

2 | *The Early 1970s*

International pressure on the white settler UDI government of Rhodesia to accept majority rule as the condition for a decolonization and independence process acceptable to the British increased steadily during the first half of the 1970s. The concept of “No Independence before Majority Rule” (NIBMAR) had been somewhat dormant since the late 1960s, but it moved to the foreground again in the early 1970s as attention from the Afro-Asia bloc in the United Nations kept the issue alive in the General Assembly. There was also attention from Commonwealth member states who still believed Britain needed to take responsibility for fixing the problem they had punted down the road in 1965.¹ Following the passage in 1969 of yet another Rhodesian constitution, a 1970 referendum on whether or not to become a republic was successful among the limited franchise electorate. Confidence was high among whites in Rhodesia, as the campaign was run on a sense of optimism that the Rhodesian state had weathered the worst of the storm and was now moving toward normalization as a recognized sovereign state. This internal domestic “white citizen” optimism did not, however, match the international condemnation of a white settler republic.

In 1971, the Conservative Party in Britain attempted to reopen negotiations with Smith’s UDI government, and British foreign secretary Alec Douglas-Home went to Salisbury in November where, as Bishop Abel Muzorewa describes it in his memoir, “he made a big show of consulting all shades of Rhodesian opinion.”² The result of this visit was a “Proposal for a Settlement,” which involved changes to the franchise requirements in the 1969 Constitution. These changes were meant to allow more black Rhodesians to vote, but the white

¹ Elaine Windrich, *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (New York: Africana Pub. Co, 1978), 162–85.

² Abel Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk: The Autobiography of Bishop Abel Tendekai Muzorewa* (London: Evans Brothers, 1978), 92.

minority would remain in control. In 1972, the official “Pearce Commission” was created to visit Rhodesia and obtain testimonies from rural and urban Africans to ascertain if they accepted the new constitution. Supporters of the still-detained executives of ZAPU and ZANU worked together with African religious leaders to organize a nationwide “No” campaign. In addition to testing internal opposition to the Smith regime, the campaign brought Muzorewa to the stage as an internal African nationalist leader. He gained national recognition for his leadership in the successful “No” campaign, and soon became an important addition to the leadership struggle within the larger Zimbabwean nationalist movement.³ The failure to obtain British approval of the 1969 Constitution was a setback to the Rhodesian government’s plans for greater international recognition. However, the ruling Rhodesian Front government continued to maintain confidence and popularity among its followers. It would not be until 1974–75 that Smith and his colleagues were confronted by British and South African pressure to seriously negotiate.

From a military perspective, the early 1970s presented an array of challenges to Zimbabwean nationalist forces. Primarily, self-inflicted leadership conflicts made recruiting, training, and supplying those who joined the liberation forces difficult. Rhodesian intelligence infiltrated the security of the military leadership in Lusaka and Dar es Salaam, and in the camps in Tanzania and Zambia. These leadership struggles are important to outline, as these internal battles would significantly handicap any real prospects for unity in the second half of the 1970s.

Both nationalist parties had continued to organize and train their recruits separately, thanks to the support of Zambia and Tanzania, as well as other external backers: the Soviets supported ZAPU’s Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and the People’s Republic of China supported ZANU’s Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA). With Joshua Nkomo, Ndabaningi Sithole, Robert Mugabe, and other political leaders detained in Rhodesia, the external leadership of political and military leaders worked from Lusaka and Dar es Salaam. For ZAPU, these included Jason Moyo, James Chikerema, George Nyandoro, and George Silundika. As historian

³ Ibid., 92–137; Luise White, *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 206–32.

Enocent Msindo describes this period in his study of Kalanga ethnic politics in Zimbabwe, the leaders began to blame each other for failures in executing the war. As with so many leadership conflicts in Zimbabwean history, the divisiveness likely started as personal issues but would soon be defined and explained by ethnic politics. Msindo points out that the divisions in ZAPU were primarily between those who were ethnic Kalangas, Ndebeles, and Shonas. The ZAPU leadership had a dramatic falling out after Moyo blamed Chikerema and other Shona leaders for failing to deliver necessary supplies to the military, and for the rise of “tribalism” in the party. Chikerema reacted violently to these accusations. The Kalanga leadership were kidnapped, only to be rescued by Zambian authorities.⁴

Leo Baron, Nkomo’s long-time lawyer advocate, recounted his interpretation of the ZAPU leadership infighting in 1970, explaining that Chikerema and Nyandoro had “abducted the other three executive members of ZAPU, Moyo, Silundika, and [Edward] Ndlovu. As a matter of fact, it was touch and go.” Baron said Zambia’s minister of home affairs, Aaron Milner, had to negotiate with Chikerema and Nyandoro to eventually release the other three leaders.⁵ The result was the formation of a new party, the Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe (FROLIZI), which sought to forge a new, nonfactionalist military effort that would mend the split between ZAPU and ZANU. Former ZAPU leaders Chikerema and Nyandoro joined ZANU’s Nathan Shamuyarira to make up FROLIZI’s initial leadership. However, FROLIZI’s relatively quick rise and fall demonstrated how intractable the ZAPU and ZANU sides were. The Frontline State presidents, and in particular Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere, had hoped initially that FROLIZI offered the possibility of resolving the divide between ZAPU and ZANU by allowing a unified military command to emerge. In the process, the creation of yet another military command structure complicated the existing liberation armies’ efforts to receive funding and training from the Organization of African Unity’s Liberation Committee and from other sources.

⁴ Enocent Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: Transformations in Kalanga and Ndebele Societies, 1860–1990* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2012), 204–6.

⁵ National Archives of Zimbabwe, “Interview with Leo Baron,” Oral History Collection 239, 75–76.

Before addressing issues of disunity in ZANU, it is worth discussing the impact of the Carnation Revolution in Portugal of 1974, which intensified pressures on the Rhodesian crisis and hastened major diplomatic and military developments. Historian Jamie Miller has provided a careful reading of how this revolution, and the subsequent Portuguese-announced independence dates for Mozambique and Angola, caused a significant shift in South African diplomacy and military thinking about Rhodesia and southern Africa. Miller states, "If a rapprochement with black Africa was one part of Vorster's statecraft program, then a distancing of Pretoria from other forms of white rule on the continent was the other."⁶ The decision by the new Portuguese government to announce the forthcoming independence of Mozambique (June 25, 1975) and Angola (November 11, 1975) created extremely favorable possibilities for the Zimbabwean liberation armies. Before exploring the global impact of this shift in Chapter 3, it is important to consider how the end of Portuguese colonialism in southern Africa also caused a *détente* between apartheid South Africa and the regional African-led governments. This was predominantly the case with Zambia, where President Kenneth Kaunda and his long-serving diplomat Mark Chona worked to negotiate with South Africa's prime minister, John Vorster, to pressure Smith's government into restarting negotiations with African nationalists in 1975.⁷

Direct talks between Smith and the nationalist leaders during the *détente* period would prove unsuccessful. This period did, however, lead to the release of the key leaders of ZANU and ZAPU from detention in Rhodesia. Nkomo of ZAPU and Sithole of ZANU were permitted to give public speeches in Rhodesia for the first time since 1964. This freedom of the "old guard" leaders had major implications for both parties, but the immediate crisis was in ZANU, where the leadership was already undergoing a major realignment that began in late November 1974 and would continue until after the assassination of their primary political and military leader in exile, Herbert Chitepo, on March 18, 1975.

⁶ Jamie Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and Its Search for Survival* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁷ Andrew DeRoche, *Kenneth Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 40–41; Miller, *An African Volk*, 141–52.

The Nhari Rebellion and ZANU's Leadership

It is helpful to consider the Nhari Rebellion of November–December 1974 in the context of diplomacy and the internal politics of ZANU and ZANLA. The Nhari Rebellion took its name from one its chief instigators, Thomas Nhari, who along with Dakarai Badza, attempted to confront the ZANLA and ZANU leadership about shortages on the war front – although some historians argue they were motivated by the humiliation of their previous demotions. By the end of 1974, the Nhari Rebellion revealed major fissures in the ZANU and ZANLA situation. As historians have argued, while most contemporary analysts emphasized ethnic rivalry as its cause, the rebellion could also be viewed as an attempt by some of the older members of ZANU's executive to try and maintain control of the party and the war effort as a younger generation began to exert its influence. As Wilf Mhanda describes, a key element in the timing of the rebellion was the return from China of a new group of commanders who pushed for a more radical, intransigent position within ZANU.⁸

As the rebellion was put down, many of the rebellious ZANLA soldiers were killed, and some older ZANU leaders accused of leading the rebellion were quickly rounded up by ZANLA. John Mataure, a long-time leader in ZANU, was summarily executed. Significantly, the operation to put down the rebellion was called *Gukurahundi* and involved soldiers brought from camps in Tanzania.⁹ Zambian police were involved in arresting some of the rebels, eventually turning them over to ZANU and its military leader, Josiah Tongogara, who had been a target in the rebellion. Failing to kill Tongogara, the rebels kidnapped

⁸ See Wilfred Mhanda, *Dzino: Memories of a Freedom Fighter* (Harare: Weaver, 2011), 48; Zvakanyorwa Wilbert Sadomba, *War Veterans in Zimbabwe's Revolution: Challenging Neo-colonialism and Settler and International Capital* (Oxford: Boydell & Brewer, 2011), 17; Luise White, *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 20–22; Blessing-Miles Tendi, *The Army and Politics in Zimbabwe: Mujuru, the Liberation Fighter and Kingmaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 42–52; Fay Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe* (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute, 2006), 92–95.

⁹ Tendi notes, from his 2015 interview with Rugare Gumbo, that Gumbo alleged it was Tongogara who went behind the backs of the ZANU leadership to have Nhari and Mataure executed before their trial was concluded. Tendi, *Army and Politics in Zimbabwe*, 47.

his wife for a short period. The subsequent killings of rebels and suppression of the rebellion by Tongogara and his loyal troops based in Tanzania showed how dissent was to be handled in ZANU and ZANLA. As historian Gerald Mazarire states, “The gun had thus not only triumphed over the party but a new form of punishment – execution by the gun – had been popularised, and was only to be curtailed by the arrest of members of the Dare and High Command after the assassination of Herbert Chitepo.”¹⁰

The Nhari Rebellion would turn out to be a fortuitous event for Mugabe. He had tried to attend the Lusaka meeting where the new unity accord was signed by Nkomo, Sithole, Chikerema, and Muzorewa, but had been forbidden to attend the conference by President Nyerere and the other Frontline State presidents, who did not recognize his claim at that time to a ZANU leadership position. His absence from the unity negotiations, which ostensibly had placed ZANU and ZANLA under the joint command of the African National Council (referred to as the ANC) – an umbrella organization of four different movements – allowed him to further challenge Sithole’s leadership. Most importantly, Mugabe gained support among the younger, more radical leaders and members of ZANU/ZANLA who opposed any unity accords and negotiations with the Smith regime. This would help his claim to the leadership role in late 1975, as described in Chapter 3.

George Houser Hears Conflicting Accounts of the Failed Lusaka Accords

The American activist George Houser visited Zambia in October 1975. Houser directed the American Committee on Africa and the Africa Fund, and had developed close relations with African nationalists and liberation war leaders over decades of involvement with the anticolonial struggles in Africa. As mentioned in the Introduction, Houser’s detailed transcripts of his talks are an invaluable source of insights into what the Zimbabwean nationalists were saying about events at the time. Given that members of ZAPU and ZANU trusted Houser as a progressive ally to their cause, they tended to tell him different

¹⁰ Gerald Mazarire, “Discipline and Punishment in ZANLA: 1964–1979,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011), 578.

information than they provided to the American and British diplomats in Lusaka, Dar es Salaam, and Maputo.

One of the first Zimbabwean nationalists Houser met with during his 1975 trip to Lusaka was Enoch Dumbutshena. Dumbutshena was, like Chitepo, one of the first black advocates in Rhodesia. He had been a member of ZAPU, and was their London representative for ten years before coming home and taking up a position in Lusaka, where he was a successful lawyer. He got involved in politics again and joined FROLIZI, but by the time he spoke with Houser he was a supporter of Muzorewa's African National Council.¹¹ Houser met with Dumbutshena on October 20, 1975, at Dumbutshena's law office on the third floor of the Woodgate building, "across Cairo Road from the Lusaka Hotel." Dumbutshena described the internal politics of the ZANU leadership prior to the Nhari Rebellion. He said the "external committee" of ZANU had "voted 3 to 2 to depose Sithole" before Sithole was released from detention and before he arrived in Lusaka. Dumbutshena said it was Nyerere who insisted that Sithole be recognized as the leader of ZANU at the Lusaka talks because he could not be deposed by a committee, and such action would have to be taken at a ZANU congress. Dumbutshena related how Mugabe remained in detention, so he "was not involved in what took place." He then described a "power struggle" in ZANU that was based on "tribal subdivisions within the Shona." Houser notes that such subdivisions had not been a factor in the "internal policies of Zimbabwe," but had become important for reasons Dumbutshena "doesn't completely understand in the external politics."¹²

Based on Houser's summary of Dumbutshena's account, it appears that Chitepo was at the center of the conflict. Dumbutshena told Houser that "the Manyikas, led by Chitepo, seemed to think of themselves as more sophisticated than the other sub groups of the Shona. The Karanga rebelled against this." Houser speculates that this was never made a public position. "Nevertheless the Karangas felt that Chitepo was favoring the Manyikas in the positions of authority within the organization. It was the military leadership of the ZANU forces that

¹¹ Robert Cary and Diana Mitchell, "African Nationalist Leaders – Rhodesia to Zimbabwe: The Web Version of the 1977–1980 Who's Who," www.colonialrelic.com/biographies/enoch-dumbutshena.

¹² George Houser, "Lusaka and Mozambique Trip Notes 1975," MSS 294, Houser Papers, Special Collections, MSU Library.

took the lead in what happened.” According to Dumbutshena, a “death list was drawn up which included Chitepo, who ironically enough as the chairman of Zanu was the one who had to sign the death warrants.” Houser writes how “Enoch wondered what kind of blackmail was put on Chitepo to make him sign these warrants. . . . Enoch says that most of those killed were Zezuru and Kore Kore.”¹³

According to Dumbutshena, the recent disunity in ZANU was related to the Lusaka Agreement and the decision to work with the African National Council. Once again, the division was described through Shona subethnicities. Dumbutshena described Sithole’s support as coming from the Manyika, who wanted to work with the African National Council, whereas “the Karangas did not.” Dumbutshena also claimed that Chitepo had spoken with Nyerere and told him that “he hoped that Sithole wouldn’t be released from detention in Rhodesia too soon because he wanted to consolidate his own leadership position.” Houser noted that “ZANU is very definitely divided” and that, on the day he was writing up his notes, the *Zambia Daily Mail* had reported that “Zimbabwe freedom fighters based in Tanzania at the Mgagao military camp came out in the strong statement opposing the ZLC [Zimbabwe Liberation Council – a short-lived external affairs wing of the African National Council] and Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chikerema. . . . They indicated that the only executive member of the ANC who they were prepared to follow was Robert Mugabe. This is a Karanga faction in Tanzania.” This key development will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Dumbutshena was not particularly optimistic about Nkomo and ZAPU. He recognized that Kaunda, the Zambian president, favored Nkomo, but added, “At the present moment Zambia is not interested in having military from [sic] its own bases.” He also noted “Nkomo’s position is weakened by the possibility of a sell-out which he does not

¹³ Ibid. Similar arguments about the motivations of factions in the ZANU leadership were presented as the basic argument in the Zambian case against the detained ZANU leaders allegedly responsible for Chitepo’s death. See Republic of Zambia, *Report of the Special International Commission on the Assassination of Herbert Wiltshire Chitepo* (Lusaka: Lusaka Government Printers, 1976). There is scholarly intervention on this theme in Masipula Sithole, *Struggles within the Struggle* (Salisbury: Rujeko Publishers, 1979). Professor Sithole details the personal reasons for internal splits and the politics of division within the leadership of ZANU and ZAPU.

think the Zimbabwe people are prepared to accept.”¹⁴ This is a reference to the possibility that Nkomo would enter into a compromise made possible by South African and Zambian cooperation during the *détente*. However, this comment points again to the persistent characterization of Nkomo by his rivals as a leader always on the verge of a “sell-out” of the Zimbabwean people. As the next chapters explore, as much as Nkomo would entertain any possibility for a negotiated settlement that would make him the leader in a new Zimbabwe, he was also never willing to accept a role short of complete control of the new Zimbabwean state. As will be shown, this would remain the main problem for Nkomo in his competition with Mugabe. As described in following chapters, Nkomo would often explain that he could convince, or have others convince, Mugabe to take on a secondary role to him.

Houser also had a conversation with President Kaunda while in Lusaka. Kaunda explained that the *détente* with South Africa was not meant to bring about change in South Africa but to try and resolve the independence of Namibia and Rhodesia. He did not think that Vorster was going to cooperate with the African presidents, but he did think he wanted a settlement in Rhodesia and Namibia. Kaunda stressed how costly the closed border with Rhodesia was for his own country’s economy. He also emphasized the importance of negotiating with Smith to try and avoid future war, telling Houser that he “feels very strongly that there will be civil war in Zimbabwe if there is not some kind of agreement between the two sides there. He indicated that the killings within ZANU would be child’s play compared to what would happen if the situation continued to deteriorate there.”¹⁵

Houser also took the opportunity to speak with Muzorewa for about two hours after a chance meeting at the Kilimanjaro Hotel in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on November 4, 1975.¹⁶ Houser said he wanted to hear Muzorewa’s views about why the African National Council coalition had broken down, given that relations had been good between it and ZAPU when Nkomo had been in detention. Muzorewa explained that the “real issue has been the struggle for power and for leadership in the ANC.” Muzorewa explained that problems arose when he, Sithole,

¹⁴ George Houser, “Lusaka and Mozambique Trip Notes 1975,” MSS 294, Houser Papers, Special Collections, MSU Library.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

and Nkomo were in Lusaka discussing the new arrangements for the African National Council. One of the Frontline State presidents had suggested Nkomo be the leader but this was not accepted, as it “would have broken up the unity plans.” It was a last-minute decision to install Muzorewa as president. The compromise was the decision to arrange a congress “in order for the people to decide who should be leaders and the executive of the united organization.” But according to Muzorewa, “it became clear very soon that the holding of such a congress would be divisive.” At this stage, “Muzorewa, Sithole, and Chikerema argued that the first thing to do was to win the country. Then the question of leadership could be decided.” Nkomo did not agree with this view, and this started the split between Nkomo and Muzorewa.¹⁷

Muzorewa also blamed Nkomo for walking out of one of the meetings intended to organize the new Zimbabwe Liberation Committee. “The Bishop said at one of these meetings Nkomo was accused of making a secret deal with Smith. At this point Nkomo angrily walked out of the meeting.” Houser asked Muzorewa if he believed there really was such a deal, to which Muzorewa replied, “Time will tell.” Nkomo explains what he saw as the reason for the fall-out after the Lusaka agreement in his autobiography. He blames ZANU and FROLIZI for lacking “any organs or structures.”¹⁸ Once again, Houser was being told by one of Nkomo’s rivals that Nkomo was in a position to potentially “sell out” the liberation movement.

British Interpretations of ZANU Infighting

In late 1974 and early 1975, as the pace of developments in southern Africa was starting to speed up with the announcement of independence in Mozambique and Angola, the British had embassy and high commission contacts in the Frontline States with both ZANU and ZAPU and relied on the local and foreign journalists for much of their information about internal developments. The information they were receiving about the end of the Nhari rebellion tended to confirm “tribal” or “ethnic” explanations of the leadership battle in ZANU. A story from the Gemini News Service in early March 1975, entitled

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Joshua Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life* (London: Methuen, 1984), 152. The Lusaka Agreement, dated December 7, 1974, is reproduced as an appendix in Nkomo’s autobiography, after p. 252.

“45 of Sithole’s Men Die in Secret Battle,” argued that the internal violence was negatively impacting the war effort by ZANLA, as well as challenging Sithole’s leadership role in ZANU. The author, who is not named, claims that the “problem” inside ZANU was “essentially tribal.” The author concludes that the “Karangas hope the peace moves will fail and the intensification of guerrilla warfare will allow them to maintain their power and consolidate their rise from relative political obscurity.”¹⁹

Views expressed in the Gemini News Service article were further supported among the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Rhodesia experts based on a conversation with Albert Mvula on March 6, 1975. Mvula, a Zimbabwean by birth, was a senior journalist at the *Zambia Daily Mail*. Mvula had two pieces of information to share with the British about developments in ZANU. The first involved Ian Smith’s decision to rearrest Reverend Sithole in Salisbury after having released him and others for the détente talks. The report was being used by some in ZANU to spread rumors that it was done because Smith had a secret deal with ZAPU’s Nkomo to bring him into constitutional talks without ZANU. Mvula explained that “he was sure ZANU would exploit this to the full and had already been spreading a story that Nkomo was prepared to make a deal and had met privately with Smith. He [Mvula] said that they were also capable of producing false evidence to support their allegations.”²⁰

The second piece of intel from Mvula, who reportedly had been a student of Mugabe’s in Zimbabwe and said he had contacts in both ZANU and ZAPU, updated the FCO on the handling of the Nhari rebellion leadership in ZANU. Mvula claimed that when Sithole had come to Lusaka, he had demanded the release of all of the suspected plotters “held by the Karanga faction.” The conclusion reached at the “trial” of the leaders, according to Mvula’s sources, was that Noel Mukono had been the leader of the rebellion. Mukono was described as the member of the ZANU executive “who originally organized the north eastern front in Rhodesia and . . . thus became somewhat out of touch with the developments in Lusaka.” While fighting in Rhodesia, Mukono was demoted within the ZANU executive and given “an

¹⁹ Gemini News Service, Special Correspondent, “45 of Sithole’s Men Die in Secret Battle,” p. 3, FCO 36/1728 1975, BNA.

²⁰ M. L. Croll, “Visit of Mr. Albert Mvula,” March 6, 1975, FCO 36/1728, BNA.

unimportant external affairs job instead.” Mvula then explained the motivations of the rebellion in ethnic terms. Mvula stated that Mukono’s response to his demotion was to “obtain Manyika support against the dominance of the Karanga on the executive, arguing that the Karanga were sitting happily in Lusaka while the Manyika were suffering hardship in the north east.” Mvula claimed that Mataure supported Mukono and had helped to organize “the attempted kidnapping of Tongogagara [sic] which set off the subsequent killings.” Mvula’s account helped confirm for the British the notion that the internal leadership issues in ZANU could be described best as ethnic competition. However, the Rhodesia department’s Peter Barlow was not convinced that ethnicity was the defining factor. Barlow, who would have an important role as an FCO expert on Rhodesia, wrote “I do not think you need bother with Mr Mvula’s revelations on the Karanga/Manyika infighting.”²¹ However, the assassination of ZANU leader Herbert Chitepo by a car bomb on March 18, 1975 would once again help to focus the “tribalism” lens used by the British FCO and others to try and make sense of the internal violence in ZANU and ZANLA.

The Chitepo Assassination on March 18, 1975

The news of Herbert Chitepo’s assassination in Lusaka came as a shock to many, although it was widely known that his leadership



Figure 2 Herbert Chitepo. July 1973. Getty Images.

²¹ “P. J. Barlow to Mr. Byatt,” March 13, 1975, item 5, FCO 36/1728, BNA.

was under threat and he was in physical danger given the divisions within ZANU at the time. Chitepo was viewed as the most respected of the ZANU leaders and would have been on more familiar terms with diplomats in Lusaka. The British high commissioner in Lusaka, Stephen Miles, wrote to the FCO the day after the assassination to assess the reasons and motives for Chitepo's death. He explained that "ZANU lost no time in issuing a statement directly blaming Rhodesia regime for the assassination." However, Miles reported, "On the other hand, all our freedom fighter contacts have without exception declared their view that Chitepo's assassination was the work of elements within ZANU opposed to him personally." The rationale for this was further explained in relation to the situation Chitepo faced just prior to his death. According to Miles, one of his "freedom fighter contacts" described how "Chitepo had to an increasing extent been taking all important decisions into his own hands and that his talk with President Kaunda on March 16, which he had insisted on attending alone, may well have been the final straw for those who were considering his elimination." Miles added that it was "perhaps ironic that Chitepo, who was aware that his life was at risk, was advised directly by Mark Chona on March 16 to allow the Zambians to provide him with extra protection. Chitepo said that he would ask for such protection when he required it." Miles also reported how, one day after Chitepo's death, ethnicity remained the main motive given to him by his sources, and that Tongogara was the alleged main suspect: "Within the Zimbabwe liberation movements the main finger of suspicion is pointed at Tongogara, ZANU's military commander who has now gone into hiding." Miles concluded, "Further mayhem is not ruled out. Manyika elements may well seek to take revenge against what they consider to be the latest, if worst, example of extreme Karanga militancy."²²

Reports in the days and weeks that followed would solidify these conclusions. On March 25, Miles met with Zambia's foreign minister, Vernon Mwaanga, who had informed him of the arrests of many "ZANU extremists" by the Zambian government. The arrests had

²² Miles Writing from Lusaka (telno 611), March 19, 1975, "Chitepo's Assassination," item 9, FCO 36/1728, BNA. For details on Chitepo's assassination, and the competing claims of responsibility for the murder, see White, *Assassination of Herbert Chitepo*; Chung, *Re-living the Second Chimurenga*.

not yet been publicly acknowledged, but those arrested included “ZANU extremists Kangai, Hamadziripi, Mudzi and Gumbo,” and they were searching for Tongogara. Mwaanga, according to Miles, had “hinted to me last night 24 March, even if he did not precisely say so, that extremist ZANU elements were responsible for [the] murder of Chitepo.” Mwaanga had told Miles that Chitepo “had become a virtual prisoner of this group and was never allowed to go anywhere without one of them.” Miles described how at the last meeting he had with Chitepo, just a few days before his death, Chitepo had been accompanied by Kangai.²³ The significance of this sort of explanation is that it helps to better explain how the British would later interpret Mugabe’s role as leader of ZANU once he successfully assumed that role in 1976. The Rhodesian analysts at the FCO tended to fall into a similar reading where, more often than not, Mugabe would be seen as “hedged about by militant Karangas,” similar to the conclusions reached about Chitepo. Chitepo was seen by the British, therefore, as a victim of circumstances and as a leader who fell victim to his more radical comrades, who saw him as a liability.

British high commissioner Miles also reported a conversation in Lusaka, about a week after the Chitepo assassination, with the leaders of ZAPU’s war effort, Jason Moyo and Dumiso Dabengwa. They confirmed what Miles had heard from Mwaanga and others about Chitepo’s murder: “they said evidence suggested it was an inside job and the perpetrators either enjoyed Chitepo’s confidence or acted with the connivance of his guards.” The ZAPU leaders were mostly worried about the impact of the arrest of the ZANU extremists by the Zambians in two areas: the future of the unity accord under the new African National Council umbrella, and the future of ZANLA’s ability to effectively carry out the war effort. The ZAPU leaders, according to Miles, found it “ironical that Moyo and Chitepo, at [the] time of latter’s death, had been cooperating more closely than at any time since [the] Lusaka agreement, whereas now ZANU personnel were likely to be, after their release, doubly embittered with both Zambians and other nationalists.”

Given the political impact on the morale of ZANLA troops, they both hoped that the “Zambians had detained people merely for

²³ Miles Lusaka to FCO (telno 656), “Details on the Arrests of ZANU Leaders for Chitepo Assassination by Zambian Govt,” March 25, 1975, FCO 36/1728, BNA.

screening and interrogation following Chitepo's murder and that they would shortly be released, but they did not seem too confident about this." Miles reports that Dabengwa was "particularly critical of the timing of Zambian action fearing that Smith might be encouraged by this move to estimate that guerrilla threat would be reduced and that he could therefore safely continue to hold Sithole and avoid further talks."²⁴ On March 29, Zambia's home affairs minister, Aaron Milner, made a public announcement about the arrests and the planned International Commission of Enquiry into Chitepo's death. Miles notes that, in making the announcement, Milner emphasized that "the Zambian Government would proceed with their investigations regardless of 'squeals' from some quarters outside of Zambia," and that "freedom fighters, like Zambians, were expected to abide by the country's laws. Zambia had suffered enough."²⁵ Responding to strong criticisms from ZANU voices in Tanzania, that it was Zambia alone who wanted to imprison and try the arrested ZANU and ZANLA leaders, President Kaunda indicated that it would be a Pan-African commission, made up of "a team selected from the Central Committee and Cabinet, Members of the OAU Liberation Committee and its Executive Secretary, as well as representatives of Botswana, Zaire, Congo Republic, Malawi, Tanzania, and FRELIMO [Front for the Liberation of Mozambique]." In addition, "Kaunda criticised Rhodesian nationalist leaders for their apparent lack of concern for the assassination of Chitepo. They had made no call for the killers to be tracked down while 'others' had demanded that Zambia must stop the investigation altogether."²⁶

President Kaunda's personal anger at the ZANU leadership over the death of Chitepo, and also the Nhari rebellion before the assassination, led him and others in Zambia to speak openly about their frustrations at the Zimbabwean liberation movements that Zambia had been hosting since the early 1960s. In addition, the Zambian government further announced it was formally closing the offices of ZAPU, ZANU, and FROLIZI in Lusaka "and their registration cancelled until the

²⁴ Miles from Lusaka to FCO (telno 688), March 27, 1975, "Rhodesia," item 23, FCO 36/1728, BNA.

²⁵ Miles from Lusaka to FCO (telno 696), April 1, 1975, "Rhodesia," item 24, FCO 36/1728, BNA.

²⁶ Miles from Lusaka to FCO (telno 688), March 27, 1975, "Rhodesia," item 23, FCO 36/1728, BNA.

Rhodesian nationalists honoured the recent Lusaka agreement.²⁷ Chitepo's assassination appeared to have been the last straw for Kaunda and the Zambians when it came to cooperating and supporting ZANU and ZANLA in Zambia.

There were reports of public protests against the ZANU infighting in Zambia organized by Kaunda's ruling UNIP party, and the description of these rallies and speeches reveal the frustrations with the Zimbabwean nationalists. Press reports from protests held on April 3 indicated that somewhere between 5,000 and 20,000 people protested in Ndola, "where angry placard carrying party members marched through the city center chanting anti-Zimbabwean nationalist slogans including: 'Rhodesians must go home' and 'the government should stop supporting freedom struggle.'" The reporting described a speech at the Ndola Civic Center by "Mr Axon Chalikulima, Minister of the Copperbelt." Chalikulima thanked the crowd for supporting Kaunda and then lambasted the Zimbabwean liberation movements: "He told the demonstrators that Zimbabwe was not yet free because the freedom fighters were 'cowards, loved money and were corrupt,' 'their Independence would not come about by shouting from Lusaka, Cairo, Moscow, London, New York or anywhere else but by going to fight inside Rhodesia.'" He then mentioned the role Zambia had played up to this point: "Zambia had sacrificed too much for the Independence struggle for Rhodesia But even after everything we have done for them the stupid idiots can still not appreciate our help." Chalikulima then "called on Zambians not to molest ordinary Rhodesians living here."²⁸ That it was important for Chalikulima to warn against xenophobic attacks against "ordinary Rhodesians" in Zambia, shows the level of disdain some Zambians may have had for continuing to host the Zimbabwean liberation movement in early 1975. With hindsight, it is safe to say the situation would get much worse with increased incursions into Zambia by Rhodesian and South African troops over the next four years. But at this moment, after the loss of a major Zimbabwean nationalist with Chitepo's assassination, a new phase of the war was about to begin.

The arrest of ZANLA's leader Tongogara and most of the ZANU executive was a blow to ZANU, although it also gave space for

²⁷ Miles from Lusaka, "Our Telno 696," April 2, 1975, FCO 36/1728, BNA.

²⁸ Miles to FCO (telno 729), April 4, 1975, "My tel 696: Rhodesia," FCO 36/1728, BNA.

a younger group of fighters to organize as the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) in Tanzania and Mozambique after Mozambique became an independent nation in June 1975. The long process of the Chitepo Inquiry, and the lack of interest on Kaunda's part in releasing the ZANU leaders to Mozambique, demonstrated the resolve of both Kaunda and Nyerere in their desire to unify the Zimbabwean liberation movement. Unfortunately, Nyerere and Kaunda often differed on tactics even when they shared the same goal. Almost a year after the arrests, Jeremy Varcoe, the new British high commissioner in Lusaka, wrote to Peter Barlow in the Rhodesia department at the FCO about the Chitepo Inquiry. On March 9, 1976, Varcoe explained that Kaunda still maintained that Chitepo's murderers would be "exposed and punished." "This has surprised some people since it had, at one time, been hinted that no-one would actually be charged." Varcoe also related that Rhodesian lawyer, Enoch Dumbutshena, had told Varcoe that "when he had visited Mudzi, one of the ZANU hard-liners still held in prison, the latter had told him that only one or two people had been involved in the actual assassination."²⁹ This is a revealing response coming from Dumbutshena.

Varcoe stipulated what would happen to these political prisoners since the report had been released. He offered his own views: "I would have thought they [the Zambians] would only be too pleased to ship them out to Mozambique to join their colleagues in the camps and rid themselves of the embarrassment and accusations that they were hindering the freedom struggle and that the continued presence of Tongogara and the rest was beginning to give rise to."³⁰ This would remain a tension throughout much of 1976 but would be resolved by an unlikely source, as discussed in the following chapters. The release of these "ZANU extremists" by the Zambians to attend the Geneva conference was a major factor in the realignment of ZANU's executive under Mugabe's leadership.

US and Frontline State Policy toward Cubans in Southern Africa, 1975–1976

The policy of the United States toward southern Africa would make a sharp pivot after the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola

²⁹ Varcoe, British High Commissioner, Lusaka to P. J. Barlow, Rhodesia Department, FCO, March 9, 1976, "Rhodesia: The Chitepo Enquiry," FCO 36/1855, BNA.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

(MPLA) came out the winner in the Cold War contest for power in Angola. In early 1975, however, all the coalition parties of the anti-Soviet and anti-Cuban forces – including the United States, China, South Africa, Mozambique, Zaire, Tanzania, and Zambia – believed they could defeat the MPLA in Angola before the planned independence date of November 11, 1975. President Kaunda's lead diplomat, Mark Chona, told the American embassy in Lusaka on April 11, 1975, that all parties were confident of an MPLA defeat.³¹ The rapid victory of the Cuban- and Soviet-backed MPLA forces in Angola created an immediate fear among the Americans in particular that the Soviet Union and Cuba would attempt to repeat their Angolan success in Rhodesia. Training and supply links were well known between the Soviets and Nkomo's ZIPRA, and the urgent need to act quickly to deter Nkomo from accepting further Soviet help, and especially new Cuban support, became a priority. One key lesson learned from the Angolan debacle, from the perspective of the Western powers, was that the lack of unity between the movements they supported had seriously damaged the anti-MPLA campaign. The Americans and their southern African allies were determined not to repeat the same mistake in Rhodesia, leading to pressure in 1976 to combine Nkomo's ZIPRA army with ZANU's ZANLA forces. Confrontations between South African troops and Cuban troops in Angola added to the Cold War urgency to fast-track negotiations between Ian Smith's government and the Zimbabwean liberation armies before the Soviets and Cubans had a chance to gain a foothold in the struggle.³² At the same time, the South Africans had felt abandoned by the Americans in Angola, as the

³¹ Lusaka to State, "Southern Africa: Zambian Views Following Kananga and Dar Meetings," April 11, 1975, Document Number: 1976LUSAKA00665, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973–76, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

³² The Portuguese coup of April 25, 1974 against Prime Minister Marcello Caetano was, according to Piero Gleijeses, caused by the unpopularity of colonial wars in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique. Gleijeses asserts that it was more the fighting in Guinea-Bissau than in Angola and Mozambique that led to the coup. For Cuba's role in Angola, see Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 229; Piero Gleijeses "Cuba and the Cold War, 1959–1980," in Melvyn. P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume 2: Crises and Détente* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 327–45; and John Hatch, *Two African Statesmen: Kaunda of Zambia and Nyerere of Tanzania* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1976), 255–57.

US Congress had cut off covert aid in the post-Vietnam context that had been promised to assist South Africa's support for UNITA in Angola.³³

In February 1976, it was clear that Smith was not cooperating in the talks with Nkomo. The British foreign secretary, James Callaghan, told German chancellor Helmut Schmidt what Nkomo had told him in London. According to Callaghan, "Mr. Nkomo feared that there was a real risk of break-down because Mr. Smith was not prepared to concede the basic principle of majority rule." Nkomo had painted a bleak future of what would happen next. He told Callaghan, "If the talks broke down the guerillas would take over. There would be early financial and material aid from the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union and the Cubans would take every opening to make trouble." Interestingly, Nkomo then said that he, "Nkomo, would be one of the first casualties and within a year Rhodesia would be engulfed in chaos." Callaghan told Schmidt that Nkomo was asking for another month of negotiations. He also said, after hearing this dire projection, that he sent emissaries to the South African prime minister, John Vorster, and the US secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, to assist in trying to get Smith back into negotiations.³⁴

The British were also warning Smith to negotiate in earnest with the African National Council in order to stave off communist intervention. Callaghan wrote a strongly worded letter to Smith on February 17 to not let the negotiations fail, or else once fighting began again, it would be difficult to avoid communist influence. "I daresay you see the danger but I am not at all sure how far the white community as a whole appreciates its full starkness. Such developments cannot but have the gravest consequences for you." Callaghan tried to leverage future British participation with the threat of outside intervention. "I and my colleagues would be more disposed to intervene if we were convinced that you were willing to act on the full implications of the situation. I am bound to say that in our view, there is little prospect

³³ On the Congressional politics of cutting covert aid at the end of 1975 and early 1976, see Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 222–28. See also Richard J. Payne, "The Soviet/Cuban Factor in the New United States Policy toward Southern Africa," *Africa Today* 25, no. 2 (1978), 7–26.

³⁴ "Note of Meeting between PM and Chancellor Schmidt," February 7, 1976, Item 11, PREM 16/1090, BNA.

of avoiding a disastrous outcome unless you go much further to meet the current African proposals.”³⁵

The United Kingdom’s deputy under-secretary for the Middle East and Africa, Anthony Duff, presented Callaghan’s alarmist call to Vorster in a meeting on February 10, 1976. Vorster suggested that Smith would not reach an agreement with Nkomo’s basic demand for majority rule, as “such a demand would entail not a settlement but a surrender.” Vorster asked Duff what would then happen, to which Duff replied, “The result would certainly be racial war and one in which South Africa could not but get embroiled.” Pointing to events in Angola and “the confiscation of the property of Europeans in Mozambique,” Vorster argued that “the Whites would not accept any assurances about their position in an independent Black Rhodesia.” Duff asked Vorster how he would talk to Smith. Vorster said he wouldn’t pressure Smith to “hand over tomorrow.” Instead, he would recommend that there should be a “gradual, orderly take-over by the Africans,” saying perhaps “a transition period of 10 years would be not unrealistic.” Vorster concluded, “The trouble was that when the Africans said they wanted immediate majority rule they meant it. They would want an election this year.”³⁶

President Kaunda of Zambia had advised Kissinger in February 1976 on how to best approach the stalemate in Rhodesia to avoid further Cuban involvement there after the Angolan experience. Kaunda’s key diplomat, Mark Chona, met with Kissinger in Washington, DC, and according to Kissinger’s account, warned the United States of the continued role of the Soviet Union and Cuba in southern Africa following the MPLA victory in Angola. Chona emphasized that the United States needed to take a proactive role in Rhodesia immediately to avoid another Soviet and Cuban victory. He advised Kissinger not to be content with containing Angola and urged him to “anticipate Soviet and Cuban involvement in other places and make their presence unnecessary.” Kissinger replied that the United States “will not tolerate another massive Cuban move.”³⁷

³⁵ “Message to Ian Smith from Mr James Callaghan,” 1976, item 13A, PREM 16/1090, BNA.

³⁶ “Record of a Meeting between Sir A. Duff and South Africa Prime Minister Held in Mr. Vorster’s Office in Pretoria,” February 10, 1976, item 11, PREM 16/1090, BNA.

³⁷ Secretary of State to American Embassy Lusaka, “Chona Meeting with Secretary,” February 7, 1976, 1976STATE030916, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973–76, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, USNA.

After having laid out a new strategy for the United States, most of which would be incorporated into Kissinger's April 27 speech in Lusaka, Chona also made an appeal for American support of Nkomo over other Zimbabwean nationalist leaders. Chona made a strong case for American support of Nkomo, arguing that Nkomo was the "only Rhodesian working for peaceful solution," that while "Nkomo has been supported by USSR, he will never be Soviet man," that "Mozambique has traditionally supported Nkomo," and that if Smith accepts a deal with Nkomo, Mozambique and Zambia will stop guerrillas from attacking." Chona concluded that "if U.S. values peaceful strategy, it should show more direct interest in Nkomo's efforts."³⁸

The Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, also weighed in on the topic of a possible "Angola" in Rhodesia in February, suggesting that the comparison was overdone. Expressing his opinions to the British diplomats in Dar es Salaam, Nyerere was critical of "the tendency to assume that events in the Rhodesia would follow the Angolan pattern, with Russian and Cuban involvement provoking American and South African retaliation." He believed that such a view could be "a matter of tactics for bringing pressure to bear on Smith but there should be no serious assumption that this would occur." He stated that other countries in southern Africa had become independent "without reliance on Cuba and Rhodesia could do the same."³⁹

In terms of the leadership crisis among the Rhodesian nationalists, Nyerere "wondered whether it was fully realized in London that it was too late for a negotiated constitutional settlement." After the split in the African National Council, he said he had "advised Nkomo, Muzorewa and Sithole to build strong links with the freedom fighters in the camps but they had failed to do so and as a result they had all been rejected by the guerrillas and were not taken seriously by Smith." Given this failure, Nyerere and Machel were organizing "contingents of freedom fighters" to send into action. This new "Third Force" would have to be considered in any future negotiations, and therefore any deals made with Smith and the older nationalist leaders would not be valid. Nyerere told the British in February, "If by some miracle an agreement

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Strong from Dar es Salaam to FCO (telno 54), February 25, 1976, "Rhodesia," item no. 4, FCO 36/1851, BNA.

were reached between Nkomo and Smith, it would be valueless unless it was acceptable to the guerrillas.” Nyerere emphasized that it was necessary to realize that “the freedom fighters were a third force whose acceptance of the terms of any agreement was fundamental.” To make his point even clearer, Nyerere asserted that should the British support “an agreement between Smith and Nkomo (and perhaps Muzorewa) . . . he was very concerned that Britain should not find herself on the wrong side, facing the guerrillas” and he feared “some clever fellow in London” might decide to ignore the guerrillas if a settlement could be reached quickly. By stressing to the British that “the old leaders were now ‘irrelevant’ and had no influence whatever with the freedom fighters,” Nyerere sought to emphasize how once fighting increased under the new Third Force, Smith would be “forced to negotiate (just as the Portuguese had been driven to negotiate with Machel).” Nyerere reassured the British that the Third Force would get its training and supplies from the Chinese and that “no one would call in the Russians because ‘we do not trust them.’ It was true that Nkomo received Russian support but it was inconceivable that ‘his old friend’ would let them in, much less the Cubans.”⁴⁰ At this stage, Nyerere’s skepticism over Russian and Cuban involvement on a scale approaching that of Angola in 1975 was shared by the British. This would be in stark contrast to Kissinger’s point of view, who came to his southern African shuttle diplomacy determined to act quickly and decisively to avert “another Angola” in Rhodesia. President Kaunda and his lead diplomat, Mark Chona, perceptively understood this difference and hoped to make the most of it by obtaining American aid and support for their work on the diplomatic front.⁴¹

Mozambican FRELIMO diplomats understood how American fears of “another Angola” in Rhodesia could be leveraged to obtain much needed foreign aid. Mozambique’s foreign minister, Joaquim Chissano, approached the American chargé in order to establish that

⁴⁰ Strong from Dar es Salaam to FCO (telno 54), February 25, 1976, “Rhodesia,” item 4, FCO 36/1851, BNA.

⁴¹ For the details of Kaunda’s and Chona’s negotiations for greater US military and development aid, see DeRoche, *Kenneth Kaunda*, 61–65. DeRoche notes that when Kissinger discussed increases in Zambia’s military assistance, and a \$10 million increase was suggested, “Kissinger joked that ‘10 million isn’t a program, 10 million is a tip.’” Ibid., 64. Original Kissinger quote from “Memo of Kissinger Staff Meeting, March 5, 1976,” 11–13, National Security Archives, Kissinger Transcripts. DeRoche, *Kenneth Kaunda*, n. 14, 244.

the Mozambican government was willing to make sacrifices to achieve majority rule in Rhodesia and that economic sanctions were being planned. Chissano told the Americans that “there are no foreign troops fighting in Rhodesia”; that “he expects there will be none in the future”; and that Mozambique “does not want another Angola in Africa.” In return, Chissano asked for “meaningful and significant” American assistance via the United Nations to alleviate some of the economic problems brought on by its sanctions against Rhodesia. Chissano also suggested that if the United States wanted to propose more direct aid, it might be acceptable to Mozambique.⁴²

A moderating voice on the topic came from Joan Wicken, who served as President Nyerere’s personal assistant, as well as a lobbyist with many British politicians by supporting Nyerere’s and Tanzania’s views on Rhodesia. In a letter dated March 3, 1976, addressed to Tom McNally, an important Labour Party advisor to James Callaghan – then the foreign minister but soon to become prime minister a month later on April 5, 1976 – Wicken reiterated the general skepticism in Dar es Salaam over the saber-rattling coming from Washington and to a lesser extent London. She argued that although Tanzanians understood a Labour government should not be as susceptible to such claims, and therefore should have “an understanding that this is really a struggle about Liberation and is not a ‘communist plot,’ yet still people worry about the emphasis which is given to the Russians and Cubans in Angola . . . and the fact that the ‘danger of Cuban/Russian intervention’ is used so often in the ‘responsible’ press.” Wicken presented Nyerere’s position that the Third Force now needs to be reckoned with in any future negotiations, and to leave them out of negotiations would be a big problem from the Tanzanian point of view.⁴³ As the pressure continued to build for some sort of diplomatic action on Rhodesia, the Americans acted based on countering the Cuban and Soviet victory in Angola.

Kissinger presented his ideas for a new South African policy at a Washington Special Actions Group meeting in the White House Situation Room on March 24, 1976. The topic was Cuba and Lebanon, and Kissinger began by saying, “We want to get planning

⁴² These points were included in an NSC memo from Hal Horan to Brent Scowcroft on the US position on Rhodesia, National Security Council Memorandum, “U.S. Position on Rhodesia,” March 8, 1976, Ford Library, USNSC Institutional Files, 1974–77, Box 20.

⁴³ Joan E. Wicken to Tom McNally, March 3, 1976, item 18, FCO36/1851, BNA.

started in the political, economic and military fields so that we can see what we can do if we want to move against Cuba.”⁴⁴ William Clements, the US deputy secretary of defense, said, “I am appalled at the way Cuban military forces are being used overseas. Are we just going to sit here and do nothing?” Kissinger replied, “Rhodesia is a lousy case but it is not the only problem of its kind in southern Africa. If the Cubans destroy Rhodesia then Namibia is next and then there is South Africa.” Kissinger noted his own respect for the perceived exceptionalism of apartheid South Africa:

It might take only five years and the South Africans just won’t yield. They are stubborn like the Israelis. The problem is that no matter how we build our policy in southern Africa anything that happens will appear to have resulted from Cuban pressure. We could make it a proposition that it is unacceptable to us to have the Cubans as the shock troops of the revolution.⁴⁵

Donald Rumsfeld then asked, “How do you prevent Cuba from doing that?” Kissinger replied, “You deter them from even trying it. We must get it into the heads of the leaders of African countries that they can’t have it both ways. They can’t have both the Cubans in Africa and our support.” Kissinger added, “It was the same situation we had in Egypt a few years ago. I told them they could not have both the Soviet presence and our support and now the Soviets have left.”⁴⁶ The briefing concluded that although the Rhodesian situation appeared to be less advantageous to the Cubans, quick actions on the diplomatic front were needed, as “over the next few months, however, these attitudes will probably change.”⁴⁷ Kissinger’s immediate public response was to issue warnings to the Cubans against their further involvement beyond Angola in southern Africa.

⁴⁴ At the time, the Washington Special Actions Group consisted of Robert Ingersoll from the State Department, Donald Rumsfeld and William Clements from the Department of Defense, Gen. George S. Brown from the JCS, Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters from the CIA, and Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft from the NSC. Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, Minutes, “Cuba and Lebanon,” 3/24/76, Ford Library, USNSC Institutional Files, 1974–77, Box 20.

⁴⁵ Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, Minutes, “Cuba and Lebanon,” 3/24/76, Ford Library, USNSC Institutional Files, 1974–77, Box 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ DDCI Briefing for March 24 WASG meeting that detailed “Cuban policy toward revolutionary movements,” Ford Library, USNSC Institutional Files 1974–77, Box 20, 7–8.



Figure 3 Henry Kissinger and Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda. Lusaka, Zambia, April 27, 1976. Courtesy Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

The Ford administration's new southern Africa policy was announced by Kissinger in a speech in Zambia on April 27, 1976. According to historian Tom Noer, the speech directly challenged the older American strategy of supporting Smith. "Not only did he [Kissinger] give the standard American defense of 'self-determination, majority rule, equal rights, and human dignity for all peoples of southern Africa,' but he also made it clear that Washington would no longer offer any support to the Smith Government."⁴⁸ In order to convince the Zimbabwean nationalists that the United States was indeed turning against Smith's UDI regime, Kissinger warned that the "Salisbury Regime," as he referred to the Rhodesian Front government in his April 27 speech, "cannot expect United States support either in diplomacy or in material help at any stage in its conflict with African states or African liberation movements. On the contrary, it will face our

⁴⁸ Tom Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948–1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 244.

unrelenting opposition until a negotiated settlement is achieved.”⁴⁹ The pressure was now put on the Frontline State presidents, from the American perspective, to produce a unified Zimbabwean guerrilla force free of Cuban and, to a lesser extent, Soviet influence.

Kissinger’s true intentions, however, were still in support of the whites in southern Africa. In a conversation with President Ford on April 21, 1976, just before he left for his Africa shuttle diplomacy, Kissinger explained his strategy to support majority rule, while also telling President Ford, “Basically I am with the whites in Southern Africa. I think it is no better for the majority to oppress the minority than vice versa. But in my comments I will support majority rule in Rhodesia.” Kissinger concluded that he would “say the same about South Africa, but softer.” After explaining his line of action, he concluded, “It will be something of a sensation.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Department of State, “Address by the Honorable Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State at a Luncheon in the Secretary’s Honor Hosted by His Excellency Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia, the State House, Lusaka, Zambia,” April 27, 1976, p. 3. Ford Library, Kissinger Trip to Africa File Box, “Election Campaign Papers: David Gergen,” Box 16.

⁵⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, President Ford, Dr Henry A. Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, Oval Office, April 21, 1976, www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0314/1553439.pdf. For detailed coverage of this transition in US strategy, see Eddie Michel, *The White House and White Africa: Presidential Policy Toward Rhodesia during the UDI Era, 1965–1979* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 156–71.