

RHODESIA

By Albert Dimech

The former colony of Rhodesia was originally a British territory in South Central Africa which was administered by the British South Africa Co. It was named after the great British Empire builder, John Rhodes (1853-1902).

Rhodesia issued its first stamps in 1890 under the name of British South Africa Co. In 1909 stamps were overprinted "Rhodesia" or surcharged also. In 1924, Rhodesia was divided into the territories of North and South Rhodesia, which issued their own stamps. Southern Rhodesia issued its first stamps in 1924 whilst Northern Rhodesia issued hers in 1925. Between 1954 and 1963 the two territories together with Nyasaland formed part of the Central African Federation issuing stamps under Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The Federation broke up in December, 1963 and stamps were withdrawn on February 19, 1964 when all three constituent territories had resumed issuing their own stamps — Northern Rhodesia changing its name to Zambia and Nyasaland becoming the Republic of Malawi. This break-up left Southern Rhodesia, which was renamed Rhodesia, as a self-governing colony ruled by a white majority.

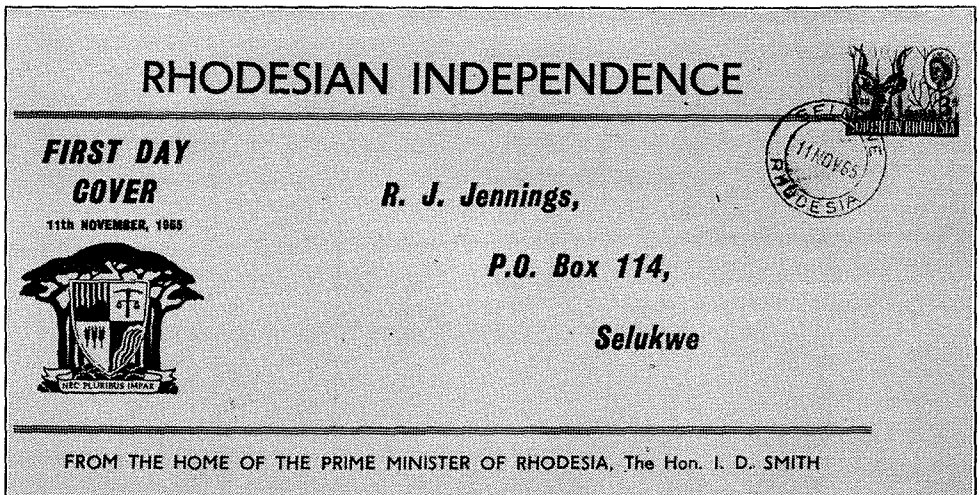


Fig.1

Ian Smith, who was elected Rhodesian Front Leader was dead set against majority rule and declared himself Prime Minister. On November 11, 1965 he declared the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from Britain. The FDC bearing the 3d stamp (illustrated) was on sale between 2.00pm and 4.00pm

on this date. This FDC was posted at Selukwe, the home of the Prime Minister, Ian Smith.

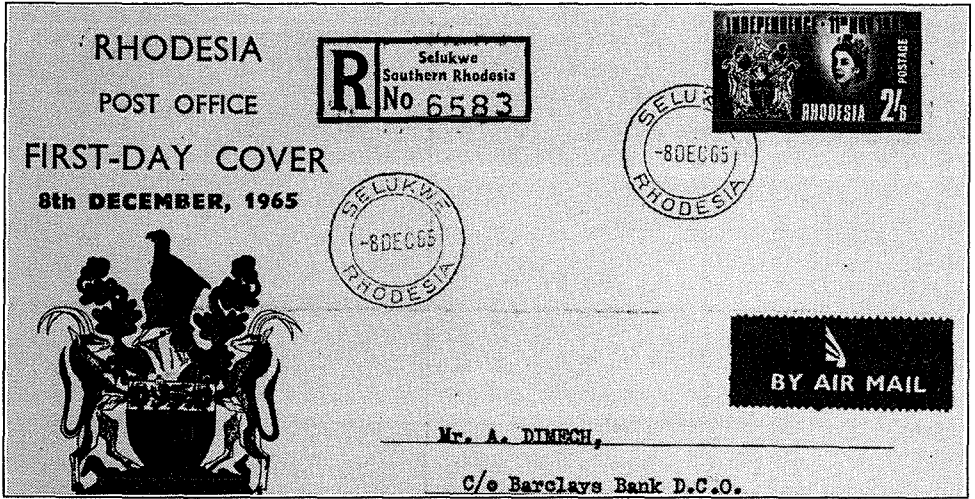


Fig.2

On December 8, 1965, Rhodesia issued a 2/6 Independence stamp (illustrated). This FDC was also posted at Selukwe (Fig. 2).

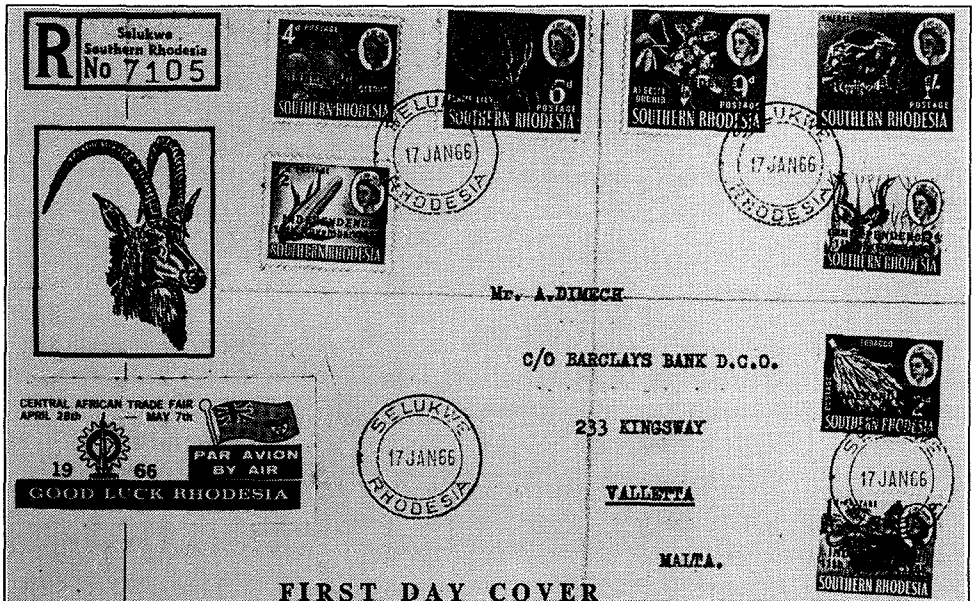


Fig.3

The British Postmaster General, Mr Tony Wedgwood Benn stated that these stamps were illegal and would not be accepted in Britain. Letters bearing these stamps were to be subjected to a surcharge as unstamped mail. Notwithstanding this warning, on January 17, 1966, Definitives of Southern Rhodesia overprinted "Independence 11th November, 1966" (Fig.3) were issued pending the issue of a new series on February 9, 1966 (Fig.4).

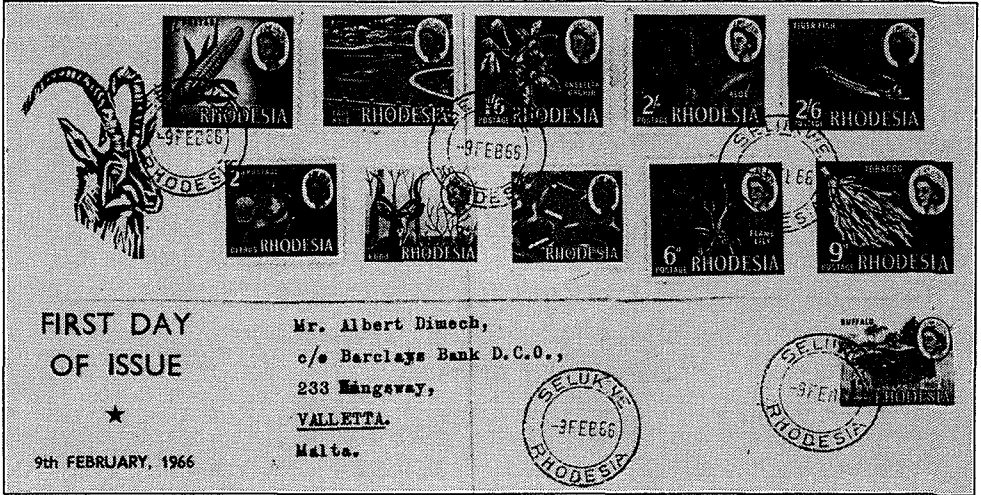


Fig.4

The British Government was thus faced with a rebellion. Various steps — including graduated economic sanctions — were taken to bring Mr Smith round to agree to change his policies. Rioting and guerilla warfare eventually broke out with a lot of blood being shed and many lives lost. It was not until February 1975 that a constitutional conference was held to discuss majority rule in the country. Further talks and conferences were held until final agreement was reached for Rhodesia to attain its own legally established independence under majority rule on April 18, 1980 changing its name to Zimbabwe.