

RHODESIAN INDEPENDENCE AND AFRICAN DECOLONIZATION

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For quite a number of years I've been working on a project looking at the history of statecraft during Rhodesia's renegade independence, 1965-1980 which will be published by the University of Chicago Press in 2015 - *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization*. After almost thirty years of writing African social history, this project came as a surprise to me. Historians of Africa and historians of decolonization have tended to avoid writing about Rhodesia's renegade independence (1965-80). Whether the white minority's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain is described as a last stand of empire or as a pale imitation of South Africa's apartheid, Rhodesia (until 1964 Southern Rhodesia, after 1980 Zimbabwe) is invariably seen as such a great exception to the orderly processes of decolonization that it is beyond explanation. There are two reasons for this. First, African historians have been reluctant to write the histories of rogue and reactionary regimes, especially when they were led by white minorities. White settlers have never been part of the canon of African history topics, however fashionable settlers might

have become in imperial histories. For African historians, racist and reactionary regimes were interchangeable; thus it has been commonplace to explain Rhodesian racial policies by referencing South Africa's. Second, there are no national archives for independent Rhodesia. For reasons more to do with staffing than politics, nothing has been accessioned in the National Archives of Zimbabwe since 1984: while there are a few manuscript collections available for the years of UDI, ministerial files are only open up to 1958. For this reason, the research I have done has been triangulated on three continents.

With summer funding from the Center for African Studies, the College of Liberal Arts and Science, and the International Center at UF I have used the large collection of oral interviews with Rhodesian politicians - conducted during the 1970s - in the Zimbabwe National Archives; Rhodesian cabinet materials from 1960-78 taken from Zimbabwe and deposited in the Cory Library of Rhodes University in South Africa; British government files in the British National Archives and recently accessioned election monitor files from the Commonwealth Secretariat Archives in London; private papers deposited in Rhodes House, Oxford; the papers of Rhodesian moderate, multi-racial organizations now housed in the Borthwick Historical Institute in York; the boxes of papers from the Rhodesian Army that were briefly available in a now-defunct private museum in Bristol; and the collection of Rhodesian ephemera at Yale. I have also relied on the extraordinary amount of white writing, mainly novels and memoirs, produced in Rhodesia at this time, and formal and informal interviews I have conducted in Africa and Britain. The refractory nature of this research has encouraged me to write a political history that shows the fractures and fissures of Rhodesian independence.

As I researched and thought about

and honed this material I was fortunate enough to be able to organize or co-organize three workshops, all supported to a degree by CAS, each of which allowed me to exchange ideas with colleagues at other institutions and to clarify my thinking on several issues as this project shifted from being a military history - which I intend to get back to - to a political history to a project that engaged with the broader issues of memories and memorialization. Between 2005 and 2013, I organized or co-organized four workshops, all funded in full or in part by CAS, one of which was on the politics of exile in Southern Africa, held in Sheffield, England on the snowiest weekend in its history.

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