VOICE FILE NAME: COHP Max Gaylard (Part One)

Key:
SO: Dr Sue Onslow (Interviewer)
MG: Mr Max Gaylard (Respondent)

Part One:

SO: This is Sue Onslow talking to Mr Max Gaylard at Senate House on Wednesday, 7th May 2014. Max, thank you very much indeed for coming in to the Institute of Commonwealth Studies to add further detail to your contribution to the Witness Seminar on the History of the Secretariat. I wonder if you could begin by saying, please, how did you come to join the Commonwealth Secretariat in July 1988?

MG: Sue, it's very nice to see you again. Briefly, I was at that time a career officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia and the Australian High Commissioner in the Solomon Islands. I'd had a fairly tough three years, from 1985 to 1988. That is another story, which will have to wait for another time. When the three years was coming to an end, the Department asked if I would like to be considered for the position of Director of International Relations at the Commonwealth Secretariat, based in London. So, I said yes. I went through a process of recruitment. I remember I was flown to London from the Solomon Islands and interviewed. There was one other Australian colleague of mine who was also being interviewed, and a New Zealander. To cut a long story short, I got the job and was then seconded from the Australian government. I was seconded for two years, and that became another two years, and then another two years. At the end, in early 1996, it was almost eight years.

SO: You took over from another Australian, Hugh Craft.

MG: That's right, yes. Hugh was a fellow colleague and friend in Foreign Affairs. Hugh had been there for quite some time, too – maybe six or seven years. Hugh was also a career officer. We were both career officers. So, the whole idea was that we would spend some time in the Secretariat, gain experience through that, and then go back to the Department, presumably to put that

extra experience and skills into play. Hugh went back to DFAT; I didn't, not least because I'd left it too long and I think had more or less been forgotten about.

SO: Max, you were the second of four Australians in that particular position.

MG: Yes.

SO: Did the Australian Government have a decided view on the holder of that position in the Secretariat, that an Australian should be Head of Political Affairs?

MG: There were other Australians in the Secretariat, but they certainly wanted an Australian in what was considered to be one of the key positions. Now, the key positions were obviously Secretary General, the Head of CFTC, the Deputy Secretary General, and maybe the two Directors of the Political and Economic parts of the Secretariat.

SO: Yes.

MG: Malcolm Fraser, whom I think you interviewed…?

SO: Yes.

MG: He actually ran for Secretary General for the 1990 term and onwards, against Chief Anyaoku. I guess if he had got that, then the Australians would not have placed so much emphasis on keeping the Director of Political Affairs, [or what was] formerly International Affairs. But, yes, it was the Australian judgement at the time that this was the position that they wanted.

SO: Did you have any handover with Hugh? Or did you arrive in post and find there was no degree of coordination with your predecessor on how to handle the particular responsibilities of the job or the key events that were confronting the Secretariat at the time?

MG: That's easy to answer: there was no handover. I don't think it was deliberate, it's just that Hugh went off to resume his career and I came some weeks after he had left – or maybe even longer. So, no handover. But when I arrived, I think [that], before the week was out, I was on an aircraft to Toronto for a meeting of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa, which was the precursor to a lot that happened later, in terms of institutional bodies.

SO: So, in that first meeting, then, Joe Clark was particularly influential, as Chairman of that Committee. I've interviewed him and he's talked very eloquently about that.

MG: Yes, that's right.

SO: So, for the Committee of Foreign Ministers on South Africa, there was close collaboration with your particular office for advice on financial sanctions and economic sanctions?

MG: Our office was still put as ‘International Affairs’ and became ‘Political Affairs’ later. We basically serviced the Committee. Chief Anyaoku, as the Deputy Secretary General, was the main Secretariat link, I would say. I mean, Sonny Ramphal was there, but he couldn't do everything, obviously. There were also a lot of other things going on.

SO: In terms of how you viewed Sonny Ramphal as a Secretary General, this is very much the sunset – the last two years – of his Secretary Generalship…

MG: Right.

SO: He'd been there for fifteen years. Could you add some reflections on how you found Ramphal’s working practices – his efficacy, his connections, his general diplomatic approach – in those two years?

MG: Well, as a person, I thought he was terrific. I didn't work closely with him: not as closely as I think Hugh Craft might have. But, at the end of fifteen years in any organisation, a person such as the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, in this particular case, will build an ‘inner cabinet’ of those he knows very well and whom he can rely on implicitly. I was not part of that group, but was familiar enough with him to say that he was a wonderful representative of the Commonwealth at large. He was charismatic and was a wonderful speaker, as you probably know. Obviously, you've met him.

SO: Yes, several times.

MG: A very engaging character, really. Very Caribbean.

SO: Indeed, yes. What about the relationship between the Secretary General, the Secretariat and the British Government by 1988, 1989?

MG: Well, it wasn't without its tensions and challenges – not least because of the whole question of South Africa. It was very much on the boil then. Mrs Thatcher was Prime Minister. As you know, the position of the British government on South Africa was markedly different – in many respects – from virtually the rest of the Commonwealth. I think, at one stage, Prime Minister Thatcher actually said something to the effect of, “It's me against everybody else.”

SO: “And I'm quite happy with that”! [*Laughter*]

MG: Yes, she was indeed! I recall the lead up to the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM in 1989. I'd been in my job for about a year by that stage, so this was the first really major event in which I was involved. The lead up was full of action: tension and anticipation as to what the British were going to do. Up to that point and even after, heads of government – the Presidents and the Prime Ministers – guarded the CHOGM in the sense that Foreign Ministers, for example, were not all that welcome. That attitude persisted for a few more CHOGMs. Foreign and other Ministers were not all that much present.

SO: "This is the heads' show"?

MG: Exactly. For Kuala Lumpur, there was a decision made within the ranks – the Secretary General and the heads of government – that they would bring the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers to Kuala Lumpur to concentrate solely on reaching some sort of common position on South Africa, which could then be reflected in the CHOGM communiqué.

SO: So, it was quite an innovation to do that?

MG: Yes, I think so. And in the end the Committee's work came down to the construction of the few paragraphs on South Africa for the communiqué. I was the Secretary for the CHOGM and also the secretary for this Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa. And I remember two or three very hard evenings, late in the night, negotiating the communiqué as it related to South Africa.

SO: Well, particularly because Mrs Thatcher felt that de Klerk's recent concessions – freeing seven political prisoners, allowing anti-Apartheid demonstrations to take place, indicating that black South Africans would have political rights within five years – represented progress. Mrs Thatcher's stance was very much that these indications of accelerated reform should not be penalised. She had also approached Dr Mahathir on the eve of the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM to request that South Africa should not dominate the proceedings. I know that she took a particularly public stance on this. John Major, her Foreign Secretary, writes about the negotiations in his memoirs. [He notes] that an agreement had been reached, and then he was hauled over the coals by his Prime Minister afterwards. Is that your recollection?

MG: It is, although obviously I wasn't as close to it as he was. The UK was not officially a member of the Foreign Ministers Committee, so it was decided – with the blessings of key prime ministers and presidents, I assume – to issue a special invitation to the UK to send their Foreign Minister, the argument being – very sensibly – [that] there was only one country that was going to give any trouble, and that was the UK. Thus, John Major attended the Committee meetings, chaired by Joe Clark from Canada, as the UK Foreign Secretary.

SO: There was also the importance of British investments and trade.

MG: Yes, indeed.

SO: Britain was a big player as far as...

MG: It was, but to actually take the step of inviting the British to join that Committee for the period of the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM was a very interesting move. So, you had the nine Committee members and John Major in the room. The Australian, incidentally, was Gareth Evans, and I don't know whether he talked to you at all about that discussion?

SO: We only had a relatively short interview, but he was absolutely emphatic regarding the input of the Commonwealth in drafting regulations on financial restrictions, and the importance of the book that was published – *Apartheid and Financial Sanctions* – which he co-authored. He said that this was the Commonwealth's seminal contribution to later introduction of international sanctions against undemocratic regimes.

MG: I think he's right. There is plenty of debate as to why South Africa unfolded at the particular time that it did, and there were many factors. But I think that the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers – supported by the Commonwealth Secretary General and Secretariat – had a seminal role to play. The whole issue of financial sanctions and the power houses of the financial world starting to think twice about their roles in South Africa was critical. In the particular instance of the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM, it was the 'nine-plus-one' – the nine Foreign Ministers plus John Major.

SO: How clearly do you recall that discussion with John Major? Were you actually physically in the room?

MG: Yes. [*Laughter*]

SO: You're starting to laugh!

MG: Well, there's one story that I can't tell yet. It won't be lost; it won't be, I promise. It was pretty lively. And it became very tense at times.

SO: Yes. Was Major sticking very firmly to his brief? He was very much a consensus politician.

MG: He was. I mean, they were all working for consensus. Nobody walked out. But there were some hot words.

SO: From whom, particularly?

MG: Well, Gareth Evans got very excited. I think Prime Minister Major – as he later was – became quite direct. But Joe Clark was the Chair, and a very gentlemanly Foreign Minister. He actually kept the whole thing under control, and the result was, basically, that everyone did agree on something. I think [that], when it was presented to the Heads, maybe Mrs Thatcher had another go to wind it back, but in the end the communiqué is there. They agreed. And I don't think Mrs Thatcher said, "Well, I'm not signing off on the communiqué."

SO: It certainly has entered folklore that she roasted her new Foreign Secretary for indicating some degree of an emollient, collaborative approach on South Africa in the Commonwealth...

MG: Yes, I do remember that.

SO: ...which was not her particular presentation of policy.

MG: I do recall quite clearly the atmospherics of that meeting, down in the bowels of this hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

SO: Whom besides Gareth Evans was particularly forceful at this meeting? Because, obviously, there were African Foreign Ministers that were also part of that committee on South Africa.

MG: Well, I think what happened was [that], if anyone was taking sides, the Commonwealth Committee members were taking sides with Gareth Evans and Joe Clark. They had now met probably three or four times now, by the time Kuala Lumpur came around. I mentioned Toronto, and I think there was maybe one before that. So, there was a sequence of these meetings, and the nine members of the Committee knew each other quite well. They seemed to get on well.

SO: Yes, so they would have established a degree of solidarity, a degree of coherent strategy, and a determination to push through a firm line?

MG: They did. And there were some strong characters there, although they may not have jumped up and down. One of them later became President of Tanzania: Benjamin Mkapa – a very nice and modest person, as I recall.

SO: So, this was a Front Line State's Foreign Minister taking a very vocal position on a Commonwealth Committee?

MG: I would say [that] they were insistent in the Committee. Gareth Evans was very vocal.

SO: I have got a summary here saying that Mrs Thatcher had claimed that apartheid was close to ending. Rather than increase sanctions, she argued that the Commonwealth should offer to reward South Africa. The other delegates unanimously disagreed with Thatcher, arguing that FW de Klerk could only make token changes and so further sanctions were necessary to bring about racial equality. A background against these discussions was that South Africa announced it had managed to reschedule most of her debt with Western banks. So, South Africa, as you say, was really up against it in terms of their financial liquidity…

MG: Yes.

SO: …and rescheduling really did give them some much needed breathing space at that critical point.

MG: Yes.

SO: So, there would be intense criticism, then, of international banks that were extending these lines of credit to South Africa.

MG: Yes.

SO: Do you recall Thatcher proposing that the IMF offer South Africa loans, on the condition that they accelerated the transition to racial equality?

MG: I don't, but I think that if that's what my colleagues were saying, then that would be perfectly logical. I guess there were two strands of thought, one being pushed by the United Kingdom. It was an argument about methodology, really. One part of the Commonwealth [was] saying, “Let's keep the pressure on. It's not time to take the foot off the accelerator pedal. We've got to put the foot down.” And then, I suppose, the UK Government of the time [was] saying, “Well, we have another opinion on the way to do it.” And, as it turns out, from what you read much later, it was all going to happen anyway.

SO: Yes, it was.

MG: And a lot of the impetus was coming from within South Africa itself.

SO: It was. When de Klerk took over from PW Botha as President, Pik Botha – the South African Foreign Minister – had a meeting with him the next day, in the August of 1989, saying, “Mr de Klerk, I think there are two things you need to do to improve South Africa's international position. One is release Nelson Mandela, and the second is decommission our nuclear programme.” And apparently de Klerk replied, “I agree with you. I've already reached these conclusions myself.”

MG: Yes.

SO: So, yes, there was impetus for change.

MG: So, where the Commonwealth came in – significantly, again – was on that financial side, and was really pushing it. So, that was the contribution. That was the principal contribution. I think Gareth is right.

SO: Also, in terms of what came later, one of the discussions that almost seems to have been agreed [upon] casually at the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM was this question of election monitoring. You made reference to this in the Witness Seminar: of the preparation of a paper before the Kuala Lumpur meeting on election monitoring, and that Malaysia said that they would be the first [to be monitored], because theirs was the first Commonwealth Election that was scheduled.

MG: Yes, that must be how it must have happened. That's right.

SO: Were you involved in the preparation of that paper in any way?

MG: I don't think so. I can't remember on that, to be honest. The broad picture on the whole issue of election monitoring – the whole spirit and the drive for it – really started with Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

SO: So, towards the end of 1979 and beginning of 1980.

MG: Yes, that's where the first Commonwealth election monitoring mission took place.

SO: I've gone through the archives at the Secretariat, carefully looking at this extraordinary, innovative approach of the Commonwealth on the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe elections.

MG: It was, and a lot of the lessons from that were refined and developed in the Secretariat by Sonny Ramphal, Chief Anyaoku and Jeremy Pope as Head of Legal Division. I don't know if Jeremy left any writings. As you know, he has passed away.

SO: I don't know if he left any writings or papers. I should check that.

MG: Jeremy was heavily involved and was very good. Jeremy had a terrific legal mind, in my view. Hugh would know a lot about that time. So, you had the Secretariat, on behalf of the Commonwealth, building up a head of steam.

SO: But that head of steam ran into the sand when they tried to repeat the exercise in the Uganda election monitoring exercise, which was altogether much more of a 'wild thing'.

MG: When was that?

SO: That was in November/December 1980. It was the first election in Uganda for eighteen years, and the Commonwealth monitoring report concluded that, "This has been a turbulent and troubled election, characterised by confusion, delays, intense mistrust, and in the end, a sense of wonder that it happened at all." The contested outcome was pretty messy, too. The Ugandan exercise seems to have burnt the fingers of the Secretariat on any idea of trying to replicate this.

MG: Okay.

SO: So, there was an appreciable gap after the Ugandan election monitoring mission and before the Malaysian exercise.

MG: Well, there was. And I guess the next spark was South Africa and Southwest Africa. We shouldn't forget Namibia in all of this, either. And so I guess there was a build-up towards election observation and monitoring as the '80s unfolded. The rather fragile birth and development of the Human Rights Unit was also part of the evolving picture within the Secretariat. Madhuri Bose could tell you more about that.

SO: I'd very much like that.

MG: The promotion of Human Rights in the Secretariat and in the Commonwealth is a history all on its own.

SO: Yes, that it only stayed a Unit rather than a Division in the Secretariat…

MG: Well, the Unit bobbled up and down in the ocean! It had its moments, but was never really allowed to prosper. A highlight was the Unit's support to Secretary General Anyaoku for his key contribution to the 1993 Vienna World Summit on Human Rights.

SO: You make it sound like the orphan child, from a Dickensian novel.

MG: Very much, yes.

SO: If I could just go back to election monitoring before coming onto the very important aspect of South Africa and the associated importance of Southwest Africa… How clearly do you recall that election monitoring exercise in Malaysia in 1990?

MG: Not very well, because…

SO: Because you were based here in London?

MG: It's not that. The principal officer in my Division dealing with the matter was Neville Linton, who worked with me, and I think that Chief Anyaoku was overseeing most of that work. I do remember it was rather fraught. It wasn't without its problems.

SO: That's how Neville described it when I interviewed him: "Fraught". Yes, that description fits!

MG: And I think there was a huge sense of relief – probably on the part of the Malaysians, as well – that we all survived it with reputations more or less intact.

SO: I would say that the Malaysian leadership – particularly Dr Mahathir – hadn't quite appreciated what would be involved.

MG: He wasn't happy, I remember that. He wasn't happy…Not necessarily with the result, but with the way things panned out. Yes, that's an important point, because of what happened subsequently. The Malaysian election monitoring mission was followed by a dozen or so more in my time, and I'm told that more than one hundred missions have now been undertaken. I worked closely with Chief Anyaoku, so I can't really comment on working closely with Sonny, because I didn't. Chief, I remember, was always most insistent that in any context of election monitoring, we talked to the government – fine – but that we also be allowed and enabled to talk to the opposition. And, in quite a lot of cases, that had to be insisted upon quite firmly.

SO: According to Neville, Dr Mahathir was extremely taken aback and insistent that the Deputy Secretary General Anthony Siaguru and Neville did not meet representation from the opposition. It was nearly the crunch point and a compromise had to be agreed.

MG: And that's where Chief came in.

SO: With an extended telephone conversation with Dr Mahathir.

MG: Well, he did that quite a lot. Chief visited occasionally when he had to, but always on the preliminary missions – whether it was Lesotho or Ghana or Guyana or wherever – Chief was at the end of the phone. So, if we ran into a

wall...We talked to him every day, anyway, but if we ran into a wall, then Chief would intervene directly at the necessary levels. And just on this point of talking to the opposition: I remember going with Tony Siaguru to Ghana – it was our first mission to Ghana, when Jerry Rawlings was still very much the President and was inviting an election observation. Sitting in the Presidential office, Tony felt it was time to inform President Rawlings that we wanted to see the opposition. Rawlings was clearly taken aback, and he said something to the effect of, “What do you want to see them for?” But Siaguru insisted, and we eventually met with them.

SO: I also know that Chief was responsible for persuading the Election Commissioner in Guyana not to resign.

MG: That's right. He was absolutely instrumental.

SO: You made reference to that very briefly in the Witness Seminar. Can you just elaborate?

MG: What happened was that I was in Guyana, on mission, talking to Rudy Collins, who was the Chief Election Commissioner. And he basically said, “Max, I'm fed up. You know I'm being harassed from all sides. Nobody really appreciates what I'm trying to do.” He said, “I'm going to resign.” So, I said, “Well, don't do that before you have a chat with Chief Anyaoku.” So, he agreed. It must have been the following morning that I went to Rudy's office [and] got through by phone to Chief, who was now Secretary General. I connected them, left the room and sat outside, because it was a one-on-one. And, as I think I said in the previous Witness Seminar, I heard these peals of laughter coming from Rudy Collins inside the room. And what Chief Anyaoku had said – because Rudy then told me – was, he said, “You know, Rudy, in my part of Africa we have the tsetse fly. If the tsetse fly lands on your private parts, if you hit it, it's going to hurt.” And he said, “If you don't hit it, it's still going to hurt.” Basically, he was saying to Rudy, “You know? Tough luck, but stay in there!” And he did! [*Laughter*]

SO: [*Laughter*] As you said, a homely analogy that made the point! Election monitoring, then, was very much a continuity of approach between the Secretaries General. Sonny Ramphal had been insistent to push this in his last years in office, and this was very much something that Chief believed in, coming out of his own personal Retreat as the new SG.

MG: Sonny Ramphal believed in it and the Chief believed in it. And all of us did, too. I think we were all quite inspired by it – not just in the Political Affairs Division and the Office of the SG and DSG. I don't know if I made this point previously, but of the Secretariat – which was maybe 250 people – you would select a team of observers ranging from six to, in the case of South Africa, one hundred. There was a back-up Secretariat team, probably most times headed by myself as Director of Political Affairs, but there were others, and we drew people from throughout the Secretariat. So, no matter what division you were in, there was always the prospect that your services would be required in Guyana or Seychelles or South Africa or wherever. There was an air of excitement and commitment throughout the Secretariat.

SO: Max, how clearly and how quickly had you developed a template for election monitoring? You have said that, obviously, Chief's role was very important and his personal relationship with the contemporary head of government and Election Commissioner in the lead up to the poll…

MG: In the lead up, yes.

SO: …that there would obviously be an early visitation. Neville made the point that outcomes of elections are decided months before the actual polling date, and so processes of voter registration, voter education, organisation of pollings, the presence of the security forces [and] all of that stuff are all influential factors.

MG: I agree.

SO: But did you develop a Blue Book on how to run an election monitoring team?

MG: Yes, there was a book. I had a copy for a long time but I don't know where it is now. Neville might know.

SO: I just wondered how quickly you thought, in the debriefing session after the early missions, that, "This worked well." Obviously, there's a need for adaptation to particular local circumstances, reconfigurations and idiosyncrasies, but did the Commonwealth develop a methodology for doing this?

MG: There were various players involved, obviously. In addition to us, there was the United Nations, the Carter Centre, the US Republican and Democratic Party bodies, the European Union and so on. From what I saw in this seven or eight year period that I was there, and in about twelve to fifteen elections, the Commonwealth was undoubtedly the most professional and indeed the best. I think we were respected, and not least because of relatively long experience and expertise dating back to 1979/80. We had a template but we also learned in every situation, as no two elections were ever the same. We concluded quite early on that it was all very well to go and observe an election, but that wasn't enough. At the very least, you had to get in to the country concerned in the months before, as Neville has mentioned, to see what was happening on the ground, to get an idea of the independence of the Election Commissioner, to study the relevant laws and regulations, have a close look at the constitution of the country and its application, etc.

SO: The allocation of political coverage to individual parties in the media.

MG: All of these things. And there was a serious effort, I would say, as we went along, to engage the CFTC – to bring the CFTC on board in helping in a more substantive way, to help the country prepare. If the country involved was reluctant, it was hard. If they were actively wanting to go along with it, it was a lot easier. Seychelles was classic in a lot of ways. I think France-Albert René, the President at the time, who had been a one-party ruler for quite a while, saw that it was time to move on. I think he also realised he could almost

certainly win an election, which he did. Seychelles has been evolving since, as have all of the others who have adopted democratic electoral practices.

Also, in the case of the Seychelles, I recall that the Government itself brought in constitutional experts, to get the constitution right. That happened with Kenya as well, with Secretariat assistance. For the process as a whole, the Harare Declaration of 1991 was seminal, in that the sixteen or so one-party states or military dictatorships began to conclude that multi-party democracy was the way forward.

SO: Coming on to Kenya, Chief told me that he had selected Professor Ben Nwabueze from Nigeria as a constitutional expert to assist the Kenyans in the rewriting or reconfiguration of their constitution.

MG: That's right.

SO: So, did you, again, liaise closely with this designated expert?

MG: I didn't, personally. The details of the arrangement were almost certainly handled by the CFTC and Legal Division, in close consultation with the Secretary General and his office. The upshot was that, eventually, President Moi and his government actually allowed the whole election process to take place, because I think the old constitution had Moi as President for life.

SO: It did, and Nwabueze helped them to revise their constitution, as Chief put it, to serve the needs of a multi-party state. But there was a crisis over that particular election result because there were the four political contenders in that election and an insidious attitude of, "We hold the elections, therefore we must win," rather than accepting the will of the people.

MG: That's right.

SO: You had made reference earlier: to the fact that you felt that the opposition – by their behaviour beforehand – contributed to President Moi's victory.

MG: Well, President Moi had to get a certain percentage of the vote in a majority of provinces, and he did that. But, in the end, it added up to about thirty-five per cent.

SO: Yes, he got approximately 1.9 million votes. And the opposition parties contested that, actually, his share of the vote was much less.

MG: Well, it could easily have been. I'd have to go back and look at the detail. But if the three opposition leaders, or even two of them…

SO: If they collaborated? Yes, just looking at the figures, they would have beaten him.

MG: Exactly. And up until a couple of weeks before the election, that's what they were going to do. But it all fell apart because each of the three thought that he could win it.

SO: The contenders were Ken Matiba, Mwai Kibaki and Oginga Odinga. Mwai Kibaki led a breakaway party – he'd won about 646,000 votes. Oginga Odinga won 910,000, and Ken Matiba was the closest with 1.4 million.

MG: That's right. The [Election Monitors'] report was written as we went along – as the election was taking place – with all the tumult and fuss and bother. We'd be there at one or two in the morning, writing the draft of the report. A key part of the process was that all members of the Observer Group had to agree and sign off before leaving the country, within a few days of the declaration of the election.

SO: Was there any discussion among you, in writing the report for delivery, as to whether the Commonwealth would have any particular sanction or follow up on that report? Because, clearly, the team would have to leave relatively soon after its formal presentation and departure.

MG: Yes, and we got better as we went along in identifying what had to be done afterwards. I remember, in particular, the huge debate on the draft for the 1992 Kenyan election within the election observer group. It was a pretty impressive group: politicians and experts from around the Commonwealth, with the Secretariat as the back-up. Carl Dundas was the leader of the Secretariat team, himself as an expert from the Caribbean, and I was the Deputy of the Secretariat team. The Observer group, as a whole, was not happy with the way the election had been conducted, with infractions of the electoral code and actual violence in several parts of the country. After a good deal of debate and wrestling with formulae, the group avoided the use of "free and fair" to describe the election and came up instead with something like, "in the end, it reflected the will of the people."

SO: Patsy Robertson commented to me that, describing the Malaysian election, she had said it was "free but not fair". So, the 1992 Kenyan election was neither free nor fair, or was it "free-ish and fair-ish"?

MG: Kenya taught us all a lot of things, I would say.

SO: Going back to those other international election monitoring bodies, was there any coordination between the teams? Given the size of the election monitoring team that the Secretariat and the Commonwealth was able to field and its limited resources, which could not compare to the size of the budget available to the Carter Foundation, for instance… Obviously this was not competitive election monitoring, so was there a degree of pooling information or pooling security arrangements?

MG: I don't recall that we collaborated on any structured basis, except perhaps with the UN in South Africa. Elections could of course be chaotic: not just in Kenya, they're all chaotic to some degree or another. Except maybe in Seychelles, where the total voter population was about 22,000. Basically, we dealt with the other groups including, for example, the Carter Centre, but

generally we protected our independence and neutrality. An industry was developing, you see. So, there were lots of people wandering around.

SO: Idealists, as you say, who could be poorly briefed, poorly informed, or had limited experience?

MG: I think the Carter Centre got into strife in the Kenya election. And the UN used to bob up every now and again. They were generally not too impressive.

SO: In terms of clear methodology and experienced, well-travelled monitors in tune with culturally sensitive issues, I can see that the Commonwealth really would be a leader of the field.

MG: The Commonwealth were the leaders, without a doubt. I'm not saying they didn't make mistakes, because there were mistakes and some very awkward situations from time to time. But they were the best, you know. The people who were brought onto the teams were impressive. There was a booklet we had on the methodology of how we did these election monitoring missions.

SO: I just wondered how early on in the election monitoring process that it was deemed necessary or valuable to have a clear, point-by-point booklet on 'How to Monitor an Election'.

MG: Let me deal very briefly with the methodology. The trigger for an election observer mission to be assembled and dispatched to an election in a member country was a formal approach from the government of the country in question. This was usually preceded by preliminary consultations, with the first approach instructed by the country concerned. At the same time, there were occasions where the Secretary General himself would initiate discreet discussions.

SO: That's interesting, because I asked Chief about this and he said, "Oh, well, you had to respond to the invitation from the state."

MG: Formally, yes. The Chief is possibly just being modest, but I'm sure he was proactive in some cases. Certainly, there had to be a formal approach. As soon as that happened, the Secretary General would have a small team on the road within a day or two, as the first mission. They would generally meet with the President or his delegate, meet with the opposition, and make contact with national electoral authorities. While that was happening, the SG and his Secretariat staff, particularly the Political Affairs Division, would be assessing the particular outlines and needs of the country in question: the constitution, the electoral laws, the parliament, opposition and alternative voices. The whole gamut. If it was the country's first, multi-party democratic election ever or [first] after a long time – and lots of them were, [such as] Lesotho, Seychelles, Zambia, Ghana – then so much extra care and diplomacy were required all round, with nervous governments at the one extreme to nascent opposition political voices on the other.

SO: In terms of finances, you mentioned getting CFTC involved, but this was an expensive series of exercises for the Commonwealth.

MG: I seem to recall that funds were raised from governments. The Chief raised money for each observer group, and member states contributed voluntarily. The CFTC came in to the picture if there was technical advice involved, such as assisting with the constitution, electoral laws and so on. That was relatively easy, as they fitted into the budget.

SO: So, that would have meant a regular circulation of the Commonwealth, soliciting for additional and extraordinary funds to do this?

MG: That's right. I mean, the cost was basically travel and subsistence. Nobody got paid specifically for the task, if you see what I mean.

SO: But even so, Max, if you were doing election monitoring mission after election monitoring mission, the sums mount up. And at a time when – let's face it – the international aid budget was diminishing because of the end of the Cold War…

MG: That's right, but somehow or other, the money was always found.

SO: That's interesting.

MG: I think we just saw a very generous response from the member states.

SO: You mentioned mistakes.

MG: Mistakes in election monitoring? I can't remember any serious mistakes, but there might have been situations where we could have done it better. In the case of Kenya, perhaps the system was a bit too quick in getting involved. But I don't think anyone said, “Hang on. Let's not go there yet.” It was more a case of, “Let's get in there, see what is happening, and do what we can to fix things as we go along.”

SO: I wanted to ask, Max, about the lead up to South Africa because of your involvement from the Harare meeting of 1991, when Chief decided to go down to South Africa immediately after that meeting. And then there is accelerated Commonwealth Secretariat assistance between November of 1991 and the April of 1994.

MG: Right. In the lead up period, this was the time that we set up our small, informal South African office. We put Moses Anafu there for a time, to operate from within South Africa.

SO: Where was he based?

MG: We rented a little house in Johannesburg that belonged to an Anglican Bishop, and we set up an office there. We then proceeded to get to know the system and the political leaders.

SO: So, it was just Moses as ‘your man in Johannesburg’?

MG: Moses with Colleen Lowe Morna, who was a young journalist by training; a Zimbabwean. I was down there regularly. And, in fact, we used it as a base in

a way, because Lesotho was having all sorts of challenges during this period – either with the return of the King, or attempted coups, or multi-party elections, or a revolt in the army. So, we spent a lot of time in Lesotho.

SO: Did you accompany Chief on that first visit that he made to South Africa, after the Harare CHOGM?

MG: I certainly accompanied Chief several times, but I don't think I was on that first mission after Harare.

SO: What were your particular duties? What were Moses' responsibilities, based in Johannesburg?

MG: Well, a priority was to get to know the system and the various actors, and for them to become familiar to us. So, we would liaise with the South African government of de Klerk – mainly the Foreign Ministry. And then, more importantly, the political parties: the ANC, of course, plus the Inkatha Freedom Party, the Pan-Africanist Congress and others. So, we entered a process of getting to know them to the best of our ability. At a technical level, we were seeking to identify – in consultation with the South Africans – the areas where they were going to need help with the coming elections, which were conducted over several days and were not uncomplicated. Probably one of the Commonwealth's major practical contributions was a team of election experts – about ten of them – from around the Commonwealth. This election support was put in place some weeks – or maybe even longer – before the election. There were crises and difficulties coming from every direction. Inkatha was still outside the loop; Buthelezi was not agreeing. In a very practical sense, it seemed that the South Africans may have underestimated the challenges, and these Commonwealth experts placed in each of the nine regional centres were able to help ease the way.

SO: So, just to backtrack, the period between early '92 and April '94 was something of a rollercoaster ride for the negotiations between the various parties in CODESA I and CODESA II.

MG: That's right.

SO: Obviously, that was a South African affair. The key negotiations were between Cyril Ramaphosa and Roelf Meyer, particularly in CODESA II. So, where was the Commonwealth in this process?

MG: Well, we were there at the World Trade Centre, where these took place. I remember going there with the Secretary General and Moses Anafu and sitting though many of the sessions. The whole business was, in essence, an internal affair among the South Africans, but I think that the presence of the Commonwealth Secretary General did help – not least as a UN Security Council Resolution did evolve as a result of interventions by Chief Anyaoku. Did he mention that to you?

SO: Yes, he mentioned that – because of the violence in what is now KwaZulu-Natal.

MG: That's right. And there was the whole issue of hidden force within the security services – what were they called? The 'Third Force'. They were doing train massacres and provoking all sorts of trouble in the mining hostels. Mandela was telling de Klerk [that], "It's your people who are doing it. You've got to get them under control."

SO: Yes.

MG: And de Klerk was denying it, saying, "It's not us." He later admitted in his book, *The Last Trek,* that it was so.

SO: In his memoirs, he admitted that there was a rogue element within the security forces, and the extent to which he was not in control.

MG: Exactly.

SO: I have interviewed Dave Steward, who helped de Klerk write his memoirs. It seems that the South African government was a dysfunctional state by this point.

MG: Yes, I think so. There were pretty terrible things happening, and Mandela was threatening to suspend the negotiations. So, I think at those times, Chief Anyaoku was always not too far away, making himself available as the voice of the Commonwealth, on behalf of Commonwealth leaders. At that time, the Secretary General – whether it was Ramphal or the Chief – spoke on behalf of Commonwealth leaders, and that was accepted.

SO: So, it was the degree to which they were the spokesperson of the Commonwealth, rather than individual Commonwealth countries having bilateral relations with South Africa.

MG: Yes

SO: Douglas Hurd, the British Foreign Secretary at the time, was interesting about that. He said, "I didn't need the Commonwealth Secretary General to pick up the phone to talk to Pik Botha."

MG: No, that's correct, and nor did Bob Hawke. But I think what I'm saying is [that], whenever Chief spoke – and Ramphal before him – they considered that they were speaking on behalf of a Commonwealth position, on the basis of policy that had been determined at CHOGMs and in other Commonwealth fora.

SO: Max, how much were you personally involved in trying to deal with the violence and the conflict mediation down in KwaZulu-Natal, between local factions of the ANC and local factions of Inkatha? Because that's where the violence was particularly acute.

MG: That's right. Well, I was involved, but the person who was probably most involved was Moses Anafu. I recall that Moses and I – under instructions from Chief – once went to visit Chief Buthelezi of Inkatha at his home in Ulundi, in Natal. I addressed the Parliament, as I recall, and I was a little nervous because Gareth Evans had been there a week or two before and had been

booed and reportedly spat at. He apparently said he was never going back! Anyway, we were treated quite well. They didn't spit at us! But that was part of the Commonwealth seeking to come in from a different angle. We went there on the authority of the Secretary General to talk to Buthelezi. It was all part of a grand effort to bring him into the electoral process, which he eventually did. To what extent the Commonwealth can claim any credit, I don't know.

SO Going back to the question of what Moses Anafu was doing, I understand that Moses was having to build relationships with a particularly suspicious group of the ANC – which, after all, had been a banned organisation in South Africa before February of 1990.

MG: That's right.

SO: So, there was a particular determination that the ANC was going to assert itself as *the* voice of the South African black community – rather than the UDF, rather than the PAC. So, there are all sorts of cultural suspicions and personality issues; the 'ex-iles' coming in, rather than the 'in-xiles'.

MG: That's right.

SO: It was a complicated political picture!

MG: Very, and including [divisions] within the Zulu nation. There were plenty of Zulus in the ANC at that time, and then Inkatha was fundamentally Zulu. This reminds me of a local reconciliation effort in which Moses was involved, between ANC Zulus and Inkatha Zulus. The stage for this particular event was a football field. At one end of the field was a bunch of ANC Zulu warriors, and at the other end a matching crowd of Inkatha Zulu, with Moses…

SO: In the middle with his whistle!

MG: …in the middle. I don't think Moses was the conductor, but he was certainly there in the middle, at the half-way line.

SO: As the referee?

MG: At a signal, the two groups came rushing towards the middle, brandishing spears and other weapons. When they reached the middle, they stopped two metres from each other, laid down the weapons and embraced. And that sealed the reconciliation.

SO: Moses was just standing there, in between them?

MG: Yes!

SO: I was going to say, what a remarkably brave man. Truly.

MG: Well, there was nowhere else for him to go, anyway. [*Laughter*]

SO: Lorna McLaren told me that he was known as 'Mr Africa' in the Secretariat.

MG: I'm sure that is true.

SO: Do you think the fact that he is Ghanaian enhanced his credibility and his access?

MG: It helped a lot, undoubtedly.

SO: I was just thinking – and Max, as an Australian perhaps you might reflect on this – whether there was a degree of inverted racism? Was it a case of the particular effectiveness of Chief, as an African, as a Nigerian, speaking to other African heads? Did Moses have credibility and an entrée because of previous historic, cultural sensitivities, that he was able to communicate in a way that someone from another part of the wider, culturally-British world would not have been able to do?

MG: I agree [with that], and Ghanaians in particular, because of...

SO: Kwame Nkrumah?

MG: Nkrumah, in particular. So, Moses was certainly welcomed as a Ghanaian, but also as a very decent human being, and quite a smart one at that!

SO: Dr Anafu, yes, indeed. His two PhDs – one from Cambridge and one from Bologna.

MG: He's quite a character. He was there at the Secretariat for twenty years, if not more.

SO: Yes, and he truly made a difference on the Secretariat's conflict mediation in Africa in the 1990s. You made a reference to him being one of the hundred most influential Africans.

MG: Yes.

SO: Who compiled this list?

MG: I can't remember. It used to come out in a magazine in South Africa.

SO: You don't know whether the Commonwealth – and particularly whether Moses Anafu – was instrumental in persuading Buthelezi to finally take part in the April elections?

MG: I wouldn't say instrumental, but the Commonwealth was certainly part of the overall effort.

SO: I know that there was a certain Kenyan professor...

MG: There was a Kenyan who seemed to pop out of nowhere.

SO: Was he one of Chief's recruits?

MG: No, [but] we encountered him from time to time.

SO: But you have no idea who was sponsoring him, where he came from, or whose idea it was that he should encourage Buthelezi to take part, at the last minute?

MG: No. He came, and he disappeared. And we haven't seen him since, as far as I know. Do you have the name?

SO: Professor Washington J Okumu. It's in Allister Sparks' book. He makes reference to this last minute intervention by Okumu, who was a Kenyan agricultural professor.

MG: It was in the last week. People were starting to tear their hair out.

SO: This was how Inkatha was put on the ballot paper, then – right at the bottom, because the ballot papers had all been printed.

MG: That's right, yes. Maybe the Professor just appeared at the right time, I don't really know. Where the Secretary General, Moses and others from the Secretariat merit some recognition was in staying close to the South Africans from 1991 right up to the election and after. And, in fact, at the very famous lunch that became afternoon tea at Mandela's inauguration – it was scheduled for one, and it took place at five, because of the sheer numbers – Moses and I accompanied Chief Anyaoku, representing the Commonwealth as an institution.

SO: So, did Moses have a particularly good relationship with Nelson Mandela?

MG: Yes, with Mandela and members of his family, I think. Moses spent a lot of time getting to know people. I was once in a hotel in Harare, some time in the early 1990s, when he rang me in my room one night and said, "Maxie, do you want to come and have a drink with some friends of mine?" I agreed and joined Moses to go to another room. Moses knocked on the door, and was let in and I followed. There were four or five South Africans there, and one of them said to Moses, "Who is this?" Moses replied, "Oh, this is Max," at which the person looked to his colleagues and turned back to Moses, saying, "Do you think we can trust this white man?" It was none other than Thabo Mbeki, along with the late Steve Tshwete and a couple of other well-known figures from the ANC. They were, of course, very welcoming and hospitable!

SO: Please, Max, if I could ask you about any Commonwealth contribution to the reconfiguration of security services in South Africa. Were you involved in that?

MG: No.

SO: On police training?

MG: Did we do police training?

SO: Chief had mentioned that there was a Commonwealth contribution to the training, specifically on how to switch from emphasising riot control to civilian policing.

MG: Yes, there was something, but I wasn't heavily involved. There was a range of contributions, but it has to be put in perspective. I was interested to read Mandela's book, where he makes *one* reference to the Commonwealth, and even then, it's the British Commonwealth!

SO: There is so much emphasis in the published literature on the Commonwealth's 'grand strategy' as being opposition to apartheid, yet it goes up to the release of Mandela and then there is this chasm. But surely what happened between 1990 and 1994 was equally critical...

MG: Exactly, yes.

SO: ...in South Africa's unlikely, relatively peaceful transition to black majority rule.

MG: And even the Commonwealth Observer Group itself, I would argue, was of some significance. For the South African Electoral Observer Mission, the challenge was such that the sixty observers – plus forty others, including support staff from the Secretariat – were virtually all put into the field for the election itself. From memory, we thus had some fifty two-person teams in action. The Chairman was the former Prime Minister Michael Manley, a wonderful person.

SO: From Jamaica?

MG: Yes. A very funny and entertaining man. I was with him most of the time. We were in South Africa quite a bit before the polls – maybe two weeks before – and we called upon all the parties to get to know them. On one occasion, we were visiting the PAC office in Johannesburg. They had just moved office, and I think [they] were struggling financially by that stage. Their support was waning. We were ushered into the office of the Party leader, who remained sitting behind his desk, with Michael Manley and myself sitting in front. [Manley] had brought his armed bodyguard along, a Jamaican female police officer called Rosie who remained just outside on guard. And, at one stage, the PAC leader got very excited and he pounded the desk, which promptly collapsed with a loud bang.

SO: So, she came barging in?

MG: Well, yes, because he pounded the desk. It didn't completely collapse but went sort of halfway. Michael Manley was laughing fit to burst, and got down on the floor to see what was the matter with the desk. In fact, all three of us were crouching on the floor to examine the collapsed desk when Rosie burst into the room with her hand on a still-holstered pistol, ready for action! [*Laughter*]

SO: She didn't shoot the PAC Leader?

MG: Well, no, but she might have shot us! [*Laughter*]

SO: Max, thank you very much indeed. I think we should end there for the time being.

[END OF AUDIOFILE PART ONE]