

We Want YOU in the British Army!!

or do We?

Competing Interests and Contradictions between the Rhodesian
Colonial Government and the British War Office over the
Recruitment of Rhodesian Africans in World War Two.

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“Does the war really affect Africans? There is a great sickness behind the minds of ordinary Africans. It is the idea that this war belongs to the whites only rather than to them, and that African young men are being used like machines against their master’ enemies with no good or better benefit as a result.”¹ South Rhodesian African, 1942

If this was the view of many Africans in colonies all over the British Empire during the Second World War, then why did so many Africans volunteer to fight in British armies? Despite so many African enlistments during the war, history has portrayed the Rhodesian Africans as unwilling to help the British war effort. What has not been recognized is what policies did the colonial government pursue during the war that helped or hindered the recruitment of Africans? Lastly, if Africans were responding adequately to British recruitment, why did the Rhodesian civil government stop actively recruiting Africans for the military Africanization program in 1943? The Rhodesian government had a detrimental impact on recruiting because they wanted to use their African labor force for domestic purposes only. The discriminatory legislation of the colonial government gave plenty of reasons for Rhodesian Africans not to join the army. Instead of labelling the Africans as undisciplined, apathetic to the war cause, and disloyal, the blame for the disappointing recruitment of Africans should also be shouldered by the colonial government.² By examining the recruitment and propaganda methods of the British in Rhodesia during World War Two, why Africans abstained or enlisted in the British military becomes apparent. When recruited efficiently and efforts were made to involve them in

¹ Quoted in Alan Dickson, “The Mobile Propaganda Unit, East Africa Command” *African Affairs*, 44 (1945): 13.

² David Killingray, “The Idea of a British Imperial African Army.” *Journal of African History* 20:3 (1979): 425.

the war effort, Africans responded and enlisted in the military. The government's decision to thwart the British War Department need for troops and keep the Africans in the colony as a labor force is why their potential as a fighting force was never realized.

The British had their own ideas about why Africans should support the war effort and rally to the Union Jack. The British Ministry of Information, who organized propaganda during the war, warned that a German victory would mean genocidal massacre and enslavement for many of the African subjects of the British Empire.³ However, historian Peter McLaughlin proposes that most Africans in Rhodesia who fought in World War Two did so for other reasons other than defending the British Empire against German aggression. He claims that while white citizens had a vested interest in fighting for the Empire. Rhodesian Africans believed they had nothing to gain from a British victory except the continued abuses by the British colonial administration. In their view, a German occupation would unlike changed the lived of African Rhodesians. Thus McLaughlin argues that Africans would have fought for any colonial master as long as they were paid for their efforts.⁴

Yet Africans enlisted in significant numbers in the Rhodesian military. If they were not fighting for king and country, what did motivate them? Many Rhodesians Africans fought for traditional reasons which were rooted in the precolonial period. Appeals to precolonial military traditions also encouraged many Africans to enlist. Promises of land for veterans of the war drew many recruits as well and attractive and steady wages ensured that military service would appeal to the colonies large migrant labor force..⁵

³ Rosaleen Smyth, "War propaganda during the Second World War in Northern Rhodesia" *African Affairs*, 83:332 (1984): 353.

⁴ P. McLaughlin, "Collaborators, Mercenaries or Patriots?" 24.

⁵ K.M. Goodenough, "Southern Rhodesia Revisited" *African Affairs*, 48 (1948) 321.

Military historians have tended to focus on European involvement in the Second World War, and have thus overlooked how African participation. One historian, David Killingray, has considered the recruitment of Africans, but his research focuses on the Gold Coast. In 1970, Christopher Wren wrote a short book on the principle African military regiments in Rhodesia, the Rhodesian African Rifles that fought in World War Two. Though he explains how the regiment trained and where they fought, he does not consider how these troops were recruited, or why they enlisted. Historian P. McLaughlin described some methods of African recruitment in his article, "Collaborators, Mercenaries, or Patriots?" but he did not consider the efficacy of any these techniques.. Rosaleen Smyth has written extensively on the propaganda efforts in Rhodesia during the war by the British. But her work focuses mostly on the transmission of propaganda before and during the Second World War from the European perspective. Rosaleen Smyth's work is not concerned with propaganda's influence on Rhodesian Africans. Propaganda did have an affect on the Africans in Rhodesia by inducing them to enlist. It did however keep the African more informed of how the war was going through the new mass media technology of film and radio.

Background

Northern and Southern Rhodesia (today the countries of Zambia and Zimbabwe) had been a part of the British Empire since 1890, when a small number of British pioneers sponsored by Cecil Rhodes staked their out three thousand acre farms on what used to be African Mashona tribal land.⁶ The colony was divided into distinct Northern and Southern

⁶ Lewis H. Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1953*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964) 69.

sections in 1924 when the British South Africa Company was dissolved and taken over by England and the colonial office. Northern Rhodesia's economy rested on its mineral reserves of copper, which was mined by African laborers. The population of the northern colony in 1939 had about one and half million Africans compared to only fifteen thousand Europeans.⁷ While the African population in Southern Rhodesia was similar to Northern Rhodesia in 1939, the 60,000 Europeans that lived in Southern Rhodesia had developed the colony more than its northern neighbor. Southern Rhodesia had gold and copper deposits as well as fertile lands that produced supplementary agricultural crops such as maize and tobacco.⁸ These ore deposits and agricultural crops became increasingly profitable with the English settlers use of African labor. The gold industry in Rhodesia in 1939 was an eight-million pound business, and bumper tobacco crops produced thirty millions pounds of tobacco for export each year.⁹

The demand for labor all over the colonies reduced unemployment in both Northern and Southern Rhodesia to a minimum. By 1942, there was a shortage of labour and the colonies business interests vied with the military for increasingly scarce African labour. Both Europeans and Africans were put to work building new roads, aerodromes, and filling other jobs left vacant by new recruits in the colonial armed forces..¹⁰ Many Africans were employed to work in the mines, military factories, and as porters of military supplies. To show the effect the war had on the Rhodesian economies, the annual revenue of Northern Rhodesia went from 1,500,000 pounds in 1938 to 3,430,000 pounds in

⁷ Colonial Office, *Annual Report on Northern Rhodesia for the Year 1946 including the Years 1939-1945*, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948) 3.

⁸ K.M. Goodenough, "Southern Rhodesia Revisited" *African Affairs*, 48 (1949) 318.

⁹ S.M. Lanigan O'Keeffe, "Southern Rhodesia's War Effort" *Royal African Society*, 39 (1940) 212.

¹⁰ Colonial Office, *Annual Report for Northern Rhodesia for the year 1946 including the years 1939-1945*. (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948) 3.

1945.¹¹ Full employment and rising wages presented the colonial government with a problem.

The wartime boom transformed the labour situation in the colonies. The government, which was comprised of white settler farmers, was responsible for supplying the British war office with African recruits for the military. At the same time, the government faced a white voting public which needed African laborers to run the booming economy. Ultimately, the colonial government had to resort to coercive legislation to insure that there would be enough African manpower to meet the quotas of the defense department. To this end they passed the legislation the Compulsory Native Labour act of 1942. This legislation was designed to make Rhodesia self-sufficient in food production, so Britain could concentrate only on supplying food for the war effort and not to her colonies which had traditionally imported foodstuffs from Britain. The dilemma of where to use African labour was an issue the British Defence department and the colonial government conflicted on throughout the war. The colonial government was able to dictate the use of Africans during the war this because it appeased the war department's other needs by supplying white soldiers and large amounts of materials for the war effort.

When given the chance to fight by the colonial government Rhodesian Africans had distinguished themselves in various military units that went back almost to Rhodesia's inception as a colony. In most cases, Africans had been eager to join local police and military organizations. The military and police organizations were popular among Africans because they were perceived as an extension of the warrior culture that had been popular before the colonization of the British. Service in the army carried an aura of prestige

¹¹ Colonial Office, *Annual Report*. (1948) 4.

amongst the traditional communities and the ability to work with weapons added to this prestige. Africans had served in the local police and defence forces that patrolled the open plains of Rhodesia. Many Rhodesian African also served in the British South African Police Force, a frontier police force that patrolled all over South Africa and the Rhodesias.¹²

Another police force, consisting of 150 Africans led by white officers was the Matabeleland Native Police that began in 1894.¹³ The role of this native police force was to deal directly with African issues and concerns such as land disputes, hut taxes, and branding cattle. The African police force worked with the white Native commissioners for each district as an intermediary between the Africans and the white colonial government.¹⁴

Though these local frontier forces were not part of the British imperial army, these national guard units were organized and trained like other imperial forces all over the empire. Because non-imperial army forces were not paid for by the Empire, their expense was part of the colonial government's budget. Native police and territorial units were always hindered by budget shortfalls in the colonial Rhodesian government and were often the last in line to receive supplies. For instance, African police officers were often equipped with only makoshifi uniforms and drilled with sticks instead of rifles.¹⁵ The poor provision extended to the Africans's pay as well. The Matabeleland native officer earned only thirty pounds a year, while a white officer of a similar police force earned two hundred and five pounds a year.¹⁶ This African wage, was however, still much better than

¹² Colin Harding, *Frontier Patrols, A History of the British South Africa Police and other Rhodesian Forces*, (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd., 1938) 43.

¹³ Colin Harding, *Frontier Patrols*, 43.

¹⁴ Colin Harding, *Frontier Patrols*, 44.

¹⁵ Colin Harding, *Far Bugles*, (Poplar Walk: H.R. Grubb Ltd., 1933) 82.

¹⁶ Colin Harding, *Far Bugles*, 43.

the traditional wages that Africans received from working in the mines or on white settler farms.

World War One marked the first time the British Imperial army employed African soldiers in significant numbers. The unprecedented demands for manpower on the western front led the British to pull all available Europeans from the colonies and mobilize Indian and African soldiers for use in Asia and Africa. The idea of a native African army, similar to the already existing Indian army, had been discussed by military officials in London before World War One, who saw in the African colonies vast untapped resources of manpower.¹⁷ The exigencies of the first world war brought these plans to fruition. P.H. Silburn, who sat on the Defense Committee of Natal, wanted an African Imperial army composed of "Every available man, irrespective of race, creed or colour."¹⁸ His desire was accommodated in the first world war as over forty African regiments from all of the British colonies were formed into a division known as the King's African Rifles¹⁹ Those in favor of creating an African army expected those warriors taken from African societies like the Matabele, Zulu, Hausa and Sudanese, with their strong military traditions to become excellent soldiers after British training.²⁰ Because of the need for aggressive troops, tribes like the Shona, which had acquired a docile reputation by the British were not strongly recruited by the British in either World War One or Two. The colonial government supported the recruitment of the more aggressive African tribes because they felt it would

¹⁷ David Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial African Army" *Journal of African History*, 20:3 (1979) 421.

¹⁸ P.A. Silburn, "The Colonies and Imperial Defense (London, 1909); 'A plea for an Imperial Army'" *Empire Review*, Nov. 1913. 174-5.

¹⁹ H. Moyse-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles: A Study in the Military History of East and Central Africa, 1890-1945*. (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, Ltd. 1956) 702-703.

²⁰ David Killingray, "British Imperial African Army," 422.

ne those militant tribes to the colonial government and would perhaps prevent anymore African uprisings from these tribes.

Over thirty thousand Africans served in the British King's African Rifles and West African Frontier Force during the First World War. These units played a significant role in the East African campaign against the Germans. Rhodesia sent a 500-man force known as the First Rhodesia Native Regiment to fight against the Germans in East Africa. Major Colin Harding, who worked with the regiment, remarked that, "Native troops led by British officers were more adaptable and more mobile than European infantry."²¹ The mobilization of African troops was the result of British Indian troops in Africa falling sick in large numbers. These regiments were primarily responsible for defeating the Germans in their colonial possessions in East Africa.²² Units like the King's African Rifles and West African Frontier force were later used in World War two and their loyal service paved the way for other native regiments to be mobilized such as the Rhodesian African Rifles. The recruitment of Africans for these units in World War One was done through pamphleteering, verbal communication, and newspapers. British propaganda to potential African recruits emphasized the opportunity to show loyalty to the empire and rewards like special land grants given to veterans upon demobilization. Propaganda also aimed at the traditional warrior customs of African society by telling African recruits that a special social status among their African society would be attained because they served in the military like warriors as their ancestors had done before. .

²¹ Harding, *Frontier Patrols*, 270.

²² H. Moyse-Bartlett, *The King's African Rifles*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1956) 420.

Most African Rhodesians serving in the British military in World War One were not in military units but in non-combatant labor forces. In South Africa alone, over 25,000 Africans served during World War One in the South African Native Labour Contingent.²³ Other Rhodesian Africans served in similar labour corps building bridges, roads, railroads and loading and unloading ships. Unlike the African combat forces, African labor units were used outside Africa during World War One. Many of the non-combat units, such as the Native Labour Contingent of South Africa and the Carrier Corps, served in France because of the serious shortage of white labor.²⁴

The mobilization of Africans to serve in non-combat roles was a cost-effective measure used by the British war Office. They paid African laborers only three pounds per month which was significantly less than white laborers who were able to demand higher wages.²⁵ Actually the wages received as a military porter were less than the wages an African porter could get on the open market.²⁶ The use of Rhodesian Africans as a laborer in World War One set the precedent of using large amounts of Africans in labor positions in World War Two instead of soldiers.

When England declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939, it also expected her colonies to take up the war effort and supply men and material. Rhodesia had responded in World War One by sending the highest colonial ratio of white men available for service in the British Empire.²⁷ The Rhodesian British would not disappoint in the

²³ B.P. Willian, "The South African Native Labour Contingent, 1916-1918" *Journal of African History*, 19:1 (1978) 64.

²⁴ G.W.T. Hodges, "African Manpower Statistics for the British Forces in East Africa, 1914-1918," *Journal of African History*, 19:1 (1978) 101.

²⁵ Willian, "Native Labour Contingent," 64.

²⁶ David Killingray, "Repercussion of World War I in the Gold Coast," *Journal of African History*, 19:1 (1978) 47.

²⁷ S.M. Lanigan O'Keeffe, "Southern Rhodesia's War Effort," 212.

second World War, either. In World War Two, Rhodesia made an even greater contribution by sending 6500 white men out of 10,000 available for active service. This patriotism to serve the mother country threatened Rhodesia's ability to defend its own borders should the Axis powers decide to invade.²⁸ Many civilians felt that in sending so many troops that another force should be set up as an internal defense force to protect Rhodesia from any German invasion. The creation of the Rhodesian African Rifles had been the response from the colony's legislative assembly intended to solve Rhodesia's internal defense deficiencies. When the British defense department needed manpower because of the global demands on white British soldiers, the British war office was able to commandeer the Rhodesian African Rifles to fight outside of Africa.

During World War Two, the role of the Rhodesian African soldier expanded from a defense-minded unit protecting Rhodesia from Germany to an attacking force that could fight in campaigns all over the world. The Rhodesian African Rifles were used not only in the African theater of operations, but also in the Asian theater at the end of the war as well.²⁹ The various African regiments bore the brunt of the fighting against the Italians in East Africa and were very successful defeating the Italians in the East Africa campaign. The Rhodesian African Rifles, and other African units such as the King's African Rifles, were part of 120,000-man army comprised mostly of African soldiers that took part in the successful Burma campaign. The Burma campaign was part of the British second front that put pressure from the west while America was island hopping towards Japan from the east.³⁰ Their success against the Japanese disproved the doubts of military officials that

²⁸ Christopher Owen, *Rhodesian African Rifles*, 3.

²⁹ Owen, *Rhodesian African Rifles*, 33.

³⁰ Killingray, "Imperial British Army," 432.

Africans could not survive in other weather zones like the tropical rain forests of Burma. Africans also proved their worth in fighting in difficult terrain as they were forced to fight the Japanese in jungle warfare after they had fought in the arid conditions of East Africa against the Italians and Germans. Even while suffering numerous casualties, African soldiers showed impeccable loyalty to the British government and the numerous acts of bravery chronicled in Wren's *Rhodesian African Rifles* shows that when given the chance to fight by the British, Africans soldiers were just as competent as white ones.

Why the British wanted Africans to fight in World War Two

British military planners thought the program of 'Africanization' was the answer to winning the war front of Africa during World War Two. The Africanization program was part of the British efforts to find new sources of manpower from around its empire. The goal initially was to recruit and train Africans in military and civilian occupations so the Europeans who were in those occupations could leave Rhodesia to fight in the war.³¹ Britain and South Africa both had manpower shortage problems which put more pressure on Rhodesia to contribute as many European males to the war front as possible.³² This Africanization program had been used in World War One and had been very successful quickly supplying the British Imperial army with units like the King's African Rifles which had over 50,000 Africans including many Rhodesians in it. Despite its effectiveness, the programs had been quickly demobilized when the war was over, because many European

³¹ Department of Defence, *Annual Reports for the Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*. (Bulawayo: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1947, 38

³² J.F. MacDonald, *The War History of Southern Rhodesia 1939-1945 Volume 2* (Bulwayo: Books of Rhodesia 1976) 443.

Rhodesians were afraid of having a permanently armed African force in the colonies.³³ In World War two, more Africans were recruited for civilian jobs because the Rhodesian African Rifles regiment was designed primarily as a defense force for Rhodesia only and needed fewer Africans. During the Second World War, over 100,000 Rhodesian Africans were used as replacement workers or conscripted laborers making Africanization on the civilian home front which was a success in the eyes of the Rhodesian colonial government.³⁴

The use of the African regiments in the British imperial armies, fighting in was strongly debated all over the Empire, but most notably in South Africa and Rhodesia. The reasons Africans in the military was contested by white South Africans and Rhodesians was because both countries had sent so many Europeans to the war-front that citizens wondered if it was politically safe to have their colonies guarded by an African defense force. Members in colonial parliaments argued the West African soldiers were characterized by "lower levels of training, they were unsuited to the climate, the difficulty of obtaining the correct food for them and their general unreliability as fighting men"³⁵ Rhodesian white settler farmers and colonial government officials didn't want Africans to fight and constantly hindered the efforts of the British war office in obtaining recruits. The British Department of Defense left recruiting up to its colonial governments all over the empire and Rhodesia while producing lots of white recruits, stalled on producing African ones. The Rhodesia government was able to stall the demands of British war office for

³³ B.P. Willan, "The South African Native labour Contingent, 1916-1918," *Journal of African History* 20 (1978) 49.

³⁴ Kenneth P. Vickery "The Second World War Revival of Forced Labor in the Rhodesias" *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 22:3 (1989) 431.

³⁵ David Killingray, "Repercussions of World War I in the Gold Coast" *Journal of African history* 20 (1978) 49.

African troops because Rhodesia was supplying so much men and material to the war effort. Report of the Secretary of Defense for the Rhodesia colony in 1941 reported it couldn't spare the Africans within the colony for military use without reducing the amount of material it supplied for the British war effort.³⁶ The significance of the conflict over the use of Rhodesian African between the British war office and the Rhodesian government is that it shows that the colonial government was able to impede the British war office throughout the war by not recruiting its Africans heavily and preventing the program of Africanization to run smoothly,

In 1942 the program of Africanization was officially instituted by the Rhodesian military on request by the British war office. Part of the program had already been in effect with the creation of the Rhodesian African Rifle regiments that had been created in 1940. Many of these soldiers were transferred to take over the Southern Rhodesia Reconnaissance Regiment, Light Battery, Signal Company, and Motorized Field Ambulance.³⁷ All the units were part of Rhodesia's internal defense force and some 800 additional Africans were recruited to supplement the Africanization program. The program of Africanization was popular with many Africans recruits because it provided additional incentives such as vocational training that would benefit them once their fighting days were over. Africans were being trained to work communication equipment, drive large trucks and work heavy machinery which were skills that were desired by the civil sector.³⁸

³⁶ Department of Defense, *Annual Report of the Secretary, Department of Defense for the Years 1939-1945*, 42.

³⁷ Department of Defence, *Annual Report of the Secretary, Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*, 38.

³⁸ Department of Defence, *Annual Report of the Secretary, Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*, 39.

The Africanization program was popular in the eyes of the British War Department because not only did it free up more white Europeans to fight but it was also more economical. The 13 million pounds that the British War Office spent on the Africanization program bought more Africans recruits than the same amount could have purchased of European ones. White soldiers at the rank of private earned five shillings a day, which was five times the pay of similarly ranked African soldiers.³⁹ Civilian African laborers working for the military earned between 15 and seventeen shillings per thirty days, merely one fourth the wage paid to the lowest untrained white wage-earner.⁴⁰

Why Rhodesian Africans joined the Military in World War Two

The reasons that Africans joined the military were not a single, consistent one like most of the white Rhodesians. White Rhodesians joined because of loyalty to the British nation because they were British citizens. While Africans could not vote, the British still saw Africans in their colonies as subjects of the crown, and hoped the Africans would feel some loyalty toward that institution when they helped the British war effort. Since Africans were not citizens of Britain they did not feel the same loyalty as their European counterparts. Therefore the colonial government needed a variety of inducements to draw the thousands of Africans into service. These reasons must be considered speculative because most of the Africans that joined the military were illiterate and left little written evidence behind. Because of these and other logistical problems, evidence has been garnered from other primary and secondary sources.

³⁹ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 35.

⁴⁰ Kenneth P. Vickery, "Second World War Revival of Forced Labor" 427.

First, it is likely that many Africans joined the military because the soldier-warrior's way of life was held in high regard by their traditional African societies. Africans, even before the British colonial government was placed upon them, had a long tradition of warfare between the various African societies living in Southern Africa. The British propaganda promoted a new-warrior ideal in recruitment advertisements showing that the African soldier of the 1940's hearkened back to the male warrior society that had been established throughout hundreds of years of African history. Colonial newspapers presented the African soldiers in heroic pictures hoping to inspire both illiterate and literate Africans to enlist in the military.⁴¹ Non-military Africans witnessed the praise and elite status given to soldiers of the Rhodesian African Rifles at parades and gatherings.⁴² Many African soldiers, because of their military experience, felt that they were better than ordinary African civilians.⁴³ Major C.F. Broomfield, who officered an African regiment in the second world war, made a similar observation remarking that, "The majority of askaris had poor opinions of the normal African civilians; he considered himself a cut above them, for wasn't he a 'warrior' as were his forefathers?"⁴⁴ This opinion was made evident to other Africans when a African soldier was on leave, which may have led others to enlist so that they too could be part of this select status in their traditional community.

Many Africans fought for the British colonial government because it was opportunity for employment. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century large

⁴¹ Bantu Mirror. November 4, 1944

⁴² P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 43.

⁴³ Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, *Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British Colonial Africa*. (Athens: Center for International Studies, 1989) 248.

⁴⁴ Anthony Clayton and David Killingray, *Khaki and Blue*. 248.

numbers of Africans had traditionally migrated down from central Africa to work in Rhodesia and South Africa. In the years from 1939-1945 over 138,00 Africans officially received passes from the immigration department to enter Rhodesia to find work.⁴⁵ With the war time economic boom, many job opportunities opened up for those migrating to work in the African military regiments, war time industries, mines, and those positions that had been vacated when the employee that used to work there enlisted in the military. Recruitment for the African military regiments was higher in those districts like the Mangwe district, which had traditionally been part of a migration trail that Africans followed on their way down to Johannesburg.⁴⁶ Up to eighty percent of those Africans that joined the Rhodesian military were rural migrants, peasant farmers and laborers who had little economic opportunities available to them.⁴⁷ The program of Africanization was popular with many Africans migrants because it provided additional incentives such as vocational training that would benefit them once their fighting days were over. Africans were being trained to work communication equipment, drive large trucks and work heavy machinery which were skills that were desired by the non-military sector.⁴⁸

Landless, migrant workers were particularly susceptible to recruiters. Africans with land were more reluctant to join up because their enlistment would have sent them down to Salisbury and Bulawayo, which were the towns where the African regiments trained.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Department of Native Affairs, Annual Reports for the Supervisor of Native Immigration, years 1939-1945 (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., (1946)

⁴⁶ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots? The 'Problem' of African troops in Southern Rhodesia during the First and Second World Wars" *Zimbabwean History* (1979) 35.

⁴⁷ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 47.

⁴⁸ Department of Defence, *Annual Report of the Secretary, Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*. 39.

⁴⁹ John Forrest MacDonald, *The War History of Southern Rhodesia 1939-1945 Volume I* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1976) 94.

The training in Salisbury would have given landed Rhodesian Africans no opportunities to work their farms during off hours because the distance between the native reserves and main training center at Salisbury was very great.⁵⁰

The wages that Rhodesian Africans received in the military were often more than one could receive in the civil sector.⁵¹ The average wage for an unskilled African worker on white settler farms and in the mines was about seventeen shillings a month which included food and shelter.⁵¹ Africans with no prior military experience enlisting in the Rhodesian African rifles were given thirty shillings a month which also included medical, food, and shelter.⁵² Those Africans that had garnered experience by serving with the King's African Rifles in World War One or various territorial police forces were recruited as regimental Sergeant-Majors and given two shillings a day or about sixty shillings a month including those benefits given to private ranked African soldiers.⁵³ Articles in the local colonial newspapers advertised war bonus and early pay increases for those capable men who enlisted early.⁵⁴ This wage far exceeded those given to untrained Africans working civilian jobs. The government also set up many incremental gratuities to soldiers depending on how long a soldier served. Pensions would be given to a soldier's dependents should he fall in battle as well as if he received a wound.⁵⁵ Excellent pensions (36-110 pounds) were also given to an African soldier's parents in the hope that this incentive would offset the potential loss of a wage-earner to an African family.⁵⁶ Pensions and gratuities were

⁵⁰ Christopher Wren, *The Rhodesian African Rifles* (London: Leo Cooper Ltd., 1974) 9.

⁵¹ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 43.

⁵² John Forrest MacLaughlin, *War History of Southern Rhodesia 1939-1945 Volume I* 94

⁵³ Christopher Wren, *Rhodesian African Rifles*, 1.

⁵⁴ Bantu Mirror. September 20, 1943.

⁵⁵ Bantu Mirror. December 16, 1944.

⁵⁶ Rhodesia Herald/. March 31, 1943.

improved throughout the war to show the Africans that the military had their best interests at heart and because prior pensions were not adequate enough to support a soldier's dependants if he was injured or killed..⁵⁷ Other incentives for joining the military included the opportunity to attain the rank of a commissioned officer which meant even more pay and privileges if one decided to become a career soldier which many Africans did after the war.

Perhaps the most compelling force drawing Africans into government service were the droughts during the war which forced agricultural, wage laborers to find employment elsewhere in other occupations. 1941 and 1942 were "nzaras" or hunger years for many Africans as massive crop failures all over the Native reserves caused one of the worst agricultural shortage of grain since the beginning of British colonization.⁵⁸ Maize crops were so devastated that the Native Commissioner of the Sebungwe district in Southern Rhodesia was forced to give thirty tons of grain to help alleviate the famine in his district.⁵⁹ Many Africans were deprived of their livelihood when white settler farmers let go of their African employees because of the droughts. With farming having dried up, the only occupations left for Africans were the military and mining occupations. Many Rhodesian Africans decided that the risks of serving in the military were outweighed by the hardships the severe drought had brought to African peasant lives. The military's benefits of food, clothing, housing and medical care extended to a soldier's immediate dependents which

⁵⁷ Bantu Mirror. December 16, 1944.

⁵⁸ Department of Native Affairs. *Annual Report for the Secretary of Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1942*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co, 1943) 53.

⁵⁹ Department of Native Affairs. *Annual Report for the Secretary of Native Affairs for the Year 1942* 53.

meant that African soldier's family would at least make ends meet while he served in the military.⁶⁰

Another recruiting technique which appealed to Africans was the promise of land as a reward for their military service. Land was highly valued in traditional African society because it contributed to one's status. Land cultivation was tied into all facets of Matabele tribal life. Upon it grazed the cattle which was another status symbol in African society and from the land grew the amabele or African corn which is the staple food of the Matabele.⁶¹ Religion and tribal medicine remedies performed by witch doctors among tribes like the Matabele were tied to the land as well.⁶² The Soldier Land Settlement scheme was introduced to Africans to enlist because it promised farmland, water and a simple house from which Africans could resume their traditional pastoral existence upon demobilization from the military.⁶³ The Soldier Land Settlement scheme also guaranteed agricultural training for the veteran soldiers and initial provisioning of livestock and farm equipment to help the Africans start their new farm properly.⁶⁴ The Rhodesian colonial government also promised cash loans up to three thousand pounds interest free for five years and easy terms of repayment to help them manage the initial financial difficulties.⁶⁵ In return for the land, veteran African soldiers had to show colonial administrators that they were using sound agricultural techniques and making improvements on the land for a period of seven years in which then they would be given title to the land.

⁶⁰ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks" 194.

⁶¹ Reverend D. Carnegie, *Among the Matabele for ten years resident at Hope fountain twelve miles from Bulawayo*. (Westport : Negro Universities Press, 1970) 25. Originally published in 1894.

⁶² Reverend D. Carnegie, *Among the Matabele*. 31.

⁶³ High Commissioner K.M. Goodenough, "Southern Rhodesia Revisited" *African Affairs* 48 (1949) 321.

⁶⁴ Government of Southern Rhodesia, *Southern Rhodesia Past and Present* (Salisbury: Rhodesia printing and Publishing Co. 1946) 86.

⁶⁵ Government of Southern Rhodesia, *Southern Rhodesia Past and Present*, 86.

Many Africans joined the military because of traditional loyalties to their chief or headmen. In a way they were showing loyalty to the British crown because African tribesmen were showing loyalty to their chiefs who had pledged loyalty to the British colonial government of Rhodesia. This misplaced perception of loyalty was accepted and even encouraged by the British colonial governments in Africa. British propaganda encouraged this notion by reassuring the Africans that they could be loyal to two different masters which was his chief and his regimental officer. Across the African colonies the British reiterated this concept of dual loyalty to the African saying, "When an African tribesman joins the army he is not throwing aside allegiance to his chief in favor of allegiance to his officer. His chief remains his chief. By serving one he serves the other."⁶⁶

Many Africans joined the military inspired by the promise of the government to make their lives better for them if they served with the African military regiments. Africans were told that they need not worry about losing their job when they enlisted because the colonial government would create job opportunities for them.⁶⁷ Recruiters told Africans that the colonial government had laws which compelled the former employers, "to reinstate a former employee for a period of at least six months after his discharge on condition no less favourable than he would have enjoyed had he not joined the Forces."⁶⁸ Many Africans like J. Sephiphi mentioned these government promises as one of the reasons they enlisted saying, "We wanted to go and fight for the country thinking that

⁶⁶ David Killingray "Military and labour Recruitment in Gold Coast" 39.

⁶⁷ Rosaleen Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies and British Propaganda during the Second World War" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14 (1985) 71.

⁶⁸ Government of Southern Rhodesia, *Southern Rhodesia Past and Present* (Bulawayo: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1946) 65.

maybe we'd get a better life when we came back."⁶⁹ These promises were advertised in the colonial newspapers emphasizing that the Demobilization Organization would take care of the African soldiers after they served.⁷⁰

The Role and Significance of the District Native Commissioner in Recruiting Rhodesian Africans

The recruitment methods used by the British in World War Two to enlist Rhodesian Africans were similar to the ones they employed during the First World War. The same recruitment methods were used in the second war was because they had proved so successful in recruiting African labor during the first World War. These recruitment methods relied on the newspapers, civil and traditional government, all still strong, visible establishments that could be used in the Second World War a generation later. The circulation of colonial newspapers had increased in the twenty years which increased the importance of them for propaganda purposes during the Second World War. The strong civil government that had been in place for forty years used native commissioners to facilitate relations between Africans and the government and get the Africans involved in the British war effort. Both newspapers and the native commissioners would play instrumental roles in the recruitment of Africans during World War Two.

The British colonial administration in Rhodesia placed a native commissioner in each district who were in charge of both military and non-military recruitment in his district. In the rural areas of Northern and Southern Rhodesia, often the only Europeans

⁶⁹ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks" 195.

⁷⁰ Bantu Mirror. April 21, 1944.

that Africans ever saw were either the district native commissioner or messengers from his department. The native commissioners, because of language difficulties, often relied on chiefs and headmen to gather soldiers and laborers for the war effort. Though conscription was never officially used by the native commissioners to recruit Rhodesian Africans for the military, in order to procure enough recruits for the military and the domestic food-producing sector, the commissioners set quotas for how many recruits each chief was to produce.⁷¹ The native commissioners also used other tactics in order to get African recruits. The native commissioner for the Sebungwe District (Gokwe-Zambesi Valley) refused to give food and shelter to Africans who did not offer their services for the war effort until "they complied with the reasonable request of authority."⁷²

Native Commissioners during World War Two had difficulty in filling their quotas for their district. One of the problems was not having enough staff members to do an adequate job of recruitment. Many of the younger white staff members had left to join the armed forces placing growing demands on a shrinking administration. Louis Beck, a Native Commissioner in Northern Rhodesia, wrote of the frustration he experienced during the war because his staff was so overworked. "This constant change of staff was very trying," He wrote, "especially as most of these youngsters were not interested in anything but joining up. It put a heavy burden on my shoulders, and I could not count the hours of overtime I worked during the war."⁷³

⁷¹ Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1940* (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co. 1941) 2.

⁷² Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs 1940*. 2

⁷³ Joy Maclean, *The Guardians, A Story of Rhodesia's outposts and the men and women who served in them* (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia Publishing CO, 1974.) 229.

Native commissioners had difficulty in fulfilling their quotas for the war department because of the constant changes in staff as well as their inexperience in their new occupation. According to McLaughlin, the Rhodesian government looked upon poor recruitment as a sign that the native commissioner did not have control of his particular native district.⁷⁴ Since many native commissioners were new to their position, there was some truth in this assertion. Many of the veteran native commissioners, because of their experience in working with Africans, became officers in the Rhodesian native regiments. Major F. J. Wane, a Southern Rhodesian native commissioner was the first officer selected to command the African Rhodesian Rifles.⁷⁵ He was specifically picked by the government because he was so popular among the Africans that the government hoped Wane's popularity would help recruiting for the regiment.⁷⁶ But Wane's departure, like that of other veteran commissioners left the new commissioners to handle the difficult job of recruiting.

Many of the Native Commissioners in Rhodesia favored the use of conscription instead of relying on chiefs to gather in African labour. One reason was quality, as the native commissioner for the Navrongo district made clear. The native commissioner derided the "rotten system" of letting chiefs gather Africans for service, "for we don't get the best men - no head of family will send his strongest and fittest men unless forced to do so and without conscription this cannot be done."⁷⁷ But conscription brought problems. When a law allowing the use of African conscription for labor purposes only in Southern

⁷⁴ P. McLaughlin, "Collaborators, Mercenaries, or Patriots" 33.

⁷⁵ Christopher Wren, *The Rhodesian African Rifles* (London: Leo Cooper Ltd., 1970) 4.

⁷⁶ Joy Maclean, *The Guardians: A story of Rhodesia's outposts-and of the men and women who served in them* (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia 1974) 230.

⁷⁷ David Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment in the Gold Coast during the Second World War." *Journal of African History* 23 (1982) 30.

Rhodesia was passed in 1942 the native commissioner's staffs were too small to enforce it. According to the native commissioner of the Goromonzi district, the conscription law only eroded strained relations between the colonial government and African reserves, further diminishing which hurt African interest in supporting the war movement.⁷⁸

Relations between the Native Commissioners and the African Reserves became so strained that it became dangerous for the Native Commissioner's messengers to ask headmen and chiefs for Africans. Already suffering from a white manpower shortage in the individual Native Commissioner district staffs, commissioners could not afford to lose messengers, who were being physically abused by the African communities the messengers were trying to take men from. Louis Beck was an eyewitness to these retaliatory attacks upon his messengers. "I was called out about twenty miles in the middle of the night," Beck reported, "to rescue a messenger who had been severely beaten up while trying to round up a squad of compulsory native labour."⁷⁹

Yet despite these violent confrontations, native commissioners still had extensive power of control over African chiefs and headmen in their districts. This in turn meant that their actions often had tremendous influence over traditional African communities. Native commissioners could remove chiefs or headmen if they were not complying with government policies like recruitment quotas. Throughout the war, chiefs and headmen were frequently removed by native commissioners who would not allow traditional African governments to stall the British war machine from procuring the necessary African men and food supplies. In 1942, for example, a chief and two headmen were removed by

⁷⁸ Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the 1943*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1944) 76.

⁷⁹ Joy Maclean, *The Guardians A story of Rhodesia's outpost - and of the men and women who served in them* (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia: 1974) 230.

native commissioners for not adhering to government policies.⁸⁰ Native commissioners also appointed new chiefs when old ones either died or were disposed by the Africans within their traditional society. The native commissioner took these opportunities to 'stack the deck' by appointing chiefs who were sympathetic to the colonial policies. In 1942, native commissioners appointed 14 chiefs and 17 headmen in Southern Rhodesia, showing that heads of African society were constantly in transition.⁸¹ During the years 1940-1945 in Southern Rhodesia alone, at least 110 chiefs and headmen were appointed by native commissioners to replace those that died (about 56) or were ineffective in the eyes of the Rhodesian government.⁸²

As the native commissioners faced a difficult task in getting African men to serve the British war effort, the labor coercing legislation in 1942 by the Rhodesian colonial government obstructed their attempts to gather Africans for the military. The Rhodesian government, which put the native commissioners in charge of recruiting, never gave the district officials sufficient manpower to help them overcome the problems they were having in getting recruits. During the war, it was the Rhodesian colonial government's position that the majority of Africans were needed more for domestic labor than military service and therefore put more pressure on native commissioners to fulfill his labor quotas before working on his military one. Because the Rhodesian government was helping so much in providing other forms of military aid, the British war office while continuing to ask for African troops did not put much pressure on the colonial government to provide them.

⁸⁰ Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1942*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1943) 64.

⁸¹ Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1942*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1943) 64.

⁸² Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Years 1940-1945*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1941-1946)

Therefore as long as the native commissioner supplied labor conscripts, in the eyes of the colonial government he was doing his part in the war effort despite the need of the British army for African troops.

The Role and Significance of Chiefs in Recruiting

During the war the British found that African chiefs were more successful recruiters than the British colonial commissioners because many Africans suspected the British recruiters of deliberately misleading and lying to prospective recruits. According to Mclaughlin, this charge was justified. The British often used deception to fill its labor ranks by signing Africans as soldiers and instead putting them into the labor companies like the Carrier Corps.⁸³ Deception was necessary in opinion of the British war office because recruitment officers would lose many potential recruits if they were told that they would be carrying supplies across deserts for the duration of the war. Most potential recruits were also promised that they would not be asked to serve abroad because recruitment officers knew that recruits were reluctant to leave their families and homes to fight in unfamiliar places. The ability of the chiefs to produce recruits is therefore an even more outstanding feat because they were able to overcome the hurdles placed in front of them by the Rhodesian recruiting officers.⁸⁴

Chiefs and headmen were essentially employees of the colonial government of Rhodesia and served as extensions of the native commissioner's staff. The native commissioner reports shows that they were given a salary and recruiting expenses to help

⁸³ P. Mclaughlin, "Collaborators, Mercenaries or Patriots?" The 'Problem' of African Troops in Southern Rhodesia during the First and Second World Wars, *Zimbabwean History* 10 (1970) 31.

⁸⁴ P. Mclaughlin, "Collaborators, Mercenaries or Patriots?" 31.

them in their recruiting.⁸⁵ Chiefs and headmen were considered by the colonial authorities to be the perfect recruiters not only because they were more trusted, but because chiefs and headmen were "in the best position to know which members of the community can best be made available for military service and which must be retained for food production."⁸⁶ The pressure put on the native commissioners by the British war office to provide African soldiers and labor was passed on to Chiefs and headmen by the individual district Native Commissioners. Chiefs that were not able to produce enough recruits were either reprimanded or removed from their position.⁸⁷ Chief David Dalindybo and Chief Victor Poto of South Africa had their stipends withheld for 12 months by Chief Native Commissioner H.C. Lugg for boycotting recruitment meetings and putting "the dignity of their positions before the needs of the country."⁸⁸ Fingo Chief Nqadini was prosecuted and convicted by a white jury and deposed by the native commissioner in his district when he refused to take his tribesman to see a demonstration by the Rhodesian African Rifles in 1940.⁸⁹ The Native Commissioner removed Chief Yate of the Gwanda native reserve because he was, "incompetent and quite inefficient as a Chief. He has shown no interest in his duties, is constantly inebriated and has lost the confidence of his people."⁹⁰

⁸⁵ David Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment in the Gold Coast during the Second World War" *Journal of African History*, 23 (1982) 32.

⁸⁶ David Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment in the Gold Coast" 34.

⁸⁷ Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1943*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1944) 123.

⁸⁸ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks for Participation in the Second World War" *Africa and the Second World War* (London: Macmillan (1986) 186.

⁸⁹ P. McLaughlin, "Collaborators, Mercenaries or Patriots" 34. and Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1940*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1941) 2.

⁹⁰ Department of Native Affairs. *Annual Report of the Native Commissioner of Gwanda for the Year 1943*. 5.

Many chiefs made financial contributions to the war effort to stay in the good favor of the government and the native commissioners of their districts to make up for not meeting their quota of recruits. The native commissioner of the Gokwe district mentioned that the Africans in his district made a voluntary gift of 127 £ to the Colony's war fund which made a great impression on the native commissioner.⁹¹ Despite a poor agricultural year in 1942 in which many Africans suffered acute food shortages, chiefs and headmen gathered enough out of their societies to make a 11,000 pound voluntary contribution for the "benefit of the personnel of the Army, Navy and Air Force, besides supporting other funds connected to the war."⁹² Though most of these voluntary donations were in the form of cash for the war effort, some Africans made other contributions to gain the favor of the colonial government. In 1945, the Gwanda people of Southern Rhodesia donated voluntarily 4,600 pounds worth of beef which rectified a poor recruiting turnout for labor purposes.⁹³ This trend had been started by chiefs in World War One and continued to be used by chiefs and headmen in the second world war. According to the treasurer for the Native affairs department, the donations made by chiefs and headmen were much higher than those given previously in the first world war.⁹⁴ These payments served three purposes. First, chiefs used monetary donations to stay in the good graces of the Rhodesian government because it satisfied the governments need for money and foodstuffs. Secondly, it also allowed the chiefs to not have to send any men to either war

⁹¹ Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs 2*.

⁹² Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1942*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co. 1943) 54.

⁹³ Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1945*. (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co. 1946) 208.

⁹⁴ Department of Native Affairs, *Report for Native Affairs for the Year 1945*. 212.

or labor conscription. Furthermore, it allowed Africans the opportunity to farm their own land which was important in the eyes of most Africans.

Chiefs and headmen also served as the war information officers for their tribal territory area. Chiefs were responsible for putting up the various leaflets and recruitment posters in the public areas as well as for gathering Africans for meetings whenever recruiters or the mobile propaganda units came by to put on demonstrations. Often the Chief was the only English-reading person in the village or community, and as such was responsible for reading the propaganda material to his kinsman. To assure that chiefs could fulfill this responsibility, the Rhodesian government had begun education courses at Domboshawa and other regional places especially for chiefs. It provided a six month educational course emphasizing basic elements of writing, reading, and arithmetic followed by a specialization course in leadership designed to help them in their role as both a colonial government employee and chief of their community.⁹⁵ As a result of these efforts, the chiefs would often speak during the meetings to implore his tribesmen to help the war effort. Chief Nondo of the Lungu in Northern Rhodesia spoke to his tribesmen during an information meeting and asked them to, "work with all your strength because this war is not only the concern of Europeans but also of all Africans"⁹⁶

Chiefs usually appealed to an Africans' loyalty to the chief to enlist in either the labor or military corps. They also called upon their tribesmen to prove their manhood by joining the armed forces. Some reminded their fellow tribesmen of their warrior traditions and the opportunity to enrich that tradition and heighten their own status in the community

⁹⁵ Department of Native Affairs, *Report for Native Affairs for the Year 1940*. 7.

⁹⁶ Rosaleen Smyth, "War Propaganda during the Second World War in Northern Rhodesia" *African Affairs* 93 :332 (1984) 354.

by enlisting in the colonial forces. And competition between opposing tribes was also used by the chiefs, using the rhetoric of not letting an adversary tribe contribute more Africans to the war effort, showing that they had more courage.⁹⁷ Chiefs not only used this as a rhetorical ploy, but took such competition seriously. They were wary of letting opposing tribes out-recruit them and getting in the better graces of the colonial government.⁹⁸ This rivalry between tribes and its employment by chiefs extended to all facets of the war effort including recruits, labor, food and money donations. The monetary donations alone helped the British war effort greatly contributing over 54,000 pounds sterling.

Many chiefs filled their recruitment quota by arbitrarily selecting tribesmen and having them enlist in the army. Agolley Kusasi, who served in the King's African Rifles, was selected by his chief to serve in the military. "The chief picked out some men and sent them to Bawku," he remembered. "The chief told me to go and do something in Bawku and I was put in the army."⁹⁹ Native commissioners observed that many Africans did not seem to realize what they were volunteering for. The native commissioner for the Navrongo district in the Gold Coast wrote, "These boys have suddenly been taken for soldiers, a thing which most of them have never contemplated, at a moment's notice to fight in a war which they know nothing about."¹⁰⁰

Many chiefs were very successful in their recruiting efforts and lauded by the colonial governments for their efforts. In the Gold Coast, Chief Sandemanab of the Kanjarga people was given the King's Medal for Chiefs for his work in obtaining people

⁹⁷ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 34.

⁹⁸ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 34.

⁹⁹ David Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment" 36.

¹⁰⁰ David Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment" 36.

for the war effort.¹⁰¹ In Rhodesia, Chief Mangwende of the Mrewa district was applauded by the colonial government for always meeting his quotas for the war effort. According to the Native Commissioner for his district, Mangwende was considered "very influential, progressive, and having more control over his people than most chiefs."¹⁰² The Native Commissioner also mentioned that Mangwende "had his methods (of recruitment) which we did not inquire into too deeply. He even used to sort out the arguments, and his people went off on the railway lorries quite meekly."¹⁰³

In 1945, district native commissioners in Southern Rhodesia blamed the chiefs for no longer having the respect of their African societies.¹⁰⁴ Tribesmen were capable of being recalcitrant against the colony-appointed chief, refusing the leadership of anyone except the hereditary chief.¹⁰⁵ Both of these examples show that colony-appointed chiefs and headmen had lost some of their prestige during World War Two. It highlights the dilemma facing the chiefs during this period. They could either follow government policies and lose face in the eyes of their own people, or refuse to help the government and risk the wrath of the district Native Commissioner. One such chief, Chief Kaka from the Matatiele district in Rhodesia for example, chose the latter. He followed government policies regarding the war effort and lost his position to another headman in a election held by the village people

¹⁰¹ David Killingray, "Military and Labour Recruitment" 37.

¹⁰² Department of Native Affairs, *Native Affairs Department Annual for the Year 1945*, (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1946) 214.

¹⁰³ Joy Maclean, *The Guardians, A story of Rhodesia's outposts- and of the men and women who served in them* (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia (1974) 229.

¹⁰⁴ Department of Native Affairs, *Report for Native Affairs for the Year 1945*. 217.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Native Affairs, *Report for Native Affairs for the Year 1945*. 217.

who were not as enthusiastic as Kaka for the war effort.¹⁰⁶ Under the burden of such pressure at least six chiefs resigned during the war years.¹⁰⁷

The recruitment by chiefs was undermined when they did not enlist for either labor or military service which they seldom did. Potential recruits wanted to see their chief lead them into battle as the great chief Lobengula had done fifty years ago during the Matabele rebellion.¹⁰⁸ Among certain African tribes like the Matabele, tribesmen would not take a war seriously unless the chief himself fought in it.¹⁰⁹ The bureaucratic activities of African chiefs during the war years shows that chiefs themselves were unwilling to enlist themselves in fighting for their country. The reluctance of chiefs to enlist lowered the traditional prestige many chiefs once had in the eyes of their subjects. It also reinforced the view that chiefs were British employees and followed what was good for the government, rather than the good of the African people.¹¹⁰

Catering to the requests of the civil government, chiefs and headmen had lost much of their status among their kinsman, who viewed them as government servants rather than independent leaders. According to historian David Johnson, in the eyes of many Africans, chiefs were "de facto government policemen" which hurt their traditional prestige in their society.¹¹¹ Native commissioners contributed to this image by removing hereditary chiefs when they didn't comply with the government. Chiefs and headmen retained their traditional status by the British colonial government in the Rhodesias because it made it

¹⁰⁶ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks" 186.

¹⁰⁷ Department of Native Affairs, *Report for Native Affairs for the Years 1939-1945*.

¹⁰⁸ R. Kent Rasmussen, *Historical Dictionary of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1979) 154-155.

¹⁰⁹ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks" 184.

¹¹⁰ David Johnson, "Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour" 141.

¹¹¹ David Johnson, "Settler Farmers and Coerced African Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1936-1946" *Journal of African History* 33 (1992)

easier for the colonial government to control the government.¹¹² This policy permitted the British to rule many of their African colonies with a handful of European administrators. But it also had administrative costs and ironically often undermined itself as it destroyed the traditional prestige that chiefs and headmen had enjoyed prior to British colonization which made governing harder on the colonial administration.

The Impact new recruitment technology and methods used in World War Two had on Rhodesian Africans.

In addition to traditional means of recruitment like newspapers, native commissioners, and chiefs, World War Two introduced new methods of recruitment that had not been available in the previous world war. Newspapers such as the *Northern Rhodesia Newsletter*, leaflets and word of mouth had been the standard methods used by the Rhodesia government to educate and inform the African masses in World War One, but were increasingly inadequate. Most African newspapers had small mailing lists that did not extend into the Rhodesian territories, so large segments of the population were left out. Further, limited English literacy among the Rhodesian Africans meant that printed material about the war effort that did reach an African audience could not be read anyways. To combat this problem, the British Ministry of Information turned to new mass media technology like film and radio to serve as recruiting and educational tools among the

¹¹² Department of native Affairs, *Report for Native Affairs for the Year 1941*. 10.

Africans of the Rhodesian colonies.¹¹³ Captain Alan. Dickson, who organized a mass media propaganda unit for the British in World War Two wrote that his traveling film and demonstration troupe was effective because, "To a mostly illiterate population, a show of this nature can do more propaganda good than masses of written literature."¹¹⁴

While radio and film later in the war would revolutionize propaganda for the British Ministry of Information later in the war, traditional standbys like leaflets and newspapers were still the foundation of the initial recruiting effort. The Ministry of Information found ways to get around the small spread of English literacy among the African people.

Newspapers like the *Bantu Mirror* were published in four different African languages to increase the chances that an African with some literacy would be able to read the newspaper to his kinsman. The British administration started its own newspaper called *Mutende* that gave information about the war and other African issues in English as well as the four South African dialects. African children in the missionary and government schools were given pamphlets and newspapers by their teachers to read to their parents.¹¹⁵ The Ministry of Information also put many pictures in the African newspapers, hoping the cliché, 'a picture can tell a thousand words' rang true to the Africans who saw them.

Often the pictures showed the African soldiers smiling and eating meals, countering rumors that African soldiers were not well fed well or were unhappy in the army.¹¹⁶ The advantage newspapers and leaflets had over film and radio was that the information given

¹¹³ Rosaleen Smyth, "War Propaganda During the Second World War in Northern Rhodesia" *African Affairs* 83: 332 July (1984) 349.

¹¹⁴ A.G. Dickson, "Studies in War-time Organisation: The Mobile Propaganda Unit, East Africa Command" *African Affairs*, 44 1945 13.

¹¹⁵ Rosaleen Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies and British Propaganda during the Second World War" 78.

¹¹⁶ *Bantu Mirror*. March 10th. 1945.

printed media was tangible, in the sense that words and pictures could still affect the Africans long after the Africans had forgotten propaganda from radio or the screen.¹¹⁷

Newspapers were pivotal in informing the African masses of how different African tribes were helping the war effort. This was also part of a larger effort to change the perceptions of Anglo- Rhodesians that Africans were apathetic to the war effort and to realize how much the Africans were contributing. In the *Bantu Mirror*, the African contributions to the war effort were noted in its own section on the first page every week. Included in this section were both the monetary and physical contributions like cattle and grain that had been contributed by the African units.¹¹⁸ Other sections in the colonial newspapers had columns devoted to the recognition of African soldiers receiving commendations and other awards. Usually these sections introduced what award the serviceman was receiving followed by what other services the African soldier had done for the war effort. Occasionally a quote from the soldier saying how happy he was in the army accompanied the article in an attempt to show other potential recruits the commendations that could also be theirs should they enlist.¹¹⁹

Newspapers also were responsible for informing Africans of where recruitment meetings were taking place. Newspapers were used in an attempt by the defence department to get the minority of literate Africans to join the military. A typical recruitment message in the colonial newspapers usually were like the one listed below:

Recruitment Meeting

A recruitment meeting to obtain recruits for the Kings African Rifles will take place at Chichiri (opposite the Central African Transport co., on the

¹¹⁷ Rosaleen Smyth, "War Propaganda during the Second World War" 347.

¹¹⁸ *Bantu Mirror*, October 28, 1944

¹¹⁹ *Bantu Mirror*, January 20, 1944.

Blantyre-Limbe Road) on Sunday the 2nd May at 4-30 p.m. The Police Band will be in attendance and a Cinema performance will take place in the evening.¹²⁰

The Police Band and the Cinema were popular crowd attractions that played traditional African songs and showed movies about the war that helped bring out potential recruits.

Radios were also used by the British Ministry of Information to stimulate the interest and recruitment of Africans. While not much radio infrastructure in the form of transmitters and receivers were in place at the beginning of the war, the Ministry of Information and the colonial governments worked hard to make radio a major component of the British propaganda campaign. Receivers and loudspeakers were set up by the information department in public centers like marketplaces, stores and other central areas where large groups gathered and could be reached by loudspeakers.¹²¹ Northern Rhodesia was able to get their radio campaign developed much quicker than the other territories because a major radio station at Lusaka had been built by the colonial government prior to the war. By the end of the war, most townships and mining centers in Northern and Southern Rhodesia had radio receivers that broadcast information during set hours during the day. African announcers were hired so information could be given in the various native dialects of the territories. Chiefs used the radio stations to appeal for recruits or cash donations for the war effort. The colonial government also used the radio to inform the people of emergencies or other important announcement. When victory in Europe was achieved in 1945, the declaration of peace was one of the announcements that was quickly relayed to a enthusiastic audience of both Africans and Anglo-Rhodesians. The use of the

¹²⁰ Nyasaland Times. April 26, 1943.

¹²¹ Wendel P. Holbrook "British Propaganda and the mobilization of the Gold Coast War Effort, 1939-1945" 352.

radio was important because unlike the cinema vans or newspapers it could promote propaganda daily to the people in their own language, thus overcoming the problem of illiteracy among the African people.

In order to erode the African view that both the British and the Germans were both heavy-handed colonial masters, the British Ministry of information used 'gratitude' propaganda which praised the African for his part in the war effort. This type of propaganda portrayed the African as being a loyal subject of the British empire and being a intrical part of the British war machine. The Ministry of Information's pamphlet *Sixty million of us*, as well as films like *Pilot -Officer Peter Thomas, RAF* which praised a Nigerian soldier who was the first African to become an officer in the British army, were part of this 'feel-good' propaganda that showed the British and Africans working together for a common goal.¹²²

In World War Two, the British Ministry of Information waged its' own war throughout the African colonies against the German Reich ministry of propaganda. German propaganda focused on the cruelties of British imperialism and how Britain was "living in luxury on the wealth collected from 66,000,000 poverty-stricken native serfs."¹²³ Britain and her colonies had prepared for this psychological warfare since 1935, when Britain began developing her own Ministry of Propaganda to combat this future German threat.¹²⁴ Censorship and propaganda were not new to Rhodesia. For years the colonial administration had controlled what the Africans read and listened to because the

¹²² Rosaleen Smyth, "Movies and Mandarins: the Official Film and British Colonial Africa" *British Cinema History* (London, 1983) 131.

¹²³ Rosaleen Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies and British Propaganda during the Second World War" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14:1 October, 1985 67.

¹²⁴ Rosaleen Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies" 65.

administration was afraid of strikes by African miners and laborers. For instance, the Jehovah's Witness newsletter, *The Watchtower*, was censored because the Jehovah's Witness denomination preached opposition to all earthly governments.¹²⁵ The Jehovah's Witness organization was also hated by the European mining managers because they were accused of instigating the African miners into various mining strikes and rebellions including the Copper strikes of 1935.¹²⁶

Films had become a exciting venue of entertainment that both Africans and Anglo-Rhodesians enjoyed and frequently visited during their leisure time. Since the late 1920's films had been shown to African audiences on a variety of topics. Though many Hollywood movies featuring stars like Charlie Chaplin were shown, there were also a fair number of instructional films. These black and white, sixteen millimeter films were used to educate the Africans on mining and farming techniques, as well as ways to avoid some of the various infectious diseases that were prevalent in Rhodesia. For instance, when hookworm became prevalent in many of the British colonies in the late 1920's, a silent film was produced and distributed among the colonial governments to be shown to the Africans in the various territories.¹²⁷

During the war years, special accommodations were made in the making of propaganda films so that Africans might be more persuaded by them. One improvement inserted a magnetic strip so the film that was being shown was in the dialect spoken in that area. The main problem, though, according to Alec Dickson who was one of the principal

¹²⁵ Rosaleen Smyth, "War Propaganda" 347.
¹²⁶ A.J. Wills. *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa, Third Edition*. London: Oxford University Press, 1973, 233.
¹²⁷ Rosaleen Smyth, "Development of British Colonial Film Policy, 1929-1939, with Special Reference to East and Central Africa." *Journal of African History* 20:3 (1979) 440.

organizers of the mobile propaganda units, was that propaganda films that were used before the war and in its first few years were too European oriented. Dickson commented that, "sequences are far too rapid for even a very skilled commentator to explain. The 'angles' of the photography are entirely European; and the African find them either unintelligible or pointless."¹²⁸ In response, the British Ministry of Information began to make propaganda films using techniques that showed all the action and information without the use of any editing.¹²⁹ This style was considered by the Ministry of Information suitable for "primitive people." African propaganda films should be "slow in pace, avoid trick photography, leave nothing to be inferred and pay special attention to continuity."¹³⁰ The absence of editing was done to reassure viewers that the British were not trying to deceive the Africans and to help combat the skepticism Africans had built up over the years regarding British intentions.

To reach the most Africans in the shortest period of time, the use of film was the most efficient means of distributing propaganda in both Rhodesias. The Nyasaland Times felt that film could solve Britain's mass education needs in ways other media could not. It reported that, "the simplest and the most direct and forcible means (of mass education) must be thrust upon the adult African mind. Here is where the cinema film should come into its own."¹³¹ Films provided a mobile media tool that could become a makeshift theater wherever there was terrain that the mobile film units could travel. In four years, the

¹²⁸ Captain A.G. Dickson, "Studies in war-time Organisation: The Mobile Propaganda Unit, East Africa Command *African Affairs* 44 (1945) 16.

¹²⁹ Rosaleen Smyth, "The British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1939-1945." 290.

¹³⁰ Rosaleen Smyth, "Movies and Mandarins: The Official Film and British Colonial Africa." 132.

¹³¹ Nyasaland Times, Monday October 29, 1945

Northern Rhodesia mobile cinema vans had made visual presentations to over eighty thousand Africans even in the most remote parts of the colonies about the war.¹³²

The use of media by the British Ministry of Information was able to counter quickly the various rumors that were considered detrimental to the British war effort. An administrative officer for Nyasaland told Alec Dickson before his mobile propaganda unit performed that

A rumour had gone round the District to the effect that your weapons would be fired *at* the crowd, partly to demonstrate their effect, and also because Government wanted to show their displeasure with the young men who had not joined the King's African Rifles!¹³³

Such perceptions of life for Africans in the military had gotten so bad that one African, who witnessed Dickson's demonstration, remarked, "Formerly we Africans thought that joining the Army meant nothing but great sufferings of hunger and thirst, bad treatment and lack of good and sufficient food."¹³⁴ Much of the presentation of the cinema vans and radio programs were given to defusing the stories of war abuses by the British against the Africans. In that, the personal touch of Dickson's mobile propaganda unit was so important.

Along with the inadequate provisions hearsay, Another rumor countered by the British Ministry of Propaganda was the view that African troops were doing all the work in the war. The British were very careful not to show any films of African troops working as laborers because it gave the impression that all the British used Africans for was back-breaking labor. The Native Commissioner of Namwala felt this rumor was being taken

¹³² Rosaleen Smyth, "War Propaganda" 349.

¹³³ Alec Dickson, "Tell Africa, An Experiment in Mass Education" 459.

¹³⁴ Alan Dickson, "The Mobile Propaganda Unit, East Africa Command" *African Affairs*. 44, 1945 13.

quite seriously, noting that "There is a very real tendency to feel that the real work of this war is being done almost exclusively by natives," he reported. "Of course they know that there are Europeans who supervise and train, but they conclude that all the manual work and hard slogging- and fighting too, is being done by natives."¹³⁵ Films that showed any Africans doing any kind of heavy work was quickly taken off the program. Dickson removed two films from his presentation, reporting:

One showed Askari of a West African Battery portering enormous guncarriage wheels on their heads up to their neck in river water. This kind of thing revives the most hideous memories of the Carrier Corps in the East African campaign of 1914-1918 and confirms African's worst suspicions regarding present-day service conditions. The other scene showed Nyasaland Askari in Ceylon, in jungle training, naked but for shorts and boots, and wielding machetes. Trained Askari appreciated the necessity for this, but Africans at home assume that 'they don't even give you proper uniform in the King's African Rifles now'.¹³⁶

Confronting and dispelling these rumours were important because it affected African interest and enlistment, the British believed.

The Colonial ministry of information found this program to be so successful that it began a more complex mobile propaganda unit headed by Captain Alan Dickson. The Mobile Propaganda Unit of East and Central Africa presented more visual options to the Africans than simply watching various, short black and white film that were meaningless to the African such as the role of anti-aircraft guns. Though this unit did show a multitude of films, traveling with the unit was a squad of about thirty African soldiers that gave demonstrations on what it was like to be a soldier in the British army. They were able to impress their audience with displays of physical strength and stamina. They gave firing

¹³⁵ Alan Dickson, "The Mobile Propaganda Unit, East Africa Command" 13.

¹³⁶ A.G. Dickson, "Mobile Propaganda Unit" 17.

demonstrations with bren machine gun and the three-inch mortar, and they also demonstrated the new wireless communication radios.¹³⁷ Because of its mobility, this propaganda unit was able to reach some one million Africans in a two year period all over East and Central Africa. Captain Alan Dickson wrote that his unit was so valuable as a propaganda tool because the unit could show,

The life and training of the askari; to demonstrate modern weapons and equipment; to explain news of the war and its significance to Africans; to stimulate greater interest in their relatives in the army; and to encourage an intensified war effort by the civilian population.¹³⁸

The unit of Askari soldiers were persuasive because they could communicate directly with the Africans, something that a film could not do. The Mobile Propaganda Unit was able to ease fears of white recruiters misinformation and reduce distrust and reluctance by having the soldiers talk individually to potential recruits. The men of the unit came from a variety of territories and tribes and thus were able to communicate into most of the communities they encountered in the dialect of that particular community. Dickson commented that "the psychology of each tribe required a different approach."¹³⁹ Having African specialists from so many diverse backgrounds gave Dickson the flexibility to choose the best manner in which he could influence the Africans and draw recruits out of their communities.

The mobile propaganda unit also added exhibits on what the African soldiers ate and wore during their time in the military. The food exhibit, according the Nyasaland times was one of the most popular, showing the staple diets and the high nutritional value

¹³⁷ A.G. Dickson, "Mobile Propaganda Unit" 9

¹³⁸ A.G. Dickson, "Studies in War-time Organisation: The Mobile Propaganda Unit, East Africa Command" *African Affairs* 44 (1945) 10.

¹³⁹ Alec G. Dickson, "Tell Africa An Experiment in Mass Education" 457.

that the diet contained. The small handouts of food given to interested observers completed the intentions of the exhibitors to show the African that the British fed the African soldiers well with good food.¹⁴⁰

The mobile propaganda unit had a schedule and purpose much like that of a circus, keeping the audience entertained and attentive throughout the performance. The following program used by a mobile cinema unit in the Gold Coast would have been similar to other performances in other British territories.

1. Loud martial music or recording of vernacular songs popular locally, to bring the audience to the van
2. Opening talk, dealing with the reason for the van's presence, the care of Britain for colonial peoples, the African family life and the strong feeling for the land, and the attempts of the Nazis to destroy in occupied Europe the similar ways of life and to filch the ownership of the land and the fruits of the soil.
3. Film: *Empire's New Armies*- Army training from various parts of the Empire, the aim being to stress the power of the Empire.
4. Recorded Music.
5. News of the week. External and internal. The trends of the war
6. Film: *Searchlight and Anti-aircraft Gun*, or other film explanatory of modern war weapons.
7. Recorded music.
8. Topic talk- Grow more food, Save more money, Crack more palm kernels, Tap more rubber- according the local need of the moment
9. Film: *An African in London* A short tour of some of London's landmarks with a well known West African from Nigeria in the principal role, developing the idea all are members of the Empire, that all may look to the imperial centre, that all are welcome there, and there is opportunity for all irrespective of race or creed.
10. Message from Governor, Resident Minister, Provincial Commissioner or District Commissioner on the need of the moment.

¹⁴⁰ Nyasaland Times, February 7, 1944.

- 11 Film *Self Help in Food*- or other film illustrating the war effort of the common man of the type of an educated British craftsman, with his wife and child doing a little extra for the war.
- 12 Closing talk: Remember what you have seen: the Empire is strong, all are members and are safe and free within it. Everyone must do his bit towards winning the war. You have been told what you can do to help. The truth has been shown; avoid rumour.
13. Entertainment film
14. The King¹⁴¹

The mobile propaganda unit and other media units were largely responsible for the improved black recruitment for the war effort. Before the introduction media units recruiters had been struggling to meet quotas to fill the various regiments.¹⁴² Ex-soldiers after the war told information officers that the "film shows sometimes provided both the setting and the immediate stimulus for military enlistment"¹⁴³ In 1943 native authorities noted in Northern Rhodesia that when the cinema van was not putting on demonstrations in the colony recruitment for the African regiments slackened off.¹⁴⁴

The mobile propaganda unit did much to soothe the strained black-white relations that extended far back beyond the war years. This is not to say that the demonstrations overcame the animosity that the two groups often had towards each other, but the unit was able to show the two races working together towards a common goal. Not only were the Africans educating their own people about how they could help the war effort, the unit also showed those white Rhodesians the effort that Africans were making towards the war.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Rosaleen Smyth, "The British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1939-1945" 294-295.

¹⁴² Southern Rhodesia. Secretary of Defence, "Report on Defence for the Year 1943." C.S.R. 16-1947 Bulawayo: Rhodesian Printing & Publishing Co., Ltd, 1949. 73.

¹⁴³ Rosaleen Smyth, "The British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1939-1945" *Historical Journal of Film, radio and Television*, Vol 8, No. 3 1988, 295.

¹⁴⁴ Rosaleen Smyth, "British Colonial Film Unit and Sub-Saharan Africa, 1939-1945" 295.

¹⁴⁵ Alan Dickson, "Mobile Propaganda Unit" 13.

The white manager of the Roan Antelope copper mine told Dickson that he had never seen Europeans show so much enthusiasm and admiration for what the Africans were doing as during Dickson's demonstration.¹⁴⁶

The British Ministry of Information during World War Two began to think more of the needs of the African in order to make recruitment of them more appealing. The British Ministry of Information told the colonial governments to cater more to the Africans in order to bring more production and enthusiasm for the war effort out of the Africans.¹⁴⁷ Obviously with the type of African-biased labor coercing legislation that was passed during the war years by the Rhodesian legislature the advice of the Ministry of Information went unheeded. The Ministry of Information felt that the British colonial governments could not, "ride rough-shod over the peoples of the Colonies whilst maintaining to the world at large we are fighting for the freedom of mankind."¹⁴⁸ New films and media programs were made to emphasize cooperation between European and Africans. The theme "This War is Your War too" was used to promote the image that the two groups were working together to defeat the Germans, Italians, and Japanese.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Alan Dickson, "Mobile Propaganda Unit" 13.

¹⁴⁷ Rosaleen Smyth "Britain's African Colonies and British Propaganda during the Second World War" *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*. 14 (1985) 77.

¹⁴⁸ Rosaleen Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies and Wartime propaganda" 76.

¹⁴⁹ Department of Defence. *Annual Reports of the Secretary Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945* 45.

The Impact of the White Settler/Business Community on African Recruiting

Dissension between the British military and the white businessmen in Rhodesia often led to decreasing African enrollment in the military war effort. Europeans working in the farming and mining industries were concerned about their African labor forces leaving for long periods of time to serve in the military. The Rhodesian Agricultural Union, which represented settler farms in both Northern and Southern Rhodesia, stated in 1940 "When natives are recruited for the native regiment there will be no spare labour left in the reserves to form labour gangs to assist farms."¹⁵⁵ Throughout World War Two, there was a labor shortage in Rhodesia and the Empire. Because so many different European employers, including the military, wanted control of African workers, they used conflicting measures to secure their own needs.

The native commissioners accused the white settler community of using scare tactics to keep their Africans from enlisting. Africans living on the property of white settler farms were told by their employers they would be evicted if they did not honour their labour contracts.¹⁵⁶ Others were scared away from recruitment by the rumors told by the settler farmers that many blacks were being killed in the North African campaign.¹⁵⁷ One big disaster that was told to Africans by the settler farmers was the sinking of the *Nova Scotia* off the Natal coast, in which 300 Africans were killed.¹⁵⁸ Administrator Daniel Hafe was appalled by the use of settler scare methods. "How can a native join the colours," Hafe

¹⁵⁵ Christopher Wren, *The Rhodesian African Rifles*, 3.

¹⁵⁶ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks", 192.

¹⁵⁷ Department of Native Affairs, *Annual Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs for the Year 1941*, 27.

¹⁵⁸ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks" 192.

wondered, "if he is aware of the fact that his house might be destroyed after his departure?"¹⁵⁹ These rumors and stories were effective counter-propaganda methods used by the settler farmers to keep their African laborers working on their farms instead of enlisting in the British military.

Settler farmers used the Rhodesian Agricultural Union and its influence in the legislative assembly to pass the Compulsory Native Labour act passed in 1942. The law guaranteed that European farmers could conscript Africans for the farming of their crops. R.C. Tredgold, Minister of Justice, Defense, and Native Affairs commented, that under normal circumstances the law would not have passed, but it was the circumstances of war that allowed it.¹⁶⁰ The law not only established conscription, but helped the settler farmers increase their profits during the war years because they did not have to pay pre-war wages for the conscripted African labor. Settler farmers routinely used this law which further upset the Africans in the native reserve. For example, in 1943, settler farmers called up 435 Africans in the district of Chibi, which was seen as "a number excessive for a single call up" by the district native commissioner.¹⁶¹

Native commissioners needed African laborers as much as the settlers, farmers, and miners because the commissioners were responsible to the defense department for keeping up African crop production for the war effort. When Africans were conscripted by the settler farmers, a substantial fall in food production by the Africans resulted, which concerned the native commissioners.¹⁶² The Native Commissioner of the Wedza district

¹⁵⁹ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks" 193.

¹⁶⁰ Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates for the Year 1942. 1443.

¹⁶¹ Kenneth P. Vickery "Second World War Revival of Forced Labor" 430.

¹⁶² Department of Native Affairs, *Annual Report of the Secretary for native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1943*. 121.

complained in 1942 that, "any further forced labour will result in a serious dislocation of the economic life of the (Native) Reserve."¹⁶³ The Compulsory Native Labour act reduced the overall pool of workers, as it caused many Africans to flee from their land so they would not be subject to conscription.¹⁶⁴ This meant that African crops were not being planted, maintained, or reaped during the peak periods when laborers were conscripted to work on the settler farms. The Native Commissioner for Urungwe noted, "I should like to see more males at their kraals at the present time to assist in harvesting but the scare of being rounded up for food production has had the effect of them vanishing."¹⁶⁵ Thus the battle for African labor between colonists and the British military effort hurt the effectiveness of both sides as settlers had harder times procuring Africans procure because the African males disappeared to evade conscription. Native Commissioners faced diminishing crop production for the war effort.

Why Rhodesian Africans did not want to join the Military

While the white Rhodesians posted the highest percentage of enlisted servicemen in all of the British colonies in World War Two, Rhodesian Africans only contributed about four or five percent of their available population for military service.¹⁶⁶ The Secretary of Defense for Rhodesia in his 1944 annual report bemoaned the paltry recruiting figures for Africans. Due to these recruiting difficulties amongst the Africans they were not able to raise African regiments as quickly as they were needed.¹⁶⁷ The reasons that Africans did

¹⁶³ Kenneth P. Vickery, "Second World War Revival of Forced Labor" 430.

¹⁶⁴ Kenneth P. Vickery, "Second World War Revival of Forced Labor" 431.

¹⁶⁵ Department of Native Affairs, *Annual Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1943*. 121

¹⁶⁶ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 39

¹⁶⁷ Government of Southern Rhodesia, *Annual Report of the Secretary Department Defence for the Year 1944*, (Bulawayo: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1947) 127.

not enlist were related not only to legislative discouragement, but also to problems in the military, settler counter-propaganda, and most importantly events that were happening in the civil sector.

In the last twenty years the Rhodesian government had alienated many Africans with a variety of legislation that hampered African's economic development. The first pieces of legislation were the Land apportionment Acts of 1931 and 1941, which moved Africans onto Native reserves. They also barred the natives from settling in designated European lands, which happened to be superior to native reserves.¹⁶⁸ The Native Commissioner for Chipanga noted this bitterness as a possible reason why Africans did not want to enlist. He wrote in 1940, "There can be little doubt that some of the more intelligent Africans resent their being "squeezed" out of the greater part of the high land in the area in the early days"¹⁶⁹ Throughout the Second World War, Africans continued to be evicted from their property and whole tribes were moved onto the native reserves. Putting a growing African population on reserves (21 million acres) that could not support them upset Rhodesian Africans because it prevented many Africans from pursuing their traditional agricultural occupations.¹⁷⁰

The Maize Control Act of 1940 also alienated many Africans because it reduced the price of maize to four shillings a bag (203 lbs.) compared to the eight and ten shillings per bag Africans had received before the act went into effect.¹⁷¹ This obviously hurt the

¹⁶⁸ A. J. Wills. *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa, Third Edition*. (London: Oxford University Press 1973) 255.

¹⁶⁹ Department of Native Affairs, *Annual Report for Secretary of Native Affairs and Chief Native Commissioner for the Year 1940*. 40.

¹⁷⁰ A.J. Wills *An Introduction to the History of Central Africa, Third Edition*. 255.

¹⁷¹ Department of Native Affairs. *Annual Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs and Chief native Commissioner for the Year 1940*. 5.

annual income of many African farmers. When food prices skyrocketed during the war years as consumer goods became scarce, Rhodesian Africans struggled even more because they were not receiving reduced compensation for their crops. African agricultural wages did not rise proportionately to meet the war-time inflation, creating animosity towards the government for setting up such harmful legislation that only helped the minority European population. Even the Secretary of Native Affairs noticed that wages were not keeping up with inflation. He writes, "A tendency towards a slight increase in wages was apparent. . . but it is doubtful whether such increase is commensurate with the rising cost of living."¹⁷²

Perhaps the most harmful legislation towards the African during the war was the 1942 Compulsory Native Labour law. The Rhodesian Compulsory Native Labour Act of 1942 forced able-bodied, unemployed males between the ages of 18 and 45 to work on European settler farms¹⁷³. Over thirty-three thousand Rhodesian African were conscripted between 1943-1945 to work on these farms.¹⁷⁴ They resisted this law because it prevented them from working on their own farms and taking care of their own crops. They resisted by running away whenever messengers for the native departments showed up to conscript laborers. Louis Beck, a Native Department Commissioner witnessed the African resistance, writing, "The messengers hated the job, and found that as they entered a kraal at one end all the (African) men ran out at the other."¹⁷⁵ Because of the resistance to this law, the Rhodesian Legislative Assembly created press gangs to gather African labor. As in the days of slavery, the press gangs did not stop raiding African villages until they had

¹⁷² Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs for the Year 1942*, 53.

¹⁷³ David Johnson, "Settler Farms and Coerced African Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1936-1946," *Journal of African History* 33 (1992) 120.

¹⁷⁴ Department of Native Affairs *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs for the year 1945*.

¹⁷⁵ Joy Maclean, *The Guardians, A Story of Rhodesia's outposts- and of the men and women who served in them* (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1974) 229.

gathered enough Africans to work on the white settler farms. The Compulsory Native Labour Act of 1942, which clearly favored the colonial government and the European farmers was another reason Africans were upset at the Rhodesia government and did not want to join the military.

The military's treatment of Africans was another reason that Africans did not want to serve in the military. Even though the African military wage was higher than one could receive in the civil sector it was still much less than the white servicemen.¹⁷⁶ Africans were also discriminated in the military were governed by a much tougher code of discipline than were white soldiers. Corporal punishment was allowed for Africans soldiers during the early parts of World War Two while it was forbidden for a white soldier to receive corporal punishment. Official army law dictated that an African could be flogged (whipped) "for disgraceful conduct in the face of the enemy, mutiny, sedition, disobedience to an officer neglect to obey general orders, desertion, and for absence without leave."¹⁷⁷ According to David Killingray even when British authorities outlawed flogging of Africans in 1941, reports of illegal floggings of Africans in the East Africa command still came to the attention of the British defense department.¹⁷⁸ Reports of brutal discipline methods being applied to African soldiers would get back to the African societies when soldiers came up for vacation and it was these stories that scared off potential recruits from enlisting.

The colony's cattle reducing program also upset many of the rural Africans. Not only did it ruin the income of many cattle grazers but it directly affected traditional Africans customs, which held the owning of cattle in high esteem. This program was instituted

¹⁷⁶ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 45.

¹⁷⁷ David Killingray, "The 'Rod of Empire': The Debate over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces, 1888-1946." *Journal of African History* 35 (1994) 212.

¹⁷⁸ David Killingray, "'Rod of Empire'". 213.

because there was not enough water and land on the Native reserves to accommodate the African population. Those that did not follow the destocking program were given criminal sanctions by the native commissioners, and each penalty resulted in the loss of African farmer's cattle as a fine.¹⁷⁹ The destocking program also affected traditional customs such as lobolo, the cattle payment made by husbands to the families of their brides, because many Africans were losing their cattle.¹⁸⁰ The price of cattle was skyrocketing in Rhodesia at this time and the discriminatory land apportionment and cattle destocking laws ensured that European farmers would reap the war-time profits by having more and better land to graze their large herds of cattle, which they then sold to the war department. R.L. Joll the Native Commissioner of Gwanda reported, "the necessity for destocking is not appreciated and is regarded by many (Africans) as a distinct threat to their insurance against poverty."¹⁸¹

The military's treatment of Africans was another reason that Africans did not want to serve. Even though the African military wage was higher than in the civil sector they were still much less than the white servicemen.¹⁸² Africans were also discriminated against in the military. They were governed by a much tougher code of discipline than were white soldiers. Corporal punishment was allowed for Africans soldiers during the early parts of World War Two while it was forbidden for a white soldier. Official army law dictated that an African could be flogged (whipped) "for disgraceful conduct in the face of the enemy, mutiny, sedition, disobedience to an officer neglect to obey general orders, desertion, and

¹⁷⁹ Department of Native Affairs, *Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs for the Year 1944*. 162.

¹⁸⁰ R. Kent Rasmussen, *Historical Dictionary of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe*. London: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1979 157.

¹⁸¹ Native Commissioner Reports for Gwanda Territory. 13th January 1944.

¹⁸² P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 45.

for absence without leave."¹⁸³ According to David Killingray, even though British authorities outlawed flogging of Africans in 1941, reports of illegal floggings of Africans in the East Africa command still came to the attention of the British defense department.¹⁸⁴ Reports of brutal discipline methods being applied to African soldiers would get back to the African societies when soldiers came up for vacation and scared off potential recruits from enlisting.

Africans in the Rhodesian African rifles were also prosecuted for military crimes more frequently than white soldiers, which gives further evidence to suggest that authorities were being discriminatory towards African soldiers. The Adjutant-General for Southern Rhodesia reported that "Commanding Officers and Sub-unit Commanders have greater powers of punishment than are allowed under the Southern Rhodesia Discipline Code"¹⁸⁵ Another example of discriminatory actions of the white military establishment can be seen in the minor offense reports for the years 1941-1943. Out of the 16,796 minor offenses posted by the defence department in the years 1941 through 1943, 13,566 of them were charged to members of the Rhodesian African rifles which only comprised about four thousand members when at full strength.¹⁸⁶ This regiment was stationed in Rhodesia until 1943, which meant when Africans went on leave they would tell other Africans in their communities how they were being treated, which in turn would discourage others from recruiting. For example, Motwana Kontolo, who served in a South African military

¹⁸³ David Killingray, "The 'Rod of Empire': The Debate over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces, 1888-1946." *Journal of African History* 35 (1994) 212.

¹⁸⁴ David Killingray, "'Rod of Empire'". 213.

¹⁸⁵ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report of the Secretary Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*. Bulawayo: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 1949. 29..

¹⁸⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report of the Secretary Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*. 78.

regiment, told others not to enlist when he was on leave, citing the hardships and discipline of army life.¹⁸⁷

Africans also lost their land to the war department during the war years so that the defense department could build military bases and airfields. At Que Que, 1600 Africans and 4800 cattle were evicted from their tribal land so that an airfield could be built.¹⁸⁸ The native commissioner had them resettled 30-35 miles away with "barely enough time to prepare fresh lands for cultivation and erect new kraals before the rains break."¹⁸⁹ This was another example of the colonial government abuse during World War Two that provided legitimate reasons for Africans to not want to join the military or labour forces.

What hurt enlistment the most for the African military regiments was the general African perspective that World War Two was a 'white mans war', that did not concern them. Regardless of what their chiefs or military propaganda told them, Africans did not see World War Two as a threat to their way of life. Most Africans did not agree with Rhodesian Prime Minister Sir Godfrey Huggins on September 3rd, 1939 when he pronounced that "England's wars are our wars."¹⁹⁰ Most Rhodesian Africans on the home front never saw an enemy soldier or suffered through any bombardments because the war reached South Africa. The only information Africans knew of the war was through British propaganda. Native Commissioner of the Gwanda district noticed this apathy of the Africans towards the war, lamenting, "The Natives are contented and have no interest in politics."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Louis Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks" 185.

¹⁸⁸ Kenneth P. Vickery, "Second World War Revival of Forced Labor." 427.

¹⁸⁹ Kenneth P. Vickery, "Second World War Revival of Forced Labor." 427.

¹⁹⁰ Government of Southern Rhodesia, *Southern Rhodesia Past and Present*, (Salisbury: Rhodesian Printing and Publishing Co., 17.

¹⁹¹ Department of Native Affairs, *Annual Report of the Secretary of Native Affairs for the Year 1941*. 2.

Many Africans felt that there would be little difference between rule by Germany and rule by the British. A schoolboy in the Mongu district touched this theme when he asked his native commissioner "If Hitler treated his white slaves any better than Europeans treat African here?"¹⁹² The information officer of Nairobi also noticed this theme, reporting that there were Africans in his district "who argue that all European are alike and that anyhow German rule cannot be worse than the British"¹⁹³ Most Africans saw the British and the Germans as one people. A native commissioner in Nigeria describes this view, stating "the mass of the (African) people still thought of the white race as one, united by colour, education, religion. . . Every time we indicted Germany or Vichy France, we indicted ourselves as well"¹⁹⁴ Overcoming the view that World War Two was a 'white man's war' was a difficult one for the British that was never sufficiently dealt with during the war. Though British propaganda showed ways that the Empire was caring about Africans, the discriminatory legislation, the military discrimination, and the settler counter-propaganda were strong enough deterrents to keep Africans from recruiting in numbers sufficient enough to meet the demands of the war department.

The Dismantling of Africanization

The British program of Africanization was officially reversed in 1943 by the Rhodesian Legislative assembly because recruiting demands were not being met adequately enough. This was in part because the Rhodesian government was not providing enough manpower for recruiting Africans for the military as it was experiencing manpower

¹⁹² Rosaleen Smyth, "War propaganda in Northern Rhodesia" 353.

¹⁹³ Rosaleen Smyth, "Britain's African Colonies and British Propaganda during the Second World War" 74.

¹⁹⁴ Wendell P. Holbrook, "British Propaganda and the Mobilization of the Gold Coast War Effort, 1939-1945" *Journal of African History* 26 (1985) 353.

deficiencies on many of its staffs. Also, the African front in the war was closing and the large amounts of African reserves that were being trained in the British army were not needed in as large amounts as when the German threat had been so imminent. This does not mean that Africans were removed from the military but rather they were transferred to other units and not recruited as heavily for military positions by the Rhodesian government, which was in charge of recruitment for the defense department. The Rhodesian African Rifles were transferred to a larger African army under the British East Africa command and other units, like the King's African Rifles, were sent to the Middle East and later to Burma.¹⁹⁵

One of the reasons cited by the Rhodesian government for the dismantling of the Africanization program was the problems that the native commissioners, who were in charge of recruitment of Africans, had in getting Africans to join the military. The defense department noted the strains that the program had put on the department, reporting "The establishment for the (African) Battalion, together with the first line reinforcements, proved to be a very heavy one and, in order that the unit should proceed at full strength, the policy of Africanization . . . had to be reversed."¹⁹⁶ The Commander of the Rhodesian military forces noted in 1943 that "Native recruiting for the military forces is at a low ebb and to raise two additional African Infantry Battalions at the present rate of recruiting will take two more years."¹⁹⁷ Reports of the Africans unwillingness to enlist further dampened the initial optimism of military leaders that Africanization could be a success. The Native

¹⁹⁵ Department of Defence, *Annual Report of the Secretary, Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*, 73.

¹⁹⁶ Department of Defence, *Annual Report of the Secretary Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*, 73.^t

¹⁹⁷ J.F. MacDonald, *The War History of Southern Rhodesia 1939-1945 Volume 2* 443.

Commissioner for the Makoni District of Rhodesia reported, for example, that African males had "rubbed peppers into their eyes to render themselves temporarily unfit for serious consideration by recruiters."¹⁹⁸ What is not told by these reports was the negative impact that Rhodesian legislation had on Rhodesian Africans during the war which discouraged participation by the African. Reports that white British recruiters did not make a complete effort in recruiting the Africans by the defense department further explain why Africans were so slow in coming forward to enlist.

Another reason that the Africanization program was stopped was a change in military policy, which allowed white Rhodesians the opportunity to transfer from their units in Europe to the Union Defence Force that protected the Rhodesias and South Africa. White Rhodesian soldiers wanted the opportunity to defend their homelands should the Germans try to gain a foothold in Africa by invading South Africa. Another reason why white Rhodesians wanted to join the Union Defence Force was because the "conditions of service were more attractive than service in the Imperial army."¹⁹⁹ Rhodesian soldiers in the Union Defence Force would have the opportunity to go home when on leave and South Africa at this point in the war was a relatively safe zone. With many of the white Rhodesian soldiers returning to fulfill Rhodesian internal defense deficiencies, it was no longer necessary to keep up the Africanization program

The British Department of Defense never gave the military part of Africanization a chance to work in Rhodesia. The program was initiated in full force in 1942 and a year later it was repealed. The British Defence Department's conscription of thousands of

¹⁹⁸ P. McLaughlin, "Mercenaries, Collaborators, or Patriots?" 42.

¹⁹⁹ Department of Defence. *Annual Report of the Secretary Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*, 71.

Africans for its war machine to work on the various military labor projects certainly met its expectations while paying less to meet them. The Rhodesian government never made the recruitment of Rhodesian Africans for military purposes a priority or it would have pursued them in the same manner the government pursued its white citizens. It would of instituted a draft for the Africans in the colony like it had for the white population.

Yet, according to the Nyasaland Times, a newspaper serving Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Africans were in fact responding to the military's needs for recruits for the African regiments. On May, 17, 1943 in a summary report of the regions work done for the war effort, the newspaper reported that, "The response on the part of the native population has been satisfactory and at the end of 1942 all the requirements of the military had been met."²⁰⁰ The Defence Department noted in the Nyasaland Times that,

the urgent demand for soldiers from Nyasaland has for the present been met and I thank all the young men who answered the call. This recruiting campaign, which went into operation only nine months since was a success from the very start. Most satisfactory reports came in from most districts to the effect that the monthly quotas were being steadily maintained and in most instances were being exceeded.²⁰¹

When Africans were being recruited properly and the government or the settlers were not trying to keep Africans from enlisting, Africans did enlist in satisfactory numbers. This contradicts other scholarship from historians like Peter McLaughlin that put forth the thesis that Rhodesian Africans were apathetic to the war for personal reasons. In reality, Rhodesian Africans were heavily involved in the war effort and supported the British colonial government when concerted attempts were made to recruit them.

²⁰⁰ Nyasaland Times, May 17, 1943.

²⁰¹ Nysaland Times, July 1st, 1943.

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It is further interesting that Africanization would be overturned so quickly when both the members in both the civil and defense department lauded the effort of African soldiers in the war effort. The Governor of Southern Rhodesia, Sir Evelyn Baring after a tour to the war front said that the "Africans soldiers have fought, and are fighting bravely and loyally to this war against the enemies of all men in all countries who want to live in peace."²⁰² A white officer in the British army, just returned from six months amongst the Rhodesian African Rifles, had this to say about them. He said, "Africans have definitely established their worth in the army. . . But it is perhaps as fighting men that they have won fame. They take drill and discipline very seriously with the result that they do make a fine appearance as a regiment. It is commonly admitted that they stole the honours at the ceremonial parades in Madagascar."²⁰³ An editorial in the Nyasaland times in 1943 reads, "Our Anglo-African have proved themselves to be just as eager as all other loyal subjects to serve King and Country in this struggles for liberty and democracy. Now, however, a decision has been taken by the civil authorities of Southern Rhodesia to restrict enlistment to Anglo-Africans who are citizens of that colony."²⁰⁴ Such enthusiasm by both members of the civil and defense departments shows that the Rhodesian colonial government and not the military were responsible for the repeal of Africanization.

The Rhodesian government never conscripted Africans for the military as it did the white Rhodesians. Throughout the war, in an effort to keep garnering men for the war effort, the Rhodesian Government kept lowering the European drafting age until it reached

²⁰² Bantu Mirror, October 14, 1944.

²⁰³ Nyasaland Times, February 18, 1943.

²⁰⁴ Nyasaland Times, June 29, 1943.

18 in 1944.²⁰⁵ Even then it was only procuring about 250 white Rhodesians a year in Southern Rhodesia which was hardly enough to outfit a regiment. The Rhodesian government which was in charge of recruitment of African soldiers never pursued them fully, through conscription. Instead they used conscription to fill the domestic labor ranks with Africans which was more beneficial to the war-time economy.

Meanwhile, the British Defense Department, in its annual defense report of 1944, wanted more African soldiers, stating, "a regular flow of trained recruits for East Africa will be possible *provided* an energetic recruiting policy is pursued by the government."²⁰⁶ When the governments made diligent efforts to recruit and accommodate Africans, Africans enlisted in the military forces. That suggests that the struggle between colonial government aim and British Imperial Government aims were quite different and that the struggle between them was critical to the practice of African military recruitment. The defense minister of England reported in 1944 that "the call for recruits had had good results and since the R.A.R. Battalion left the Colony very good reports have been received. More (African) recruits were needed to keep up its strength, and asked the leading Africans to stimulate the movement."²⁰⁷ When the government opened a Rhodesian African Rifles depot in Matabeleland to help facilitate and induce Matabele Africans to enlist, "there were indications that African recruiting, which had previously been somewhat disappointing, was definitely improved."²⁰⁸ Therefore, Africans were

²⁰⁵ Department of Defence, *Annual Reports of the Secretary Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*. 122.

²⁰⁶ Department of Defence, *Annual Reports of the Secretary Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*. 127.

²⁰⁷ Bantu Mirror. October 21, 1944.

²⁰⁸ Department of Defence, *Annual Reports of the Secretary Department of Defence for the Years 1939-1945*. 73.

recruited well in small numbers because that is all the effort the government made in recruiting them. Other potential recruits were persuaded not to join by their chiefs, the colonial legislation, and counter-propaganda told to them by the Anglo farmers and mineowners.

The use of African regiments fighting in "white man's wars" was hotly debated all over the Empire, but most notably in South Africa and Rhodesia. One reason Africans in the military were contested by white settlers in Rhodesia was because Rhodesia had sent so many white British civilians to the warfront that the Rhodesian government and their white citizens wondered if it was politically safe to have their colonies guarded by a large African defense force. The commander of military forces for Rhodesia, despite the African's loyal service in the Rhodesian African Rifles, voiced his nervousness that in his mind there were not enough European soldiers in the colony should the Africans decide to revolt. He stated emphatically, "The term 'Africanisation seems to be generally held to be the panacea for all our problems. Nothing could be more dangerous as it is essential in my opinion to preserve a fair balance between European and native troops in the colony'"²⁰⁹ These worries were not totally unfounded. In 1941, there was a large African strike in the copper industry that reached a high level of hostility and bloodshed between Africans and the white European managers. It was these types of strikes that contributed to the discriminatory actions of the settler government in fully implementing African military recruitment in the colonies.

²⁰⁹ J.F. MacDonald, *The War History of Southern Rhodesia 1939-1945* (Salisbury by authority of the Government, 2 vols., 1947-50) II, 442-3.

Conclusion

"Would you fight for a country if you didn't agree with its policies?" Thousands of Irish did not fight for the British in World War One because they disagreed with the British policy of Home Rule in 1914. Thousands of Indians responded likewise when British colonials killed and injured thousands during the Indian independence movements. Similarly, many Rhodesian Africans abstained from enlisting because of the legislation passed by the colonial government during the war, the discriminatory military treatment, settler counter-propaganda, and the deceptions of British military recruiters. Because of their actions during World War Two, Rhodesian Africans in many previous historical articles have been labeled as disloyal, apathetic, and mercenary soldiers willing to fight for any colonial master. What these earlier articles don't mention are the ways Anglo-farmers and the Rhodesia government contributed to the attitudes and poorer turnout of African soldiers that never reached its potential.

The civilian government alienated not only the Rhodesian Africans throughout the war but also the British Defense Department, from whom they kept potential African recruits and laborers throughout the war. Rhodesia had shown the British crown that it was happy to send her white troops to the war front but the colony was unwilling to release its hold on African laborers. The civil government stopped Africanization in 1943, despite the continual call by the defense department for troops. They also prevented recruitment in areas where white agricultural and mining operations needed African laborers to take advantage of the war-time boom in the economy. The Minister of Mines, Public Works,

and Air represented the views of most settlers, miners and agriculturists regarding the role of Africans in the colony and in the war. He reiterated the view of the colonial government in June of 1943, when he said "even if we did have rifles we would not issue rifles to all of them. . . There is no intention of arming these natives, because as I said before their principal purpose is for labour."²¹⁰

For most Africans that did enlist, the deciding factor was a good paying job. Many recruits that joined the army were from the lowest rungs of African society, as was the majority of British recruits. Most armies have traditionally been full of men with little economic opportunity available to them. Yet most Africans who lived within the colony were wary of helping the colonial Rhodesian government during a war in which native inhabitants had been treated so poorly. To furthermore add tension between African Rhodesians, the Anglo-government enacted a barrage of legislation such as the cattle-destocking and the Maize Control Act that hindered the Rhodesian Africans from working on their own farms and keeping their traditional social customs.

Though accused of apathy by the colonial government and historians, the Rhodesian Africans made sizable contribution to the war. Hundreds of thousands Africans supplied labour for the war effort building aerodromes and other military bases on what had been their own land. Monetarily, they contributed over fifty thousand pounds during the war even as agriculture bottomed out for two years in 1942 and 1943, food prices were higher than ever, and African wages had not kept up with the war-time inflation. Over six thousand Africans enlisted in the military, and many of them suffered greatly in the cause

²¹⁰ Southern Rhodesia. Legislative Assembly Debates fifth session- fifth parliament, Thursday, June 10, 1943. 1732.

of British nationalism. Africans contributed highly where they were directed to serve, but it was the British colonial government that dictated how Africans were allowed to participate in the war.

British recruiters worked hard to overcome the interference of the civil government in obtaining recruits for the war effort. There was an uphill battle, overcoming both the idea that the war was a "white man's war" and the harmful rumors that were planted, not only by Germany but Rhodesia's own Anglo-farmers. They tried new propaganda tactics such as the radio and film as well as traveling troupes of Africans whose primary purposes was to get recruits and to persuade the Africans that life in the military was attractive. They offered potential recruits above-average wages and the prospect of owning their own land after their fighting days were done. After the war both the European and African discharged servicemen were supposed to receive land but in keeping with Rhodesian government precedence seemingly only the Anglo-British soldiers were able to acquire land. According to the Head Native Commissioner, the African veterans were unable to acquire land because the land reserves had been used up.²¹¹ Many district native commissioners were upset that they were not given more land to accommodate their African soldiers upon their demobilization. It also shows that the discriminatory actions the government undertook during World War Two would continue after the war.

Propaganda was very important and useful in getting the Rhodesian Africans involved in the war effort. Innovations like the mobile propaganda unit and the new forms of mass media kept the Africans more interested during demonstrations and increased recruitment

²¹¹ Southern Rhodesia. Department of Native Affairs. Report of the Secretary for Native Affairs. Year 1945. 207.

in the areas where these new forms of mass media were used. Propaganda was also important because it kept the Africans thinking positively about the war despite the actions of the civil government which had made life difficult for the Rhodesian Africans. The mass media infrastructure that was set up during the war for propaganda purposes was still so successful, in fact that it was used after the war to inform and influence Africans about developments in the colony. The mobile cinema vans were another innovative educational tool that showed Africans how they could use new technological agricultural innovations so greater crop returns could be harvested from their land.

The military and labor contributions made by thousand of Rhodesian Africans has been overshadowed by the exploits of the Anglo-Rhodesian soldiers. This is partly because of historians have paid more attention to the British soldiers whose part in the war was more highlighted than the role played by the Rhodesian Africans. The 1940's were a period of Rhodesian history when few Africans were literate and therefore unable to write their own histories of African involvement. The reasons why Africans enlisted or refused to enlist during World War Two will not be complete until the government of Zimbabwe releases more of the reference materials relevant to this period or one has the chance to interview those who served in the Rhodesian African Rifles during World War Two. Because history has in the eyes of the author portrayed the Rhodesian African's role in World War Two so negatively, it is important that other interpretations fill in possible explanations for why Rhodesian Africans did not enlist in large numbers. This paper however is a step in the right direction to the answer that might never be resolved.

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