University of London

INSTITUTE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES

COHP Moses Anafu Appendix One: Interview Inserts

Key:
SO: Dr Sue Onslow (Interviewer)
MA: Dr Moses Anafu (Respondent)

Contents:

Additional material read into the record by Moses Anafu, in dialogue with Dr Sue Onslow on 6 May 2015. These comments are provided in relation to the completed transcripts for three interviews with Dr Anafu for the Commonwealth Oral History Project: Part One (17 June 2014), Part Two (3 July 2014) and Part Three (19 November 2014).

Insert One: Concerning Gambia and Senegal

SO: This is Dr Sue Onslow talking to Dr Moses Anafu on Wednesday, 6th May 2015. This is to be read into record concerning page 29 of Interview Transcript Part Three. Moses, you've just recapitulated a little story which concerned the independence day celebrations in Senegal in June of 1980 – the particular incident when President Jawara obtained President Sékou Touré's reassurance against any possible Senegalese invasion. When the confederation of Senegambia was established the following year, in 1981, was that an issue of concern or diplomacy for the Commonwealth?

MA: It wasn't, for the simple reason that it in no way impaired the Gambia's sovereignty or independence of action internationally and therefore did not affect its membership of the Commonwealth in any way. Now, if it had had that kind of implication, then the Gambian government would have written to the Secretariat by way of contacting all governments to say, "This is the new reality. Our country is not part of the bigger thing. We would like either to have the Commonwealth consider this new and bigger Senegambia or to advise us on the best course forward."

SO: So, was this a particular political issue that Secretary General Sonny Ramphal was following with close attention?

MA: I would have known of it.

SO: Yes, as you were working in Political Affairs?

MA: Yes, I would have known of it; I would have handled it, even. But no, it wasn't [a particular issue]. I have his memoirs here – Sonny's memoirs. Let's look under Gambia.

SO: This is Sir Sonny Ramphal's memoirs, *Glimpses of a Global Life* [(Hertford: Hansib, 2014)].

MA: I haven't got my glasses, so you look under Gambia and tell me.

SO: There is nothing in the index marked 'Gambia'.

MA: Good. That says it all.

SO: Just because, though, he has not recollected this as a source of diplomatic concern in his memoirs… That could also be that he hasn't recalled a sense of disquiet, or that he made private soundings. What I'm suggesting is that this memoir isn't necessarily the definitive account of the Secretariat's activities during his time as SG.

MA: Well, I don't know. If he had been contacted – and he would have been contacted even if the thing showed signs of going anywhere, really – it would have been of particular interest to him as Secretary General, Sonny Ramphal, because his own Guyana was in the same relationship with Venezuela. That is one of the reasons why the security of small states remained so high a priority. If the Gambia looked to be...

SO: …if it was going to be swallowed up, in the way that Venezuela's territorial claims on Guyana pose an existential challenge for Guyana.

MA: You know something: it would have minimised.

SO: What was your understanding of President Jawara's decision-making process in accepting the Confederation of Senegambia?

MA: It was imposed on him.

SO: It was imposed on him?

MA: Literally. It was the only way the Senegalese would help him to get back home.

SO: So, there was an attempted coup against him?

MA: Yes! There was an attempted coup, and he stayed out for a week or so and then the Senegalese dismantled it.

SO: Were you aware of whether or not the Senegalese were complicit in this, negotiating with those coup leaders within the army? Was this a collaborative effort to oust President Jawara?

MA: Senegal would never had done that, because Senegal – whatever its faults – is a very constitutionally-minded country, and it was particularly so under Senghor, the 'Poet-President'. Now, it is unlikely that there could have been any major development between the two countries without Jawara at least informing the Commonwealth, which he didn't do. To be honest about it – and this is my own view – I don't think he hoped the thing would prosper, the Confederation, because what it would have ended up as [would be] to make the Gambia a bigger province of Senegal.

SO: Well, it is a tiny enclave. The Gambia is the smallest country in Africa. So, in terms of its territorial size it is an anomaly – its boundaries effectively follow the river system. Also, its markets are surely regional rather than solely national, because the national area is so small. So, you could see why the Confederation would have an economic logic.

MA: Yes, if it had been peacefully negotiated.

SO: Ah. With a degree of good will and engagement on both sides?

MA: Yes, but not to take advantage of a local difficulty [to] impose a Confederation.

SO: Did you closely follow, then, President Jawara's attempts to unravel this Confederation?

MA: No, not the unravelling, but the making of the Confederation. He had his negotiators, and he had a lot of confidence in them – in one or two of his advisors. But I don't think his heart… His heart could not have been in it.

SO: So, he didn't draw upon constitutional experts in the wider Commonwealth? Okay. But how about the dissolution of that Confederation? Again, did he draw upon Secretariat resources?

MA: It just disintegrated. You see, what happened was that, as I said, they exchanged High Commissioners. But the High Commissioner of Senegal in the Gambia was a proconsular figure. That's my analysis of it. He was more than an Ambassador, because the security situation was in his hands. The Senegalese army was in occupation.

SO: My goodness!

MA: Yes.

SO: So, a little more akin to a colonial governor?

MA: Yes. The Gambians didn't like it one bit. I espied this figure once. We were walking past, [and] my Gambian friend pointed to him and said, "That's the High Commissioner."

SO: So, the President of the Senegambia was Senegalese. Did they accompany – on observer status – a Gambian representative coming to the next Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting?

MA: No. This is my own speculation. A lot of it wasn't written down, I suspect. For example, Jawara was Vice President of the Confederation, and there was no question of rotating the Presidency. In a way, if you go back to the history of those two countries, Britain acquired the Gambia to the great chagrin and inconvenience of the French, because it then meant that what was largely a French area was interrupted by this thin line.

SO: Claimed by perfidious Albion!

MA: And you know, it was used as the basis of policy in other parts of Africa: "We must not allow the French to encircle us again."

SO: Ah, yes.

MA: I come from northern Ghana, and in the 1920s we had a very progressive governor [who] was keen on extending the railway from Kumasi, the Ashanti capital, up north, and the idea was to divert French trade – the trade of the French colonies – down to Ghana. That is precisely what the French had anticipated, so they had them build a railway from Abidjan in Ivory Coast right up to Burkina Faso over to Niger. So, the two countries were clearly aware of what encirclement meant. So, the Senegalese always – it doesn't say so, but obviously – looked upon the Gambia as part of their territory that have been filched. In a way, if this hadn't worked, [it] would have resolved their problem from their point of view.

SO: So, after the dissolution of this short-lived Confederation, was there a general expression of Commonwealth solidarity towards the Gambia? To help to shore up the political legitimacy of President Jawara? To help to deal with dissident activity within the army? Because, of course, the coup was led by Jammeh in 1994 from within a junior element of the officer corps…

MA: Yes. I don't know why Jawara decided that he needed an army. That was eventually his undoing. But anyway, after the dissolution of the Confederation, he never raised the issue of international security to my knowledge, and that again is surprising.

SO: Yes. If there were sources of political and economic advice and support within the wider Commonwealth, why not draw upon them?

MA: Well, first of all, what Jawara had to do was to give his country the kind of profile which it lacked, and which enabled the Senegalese to come in and take it over quietly. You have to do that first. Secondly, he would have had to be in the forefront of security arrangements for the protection of small states. He wasn't.

SO: He would have had to push up his international profile precisely to enhance the standing of his small country.

MA: I think so. But that is the only way to protect it. What else?

SO: That makes it particularly striking, because the United States' invasion of Grenada was in October of 1983, so this is shortly after the dissolution of the Confederation.

MA: It would have been different in his case. One, the initiative would have come from him as the legitimate leader of the country – for many years standing. Two, it would have been done with the blessing of the sub-region – the ECOWAS region. You see, Senegal hasn't got, in my judgement, the sort of clout it should have by virtue of its size, its pre-eminence in Francophone West Africa and the prestige of Senghor. Politically, it all came to nothing.

SO: How do you account for that?

MA: Well, I'm going to be cynical here. Once they were in the house of mother France, why worry?

SO: It's comfortable to stay within an old-fashioned stockade?

MA: You see, by not having – if you like – a high profile foreign policy, by not being active in Pan-Africanism and by this excessive dependence on France, in the first instance, and on the western alliance as a whole, it in a way took away the drive and impetus for a dynamic foreign policy.

SO: Speaking of a drive and impetus for a dynamic policy, you have a note here talking about how the Commonwealth has a lot of experience in undoing settler minority regimes.

MA: Mugabe.

SO: With Mugabe. But then you also go on to ask, "Why is that experience not drawn on to dismantle the settler regime in Northern Cyprus?"

MA: That's what Mugabe said.

SO: Oh, is this what he said? Ah, okay.

MA: That's why he became the darling of the Cypriots. He was a very popular man there.

SO: Yes, because Chief Emeka had expressly selected Limassol to give a degree of solidarity to Cyprus in its confrontation with Northern Cyprus.

MA: It worked. He didn't give them back what they wanted – well, whatever they took.

SO: Do you know whether Chief Emeka, as Secretary General, was in fact trying to operate below the radar, using his good offices to try to promote a degree of political amelioration – to help to turn that border from a hard frontier to more of a soft, porous border?

MA: In Cyprus?

SO: Yes.

MA: I don't think so, because I didn't see any papers. The other thing is [that] Cyprus has got an internal situation which one might have thought would have led to an activist foreign policy. It hasn't. They're in the EU, aren't they? Cyprus is part of the EU, isn't it?

SO: Yes, it is. It's also part of the Eurozone. That was what part of the crisis was about, 18 months ago.

MA: But in terms of recovering the lost part, of recovering the Northern region or whatever, they have a problem. Now, for them to get it back with the support of, say, Britain, or the Americans… That will impinge on NATO unity.

SO: Dramatically so.

MA: Okay. So, what is the alternative? They are not particularly prominent in third world meetings, the Cypriots. So, they've fallen between two stools.

SO: Yes. Moses, thank you for that.

[END OF AUDIOFILE INSERT ONE]

Insert Two: Concerning Mozambique and the Commonwealth

SO: Moses, please, when did the idea of Mozambique joining the Commonwealth first emerge? Do you recall?

MA: It's difficult to put a precise date to the question, but I can speak of the background circumstances which led to Mozambique eventually becoming a member of the Commonwealth. It has to do, one, with the fact that all Mozambique's neighbours are Commonwealth countries, and this is something they had been thinking about. In fact, at a subsequent meeting with Chief Anyaoku – much, much later – I remember Joaquim Chissano, who had by then had long succeeded Samora Machel, saying that although Mozambique was a Portuguese colony, it was really nominal.

SO: Yes, you say this in the transcript.

MA: Exactly. The content of Mozambique's colonial experience was British. The farms – the big agricultural estates – were owned by English companies; so were the railways. And of course, Mozambique had a large contingent of migrant workers in South African mines. Now, all these things must have gone to impel a reconsideration of their diplomatic position, of their international relations, come independence.

SO: In 1975.

MA: Yeah, and the first person who raised it, as far as I know, was the late President Samora Machel, but he didn't see it through. He died...

SO: In the plane crash in '86.

MA: …in the plane crash, and then Chissano is the one who negotiated it.

SO: Okay. So, it's a question of involvement in supporting the liberation struggle in neighbouring Rhodesia/Zimbabwe; a function of geographic proximity to other members of the SADC region, who are also core members of the Commonwealth, the Front Line States; it's the diplomatic engagement from Arnold Smith's era of technical assistance to Mozambique, precisely because of the price the Mozambican economy was having to pay because of sanctions against Rhodesia. So, there's a geographic, a political and an economic logic to it all. Okay. And also, as you say, the permeating influence of forms of Englishness from neighbouring Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, but also possibly coming up from South Africa.

MA: This is the other point I went to let you know: that the African masses in Mozambique saw through the hollowness of Portuguese colonialism. Now, this is important. In no other African country of my experience did the masses actually see the *nudity* of the colonial power as they did in Mozambique.

SO: But not in Angola?

MA: No. Angola… I don't know, because I didn't have much to do with Angola. But if it was, then it was more so in Mozambique. Nobody needed to tell them that these people who are sitting on your necks can't take your fire in this world.

So, that kind of mystique of the white man didn't exist there, which existed in places like Ghana. [In Ghana], it took a lot of work to explain, "Why independence?" But there, the facts spoke for themselves. Are you with me?

SO: Totally.

MA: So, the move to join the Commonwealth [was also] in order to strengthen Mozambique's security, because they saw how it had restrained the situation in Zimbabwe. That was another attraction for the Mozambicans.

SO: Okay. Thank you, Moses.

[END OF AUDIOFILE INSERT TWO]

Insert Three: Concerning Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers

SO: Moses, please, if I could ask you more about the Tamil Tigers and your observations of them as a political movement.

MA: The only occasion I encountered a representative of the Tigers was here in London. They sent a gentleman to come and brief the Secretary General on the situation and on their position. What struck me unforgettably about the guy was [that] all their grievances were cached not so much in political terms as in academic, abstract terms. For example, the language issue: he tried to say that their language, Tamil, had not received the parity with whatever the other one was [Sinhalese].

SO: What did he mean by parity?

MA: Well, people didn't get enough publicity on the telly, radio... Now, I was a bit surprised by that. I couldn't believe that that was the driving force behind their struggle: it had to be much more fundamental than that, and the lack of a discussion on the fundamental issues was their weakest point, in my view.

SO: So, there was a sense of cultural alienation which he radiated, this representative of the LTTE from Paris?

MA: Yes. I know he was coming from Paris, but whether that accounts for the cultural side of things… [*Laughter*]

SO: But leaving that aside, your sense was that this was more of a linguistic grievance, a cultural grievance, rather than a profound argument of political alienation, subordination and the persecution of minorities?

MA: Yes, it was. I felt that the emphasis was misplaced. I felt that he had not brought out the political side of their case with the necessary passion and clarity. After all, he was out to make allies; he was out to present a case, and the case wasn't coming through his presentation.

SO: Before Chief Emeka had that meeting, do you remember preparing a detailed briefing paper?

MA: No.

SO: Okay. I was just wondering if there had been a detailed study of the particular constitutional or political economy situation in Sri Lanka.

MA: I'll tell you this. In my experience, an envoy coming to present a case to the representative of a section – an important section – of the international community would have come with a prepared paper which you would leave behind. He didn't.

SO: Absolutely, yes. You leave an *aide-mémoire*. So, was this person a university professor?

MA: Good question.

SO: He obviously wasn't a political spokesperson.

MA: If he had been a university professor in his homeland before, I wouldn't be able to tell, but he was in exile in Paris. That's the other thing. I thought Paris was an awkward place.

SO: Why?

MA: Well, one, there are not many Commonwealth countries represented in Paris. Two, there was nothing in it for the French, and whatever investment they were required to make would have been a net loss. The French, in my experience, would do all they can to support a Francophone country in trouble, especially if the other side is Anglophone. But this is Anglophone versus Anglophone. Now, the Indian side – the Indian side of the case – he [the LTTE representative] didn't talk about. And I asked myself, "Have they briefed the Indians before coming to us?" That would have been their natural route. It doesn't appear to have been the case.

SO: Okay, now I understand why you would have had such doubts.

[END OF AUDIOFILE INSERT THREE]

Insert Four: Concerning the Cold War and the Commonwealth

MA: The Cold War as the 'Cold War' was never an issue within the Commonwealth. Why? [It was] not that it didn't exist – it existed – but it was in no one's interest to try and bring it in to the councils of the Commonwealth. One, the majority of the developing countries in the membership, they didn't want the Cold War dragged in. Two, I think it was quite clear that the Commonwealth did better – it prospered better – by appearing to be for something higher than ideological rivalry. That is why you could have an Nkrumah in it, in good faith. You understand?

SO: Yes.

MA: That's why a Nyerere could take it so seriously.

SO: Because the Commonwealth's political philosophy was modernity?

MA: Yeah. It wasn't about ideological conflicts. And in fact, if it's the case, membership of the Commonwealth was seen as bringing reason.

SO: Not race?

MA: No. Bringing *reason* to the powers: the powers on both sides of the ideological Cold War divide. Now, if you take Canada. Canada was a part of the western alliance: it never hid that fact. But what was the difference? You could not resent Canada for being a part of the western alliance, because its membership of the western alliance was grounded in reason, not hegemony. I mean, the Commonwealth saw itself as a kind of bridge: not through its membership, but through its good sense. It was a bridge between the two camps. Now, a Commonwealth country or government speaking internationally did so with less suspicion than if it had been an allied member. In other words, we didn't have an Ivory Coast in the Commonwealth. You understand what I'm saying? I think that was an invaluable source of strength for the association. No one tried, in my time – after my time there was no ideological war anymore anyway! – nobody tried to drag in ideological issues. Britain never did – never – and I think it suited Britain that way.

SO: Yes. So, this was a determinedly non-Cold War international association in the wider international environment of the Cold War, but unlike the Non-Aligned Movement.

MA: Yes, well, we didn't fly a flag saying, "This is a neutral association." Our deeds spoke better for us.

SO: So, on this question of the ideological contest in international relations, Moses, please could I ask you – as a long-standing Ghanaian diplomat – to reflect on this question of the Commonwealth and race in international relations in the latter part of the twentieth century?

MA: Well, the Commonwealth, in a way, was the answer to the issue of race in international relations. It didn't set out to do that, but its imaginative mechanisms enabled it to play that [role]. And thank God we have no constitution in the Commonwealth.

SO: No, but we have a Commonwealth Charter now.

MA: But what does the Charter say which hinders common sense? Nothing. I don't even know why they bothered with it. That was all after my time. It was a mistake, really. But anyway, as a Ghanaian and as an Nkrumahist, I rejoice in the membership of my country's place in the Commonwealth. It's not given me any complexes; it didn't prevent Ghana from taking a very high profile stand on the questions raised in Southern Africa. In fact, I think it helped us, because when a South African diplomat, say – an apartheid diplomat – saw the Commonwealth in action, and [there were] these mixes of hues and colours and so on, with no pretence, no claims of superiority or inferiority on either side, he would have gone back and said, "Oh, I have seen the future; it does work." That's why the Commonwealth was able to play this big role in South Africa which the UN couldn't. It came with too heavy a load.

SO: It was avowedly non-racial in every shape and form.

MA: That's right. And you could see it – where else could you see that?

SO: But if the Commonwealth and this question of race in international relations was particularly highlighted in its approach to South Africa, what about the place of race in wider international relations? This is a very, very difficult suitcase to unpack.

MA: Yeah, but it doesn't have much cache, you know? At the beginning of the twentieth century, yes: WEB DuBois and co were saying, "The colour question is the question of the twentieth century; it's going to be the dominant issue of the twentieth century." But with decolonisation, it has become an international, interstate issue. Now, there may be racism in individual countries, but that is the challenge for domestic leaders to deal with. But you will not get far if you have a colour flag, internationally, and thank God for that.

SO: Okay, but it isn't simply a sharp binary, a sharp dichotomy. There are also other ethnic complexions of national identity that play into it. I'm thinking about in the Pacific, where you have Indo-Fijian against Fijian-Fijian/Tokai aspects, and the wider complications that can come with that. In the Caribbean, there's a different political dimension to that complexion. You mentioned earlier about the importance of Mrs Ghandi, leader of India, endorsing Sonny Ramphal's candidacy for Secretary General and that aspect of ethnicity and power – it's an important dynamic.

MA: Yes, it's an important dynamic in the sense that it's not something you want to deny. You understand? But in and of its own, it's strong enough. Now, if Sonny had got Mrs G's endorsement – which he did – there was a point of departure. He could not have done the wonderful work he did for the Commonwealth on the basis of that.

SO: No. No, I'm not saying that this was by any means the sole motivation.

MA: I know you are not saying that. That was the take-off point for him. But if, for example, tomorrow, the South Africans – well, they've got it now, but let's suppose they come up in the next fifty years or so – [they come up with] a candidate for the Secretary Generalship of the OAU who is white. That would

be interesting to watch. You cannot object to his colour, because there were white South Africans dying in the cause of South Africa's freedom. "What did you say about that? You endorsed it; you approved it." So, gradually, I think that thing is losing its power. This is my own interpretation. Now, Namibia is the same. If you go to the ex-Portuguese colonies, it's all mixed up. The browns are so many. Where do you draw the line? It will always be an irrational factor, really. It has become even more so now.

SO: Thank you, Moses, because as I say, it's a very difficult suitcase to start to unpack. But I tell you, my last trip to the Caribbean, I was going round, thinking to myself, "I feel so comfortable, because of the Commonwealth dimension."

MA: You did?

SO: Oh, yeah; totally.

MA: Thank God. I have had that experience too. The other thing is this: my first year in Cambridge, we had a Sierra Leonean – a very distinguished man: fellow of his Cambridge college, fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, a very distinguished Ambassador. He was High Commissioner here, Vice-Chancellor of a university, Ambassador to the UN, [and] later one of the Under-Secretary Generals. He came – this was autumn of 1971 – and he made a statement which I will never forget. He said that, "The white men you see here are not like the white men in South Africa." And he said, "The white men in South Africa are also not like the white men here." He then went on. He said, "The white men in South Africa are clothed in fear." He said they walk around in fear. He said, "Forget about the guns and the tanks and all. Beneath all those gadgets is a big fear, and it's a fear they've brought on themselves. One day, when that problem is resolved, they won't walk in fear." He said, "They'll be there, and [they'll be like] the white men here you're interacting with. Now, when you are in a class with white people or you go to your tutorials or whatever, you don't think about the colour of the person who's going to sit in front of you." We said, "No, we don't." He said, "Yes. It will be like that." And when I went to South Africa, I recalled his words. "The white men in South Africa are not like the ones you see here." Now they are the same. There's a difference. This carried luggage, this self-imposed baggage… Now they've freed themselves of it, and we're all the better for it.

SO: Very much so.

[END OF AUDIOFILE INSERT FOUR]