



University of London

INSTITUTE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES

Key:

SO = Sue Onslow (Interviewer)

EA = Chief Emeka Anyaoku (Respondent)

M = Mary Mackie (Chief Emeka Anyaoku's Personal Assistant)

SO: This is Sue Onslow talking to Chief Emeka Anyaoku on Wednesday, 2nd October, 2013. Chief, thank you very much indeed for coming back to Senate House to talk to me for this project. I wonder if you could begin, please sir, by talking about the preparatory process leading up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings.

EA: Well, the Secretariat does essentially three things. First, it consults on a continuous basis with the host government on arrangements and logistics for the meeting. And second, it prepares the preliminary draft agenda in the form of suggestions to governments for their comments and additions if they felt necessary; and then in the light of that, prepares memoranda on the issues involved in the agenda. And then thirdly, it also considers what possible controversies, what possible challenges, particular heads of government meeting will face, and deals with those by consulting the governments concerned and talking to heads who are likely to be involved in resolving what the challenges are. And I must also add to the first point about consulting with the host government that since 1973, when the retreat was introduced, the consultation would also include arrangements for the Retreat.

SO: So having identified the host government, then there is close coordination with the Secretariat to ensure the administrative arrangements are as smooth as possible. In the preparatory process, how much international travel is involved for International Division to coordinate with other governments having identified the potential storm clouds that inevitably loom before Commonwealth heads of governments meetings?

EA: Well, there's a bit of travelling to start with in respect of the arrangements and logistics: usually travelling between the Secretariat and the host government, which is done by the conference secretary who is the Director of the Political Affairs Division, and then there's also travelling which is done by the Secretary General himself to deal with the major issues coming up at the meetings, and he would usually ask, in addition to his private office staff, the head of the political affairs division to accompany him. There are not a fixed number of travels involved; it often depends on the issues coming up at the heads of government meeting; where there are challenges that require wider

consultations, the Secretary General would inevitably do more travelling than in other cases.

SO: You have been intimately involved in the organisational details of Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings, both in your position as Assistant Director in International Affairs, and then moving up the hierarchy within the Secretariat to the position of Secretary General. Arnold Smith had, obviously, a particular style of diplomacy in managing these meetings which was similar, but not identical to Sir Sonny Ramphal. The first Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting that was abroad, of course, was Singapore in 1971 – being the first meeting outside London after the special meeting in Lagos in January 1966. You were not yet at the Secretariat at that particular point.

EA: No, I was not at the Secretariat at the time of the special meeting in Lagos but I was there for the Singapore meeting.

SO: Were you involved in international travel to try and smooth the way, in any way, shape or form, before the Singapore meeting?

EA: Not for the Singapore meeting, because at the time of Singapore meeting I was Assistant Director. Bill Peters was my director. At that time it was still called the International Affairs division, and it was he who did the travelling between London and Singapore.

SO: Was there a great deal of international travel beforehand? The storm clouds at that particular meeting were the British government's decision to revive the issue of helicopter and arms sales to South Africa, under the Simonstown agreement, but the meeting was also against the background of British Prime Minister Ted Heath's determination to push Britain's application for the European Economic Community. At the same time there were looming tensions within the then Pakistani state, between East Pakistan and West Pakistan. So were you involved in...?

EA: Well, I accompanied Arnold Smith to a very crucial meeting that he had at Chequers with Ted Heath over the issue of possible arms supplies to South Africa. And also, I accompanied Arnold Smith the following year to Pakistan on the issue of Bangladesh emergence as a sovereign state. But when I went with Arnold Smith to Pakistan, I had become the director of the division. In the case of preparations for Singapore, Arnold Smith travelled quite a bit because the issue was very challenging. I cannot now recall the precise list of the countries he visited but I remember that he travelled to the Caribbean, to Africa and to India to consult with Heads of Government over the challenges that were due to come up in Singapore.

SO: So in trying to hear from heads of government their particular views, was Arnold Smith trying to reach a degree of consensus before the Singapore meeting?

EA: Well, yes, actually the purpose of his intervention was to soften the determination of Ted Heath to go ahead with his stated policy, while at the same time trying to soften the reactions of some of the heads of government with a view to avoiding, or at the least limiting the adverse impact of the conflictual views on the cohesion of the Commonwealth.

SO: How clearly do you recall that meeting at Chequers?

EA: It was not an easy meeting. It was a meeting that happened about 10 days after Julius Nyerere, had been to Chequers to see Ted Heath. And on his leaving Chequers, he told Arnold Smith that he'd had a very difficult meeting with Ted Heath, that Ted Heath seemed adamant. And so Arnold Smith went to Chequers with the benefit of the briefing from Nyerere and so sought to soften Ted Heath's determination to go ahead with the policy of resuming arms supply to South Africa. He didn't entirely succeed.

SO: I'm not surprised!

EA: *[Laughter]*.

SO: Ted Heath was a colleague of my father's; I met him a couple of times, so, no, that does not surprise me.

EA: Yes.

SO: But how closely was Arnold Smith also coordinating with Lee Kwan Yew as the host prime minister, the host head of state? You talked about his tours of the Caribbean, of Africa, trying to –

EA: Yes, he also went to Singapore to consult with Lee Kwan Yew.

SO: Of course. So in that case there would have been close collaboration, particularly with the host government on how to manage this explosive issue on top of the Rhodesia crisis?

EA: Yes indeed.

SO: So do you recall, or were you aware of, Lee Kwan Yew's particular input in this?

EA: Lee Kwan Yew's primary concern was to have a successful heads of government meeting. His primary concern was with how to manage the situation between Ted Heath and most of the African heads of government who were the most critical of the policy. And Arnold Smith discussed with Lee Kwan Yew the idea of setting up a foreign ministers committee as means of diffusing the crisis.

SO: The special study group on Indian Ocean security.

EA: That's right. The way in which the crisis was diffused at Singapore was by appointing an eight member Foreign Ministers' committee to deal with the issue of security of the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic and so provide Ted Heath with a face-saving device, really.

SO: And this is the era before the innovation of the Retreat. Do you have any recollection of where the idea of the study group came from? Because there wasn't the possibility of heads retreating into an informal setting to resolve the issue among themselves.

EA: It was an idea that Arnold Smith and Lee Kwan Yew had discussed and an idea which Lee Kwan Yew subsequently put to the executive session of the

heads of government meeting for consideration and adoption. There was no Retreat at the time, so it had to be put to them in an executive session.

SO: I'm just thinking of the management of diplomacy: whether Arnold Smith and Lee Kwan Yew had thought, as a way to resolve this, to take it out of a very fractious heads of government meeting, might be to delegate to two officials.

EA: No, they didn't think about it that way. What they thought, and which happened, was that once he and Lee Kwan Yew discussed and agreed that a possible way out was through the setting up of this eight member committee of foreign ministers, Arnold Smith then took it on himself to sell the idea to some of the African heads of government concerned, and Lee Kwan Yew undertook to sell it to Ted Heath. I did accompany Arnold Smith to at least three such meetings with some African Heads of Government.

SO: I see. Now I understand the pattern of diplomacy.

EA: Yes. So Lee Kwan Yew was talking with Ted Heath and Arnold Smith was talking with the other heads of government.

SO: And there were a much smaller number of heads then.

EA: Yes.

SO: Absolutely, there were only 22, so it was a very different forum.

EA: Yes.

SO: People talk of the innovation of the Retreat at Ottawa in 1973, and Trudeau's enormous intellectual input into the Commonwealth, but I'm particularly interested in a subsequent meeting in Kingston in 1975. Having looked through the archives at the Secretariat, it seems to me that this was the forum at which African liberation movements were on the periphery. I know that SWAPO sent a delegation. I understand that both Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU and Robert Mugabe of ZANU were also there. I understand Bishop Abel Muzorewa was there. So this was a different type of meeting.

EA: Well, yes it was, but you see the idea of a Retreat, in my thinking, came from the experience of Singapore. I think Trudeau left Singapore with the belief that the heads of government needed to be alone to deal with very ticklish issues. It was after Singapore following the decision that the next venue would be Ottawa that Trudeau put it to Arnold Smith that in Ottawa there should be a Retreat to allow the heads of government in a more relaxed gathering by themselves alone to deal with ticklish issues, challenging issues. I must tell you that the venue for the Retreat was changed only eight weeks before the meeting. I was the conference secretary then, and had gone to Canada to view the venue for the Retreat with the head of Trudeau's office. We both went to where they had decided that the retreat would be: Whistler. On arrival in Whistler, I looked around and saw that the arrangements for Heads' accommodation and dining facilities were in areas where tourists were likely to still remain.

SO: [Laughter]. Because it's a ski resort and a walking/hiking resort in summer!

EA: Yes indeed a ski resort. The venue had two little squares, and tourists and Heads of Government would have had to be walking through these squares. I was horrified at the thought. First I had to persuade my colleague, the head of Trudeau's office, (Mr Ducet ?) about the impracticality of Whistler and this was only eight weeks before the meeting. He saw with me when I pointed out the weaknesses of the venue. I then made a telephone call to Arnold Smith to tell him my findings; and Ducet in turn put a telephone call to his Prime Minister. Arnold Smith and Trudeau having been persuaded by both of us that Whistler would not be suitable, Trudeau immediately offered an alternative venue which we then proceeded to visit. It was Lake Okanagan, a wine producing area. When I saw the site and the venue, it seemed suitable to me and I immediately telephoned Arnold Smith to tell him. He and Trudeau agreed, and so the preparations for Lake Okanagan as venue for the Retreat were completed within eight weeks.

SO: In that it was an innovation for the Commonwealth, for Arnold Smith, as a Canadian Secretary General and for Trudeau, as the host, a lot was riding on this.

EA: Oh, yes, and both of them knew the two places. Arnold Smith knew Lake Okanagan and Whistler. Trudeau of course knew the two places too, and so it was easy for them to agree.

SO: Yes, the politics of selecting the Retreat: as you said, providing the right venue and also the right security and privacy for heads of state. Both were important considerations.

EA: Yes.

SO: So how much politics was there around the selection of Kingston as the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting at that Ottawa CHOGM?

EA: There wasn't really. There wasn't any controversy that I can remember because Michael Manley was a very popular Prime Minister and by then it had become clear that Sonny Ramphal would be chosen as Arnold Smith's successor.

SO: So a Caribbean location would be appropriate.

EA: That's right. And the combination of the two factors made it quite easy to choose Kingston.

SO: Was it also that Michael Manley was a luminary in the non-aligned movement, as well? That was an additional factor?

EA: Well, Michael Manley had a lot going for him. He was a fellow intellectual of Trudeau, he was a strong advocate of the Non-Aligned Movement and his government's policy of friendship with Fidel Castro's Cuba, which annoyed the Americans, had commanded some respect and admiration from Trudeau. [Laughter]. His standing in the Non-aligned Movement, and also his standing

among African heads of government as well as in India was very high; he was therefore a popular choice.

SO: I can see why. And I had mentioned, the attendance, obviously not in full session, but on the periphery, of African liberation movements. Do you recall having any warning that this was going to happen?

EA: Yes, as the conference secretary. I had had some indication from some representatives of the Liberation movements that they were planning to come to Kingston during the CHOGM and had reported that to Arnold Smith. When he proposed to the Heads of Government in executive session that they should allow the representatives of the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean liberation movements to address them, they agreed to hear them in an informal session. To emphasize the informality of the session with the liberation movements, Trudeau insisted that Heads should not sit in their normal places. Heads could sit anywhere they liked, not in their normal places. And Trudeau made the point by moving around the conference table during the session with the Liberation movements' representatives.

SO: Junior people got very upset? They didn't know where to go?

EA: Yes. I remember that Trudeau came to occupy the Commonwealth Secretariat's seat just behind me where a Singaporean official had sat. The official subsequently presented me with a tie for restoring his seat after Trudeau left *[laughter]*.

SO: Did he also put his nameplate upside down? Or turned it over? I had heard that he upended his nameplate in protest.

EA: No, he wasn't really protesting. He was not objecting to hearing them...

SO: But he was insisting on the informality because –

EA: Yes, he was just making the point that they were not to be heard in a formal session of the Heads presumably because of a precedent being set for Quebec.

SO: Ah, ah. Thank you.

[Laughter].

SO: It's a while ago. I think that can go on the record.

EA: *[Laughter]*. Well, I mean Trudeau must have had his own reasons for his extraordinary sensitivity towards liberation fighters.

SO: Connected to that, and please excuse me for interrupting, but were there ever Quebequois delegations around the periphery of Commonwealth meetings?

EA: No, never.

SO: I'm sorry, I just wanted to clarify.

EA: Arnold Smith would never have allowed that. In 1968 I accompanied Arnold Smith on a visit to Canada, which took place barely ten days after the French President Charles De Gaulle's visit and infamous speech of "Vive Le Quebec! Vive Le Quebec libre!" You remember that. And Canada was on tenterhooks with a growing movement for an independent Quebec. It was the days of Lester Pearson as prime minister. I accompanied Arnold Smith to a meeting with Pearson and some leaders of the Liberal party. You remember that the nature of Canadian politics at the time, was such that Pearson, very boldly, bypassed the stalwarts of the Liberal party, people like John Turner and Paul Martin, the father of the second Paul Martin who subsequently became prime minister. He bypassed them at the Liberal Party Convention to go and choose Pierre Elliot Trudeau, the Quebecois whose parliamentary experience at the time was not more than three years, and whose ministerial experience was just under 18 months as Minister of Justice, during which time the ministry had had a little scandal. *[Laughter]*. But Pearson wanted him to succeed him in order to save the Canadian union.

And of course Trudeau, when he succeeded Pearson, immediately brought in the legislation that a third of all senior appointments at the level of permanent secretary in the federal civil service had to be French-speaking. The bilingual policy was brought in, that official speeches had to be made in the two official languages. It was not easy for the English speaking Canadians to swallow because at the time this policy came, over 80% of the permanent secretaries were English speaking, but Trudeau was wise enough to say that the English speaking permanent secretaries should remain as supernumeraries in order to sustain experience and competence. I went with Arnold Smith to Canada then and in fact went with him to Quebec for not an easy meeting with Ronnie Leveque who was then the leader of the Quebecois party.

SO: Can I suggest that, because Quebec was a domestic issue, it was imperative that a Secretary General, albeit a Canadian Secretary General, should not be seen in any way to be interfering in the domestic politics? But was there also a particularly supportive intention of Arnold Smith in meeting Ronnie Leveque?

EA: That was a lesson I learned from Arnold Smith in dealing with the Nigerian situation during my time as Secretary General. Arnold Smith drew a line between his role as Commonwealth Secretary General and his duty to his native Canada. And this was the first message he conveyed to his Canadian interlocutors, which made my presence at some of the meetings a little awkward because he was talking with them as a Canadian concerned about the future of his country. He made sure that they regarded his intervention as not being that of the Commonwealth Secretary General, but that of a Canadian who happened to be Commonwealth Secretary General.

SO: So that would place you in an anomalous situation, as an international servant.

EA: That's why I say that in some of his meetings I felt a little awkward. But I coped with it because I saw myself as being with the Commonwealth Secretary-General who was also a Canadian.

SO: But you said you yourself, when you were Arnold Smith's emissary or interlocutor in the Nigerian civil war, made the same distinction between

your Nigerian nationality and also your regional origins, and your position at the Secretariat.

EA: Yes. During the crisis in my country in the 1990s, I sought to talk to my Nigerian compatriots as a Nigerian who happened to be Commonwealth Secretary General.

SO: But in the late 1960s you were also from the region that was seeking to secede from the Nigerian federation and that placed you in a particular position.

EA: Yes. In October '68, right in the middle of the civil war, when Arnold Smith was trying to broker peace and had put some proposals to both sides, the Biafran side, my home, was proving a bit difficult and reluctant to accept it. I told Arnold Smith that I was willing to visit home to see the Biafran leader, Emeka Ojukwu. Arnold Smith said "No, that's very risky." At that time it was a huge risk to go to Biafra. Emeka Ojukwu and I had been friends since our boyhood and I said to Arnold Smith that I would like to go and talk to him. At that time, flights into Biafra were very hazardous. There were only 'the mercy flights', the name which was given to the Roman Catholic charity flights that took off from Holland with medicines. And I remember in October of that year, the flights went about once in two weeks and the next flight following my enquiries was on the day after my second son was admitted to hospital. He was just about three months old and quite ill. I remember my wife asking me, "You really want to leave your baby who is so ill?" And I replied, "If, God forbid, anything were to happen to him because of my absence, he would be counted as one of the victims of the civil war". She thought it was the "coldest" thing I could ever say.

SO: Oh. As a mother myself, I feel very affected by that statement.

EA: I then left and went into Biafra via Holland and Sao Tome, the Portuguese route, and landed in Biafra at Uli Airport in the middle of the night. I went the next day to Umuahia to see Ojukwu. I told this story in my memoirs. The return flight was even more frightening because the flight again had to take off at midnight and we went to Gabon. I was in an aircraft with little children in such a terrible state of health who were being evacuated by the CARITAS. These planes had no seats; we had to fly sitting or lying on mats.

SO: Were you also acting in any way as Arnold Smith's particular emissary because of your understanding of the local politics and the local dynamics with those African states that did recognise Biafra's independence?

EA: No.

SO: These were Tanzania and Zambia.

EA: Yes, Tanzania and Zambia were the two Commonwealth countries that recognised Biafra but I was never involved in their recognition of Biafra. I was careful not to go to Biafra as Arnold Smith's formal emissary, although by implication this is what I was, because as I said to him, I needed to. I don't think he wanted to take responsibility for sending me to such dangerous situation, but I insisted on going and he allowed me to go talk with Ojukwu on the basis of his proposal.

SO: Ah, yes. Did you have other diplomatic responsibilities in any way, to talk to the French, who of course were particularly supportive of the Biafran government, or to...?

EA: No, apart from my trip to Biafra, I was not involved in the Secretariat's efforts to broker peace in the civil war especially because the Nigerian government had petitioned Arnold Smith twice to remove me from the Secretariat.

SO: Yes, the letter from the Permanent Secretary is in Arnold Smith's papers.

EA: Well before the civil war started in Nigeria, I had come to the Commonwealth Secretariat on secondment as a Nigerian diplomatic officer. So I was still on the books of the Nigerian Foreign Service. At the start of the civil war, the Nigerian federal government required all Nigerian diplomats of Igbo extraction, and I'm Igbo, to take oath of allegiance to the federal government. I refused and formally resigned from the Nigerian diplomatic service. The Nigerian government then petitioned that I should not remain in the Secretariat, but Arnold Smith took the view that I was a collective servant of the Commonwealth. He cited the example that when Czechoslovakia went communist after the revolution in 1948, the new communist government in Czechoslovakia had petitioned Trygve Lie, the first UN secretary general, that the Czechoslovakian officials in the UN secretariat should be removed. But the UN Secretary General said no maintaining that all the UN secretariat staff were international civil servants owing allegiance collectively to the international community. Arnold Smith said to the Nigerian government that Emeka Anyaoku and all his colleagues in the Secretariat were international Commonwealth servants whose allegiance must be owed collectively to the Commonwealth and that he saw no reason to think that I did not owe allegiance to the Commonwealth association. He therefore refused the request.

SO: I've read Arnold Smith's letter of reply which is in his papers, rebutting the criticism from the Nigerian permanent secretary which calls for your removal.

EA: Yes, that was why I told the story in my book of my first meeting with the then Head of State of Nigeria, General Gowon, after the civil war when I went to Nigeria as a special envoy of the Secretary-General to discuss the issue of the admission of the new state of Bangladesh into the Commonwealth.

SO: Yes, and General Gowon asked you about your position during the civil war, and said at the end he respected your honesty.

EA: Yes, at the end of our meeting. To start with, the officials in the Foreign Ministry had refused that I should see the Head of State insisting that I should deliver my message to the Foreign Ministry. And I said "no" arguing that I was a special envoy of the Secretary General on a mission to deliver his message to the Head of State. Ultimately, the officials of the Foreign Ministry accompanied me to the meeting with the Head of State. At the end of the meeting, the Head of State asked to talk to me alone and that was when the conversation that I recorded in my book took place.

- SO:** Yes, General Gowon said that he respected your honesty because you had declared yourself to be a Nigerian patriot, and you did not deny your particular position as an Igbo. You talked of your house here in London being a venue for both the Biafra visitors, but also visitors of the Nigerian government. That must've called for some coordinated diplomacy.
- EA: Well, because my wife is Yoruba, and we naturally had contacts on both sides of the conflict.
- SO:** Yes. On your contacts in Biafra, I just finished reading Chinua Achebe's, *There Was a Country*. Achebe makes particular reference to the cohort of university students at Ibadan and he mentions you quite specifically. So was that part of your network?
- EA: Yes, that was an interesting part of the crisis, that our human networks were still there and I didn't cut off my network with my friends and associates.
- SO:** Were you in any way delegated to observe the discussions in Kampala (between the warring sides) which Arnold Smith tried to mediate?
- EA: No, because from the word go, Arnold Smith said to me, and I agreed, that he would keep me completely out of the talks on Nigeria. This was to ensure that any suggestion by the Nigerian government that I was using my position to interfere would be unfounded. My trip to Biafra was the only intervention that I undertook with his knowledge.
- SO:** So after the conclusion of the civil war, was there a particular move, within the Secretariat, to support Nigeria's reconstruction in terms of humanitarian assistance, technical assistance? I know you were very much part of a drive to provide Commonwealth technical assistance to Mozambique from 1974 for a variety of reasons. I was just wondering whether there had been any prior moves towards Nigeria?
- EA: No, not really. Nigerians did not ask for it, nor did Arnold Smith wish to impose that on them.
- SO:** The conclusion of the Nigerian civil war was approximately concurrent with Bangladesh's declaration of independence. The conclusion of the Biafran war was in 1970?
- EA: Yes, in January 1970.
- SO:** And then '71 was the Bangladesh declaration of independence.
- EA: Yes, a year later.
- SO:** In that crisis, Arnold Smith was one of the facilitators of international recognition of Bangladesh because of his acute concern of the humanitarian crisis of 4 million refugees in neighbouring India (an echo of the earlier Biafran humanitarian disaster).
- EA: Yes.

- SO: Again, was there a particular Commonwealth dimension to support nation-state construction in Bangladesh after independence?**
- EA: Oh yes. I told the story in my book of Arnold Smith's trip to Islamabad at the invitation of Prime Minister Bhutto, and how he nearly refused to go the meeting with Bhutto but was persuaded by me and David MacDowell, who was one of his two special assistants; and how at the meeting Arnold Smith asked Mr Bhutto "Why invite me if you had already decided to leave the Commonwealth?". We had heard the decision about Pakistan's withdrawal from the Commonwealth on the radio after lunch following our arrival in Islamabad. Arnold Smith was keen that Bangladesh should be recognised as a sovereign state and he sought to achieve that through the admission of Bangladesh to Commonwealth membership. That was why he sent me on a mission to West Africa.
- SO: And you write about that in your book, and your particular approach of ensuring that two of the Commonwealth members you visited were supportive while one would not object. The one that would not object, of course, was Nigeria.**
- EA: Yes.
- SO: Subsequently, was there a particular aspect to Commonwealth diplomacy to coordinate support for Bangladesh's administrative capabilities?**
- EA: Yes.
- SO: Technical training?**
- EA: Yes, CFTC was active in Bangladesh and Arnold Smith also encouraged the donor members of the Commonwealth, the ABC countries, Australia, Britain and Canada, to be generous towards the new state of Bangladesh.
- SO: Yes, so he was an active advocate trying to solicit extra funds.**
- EA: Yes, an advocate for extra funds and an activist in terms of CFTC intervention in Bangladesh.
- SO: You mention particularly ABC countries, but was there a particularly Indian dimension to his diplomacy?**
- EA: Oh yes, he talked to the Indians about what he was doing and Indians, having spent quite a fortune on the war, were not in a position to provide additional help.
- SO: But they could provide technical expertise in forms of skills?**
- EA: Indian technical experts were deliberately avoided because I believe that there was the delicacy of avoiding the impression that India was going to colonise Bangladesh after its massive help in the Pakistan/Bangladesh war.
- SO: Ah, yes. Yes.**

EA: India had helped the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign state, and I think it was William Shakespeare, who said that only the brave have the strength to bear the burden of gratitude.

SO: One of the Commonwealth crises which Arnold Smith was required to deal with, surely in 1974, was the invasion of Cyprus, of course a Commonwealth member. And this is not looked at in terms of the Commonwealth dimension.

EA: Well, to some extent, that is correct. Maybe I should have told part of the story in my book because I happened to be with Arnold Smith on a trip to Africa at the time. We had had a meeting with Jomo Kenyatta at his Gatundu farm a couple of miles from Nairobi. This was in the preparation for the Kingston CHOGM, and then from Kenya we went to Ghana. It was in Ghana, just as we were getting ready to go to a meeting with the then Head of State in Ghana, General Acheampong, that the British High Commissioner informed Arnold Smith of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. And when we came back to London, I accompanied Arnold Smith to a meeting at Grosvenor House with Archbishop Markarios. I have never forgotten that meeting because it was the first time I realised how young Archbishop Markarios was seeing him without his customary head gear; my image of him had been that of an old man.

SO: Yes, this Patriarch.

EA: Yes, Arnold Smith talked with him and said what you would expect him to say in such circumstances. Arnold Smith subsequently in his dealings with Heads of government sought to encourage some sympathy for the Greek Cypriots, but in the end, that didn't achieve much.

M: There was a committee on Cyprus.

EA: Yes.

SO: A committee of senior officials?

EA: Yes, there was a committee of senior officials on Cyprus that were set up. Azim Husain was then Deputy Secretary General (political), he went with the Committee to Cyprus. Subsequent to that, when I succeeded Azim Husain, I visited Cyprus. Kipranu was then the president. I had prior to my visit, asked the UN to allow me to go to the Eastern part of Cyprus, which the UN arranged.

SO: So this was Turkish occupied Cyprus?

EA: Yes. To get there, the UN took me to a border post and then escorted me across to the Turkish side, where I was met by Denktash. Denktash having learned that I was a Nigerian, I think assumed that I was a Muslim, because he drove me himself. We were just two of us in his car to show me parts of the Turkish occupied Cyprus. I was careful not to tell him bluntly that I was not a Muslim.

SO: Not to disabuse him of that perception!

EA: Yes.

SO: So Sir, in that particular time, what was the Commonwealth's role? To lend international diplomatic support to Archbishop Markarios? Was the Commonwealth Secretariat trying to coordinate humanitarian assistance going into Cyprus because of internally displaced people?

EA: No.

SO: It was political support only?

EA: It was absolute political support because the Commonwealth recognised only one Cyprus state.

SO: Right, and was this in close collaboration with the British government? Did Britain have a particular responsibility? Were you coordinating with Malta?

EA: We consulted closely with the British government, but without involving it in our own initiatives. The British government, in my view, was cautious, a lot more cautious than the Commonwealth Secretariat was.

SO: To them it was a Cold War crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean between Greece and Turkey as members of NATO, I suppose.

EA: Yes. So they were more cautious than we in the Commonwealth Secretariat who saw our duty as that of propping up the Cyprus government, a member of the Commonwealth.

SO: Indeed. So this was supportive diplomacy? It wasn't in any way the Commonwealth acting as a particular below-the—radar channel for support?

EA: No.

SO: I'm just trying to tease out the role and activities the Commonwealth Secretary General and Secretariat of the Commonwealth as an autonomous diplomatic actor, on the Cyprus question.

EA: Well, the Commonwealth Secretariat was not exactly popular with the Turkish Government, because the Turks had consistently written to the Secretary General asking to be allowed into Commonwealth meetings, claiming that Cyprus was a divided country and even asking to be allowed to come to Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to present their case. And the Secretariat's line throughout was that there was only one recognised government of Cyprus.

SO: And there would seem to be a determined refusal to allow a separatist entity of Cyprus to attend –

EA: That's right.

SO: But African liberation movements were an altogether different entity.

EA: Yes indeed, African liberation movements were liberation movements seeking to liberate their countries from colonialism or racism and the Commonwealth supported them.

SO: With respect, having looked at the Commonwealth Secretariat files on international terrorism, where the emphasis is on ‘civil aviation sabotage’, it seems to me this question of language is particularly loaded in the 1970s and the 1980s. It goes back to that cliché of ‘One person’s liberation fighter is another person’s terrorist.’

EA: That is a view that I would reject outright. In a divided society, that phraseology could possibly apply, but in an oppressed society, externally oppressed or internally oppressed by a racist minority, liberation struggle cannot and should not be described as terrorism. That was why Margaret Thatcher’s use of the word terrorism in her reference in ’87 in Vancouver to the ANC led by Nelson Mandela was roundly condemned.

SO: Thank you for talking about Cyprus, because as I said, it doesn’t feature and yet it was a challenge to the Commonwealth.

EA: Yes it was a challenge.

SO: So taking the Cyprus story forward: the Turkish occupied northern part is only recognised by a few members of the international community. Was that a continuing issue during your time as Secretary General, the question of how to resolve the Cyprus issue, or were you effectively having to deal with the status quo?

EA: Yes, in my time as Secretary General, I had a settled view that had long been established before my time, and that was that there was only one recognised government of Cyprus, hence we had a Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus.

SO: Indeed. I want to make sure that we capture that Cyprus ‘voice’ because too often the Commonwealth story, it seems to me, is focused on the absolutely necessary question of racial justice and democratisation, but there are other enduring points of tension which should be brought further up the hierarchy of international issues.

So Kingston 1975 was Arnold Smith’s last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting as Secretary General, and Sonny Ramphal was there, I’m aware of that. Would you be able to make a general point of comparison between the two Secretary Generals’ style of diplomacy? I know that Sonny Ramphal was a very effective ‘telephone operator’: he liked to pick up a telephone and valued immensely that personal contact. How does that compare with Arnold Smith’s general approach to diplomacy? Was he a face-to-face person? Was he a telephone person? Was he an emissary person?

EA: Well, I would say that Sonny Ramphal was a greater activist than Arnold Smith. Arnold Smith was a seasoned diplomat, and as such, observed the constraints of diplomacy both in his pronouncements and in his dealings with Heads of Government. Sonny, on the other hand, had been a very outspoken politician, seasoned in Non-Aligned Movement diplomacy and so brought to his office some Non-Aligned perspectives which Arnold Smith was clearly not in a position to reflect. There was no difference between the two in their commitment to the concept of one common humanity. Both were equally committed to the concept of one common humanity, which means that they

were equally committed to non-racism, equally committed to ending colonialism, equally committed to removing all the obstacles in the way of common humanity. But Sonny Ramphal, coming from the Third World and Non-Aligned Movement, clearly demonstrated the adage that the wearer of the shoes knows where it pinches the most.

SO: An excellent analogy! Sonny Ramphal was remarkable in his ability to use the policy space provided by his authority of office as Secretary General, but also the Commonwealth as an association. It seems to me that Arnold Smith used the policy space in a different way, although he was equally determined to emphasise the autonomy and the authority of this new international servant.

EA: Well, you see, the reason for that was that Arnold Smith built the Secretariat and established its independence. By the time Sonny came, there was no longer a challenge to the status of the Secretariat. In the time of Arnold Smith, there was a challenge, hence, in my book, I mentioned such minutest thing as the argument over the registration of the Secretary General's official car –

SO: You mentioned, that, yes! Getting the number plate 'CSG 1' was a fight.

EA: Yes, CSG 1 was a fight. There were then within the British bureaucracy people who thought, like Prime Minister Robert Muldoon of New Zealand, that the Secretary General and the Secretariat should be no more than a Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretariat of Heads of Government meetings. In other words, his/her primary responsibility was just to take notes of discussions and only carry out the Heads of Government's decisions without much input in the decisions.

SO: Yes, be a Secretary, not a General.

EA: That's right, Arnold Smith insisted that the Commonwealth Secretary General and the Secretariat had *inter alia* the responsibility for promoting the cohesion of the association and for giving the association a role in the international community; Sonny Ramphal built on that foundation.

SO: As my last question before you see Professor Murphy for lunch: you made reference to the preparatory visits that you made, that Arnold Smith made, in the run up to Singapore. At the 1971 meeting of course, there was the Singapore Declaration, and you also embarked on post CHOGM meetings and visits to ensure that those aspirational declarations weren't just hot air at an international meeting. I'm also aware of Sonny Ramphal's preparatory diplomacy in the run up to the 1979 Lusaka meeting; again you were sent off on preparatory tours around Africa and the post-conference work after the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. So we shouldn't just look at these biennial occasions of heads of government as ends in themselves –

EA: No, certainly not.

SO: - But it's the enduring process of diplomacy that's associated with these CHOGM meetings?

EA: You've captured it well because in the run up to the Lusaka meeting, there was the assumption of office in May 1979 by Margaret Thatcher as Prime

Minister of the UK. The signals that she had sent around suggested possible recognition by her government of Abel Muzorewa as leader of a government in Rhodesia.

SO: It was in the Conservative Party manifesto before the British general election in May 1979.

EA: That's right. That was what prompted us in the Secretariat, particularly Sonny, to see the danger ahead and to endeavour to try and defuse it before it exploded.

SO: In what ways?

EA: Well, it was clear to us that if Margaret Thatcher's government proceeded to recognise Abel Muzorewa who was no more than a stooge of Ian Smith and his cohorts, the Commonwealth would have exploded. We would have had people walking away saying we will no longer belong to this organisation. And so Sonny Ramphal was working on one hand to try and influence Whitehall to soft pedal on the issue of recognising the Muzorewa government, while at the same time encouraging African heads, and India, and the others, to believe that the situation was going to be manageable and that a middle way would be found to save everybody's face.

SO: So were you one of those who were sent to visit Kenneth Kaunda, to visit Julius Nyerere, and others? Such as the Nigerian head of state?

EA: Yes.

SO: Expressly to say "Thatcher is coming, soft-pedal your criticism of her"?

EA: No, I went not to say to my interlocutors, "Soft pedal your criticism" but rather, "Thatcher is coming, she may well want to recognise Abel Muzorewa, but she will not succeed and the Commonwealth will contain it. So help the Commonwealth to contain the situation".

SO: But there was a degree of, shall we say, encouragement of careful handling to give Thatcher the space to compromise?

EA: Yes of course. Obviously that was why the situation was handled first by setting up a committee, a working group of six Heads of Government in Lusaka to try and find a form of words to resolve the crisis. And the six worked with the Secretary-General to produce the formula that resolved the crisis. As I told you after they finished their meeting, Tony Duff, Mark Chona and I were asked to tidy up the statement they were going to make and produce it for consideration by the executive session the following day, which would be a Monday. We did that, but unfortunately the Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser that evening or late afternoon in a briefing that he thought was for only Australian media because of the time difference between Lusaka and Australia, briefed the media on the formula while unknown to him was the fact that there was among them a British-Australian journalist.

SO: Yes, you write of it very vividly in your book, and how you managed it at the barbeque, by the pre-emptive press statement. I am particularly interested in this question of management going up to this particular CHOGM. You talk of your contribution to the personal diplomacy in

helping to coordinate particularly stern and outspoken African heads of state, but not just African. Did you have any awareness that in fact in Whitehall there had been an agreement before the Lusaka meeting that Britain had to host an all-party conference? I know in your book you write that there was concern that Lord Harlech, who was Thatcher's emissary, was going through southern Africa, and who in fact met the South African government, In reality he was on a fact finding tour, but from the way that you write in your book, it indicates that there was acute concern, still, that Muzorewa's government was going to be recognised.

EA: Yes, there was.

SO: So I just wondered if you had any idea of the willingness of the British government to assume responsibility for the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe issue, and to have an all party conference in London, before the Lusaka meeting?

EA: Well, we had had signals and reports that the new Conservative party government was going that way.

SO: So these were, should we say, 'green shoots to be nurtured'? Now I understand it. Also you make reference in your book to the Lancaster House discussions in providing the administrative support from the Secretariat for the liberation movements in those tough negotiations with the British government.

EA: Yes.

SO: You also make reference to meeting Bishop Abel Muzorewa's team. Now that surprised me, because I knew of the support to Joshua Nkomo and to Robert Mugabe in the negotiations. They were liberation movements. They weren't seasoned, tough diplomats.

EA: Well, my first contact with the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean leaders was in earlier negotiations in 1976 during Harold Wilson's prime ministership. It was a conference that lasted for three months in Geneva and the Secretariat was financially supporting the African delegations. My Personal Assistant, Mary Mackie was their paymaster. She was paying them their allowances for staying in Geneva; and there were four delegations: one led by Abel Muzorewa, one led by Joshua Nkomo, one led by Robert Mugabe, and one led by Ndabaningi Sithole. It was in Geneva in 1976 that I established what were to become my strong personal relations with Nkomo and Mugabe.

SO: Were you aware that representatives from the CIA and MI6 were also in touch with the Rhodesian Front element of those negotiations?

EA: We always assumed that *[laughter]*.

SO: I've read Rhodesian and the South African side of the story in their archives, which makes your eyebrows rise!

EA: I have always assumed that.

SO: So you were providing financial support. Were you providing also legal support in drafting in...?

EA: Well, two of my colleagues in the Secretariat, Johnson Ndlovu and Ariston Chambati, were Zimbabweans who were interacting with their compatriots, but my only formal intervention in the talks was prompted at one point quite early in the talks. Joshua Nkomo of ZAPU and Robert Mugabe of ZANU were insisting that the talks should name a date for Zimbabwe's independence. By coincidence, President Julius Nyerere was visiting Nigeria and had discussions with the then Nigerian Head of State, General Obasanjo. After their discussion, General Obasanjo telephoned me to say that he and his brother, President Nyerere would want me and Salim Salim the Tanzanian OAU Secretary-General who was also in Geneva to go and press on Nkomo and Mugabe to drop their insistence on naming a date for independence. We went and had not too much difficulty in persuading Nkomo. We had a little more difficulty in persuading Mugabe, but he eventually agreed.

SO: Was there any interaction between yourself and the conference chairman, Ivor Richards, who seemed to me to have had a thankless task.

[Laughter].

EA: Not much, but tangential contacts, yes.

SO: In what way?

EA: Well, there was first a reception that he hosted for all the delegates. It's a reception that I've never forgotten because at a point during the reception, I deliberately went to join a group of three men in conversation. The group included Ian Smith's foreign minister, PK van der Byl, a not too pleasant character. Responding to an observation by Van der Byl that Rhodesian Africans were totally lacking in expertise to run anything in Rhodesia, I pointed out that I had two African Rhodesian colleagues, one with an M.Phil from Oxford, Ariston Chambati, and the other with an MA from Princeton, Johnson Ndlovu. And I added that as we were talking, the Deputy Secretary General of UNCTAD based in Geneva, Bernard Chidzero was a Rhodesian and that I knew of some Rhodesian African professors in universities such as Professor Stan Mudenge in UBL. Van der Byl simply walked away from the group; he obviously couldn't stand my observations.

SO: You'd made him look a fool.

[Laughter].

SO: Chief, I think I will stop there. I don't want to keep you from your lunch. Thank you very, very much indeed.

[END OF AUDIOFILE]