in a big immigration wave into the colony. The economic boom continued in the Federal period (Coggins, 2006). Robert McKinnell has observed;

Gross domestic product increased by 85 percent, while the contribution of manufacturing more than doubled, partly to supply the new, expanded, ‘domestic’ market. The growth of the whole Federation was mainly attributed to expanding exports and to the inflow of external capital (McKinnell, 1969, 573-4).

The expansion of the economy, however, was not accompanied by corresponding political successes. Whites in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland felt that the lion's share of Federal benefits was going to Southern Rhodesia at their expense, while Africans in the three colonies clamoured for the end of the Federation and for independence. These developments culminated in the dissolution of the Federation in 1963 and, consequently, the independence of Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) in 1964. Britain was agreeable to the independence of the two territories, and also supported the aspirations of Africans in Rhodesia for a transition towards majority rule (Smith, 1997).

Rhodesian Front politicians were not open to the idea of majority rule in Southern Rhodesia. They argued that the 1961 Constitution, a smokescreen meant to deceive the British government into believing that Southern Rhodesia was on the road to greater African involvement in political life, provided the basis for African participation in the country's politics. The Constitution provided that, over time, as the economic and educational position of Africans in the colony improved, more and more Africans would become eligible to vote (Coggins, 2006). The British government did not agree with this position. Winston Field, who had been elected to the premiership in the 1962 elections on a Rhodesian Front (RF) ticket, was elbowed out in an internal coup for his alleged failure to reach a favourable agreement with the British Government on the matter. He was replaced by Ian Douglas Smith in 1964. Smith, a hardliner, immediately began to steer the country towards UDI. UDI was, in the eyes of the minority government, a necessary step to preserve white rule in the colony in the face of increasing African demands for independence.

The change in British policy had largely become evident after the significant 3 February 1960, "Winds of change" speech in South Africa by Harold Macmillan, the British prime minister, during his tour of South Africa and British colonies in Africa. The speech not only signalled British intentions to grant independence to her colonies, but also gave legitimacy to African nationalist demands for independence. The government of Southern Rhodesia was familiar with nationalist sentiments on the continent as many African countries were gaining their independence. Locally the settler administration had crushed various protest actions by nationalists (Mothibe, 1996). Smith and the Rhodesian Front chose not to yield to the nationalists and to British pressure.

From 1964, the British government had tried to use diplomatic channels to stop Rhodesia from declaring independence after it became apparent that Ian Smith and his party were mobilizing the country's populace for it. A referendum was carried out in 1964 to determine whether the white electorate was ready for independence under the 1961 Constitution. An *Indaba* was also held in 1964 with African chiefs to get them to support independence, as the purported legitimate

representatives of African people, as opposed to the African nationalists, who the regime attempted to cast as dissentient “communist” malcontents (Coggins, 2006, 365). On 27 October 1964, the British prime minister issued a stern warning that unilateral declaration of independence would be met with biting economic sanctions (Coggins, 2006, 365).

The British prime minister’s advice was not taken by Smith and his government, as a year later - on 11 November 1965, the colony declared its independence. UDI did not get international recognition; the colony had prepared itself for confrontation with the United Kingdom and the international community (Hodder-Williams, 1970). Smith was convinced that Britain had changed, and going along with the British would yield African rule in the territory, which, he argued, would destroy everything the white minority had toiled for in 75 years. Smith, an admirer of former British Prime Minister Churchill, said in 1965;

If Churchill were alive today, I believe he would probably emigrate to Rhodesia. I believe that all those admirable qualities and characteristics of the British we believed in, loved and preached to our children, no longer exist in Britain (Meredith, 1979, 44).

Britain, with the support of the international community, warned that it would not accept Rhodesian independence if it did not embrace African aspirations for majority rule (Minter and Schmidt, 1998).

Sanctions and Border Closures

The British response to UDI was swift; on the day UDI was announced Britain announced an embargo on Rhodesian sugar and tobacco, an immediate withdrawal of British aid, removal of credit facilities on Rhodesia’s exports, and Rhodesia’s immediate removal from the Sterling area and Commonwealth trade system (Strack, 1978). These measures were given legal effect by the passing of the Southern Rhodesia Act, 1965 (De Smith, 1966). On 1st December 1965, the British government expanded the number of Rhodesian products on its embargo list to include two more agricultural products; maize and beef. It further embargoed copper, asbestos, chrome, iron and steel, and the sale of petroleum and petroleum products. Assets of the Rhodesia Reserve Bank, worth approximately, £10 million, were frozen, as was the disbursement of pensions to Rhodesians (Strack, 1978). These restrictions had huge implications on the Rhodesian economy as, according to Morris Bornstein, they prohibited “95 percent of the value of Rhodesia’s normal exports to the United Kingdom” (Bornstein, 1968, 421).

Apart from British sanctions, Rhodesia was also slapped with UN sanctions. On 12 November 1965, a day after Smith announced UDI, the United Nations Security Council requested all members of the United Nations not to recognize Rhodesian independence and to withhold all their assistance to the country. This paved the way for the imposition of UN voluntary sanctions on 20 November 1965. The United Nations urged its members to stop sales of arms and military hardware, and petroleum products, and to sever all economic ties with Rhodesia (Minter and Schmidt, 1988). A little over a year later, on 16 December 1966, the UN followed up on its voluntary sanctions with mandatory sanctions (an embargo on petroleum and petroleum products, arms, military hardware, aircraft, and motor vehicles). UN sanctions were stepped up on 29 May 1968 to “comprehensive mandatory sanctions” which put a blanket ban on all imports from, and exports to, Rhodesia and on loans, immigration and investment (Losman, 1979 and Security Council Resolutions, 232 and 253). Sanctions on Rhodesia, were in four categories, covering: exports, imports of Rhodesian goods, transportation and financial controls (Bornstein, 1968).

The souring of relations with neighbouring territories, Zambia and Mozambique, also dealt the Rhodesian economy a significant blow. In 1973, Rhodesia closed its border with Zambia, citing increased guerrilla activities as the reason. Zambia retaliated by telling the Rhodesian authorities that reopening of the border would not be left to the Rhodesians, as the Zambian government wanted the border permanently closed. This move hurt both economies, with Rhodesia losing railway revenue to Tanzania, as Zambian copper exports were rerouted via Tanzania - Zambia Railway (TAZARA) routes (Renwick, 1981). Three years later Mozambique also closed its border with Rhodesia. This had a significant impact on Rhodesia as the Mozambique port of Beira was nearer in comparison to Durban, South Africa. Apart from the distance and the greater transport cost, South African ports were congested, which resulted in higher shipping costs and longer delays (Renwick, 1981). The closure of the Mozambique border also gave the South Africans more leverage over Rhodesia.

Sanctions and Settler Agriculture

The Rhodesian agricultural sector was vulnerable because of its reliance on exports. The colony’s tobacco was its major agricultural export, accounting for 30 percent of the country’s exports (Cross, 1981). There was uncertainty whether the colony would be able to sell her crop when UDI was declared and sanctions were imposed in the 1965-6 season. Most Mashonaland farmers had either completed tobacco planting or had planted the majority of their crop. The 1965-66 and 1966-7 selling seasons turned out to be catastrophic for the tobacco sector. As Morris Bornstein has put it;

The 1965-66 tobacco crop was 250 million pounds, but only 120 million pounds could be sold in the government's secret auction, with the remainder purchased by the government at the support price for stockpiling. The 1966-67 crop was about 200 million pounds, with about half being stockpiled (Bornstein, 1968, 424).

In spite of this catastrophic situation, the first few months after UDI were characterised by unexplainable optimism among farmers and government officials. This optimism was not shared in the United Kingdom.

Lord Hastings, a Conservative legislator, predicted in November 1965 that the immediate impact of the sanctions would be "massive (African) unemployment" (*Rhodesia Herald*, 15.11.65, 4). Hastings, who had lived and even owned a farm in Rhodesia, further stated that African unemployment would further foment revolution in the colony, which would become the colonial regime's downfall (*Rhodesia Herald*, 15.11.65, 4). True to his prediction, by December 1965 farmers were already considering the fate of their workers in Mashonaland. A survey by the *Rhodesia Herald* showed that many farmers were cutting their African workers' wages. White farm managers and assistants were not spared by the wage reductions and redundancies (*Rhodesia Herald*, 31.12.65, 3).

Apart from the loss of jobs, Rhodesia had, without question, entered into an era of austerity. An editorial in the *Rhodesia Herald* of 10 December 1965, captures the economic climate of the period in a very concise way;

The era of easy credit to Rhodesia farmers has ended. From now on the man who has the cash to pay for his needs will be able to get what he wants, but only if it is available. The farmer who asks for extended credit is unlikely to get it. Rhodesia has entered a period of shortage of money and goods, and this will inevitably mean that the trade will give preferential treatment to the farmer who can pay. Traditionally at this time of the year the money from overseas for the purchase of the next tobacco crop begins to flow in strongly, but to date the flow has not yet started and ... it is unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future (Rhodesia Herald, 10.12.65).

Optimism gave in to despair. Farmers were no longer certain they would be able to sell their produce on international markets, or get enough to be able to remunerate their workers at existing wage levels. They were not able to access credit as the Land Bank and other banks' capacity to lend was conditional on their getting deposits from private enterprise, something that was not happening at a significant scale at the end of 1965, as the cited editorial reveals.

Less than six months after the declaration of UDI and imposition of subsequent sanctions, the settler agricultural sector was 'screaming.' In April 1966 the Rhodesia National Farmers' Union (R.N.F.U) reported that the agricultural sector was in trouble and needed to be urgently subsidized by the government. Truscott, the vice-president of the R.N.F.U, explained that such a

subsidy would improve farm incomes and productivity, and the whole country would enjoy the benefits of such a programme because, as things stood, farmers' indebtedness was "frightening" (*Rhodesia Herald*, 5.4.66, 4). Truscott elaborated;

To my knowledge there is no country in the world that does not subsidise agriculture. We have always been proud of the fact that we can maintain ourselves and so we don't want subsidies. This is because credit facilities have been big enough to let people carry on - but now I think we must consider the possibility of subsidising agriculture, particularly where there are export possibilities (Rhodesia Herald, 5.4.66, 4).

The inability of the financial system to give credit to farmers meant that everything needed to be paid for upfront.

In addition to funding challenges, pricing and marketing of agricultural goods on international markets became cumbersome for the colony. One farmer complained in 1970 that prices "farmers receive for their milk, and tobacco are considerably lower (than they were ten years ago), but machinery, fuel spares etcetera cost more. Farmers will eat *sadza* (the Zimbabwean staple, a thick porridge made from maize flour) if necessary, but would also enjoy some cake" (*Rhodesia Herald*, 13.3.70, 15). In the case of tobacco, a quota system was put in place from 1967 (*Rhodesia Herald*, 5.5.67, 1). This was meant to ensure that the colony produced only what it would be able to market. This situation continued into the 1970s (*Rhodesia Herald*, 13.4.73). Tobacco marketing in the UDI era was characterized by secrecy, as the Smith regime sought to bust and evade sanctions. Farmers were urged to maintain secrecy as "experts in espionage had a way of collating small pieces of information from various sources and making them into something worthwhile", Freeman, the chairman of the Tobacco Corporation told farmers in 1973 (*Rhodesia Herald*, 18.7.73, 6).

Pricing was a major grievance. Farmers had no control over their input costs, and they also had no say in the determination of the end price of their products. One farmer wrote to *The Rhodesia Herald* about this situation in 1968;

Since UDI, if the cost of living has increased in the towns, it has well been disguised by the general air of prosperity. But on the farms our cost of production has been increased immensely, by, among other things, higher fuel prices, transport costs, upwards of 100 percent increase in spares costs, and above all the general "farmers are fair game" attitude of commerce and industry. It must be obvious to everyone that a reduction of twenty-one and a half percent in the gross return to the grower makes production impossible to everyone without large capital reserves, a rare thing nowadays. The tobacco farmers originally financed the Rhodesian Front to power. Perhaps this is just retribution (Rhodesia Herald, 18.3.68, 5).

With the fall of the tobacco price from 26d per pound in the pre-UDI period to 22d in 1968, growers felt it was they who bore "almost the entire brunt" of the burden of sanctions (*Rhodesia Herald*, 23.3.68, 1). It was time for Prime Minister

Ian Smith, the chairman of the Umvukwes Farmers and Tobacco Growers Association (TGA) stated at a TGA meeting in April 1968, to;

...tell us categorically whether or not it is the present Government's intention to sacrifice the tobacco growers of Rhodesia for the good of the country and if so, what possible good does he see coming from such sacrifice... and I will remind (him), that it was this present Government that got Rhodesia into the mess we are in, and it is this Government that must get us out of it or resign (Rhodesia Herald, 5.4.68, 1).

Government bureaucrats, however, thought that tobacco farmers were crybabies who, instead of diversifying in response to the low prices and marketing difficulties, chose to lament and to apportion blame. This accusation was unjustified as in January 1969 the Minister of Agriculture, David Smith, admitted that diversification was taking place "at a good rate", as 28,000 acres formerly under tobacco had been replaced by other crops (*Rhodesia Herald*, 3.1, 69, 1).

Fuel shortages and rationing also had a huge impact on agricultural viability during UDI. Just five months from November 1965, for example, many farmers could no longer get the same amount of petrol and diesel as before UDI. While in the past farmers had been able to access fuel from fuel companies on credit, the companies began to insist on payment when farmers placed their order. "The rule (to pay cash in advance) was always applied to commerce and industry, and no exceptions have been allowed in these two sectors," stated a *Rhodesia Herald* editorial on 9 December 1969, "but its strict application to agriculture, I understand, has not always been possible." The editorial continued;

Sometimes fuel tankers travel many miles to district farms to deliver bulk orders of petrol and diesel fuels, only to find that the farmer is either away in the lands or in town. To save time and costs in these cases ... the fuel would be delivered and payment collected on the return round, or later. But any concessions of this nature, and others, to farmers are now to be stopped. The rule will be applied equally to fuels delivered to farmers by bulk lorries or tankers and those collected in drums from drum filling points at depots (Rhodesia Herald, 9.12.65).

The requirement for farmers to pay for fuel in advance was not just a reaction to the method of payment mentioned above, which obviously resulted in oil companies getting their money from the farmers late, but to a severe fuel shortage which the country began to experience.

From January 1966 farmers who bought petrol in bulk had their allocations reduced by half as a result of the colony's inability to secure adequate fuel. A statement issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on 3 January 1966 stated that fuel rationing would be applied to all, including diplomats and consular officials (*Rhodesia Herald*, 4.1.66,1). Farmers could, however, still access their normal allocations of diesel. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry stated;

It is appreciated that diesel fuel is the basic fuel used by farmers and there is no intention at the moment to reduce their supply of this. But it is considered that the farming community can afford to make their contribution to the conservation of fuel supplies by curtailing their use of petrol. Naturally, any farmers who find his reduced fuel ration inadequate can apply in the ordinary way for an extra allocation (Rhodesia Herald, 4.1.66,1).

The shortage of fuel naturally affected farmers. For example, at the end of January 1966 the Chairman of the Ploughing Championships, Linnel, announced that the National Ploughing championships which had been scheduled to take place in April 1966 in Karoi had been cancelled. Fuel shortage was given as the reason for the cancellation. "The fuel shortage has made this decision inevitable," Linnel said, adding;

We have also been informed that many of the local competitions have been cancelled for the same reason. The cancellation of the National Championships will mean that we will be unable to nominate any competitors for the World Ploughing Contest to be held in New Zealand in May next year (Rhodesia Herald, 1.27.66, 14).

Local competitions such as the Barwick Ploughing Match, held by the Barwick ICA Committee (Concession), were also cancelled due to constraints in finding adequate fuel (*Rhodesia Herald*, 27.1.66, 14). Though the cancellation of the championships would not have a major impact on Rhodesian farming life, it was small things, such as these competitions, that contributed to building closer relationships and community in the several farming districts over time, and fostered a spirit of healthy competition, which was good for the colony's agrarian sector.

Farmers' desperation for fuel was exhibited when The Rhodesia National Farmers' Union (R.N.F.U) reported at the end of January 1966, that their office was "inundated with requests from farmers and smallholders for additional supplies of fuel" (*Rhodesia Herald*, 1.2.66, 3). This was despite the fact that the R.N.F.U did not deal with applications for fuel. This was the brief of local district commissioners, who were the designated issuing authorities, and petrol rationing officers. In April 1966, the R.N.F.U criticised government petrol rationing regulations. *The Rhodesian Farmer*, the official publication of the R.N.F.U and the Rhodesia Tobacco Association asked in its editorial entitled, 'Does Government want agricultural production to be cut?' whether the government understood the importance of fuel in farmers' operations. The editorial reported that a lot of harm was already being done by the fuel shortage; farmers had had problems with harvesting their tobacco while ploughing was behind schedule.

While financial difficulties, marketing challenges, poor international prices for commodities, and fuel shortages were often a very important determinant of whether farmers carried out conservation projects on their farms or not, conservation efforts often also succumbed to the effect of droughts. The 1967-8 drought is an example, which was invariably described by the press as “the worst crisis” and “a national disaster” (*Rhodesia Herald*, 28.3.68, 1). Commenting on the impact of this drought on farming operations, a farmer wrote to *The Rhodesia Herald* in December 1968, “Sir, drought and slumps are far more dangerous than sanctions” (*Rhodesia Herald*, 17.12.69, 9).

The African Response: Arson, Farm Killings and Armed Resistance

Apart from the difficulties experienced by farmers as a result of the sanctions, growing African militancy and the liberation struggle also disrupted white settler agriculture. The declaration of UDI effectively shut the door on a peaceful transition to majority rule, as had happened in Malawi and Zambia. Sanctions against the Smith regime created additional conditions necessary for the prosecution of the liberation struggle. ZANU supported the sanctions, saying that they created conditions fertile for African disgruntlement, and consequently made it easier to recruit cadres to fight the Smith regime. ZANU support for sanctions was also because, according to Eddison Zvobgo, one of the leading African nationalists during the war of independence, they hurt the Smith regime more than they impacted on the African population. Giving evidence to a US Congressional hearing in February 1973, Zvobgo stated;

It is not us who need sheets to sleep on or cars to come into the city, or spare parts to run the industries. We do not own the economy. Those comforts which have been siphoned off by sanctions are totally irrelevant to the African people. Over 90 percent of the African people live on the land... They are fed by the very soil. So to suggest that sanctions hurt the Africans and therefore in the interest of the African we ought to drop sanctions is nonsense (Minter and Schmidt, 1988, 232).

Zvobgo’s position seems to have been politically expedient for him and his ZANU but, in reality, sanctions also impacted negatively on Africans. The sanctions led to massive unemployment, and a general increase in African poverty. Between 1965 and 1972, Losman observed, the gap in average wages given to white and black employees grew by 40 percent, while farm income also tumbled by 16 percent in the same period (Losman, 1979, 116).

The African response to UDI was swift and calamitous. In December 1965, only a month after the declaration of UDI, farmers in Raffingora and Karoi were employing the services of guards to ensure security of their crops and barns. This followed incidents of arson, where disenchanted Africans set ablaze the tobacco crop and barns on farms in these areas (*Rhodesia Herald*, 14.12.65,3). One

farmer told *The Rhodesia Herald*; “There is a general feeling in the district that something peculiar is going on and quite a few farmers have decided to protect their barns in addition to the patrols on the lands” (*Rhodesia Herald*, 14.12.65, 3). At the end of December 1965, three African men were arraigned before the Salisbury Regional Court for uprooting three acres of maize at Frascati farm in Goromonzi (*Rhodesia Herald*, 25.12.65, 7). By 1966 these actions had taken on another dimension; a white couple was murdered at a farm near Hartley. The farmer, Johannes Hendrik Viljoen and his wife, it was reported, were killed by an “African terrorist gang” which left “pamphlets published in the name of the Zimbabwe African National Union” calling for “violent action against Europeans in Rhodesia” (*Rhodesia Herald*, 19.5.66, 1). The pamphlets left by Viljoen’s killers had also been found on seven Africans killed in the Battle of Sinoia on 29 April 1966 (*Rhodesia Herald*, 19.5.66, 1).

The state’s reaction was to step up security on the farms, and to try to get more settlers on the land. The minister of justice, Desmond Lardner-Burke, explained the logic of trying to put more settlers on the farms at the official opening of the Fort Victoria Agricultural Show in September 1971; “It (is) only when you have vacant farms that you are liable to suffer from squatter problems,” he said. “This could lead to infiltration of terrorists or their supporters and could undermine the security of the country” (*Rhodesia Herald*, 18.9.71, 5). The government was, however, not able to stem the problem of farm murders. On 24 January 1973 a farmer’s wife, Ida Kleyhans, was killed while the husband was seriously injured in a grenade attack at Ellan Vannin farm in Centenary. The incident was “the fourth attack on civilian targets in the north-east border area since Christmas and marked a swing of terrorist activity back to the Centenary area following a move east to the Mt Darwin area” (*Rhodesia Herald*, 26.1.73, 1).”

In March 1973 another farmer, Andries Hendrick Joubert, was killed in Wedza (*Rhodesia Herald*, 11.3.73, 1). Next was the killing of Louis Couve of Paridon farm, Mt Darwin, marking the eighth farm killing in 1973 (*Rhodesia Herald*, 9.6.73, 1). In December, 1974, an African was charged at the High Court in Salisbury for a grenade and rocket attack at a Sipolilo farm, to which he pleaded guilty (*Rhodesia Herald*, 4.12.73). This prosecution did not deter the attackers, as from 1975 the attacks increased (*Rhodesia Herald*, 26.6.75: 19.10.76; 30.9.76). The farm attacks brought insecurity on the farms, which was detrimental to productivity of the farms and construction of conservation works. The liberation war affected agricultural productivity. To start with, the Rhodesian army relied on compulsory conscription - military call-up; all men under the age of 50 had to go to the front. The call-up has been characterized by Tony Hawkins, an academic at the University of Rhodesia during UDI, as “relentless” and “devastating” (Minter and Schmidt, 1988). The call-up impacted on the morale of many people, as they had to leave their families and farms. According to John Graylin, “People got very

fed up with having to go into the army for longish periods very frequently often six weeks at a time, four to five times a year” (Minter and Schmidt, 1980. This impacted on productivity and conservation work on the farms.

The Endgame

In 1976 the colony’s immigration patterns changed, more people left the colony in comparison with those who came to settle in Rhodesia (Strack, 1978, 89). More than 7,000 people left the colony in that year (Losman, 1979,135-6). The exodus of white settlers has to be understood in the context of insecurity on the farms and what was happening in the agricultural and industrial sectors more generally. From 1951, the manufacturing sector had overtaken agriculture as the most important sector in the colony (Irvine, 1959, 309-17). Though the sector had managed to remain vibrant in the wake of sanctions, it began to experience the impact of the combination of sanctions and the armed liberation insurrection in the mid-1970s. The government made it mandatory for employers to pay salaries and wages of employees on call-up, giving the industrial sector a huge burden. Though the government later subsidized this, the burden was huge for the colony’s industrial sector (Minter and Schmidt, 1988, 234). Compulsory conscription also affected the settler agricultural sector, as farmers, too, were called up to fight on the front.

A combination of sanctions and the war forced the regime to agree to transfer of power. Some scholars have argued that it was not the war that yielded independence. Matthew Preston has argued that the war got to a stalemate, with no side winning, and this led to a situation where it became necessary for both sides to reach a settlement at the negotiating table (Preston, 2004). But had the war reached what William Zartman has called a “mutually hurting” stalemate (Zartman, 1983)? There are scholars who, however, argue that the Rhodesians were on the brink of losing the war in 1979. Faced with such a situation, they were left with very few options, hence their willingness to negotiate at the Lancaster House Conference. John Stedman has argued that the Rhodesians were facing a “desperate crisis” (Stedman, 1991). By 1979; they had lost the war, both against sanctions and against African liberation fighters. The Smith administration was forced to negotiate the Internal Settlement, under whose auspices elections were held in March 1979, ushering in a new government under the leadership of Bishop Abel Muzorewa.

Conclusion

The UDI period still needs more study, as there is little information on many aspects of the Rhodesian economy then, including conservation. Literature on

the UDI mostly focuses on the dynamics of sanctions, and how the Rhodesians managed to hold on for 14 years under the sanctions. This article argues that with the imposition of sanctions, white agriculture lost the momentum it had gathered from the 1940s. Economic sanctions and the war effectively ensured that the state and farmers' attention became fixated on survival in the short to medium term, and not so much on increased productivity.

The imposition of economic sanctions on the colony by the British government and the United Nations disrupted settler agriculture in a number of ways. The colony's tobacco industry lost access to the traditionally important United Kingdom market. Farmers' focus largely shifted to survival, resulting in very little new investment taking place in the agricultural sector. Most farmers' incomes dwindled and their future - especially after the beginning of the war - became uncertain. The pace of conservation work slowed. The liberation struggle complicated life for farmers by making the farms unsafe, as liberation fighters found white farmers to be easy targets. From the mid-1970s, as the war intensified, many white people began to leave the country. The majority of farmers who remained on the land were forced by the political and economic environment to tighten their belts, hoping that the situation in the country would improve so they could continue farming without the uncertainty wrought by a combination of sanctions and the war. As Glazier asserts figuratively, some farmers increasingly faced the unpleasant prospect of being reduced to a state where they would have to "(eat) mud pies and (dress in) Msasa leaves" for their daily sustenance.

Endnotes

¹The country has changed names a few times; Rhodesia in the early 1890s, Southern Rhodesia from 1898 to October 1964 when Northern Rhodesia gained independence and was renamed Zambia, Rhodesia from 1964 to May 1979, Zimbabwe-Rhodesia from 1 June 1979 to 12 December 1979 and Zimbabwe at the attainment of independence in April 1980.

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