

# Rhodesian settlement plan as an 'essay in gradualism'

By Lord Garner

Through the last ten years, no single problem has been more baffling, continuous and intractable than Rhodesia. There is no easy solution because in present conditions it is impossible to devise any arrangement which will be welcomed by all concerned. There is now little room for manoeuvre since attitudes adopted in the contemporary drama have been fixed in advance by circumstances often beyond the control of the participants — by history, by geography, by events in other lands, by conflicting ideologies.

The events of the past have indeed cast a long shadow. Cecil Rhodes first beheld in 1888 the land that was to bear his name and, after his dealings with Lobengula (questionable no doubt by the more exacting standards of today), the British South Africa Company was in the following year granted a charter. For over 30 years, until 1923, the chartered company administered the territory; it was not commercially profitable and in the early days there were unhappy clashes with the Matabele tribesmen. But the land was painstakingly developed and the numbers of European settlers grew.

After the First World War, company rule was no longer appropriate and in 1922 the electorate was given the chance to decide between union with South Africa and self-government; they opted for the latter. The future of Rhodesia was thus decided by an electorate that was overwhelmingly white. This seemed right in 1922; except in Southern Africa, it would no longer have seemed right in the eyes of the world in 1972.



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Southern Rhodesia thus became self-governing, though not independent, 50 years ago. Eventually the sole restriction in domestic matters was the need to reserve any discriminatory legislation for approval in London. Southern Rhodesia played a full part in the war against Hitler and its Prime Minister invariably attended meetings of Commonwealth prime ministers.

There followed after the Second World War the brave attempt to form a Federation of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, in the hope of engendering a spirit of partnership between the races, expanding the economy of all three territories and of containing the advance of *apartheid* into Central Africa. The Federation brought many benefits for Africa — in the franchise, in education and economic progress; but it failed to win their hearts. It fell apart and was quietly buried in 1963. The Federation is relevant to the present theme because, for the crucial decade when Africa was on the march, all interest was focused on the Federation. Southern Rhodesia virtually stood still. It was not until 1961 that, under pressure from the British Government, a new constitution was introduced which guaranteed a minimum number of seats for African voters.

Shortly after the dissolution of the Federation, Nyasaland and Northern Rhodesia were both granted independence and the Government of Southern Rhodesia pressed for independence to be granted to it. This posed the question that its essence still confronts us today.

## Rival claims

The attitudes adopted by the two sides are understandable. The Europeans claimed with justice that they alone had been responsible for developing the country and bringing it to its state of prosperity and that for 50 years they had proved their capacity to govern the country. They could not understand independence, accorded so readily to