VOICE FILE NAME: COHP The Most Hon PJ Patterson

Key:
SO: Dr Sue Onslow (Interviewer)
PJP: The Most Hon PJ Patterson (Respondent)

SO: **This is Dr Sue Onslow interviewing the Most Honourable PJ Patterson in Kingston, Jamaica, on Thursday, 22nd January 2015. Thank you very much, Sir, for agreeing to take part in this interview project on the history of the Commonwealth.**

I wondered if you could begin, please, by reflecting on how you regarded the Commonwealth when you came into politics, because yours is a very long political career.

PJP: My first meeting with the Commonwealth Heads was in 1973, at which time I was the Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Foreign Trade. The meeting was held in Canada [and] Prime Minister Trudeau presided. The meeting, for the first time, [centred on] the need for the Commonwealth to focus not only on the political issues of the day but those pertaining to economic and trade relationships, hence my participation in that capacity.

At that meeting, Michael Manley was persuaded to host the next meeting of Heads, which took place in Jamaica in 1975. I still held the same portfolio but I was the Minister largely responsible for the organisation of the conference. All Ministers were assigned the responsibility of meeting Heads on their arrival, and mine included Prime Minister Trudeau and Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

Harold Wilson was also taking the opportunity to break ground for the British High Commission which was being built on land that had been owned by the British Government and kept by them – even after our independence – in Trafalgar Park. That meeting signified a major turn in the affairs of the Commonwealth, particularly with the focus on the Liberation Movements in Southern Africa. Prime Minister Michael Manley invited representatives from both Rhodesia – as it then was – and South Africa, to be present in the meeting.

SO: Do you recall if SWAPO representatives come to the Kingston meeting, as well as the ANC, ZANU and ZAPU?

PJP: I don't recall SWAPO being at that meeting but, certainly, we had continued exchanges with them – to which I can attest after my becoming the Foreign Minister in 1977. But I remember particularly Prime Minister Trudeau insisting that the discussions with those representatives would have to be informal, so that the sign designations of countries for different delegations had to disappear from the conference room.

It was the first time that Commonwealth Heads were speaking directly with representatives of those countries where the fight for liberation was waging intensely. In those discussions, Heads were able to hear directly how the Commonwealth would be expected to assist in their struggle. One of the results of that discussion was an acceptance by Heads that, in dealing with the problems of land-locked countries – Zambia, Rhodesia and Malawi in particular…

SO: Botswana too?

PJP: Botswana was not in that particular discussion because the problems there related more to being surrounded by South African territory, in the main.

But in relation to these land-locked countries, Mozambique had been making a tremendous sacrifice in allowing, particularly, their mineral goods to have access to the sea through their ports. That triggered an acceptance that some support – largely at a technical level – would have to be given to Mozambique. That was a precursor for the association which began between the Commonwealth and Mozambique and which led, eventually, to their application and their acceptance to become a full member of the Commonwealth.

SO: Did FRELIMO representatives also attend the Kingston meeting in any way? Were they there on the periphery of the Kingston meeting?

PJP: No, I don't recall Mozambique and FRELIMO having any presence at that meeting. I should mention that Jamaica, which was at the forefront of the Non-Aligned Movement, would have had interface with both FRELIMO and SWAPO, and certainly we would [have been] aware of their concerns. Guyana, which was also very active in the Non-Aligned Movement and at that time was represented by the Foreign Minister Shridath Ramphal, would have been able to bring those concerns to attention, even though they were not physically present at the meeting.

The other significant thing from that meeting was the focus on economic issues. As a result of very intense discussions – one led by Harold Wilson for the developed countries and the other led by Forbes Burnham on behalf of the developing countries – there was a decision to set up two expert working committees to look at, among other things, how to reduce the gap between the developed and the developing world. I should mention that, at the meeting in Kingston, the United Kingdom was on the verge of entering the European Common Market and it would have been of grave concern to us – and

certainly Harold Wilson was aware of it – as to what would be the approaches and the sensitivities. The UK actually entered the European Common Market, but the negotiation for other countries of the Commonwealth had not yet been consummated.

SO: You're referring to the lead up to the Lomé Convention?

PJP: That's correct.

SO: Sir, if I could ask, the international economic intellectual debate at the time was very much centred around the New International Economic Order…

PJP: Very much so.

SO: …and the need to address the lack of capital accumulation in the developing world. Were there any particular terms of reference – that you recall – for these two expert working committees? As it was the Commonwealth, was there a more consensual rather than an adversarial approach towards the established economic order?

PJP: The precise terms of reference had been settled. In fact, some preparatory work had been done by us in the Caribbean in preparing for that conference, and they had, among other things, to examine terms of trade, financial flows, [and] access to educational opportunities. Sir Alister McIntyre was appointed as a coordinator of that working group and the representatives from the various countries. The formula was agreed there.

SO: Sir, I'm aware that in the second part of the 1970s, Prime Minister Michael Manley was particularly keen on the idea of establishing a Common Fund...

PJP: That's correct.

SO: …and worked with Malcolm Fraser on this.

PJP: That came a bit later, after the Kingston Conference. At the Kingston Conference, Sir Shridath Ramphal was elected Secretary General by acclaim and, in his acceptance speech, he set out in clear terms how he saw the future of the Commonwealth and his own role as Secretary General. Indeed, he actually assumed office in Jamaica and then we proceeded to send him off in Montego Bay, where he gave certainly one of the most memorable presentations, as he departed, on the regional integration movement. When he assumed office, he made it clear that the issues which were being dealt with at a global level could not be ignored by the Commonwealth, particularly since the Commonwealth represented a unique combination of developed, middle-income and small island states.

At that time, UNCTAD accepted the proposal to establish a Common Fund [for Commodities] and the Secretary General regarded it as part of his responsibility to ensure that the Commonwealth made a contribution to the dialogue on the Common Fund. I very well recall his convening a meeting of trade ministers at Marlborough House. By that time, I had the Cabinet position

of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Tourism. When he called me and I was questioning the possibilities of my being there – because I had, by then, a number of very serious travelling obligations – he persuaded me that Jamaica's participation at the ministerial level was critical because, in Geneva, our Ambassador Herbie Walker had been appointed as Chairman of the Common Fund. Herbie Walker, incidentally, was my first Permanent Secretary when I assumed the responsibility as Minister of Industry, Tourism and Foreign Trade.

SO: I have been told by economists who worked at the Secretariat that there was some tension between the G77 group and a Commonwealth position, because the G77 felt that a more consensual, Commonwealth approach undercut a negotiating position put forward by those who wanted to pursue a harder line with others in the developed world. Is that your recollection?

PJP: Well, we were active in both the G77 and in the Commonwealth, and we would never have subscribed to a position being taken by the Commonwealth that would be divergent from that which was acceptable to the Group of 77. Now, the position of the Commonwealth may not have been as forceful as that of the G77, but it certainly would form the base of an agreement by the Commonwealth countries and really be a springboard from which we could move in our discussions to evolve a common G77 position.

SO: Sir, please, if I could just take you back to that meeting in Kingston in 1975. How much value did Prime Minister Michael Manley – with whom, of course, you worked extremely closely – attach to the Commonwealth? Or was it of lesser importance to him than the Non-Aligned Movement and non-alignment?

PJP: We never saw them as competing for the same influence and control. We recognised that essentially these were two very different groups.

Certainly, the Non-Aligned [Movement] would have included a number of countries that were members of the Commonwealth, and even some countries that were eligible for Non-Aligned membership had chosen not to exercise it. It could be true to say that you would therefore expect more militancy on the part of the non-aligned than would be forthcoming from the Commonwealth. But to the extent that you could get Group B countries – as they are called – and developed countries, which were Commonwealth countries, sympathetic or supportive of elements that were in conformity with the non-aligned position, so much the better.

SO: Sir, how much importance did Prime Minister Manley and yourself attach to having the new Secretary General of the Commonwealth come from Guyana, from the Caribbean region – someone who had been a very activist foreign minister for Guyana within the Non-Aligned Movement? Was that a very useful adjunctive for Jamaican diplomacy?

PJP: The story is reflected in the book recently written by Sir Shridath: *Glimpses of a Global Life*.

SO: Which I've read, yes.

PJP: When the idea [of Shridath Ramphal becoming the next Secretary General] was first mooted in London, it caught fire instantly because, certainly, by then, Shridath Ramphal had established his credentials in several fields: in the Non-Aligned Movement, in the ACP group where he was a lead negotiator, in the Commonwealth itself, and having participated as Foreign Minister in the Organisation of American States. So, there was ready acceptance, not because he was a Caribbean person but because he was eminently qualified to undertake that role. In the soundings, particularly from India, he was asked whether he would not be of greater service to the developing world by remaining an articulate ministerial spokesman than by moving into what some regarded as a moribund association like the Commonwealth. His response was, "We must change it. We must give it new life." And that's exactly what he set out to do: to mould a Secretariat that would have command and a voice that was respected internationally.

Of course, from the Caribbean viewpoint, it was not only an acknowledgement that we were contributing to international dialogue but [also that] we knew we had someone who understood the problems of the region and would not ignore them in the discharge of his duties as Secretary General.

SO: I'm aware that during Sir Shridath's fifteen-year tenure in the position of Secretary General, the Commonwealth Secretariat – and indeed the Commonwealth itself – seems to have been particularly Secretary General-led or Secretary General-centric, to a remarkable degree.

PJP: He stamped an imprimatur. I think I said in the launch of the book [that] he became the template by which other Secretary Generals can be measured, and this has been widely acknowledged by other Commonwealth Heads. Malcolm Fraser, Joe Clark, [and] Mrs Thatcher herself [all] recognised the quality of his work.

SO: Sir, you've just mentioned Malcolm Fraser. Please could you reflect on the – it could be said – 'unlikely' political combination of Malcolm Fraser and Michael Manley, as two highly effective and focused Commonwealth Heads?

PJP: Yes. I won't say it's because of their common love of cricket, [*Laughter*] although that was not disabling by any means. I think, from the point of view of a developed country, Malcolm Fraser had an awareness of the world around him and the role of Australia and where its real interests lay. Australia is a developed country, but in certain areas – like its mineral resources in relation to the treatment of agricultural products – it has a lot in common with a number of developing countries.

SO: Yes, because of the importance of agricultural and mineral commodities to its foreign exchange earnings.

PJP: That's correct. And, certainly on the political side, Malcolm Fraser was as firm and fervent as ever that the atrocities that were evident in southern Africa were incompatible with the principles which guided the Commonwealth.

SO: As you have identified, the particular diplomatic focus and drive of the Commonwealth at this time was the resolution of the long-running Rhodesia problem. You mentioned the Zimbabwean liberation leaders who attended the Kingston meeting. I'm also aware that you attended the Lusaka Conference in 1979…

PJP: No, I didn't. I didn't go to the Lusaka Conference.

SO: Oh, I'm sorry: I have a note in my research papers that you did.

PJP: No, no, but I'll tell you what happened. At that time, I was the Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and there were very few occasions when both the Prime Minister and myself would go [to one place together]. Prime Minister Manley went to Lusaka; I didn't. But, as Foreign Minister, of course I would have been fully involved – not only in the preparation of the briefs that would go with the Jamaican delegation, but [also] in some of the consultations with other delegations which would have taken place prior to Lusaka.

SO: And, of course, immediately after the Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the Non-Aligned Movement meeting was held in Havana, in early September 1979.

PJP: That's correct, and that was a meeting where we were both present.

SO: Wasn't the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Havana the turning point in persuading Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo to attend the Lancaster House discussions? I know that they were not at all happy with what had come out of the Lusaka meeting: an all-party constitutional conference to be convened in London.

PJP: Yes, it was difficult, but yes, I think that was the meeting. One too often fails to appreciate that what takes place when Heads assemble is not confined to what takes place in the public meetings and conferences, but in the discussions that take place on the side. It was in those discussions on the side that we were able to persuade those delegations to participate in the Lancaster House meeting.

SO: Thank you. I've always wondered; thank you very much for that. I also have a quotation from a press conference you gave, in which you said: "I can say to you, Jamaica was very influential in securing the final breakthrough at Lancaster House. One of the important things was the acceptance that they would not change the Constitution for a specific period to deal with things like land, because in the interim, the UK and the US Governments would, between them, make capital available for its purchase."

PJP: That's correct.

SO: So, were you in constant discussion and contact with the Patriotic Front leaders?

PJP: Yes, and the thing you should remember [is that] this was on the eve of elections in the United States and Carrington had had discussions with

Secretary Vance. I think we all felt that, between them, funding was going to be provided to compensate for the land that would have to be acquired from the white settlers in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. The defeat of Carter and the election of Reagan changed all that.

SO: I know that Sir Shridath was very instrumental…

PJP: That's correct.

SO: …in helping to broker the diplomatic promise on the land question, behind the scenes at the Lancaster House discussions.

PJP: Once the Carter regime was out and the Reagan regime was in, and the Thatcher Government was in place, there was no pursuit of that.

SO: That is a tragedy, because Lord Carrington – in conjunction with Secretary Cyrus Vance – did not simply make the promise of unspecified, substantial funds, which was the clincher in the October crisis over land. Before Zimbabwe's independence, in March 1980, Thatcher wrote to President Carter asking could he put up *more* money, because Britain intended to do so, too. I've seen President Carter's positive response, written in the April of 1980, promising further funds.

PJP: Which, perhaps, is a good point for me to say something about Zimbabwe. The understanding when we left Lancaster House was that there would be no changes in the Constitution of Rhodesia for a certain period, but those changes would take place after an interval which would coincide with the acquisition of property for which there would be compensation funded largely by the United Kingdom and the United States.

SO: And the understanding, then, that after the ten-year period the 'willing buyer'/'willing seller' approach – by which property rights were embedded in that Lancaster House Constitution – would be moderated?

PJP: That is correct. Which to a great extent, when that commitment was not honoured, made Mugabe proceed: one, with the alteration of the Constitution, and two, without any funds to pay for compensation for the land which he had acquired. Jamaica was very much involved, in total support, with Zimbabwe to secure its independence. The most iconic figure at that celebration…you would never guess who it was…

SO: Bob Marley.

PJP: Bob Marley!

SO: Singing in Rufaro Stadium with the Wailers!

PJP: Let me tell you this. I led the delegation from Jamaica because, at that time, we were coming up to elections in 1980 and it was decided, after considerable thought, that the Prime Minister couldn't go. So, I was chosen to go. Well, I went down on the same plane with Bob Marley. Forbes Burnham, who was leading the Guyanese delegation, was also there. When we arrived in Salisbury – as it then was, Harare as it now is – the crowd invaded the

airfield, and Bob Marley's feet never touched the ground until he reached his hotel. They lifted him off and took him right through!

I'll give you another titbit. When they were about to unfurl the Zimbabwean flag, a deal had to be made because he was still singing in the stadium and nobody was leaving. The deal was that, if he stopped, he would give another concert the following night, so that the concert could have stopped then and the ceremonials could proceed.

So, we have been integral to that struggle, and perhaps that was what influenced the Chairman of the Abuja Conference in 2003 to have asked me to chair the Prime Ministerial group looking at the situation in Zimbabwe.

SO: Sir, you also welcomed Robert Mugabe here, in Jamaica, in 1996?

PJP: Several times.

SO: And he's been awarded the highest honour in Jamaica.

PJP: Oh, yes. Several times, several times.

SO: So, you had a particularly strong political relationship?

PJP: Oh, we got along extremely well. He would refer to me always as "my brother, my brother". When I knew that what we had worked out in Abuja was going to end up as it did, I remember very well the conversations that were held between President Obasanjo, President Thabo Mbeki and myself with him. We spoke from Abuja by telephone to him in Harare. I knew we were in real trouble after the others had spoken to him and I was to have my turn in speaking to him. Instead of his saying "my brother", he said, "Mr Patterson".

SO: Ah.

PJP: And I knew that he was really confirming what he had said to Obasanjo and Mbeki: that, if there is going to be a suspension, Zimbabwe no longer has an interest in being a member of that sort of association.

SO: Don McKinnon underlines in his memoirs that you knew Robert Mugabe very well, and that you had everyone's confidence that you would be able to – as Don McKinnon put it – "do it right". But how far was there also intense debate within that committee – between the SADC members, represented by Thabo Mbeki and President Chissano of Mozambique, and the other members, such as John Howard…?

PJP: Well, I'd say this. The group included Australia, and John Howard was a hardliner. He wanted the expulsion of Zimbabwe. Chretien was also a member of that group and he was, I think, a moderating influence. There were those who felt there should be no sanction of any kind, but we were bound to consider this matter in accordance with the Harare Declaration, and that was the Declaration which had defined criteria for membership. The report from CMAG which came to us had pointed out deficiencies in the critical area of the elections for a parliamentary democracy.

SO: This stemmed from the Zimbabwe parliamentary elections in 2002, which had precipitated the critical Commonwealth election observer mission report?

PJP: Yes, [on] the rule of law, the functions and roles of the judiciary and the freedom of the press. Sympathetic as we were to the disappointment, the upset and the understandable grief which the failure to implement the Lancaster House understandings had driven Mugabe to the position we had to examine, we could not but conclude that there had to be a period when Zimbabwe should be given the opportunity to conform with those principles and standards which had been set by the Harare Declaration.

In our recommendation to the meeting, we had set out a very well thought out procedure for assisting Zimbabwe in which South Africa, led by Mbeki, would have played a critical role. The SADC countries and Nigeria were also willing to assist. We had actually identified emissaries that were going to work with Zimbabwe but, you know, Zimbabwe had made up its mind. It was going to go. So, it made a simultaneous announcement from Harare that they were quitting.

SO: Yes. Sir, you must have felt a particular sadness because of your long friendship, and because Robert Mugabe had been such an advocate of the Harare principles after 1991.

PJP: Definitely. As I said, we had a very, very warm relationship. I had been to Zimbabwe, I think, three times through my Prime Minister tenure and I think he'd been here three or four times. We had a very good working relationship.

SO: Sir, thank you for filling in those details for me. If I could just take you back to reflect about the value of Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meetings in a general sense. You have mentioned the Kingston and Lusaka meetings. How much importance did you attach to these heads of government summits, and how did you see them change during your political contact with other Commonwealth heads?

PJP: As I mentioned before, there are times when what happens outside meetings can be more valuable and important than what happens inside. By that I mean…you develop personal working relationships which, at times, can make all the difference in relation both to bilateral and sometimes multilateral affairs.

Everyone recognises there are several respects in which the Commonwealth is truly unique. As I mentioned before, it includes developed countries, it includes developing countries. It includes Christian countries, Muslim countries, Hindu countries. It's multi-ethnic, and although we converse in English, it's also multilingual. It also has an unusual weight of small island states – small countries with small economies – and it also includes land-locked countries. These all relate to problems which have to be dealt with at the international level. To the extent that the Commonwealth provides some bridge of understanding, it has a purpose. It has been of great importance in terms of the technical studies and technical assistance which it has been able to give. Unfortunately, that is diminishing, and it is one of the areas of concern to those who believe the Commonwealth has a future.

Even for those who question whether the Commonwealth is still useful or relevant, the answer comes from the number of people who have been seeking to join. [This] is what led the conference in Malta in late 2005 to decide that criteria for membership should be developed, and the establishment of a committee which I was asked to Chair since my retirement on the criteria for membership.

SO: That was 2006-07.

PJP: That's correct. We met, deliberated, [and] sent our recommendations to the Uganda Conference, which were accepted and allowed for the admission of Rwanda [to the Commonwealth]. The reason for that acceptance was that, although Rwanda never had any relationship with the UK as a colony, it sufficiently related to a number of Commonwealth countries in the particular area and that would be criteria sufficient to allow them for admission. It also has implications throughout the regional movements including CARICOM, where places like Suriname and Haiti don't belong to the Commonwealth tradition.

SO: How much was there an enduring concern for the 'cultural adulteration' that might accompany expansion of the Commonwealth? This is a phrase that I have encountered in reports on the Commonwealth in the 1990s: Cameroon had joined, Mozambique had joined in 1995, and I am aware Yemen as well as the Palestine Liberation Authority were also interested in applying for membership.

PJP: Yes. Well, in respect of the Palestine Liberation Authority, the decision was that such an application would only fall for consideration when its independent status had been settled because Palestine, of course, has linkages with the United Kingdom before the creation of Israel. What we did say is that for the present and the foreseeable future, communication would have to be in English. The moment you get into a proliferation of languages, you're getting into levels of expenditure which would make the Commonwealth budget require very, very substantial inputs.

SO: It would, especially if it involved production of multiple copies of documents in varying languages. But it would also erode that very 'outer diplomacy', the 'quiet word' on the fringes of meetings, that you've made reference to.

PJP: Yes.

SO: I'm aware that Senator Hugh Segal argued for an expansion of the Commonwealth and that the criteria that you set out was that an aspirant should be a sovereign state with a historic connection to an existing member or group.

PJP: Yes, and there was also some suggestion that portions of state, like Somaliland, should be eligible for consideration, and we said no. We're not going to go into existing nation states and pick out parts of it and say, "You can belong" and leave others. No.

SO: In your year-long discussions, you obviously convened regular meetings, supported by the designated officer from the Secretariat. Do you recall being the recipient, particularly, of arguments from Uganda in Rwanda's case?

PJP: Not in our meetings, no. Uganda did not have membership of our committee and it happened to go to Uganda because that was where we had decided in Malta that the meeting of Heads should be. It is a coincidence that that is where the question of Rwanda fell for consideration, but no, there was no pressure from any particular country. We said [that] once you are part of a regional integration process where there is a substantial connection with the Commonwealth, you should not be excluded from consideration, if all the other criteria for membership were satisfied.

SO: Sir, can I ask you just to reflect, then… By 2006-07, the Commonwealth had grown dramatically from its original small size in 1949, with the happy re-inclusion of South Africa after 1994 and the inclusion of Mozambique. From one viewpoint, this produced a particular SADC bloc. There is, of course, a CARICOM bloc; there is a grouping of the South Pacific Forum, [and] the Indian Ocean Commission. How far do you see that the Commonwealth is, in fact, promoting regionalism, or is it becoming something of a victim of regionalism, because it's getting so much bigger?

PJP: I think it must never see regionalism as a threat to its existence. I think it is obliged to – and can contribute meaningfully to – bridging regional differences.

SO: Sir, given your own particular political background and experience, how far are you unusual in the Jamaican political spectrum in terms of promoting a particular regionalist approach, rather than a Jamaican national approach? Of course, they aren't necessarily conflicting in any way, but I'm just wondering to what extent, Sir, you are unusual?

PJP: I'll tell it very simply. I entered the University College of the West Indies in 1954 as a Jamaican aware of the region. I and virtually everybody in my time left that university as a regionalist.

I have said repeatedly that I envisage the Caribbean as an area where we pool our sovereignty, because there are so many areas in which integration can assist us in dealing with our individual concerns and realising our full potential as a people. Indeed, when you look at the increase of regional movements throughout the world, it's the way everybody needs to go. This is nowhere more evident than Europe.

There will be strains and you might even have, as you did recently, a referendum to determine whether, after 400 years of Union, Scotland should move separately. But the world is moving more and more towards regional blocs.

SO: Yes, which enhance a national voice.

PJP: That's correct.

SO: Indeed. Sir, if I could ask you as a general last group of questions about this notion of the personal chemistry and diplomacy that goes on between Heads. I made reference to the changing size of the Commonwealth. Obviously, the institution of the Retreat was designed precisely to underpin private trust and contact in 1973. By the time you became Prime Minister in 1992, it had become a different Commonwealth – it was a very different international environment. Could you reflect on your relationship with other key Commonwealth Heads during your fourteen-year Premiership, besides Robert Mugabe?

PJP: Yes, well there are some with whom I have worked as Foreign Minister: Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania [and] Chissano of Mozambique. I had known President Obasanjo from his previous tenure as the military head of Nigeria. I'm not going to list the Caribbean leaders for the reason that we also worked with them in CARICOM.

SO: I'm wondering particularly about, for instance, Prime Minister John Major. So much discussion is addressed to Thatcher…

PJP: My first meeting as Prime Minister was in Cyprus and John Major was the Prime Minister at that time. He was particularly concerned about matters pertaining to international trade – with the emergence of the WTO to replace GATT arrangements – and I worked with him as part of a committee to give a report to Heads on the position we would take. We developed a very good working relationship. The fact that we were both cricket lovers didn't hurt!

[*Laughter*]

SO: He is indeed passionate about cricket!

PJP: [*Laughter*] Oh, he is, he is! Certainly we developed not just a mutual respect but a very, very good working relationship. In fact, I tried several times to persuade him to come on an unofficial visit to Jamaica. I wasn't successful. Then he retired, [and] he's come nearly every year. When I was in office – there was a period when I was still in while he had left…

SO: Yes, 1997.

PJP: Yes. I've seen him, and now that we're both retired we have regular contact and I have a very, very healthy respect for him. Chretien, I have mentioned. Canada and Jamaica have a long working relationship, but at a personal level, it's been very good; it's been very warm. He calls me "Pi Je", with his French accent! [*Laughter*] He is a man that speaks his mind.

SO: Yes.

PJP: He doesn't go around and around. Well, President Obasanjo…We've got a long working relationship. We work very well together. President Rawlings of Ghana and John Kufuor who succeeded him: again, I found those personal relationships very, very helpful. Kikwete succeeded Mkapa and, again, there's a brief period of overlap, but I had known Kikwete from the time he was

Foreign Minister. So, I have been in this thing for a long time. Perhaps too long, eh?

SO: Sir, thank you for your emphasis on the importance of the network of Heads, the network of Ministers, and officials. It has always struck me that the Commonwealth's trump card is its multiple networks. Sir, in addition to looking at international trade, I know John Major was also particularly keen to address money laundering and the debt issue.

PJP: Yes.

SO: Could you reflect on the value and work of the Commonwealth on those two particular aspects?

PJP: Well, money laundering is a matter of international concern because it's linked with drugs and with illicit trafficking. So, there's a common global interest in dealing with that. On the question of debt, the Caribbean and Jamaica have been at the forefront in raising the question of the level of indebtedness and the limitations it places on economic growth and human development. Major responded by affording some relief in particular areas where a number of countries have been concerned.

SO: Sir, from 1992, you yourself were one of the key Commonwealth leaders trying to encourage some form of an operational arm of the Harare Principles, in the form of CMAG. Could you just add some comment, because so often it seems that CMAG emerged from the Auckland Summit because of the crisis in Nigeria...

PJP: That's correct.

SO: …but obviously there was an important background story to that?

PJP: No, we felt that there should be some monitoring device. I think there are a number of international organisations and bodies which have what you might call the 'Troika' which operates between summits. The Commonwealth has never really had the equivalent, and the person who hosts the meeting is generally acclaimed as the lead Head for that meeting. But almost immediately, the meeting ends, [and] there's much more that an incoming host has to do without having any formal executive or authority.

When things occur in between – whether it is in Fiji or in Pakistan – and there's a need for some sort of response, we need to have a body that can invigilate the operations of the Harare Principles to what is happening. So, CMAG was constituted to enable us to do that.

SO: As you were one of the key supporters of the CMAG idea before it formally emerged, what was your view of CMAG in action during your time as Prime Minister? You've made reference to it, over Zimbabwe…

PJP: Look, look, look…From time to time, questions are being raised about the balance. That's always going to...There was a time when Zimbabwe itself was a member of the CMAG group.

SO: Indeed, the Zimbabwean Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge was the first Chair.

PJP: Yes. So, I think [that], on the whole, it has discharged its responsibilities well.

SO: I just wondered if you felt like Dr Mahathir, who wrote to President Bill Clinton within the year of CMAG formally being set up, saying, "They can't get through the door to talk to Abacha. You need to do something, Mr President…"

PJP: Okay, it's so good you mentioned Dr Mahathir. How could I, in talking about Commonwealth Heads, not make special mention of him? Dr Mahathir is very much on the forefront of those who commanded and earned my full respect and, again, with whom I would be extremely happy to work. And not only in the Commonwealth: we had a G-15 of which both Mahathir and myself were members and which, at different times, each of us have hosted. That's a group with Egypt, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Venezuela…It's a group of developing countries created by the non-aligned.

SO: Yes, Sir Sonny Ramphal and Dr Mahathir crafted this idea in about 1989.

PJP: Yes, G-15. But, certainly, Malaysia under him was very vocal, very active, [and] very influential, in a positive way, in the deliberations of the Commonwealth.

SO: And I think that was very warming to those who were committed to the Commonwealth because, initially, when he became Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr Mahathir was quite sceptical of its value and contemplated at one point pulling out.

PJP: Listen, in all these things, it's what you make of it. You can either go in, look at it, say you don't like it and leave, or you go in, look at it and say, "Listen, this is how I would like to see it evolve. Let me help in shaping it."

SO: So, Prime Minister Manley wasn't being serious when he told the journalist in the late 1970s that, "I'm thinking of taking Jamaica out of the Commonwealth", saying he wanted to focus on the Non-Aligned Movement instead?

PJP: No, I wouldn't say he wasn't serious. He may have been reflecting at the time some particular upset. But, certainly, he was a very significant contributor to the Commonwealth. The Gleneagles Agreement…he was right at the front of it. And even the Harare Declaration: again, he was very much a contributor to it.

SO: So, while you were Prime Minister, after 1992, what was your particular view and perspective on the role and importance of the Secretaries General – Chief Emeka Anyaoku and then Sir Don McKinnon?

PJP: I had known Chief Anyaoku when he was Deputy. When he succeeded to the office, I think he brought profound understanding of the working relationships, exactly as I mentioned. Of course, he was very, very knowledgeable,

particularly as it related to the African states. He was, and he continued to be, cognisant of the concerns of the Caribbean and we worked well together.

I had known his successor when he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in New Zealand. I supported McKinnon's candidature.

SO: You led his campaign in 1999?

PJP: I wouldn't say I led his campaign – that might be a bit of an overstatement. I strongly supported him.

SO: In contrast to Thabo Mbeki, who was supporting a very different candidate?

PJP: Yes, well, how shall I call it? Certainly, it never reached a point of conflict. I thought McKinnon was well suited for the job and I supported him and so did most of the Caribbean. Again, I think he tried to proceed with the work entrusted to him.

I think, with diminishing resources, the Secretariat has not been able to contribute as much as it previously did to technical work, to technical assistance, and as strongly as it did to the international dialogue. I think, also, that the intensity for the Commonwealth which existed in the fight against apartheid and colonialism has diminished. The Commonwealth has lost some of its firepower, because that hasn't been replaced by any issue of equal preoccupation.

SO: And, it could be said, immediate media attention.

PJP: Well, in what is happening in the world today, I think the Commonwealth has to try and define its role.

SO: Sir, in helping to raise the profile and value of the Commonwealth, how much importance would you attach to the Queen as Head?

PJP: I attach great importance to that. I will be plain: I am for a republican form of government in Jamaica, but the Queen as the Head of the Commonwealth, certainly, I enthusiastically endorse. I'm talking now not just about the position: I'm talking about the person. I think she has been an unbelievable source of inspiration, of good and of being able to hold everybody together. I think I said in something that I wrote in Sir Shridath's book that, the Queen apart, he, perhaps, has been the most [powerful] single influence in the shape of the Commonwealth. And I say "the Queen apart" because I think she has played that role. What will happen after? My gifts of prophecy now don't allow me to venture there. [*Laughter*]

SO: As my final question, how important do you think are the Commonwealth Games? Jamaica is a leader in the field of athletics. Do the Commonwealth Games play any soft power political role for Jamaica?

PJP: Yes, and actually the President of the Commonwealth Games for the longest time, Michael Fennell…he's a classmate of mine. [*Laughter*] It's trivial in one

way, but certainly in endorsement of the Commonwealth Games…One of the things I said in Cyprus in my first intervention as Prime Minister was that the future of the Commonwealth depends on bringing our young people together, and nothing does that better than the Games. So, I think it's very important, and not only because we get a haul of medals! [*Laughter*]

SO: Usain Bolt certainly set Glasgow alight at the Commonwealth Games last summer.

PJP: He really did. He truly did.

SO: Sir, thank you very much indeed.

[END OF AUDIOFILE]