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VOICE FILE NAME: COHP Moses Anafu (Part Two)

Key:

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

Part Two:

SO: This is Sue Onslow talking to Dr Moses Anafu in Willesden on Thursday, 3rd July 2014. Moses, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to a second interview for this oral history project. I wonder if you could begin, please, by describing how you came to be involved in the events in Lesotho after the 1994 Army mutiny.

MA: Let me go back first to the return of the King. That's how I first got involved with Lesotho. The Army had sent Moshoeshoe II into exile [in 1990] and he had then contacted the Secretary General and asked for help to go back. So, I was sent to Lesotho to negotiate his return. The man who was then in charge of the military government was somebody without much education, but he was obviously under the influence of others who were not all soldiers – some of them seasoned and experienced politicians.

SO: So, who were the power brokers in Lesotho? Or were these powerbrokers people from outside the country?

MA: No, these were their own people – I'm talking about the internal situation. Of course, then, at the time, South Africa was also in the middle of the transition, and what I decided to do was to get the military government to accept in principle the return of the King. They hadn't deposed him – his son was holding the fort for him, as it were. But the son had refused to be crowned King in place of his father. So, it meant that technically the King was still the King, except he was out of the country. He had been driven out by the Army. Another minor detail – which is in a way interesting – was that he was living in the High Commissioner's residence here.

SO: In the Lesotho High Commissioner's residence in London?

MA: Yeah. The High Commissioner left his residence and came to another property that was in Willesden, here, to make way for the King to take over his official residence. So, quite clearly, the formalities were maintained. He was King, but not King, if you get the drift of my thought.

SO: Yes.

MA: But we knew that if he had to go back, he had to go back either as King or not, and my instructions were to ensure his return. I went to Lesotho. When I got there, I went to see General Phisoana Ramaema, but I had only to talk to him for a few minutes to realise that he was only the front man – there must have been more astute people in the background. Anyway, I talked to him and I said, "Look, it's not good for the health of your country to have the Head of State outside. It's not as if you've deposed him, and don't forget that he has a Pan-African profile which no politician today in Lesotho has. You will have to make up your mind whether you want peace in Lesotho, because if you are going to depose him, it will split the country down the middle." Anyway, in the end I drafted a text which was to serve as the basis of his return.

SO: Who were General Ramaema's chief backers? Did you talk to them as well, or did you focus your attentions and energies on him?

MA: I talked to the politicians; I talked to some of them. I talked to the Church, because Lesotho is a very Catholic country. The Church has a lot of sway, and not one of them said to me we don't want him to return. So, I was basically narrowing down the basis of the opposition so that I could focus on it; who was sworn against his return.

SO: Yes. Why were they antagonistic towards the King?

MA: They couldn't tell me.

SO: They couldn't tell you, or they wouldn't tell you?

MA: If they could, they would have. But I got the impression that maybe his personality was an issue. But then to say, "We don't want the King to return" – nobody said that. And even Ramaema – who was the one who supervised his extrusion from the country – couldn't tell me that. I tended not to attach too much weight to him. He was not educated at all, really, and I don't think the South African government was involved either.

SO: I was going to ask whether the South African government was involved, because they would have been the previous arbiters…

MA: Their hands were full. Oh yes, they would have been the decision-takers. But no, the South African government by then had its hands full with its own internal situation. In fact, I don't remember if there was, at the time, a South African Ambassador to Lesotho, but they had somebody in Johannesburg who they didn't call an Ambassador.

SO: So, what would he have been – the 'Accredited Diplomatic Representative'? That was the title they used for the Rhodesian representative in Johannesburg when the country was an international pariah.

MA: Accredited?

SO: Yes.

MA: That's a heavy word. No, I wish it had been as clear cut as that; then I would know what to do.

SO: But, instead, it was someone who was simply their interest section?

MA: Yes, that's right. And he was a friend of mine, as it happened. So, when I first met him in Johannesburg, I was very surprised. I said, "You are a very senior man. You were High Commissioner in London and now you're here." He said, "Yes, you know, they're our neighbours whether we like them or not." Anyway, he couldn't tell me the case against the King either. So I said, alright. Basically, the memo I would write for the parties to look at would say that the return of…and there's the other thing. I didn't know whether I should say 'King', so I said His Majesty. I omitted King because, you know, you can be an ex-King and still be called Your Majesty, can't you?

SO: Yes, I think you can!

MA: Yeah, so, "The return of His Majesty would make for a more united country, especially at a time of considerable change in the region," and so on. And then I gave it to Ramaena. I said, "You type it for me." So that, if it leaks…

SO: You'd know exactly where it came from!

MA: So, it was typed and I said, "Take it to your advisors, or the Council – the Military Council – and consider it. Is it an acceptable basis on which he can come back?" He took it, typed it and to their credit, it didn't leak.

SO: What was the politics of handling the King's family? Did you have to walk with care?

MA: No, I went to see his son [Bereng Seeiso] who was more or less acting King, without accepting the title. 'The present King'. A very astute young man: very impressive, educated at Ampleforth. So, the Jesuits did a good job, didn't they? Then, when I ran through with him the terms on which his father could come back, he didn't say a thing. He asked me whether I had cleared that with the Military government and I said yes, they had seen it; they typed it for me. And I said, "I'm not asking whether you agree. Can you live with it? That's what I want to know. Is there anything here that is outrageously unacceptable?" He said, "No." I said, "Okay, I'm going to run with this."

SO: Did you have to also talk to elements in the press?

MA: No.

SO: So, you didn't have to manage the presentation of the story, or anything like that?

MA: No. I couldn't talk to the press.

SO: This was an entirely below-the-radar, good offices role that you were fulfilling here – as Chief Emeka's emissary?

MA: Yes. No talking to the press; I avoided them like the plague.

SO: Did South Africans approach you in any way to ask what was going on?

MA: No.

SO: I wondered if there was some concern about a possible flight of refugees across the border, or whether the crisis in Lesotho might have any impact on the fraught politics of transition in South Africa?

MA: No. But [the South Africans] would have known I was there. They didn't approach me, no. And I couldn't go there; it would have complicated my work.

SO: Was any other government paying particular attention? Were the British sending you messages of moral support, or the Front Line presidents?

MA: I used to speak to the British High Commissioner in Lesotho then, but basically I had those kind of conversations to see what other useful bits I might pick up on who else is in the mediation. But, anyway, who were those opposed to the King's return, outside the Army? There was one man...He wasn't opposed to the King's return…Evastius Sekhonyana. He's dead now. He was Finance Minister. I was in close touch with him. Who else? That's part of the problem with Lesotho politics. These people who don't come up – they're always underground, nothing brings them to the surface. Anyway, when I had done the rounds, I think that Moshoeshoe II saw [the draft]. I didn't give it to him, but he saw a copy of what I had done, and he was anxious to impress upon me that he never wanted to be an executive monarch – which means there were circles that were accusing him of that.

SO: So, was Max having to handle any aspect of this crisis, as head of Political Affairs?

MA: No, Max wasn't there.

SO: Was Chief Emeka handling the King – here, in London – and addressing his particular sensitivities and determination not to be an executive monarch, but instead a ceremonial one, while you were trying to broker the circumstances to permit his return?

MA: I don't know that the Chief followed it that closely once I was on the ground, as it were. But, of course, I kept in touch with him and told him [of] the progress or lack of it. But, anyway, in the end, we got to an agreed statement. Have you seen it?

SO: No, I haven't.

MA: It should be easily accessible, because it's a public document now. [See Appendix Three] What we said was that we wanted His Majesty…or, [rather], "the nation agreed that His Majesty's return should be in circumstances that made for greater national unity."

SO: Excuse me, Moses, that's a wonderfully imprecise phrase. You must have been proud of your political fudge! [*Laughter*]

MA: Well, that's what the traffic could bear at the time. But, in any case, the King could live with it. And then, when he was going back [in July 1992], I accompanied him. And, you know, then I realised…Because, first of all, at the airport in Maseru, the military had prevented some of the lorries full of people who were coming from the remote parts of Lesotho to welcome their King. What they had wanted to do was to keep it low-key.

SO: So, the military didn't want it to be seen as a triumphant return by His Majesty? Having ousted him in a coup in the first place, I can see why that didn't fit their agenda.

MA: Didn't fit the agenda. On the other hand, I was there representing the Commonwealth, and they knew that I would report what I saw and heard. Anyway, to give you an idea of how popular he was, for something like a mile to the palace we had a welcoming guard drawn up of Basuto horse riders. It was spectacular. And two of his sons rode up to welcome him, and they brought out a white horse for him and a Basuto blanket for him to change into, and a Basuto hat. I hadn't realised what a horseman he was! It was moving, he changed, got onto the horse…Impressive horsemanship. Then I also understood why the Army didn't want a big crowd at the airport. Are you with me?

SO: Yes.

MA: I went with Clive Jordan from the Information Department. [There] was a big feast, some tears from his family, but we put him in and, the next morning, went back. They said I should address the assembled crowd and I said, "Well, our job was to return your King. You must now look after him, and looking after him means doing everything that makes for a stable Lesotho – stable and united – especially on the eve of these big changes that are about to take place next door. You've always been in the forefront of the Commonwealth effort against Apartheid, and now we're coming to a resolution. So, we hope that you continue to play a constructive role, beginning from your own domestic situation." And that was it.

SO: Moses, just as a reflection on this, you have situated these events very much against the backdrop of huge transition in South Africa. How big was the Lesotho Army? Surely this was a relatively small Officer Corps?

MA: Very small.

SO: Was this an attempt by a small cohort of Army officers in Lesotho to keep a degree of control of power, because they saw that change was accelerating in South Africa?

MA: You know, I don't think so, because there has never been a Republican movement of any significance in that country, in Lesotho. [Also], the Basuto, as you know, is really a collection of refugees from South Africa – the same South Africa.

SO: I just wondered about the extent to which the borders were actually 'soft', and so the sense of change in neighbouring South Africa was spilling over into Lesotho.

MA: No. But I should say this, that if South Africa – and I would be very surprised if they didn't – have their own discreet sympathisers within Lesotho, they didn't surface. They're too great to hide, because the Lesotho royal family has never been sympathetic to the white government in South Africa. Never.

SO: No, not at all. But given how isolated they are geographically, being landlocked in the middle of South Africa…

MA: Yes, it didn't matter.

SO: …it was hugely problematic in how Lesotho manifested this opposition.

MA: You see, what they tried to do in all the neighbouring States was always to have a cell of sympathisers. Zambia, Zimbabwe, [and] the Portuguese colonies were, in any case, extensions of the South African economy – Mozambique, and to a lesser extent Angola, but that's only because of distance, you see. So, they always had their friends, if you like. But these are friends who would never publically own up to the friendship. That was the problem – or, one of the problems – for that part of South Africa: that all their friends were friends who would not speak up at the critical time.

SO: Yes. What about friends in the neighbourhood? Because I understand that Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle had appealed also to the head of SADC.

MA: He was probably Chairman at the time.

SO: I just wondered if any of your negotiations or fact-finding missions were in collaboration with SADC.

MA: No.

SO: Was there parallel work being done by SADC to try to promote resolution of the crisis?

MA: The return of Moshoeshoe?

SO: Yes.

MA: No. Not even the UN or the OAU was involved in that. The chronology was: first, the return of the King, then, the mutiny – or, rather, the disturbance within the Army, let's call it.

SO: So, then you and Max worked to negotiate the ceasefire? I have 'ceasefire' written here, but I don't know if that's the right word. How did you achieve this?

MA: Well, first of all, when we got there, we could see that something terrible was about to happen. The Army had split into two. You know [that] Max is a former army officer, don't you?

SO: Yes, I do. You can tell that by the way he walks into a room.

MA: Okay. He got the sword for the best cadet in his year.

SO: Did he? The Sword of Honour?

MA: He hid all that from me until much, much later. Yes, Max is complicated. But anyway, I was really delighted to have him because he could understand the technical side of it, which I couldn't. The Army split into two, and it had nothing to do with the King; it had to do with their own internal differences. You see, the mechanised section of the Army was the elite side. Then you had the foot soldiers, and the foot soldiers were the numerical majority. So, when we first got there, we said, "Look, let us assemble all of them and talk in general terms so that we can get a feel of their situation." At that time, they had already been deployed. The mechanised units were on surrounding hills with their guns turned towards the city centre and – I don't know what you call them in that case – the 'non-mechanised' [units] were scared. But I asked the men the same question: I asked, if you are in majority...Because the problem is where the mechanised divisions always had the pick of everything and they, well, they got the dregs of what's left. But you wear the same uniform, so how do you know the enemy – how do you tell the enemy? They said, "Ah, the Infantry had AK-47s, and the mechanised units had big guns, so you could tell by the weaponry who was on which side." And they all had an Israeli gun, the Galil. Everybody took that home like their uniform, as it were. Can you believe?

SO: Yes, I can. That's what they used to do in the Swiss Army: people would take their guns home.

MA: Really? Well, they were doing that there, too. [*Laughter*] So, what we then decided was we would commute between the two sides. So, we'd go and talk to Group A today, and tomorrow, talk to Group B.

SO: Did they have discernible leaders that you could talk to, each of these sides?

MA: No, they didn't put forward leaders, no. Everybody spoke for himself, they said. [*Laughter*] But they had leaders, obviously.

SO: Well, yes, but if there is a discernible leader, it makes negotiating a hell of a lot easier!

MA: Yes, yes! But it also made risks for them. In the event of a failure to reach a settlement, what was going to happen to them?

SO: How big were these groups? I mean, what are we talking about: an army of a thousand men?

MA: If that; couldn't be more. Maybe 600 even.

SO: Did this stand-off also involve the police?

MA: No police. It was an Army affair.

SO: I've always wondered why a small, mountainous kingdom like Lesotho would need an Army; surely they need policing units to keep civil order, but…

MA: Yeah, we'll come to that. Now, what do they need an Army for? They really did not have an Army until, I think, well after independence. And it wasn't raised along the lines [that] you would expect an Army to be raised: such as, what are the security considerations, what are the defence needs? And who is the enemy, the potential enemy?

SO: So, was it a job creation scheme?

MA: Yes, you've hit the nail on the head. And what made it even worse than that, then, was that the politicians…Everybody was smuggling his [own] people into the Army.

SO: Oh, that's dangerous.

MA: Yes, extremely dangerous.

SO: So, you have the BCP-led government, with politicians each starting to create their own private militia.

MA: Yeah, but within the national Army; [creating] their following within the Army.

SO: That's a very dangerous dynamic.

MA: Very.

SO: How quickly did you realise this?

MA: When we started, we said we did not want anybody to give us their names; we just wanted them to get up and talk in the room. But in two different rooms; far away. And a number of points emerged. One was that a lot of them had been recruited into the Army by politicians; and two, they felt [that] their promotions were therefore along political lines. Now, it's significant that they didn't say, "Well, here we are, Front Line African Army, vis-à-vis the South

Africa Army, and we didn't have proper weapons." No, that wasn't an issue. The issue was that promotions were biased and along the lines of favouritism. Fine. Then they said [that] politicians would come to their barracks in the night, and instigate them to change governments. So, in the end, Max and I were very grateful. We said, "Look, clearly you have no differences with each other as soldiers. All the differences come from outside. Now, in that case, what you need is to be a truly national Army. Not a coalition of partisan armies." That went down very well. And, after that, those were the lines along which our conversation went.

SO: As soon as you'd articulated such an attractive, unifying approach – that of a national, meritocratic Army representing the kingdom of Lesotho and responsible to the Commander in Chief, presumably the King – were you at that point starting to reach outside, thinking about what training they were going to need to achieve this sense of cohesion? Or that was further down the line?

MA: Yes, we were – what Commonwealth technical assistance could be given, yes. We left that with the technical assistance section – TAG.

SO: The Commonwealth – and particularly Britain – had done this before: there had been a BMAT, the British Mission for Army Training, in Zimbabwe post-1980, they'd done it in Uganda, and they were doing it down in South Africa. And there would be a need for it in Lesotho?

MA: But, you see, Lesotho's geographical position and political position meant that they got left out of these things. What kind of training…Let's say 1970. The South African regime was still in place, very much so, and very confident. What kind of training can you give [Lesotho] without making South Africa think that something was being planned.

SO: That something was up, yes.

MA: So, that was always a constraining factor. Second, Lesotho itself would not want anything that would arouse suspicions in Pretoria.

SO: No, they needed to stay below the radar.

MA: Yes.

SO: That this was not a rising, feisty little power…

MA: When it came to sanctions, they had a wonderful formula, the Lesotho people. They said, "Look, we ourselves are in no position to impose any kind of sanctions against South Africa, but we don't want you to use our vulnerability as the excuse not to impose sanctions."

[*Laughter*] Very clever, isn't it?

SO: That's seriously smart.

MA: So, "Oh no, we can't do it. So the rest of you can do it. It's up to you."

SO: Yes. "But don't use us as the excuse."

MA: Exactly. So, that way, they kept their pan-African credentials clean, [and] their Commonwealth loyalties clean. I'm sure that the regime in Pretoria saw through that anyway.

SO: But it was an important – and not just simply a face-saving – approach by the Lesotho King and his advisors. So, what was the outcome of your and Max's work to negotiate the ceasefire in the January? Did it fail?

MA: It didn't fail. Failure would have meant a return to fighting. It would have meant that the return of the King would have been reversed. But none of that happened. There were follow-up missions, but just for two reasons: to let the people of Lesotho and their government know that we have not washed our hands of them – it was important to do that – [and] also, we went to South Africa quite a bit. It's not far, so we would drop in. But, you see, in one of these periodic upsets in Lesotho – this time after the end of apartheid – the South Africans made a gaucherie. They sent their Minister of Internal Affairs [to Lesotho]. The Basuto said to us, "You see, look at how our neighbours are behaving. We are an independent State."

SO: "We are not a Bantustan."

MA: We are not a Bantustan. But they are treating us like a Bantustan.

SO: So, when did things start to calm down, from your perspective, Moses?

MA: Well, the return of the King was a major turning point in calming down things. The ending of apartheid in South Africa was the next thing, because we now had a government next door that was interested in stability. They knew that if there was any trouble, their shaky sovereignty will be exposed for what it is. So, they never took things, if you like, to a risky point.

SO: Moses, on your comment about SADC taking such a back seat…Was this because it was focusing on – as it saw it – the bigger prize, the bigger picture, of South Africa? Or was it because they didn't have the bureaucratic capability or the institutional backing? Was SADC, at this point, more of a customs union than an organisation that had institutional and diplomatic capabilities?

MA: The Basutos themselves didn't call in SADC, which is significant. Very significant. Why didn't they call in their own regional organisation? Well, I now enter the realm of speculation, but anyway, SADC has always been strong on economic co-operation. Its Secretariat, I don't think, is strong on the political side. And if it came to that, they would probably have then made it an OAU affair.

SO: But there was no hint of the OAU being drawn in?

MA: No.

SO: **Thank you. Well, there was certainly the policy space and opportunity for a Commonwealth initiative, as well as an identifiable need.**

So, your next role as Chief Emeka's personal emissary [was in relation to] the whole democratisation process in Zanzibar. In October 1995, the elections in Zanzibar produced a political stand-off between the political party that was predominant on the Tanzanian mainland and the political party within Zanzibar Island, and this stand-off was crippling the economy. So, how was Chief approached to use his good offices?

MA: Chief never let on [who] his sources [were], but he kept his ear very close to the ground; he knew which [places] were the potential trouble spots. In Zanzibar, if you look at the results of the election, there are two parties: the old Afro-Shirazi Party, which was the party of Zanzibari nationalism – I'll come to that because that's very critical to understanding it – and you had various parties which were sympathetic to their Sultan. Now, the Afro-Shirazi is not just a name. It was the coalition of Africans and those of Sherazi stock – originally Persians, Iranians.

SO: **From the time when Zanzibar was part of the Sultanate of Oman …**

MA: Yes.

SO: **…and part of 'the Swahili coast', isn't it?**

MA: Yeah. It's significant that the Shirazis...through India – not with the Africans, and not with the Arabs. Then, they had more or less the same electoral strength; the differences were in fractions. So, some kind of easy coalition was cobbled together. Then, the union with the mainland.

SO: **That was brokered after independence, in April 1964 – after the rebellion against the Sultan and the democratically elected government?**

MA: You see, two years, I think, after independence, the trouble started. As I say, at the election, they were about equal. And the Arabs – the Afro-Shirazi – made a bid for power. And that, in a way, accelerated the union: the move towards a union. But it was always a tenuous union and remains [so] to this day – tenuous. So, there is the President in Zanzibar and the President in the mainland, in Dar. The one on the island has no international recognition. Every year, they celebrate the revolution in Zanzibar and he invites the President of the mainland to come and they all come and take their seats and he takes his time to come out. I've seen it. Sometimes he's inordinately late in coming out. In the meantime, the union Army is in full array for him to come and inspect. Very complicated.

SO: **Indeed. What about the events after the election of October 1995?**

MA: So, the same. If you look at the results of the election of 1995, there was hardly any difference in terms of proportionality between the two parties. They had each maintained their electoral strength in the intervening period. But,

somehow, the opposition could never see themselves ever getting to power if this situation continued.

SO: Did they have a concept of being a 'loyal opposition'?

MA: Yes, because they would never have tried force. They call themselves by a new name now: not Afro-Shirazi, [but] the CUF – the Civic United Front. And then you've got TANU. So, basically, what I went there to do was to see whether we could get them to work together, i.e., accentuate the commonalities. Anyaoku himself came, and the ruling party agreed that they would give the opposition one or two seats in Parliament. So, that was how we left that. But they never gave them.

SO: They reneged on the deal?

MA: They never gave them and, you see, it embittered the CUF. By the way, they are part of the Liberal International. Now, that is difficult for us to enforce, but you see, I'll tell you this. There is no sitting President in Dar who will want the record to say that he let go of Zanzibar.

SO: No, I can understand why no President would want to have the stigma that they were responsible for 'losing' Zanzibar and everything that would mean for the diminution of Tanzanian sovereign territory. That would come at a very high political and reputational price.

MA: Yes. So, the mainland party doesn't give instructions to its wing in Zanzibar to say, "This is the agreed settlement. Can you please proceed and implement it." So, it's there.

SO: Moses, this crisis seems to have been particularly protracted. You went there after the October 1995 elections, and it seems to have been finally inching towards a degree of settlement by 1999. And yet, there is a May 2000 report from TOMRIC, a Tanzanian news agency, in which you expressed considerable frustration over your mediation in this seemingly endless crisis. You must have had to make multiple trips to…

MA: Not from London. I was actually based there for, I think, two months.

SO: Were you working in collaboration with other people in the diplomatic community? With the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan or…

MA: No.

SO: …with the OAU?

MA: No, I was alone.

SO: Oh, you were alone? Were you sending any reports to New York, to Kofi Annan's office?

MA: Well, I was reporting to my boss. I wrote regular reports for Emeka. What he did with them, I don't know, but I doubt that he sent them to anybody.

SO: Did you have any sort of institutional support, any sort of administrative backup?

MA: No, I wrote my reports in longhand and faxed them to London, like that.

SO: In terms of interested regional powers, were you also having to brief the Kenyan President?

MA: Kenya has never really taken an interest. Why do you say Kenya?

SO: Just because it's the most proximate neighbour to the north. There are aspects of the Swahili cultural engagement with Zanzibar that run up the East African littoral; I just wondered if there was any degree of regionalism which was also part of the diplomatic equation.

MA: No, there wasn't, and I don't think that the Tanzanians would have been very happy with me if they had seen me bring in Kenyans.

SO: No, I can understand the diplomatic sensitivities there.

MA: Yes. But, you see, the Swahili thing – which is the common cultural trade between the island – it's practically non-existent politically. From the beginning, the Zanzibaris looked to the mainland. Yes, they had relatives in Lamu and places like that, but it never then translated itself into a cause, politically.

SO: So, there was no conflicting political affiliation to outside parties. It was, as you say, an entirely domestic scenario within Tanzania.

MA: You see, the CUF is in a difficult position. As far as I can make out, they're loyal Tanzanians. They don't look to Oman; they don't look to Lamu in Kenya. They look to the mainland. And their present leader – I don't know if he's still the leader – he was a very senior member of CCM, Chama Cha Mapinduzi, the old TANU. [CCM has] been there for a long time now: since Nyerere's time. But that was also necessitated by the union – it couldn't be Tanganyika African National Union anymore, could it? So, the point that I was making is that it's not in Tanzania's interest to allow the anger and discontent on the island. My sense of the situation is that they realised the perils to which small states are exposed in the world, and so they welcomed the shield of the mainland. But the mainland would need to make up its mind whether it actually does want the island to manage its own life, as long as it doesn't imperil national security.

SO: And the disagreements continued, hence your comment to TOMRIC in June of 2000.

MA: You see, it continues because the settlement we brokered has not been implemented.

SO: Yes, as you say, they haven't allowed for Cabinet representation for Zanzibar in the mainland Cabinet.

MA: Yeah. They didn't even want Cabinet. They said a seat. They wanted an extra seat in the Island's legislature.

SO: Oh, so not in the inner sanctum of power?

MA: Yeah. You see the problem. A seat – an extra seat – and it would not have imperilled anything. But, as I say – and this you have to take into account seriously – there is no President, Union President, in Dar es Salaam who would like the historical record to say that Tanzania lost Zanzibar on his watch. That's important.

SO: It is. So, despite your best negotiating efforts, there remained irreconcilable differences. Could you contrast that, in fact, with the success in Sierra Leone?

MA: But Sierra Leone was different.

SO: Indeed.

MA: Sierra Leone…That's where we negotiated with the rebels, the RUF. So, the Sierra Leone thing was…Well, I worked with the UN man very closely – Berhanu Dinka.

Berhanu Dinka is a very professional diplomat with formidable skills. Now, he and I hit it off from the word go, and we always exchanged views very freely. There, we got the impression that the RUF was not alone. They had regional backers. They had other backers outside Africa – I mean, outside West Africa, in addition to sympathy in some quarters in West Africa.

SO: Were you able to identify who these people were, or who these forces were?

MA: Well, let me give you an example. In one of our meetings with Foday Sankoh, he said to us, "Me and Charles Taylor trained in the same camp in Libya. He has come back and used the training to gain power. You people" – meaning us, the international representatives – "are standing in my way." To say this in open court, as it were!

SO: I'm aware of the RUF's collaboration with Charles Taylor, as well as the Libyan dimension, but were there any other 'deep pockets'? Because of this question of diamonds, the natural resources that were being…

MA: Well, I can tell you that I don't know who they were. In the hotel in Abidjan, I shared the same floor with Foday Sankoh and I saw streams of visitors. They were not peasants, coming to see him. So, I said to myself, "Ah, so these talks have, in a way, ended up making it easier for the RUF to remain in contact with their backers."

SO: Why? Just because in terms of communication, the very fact…

MA: Yeah, there was no communication problem.

SO: So, you were in Abidjan to negotiate the agreement – which was concluded in November of 1996 – but the very fact that Sankoh was in a major West African city facilitated his contact…

MA: With good connections: planes, cars. I saw them, but I cannot say where they came from or who they were because I didn't talk to them. But I could see streams of visitors, and he was there and in Togo, which was our next visit. Because after we had negotiated the Abidjan agreement, he said he didn't like that, and in Togo he had a sure footing – more, for some reason, than he had had in Abidjan. The then Togo Foreign Minister did everything to exclude me from the meeting.

SO: So, in addition to your close collaboration with the UN Special Envoy, Berhanu Dinka, I have a note that the other moral guarantors of the Abidjan agreement were the Special Envoy of the OAU, Adwoa Coleman…

MA: Yes, Adwoa Coleman.

SO: …and then you, representing the Secretary General for the Commonwealth, and also the President of Cote d'Ivoire, Henri Konan Bédié.

MA: Konan Bédié was our host. We worked mainly with his Foreign Minister, Amara Essy – a very fine gentleman. But, by then, it was clear to me that the RUF were really not interested in a peaceful settlement. What they wanted was the chaos of war, leading to a handover of power to them. That's all they were interested in.

SO: Yes. War was extremely profitable.

MA: Too profitable.

SO: So, was this effective collaboration, then, of the Commonwealth – through you – with the structures of ECOWAS?

MA: We didn't have an ECOWAS representative that I can remember. OAU, yes, but ECOWAS, no.

SO: Okay. In terms of the implementation of the Abidjan agreement, you said that you then had to move on to further negotiations in Togo because Foday Sankoh was defying it.

MA: Now, what I didn't understand was why the guarantors allowed another round of negotiations.

SO: Did you talk to Dinka about that?

MA: Well, you know, when we went to Togo, the Togolese authorities tried to humiliate me.

SO: What happened?

MA: Well, I went to represent the Commonwealth, as I had done in Abidjan and [in Cote d'Ivoire] nobody had asked for my credentials. There, they did. The Foreign Minister of Togo at the time did, and did it so crudely.

SO: Did he argue that you were not an 'ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary'?

MA: But nobody there was!

SO: No, okay. So, why did he challenge you?

MA: He asked for my accreditations. I said, "Well, you can ask my colleagues. I have represented the Commonwealth throughout this." So, I said, "Okay, I'll get them." I rang London and they faxed my accreditations. But we never struck it off. He wanted to make life impossible for me.

SO: Why?

MA: I believe that the RUF had got to him. It was obvious to me where he and his government stood on the matter.

SO: Okay. Was there a French dimension in any of this?

MA: By French dimension, you mean Paris?

SO: Yes.

MA: They would have seen Foday Sankoh for what he was: somebody who can only compromise the standing of France in Africa if they gave him their backing. But they didn't ask the International Alert's representative for his credentials, but they asked for only mine.

SO: The fighting was still going on while you were trying to broker this agreement?

MA: Yes.

SO: The appalling brutality, the amputations, the terrorising of the civilian community…

MA: Yes.

SO: …the death toll was rising. Were the British helpful in these negotiations? I'm thinking particularly of Tony Blair, who later liked to emphasise his particular credentials in bringing peace to Sierra Leone...

MA: He hadn't come on the scene, then.

SO: Yes, he hadn't come on the scene by that point, because of course he was not elected till 1997. But I just wondered if there was any particular

backing, assistance, or engagement from other elements of the Commonwealth.

MA: The Secretariat.

SO: In addition to the Secretariat, was there any regional dimension, with Nigeria paying particular attention to what was going on because of being the regional hegemon in that part of the world? Or from Ghana: [did they express] any particular desire to resolve this ongoing crisis?

MA: The Ghana Ambassador in Freetown – the High Commissioner – was a soldier. He was very sympathetic to the military regime then in power. And still, I got on very well with him, but I don't think that I moved him.

SO: Did Chief come out to lend his backing to what you were trying to do in these negotiations?

MA: He didn't, and I didn't need it either.

SO: Did you have other Secretarial support behind you?

MA: I was alone.

SO: Moses, excuse me for saying this, but you are remarkably good at flying solo!

MA: Well, you see, the Secretariat then…We did not want to encourage anything that would bring excessive formality into it.

SO: So, this was in fact a classic example of operating 'below the radar', the discreet use of good offices…

MA: That's right. Commonwealth-style.

SO: It's 'the quiet word', the 'smoothing', the 'let's not bring these differences into the open because then they become more entrenched'?

MA: Let's suppose Emeka came up from time to time. It would raise the price.

SO: And it would have raised the profile of the discussions, too.

MA: Not only that. You see, if the RUF is given to understand that they can always pull big guns in, [then] filibustering...

SO: They would have started to grandstand even more?

MA: And demand more. So, you can't give it, but your boss can give it! [*Laughter*]

SO: So, Chief Emeka's presence would have undermined your credibility?

MA: Well, it does not undermine it, but it certainly reduces my ability to sell something on my own.

SO: Chief Emeka's memoirs refer to developing his good offices in this decade, particularly in order to counter violence and military regimes in Africa – I'm going to come to the whole question of Nigeria in a minute – but did this good offices role have a degree of formality, as you understood it? Was there a template in how the Secretariat in London put good offices into play?

MA: No template: let me get that out quickly. But it had official standing as one of the duties of the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, I think. At that point, we're talking of the Commonwealth [i.e. not just the Secretariat].

SO: But this was the international organisation and bureaucracy of the Commonwealth. So, the Secretariat was responsive, it was not proactive?

MA: It was proactive.

SO: In what way?

MA: Well, how did we hear of this tension in Zanzibar? No government approached us.

SO: But I had understood that the sending of an emissary or a special envoy was only in response to a specific request?

MA: No. I had to go and sell myself!

SO: Ah, okay, so Chief would hear through his phenomenal networks and sources of information …

MA: Yes, that there is trouble brewing at such and such a place, and he would send me or somebody else. That's how I got involved with all these things. Do you know how we got the RUF?

SO: No.

MA: It is not on the record; I'll tell you. Emeka had been wondering what to do, so he decided that he would go on BBC World Service. He went on BBC World Service *Focus on Africa*. He said, "I know you listen to the World Service of the BBC in the bush. I am so and so. I want to help resolve this problem. These are my contact phone numbers, please get in touch." So, they rang the next day and I took over from there. That's how we got involved.

SO: That's remarkable, because it is using all possible means of communication. Circumventing governments and…

MA: When they're cutting the BBC budget, I grieve. They don't know…

SO: I think it's disastrous. This is the most superb source of soft power that Britain has.

MA: Well if you have other contacts, I'll tell you this. There are African Presidents that I know personally who won't go to office until they have first listened to the World Service. Do you understand? These are poor countries; they have no way of getting information other than that in the public domain, and which public domain is better than the BBC?

SO: Indeed. Well, I was talking to one BBC World man – who, in fact, worked on BBC Africa for the World Service – and he told me a tale that, in India, an insult used to be that if someone was pontificating, [you would say], "Who do you think you are, the BBC?" [*Laughter*]

MA: That's right. I don't know whether France International has the same impact on other Francophone countries; I would be surprised if it doesn't.

SO: So, the Chief reached out to the RUF via his interview on the BBC World Service. How long was that negotiation process?

MA: What we did next was [this]: I was sent out to Freetown with Chris Child, a colleague from the department, and two policemen who operate gadgets – radio operators. So, the four of us went out and they went and set up the phone link with the RUF in the bush.

SO: So, where were these radio operators from?

MA: Now that I think of it, I don't think they came from Scotland Yard. They came from a much more complicated outfit.

SO: I didn't think Scotland Yard had radio operators that were quite that sophisticated, but I could be wrong!

MA: But in the bush, too.

SO: No, but they may well have been communications people from the SAS, military intelligence, or perhaps Special Branch?

MA: At that stage?

SO: Anyway, it would be highly skilled technical personnel.

MA: Yes, but how can you take some gadget into Sierra Leone, and where do you direct the thing…which part of the bush?

SO: Don't ask me.

MA: Sue, you must have some…

SO: Well, I'm certainly not going to say it on tape if I do!

MA: Anyway, these radio communications people went to Freetown and were able to get the contact of the RUF based out in the bush. It worked.

SO: Were you liaising particularly with the Foreign Office on this?

MA: I just liaised with my boss. If he then liaised with them…

SO: Okay, so Chief Emeka would have his own contacts in the British government.

MA: Yes, as with other Commonwealth governments.

SO: So, this must have been a protracted process – to establish the necessary trust with the RUF in the bush.

MA: Well, from there they said to me, "One of our people" – RUF people – "will be in Accra next week. Can you be there?" I said, "Yes, I can be there." So, I went and we talked. I said, "Look, this is what the Secretary General wants to do. He wants to help you resolve this problem, so you'll be given a full opportunity to state your case, raise your issues, tell us what your grievances are, and we'll do our best to help." Well, shortly after that, he was sacked from the RUF – or, he left. But Foday Sankoh didn't like me from the word 'go'. We never got on, and we'd never met before that, of course. But I kept my cool and I said to him – I called him Chief – I said, "Chief, you know, you are like this tree, the Orinoco tree: very, very tall. And when you get to the top of [the tree]…It takes a lot of effort to get to the top, but the proverb says [that], when you finally get to the top, fetch as much firewood as you can."

SO: Why does the proverb say that?

MA: Because the tree in question is so difficult to climb, so, if you persevere and get to the top, make the most of the opportunity and bring down as much of the firewood. So, I said, "You are to me an Orinoco tree. It's very difficult to get to you, so if sometimes I seem to be repeating myself, do please forgive me because I want to make sure that I hear you correctly, I understand you correctly, and we can do business together." He said, "Okay." But I think somebody else had got onto him. You see, we in the Commonwealth – then, and still now, why not – we in the Commonwealth take this commitment to democracy seriously. I can't speak for other organisations. And that is difficult.

SO: Yes, if you're not all working for the same ultimate end goal.

MA: How else can an African government rig Foday Sankoh out in expensive clothes? You understand? He became a changed man. Okay, you can be generous and say, yes, it's to make him comfortable so that he can negotiate properly and so on. But they never said to the negotiating parties, "Look, we are happy to host you, we are honoured to host you, and we're hosting you not on our own behalf but in the name of the rest of Africa. That's what Africa needs: peace, stability. So, if any of you, once you've entered into a commitment, dare to withdraw from it – for whatever reason – or undermine it, we will denounce you." If they had said that, it would have been legitimate in that context; it would have helped a great deal. But they either could not – and certainly did not – say that.

SO: In fact, the way they then treated Foday Sankoh, giving him legitimacy, [that] would have made him more obdurate; it would have reinforced his sense of entitlement.

MA: At the signing of the second agreement, the Lomé Peace Accord, [Ahmad Tejan] Kabbah – God rest his soul – came with, I think, maybe a two year old baby, maybe less, with an amputated arm, into the signing room. He brought this child into the hall. Some of us were in tears. How can you look at that and still not want peace? You know what Foday Sankoh said? He said, "Oh yeah, we can all bring people who have been hurt in this war: our side, too. We have got people who have had…" [*Claps hands*] Can you believe this?

SO: I'm revolted.

MA: Yeah. But this was the man that they were extending courtesies to. 'Criminal' is not enough of a word to convey what the RUF was.

SO: Moses, I'm going to ask you…As a very moral man, how did you negotiate with such – you can't even call it delusion – with such evil?

MA: Well, I realised that they had total control over the RUF. I'm sure Gaddafi gave some of the money that was channelled to him. He could not be entertaining them in his military training camps and not give them money. He kept control like that. And so, there was no likelihood of a revolt within his own group and producing another, more acceptable leader. So, we had to be very careful. We had to actually just sit on our consciences in order to avert a more unacceptable leader – anything more unacceptable.

SO: True, I suppose that, if the RUF had fragmented, you would have had to negotiate with someone else, or multiple other rebel leaders.

MA: If it had fragmented…

SO: Or, in your view, was the RUF a rabble army, with Foday Sankoh as only a nominal leader? Was that in large part the problem?

MA: No, he wasn't a nominal leader. His word went. There was a medical officer…this is one of the surprises…

SO: Oh, that is even more disgusting.

MA: …who was with him and, you know, he was in it only for the money, I'm sure. But anyway, in the end they fell out.

SO: Moses, as a highly intelligent observer, did you ever try to reflect on what had produced this appalling violence?

MA: I have tried. Not easy. But let me finish the story. He fell out with Foday Sankoh in the bush. And you know what he did to him? He literally stripped him naked and left him like that in the camp, so he was walking about naked. Almost like a mad man. His wife told me this.

SO: So, he was demeaned, he was nothing…

MA: In fact, if only he could have escaped, but…You see there's something else I must tell you. Foday Sankoh, not being an educated man, used to blurt out certain things. He said, for example, that he wasn't working alone and it was not only those in the bush with him who were working with him. He said, "Where do we get our information from?" He says, "From Freetown." He said, "But today is not the day and this is not a place for me to reveal names. But when the day comes, we will." And you know what confirmed it for me? A principal Secretary – the Secretary to the President, no less…To cut a long story short…I could tell you other things about him. But, you know, when they made their push into Freetown and they were driven back, but only just, this Secretary to the President went with them. He followed them into the bush.

SO: So, they already had their spies within the opposing camp – within the Presidential inner circle?

MA: His name is Sheku Bayoh. This is somebody [who], when I was going in to see Kabbah on one occasion, he said, "Please, can you tell him [to] reinforce my position here for me?" I said, "But you are Secretary to the President, Head of the Cabinet." He said, "Yes, but you are his personal friend and you are not a Sierra Leonean; he will take you more seriously." So, that war lasted so long partly because of the informants from the inside. There was another one I suspected, but I have no evidence on him. This is an old diamond trader.

SO: It's wicked. Because, it seems to me, it was driven by personal greed.

MA: What else? But how much food can one person eat? How many clothes at a time?

SO: Exactly. But going back to my question about how you can come to try to grasp what produced this appalling violence…?

MA: How…What produced the Nazis?

SO: Ah, "the path to Auschwitz was taken one step at a time"…

MA: If you understand that, you understand what happened in Sierra Leone. You see, Sierra Leone was never a well-integrated country, but somehow it had muddled through. The Creoles gave up in their ambitions for political power because of their numbers. But they were strong in the bureaucracy, in the professions and so on. But I always got the impression that there was a residual lack of respect for the 'up-country boys', as they called them. Did they throw their lot in with the new Sierra Leone? Yes, by and large, but there were always people who didn't. Now, Sheku Bayoh…You can see from the name he's not a Creole. But the Creoles never took an interest in making sure that the up-country boys didn't get to excesses, even if there were signs of it. And to that extent, they didn't throw in their whole lot with Sierra Leone.

SO: No, so they didn't make a nation?

MA: Now, I come from a country where the long-established, coastal professional middle had their prejudices against the up-country people, but they were very careful to hide them.

SO: Is that because of Nkrumah – because of his emphasis on the Ghana nation, and his Pan-Africanism?

MA: Yes, that's only because of Nkrumah. Nkrumah, whatever mistakes he made and he must have made a lot – you can't be in power for so long and not make mistakes – was by and large the founder and saviour of Ghana from a dangerous retrograde tribalism.

SO: I would argue, in the same way, that Julius Nyerere played that role in Tanzania, in his extraordinary contribution to 'making' the Tanzanian nation from so many different ethnicities and linguistic groups.

MA: Okay. Julius. I went to see him, and do you know what he said? During my Zanzibar negotiations, you could see [that] he was very unhappy with Salmin Amour. But you know what? He took the position that the country has now got new leaders. "My job is to stand behind those leaders, and if they need to send the Army" – this is what he said to me – "to Zanzibar, it's for them to decide." He didn't like what Salmin was doing.

SO: No, but he wasn't going to be a Margaret Thatcher-like 'backseat driver', as she famously said that she was going to be for John Major when he became British Prime Minister in 1990.

MA: Julius really was very moral that way. And the other thing: you know, like me he collected books [from] all over the world, and then came the time for him to leave State House. He didn't have a house, by the way.

SO: No, like President Kaunda when he left State House in Lusaka.

MA: Like Kaunda, who's another friend; I always go and see him when I'm in Zambia. The State offered to build Julius a house. He said, "Is this what you are going to do for every Tanzanian?" They said, "Well, we can't do that for every Tanzanian." He said, "Why are you doing it for me? Unless you can do it for every Tanzanian, don't do it."

SO: He wasn't asking for special treatment.

MA: You know how they eventually got around that? The Army Commander of Tanzania went and said, "Mwalimu, whether you like it or not, you have been our Commander-in-Chief for a long time and we're not going to allow our Commander-in-Chief to live in a house like this. We will take money from our vote and build you a house." That's how they got around it. He stayed in it for four weeks and [then] died.

SO: But the courtesies on both sides were observed. He didn't ask for special treatment, and they said, "There is no way we're treating you like everybody else"!

MA: They got around it wondrously.

SO: Just to go back to Sierra Leone…Did you continue to follow the politics of what was going on there after the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord? Did you have the same sense of disquiet and frustration that was running parallel to your…

MA: But Lomé made no difference, did it?

SO: No, it didn't.

MA: And, in the end, it showed Foday Sankoh for what he was. He was going to make use of the training he had received in Libya to get to power.

SO: Were you aware of any other Commonwealth African leaders or diplomats trying to exert pressure on Sierra Leone for a settlement?

MA: Sue, you see, when you send an Ambassador to a situation, it's very difficult to ignore the Ambassador completely – what he comes back to report – and [to] ensure that we're all reporting honestly when the situation is real. I will just mention this story but I won't name names, because it's too dangerous. One of those who was also [going to Sierra Leone] – incidentally, he used to go periodically – I heard him say to his Head of State, his Head of Government, that while he's heard of bodies lying on the street, he never saw any.

SO: He never saw any of the bodies on the street?

MA: Yeah. He never saw any. I did.

SO: Yes. How could you not?

MA: He *did*. But, you know this old problem with Diplomats – you read your President or Prime Minister or whatever.

SO: You tell him what you think he wants to hear?

MA: That's right. You read him; you know where his sympathies are.

SO: And so you pander to them?

MA: Yes.

SO: Moses, please, if I could take a slight step back to ask you about Nigeria. Obviously, there was the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Auckland in 1995, the backdrop of which was the approaching execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the eight Ogoni political dissidents in Nigeria. Personal pleas for clemency had been put to President Sani Abacha. Abacha publicly defied these appeals on the very eve of the CHOGM. Had you been involved, in any way, in any approaches to Sani Abacha before that point?

MA: No. But that would have been something that the Chief would have played very close to his chest.

SO: Because of the fact of him being Nigerian?

MA: Because of his being Nigerian.

SO: Did you and Max go to the Auckland meeting?

MA: Yes.

SO: You did? So, had you been working with Max Gaylard in the run up to Auckland on the idea of a contact group, of a Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group? These ideas didn't emerge suddenly at the Auckland meeting – they had been brewing, gestating, beforehand. So, where had these ideas come from? How had they been elaborated before you got down to New Zealand?

MA: When was CMAG set up?

SO: CMAG was set up after the Queenstown retreat, and you went back to Auckland in November of 1995.

MA: So, it begins from Auckland?

SO: It began from Auckland with the Millbrook Declaration. When I spoke to him, Max indicated that there had been ideas of a contact group certainly within the British government, and Max had said that these ideas had also been going around the Secretariat. I don't know whether in Political Affairs, whether in Chief's Office, whether Stewart Mole had been working closely on this idea, whether you had been involved. I'm just wondering where the ideas of CMAG had emerged, before they were put to Heads at the Auckland CHOGM.

MA: That would have been largely Emeka's own thing, you see, because he always kept his ear close to the ground. He always wanted to intervene. But, in the best Commonwealth tradition, you know, [he] goes with the grain, as it were: don't intervene in the way which questions sovereignty, or gets people's backs up. So, in a way, CMAG was a typical Commonwealth thing. Only the Commonwealth could have set that up, really. Now, did it deal with Abacha?

SO: It tried to. Well, it didn't expressly deal with Abacha. The creation of CMAG and Nigeria's immediate suspension from the Commonwealth were separate. Mandela had put in his own personal plea for clemency for Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other dissidents, and so had a sense of moral affront when the nine of them were executed on the eve of the Auckland meeting. Mandela had certainly gone into the retreat with the Prime Minister of New Zealand – Jim Bolger, whom I've also interviewed – with both of them arguing [that] something had to be done. They identified two resisters: one was Dr Mahathir of Malaysia, and the other was Robert Mugabe. Individually, they each spoke to Mahathir and Mugabe – as people whom they perceived would be opposing the idea

of a Commonwealth response. So, there was condemnation of the Abacha government, and Nigeria was immediately suspended from the Commonwealth. Then, separately, was the CMAG decision.

MA: Okay, alright. The CMAG mission was something that was very carefully deployed whenever it went into action, for the simple reason [that], one, there is the question of sovereignty, and people or governments that are not interested in our involvement in their internal affairs can always throw that at us. Up to that point, there had been declarations. So, CMAG would have given teeth to any course of action that the Commonwealth agreed on. It's a shame it didn't work in Nigeria's case, but…

SO: Well, indeed. It seems President Abacha just refused to see any of the deputations from CMAG. Dr Mahathir was writing to President Bill Clinton the following year saying, "Look we've come up with this particular mechanism to deal with military governments, but they can't even get through the door because he's refusing to let them in."

MA: This has as much to do with Abacha's own personality. He came across to me as somebody who really didn't set too much store in what the others all thought or said of him. He didn't want *The Times* or whatever – *The Observer* or *The Guardian* – to have a glowing article on him. It meant nothing to him.

SO: When did you meet him?

MA: I've never met him on one to one. But I've been in a room – in a meeting – with him.

SO: Where was this?

MA: An informal occasion, mind you. I've been in a room with him and others, through my Nigerian friends. Because I'm from Northern Ghana, they would regard me as a brother. I always got the impression at that encounter…I said nothing, I just listened. But he didn't set much store in what the Commonwealth thought of him, and if Nigeria had been thrown out of the Commonwealth, it would have made no difference to him – at all. On the other hand, you know, when the coup happened in Sierra Leone – the first coup against Kabbah – I had a detailed briefing from Kabbah on this, because I wrote all his speeches. I wrote the speech he delivered at ECOWAS; I wrote the speech he delivered to the UN; I wrote the speech he delivered to Commonwealth Heads of Government. Such was our relationship. When the coup happened, Abacha sent a plane. He sent a plane to Freetown, and he said the plane was to stay there until it could bring him out – by which time he'd already crossed into Liberia. Now, he was prepared to stand by Kabbah – and I must get this right – because he said the plane should stay there until it could bring him either to Nigeria or back into power immediately. Although the Commonwealth was also engaged in wanting to settle Kabbah's problem, he worked on his own. I don't remember any kind of crossing of wires. And, in a way, he didn't know much about the importance of international cooperation. He didn't care for diplomacy, I don't think.

SO: So, as far as there was any degree of Commonwealth sanction – being suspended from the Commonwealth – that would have made absolutely no difference to him…

MA: Water off a duck's back.

SO: Hence, the approaches from CMAG saying, "You need to correct the political complexion of your government", would have produced a shrug of his shoulders. So, it had no leverage whatsoever?

MA: Nothing. There was no entry point for us with him.

SO: Was Chief also trying to use you, because of his delicate position as a Nigerian?

MA: He handled this himself.

SO: Yes, but he was in a particularly sensitive position as a Nigerian Commonwealth Secretary General. Was there any private mutterings that, if this continued, this might make his position untenable?

MA: Yes, but not at the level of Heads – that I heard. But I would imagine that quite a number of them would have said, "Okay, well, you've been an exemplary Secretary General. Continue." I think he would have been asked to continue, irrespective of whether Nigeria was there or not. Because, after Abacha, it could come back.

SO: Well, indeed, and let's face it, that's exactly what had happened to Chief in the late 1960s. I've read the letter from the Permanent Secretary of the Nigerian Civil Service, written to Arnold Smith, demanding that Emeka was removed from the Secretariat. And Arnold Smith was remarkably adept at protecting Emeka.

MA: How did he protect him?

SO: He sent him off to the Gibraltar referendum, and then he also dispatched him to deal with the Anguilla constitutional issues. Smith made sure that, even though Chief had made, I think, a couple of trips back to Nigeria – and had used his information network particularly among Ibadan University former colleagues to give Smith information…I know that Chief Emeka's house in London was also used as a point for Nigerians and also for people from Biafra coming through…But Arnold Smith was highly deliberate in trying to insulate him as much as possible.

MA: He spent time in Tanzania, did you know that?

SO: I didn't.

MA: During that period. He was very close to Mwalimu. He had his friends, and he regarded Africa – Commonwealth Africa – as his constituency. And he got on very well with KK, very, very well with Mwalimu…Who were the others there?

The Kenyans never took an interest in anything he did. He never got involved with anything there.

SO: **He implied as much when I interviewed him. In Uganda, there was the problem of Idi Amin in the 1970s. But then, did Chief form a particularly close and supportive relationship with Museveni once he achieved power in 1986?**

MA: He was very close to Obote, that I know. Museveni is…Was he close to Museveni? Museveni came in January ’86, didn’t he. Then he had an election…was it ‘92?

SO: **That I can’t remember. I was in Nairobi when Museveni came to power, and then I left in 1987, so I’m afraid I don’t know the cycle of elections in Uganda.**

MA: No. Kenya has no international profile…do you notice?

SO: **No, it doesn’t. It’s completely dropped below the news radar again.**

MA: Consequently they have no influence.

SO: **Although I’m afraid that the only time they do seem to have any particular press profile is when there is violence there, in the country. But political profile, no.**

MA: No, but then their nationalism has always been different, anyway.

SO: **Once Sani Abacha had died in those dubious circumstances, there was a new military …**

MA: Why are they dubious? [*Laughter*]

SO: **It’s true – those entirely respectable circumstances! [*Laughter*] The new military leader was Abdulsalami Abubakar. So, Chief made a visit to Abuja…**

MA: I’m sure he did.

SO: **Okay, again, but you were not involved?**

MA: No, I wasn’t involved. But he wouldn’t have to take a Ghanaian with him for that!

SO: **I’ve got two other questions, one of which concerns the African Commonwealth Heads Round Table in 1997. In what way were you involved in setting this up – in the diplomacy to get it together? What was your particular reflection and judgement on its value?**

MA: Now, where was it and when was it, first of all?

SO: **It was in 1997, in Botswana.**

MA: Yes, that was restricted to African leaders. It was [designed] to enable African leaders to exchange their respective challenges with democracy and to suggest solutions. But he [Chief Emeka] also wanted a forum where African leaders could speak, [where they] would feel free and actually say the things that were bothering them. And you know how it was organised, don't you? Well, first of all, there was one meeting of the representatives of political parties – opposition and ruling – and then, the next day, there was a meeting of heads of government. And, you know, what came out of that meeting was quite interesting.

SO: In what way?

MA: Well, a number of the opposition party leaders got up and said [that] this was the first time they were meeting face to face in the same room with their opposite number. Yes, Cameroon said that; I remember that. Uganda…See, you had multi-party systems, but the spirit wasn't that, and the ruling parties tended to hog [power]. Some of them thanked Emeka very profusely and said, "Look, it's a shame that we've had to come all this way in order for me to talk to my brother across the room."

SO: So, it was reflective, in fact, of sharply divided political cultures.

MA: Yes.

SO: Again, does this go back to the question of the problematic concept of a 'loyal opposition'? Emeka made that point…

MA: Well, he says that; he always said that. The concept, the reality, of a loyal opposition, accepting the opposite side – that, if they win a fair election and come to power, [then] they have every right to rule. The following day [of the Botswana Roundtable], I sat in on both – the Heads and the parties. You know what, the intolerance that was directed against NGOs…Unbelievable.

SO: Why?

MA: They made a number of accusations against NGOs. They said, first of all, they were really manned by failed politicians – politicians who had been defeated in an open contest and were trying to come in through a back door. Second, [that] they were more or less making themselves the referees to donor governments – that if a donor government wanted to give aid, they would consult the NGO on the dependability of the government. So, in this way, the defeated were enabled to sit in judgment of the elected government for its suitability.

SO: Well, there were obviously issues of budgetary transparency and accountability kicking in there – to explain why there might be external donor contact with NGOs and the need to channel funds with NGOs, if there was an external perception of a degree of graft, corruption, or lack of human skill capacity [in the government]. I'm trying to be devil's advocate here…

MA: No, I have no problems understanding it myself. But Museveni…Yes, he was there. But the ones who led the opposition to NGOs were Mugabe and Kenya's Arap Moi, and they said that NGO employees lived even better than Ministers – they went around in 4x4s...

SO: But it's true though! Let's face it: the funds that were channelled into expatriates who did not pay income tax, who had access to the perks of…

MA: Almost like diplomats.

SO: Yes, indeed. And, in fact, they seemed to set up parallel structures, because if there was a demand for budgetary accountability that would put extra strains on government resources. There's also the aspect of if NGO salary packets were more attractive than working for the Civil Service…

MA: It's a general animus against NGOs.

SO: Had you identified that before?

MA: Independently, no. But I was quite surprised at the strength of the hostility towards NGOs. But, of course, some of the NGOs invigilate governments don't they? Let's be honest about it. And they don't want to be invigilated, do they? So, that's really the crux of it.

SO: Well, no, this is a totally understandable attitude of governments: "We have the mandate, we have the political constituencies. You're representing a non-elected pressure group that's dependent on external financing and support projects which may not be in line with government strategies."

MA: I think it's quite widespread, actually.

SO: This idea that NGOs are accountable to external factors and forces….

MA: Yeah, the donors.

SO: …who have a different agenda.

MA: But, you see, who would they be accountable to? There are the people who give them the money, but there ought to be, in my view, a joint Board of the donors and the beneficiaries, who should then meet and get a clear picture of what's happened to the money.

SO: Yes, I agree.

MA: But if you say that the recipients, alone – or those who run the NGOs, alone – should account for it, we know how they'll do it, don't we?

SO: Yes. Moses, was this Round Table conceived as a one-off meeting…

MA: Yes.

SO: Was there any idea or discussion that it would be repeated?

MA: No. Also, I'm not sure that a non-African Secretary General could convene such a small meeting. They will ask you, "Is it a common worldwide practice, and so will you go to Asia after this? Will you go to the Caribbean, or is it just us?"

SO: Moses, please, if I could ask you about Zimbabwe in the 1990s. How far was Robert Mugabe a pillar of the Commonwealth in the '90s?

MA: Well, I think that the role that Sonny played at Lancaster House – behind the scenes – could hardly have failed to command his admiration and even gratitude. Why not?

SO: Indeed. Sonny helped provide administrative backup, advice, constant diplomatic support; he helped to broker the land fudge and the US/UK financial deal. His 'outer' diplomacy at Lancaster House was remarkable.

MA: I remember that Sonny used to have meetings in Marlborough House at the end of each negotiating session, where he and Joshua Nkomo would come and brief the High Commissioners. But that was valuable. They would tell them what progress they had made, where the snags are, and how the Commonwealth could help. I'm not sure that Britain welcomed it enthusiastically.

SO: No, no. Carrington was intensely resentful of what he felt was Ramphal's interference. He wanted to run the negotiations as a 'British show'.

MA: It *was* a British show: nobody said it wasn't. [It was] nobody else's show.

SO: I think that Carrington was not at all appreciative of Ramphal's criticism of his negotiating style and the process by which Carrington was trying to move the negotiations forward.

MA: I think they wanted Nkomo to win.

SO: They did.

MA: Desperately.

SO: They wanted Nkomo to win. Or that there should be a coalition with Nkomo and Bishop Muzorewa.

MA: You know who came to the Botswana Round Table meeting in 1998? Muzorewa. Nobody invited him. He heard of it, and he came. And the Chief deputed me to talk to him and keep him company. He said, "I'm going to take you out to lunch though." He was in faded clothes; you could see the strings of his trousers and tears on his jacket. [He had] fallen on very, very tough

times. So, I said, “But how, where are your white backers?” He smiled and said nothing. It was sad.

SO: Yes, that would have been very sad indeed. Because, for all his faults – and as you say, a leader in power has many – he was a moderate Rhodesian nationalist.

MA: But what does that mean – moderate?

SO: Well, in the climate of the Cold War, of course, it meant that he wouldn’t be embarking upon any radical socialist ideas – that it would be reformation, rather than revolution, of the political economy.

MA: Muzorewa…He never went anywhere to collect dangerous ideas anyway!

SO: No, I know he didn’t, he stayed put. He accepted the presence of white economic dominance of the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe political economy.

MA: Yeah, so it’s not that he was moderate…[*Laughter*]

SO: He just hadn’t been exposed to any dangerous ideas? He had insulated himself by staying in Rhodesia in the 70s, so he hadn’t picked up any dangerous external ideas!

MA: All he did was to eat endless *ugali* in the bush! But why can’t they ever choose intelligent collaborators? Sue, tell me…It’s the history of Africa, isn’t it?

SO: It certainly is. On this question of Robert Mugabe and his contribution to the Commonwealth in the 1990s…What I don’t want to do is to slide into any false conflation of [this with] Robert Mugabe as problematic leader of Zimbabwe, because I feel that his social transformation of the country – the focus on healthcare and education in Zimbabwe in the early-mid ‘80s – was admirable. The Harare Declaration of 1991, with its emphasis on good government rather than good governance, had been signed in *his* capital. But at what point do you feel you can identify a progressively embattled leader? Was he still a pillar for the Commonwealth by the mid-1990s?

MA: It’s not the Commonwealth, I don’t think. It’s Britain. And he is not one of these Africans who had studied abroad. If you go through the history of Southern Africa, the Commonwealth in which Menzies and that lot had sway was not sympathetic to our aspirations. That is the kind of Commonwealth – the image of the Commonwealth – that Mugabe would have known when he was growing up. Then he comes to Lancaster House, and the Commonwealth cooperates – works together as a team – to bring about a fair and just settlement. You know, he came to Marlborough House with Nkomo. At one of these briefing sessions – I must tell you this – he made Nkomo speak on their behalf, which is interesting. Nkomo rose to the occasion – he was marvellous: much more experienced politically than Mugabe. Now, this threat to break up the conference if they didn’t get what they wanted over the land issue…

SO: Yes, in October.

MA: Now, you've heard of Nyerere's intervention?

SO: Yes.

MA: It would have been the kind of language that Nkomo would have spoken if he had been on his own. "Let's get our independence; let's get our constitution first..."

SO: "Let's get power."

MA: "Let's get power first. Land is a policy issue; it's not a constitutional issue." You see it? Nkomo would have spoken like that. Mugabe might have said, "No, we either get what we want or we don't." But, on the two of them as leaders, I must say something else. Nkomo had a broader African constituency. Africans had seen and heard him…You understand? From way back. He was in Ghana for the 1958 conference. He had a higher profile. Mugabe didn't have any profile then. But what we didn't know was how much the tribal thing would play. We didn't.

SO: Even though it was common knowledge that twenty per cent of the population spoke Ndebele, and eighty per cent chiShona?

MA: When did that become common knowledge?

SO: Okay. I suppose as a historian I've always known this. I have interviewed former members of the Rhodesian police and security forces, and I've also read Rhodesian Information Department reports from the mid-70s, giving linguistic and ethnic breakdowns of the various groupings inside Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

MA: You and I have always known it, but we're not talking about us. The masses didn't know it.

SO: But what of the sub groups, the regionalism, that existed within the country at the time?

MA: Now, do you know what helped to obscure it further? The racist policies of the regime: it didn't distinguish between Ndebeles and Shonas. So, it obscured the picture for us as to, you know, how the country would vote.

SO: You know there's an irony there, because the Rhodesian government – and I've looked at files from Ian Smith's office that were smuggled down to Rhodes University in Grahamstown…

MA: How were they taken down?

SO: They were flown down in two Dakotas which landed on the playing fields during the university holidays, and they were taken into the library. It was called 'Operation Geraldine'.

MA: This is important. How interesting.

SO: In these papers, there were files from the Ministry of Information which listed the ethnic and linguistic breakdown of Zimbabwean communities, as well as details on support for African nationalism within the territory of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. And I remember thinking this was actually quite sophisticated.

MA: Did you make a copy?

SO: I've got a copy of it somewhere.

MA: You must let me have a look.

SO: Because I was thinking that they *did* understand the extent to which the principal divide between Shona and Ndebele was important.

MA: Okay. They did.

SO: They thought Muzorewa would triumph in the Shona vote. But I'm going to suggest, Moses, that anything that the Smith/Muzorewa government put out would have automatically been dismissed by the Secretariat, because of your conviction in the repugnance of the racial regime.

MA: I think Ian Smith and his inner circle would have known how this would play out. I have no doubt about that. Look, they can't have this kind of information and not know that. Okay. Two, that's why Mugabe was saying, "No, no, we'll stand as ZAPU and ZANU." You understand? "If, after that, we want to come together, that's different. But we can't say we are a Patriotic Front. The Front was for fighting. This is not fighting anymore." So, he knew what the outcome would be.

SO: Were you involved in any of the briefings around the edges of what Sonny was doing?

MA: Where? To the High Commissioners?

SO: To ZAPU and ZANU delegates at Lancaster House. Because, after all, you had joined the Secretariat in 1979…

MA: I used to keep the record.

SO: You were the one taking the notes at the meetings?

MA: Yeah. I must say that the British were a bit uncomfortable at the meeting.

SO: Indeed. Who was the British representative?

MA: Antony Duff came sometimes.

SO: But it was also Johnny Graham, wasn't it?

MA: Yes. Antony Duff was really avuncular – in a nice, dignified way, mind you – but then he dropped out. He was senior, wasn't he?

SO: Very. He was the second in command at the British Foreign Office, as Deputy Under-Secretary. He was Carrington's number two – after Michael Palliser, who was the top civil servant at the Foreign Office. Duff was the second.

After independence, Mugabe's engagement and commitment to the Commonwealth was remarkable. But by the 1990s, the land question was starting to raise its head again. Was the Commonwealth in any way helpful – was the Secretariat useful – in trying to support a land audit, in trying to support what the John Major government was trying to do before 1997?

MA: No, there was no entry point for the Commonwealth in the land issue, and I don't think Mugabe was in a hurry to do that either. You see, don't forget that by then, I think, the ZANU Central Committee had taken a decision on that.

SO: I know that by 1992 there had been two bad droughts in Zimbabwe. Mugabe had certainly approached the National Farmers Union in Zimbabwe with the hope that there could be an acceleration of the land transfer programme, but the National Farmers Union had been remarkably resistant and had in fact appealed to the international community to support the continuation of private property rights. I think that they really missed a trick there, seriously, for an accelerated, managed land transfer programme. I just wondered: was the Secretariat forming any opinion on this issue? I appreciate that the principal focus was on South Africa at that particular point.

MA: Yes. At that point we had already…

SO: I've also heard that Mugabe, at that point, held back from pushing ahead with an accelerated land transfer programme, precisely because of the delicate and sensitive nature of what was going on in South Africa. So, there was concern for the regional context.

MA: That's what Emeka said to Mugabe. What he said to him was, "The South African issue is coming to a head, and if you proceed with this drastic land reform it will complicate the situation for us. So, you wait. Let's get South Africa out of the way, and then you can do your reforms." That's what I heard Emeka say.

SO: So, you heard him say it, or he was repeating…?

MA: Yes, I heard him say it. Yes, that's what he told Robert.

SO: And he was saying this at the Harare meeting?

MA: No, no. He said it to me.

SO: Okay. So, do you remember the time and context of him making this remark?

MA: Oh, long after the land reform.

SO: Okay. So, he was reflecting and looking back. It's just that Robert Mugabe has made the comment that he'd always found dealing with Conservative governments much easier than dealing with Labour governments…

MA: Not only Mugabe. Other African leaders have said the same.

SO: Truly? Did they explain why they found it easier to deal [with Conservative governments]?

MA: Because the Conservatives are more self-assured. They do not have to look over their shoulder.

SO: So, they speak with a greater degree of confidence?

MA: Oh yes. And the Africans caught on to that very early on.

SO: That's interesting. Tony Blair came into office in the 1997 election with a sizeable majority and an extraordinary mandate for political change. This was a sea change in British politics, in terms of the political constituency of support – within British political culture – for New Labour. And you are saying that this didn't come across in a positive way towards Africa?

MA: But that was recent. I'm talking during the colonial days. You see, the Conservatives, when they came to speak...When did we begin to have Labour governments here anyway? Not until Clement Attlee in 1945. And then they went back into opposition until Wilson [in 1964]. So, it's the Tories who did the decolonising – most of it, anyway. And they always spoke much more confidently. You always got the impression that Labour…Not only did Labour look over its shoulder, but they didn't have the same wealth of experience for dealing with Africans. Now, there were some Labour politicians who had encountered Africans here as students, you understand, but they hadn't encountered them in government. Like Stafford Cripps' daughter married a Ghanaian here…Things like that.

SO Moses, how much do you feel that African issues dominated the Secretariat's work or the Commonwealth's work and attitudes in the 1990s? And, in fact, that it eclipsed other tensions and pressures elsewhere within the Commonwealth?

MA: No. As soon as Ghana became independent and Nkrumah started attending Commonwealth summits, the African issues started to dominate. You only have to look at Robert Menzies' memoirs – *Afternoon Light,* or something like that? Now, the very detailed letters he used to write to Verwoerd, coaching him on scientific racism. Long, long letters on how he is doing it with his...I don't what he called it, but anyway. But he says, for example…After

independence, Nkrumah wrote to the South African government saying, "Look, we are all Africans. I'd like to exchange Ambassadors with you." And one of Verwoerd's complaints was, "Well, where do we put them? Because all the blacks have to live somewhere in reservations. How can we put the Ghanaian blacks…" You read it. Read the book: *Afternoon Light.* It's a very important book.

SO: Moses, it strikes me, though, that the Commonwealth may be a unique institution. For all its diversity – the talk of its sovereign elephants and the sovereign mice, suggestions of its links with the Non-Aligned Movement and Afro-Asian ideas of solidarity and development – in reality, it has proved to be an *African* problem-solving institution.

MA: No. Most of the problems that came before it were African, that's all. There's no mystery about it. But, this 'sovereign mice'…it's an academic's…

SO: It is, and I wish I could remember who said it. Ron Sanders quoted it recently…

MA: It was Dennis Austin, I think. Another friend I have. Is he alive, do you know? He's a friend I've lost touch with – Dennis Austin. He's a very good example of an English academic who would vote Labour here and support Tories in Ghana.

[*Laughter*]

SO: It's like the comment the Americans made to Ted Heath: that, if they were in America, the Tories would be the Democrats and Labour would be the Democrats!

MA: Yes! Nyerere famously said that the American system is really a one-party system, but, being American, they have to have two.

[*Laughter*]

SO: That's very good. Moses, I'm going to stop there. Thank you very much indeed for a fascinating and detailed interview.

[END OF AUDIOFILE PART TWO]