

by Rev. Bill Bathman Looking Back To My First Visit in 1977

This is the transcript of Rev. Bill Bathman's message at the Pinelands Town Hall on the occasion of the 40 th Anniversary of Rhodesia's UDI:

From South Africa we traveled north to Rhodesia. September marks the beginning of Spring and the Jacaranda trees were in full bloom. Downtown Salisbury was busy and indeed thriving, in spite of "big bully" sanctions imposed on them by the two super powers and the United Nations.

Unlike South Africa, Rhodesia does not have the policy of apartheid...even public toilets are no longer segregated and we mixed with Blacks everywhere.

We visited the un-official U.S. Embassy, established by Mr. Robin Moore and other Americans concerned for Rhodesia and embarrassed by our shameful treatment of this pro-Western, anti-communist country. Moore, the self-styled American "Ambassador to Rhodesia" is the author of ***The Green Berets*** and the ***French Connection*** plus many other books. Together with his actress/singer wife, Mary Olga Moore, they have bought a large double-story Avondale house in Salisbury, which they set up – complete with flag poles – as a privately financed "embassy" for all Americans and foreign soldiers fighting under the Rhodesian flag. There are lots of them!

In his address to the American Bar Association in the Spring of 1968, the late Dean Acheson declared that, ***"the imposition of economic sanctions against the state of Rhodesia by the U.S. and other countries at the instigation of the United Nations constituted nothing less than bare-faced aggression, unprovoked and unjustified by a single legal or moral principle."***

Until this year the so-called Byrd Amendment of 1971 at least allowed the U.S. to purchase high-grade chrome ore from Rhodesia to the benefit of both countries. To the United States

because chrome is essential to making stainless steel and other high-tech products; to Rhodesia because sale of chrome allows her to earn the foreign exchange she desperately needs to buy arms to defend herself against mounting terrorist attacks.

The terrorists are amply supplied with communist guns and money, which in itself contravenes all principles of international law...to say nothing of the U.N. Charter. Thus our present foreign policy puts the seal of American approval on aggression and terrorism in Rhodesia that can only serve the expansionary interest of the Soviet Union.

When Rhodesia declared unilateral independence in 1965, after many years of being a self-governing entity, Great Britain opposed the move. Having no Redcoats at hand to put down the alleged 'rebellion' (as she did in 1776) the whole matter was thrown into the lap of the United Nations – from whose unworkable bureaucratic attention America was mercifully spared (in 1776).

Under pressure from other African states (which by now had communist governments) it did not take the UN long to discover that Rhodesia was a "threat to world peace" – perhaps because she had upset the psychology of her neighbors. Hence the sanctions imposed by the UN and supported by Britain and the USA.

However, despite the sanctions and embargoes, Rhodesia has staged a spectacular economic advance, which surprised her friends and aggravated the envy of her foes. Between 1965 and 1975 Rhodesia's gross national product expanded on average by 7% per year – which is higher than that of the United States. Today, under wartime conditions, 85% of Rhodesian children receive at least five years of elementary education. The literacy rate is the highest in Africa (except for South Africa) and there are more Blacks in the University of Rhodesia than Whites. 82% of Rhodesia's Regular Security Forces are Black Rhodesian officers and men, and every one of them is a volunteer!

Race relations in Rhodesia are among the best I have encountered anywhere. Some discriminatory legislation still exists, so there is room for improvement, but I was impressed with the way the government is working along with other public bodies toward this end.

Rhodesia is not perfect – but where is such a country? It is multi-racial. Everywhere you look

you will see Rhodesians, black and white, together...in the shops, offices, hotels and public transportation, in cinemas and on TV, on screen and behind the cameras...at sports grounds, both as spectators and as competitors.

There are excellent medical facilities available to all Black Rhodesians. There is one hospital bed for every 350 of the population. By contrast, in Nigeria (one of Rhodesia's most bitter critics) there is one bed for every 1,867. Medical and educational facilities are mostly subsidized by White taxpayers.

Churches of all denominations are multi-racial. I noticed however, that Christians seemed to prefer to worship with other members of their own race, but there were no regulations about this.

One thing the believers had in common, both Black and White, was utter amazement as to why so many of the West's churches, which are supposed to be anti-communist, continue to support the Communist-backed terrorist. Money given by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to various "liberation" movements and "freedom fighters" buys the bullets which have killed missionaries, pastors, priests and nuns, not to mention countless Christians living in the *bush*.

And what a misnomer – freedom fighter. Freedom does not follow in their wake, but murder, savagery and enslavement. And they are not even "fighters." They almost never engage the Army or Security Forces (except by ambush and land mines). These men can fight back, and the 'freedom fighters' might get hurt! Instead they prove their bravery by attacking unarmed Black men, women and children – intimidating, torturing, maiming and massacring the innocent with the aim of terrorizing the population into submission.

The more accurate term for these WCC-financed cowards is "terrorist." They stop children attending school, often abducting them at gunpoint, forcing the boys into terrorist training and the girls to become under-age 'camp-followers.' They destroy anything that could bring their fellow Blacks any benefit or progress and often commit acts of armed robbery for personal gain.

Rhodesia is at war. A war she did not declare, a conflict she did not initiate. She is under attack by her neighbors who have been armed by the Russians, trained by the Chinese and to a large extent financed by the World Council of Churches. Rhodesia is the target of the biggest power

grab since the communist swallowed up Angola and Mozambique.

We have just returned from the war zone. Pastor Davidson and I had the privilege of preaching in various churches across Rhodesia, as well as ministry with the troops and Security Forces along the front lines, amid the trenches and among the sandbags and barbed wire. To reach our destination (in some cases) we were airlifted in by Missionary Aviation Fellowship in a little Cessna 180. At other times we drove as far as we could on hard surface roads – the terrorists have not learned how to *mine* the asphalt yet. The MAF plane took us over the terrorist infested area to the Mozambique border – Rhodesia's frontline.

Much is made in Western news media about the “armed struggle” for “liberation.” In reality it is a group of Black children driving an ox-cart along a rural dirt road: next moment there is an ear-splitting blast and all that is left is a few arms and legs. Or a White farmer is driving home with his wife and children; a hail of bullets from the bush means the end of a family that has lived and loved together. Or perhaps it's a mid-night raid on a lonely mission station. They hit and run. If the Rhodesian Security Forces pursue them over the border into Mozambique or Zambia, then there is an international outcry, and aid pours in from member states of the UN for the “victims of Rhodesian aggression.”

The suffering of the ordinary tribes-people is insufficiently known in Rhodesia, and virtually unheard of outside the country. We visited a noted missionary Doctor on his isolated mission compound and he told us of Mr. Chikombe Mazvidza. On the night of December 3rd 1976, a gang of ‘freedom fighters’ entered his village in the Mt. Darwin area of northeastern Rhodesia. They were armed with Russian automatic weapons and knives. Chikombe, the nephew of the village chief, refused to give them food, so they tied his hands behind his back and beat him mercilessly, fracturing his wrists. Next they cut off his ears, his lips and the flesh of his nose. The instrument they used was a pair of pliers. Then, at gunpoint, they forced his wife to roast the flesh on an open fire and eat it. “I ate it and vomited,” she said.

Chikombe and his wife were not the only Black Rhodesians to be tortured by the terrorists that night. His mother was thrown to the ground and her legs forced apart while another terrorist thrust a log into the embers of the fire. When it was red hot he burned the inside of her thighs and her private parts, inflicting 3rd-degree burns. The village chief and his brother were also in hospital being treated for fractures and multiple bruises after being beaten up by the terrorists – their fellow Blacks.

Police begin the investigation of a murder by considering, "Who stands to benefit from this crime?" Applied to southern Africa, we should enquire, "Who will benefit from the death of Rhodesia and the collapse of South Africa?"

The Blacks? No, they will be the first to suffer through unemployment, increased poverty and starvation (if they are not annihilated to begin with by stronger tribes).

The Whites? No, everything they have worked for generations to build will be lost.

Will America benefit? No, we will be cut off from essential raw material sources and our oil supplies from the mid-East will be in jeopardy.

Who then will benefit?

Russia and the communist bloc!

If the Russians controlled South Africa, either directly or with a puppet government, this would give them a monopoly on world gold resources. Such an event would tip the economic seesaw in favor of the ruble. Overnight the Soviet currency would become 'hard' and the already weakened dollar 'soft.'

THINK for a moment what this will mean to world missions. Without support from America, most of the missionaries overseas would have to come home. Support for indigenous ministries would stop. And in case you're not concerned about foreign missions, remember – with a *soft* currency we would not even be able to buy oil from the mid-East, much less get it around a Soviet controlled Cape of Good Hope.

Our negative foreign policy contribution can easily boomerang one day and we will awake to the fact that we have put the whole of southern Africa within reach of the *real* enemy. A new Imperial presence threatens the whole African continent, and we are looking the other way.

America, it's time to "**Wake up!**"

This report was written by Bill Bathman following his first visit to southern Africa in September and October 1977. It was published and widely distributed to religious and political leaders in the USA.

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