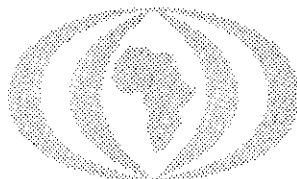


**THE RHODESIAN ELECTIONS:
APRIL 1979**

David Willers

OCCASIONAL PAPER

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THE RHODESIAN ELECTIONS APRIL 1979

An analysis by David Willers of the recent Rhodesian elections which were held to elect seventy-two black common roll members of parliament.

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BACKGROUND

The background to these elections is fairly well known. Under the provisions of the constitution evolved by the interim government of Rhodesia-Zimbabwe, elections based on the principle of universal suffrage were held to elect a new government.¹⁾

The interim government launched the campaign with the slogan "that is what the people want" and the following legend included in campaign posters: 'the opportunity to help the people achieve a recognised independence and choose their own majority government through one man one vote elections.' There were also frequent exhortations to 'use your vote - and bring the peace for true freedom'; 'your vote can bring the peace'; 'use your vote and win the peace'; 'use your vote and bring peace and better education for your children' etc. etc.

It was thus apparent from the outset of the electoral campaign - both to outsiders and the Rhodesians themselves - that this election was being fought on simple choices and issues, e.g. war or peace.

This was also the issue to which most observers of the election addressed themselves with the single question, 'why are people voting?' The answer to that question it was thought, would provide at least some evidence of the effects, inhibiting or otherwise, that the war was having on the conduct of the election and whether, indeed, it was possible to hold a 'free and fair' election at all, and so secure a genuine expression of popular opinion.

Section B.(a). of the March 3 Salisbury agreement reads inter alia that the prime function of the new transitional government would be to bring about a ceasefire, and Section C.(d). to create a climate conducive to the holding of free and democratic elections.

The two sections are, of course, dependent to a critical degree one upon the other, and since a ceasefire has patently not been secured it must be questioned whether the second objective the transitional government set itself, namely the creation of a climate conducive to the holding of free and democratic elections, was achieved. Before examining the effect of the war on the Rhodesian elections and the question of the foregoing objective of the transitional government, however, it may be worth noting action taken in this regard by the parties to the SWA/Namibia dispute.

In essence Western strategy towards both SWA/Namibia and Rhodesia has been to secure free elections for both countries under UN supervision, to secure the participation of all important elements in such elections, and so ensure that the outcome will be acceptable to the international community, which would then presumably give the new government its support.

- 1) the agreement which led to the April 1979 elections was signed in Salisbury on Friday, March 3, 1978, by the leaders of the Rhodesian government, the African National Council, the United African National Council and the Zimbabwe United People's Organisation. Important elements, namely the two wings of the Patriotic Front under the leadership of Messrs. N'Komo and Mugabe, were missing from this agreement however, and, although invited, they did not participate in the elections.

In the case of SWA/Namibia the 'occupying' power - South Africa - together with the most important African nationalist element - the South West African peoples Organisation (SWAPO) - has been agreeable to this approach. Consequently, as part of the process of transition to independence in SWA/Namibia, a good deal of time has been devoted to securing agreement by both sides as to what would constitute a climate conducive to the holding of free and democratic elections. In practice this has meant identifying factors on the ground which might, in the opinion of either South Africa or SWAPO, have inhibited an election, e.g. troop levels, intimidation, time set aside for campaigning etc. etc. It has also been a fact that the removal of such inhibiting factors was often linked to questions of security or electoral tactics and this has made agreement difficult - (and in recent times extremely difficult) - but at least the effort has been partially successful. A cardinal element of agreements on SWA/Namibia has also been that any election will have to take place under conditions of peace, and any electoral campaign could only commence once a ceasefire had been installed.

It is important to note that in the case of Rhodesia not only were important elements excluded - (not necessarily by design) - from the April elections, but more importantly, no agreement was reached - (if indeed it was ever sought) - by all the parties to the dispute on what might constitute a climate conducive to the holding of free and fair elections, and consequently it must be questioned whether a priori the outcome, in terms of past Western strategy and by definition, will be acceptable to the international community. Also, the elections were not held under conditions of peace, a basic requirement for an unfettered electoral environment that can almost be regarded as a principal - a principal that has more-over been subscribed to not only by the West but also by South Africa in its agreements on SWA/Namibia.

This paper does not intend to explore the reasons why past Rhodesian all-party conferences, designed to secure the sort of outcome described above, have not succeeded. It is sufficient to note at this stage that all the parties to the dispute were not parties to the election and neither did they agree on the criteria that would have to be satisfied before the elections could properly be termed free and fair. Nor was there a ceasefire.

It is important, therefore, to see what steps the internal leaders took to create the necessary climate for free and fair elections and to transpose the election onto comparative models of free elections elsewhere. It will also be important to qualify one's findings when set against the ideal election in terms of the special restraints existing in Africa and more particularly in Rhodesia. In other words, even if there were drawbacks and doubts about the fairness of the election, would the results nevertheless be construed by a fair minded person as being at least a reasonably accurate and genuine expression of the popular will?

Finally, considerations of realpolitik will also have to be taken into account; e.g. the nature of the new government and its viability, the attitude of other African countries towards the election and restraints on the West.

THE ELECTION

The 1979 Rhodesian Constitution provided for a House of Assembly and a Senate ²⁾.

- 2) The Senate would consist of thirty members, ten of whom would be elected black Senators, ten white Senators and ten Senator Chiefs.

The House of Assembly would be made up of one hundred members comprising seventy-two black common roll members, twenty white roll members and a further eighty white members elected by an electoral college consisting of the seventy-two black and twenty white members.

Two elections were held - one to elect the seventy-two black common roll members and the other to elect the twenty white constituency members. Blacks and whites could vote to elect the seventy-two black members and whites only were permitted to elect the twenty white members.

The common roll election held towards the end of April 1979 involved some 2,8 million voters who were unregistered (with the exception of the whites). The Rhodesians claimed it had proved impossible to register people for voting purposes or to prepare rolls of voters and delimit seventy-two constituencies in time for the April elections. Consequently it was decided that the seventy-two common roll members would be elected on a party list system.

The party list system is a form of proportional representation. There are other forms - one such is the single transferable-vote system. The proponents of proportional representation argue that the majority or two-party system of government is incapable of providing a democratic assembly since majority parties will get more seats than their share of the votes really entitles them to. They argue further that a truly democratic representative assembly should be to the political divisions in the nation "as a map is to the territory it represents or a mirror to whatever is placed before it." 3)

Critics on the other hand are inclined to the argument that proportional representation has in practice led to weak government coalitions. This is because proportional representation has given rise to multiple party systems, deepened ideological fissures and lowered consensus and has, more importantly, "failed to elicit popular mandates on the immediate and practical issues of the day." 4) This last is a particularly important criticism in its application to Rhodesia-Zimbabwe and the recent elections. Time alone will tell whether the new coalition will prove to be viable or whether, in terms of the system used to elect him, Bishop Abel Muzorewa can be said to have been awarded an authentic popular mandate to govern. What may already be said however is that the Rev. Ndabainingi Sithole's decision not to allow his party to take their seats in the new parliament has left a glaring hole in the coalition government - a more obvious and important gap than would have been the case had a majority electoral system been used. There is a case to be made out that proportional representation in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe may only aggravate the already complicated factional nature of politics in that country.

All proportional representation systems, including the party list system, treat

3) A. Ranney, The Governing of Men. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc; 1966, p.301.

4) Ranney op. cit. p. 304

political parties as the basic units for which fair representation is sought in accordance with each party's share of the total popular vote. The Rhodesians encouraged participating political parties to nominate candidates representative of the area in which they lived by dividing the country into eight electoral districts. Each region was allocated a number of seats based on the estimated number of voters resident in the region as follows:

Manaciland	-	10 seats
Mashonaland Central	-	5 seats
Mashonaland East	-	15 seats
Mashonaland West	-	6 seats
Matabeleland North	-	10 seats
Matabeleland South	-	5 seats
Midlands	-	2 seats
Victoria	-	10 seats

The formula used to allocate the number of seats in terms of electoral results was as follows:

Any competing political party which was given less than 10 per cent of the total number of votes cast in any Electoral District in which it was participating, would be eliminated from that Electoral District for the purposes of calculating the number of seats to be allocated in terms of a formula used to calculate the available seats:

$$\frac{A}{B} + C$$

"A" represents the number of votes given to the registered party concerned.

"B" represents the quota determined by dividing the total number of votes given to all competing parties for that Electoral District, who have not been eliminated by the number of seats apportioned to that Electoral District.

"C" represents the value 1 if a seat is allocated to a competing party and 0 if no seat is allocated.

An example of the working of this formula is set out below is a hypothetical election in Manaciland which has been allocated ten seats and in which five political parties took part.

FORMULA EXAMPLE

MANICALAND - TEN SEATS

Party A	248 013	50,84%	
Party B	102 604	21,02%	
Party C	133 721	27,40%	
Party D	2 560	0,52%)	} Eliminate
Party E	1 013	0,22%)	
	<u>487 929</u>		
TOTAL			
	6		

$$\text{QUOTA} = 487\,929 - (2\,560 + 1\,013) = 484\,356 = 48\,435 \text{ (disregarding fractions)}$$

10

PARTY A	$\frac{248\,013}{48\,435} = 5,12 = 5 \text{ seats}$
PARTY B	$\frac{102\,604}{48\,435} = 2,11 = 2 \text{ seats}$
PARTY C	$\frac{133\,721}{48\,435} = 2,76 = 3 \text{ seats}$
	<u>10 seats</u>

In this example political party D and E were eliminated because they received less than 10 per cent. of the votes cast in the electoral district. The quota was obtained by taking the total votes cast less the votes obtained by the eliminated parties and divided by the number of seats allocated to the electoral district. The total votes cast for each individual party, being divided by this quota, determines the number of seats which each party will have obtained.

Regarding the common roll election, the provisions of the Electoral Act No. 14 of 1979, were applicable - particularly Chapter XI, dealing with the transitional provisions which were included in the Act to cope with the situation created by the use of the party list system.

Common roll instructions were issued to returning, presiding and polling officers. At each polling station there would be a presiding officer appointed by the administrative district returning officer - (normally a District Commissioner). Presiding officers were in charge of polling officers and "any member of the security forces who may be in attendance at the polling station for the purposes of internal security as distinct from the security forces, deployed for the external security of the polling station." 5) Of importance with regard to returning officers was the fact that they were obliged to issue certificates of appointment to every presiding and polling officer appointed by them.

5) Common roll - Instructions and notes for the guidance of returning officers and presiding officers.

The hours of the poll were from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the earliest, in the rural areas, and polling stations were required to admit any voters who had formed a queue or who were in the precincts of the polling station at 3 p.m. In the urban areas - (where greater security could be offered against attack) - the polling stations were open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on each day of the poll. All mobile polling stations were permitted to operate at any time between the hours of 7 a.m. and at the discretion of the returning and presiding officers. In practice this meant that they would generally go out to collect votes at pre-arranged places, or when they received word that potential voters were congregated at some site or village. Often they were alerted to the presence of such gatherings by spotter plane, or by messenger. The mobile polling stations also never traversed the same route more than once during the entire five-day election, in case they were ambushed or mined. This meant that if people wanted to avail themselves of the mobile polling booth they only had one chance, and the doubting Thomases who might have been encouraged to vote after the rest of the village had done so, (and were seen not to have suffered reprisals), were not given an opportunity. In some tribal trust lands - (scene of most mobile polling) - authorities estimated that many hundreds of votes had been lost in this way.

The Electoral Act was clear as regarded security viz: "every returning, presiding and polling officer must maintain the strictest impartiality in the discharge of his duties and by nothing in his speech or manner give cause for suggestion or suspecting the contrary. In exercising this strict impartiality all election officials must do everything in their power to ensure that the secrecy of the voting is maintained at all times and is seen to be maintained."⁶⁾ All polling officers were also required to make a prescribed declaration of secrecy on a special form before the opening of the poll.

The question of impartiality was, of course, the central issue raised by the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, leader of ZANU, when he charged, after the election, that there had been 'gross irregularities' and that voters were improperly influenced.⁷⁾

It is a fact that not all the polling booths were under observation all the time by observers and journalists and it is not inconceivable, therefore, that some irregularities may have taken place, not necessarily by election officials, but perhaps by candidates' agents; particularly at those polls where not all the candidates may have had agents. But even if this was the case the poll could hardly have been affected by more than one or two per cent. This would not have detracted from the overall impact of the vote, since all the candidates were

6) Common roll instructions.

7) Personal observation tended, however, to reinforce the view that strict impartiality was very much the order of the day as far as polling officers were concerned. And given that the Rhodesian government was concerned to make the elections appear at least to be as free and fair as possible, one would hardly have expected at the bureaucratic level, anyway, which was open to public and foreign scrutiny, that attempts would be made to improperly influence voters who, through a lack of sophistication, might not have known how the ballots worked. And, indeed in the opinion of most observers and journalists, this was the case: there was never any suggestion that election officials improperly influenced the polls.

canvassing substantially the same issue. However, a case may be made out for investigating this specific charge, particularly since proceedings at polling stations were often conducted in a local dialect or language not understood by observers and journalists⁸⁾

Instructions with regard to ballot papers were fairly stringent. Every presiding officer was required to account for the number of ballot papers issued to him under the headings of; issued ballot papers, unused ballot papers and spoilt ballot papers, and the difference between the number of ballot papers issued and the used and surrendered ballot papers was taken to represent the number of papers in the ballot box. The security of unused ballot papers was to be ensured throughout the poll in the same way as the security of papers already in the boxes.

The voting procedure was simplicity itself and instructions laid down that there was to be no departure from the system. The polling officer or presiding officer was to identify voters at the entrance to the polling station. Voters were required first to place each of their hands in the checking device - (a fluorescent ray scanner) - and thereafter proceed to dip the fingers of both hands in the marking fluid. Thereafter they were to be given a ballot paper and proceed to the polling booths which had to be so situated as to be well away from the officials conducting the poll, and sufficiently separated from each other to ensure complete privacy. The voting drill was meticulous in almost every respect and gives some idea of the efforts made by the electoral authorities to ensure a proper ballot.

VOTING DRILL - COMMON ROLL ⁹⁾

1. The presiding officer will regulate the number of voters to be admitted to a polling station at any one time.
2. The voter will be identified as a person eligible to receive a ballot paper before being admitted to a polling station. Voters will have been instructed to take to the polling station whatever personal documents they may have in order to establish identity and eligibility. The presiding officer may or may not call for such documents, but in the event of his being in any doubt as to the right of any person to receive a ballot paper, he is empowered to insist upon documentary evidence.
3. On admission to the polling station the voter, who may only vote once at an election, will be directed to the checking device in which he or she will place each hand palm downwards.
4. If the checking device reveals that the voter has already voted in the election a ballot paper will not be issued and the person concerned will be requested to leave the polling station.

8) Although translators were available these were invariably, in the experience of the author, officials of one sort or another and as such, it could be argued, were not strictly impartial and neutral. It must be stressed, however, that the author never experienced any evasiveness on the part of an interpreter. The main objection was that the largely unsophisticated and war-cowed voters might feel safer in giving a "right" answer to officialdom's questions, just as they might have given the "right" answer to Patriotic Front insurgents!

9) All references from the Electoral Act No. 14 of 1979.

5. If the checking device reveals that the voter has not previously voted in the election, he or she will be requested to dip the fingers of both hands into the invisible marking fluid.
6. A polling officer will endorse the back of a ballot paper with the individual official mark issued to the polling station and hand the ballot paper to the voter.
7. The voter will be directed to a polling booth where, in complete privacy and secrecy, the ballot paper will be marked with an X against the name of the political party of his or her choice. Before leaving the polling booth the voter will fold the ballot paper so that the official mark of the polling station is visible, but the names of the political parties and the cross made by him or her is not visible.
8. Having marked and folded the ballot paper as set out above, the voter is required to drop the ballot paper into the ballot box displaying to the presiding officer or polling officer in attendance the official mark of the polling station, but NOT the manner in which the voter has cast his vote.
9. The voter will then leave the polling station.
10. If a voter inadvertently spoils a ballot paper before dropping it into the ballot box he or she may surrender it to the presiding officer who will issue a new ballot paper and endorse the surrendered ballot paper as "cancelled". Ballot papers surrendered in these circumstances will be made up into a separate packet by the presiding officer at the close of poll. The packet will be labelled "Spoilt ballot papers surrendered" and will be endorsed with the number of papers contained therein.
11. At the request, in person, of a voter who cannot read or write or who is incapacitated by blindness or other physical cause from voting in the manner set out in paragraphs 1 to 8 above, the presiding officer shall mark the vote of that voter on the ballot paper in the manner directed by the voter and place it in the ballot box. If the instructions of the voter as to the manner in which the presiding officer is to make his vote on the ballot paper are not sufficiently clear to enable the presiding officer to make the vote, the presiding officer may put such questions to the voter as he considers necessary to enable him to do so.

Points of interest arising from the foregoing include the fact that there was no registration of voters in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe for this election. The rule of thumb was that all persons over the age of eighteen and all residents over the age of eighteen, resident for more than two years in the country, were eligible to vote. Presiding officers were urged to use their discretion and to call for documents where they had reason to suppose that voters were either under age or had not been resident in the country for at least two years. Clearly this was an area where the voting criteria may in certain instances not have been met. Numerous voters spoken to in the rural areas had no documentation whatsoever on their person and several may, in fact, have been under age of eighteen. However, given the exigencies of

tribal Africa, such irregularities, if they occurred, might be overlooked by a fair minded person, particularly since they could not have affected the overall poll by more than a fraction of a per cent. - (unless, of course, Zambians and Mocambiquans living on the borders voted in their thousands, which was hardly likely!). - Moreover, as the Rhodesians were at pains to point out, and with some justification, the system is not unique in Africa. Neither Gabon nor Mocambique registered voters for their last elections; Iran had no registration of voters for its referendum on an Islamic Republic; Angola has not only neglected to register its voters but has also, (thus far), neglected to hold any elections; and finally, Swaziland had a primitive form of registration in 1978 where the man as head of the family had to register wives and children over the age of eighteen but no proof of citizenship was required. Of course these may not, in the opinion of some, be ideal comparative models against which to judge criteria for the fairness of an election, but the point is taken nevertheless. The principal of residential participation is also not unique. Tanzania has a similar five year, (not two year), provision for people living in the border areas. Likewise the finger dyeing process - (an indelible, colourless, odourless substance which only shows up under special lights) - to prevent people attempting to vote more than once, was used in Iran in the March 1979 referendum, and also in Kenya and Tanzania.

As was pointed out at the beginning of this paper, one's findings about the freeness and fairness of the Rhodesian elections would also have to be qualified in terms of the special restraints existing in Africa, and in this regard one must recognize that secret ballots are not necessarily the norm in Africa. Mocambique's one-party candidates in the 1978 elections were elected at public meetings by a show of hands, and in the Senegalese elections in 1978 voters had the option of a secret ballot or a vote in public ¹⁰⁾.

Other aspects to do with the conduct of the poll related to rules laying down who was permitted to attend a polling station - (polling officers, internal security officers on duty, the candidates or their election agents) - posters for the guidance of voters, sealing of ballot boxes, polling booths, queries, procedures at close of poll and finally a list of instructions on the counting of the papers.

Thus, for instance, posters for giving directions for the guidance of voters had to be placed in a conspicuous place outside the polling station. Presiding and polling officers were forbidden from answering "any questions put by a voter on the method of voting but must refer the voter to this poster." ¹¹⁾. In practice, however, this was more easily said than done and it was, in fact, a common sight at polling booths to see a score of perplexed-looking rural Africans being addressed by someone on voting procedure. Under these circumstances there may have been some scope for an unscrupulous type to mislead voters and so improperly to influence the vote. It is a pity that where voters were addressed on the subject of voting procedure, that this was not apparently done in the regulated presence of candidates agents, since this might have removed the possible substance of the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole's allegations of irregularities. As stated earlier, however, if there were irregularities in this area it is not likely that the poll could have been influenced by more than one or two

10) The Senegalese may have had a point - even so eminent a democrat as John Stuart Mill argued that secret voting was undesirable on the ground that ... "the duty of voting like any other duty should be performed under the criticism of the public ..."! John Stuart Mill. "Utilitarianism, liberty and representative government." Quoted in: A. Ranney. The Governing of Men. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc; 1966, p. 295.

11) Common roll instructions.

per cent. by such irregular behaviour, if it did take place. Quite apart from the single issue factor, support for the different parties was fairly clearly delineated along traditional tribal and ethnic lines and in only a very few areas could the Rev. Sithole's supporters have been deceived into voting for the overwhelmingly Shona-supported Abel Muzorewa.

Arrangements for the sealing of ballot boxes were very fair and candidates' agents were able to examine the seals and be present at the closing of the ballot boxes etc. Mobile polling booths were required to use a new ballot box every day. The safety of the ballot boxes was also of paramount importance and counting arrangements were fairly straightforward. Regulations stipulated who would be present at the count, verification of statements by administrative district officers, and spoilt papers. With regard to this last, section 175 of the Electoral Act laid down that a ballot paper "shall not be rejected where a voter has indicated with certainty the party for which he intended to vote merely by reason of the fact that he has so indicated otherwise than by means of a cross". This meant that a voter could indicate his preference with a line, a dot or any mark. This precaution was probably wise, given that for numerous voters the elections afforded the novel experience of holding a pen for the first time in their lives. Actually using the pen presented a different sort of problem and election officials pointed to the fact that some voters had made their crosses on the walls of the polling booth rather than on the ballot paper, as an illustration of the obstacles that confronted them in their efforts to educate the voting public in electoral procedure.

INTIMIDATION AND RECOGNITION

It was noted at the beginning of this paper that conditions of peace were not present when the April Common Roll Elections took place. Consequently it was not surprising that the elections have been criticised for not having been free and fair by several commentators and observers. One observer, Lord Chitness, termed it a *massive confidence trick*.

If the electorate have been "conned" then perhaps the confidence trick lies in the fact that they were led to believe, on the basis of a concerted, massive and deliberate government elections campaign waged on this specific issue, that their votes would mean an end to war. In this sense they did what any sensible person would have done and voted for the only initiative in sight which promised peace. The high poll was really a "cri de couer" by unsophisticated masses asked to express their feelings on a matter which affected them painfully.

Having failed to stop the war and bring about a ceasefire, the transitional government concentrated instead on creating a climate conducive to the holding of free and democratic elections. This task was entrusted to the election directorate under Mr Malcolm Thompson, the Chairman of the six man agency. The directorate set itself three main tasks ¹²⁾ These were

1. to reassure the electorate that patriotic front reprisals would not be possible if people voted because of the secrecy of the vote,
2. to teach people the mechanics of voting (by way of a massive education), and
3. a publicity campaign to enlighten people to what the elections were all about and to overcome apathy amongst women voters.

12) Star, 26/3/79.

It was this campaign as much as anything else which encouraged some doubters to say that the elections had been rigged and that intimidation was rife during the election itself. In all of this criticism five types of intimidation were identified. These were respectively:

Industrial intimidation:

Blacks were threatened with a loss of job opportunity or advancement if they refused to vote.

Farmworkers intimidation:

The charge was made that farmworkers felt they had no option but to vote or incur the wrath of their employers. Also they were left with very little choice in the matter particularly when ordered aboard a lorry to take them to the nearest polling booth. It was pointed out by critics that the government encouraged the use of buses and lorries to transport voters and in fact waived regulations restricting the number of persons who could legitimately be carried in terms of vehicle specifications for the duration of the election.

'Protected villages' intimidation:

Blacks who lived in the protected villages felt they had no option but to vote - community pressure to vote was so great that unfettered freedom of choice was not possible.

Auxiliary and guerilla intimidation.

Intimidation at the polls by officials or candidates agents.

These charges were important because they go to the root of the matter, viz., estimates of the fairness of the election looked likely, because of the war, to depend on the extent of intimidation which took place.

Industrial and farmworkers intimidation would have had to involve tens of thousands of voters to have had any impact on the size of the overall poll. Apart from the fact that substantiated evidence still has to be proffered of specific instances of this type of intimidation the feeling in Salisbury was that worker discontent would have rapidly evidenced itself if there had been blatant discrimination in this area.

The question of intimidation in the protected villages was a different matter altogether. Here one had sizeable populations living together in large villages, behind armed stockades. The folk in these protected villages were often the least sophisticated members of the Rhodesian population because of their rural origins and because even basic schooling had been disrupted (for several years in some instances) in their areas. Consequently it was charged that they were the victims of institutionalised intimidation and that they felt too cowed by the war and their circumstances to do anything else than vote when told that they would be able to do so.

There may be some truth in this last charge. Certainly it was common in rural areas to find voters who could only say they were voting because they had heard there was going to be a vote, or an aeroplane had told them (light aircraft with loudspeakers were used to tell tribesmen about the vote in tti's) or because they had simply been told there was going to be a meeting. These self-same voters tended not to say - (to questions) - that they were going to vote because of the

war-peace issue or because they wished to elect a new government. Indeed in these backward parts of Rhodesia the concept of electing representatives for a government as such was something, one felt, that was beyond the comprehension of most voting folk.

However, there was no doubting the determination to vote once minds had been made up. The issues may not have been that clear, the concept of an elected government may have been vague, but once they had decided to vote they often walked thirteen or even twenty miles to do so - at considerable risk to themselves if they were stopped by Patriotic Front guerillas. The important thing was they knew the vote was important, and although there may well have been a few people in the protected villages for instance who felt they may have voted because of community pressure, there was no getting away from the spontaneity of the exercise by an overwhelming majority of the people in protected villages. They certainly did not give the impression of people who felt themselves institutionally intimidated. 13)

The question of intimidation by the auxiliaries and the Patriotic Front guerillas is a more complex one. As part of their campaign to protect voters throughout the country from intimidation by the Patriotic Front and so create a climate conducive to free elections the transitional government mobilized more than 100 000 men to protect the voting. In the week prior to the election there had been a major anti-insurgent offensive and in one day alone more than eighty Patriotic Front guerillas were killed in a tribal trust land not more than 45 miles from Salisbury.

But mobilization is not the only way voters were protected - last July the government approved the nationwide placing of auxiliary forces, loyal to the two principal black figures in the country - Rev. Abel Muzorewa and Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole. These auxiliaries, often semi-literate, were armed and distributed into the tribal areas where they have proved most effective in curbing guerilla activity. At the moment there are believed to be at least 6000 auxiliaries in Rhodesia and in one area, the Que district, they patrol regions inhabited by at least 700 000 people. 14)

However, the auxiliaries are also fiercely loyal to their respective leaders - so much so it was charged, that they were engaged in strong-arm canvassing tactics during the campaign. Even the security forces (in overall control of the auxiliaries) conceded that the auxiliaries may have been a little 'overzealous' during the campaign. They firmly denied, however, that voters were being forced to vote. The role of the auxiliaries was played down by the Rev. Sithole who claimed that the people wanted to "cast their ballots according to the wishes in their hearts" 15)

13) One must also bear in mind that voters were perfectly free to spoil their ballot papers in the privacy of the polling booth if they wished to do so.

14) International Herald Tribune, 'Rhodesian Auxiliaries Rival Guerillas' by John Burns, April 19, 1979.

15) Address to a gathering of newsmen and observers, Meikle's Hotel, Salisbury, 18 April, 1979.

and they would not be dissuaded from doing so through intimidation.

On the reverse side of the coin there was little evidence of intimidation by guerillas (probably due to the stepped-up security arrangements) and so in this respect at least, as regards the intimidatory effect the war was having on the electorate, one might argue that the transitional government largely succeeded in creating a relatively trouble-free environment for the average voter.

But did a relatively trouble-free environment really mean a free choice? Apart from the fact that the parties of the Patriotic Front remained banned (and numerous ZAPU supporters were arrested in the week prior to the elections) which meant that voters had a limited choice of parties (and candidates) from which to choose, the issues the voters were confronted with were also fairly narrowly defined. There was not the multiplicity of issues placed before voters that one might have expected in a freer (and more Western-type) election. As has already been mentioned the election was virtually a one-issue referendum in many ways - a straight choice between war and peace. The reasons for this may have been part deliberate and part accidental. Accidental in the sense that the pre-election campaign may well have been affected by the unsafe conditions that existed in many parts of the country, and which made it difficult for the parties to place their programmes before voters in some rural areas¹⁶⁾.

It is more likely that issue choices were limited because the different parties did not dwell on the specifics of their programmes which might have addressed such concerns as illiteracy, poverty, homelessness, disease and the unpromising job market. Certainly there is some evidence to suggest that none of the parties had any obvious platform except power (although their party manifestos contained fairly detailed programmes these points were not apparent on pre-election posters) and Bishop Muzorewa for instance was described as addressing "crowds who listened to his empty programme-less mockery of his opponents voting symbols - Sithole's lighted torch is lampooned as an ice cream cone, Chirau is likened to his emblematic elephant, and so on"¹⁷⁾.

The Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole told Mr David Caute¹⁸⁾ that "deliberately we have not publicised our specific programme. But we have got it. It will be announced as soon as we get to power."

That then was the election. It was not the election of the Anglo-American proposals, but as the Guardian has pointed out "to single out one election in Africa as unsatisfactory would be partisan in the extreme"¹⁹⁾. The election was influenced by the war, but not to the extent that people feared, and to say that

16) In West Matabeleland for instance it was not uncommon to be told by voters that they had no idea of the issues involved because they had never encountered a campaign team. On balance however, it may appear that a relatively few people were ignorant of the issues merely because campaign teams were unable to reach them. There was considerable evidence that candidates and party leaders had travelled in protected vehicles to towns, villages and even white farms to address potential voters.

17) The poll of the puppets - D. Caute. New Statesman, 20 April, 1979

18) Ibid.

19) Guardian, April 29, 1979

the atmosphere was not conducive to relatively free elections would be an exaggeration. There is little doubt that many voters may have been intimidated, but it is equally clear that a great many more voted freely and enthusiastically. Bishop Muzorewa's electoral victory is now a fact of life and observers will be watching closely to see whether he will be Prime Minister in fact as well as name - i.e. if he can build a really solid base of popular support.

That in turn will depend on whether he can end the war since the Rhodesian people will at this stage only support the side that promises them real peace. If the Patriotic Front is able to prosecute the war even more vigorously in the months that lie ahead then support for Bishop Muzorewa will dwindle (on the grounds that there will be no peace until the Patriotic Front wins the war.) On the other hand the Bishop may himself take an edge in the war. Life for the Patriotic Front 'boys in the bush' as they are known in the tribal trust lands, will be bleak indeed if the Bishop succeeds in substantially increasing the recruitment of auxiliaries who would then be deployed in virtually every village in the country. Patriotic Front insurgents would then be forced to take to the hills.

If Bishop Muzorewa is to broaden his base he is going to have to deliver on his campaign promise that the war will be ended. The worst thing he could do now would be to shatter the expectations of the electorate on this score and consequently there will have to be a rapid return to normality in at least four areas where expectations are highest:

- The economy There will have to be a fairly dramatic improvement in this sector and something will have to be done about unemployment. Black workers will also be expecting tangible work-place reforms such as equal pay and improved job advancement opportunities.
- The new government will have to demonstrate that it is in power by taking a firm grip on the administration of the country and by installing a few new and preferably black faces in senior positions.
- Rural life will have to be normalised and martial law and curfew restrictions gradually lifted. Rural farmers will also be wanting to return home to their villages, and the protected village system will have to be discontinued fairly rapidly.
- The death toll will have to be dramatically lowered.

The alternative - that life carries on much as it is and possibly even worsens - would probably spell defeat for Bishop Muzorewa. Not only will his former constituents begin supporting the Patriotic Front but whites will leave the country in a renewed exodus which will only exacerbate the situation still further.

Pretoria must be watching the situation with concern. On the one hand there is an acute appreciation that a worsening situation in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe would be detrimental to South African interests, and on the other there are the risks attendant upon supporting a crumbling fragile coalition. The Rev. Sithole's refusal to serve in the new government can only have sharpened Pretoria's anxieties about the intrinsic viability of the new regime. The Nationalist government will not be wanting to repeat the disastrous experience of Angola when support for a weak leader (Dr. Jonas Savimbi of UNITA) led to a serious deterioration of South Africa's

position internationally.

There are some signs however, that hard decisions may have already been taken with regard to the Rhodesian situation. Certainly some Western commentators like Jonathan Power maintain they have received reliable reports of South African military helicopter personnel working with the Rhodesian Air Force and other evidence of military involvement²⁰⁾ Whether this is true or not, the point is that foreign antenna are already sensitive to South African involvement in Rhodesia. Power for instance argues that the war in Rhodesia is already more than half won and for South Africa to turn it around would require direct involvement²¹⁾. This in his view, and in the view of others in the West, would be an open invitation to the Cubans to get involved.

Whether the South African government necessarily shares this view is not known but there have already been muted warnings in the Afrikaans press that South Africa should be extremely wary of getting sucked into Rhodesia.

The West is reacting to the new post-electoral situation cautiously, and the British conservative party's new Rhodesian initiative is in affect a recognition of the constraints it labours under when considering either a lifting of sanctions or recognition of the new regime. However, the new British government is not insensitive to the changed post-electoral situation and recognises that a new element has been introduced which will have to be taken into account²²⁾

Nevertheless the risks for the British government of antagonising her other interests elsewhere through precipitate action on Rhodesia could be enormous.

As Dr. Deon Geldenhuys²³⁾ has pointed out "this consideration is bound to weigh heavier than the fairness or impressive turn-out in the Rhodesian election."

The international implications for Britain of recognising the new Rhodesia-Zimbabwe are indeed formidable:

- The effect on the commonwealth, the great majority of whose members would strongly oppose recognition of the new regime.
- The effect on Britain's relations with African states. The OAU is at present (although this could change) against the internal settlement. Countries like Nigeria could strongly influence the British position.
- The effect on relations with the US. The Carter Administration stands firmly behind the principle that no settlement is acceptable if it excludes the Patriotic Front.
- The response by Front Line States to British recognition. President Kaunda has already warned that he might turn to the Russians and the Cubans to play a larger role in assisting the Patriotic Front if the Western powers support

20) International Herald Tribune, 23 April, 1979

21) Ibid.

22) See in this regard the text of an address by the British Ambassador to South Africa, H.E. Sir David Scott, GCMG, on Three Years as British Ambassador to South Africa to the S.A. Institute of International Affairs, Jan Smuts House, 16 May, 1979

23) Brief Report No. 15, SAIIA

the Salisbury regime. (Kaunda may not be as free as he likes however - this argument may neglect the important leverage South Africa can exercise over Zambia to 'come on-side' as it were.)

- The Bingham Affair. This is still a potential sword of Damocles that may yet drop.

Some British observers feel this issue will shortly have to be hauled out of the locker and that it could influence British public opinion towards Rhodesia.

The new conservative government is thus, in a sense, over the proverbial barrel and it must be questioned whether Mrs. Thatcher will be able to square her position with the dictates regarding Rhodesia contained in the Tory Election Manifesto, which stated inter alia that the next British government would have a duty to lift sanctions, return Rhodesia to legality and ensure international recognition if the six principles were satisfied. In the conservative view only the sixth principle was still in question before the election, viz. that a Rhodesian settlement should be generally acceptable to the people as a whole²⁴⁾. The Tory observers to the elections are widely expected to say that in their view the recent elections were a sanction for the internal settlement, that the elections were reasonably fairly conducted and that the new regime according to the six principles ought strictly speaking to enjoy recognition.

The American position is also fairly complex and hinges to a large extent on Senate attitudes in the coming weeks before June 15 when President Carter will say what he intends doing about Rhodesia. Those attitudes will to a large extent be influenced by attitudes to the Case-Javits amendment which was tacked onto the International Security Assistance Bill passed last year in the American Senate. The amendment reads that:

"The government of the United States shall not enforce sanctions against Rhodesia after December 21, 1978 provided that the President determines that

- (i) the government of Rhodesia has demonstrated its willingness to negotiate in good faith at an all-parties conference, held under international auspices, on all relevant issues; and
- (ii) a government has been installed, chosen by free elections in which all political and population groups have been allowed to participate freely, with observation by impartial, internationally recognized observers."²⁵⁾

The amendment vests a wide discretionary authority in the President of the United States.

A subsequent amendment by Senators McGovern and Hayakawa was intended to provide that an official observer team be sent to Rhodesia to monitor the elections in accordance with the second point of the Case-Javits Amendment. The Senate passed the amendment but it was later torpedoed by a congressman, Republican Steven Solarz.

24) Ibid.

25) Rhodesia and Case-Javits by J. Hutchinson. The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder, April, 1979

The American government therefore now has to decide, on the basis of second-hand accounts and newspaper reports, whether the election was indeed free and fair.

The Americans will also have to take special constraints into account in their evaluation of Rhodesia's post electoral standing, viz:

- The argument that they may be backing a losing side. This is an especially sensitive issue - particularly after the humiliations of Vietnam and to a lesser extent, Angola. The new Rhodesia-Zimbabwe premier elect, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, is also not seen as a particularly viable leader even though he may enjoy majority support among the Shona-speaking peoples.
- The refusal of the Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole to participate in the new government has strengthened the belief that the new regime may not be worth backing because it is intrinsically weak anyway. It is thought that Sithole's post electoral stance had already muted immediate demands in the US that sanctions be lifted.
- A reluctance to be drawn into supporting the British in a costly aid exercise to support the new Rhodesia-Zimbabwe government - particularly if by so doing they risk a military commitment.
- A fear that by lifting sanctions or recognizing the new regime that this will have the effect of encouraging Cuban adventures in the region.
- There is still a feeling that the Rhodesian internal settlement does not go far enough to satisfy black political aspirations and has moreover not succeeded in ending the war as it had set out to do. Therefore the argument goes, another settlement is required. Observers see this objection to recognition as basically a moral one.

CONCLUSION

What is important about the elections in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe is that they have led to the first black government in that country's recent history. This must inevitably cause a reappraisal of Western policy towards the Rhodesian problem since the 'illegitimate' principle actors responsible for UDI in the first place - the whites - have been replaced by black actors whose 'legitimacy' can argueably have been said to have been conferred upon them by more than 60 per cent. of the Rhodesian electorate. The question is whether the West can continue to deny legitimacy to Bishop Abel Muzorewa in the same way that it did to Mr Ian Smith. As Dr. Chester Crocker says: "That policy made sense while whites continued to monopolize economic and political power and showed no sign of movement toward African rule. After the election however, it may be the surest possible formula to drive Salisbury still further into the arms of South Africa, while legitimizing communist intervention."²⁶)

Black Africa will also have to address itself to the question of whether, if the new government is seen to be effectively in black hands e.g. Bishop Muzorewa's, it can continue to deny recognition or support for the regime. In effect the continent will be faced with the first black African government in a black African country that is not recognised by the OAU. This issue and the effect of the continuing war on the neighbouring Front Line States like Zambia, Botswana and Mocambique are likely to dominate most African get-togethers over the next few months.

26) Chester A. Crocker "They may make a decisive difference". The Washington Post, 4 April, 1979.