



Outdated sign on border is ironic reminder of a once-peaceful nation now rent by war.

On the Scene in Strife-Torn Rhodesia

White influence and hopes for the future are plummeting under pressure of a war that pits the black government against black guerrillas.

SALISBURY

Return to this once-prosperous country after a long absence, and signs of decay, destruction and disintegration are all too evident. They are the price of seven years of unremitting war.

Zimbabwe Rhodesia has been ruled since June by Prime Minister Abel Muzorewa, whose largely black government replaced the white-minority regime of Ian Smith. Yet there has been no letup in hit-and-run attacks by rebel guerrillas of the so-called Patriotic Front and no indication that they will cease anytime soon.

Talk with Zimbabwe Rhodesians, white and black, old and young, and it becomes clear that this is a deeply war-weary nation that longs only for peace. And with good reason.

In a land of 7 million inhabitants—200,000 whites and 6.8 million blacks—at least 20,000 persons have been killed. The death toll continues to rise at a rate of 300 to 350 a week. Casualties this year—mostly black—are expected to make up one third of the seven-year total. White deaths will be the highest yet recorded.

Thousands more have been killed in retaliation raids by Zimbabwe Rhodesian forces across the borders into Zambia and Mozambique where the Patriotic Front maintains its two headquarters.

About a million people are homeless, and 90 percent of the country lives un-

der martial law. The economy is in tatters, with the war costing the Salisbury government about 1.6 million dollars a day, eight times more than it did in its early stages in 1973. Defense costs currently account for 40 percent of government spending.

Outside the capital, roads are unsafe, and life grinds to a halt at dusk for fear of attack by black guerrillas. Patriotic Front forces are entrenched only in a 50-mile corridor along the country's borders with Zambia and Mozambique. But day by day, more of the country slips out of government hands.

Each morning, three or four columns of the *Herald*, Salisbury's only daily newspaper, carry condolences for families of those who have been killed.

A black taxi driver complains that he has been unable to visit his tribal homeland for six months for fear of being murdered. A white farmer reports

with horror that his neighbor was murdered—hacked to death by an ax-wielding rebel.

For those who remain in the country, hopes for peace rest almost solely on British negotiations in London with Muzorewa and with Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, co-leaders of the Patriotic Front. Britain lost control of its colony in 1965 when Smith, then Prime Minister, unilaterally declared its independence in an effort to perpetuate white rule.

Under the British peace formula, all fighting factions would be united, the Constitution would be revised and new elections would be held. A British governor and a number of British military and police advisers would be appointed to supervise elections.

Land payments. One of the principal snags has been the question of compensation for white farmers who would have their lands confiscated if the Patriotic Front agrees to share power in Zimbabwe Rhodesia. To prevent the talks from breaking down, Britain and the U.S. have agreed to contribute to an internationally financed "white buy-out fund."

Prospects for settlement rose slightly on October 17 when representatives of the five front-line black African states—Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia—declared in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, that they are "happy" about progress made so far in London talks. The five nations back the guerrillas but are eager for the war to end so they can start to rebuild their own shattered economies.

If Nkomo and Mugabe do walk out of London negotiations, Muzorewa hopes that London will recognize the legitimacy of his government, lift economic sanctions and also persuade the U.S. and other United Nations members to call off the trade ban that was imposed in 1966. But there also is realization here that if the London talks collapse, it could mean that the Patriotic Front has opted for a "military solution" to its conflict with Salisbury, a decision that would bring civil war among blacks, with whites caught in the middle.

The Nkomo-Mugabe alliance sometimes is divided in philosophy and tactics, but it is united in branding Muzorewa as a front man for the whites. And in the Muzorewa camp, there are accusations that the Patriotic Front is only a puppet of the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Meanwhile, it is the nation that suffers. Zimbabwe Rhodesia today bears little resem-



blance to the country of a decade ago when whites bragged of a thousand more years of white rule. The war between Salisbury's 20,000-man armed forces and 12,000 black rebels has remade the face of the nation.

Whites now shudder when they hear guerrillas demand seizure of white land without compensation, nationalization of industry and commerce and punishment of white "war crimes."

Here is the stark picture that emerges from talks with government ministers, from meetings with white and black Zimbabwe Rhodesians and from journeys to the war zones:

Under Muzorewa, wealthier blacks have moved into previously all-white suburbs, discrimination in bars and restaurants has ended, and once-segregated schools are open to blacks.

But disease and malnutrition are spreading rapidly among what once was one of Africa's best-fed, best-cared-for black populations. Scabies and malaria are near epidemic levels.

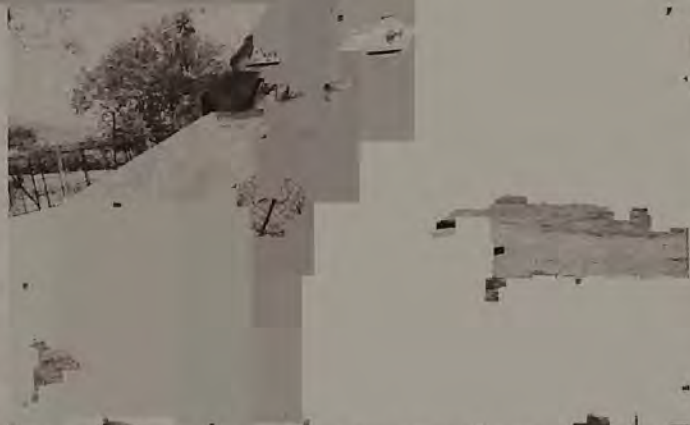
Forced out. So many people have been forced from their homes by war that the International Red Cross alone spends 2 million dollars a year to bring them relief. Sixty percent of the country's hospitals and clinics and half of its schools have been closed because of the violence. This has deprived almost a half-million children of education.

Unemployment has increased sharply, and both black and white living standards have fallen substantially.

Law and order have collapsed in black rural areas, leading to widespread intimidation and cattle rustling. There is war fatigue on all sides, including the guerrilla troops. Nowhere is this more apparent than among whites, who make up only 15 percent of the armed forces but who lend most of the expertise and leadership.

Not long ago, whites who left the country were contemptuously described as being "on the chicken run." Today, they are said to be "taking the gap," a rugby term suggesting respectability. The state-run television service features advertisements of products intended to help whites who want to seek safety in other nations.

The number of whites who have fled the country is startling. Since 1975, there has been a net outflow of 40,000 whites who became convinced that they would have no future under either the



Some white farmers are resolved to fight against guerrilla raids with aid of armored trucks and fortified homes. But hundreds of others have abandoned their lands.

Patriotic Front or a government such as Muzorewa's. "You're right down to the diehards now," one businessman says. "We're either liberals, pioneers or financial prisoners."

However, white emigration has slowed as prospects for peace seem to have improved, and a wait-and-see mood has spread. Since May, 2,961 whites have left—28 percent fewer than in the same period a year ago.

For those whites who remain, the good life that once attracted many of them to white-run Rhodesia rapidly is becoming only a memory. Servants can still be hired for \$30 a month, but real income of whites has fallen 28 percent in five years.

White males between 18 and 38



Blacks make up bulk of Army. But white men—and some women—provide most of the leadership.

years of age usually must serve 190 days in the military, and those between 39 and 59 at least 70 days. With a black government in power, blacks are being called up only on a selective basis, and the resentment by whites is mounting.

Economic losses. The most serious economic impact has been in agriculture, on which three quarters of the population is dependent to some extent. As growing numbers of white farmers desert their fields because of guerrilla attacks, overall output slips. Eight years ago, there were 6,200 white farmers here. Today, the official estimate is 5,400, and analysts believe the figure actually is about 4,500.

This rural exodus is a life-and-death matter for the predominantly black Muzorewa government. Agriculture provides half of Zimbabwe Rhodesia's vital foreign-exchange earnings.

The mining industry also is in trouble. Production is down sharply because of white emigration and a resultant lack of skilled labor. Another important foreign-exchange earner, the tourist industry, is close to collapse.

As a result, Zimbabwe Rhodesia's gross domestic product will decline in 1979 for the fifth successive year. Income per person is back at the 1966 level. Economists estimate that U.N. sanctions cost the country 200 million dollars annually, even though it has built up a sturdy industrial base.

But despite all the hardships and difficulties that face the country, a surprising amount of optimism remains. Some whites and blacks believe that Zimbabwe Rhodesia can survive over the long term with the two races working shoulder to shoulder—provided there is an early end to the war and a fair and lasting political settlement. □

This dispatch was written by Robin Knight, recently reassigned to cover Africa after a three-year tour as chief of the magazine's Moscow bureau.