



Zimbabwe — the second liberation struggle

By Erling Söderström

After 18 years of confinement in the detention barracks of the former white regime, the Minister of Mines, Maurice Nyagumbo, is newly settled in his ministerial office.

With the inheritance of a strongly capitalistic economy, the newly independent nation of Zimbabwe has adopted a pragmatic approach towards socialism. The mining industry has been left essentially intact and Government officials have assured investors that there will be no nationalization of the mines. However, the Government has announced proposals to establish a state-owned minerals and marketing agency.

The Raw Materials Report has met the Minister of Mines for an exclusive interview on Government mining policies.

Erling Söderström is RMR's correspondent in Zimbabwe.

The interview was made in Salisbury, Zimbabwe, November 1981.

RMR: Today, to what extent are the nation's mineral resources exploited by transnational companies and to what extent by fully-owned Government companies?

Nyagumbo: At present, 90 per cent of the nation's mining industry is owned by foreign or transnational companies. It is a heritage from the colonial era. There are, however, a few Government-owned mines. The Kamativi tin mine is 98 per cent Government-owned and the Mashaba asbestos mine is fully Government-owned.

RMR: Several companies such as Rio Tinto (Mining) Zimbabwe, Shell Developments Zimbabwe and others are presently searching for coal, uranium, diamonds and pregrmatite mineral deposits. If large deposits of high concentration are found, will these be extracted by transnational companies or does the Government intend to finance the extraction through any Government-controlled or owned company?

Nyagumbo: All strategic minerals are of interest to the Government. In most fields we wish to extract them on an equity ownership basis with the large companies. Especially if large extractable deposits of uranium are found. There the Government would be interested in participation in order to provide Zimbabwe with a new energy source and maybe to build nuclear power stations.

We are also keeping a close watch on developments in the coal field, which is an important source of energy.

RMR: In 1975 14 of the total 500 mines in the country accounted for 74 per cent of the country's total mineral production. A few big transnational companies still control most of the mining industry. Turner and Newall company alone is responsible for 95 per cent of the nation's asbestos production. The MTD (Mangula) Ltd, Zimbabwe's largest copper producer is 55 per cent owned by the

South African Messina group. Most of the gold production is done by the transnational Lonrho group.

What steps has the Government taken and plans to take to minimize the control of the mineral resources by foreign and transnational interests and specifically to control the few big mining companies which stand for the most important part of the nation's mineral export?

Nyagumbo: We are worried about the foreign ownership but do not believe it right to nationalize the industry. We prefer to see that at least half of the company shares are held by a Zimbabwean citizen, thereby securing that Zimbabwean interests dominate.

RMR: During the colonial era, the export of mineral resources was directed mainly to the capitalist countries which defied sanctions against the Smith regime. Zimbabwe was supplying the raw material for strengthening industries in the capitalist block. What steps are taken to change this trade pattern and to direct the trade to socialist and progressive states in the "third world"?

Nyagumbo: Through the Marketing Authority we will try to break the monopoly of markets in the West. The transnational companies come from the West and direct their minerals to markets there. To us this is unsatisfactory. We are a non-aligned state and will try to sell to all countries, including the East.

RMR: The mineral export market is basically controlled by the transnational companies, an economic power which often directly opposes the aims of national liberation movements and, following their victories, the aim of the new progressive governments. Through transnational companies and banks, pressure is often brought to create a neo-colonial economic situation, sometimes by dumping the raw material prices. Should a crisis arise, can you cope with

Maurice Nyagumbo,
Zimbabwean Minister of Mines.

it without international support? Can a changed trade pattern reduce the effects of such an intervention?

Nyagumbo: In the event of such a crisis, we think we shall be able to stockpile the minerals and instead expand the agricultural and manufacturing industries to alleviate the foreign currency deficit. We happen to have a very diversified agricultural industry and a sophisticated clothing and steel industry.

Naturally, a changed trade pattern which is more strongly directed to progressive states will decrease the power of transnational markets.

RMR: Asbestos is the second largest mineral export product in Zimbabwe. However, several medical reports have indicated prevalent health hazards to the miners and workers handling asbestos. Is there a need to enforce stricter health regulations at the asbestos mines in Zimbabwe or are you satisfied that the present health regulations as applied are sufficient to protect the miners?

Nyagumbo: We have received assurances from the miners that the safety precautions are sufficient. I have also visited two open-cast asbestos mines in Canada, and I think the measures taken there are the same as those used in Zimbabwe. They are up to international standards and should be sufficient. At Shabanie asbestos mines I was told they have had no serious incident in 50 years.

RMR: Do you foresee a stagnation in the mining companies' investment will as a result of the strengthening of the Zimbabwean trade union movement, — the miners being better organized and demanding better living conditions. How would the Government react to a decreased will for future investments by the mining companies?

Nyagumbo: If there is a stagnation, we think we will have enough manpower for the State to expand and invest in the mining industry.



RMR: Most countries in the "third world" lack trained technical personnel. This makes it difficult or impossible to manage the transformation of minerals in all stages. In some cases, this has meant that nationalized mines *de facto* have been given back to the former owners, the transnational companies. Do you think an international effort to train and organize a cadre of technicians working in the spirit of international solidarity could be a contribution to solve the problem?

Nyagumbo: International solidarity would be a wonderful contribution. And in fact, we have already contacted several countries for aid in the training of our manpower. And it is succeeding. Bulgaria, Rumania and Canada have already accepted people for training.

RMR: What raw materials are presently basic to the industrial development efforts of Zimbabwe? Are these found in sufficient quantities inside the country or are they secured on the international market? If the latter — by what means — bilateral agreements or by trade exchange with the "third world"?

Nyagumbo: We still have to import some raw materials. Bauxite, phosphates and ammonia are imported. Fertilizers are imported for our agricultural industry. They are mostly secured through bilateral agreements.

RMR: Zimbabwe is one of the world's leading mineral producers. To what extent are the minerals refined and transformed in the country?

Nyagumbo: Our emphasis has been to encourage the mining companies to refine



their products before reaching the markets. And nowadays, no chrome ore is exported without first being processed. Iron ore is also refined and smelted into iron rods before being exported. In fact, most mineral products including nickel and copper, are refined before export. Really, Zimbabwe is better off than most African countries. We have had a long experience of the processing of raw materials.

RMR: Large transformation industries demand very important investments. What steps are taken by the Government to secure a regional co-operation with other progressive African states? What are the possibilities of financing this kind of investment? Are the transnational banks hostile to such co-operation?

Nyagumbo: We see possibilities of joint ventures but have not yet started any. But we have not had any objections from international banks such as the IMF because they see the potential of our economic development.

RMR: The transnational companies are by definition very advanced in all as-

pects of the industry. One central part is their control over vital sources of information such as statistics, prices, etc. Raw Materials Report will try to contribute to the efforts of creating a new international information order by counter-information in the mineral field. What is your view of the importance of information and control of information in the field of mining and development?

Nyagumbo: Mining and mineral resources are not renewable. And all information on the extent of the deposit, we want to confine to the ministry. We do not divulge figures on the quantities. But the companies must inform us of their findings.

RMR: What do you think will be the most important developments in Zimbabwean mining in the coming years?

Nyagumbo: I can foresee a lot of activity in the energy sector, that is, coal and uranium mining. But that is dependent on the world price of minerals and our own technological advancement.

The mining industry forms a cornerstone of the Zimbabwean economy. It accounts for 8 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and employs approximately 60 000 people.

The Government has tried to raise the miners' living conditions by introducing a minimum wage.

Miners at the Shabanie asbestos mines.

Notes to table:

- ¹ Excluding socialist countries
- ² World production not known
- ³ Precious stones, tantalite, magnesite, limestone, lithium
- ⁴ 1 fine oz = 0.0311kg

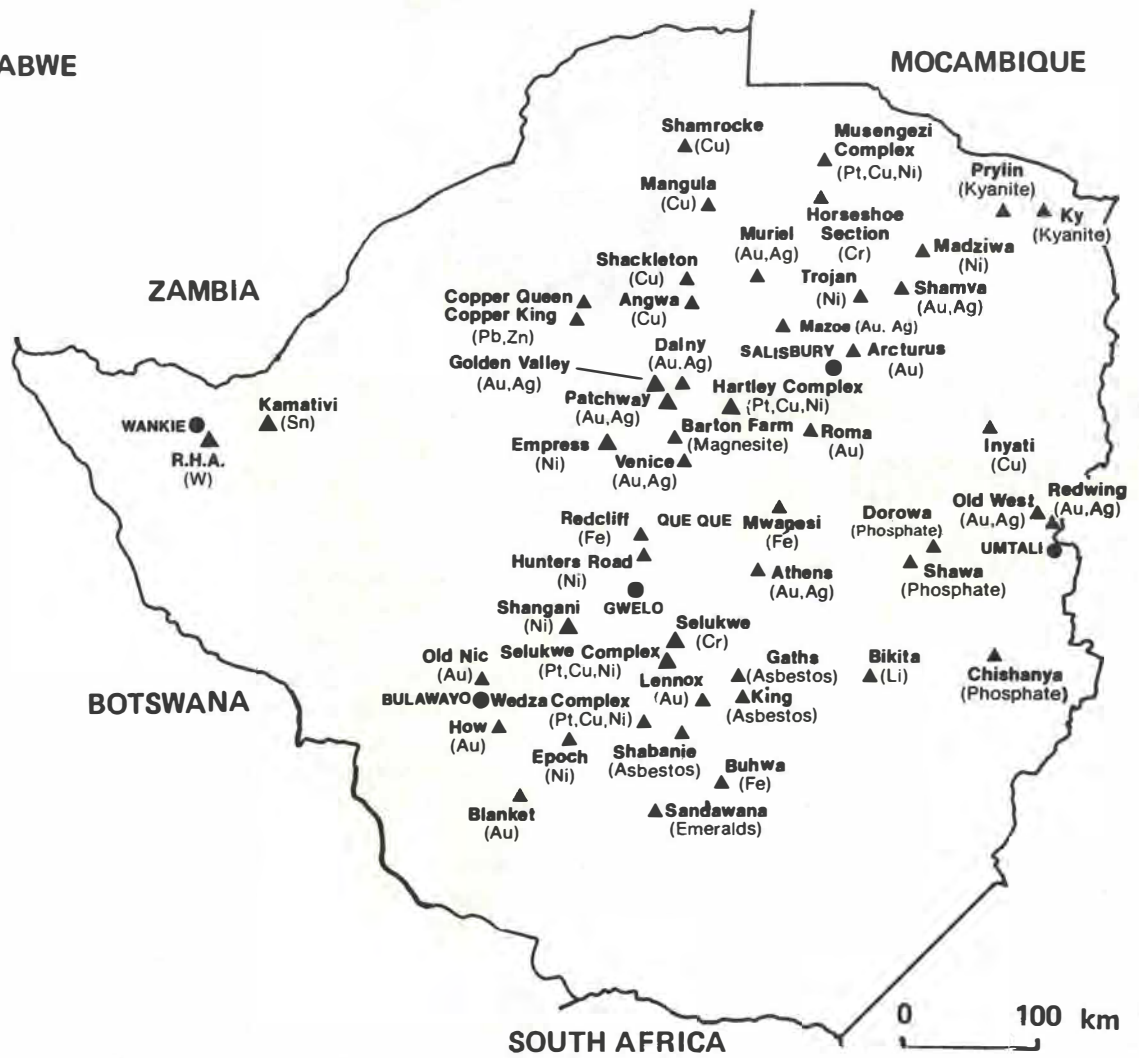
Sources:

Mining Annual Review 1981,
Mining Journal 1981-06-20

MINES IN ZIMBABWE

MOCAMBIQUE

- ▲ Mine
- Town
- Ag Silver
- Au Gold
- Cr Chrome
- Cu Copper
- Fe Iron
- Li Lithium
- Ni Nickel
- Pb Lead
- Pt Platinun
- Sn Tin
- W Tungsten
- Zn Zinc



Zimbabwean mineral production

Period	Asbestos '000 tons	Gold '000 fine oz.	Chrome Ore '000 tons	Coal '000 tons	Copper '000 tons	Nickel tons	Iron Ore '000 tons	Silver '000 fine oz.	Cobalt tons	Tin Metal tons	Other ³
1964	139.2	574	447.5	3,040	16.5	NA	824	96	—	520	
1965	159.8	550	585.6	3,509	18.0	NA	1,287	83	—	511	
1966	162.9	541	586.0	3,103	16.0	NA	869	87	—	689	
1967	154.1	493	557.8	3,206	22.2	400	1,228	113	—	875	
1968	167.7	467	432.5	3,203	21.0	441	1,028	202	—	928	
1969	178.9	446	370.5	3,299	28.7	5,747	749	167	—	972	
1970	187.7	438	503.8	3,520	30.0	8,585	813	210	—	1,094	
1971	205.6	399	671.7	3,360	34.4	9,278	818	252	—	1,118	
1972	205.9	349	755.1	2,908	46.5	10,115	723	271	43	990	
1973	261.9	338	790.4	3,536	51.9	10,873	735	270	23	1,138	
1974	261.4	335	703.0	3,105	47.5	10,694	715	240	28	1,089	
1975	261.5	354	875.7	3,300	47.6	9,121	1,246	242	18	997	
1976	281.4	387	863.9	3,593	41.3	14,604	1,353	200	—	915	
1977	273.2	402	677.3	3,029	34.8	16,671	1,176	207	—	920	
1978	248.9	399	477.8	3,065	33.8	15,701	1,123	1,109	17	945	
1979	259.6	386	541.8	3,188	29.6	14,591	1,201	977	204	947	
1980	250.9	367	553.5	3,134	27.0	15,074	1,622	949	115	934	
% of total world production	4.8	11.0¹	5.6	—²	0.4	2.9	1.8	3.3	0.4	0.5	
Value 1980 (\$Z 000)											
Total	414.579	70.2	144.8	28.0	35.3	55.5	14.8	13.0	2.7	9.8	21.8
% of total value	16.9	34.9	4.4	6.8	8.5	13.4	3.6	3.13	0.7	2.4	5.3