VOICE FILE NAME: COHP Gerald Hensley

Key:
SO: Dr Sue Onslow (Interviewer)
GH: Mr Gerald Hensley (Respondent)

SO: Dr Sue Onslow talking to Mr Gerald Hensley in Martinborough, New Zealand, on Wednesday 2nd April 2014. Mr Hensley, thank you very much indeed for inviting me to this beautiful spot. I wonder, Sir, if you could please begin by talking about how you came to be recruited to the Commonwealth Secretariat from the New Zealand Diplomatic Service?

GH: Well, like a lot of these things, it was purely accidental. I was Head of the Pacific and Antarctic Division in the New Zealand Foreign Ministry, but Alister McIntosh, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, was a leading candidate for the position of Secretary General in 1965. The Commonwealth Prime Ministers had agreed to set up the Commonwealth Secretariat and in '65 they had worked out details of how the Secretariat would operate. The next step was of course to recruit the Secretary General. It wasn't done by any open election; it was done in a very Commonwealth way, by consultation among people around the world and McIntosh from New Zealand appeared to be the leading candidate. Then, rather surprisingly, Britain put forward a rather obscure man - the Governor of Honduras, I think from memory, as their candidate. And it was pretty obvious then that the aim was to spoil McIntosh's chances. It was a mystery for years; Arnold Smith and I used to speculate why they would have done it and subsequently I suppose the most plausible explanation is that McIntosh was, although not known to us at the time, a homosexual, and it may have been they felt he was a security risk. At any rate, in London McIntosh decided that he would not press on with his candidacy and he went to the hotel where Arnold Smith, the Canadian diplomat was staying, who was in second place as the race was running at that stage, and said to Arnold that he was withdrawing because of his deafness - he was a little bit deaf - and that he would ask his support to favour Arnold instead. This put Arnold over the top as the preferred candidate. In return Arnold said to McIntosh, 'I would like a young New Zealand Foreign Service Officer to be my special assistant', and so when Mac came back he asked me if I would like to go. Well, I was so excited that I dropped even my house renovations and left them exactly…

SO: You say in your memoirs about dropping your brush!

GH: Well, I was cleaning bricks over the fireplace, and years later I happened to come back into the house; and they were still half cleaned because they had been cleaned on that afternoon when I stopped, as it turned out, forever. So my wife and I, with a newly born child, went to London in September 1965. I was, I think, the first diplomatic officer to join the absolutely brand new Secretariat which then really consisted of Arnold as Secretary General and his PA, Joy Tilsley. We didn't have either of the two deputies at that stage. But Arnold had a couple of Canadian diplomats helping him and a very nice, slightly eccentric, Bill (William) Cranston, from the British Foreign Office as an immediate assistance, and a very able administrative officer, Don Abbey, from, I think, the Commonwealth office; he certainly was from the British Civil Service. And those first weeks that was about it.

SO: So when did Michael Wilson, the Australian, join?

GH: Michael came a little bit later and that was an embarrassment to Arnold. Having recruited me, that was that as far as special assistants were concerned. Sir Robert Menzies was deeply suspicious of the Secretariat. He was opposed to the whole idea, disliked it and he was a bit inclined to be obstructive. However, since it was clearly going ahead, he then switched and insisted that an Australian be appointed to Arnold Smith's private office. So we did all that could be done; that is, we split the Special Assistant's job in two instead of one. It worked very well because Michael and I, an Australian and New Zealander, got on extremely well and the system worked a lot better than you might have thought from the outset. Whether Michael Wilson did exactly what Sir Robert Menzies had in mind, I think was probably very debateable. Michael was sceptical, very clear-sighted and not at all I think likely to have shared Sir Robert's views.

SO: So there were two Special Assistants in the Secretariat. You were based in Marlborough House at this time?

GH: Yes. Michel and I occupied what had been the royal nursery when George V was a baby - there were still little bars across the lower part of the windows.

SO: At this point then - with assistance from the British Civil Service, as you pointed to William Cranston and Don Abbey - how did Arnold Smith go about expanding the diplomatic representation within the Secretariat?

GH: Yes, that was obviously a fairly urgent early job. To some extent it was interrupted by the crisis over Rhodesia, but we'll come to that later on, no doubt. I can remember Arnold early on saying to me when we were first discussing recruiting that he would not ask Governments to nominate, he would seek out and ask for the people he wanted. He quite rightly realised, and we had plenty of other examples over the years, that you ask Governments to nominate and naturally they get rid of old Joe What-not that they've been wondering what to do about for years, and a good chance to pack him off somewhere and never hear of him again. So Arnold's system was in fact to prowl about and get recommendations, 'Oh, if you're looking for a good economist, then so and so, if you can get him, would be very good.' And then Arnold, who was forthright and business-like, would then ask for this person from the Canadian or the Australian or the Indian Government or whatever it was; and in some cases they were a bit resistant, obviously not wishing to lose a good person. But it was, I think, a very sound method of recruitment. We were so small, at least then, that you could not afford to carry

any dead wood at all, if you were going to get anything done. This system of asking for good people, that's how Emeka Anyaoku came from the Nigerian Foreign Service.

SO: And how Arnold Smith approached Patsy Robertson…

GH: Yes, from Jamaica and so on. And so it was a very good system and secondly it was based on another important principle on which Arnold was absolutely insistent: that having joined you were the servant of the Commonwealth, not the servant of your Government. You were not a delegate of the Government of Jamaica or India or whatever; you were a member of the Commonwealth Secretariat. This was important as a principle and became a principle which he defended very tenaciously during the Biafran Civil War when the Nigerian Government at the time had deep suspicions about Emeka. We had to do all sorts of things to defend his position in the Secretariat. But Arnold would not give up that principle that you are an international civil servant, not the servant of your Government. I think that was vital.

SO: I've seen the letter from the Nigerian Parliament Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Arnold Smith's papers, basically issuing a recall of Emeka Anyaoku, saying that he was not the Nigerian delegate to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

GH: Yes, that's right.

SO: And the extent to which Arnold Smith robustly defended Emeka's position.

GH: Well, it was running battle for some time. At one stage, I think Arnold sent Emeka off to supervise the Gibraltar Referendum, just to keep him out of the way. But in the end as you say, Lagos actually demanded his return and Arnold refused. And was quite right. And I think that's the key to running a proper international organisation.

SO: As Special Assistants were you ever required to go forth and identify possible excellent recruits on Arnold Smith's behalf? I'm just thinking of the diplomatic crises - you mentioned Rhodesia – which were piling up; so how much time and energy could he devote to recruitment?

GH: Well, recruitment certainly was subject to the immediate issues. The first one which he had just tidied away when I arrived, was over the entry of Singapore to the Commonwealth. The Malaysian/Singapore unhappy divorce had occurred at the beginning of August '65, and obviously both of them were prime Commonwealth members but Singapore as the newly independent country had to apply. And it was no problem as far as I can remember with Malaysia or other Commonwealth members, but Prime Minister Bhutto in Pakistan declined to agree and this posed a tricky constitutional issue, that as far as I know had never arisen in the Commonwealth, could one member veto? You know, like a club, one blackball would wipe out a membership application, and it would have been, as you can imagine, quite absurd if Singapore were not to be a member and very demoralising for them. Things were bad enough with the suddenness of the divorce. Arnold had a real creative mind on this sort of thing and there was a lot of ringing around. I do remember him ringing Bhutto several times; ringing around, he got agreement

that he would announce there was a consensus for Singapore's membership and he would make a private note that Pakistan disagreed with the consensus. So we got over that one. But as you say, there were enough serious diplomatic challenges that though recruitment was essential it rather took second place to the immediate challenges. I can't recall either Michael or I recommending people; only one or two people we did know and we would give our opinion on. Arnold got some very good advice I think from Joe Garner, Sir Saville Garner, the Head of the Commonwealth Office then, who was an invaluable source of support in those early days.

SO: I'm just looking at my list of early Commonwealth Secretariat appointees, so I know that Tony Aston was there, as well as Yaw Adu.

GH: Yaw was the key one. Tom Aston was from the Foreign Office; he became Head of the Political Division that didn't exist apart from Tom in the early days but that was his role and he was a British Foreign Service Officer. Yaw was the key man. He was well known in the Commonwealth; he had been Secretary General of the East African High Commission which ran railways and postal services and so on for Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, or Tanganyika as it was then. And he had been Nkrumah's Secretary of External Affairs in Ghana but had left. I can't recall the detail of Yaw's recruitment. He certainly was recruited unseen because we picked him up when Arnold and I went to East Africa in November '65, and we met Yaw there. He was a remarkable man and I think an absolute necessity in those early days. He had very sound judgement, a lot of experience, and was a 'people person'; he knew people, liked people and around the Commonwealth people warmed to him. He certainly played a vital part in the early days for the mediation of the Biafran civil war.

SO: Just thinking of whom else was there at the same time, on this list I have DSG Economic and Social, TE.

GH: Tilak Gooneratne from Sri Lanka, it was Ceylon in those days. He was the other Deputy. Yaw was from Ghana but he was the political deputy and so tended to be more, at least in those early months, in the limelight.

SO: And then also I've got Economic Affairs the Division, Sen Gupta.

GH: Yes, he was from India. Nirmal Sen Gupta.

SO: So these were all headhunted by Arnold Smith?

GH: Well, as far as I remember. I can't authoritatively say, they certainly weren't headhunted by anybody else. I wasn't involved in the process. And Arnold had good diplomatic contacts. He relied a lot on Canadian suggestions from his own people and so on. But he did headhunt, wherever possible. He didn't head-hunt Tom Aston, I mean you know if the British Government said, 'We'd like this chap,' then you're not going to say 'Oh, I don't know. I'll have to look', and Tom was very good. The Commonwealth Office did their bit. It was in their own interest to get a good person (in the Secretariat) and they did. Otherwise, I really don't know where Arnold got his recommendations but he did, on the whole, insist that he had to have lined up someone himself, rather than accepting Government suggestions. And he had to be careful to keep a reasonable geographical balance across the Commonwealth, though he was firm about not having any fixed geographical quotas, as the UN did.

SO: Patsy once told me that there was a general joke that every time Arnold Smith went off to have coffee outside Marlborough House, he came back with another Division.

GH: Yes, we did grow very fast. But the exciting thing for me, at any rate, of that first year was there was no bureaucracy or even a proper filing system; we were so small.

SO: Well, you had an administrator, Mr Abbey.

GH: Yes, we had him. Oh, we had good people on the administrative side; I mean, the rent was paid and so on, but there was no elaborate bureaucracy, clearance of documents or anything, you were moving on your feet all the time. I spent a lot of my time drafting, sketching what Arnold needed in cars, aircraft and all places. But it was exhilarating that you weren't, certainly for a young man of my age, passing paper up the chain of command and so on. I was in and out of Arnold's office all day long and we just scribbled things down and said 'Yes, let's do this' and I found that absolutely exhilarating. There was no alternative to operating this way because the challenges were crowding in on us, particularly the main one the Rhodesian crisis which might have ended the Secretariat at birth. And we had to react with what we had as best we could.

SO: So what was Arnold Smith's working style? Was he somebody who liked to rely a lot on the telephone? Did he delegate? I have been told by others he was a very charismatic and thoroughly colour blind diplomat. Personal charisma and good humour I think are key personal aspects that can enhance anyone's diplomatic skills.

GH: Very much so. I wonder whether the Secretariat in those early critical years would have survived if it hadn't had Arnold as Secretary General, I really do. By the oddity of the luck of the fight over McIntosh, the Secretariat got the Secretary General which it absolutely needed. I'm not sure that there were plenty of people in the British Government including Harold Wilson, who would agree with me then or perhaps later. Arnold was a big personality, a big ego, but in a good sense. Vigorous, very energetic, pushy I think in the eyes of certainly some in the Commonwealth Office or the Foreign Office, but what I saw was moral courage. His combination of energy, ideas and moral courage, I think, were vital. By moral courage, I mean that whenever trouble arose or some Commonwealth Head of Government said they were going to leave the Commonwealth, Arnold had no hesitation in ringing or we were in the air travelling there; and so to speak, tactfully but firmly berating them for making the wrong or leaning towards the wrong decision and telling them why they were wrong - courteously, diplomatically but firmly. And I think that with someone without that moral courage the new institution might have been stillborn or not survived for long. It was uncomfortably close to disintegration, as you know, at some points in the Rhodesian crisis. So I think Arnold's bounce, energy, willingness to try ideas and his moral courage and willingness to wade into trouble was crucial. I remember, and I think I may have said, he had a word with Harold Wilson, quite firmly, saying that these endless negotiations with Ian Smith were doing a lot of damage to the Commonwealth. He told Lester Pearson (he was quite friendly with Pearson who was then Canadian Prime Minister), 'I felt I had to stick my neck out' and Pearson said, 'You certainly stuck it out alright!' And I think Pearson was

delivering a bit of a warning. That he had been talking to Wilson and Wilson was pretty cross. Though he no doubt took note of it, Arnold Smith was not frightened by that sort of thing and if he had been the thing wouldn't have worked.

SO: I know from looking at the Founding Memorandum, the idea was that the Secretary General should be of the same standing as a Senior High Commissioner; but Arnold Smith was very much a large personality moving into the rank of a Foreign Minister, with his willingness to talk to Heads of States one on one, rather than in any sense of hierarchy and deference.

GH: Very much so, in fact nothing annoyed Arnold more than for someone to quote from the Memorandum, 'You should be behaving, Secretary General, like a Senior High Commissioner.' His temperament, his personality would not accept that and he was right. Whether it was a fact of his own big personality, it was right for the job. He would go and talk to Jomo Kenyatta one to one or, Nkrumah, or Julius Nyerere or whoever; and as you say, not as 'I come here as a Senior High Commissioner', but 'I'm here speaking for the Commonwealth. I want to hear your views and I want to tell you what you know I've learnt as I've gone around.' It was that one to one approach that I think was crucial in the crisis. It never occurred to Arnold to treat it otherwise; it would never have occurred to him to regard himself as a Senior High Commissioner. In fact, the thing that used to madden him quite unreasonably was when he was called the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

SO: Oooh!

GH: And that was a terrible faux pas! I remember once we were in a television studio and he was doing something for the BBC and they had a rolling sign that said 'And now we talk to Mr Arnold Smith, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat', whereupon the whole programme stopped. The cameras stopped rolling while Arnold insisted on it being corrected to 'Secretary General of the Commonwealth.' That was a minor and mildly laughable quirk, but which shows you that Arnold had a sense of his importance which, I think, was very important to make the system work. The Commonwealth after all had and has as its great advantage, a degree of informality that other international institutions don't have. Using this common language and other traditions has always met for more informality; and it meant, I think, that the Secretary General needed to be informal too in dealing with Heads of State, or Heads of Government or whatever and Arnold had that knack.

SO: Did he in any way draw on other institutional models, say the Secretary General of the UN? Or, was he drawing particularly upon his close political friendship with Lester Pearson as a significant 'backer', or a larger power within the Commonwealth, even though Canada regarded itself as very much a middle power at that time? I was just thinking what other institutional models he might have used, what other political resources could he draw on?

GH: I don't think the UN struck him as a relevant model. I don't think he felt there was anything from U Thant or whatever that was useful. The Commonwealth was a different sort of organisation and indeed one of the things he was

anxious to do was to prevent it going down the UN path, with the resolutions and formal debates and so on. Losing that degree of frankness and informality which was the Commonwealth's great strength. So the UN was not the way to go. Lester Pearson was important for him; there's no question. They had known one another for years, and I think Pearson's advice and support was quite important to Arnold. It was given very discreetly and there was no sense of Arnold being in the Canadians' pocket. But Canada was after all the second biggest member of the Commonwealth, and so it was important. And when, for example, we were dealing with the Biafra when it came to putting together a potential peace-keeping force to reassure the Biafrans and being able to talk to Pearson and get Canadian troops in the mix straight away was the kind of help that Arnold always felt he could get from Pearson.

SO: Did you ever have the sense that Arnold Smith was a Cold Warrior? This is a slightly tangential question, but I'm very aware that this was the mid-late 1960s: the international system and its international structures were not just shaped by the United Nations, but this was also the context of the Cold War?

GH: No, I don't think so. It was the background to everything you did in diplomacy obviously. But I don't think it was of immediate interest to Arnold. It didn't impact on the problems we were dealing with in Africa and so on, except as part of the background. He had of course served two terms in the Soviet Union - one during the war and the last time as Ambassador. He spoke some Russian; he liked Russians very much. I'm not sure that he greatly cared for their government, but he liked Russians and of course he had a very good collection of early pre-revolutionary Russian art. Such a good collection that he couldn't afford to insure it. And he looked at the insurance costs in London and he thought well, it's better if they're all stolen than paying that sort of money! But he certainly didn't see himself as working to reduce Russian influence or anything like that. I don't think that was seen by him ever as relevant.

SO: So was he really a reflexion of non-alignment at that particular time?

GH: He had a strong, almost evangelical, moral compass and he privately repudiated non-alignment on the grounds you can't be non-aligned between a good system and a bad one, but it just wasn't relevant. We were dealing with a different set of issues. If we'd discussed it and I suppose we did, we'd have had what you might say were conventional Western views on it. But it wasn't relevant in the working day, if you know what I mean.

SO: Totally, because as you say, the area and realm of your work was not expressly connected to big issues of the nuclear arms race or disarmament.

GH: No, the Commonwealth couldn't really help on that. It liked to discuss them at Heads of Government meetings, but it was not a direction that the Commonwealth could take and certainly from that point of view, Arnold had no great interest in these as issues where he could contribute something.

SO: You made a point about President Bhutto trying to blackball Singapore in its desire to join the Commonwealth.

GH: Yes.

SO: And you used the word 'consensus': that there was consensus in the Commonwealth, but he would register that Pakistan effectively was a dissenter from that consensus. So can we look to Arnold Smith as the originator of this idea of establishing a working consensus?

GH: Well, I think so because I think that was the first time the term had ever been used; before countries had joined the Commonwealth by acclamation, everybody agreed. He couldn't say that this time because of Bhutto's objections and so the word was 'consensus' and it of course became, as you would know, increasingly important working by consensus in the Commonwealth. As far as possible he did consciously aim to avoid votes. His argument was the Commonwealth doesn't work by votes; you don't vote things down or vote them up. We get or form a consensus and the advantage of the term 'consensus' means that if there are two or three diehards who won't move, you can say 'Okay, the consensus is that we do this, we understand that you are not in favour of it,' but not a vote and I think that was part of the way in which you might say face was saved.

SO: And egos were managed?

GH: And managed; and business got done without splits and all the excitements that otherwise might have appeared in the press.

SO: That is very consciously not going the UN route, with the 5 permanent members of the Security Council having that veto that you made reference to.

GH: Yes. That was part of the reason why we certainly did not take the UN as a major model for the Commonwealth; we had different lines of development and that was one of them.

SO: Aha. You also made reference of Arnold Smith very consciously using the persona and the authority of his office that he was claiming, to assert that you were servants of the Commonwealth. How far do you think he was consistently, consciously, driving through this is a modern Commonwealth? This is not the British Commonwealth?

GH: Oh, very much so. That was his message. When I went out with him on his first tours in 1965 that was his great message to every head of government, and head of state that we called on was to say 'The Commonwealth is now in common ownership. It is not a British club, it is not run by the British; it is run by all of us.' And that I think was the key message and I think a message he managed to get across in the heat of the Rhodesian UDI. He finally convinced a lot of Commonwealth heads of government that the association wasn't a sort of stalking horse for British diplomacy, that it was in fact in common ownership. And that was critical to its survival and Arnold was very blunt in emphasising this. He was a clear and forthright speaker; he didn't mind saying the same thing 5 or 6 times over, but he got his message across and that boldness with which he approached any sceptical head of state. He didn't lecture them; he was much more tactful than that, but nonetheless they got a brief lesson in the way the Commonwealth had changed and why it was important, and it worked.

SO: Please, if I could come on now to the issues and events – 'Events, dear boy, events', as Harold MacMillan would say. Arnold Smith had been confronted in 1965 by a war between India and Pakistan; then immediately the Rhodesian UDI issue erupted, which had been bubbling up in 1964-1965. In fact, you say in your memoirs, that an African head of state identified this was going to happen a month before the actual declaration of UDI on 11 November 1965.

GH: That wasn't a head of state; it was a very dubious character from Zambia who we had dark suspicions was in fact a Rhodesian undercover agent. He kept coming to see us and you got a lot of cranks and oddities in those early days and perhaps always! You had to see a lot of them because you never knew which ones might be useful; and this chap whom we had great doubts about said he thought there would be a UDI in a month's time. And he was spot on, to the day. So either he was very lucky or he did so because he had inside knowledge. But at that stage Arnold had told Garner at the Commonwealth Office that he was thinking of an introductory tour to Central and East Africa at the end of November and Joe Garner said to him, 'I think you should bring it forward'. So with this and hints from this dubious chap and other people, Arnold left about three weeks early and picked up Yaw Adu in Kenya and, well you know the rest from my memoirs! But in fact the timing was providential because the explosion of wrath in independent Africa was very great, as you can imagine, and we were on the spot, jumping from country to country to make this argument, 'Use the Commonwealth. Don't pull out of it. You've got a weapon that you can use if you disagree with the British. Here's your loud speaker, use it.' Had we not been there, well it would have been interesting; so I think that was providential. Needless to say, the British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, Arthur Bottomley, had urged us not to go saying it was premature; but Garner, its permanent Head and a very sensible man, said 'Go.' And so we went.

SO: Had you been in touch with the Rhodesian High Commissioner in London, Andrew Skeen beforehand?

GH: No.

SO: Obviously Rhodesia was not formally in the Commonwealth because it was still a quasi-colony at that point, following the break up of the Central African Federation.

GH: No contact with Rhodesia or Rhodesia House at all.

SO: I know you made reference in your memoirs, that Jomo Kenyatta was much more moderate.

GH: Yes, he was.

SO: Was this, do you think, a product of having fought the British in the Mau Mau emergency, so he had an awareness of the casualties and cost of war?

GH: In effect he said it was. I mean, not in so many words, but quite clearly indirectly, yes. He said 'I know that it's better to avoid violence if possible'. He said, 'Of course it will take longer, but economic sanctions will do less damage in the long run than war'; and he is yet to be proved wrong on that. I

found him very impressive. I met him twice with Arnold and both times I was enormously impressed with Kenyatta. A very heavy dignified man with, I thought, a very good grasp of human nature and affairs. He clearly was delivering a message which was not welcomed by his Foreign Minister or other members of his Cabinet. The excitement was intense in Nairobi when we were there the day after UDI, and Kenyatta was quite clearly laying it down, 'We will not be taking a military approach to this', and of course his word was law and stuck. But I thought he was right. The other person whom I found very eerie, but on whom I've come around to in my older age to change my views a bit was Hastings Banda in Malawi.

SO: That sounded a very strange encounter in your memoirs.

GH: It was very strange! Leaving aside the strangeness of his arrangements and wiping the foam from his mouth.

SO: You describe the room as extremely dark and …

GH: Yes, all the curtains were drawn; it was as hot as hell. We sat in a sort of sun porch in his little house and all the curtains were drawn, presumably because he was afraid of assassination. There was a large brick wall around the house anyhow. But he stepped into the room where we were sitting waiting, with a bit of sunlight glinting through some of the curtains, in a thick black suit, black waistcoat and watch chain, dressed more like an Edinburgh doctor - which of course he had been. But for somebody in that climate? As you know, he invited us to a public hanging which was very unnerving. Banda though, to come back to the point, was more forthright that Kenyatta. He said, 'I know the British very well. I've known them since before 1923 when Rhodesia was (a crown colony). He said, 'I think it is much better to leave it to them. They will do it better in the long run and I don't think other countries should be in the business of interfering.' I was a young man of 28 or something, so I was appalled at this dreadful reactionary view but I have wondered in the light of the subsequent history whether his advice might have been better. Given the miserable state that Zimbabwe has ended up in, at least I hope temporarily, that puts Banda's advice in a somewhat different light. In that sense Banda may have been right, but there was no chance of that being politically possible. Quite apart from my own personal deep disapproval, nobody was going to agree with that approach. But I was interested that he and Kenyatta, and I wouldn't say the two agreed, Kenyatta would certainly have not put it that high. Nonetheless the two older more experienced men perhaps had a cooler eye on how to manage it. The problem was, and it's hard I think for us to understand now why people were so worried, the feeling really was that the apartheid regime was a kind of leprosy that was spreading North from South Africa. Now Southern Rhodesia had gone, Malawi looked as if it could be controlled, and would Zambia be next? What would happen to Kenya and so on? It didn't to my eye then seem to be a plausible fear but it was certainly there.

SO: But Wilson certainly made reference to that. He feared Rhodesia was lost, and South Africa would expand its control.

GH: Well the fear was there and it strongly influenced reactions to UDI. I was struck by the oddity when I was first in Zambia after UDI that all the Rhodesian small goods, soft drinks and minor consumer goods had all disappeared - only to be replaced by South African toothpaste, toothbrushes

and all that sort of thing. It was a sign and people like Milton Obote did feel that they were being slowly swallowed up. He said to us, 'Malawi's still there, but its soul has gone.' I remember him saying that they were being eaten from within by Apartheid; so I think the fierceness of the reaction reflected that feeling that this sort of leprosy was spreading unstoppably like a disease, and only very brisk action by Britain would have stopped it.

SO: Well, it's almost a Cold War analogy, isn't it. The comparison to apparent creeping Soviet-led socialism. I'm just thinking of the advance into Eastern Europe in the late 1940s; that's a direct contemporary reference point.

GH: Yes, the advance into Eastern Europe was of course with the Soviet Army, which helps. But the South African army was already in Namibia. Well it wasn't called Namibia then but yes, I mean the fear of South Africa's economic power primarily, but also its military capabilities. South Africa was still the most powerful military state in the continent. So the fear was very strong, and Arnold got from Nyerere and Obote, 'We'll have to leave the Commonwealth if this goes on.' And by the end of Arnold's trip when we left Tanzania, it was still in the balance; but I think we both came away with the feeling that there wouldn't be mass departures from the Commonwealth which had seemed very likely at the beginning.

SO: From what you observed, would you say that these African Heads of State were very much in control of their country's foreign policies? That they were the arbiters and key drivers of foreign policy?

GH: Very much so. It's become a fact around the world and in our own countries, the Prime Minister now effectively runs foreign policy, I think everywhere; and that was certainly the case then with Nyerere, with Kenyatta, with Kaunda, and so on. So they were the people we saw. Often they had their Foreign Ministers with them. But the deciders were the Presidents or Prime Ministers.

SO: Yes, so it's really the discussion within the Prime Minister's office, with his key adviser within his office, that then would be the key foreign policy element?

GH: Yes.

SO: And so a Foreign Minister was to deal with day to day stuff?

GH: Yes, that's right.

SO: You mentioned Milton Obote: how good a Commonwealth Head was he? How committed was he to the Commonwealth? Obviously Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere had an increasing significance through the '70s and particularly the early '80s, but Obote?

GH: Well, Obote was extremely helpful to the Commonwealth Secretariat. I remember the first meeting with him on that visit maybe after UDI. And he said to Arnold, 'I can see that the Commonwealth is no longer run by the British but it still looks to us like an English club'. Because of the UDI thing. I think that Arnold convinced him on that first visit. 'Well, why not wait and see, why not give it a go before you write it off', and he did. I think he was a convert because when the Biafran crisis came out, it was he who lent his

good offices when we finally had negotiations between the two sides. And he was extremely helpful. I mean we failed for other reasons but we certainly needed somebody like Obote as head of state to get us accommodation and push, and I think add some diplomatic bounce too.

SO: Thank you. I was wondering why those negotiations on the Biafran war were in held in Kampala.

GH: They were in Kampala by an accident. The two sides never engaged in direct talks; shuttling between the two sides was extremely trying and our main contribution was to be endlessly patient. We finally got them to agree to a meeting, but then they couldn't agree on where to meet. The Nigerians said London, and the Biafrans said, 'No, London is no good', and they suggested, now I can't remember what they suggested, and there was deadlock. They agreed to meet but we couldn't get a meeting because we couldn't agree where. And finally, Arnold said to them 'Write down an alternative place where you could meet other than the one you've said you would prefer, on a bit of paper and give it to me.' So they both wrote a short list and fortunately Kampala was on both lists, so we said Kampala. Arnold got on the phone to Obote and Obote said, 'Sure', and he was very helpful in facilitating the whole thing. So that's how it came to be Kampala.

SO: Staying on Biafra for a moment: did Arnold Smith use Emeka Anyaoku as a source of information in any way, or as a private envoy, given that he was also Igbo, from Nigeria?

GH: Because he was Igbo, definitely not. I think in the beginning before the split came, before the secession, as Colonel Ojukwu became increasingly important, Emeka was helpful among others in keeping Arnold briefed on how the situation was developing. The moment it became a crisis of secession, Arnold could not use Emeka without compromising his integrity as a Commonwealth civil servant, so our main role with Emeka was to protect him and keep him, so to speak, away from the subject so we didn't use him after that. Of course initially Arnold relied very heavily on Yaw Adu who made a trip to West Africa and came back and reported very sensibly and accurately and very pessimistically; and Yaw was well known in the whole of West Africa obviously. So he was our initial point of contact. Afterwards of course it was Arnold himself once we got into mediating - you might like to talk about that later on.

SO: Yes, I would very much like to because I'm enormously struck by Arnold Smith's energies and his input into trying to resolve the Nigerian civil war; and also the lasting impact of the failure to resolve it.

GH: Yes.

SO: As well as the humanitarian crisis in Biafra and how that affected his subsequent political approaches.

GH: His energy and his boldness were, I can't keep saying it often enough, truly remarkable and absolutely essential in this early stage. Because you've got to remember the Secretariat was hardly known by anybody, 'Commonwealth Secretary? Who's he?' Arnold had to build the job and he did and he built it as a senior, as you say, foreign minister sort of job. And people teased him for his ego and his sense of importance. I don't know how much of it was self-

importance, but the point was it was critical to getting the institution recognised and accepted as something that you could deal with. And for that I think he was irreplaceable.

SO: Why was U Thant so resistant to the United Nations getting involved?

GH: I don't know the answer to that. We puzzled about it quite a lot. Arnold would go to see him a couple of times in New York and talk it over. Arnold got the impression that U Thant felt that it was being handled by the Commonwealth and he had other things on his mind and he had no need to get involved. For want of any better explanation, that still seems to me to be the best. He certainly liked to be briefed and kept informed, but he had no interest in playing any part. But on the other hand, Arnold did have a role, and I suppose U Thant would have had to push him aside if he wanted to be more active; nor was there any particular advantage I think in the UN doing so. We weren't short of active supporters when they needed peacekeeping forces and economic aid and all that, we could muscle that up within the Commonwealth if and when needed. Our problem was to get the two sides to agree and I don't think the UN had any better ideas than we did on that one.

SO: I'm very aware that the Biafra issue in fact had Cold War angles to it, that France and Britain were very much at odds over the conflict; South Africa and the Ivory Coast also had their own fingers in this particular pie; and so it wasn't simply an intra-Commonwealth issue, a civil war within the Commonwealth. It did have much wider international ramifications.

GH: Oh, it did indeed. I mean, the whole question of secession was a difficult and confusing one for many countries. But the issue of Biafra was less Cold War and more entangled with arbitrary colonial boundaries and above all, oil. That caused the trouble. I remember when oil was found in the river states in Nigeria before the Biafran crisis and Yaw Adu said to me 'Oh I'm very sorry to hear they've struck oil in Nigeria' and I said, 'Come now, Yaw! You mustn't be jealous, you know. It's their good fortune.'

SO: Rather than Ghana?

GH: Yes. Yaw said, 'You misunderstand me. Oil is trouble. They're going to have trouble' and he was right. Any time I remonstrated with Yaw, he was always right and I was wrong.

SO: Did Arnold Smith make any approaches to Paris, to try to ring-fence the discussion in any way?

GH: No, I think he stuck pretty closely to his Commonwealth brief. I can't recall. Occasionally people, possibly the French Ambassador certainly other ambassadors, would come around for a briefing. I certainly remember being asked to dinner by the Papal Nuncio who wished to be briefed on it, in the cautious way of papal diplomacy, at his house in Wimbledon. And Arnold's position was that, barring more sensitive things, he was perfectly willing to brief anybody who wanted to know what we knew about the crisis; but he certainly didn't go out of his way, and nor did he have time. It wasn't a leisurely affair, as you can imagine, when we got into the mediation effort with Biafra.

SO: What about Arnold's relationship with the Foreign Office and Number 10 on the Biafran issue?

GH: I have to go wider than that. The initial relationship was sensitive. I think, not so much the Permanent Under Secretary of either the Foreign Office or the Commonwealth, there were two in those days who I think were large-minded and understood what were the changes that would work. There was considerable… I think, jealousy's too strong a word, but resentment and wry laughter at, you know, these amateurs in the Commonwealth Secretariat, because in a sense we were doing the Commonwealth Office out of an important part of their job. So that was understandable. There was nothing nasty or anything but just occasional signs of resentments. With Number 10, the relationship varied. I think Harold Wilson recognised in Arnold a kind of formidable partner who might well be difficult to control, as indeed he was. So I think their relationship did fluctuate; I think Wilson, although much criticised over various things, on the whole was extremely helpful to the way the crisis developed in the Commonwealth. When, as a result of UDI, the pressure mounted for an early Commonwealth meeting in Lagos (January 1966), Wilson's immediate reaction was to say 'Yes, I'll go.' And that was quite a big thing. He had reservations about it afterwards; he said, 'You know, I'm not going to be put in the dock'. But his decision to say 'I'll be there,' made that meeting a goer. And I think it was very important that meeting, to provide a vent for the resentments, the fears, what are the British up to? And so on.

SO: So it was a safety valve really, to blow off steam?

GH: I think it was a way of people doing what the Commonwealth does best, talking among themselves, getting a better grip on how other people saw it and what possibilities there might be. I think with hindsight, everyone was too optimistic at that stage. Certainly Wilson was a brilliant man, attractive in that sense, but he was convinced that sanctions would bring Southern Rhodesia to their knees and managed, I think, to convince the meeting in Lagos that given six months or so, it should do the trick. I'm not sure the meeting entirely agreed with him but I think they were prepared to take him at his word and give him six months. Later on that trust evaporated and there was rising suspicion that Wilson might do a deal with Ian Smith and abandon Rhodesia to white independent rule.

SO: You write of that in your memoirs.

GH: Yes, the pressure especially from the African members was to get Britain to rule out any possibility of independence before majority rule. So trust in Britain faded but in the early days I think there was a willingness to let Wilson have a go.

SO: But still there were demands for British intervention. The calls for the use of force really were very loud indeed.

GH: They were, they were. Wilson never hesitated on that. I remember him saying to Arnold 'My cabinet would not. My cabinet are simply not in the mood for foreign adventures'. Among Wilson's advisers there was, I think, concern that a British invasion of Southern Rhodesia posed huge military risks and I don't think it was ever considered seriously in London. But people like Kenneth Kaunda really felt that if the thing went on in six months, it would come to be, as we say now, 'the new normal' and everyone would have accepted that

Southern Rhodesia was run by the whites and that was that. And I think that his fears were to some extent realised.

SO: How much was he, Kenneth Kaunda, also trying to defend himself against left wing criticism from people like Simon Kapwepwe? Was there also a fear that Zambia, as former Northern Rhodesia, had a black independent government but their legitimacy was also tied with their Southern Rhodesian colleagues acquiring independence at the same time? In other words, they felt, to a degree, morally cheated and compromised in their own acquisition of liberation? I'm just wondering if you felt that in any way permeated their thinking?

GH: I don't know. I don't know about that. On the first point, Kaunda's position as president although unchallenged, was not anywhere near as strong as Kenyatta's or the others. And so his rather more fiery Foreign Minister, Simon Kapwepwe, was much more of an influence. When Kenyatta's Foreign Minister disagreed with his president and the president said 'Don't', he withdrew it. That was not so with Kapwepwe. You hinted that Kaunda was probably always looking at his left, but I don't think his prime worry was internal politics, although that could obviously be part of it. I think his prime worry was that many in Zambia were so inter-connected with the Southern Rhodesians.

SO: Yes, because of the Central African Federation's infrastructure and political economy.

GH: He couldn't get his copper out or his oil in, except through Southern Rhodesia. When I was in Lusaka I found that even my telephone calls to London all went through an exchange in Salisbury. That was the first practical thing the Commonwealth could do, because Kaunda explained at really heart-breaking length the extent of the ties and how crippled his country was going to be, he could not export. Zambia's money was in copper and he couldn't get the copper out. And it was going to run out of oil and so on. And as you know we worked out an arrangement for a Commonwealth airlift.

SO: Yes. The British and Americans participated as well. There's a lot of material in the British National Archives on this.

GH: Yes, Canada and New Zealand, the British, the Americans others, Australia too I think. We had Hercules, I think, and they bought oil in and took copper out and got over the initial supplies problem; and that greatly eased the situation. We recruited from India a senior Indian civil servant to run the operation at the Lusaka end; and well, we got over that crisis.

SO: Was that a Secretariat initiative?

GH: Yes. Well, they asked us for help and we delivered. We got in touch with people and explained what was needed and then it was organised by several Commonwealth air forces. I was sent down by Arnold to Lusaka about Christmas time and we worked out a scheme. They gave me a list of what they needed and how much and when - all the details. We spent days sitting there. Kaunda's officials were very good at producing a comprehensive list of their needs. I took this back to London and we sent it around to Canada and the other Commonwealth members, and up came the aircraft and people

knew what to take in and what to take out; and it worked beautifully. And that was probably the first actual practical thing that we did come to think of it.

SO: Well, the logistical planning needed phenomenal coordination.

GH: Yes, it did. We did not coordinate the flights or anything like that as it wasn't our business. But we got it going and circulated the list of what needed to be moved and the respective Commonwealth governments and air forces did the rest.

SO: Yes, but by the September 1966 Commonwealth heads meeting, Harold Wilson was already starting to have the bilateral discussions with the Rhodesians that led to HMS Tiger talks later that year.

GH: Yes, it was much more rocky.

SO: Then in 1968, it was HMS Fearless.

GH: Yes.

SO: But at this point, did Arnold ever venture a private opinion to you about how he felt that the British Government was handling this?

GH: Oh yes, quite often. We assumed that Arnold's office was bugged which did not bother him at all. He felt that what he said informally in his office might have more impact on the British than his formal calls, and he could be relaxed about this because there were no discrepancies between his private views and what he said in Whitehall - they were couched in much the same words.

He was equally frank about raising it with Wilson when there was speculation about the coming Fearless talks. Arnold said - and I was there - to Harold Wilson, 'We really need to break out of this autumnal routine of negotiations with Ian Smith'. Wilson was very cross. This was when Arnold said to Lester Pearson afterwards, 'I stuck my neck out.' He did. So, I think one of Arnold's strengths was he did not, so to speak, pussy foot. He told Heads of Government, and particularly Harold Wilson, what he thought. Not gratuitously but when he thought it really required plain speaking. And I admired him for that moral courage.

SO: Was he in touch with the Zimbabwean national liberation political elements at this particular time?

GH: No, I mean they came to see us and I knew personally people like Bernard Chidzero, a very impressive man. We didn't see it as our job to foment resistance in Zimbabwe. There were plenty of other people doing that. Our job was to maximise international pressure on the regime to get it changed; and that really came down, in practical terms, to trying to put the maximum effect of pressure on Britain to do the right thing. And I use the term 'maximum and effective'; both are important. Maximum pressure was not necessarily most likely to get the British Government to do what we hoped it would. So you had to make sure that your pressure was effective, something which elements within the British cabinet and within the British civil service would relate to and understand. Arnold was good at that.

SO: I know that in later years that Secretary General Sonny Ramphal had contacts with both ZANU and ZAPU. Obviously, between 1965-74 the Reverend Sithole and Robert Mugabe were incarcerated inside Rhodesia. At the Kingston CHOGM in 1975, which was Arnold Smith's last CHOGM as SG, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo both attended and made an unofficial presentation to heads. Ramphal has told me he was keen to provide administrative and political support, and solidarity to both these liberation movements which then came together as the Patriotic Front in 1976 – this was both at the Geneva meeting in 1976, and behind the scenes at Lancaster House in 1979. I understand he was also willing to use private briefings of the British press to exert effective pressure on the British Government. I wondered if Arnold Smith was a forerunner of this particular SG technique?

GH: Oh, I think he did. It's a very delicate weapon to use; it's a double-edged weapon and my boss McIntosh was good at it. I learnt and saw something of the art with him. Arnold did do it but very sparingly and very carefully. He was quite right, I think. He felt it was better that he talked to ministers rather than give them the impression that their arms were being twisted by stirring up public pressure, but we did of course have lots of contacts in the media. There were Commonwealth correspondents in all the quality newspapers in those days in London, and they came to see us a lot and got briefed. But I think not with any underhand intent, but just briefed, 'This is what we know at the moment and you've asked for information and here it is.' But I think it would not be fair to Arnold to say that he ran any kind of private campaign.

SO: I wasn't trying to suggest that Sonny Ramphal ran a private campaign, but he used all sources to exercise effective pressure.

GH: Yes, well, I'm sure Arnold would when it was necessary, but I think he was pretty chary. The relations with Wilson and his cabinet were sensitive enough on this issue without orchestrating press criticism. If they had had the feeling that we were campaigning against them, then we'd have slipped backwards a long way. Arnold talked to the press quite a bit, but he tended to talk on the record, rather than off the record.

SO: Was Arnold Smith also using other aspects, or other issues as a way to build up the positive role of the Secretariat, so that it would counteract any perceived negativity that the British Government had towards the Secretariat on the Rhodesia issue? Such as the Gibraltar referendum, or the Antigua constitutional issues, so that there were, as far as the British Government was concerned, some plus sides on the ledger?

GH: Oh, very much so. And also I think he would argue very vigorously with Wilson and with George Thomson (a very able junior Minister in the Commonwealth Office) that the Secretariat was in Britain's best interest in handling the Commonwealth; and that it provided Britain with ways and with safeguards that it wouldn't otherwise have. So he certainly used that argument on the Rhodesian crisis itself but also, as you say, in lesser but useful fields, and that's gone on ever since.

SO: Yes. On the Biafran negotiations: after all the energy put into mediation, and the endless to-ing and fro-ing, it culminated in those thwarted Kampala discussions, which then broke up without any resolution. At

that point, did Arnold Smith ever despair of mediation and think that there was no role for the Secretary General of the Commonwealth?

GH: Oh no, no, never. But he must have, though he disguised it, he must have been heartbroken. We had come so close after two years of effort and the outlines of a possible compromise decision was staring everybody in the face; and it looked so do-able until Ojukwu pulled out. We could only speculate on why in the end he would not settle - perhaps he felt it too dangerous to him personally, perhaps he had gambled all on secession and felt fatalistically that he had to go down with the ship. It seemed to me that Arnold was in line for a Nobel Peace Prize if he had pulled it off. But he was not a despairer. I'm sure he was upset, but he gave no outward sign even to me; I saw him all the time on that. So it was just that it hadn't worked and maybe something else will work, although it was pretty obvious to us that after the Kampala effort - although we kept on, and kept in contact and writing to Ojukwu and so on - but it was pretty obvious that there was no game changer, that Ojukwu was going to fight on to the inevitable end. And that's the problem I think, often with those situations. Successful mediation is very difficult to achieve. People say glibly that there should be a lot more mediation, but in fact it won't work while either side thinks that they have a chance of getting what they want militarily. It only works when both sides have come to the conclusion they are not going to succeed, but they need a polite way to climb down.

SO: It's known as a 'hurting stalemate'.

GH: Yes. And then mediation can provide you with a dignified way out of the dilemma you've got yourself into. 'Well, we've got a good deal in the end.' We thought we had got to that point at some stages in the Nigerian civil war, but in the end it didn't work.

SO: Yes. Was there a particular Commonwealth dimension to the humanitarian relief attempts in Biafra?

GH: Yes, there was. Well, there was very much a British one.

SO: Yes. I just wondered if there was a separate Commonwealth one that you…

GH: No, there wasn't a separate Commonwealth one. Again it was a terribly delicate issue. Arnold thought, in fact he said to me, 'We might have pulled it off if we could have got into Enugu and seen Ojukwu.' We couldn't, because the Federal Government would not allow the Commonwealth Secretary General to go there. They regarded this as being a form of recognition which would be exploited by the Biafrans. I think they were over cautious, but I certainly feel that it was a considerable hamper in our efforts that we could not talk directly to Ojukwu, only to his negotiators who were nervous of Ojukwu and so we could never be sure of how frankly and accurately they reported back to him.

SO: To what extent do you feel that those appalling images of the famine in Biafra were being used by Ojukwu as a highly conscious political tool, to break the blockade?

GH: Well, they were certainly being used by the Biafran lobby in London. I am sceptical about the huge famine. I mean, there was chronic famine in the East

at certain times of the year and there is that disease 'Kwashiorkor', a malnutrition disease which gives children a very swollen belly; it's a seasonal dietary problem. Anyhow, civilians suffer very badly in civil wars, there's no question about that. But what struck me was that as the Federal troops advanced and other more independent observers came behind, there was no great sign of genocide or of mass killings or indeed mass deaths from starvation; and the big point for me was that when the secession was over I can't think of two halves of a split country that have knitted together again more comfortably than those two did after it. Nigeria has other problems, big problems; it doesn't have that problem anymore. So I think that the Biafran lobby, which was very active in London, as you may remember, was campaigning for a better political outcome.

SO: I do.

GH: And even here in New Zealand here, some people were protesting. I'm not sure how well-founded their views were but I think it probably prolonged the war. Not of course deliberately, but I think it did give the Biafran hawks - of which Ojukwu was one - the feeling that maybe they could yet get international aid if they could just hold on a bit more. Which wasn't practical; nobody was prepared at that stage to give practical help. So the war fought itself out until the end.

SO: Sir, if I could ask one question about the Commonwealth and South Africa at this particular point, before I ask you about the Technical Cooperation Fund. How far was Arnold Smith also important in helping to lay the groundwork for the Commonwealth's later grand strategy in opposing apartheid? Did you have contacts with the Anti-Apartheid Movement? Was there a beginning of scholarship assistance to South West African students, or contact with South African dissidents? I'm just wondering about the forerunners of Sonny Ramphal's later campaign on apartheid?

GH: Yes, Rhodesia was seen as the advance guard of the apartheid problem. But yes, we certainly had contact with what was then South West Africa's emerging political leaders, including Sam Nujoma and others. We had contacts in South West Africa whom we saw from time to time and we did work to provide scholarships and so on. That sort of investment: I know it's long term, but it's really important. South Africa itself wasn't a focus; it was the whole background of everything we did. But I couldn't say that there was any need for the Secretary General to organise Commonwealth opposition to apartheid. It had it already.

SO: I was going to say 'it was alive and well'.

GH: It was a question of, in a sense, preventing it from something totally dominating all Commonwealth meetings. People like Lee Kuan Yew, Keith Holyoake, then the New Zealand Prime Minister, and others got impatient that you couldn't talk about anything else at Commonwealth meetings. They came all the way to London and there was only one subject. And that became an emerging problem. We had to adapt the structure to provide parallel discussions - one set of meetings on Southern Africa and another on other international issues including Vietnam, international aid and matters that other prime ministers wanted to talk about.

SO: Wilson had come up with the idea of a Commonwealth delegation to go to Vietnam at the London meeting in 1965.

GH: Yes, it was not, I think, taken terribly seriously; it certainly was not taken by us very seriously. I went so far as to have some injections in case we had to go suddenly. I think it was probably more of a political gimmick. I mean again, I don't quite see what use a Commonwealth delegation could possibly be to either the Vietnamese or Americans and it died almost in being born. But Harold Wilson did push it for a while.

SO: But Nkrumah was quite keen. The minutes show this.

GH: Yes. I don't recall it ever being taken really seriously and I couldn't at the time see what it was that we were supposed to be able to do.

SO: So, when did you bring in these parallel discussions in 1969? At the London Commonwealth heads' conference?

GH: I think it was '69. My memory's a bit vague on that.

SO: No, because there was an appreciable gap after the London September meeting in 1966.

GH: We couldn't meet again for a while after that. The September '66 meeting was in a sense a disaster; not because of anybody's fault or anything like that, but because the issue had become so explosive. Distrust of the British became so deep that rational, even-tempered discussion was no longer possible. I can remember Arnold talking about this after the meeting; he said 'You know, we can't meet again like this.' When a year had gone by, more than a year, we looked at a meeting in Ottawa. But Pearson was not, as you can imagine, terribly interested in the possibility that the one Commonwealth meeting held in Ottawa might be the last meeting held by the Commonwealth anywhere! In the end we met in January '69 in London. It was the depths of winter, the last meeting held in the long drawing room in Marlborough House, and still remembered years later by Lee Kuan Yew as being absolutely awful, stuffy and hot and pipe smoke all over the place. I've never had the courage to say to Lee it was mainly being contributed by me with an enormous pipe, sitting behind Arnold and smoking. But, as you know, it went a lot better and we got over it. But after September '66, we really were not, I think, in a position to sensibly hold a meeting until something had changed to improve the feelings.

SO: Sir, if I could ask you one last question before we stop for us both to have a break. About the Commonwealth Technical Cooperation Fund, its origins and its genesis.

GH: Well, that is one of the practical things that I'm still very proud of having a modest involvement in. As far as I recall it, it was Arnold's idea. Someone may have suggested it to him, but it was a genuinely new idea in international affairs. International aid was a commonplace and developed countries would send experts and so on, but the point about the Commonwealth was there were a lot of countries, countries like Jamaica and others who had great hydrologists, soil scientists and so on, but who as governments were in no position to pay to send those hydrologists as aid to Africa or somewhere else. So the idea behind the technical cooperation arrangement was that we could

tap this hitherto unused source of aid expertise. Countries which could afford to pay would cover the costs of sending experts from those countries which had them but couldn't afford to provide them as aid. A brilliantly simple idea but one which hadn't been tried before. And perhaps could only work in the Commonwealth because of the links of the language and so on.

So you could say that a hydrologist from Jamaica could work in Pakistan and would be more effective more quickly than if you'd had a hydrologist from Armenia or somewhere. So it was a simple idea and welcomed by Commonwealth governments and we had a meeting of Commonwealth ministers in Nairobi - I think it was ministers, certainly senior Commonwealth officials I can't remember now which it was - and we thrashed out the outlines of how it would work. I sat up all night in my hotel room in Nairobi writing a memorandum of understanding to set out how the Fund would operate. I remember going out and standing on the balcony as the sun rose over Nairobi, having just finished it.

SO: Was this the New Stanley or the Norfolk hotel?

GH: It was one or the other, exactly; the only two Nairobi hotels I ever stayed. I think it was the New Stanley; it had a balcony. I would have been on the fifth floor or something like that. Standing there watching the sun rise and feeling absolutely exhausted, but feeling a considerable sense of satisfaction. I thought it looked good and workable. So I took the draft to Arnold and it was circulated when the meeting began at nine in the morning. I think I said something to explain how the document had been set out. Then I sat behind Arnold and fell fast asleep. When I woke up it had been adopted. And it has worked, it's been a very distinctively Commonwealth contribution to the whole world of international aid. I'm no expert on how it's worked in recent years but my hope was that it was more likely to get over problems of language and culture shock and so on than more general international contributions sometimes do.

SO: Principal funding of course comes from the ABC countries, so again, I'm wondering the extent to which that this was Arnold drawing on the ideas of the Pearson Commission, with again a particular Canadian input?

GH: He may have done. I can't remember. He did recruit a Canadian economic adviser, Gordon Goundrey, to help run this. To what extent it had originally been a Canadian idea, I'm simply not qualified to give an opinion on. All I can remember is Arnold saying, 'We've got to do something with this' and we did.

SO: Yes. And so this would have been when, 1969?

GH: '68, I can't remember. Yes, the record will tell you when. Tom Mboya, a very able Kenyan and minister chaired the meeting. I think I've got a photo of somewhere of Arnold and I and Mboya sitting at the table. He was later assassinated.

SO: Yes, of course he was. He was shot on Government Road (now known as Moi Avenue), after leaving a pharmacy.

GH: How very sad.

SO: I lived in Nairobi for two years, in the mid 1980s; and I remember his death was still a strong memory and keen sense of loss.

GH: Yes. He was a loss, a real loss.

SO: So, please shall we stop there?

Part 2:

SO: Sue Onslow talking to Mr Gerald Hensley on 2nd April, 2014. Part 2. Sir, I wonder if you could reflect please on your experiences and view of the Commonwealth after leaving the Secretariat. You went back to the New Zealand Foreign Service after the autumn of 1969. You must have been a rather different diplomat, having had quite so much autonomy in the Secretariat?

GH: Yes, I think I was probably more than a little insufferable because I had acquired a lot of Arnold Smith's outlook and probably a lot of Arnold Smith's habits. So I may have had to be slightly depressurised at home, but I'm always grateful to Arnold, what he taught me about how to practice diplomacy. Diplomacy has a bad name for people being underhand, shifty and 'lying abroad for the good of their country' and all that sort of thing; but Arnold's straightforwardness and energy seemed to me to be the key to successful diplomacy, and I've tried to follow it since. So I came back to the New Zealand Foreign Service and was posted to Washington but I did completely different work there. I was Counsellor and head of the Political Section of the Embassy and I had very little to do with the Commonwealth. And then subsequently I was posted to Singapore as High Commissioner and so I moved away; although I was on a visit to Ottawa at the time of the Ottawa Heads of Government meeting in '71[1973?] and I was with my then Prime Minister, David Lange, in the Bahamas for the '85 Commonwealth meeting. But then, let me go back, I was in Jamaica for the Commonwealth meeting in…

SO: The Kingston CHOGM was in '75.

GH: 75, wasn't it? which was Arnold's last. I was there with my Prime Minister, Bill Rowling. A good meeting because you may remember the Oil Shock of '73 had dislocated the world economy quite seriously and there was much talk of the need for a New International Economic Order, with nobody quite sure what the new economic order would look like or how it would work. And interestingly in my view, the Commonwealth meeting in Jamaica in '75 was an important step in the way the international community came to terms with the economic problems we were facing as a result of the oil shock. There had been a huge amount of debate and the usual number of silly ideas and impractical proposals and all that which was part of any debate. But the Commonwealth meeting to my mind managed to sift the ideas to come down to a more sensible view of what might work. It set up a group of Commonwealth experts to report back to the Commonwealth heads of government. With major reports like this on the international economy years could have gone by with a doorstop report finally being produced in several volumes. Instead the Jamaica meeting said sensibly that, 'We need an interim report before the Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting' which was to take place in Georgetown in Guyana in a few months' time, and it thus

managed to abbreviate what otherwise might have been endless deliberations. The Commonwealth experts were chaired by Alistair MacIntyre, a very able Caribbean economist, and he came up with a very sensible set of recommendations within the deadline. For all the talk there had been about 'We need a radical new approach', it took an orthodox approach and so was more likely to appeal to the major developed economies. It looked pretty much like the old international economic order, trusting to the IMF to recycle the Petrodollars to get the economy going again, as indeed happened. The report was adopted by the Commonwealth finance ministers at Guyana, I was there with my finance minister, and then was taken on to the special session of the UN General Assembly convened to discuss the crisis. The Commonwealth discussions were reflected in the Assembly debates by countries like Guyana and Ghana and it seemed that those discussions had in some silent way focused the discussion away from the wilder ideas and on to what could be acceptable to the wider international community.

SO: The G77 confrontational approach?

GH: Yes, down to what might be possible. It was helpful to rule out what had no chance of being implemented. What we ended up with was pretty much like the old economic order. There was the same need for international assistance and so on, but I think very sensibly grounded on trust in the IMF to recycle the Petrodollars, which it did. I feel that the outcome of that at the UN was very materially influenced by the preliminary Commonwealth discussions in Jamaica and subsequently at the Finance Minister's meeting in Guyana. This was my view as one participant and I can't say that I've looked into it all that closely ever since.

SO: So, did you follow the debates about setting up a Common Fund?

GH: Yes, I certainly did. I had in Jamaica a Prime Minister who was actually an economist. Unusual in prime ministers, and Bill Rowling was very sceptical about commodity funds and funds that attempted to stabilise commodity prices. He was quite right, and the Commonwealth experts group rubbished the idea. The remaining commodity agreements all broke down as a result of the crisis over liquidity, the Petrodollar problem, and demonstrated that stabilizing commodity prices are not the way to go. It's better to provide aid if you like, through a common fund, than to try and stabilise coffee or wool or whatever prices. And I think that idea of commodity funds was killed in '75 and quite rightly so. They never work, they didn't work then and they don't work now. That was I thought a step forward. As I say, some of the major steps forward that the Commonwealth pointed to in 1975 was what you couldn't do. It wasn't so much what you should do, but what wasn't going to work. And a lot of impractical ideas went out.

SO: What you're identifying then is a practical relationship between West/South, rather than an antagonistic one between the major political economies, and the G-77?

GH: Yes.

SO: Or inter-governmental confrontation in the North/South dialogue.

GH: Yes, you've put your finger right on it, because initially the reaction was confrontational North/South. The South were saying, 'You've got to do a lot

more. Everything has changed and you've got to change with it', and that sort of talk that you get in a crisis. What the Commonwealth discussions in Jamaica, but particularly I think the Alistair MacIntyre Commonwealth Group and the subsequent discussions in Georgetown Finance Ministers wasn't was a North/South fight. It centred around 'What can we do that will work and looks good to practical economists and is politically possible?' That narrowed the debate but still left a lot to argue about. I think you're absolutely right: it got us out of that sterile North/South argument. 'It's us against them, and them against us' and so on.

SO: Yes. What of, though, Malcolm Fraser's input into this debate? I know he was politically close to Michael Manley, although ideologically they were poles apart: and they were both keen to stress Commonwealth development and this developmental angle of West/South. And I understand that they had a meeting in Runaway Cove in 1979; seven heads attended including the West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt. It was all about re-correcting the international economic asymmetrical configuration. Sir Peter Marshall, when I spoke to him, emphasised that this idea of inter-governmental cooperation ran smack into the buffers at the World Summit in Cancun in 1981. So that although there may have been ideas towards an international developmental approach that was collaborative West/South, that in fact these ideas effectively petered out after Cancun?

GH: I could well believe it. It's beyond my area of knowledge. But what I do remember was I was a delegate at the UN Special Session and I was braced for a pretty angry North/South confrontation and it didn't really happen. There had been admittedly a world debate, not just in the Commonwealth. There had been so much debate that a lot of the fire and one might say, the silliness, had got weeded out, but I do think that the Commonwealth's efforts, perhaps by chance, because the Heads of Government meeting in Jamaica, the Finance Ministers meeting came before the UN special session and everyone had talked themselves out in the Commonwealth on it, and brought their views to New York. Therefore, my experience at that UN Special Session was much less confrontational and much more constructive than I had expected. We were talking from much more of a common platform than I had expected. And I do think the Commonwealth played an important part in that. Beyond that I can't go because I was doing other things after that.

SO: Thank you for that observation. Peter Marshall's argument is very much that the Commonwealth was an important pilot fish in all sorts of ways, as an initiator, a platform of debate, because it was a smaller environment that enabled both frank discussion, but also practical outcomes.

GH: That's absolutely right on this and on other things too. But on this very difficult economic question the middle of the '70s the Commonwealth did exactly that, and they did it because people spoke very frankly. I think not rudely, but they said what they thought. We didn't get long speeches and not too much of 'what my country is gloriously doing', and so on. And a good chairman in a Commonwealth meeting was able to discourage a bit of a tendency to go off into UN-ish kind of talk. Anyhow, there was enough discussion and enough weeding out. A really good group of Commonwealth experts was put together - a serious group with that instruction, which I thought was critical to give us an interim report, because the real one would

have taken 8 years, and be old news. I think in that sense the 'pilot fish' role was rather important for the world as a whole.

SO: So 10 years after that meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, you accompanied David Lange, your Prime Minister again, to the Commonwealth Heads meeting in Nassau in 1985?

GH: Yes.

SO: Ramphal was of course now SG. I understand you had met him when he was Attorney General of Guyana.

GH: I also knew Sonny, yes. I (had first met him) at Guyana's independence - at the time I went to Brazil by canoe, arranged by Sonny. So I did know him and I saw quite a bit of him on and off. At his request I chaired a Commonwealth officials group on the international economy at the Delhi meeting in 1983.

SO: Was this New Delhi meeting of Commonwealth senior officials?

GH: Yes, but we met to draft an economic statement while the heads of government were meeting.

SO: In that eight year interval between the Kingston and New Delhi meetings, did you feel that the Commonwealth had become an appreciably different organisation, under a different head?

GH: No, I didn't. Maybe I should have. But my observations of the Commonwealth were very intermittent. From 1980 I was head of the Prime Minister's Department and of course concerned with foreign policy, but also with domestic policy. So, my knowledge of the Commonwealth was fairly intermittent at that stage. But in Delhi there was a desire for an economic declaration, and I was asked to chair the committee to draft it. But the Secretariat had a draft which nobody, including me, liked very much, so we only had a few hours to produce a new one. We went off into a room at the back of the main meeting while it was going on and I had an inspiration. I said, 'Well, we won't be breaking for lunch. We will have lunch when we have finished'.

SO: I'll bet that concentrated people's minds!

GH: I've had a lot of experience of Commonwealth communiqué drafting and the tendency of people to get bogged down in grammatical changes and minor alterations of sentences. So I said, 'We'll have lunch as soon as we have finished.' So we worked away and by 3 o'clock miraculously we had reached agreement. We had lunch and I took it back into the meeting and the meeting adopted it. I do remember sitting behind my prime minister while the discussion was going on about adopting it and being touched on my shoulder. Turning around, I saw it was Lee Kuan Yew and he said to me, 'It's very good but it won't make any difference, you know.' Which was probably right.

SO: I know Prime Minister Robert Muldoon had had extensive exchanges with Margaret Thatcher in the run up to that Delhi meeting, talking particularly about economic issues. Their correspondence is in the Margaret Thatcher archive.

GH: Yes, he was much engrossed; that's why I was asked to chair it, I think. He was much engrossed in the need for a New Bretton Woods, which took up a lot of his department's time, drafting articles, speeches and so on for him. I was privately less convinced than he was, though of course loyally drafting away for him; but at the meeting with Mrs Thatcher, she said 'Rob, the system will re-balance itself. We don't need to make radical changes.' She was right; it did re-balance itself, but there were a lot of people like Muldoon who did not think that it would. Oddly enough, the people who were most behind it were the leaders of Commonwealth developing countries. I remember Julius Nyerere saying to me, 'I'm sorry now that I didn't go to the Finance Ministers' meeting.' New Zealand had then been in considerable disgrace because of a rugby football tour by white South African players and as a result the Finance Ministers meeting was shifted from Auckland, much to Muldoon's anger. But Julius Nyerere said to me and to others he was sorry he hadn't gone, because he was now a great supporter of Muldoon because of his economic theories. And they played quite a part in the '83 economic discussions. Those discussions were mainly taken up with the issue of the security of small Commonwealth states, as a result of the American intervention in Grenada, as you'll know. But the economic one was the other big theme and the one on which the meeting adopted the Economic Declaration prepared by officials.

In fact the system did re-balance itself, as we all know. But Muldoon certainly was very anxious to push the need for greater efforts, again, because of the effect on developing countries. He has a reputation, partly deserved, of being a bit of a monster; but he really did care about small countries. He cared about the Pacific islands; he never missed a Pacific Forum meeting. His theories on the need for a new Bretton Woods were really predicated on the need for the international community to do a lot more for vulnerable states than it was doing. And I think his motives were entirely pure and correct. I rather shared Mrs Thatcher's views that a more practical way was in fact the way that happened, but that's a matter of opinion.

SO: Yes. So what was Muldoon's attitude towards the value of the Commonwealth then, as a platform for New Zealand foreign policy, as a way to enhance New Zealand's standing in the international community, as a vehicle to achieve certain specific policy goals?

GH: Well, it varied with the meetings. I went to two Commonwealth meetings with him. The first one was disastrous from our point of view. It was in '81 in Melbourne. And he was in the dock over his stand on the Gleneagles Agreement and the South African football tour of New Zealand. He was an aggressive man when challenged, and he went to Melbourne in full aggressive mode, ready to punch in all directions. So it was really very, very difficult and not one of New Zealand's better diplomatic moments. '83 in Delhi - it was a different world. He was in a sense, greatly admired by Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere because of the economic arguments he was making and so the atmosphere was quite different. No New Zealand prime minister then, or now, would miss Heads of Government meeting, so that speaks for itself, I think. It was not an option. Muldoon was not an idealist. He wouldn't have had idealistic views about the Commonwealth. I think I actually did talk to him once or twice about it, but unless you were talking a practical problem that required action today, he wasn't interested. He wasn't a reflective man. And so that sort of conversation, at least between him and me, never took place over the four years I worked for him as head of his

department. But he clearly valued the Commonwealth. He liked that sort of meeting and he liked the chance to talk things over with other leaders.

SO: Because it was a smaller venue?

GH: Small and I think he liked the chance to talk separately to 'Margaret,' – as she was always referred to - and to others. I think more than the discussions during the morning and the afternoon sittings, it was the chance to mingle.

SO: So the retreat sessions would be particularly valuable?

GH: Yes, I think just in the corridors, just in that sort of thing.

SO: Discussions on the periphery, as well.

GH: That informality of the thing. I think he relished that. It was pretty obvious to me that he did find that valuable. He always said to me, 'Oh, we'll go and have a bit of a chat' and I think from him that was high praise, I think he picked up ideas, and he tried out ideas. He was not a reader. He was a highly intelligent man but not a reader, not well educated.

SO: So then that says that the Commonwealth Heads meeting is a way of exchanging global ideas?

GH: Yes, I think it's perhaps exchanging ideas about current problems. I have to say that Robert Armstrong, then Cabinet Secretary in Whitehall, introduced a custom at some of the ones that I was at, where while their prime ministers were having dinner with the Queen on the Britannia we - four of us, the Canadian, Australian, myself and Robert - would have dinner together in some restaurant. And this was enormously helpful, certainly to me and I think to others, because it was a lonely job being head of a prime minister's department; and the only other people who knew what it was like were the other three people that were with me. So they'd say 'Does your chap …?' 'Oh does he ever! Yes, of course' and you realised, 'yes, I'm not alone on this. I have the same problems.' It was enormous fun but also to me a great help.

SO: That suggests something of a senior officials group counselling session!

GH: Yes, a group counselling and I think in a bigger way the prime ministers found the same thing. Obviously in a much wider group and more diverse, but my experience with good politicians is they make instant snap judgments of people, sometimes wrong but, more often than not, right; they have to make shrewd judgments otherwise you wouldn't get to be a top politician. And they want to make those judgments about the new prime minister say of India, or of Pakistan, what sort of person is he or she like? The Commonwealth provided that sort of thing in the way the UN can't easily do, because you're meeting in more informal ways, chatting, sitting down together at dinner, having a cup of coffee in the break in the middle of the afternoon or whenever it might be, and forming those judgements which I think, certainly for my prime minister, he found very important. I didn't always agree with his judgment; that's of course a separate issue. But he made them and he made them because he was mixing and so on. I suspect that if I'd said to him, 'What is the most valuable thing you get out of these?' he'd probably say that was it. I can't quote him on that so it's a speculation on my part.

SO: So, the Commonwealth meeting environment was valuable for somebody whom you describe as an intuitive politician and who was using that personal chemistry and contact with Heads as a way of affirming ideas, establishing those bonds of trust, using the informality, the opportunity for a quick exchange of deep seated concerns?

GH: That's right. 'Is this someone I can do business with?'

SO: Yes, exactly, to use Margaret Thatcher's comment about Mikhail Gorbachev.

GH: Or 'Maybe this probably isn't someone chap I can do business with.'

SO: Yes.

GH: And that will influence your subsequent actions if you need them for something say, 'He or she is very good. I must have a word with them' or, 'Well, no, I think maybe we won't bother about that.' Those sorts of judgments, I think, were made at those kind of meetings. This sounds all very black and white but it meant that when some issue came up later on, the PM would say 'Oh yes, yes. I talked to her at Delhi and she had an interesting view on this so perhaps we should follow it up.' - that sort of thing.

SO: But was there ever any sense of 'I'm facing a serious challenge. So and so made a comment that is now striking chords. I should find out what they privately thought or did about X'. Was it also a problem solving environment in any way?

GH: It could be. And in our case in '81 the problem was insoluble, so it didn't. Yes, I think in the economic one in '83, yes it was. '85 with Lange: Lange was not really comfortable. He was never comfortable in any meeting and I don't recall it being other than a fairly routine sort of gathering. He was more interested in making jokes about people around the table and over his shoulder with me sitting behind him and so on.

SO: That suggested a degree of insecurity.

GH: Yes. He was not comfortable in that setting. He was extremely intelligent, but with no great willpower, which is very odd in a Prime Minister. They tend to have willpower even more than intelligence quite often!

SO: Do you think that was a reflection of his health issues?

GH: No, I think that it was his personality. Well you'll have to read my book which goes into that (*Friendly Fire).* I really learnt more about David writing that book than I did the five years when I was working with him. But he wasn't a Commonwealth figure.

SO: No, because he was left out of the Nassau meeting when the small group got together, and decided on the EPG at the Retreat – and then put the idea to Thatcher.

GH: Exactly, yes.

SO: And he was left 'pressing his nose against the window.'

GH: A bit humiliated about that but it was his lack of clubbability. Commonwealth heads of government gatherings sort themselves out into who matters most like any other largely male gatherings. Like a good British school, you're either in the first XI, or you're not.

SO: Being in 'Pop', with your waistcoat?

GH: Yes, in 'Pop', if you're at Eton. He was not in the first XI. Why I don't know. He was not a joiner, his personality was awkward, he was insecure, and he had only been prime minister for a year when we went, although that should have been long enough. He had no 'long experience'; he had never been in office when he became prime minister. So he wasn't, I think, a normal New Zealand prime minister of the sense that Muldoon, or Rowling, or Holyoake, or even Norman Kirk was. Anyhow, that was the last Commonwealth heads' meeting that I went to.

SO: So, could I just ask about the Prime Ministers you described before David Lange: how much was there an enduring and insidious attitude of New Zealand as being part of the 'old' Commonwealth? Of New Zealand being part of that first XI?

GH: Yes, it's a difficult question to answer, for all our problems over football, New Zealanders were not particularly racist. They took prime ministers at their face value, but you couldn't avoid being part of the old Commonwealth: your educational background, you bonded with Britain and Canadians and so on more easily, helplessly, if you like, whether you wanted to or not. But I don't think it was a conscious thing. There were people who would try to divide the Commonwealth into 'old' and 'new'; and we certainly consciously - as we are now talking about New Zealand Foreign Service - consciously fought against that, and rightly. Rifts could open up very easily, on things like Rhodesia, where you were accused of being pro-Rhodesian because, 'After all, they are your sort of people' and that sort of thing. But on the whole, it wasn't a big factor; but it was, I think, always in the background, if you know what I mean. You couldn't avoid it.

SO: An insidious colouring?

GH: Yes, your colour, your voice, your education, your outlook on the world, your Western outlook and so on: these could not be denied. On the other hand, the whole point about the Commonwealth was that it was big enough to take in everybody.

SO: Yes, it was diverse; it is diverse indeed.

GH: Yes.

SO: Did you accompany your prime minister to any retreats or not?

GH: Yes, I did to the one in Delhi, where the retreat was in Goa. You were supposed not to. They said, 'No.' The PM said, 'I think you had better come.' and I said, 'Well, I think they don't want advisers.' He said, 'Never mind.' He very kindly also asked Juliet, my wife to come, so we both went down to Goa and we had the most marvellous three days walking around Goa and eating

lovely food and so on. I didn't see my PM once because Mrs Gandhi kept everyone working 11 hour days.

SO: To get her International Security Declaration?

GH: Yes, exactly. When we got back to Delhi, the Prime Minister was very cross! He said to me, 'I worked like fury. You've had nothing to do but walk around looking at cathedrals.' I said, 'Yes, and jolly nice it was too!' But, I think that retreat wasn't a success because on the whole, the growing practice of international declarations on this and that needs to be used with a very sparing hand. When you've really got something to declare, declare it, but otherwise don't.

SO: Mrs Gandhi had a firm agenda for 1983: first, with the Non-Aligned Movement in March of that year. And the backdrop to the Delhi Commonwealth meeting was also, Pierre Trudeau's decision to fly on to Moscow and try to kickstart the START negotiations again.

GH: Yes.

SO: This certainly chimed in with Mrs Gandhi's own idea of the Indian Ocean being a nuclear free zone. So she had a different agenda, which was not necessarily particularly Commonwealth.

GH: No. And the economic one, which as Chairman (of the CHOGM) was the one that she was pushing; this was in a sense, part of that. She thought that it was a way of once again getting more aid to the developing countries. Which was certainly a by-product, but not the purpose of it. But for the same reason she was pushing that. But at that meeting, I heard Bob Hawke say, 'This is the best Commonwealth discussion I've ever been present at.' And I think he was right. She complained about the American action in Grenada. That triggered off an impromptu morning's discussion as could only happen in the Commonwealth. There was no agenda item or anything, but suddenly for the rest of the morning, we had as Bob Hawke said, one of the best debates on the security of small island states you could possibly hope to hear. And it was led by a very formidable lady who was Premier of Dominica.

SO: Eugenia Charles?

GH: Yes. She took objection to Mrs Gandhi's remarks about Grenada and said, 'That is not true. We were all vulnerable.' I remember her saying, 'A launch load of armed men would take over my Government'. She stressed the vulnerability of states like hers in the Caribbean, saying 'Thank God that that mad man in Grenada was removed, but we've still got a security problem in the Caribbean that all of us are still having to think about.'

SO: Because they only had small police forces, trained for civilian policing?

GH: Exactly. Well, Mrs Charles' point that a launch load of armed men could overthrow Caribbean island state governments led, as you know, to a lot of Commonwealth work done on the security of small states. That debate came out of the blue really, because Mrs Gandhi was a bit provocative about the Americans and Grenada and Bang! Off it went.

SO: Robert Mugabe was particularly critical of the American intervention in Grenada.

GH: Yes, I'd forgotten about that, but you're right. But it was interesting that Bob Hawke said that. I do remember him saying it and he was right. That didn't happen all that often in the Commonwealth, but you could never have had that in New York. It was impromptu, unscheduled, genuine, and frank, and something happened. We set up something to look at safeguarding our small states. That's one of the best arguments I've ever seen at a Commonwealth meeting.

SO: Were you allowed to sit in on those executive closed sessions?

GH: Yes, I was there. Yes.

SO: And would you agree that the energy, the engagement between heads, the unscripted contributions…

GH: Oh yes, I was the only person with my prime minister basically trying to take a note or two. But everyone was struck by the force, energy and the frankness. Not rude, nobody was rude; there was no abuse or anything, but people did not tailor their 'diplomatic speak', and Eugenia Charles led the way. All the Eastern Caribbean was lined up behind her but she was a very forceful personality; and she carried the day.

SO: There was a split between the Caribbean islands, wasn't there?

GH: Yes, I can't remember the details.

SO: The Organisation of East Caribbean States took very much the robust line: Tom Adams, John Compton and Eugenia Charles.

GH: Yes, they said they were the most at risk.

SO: There were those who were more radical.

GH: Yes, there was also something of an anti-American group. That is right. I don't remember the full details but I do remember what an unusual thing it was for that sort of thing to happen.

SO: You stepped down from being Head of the Prime Minister's office in 1987?

GH: I was there from 1980 to '87.

SO: So did you go to the 1987 Heads meeting?

GH: No I didn't. I became Coordinator of Domestic and External Security.

SO: For New Zealand of course the big fight once David Lange became Prime Minister, was the whole question of American warships, which potentially carrying nuclear weapons, and the policy of 'neither confirm nor deny.'

GH: Yes, potentially.

SO: How much of that was a product of, and reflective of opinion within New Zealand domestic politics? Or was it a particular agenda within the upper echelons of New Zealand Labour Party, and David Lange's own personal policy?

GH: It was both. New Zealanders had had a long history of worrying about nuclear testing in the South Pacific and by the French. Well, it was originally the Americans and the British, but latterly the French atmospheric testing, which you know brought strong reactions to those who lived in the South Pacific and found their milk contaminated with Strontium-90. It created I think a considerable nuclear sensitivity in New Zealand. But no one was particularly opposed to American visits. But the left wing of the New Zealand Labour Party was in fact very keen on the anti-nuclear policy. I think it would be fair to say that they were strongly opposed to the American alliance, hoped to end New Zealand's participation and saw the nuclear issue as the best line of attack.

The problem was that the Labour Government in '84 was elected on a platform of no nuclear weapons within New Zealand's territorial waters; but also full membership of ANZUS. And the problem that faced the Prime Minister and his advisers was how to reconcile these two very different aims and we laboured away to square that circle, in the end without success. Our plan had been, with the Prime Minister's full encouragement, to get a visit by an American warship which was, if you like, patently non-nuclear. And having had that visit we could let the question of naval visits lie for two or three years, while everybody took fresh stock of the situation and we might get a better solution later on. That idea didn't work because the prime minister didn't tell his colleagues anything about what he was doing arranging this visit. When the story broke he was out of the country and left it to his deputy who had known nothing about it to manage the controversy.

SO: So, that's when he was in Tokelau.

GH: He went to Tokelau out of effective wireless communication, and it all broke nationally while he was away. And we lost that battle. Now it's all in *Friendly Fire,* in great detail.

SO: Yes. That was the USS Buchanan?

GH: Yes. The USS Buchanan yes. And it broke in January 1985.

SO: How far were you also having to firefight in New Zealand's relationship with Canberra in this?

GH: On the nuclear issue?

SO: Yes.

GH: Oh, very much. It was a three-way alliance and the Australians were genuinely very angry with us because they felt we were endangering the whole alliance. It was pretty clear that arranging that kind of defensive alliance with the Americans, where it was agreed to defend each other if threatened, was unlikely to be possible in the present day. It was a creature of the early 1950s and the Australians who placed great reliance on it felt we

were rather wilfully jeopardising it. What also increased their anger with us was that the dispute risked reopening a split their own Australian Labour Party, which was in power. Bob Hawke was prime minister, but the left wing faction in the ALP also wished to ban possible nuclear naval visits. Hawke had faced them down; Hawke and Bill Hayden, his foreign minister had won that battle; and they had reviewed ANZUS and said it should go on as it is. They felt that we were being soft in not taking the same line. And that by our actions, we were raising the risk of re-opening that old wound in the ALP, so naturally they felt cross about it.

So the relationship was strained and Hawke and Lange did not get on. I think not just because of this, but temperamentally they were very different. It's still clear to this day when you talk to Hawke, but even at the time when we had the South Pacific Forum meeting we adopted the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, somebody asked Bob from the press, 'How did you get on with Mr Lange?' And Hawke said - from memory, I've quoted it in the book – 'I found him fairly congenial. We were at opposite ends of the table.' Now you couldn't get a more cool-ish answer than that! And it was true, the two did not get on.

SO: How much of this was also reflective of pressure within Australia, and within New Zealand of a grass roots campaign for nuclear disarmament?

GH: Oh, very much so. In New Zealand there obviously was a big lobbying effort. The polling in New Zealand exasperatingly, if you were trying to solve the difficulty, always came out about 75% of those polled wished to ban nuclear weapons in New Zealand, and 75% exactly the same number, wished to remain full members of ANZUS, thus leaving us with the same problem. Right until the end when pressed, a small majority of the polls would have accepted American visits if that was the price of ANZUS, so there never was a sort of tidal wave of opposition. But the government was very nervous about the political costs of having to leave ANZUS; so we played out our hand as long as we could. When we finally did, Shultz said, 'We part as friends, but we part company.' David Lange was really quite angry and quite worried. But New Zealand faced no threat and after a year or two those who worried about membership of ANZUS stopped worrying. There wasn't an immediate threat; that's not to say there couldn't be one in the future, but there wasn't then. And so the issue died away as a politically sensitive issue.

SO: Sir, how much were you aware of this being a global movement, and cross-fertilisation of ideas? I'm particularly conscious of the peace movement in Germany.

GH: Yes.

SO: And in the early '80s, the CND movement in Britain.

GH: Oh, very much.

SO: Against Pershing and Cruise missiles being installed at Greenham Common.

GH: Yes.

SO: I remember those debates very well.

GH: Oh, no doubt. Like a seismic wave, the movement travelled across the world and landed up in New Zealand where it had a big impact. It energised lobbies, the people who think politics deals only with single issues. People were brought from Britain to talk about the nuclear menace and what they saw as the growing risk of nuclear annihilation and certainly the whole lobbying effort was greatly energised. In subsequent histories of the KGB, there's talk about what the KGB spent in Europe.

SO: I was about to say, where did the money for doing this come from?

GH: Yes. I was Chairman of the Intelligence Council for 10 years. I was interested in this. And I asked Oleg Gordievsky, the double agent, because he had been head of the Australia and New Zealand division of the KGB. I said, 'How much did the KGB spend in New Zealand on that campaign?' And he said to me, 'I don't know. Gerald, you must remember' - very memorable words – 'we in the KGB [he was still saying 'we in the KGB'], know the Left and we know the buttons to push.' And I thought that was a very shrewd point. I'm sure some money was spent here, but I think the main impetus came more from the great European wave of opposition to nuclear weapons. Whatever the KGB may have spent in Europe, I wouldn't attach a huge weight to the cause being money-driven in New Zealand. These were people who were genuinely worried about American imperialism, as they saw it, and certainly worried about nuclear weapons, as everybody was. I don't know what the KGB may have spent but it was unnecessary to postulate some huge spending by them and I thought Gordievsky's comment, 'We know the Left and we know buttons to push' was right.

The Soviet Union persistently weighed in over the ANZUS dispute, much to David Lange's embarrassment. At least once he called in the Soviet Ambassador and gave him a dressing down and told him to pipe down. But of course the Soviet Union was fairly pleased with the way the dispute developed. They had gambled heavily in Europe and in fact lost on the deployment of the Pershing and Cruise missiles after they had deployed the SS-20s. And they were making a big effort on Japan then; they really were spending money in Japan. But, if New Zealand, which mattered much less, could be detached from the Western alliance, well maybe Australia would follow and there would be a consequent impact on Japanese opinion. So they did have some interest and hope in us, but certainly they played no part with the New Zealand Government which was very wary of them.

SO: Two things, Sir: how much do you feel that the Americans valued the 'old Commonwealth' - and New Zealand is part of the old Commonwealth - precisely because of the 'Five Eyes' intelligence sharing arrangement? Was America's attitude of the Commonwealth, this multilateral diverse association, shaped by the fact of a core group of countries who were 'old' Commonwealth who helped underpin America's global strategic interest, precisely because of intelligence sharing?

GH: Yes, I think they saw us not as Commonwealth members but as the legacy of World War II. We'd been one of a handful of active allies and as you say, the intelligence arrangements had even survived the ANZUS bust up, the Five Power arrangements. They saw us as close friends and oddly enough, even after the split, it was impossible to totally eradicate this attitude on either side.

They believed we were still close friends because, I think, again language, common institutions, common interests made the actual alliance a formality and everyone, even including David Lange, assumed that despite the quarrel the Americans would still come to our aid if we got into trouble.

At the time of the ANZUS quarrel when I went around friends in South East Asia. I got the feeling, although they didn't put it this bluntly, that they didn't take it terribly seriously; they thought it was the sort of row that breaks out in families and blows over. And it's more the sort of row 'New Zealand, the nephew of a very rich Uncle Sam, has said, 'We're going to be independent and live on our own.' And Uncle says 'Oh, off you go, lad.' But later when the nephew gets into trouble the uncle is immediately down to the police station with the bail. The feeling that if we got into trouble the Americans would have to help anyhow. This was David Lange's view - and probably true. New Zealanders did feel that the relationship would endure despite the dispute over ship visits, and were confirmed in this view when the Americans took no steps over New Zealand's trade which actually went up during the quarrel. They felt that the real bonds were probably not breakable.

SO: Did Gordievsky and KGB feel it was real?

GH: I think they hoped it was breakable. I can't speak for the KGB.

SO: I just wondered if he passed comment on how much credibility 'we' attached to the New Zealand disagreements with Australia and the US over nuclear armed vessels?

GH: He was out of the KGB by then even though he said "we in the KGB". I don't know. I think they saw, as I say, a hope that perhaps some unravelling of Western solidarity might start. But by that stage, in '85, they were living on hopes.

SO: I was going to say, by then Gorbachev was elected First Secretary of the CPSU, in March '85.

GH: Yes.

SO: And then began his progressive recalibration of what constituted security for the Soviet Union.

GH: They had by then lost the battle over European security. They had from '81 to '83 really made a big effort to face down the deployment of the Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. Christopher Andrew says they spent $100 million in Europe to support popular opposition to the deployments, and I believe he has good sources. The Mitrokhin archive volumes which have been published so far, lend some credibility to that figure. Anyhow that's by the way. When they lost that, and they had by '83/'84, I think New Zealand was a sort of minor consolation prize, or the prospect of a minor consolation prize, I think their real hope was Japan.

SO: On this question of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone: was Fiji a driving force in the debates on this?

GH: No.

SO: It is one of the larger Pacific nations.

GH: No, it was an Australian idea. An Australian proposal, although naturally New Zealand was quite keen on it too. It rolled along at a fairly leisurely pace through at least two Pacific Forums, I think three. In other words, I don't think there was any sort of fiery pressure for it. The main pressure from Pacific countries was from Walter Lini, of Vanuatu. My impression now from memory - and we'd have to check this with the minutes - was that Fiji, certainly Samoa, and Tonga, were rather cautious. By that I mean, not against anything, in favour of it, but not pressing for a reaction. And at one stage I think at David Lange's first Forum in 1984 in Tuvalu he talked about taking it to the UN, to Bob Hawke's irritation, and there wasn't any great support for that. You've got to remember it was also running and competing in the Pacific Forum for attention with the situation in New Caledonia, which was then a very lively issue; so it wasn't the sole topic. But I didn't ever get the impression that it was a matter of hot or fiery debate in the South Pacific, except for Walter Lini.

SO: Yes. So this doesn't exactly have a Commonwealth dimension then?

GH: No.

SO: I know that Malcolm Fraser was largely instrumental in setting up the Commonwealth Regional Heads of Government meeting in Sydney, followed by biennial meetings in Suva, Fiji; and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

GH: Yes, that's right. I was at the last two. In Suva in '82 and then in Papua New Guinea in '84.

SO: How much value do you think those meetings had?

GH: Well, I think the general feeling was not enough to keep them going. It seemed an interesting idea, there were a lot of regional things to talk about, but I noticed that by Suva, there was a growing inertia and certainly by Papua New Guinea which was the last of the meetings. So I think they died because there just wasn't felt to be a need.

SO: It wasn't that Malcolm Fraser was no longer Australian Prime Minister, and it had been his particular initiative?

GH: No. I don't think it was that. Mahathir, I remember talking to him in Suva about it. It was new then. I got the feeling, but this is long after the event, that they didn't get the exposure to global Commonwealth Prime Ministers that they really liked. A regional meeting cannot deal with the big issues that concern leaders and you know a lot of the people already; it just wasn't in the same category of 'Must do's' as the global one.

SO: And yet when I spoke to Malcolm Frazer a week ago he said, 'I deliberately had this idea because I felt that Heads of small states didn't speak up at these bigger meetings.'

GH: Well, he's right but the fact is the idea died. Nobody stamped on it or criticised it, it just faded. And that was a good Commonwealth way of dealing with the

problem. I just felt that people felt there wasn't enough to get them to leave their busy offices to…

SO: Yes. Exactly so if there was the input, and sense of value attached by Heads, it was going to wither on the vine.

GH: Then the thing dies. Exactly.

SO: Obviously something that didn't wither on the vine was the whole challenge of Fiji.

GH: Yes.

SO: To democracy, in 87.

GH: Yes.

SO: You had pretty much a ring side view on that particular crisis.

GH: I was closer to the ring than I had intended! The Prime Minister sent me to Suva. The Auckland Labour Party was really quite close to the Fiji Labour Party and giving them help and advice. But we were much more distant from the Fijian 'chiefly' end. As far as I know David Lange was the first to announce to the world that there was a coup going on because we got a flash message on our intelligence that armed men had moved into Parliament; and I told the PM and he made an announcement straight away. And I and the Secretary of Foreign Affairs both said to him very earnestly, 'Now obviously you've got to denounce this assault on Parliamentary democracy. But you've got to be careful what you say because Fiji has a very sensitive and complicated chiefly system, and we have to tread carefully.' We went over this with the PM before his press conference; and as always David Lange said yes, yes, I understand that. Then at his press conference, he criticised Ratu Mara, calling him a traitor.

SO: Oh!

GH: And I heard that and I thought, 'Well, there goes our chance of being a useful intermediary.' Ratu Mara was, as you may remember, a very proud and sensitive man. He had nothing to do with the coup and I don't know what led David Lange to say that, but he did have a tendency to get carried away in press conferences. Anyhow, I realised then that we'd put our foot in it quite badly. Five days later I had just arrived in my office at 8 in the morning and got a phone call to say that an Air New Zealand 747 from Tokyo had been hijacked while refuelling in Nadi. I won't give you the whole story, but managing events from Wellington was difficult. And finally the PM said, 'You'd better go up there.'

SO: Excuse me, who had taken it?

GH: Well, that's always the problem with a hijack. You don't know at the beginning and you begin your efforts in a maze of uncertainty. After an hour or so we established that it was a lone hijacker, a Fiji Indian in the cockpit who demanded to be flown to Libya and presented a series of rather incoherent notes to President Reagan, the Queen and David Lange. He had been supervising the re-fuelling of the plane; and when this had been completed

and the passengers were starting to reboard, he appeared on the flight deck with 6 sticks of dynamite around his waist and a cigarette lighter and said the obvious. A very quick-witted flight steward grasped in some way what was going and got the passengers off; so in the end he had hijacked the plane with the flight crew on the flight deck but nobody else. The plane was of course fully re-fuelled and he demanded it fly to Libya.

SO: Can you say whom you first thought had taken it?

GH: We didn't have a view. You simply don't know. Believe me it's an awful hour while you're trying to work out how big the group is, what their intentions are and so on.

SO: Yes.

GH: And it was sometime before we basically became assured that it was one person. He had a gloomy brother and somebody else in the airport but they were only hanging around. There was no big group. And he wanted to fly to Libya. I could communicate with the pilot reasonably quietly through a single side band radio in the cockpit; and it turned out a very sensible Fiji Indian Inspector of Police in the control tower could communicate also with the pilot but through the loud speaker in the roof of the cockpit so it could be heard by the hijacker.

So it was very ticklish, but I had to keep saying to the pilot, 'You're there and I'm not. So you've got to be the final decider but can we keep talking because once you take off with a full load of fuel, we've completely lost control of the situation. Let's try and stay on the ground as long as we can.' He understandably got a bit itchy with this constant advice because I had to keep saying, 'I know. It's you, not me, but let's keep talking as long as we can. ' So we talked and talked; and when it became apparent that there was only one hijacker, we thought, 'We're okay if we can keep talking. Sooner or later, if nothing else, sleep will overcome and we'll be okay.' Well, in fact something better than that happened. A tough little nut who was the flight engineer on the excuse of going to the lavatory, went down the aircraft and came back with 40 oz bottle of Teacher's Whisky and hit him over the head with it and knocked him out. That was the end of that.

Before that, I had made a mistake which was nearly fatal. The Inspector came on the line and said to me 'I've got his mother and father with me here in the control tower. Shall I put them on the speaker to the plane? I thought, 'Yes, that's a good idea. Let them do this. Mum and dad. Just the thing.' It was just not the thing. His mother wept and said, 'Son, you have brought eternal shame on us which nothing now can wipe out'; and finally the pilot's voice came on the side band radio to say, 'For Christ sake, get her off! He's getting jittery and he's lit his lighter and he's waving it around near the dynamite.' So we pulled mum and dad away from the mike quickly. I'd never do that again. But I thought at the time, you learn these things, I'm sad to say.

SO: Did you have any assistance in your hostage negotiations from others who had been through it?

GH: No, I didn't. And I'm still cross about that. We had rehearsed all this. I was Chairman of the Terrorism Committee, and we had borrowed from the British the concept of a combined Committee of Ministers and Officials, tailored to

the particular issue - foreign affairs, if it was foreign and so on. And we had run a full-dress exercise for a hijack, when only the Prime Minister and I knew it was fake. We summoned everybody in on the lunch hour, saying a plane had been hijacked at Wellington Airport and so on. We went through the whole drill; so we'd really foreseen and practiced all that. So when I got the original message about the Fiji hijack, I went to the PM's room. It was about quarter past 8 and I said, 'This has happened. We don't know any more, but we've got the set-up in the basement of the Beehive with all the communications and so on as we had exercised. So could you move down there?' And, to my horror, David said, 'No. I don't see any need to convene the Terrorist Committee' and I said, 'But I can't coordinate without that.' And he said, 'You'll manage.' The phones were already shrilling outside his room and I found myself dashing between the phones. The Minister of Police, a very intelligent lady, was passing by and said 'Do you need a hand?' I just pointed to a phone that was ringing, while I was talking on another one; and she picked it up and found herself speaking to her own Commissioner of Police who was trying to find out what was going on. I couldn't keep my colleagues properly informed, though I did manage to keep the police informed. The Chief of Defence Staff came over finally to find me. There was simply no time to tell my colleagues what was happening, most of the time I was on the phone to Nadi Airport talking with the pilot and the inspector in the dealing with that.

But then after two hours I felt we'd got a grip on it. The chap had twice backed off his demands to take off, most recently to go to Auckland and I thought, 'We are gradually getting the upper hand.' So I stepped into the PM's room and told him that the position was getting clearer now. He said, 'I think you should go up there.' I said, 'There's no point in my going. There's a very competent Fijian Inspector there. The pilot is coping. We've got communications through Air New Zealand with them. My job is here, not there.' And so he said a second time. When he said it a third time, I realised that it was insubordinate to continue to refuse. So I said, 'Very well.' They laid on a plane and took me up to Nadi. I arrived just as the poor old hijacker was being wheeled out of the plane with a large bump on the back of his head.

Then I rang the PM and reported to him what had happened. He said, 'I'd like you to go to the High Commission in Suva. They are under some pressure there.' So I drove across the island to Suva where full-scale riots were under way and the Fijian Prime Minister, Dr Bavadra, and his wife had taken refuge in the High Commissioner's residence when I arrived there for lunch. As the rioters approached we had to make hasty evacuation plans. We had fortunately a frigate in the harbour and in those days, until they bought new ones when I was Secretary of Defence, the frigates had a very tiny helicopter - what they call a 'Wasp' - which would only take 2 passengers as well as the pilot. So our plan was to get Dr Bavadra and his wife away in the Wasp from the tennis court; and the rest of us just had to scramble down the hillside, ahead of the mob which had been coming along towards us. I remember the Private Secretary being outraged that he was going to be left behind. I said, 'Look, it's too bad. You can join me scrambling down the hillside if the worst comes to the worst.' But the rioters turned back and the problem didn't arise. I'm sorry about talking about this because it's not really relevant to your…

SO: No, but I'm just laughing because I know where the New Zealand Residence was in Suva: on the high ridge above the harbour, at Tamavua.

GH: It's straight down. Yes, I'm glad you realise what it was like! I think we would have got down the hill fairly quickly.

SO: Oh yes! But I was talking about the Fiji coup.

GH: Well, this was in the aftermath of the coup when there was bad racial rioting. I had actually seen it before in Fiji, in Christmas 1959, and I've never forgotten it. There was something peculiarly sickening about people chasing an old lady and hitting her down the road and so on, because she's a different colour. No riot where people are savaged is a pleasant sight, but somehow in a racial riot, the violence is gratuitous. It's mindless and gratuitous and certainly that night in Suva there was some bad incidents. We got the Prime Minister safely away to his home in the west and my last task was to get the head of his department, who had taken refuge with his family in the High Commission offices, safely out of the country.

SO: Are you aware of a discussion about whether India was shipping arms to Fiji?

GH: There were rumours galore. No evidence whatsoever. I think there was a degree of racial hysteria in parts of Fiji, or in Suva at any rate. I can't speak for anywhere else, which gave rise to that sort of rumour. There was no evidence of it at all. Some members of the Fiji Anti-Nuclear Group which was largely Indian Fijian, four of them were killed or badly injured when their own bomb went off. Naturally there were fears of more of these; in fact, it was the only one. And there was no other violence of that sort but there was rioting. I don't have to tell the whole story; my memoir 'Final Approaches' tells the slightly farcical story of getting Dr Sutherland and his wife out of the High Commission and safely on the plane to Sydney. They were being sought by the army and might have had a bad time if we hadn't got them out.

SO: You didn't attend the Vancouver CHOGM meeting in October 1987?

GH: No.

SO: Obviously Fiji was suspended from the Commonwealth at that meeting.

GH: Yes, yes.

SO: Because the second coup that year had happened.

GH: No, I can't really add anything to that I was doing other things then.

SO: During your involvement with foreign policy and defence policy, what was your general view of the importance or not, of the Commonwealth to New Zealand politicians and foreign policy makers?

GH: It varies. It was certainly more important earlier in my career than it was towards the end. But I think it would be true to say, 'Pretty important, at either end, for New Zealand.' Isolated, small, English speaking, the Commonwealth had links and horizons which otherwise would not have been available. We always placed great importance on the United Nations obviously. But where we originally played a much bigger part in the UN - after all, we were only one of the five or six victors at the end of the War who had been in it from the

beginning, and thus had influence - but as the membership of the UN got wider and wider that influence became progressively diluted. In the end, although still very important to us, the UN lacked that intimacy and immediacy and I think the Commonwealth has always supplied something what was missing from that. It's hard to quantify it because it was more instinctive than conscious. But the feeling that it provided wider horizons, more opportunities of listening to people and, as I said earlier, more opportunities of getting to know people of perhaps very different views: 'Why were they holding these views?' and so on. I think the Commonwealth has always been important to New Zealand politicians and New Zealanders generally. I think you can go on the attendance. A New Zealand Prime Minister is very loathe to miss a Commonwealth meeting.

SO: Because they value it as an inter-governmental association.

GH: Yes.

SO: Because that's the trouble with very words 'the Commonwealth.' The phrase is used as an ideal.

GH: Yes.

SO: Yet the Commonwealth as an inter-governmental organisation from the '90s changed again, with the increasing role of civil society and NGO activism. Do you feel this diluted further the influence of the Heads' meeting, the intergovernmental pillar?

GH: Yes.

SO: **And of course New Zealand became a member of the UN Security Council.**

GH: Well, it's been on and off at various times. It has hopes again, but that's a relatively minor thing. I wouldn't want to exaggerate the Commonwealth, but I think there's still that instinctive feeling that there is a kind of bond, not a bond that we have with countries that are not members.

SO: How far would you say that it provides a particular platform to augment New Zealand standing in the international community, as a vehicle for particular Prime Ministers? I know that Malcolm Fraser expressly used it as a way to enhance Australia's standing in the international community.

GH: Yes, I think it depends on the Prime Minister. It's a matter of their personality.

SO: Well, obviously David Lange didn't!

GH: No, David Lange didn't. Muldoon in both senses: both villain of the Commonwealth over South Africa and as on the new Bretton Woods campaign, the admired leader of new economic thinking. Norman Kirk did although he was Prime Minister for too short a time; he was at Ottawa and I think definitely made an impression.

SO: Jim Bolger in the 90s?

GH: Well I wasn't there.

SO: I just wondered.

GH: But I think that from New Zealand's point of view, it did depend on the personality and the authority of the Prime Minister, rather than just being Prime Minister.

SO: How important, as you observed, was the Queen? How much did she contribute to the ongoing vitality of the Commonwealth?

GH: I suppose it's a generation thing and you're talking to somebody from another generation. I'd have thought the Queen really was quite important, as the kind of 'dignified glue', if you can have such a thing! She lent her presence there, her 'bilaterals' - her individual meetings with each of the prime ministers, or most of the Prime Ministers, and the parties on Britannia. I think it's very hard to put a weight on them but they seem to me to add to the dignity of the Commonwealth; and in political affairs, I think the dignity of an arrangement is almost as important as the effectiveness of it. Obviously after her? The question is up for grabs. My instinct, and this may reflect on the generation rather than anything more informed, is that we will probably continue with the head of the Commonwealth as Prince Charles, but I know we could have a rotating one. But the problem with a rotating one is the problem you have with the President of the Republic. There may be very good reasons for having a President of the Republic, but it is damned hard to have a President who has the kind of prestige of a lady who has sat there for 50 years.

SO: Indeed.

GH: For that reason I think that we would probably continue with a Royal arrangement after Her Majesty. But as I say, I have to add a caution, you're talking to somebody who grew up when she had just become Queen and so my generational view may be very different from that of others of another generation.

SO: The media buzz and general aura that surrounds the Queen, particularly after the 2012 London Olympics and the Jubilee last year, is striking. When I talk to my daughter who's 26, I'm impressed she is an immense admirer of the Queen. Of the Queen herself, not simply the younger generation of Royals.

GH: Yes.

SO: There are certainly those who feel that the Queen is definitely one of the Commonwealth's 'secret weapon' - in her good humour, in her incomparable knowledge, in her charisma, her star quality, but also her evident political commitment to this unique association.

GH: That's been very important. Now whether that survives a change? It's quite clear and it's been clear all along, the Queen has set great store by the Commonwealth. She's been teased about it and I've heard British Ministers being slightly irritable about her views and her insistence on doing the right thing, but I think that commitment has been part of the success of the thing; and I suppose you've got to say, would it continue?

SO: Yes.

GH: But she has made it very clear that personally she is very interested in the Commonwealth and that I think has made a big difference. It means that all sorts of Commonwealth leaders, of new Commonwealth leaders and in some cases just out of jail, whatever felt welcome and comfortable in her presence which, you know, is really something. I do remember at one meeting - I think it was in Lagos in '66 - there was some almost - boasting around the table as to who had been imprisoned by the British. It was very cheerful but ended in laughter when Lester Pearson said "I too have been imprisoned by the British". There was considerable surprise around the table and Pearson said, 'Yes, in the First World War I was Sergeant Pearson. Late back from leave I was held overnight in a British guardhouse.' It all dissolved in laughter. Some of those present had been more seriously jailed but Pearson's tact in telling his own story made it a joke. And that too, I could never imagine that in New York, that sort of discussion. It was the kind of thing that, I hope it still happens, but it certainly was part of the charm of the organisation and why it diffused to a large extent what otherwise what might have been a lot of post-colonial resentments.

SO: So with your long experience and observation of the Commonwealth, to what do you attribute its survival, in addition to the Queen. You mentioned 'inertia'; you mentioned individual value that particular prime ministers have attached to it. What does this say then for the key aspects if the Commonwealth is to survive and regenerate itself going forward?

GH: It's a hard question, obviously. I think it has declined in influence and visibility and you might say, 'Well, that's inevitable, that we are now 50/60 years on from its primary role as helping everybody over the stile of post-colonialism, which it did superbly.' But I think it's not just inertia which can never be ruled out in an international organisation. There is still a Great Exhibition committee that meets somewhere in London as a legacy from the Great Exhibition of 1851. We used to speculate whether that phantom of 1956, the Suez Canal Users Association, still meets quietly somewhere once a year. International organisations are extremely hard to abolish. But however, that's not the reason for the Commonwealth's survival. It's not the reason why the Prime Ministers and Heads of Government go; there is much more than that to it. I think it's ease of procedure. I don't think prime ministers go because of the excellent work and sterling technical coordination and so on. I mean, they supportive of all that of course, but that's not what's going to get them out of their chairs to go to Heads of Government meetings. I think they do go because it has an informality, a punchiness unlike the formality and often dullness of General Assembly debates. It provides a gathering where Heads of Government can still, as I said earlier, take each other's measure and meet and form some views of who is more impressive or more convincing, whether this or that person is reliable; and I think all politicians want to do that. And it means that if there's ever a need they can talk to the prime minister of such and such a country because they have met them a couple of times before, and ring them up and talk on an easy way. So from the Heads of Government point of view, I think that's all very important and it's why they go. And while they continue to go then I think the rest flows down, the technical cooperation, the good work that the Commonwealth does, work it's done on good governance and so on, it gets its authority from the fact that Heads of Government will turn up at its meetings.

SO: I've got two questions coming out of your description of the sources of the value of the Commonwealth:
1) how much is the viability and vitality of the Commonwealth attached critically to the persona and activities of the Secretary General, and you have known two closely?
2) During your time as a New Zealand diplomat and civil servant, your intimate involvement in foreign affairs, the Commonwealth had two grand strategies: opposition to apartheid, and development. On the first there was a publically identified grand strategy against apartheid. It had a good news story, as it did promoting development. Now does the Commonwealth indeed really have a grand strategy?

GH: Yes, both are important. Let me just take the second one, I think it does have one now. I think the work it's done on good governance. I know it's an uphill job. You cannot change people's social and political culture overnight. And there are habits and so on which are inimical to good governance, corruption and bribery and all the rest of it, but the Commonwealth has nagged away and has set out principles. I think it's the only international body that really does that or has that sort of influence. And it's easy to point to where it fails and lacks credibility, but I think it's had an effect and if it keeps plugging on that strategy post-apartheid if you like, it is a job for which its qualifications are rather better than anyone else's. It's not a UN thing again. The UN's too wide, too subject to veto and so on, so I think the theme of good governance is an important one for the Commonwealth to keep pushing and it has I think for the last 10 years or so. On your first point, I think, leadership is critical and I think, well you know my experience was two very able leaders, Arnold and Sonny. And I think without them, even then, the organisation would have looked pretty pale.

SO: Aha.

GH: And I think that it badly needs that sort of vigorous but experienced leadership to give it direction and to compel the attention of Heads of Government. They will listen to somebody like Arnold who bounces in and you know grabs them by the lapels and talks, they won't listen to memos sent to them urging good works and so on. So there has to be that personal element and I think it has to be a fairly forceful personality.

SO: Aha.

GH: Whether we have that or not now I certainly don't know but I do think that the organisation's vitality does depend on leadership, and I don't mean leadership by a chairman of Prime Minister's meetings, I mean what happens in between. Which is really the Secretary. I remember being in London a few years ago when there was a large Aid for Africa demonstration. And I was rather shocked that nobody thought, Tony Blair didn't think, to invite the Commonwealth Secretary-General to sit on the stage with everyone else who was concerned, and I thought dear me that is not a good sign, I mean some years earlier it would have been taken for granted, the Secretary-General would have been in the front row.

SO: Yes.

GH: So in that sense it may have faded back a little but I'm not speaking from a close personal knowledge.

SO: But you're reflecting on what you identified as being key elements of the success.

GH: Yes.

SO: Over a 30 year period, no a 25 year period.

GH: Yes.

SO: '65 to '90.

GH: Well in my era '65 to '85 really but I think that leadership is not something that you can easily produce whenever it is needed.

SO: Would you say then that says a politician rather than a diplomat. I know Arnold Smith obviously was a very, very senior diplomat?

GH: I think it depends on the person. I think the trend has been towards a politician. There's no doubt that there is a camaraderie among politicians. They understand one another, even when their political views may be strongly opposed, because they are after all in the same profession. They understand better than anyone else how the business works and so underneath the struggles and fiery disputes they may have more in common with their political opposition than they have with anyone else. So I think it may be, and I'm really speaking very speculatively on this, that the trend now has to be another politician, but I wouldn't put that down as a rule. I think it depends on the personality, the creativity and the vigour of the person. If you had another Arnold I wouldn't for a moment say we must have a politician, but if you had a politician who had that sort of courage and push then I think that would be ideal.

SO: So, do you think that the Secretary-General and the Commonwealth Secretariat is indeed the beating heart of the Commonwealth?

GH: Yes and no, is the difficult answer to that. I mean no, in the sense that if it died the Commonwealth would still have lots of links so it doesn't depend on that. But yes, in the sense that the way the Commonwealth functions, and even just the organising of meetings of foreign ministers and so on, without it there would be nobody to do it. Going back to a Commonwealth Office is unthinkable now, so if there's no Secretariat there who would do it? And if that was so, Commonwealth gatherings and indeed initiatives might just fade away and that would be throwing away a useful international institution to no particular purpose. In that sense I think the Secretariat is essential.

SO: Sir, thank you very, very much indeed.

[END OF AUDIOFILE]