

## POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND MILITARY COOPERATION BETWEEN ROMANIA AND THE SUCCESSOR STATES OF FORMER BRITISH RHODESIA (ZAMBIA AND ZIMBABWE) BETWEEN 1970 AND 1989

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*Despite a rich international bibliography dedicated to the fight for national independence of African states and their evolution in the postcolonial period, the contribution of the Romanian state to the achievement of this important objective is completely neglected. An interesting chapter for our national history, little known to the public, is the military and economic collaboration of Romania with the successor states of the former British provinces of North and South Rhodesia, the current states of Zambia and Zimbabwe. That financially risky approach had all the chances to become a viable project to position Romania among the states with influence on the African continent.*

*Keywords: Rhodesia; defence industry; military collaboration; national liberation; anticolonial struggle;*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most important points on the foreign policy agenda of the two superpowers, the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), in the second phase the Cold War was to identify the means by which they could extend their influence on the “third world” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 207)<sup>1</sup> of which the states on the African continent were also part. Their entry into this space was to come at the expense of the former colonial powers, Great Britain and France, which immediately after the Second World War hoped to support the reconstruction of their own economies devastated by conflict through raw materials and labour available in the territories that legally belonged to them. Even though in the first phase of the Cold War the USA seemed to support, financially and militarily, the maintenance of the two European empires (Darwin, 2021, p. 504)<sup>2</sup>, subsequently, despite declared intentions to support Great Britain and France, the Americans invested enormously in supporting the national liberation movements. It was most likely intended to break the economic monopolies that France and Great Britain had in the colonies and to open the markets of those new states to the free economy in which the USA dictated the rules of operation. The weakness manifested by the European metropolises created the necessary conditions for other states with different levels of economic development to try to develop political, military and especially economic relations with the new states on the African continent. One of the states that risked investing in supporting those movements was Romania, which most likely wanted to create an outlet for many of its products lacking competitiveness in the international market.

### THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT THAT ALLOWED THE ANTICOLONIAL STRUGGLE TO START

Despite a moment of hesitation immediately after the end of the Second World War for the political leadership of the United States of America, it had already become clear that the British Empire would no longer be able to afford to financially

<sup>1</sup> The term *third world* described the community of states that at that time were not ideologically aligned to one of the two political-military blocs: the communist world ruled by the USSR and the “free” world led by the USA. In the first phase of the Cold War the interest of the two superpowers was centred on strengthening their power in the European territories where they deployed their armed forces. (A.N.).

<sup>2</sup> The funds made available to the two colonial powers were considerable for that period. Fearful of a possible expansion of the influence of the USSR in Iran and the Persian Gulf states, the USA had allocated, following the end of the war, about 1 billion dollars annually to defend the British Empire’s interests in the Middle East. (A.N.).

and materially support the installed political leadership in the various provinces of the empire. This fact was recognized even by the British who claimed that in many situations the expenses already exceeded the possible profits that could be obtained there. Lord Curzon, a former foreign minister of the British Empire, had declared since the end of the First World War that Britain's military presence in the Middle East, regardless of future earnings from oil exploitation, was too expensive: *"expenses can no longer be sustained"* (Frankopan, 2019, p. 378). Considering the potential for economic growth in the Middle East, which could be sustained through the exploitation of oil, and comparing it with low expectations for future exploitations in various African colonies, we can conclude that the Great Britain was already planning to cut its spending by abandoning some of these colonies. The thus created opportunity was grasped by both rival powers and Western-schooled leaders of the indigenous population who were willing to engage in military conflicts to take political power from the hands of the British.

As regards the support of the national liberation movements, the position of the political leadership in the USA coincided with that of the USSR, both of which were ready, regardless of the costs, to provide material and financial aid to these local leaders in the hope that they will succeed in expanding their ideology and model of economic development in this space. This seemingly disinterested aid was the perfect opportunity the two superpowers used to develop their trade with the arms produced by their defence industry. The best example is that, between 1967-1978, the Soviets and the Americans delivered more than 4 billion dollars' worth of weapons to African states (2.7 billion USSR and about 1.6 billion USA) (Zaayman, 2010, p. 140). The US military presence in Africa was recorded as early as the Second World War, when the American armed forces decisively contributed to the evacuation of the Nazi armed forces from the northern part of the continent. That moment was speculated by the Americans to strengthen their relations with some of the North African leaders to whom some of the weaponry used during the conflict was distributed. For the USSR this step was an element of novelty, the political leadership of this state being willing to unconditionally deliver several types of weapons at sometimes lower prices than the price of production. Figures indicate that between 1960-1970 the value of Soviet arms deliveries increased from just 150 million dollars to more than 2.5 billion (ib., p. 141).

Under the pressure of new ideas and with the military support of the USSR and the USA in many of the territories of former colonial empires, paramilitary groups were formed that triggered an unbroken string of conflicts. Very few specialists supported the idea of forming national states built around the European idea

of nation. The states established on the territory of former empires had borders that were inconsistent with their ethnic structure and, not infrequently, tribal peoples or communities were divided by arbitrary borders drawn on the ruins of former provinces in the colonial era (Stockwell, 2007, p. 243). This aspect, combined with the very low level of education and civic awareness, produced a real tragedy, with most of the new states being thrown into bloody civil wars. Many of the African leaders were willing to work together to achieve this goal, and would later militarily settle their existing divergences. It generated a rapid increase in military needs, with arming becoming one of the major objectives of the new leaders.

Those were the new circumstances in which political leaders of developing countries, such as the central and eastern European states in the area of influence of the USSR, which shyly started to develop their military sectors began working with various African leaders to whom they offered military support. Armed with weapons procured from around the world, these paramilitary groups, still led by tribal leaders, starting in the 50s of the past century, became very active and managed to cause considerable losses to armed groups led by military leaders of European origin (Darwin, p. 535) and subsequently to gain not only national independence but even a privileged position, compared to the neighbours. The richness of the soil and subsoil of African states very quickly became their main drawback. Both the former colonial powers and the two superpowers chose to support the bloody dictators they armed to be able to impose themselves in front of the contenders supported by rival powers. The very large number of conflicts that erupted created the necessary conditions for states that previously lacked the means to promote their interests in this area to enter the African market for arms and resource exploitation. Alongside PR China that, despite its economic and military underdevelopment at that time, harboured great ambitions, on the African market entered with their products the Soviet satellites from Central Europe, among which was Romania.

The Romanian state took full advantage of the opening of those colonial monopolies and tried to establish economic relations with a part of those states. Following a model of co-operation already established by the two superpowers and the two former colonial powers, Romania chose to support some of the African political leaders with the necessary elements to strengthen their power. The first visit by a high-ranking Romanian official to Africa took place in May 1970. Corneliu Mănescu, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, conducted a tour of Central and East African states with the declared goal of developing lasting economic and political relations. Between 3 and 26 May, he succeeded in establishing initial contacts with officials from the new states that had emerged on the African

continent: Gabon, Congo, Cameroon, Nigeria, Burundi, Tanzania, and the Malagasy Republic (Madagascar) (Melinescu, apud Hlihor, 2024, p. 60). Mănescu's visit was merely a preview to the future relations between the Romanian state and many African countries that had either gained independence or were in the process of proclaiming it. The first African leader to recognize the emerging opportunity was Robert Mugabe, head of the paramilitary organization ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union). He sought to strengthen his position against Joshua Nkomo, leader of ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union), who was also fighting for independence from Britain in the province of Southern Rhodesia. Mugabe's quick response to the Romanian leader's invitation stemmed from his concern over his internal rival, Nkomo, who had already secured external support from Ethiopia.

### ROMANIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE STATE OF ZAMBIA

On 24 October 1964, when Northern Rhodesia became Zambia, it declared its independence from the British Empire, having a population of about 2,400,000 people on its territory, of which 74,640 were settlers of European origin (Shurmer-Smith, 2011, p. 83). That minority, which had received direct support from the British government, owned the vast majority of the agricultural land and mineral resources of the young state. That situation generated considerable dissatisfaction among the native population, which exerted pressure to achieve the nationalization of the lands owned by them (Brown, in Evers, Spierenburg, Wels, 2005, p. 82)<sup>3</sup>. As a result of those reforms, the new president of Zambia lost the support of the Western states, which, like other leaders of the new African states, he accused of destroying the African ethnic space and implicitly their way of life. According to his point of view, it generated material deprivation and economic backwardness. Within the new political context that was formed and the interest that the socialist states manifested for the development of political-economic relations with the African states, he addressed the president of the Romania, Nicolae Ceaușescu to get the economic support he needed. According to documents preserved in the archives of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), Romania had become a state capable of providing not only the necessary materials for the struggle against colonialism but also the political and ideological support needed

<sup>3</sup> During the colonial period, a large portion of the native population in Zambia was relocated to the outskirts of farms owned by white settlers, being allocated small plots of land insufficient for producing the food necessary for the growing population. In that way, the British managed to achieve a second economic objective, namely to ensure the labour force required for large agricultural operations. (A.N.).

for the reform of the Zambian state in accordance with socialist principles.

In a letter addressed to the Romanian president by his Zambian counterpart, Kenneth Kaunda, sent on 10 November 1970 (ANIC, p. 14), it was noted that the relations between the two states had already laid the foundations for the development of solid technical and economic agreements. At that time, there was a desire to obtain a new package of support aimed at developing cooperation in the defence sector. According to documents preserved by the National Archives of Romania (ANIC), our country had offered to assist in organizing the armed forces of the newly independent state and to provide political support for establishing a political regime similar to that functioning in Bucharest. To that end, Romania's Minister of Defence invited the future Chief of Staff of Zambia (Good, 1989, pp. 297-313)<sup>4</sup>, Lieutenant Colonel Chinkuli Kingsley, to participate in a fact-finding visit. During discussions, the Zambian representative requested that our country should provide a significant package of military equipment, which was to include military aircraft. The delegation also included the Zambian Minister of the Interior, who was interested in how the youth movement in Romania was structured and operated. He also requested information regarding the training of agricultural specialists (ANIC, p. 15).

The cooperation between the two states strengthened over the following year, when, on 4 May 1971, the Zambian President expressed his gratitude for the support provided and invited a group of political consultants from the Romanian Communist Party to visit his country to participate in the activities of the United National Independence Party. It was hoped that they would present aspects of working in the field of economic security and participate in training the personnel responsible for countering disinformation (Ib., p. 39).

Motivated by fears of interference from British intelligence services in the political and economic functioning of the new state, Zambian representatives requested, among other things, the training of personnel specialized in counterintelligence. Thus, on 28 June 1971, President Kaunda requested Ceaușescu to prepare 6-10 specialists in Bucharest, who would operate in various structures responsible for national security. The goal was for the new officers to conduct activities against economic sabotage and to participate in combating fraud (customs, currency, and income tax). Additionally, there was a need to train future officers who would operate

<sup>4</sup> On 28 December 1970, Lieutenant Colonel Chinkuli Kingsley, aged just 31, was promoted to the rank of General and became the first indigenous Chief of Staff in Zambia. Despite the fact that he had been trained at the prestigious British Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), during his military career he became one of the main supporters of national liberation movements in neighbouring states that followed the Zambian model and proclaimed their independence from the United Kingdom. (A.N.).

in military intelligence, capable of recruiting agents, conducting investigations, and interrogating suspects. There was also a requirement for training in technical areas specific to intelligence work, such as officers responsible for cryptography, secret writing codes, photography, and surveillance operations. During discussions, it was agreed that their training would take place in an intensive regime but would last no less than six months (Ib., p. 21). The agreement, signed on 23 November 1972, not only established the training in our country of the requested categories of intelligence officers but also foresaw an intensification of military intelligence cooperation between the two states. On that occasion, Romania created the opportunity to deploy intelligence officers in Africa (Ib., p. 118), which could provide a significant advantage over its economic competitors from both the socialist bloc and the West.

The political relations between the two states were strengthened in the following years, entering a new phase, in which the African leader communicated his main foreign policy decisions to Romania. One such moment was the communication of his key actions to support the national liberation movement in neighbouring Southern Rhodesia, which was still a British colony at the time. Through a telegram dated 23 March 1973, Kaunda informed Ceaușescu about the aggressive movements undertaken by the illegal regime (Nyerere, 1965, p. 373)<sup>5</sup> of Jan Smith, the leader of the white minority in the British colony of Southern Rhodesia. To provide additional details regarding the repeated violations of the state border and to request military support, the Zambian president sent two of his most important advisors, Mark Chana and Lishomma Lisshomwa, to Bucharest (ANIC, p. 72). They presented evidence of the aggression by the movement led by Jan Smith and its collaboration with the South African armed forces (ANIC, pp. 107-113)<sup>6</sup>. The first intervention of South African forces on the territory of Southern Rhodesia was recorded in 1967, when the South African police deployed over 2,000 members in support of the white minority, engaging in repressive actions against the native population (Moorcraft, McLaughlin, 2008, p. 32). To limit those incursions, which had already resulted in the deaths of 13 people, Zambia closed its state border starting on 9 January 1973,

<sup>5</sup> The province of South Rhodesia proclaimed its independence from Great Britain on 11 November 1965, under the leadership of the white minority that, at the time, represented only 5% of the region's population. The lack of legitimacy of the new regime, organized in a way similar to the Apartheid regime in South Africa, justified the movement to exclude the new state from the international community until 1980, when the native population, led by the future president Robert Mugabe, proclaimed the new African state called Zimbabwe. (A.N.).

<sup>6</sup> South Africa has repeatedly been accused of committing crimes against the civilian population, the apartheid regime being, in the opinion of President of Zambia, strongly supported by corporations active in the mining field: *"the political power of this regime was supported by international capital through multinational corporations"*. The racist South African regime was branded by President Kaunda as fascist, and the fight against it described as a fight against *"colonialism, neo-colonialism racism and fascism"*. He stated that independent Zambia has a *"historical duty and responsibility to support liberation movements"*.

and abandoned supply routes transiting this region. This action significantly increased the costs of importing necessary products, which had to be transported via Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. In this context, the African president requested the delivery of port facilities, trucks, communication equipment, as well as financial support and technical training for personnel who would carry out supply activities through Tanzanian ports (ANIC, p. 74).

Another delicate moment in international relations was debated between representatives of the two states on 1 November 1973. Considering that Romania remained the only socialist state that, after the conclusion of the Yom Kippur War, still kept its embassy in Israel open, President Kaunda deemed it necessary to inform Bucharest about the suspension of relations between Zambia and Israel. The decision was motivated by the alleged expansionist tendencies exhibited by the Israeli state towards its neighbours. The actions undertaken by the Arab states during the Yom Kippur War were considered just and necessary to temper the aggressive tendencies of this state (Ib., p. 50). On that occasion, he informed Bucharest that his country would support the Palestinian people, but it should not affect the very good relations existing between the two states.

The military collaboration with Zambia extended throughout the 1970s, reaching a peak in the latter part of the decade when support for the Mugabe regime in the neighbouring country reached its highest levels. Following the visit of Alexander Grey Zulu, President of the Defence and Security Committee and Minister of National Defence, on 7 July 1979, important details were established for the continuation of the military cooperation between the two states. It was desired that Romania should continue to train Zambian military personnel, but reduce costs. Moreover, it was proposed that most of training activities should be conducted in their home country. The only accepted exception was the training of military personnel who would operate in commando units. During the visit of the Minister of the Interior, Wilted J. Phiri, on 6 September 1979, cooperation was extended to include the training of the Ministry of Interior's troops. The official requested the delivery of a significant military equipment package consisting of 30 armoured personnel carriers for police troops, 20 prison vans, 80 ARO cars, 2,600 automatic weapons with over 1 million cartridges, 200 machine guns with over 300,000 cartridges, 50 anti-aircraft artillery pieces with 100,000 rounds, and 64 mortars with 10,000 rounds (Ib., p. 102).

On 20 November 1982, the Minister of Legal Affairs and Attorney General of Zambia, Mr. Gibson Chigaga, arrived in Bucharest with the mission of examining the possibility of adopting the Romanian legal system. He aimed to analyse

the feasibility of amending the legal system inherited from the colonial era in his country to eliminate provisions that continued to “*protect capitalist interests*” (Ib., p. 126). Cooperation between Romania and Zambia reached its peak in the early 1980s, when our country became a potential model for organization and operation for the African state. This model was to be extended to neighbouring African states seeking rapid modernization.

### ROMANIAN-ZIMBABWEAN MILITARY COOPERATION, AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT ON THE PATH TO POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE FOR THE AFRICAN STATE

Utilizing the experience gained during the 1970s in supporting Zambia’s independence consolidation movement, Romania continued to provide new support packages to Southern Rhodesia (the future state of Zimbabwe), which was then engaged in its own struggle for independence. The Romanian state justified its military support to some of the newly independent African states as a necessary means to sustain the anti-imperialist struggle. This financial and military aid was provided at the request of leaders of guerrilla movements in Africa, such as Robert Mugabe. He invoked in support of his cause the fact that his adversary, Ian Smith, the leader of the white community in the former British province of Southern Rhodesia, received support from major powers. He argued that the assistance was delivered to white Rhodesians indirectly (ANIC, 3Z/1979, p. 5), without drawing attention to the blatant violation of UN directives, which recognized the national liberation movement of African states as just. The leader of ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) requested the Romanian state to provide a significant package of economic, financial, and especially military support.

Through a bilateral agreement approved by Nicolae Ceaușescu on 7 May 1978 (Ib., p. 3), the Romanian state committed to supplying the African state with weapons, financial assistance, and training for a large group of military personnel. In the initial phase, specifically in the three months following the signing of the agreement, Romania pledged to provide equipment and armaments for the rapid equipping of 6,000 soldiers. Additionally, it was to supply further materials for the training of new recruits who were to be enlisted from the populations of regions that were to be liberated. The most important part of the agreement stipulated that, during 1979, Romania was to host, equip, and train 2,000 African soldiers who were expected to arrive in our country as follows: 900 in the January-June period, 900 in the July-December period, and 200 were to be hosted by the Romanian state for a period of 3-4 years, necessary for their training as future officers specialized in artillery, aviation, and reconnaissance (Ib., p. 5).

Constrained by severe shortages, Mugabe requested that the Romanian side should approve financial support of \$500,000, urgently needed to purchase essential food supplies to feed both the soldiers enlisted in his armed forces and the civilians in liberated areas. The funds were to be sent to ZANU through the Romanian embassy in Mozambique. He also requested the expedited delivery of medicines, transportation means, and either funds or parts necessary for maintenance. As for weaponry, Mugabe requested that the initial shipment should include 5,000 automatic weapons with 800 boxes of ammunition, 1,000 RPGs, 200 pieces of 82 mm mortars with 800 boxes of ammunition, 50 pieces of 120 mm mortars, 300 anti-aircraft machine guns of 12.7 mm calibre and 200 boxes of ammunition, 50 cannons of 75 mm calibre, 25 cannons of 85 mm calibre, 25 cannons of 107 mm calibre, 400 surface-to-air missiles, explosives, anti-personnel mines, chemicals, radios, and other military equipment (Ib., p. 8).

Another request from the Mugabe regime was that all the weapons and munitions should be shipped to Zimbabwe before the arrival of a group of 1,000 soldiers trained by the Ethiopian armed forces (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 207, p. 63). The soldiers were part of a rival faction led by Joshua Nkomo, leader of the competing organization, ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union). Despite ethnic differences (Msindo, 2012, p. 200)<sup>7</sup>, which sooner or later could lead to armed conflict (Zhira) between the groups, the ZANU leader asked the Romanian state to make efforts to equip them. The request demonstrated the level of political maturity of the African regime, showing that it understood that the immediate goal shared by both groups was paramount. Achieving political independence from Great Britain and, above all, eliminating the white minority paramilitary group that sought to extend the Apartheid (Dubrow, 2014, p. 3)<sup>8</sup> regime into that region were the most important objectives to be achieved.

In the following year, Romania was asked to intensify efforts to train the soldiers sent by the African regime, given the limited capacity of the regime in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to increase the number of troops it was already training. At that time, Ethiopia was already involved in supporting Zimbabwe’s independence struggle by training a significant number of soldiers, primarily recruited from the Nguni tribe.

<sup>7</sup> Mugabe belonged to the Shona ethnic group, a tribe associated with the Bantu population, the majority population in Southern Rhodesia, while his rival belonged to the Ndebele ethnic group, a tribe that is part of the Nguni-speaking peoples, who predominantly lived in South Africa.

<sup>8</sup> Apartheid was a slogan used by the white South African minority of Dutch descent (Boers) in the campaign aimed at proclaiming state independence from the British Empire. Later, the term was used to promote a regime of racial segregation established in South Africa between 1948 and 1994.

In a very short time, the Romanian side fulfilled its commitments to the African state. In February 1979, the military advisor and Chief of the Central General Staff of the Patriotic Guards, General Constantin Olteanu<sup>9</sup>, reported to Nicolae Ceaușescu that the military aid worth 6,750,000 lei was loaded onto the ship *Tîrnăveni* and was expected to reach its destination within the same month. The next step in consolidating the relations between Romania and Zimbabwe was the reception of a delegation of ZANU members at the Ministry of Defence headquarters in Bucharest. During the visit, they established the necessary details for the arrival of the 1,000 soldiers in Romania, as well as the specifications regarding transportation costs. The amount of 35,160,000 lei was to be covered by Romania (ANIC, p. 20).

It is important to note that Romania contributed significantly to the development of Zimbabwe's national air defence structures. In Bucharest, the initial training requirements were established for future personnel who would operate in this field. The training program costs for the 200 soldiers who were to be integrated into the structures of Zimbabwe's future Air Force General Staff were estimated at over 200 million lei for just the first phase. Romania was set to train 10 pilots, 30 personnel specialized as aircrew, 10 aircraft mechanics, 100 anti-aircraft artillery operators, and 50 signal operators. The funds were to be allocated from the International Solidarity Fund of the CC of RCP (Ib., p. 21).

The development of military collaboration was just one component; the Romanian state also aimed to increase its involvement in the foreign policy actions of the new state by training future leadership cadres. To that end, it was decided that when the soldiers arrived for training, they would be accompanied by several political leaders. On the occasion of the delegation's arrival in Romania, the first diplomatic relations between the two states were also established. Among the delegation on the plane was Lovemore Mazivisa, the first representative of the African state in Romania.

Among those who visited Romania during that period was Deputy National Commissioner and Central Committee member of the ruling party, Josiah Tungamirai, who would later become the Chief of the Air Force (appointed to this role in 1982, right after returning from Romania, where he was trained as a pilot) (Ib., p. 25).

<sup>9</sup> General Constantin Olteanu was considered at that time one of Nicolae Ceaușescu's trusted men, who, starting in 1971, took on the task of removing a significant number of officers educated in the USSR from the active ranks of the Romanian armed forces, some of whom were active members of the Soviet intelligence service, the KGB. For his support, in March 1980, he was appointed Minister of National Defence, a position he held until December 1985, when he was appointed First Secretary and General Mayor of Bucharest. His last important position held until December 1989 was Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) for foreign relations. (A.N.).

Another significant figure trained by the Romanian state was Mike (Rex) Tichafa, the military commander of Harare Metropolitan Province. Both officers subsequently held high-ranking positions in the military and political leadership of the new state.

It is worth noting that, at that time, Mugabe sought to secure a strong position not only against white colonists but also in relation to his African rivals, with whom he anticipated future conflicts after achieving state independence. For him, establishing a monopoly in collaboration with the Romanian state was a major imperative, as it could later ensure a steady flow of arms and ammunition, as well as a potential market for goods that could be exported despite any embargo the British might impose.

An important chapter in the collaboration between Romania and Zimbabwe remained the defence industry and the training of experts who would coordinate the new production capacities. To establish further details regarding the investments that Romania was to make, Ion Coman, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) and member of the Executive Political Committee, was appointed to lead the negotiations.

The first phase involved a state visit by the President of Zimbabwe to Romania, allowing him to visit the location where young recruits from his country were being trained. In addition to the military camp in Cincu, Brașov County, where African soldiers were receiving training, President Canaan Banana also toured several industrial sites in the surrounding area (Ib., p. 3). It is important to mention that the Zimbabwean President acknowledged Romania's support, including in the political organization of his state. Despite the fact that the elections had been organized by the British, his organization, ZANU, had achieved a sweeping victory (Tevera, 1989, pp. 162-165). Romania advised the African state to continue fostering the relationships between the two political factions, ZANU and ZAPU, and to bring into the government white minority members who demonstrated an understanding of the new political context.

Despite winning the war, the leaders of Zimbabwe spoke of the extensive material destruction left behind and the urgent needs for resettling thousands of refugees, rebuilding destroyed farms, and even maintaining armed posts in certain areas to defend against any potential breach of national sovereignty (ANIC, 168/1980, p. 5). Collaboration with Romania was seen by Zimbabwean leaders as an opportunity to disapprove the "*imperialist and colonialist*" theory that economic development for the country was no longer possible from that point forward. Romania aimed to establish itself as a primary model for the empowerment of developing nations,

promoting the concept of “peaceful coexistence” with capitalist countries with which continued collaboration was encouraged. The sole exception to that approach was apartheid South Africa, led at the time by a racist regime (ib., p. 10).

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter of our recent history has been very little analysed, and on the few occasions it has been discussed, unfortunately, only the economic shortcomings suffered by Romania have been brought into the spotlight. After years of investment in the economic, political, and military support of the new state, as expected, our country signed several contracts aimed at providing long-term loans for the development of various industrial sectors. Many of the new enterprises were to operate as joint ventures, with a significant portion of future profits being allocated to the Romanian state. The first investments were made in the mining sector, for which Romania exported machinery that was to be reimbursed through the extracted raw materials. Another important contribution to the development of this sector came from Romanian geological engineers who conducted prospecting and provided predictability for future investments. To accelerate the development of these enterprises, representatives of Romania expressed their willingness to cooperate even with privately-owned companies (ib., p. 8).

Typically, these economic losses are specific to any period of market formation, and they are also experienced by major powers. It is interesting to note that former colonial powers declared that during the period they controlled these territories, their trade balance was heavily imbalanced, incurring considerable losses due to their inability to capitalize on the economic investments made there. It clearly indicates that, in the case of Romania, the results of the collaboration were expected to emerge later on. Unfortunately, after the collapse of the socialist system, which occurred at the end of the Cold War, Romania deliberately or because of its financial incapacity withdrew from most of the investments it had made in Africa, thus putting an end to an atypical episode in our national history.

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