

Translocating the Rhino

THE rhino is a rare beast becoming rarer. It is likely to vanish any day from this earth on which it has lived for almost 60 million years. The rhino is really a Stone Age anachronism living in the 20th Century and in its final stages of existence — what Aberdare National Park warden Phil Snyder describes as the "era of megaphonical extinction".

In Snyder's realm, a total of 80 rhino roam its 350 square miles of primeval forest, one of the largest single concentration of African rhino remaining.

Local poachers have culled them in such numbers that translocation from ranch land and unprotected forest and plain is seen as the only feasible way of giving them maximum protection.

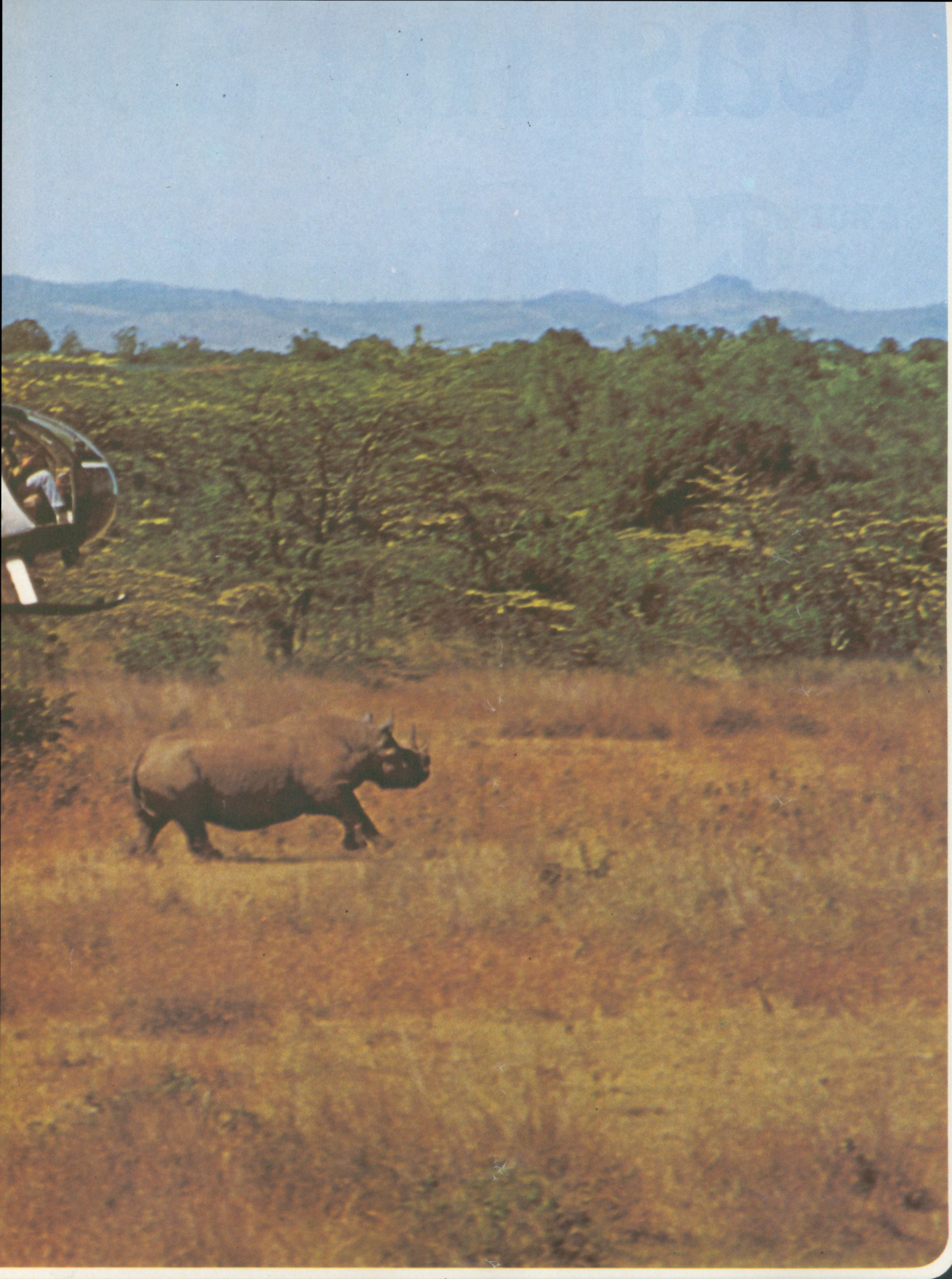
Senior Game Warden Ted Goss, head of Kenya's Anti-Poaching Unit, brushes the treetops in his Hughes chopper, the fan blades swathing branches with its elemental force while veterinarian Dr. Ishtiaq Chawdry sits beside him waiting to pop a drugged dart into the rhino with a .22 rifle.

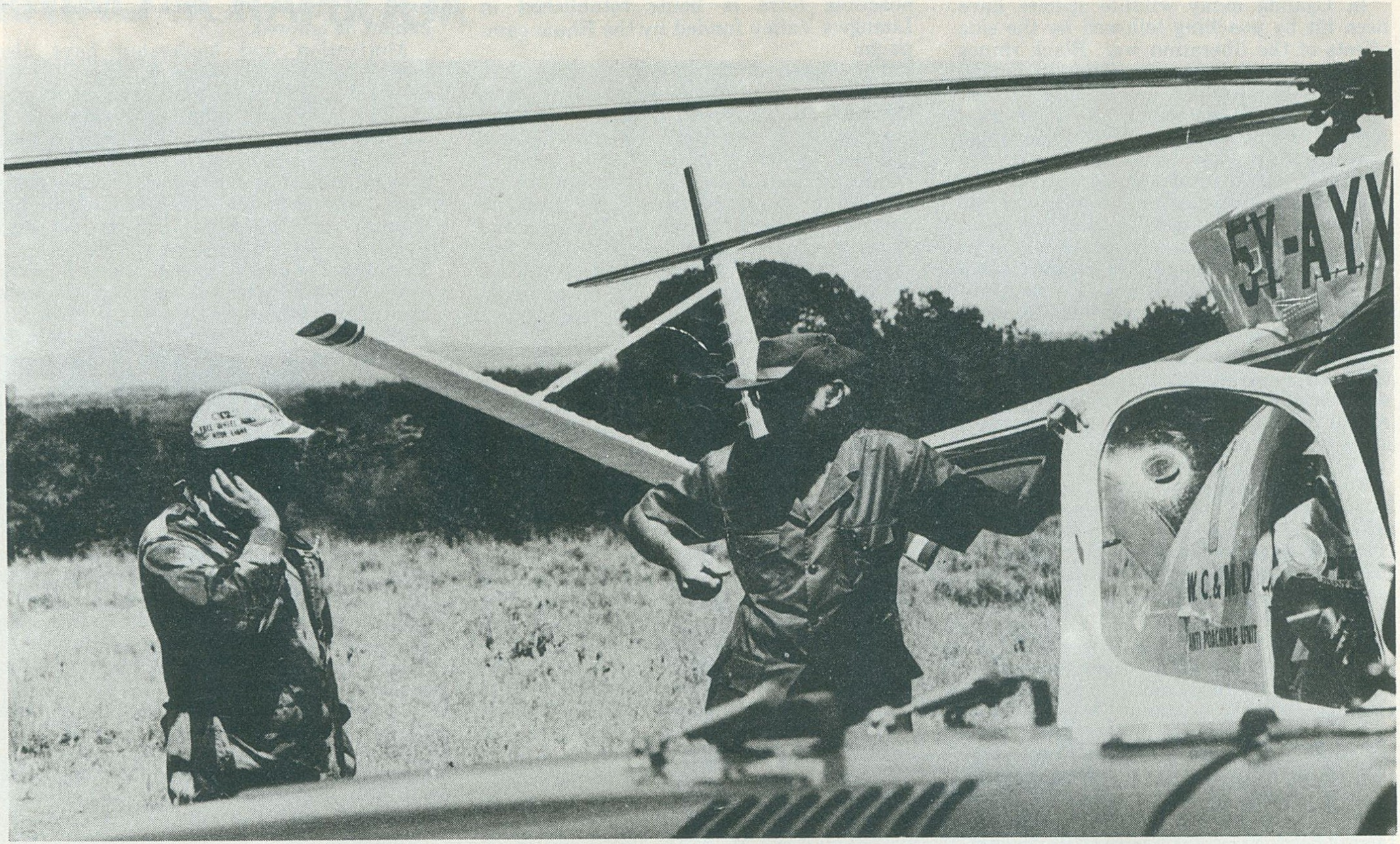
Three or four hundred feet above the bush-hopping chopper is Snyder circling endlessly in his Piper Super Cub. His job is to mark the spot where the rhino falls as Goss drops Chawdry to monitor the beast's respiration and muscle tremors.

With his whirly-bird Goss guides the work gang, waiting four miles away, who load the dormant giant on to a sled which they run up the lorry. The rhino is taken to a boma, a wood and iron enclosure, just outside Nyeri, the town where Lord Baden-Powell, father of the Scout movement, rests in eternal sleep.

"Translocation, however, is only a minor solution for a major problem. It only works in a localised situation like we have in this area — between the Aberdares and Mount Kenya," says denim-clad Dr. Kes Hillman, a zoologist who heads the Africa team of the World Wildlife Fund and International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources "Save the Rhino" campaign.

These pictures capture the drama of the translocation exercise. Translocation may save the few rhinos on the Laikipia plateau near the Aberdares. But who, or what, can save the rest?

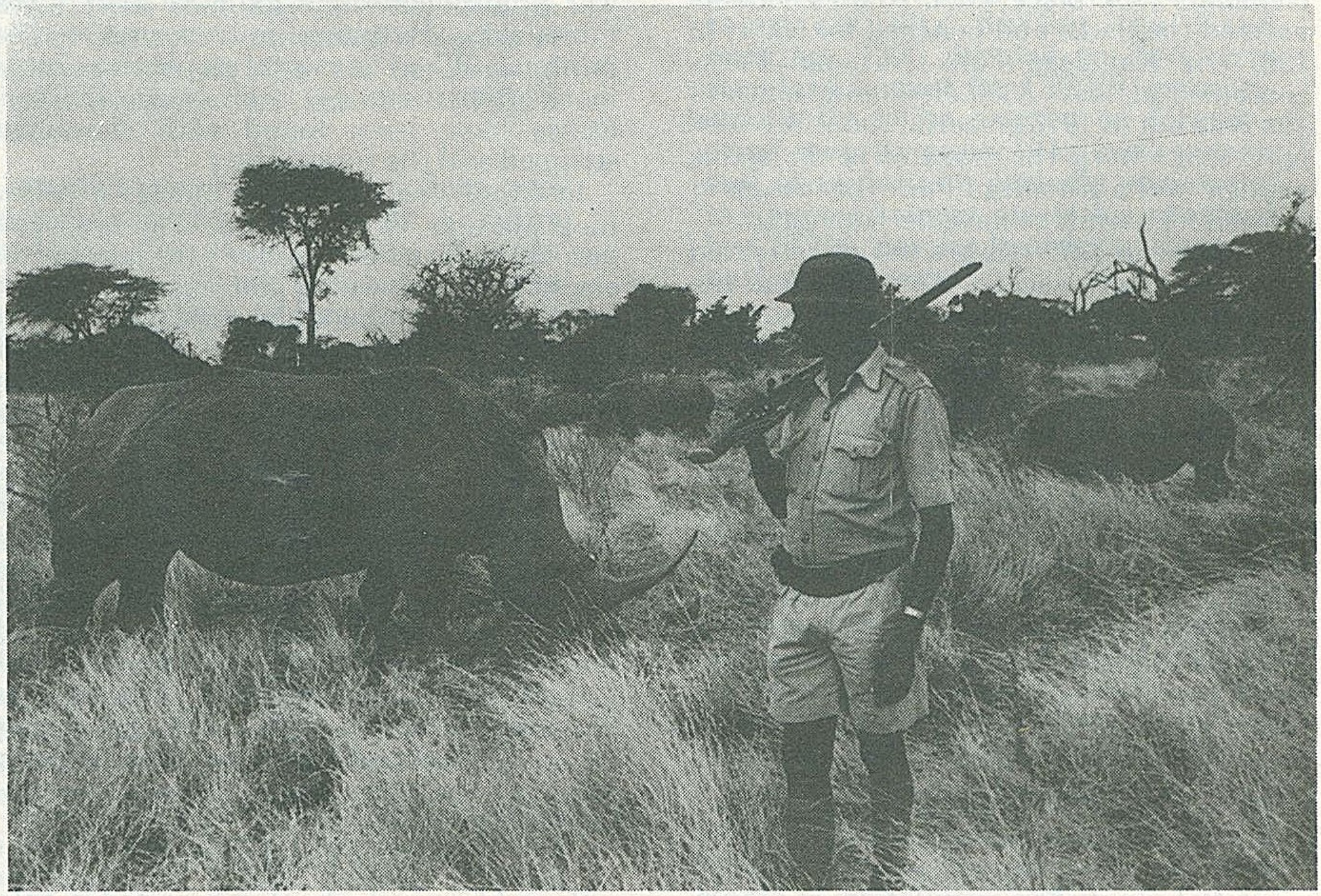




KENYA Game Department veterinarian Dr. Ishtiaq Chawdry with the head of Kenya's Anti-Poaching Unit, Ted Goss, during "Operation Rhino" to translocate the rhino to a safer home.



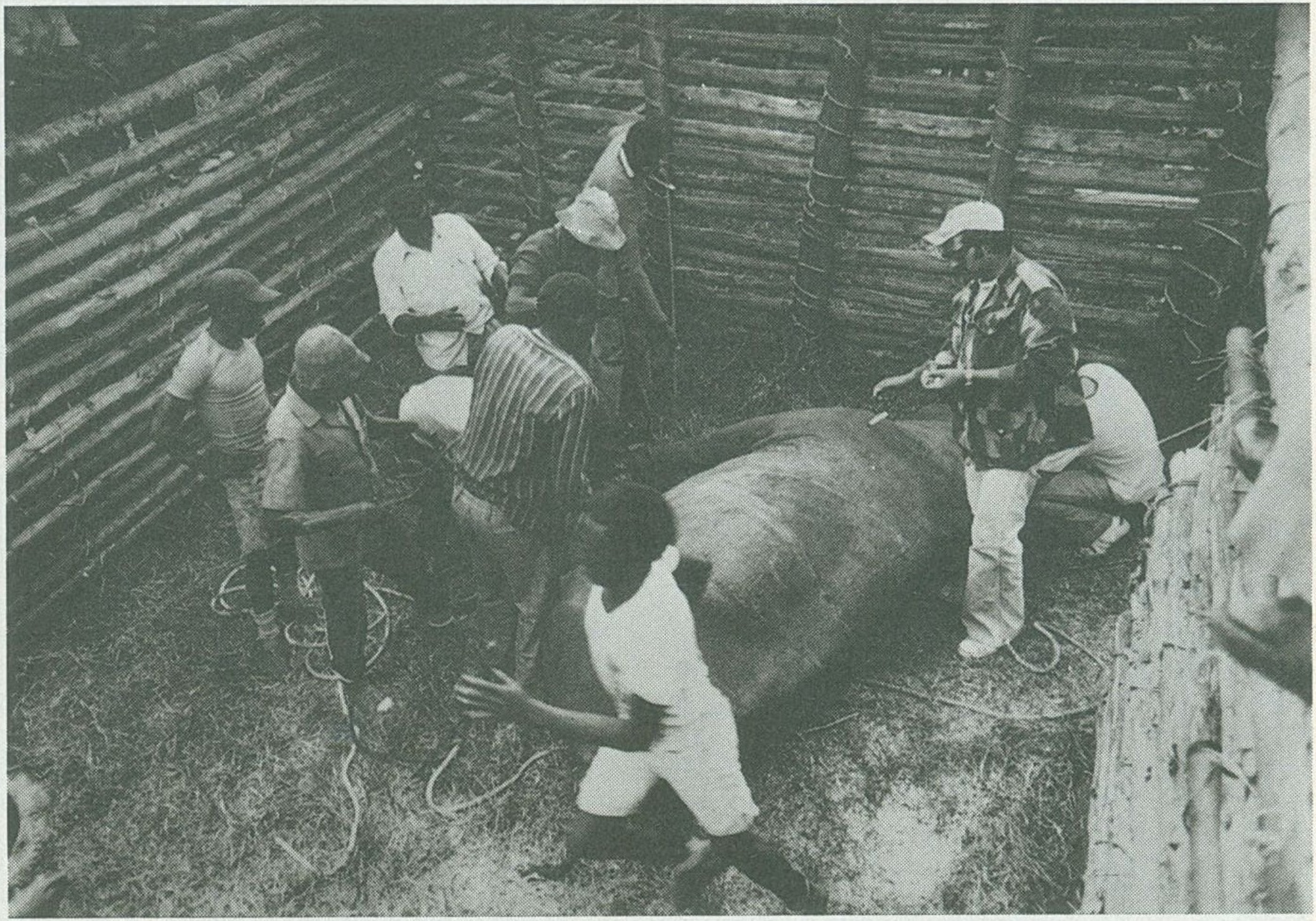
ARMED camel patrols, aided by airborne and motorised patrols, maintain lengthy vigil in Kenya's semi-arid North Eastern Province.



ONE of the surviving white rhinos in Meru National Park. Not their traditional habitat the rhinos were translocated from another region of Kenya.



TWO tons of primeval aroused anger tries to climb a 12ft. wooden fence.



UNLEASHED. . . . Dr. Chawdry administers the drug which will revive the rhino — and everybody starts to move out.