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VOICE FILE NAME: COHP Ambassador K Shankar Bajpai

Key:

PM: Professor Philip Murphy (Interviewer)

KSB: Ambassador K Shankar Bajpai (Respondent)

JM: Professor James Manor (Discussant)

PM: This is Philip Murphy interviewing Ambassador K Shankar Bajpai on 13th June 2013 in Delhi. Also present is Professor James Manor who will also be asking questions. Ambassador Bajpai, your father, Girija Shankar Bajpai, was a very senior Indian diplomat and had a role in the process by which India remained in the Commonwealth on becoming a republic in 1950. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

KSB: Yes, indeed. I could go in to great detail about it, but I'm sure you don't want that. Actually, it so happened that I was an undergraduate at Oxford [in 1949]. I was reading History and I was supposed to be examined on British constitutional history. I was reading Grant Robertson's select documents, and I'd taken the volume up to London with me to spend the weekend with my father. He asked me if it contained the Statute of Westminster, and said I'm running to [a meeting]...and he just tore it out of the book, and had it with him, and it was because he had to prove that his quotation from it was in fact valid! He was involved in a number of ways. First, I think the most important fact was that he had an extraordinary – and, obviously, now one would say mistaken – belief that the Commonwealth would be a major factor in international relations. He envisioned it as perhaps the first multi-cultural, multi-racial core unit which would be at the heart of the United Nations and things like that. He had been all his life involved with people like Lord Tweedsmuir, and, particularly, Lionel Curtis was a great friend. And Lord Lothian, for that matter. The people...What was it? The 'Milner's Kindergarten'. So, they had been great friends, with this idea of the Commonwealth which he had also developed because he happened, in the 1920s, to have gone out to South Africa, Canada, [and] Australia to negotiate the condition of Indians. Anyway, the point is that he really believed that the Commonwealth was going to be much more important than we might now consider it. He was also our representative in Washington during the War. Although we weren't independent, the Brits allowed us an envoy, and he

became very close friends with people like Lester Pearson, Sir Owen Dixon and I forget who the South African was, not that he was very keen on him! Anyway, this commitment to the Commonwealth became something of an article of faith in humanism. You can see from his exchange of discussions with [Leo] Amery, etc. They were trying to think how to find a solution for a new Commonwealth which, in any case, needed to be revitalised after War, but which he did, shall I say, push particularly hard because of India's determination to become a republic. And, if I may...I don't want to bore you with history, but the Dictionary of National Biography entry on my father by Olaf Caroe, I think, says it all: "In Bajpai, the Commonwealth had a doughty champion and the reality of the Commonwealth bond between India and Britain in all probability owed more to his steady counsel behind the scenes than to the decisions of statesmen." I think that is very well put, and it is, in fact, what happened both in advising Nehru here and in his conversations with the Commonwealth leaders on the advisability of keeping this somehow an active relationship. He was able to play a role because he knew the London establishment and he also had access here [in Delhi]. I have to add that there was a bigger problem of persuading the other Indian political leaders to be more open to the idea, because they were originally flatly hostile to it. It was made a bit easier because of Nehru's innate, shall I say, sense of kinship with the nicer Brits, if I may put it that way.

PM: Yes.

KSB: It was ultimately his statesmanship and his personal intervention. But, I have to say, also Krishna Menon – who was otherwise a very controversial figure and not always welcome in London – on this he was very helpful in pushing the Indian readiness to join the Commonwealth as a republic, and then it was a question of finding the formula which, as you saw in this *Guardian* comment, was very much my father's phraseology.

PM: **Can you explain that a little more. You say it's your father's phraseology. Can you explain a little bit about the background to that?**

KSB: This is Patrick Gordon Walker and, in it, it says that he had started this discussion in Delhi when Gordon Walker came here for the preparatory meetings, and he explains it all in some detail, if I can find the relevant page. He said that:

[*Reading*] "The adequate consideration to the problem could hardly be given in Delhi. There were many other things, including Nehru's preoccupations. At the best they had been thinking about it in fits and starts. He himself had been thinking of the type of declaration of the Balfour kind. It would recite that the British Commonwealth was dynamic and must change in its vitality. The membership of the new Dominions not of British origin necessitated further change in the form of the Commonwealth. The reality of the Commonwealth relationship was common acceptance of ideas of justice and liberty. Of these common ideas, the king and parliament had been the pre-eminent institutions. The Crown was the symbol of the unity between all the members and so recognised as such. He said this was only his idea, but Nehru had, perhaps, something like that in mind when he talked to me in the afternoon."

So, this thinking that had already gone in, and somewhere he actually uses that phrase – ‘Head of the Commonwealth’. That’s simple enough once that happened.

PM: Yes.

KSB: So, sorry, to go back to your question. It was...?

PM: Your father’s role in framing that, but I think the documents brings it up very clearly. Can I broaden the question out? It’s interesting you say [that] your father thought the Commonwealth was going to be a major force in world politics. In David Malone’s book *Does the Elephant Dance* – a recent survey of Indian foreign policy – it’s interesting that there’s only one reference to the Commonwealth in the index, and that’s to the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010. Do you think that’s a fair representation of the significance of the Commonwealth in Indian foreign policy since 1947?

KSB: Should we limit it to India? I mean, wouldn’t you get – more or less – something like that in almost any member, including Britain?

PM: I think you would.

KSB: So, I would say that that is a change in the sense of either the importance of the organisation in itself, or of the relevance of the individual members in their own policy-making.

PM: Yes.

KSB: As you know...do you still call it the Foreign and Commonwealth Office?

PM: Yes, you do.

KSB: I think you’re the only ones who do. [*Laughter*] No, I think Australia does, too. No, frankly, it doesn’t weigh in anybody’s thinking. In fact, people often chide us for remaining in it, or, rather, even paying obeisance to it with its annual conferences. I have attended one Commonwealth Heads of Government [Meeting] here, and two CHOGMS – oh, sorry, I forgot the one in Bermuda when I was Ambassador in Washington. I have no doubt in my own mind that it is, today, bound together more by historic memories than by common practice. There was a time when it was bound together by the commitment to democracy – we all know that there are certain members which have very little time for democracy any longer. The British rule of law which we all inherited... perhaps this continued more effectively, and I think I’m right in saying that there is a Commonwealth juridical grouping that meets with the Chief Justices and things.

PM: Yes, the Commonwealth Lawyers Association.

KSB: I think the Commonwealth Speakers, also.

PM: Yes.

KSB: But, as far as the Commonwealth Heads of Government are concerned, I think it serves the particular purpose of making people from very different parts of the world – who, of course, all now belong to the United Nations, but this is more of a club – feel more at ease with each other. They speak in the same idiom, as well as the same language, and they feel that they can talk to each other much more frankly than they do [at the UN]. So, in a sense... And it's been quite interesting, [because] quite often these have met just before the General Assembly and a lot of issues have been sort of aired and helped people make up their minds on policy. So, that is a hard-to-measure role that it plays, but I think it does play that.

PM: Yes.

KSB: And if I may transpose... Somebody else was interviewing me this morning about our commitment to Non-Alignment. I was reminded [that], after I retired, I was a Professor at Berkeley and was asked to inaugurate a Chair at Brandeis and they had a little lunch for me at which two diplomats – one, an Ambassador from Ghana, and one from one of the West Indies, I forget which – were at the lunch and I was saying frankly that the Non-Aligned Movement had had its day. And they said, "You know, it's alright for you, from a very big country, to say things like that, but we all come from very small countries. We find it a very convenient way to be heard and to also learn what others are thinking." And I think that applies to the Commonwealth also.

PM: Can I ask you about your period as Secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs? This coincided with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Delhi. Were you involved in the preparations for that and can you tell me a little bit about that?

KSB: Yes, we were. Actually, the problem there was that we were also suddenly landed with the Non-Aligned Conference and were more busy with that.

PM: Yes, indeed.

KSB: So, we were more busy with that. This became a family affair compared to the other, and the main thing always in these things is the retreat and, well, my only involvement in that was that Mrs Gandhi sent me to go make sure the menu was up to her standard [*Laughter*]. She was very particular about those things. Actually, I was more involved in the policy side of it at Fiji for the CHOGM the year before. Mrs Gandhi refused to go because she was having a quarrel with Ratu Mara at the time. There we got very involved with things like Indochina [and] the Cambodian issue, so I would say that the preparations for the Commonwealth that I'm familiar with were really extensions of preparations for the UN and other meetings. We had more or less the same agenda. Let's say 'intra-Commonwealth' issues hardly came up. But [with] the difficult ones, of course – like Kashmir – we were the first to say we're not going to discuss it.

PM: Yes.

KSB: So, what are the issues? Sometimes a few trade matters, Commonwealth preference having long since been history. There aren't many issues between the Commonwealth, cementing or divisive, I think, so we more or less talk

about the world situation. And I don't think there has been a concerted Commonwealth position. Even, I would say, perhaps – you will know much better – if you take the original Dominions, I'm not sure that they concert policy all that much any longer.

PM: No.

KSB: So, the larger ones are even more amorphous.

PM: One thing that happened shortly before the CHOGM in 1983 was the American invasion of Grenada and, again, the Commonwealth was quite divided in its reaction to that. Did that feature in discussions?

KSB: Not that I'm aware of. In fact, I was not dealing with that aspect of it. I was Secretary of Eastern [Affairs]: China and Japan. I didn't have any involvement in that. But I can't remember anyone even talking about it, frankly. I mean, they talked about the American invasion but not as a Commonwealth matter.

PM: Were you at all involved in the arrangements for the Queen's visit? This was her first visit to India since 1961.

KSB: I was only there to clap. [*Laughter*]

PM: Do you have any recollections of her visit?

KSB: To be honest with you, I don't, and I'm trying to think why. I think I'm the only Indian still alive who attended both her coronation and that of her father.

PM: Did you?

KSB: It was 1937. So, I should have a more lively awareness of her India trip but, to be honest, I don't.

PM: And you attended the Coronation in 1953? Why were you able to attend?

KSB: I'd just joined the Foreign Service, so our Secretary General – who had succeeded my father – out of kindness to me, I think, took me as his Private Secretary.

PM: What do you think of the monarch's role as Head of the Commonwealth? And her record as Head of the Commonwealth?

KSB: Doesn't it vary from place to place?

PM: Yes, indeed.

KSB: Obviously, the original advocates of having a greater role for the monarchy in the Commonwealth are no longer that keen on it. I mean, Australia and New Zealand were the two states who were most adamant during our negotiations [in 1949] about giving recognition to the Crown, and they were the hardest to persuade to accept the new formula. Canada was very helpful in the case of Pearson, I would say. Probably... Am I just wrong in thinking that somehow

there's more affection for the Queen in Canada than there might be even in Australia, possibly? [*Laughter*] I think the republican movement in Australia has petered out, but there isn't as much of an affection for the Crown as there was at that time. And, of course, South Africa was different all along. So, I would say that the role of the monarch is to lend the aura of the monarchy as an additional prestige to the organisation.

PM: Yes. What about Mrs Gandhi? What would you say, broadly, was her attitude towards the Commonwealth?

KSB: Pretty much that of her father, I think. She felt that this was a very useful gathering of different cultures and different political points of view – even of different political systems, by that time – and, therefore, I don't know if she actually used this phrase, but more or less she looked upon it as a miniature United Nations, without all the formalities and the political posturing that goes on there.

PM: How did she get on with Mrs Thatcher?

KSB: Very well indeed.

PM: Right.

KSB: Extraordinarily well. I think the feminine bond was one of the things. They were both Iron Ladies of their own kind. So, I think they were kindred spirits in many ways, yes.

PM: Did you see that in action?

KSB: Yes, well one could see that there was really almost sisterly affection between them.

PM: Was there any change in India's approach after Indira Gandhi died? Was Rajiv Gandhi...do you think he engaged in a more positive way with the Commonwealth?

KSB: Rajiv Gandhi was very, very involved. In fact, one of my most intensive experiences was the CHOGM in Bermuda. Bahamas. I keep mixing the two up. Which was the one...?

PM: Was it Nassau?

KSB: Nassau. I am sorry. Because I was with him then and he was very keen to get to know the leaders. He felt particularly close to Bob Hawke – the age may have helped. I'm trying to remember the New Zealander who was also quite a young man. He made quite an effort, and after that he was always looking for Bob Hawke. I'm trying to remember... Maggie was still Prime Minister, so she was there. He was very keen on it, he always attended.

JM: There was one CHOGM where Rajiv Gandhi worked together with, I think, Malcolm Fraser – this was a different CHOGM, obviously, without Hawke there – and with, I think, Kenneth Kaunda, and the three of them managed to persuade Mrs Thatcher to ease her rather hard line position on South Africa.

And Rajiv, I think, was actually a constructive force on that occasion and very much aware of...

KSB: Could well have been. I'm trying to remember when that would have been... Because I went from the CHOGM here [in Delhi] as Ambassador to Washington, which is where I was concurrently accredited to the Bahamas – that's how I got involved. And so, Malcolm Fraser was here for the main meeting and then, by the time we got to the Bahamas, there was already Bob Hawke. So, I don't know where this could have taken place.

JM: I may be off slightly, but I do think that, certainly, the Zambians think that Rajiv played a very constructive role.

KSB: But he would; I could believe that. He would try. But I'm trying to think what the forum would have been, unless there was a CHOGRM in between. But how could a CHOGRM involve those three? So, you have me there.

JM: I was present in New Delhi during the most recent visit by the Queen [in 1997], which was a more troubled visit. She had gone to Pakistan prior to coming to India. It was nothing to do with the Queen, but the British Foreign Minister had made statements which upset New Delhi. And I think Mr Gujral was also somewhat upset with an incident that occurred between him and the British High Commissioner in Delhi, David Gore-Booth. I was working in the Prime Minister's office on Panchayati Raj, of all things. I'm not even British, but the British High Commission was desperate because the MEA was not returning calls and the Queen was arriving in 36 hours, etc. I was carrying messages verbally from the PMO to the High Commission and back again, because the High Commission... Somebody wasn't interacting, and Mr Gujral was perhaps reluctant to get involved in this. And, of course, then he became Prime Minister. I wonder... This incident may not suggest a lukewarm attitude by Prime Minister or Foreign Minister Gujral towards the Commonwealth, but he was certainly feeling very unhappy and maybe that extended to the Commonwealth, since the Queen is the Head of the Commonwealth. I don't know.

KSB: No, I doubt if it would extend that way. I think, you know, petty people have petty differences, and I suspect that this is just one of those brushes that immature diplomats have, if I can put it that way. But normally we get on well with the Brits here and in London. In fact, I was just delayed by a meeting with the Foreign Secretary, and he delayed me because he was leaving tonight for London and was on the phone with his counterpart. I don't quite know how to put it, but the Commonwealth aspect of it has in some ways remained stronger than the Indo-British aspect. Certainly, soon after independence, Britain lost interest in India. And it was reciprocated: I think we also started looking at other countries. Even for education, we looked more to the States than to England. That's partly Maggie Thatcher's fee structure, but it was other things, too. In spite of the fact that we have such an active community of Indian origin in London, and in spite of very widespread anti-Americanism in the intellectual circles of India, most Indians now would look rather to the United States for both personal and for business purposes than towards London. Even on the continent, we are now perhaps more engaged with France and even with Germany – in fact, economically perhaps even more with Germany – than with the UK. I would say, though, that over the last 20

years there has been a slight reduction in the balance and Mrs Thatcher – although she may have put off a lot of Indian students – otherwise did a lot to try and restore relations. On the whole, we've now got back to an even keel. But there were times soon after independence...I remember they were wanting to close down the Indian Institute at Oxford because they said nobody would be interested in things like that. At that time, the Commonwealth was less in people's mind. They didn't know what it meant. But, somehow...I mean, if you talk to the India International Centre group and say, "What do you think of the Commonwealth?", somebody may scratch his head and say, "Well, what is the Commonwealth?" But I think, oddly enough, there is more sense of the Commonwealth being a body worth belonging to than [association] in purely British terms. I mean, the wider circles, you know.

PM: So, you think that Indian policymakers make a clear distinction between the Commonwealth as an institution and bilateral relations with the UK? Because sometimes it's suggested that those are conflated.

KSB: No, no, very different. Very, very different. I mean, there are times when you would say – for obvious reasons – that we'd better discuss this with the Brits before we would go to the Commonwealth meetings. But I would say that's [happening] less and less, unless it's a very major decision.

PM: You mentioned Mrs Thatcher helping to improve relations with India. Can you explain a little more what you mean by that?

KSB: I'd have to go back a long time. It's an impression that has remained with me. I'm not sure I could cite chapter and verse, but maybe [it's] because the two ladies got on well together. I mean, hardly any Indian policymaker – let alone maker of public opinion – would approve of any of the things she spoke for on international relations, where she was seen as, if anything, one-step ahead of Reagan's hard line on many issues. And we were having problems with Reagan, as you know. So, it was not a kinship of policy but, perhaps, just sentiment. She was able to provide the sentiment.

JM: Between '71 and the 1980s, India had a close relationship with the Soviet Union – understandably, in the circumstances – and a formalisation of it in '71. Now, that would affect relationships with western powers, but would it have any implications whatsoever for the Commonwealth? Except to be something that India had paid more attention to than the rather marginal business of the Commonwealth?

KSB: Well, I can tell you that the Russians thought our membership of the Commonwealth was a sign of our remaining under British tutelage and, therefore, they thoroughly disapproved. I mean, you'd be amazed... Actually, I was 'Ambassador' in Pakistan [rather than High Commissioner] because they had walked out of the Commonwealth. The other Commonwealth representatives... In fact, they all became Ambassadors, including the Brits. I forget, this must have been 1978...It was some occasion, I don't if was the Commonwealth, I know it was a Queen's...I forget what. It was a major British...

PM: It was 1977, the Jubilee, was that...?

KSB: That was it. That must have been it. The British Ambassador asked us, of the Commonwealth, if we'd like to have a joint reception. So, we said, "Fine, we'd love to help foot the bill, if you provide the venue," because they had the only building already ready. But the Russians refused to come. I'm curious. Just to mention that I was doing some research at the Nehru Memorial Museum and I was looking at some letters from Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, who was then our Ambassador in Moscow, to my father. The Russians, when she went to present her credentials, welcomed her in Hindi, and she had prepared to speak in English. And she muttered a few words in her broken Hindi but went ahead in English, and the Russians objected. The next time she had to go with a translator and they insisted on trying to speak to us in Hindi because, when we didn't, they took it as a sign that we were still British stooges. So, the Russian attitude towards the Commonwealth was [as an instance of] western imperialism, that's all, and therefore our membership of the Commonwealth was held against us in odd little ways like that. But let me just correct one thing: the relationship with the Russians antedates '71, and in fact was more useful to us 'til 71 than afterwards because... And I was at Tashkent and I can tell you that the Russians were far from being helpful to us on a number of issues. And even during the Bangladesh crisis. I think they were more concerned that we did not attack Pakistan than that we liberated Bangladesh. So, the treaty has to be seen purely in terms of warding off a possible Chinese involvement: it was neither more nor less than that. The treaty was not the cementing of a particular relationship; it was a purely ad hoc tactic and strategy – a strategic move – for a particular purpose.

PM: Can I ask, do you think the Commonwealth played any significant role in India's regional security policy? I mean, in terms of relations with neighbours like Pakistan or Sri Lanka.

KSB: Not really. In fact, the Commonwealth involvement – threefold, with the Canadians, the Brits and the Australians – came in for a lot of flak because General McNaughton, who was the President of the Security Council at the time, was a Canadian, and we thought he was not very clear what it was all about. In fact, I remember we had to intervene with Mike Pearson, get him to do things. He was very helpful, but the Canadians as a whole were not viewing the Indian involvement with Kashmir with any great favour. The Australians, of course, sent us Sir Owen Dixon as a mediator and it didn't come to anything, but I think the Australian sympathies were very equivocal, to put it mildly. And, as far as the Brits are concerned... I'm sorry to say, they had us hopping mad. In fact, there's a lot on record. [Philip] Noel-Baker, who was then the Commonwealth Secretary, we had to complain about his behaviour to Attlee. So, I would say that Commonwealth involvement in security issues in South Asia has been very marginal, if anything at all. The only time they were at all of any help, and even that was rather equivocal, was during the Rann of Kutch [in the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War], when the British High Commissioner Morris James in Karachi was a sort of go-between. But there, also, one could feel that he thought the Pakistanis had a better case. And, I'm sorry to say, [but] to begin with there was a very clear London bias towards Pakistan. It hasn't changed all that much in that respect. I mean, we've had our bilateral defence relationship which has been quite a healthy one in terms of our getting equipment and things, but it's purely commercial. I can't think of a single... Even, you know, in Sri Lanka, as you know, the Norwegians have been more of a force than any of the

Commonwealth countries, and I think it has been proved that Commonwealth countries feel inhibited about dealing with the problems of one of their members. Partly because the members don't like outside intervention and partly because... Especially when it's a dispute between them. But in Sri Lanka, there's not a dispute with another... We have not really come in to it in that sense. But I can't think that the Brits have played any role there. The Canadians, as you know, have been very much more outspoken.

PM: Could you say something about the leadership of the official Commonwealth and some of the people who've played leading roles in it? Particularly Sonny Ramphal, during your time.

KSB: I was going to say that Ramphal is the one I knew. He's a charming and very effective go-getter, if I may put it that way. There are people who thought he was a bit too publicity-seeking, but I don't buy that. I think he did a very good job. He was suave, he was well spoken and he had a commitment. What was the first one, it was a Canadian?

PM: Arnold Smith.

KSB: Arnold Smith. He was a bit wooden. I don't know if you've heard that from others?

PM: Yes. [Laughter]

KSB: I thought I saw you smiling. [Laughter] I can't think why, but... He had a brother, I think – Wilfred Cantwell Smith. He was an authority on Islam. There was some sort of... he was a bit religious himself, if I may put it that way. Those are the only two I really know and, of course, Kamallesh [Sharma]. He's now the contemporary Commonwealth... you'd be a better judge of that than I could.

PM: There was an Indian diplomat Moni Malhoutra who was Assistant Secretary General in the '80s.

KSB: Moni, yes, have you met him? He's been very sick. He had a heart attack last week, or about two weeks ago. It was touch and go, but I think he's back. I haven't seen him, but since I heard about it... Yes, he had a massive heart attack and [they] got him to hospital just in time. I'm not sure if he's seeing anybody. Well, yes, he was Assistant Secretary General. Very bright and just the type of man a Secretary General would like to have as his right hand. But I think the man who was more active, originally, was Azim Hussain – he's gone now, alas, but he settled in London.

JM: And, of course, Kris Srinivasan, in more recent times, was Deputy Secretary General.

KSB: Quite right. He lives in London most of the time, doesn't he?

JM: And Calcutta, strangely.

KSB: Well his wife is Bengali.

JM: But Kris, I think, has a much more jaded view of the Commonwealth.

KSB: As he had of most things. [*Laughter*]

JM: Yes, I eventually got that impression.

PM: Rounding off then, as an overview...What do you think are the Commonwealth's achievements – if any – since 1965, from an Indian perspective?

KSB: Its great achievement is its survival. [*Laughter*] I'm afraid I'm not joking. You know, the very fact that people want to keep it going...They will not think about it every day of their lives, but when the time comes, nobody is saying, "Let's get out of it," and nobody is even saying, "Well, let's ignore it." I think those are important considerations, even though they may sound negative. I have to say, my feeling is that the historic sense of having belonged to something provides a certain momentum which continues to motivate people – or, at least, allows them to view a thing favourably. Otherwise its bonding elements have mostly weakened. To be quite frank, to begin with, this was very much the kind of commitment that made my father overestimate its potential, was that this was the extension of the Enlightenment to the great, wide world and it enabled the values of the Enlightenment to be practised – in the British tradition, but with local colour – and that it would enable the local colour, in a sense, to be able to shape a new multicultural and multiracial organisation. That was the feeling that motivated him. I don't think he would be considering it so today. But it led to a fellow feeling which is not there today. So, what is the bond? I can't think of anything else. If you're in a club, why leave it?

PM: Is that all that keeps it going or are there other factors that keep it going, do you think?

KSB: You see, there's no aid from this thing; there is no Commonwealth preference; there is no common citizenship. So, what is it that anyone gets out of it? I really can't think... In hard, realpolitik terms, it's not doing very much for anybody.

PM: Do you think it's more valued by the smaller, weaker countries?

KSB: Well, this is the sense I got, as I say, but to be honest I have not served them; I have not had much to do with them. It's just this remark by these two [diplomats] that lingered in my mind. Although it's another context, I think it applies. Yeah, I would say that I'm quite sure that the smaller countries feel... For one thing, it's the only way they get heard in major capitals like London or Ottawa or... it helps.

JM: There is an office in the British Aid Ministry which seeks to promote the interests of small, poor countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and to give them voice. This may sound unconvincing, but there is such an office and those people who are committed to what they do say that the Commonwealth is more or less the only forum in which the voices and views and interests of those small, weak countries are not squashed at the outset by the big players.

KSB: I'm quite sure that's true, yes.

JM: So, I think it resonates with what you're saying.

PM: Good, well, thank you very much.

KSB: Not in the least. I'm delighted if I've been of any use to you.

PM: I think we captured some really interesting ideas there. I think it was a very good interview.

KSB: Well, I would say...I think this is a very important phrase that [Leo] Amery uses or what he describes about [what] my father said, "We should conceive of the Commonwealth as an organic..." What is it we say? What's the word he uses? [*Reading*] "I was particularly struck by a remark that, apart from any particular symbol of unity like a Crown, the important thing was that the Commonwealth should be conceived as a living organism." And that's his, I think...What Amery says is: [*Reading*] "The essential characteristic of an organism as contrasted with a mechanical structure is that there is vitality in all its parts: mutual cooperation between them and, above all, a general purpose to maintain existence." I think that's very well put. But I have to add that, by that criterion, it [the Commonwealth] has moved more from being a living organism to being a mechanical structure."

[END OF AUDIOFILE]