VOICE FILE NAME: COHP (Mark Chona)

Key:

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SO = Sue Onslow
MC = Mark Chona

SO: Sue Onslow talking to Mr Mark Chona in Makeni, Lusaka, on Tuesday 11th August, 2015. Sir, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to be interviewed for this oral history project. I wonder if you would begin please, Sir, by explaining how you came to be His Excellency's Kenneth Kaunda's special advisor on political affairs, and what was your view of the Commonwealth when you assumed that office?

MC: Thank you very much. President Kaunda and I come from quite a distance in the past through my brother, Mainza Chona, who was in the UK at Grays Inn (1955-1958). When he qualified as a Lawyer, he came back and joined politics and became the first president of what became the ruling party, the United National Independence Party. President Kaunda then arranged with President Kennedy for me to be among the first prospective diplomats after independence, so I was in Washington at the American University from 1963 to 1964.

After staying in Cambridge again for one year to study public administration, I came back into government administration. I had known President Kaunda earlier when I was at University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. He was

very much in my blood as a student activist. So immediately after independence, following my diplomatic training, I was in his office up to 31 March 1965, when I became Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I took over from the British team in establishing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Of course, that was the year when UDI [unilateral declaration of independence] was declared in Rhodesia.

So, as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I was already involved with the Commonwealth institution and its role in galvanising opinion to try and stop the UDI, which failed. Immediately after that, we got involved in the management of the consequences of UDI. The diplomatic multi-pronged attack on the problem was launched in defence of Zambia's national interests as rebel Rhodesia then became a matter of national security to us. I was involved in the [Harold] Wilson meeting with President Kaunda in Livingstone (on 30 October), which became a big issue. After that I was involved in all the other meetings concerning Rhodesia. Then in 1968, I moved to his office in State House. But, I was already dealing with foreign policy issues before I went to State House on 1st April 1968.

SO: How did you regard the Commonwealth at this particular point? You explain you were Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before you moved to President Kaunda's office. As I understand it, strategy for foreign policy for Zambia at that point was situated very much in the President's office, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implementing day-to-day foreign relations. Is that a fair explanation? Or was there tighter coordination between the Ministry and the President's office, precisely because the State of Zambia was much smaller?

MC: Between 1965 and 1968 I was still managing a lot of President Kaunda's work from the Foreign Ministry. So, foreign policy issues were still managed by the Ministry. But, when he invited me to move to State House, he was more directly now concerned with foreign policy issues related to security. So, the issues of southern Africa were actually centred around State House. So, I went with them to State House. The rest of the world issues were dealt in the normal way by the Ministry. That is how, in many ways, we actually worked.

SO: So, it was because this was a crisis of national security for Zambia that there was a concentration of 'resources' in the President's office?

MC: There was a concentration of, not financial resources, but effort by a small team. Basically we were not a big staff. There were only three of us. I recruited two officers. There were three who were really looking at southern Africa and developing the policies in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who were the spokespeople. The Foreign Minister continued to be the spokesman on foreign affairs. We were backroom boys for the President and the Ministry.

SO: Yes. 1965 of course saw the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, in the July of that year, and Arnold Smith's appointment as the first Secretary General. So, the Commonwealth itself was changing to the modern Commonwealth for Zambia. At this particular point how did President Kaunda regard the Commonwealth, rather than the bilateral relationship between Lusaka and London?

MC: President Kaunda immediately recognised the importance of the Commonwealth. Fortunately the appointment of Arnold Smith, a Canadian, who represented a degree of neutrality in approach to issues, rather than a Briton who'd be associated directly with the Foreign Office, that assisted President Kaunda's assessment of what kind of Commonwealth would develop, and that it would be much more focused, not only to look after British interests but overall interests of Commonwealth members, regardless of nationality, race, colour or creed.

Since he had already developed that concept himself among his first speeches, actually drafted by British officials at that time at independence, he emphasised non-racialism. He went beyond multi-racialism; he was talking about non-racialism. Arnold Smith, his chemistry, his disposition, his gentleness reflected a very deep understanding of the kind of world President Kaunda was looking at. He had even signalled [Hendrik] Verwoerd before independence and said publicly that he was ready, to our shock, to establish diplomatic relations with South Africa; that he would be prepared to send an ambassador as long as the ambassador was not discriminated against.

Initially, as young people, it was a real shock but Verwoerd's response was the one that excited us because he thought our ambassador would be a Trojan horse; so he rejected President Kaunda's proposal and that was the end. It was good that it was not Kaunda who said we would never establish diplomatic relations, it was Verwoerd who said, "No, I don't want a Trojan horse in my country".

So, President Kaunda therefore had a good idea of what kind of Secretary General was needed to build bridges across. He respected the Commonwealth right from the beginning.

When Ian Smith declared UDI, and the British government under Harold Wilson was not showing resoluteness to resolve the problem, and everything that was said was no more than a cloak of verbiage signifying nothing, President Kaunda relied on international organisations. The Commonwealth came in very handy. He understood its limitations and the fact that it was based in London; psychologically, you felt that the Foreign Office would bear hard on the Commonwealth Secretary General and that he would not be independent. But, as we developed, we found that he had his own ideas and that was a source of comfort.

SO: So, you had your own Trojan horse.

MC: We had our own Trojan horse! [laughter] Every ambassador is, potentially, a Trojan horse.

SO: Indeed, and the value of the Commonwealth High Commissioners' network is considerable.

MC: Absolutely. Absolutely. That was a source of strength for us. Morally it was comforting that we could probably get through the Commonwealth what we could not get directly from Mr Harold Wilson, who was extremely slippery for our purposes.

SO: Indeed. Reading the transcript of the September 1966 meeting of the Commonwealth in London, it is clear Harold Wilson was furious that

there was a delay in re-starting the executive session as the African leaders had grouped together to discuss their position before they went back into the session. He said there should be no UN caucusing.

MC: That's true. That was bound to happen because of shared visions and shared interests in attacking a common problem. We would be coming from different angles and it was absolutely necessary, we thought, for us to have a common understanding. After all, we had already an OAU position. That is the position we took with us to Commonwealth conferences, on common issues of international concern; but they were arising from Zambia's own national interests, which were identified, whether it was in Lagos or in London later that the declaration of UDI in Rhodesia was going to impact on Zambia's national security and economic interests.

So, it was natural for African and also Asian countries to, first of all, discuss what the position should be. I'm sure that was also true of Harold Wilson's camp. He tried his level best to get New Zealand and Australia closer. Canada was beginning, it appeared, to be influenced by what the Secretary General could also say…I think they did listen to him. That was, in a way, helpful in the development of the future Commonwealth, which was not the 'British' Commonwealth, but actually a Commonwealth of Nations. So, the spirit was beginning to build. The only problem was that in this particular case Rhodesia affected Britain. That was the only problem. There would not have been a problem if the problem was not affecting Britain. Wilson would have no problem with the caucuses.

SO: Sir, I'm just looking at the list of crises that confronted Arnold Smith in 1965. The Indo-Pakistan war; the 'divorce' between Singapore and Malaysia; and then, of course, the explosion of the long-running crisis of UDI in the November, which lasted for 15 years. So, a series of dramatic international crises...

MC: Absolutely.

SO: For Britain, UDI proved a real crisis for a great power, because London had the responsibility, but no power.

MC: Exactly. That was her (Britain's) problem. I think we overestimated the willingness of a great power to discharge its responsibilities.

SO: Sir, please could I ask you about the question of the use of force? It comes up so often in the literature. Wilson announced that Britain was not prepared to use force in 1964, and Denis Healey, the British Secretary of State for Defence, was very critical of this public statement, arguing in essence, 'You don't do that. You don't announce that you're not prepared to use the ultimate weapon in diplomacy.' But, Healey also said that a Prime Minister should never ask the armed forces to do something which he thought they were not prepared to do. What were your views when Wilson made that statement?

MC: We deeply regretted it because we thought that was a trump card which he could have kept up his sleeve. Ian Smith should have really been left to guess what the British were planning.

SO: Andrew Skeen had been sent as Rhodesian High Commissioner to London, in what proved to be the last three months before UDI, precisely to identify whether the Royal Air Force would be prepared to act, and whether there would be an airborne invasion. He was sending messages back to Salisbury, as it then was, saying 'I've come to the conclusion that this won't happen. The RAF is not not prepared to do that.'

MC: That was our problem because when the British sent us Javelins to provide us 'air cover', we thought that was nothing. Our Foreign Minister said it was really a joke. It was like the British pilots were talking to the Rhodesian pilots saying, "Don't worry, we are not coming to you". It was a joke which we had heard. But I believe that a Conservative government would have handled that situation better. I don't know. We had a bit of a problem because Labour appeared to have been so good in opposition on a lot of our (colonial) issues, but not in government.

SO: It could be argued that's the pragmatism of power.

MC: That is it.

SO: Stripped of the luxury of opposition and criticism, that the Wilson government found there were perpetual British interests which they had to take into consideration?

MC: You could recall our (Northern Rhodesian) draft constitution. Jim Callaghan, then in Opposition, called it 'not fit for even a dog's breakfast' - during our struggle for independence. That was what he had called our proposed draft constitution. But, when they came into power it was different. The group interests were so embedded that they actually prevented even the most effective policies, which could probably have ended the problem. As Brian Crozier said of De Gaulle (in his biography), even "for man as strong as De Gaulle, his decisions were flowing into dry creeks of immobility".

SO: So, did Arnold Smith ever venture to you an opinion on Wilson's declaration that Britain was not prepared to use force?

MC: Yes, he did. Because I was young and a little bit stubborn, he liked me and he did invite me once to dinner. And whom do I meet - but Averill Harriman, whom he wanted me to meet. So, he really was disappointed that Mr Wilson was certainly long on promises but short on action.

SO: Sir, was there any appreciation or sense here in Zambia, with Kenneth Kaunda and yourself, or for Arnold Smith, that part of Wilson's calculation in making that statement was to encourage the Zimbabwean nationalists to be more moderate in their requests and demands?

MC: No, on the contrary. We thought that Ian Smith had decided to use repression and he took up arms against the Africans using excessive force. Then they had no choice therefore but to respond with arms. Because of that, it was necessary for the British government, with responsibility for Rhodesia, to make sure that the rebellion was ended and so that the nationalists then did not take up arms. There was no way in which the nationalists would not take

up arms if in fact Ian Smith was now in full control of an air force that was equipped using Northern Rhodesian money – because they took over the entire Federal air force. Even the army: as Welensky said to us in 1975, he could have actually resisted the break-up of the Federation because he had a strong air force and a strong army. But, he said, at what cost? Not Ian Smith. Ian Smith did not count the cost and he went ahead with UDI in Rhodesia, so the nationalists therefore could not be persuaded to even think of the possibility of any negotiations with Ian Smith because he was not ready for such negotiations.

SO: Sir, if Wilson was hoping by making this declaration to discourage greater militancy from Zimbabwe nationalists, this was a fundamental miscalculation?

MC: Total miscalculation because in the first instance he would not have detained the nationalists. He would not have done what Smith did. Even for us, there were wagon-loads of arms on a train that were coming in via Rhodesia, in July 1965. They were stopped and we never got them. That means Smith was already fully prepared for any military confrontation. I think Wilson definitely miscalculated and underestimated the Ian Smith commitment to UDI. That was a mistake whose disastrous consequences continued to be felt for some years later.

SO: Sir, in that this represents such a challenge to the cohesion of the modern Commonwealth between 1965 and 1970, how did Zambia use the Commonwealth? As a platform to strengthen its alliances with other African leaders? Did President Kaunda reach out particularly to Asian leaders, such as Lee Kuan Yew? Was it possible for Zambia to use the platform of the Commonwealth in this five-year period? Given the bitter arguments that took place at the Lagos meeting in January 1966 and the September meeting in London, there was a highly deliberate gap until the next London heads' meeting in 1969.

MC: I think President Kaunda's vision became very clear. I remember John Dickie, the diplomatic correspondent of the Daily Mail, who became a dear friend, said to me in 1965, as I was taking him for lunch: "What are you going to do if

the British government does nothing about Rhodesia?" I didn't answer the question but that continued to bother me. So, we understood this was to be a long haul we were in and we had to use whatever instruments were available to survive. The Commonwealth, sitting in London, with all the high commissioners and ambassadors who were friendly to the cause, like those in the Non-Aligned Movement, became an important focal point for us: because those who were not against us had to be won over to be with us. The Commonwealth was the most convenient instrument because the responsibility for Rhodesia lay with London where the Secretariat had its headquarters.

Therefore, the networking would be important for us through the Commonwealth. So, the leadership of Arnold Smith became a critical factor especially that he was sympathetic to the general cause of peace based on freedom and justice in the region, in Rhodesia. So, you had at least someone in the Commonwealth Secretariat who understood, who could then communicate with sympathy, and who understood that President Kaunda was not for violence. He renounced violence long before, like Mahatma Gandhi. But, then as we declared later in the Lusaka manifesto: 'we would negotiate where possible, but would fight, if necessary'. He is a non-violent man, in this case your questions will come later as we look at what instruments he could use to achieve the same goal by peaceful means. The Commonwealth was important.

SO: Following this line of thought explains why President Kaunda approached the Johnson Administration asking for nuclear capability as a means to deter South Africa, and to boost Zambia's standing in the region?

MC: Yes. We knew much earlier about South African intentions on a nuclear weapon.

SO: How did you know?

MC: The world is so full of friends. President Kaunda has such wonderful friends all over the world, so we did hear that something was happening and we

followed that very carefully. I will jump the gun: in 1972, addressing a rally in Livingstone, President Kaunda told South Africa: “You can have all the nuclear weapons you want, but we are already in your backyard.” So, we had to make sure that our intentions were very clear. We will certainly negotiate where possible but we will fight if necessary. But, Arnold Smith was a source of confidence in that he would try and use as much influence as he could, directly on the British government and through Canada also, his home government.

SO: So, would you or President Kaunda phone Arnold Smith on a regular basis? How did you keep up those lines of communication?

MC: President Kaunda spoke to him wherever necessary. Whenever I was in London I called on him. He certainly showed this shared vision on the future of common humanity. Because of that concern, he kept us confident that we could use the Commonwealth as a very powerful resource in all the efforts we were making to solve the problem by peaceful means.

SO: Excuse me, Sir, it sounds a little like a nation-building confidence booster, to feel that you have the Commonwealth or the Secretary General’s support in the pursuit of your foreign policy, and in your national security interests?

MC: It is partly true, but it is just one of those instruments of foreign policy. At least we could tell the people that we have the Commonwealth with us, we have also the Non-aligned Movement etc, while preparing our military capability to face the inevitable. This is what was really happening. Even in the UK we had lots of constituencies. Again, they were basically giving us confidence that Britain is a very complicated country. As a government I think it's in the Palmerston-ian dictum: democratic at home, reactionary abroad. We had people in Britain who understood that what had happened in Rhodesia was basically unacceptable. You heard it in the speeches at Hyde Park Corner at weekends. So, the pressure was important. Around the Commonwealth there was already an instrument available for us to use before going to Non-Aligned countries and the United Nations.

SO: Sir, please if I could ask about your ability to communicate effectively with London but particularly also to the British government. If the Secretary General was part of your diplomatic arsenal to do this, so surely was the appointment of Daphne Park as the deputy British High Commissioner in Lusaka; and, of course, she was a member of MI6.

MC: Yes. And she was very close...President Kaunda gave her an open door. What was important about that was that she knew that President Kaunda was non-violent. He would not allow Zambia, without trying, to be the proponent of the use of force if peaceful means were available. I think Daphne understood President Kaunda very well and that was important for us that the British security understood us.

SO: Sir, when I interviewed Daphne Park, she led me to believe she helped President Kaunda to develop his public policy stance that the Zimbabwe nationalists could have refugee camps here in Zambia, but they weren't allowed to have training camps; that Zambia was not to be used as a springboard to use any sort of incursion. Is that correct?

MC: The public image is that what we were doing on the ground was different, because there was no way in which we would say publicly that we were supporting freedom fighters. Only once it happened and it was the Chinese Ambassador then who said, "Please, don't accept this in public." It was important that we did not publicly say that we were supporting freedom fighters; nor that we had training camps. It didn't matter whether people believed us or not, but we did not want to give legitimacy to military action by Ian Smith, the South Africans and the Portuguese because we actually had training camps in Zambia. We did as much as possible deny that we had training camps, but of course in reality we had. We called them sometimes 'transit camps' for refugees to go to other countries or for training. You know, we used to call ourselves 'the Ho Chi Minh trail.' We were a Ho Chi Minh trail. Botswana became a Ho Chi Minh trail. We accepted our responsibility. But, you know, we were not fighting the war in Rhodesia, and Mozambique, and Angola, and South Africa and Namibia: it was the nationalists, their own people. We always said, "We're only providing logistical support."

Now, whether people believed it or not it didn't really matter. We went through the motions to make sure that what could have happened once did not ever happen; namely, an actual frontal attack, both airborne and land incursion. An invasion was possible. We did everything possible to avoid an invasion by Rhodesian or South African forces. This is where President Kaunda's leadership was absolutely important; that Zambia could not become a client state like Malawi.

SO: What do you mean by that, Sir?

MC: Well, you see, Kamuzu Banda pursued a policy which basically banned liberation movements from using Malawi as a base in the armed struggle while allowing the South African Government to use the territory for wide ranging counter insurgency operations against Frelimo, Zimbabwe and South African liberation movements.

SO: South Africa had formal diplomatic relations with Malawi.

MC: Booming, and economic relations were very strong. We didn't want to become that kind of state, but we did not become a Beirut either.

SO: Sir, Malawi was a member of the Commonwealth. As a national liberation leader, Dr Banda had led opposition to British colonial rule in Nyasaland, particularly from 1959. What were his relations like with President Kaunda?

MC: Diplomatically correct. It was diplomatic correctness being the fundamental principle between them; but, of course, they seriously disagreed on Banda's decision not to support the liberation movements, that had made it difficult for us to achieve early independence for Mozambique. Banda did not accept freedom fighters on Malawian territory. Yet the Malawi/Mozambique border front was very long, from the Tanzanian border in the north down to the southern tip of Malawi. If that border had been opened, the Portuguese would have been defeated much earlier. In this case the line of communication, the line of supplies from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania which was of strategic importance to us, was too long. But, if we had staging posts, which Banda

refused to provide, because it was South Africa's client state - that's the way I looked at it, a client state, we would have finished the job in Mozambique much earlier. As Samora (Machel) used to say: "Dr Banda delayed Mozambique's independence by ten years".

SO: Sir, speaking of a leader and a country that did support Mozambique independence, namely, Tanzania under President Nyerere, what were relations like in the late 1960s between President Kaunda and President Nyerere?

MC: Excellent relations.

SO: Tanzania had already offered training camps in the southern part of Tanzania, where there were Chinese military instructors, for Zimbabwean and Mozambican liberation combatants.

MC: Not only that. Tanzania was really offering training facilities for almost all liberation movements, and therefore it had become important for us to have a relationship that allowed us to train people (freedom fighters) in Tanzania and then they could come in transit through Zambia to Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique or South Africa. They all passed through Zambia for training in Tanzania. From Tanzania some could go to China and the Soviet Union and so forth. So, Tanzania was of such strategic importance, and the relations between Kaunda and Nyerere were so, so close. There was only one time when Nyerere thought Zambia was really suffering and wanted to maybe send some troops to assist Zambia and President Kaunda said, "No." He declined the offer.

SO: When was that, Sir?

MC: In the 70s.

SO: When the Rhodesian war was really beginning to heat up?

MC: Right. Right. Right. Yes. Just before Mozambique became independent (in 1975). Yes. Just before Mozambique became independent, because all of us

(Tanzania and Zambia) participated in the war in Mozambique directly or indirectly. While Tanzanian troops moved in to assist Frelimo in the north, Zambia was doing the same: whether it was in Angola or Mozambique. Our troops moved in to help push the Portuguese forces and give FRELIMO greater penetrative ability and capacity. But, that was also to open the eastern border of Rhodesia. So, it was essential for these two countries to do that and thus assisted FRELIMO to move much faster than was expected. We did the same in Angola, helping the MPLA to push the Portuguese as far inside as possible.

SO: Sir, while Tanzania was providing nationalist fighters' training bases with Chinese instructors in the south of the country, Tete province in western Mozambique was strategically particularly important - in both the struggle in Mozambique, and neighbouring Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. I am aware FRELIMO established a front in Tete province in '68/'69, and asked the ZIPRA leadership, as one of the 'authentic ones', whether they wished to collaborate militarily in the area. (This was refused for a variety of reasons, whereas ZANU/ZANLA comrades accepted FRELIMO's subsequent approaches; this accelerated Rhodesian incursions in support of the Portuguese colonial forces in Tete.) Did this have any Commonwealth complications in any way, because Portugal was a NATO ally of Britain, or because Malawi did not support Zambian/Tanzanian policy?

MC: Not at all. We felt nothing. Nothing because the focus was then basically on fighting. It became very clear to us what needed to be done. We had a 'domino approach'*:* that is if we could get the Portuguese out of Mozambique, that would assist us to open Rhodesia's eastern front which was of such strategic importance in the armed struggle. Zambezi was a physical impediment. Therefore, if we could have Mozambique free, and thus open liberated areas as far south as possible, then this would allow us to have longer border areas to move freedom fighters into Rhodesia. So, ZANLA forces would move with a greater penetrative ability and capacity because of the length of the Mozambique/Rhodesia border.

SO: Approximately 1230 kms.

MC: Correct. That for us was extremely important. That is where we got frustration from Kamuzu Banda, that if he had not limited his support, or even actually opposed, we would have completed the job of freeing Mozambique much earlier. So, the Zambezi being a problem, a physical impediment, this was balanced by our ability to get western Mozambique/eastern Rhodesia free.

SO: So these regional tensions – Zambia's wish to prosecute and to support the liberation struggle as much as possible, contrasting with Dr Banda's resistance with his own idea of what constituted Malawian national interests – did they play out as tensions within the Commonwealth? Historians tend to think of the Commonwealth versus Britain on the Rhodesia issue, whereas, in fact, it was much more complex.

MC: The issue was much more complex because we watched always, whether it was in Singapore or London, Dr Banda who was watching where the British stood. So did Muldoon of New Zealand. They were the ones we watched where their positions would be. It was very clear to us because the majority of us were basically together. But, they supported the British position most of the time, if not all of the time, by their silence. It happened here in Lusaka in 1979. It was embarrassing. Mrs Thatcher had moved too fast for them! They didn't know that Mrs. Thatcher was party to the Communique on Rhodesia during the retreat at State House. An attempt to question the Communique was thwarted by Mrs. Thatcher's unequivocal endorsement. So, that is why we didn't really mind about them. It didn't stop us from proceeding with what was actually important for us.

SO: Sir, please if I could just ask you one more question about the political and personal relationship, the personal chemistry, between President Kaunda and President Nyerere, because you saw this at first hand. The Commonwealth prides itself on providing the unique opportunity for the establishment of personal relationships between heads, thereby boosting the element of trust; and that the Commonwealth fosters friendships, knowledge of each other's strengths and character traits, as national leaders. You've emphasised that there was a complete identity of interests between the Zambian and Tanzanian leaders on this

question of the liberation struggle. However, was there an element of rivalry in terms of each's ability to prosecute the liberation struggle? That Nyerere had greater freedom because of the geographic position of Tanzania: further away from the front line, obviously a coastal nation. In contrast, Zambia is landlocked, and was right on the racial frontier in southern Africa?

MC: There wasn't any...I didn't see any problem because for us, and it's a term, I think I only use, there's a difference between 'a front-line country' and 'a battle-front country'. Zambia was battle-front. Botswana was battle-front. So it was easy sometimes for Tanzania to say, "Why have you done this, instead of this?" So, there could be a difference in tactics. Even the commander of an army will find that the battle orders are changed by the man right in the theatre of battle.

So, sometimes Tanzania, as chairman of front-line countries, would have wished things to go one way, just like when he had thought that he could send Tanzanian troops to help Zambia and President Kaunda said "No", because the Zambians would have said, "No". Because this was not about reputation, this was not about credit; this was about winning the war. But, you see, the same is true for people who are not really in the battle front or front line, whether it is Forbes Burnham, Manley, and later on you can add Malcolm Fraser. These people spoke with candour and determination, and they became such strong allies in the Commonwealth in dealing with the issues concerning peaceful means to end the crisis in southern Africa.

SO: Sir, please if I could just ask about that other crisis in the Commonwealth in the late 1960s: the Nigerian civil war. As I understand it, Zambia's position was appreciably different from the British view on what was happening in Nigeria. Please could you add more about Zambia's view of the tensions within the Commonwealth on the Biafran war?

MC: I think it was the problem of President Kaunda's moral stand, and although initially it was a stand between two brothers - Nyerere and Kaunda - when they decided to recognise Biafra. Eventually, and unfortunately, Zambia was

carrying the can and this is because of President Kaunda's moral stand that if he made a decision he could not just disengage.

SO: What was President Kaunda's moral reason for doing this?

MC: It was the numbers of people who were killed during that period and he thought that it was an unjust war. That is what he thought. That is what Nyerere thought also. But, in terms of capacity, President Kaunda went further in this case.

SO: In what way?

MC: Because he spoke much more. He had an outspoken High Commissioner in Nigeria who had been high commissioner in London, Ali Simbule who had called the British 'a toothless bulldog', if you remember. President Kaunda did not immediately feel that he could change the position where people had died in Nigeria. Yet the reality was that the war could just end by military means, not by negotiation.

SO: Was President Kaunda pressing or encouraging Arnold Smith in the Secretary General's negotiating efforts between the two sides?

MC: Yes.

SO: How much was he an active supporter of negotiations? How was he doing this?

MC: I can't quite frankly say how regular, but otherwise he wished that the Secretary General could assist in the process because it was a Commonwealth problem within a Commonwealth country. I can't say much more.

SO: I'm aware of Arnold Smith's efforts to broker negotiations between President Gowan and the leader of the Biafran forces, Colonel Ojukwu. There were lengthy negotiations in Kampala, with President Obote in the

chair. Were you in any way deputed to go there to listen, or to support this Commonwealth initiative?

MC: No.

SO: Just to go forward on how the Biafran War and its outcome influenced the future Commonwealth: I'm aware that it was a very important part of Arnold Smith's reasoning in his decision to try to get international recognition for East Pakistan, as independent Bangladesh. Do you recall Zambia's position on that particular point?

MC: It was really that Bangladesh should be independent. There's no logic whatsoever, and so he did support Bangladesh. We didn't like the secession, but that was...

SO: Biafra was secession as well.

MC: Exactly, but what could we have done? We tried our best.

SO: So, humanitarian issues would trump secession?

MC: Sometimes they did. Unfortunately even today because, as you can see, the British and Americans over Iraq.

SO: Iraq is an artificial state, created out of the former British mandate. Sir, please could I take you back to points you've made about the Non-Aligned Movement, which met in Lusaka in 1970. The following year was the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Singapore, the first to be held outside London, at which you were one of the drafters of the seminal Singapore Declaration. Sir, please can I ask you about that process? Were you feeding in Non-Aligned ideas into the Commonwealth at this point?

MC: No. For us, the genesis of the Singapore Declaration was actually Ted Heath. We took a Draft to the Summit as a Lusaka Declaration. We looked at how far the Commonwealth was moving, and the consensus we were building on

Rhodesia and on the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique. We considered how much the South Africans were working very hard, particularly with Nixon and Henry Kissinger in power in Washington DC, and their 'Tar baby' option. The forces against us looked so strong that southern Africa would become a hotspot, which would really explode – firstly, because the nationalists were now being well trained and we were building capacity to carry out a more intensified armed struggle. Secondly, we had the Soviet Union training some liberation movements, while the Chinese were training others for the armed struggle in the same countries. We had refugees who were also divided ideologically.

So, the international community was really developing a trend that would make it extremely difficult to solve the problems. Evidently, we saw the potential for an explosion and the war between white and black in southern Africa would break out; and the consequences would be too horrendous to contemplate. So, when Heath said he would resume arms sales to South Africa, we thought that Pretoria, Salisbury and Lisbon were winning the West, whom we had thought we were beginning to woo, to come on board with us. The 'Tar baby' option made things worse for us. So the question was how could we use the Commonwealth, which had a shared vision – in words at least – except for this problem, namely, that Rhodesia was a British problem and responsibility. Otherwise, on a number of major issues, we agreed. British disengagement globally and the preparations the British made to ensure that there was stability in former colonies after independence showed that what they wanted was peace and stability. I was a District Officer before independence. President Kaunda allowed some of us to join the Colonial Civil Service. That helped to lay a good foundation for stability. So, therefore, when Heath said he was going to sell arms to South Africa, it was changing the entire perspective, which we were developing.

SO: Yes. He also launched a new negotiation initiative, through Alec Douglas Home, with the Rhodesians when he came to power in June 1970. So, it seems that there was very much a British active policy towards southern Africa at that time.

MC: That, for us, again was introducing contradictions, and it could only be done if there was a common understanding on what the Commonwealth stood for.

SO: Sir, did you go to the 1971 meeting with a draft of what became the Singapore Declaration?

MC: Yes. We went with a Lusaka Declaration drafted and I was fortunate in developing this concept in that I had a man in the UK, who was very sympathetic and later became Lord John Hatch. He was a man who didn't like the widening gap between the rich and poor and that therefore this war, which we had, was making things even worse. It was good to have him as a sounding board. He was an Africanist through and through. So, we discussed prospective outcome of Singapore Summit and Kamuzu Banda's position; eventually he did encourage us and said, "Go with a declaration to Singapore." That was the best way of changing and more redefining the Commonwealth principles. For us we wanted to show Ted Heath that he could not go along this line (selling arms to South Africa) when in fact he subscribed to the principles of the Commonwealth and to push him into a political cul-de-sac, where he would be left alone when the rest of the world was moving along on the line of international understanding.

SO: Sir, did you come with core clauses already drafted, to which Ivan Head added others?

MC: Ivan Head was such a fantastic colleague. We sat together and looked at the draft declaration, with Sonny Ramphal of course, whom I had known as Foreign Minister of Guyana. These were fantastic colleagues. We were able therefore now to make it even wider, not only from the Zambian angle. We wanted to lock Ted Heath in a position where he was contradicting himself in the things that he said and what he did. We were happy that the Commonwealth principles were actually understood. For the first time we were beginning to have a shared vision in writing in a Declaration of Principles.

SO: Were there other opponents? You said you were trying to set the parameters for diplomacy for the British government under Ted Heath. But, also for others?

MC: Kamuzu Banda and Muldoon.

SO: What was Lee Kuan Yew's position?

MC: Lee Kuan Yew was very much part of our pressure group. He made a very fantastic speech on the Commonwealth at that time, yes, because he referred to "little Chinese being crushed" by colonial forces, yet they could not fight the big Boers in South Africa. He was very, very strong. So, therefore we actually had behind us all leaders, except those two I mentioned (Kamuzu Banda and Muldoon) earlier. If you add Ted Heath, there were three.

SO: 19 against 3. The Singapore Declaration was being drafted against the background of 'kicking the can down the road' on arms sales to South Africa through the establishment of a working committee to look at this issue. Yet, what was the mood music, the policies around the Singapore meeting? It was a long summit meeting, which lasted up to ten days. I've seen the transcript of the executive sessions, but what about the discussions in the corridors?

MC: I think in the corridors the caucus meetings were going as usual. In one of them, we wanted to get to our side, Leabua Jonathan, Prime Minister of Lesotho, who, because of his country's situation and the fact that he was a product of the South African regime, by their own admission later on, we needed him not to oppose the position of Presidents Nyerere, Kaunda, Obote or Khama. I remember how, at a private lunch, with Nyerere's persuasive powers, they convinced him to come with us. And he did. The other leaders understood, just as there were groups which basically said, "This is a British problem". But, the others said, "This was an African problem". So, what became Front-Line States had shared responsibilities, particularly Obote, Nyerere and Kaunda. We had shared responsibilities. Therefore it was easy for Obote to understand the need for him to be in Singapore. That is why a lot of pressure was put on Obote to attend.

SO: I wanted to ask you about that, Sir. There were political tensions in Uganda at this particular point with the possibility of a coup in Kampala. I've read Sir Sonny Ramphal's memoirs in which he said that Kenneth Kaunda felt a considerable degree of responsibility having pressed Milton Obote to be there in Singapore, precisely because of the approaching confrontation with Ted Heath.

MC: That's right. Yes, and I do feel responsible, because two weeks before we got information from our man in London that a coup was brewing in Uganda. It was in black and white, so we knew that a coup was brewing in Uganda. We had a very good contact in London. He really said definitely a coup was brewing in Uganda. When I got that report I gave it to President Kaunda and he said "Ohhh". When he (Obote) came to Singapore we thought that he would survive, but unfortunately he didn't. Ted Heath knew, just as our people in London knew, that it was happening.

SO: After all, there had been the coup in Lagos when you had been there in January 1966, immediately after the Commonwealth meeting.

MC: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

SO: This was the reality of political convulsions in Commonwealth countries.

MC: It was, but it's just that, if we did not press Obote to go to Singapore, it would not have happened at that time. It was revealed by Ted Heath in his deep background briefing to his (British) press corps, when he said, "Some of these presidents will not get back home."

SO: Sir, was President Nyerere equally alive to the possibility of a coup in Kampala?

MC: Yes, he discussed it with President Kaunda. But, still he said we needed him to go, to join us. Three was better than two.

SO: Indeed. The Singapore Declaration is now held up as the founding declaration for the Commonwealth. You describe its genesis as complex, with many different forces coming together to produce this document.

MC: It was, but you see, great events are not created by one reason. There are always forces which converge to make it possible for an epoch-making event to take place.

SO: I agree, Sir. It's never just one factor. But, on the other hand, you could say 'Victory has many fathers.'

MC: And "Defeat is an orphan!" [laughter] For us, it was fortuitous that people saw that there was an opportunity to actually have a declaration that defines something much bigger than what Mark Chona originally thought in State House and that this was the way to lock up Ted Heath in the prison of principles.

SO: Sir, if I could suggest to you that one of the fundamental criticisms held against the Commonwealth is that there is an attachment to declarations and process, rather than impact and outcomes.

MC: Those are really limitations of many organisations. The Commonwealth in this case is not an exception, particularly before creating a number of implementing institutions. Before, certainly you could call it, as they did, a "talk shop", but later on it had organs for implementing a lot of the decisions which they made. Some of the decisions which covered other areas, the Commonwealth could really move, could be kind of a caucus, go with an agreed position into the UN, go into an agreed position into the Non-Aligned Movement.

SO: And this is what happened?

MC: This has been happening. This has been happening. The differences may arise as a result of our diversities. But, otherwise once a Commonwealth position was taken, Commonwealth ambassadors and ministers took it. We

had Commonwealth finance ministers meeting before the World Bank and now governors of Central Banks. So, slowly, slowly the organisations under this Commonwealth Secretariat were beginning to formulate and also implement.

SO: And incubate policy?

MC: Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. This is where the Commonwealth Secretary General's position comes in. When you have a dynamic Commonwealth Secretary General who has a vision also of what the world should look like, who understands, inter alia, the shortcomings in governance, he will sometimes canvas certain positions by lobbying Commonwealth governments to take a position on an issue. I think this is where the Singapore Declaration becomes a foundation for assisting people to respect certain principles. If one is out of line, they can always refer to the guiding lines of the Singapore Declaration and many succeeding declarations.

SO: Sir, I would like to follow up on what you say about the importance of the personality, the dynamism and the political energies of the Secretary General. But on the question of Commonwealth heads' meetings during Arnold Smith's time as Secretary General - there were two more following Singapore, in Ottawa and then in Kingston. In Ottawa there was the innovation of the retreat. I wondered if you could comment on that, Sir: how you saw it emerge? But also what you thought of Prime Minister Trudeau's idea as President Kaunda's special adviser on political affairs. Of course, you were not supposed to be there. How much value did you attach to the idea of the retreat, or how concerned were you about this innovation?

MC: It was extremely valuable. Retreats were such an important initiative because even if their personal relationships are good, and meetings had taken place in hotels, during summit meetings, a retreat by leaders to be alone, a smaller group, person to person, like people who play golf, is very important.

SO: Golf diplomacy, yes.

MC: Golf diplomacy. It becomes extremely vital. Gleneagles is a good example.

SO: You mean, play golf, get sport sanctions?

MC: Get things done. I think that it has been proved that in the retreats the consensus is built and friendships are built and guarantees of trust are built. I think that it's better than this combative atmosphere in Plenary Sessions. Even in committees it's still combative, you take a position all the time. But, retreats give people an opportunity to be alone and see what we can actually do. We had that experience fortunately and I know you'll be coming to the issue in Lusaka.

SO: I will, but please if I could just ask you: as President Kaunda's right-hand man, and his key official on foreign affairs. I've talked to another New Zealand leading official on foreign affairs, Simon Murdoch, who was horrified at the idea of his Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, going to a retreat without his officials. I commented, "You make it sound as if he was going skiing, alone, 'off-piste': having fun, but also dangerous and you couldn't control him". He said, "No, it's very dangerous." I wondered if you had a view on that?

MC: I have a view, but born out of experience and the positive results that come out. I think when you have a weak leader in terms of his constituency you can be afraid that his political party would come heavily on him, "Why did you agree to this type of position?" But, for us, whose vision was very clear and whose goals in the region were clear, we didn't have a problem. In these situations, when your boss is already attuned to what the results should be, you are not worried; you have already armed him with what needs to be achieved. The rest is tactics.

Only when you don't know what the product should be then you should be worried that presidents can be loose cannons. On the other hand, if you are firm, that can't be a problem. Certainly if your leader is one of the champions of a just cause, there will be no need to fear. In fact you'd be thinking he will do a very good deal. He will tackle it.

SO: Would you advise him to target this particular person, or others?

MC: Yes.

SO: So, you would brief him beforehand and encourage him, "This would be good if you spoke to him, or her".

MC: Absolutely. Speak to so and so and so and so and so and so; these are the difficult ones. These ones, don't worry they are already with us. These ones are the ones that we need to bring to the table. Retreats therefore are extremely important to that extent.

SO: What was President Kaunda's relationship like with Pierre Trudeau? When Trudeau was first elected premier, he was on record as saying the Commonwealth was old hat, and an outdated colonial institution; and then there he was, hosting the heads meeting and initiating the retreat, becoming one of the most fervent supporters of this association.

MC: You see, presidency is a university. You come in without much knowledge about the affairs of the world. Being foreign minister, or being vice-president, is not the same thing as being executive president, or executive prime minister; it is very different. Therefore you can come in green and the moment the challenges confront you, you don't have to look at anybody else but yourself. Then you begin to value your institutions that are actually important. Being Trudeau also had its problems. Therefore it was not surprising when once he actually confronted the challenges, on which as a leader, he actually had to make decisions, he changed. I'm glad that it was a Canadian. Malcolm Fraser came later. These two became extremely important pillars in the decisions the Secretary General had to make. They just had to be convinced about the correctness and the moral grounds on which the recommendations were made.

The moment they understood, they were like a CEO or a president who has on his door an invisible signpost: "You come in with your recommendation and you go out with my decision." I think that the moment Trudeau stepped in (as Prime Minister) and understood the challenge, he got convinced that the

Commonwealth was an important instrument for international peace and security.

SO: It is interesting you emphasise this question of security because so often the Commonwealth is seen as a talk shop to exchange ideas, but not as an association which can boost and enhance national security.

MC: It's very, very important because most of the issues that are brought before leaders in Commonwealth Summits touch national security interests of member states.

SO: Lee Kuan Yew once described the Commonwealth executive sessions as seminars for world leaders. As you say, the chance to have this overview of world affairs, which always started the executive sessions, was unique. And where heads would not speak to notes; that they would generally articulate what it was that they were concerned about, on the basis of the briefing that they'd been provided by their teams.

MC: Exactly. Exactly. But, after that now it's really getting to the decision time. What decisions do we have to make? So, I believe that every leader who comes in has a different view. Even Ted Heath became more flexible. May be the fact that he was not married had its influence on him because normally a good father has a heart for others. But, if you don't have the experience of looking after this little 'thing' you wouldn't have the feel or experience of looking after people. It seems later on, he begun to understand. He understood the complexity of problems following his experience in office and after he left office. The Commonwealth for a lot of people had been made relevant in resolving world problems and it was made relevant by decisions of the leaders when they were facing challenges.

SO: After my recent meeting with the South African former Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad, I was talking to a South African ambassador for multilateral affairs. He remarked, "I hear so often people say 'What has the Commonwealth done for South Africa lately?'" My jaw dropped! Yes, Sir, I thought you would find that quite telling!

Arnold Smith's Special Adviser, David McDowell told me that at the Ottawa retreat it was Ted Heath who offered very useful advice to Norman Kirk, the New Zealand Prime Minister. Kirk had complained he didn't know what to do with his backbenchers - the restive political types. Ted Heath said "You need to create backbench committees which will channel their energies." So heads' meetings were occasions of practical support and advice, in addition to the chance of being able to talk out problems with other leaders who had similar concerns.

Sir, please could I ask: to what extent in the early '70s did President Kaunda also use the Commonwealth, and Zambia's success and standing in the Commonwealth, as a way to boost the legitimacy of his government at home? Chief Emeka makes the point about 'intermestic issues' - international matters but which had domestic ramifications. President Kaunda was a leading opponent of apartheid and white minority rule in states in southern Africa; he was a figure of prominence and standing on the world stage. Was this used in the Zambian domestic environment to boost his legitimacy, his political standing, and the standing of the party, UNIP?

MC: I think that is probably the result of the success of the policies. If the policies were not successful, it didn't matter what he did overseas, that would not actually boost his image. On the contrary, he would in fact damage his image. But, in this particular case I think President is probably different from many other leaders because of Zambia's geopolitical position right in the middle of a war torn zone. To survive he depended on trans-national routes to the seaports in enemy territories. A lot of people might think that our support for the armed struggle was *only* to liberate Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola and South Africa. But for us who were actors, it was also for our own national security interests. We knew that as long as these racist regimes existed and posed a threat to Zambia's peace and security, we were not free.

In 1972 Professor Mungar from Stanford University visited Zambia and he saw me at home. (Well, my wife and others joined President Kaunda at Mulungushi International Centre to watch James Brown's Show!). Sharing a cup of coffee with Professor Mungar, who came with one Lecturer from

University of Zambia, he told me one thing that struck me. He said, “I've seen a map in the Ministry of Defence in Pretoria with a cross over Zambia.” I said, “Yes” not surprising. Those were the kind of strategic maps I also did in 1968!” I had three maps; one exactly like that with a cross over Zambia; another with a white belt from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean (covering Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola and Namibia as well as South Africa) targeted for white control. The third was the ‘Ho Chi Minh trail’ – Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana. I said, “This is what I'm implementing to prevent the South Africans from destroying Zambia.” Everything that we were doing was to stop Zambia from being destroyed and therefore what Kenneth Kaunda was doing overseas was for national preservation, security and development.

So, this ‘intermestic’ question: it is true for others but for us this was really to remove the external threats around us, to enhance national security and also improve the foundations for peace, stability and the growth of our economy as well as the general welfare of the people, which was not possible without the liberation of these regions. SADC is a product of armed struggle, of life lost and property destroyed. That was the price we had to pay in the dark days. As we say, "Freedom is a light for which one must fight in the dark".

SO: And in that struggle for freedom, Sir, you embarked on diplomacy with South Africa. I've read the transcripts of your first meetings with Prime Minister Vorster down in South Africa, which are in the Department of Foreign Affairs files. It made very interesting reading. You first went there in 1974 after the April ‘Carnation revolution’ in Portugal?

MC: Yes.

SO: So, it seems that '74/75 was a particular important year for Zambia, for South Africa with Vorster’s decision to go for ‘détente’...

MC: A term I don't like!

SO: …This was also the time after the revolution when Arnold Smith reached out to General Spinola in Lisbon to encourage transition to

independence for Mozambique, saying that Spinola could not try and keep the old colonial influence; that FRELIMO was not going to accept autonomy within a federal structure. Arnold Smith also sent Chief Emeka down to Lourenco Marques with a view to offering assistance to FRELIMO's leadership, following the Portuguese settler population's abrupt departure and destruction of factory plant.

So, in President Kaunda's willingness to talk of diplomatic resolution of the Rhodesian issue and your own approaches to Prime Minister Vorster, is it fair to say that the Commonwealth was a key actor in this? Or was this simply Zambian national policy at this time?

MC: At this particular time the Commonwealth was out of the picture and it is just before even front-line states came into existence. It was a follow-up to what I said earlier about our domino approach. In January 1969, during my first ever visit to Portugal, I told Franco Noguiera...

SO: The Portuguese Foreign Minister, whom you met in Lisbon immediately after the Commonwealth heads' meeting in London?

MC: Yes just a day before the end of the Commonwealth summit. I saw Prime Minister Caetano - this was really the main mission to assess the successor Salazar, but also to tell the Portuguese leadership that it was time to talk to the nationalists; that there was a cost in granting independence immediately to Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau, but also a greater cost in delaying independence; so one had to find the right time. When I said to Nogueira: "Talk to the freedom fighters, Frelimo and MPLA. That Dr. Mondlane and Dr Neto are very good people." "Yes", Noguiera said, "but if the military discovered that we were engaged in secret talks with terrorists there would be coup in Portugal". I was surprised.

But, later on in the year we had some contacts with representatives of the Portuguese military, because of the border incursions into Zambia by their soldiers and resultant exchanges of fire between them and our forces. This followed a serious battle between MPLA combatants and Portuguese army in Caripande area close to the Angola/Zambia border in north-western Zambia

The MPLA had really battered the Portuguese trucks. I visited the border area in Chavuma with our Army Commander who was a Briton. General Reid was very good, a real professional soldier. When we met the Portuguese soldiers on the border, travelling in their battered truck, he said to me, "Mark, the Portuguese have lost the war". So, that was a signature statement made in 1969.

From this experience, we were now looking at the Portuguese colonial war differently. It was increasingly clear that the military were the main factor; that they were tired and the Portuguese economy was facing difficulties. In addition, we had a Portuguese businessman, Jorge Jardim, former Consul-General for Kamuzu Banda in Mozambique, who contacted President Kaunda. He became a link-man. We knew that he was a double agent, but in this business, as long as you know he's a double agent you can deal with him. It was clear that a coup was coming but the question was: would it be rightist or leftist? I remember when I got a call from our Zambian News Agency reporting that there was a coup in Portugal. It was on St Mark's day April 25th. So I said "St Mark, thank you!"

I did ask a question to try understand whether it was a rightist or leftist coup. We were concerned that it could be rightist coup. I said, "Where is President Tomas?" and I was told he was under house arrest. For me, from what I knew, it was okay. That opened now a new door because I think the South Africans got the message that chickens were coming home to roost. We took advantage of that immediately. It's not President Kaunda who initiated it; I think it came through a contact. I'm sure my memoirs will tell you who brought it!

SO: Sir, please can I ask you (this is an area in which I research and write on a lot which is not connected directly with the Commonwealth project): what was your view of Premier Vorster as a diplomatic opponent, as a diplomatic negotiator?

MC: He was as described by General Van der Bergh in the plane from Lusaka to Cape Town. He described him as 'cool but not cold.' I thought he was a very frank person. But as he said himself, "I don't want to be the Prime Minister

who leads the people of South Africa to a destination I don't know." So he wasn't very clear where to go but, for me, I was only interested in: non-interference in Mozambique; freeing the freedom fighters in Zimbabwe; non-interference in Angola; and freedom for Namibia. I didn't touch South Africa, although General Van der Bergh pushed a question which led to my answer which you found. Because it was too specific and I didn't want South Africa to be on my agenda. I didn't want the ANC to be on my agenda and complicate the domino process. I just wanted to limit myself to non-South African issues. However, he himself said, "But isn't it true that I'm the last on your agenda?" And, of course, I said, "You have not read *The Manifesto on Southern Africa*?" He said, "No", so I said, "I'll send you a copy!" and that's how I evaded the question but I think he obviously knew that South Africa was the last on our agenda. His concern was as he put it: "You want to throw the whites into the sea". I had to refer again to *The Manifesto on Southern Africa* as proof that this was not our intention. This was to become the real issue for President Kaunda, namely, to assure the whites in Rhodesia and South Africa that it was not the intention of the liberation governments to throw the white people into the sea.

SO: Behind the doors in these talks, as far as you recall, what was Premier Vorster's view of the white Rhodesia Front Government and Ian Smith?

MC: It was very interesting and that's what gave me cause for encouragement. First, he basically said - as you must have read - that "we gave them a chance in 1923. They had a referendum and they voted for self-government. Their Constitution has in it an embedment of majority rule". He said, "It is time for them to talk to the Africans." Indeed the following day, as I left for Zambia, the *Cape Times Newspaper* had an editorial – it was clearly an official line - that Rhodesia was *politically embarrassing, strategically irrelevant and economically a burden*. So, for me, that summarised the position that we could move them to get Smith to negotiate.

SO: Behind the scenes, how frank was Premier Vorster in saying that South Africa, with its system of *apartheid*, didn't pose a threat to other African states? While he might be encouraging a joint effort to deal with the

diplomatic embarrassment of Rhodesia, that South Africa was another entirely separate issue. Was he as frank as this in your discussions?

MC: He was, but I didn't believe him. He tried his level best to emphasise that South Africa's way of managing affairs was going to be one that provided security for all, and development for all. When he referred to Mandela, he said, "he can be freed" - I did *not* raise the question – "but on condition that he renounces violence, and he'll go to his homeland (Bantustan)." I had no instruction to discuss the release of Mandela. Nor did I even ask to see him. Although, if I had asked, I know that they would have arranged for me to see him, but I had no instructions to do so at this stage. It was just to secure peace in the four countries: Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola.

SO: Sir, thank you for that. Did you tell Arnold Smith, the Secretary General any of this, or was this purely Zambia's foreign policy?

MC: At that point, it was just Zambia's foreign policy. The reason was that, in 1966, after the failure of the Rhodesian nationalist/ANC invasion…

SO: The Wankie campaign?

MC: Yeah. That drew the South Africans into Rhodesia and that caused a lot of security problems. That was a real danger for us for two reasons. First, it brought the South Africans very close to Zambia on the Zambezi escarpment – and they could invade Zambia any time. Second, it strengthened Rhodesia's eastern front facing Mozambique border. Smith's forces were concentrated on the Rhodesian/Mozambique border. What we wanted was to overstretch Ian Smith's forces by him having to supervise the entire Mozambican border, the Zambian border and the Botswanan border. The presence of South African troops in Rhodesia was a great threat to our national security and we had, therefore, to use diplomacy to get South Africa's forces and equipment out of the rebel colony by dangling the carrot and keeping the stick at the back.

SO: There was the attempt to promote negotiations between the Zimbabwean nationalists and Ian Smith's regime at Victoria Falls in August '75.

MC: That, again, was Vorster's initiative. He, I think, wanted to demonstrate that he was actually serious in removing the South African troops and equipment from Rhodesia as a way of weakening Ian Smith and drive him to the negotiation table. I remember that when I was told to see him, I was in Mozambique. President Samora Machel said, "Vorster" - I won't tell you his nickname - "wants to see you." I said, "I have no item to discuss with them". So I said, "No." But he said, "He wants to see you." So I said, "What do you think?" He said, "go and listen." So I quickly left Maputo, flew into Lusaka, en route to South Africa. I stayed in a different guest house this time with my Assistant Peter Kasanda. The following morning, Brandt Fourie, Vorster's key Foreign Policy Advisor picked us up and said, "Yes, Smith will be at the meeting." So I said, "No. We turn back. I have no instruction to meet Ian Smith." So, Brandt Fourie, the diplomat that he was, said, "No, no, you know when the Prime Minister says 'Come', it means he has a message." So I said, "Okay, I'm attending as a witness. I'm not participating." So Peter Kasanda and I sat in the meeting with Ian Smith. Vorster was very clear in telling Ian Smith about the need to talk to the nationalists. That was reflected in the *Pretoria News,* in their editorial on that day, that Smith must just speak to the Africans…Vorster said, "Gentlemen, if you don't, count me out." And he was very strong. I was happy to hear that and I was happy to read the *Pretorian News* editorial too, just like *Cape Times Newspaper* the year before. There was a certain shift in their support for Ian Smith. (The appearance of P.W Botha, Defence Minister, during lunch was a disturbing signal).

What was constraining them, I didn't know. And that is how the issue of the train came about. Discussing the options for the venue of the meeting, Ian Smith wanted it right in Rhodesia and, of course, the nationalists would reject that as a venue. So I said, "No". I said, "The nationalists will never accept." So Vorster proposed his Train on Victoria Falls Bridge…"

SO: Sir, did this come up at all at the Kingston Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in the summer of '75? The meeting on the bridge

at Victoria Falls was the following month. Was this an issue that was discussed behind the scenes at the Commonwealth heads' meeting?

MC: No, no, no, no. This was…

SO: Because I know that the liberation leaders were at the Kingston meeting. The Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley had enabled them to come…

MC: Correct, yes.

SO: …and they were able to make an informal presentation to the Heads, even though Pierre Trudeau objected.

MC: Yes, yes. He didn't like it.

SO: Indeed! [laughter] Trudeau turned his name-plate upside down. So there were ANC representatives there, Sam Nujoma of SWAPO, as well as Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU, as well as Robert Mugabe of ZANU.

MC: It must have been Robert Mugabe and not Sithole really, I don't know, No, the records say it is, the records say it is Robert Mugabe.

SO: But you remember Sithole?

MC: Yes, I remember Sithole.

SO: All of them were able to make that extraordinary contact with Heads. So, was the Commonwealth starting to take a position on Zimbabwe? Or was this really a means for these liberation leaders to brief Heads on their particular agenda?

MC: I think it's composite. Composite in the sense that the Commonwealth leaders like Manley, Forbes Burnham, Nyerere and Kaunda wanted the Nationalists to put their case before the Commonwealth because Rhodesia was a British problem or responsibility. So it would be natural, just like Kaunda went to the

United Nations in 1962 to put his case for Zambia. So, in this case, I think, they wanted the liberation movements to put their case and I think it was important for the Nationalists to show that it was not their intention to throw out the whites after independence, but to demonstrate that they were human beings with responsibilities for common humanity. So, that was the idea and I think that there wasn't consultation before, whether the nationalist leaders should actually come in and present their case. That's why Trudeau did what he did. Consultations before would have resulted in disagreement and nationalists would not have been allowed to appear at the summit.

SO: It seems that the Commonwealth became involved again the following year after the Kissinger Initiative, with the squeeze play on Rhodesia from Vorster and from Kissinger, and also supported, I'm sure, by Zambia…

MC: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SO: I'm aware the Commonwealth Secretariat provided both financial and diplomatic administrative support for the nationalist delegations at the negotiations in Geneva. Were you also sent to observe these discussions?

MC: I was the Head of the Zambian observers, as I was at Lancaster House… and we worked very hard. There, it was different, because observers were always around and listening in, and this is when I met Tony Duff. I had a bad experience which affected our relations at Lancaster House. Even if I had a message from Mugabe at Lancaster House, our relations in '76 weren't good, because we were trying to follow what they were discussing. And we were trying to help the Nationalists and helping the British authorities in their process. So, things became difficult and our UN Permanent Representative suggested that we have dinner with Tony Duff and I think our conversation was a little bit difficult…

SO: In what way?

MC: …and he ended up by saying, “If you Africans don’t accept this proposal, you’re going to be the ones suffering.” I didn’t take that kindly. I was only 42 and I told him, I said, “Look, this is a popular war. And if things become worse, I am prepared to join the fight,” and I don’t think he liked that very much.

SO: Well, as a former Naval Commander in World War II and a senior Foreign Office official, no, I shouldn’t think he did.

MC: But I think he also understood that I had actually slipped, sneaked out of Geneva. Tiny Rowland helped me to meet Margaret Thatcher, the leader of the Opposition in London.

SO: When did you do that? At the same time?

MC: Yes, I think it was in October. Ivor Richards was just the wrong British negotiation leader because you wouldn’t put such a wonderful nice man in the chair. It was like a candidate going into a chemistry examination with a smile, hoping to succeed, to pass…

SO: And he was faced with all these elements which, if you combined them, would explode?

MC: He had Ian Smith there as leader of the Rhodesian delegation and Ian Smith had a very good time. So because we (Observers) were always being told that the British Parliament will not accept, the Conservative Opposition will not accept the outcome of the Geneva Conference, I asked Tiny Rowland for help. I said, “Look, this is what they (British negotiation team) are saying,” and he said, “You want to meet Margaret Thatcher?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Okay.” So he arranged an appointment through Duncan Sandys, of course, and Edward du Cann. So he sent his plane to pick me up and I met Margaret Thatcher at the House of Commons. She was very good, with John Davies, the Shadow Foreign Secretary. She just said to me: “Mr. Chona if you produce a good agreement in Geneva, we will support it.”

SO: That’s interesting.

MC: So, I flew back to Geneva. The following day, her Assistant phoned me and said, “Have you read today’s Daily Express?” I said, “I don’t read that paper.” So he said, “No, go to the railway station and get a copy.” I got a copy and it was a very nice article, explaining her position…

SO: Ah, this practice of briefing key journalists behind the scenes, to leak policy!

MC: Of course, my “friends” in British security reported my visit to London and meeting with Margaret Thatcher and the British Team was not amused that I had sneaked out and in; my stubborn streak was a problem. So anyway, I knew Margaret Thatcher wanted a solution. How, or what type, I can’t say until we met her here in Lusaka, the night before the Commonwealth Summit. At the end of the Geneva Conference, Henry Kissinger had said to me…“But Mark, if Gerald Ford had not lost the elections, I would have tied this thing up.”

SO: Kissinger had put a considerable amount of energy into his initiative, having persuaded the Rhodesians through extraordinary diplomacy, with Vorster, in September 1976 to accept transition to majority rule in two years, then to go to an all party Conference - which the British didn’t want. I’ve read the South African Foreign Minister’s Pik Botha’s appeal to Kissinger, sent in early December 1976, to put his authority and weight behind the negotiations because the conference was clearly unravelling. This appeal came after the Carter victory in the Presidential elections in November, and Kissinger’s response was, ‘I can’t do anything’.

MC: No. No, I saw him just before he left office. I was the last guest on the last day of his departure as Secretary of State. He called me.

SO: So that was in January of 1977?

MC: Yes, just before the handover. I was the last, and I went with my wife and, I mean, both of us – we had a very bitter quarrel after Geneva, but he said, "Come". It was the last day of the transition.

SO: What was the source of the quarrel?

MC: No, it was a message he sent to President Kaunda, and we didn't like it.

SO: Did Kissinger hold the Front Line Presidents responsible for the failure of the Geneva meeting?

MC: It was a breach of protocol for him to send a message to President Kaunda and the message was not in a language which we liked. I was in Geneva and my Assistant read it to me. I said, "Just reject it." But, anyway, after that, Kissinger said I should really come to Washington D.C to be introduced to the transitional team, which I did. After seeing him, I went to see Vance in the Basement Offices. So Kissinger was, I think, very disappointed, but that is where the Zimbabwe issue was. He was so determined that he would do whatever it would take to help the situation. It was not to be.

SO: I know how important addressing the land question was to the Kissinger Initiative, with the Development Fund…

MC: Exactly.

SO: …and the discussions with the British and the South Africans; and that the French, the West Germans and the EEC were prepared to come on board.

MC: Exactly.

SO: All of this is available in the British and South African files now.

Just going forward to the role of the Commonwealth in resolving the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe long running crisis. Please could you talk about the Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting? When did

Sonny Ramphal approach President Kaunda to ask if the meeting could be held in Lusaka?

MC: As it is normally the case, it's done the year before. It had been agreed after the 1977 Commonwealth Summit in London. Fortunately, we had the facilities from the 1970 Non-Aligned Summit. The houses were there, people who were living in the houses had to temporarily move to other houses...

SO: So this was from the Non-Aligned Movement Meeting of 1970?

MC: That's right. That's right, yes. The hall was there, everything, all the facilities. The houses were in Mulungushi Village complex. The people who were living there, had to move for a moment to facilitate renovations.

SO: Yes.

MC: So, it was very, very fortuitous and for President Kaunda, he was absolutely determined to make this a success. We had a bit of a problem, because we needed the Queen. And she hadn't come to Singapore. She has a way of imposing a certain atmosphere when she is around and for us that was important and Rhodesia was just next-door.

SO: Excuse me, Sir, Lusaka was <u>in</u> the war zone, considering the April raid by the Rhodesian Air Force, and the attempted assassination of Joshua Nkomo.

MC: Absolutely, absolutely, and that's why, in a way, we were a battlefront and not merely a frontline state. We knew the consequences and we were aware of the dangers. Muzorewa was interim Prime Minister and so Ian Smith's Generals could order anything...Muzorewa could do nothing. As Kissinger said, "Archbishop Makarios is too big for Cyprus, but Muzorewa is too small for Zimbabwe". But our target for the Commonwealth Summit was Margaret Thatcher. We had to make sure that she didn't face protests; we also we made sure that the Queen was well received.

SO: Looking at the papers in the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, the Thatcher government tried to use the question of whether the Queen would come or not as a way to get ZAPU/ZIPRA to declare a ceasefire.

MC: Mmmmh.

SO: But it seems that the Queen's advisors at the Palace were very quick to say, "She's coming anyway."

MC: We were so happy and that is the only time when we thought, "Divide and rule will work!" And the Queen would be received with everything that was possible. Even the routing was a bit of a problem for us, because my colleague who went to Buckingham Palace, decided one route. When I saw it, after coming back from a brief holiday, I said, "No way. She comes through the crowds. She's a lady of the crowds, she must be received by the crowds." We wanted to go all the way to please and guarantee that there was no security problem at all for the British Monarch. For Margaret Thatcher, yes, there was a security problem, but it was exaggerated. The most important thing was that when she arrived…the night before the Summit, Margaret Thatcher called on President Kaunda with Lord Carrington. I'd not met him before. There were four of us. There was President Kaunda, me, Mrs Thatcher and Lord Carrington. She was tough. Her mind was made up on recognising the internal settlement in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. That is what, at that time, was her frame of mind and I was watching the body language of Lord Carrington. I wasn't quite sure whether he completely agreed with her. But President Kaunda played the game which we said he should – "to go on a charm offensive" – and he really spoke peace. He spoke peace. How long it has taken him to bring things to where they were, and he just point blankly discouraged her from thinking about the internal settlement that would not end the war. It would exacerbate the conflict. Thankfully, I think, there was beginning to be a chemistry for a common purpose. With Lord Carrington there, I didn't know what was going on in his mind but it seemed as if the two were beginning to show that there was an opening for possible acceptance of new ideas, new proposals, as long as they were aimed at ending this conflict…what Lord Carrington, in his Memoirs, called 'this thorn in the flesh'. This 'kith and kin thing', as he called it. And indeed, after that meeting, she

spoke so well during the opening Session of the Summit. She was so good – relaxed. When I met her. I said, "Prime Minister, that was a good speech." "Of course, I wrote it myself." [laughter]

SO: It wasn't just President Kaunda who was on a charm offensive, Sir.

MC: Absolutely, and I think even President Nyerere had shifted grounds and said, "No, I think we can do business with this lady." I think this is where, now, my original idea emerged about our experience – when dealing with a Conservative Government. We found that they are more decisive, sometimes on the wrong things, but if they are decisive on the right things, then you have them. In this case, it was really, to go all out to convince this lady, who, if she did not come with us, then the conflict in Zimbabwe would definitely be so horrendous.

SO: So, were part of your calculations that she could deliver that element within the Conservative Party, who were saying, "Recognise Muzorewa, lift the sanctions." There was also the group within Congress, led by…

MC: Senator Jesse Helms, yes, yes.

SO: … which was saying, 'Multi-party elections have been held. The Muzorewa government should be recognised'. Or you were just focusing on this lady who, as the Conservative leader, could deliver her party?

MC: We were actually focusing on her and, for me, because of what she said in 1976, that if we can produce a good agreement, she would go and sell it. And with Lord Carrington's body language, the chemistry, it looked like the two were a kind who could actually reach agreement and sell it and say the alternative is, quote, "Too ghastly to contemplate". Therefore, that's why we actually said, "This is the time, and this is the opportunity."

SO: Sir, I have Clyde Sanger's diary which describes the meeting in President Kaunda's library…

MC: Yes.

SO: .. with the key people there : Kenneth Kaunda, Margaret Thatcher, and Lord Carrington, Sonny Ramphal, the Nigerian Foreign Minister, Henry Adefope, and, obviously, Julius Nyerere…

MC: Yes. A small group of people – Manley was there. Forbes Burnham was there. Fraser was there. It was a small, but for us, a trusted group.

SO: I'm aware Sonny Ramphal had done the 'outer diplomacy' beforehand. He'd sent the emissaries to other Commonwealth capitals in Africa to say, "Make it easy for Margaret Thatcher." So he'd done the groundwork in the run up to the Lusaka meeting, preparing for it?

MC: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SO: So, were you surprised with the apparent ease with which it was agreed at Lusaka to go for an all-party conference?

MC: No, because we had been working for it. President Nyerere was Chairman of Front Line States and he had a lot of influence but the Battle Line States including Mozambique were around, although not in the meeting. Sir Seretse Khama of Botswana played his crucial role. We were all really hoping for opportunity at the Lusaka Summit that would open the way for negotiations to return Rhodesia to legality. The freedom fighters were not there, which was a problem.

SO: Sir, please can I ask you: in documents in the UK and US archives, it seems that Kenneth Kaunda had often said, before this point, he was very concerned about Soviet infiltration. He had also raised a possibility that Cuba would intervene in Zambia, in a way that it had done in support of the MPLA in Angola. Were you genuinely concerned about this, or was this a diplomatic ploy to get the Americans and the British to pay attention?

MC: It was basically, a diplomatic ploy because, essentially, we understood that the Soviet Union only supplies arms. Never - not outside Europe - have they actually gone all out: not in Vietnam, where they came out very quickly and in Cuba, they came out very quickly. So, therefore, we didn't expect their direct involvement. The Cuban element was important, but the one who probably would have been worried, was ZANU, and, therefore, that was an internal issue. We were protective in our national security assessments, because we didn't want another Angola which would be too messy and dangerous for us.

SO: ZAPU had not taken part in the elections in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in the April of 1979. At this particular point, I'm aware that the Soviet Union had, in response to ZAPU's request, stepped up its logistical and military support to ZIPRA with a view for a conventional invasion of Rhodesia, and that three Soviet officials were embedded in the Zambian Ministry of Defence. The Soviet Ambassador in Lusaka, Vasily Solodovnikov was also very important in this liaison.

How then, having got the agreement for an all-party conference within the Commonwealth, did you manage the ZAPU side of things?

MC: I think it was tricky. We had to look at this holistically and President Kaunda was close to Joshua Nkomo. Not that he was the anointed leader of Zimbabwe as per the perception that prevailed at the time…

SO: No, but he had a prestige and a claimed position of being a father of the Revolution…

MC: That's right, yes, but President Kaunda told him in my presence, before the Commonwealth Conference, he said, "Joshua, people think that I have selected you to be the leader of Zimbabwe. The choice of the leader of Zimbabwe is a prerogative of the people of Zimbabwe." Joshua said, "But Mr President, we have always known that. We have always known that to be the case." So, it was, therefore, now important for him to form the Patriotic Front and make it really so glued in a manner that would render it unbreakable as we moved forward. If Margaret Thatcher had accepted to go to Lancaster House, then it meant accepting the Principle of NIBMAR *(*No independence

before Majority Rule).The unity of ZANU/ZAPU-PF had to be achieved. Return to legality in Rhodesia was what we had been fighting for and this was now going to be achieved. So, I think, that the nationalists weighed the situation carefully. Nyerere and other leaders did the same.

SO: At the Non-Aligned Meeting in Havana?

MC: At the Havana meeting, yes. Our leaders told the nationalists about Lancaster House meeting. When they came to London, where we met them as observers, Nkomo and Mugabe were very angry that Frontline leaders had pushed them too far. They just wanted to fight. We passed the message from our leaders, which was the assurance that we will never let them down. "If Lancaster House fails, we will go ahead and still support you", and that is the word which they wanted to hear.

SO: Machel's and FRELIMO's support for liberation had been consistent and constant, but President Machel is identified as the FLS leader who said if Robert Mugabe did not signed the Lancaster House deal, that ZANLA had to withdraw their camps and bases from Mozambique.

MC: That is actually true because at that point, the leaders were seeing the possibility of success. That is only when they said it. When there was possibility of success…

SO: So, in going into the negotiations, it was "we back you to the hilt…"

MC: Right.

SO: And then when you saw the deal on the table, it was, "You must sign, and take part in new elections"?

MC: That's right. So – and I think, to his credit, President Mugabe did his level best in London on issues that were deal breakers, because he was the key. On the land issue, he was key.

SO: Yes. From what I've read on the land question, which was obviously a vital issue as one of the 'National Grievances'…

MC: Right.

SO: …Joshua Nkomo was prepared to be more amenable than Robert Mugabe.

MC: Right. Yes. Well, he didn't fight hard on this issue…President Mugabe called me to his Flat and said, "Look, in Geneva this is what Kissinger said. Can you phone the Americans, and ask whether they can confirm what Kissinger promised on land reform, on the funding." And I called Gib Langphar who was in London as US observer (and who later became American Ambassador to Zimbabwe). I called him and Mugabe was there listening. I said, "This is what Kissinger said (during the Geneva negotiations). Is that programme or that promise still available now for the Lancaster House talks?" And Gib said, "In principle, yes, but not necessarily that amount. We would have to look at the figures again." And that is all Robert Mugabe wanted.

SO: That's interesting. Sir Sonny Ramphal presents himself as the critical person contacting the Americans. Victory indeed has many fathers. When I interviewed him in 2006 and again in his memoirs published last year, Ramphal describes how he called Secretary of State Cyrus Vance who then phoned President Carter. Vance replied within 24 hours that the Americans would provide funds for land restitution – although this was an undisclosed sum because they "couldn't frighten the socks off Congress."

MC: No, President Mugabe actually called me and said, "Can you please phone…?" and I phoned straight. But maybe that is when the rest of the conversations started. But otherwise, I had to say to Gib, "This is what ZANU is asking. Is that funding still available?" And there was another occasion during the ceasefire agreement which would have broken down the negotiations. Again…

SO: That was to do with assembly points?

MC: Yes. So, again Mugabe called me to his Flat and asked me to quietly put forward a proposal to the British to save the negotiations from breaking down. Now, this is where the Tony Duff factor came in, because I went, quite late in the evening to Tony Duff's office and said, "If you put this proposal to the Nationalists, they'll accept it." Tony would not have anything to do with me, and so I called Sonny Ramphal, I said, "Look, this is the position. If the British can make this proposal, the Nationalists will accept it."

SO: As the head of the Zambian observer mission at Lancaster House, thanks to your experience and personal contacts in Lusaka, you had particular knowledge and links with the ZAPU delegation - but what of the ZANLA delegation? What did you think of Josiah Tongogara as a negotiator, as a critical factor in ZANLA's decision to sign the agreement?

MC: No. I didn't have much of contact with ZAPU as such. I was just observer for the entire Patriotic Front but, at the end of the meeting, I met Tongogara with my wife. He was surprised that people thought that Joshua Nkomo was just useless, but he was a very thorough negotiator. Tongogara said, "Nkomo was a thorough negotiator and with Mugabe's ability to articulate, the two made such a perfect pair, leading the Patriotic Front." That was Tongogara. It was said very much in private.

SO: That is important because so much of the received wisdom is that there were tensions between the two. Foreign Office officials thought at one point in early October that they could drive a wedge between Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, but the British ministers on Carrington's team, Richard Luce and Ian Gilmour, refused to do that. They insisted, "We have to negotiate with the Patriotic Front as a team." It appears British were particularly impressed by Tongogara, and the Secretariat team, to whom I've spoken, were impressed by Nkomo.

What was your view of Fernando Honwana, the Mozambican special envoy?

MC: I worked with him in Geneva and I also worked with him again at the Lancaster House talks. You know, he was very good. I liked him very much, but partly because his older brother was a friend of mine, and he's the one who met Brand Fourie in my house, much much earlier.

SO: These informal diplomatic networks never cease to impress me. How important was the Commonwealth then, in the period from the ceasefire to the holding of the elections?

MC: Extremely important. It was extremely important, because then, the details after the Lancaster House agreement, the details now under implementation, the details on how the Civil Service would be dealt with could not be left to the British alone, because the Patriotic Front did not trust the British for this particular role. The Commonwealth's neutrality was becoming extremely important as a stabilising factor…The Front Line states were no longer really important as such, and so the Commonwealth, with all the resources which it could mobilise, was much more important for the Patriotic Front.

SO: I'm aware, obviously, the Commonwealth contributed the Commonwealth Monitoring Force, and that it sent the innovative election observation team as well.

What was Kenneth Kaunda's private view of the outcome of the election in the end of March 1980?

MC: He welcomed it very, very much, because what we were looking for was that degree of finality in the closure of the colonial period and also the conflict period and the guarantee to peace, and I think that, unlike, in Angola, where there was a mess after the handover, the Zimbabwean scenario represented what we always thought was the British way of disengaging. There was no vacuum and that was what we were looking for: that there would be no vacuum which would continue to encourage threats to our national security.

SO: Sir, Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU party only secured 20 seats in the election result, announced at the beginning of March 1980. Was President

Kaunda in any way instrumental in persuading him to join Robert Mugabe in a coalition cabinet immediately after Independence?

MC: Yes, and probably Chief Emeka Anyaoku would have told you that he was disappointed that Joshua Nkomo refused the Presidency. He reported this to President Kaunda and I had to rush to Harare. Dr Kaunda told me, "Move!" so I moved with my Assistant Peter Kasanda to see President Mugabe. In his brief, President Mugabe said, "I offered him (Joshua Nkomo) the Presidency, and he refused." So he said, "Go and see him". So I spent a night in Harare, which I didn't expect. I saw Joshua Nkomo and (referring to non-Executive Presidency), he frankly said, "Yes, but I don't want my party to be destroyed." And so that was the problem. But otherwise Robert Mugabe, by now, was thinking: "but I have already found Canaan Banana now (to be President)". So, for us, there was nothing that President Kaunda could do. The result had been achieved. It was the fulfilment of what he had said earlier in 1979, when he said, "Joshua, the selection of the leader of Zimbabwe is the prerogative of the Zimbabwean people." The Zimbabwean people had spoken.

SO: They had indeed and they had spoken with a very loud voice.

MC: Absolutely.

SO: Sir, do you remember being at all concerned that there might be a coup, or that the South Africans might intervene?

MC: We were concerned that General Walls would conduct a coup. We had heard about Margaret Thatcher giving her assurance that, "Here's a telephone number. Call me if you are concerned…" and then she'd ignored him …

SO: She did indeed, when General Walls did try to call her.

MC: And I think, for us, this is where we were having a little bit more confidence than before that, if she said, "This is what I have decided. I'm sending Lord Soames. This is what I want done. I'll accept the result." She did accept the result. The South Africans? I was not worried that they would, because of the earlier meetings I had. General Van der Bergh, as we flew through Orange

Free State, looked down and said, “Do you see that big tree there? My people were slaughtered by the British,” and so, I don’t think they cared after the Zimbabwean elections. At Vorster’s meeting with Ian Smith in Pretoria (1975) that resulted in the Victoria Falls Bridge meeting, PW Botha, then Defence Minister appeared over lunch and that is the man who, with General Malan we considered dangerous. Those are the people who were scared by the Mugabe victory and majority rule in Zimbabwe and who would have attempted a coup in support of General Walls.

SO: PW Botha had become Prime Minister by that point.

MC: But by that time, I believed that the train had left him at the station.

SO: Sir. I understood that you stepped away from being President Kaunda’s Special Advisor for Political Affairs in 1980. Is that correct?

MC: That’s right, yes. I retired. I was tired, but not tired to do the other jobs.

SO: So, do you recall Zambia’s, or President Kaunda’s response or views when the Gukuruhundi campaign developed in Zimbabwe after independence, from late ‘82/1983?

MC: Yes. I think it was a real disappointment, that after the successful conclusion of a bitter conflict between white and black, and now there would be a fight between black and black. How to resolve that problem was his concern.

SO: Do you recall how you became aware of what was going on in Matabeleland? I’m aware Joshua Nkomo fled the country. He sought refuge in Botswana and then he suddenly came to London in early 1983. Were you aware of approaches to President Kaunda, appealing for support in resolving this?

MC: I was aware, but I’m not quite sure, quite frankly, of the details of what actually happened and I think, again, Chief Emeka Anyaoku appeared, to try and help sort out things, but beyond that…

SO: It seems to me that so much emphasis is placed upon the Commonwealth's contribution to the final resolution of the long-running Rhodesian crisis…

MC: Yeah.

SO: …and then there was another crisis in Matabeleland barely two and a half years later, and there is this large silence, where the Commonwealth doesn't appear to say anything.

MC: That is true and that is part of history now.

SO: A tragic part of history, it could be said…

MC: Absolutely.

SO: …and for some in Zimbabwe, it's a very present history.

MC: It's very present history, yeah. It was sad.

SO: Were you aware of efforts seeking to encourage resolution of the issues, to use Zambian diplomacy and good offices to try to sort this out?

MC: I might have been aware of what President Nyerere could have done at that point. Then I became a good farmer.

SO: President Nyerere, of course, sent troops into Uganda in 1979 to…

MC: He did, thankfully.

SO: I understand that a member of Nyerere's office had approached the British High Commission and suggested that Britain should intervene militarily. The British High Commissioner's immediate response was "No. If we did, you would be the first to object."

Sir, another surprising person whom you've made reference to as we were speaking, was Tiny Rowland. Is it fair to describe him as a diplomatic actor?

MC: Yes indeed. Yes indeed. I believe that the South Africans did, from time to time, use him as a line of communication. One of the many lines of communications and it was good that he did communicate certain messages. I was not privy to all of the messages, because this was a very personal relationship between President Kaunda and him, but I always knew that this can only come through him.

SO: Sir, just two general points before I wrap up with this question of leadership and the Commonwealth. How important was the Commonwealth in Zambia's diplomacy, compared to the Non-Aligned Movement or the United Nations? Or, was it more a question of, it was part of a range of multilateral options?

MC: I think it was part of a range of options which Zambia had. We needed a "dual revolutionary strategy" as the Chinese would say, of talking and fighting. We could actually be fighting and still say, "Through whom can we pass this message? And how many voices do we need?" I think the British and Americans would now use the term, "the international community will not allow this to happen" and while Zhou Enlai in 1973 said to me after the Rhodesia/Zambia border closure: "Don't believe that the international community will help you." So, I think the Commonwealth was important for us, because if the voice of the Commonwealth was not there, that would have certainly weakened our position to some extent. So, really, it doesn't matter what differences we had with London – over Zimbabwe, and with Mrs Thatcher and Mr Heath, over South Africa – London was still important in our implementation of certain decisions which were needed to resolve issues in this region. For example, the British training of the Mozambican military that was needed because of the professionalism for which the British are actually known. We also have the experience in Zambia where President Kaunda left the Army Command under a British General and a number of officers until 1970. Regardless of what we suspected they could have been doing privately, there was professionalism in their operations and that is what Mozambique

needed. To that extent, the British were kind of neutral, because they would not encourage the South Africans on the other side to destabilize Mozambique.

SO: Sir, I haven't asked you detailed questions about the Commonwealth and South Africa. You made reference earlier to the Gleneagles Agreement on sporting contacts with South Africa, designed to isolate 'the polecat' of the international community. After Rhodesia/Zimbabwe was resolved, international attention shifted towards South Africa. How important was the Commonwealth to Zambia's pursuit of that ultimate goal, the end of Apartheid in South Africa?

MC: It was still very, very important because when we were dealing with Angola and Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia, the final goal was actually South Africa and that is what the Manifesto on Southern Africa spelt out in 1969. So, the Commonwealth was still an important voice in the management of the processes that led to the end of Apartheid. It always stayed on the agenda of Commonwealth Summits. It never left. So, therefore, when the Eminent Persons Group was mooted and formed, it was a wonderful opportunity, because it coincided with President Kaunda's initiative here to talk to the leading South African business tycoons/leaders. He had them in Luangwa Valley. He was in constant contact with the Oppenheimer influence machine and we were always working to see who, within the white South African community, could publicly eventually say, "Apartheid is unacceptable" and stand their ground. Slabbert was not enough. Helen Susman was not enough, but other forces within South Africa which could cause some kind of implosion, revolution from within, fulfilling President Kaunda's forecast in 1972 that whether the Apartheid regime had nuclear weapons, "we are actually in your backyard". So in 1986, when he was meeting the white South Africans in Luangwa Valley, I had, I think, 20 black businessmen here at home in Makeni visiting me through NAFCOC and so I briefly became a line of communication for the ANC to bring newspapers out – to pass them on to Pallo Jordan and so forth. So we were all very, very concerned and the Commonwealth had never taken South Africa out of the radar screen.

SO: Sir, did you recall the diplomacy around the meeting at Gleneagles in 1977?

MC: Yes. First was a Retreat, again. It was important to carry Australia with us, because this was a critical country, and the Caribbeans were not a problem. Canada was with us on moral grounds, so it was easy, basically, to woo them because if people (international community) can impose sanctions against the Soviet Union and others, there was no reason why the issues of South Africa should not receive exactly the same treatment. I know that, for us, the issue of sanctions on sports was no different from the importance attached to Simonstown Naval Base. At the height of the Cold War, the *International Defence Review* carried an article arguing a case on the strategic importance of South Africa to the west and I thought, "My goodness! The South Africans have succeeded in putting their position in the *International Defence Review*!" I drew the attention of the NATO Secretary General when I met him in early 1973, as part of our preparations for the Ottawa Commonwealth Summit. I was urging that NATO should not be involved in supporting South Africa. So, therefore, the Gleneagles Agreement was of strategic importance for us in the isolation of South Africa. We felt that banning South Africans, from going for sports in Australia, New Zealand, Caribbean and UK, would make them feel that Apartheid was working against them...So it was important for us in that connection to have that an agreement in the place where golf is actually played.

SO: Indeed. As you say, the inner sanctum of a particular international sport.

MC: My wife's sport. Although she no longer plays now.

SO: Sir, what was your view of Prime Minister James Callaghan's and Foreign Secretary David Owen's commitment to the Commonwealth?

MC: As long as it served their interest and objectives, it was worth supporting, but certainly, I found them sometimes, I think, long in promises, but *short* in fulfilment.

SO: Do you remember particular instances of this, or the occasion?

MC: I remember James Callaghan and David Owen when we met them in Kano, Nigeria after the bombing of Zambia by Rhodesians, the bombing of a ZAPU camp where I think 500 people (combatants) were killed. We had the British Rapier missile system which failed to function and we were hoping that after the Kano meeting, James Callaghan would, as promised to Kaunda, actually send technicians to repair this equipment that we bought from Britain. The promise was never fulfilled. I think that the fear of the Conservative Opposition always loomed so high for them. I don't know why the Conservatives are so powerful over Labour sometimes.

SO: Well, at this particular point, the Labour government did not have an overall majority in Parliament; they had a working agreement with the Liberals in the 'LibLab pact'.

MC: I'm not quite sure: Our history demonstrates that the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was imposed under Labour, and then it took the Conservatives to break it up. Another example, having failed to stop UDI in Rhodesia which Conservatives would not have allowed, I thought they had a chance in Geneva with the Henry Kissinger around. The Labour Government did not take advantage. Just why choose Ivor Richards to head the British negotiation team?

SO: Carrington's team had clearly learnt the lessons from their earlier mistakes by the Lancaster House discussions: to begin with the constitution, i.e. where you want to end up; then to discuss transition, then talk about the ceasefire. This was Robin Renwick's astute policy recommendation, to turn the order of negotiations inside out.

MC: Absolutely. But that is where, again, you go back to the issue of leadership. Incisiveness in looking at what you want actually to achieve, the end product, and if the end product is not clear, you can have a problem. Take the Zimbabwe case, for example and the Tony Blair administration on the land issue. I thought that Margaret Thatcher tied up the land issue in the Lancaster House talks with funding and I don't know what happened to the Blair

administration when they stopped the funding, and Mugabe simply said: "Fine, I'll do it my way." UK's response was to impose sanctions on Mugabe's administration.

You see, Henry Kissinger as a negotiator was known to leave so many loose ends in some of the agreements, and failure to tie them up could end in a mess. As the architect he could still say: "It's your fault; I had done everything. It was just the loose ends that you needed to tie." And those are the most difficult sometimes! In the Lancaster House agreement Margaret Thatcher and Lord Carrington succeeded overcoming the major obstacles such as land. But Labour's approach caused ZANU-PF to change course in land reform with consequences we witness today.

SO: Well, I know that Kissinger drove the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Crosland, to distraction with his fast and loose style of diplomacy - going to Lusaka, and then bouncing round the Front Line states' capitals. In Crosland's papers at the LSE, there are copies of telegrams of British diplomats saying, "What's he doing?!"

Sir, please if I could ask you, how important was the Commonwealth in terms of development for Zambia? Because the Commonwealth wasn't simply about supporting Zambia's diplomacy vis-a-vis the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe question. What about the Commonwealth Technical Cooperation Fund?

MC: Yeah. I was told once in London, "Why don't you use the Commonwealth Fund Technical Cooperation? After all, you were the ones who created it." Indeed in a way it was our product but at the time when I was there (State House), there weren't projects that featured in the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation. It was really Zambia's responsibility to develop projects that could qualify for CFTC support. Women's projects and youth projects for example. We have a Commonwealth Youth Centre, as specific example. But I think all such projects are dependent on the country that needs them. The Commonwealth Secretariat would not, with so many member countries, and they're in the third world, would not be going out and asking, "What do you have?" After all, in my time, they had limited resources.

So the fewer countries that went to them asking for project support, the better for them, because they were focusing resources on those countries that actually had projects to support.

SO: So from your viewpoint within President Kaunda's office, you didn't see the Commonwealth as being an important resource of South/South technical cooperation in terms of development?

MC: There weren't projects that actually caused us to do that. It was really the Zambian responsibility, not the Commonwealth Secretariat.

SO: Was the Commonwealth in any way useful in providing you with economic advice when the Zambia's political economy started to get into such difficulties in the 1970s, leading to the decision to apply to the IMF/World Bank for a structural adjustment programme?

MC: Yeah, we had people paid by the Commonwealth Secretariat. We had technical assistance and also in many ways; we also had SWAPO programmes, for example in training. So, to that extent, the Commonwealth was here supporting these new institutions that were being created for strengthening SWAPO and other beneficiaries through Technical Cooperation.

SO: So my last question is about the Commonwealth and leadership. How much is the Commonwealth's secret weapon, the Queen?

MC: I can only talk about Zambia here where she played a very, very important role during the 1979 Commonwealth meeting. Just her presence, we thought, was an important factor in tempering down Margaret Thatcher.

SO: Sir, did it go beyond 'presence' though?

MC: There was always quiet diplomacy around her and she, I'm sure, proffered advice, restraint, but otherwise, beyond that, I quite frankly as an actor, was too busy running around to see everything was going well: like organising the retreat which was a major preoccupation. But meeting Prime Ministers, I

would say was important and how much she was interacting at receptions. She was talking to, literally, everybody and with the hush of voice, when she was free…

SO: Do you think the Commonwealth in fact frees up the Queen to be more herself, rather than being the British constitutional head of state?

MC: It did. It did free her and that, for us, became important because the Commonwealth became less British and more Commonwealth and her behaviour and the chemistry which it showed, indicated the degree to which she genuinely believed that she was Head of a Commonwealth of Nations, and that she was concerned about poverty in different parts of the world.

SO: As Queen of Zambia, after the Commonwealth meeting, she then toured your country.

MC: Absolutely, and she went to spend a bit of time in Luangwa Valley and so forth, and I remember when she was leaving, she said, "Mr Chona, I am sure you are happy that we are leaving." I said, "No, I think they just forgot another programme," And all these things, you know are important. Without someone like that with a human touch, things would have been different. Maybe even a King would have done it differently. But somehow, the mother that she is and the way she carries herself, gives the Commonwealth that character which is important to it. It is absolutely unique, and so for us, we are privileged, we were privileged. The modern Commonwealth has happened under her reign and I think that is a tribute to her personality and character that this has happened.

SO: Sir, as a longstanding Commonwealth diplomat, what do you think then that says for the eventual day when the Queen is no longer with us – for the future Headship?

MC: I think much depends upon the person that comes in. I think she has laid the foundation that can help the future Head of State of Britain, to continue to be the symbolic Head of the Commonwealth and the empathy which that person shows towards today's main issues - the majority poor and the conflict

resolution approaches, the strategies and what the British people think of that particular individual.

SO: Indeed. Sir, you've mentioned a lot about Arnold Smith and made reference to Sir Sonny Ramphal and Chief Emeka Anyaoku. How much do you think the standing, the cogency and the value of the Commonwealth is tied directly to the Secretary General?

MC: I think the future of the Commonwealth is really very much dependent on that person. The character, integrity, the intellectual capabilities, the vision of that particular individual, has always determined the type of Commonwealth structure laid initially by Arnold Smith. He was principled and neutral and he behaved as one. Just looking at the issues and the challenges that the Commonwealth was facing, compared to other organisations, he gave dignity and role to an organization which could have easily been consigned to the pages of history as a colonial artifact. Take the unique nature of the Commonwealth: that the values can all be defined in the same language, the same semantics. These meetings which have already started among Foreign Ministers, Finance Ministers, Bank Governors, Justice Ministers, Parliamentary Associations: all these, together, will continue to have a symbiotic kind of union in the Commonwealth, if people value it as I do. Because "If it ain't broken, don't fix it!"

SO: And it certainly wouldn't be invented now, Sir, that's for sure. But, Sir, what you've been describing is a very much earlier age, in terms of media communication, the dynamics of the international community which were very different to today's world. You have been commenting on a time which was at the height of the Cold War, when the Commonwealth provided a multilateral association which was non-racial, but also which stepped outside the straight jacket of the UN and the P5. For newly independent states, with small bureaucracies, it gave extraordinary contact through summits, with the larger powers of Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand to a lesser extent. Sonny Ramphal has been described to me as the "right person for the time", by virtue of his background in the Non-Aligned Movement, his personality, his energy, dynamism and intellectual qualities. Chief Emeka was a

different entity, at a different time, who has been described as an international civil servant. How far would you agree with that characterization?

MC: I think Chief Emeka was more of an international civil servant, a technocrat, but with that African respect for protocol which tends sometimes to check one, you know, always looking at things on all sides. But he was such a wonderful and cool person. I didn't see the crisis management aspect of him because I was out…

SO: Yes. When Chief Emeka stepped in because of the treatment of former President Kaunda following his departure from office?

MC: That's right, that's right, that's right. So I was out by that time. But the courage which he had speaks, again, of somebody who put another brick in the moulding of the edifice of the new Commonwealth, and watching the needs of new members who were non-English speaking.

SO: Sir, please could you comment on that, because a common language has been one of the Commonwealth's assets. You made reference to this common language, the common semantics, the shared sense of humour even, you could say; the fact that heads didn't need translators in private discussion at the retreat. What does that say now for the Commonwealth with the inclusion of non-English vernacular nations and leaders?

MC: I think that's good. The cross-fertilisation based on the needs of the countries…

SO: But it's not a mini UN?

MC: It becomes a kind of UN eventually and there are risks, yes, in dilution, but if the language is going to help, then the values of the Singapore Declaration for declaration could be passed on; and if that is good for them, then it is good for humanity, because sometimes the UN may be too big, too cumbersome, too bureaucratic and quite frankly, too expensive. The Commonwealth hasn't

got as much, in terms of resources, so it probably is more cost-effective in some ways. Can I say, it can be more cost-effective, depending upon what people at the top are able to make it.

SO: Sir, how much, in your experience, is the Commonwealth made by the leaders? You've talked about the Queen, you've talked about individual Secretaries General. What of the leaders themselves?

MC: I think that's a very big problem, particularly in regions like ours where, because of lack of good education and the poverty, the weakness in governance systems tend to violate some of the very basic values which the Commonwealth essentially wants to promote - because that is what the Commonwealth is really about.

SO: But then, Sir, in the era when you were most active, the Commonwealth had its grand strategy of opposition to Apartheid. It had a moral cause, it had an identity, it had a purpose.

MC: They were adding new issues. Yes, they're still adding new challenges even now because freedom and this thing we call 'democracy', the principles that make it what it is, imperfect as it is, are more honoured breach than in their observance.

SO: But, Sir, has the Commonwealth become outdated? You made reference to key Heads. Yet now there has been a move to regionalism – you mentioned SADC. The United Nations has grown considerably in number, with the independence of small states. There has been a proliferation of international organisations and agencies, of other summits and a multiplicity of NGOs. It appears to me, having talked to over 70 people for this oral history project, the Commonwealth worked well when there were leaders of stature and standing who sought to use the association as a platform; but there has to a leading group, a core, pulling in Britain, Canada, Australia, on whatever cause. Nowadays, do heads really need to meet? The CHOGMs themselves are so much shorter.

MC: I believe, now, unfortunately – I have to go back to the Secretariat – the identification of points that give the Commonwealth the strength it needs to remain relevant to the present needs of the people. People have not yet disappeared – in effect, there is probably *more* need for organisations that have principles and values that are worthy of emulation, where *leaders* with honesty, integrity, a sense of commitment to issues that concern especially the poor can confer and agree on agendas for change to make the world a better place for humanity. The new leaders will actually learn from history and experiences of other regions where mistakes, greed, dictatorships etc. have led to destruction. At the moment there are too many leaders who assume leadership positions without a vision or clear goals in their poor vision. As one close friend who became President, commented on today's leaders: "Presidency is *not* about motorcades, lining pockets and lining bellies, *but about people*, the poor". The Commonwealth still has a chance of making people – the majority poor – the centre of attention because it includes people from other cultures and regions. New Commonwealth leaders, exchanging knowledge and experiences will learn that they are not better than their counterparts; that other leaders may be better than them. With the 'digital divide', there are still so many challenges facing the Commonwealth in order to improve the quality of life globally. To be frank, I'm so flabbergasted by the verbiage which fills the world, and yet what people need are just small things which we have been doing. I had four years of experience in rural areas, building schools clinics, cattle dip tanks and women/youth income generation projects with very little money from a donor who once said, "How is it possible that with a small fraction of what we've given you, you are able to achieve this, when so much in government gets wasted?" There are so many step-down transformers or leakage points in resource flows from the top decision-makers to the village that nothing reaches the rural poor. The implementation capacity and codes of conduct in financial management from the top down still require improvement. You know, "the harvest is great, but the labourers are few".

SO: Indeed. Sir, thank you very much indeed for a fascinating and wide-ranging interview.

[END OF RECORDING]