Key:

SO: Sue Onslow (Interviewer)
AP: Aziz Pahad (Respondent)

SO: This is Sue Onslow talking to Mr Aziz Pahad in Johannesburg on Thursday, 18th April 2013. Mr Pahad, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to talk to me. It's a pleasure to be here. I wondered if you could begin by saying please, sir, how did you come to England to study, and then become an active participant in the Anti-Apartheid struggle?

AP: Thanks, Sue, it's a great pleasure. Let me just quickly do the background. As a youth, I was a member of the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress and a very active participant in the struggles in the country against apartheid. So in 1963 I was banned under The Suppression of Communism Act which was one of those crazy laws under which anybody who opposed apartheid, once you got banned, you couldn't get involved in any political activities, go to any institutions of learning or work. So the Rivonia trials had taken place, which meant that our movement internally had been decimated. My brother and I decided - we couldn't get passports - to seek exit permits and we were given exit permits to leave South Africa at the end of November 1964. So we left South Africa at the end of 1964 on exit permits to come to London, to join my father who was already in London. Exit permits meant you couldn't return back to South Africa legally; you had to just go on a one-way ticket.

SO: So you didn't have a passport?

AP: No.

SO: It was the South African state just shipping you out of the country?

AP: Effectively, yes.

SO: And England and Switzerland were the only two European countries which didn't require visas for South African citizens at that point.

AP: No. The Anti-Apartheid Movement had already been growing. There were many South African exiles in London already: very senior members of the three structures of the alliance. The ANC had already established an office there. Dr Yusuf Dadoo who was a leader of the South African Indian Congress in the South African Communist Party, had left the country at around the same time as Oliver Tambo and he was also based in London;

and the PAC were also based in London already. So if you did not go across the border and join the camps, London because of the historical connections was one of the first places South African exiles went to.

SO: So London was a natural point of connection for South African exiles?

AP: Yes.

SO: Was this when you registered for your studies at University College, London?

AP: I did my Diploma in International Relations at UCL and after that, I went to Sussex to complete my MA in International Relations.

SO: Is this where you forged your friendship with Thabo Mbeki, at the University of Sussex?

AP: Fortunately Thabo was the leader of the African Students Movement in South Africa and there was a close link between the Indian Congress Youth and African students. So we knew Thabo from that time. But of course he left in the '60s to go to London. But he didn't go by plane, he went via the then Rhodesia. So we knew him before we left the country; we just renewed our acquaintances when we came to London. Thabo was of course the head of the ANC Youth League, the ANC youth structure in London. And as you recall, after discussions with the ANC Youth section with Oliver Tambo, long before the ANC was open to all groups, the youth section was opened to members of all South African groups. So we were all in the same committees then.

SO: So you didn't maintain your autonomy as a representative of the Indian Youth Congress?

AP: No, because the Youth Section was open to all.

SO: How did you then accelerate your political activism in the 1960s?

AP: Because of the ANC Youth Section and the ANC office, we were active there. But of course there was a very strong link between the liberation movement and the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) and we had a very, very close working relationship. The AAM was non-sectarian and we encouraged that; that the AAM should not support any particular movement. It should just support the Anti-Apartheid struggle.

SO: Yes.

AP: But the PAC outside was making a lot of slogans etc. and were not really an organised force. So it was the ANC that spent a tremendous amount of time interacting with the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

SO: And so your recollection is that the PAC was by no means as organisationally focused as the ANC?

AP: Yes.

SO: It is very much the story now that the PAC was riven with internal animosities, and that personality clashes developed. Is that an accurate reflection of what was going on?

AP: Yes. It didn't seem that they had any organisational structures except in the leadership officers. Either in Africa or in London, they had officers but they did practically very little work in mobilising the anti-Apartheid sentiments. And they were supported largely by - I don't know how to call them - but it was mainly breakaway groups from the AAM and the so-called pro-Chinese groups. The PAC was supported by them but, by and large, they paid very little attention to the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

SO: As for your own politics at that particular time: would you call yourself an active Socialist or were you more of a Communist?

AP: No, I was not a member of the Communist Party in South Africa. I've always thought that most South African activists would have been what I would have called 'left Social Democrats'. And so we would have grown up in that tradition of being, yes, Social Democrats whether we were 'left' or 'centre' or 'right'. I think we were left Social Democrats.

SO: Mr Pahad, can I ask you a tangential question: what was your view of Euro-communism of the 70s? After all, communism was not monolithic as an ideology?

AP: No, there's a difference between Marxism and Leninism as a philosophy and communism as was being practised in the then Soviet Union and in other socialist countries.

SO: Yes.

AP: Now obviously from very early on, in South Africa and then even outside, because of the support that the then Soviet Union gave to the liberation movements - and I suspect because of our political education - we had a view of the Soviet Union as an alternative to Western capitalism. I personally - I can't speak for my other colleagues - I had a blinkered view of what was going on in Soviet Union. You know until the Khrushchev exposures and all that. I tended to see criticisms as part of a propaganda campaign in the West against the then socialist countries. So it's only in the later years that we began to understand that the socialist countries had their own contradictions. But of course, many of our students were being trained and many of our military people were being trained in the Soviet Union and in the then German Democratic Republic. Of course, many of our students were in England and other English speaking countries, but a lot of students also went to former socialist countries. So although we began to understand, in much later years, the contradictions in the then socialist countries, we never really became anti the socialist countries.

SO: I appreciate that. But I was just thinking you got your MA at Sussex in 1968. This was very much the year of the challenge of 'New Left' youth in Western Europe.

AP: It was, and that's where some of the sharpest debates took place in the anti-Vietnam war movement. We served on the Anti-Vietnam Committee based in London, which was, I think, after the Anti-Apartheid Movement, the strongest movement of solidarity. And in that broad movement were all sectors: the so called Maoists; those who saw themselves as Trotskyists; then the members of the Communist Party of Great Britain; and we as a liberation movement were represented on that committee. So the debates were always very sharp.

For instance, those were the days of what you could call 'uprisings of thinking' right through Europe. It was a privilege to have been in exile in London at that time, because I think it's only those who were there that could have got this sort of experience we've got: based on the anti-Vietnam war protests and then the coups in Latin America, especially the overthrow of Allende etc. So in those meetings, for instance, the formal slogan would be 'Hey hey LBJ. How many kids did you kill today?

SO: I remember that one!

AP: And the Trotskyists' slogans would be 'Hey Hey Ho Chi Minh! How many kids did you kill today?' But in the discussions, it was always a debate about whether you tried to mobilise the broadest sector of people against the aggression against Vietnam, and not get involved in the internal dynamics of whether the Vietnam struggle was communist or Maoists or pro-Soviet etc. And so the argument was always, do you broaden the Anti-Vietnam protest movement as it was, as in the Anti-Apartheid Movement where you bring in all sectors of British society? Or do you narrow it down because of the very ideological position you take? So this was a debate both in the Anti-Apartheid Movement and in the Anti-Vietnam protest movement.

SO: In intellectual terms, though, distilling the then contemporary 'New Left' criticism of the current state of international relations and South African internal politics, it was the combination of social justice with racial justice?

AP: Yes.

SO: So there was an ideological fusion?

AP: Yes *[laughter]* but that's why I think where we came from was important. We had been brought up in the ideological framework of the relation between the national and class question; and this is why the South African alliance is a unique one in that time between the ANC, which was a national movement, the South African Communist Party whose ultimate objective was communism; and the trade union movement. Historically, the SACP had understood that since its formation in 1922. They had in the sixties deliberated this concept of 'colonialism of a special type'. And it is still what should be driving what we call the National Democratic struggle. We have not completed this phase of the National Democratic Revolution. And therefore we would always be clear in our own thinking, or as clear as we could be, that the fight for socialism in South Africa, in Southern Africa had not matured; and therefore we must fight for the national liberation struggle. We always took a position in Vietnam and although our movement's alliance took a position in the Sino-Soviet dispute, we *[laughter]* criticised what we called the Chinese

approach to the developments of the world revolution. And so we took an official position as the alliance.

SO: Were you as critical of Tito-ist Yugoslavia which was, after all, pursuing its own separate road to socialism?

AP: No, no. The debate was very sharp between the Soviet Union and China in the world communist movement. And since the South African Communist Party was an active participant of the world communist movement… I think, broadly speaking, we still debate about why we had to intervene as ANC in that ideological battle. So on Tito, yes I think intellectually publicly we never discussed it, but intellectually we did in private debates. You would have heard people who say, "But Tito-ism is a deviation from Marxism and Leninism". You would have had that discussion. But it was never a major issue for the ANC.

For the South African Communist party too, it never became a major public issue. It was more the Chinese/Soviet debate that became public. Whether in international youth conferences, such as The World Federation of Democratic Youth, and the World Peace Council. These debates became very sharp and the ANC then became involved in those discussions and there were debates quite sharply on the side of the forces that were labelled the pro-Soviet forces.

SO: Coming back to your own particular experiences: after finishing at Sussex in 1968, where did your life and your political activism lead you next?

AP: After '68, I was recruited to work full time for the ANC. In the initial year and a half I worked fully in the ANC office in London, But in '69 I was recruited to work for what then was called a revolutionary council. That's the London section of the Revolutionary Council, whose task was broadly speaking, internal reconstruction. That was the body in London which had covered all of Europe and North America in helping to develop our underground movement. And so that's where I started working after 1969, in the Revolutionary Council.

SO: Just to explain, how large was the Revolutionary Council?

AP: Dr Dadoo, Joe Slovo, Ronnie Kasrils, Jack Hodson, Stephie Kemp and myself were full-time members. And, of course, there were other people helping with specific activities, but full-time there were six of us. But of course, that didn't mean that we stopped all our work on the Anti-Apartheid front, because it still remained crucial to mobilise the international community. The British Anti-Apartheid Movement was the first movement before the other countries started.

SO: As you say it seems just by looking at the sheer volume of material that survives in the AAM archives at Rhodes House in Oxford, that London was the principal centre of activity, although of course there were other important anti-Apartheid councils in Europe.

AP: Yes, but London was the key. By the time we got there it had already developed into quite a strong movement and it influenced the formation of

movements in the Scandinavian countries, in Europe and France and elsewhere.

SO: And Holland as well.

AP: And in Holland, very much so. So no, I think the entire world Anti-Apartheid Movement, when you look back, would have been inspired from what happened in the UK. And the UK Anti-Apartheid Movement was very significant in the sense that historically links to Britain and apartheid South Africa. I won't say just with the government, but before that; there were still many links between Britain and South Africa relating to the private sector, the churches, the trade union movements. And so you know, pre-democracy, many South African students came to study in the UK, but they had tended to be only white compatriots. A few blacks went, but not as many. So there have been historical educational links, trade union links, religious links, business links and we speak the same language, English.

SO: It makes London a natural crossroads of all those different forces.

AP: That's why it was not surprising that the heart of the protest movement and the initiation of many campaigns, whether it was the arms embargo, the sports boycott, the cultural boycott, or the release of political prisoners. All were initiated from the UK, from London.

SO: From your point of view as an ANC 'youth activist' in the Revolutionary Council: what are your recollections of the growing role of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth criticising apartheid rule in South Africa? In the 1970s there was an acceleration of international criticism of the white minority government of the Rhodesia Front, as well as apartheid South Africa?

AP: I came into exile in '64 as the Commonwealth itself was going through fundamental transformation. When we were still at home in '60, South Africa declared itself a republic and the debates were very sharp about whether it should remain in the Commonwealth. You know, there have been earlier discussions in India, whether if it became a republic it could still be part of the Commonwealth. And I think that the Commonwealth changed its rules and regulations to allow India to become a member of the Commonwealth.

SO: Yes, there was a reformulation in 1949.

AP: That's right. It was obvious given the historical links between the Indian Congress party and South Africa; Gandhi's own political career started in South Africa. And it was obvious that once India became a member of the Commonwealth, it had already raised the issue of apartheid in the United Nations. It was obvious that it was going to raise it in the Commonwealth, but it was still a lone voice. We ourselves were involved at home; obviously it didn't become a major campaign, but when the question was arising about South Africa applying for Commonwealth membership unfortunately that coincided with the time when the decolonisation process was starting. So African countries were beginning to join the Commonwealth in the sixties. You saw all former colonies etc. coming in and Dominions coming into the Commonwealth. So the Commonwealth was becoming fundamentally

transformed by the ’60s. So the formation of the Secretariat was very important.

Once the Sharpeville massacre took place and once India and Ghana and others started raising the apartheid issue in the Commonwealth, it was obvious that Verwoerd was not going to apply for membership; maybe they were convinced that they would not succeed. After Sharpeville it was quite clear that there would be no possibility of apartheid South Africa joining the Commonwealth. But by this time, the Commonwealth had started at least building a good relationship with the Anti-Apartheid Movement. I don’t know whether it was structured, but it was quite obvious that there was interaction between the Secretariat (after 1965) and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. So we ourselves of course didn’t deal directly in the initial period with the Commonwealth; we dealt directly with the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

The leadership, of course, after the first Canadian Secretary General, Arnold Smith, was Sonny Ramphal. I think Sonny built a good relationship with people like Oliver Tambo. He had a very good relationship with people like (Archbishop Trevor) Huddleston, Abdul (Minty), Mike Terry, Canon Collins, so I think Ramphal probably initiated contact with the ANC leadership. I was not in the leadership at that stage. There was some contact but obviously the Commonwealth then became an important terrain of struggle. What is significant, which I don’t think even I understood at that time as clearly, was that many of the Commonwealth members were also members of other groupings, such as the OAU, then after the Bandung conference, they were members of the Non-Aligned Movement. And so in a way they were coming into the Commonwealth as a united front. Although the Commonwealth is a voluntary organisation etc., members were coming there with a collective approach to deal with issues like apartheid.

SO: So the ANC only belatedly came to appreciate this ‘global sub-system’ and to see that the Commonwealth – or more particularly, individual Commonwealth countries were represented on multiple international organisations? And to start thinking there was the possibility of ‘a voice’ here, a group to exert pressure?

AP: Now we put biggest emphasis on the OAU. Because once you got the OAU on your side, you knew you would then influence the Non-Aligned Movement. You knew you had the collective strength in the UN General Assembly. And you also knew in bodies like the Commonwealth. It was unique compared to the others, because you know, the language of English united us as does the similar education, legal etc system. The Commonwealth was an important terrain on which to battle apartheid.

SO: When did you come to this realisation?

AP: I think I personally would not have been aware; but I think the leadership was. Especially the youth leadership in London would have understood the importance of the Commonwealth. And therefore we would have spent time lobbying key Commonwealth countries on these issues. Now you know - as you know better, you might even shake up my memories - that already in ’64 as the Secretariat was being formed, the AAM was submitting memorandums to the Commonwealth. But once the Secretariat was formed with its own

bureaucracy, the AAM established structured relations with the Commonwealth. And that's why we remember so vividly that the delegation of the Commonwealth, led by Kaunda, in '70 that went to see Edward Heath on the arms embargo. But the discussions leading up to that would have taken place were very structured. They would have been taking place in the ANC; the ANC would be discussing with the AAM, because we were all part of the arms embargo campaign. So when he went to see Heath. From what I recall, it was not a very good meeting!

SO: No it wasn't! It was rather acrimonious!

AP: Yes, from what I recall, and I think we had protests about that actually. We had so many demonstrations in London, but we did protest first of all in support of the delegation and then afterwards at how badly the meeting went.

SO: This was in the lead up to a huge argument at the Commonwealth heads of government meeting Singapore.

AP: And if my recollection is right, Heath advised the Queen not to go to that meeting?

SO: Yes.

AP: Now you're reminding me of *[laughter]* discussions and issues that were coming up. Because, by that time it, was clear that the Commonwealth had strong opinions. Whether it could take action was a different matter, but that the issue of apartheid, had got high on the Commonwealth agenda. It was clear it was the one topic that was causing a lot of acrimony. On other issues, there were, you know, meeting of minds because, again, most of former leaders studied in UK institutions. So I do think that yes, we would have seen the Commonwealth as a unique association, outside of the Non-Aligned Movement or the OAU; an opportunity for the new Commonwealth members to try to influence the old Commonwealth in a way, so it would be Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, which by the way they did. It's in a very interesting way, when you recall that crazy Australian Prime Minister who made that press conference statement, saying something to the effect that after he left the meeting and said, he had been sitting around the table, with "people who have just come down the trees".

SO: That was Prime Minister Harold Holt, Bob Menzies' successor, in 1966.

AP: I remember that because we then had protests about that. But it was clear to us that the debate was getting important in the Commonwealth and as more ex-colonies, and dominions joined the Commonwealth, we were able to have voices that were from the OAU and the Non-Aligned Movement, coming together in the Commonwealth. And the Commonwealth was a different forum. I don't know what year they introduced a breakaway of heads of states, you know they had the formal meeting and then breakaway sections involving leaders only.

SO: It was in '73 at the Ottawa heads of government meeting. The idea of a 'retreat' was Pierre Trudeau's initiative.

AP: Ah, because that I do believe was probably the best innovation. Because we go to formal summits and extended speeches are made, and very little discussions take place actually. But that one, the retreat, where you break away: of course you break off formal discussions, but even playing golf, you're discussing politics.

New members of the Commonwealth were taking more advanced positions. We were even able to use the Commonwealth to carry some of the African countries, to keep them together so that it even impacted positively on the discussions at the OAU, like Hastings Banda, and probably the Front Line States who were coming under a lot of pressure and destabilisation from South Africa. The Commonwealth would have been a good smaller grouping for them to feel more as a family, to really remain committed to the struggle.

SO: So what you're suggesting here then is that the fact of heads of government intimate engagement at the retreat, made then, the bi-annual meetings a particularly attractive venue for ANC representatives around the fringes?

AP: I don't know whether the ANC really did this. It was only in later years we went to all Commonwealth summits. But I think in the earlier years, it would be mainly the AAM would be involved.

SO: I know that in 1975 which was Sonny Ramphal's first Heads of Government Meeting as SG elect - the Kingston CHOGM was when Arnold Smith was stepping down and he, Sonny Ramphal was coming into the Secretary Generalship - Ramphal was very surprised that Michael Manley had initiated the possibility of Zimbabwean liberation movements speaking to heads; it wasn't then the Patriotic Front, but Joshua Nkomo (ZAPU) and Robert Mugabe (ZANU) spoke to heads of government in Kingston.

AP: Yes and that was one very important element. I had forgotten that.

SO: Was the Anti-Apartheid Movement or was the ANC thinking, 'Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings are possible point of leverage. We should try to do this'?

AP: Absolutely, and I'm sure that the AAM and the ANC would have had discussions on those sort of possibilities. And I'm sure that this would have been discussed with the Secretariat etc., that we would, and the AAM would have discussed that. And we ourselves, of course, by this time had built a good contact with the Secretariat. The ANC in Lusaka through the London office, maintained some contact with the Secretariat. It increased dramatically after Ramphal came in and then continued; and then subsequently Chief Anyaoku developed much more contact; and then Don McKinnon. But that was a bit of a difficult period, because of the Zimbabwean issue.

SO: I want to ask you about that certainly.

AP: Going back to the Ramphal era, I do believe that we would have seen the Commonwealth as an important terrain of struggle.

SO: From your own personal point of view, you remained obviously an active ANC promoter, and were also actively involved in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. In the 1970s and then the early 1980s, were you still in London and still pursuing your ANC activities?

AP: Yes, London remained my base but then I travelled around Europe. I had to go to other parts of Europe. Both for the Anti-Apartheid element of it, but also for our internal reconstruction work, I travelled to North America. So I travelled from London to other parts of Europe and then later in the '70s I started going to Lusaka. And then in the '80s of course, I spent more time - when I say 'more time' I didn't live there - I used to go more to Lusaka and then after independence to Mozambique, and after Rhodesia-Zimbabwe's transition into Zimbabwe to Zimbabwe, then I was sent to be based in Angola. But after four months I was sent back to London.

SO: Please could I ask you, sir, if you recall, how far did you see the Commonwealth as an increasing diplomatic actor in the possibility of peaceful resolution, or peaceful transition of South Africa after the 1979 Lusaka meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government? I ask this because of the role that Sonny Ramphal and his Secretariat played in providing diplomatic support for the Patriotic Front, behind the scenes at Lancaster House discussions. The Commonwealth also initiated election monitoring in Zimbabwe in early 1980.

AP: The Lusaka summit that took the resolution on racism etc. was in '79 I think. The ANC would have been definitely interacting very much, because President KK would have made it possible to meet, with the Secretary General, and being on the fringes in the corridors allowed us to interact with the leaders. So the ANC would have been actively involved. I suspect that we were not necessarily strong enough when the first Commonwealth summit took place in Nigeria in '66, because I think we were not yet prepared; but it's possible that the ANC were not allowed too close, but were in the vicinity. And after that, I suspect that we would have been present at many of the summits, clearly Mbeki went to many summits of the Commonwealth. I think the last one he went to was to explain the Harare Declaration, which was quite crucial by then. The Harare Declaration was adopted by the OAU, and served as the basis for the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement in South Africa to negotiate positions. It enabled us to limit outside interference. It was also adopted by the UN General Assembly.

SO: Do you mean 1990, when you had the OAU meeting in Harare?

AP: It was 89.

SO: Then there was the Harare Declaration of '91 which is the Commonwealth and then-

AP: And there was the '89 Harare Declaration of the OAU. Now that's the one that I think Mbeki had to go and explain to the Commonwealth, because that one then would be the basis on which we work on all our future negotiations, and tactics.

SO: So just to try to take it forward chronologically: you said that you personally had assumed much more of an international role as part of your Revolutionary Council position. By 1985 you were then on the ANC executive committee. By then were you still working for the Anti-Apartheid Movement?

AP: But then less and less. And I was concentrating more on my ANC work. By then it had been transformed. In '79 the Revolutionary Council was transformed to the Political Military Committee and I was then in London. I was the Secretary of the London Section of the Political Military Committee. We had what we call 'forward areas'. Now, of course, London was declared a 'forward area', because so many South African passport holders came through London and so many South Africans were studying in London.

SO: Again, they didn't need visas for visiting England.

AP: Yes, our task was to try to meet with South Africans to do several things: for passport holders, to recruit them into going back to work in open structures, to recruit them to go and work in the underground structures and finally, which we don't think we succeeded in very much, to recruit them to go into the ANC army. But in London we did recruit many people to come back and work in the legal structures at home.

SO: So how much of your energies were also devoted to trying to ensure that the ANC was identified as the sole voice of the South African black community?

AP: Well as I said we had to build the AA struggle on a non-sectarian basis. Of course that was Oliver Tambo's position from the'60s; that the AA must never identify with one movement, because it would then get split into fights that would detract from the main objectives. But as I said, it was more the actions inside SA and post-Soweto in '76. And then post the clamp down on the black consciousness movement, when so many young people came into exile and joined the ANC that the AA increased its support for the ANC. By then the PAC had practically disintegrated. And I think with the influx of those people into our ranks, we were better organised in that way, and certainly relatively better organised than the PAC; and because we had some underground structures, although it was not as strong as we'd wanted. One of the things that saved us in exile, in the worst periods was, we never lost contact with many sectors inside SA although our movements and underground structures had been decimated. We still maintained contact with South Africans including religious, sporting, and academic leaders. So by the time the Black Consciousness Movement came up - it was not our creation - we had already established contact with leadership of the Black Consciousness Movement. So some of their leaders were quite instrumental when they came out, not only to come into the ANC ranks, but to bring with them the Black Consciousness contingent. So clearly that, plus other activities, led to an acceptance that the ANC was the movement, but we never made it an issue to fight on.

SO: I know that in 1979, the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party had a particular discussion, whether the ANC should be identified as the sole voice of the South African people. (Abdul Minty

was pressing hard for this.) That became of course problematic, because when they were to send any delegations down to South Africa, would they then be able to talk to other political organisations?

AP: Absolutely, and it was in that period when the debate on the arms struggle became very heated. The whole sanctions issue was never easy, and the British trade unions had links to the South African trade union movement. And the churches' links were very strong; but the AAM, I think because the tactical approach that they adopted, in the end managed to convince many people about the correctness of sanctions. I think South African government actions always strengthened the sanctions campaign. We campaigned against visits to SA, but if delegations went to SA, we advised that they meet with genuine representatives of the people. After the formation of the UDF and COSATU we had a more nuanced approach.

SO: Sir, could I just ask you on this question of trade union support and solidarity? I know that the International Trade Union Movement was divided between the traditional socialist strand, and the far left. This was represented in division at international organisational level. Given the position of the South African Communist Party and its close association with the ANC, did that not complicate the ANC's wider relationship with the International Trade Union Movement?

AP: It did in a way, but fortunately it's one of those untold stories. There was even anti-communism amongst our supporters in the UK: the belief that the SACP was really a Moscow tool and was dominating the ANC was very strong. I must give credit to AA leaders like Huddleston, Bob Hughes, Mike Terry for how they handled it; then when leaders like Tambo discussed that element with all sectors of the British Society. That anti-communism grew more differentiated, but sharper, when the armed struggle debate came, because remember, the AAM had to also decide on whether they supported the armed struggle. We eventually took a decision that it would be better for the AAM to support the armed struggle, which was a difficult decision, because many AAM supporters were not for an armed struggle, but we argued for the concept of a just war. We elaborated it in the South African context. And that is why we won over quite a few people who were opposed to the armed struggle within the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

SO: So in intellectual terms, should we regard the tactics and the approach of the AAM as really the role of the Popular Front? I'm thinking of the battle of the left and the moderate left in the 1930's and whether it as comparable in the 70s and 80s: was this a reconstitution of the Popular Front?

AP: It's a very good example of a successful popular front actually. It's a very broad front, I mean it even brought into its fold conservatives, I won't say many, but it brought into its fold people from the Conservative Party. The only ones who were more critical and probably did not join, were - I don't know what a better word would be - what was regarded as 'the ultra left.' They never really came into the AAM. I think that the way the AAM handled its approaches with these sharp questions of anti-communism, armed struggle, made the AAM what it was and I think it influenced the Commonwealth too.

Now the EPG was an excellent example of the dynamics between the Commonwealth. So I can tell you from our side. At that time the struggle inside the country had escalated and, and we had called on our people to 'Make South Africa Ungovernable', the ANC had, and in reality, the internal mass democratic movement had grown in strength. But before that the UDF had been formed, COSATU had been formed. We had the first meeting with the white captains of industry in Lusaka, which opened up the floodgates for people to defy the regime and meet South Africans, and some of us were convinced that the EPG would impact negatively on our struggle.

SO: But these were clandestine meetings?

AP: No, not all. The first public meeting was with the businessmen in Lusaka, what year was it '85? It was just after the Rubicon speech.

SO: ANC representatives had meetings with senior South African businessmen in Lusaka, such as Sir Timothy Bevan, chairman of Barclays and Gavin Rennie, chairman of Anglo-American.

AP: Yes, that was Lusaka. Now that opened the floodgates. From that time onwards, many, many delegations came and met the ANC quietly in Africa, and Europe; we organised those big meetings starting in Dakar with the representatives of the Afrikaners. Van Zyl Slabbert, who was one of the founding members of IDASA, and the former leader of the opposition brought about 80 establishment figures to Dakar for a week of discussions and then the select delegation went to Ghana and to Burkina Faso. We had three more like that. We had one in Paris that included the UDF, then we had another one in Germany that included the Russians - they were still the Soviet Union then. It was the white South Africans, the ANC and the representatives of the Soviet Union - academics. So you know these meetings helped us to interact, for the first time, in large numbers with the Afrikaner establishment...

SO: Where was that in Germany?

AP: The first was Dakar, then followed by Paris. Paris was the one where UDF was represented, and business was represented. And the broader Afrikaner establishment was represented, so that was in Paris, just outside of Paris. And then there was the Leverkausen one. Those were the three public meetings. But by then, delegations were openly coming to Lusaka, Harare, Botswana for meetings with the ANC.

Then there were the secret meetings. With regard to the EPG, you know, even in our ranks there was a sharp debate, about it. By '85, our analysis told us that the sanctions campaign was reaching new heights, because after the Rubicon speech, the mass democratic movement, that means the unions, COSATU, and the UDF, were now beginning to challenge the government openly. Given that, it was possible for our armed actions to be a increased with less casualties. So those four pillars of our struggle - mass mobilisation of our people, strengthening our underground structures, increasing armed actions and the international solidarity movement had brought a lot of confidence that the regime was on the retreat. And then comes the EPG after the Nassau meeting.

SO: Yes October '85.

AP: And we had expected that Nassau was going to impose much more stronger sanctions.

SO: Sonny Ramphal had openly called for sanctions in the June of that year.

AP: Absolutely, and some of us thought that it was a pity to weaken our struggle. So when the EPG was formed, obviously I can only give you a summary, but obviously the discussions were 'What is this, an attempt to derail the struggle?' That was the thinking.

SO: This is fascinating.

AP: Was it an attempt to derail the struggle, to divert us from the internal struggle and stop greater sanctions? Now that was a fear, so at the first meeting between the EPG and the ANC in Lusaka, the ANC expressed its concerns.

SO: Well, understandably so.

AP: But when the EPG provided us for the first time with… what was it called, a concept document?

SO: The Possible Negotiating Concept.

AP: Concept. Of course, I mean it was exactly what... I'm not saying everybody, because within the ANC there was still those who said, "we want an insurrection, armed seizure of power": the SACP, the path to power had just been adopted at the 10th Party Congress in Cuba, which I thought was always insurrectionary in nature. Some of my colleagues disagree with me, but I thought it was insurrectionary in nature. So there was a debate. But once we saw that concept negotiating paper, our concerns were dealt with.

SO: So were you in Lusaka at this time then?

AP: No, but I was being briefed fully because Thabo Mbeki and other leaders regularly visited London.

SO: So you're fully in the picture.

AP: Yes, about the EPG and since then I've read about it. But clearly, that's why I'm fascinated with what was said. My view is that they, the apartheid regime, would have been under a lot of pressure from Thatcher and her supporters not to refuse the EPG coming to SA.

SO: They were.

AP: You see, they would have been. And I think that those guys were in such isolation, that in their mind, they thought they could outmanoeuvre them. I think they made mistakes in how they handled it. They didn't think that with (Malcolm) Fraser, and other "supporters", that we would accept it. And with all our misgivings, of course once we saw the Concept Paper, we said, "But if these guys accept this, we've got no problem. It's going to lead us to where

we want to get to". But we were worried that the South Africans were going to string this thing along for a long time; that by this time inside the country there would also be exhaustion, because the repression had come very hard. We were having internal discussions with the UDF and they had sent a delegation and we had met them, and they were saying, "the balance of forces has changed. We need time to retreat" type of thing. And the movement's view of course was that "We can't retreat now. Now is the time to intensify the struggle."

Fortunately, the internal leadership accepted that the balance of forces was not that badly against the struggle. But it was a debate, a sharp debate, so we were very concerned about the process of the EPG. The thing that shocked everybody was also that must have been a concern - it was my concern, so I did not know if the others at the ANC whether they felt like that - was when they went to see Madiba. We were always aware that a tactic had always been to divide the liberation movement; and then secondly to divide the ANC from the outside and inside. We had managed to maintain our unity but once we saw that they were going to see Madiba separately and that was before they came to see the ANC in Lusaka, there was some concern. But I think that their discussion with Mandela is a remarkable testimony of how a leader who had been in prison for so long broadly speaking, stayed within the framework of the ANC's strategic approach.

By that time the Harare Declaration was not yet adopted. So you know, you try to understand what was he discussing in his secret talks. There were no divergences, in his positions on many issues including the armed struggle, and communism. That's the same talks we've had with all sections of white society, and with the representatives from the Democratic Movement; In the open talks and the secret talks, three issues consistently came up: i) the role of the Communist Party; ii) the armed struggle, and iii) the nature of the economy post-independence. Through the late 50s and 60s this had been the debate anyway within the movement, before we were banned. So one would have expected that if it was not somebody who had come through the whole movement structure, maybe they would vacillate on those issues. But it was clear that Mandela gave the EPG the same sort of analysis. It was also obvious from what I've subsequently read and heard, that Mandela said that he's talking for himself; he's not even talking for the other prisoners. That they must go to Lusaka to discuss these issues. Now I think if there were some EPG people who were themselves not convinced about the genuineness of ANC to negotiate and were convinced that the apartheid regime was going to make fundamental changes and would be willing to genuinely negotiate, they came out of their experience totally convinced that that's not true. That's the way the apartheid regime dealt with them, despite the long letters that Botha wrote to them in correspondence. On the eve of the one meeting with the selected team of government, the regime attacked the neighbouring countries (on 19th May). It is still not clear even now to me, where that decision came from. Many different interpretations have been given.

SO: Speaking to Minister Botha and also to Vic Zazeraj, and Dave Steward, it would seem that that had come from a dysfunctional National Party government structure, with the SADF determined to send a message to exiled liberation forces, using various techniques of armed struggle and waiting then for clear skies over Gaborone, over Lusaka and over

Harare. So there was a very unfortunate coincidence of weather conditions. This is what I've been told, not a well thought through and coordinated effort to send a message to the EPG. Pik Botha was apparently incandescent with rage when he was telephoned very early in the morning with the news. This happened on the very morning that the EPG delegation is due to meet and present their report.

AP: That's very interesting, but if it were just a question of the weather, then would you have still hit it when the EPG were in South Africa?

SO: Indeed. The message that the EPG took was that this was the National Party government basically thumbing their nose at an international delegation, trying to promote dialogue with the ANC.

AP: Again tactically, the EPG played it well by not saying, "We're breaking off all relations immediately" and then with those exchange of letters. I think they did go to that meeting in the end.

SO: They did go to the meeting, but it was-

AP: Not a good meeting.

SO: - it was not a good meeting! Malcolm Fraser refused to borrow cigarettes off anybody South African in that meeting that day.

AP: I didn't know that!

SO: He was trying to give up smoking apparently on that particular trip, and kept borrowing other people's cigarettes.

AP: Then came that exchange of letters between Pik in his own long-winded way, telling them how they were going to make major changes to apartheid and repeating many things the EPG had already heard. The final EPG report was very significant... And so the significance of the EPG's report: I think it exposed the myth of the regime seeking fundamental change and wanting genuine negotiations and left no doubt, even in the UN, about the ANC's internal support. And that the ANC was the sole movement.

SO: Did you know Moni Malhoutra well?

AP: Yes, yes.

SO: He played a key part in drafting the EPG report.

AP: He played a key part. But it's another London connection isn't it?

SO: Yes it is, and also Jeremy Pope of course.

AP: Jeremy Pope, yes. Are they still around?

SO: Jeremy sadly not, but Moni Malhoutra is back in New Delhi.

AP: Oh, because that, that EPG thing! I can remember little of it, because I'm also trying to write up on the whole EPG - that underrating of the EPG in the broader process of the democratisation of South Africa.

SO: Pik Botha actually was remarkably complimentary in the ultimate contribution of the EPG to the National Party's initiation of negotiations with the ANC, after the release of Madiba. His line of argument is "Look, even though at the time it seemed it was a failure, by providing the Possible Negotiating Concept, it meant that the National Party had already gone through the internal discussions and agreed 'We can start with this.'"

AP: And you see, I think that's the element. That's a very interesting point. Did he say anything about besides the bombing, why they were handling the EPG in such a manner? I don't think they were playing games. I just think that their mindset was influenced by their own propaganda and isolation.

SO: No. Dave Steward was very interesting, talking about the mindset among the conservatives within the State Security Council and particular P W Botha's mindset of sensitivity and hostility. Steward referred specifically to PW Botha's animosity towards the Commonwealth having, as he saw it, chucked South Africa out in 1961; having been intensely critical of South Africa's 'grand apartheid' regime; having criticised Pretoria again and again; and the growing call for sanctions. So that when the initial approach was made to accept the Eminent Persons Group, Botha's attitude was "To hell with them! 'Do your damnedest'" and that it took Mrs Thatcher's concerted correspondence to persuade him to allow the EPG into the country in the first place.

AP: I would have thought that is what happened. I haven't seen P W Botha's letters to Margaret Thatcher, but I've seen one of her letters.

SO: If you're interested sir, go onto the Margaret Thatcher Foundation website, because actually that's where a number of those letters are available, as well as his responses.

AP: Okay I will do that. Because that would be interesting to me the interesting thing and I'm trying to link the whole EPG to the secret talks we had; and then to the secret talks the regime had with Mandela in prison and how there is some connection.

SO: Yes, the networks.

AP: The influencing of one another. And I believe that they helped to open up the space somewhat. When the EPG reported back to Lusaka about what Mandela's position is, it might have eased some doubts also about the success or the potential success of the 'divide and rule' tactics.

SO: After the apparent failure of the EPG mission to South Africa in 1986, there was a mini-Commonwealth heads summit in London. Did you follow that?

AP: I did.

SO: Did you follow that closely? I know that there were only seven heads of government-

AP: Seven, yes, at the review meeting. Well I haven't followed it closely. I'm just mentioning it. As the decision then to implement the EPG and that was followed by the summit in Vancouver, which took the decisions there.

SO: Yes, that was the CHOGM which set up the Committee of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers on South Africa. Sydney Mufamadi was in the Sunday Independent, saying that Thatcher was useless and wouldn't see him.

AP: Yes, that's the one Sydney went to. So you know, that report led to the new Commonwealth members changing their positions. I think Margaret Thatcher was on the back foot after that, because she had worked very hard for that and now a committee that she had worked so hard to get into South Africa, comes back with the report. And the actual conclusions are quite far reaching. It concludes that there's no way that, I think it concludes, no way that the apartheid regime is genuinely going to negotiate for 'one person, one vote'. Fortunately when they were there, they talked to the UDF and COSATU and AZAPO. Well broadly, COSATU and UDF would have had the same positions reflected by the ANC in exile and by Mandela in prison. So I think they then laid the basis for no more hesitation, and the Commonwealth were imposing stronger sanctions, which was happening slowly. I think that did it, the final straw that broke the camel's back.

SO: I know that Ambassador Abdul Minty in his position as editor of the Anti-Apartheid News was a regular attendee, in fact had press accreditation around successive of Heads of Government Meetings.

AP: Yes, right.

SO: Was he also, was he part of the conduit for you receiving information on what was going on and?

AP: From the Commonwealth? Yes. I wouldn't receive it directly, but we had the head of the international department, Johnny Makatini then who would have received all such reports and the ANC in Lusaka. I would have probably been receiving some reports, Abdul would have reported directly to Lusaka.

SO: I know that after the setting up of this special committee to monitor what was going on in South Africa, Phyllis Johnson wrote a particularly powerful report of the impact of apartheid on the economies of Frontline states that was presented at Kuala Lumpur.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement archives show that the AAM was being supported by the Secretariat on press briefings and also reports that were being prepared for this particular committee.

AP: Yes.

SO: And there seems, in the AAM papers, to be concern and hesitation in the ANC that the Secretary General Sonny Ramphal was coordinating the reporting to this particular committee. Does that strike any bells, ring any chimes with you?

AP: Not to me, no. But Thabo (Mbeki) would be better on that because that would have been discussed at Lusaka.

SO: I picked up this concern in ANC correspondence: it is a sense of 'Wait a minute. This is our chance to report to the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers and in a way we are being controlled and corralled here a little bit by the Secretariat.'

AP: Interesting.

SO: There was another point where the Secretariat was trying to provide media briefings to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Mike Terry of course was very involved in this and there was criticism from within the ANC that Donald Woods was one of the media advisers. There was some friction there too.

AP: Yes, that there would have been. But you know that is in any situation, some in the liberation movement would say, "Now is our job being taken?" even our allies, the AAM, forget the Secretariat", they would, you know, from time to time. It would be unavoidable; there were lots of personality clashes too. I don't know whether Abdul hinted at that, there would have been personality clashes even within the AAM.

SO: Every organisation has its politics.

I appreciate that the ANC was a non-racial movement at this point.

AP: Yes.

SO: But did there remain an undercurrent of people's personal cultures and attitudes, despite there being a remit of non-racism? That there was any division according to group?

AP: Post-'94, I think throughout the movement, we've seen a critique on fundamental positions of the ANC. Non-racialism is one. Anti-tribalism is another. I think that we never fully appreciated what happens to a party when you go into government.

SO: You were moving from an underground clandestine, revolutionary movement, now to a pragmatic party of power.

AP: We actually analysed it on our first legal conference in South Africa and subsequently we analysed it at every conference; but having analysed it that was okay, we didn't then take the actions, because we didn't think it was going to hit us so fast actually. So the result is, which the last conference report tried to bring together, is that we have a party of a new type.

SO: Yes you do.

AP: The cadres that have come into the movement don't come in because they're sacrificing. You know, in the old days you joined the ANC, you didn't get any valuables. You were not paid, you were given everything: clothes - and that's in the camps - your food and accommodation. Outside if you worked full-time you were given a monthly allowance, but it wasn't overly generous you know; it was enough to keep you, and cover your transport and food.

SO: No, it was subsistence. It was not a salary.

AP: And if you remember those who were working inside the country, or were being sent back, were in danger of either being arrested and killed. So that was what drove the ANC since its formation I think, through different periods and... But the new lot joined post-legalisation. It got worse as we went along, so the quality of the membership of the ANC and even the party members deteriorated.… I think that's one of the big problems, as we began to see membership of the ANC take control of state structures for personal monetary gains. And that now I think would characterise many of our cadres, the new cadres, many, not all. And I think that reflects itself in policy formulations, lack of policy formulations, our inability to carry the urban youth, even African, increasingly losing the support of the minorities. And I think the next election if we're not careful, we'll see a further decline in our voting-numbers.

SO: Excuse me sir, but if the taxi driver that I spoke to at length last night is anything to go by, yes, he'd agree.

AP: No, I think we've been warning our leadership that you know, "go back to the early analysis of what's going on in party structures and take remedial measures". But I think the decision to become a mass party was wrong. instead of a M-A-S-S, we've become a M-E-S-S.

SO: Yes.

AP: *[Laughter]*.

SO: I'm afraid so, sir, I could have an extensive discussion about South African politics to this day, but if I please could take you back just a little bit: to the role of the Commonwealth after the EPG which was in 1986, up to your return to South Africa in 1990. In that four-year period, I am aware that the Secretariat was trying to support the acceleration of sanctions. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings were increasingly trying to exert pressure on an obdurate Mrs Thatcher.

AP: Right.

SO: To exert greater degrees of financial and economic pressure. But I also know that in Harare, from approximately 1988, there were a succession of meetings organised by the Secretariat to try to give practical and policy support to the ANC in discussion of what to do-

AP: Preparing us to govern actually.

SO: Exactly. Were you involved in any of those discussions?

AP: No, I would have known about it because of the ANC, but I was aware of the assistance in preparing cadres to go into government. To help change the policing. To prepare us for elections. That, over that period, there was an acceleration of bringing more South Africans now across the colour line, to come and study in Commonwealth countries. So in '92 the Commonwealth sent - when the Peace Accord was signed - a team to South Africa, a Commonwealth team, to observe the Peace Accord. And then there was a team to help us run actual elections in the post-election period. So they played a very important role in that.

SO: And I know that Moses Anafu particularly played a particular role in trying to persuade Chief Buthelezi to join the parties.

AP: At a time when he wasn't part of that process, yes, he-

SO: Yes, were you liaising with the Secretariat in London in any way? I know at this point you were deputy head of the ANC International Affairs Department from '91 and then you became part of the TEC Sub-Committee on Foreign Affairs. You were at the heart of foreign engagement at this particular time.

AP: Yes and therefore when we came with the TEC delegation to visit countries to prepare them for a future democratic SA. The Anti-Apartheid movement was still very opposed to lifting or even considering easing on the sanctions. And they still thought that the apartheid government was fooling us. The TEC had to come and brief the United Nations, we met the Commonwealth and we briefed them about the progress we'd made in the negotiations, and the challenges we faced.

SO: So you actually attended the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in '93? It was in Limassol, in Cyprus.

AP: No, I didn't go to that one. When we went to brief the Commonwealth on the sanctions thing, or the negotiated process and the Harare Declaration, I think I was there. But I can't remember.

SO: You met Chief Emeka because …

AP: Many times, many times and even Ramphal many times. I mean I know Ramphal's got the Oliver Tambo award, I don't know whether Anyaoku ever got it.

SO: That I don't know.

AP: I must check because he should have got it as well. No, no many times, because by that time, more you know, 'cause there was more personal contact and we used to go there to the Commonwealth office quite a lot and discuss a lot with them. You know Sonny was a bit different. Sonny was more of a statesman, whereas Anyaoku? What can I say? He was more open and… So we had a lot of discussions with him.

SO: Do you think in part that was a reflection of his political culture?

AP: I will struggle to find a correct word. It's like an African today and because he's from Africa, I mean in a sense true, but it was also because of that you know, there's been so much contact in that period, and before, by law, he became the Secretary General, he was working in the Secretariat.

SO: He was a deputy Secretary General, yes, and he'd been there at the Commonwealth Secretariat since '66.

AP: So we had met a lot of times, as ANC and as delegations.

SO: So do you think that longevity of your knowledge and contact with this now leading diplomat was an important assistance to you?

AP: Very much so. Because we got a sense of what the Commonwealth's challenges were and they got a sense of our strategy and tactics. So, you know, and one hopes that it was mutually beneficial.

SO: In your view then, how far do you think that the Commonwealth, through the Commonwealth Secretary General and the Secretariat, provided part of the unseen underpinning to help with transition?

AP: I think it did-

SO: I'm not taking you away from the discussion of the negotiations.

AP: No, I think it played a big role in terms of preparing us to govern. I think the Commonwealth team that came to sit on the independent electoral commission, played quite a major role at a crisis time. It might be better to talk to somebody like Peter Harris, who was the head of the electoral team. And the Commonwealth? Well, at least there were three or four people who came from Commonwealth countries; I suspect they were not there individually, they were there sent by the Commonwealth. And at a very difficult time in the actual run-up to the elections, they played a major role on that. But then they did a lot of training for our police and how to become a more democratic police force and then how to transform the civil service. There was a lot of discussions and remember we had a lot of sub-committees? And so I suspect that key sub-committees had a lot of discussions with relevant, Commonwealth institutions. There's the governance and institution division which provided very important technical assistance. There was an economic division, so it must still be there. Then there was a governance and transformation or institutional development division. And then there was a thing called Commonwealth volunteers abroad. So it's those two committees that I think, gave the most assistance. The economic assistance would only be helping through general resolutions of Commonwealth, but I don't think it was a large economic contribution. I don't know, but they might have sent experts to South Africa.

SO: Yes they did.

AP: They did, they must have sent, Commonwealth experts in many areas of-post-conflict development, I think. But then you'd have to know that from each of our specialist sections that worked with them and I wouldn't be aware

of that. I would know from the TEC days, meeting with the team that came to monitor the Peace accord; we had a lot of discussions when they came to observe the elections. I think it's the same team that stayed over for the elections actually. So that part I would be familiar with, but economic and the police and the... I think the Commonwealth even helped us with the defence force. How to create a professional army must have been discussed with people who were involved.

SO: Malcolm Rifkind who was then Secretary of State for Defence in the British government, was certainly in discussions with the South African Government, building on the back of their (BMATT) experience in Zimbabwe after independence.

AP: I suspected that that happened a lot. That there were British helping us to transform the army. Well, now I don't know whether that again is bilateral or came as the Commonwealth, you see. Then we had talks with the services, intelligence services as well about their transformation.

SO: How do you forge together very different intelligence services, with their different ethos, culture and experience?

AP: Absolutely. Yes, so I know. I was in some of those discussions, but whether they came as the Commonwealth or if our discussions then were with the British as part of our bilateral relationship I don't know.

So, but generally the Commonwealth, something that needs… and I am glad you're doing it to this. You know of course like every organisation, people will have concerns it could have gone faster, especially after the '71 resolution, then the Lusaka resolution. But I certainly would say we ourselves never exploited the cultural, educational, historical links between South Africa and for instance the English speaking Commonwealth countries. But there's no doubt in my mind, it was through the Commonwealth we make greater contact with people like Mahathir. But with the Indians: we always had that historical contact you know, with Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. There were personal contacts between them and the ANC and all the time, before Indira was assassinated, before Rajiv was killed, they were very strong links. But I think it's through the Commonwealth pre-'94 that the links were further developed with people like Mahathir in Malaysia and then Singapore. I think when we go to Non Aligned meetings, it's too big and you don't get that personal friendship developing whether you sharply debate or not, but you don't build strong personal relations like in the OAU and Commonwealth..

SO: But the Commonwealth now is 53 different countries of very differing sizes. There is a resistance among individual Commonwealth countries to act as a bloc, but still there's the possibility of using the Commonwealth as an enabling organisation.

AP: The Millbrook resolution was, you see, important… I served on the committee afterwards that had to look at Zimbabwe. And it was not only Zimbabwe - it was two countries we were looking at, it was Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

SO: Because of the crisis at the Auckland summit over Ken Saro Wiwa's execution?

AP: Yes. So there was only seven on that day. And that was very exciting, it was down to Chief Emeka. Don had the tough ones. So Don had to pick up the more difficult times when pressures rose on sanctions against Zimbabwe and all that. That committee was a very … active one and there were many differences. I don't know, is it still existing?

SO: CMAG, yes. It has been reformed, and reconstituted under the latest EPG of 2010/2011, and their report which was presented to Perth.

AP: Obviously the one good thing about the Commonwealth is despite the problems on UDI and on apartheid sanctions, the Commonwealth never tried to impose or find solutions outside of the negotiated solution. And that, my fear now is that unlike the Commonwealth, I think the Non-Aligned Movement has become very quiet. I don't see it, I don't know what's happened to it actually. So it's no longer representing the collective voice of the third world countries. There were differences on approaches to many key issues but I think the Commonwealth still remains as a body that has not yet lost its importance. Hopefully it will never become a body that works for regime change policies. Whereas my theory is that recently we've seen multi-national organisations moving increasingly towards a militaristic approach to finding solutions. Whereas the Commonwealth can at least remain, I hope, an instrument that is able to bring sense into that sort of debate.

SO: Sir, for South Africa post-1994, I know that for the incoming Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo, rejoining the Commonwealth was No 5 on his list of the top things that the new South African government of national unity had to do. No. 1 was the OAU; No. 2 the UN General Assembly seat; No. 3 was The International Atomic Energy Agency, and there was another.

AP: NAM, and the Commonwealth. I don't think we ever had strict priorities. It might have been in their heads, but there was no programme that said this.

SO: Okay, so there wasn't a list of priorities?

AP: No.

SO: Thank you, because Vic Zazaraj suggested that as Director of the Minister's office that Alfred Nzo had said, "these are the five things that are important", but I'm just, that doesn't mean it was a list of priorities.

AP: No, and precisely because of our interaction, the Commonwealth had been more dynamic. You can't avoid the OAU. You had to go there first; that trigger had to be first. So it would also depend, but I'm sure we had different people simultaneously, because when the TEC visited the Commonwealth Secretariat, we discussed extensively many issues with the Commonwealth, South Africa is coming back to the fold after '94 and all that. So I wouldn't think we ever said, 'No, we only are going this route, this route, this route.'

SO: No, thank you. I just put it in context. Even though there was an internal list of policy objectives, that he didn't mean that this is a policy priority.

AP: No, no, no. I mean that, because of the role the Commonwealth played in preparing us for governance If anything, we would say we must try to do that as quick as possible. I don't know, it would be good to check when we first started the discussions to get back. I say that during the TEC we raised it. On other visits we said, "Well I mean as soon we become a democracy, we want to return back to the Commonwealth". And then of course we hosted the Commonwealth Summit in '99.

SO: You did, in Durban.

AP: Some see the Commonwealth only in terms of its discussions of UDI in the then Rhodesia and the anti-apartheid struggle. But there were resolutions on youth, on women, and my recollection is that there was a declaration in '91 on good governance etc. and it codified, in a sense, the Singapore, 1971 Declaration. There's a lot of work on environment. Maybe I only started looking at the other matters on development after '99 because, when the heads' meeting was here, the theme was globalisation and people-centred development. And then during our period as chair I noticed that subsequent, summits dealt with development in the broader context of human security. So you know we have to take all the Commonwealth statements, not just limited to this. This is as important because I think it put into practice all Commonwealth values.

But we have to look at positions taken on so many other issues. I think we'll finally appreciate this, whether it was on pre-'94 issues, the youth and the gender issue each year. I think the gender issue first came up in one of the conferences, was it the Lusaka conference on racism and racial discrimination? Oh no, it was after that. So the debate on many issues means that one must really look at the Commonwealth positions and see how the present positions of people coming from OAU structures, and Non-Aligned Movement structures influenced the Commonwealth. But did it influence how we voted in the General Assembly?

SO: So you're suggesting a cross fertilisation of ideas across international organisations?

AP: I think so. I think that was why the Commonwealth was important in a sense.

SO: But I do see it very much as a seedbed of ideas, certainly on law of the sea; also on ideas of the role of experts and development. This is the strength of the Commonwealth: its phenomenal networks, in providing advice.

AP: Absolutely. And because of its historical genesis, we were all ex-colonies or dominions and so our educational institutions, legal systems, the language reflected that of the coloniser. Of course the Afrikaners were hostile after the Anglo-Boer War and all that, but you'll see most of our institutions, legal systems, cultural influence of the British. Now many cultures are very Americanised but we'd been British influenced.

SO: Is this still part of a wider 'British world' then?

AP: Well, we haven't changed! We haven't changed our legal system *[laughter]*, by and large our literature, everything except the nonsense that's now flooding our TV screens. I wish to argue with the BBC on that, by the way: our new generations are growing on all this, we call "Skop, Skiet en Donder" from America, this crime and violence, and yet we all go to the BBC first *[laughter]* by the way. I think amongst our generation, and English speaking South Africans, when we seek intellectual stimulation we go first to the BBC channels.

SO: Sir, thank you for confirming that. I've interviewed someone from the BBC, because it seems that the BBC provides these silken threads of connectivity across the Commonwealth. Classic soft power.

AP: Absolutely. And BBC Radio, when we were in exile, especially for our people in Africa, it was compulsory listening. Now I see we get it here locally too and all that, so it's a very powerful medium. Of course now we are beginning to... well I can't say collectively, I can say for me, when I see how they're reporting on some of the issues, I think might go to the Sky to get a balanced view.

SO: Well, we now have the greater possibility of being selective in our news information.

AP: Absolutely. But you see those connections are something that still is invaluable in terms of the Commonwealth family, the Business Council, the Commonwealth Games and I'm sure you'll come across the sports boycott in the Gleneagles Declaration and the boycott against SA tours.

SO: Sir, can I ask you, in your view, how important was the sports boycott?

AP: Very. Two things: first of all, in all our talks with the Afrikaners, they first would raise the sports boycott, then of course the economic sanctions. But the immediate thing was, it felt that rugby and cricket boycott was very important for them. Sort of like the bible.

SO: *[Laughter]* So it was the Bible as *Wisden*?

AP: Sports was very important and the cricket rebel tours and then the rugby tours to England, and Britain, and the massive demonstrations were always discussed.

SO: In New Zealand, yes.

AP: Personally I think those demonstrations, fortunately we were in London, so we were part of many of them from the ones at Lords in '65 or so. I think those sports boycotts gave impetus to the AAM becoming a mass movement. Because there were people in direct action and coming with innovative ideas of demonstrations and, and it caught the imagination. There was no violence. I mean, some violence happened, but generally it was people's protests etc. and it was successful. '63 was the first Olympic action against South Africa; but they were very still keen on their rugby tours and their cricket tours, and that was sharply discussed within Commonwealth countries. And the Gleneagles agreement and the threat to boycott Edinburgh games and all

that, I think, had a massive effect actually on Afrikaner thinking. You see, you had to do lots, break them out of their laager.

SO: Can I also ask you, in terms of how this soft power organisation and the broader Anti-Apartheid Movement behaved, can you see a connection or change from the Anti-Apartheid Movement as an umbrella organisation which empowered direct action, and now what you see in the change of the international community, international society, international politics is the rising role of non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations? So is the Commonwealth reflective of the change in the international community and international connectivity? Or am I completely wrong?

AP: Are you saying the Commonwealth is reflective of civil society?

SO: Yes, I'm saying that the Commonwealth is reflective of change in the international system, through its changing shape as an international voluntary association.

AP: Yes.

SO: It operates on the basis of consensus, but it also is reflective of the changing ways of international politics. From the 1990s, there was the dynamism between national governments and society, reflected in values, politics, and policies. The Anti-Apartheid Movement was a classic 'boomerang' organisation.

AP: Yes.

SO: Its weakness because of repression at home meant that you had to take the struggle overseas to act back and empower.

AP: Right, right, right.

SO: But what we see now is much less direct action. We see a much more non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations as quasi-diplomatic actors.

AP: Yes, let me pose this question to you. Is it that the Commonwealth itself might be reflecting what I feel for instance, on the African continent, where there seems to be a dearth of creative leadership and-

SO: I would agree with you there sir.

AP: -and leadership with vision, leadership that can say, "how can we use the Commonwealth, which always had its role of bridging our different memberships, of multilateral organisations, because we were in the OAU, the Asian members were in the ASEAN and then the Caribbean members were in CARICOM, but we all came together in the Commonwealth and that's the one place where you brought in all other collectives, thinking etc.?" And so you were able to make a bigger impact. Whether we succeeded, I think we could have. I think now that the Commonwealth, as it's reflected in all multi-lateral structures, because of a leadership crisis, generally seems to have going

through a process of decline; after years of excellent visionary leadership. A new generation is coming. And a visionary leadership will emerge again hopefully.

SO: But now you feel it's in the doldrums?

AP: I think so, but it's not the only thing. You know we in the AU are asking about how do you revitalise the AU and generally other regional structures. You look at our sub-regional groupings and more and more leadership are dying out, you don't have the Nkrumahs, the Nyereres, Kaundas.

SO: But sir, we've also been talking about an era in which ideas mattered. And mattered enormously.

AP: Yes. Mattered. And visions.

SO: And I really question whether ideas and vision matter to the same extent today, in this matter of politics?

AP: You see, now that's precisely because we're going through such a serious challenge to the stability of the world now. We're getting issues related actions you know: Wall Street sit-downs. We go through periods where the gender issue becomes very important. These are issue oriented, we had it on the alternative to globalisation movement. It's clearly very issue-related. And now we've always asked ourselves the question, "why wasn't the strong Anti-Apartheid movement able to turn itself from being anti to being pro African renewal?" So the African challenges still remain with us, conflict and all that. As a historian, you've probably done more studying of the root causes than just the symptoms of the conflict. I believe many politicians exploit symptoms, including tribalism ,ethnicity, poverty, and underdevelopment and marginalization are some of the root causes. And so, we are now in the globalised world of financial crisis in Europe and America. Of course we are all spouting these latest figures of the World Bank and the Economic Commission of Africa will have a 5% growth rate, but from what? Has growth meant development? And if that international progressive world can be mobilised as a civil society in support of people-centred development, then we might again bring together all the different strands into a common approach to a better world. We have to try it. I'm now part of an NGO that works on conflict resolution. But we've all concluded that we were bandaging, we're not transforming and now they're working on a concept paper, global movement. They call it 'global movement for peace', but actually it's global movement for peace and development. It's a big challenge.

SO: I was going to suggest, it focuses too much on protocols and processes, rather than how policy outcomes?

AP: I want to see the concept paper to see if this is doable? People like Mahathir, Ahtisaari and Graca are going to be the patrons. And they want to mobilise youth around the world to be part of this movement. Well I must wait, until we see the concept paper. But what I'm saying, it's an attempt to say, "What do we do to give more meaning to life?"

SO: To re-inject value and ideas.

AP: And how do we give it to our youth today? We're really also thinking now, "yes, we've lost it". I don't say, everybody, because there are many youth committed to a new society, but many are materialist and believe that if I make my own money and I've got my posh cars, the people can suffer. It's their fault.

SO: Sir, I'm going to stop there, but say the Commonwealth faces new and different challenges.

AP: Yes.

SO: Thank you very much indeed sir.

AP: And they must accept those challenges.

[END OF AUDIOFILE]