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VOICE FILE NAME: COHP Carl Dundas

Key:

SO: Dr Sue Onslow (Interviewer)

CD: Carl Dundas (Respondent)

Part One:

SO: This is Dr Sue Onslow talking to Mr Carl Dundas in Milton Keynes on Tuesday, 10th February 2015. Mr Dundas, thank you very much for agreeing to take part in this Commonwealth Oral Histories project.

CD: It's a pleasure.

SO: I wonder, please, if you could begin by reflecting on my request to add additional information and detail to your autobiography, *My Wonderful World of Elections* [Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2011].

CD: Yes, indeed. I tried to look a little bit behind the scenes by relating some of the more interesting incidents that occurred during my stay at the Commonwealth Secretariat. I did a lot of diplomatic and quasi-diplomatic missions on behalf of two Secretaries General – Sir Sonny Ramphal and Chief Emeka Anyaoku. One of the areas that I was asked to assist the Secretary General with was, for instance, Grenada. I was the Secretariat's liaison person, as it were, between the various authorities in Grenada after the incident and the Secretariat, and I might have mentioned, for instance, my search for someone to head the interim government.

SO: You did, Sir. You make express reference to that in your autobiography.

CD: Yes. Alister McIntyre: I went to Geneva to see him, and the funny thing about it is [that] by the time I went to New Delhi, where the heads were meeting, I was told that Mac couldn't fill the post because he was ill. He had some sort of certificate from his doctor, so we had to start all over again. That was the sort of diplomatic mission that I assisted with, and there were many others which I might have mentioned. Some, I'm sure I mentioned in connection with elections, because the thrust there was really dealing with matters relating to elections. We had situations like searching for an expert person, a

personality, to head the Commonwealth Expert Group to South Africa. So, I went on a wild goose chase around the Caribbean. I mentioned that. I don't know how much I went into it, but...

SO: You write that the idea was that Michael Manley would be the Commonwealth senior personage on the Eminent Persons Group.

CD: Yes. I could give you a little bit about that because it was very interesting. I went at the behest of Sonny Ramphal to Jamaica to try and secure the services of Prime Minister Edward Seaga – well, 'consent' rather than services – to agree to Manley heading the expert group. And I opened negotiations with Seaga himself, whom I knew because I ran elections in Jamaica. He was very political and he would appreciate that. I had a good chat with him and so on. So, he asked for some dates – just that – some dates to consider the matter.

SO: Did he mention his view on the Eminent Persons Group? Because this was a novel exercise for the Commonwealth.

CD: No. He agreed with the idea; he didn't have any objection to the idea. You see, his problem from the beginning – being a political animal – was giving Manley some kind of publicity. That's how he saw it. So, when I went to talk with him, he was okay but right away he began to think politically. And his Permanent Secretary was a good friend of mine, Don Brice. I was liaising with Don when I was in Jamaica because that was the sole object of my visit. And it took a mighty long time – about five days – [for him] to give me an answer. And then he came back in the negative. Exchanging views with Don, they were saying, well, you know, this is a political thing...and so on. So, anyway, he turned down the idea that Manley should be allowed to head this mission. I had to go to Barbados to research on Miss Nita Barrow, and I had a good discussion with her and she indicated a willingness to consider the Secretary's proposition for the EPG.

SO: Sir, please, if I could just to go back to the Jamaican political scene. I understand that Mr Seaga had a cautious view of the Commonwealth coming out of the Grenada incident – to which you've just referred – when he had found himself at odds with other Caribbean heads. Do you think that his particular view was coloured by a more Cold War regionalist idea which down-played the value of the Commonwealth, rather than opposition to Michael Manley's presence on an Eminent Persons Group? I know that it was Sir Sonny's idea that Michael Manley should head it at this particular point.

CD: I think Seaga's calculation was largely based on a fear that Manley would be seen, because Manley was – what we would say in Jamaica – a 'loud mouthed man'. So, he would announce it to the world that he's outstanding, that he is...

SO: Ah. So, this would give Manley a platform.

CD: Yes. Manley was very egoistic. He was, really. I dealt with him at very close range, and yes, he would do that kind of thing, and that was what Seaga feared.

SO: Mr Seaga didn't want to let him grandstand.

CD: That's right. And then, of course – this is all fully personal, but in the context you probably will understand it – Seaga was always doubtful of Sir Sonny's relationship with Manley.

SO: Oh?

CD: That was part of the thing behind the equation. You see, Sonny was, as you know, a regionalist coming from the Federation, and Manley's party, the People's National Party, were highly pro-Federation and pro-CARICOM and so on.

SO: Seaga and the Jamaica Labour Party were not so?

CD: Not so. They were always on the defensive, just as they are now with the Caribbean Court of Justice. So, Seaga was a bit suspicious of any relationship between Manley and Sir Sonny.

SO: Well, Manley and Sir Sonny had a 'history'. Sir Sonny had been elected as Secretary General at the Kingston CHOGM. There was also their particular shared view of African nationalist liberation movements, Michael Manley's view of the New International Economic Order, and the Non-Aligned Movement. So, there were political and ideological underpinnings to their relationship.

CD: Yes, that's right. That's exactly how I would see it myself. And I thought that was in the equation when I went on that mission. I was not unaware of the circumstance because I had dealt with both Manley and Seaga when I was directing elections in 1979-80, but it had been a long time. So, that was that, and anyway, we had Miss Barrow and the EPG went okay. It produced a fairly good report.

SO: Had you already identified Dame Nita Barrow of Barbados as a possible appointment?

CD: Yeah, she was. We would say she was 'in the hat' – she was 'in the cards', she was within the radius, as it were – in terms of personalities in the Caribbean. The idea was to have someone of standing, of some prominence, to head the EPG. We were looking for someone to head this Mission, so it was important.

SO: Excuse me, Mr Dundas, so that means General Obasanjo and Malcolm Fraser were not the first thought of as co-leaders?

CD: No, no. For some reason, I think Sonny wanted a Caribbean national.

SO: Did he now?

CD: Yeah. So, that's why we spent so much time on this.

SO: Possibly because the EPG initiative emerged from the Nassau heads meeting? I'm just interested about Sir Sonny's thought processes here.

- CD: Manley, for instance, was very close – passionately so – to the whole anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and a great admirer of Mandela. So, I think that equation played some role in Sonny’s thoughts.
- SO: **Ah, particularly if the ANC was somewhat suspicious of the idea of a Commonwealth EPG? I understand that the Commonwealth had to visit the ANC office in exile in Lusaka to explain the purpose of this diplomatic mission...**
- CD: Yes.
- SO: **...[and] to see whether and where there was possible common ground for negotiation.**
- CD: Yes, because, you see, Thabo Mbeki was in Lusaka.
- SO: **And so was Oliver Tambo.**
- CD: Yeah. So, there was that equation, but the Commonwealth, as you will appreciate, is always probably split. Sometimes it doesn’t come to the surface but at other times it is there. Just like the Fiji situation recently – I was involved in that, so I was there a couple of times last year.
- SO: **Going back to the EPG, you said the Commonwealth has these subterranean divisions which sometimes come to the surface.**
- CD: Yes, and it certainly had it in respect to South Africa and apartheid. Most Commonwealth members were on one side, and Britain was on one side and had to be coaxed or brought forward or whatever diplomatic phrase you might use. So, they were not on all fours in terms of how to deal with apartheid. I suppose the more radical [among those] in the Secretariat would have said harsher things about Britain’s role, but I think everybody in the Commonwealth wanted to see the back of apartheid. But how to do it was really, in my view, not an agreed approach. So, yes, we had that in the mix. And, you see, I was fortunate enough to follow [it] through, because I was in South Africa for a mighty long time, leading up to the elections and then for the elections. So, in terms of how it worked out, I went to see FW de Klerk and so on with the Commonwealth team, and so on and so forth. So, I thought the Commonwealth played their cards well towards the end, in that the group made an impression.
- SO: **So, if I may just mentally reconstruct this, your role as Sonny’s discreet emissary to Jamaica to see if Prime Minister Seaga would agree to Michael Manley’s involvement had failed, but you didn’t encounter the same political difficulties when you went to Barbados to enquire about the appointment of Dame Nita Barrow to represent the Caribbean region on the EPG. Were you at all privy to the discussions about approaching a leading Nigerian and a leading Australian? I know that Malcolm Fraser had had a particular ideological and personal friendship with Michael Manley, and I wondered if Sonny had sent other emissaries out to enquire?**
- CD: Not that I’m aware of, but I know that they were in contact with Malcolm Fraser and so on. Many, of course, didn’t think Fraser was the right person anyway.

SO: Did they not? He was passionately opposed to apartheid.

CD: Yes, but...Well, you know, I was seeing it from maybe the sort of mid-level bureaucratic standpoint.

SO: That can be very clear-eyed.

CD: But the views in some quarters – certainly from the African angle – didn't support a Malcolm Fraser presence as head of the EPG.

SO: So, was this the view from mid-range bureaucrats within the Commonwealth Secretariat, or from your knowledge and contacts within other African states?

CD: No, it was mainly getting a feel from other African states, because I used to do elections in Africa.

SO: Sir, I'm aware that you had been involved in elections in Jamaica before you joined the Secretariat. Yet there was something of a lull in the 1980s in terms of Commonwealth election observation. I'm just curious as to how you would have had a degree of contact with these mid-level bureaucrats that you're mentioning, who were expressing private concern about Fraser.

CD: Well, yes, you're quite correct, because after I left the elections area in Jamaica, it was quite some time after that before the Commonwealth and the Secretariat got involved in elections. But I used to do a lot of work in Africa.

SO: What type of work?

CD: Negotiating mineral contracting [and] petroleum contracts in many countries. Tanzania, Namibia...Well, Namibia was later on...I was in Namibia when they had elections in 1989. That was one of the first sort of inputs that the Commonwealth did on elections in Africa. But I worked in many places: Mozambique in minerals in 1981, and so on.

SO: So, this would have been providing technical advice in terms of legal contracts between the government of that country and multi-national corporations?

CD: Yes; yes. You see, when I first heard about this oral history project, I thought it was geared towards sustainability. And I said, "Ah, that is it. It would be excellent for elections in which I was deeply involved in the Secretariat." But I formed the impression – perhaps somewhat erroneously – that elections were not on the radar. So, the Secretariat had been in contact with me before, but I was working in Ethiopia and Nigeria, so I couldn't fit into their schedule. A couple of the things I was involved in that I had in mind that we used to do in the 1980s, but were not really sustainable, [were the] negotiation of contracts – petroleum contracts, mineral contracts. Those were okay and were sustainable, but we had many others that were not, like civil aviation. I used to be somebody of many parts. I used to negotiate civil aviation agreements for Gambia, Antigua/Barbuda and Tuvalu. We did quite a few civil aviation agreements in the Caribbean – Antigua and St Kitts and so on – and I used to do that because I did air law in my studies. But those things were not sustainable in the context of the Commonwealth Secretariat, although we did

well. We were very successful in negotiating and helping these countries to negotiate their contracts: revising their petroleum, civil aviation contracts and so on.

SO: So, your work on mineral rights was in terms of royalties, tax structures and tax receipts?

CD: Yes. We had a big programme to assist the small Commonwealth members in strengthening their hard rock mineral negotiating capacities and, in fact, when I joined the Secretariat, that's what I was doing: negotiating legal contracts, drawing up legislation for minerals all round the world, from the Solomon Islands and Fiji with their gold – though that never came through – and some more. So, we had that programme which was really aimed at helping Commonwealth countries.

SO: It was capacity-building?

CD: Yes, it was. In Gambia and Sierra Leone – you name it, all over the Commonwealth. So, some of those areas were sustainable; others weren't. And on my liking for elections, when I was in Jamaica, I got involved in elections quite unexpectedly, because I was an international lawyer. So, I was Legal Counsel in CARICOM for some time, and then I went back to Jamaica and I got interested in elections because I was interested in constitutional law. So, that being my background, I saw it as an area which was very sustainable in the Commonwealth Secretariat.

SO: Your particular experience in Jamaica in 1979-1980 was against the backdrop of what the Commonwealth was doing in Zimbabwe in December 1979 to March 1980, and then the altogether much more challenging experience in Uganda in 1980.

CD: Yes, that was to my mind a very attractive area for the Commonwealth. But, you see, there's a great secret in that the Secretariat was very reluctant to delve into elections, perhaps fearing that it would divert resources from economic development. The Commonwealth and the Secretariat were very split on the issue. Strangely, Secretary General Ramphal, Canada, India, and many of the developing members of the Commonwealth did not welcome the possible diversion of resources from economic development to the development of democracy in the Commonwealth, actually. I was reflecting on it this morning, because a couple of countries, Canada, and I dare say my dear friend Sonny, were not in favour of the Commonwealth getting into elections.

SO: Canada was not keen?

CD: Canada was not keen at all. I was intimately involved in the Secretariat, but the fact is that both Sonny and surprisingly India – though not surprisingly Canada – were not in favour of giving elections and that aspect of democracy prominence.

SO: Sir, could I ask you, do you recall when exactly this was? In the 1980s or towards the end of the decade?

CD: This was towards the end of the 1980s. The reason being is that Sonny intuitively – on behalf of what we used to call 'his supporters' in terms of

Caribbean and African countries – wanted the Commonwealth to concentrate more on economic matters.

SO: Development?

CD: Development. Therefore they were not too keen on the democratic, electoral side. I have to tell you, I had some personal battles just to keep this thing afloat, because Canada used to supply the Director of CFTC and they controlled the funds. I had to have some serious battles with the Managing Director because I wanted to produce records on elections, and I had to depend on the CFTC budget to get some of my books done. I have to say, it was a constant battle. You see, I was at that time writing – I've got a stack of books here, that's for sure – I was writing this thing here which is four volumes.

SO: [Laughter] It's the size of a PhD! The title reads *The Compendium of Election Laws, Practices and Cases of Select Commonwealth Countries*, and you say it runs to four volumes.

CD: This is Volume 1, Part 2, and then there's Volume 2, Parts 1 and 2. These are the actual laws for selected Commonwealth countries. There were thirty-seven. And the other volume is about a number of cases.

SO: So, this was written in the decade of the 1990s?

CD: Yes, these are 1996 [and] 1997, I think. The reason why I mentioned this is I had to fight in all sorts of ways to get it through, because the Canadians didn't like the idea of resources being diverted towards elections and so on. But Emeka supported this kind of thing. In fact, he had copies in his room. He was more interested in elections than Sonny was.

SO: Well, indeed. Chief Emeka's idea of democracy and development is that elections are a manifestation of democracy, building on the Harare Declaration of 1991.

CD: That's right. Okay, so, this is just to illustrate the fact that there was a split not only in the Secretariat but in the Commonwealth about elections. But quite frankly, I was one of the few people in the Secretariat who was always espousing the whole idea of supporting countries to allow democracy and democratic elections.

SO: During the 1980s, it seems that the Commonwealth's two grand strategies were development and also the international struggle against apartheid.

CD: Yes.

SO: So, a considerable number of Commonwealth countries – which themselves had a highly variable track record of plural politics and democracy – wanted South Africa to bring in racial justice and a universal franchise when, in fact, they had a poor democratic record at home.

CD: Yes, sadly. And I think that is one of the reasons why elections were always on the back burner, even when, apparently, the OAU – and later the AU, the

African Union – was advocating elections but in a very lukewarm way, because they never had anything to shout about nationally with respect to democratic elections. So, that was always a kind of baggage, quite frankly, which they would put forward conveniently to meet, I would say, the demands of the West, by and large.

SO: Well, certainly. The international environment and development debates of the 1980s were focused on economic liberalisation, and by the 1990s on the parallel need for good governance.

CD: Well, the [issue of] good governance came in in the early 1980s. I was there in New Delhi at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1983, and Trudeau was advancing the idea of good governance and urging the Commonwealth to play a bigger role in good governance. He wasn't highlighting elections. I think Trudeau was more interested in the actual machinery of government proper.

SO: Ah, good government?

CD: Well, he was talking about good governance.

SO: Good governance or good government? Because there is a considerable difference.

CD: No, good *governance*, but Trudeau's good governance concept pointed more to the machinery of government proper, rather than elections. So, that was on the table from 1983, maybe before. But in terms of elections, that never got on the front burner until when Emeka really took over in 1990. Quite frankly, he and I worked very closely together. So, although you might have seen in the book *My Wonderful World* some hints [of this], I ran into serious trouble with Emeka earlier in the 1980s because Sonny wanted me to do a lot of diplomatic work. That caused a measure of uneasiness with the then-Deputy SG and some members of the Political Affairs Division of the Secretariat. I usually played these differences down; I didn't want to embarrass people.

SO: In your autobiography, you make a very gentle reference to Political Affairs Division and also to the Office of the Secretary General, both of which were unsettled in the 1980s when you were acting as a personal emissary of the Secretary General.

CD: Yes, it caused a bit of a problem.

SO: So, could you add some detail to that please?

CD: Yes. Some people feel I was pretty close to Sonny. They used to refer to me as a member of the inner cabinet.

SO: He did have his inner coterie.

CD: Yes, but I'm not sure I was one of them. But being from the Caribbean...And I knew him before he came here, to the UK, and so on. Yes. But he used to use me to do a lot of little diplomatic chores: many of them I didn't mention but some I did. I hinted that Emeka, on two distinct occasions, called me and said I was doing his work. So, you know, I was quite frankly free thinking and frank enough to say, "Well, you know, Chief, you'll have to tell the Secretary

General that, because when he asks me to do something, I can't say to him, 'Look, that's not my work'. So, twice I had to tell him that. One of them was Grenada. As you know, Grenada split the Caribbean. Miss [Eugenia] Charles, who was one of the 'head cook and bottle washers', in that old Caribbean term, she was close to Reagan, President Reagan.

SO: 'Bottle washer'? What do you mean by that?

CD: It means...[someone in charge]. 'Head cook and bottle washer', yes. It's a Caribbean phrase. Miss Charles had one wing with maybe Seaga and Tom Adams. Now, Tom Adams was a kind of loose cannon, and he had a big clash with Mrs Gandhi. I might have mentioned that...

SO: You say in your memoirs that, in the plenary session, in essence, Mrs Gandhi announced, "I'm stepping out of my position as Chair, and I'm really going to give you a dressing down for suggesting that another power – probably Pakistan, although you don't mention it – could have attacked the Taj Mahal."

CD: Yes. You see, Tom Adams was diametrically opposed to Sonny's posture with respect to Grenada, and so was Miss Charles. I was Miss Charles' chief negotiator in maritime boundaries – it was one of my specialities, I did many things – so, I was negotiating on behalf of Miss Charles, doing a presentation with the French on the maritime borders of Dominica and Martinique, Guadeloupe. We were very close. So, when Grenada happened, Miss Charles was on one side and Sonny on the other side. I was on Sonny's little delegation with Patsy Robertson. We went to see all the Caribbean heads over the 1983 Christmas-New Year time.

SO: So, this was part of the 'fence-rebuilding' exercise?

CD: Yes, that's right – part of the fence rebuilding tour. I remember while we were in the air, going to Bahamas, we got the news that Emeka's government was overthrown.

SO: Indeed; he was the Nigerian Foreign Minister at the time.

CD: Yes. We were worried about his personal safety. But anyway, the point I want to make here was that the Grenada scenario placed Tom Adams in the opposite direction of Ramphal, and when Emeka came back to the Secretariat after the military coup in Nigeria, it was alleged that – I can't state this as a fact – he was siding with Tom Adams and therefore in conflict with Sonny's position. [This] was brought back to Sonny. So, it was around that time he felt side-lined, because Sonny was using me as liaison. I was doing a lot of things, you see, because I went to negotiate with the incoming Grenada government after the interim government. They had elections and Herbert Blaize became the new Prime Minister, and I was dispatched to go and fix a team with Blaize to renew the constitution. Somewhere [along] the line there, the Chief felt that I was doing his work so he phoned me, which was improper, but I'm not by nature a troublemaker – I didn't tell Sonny all that. So, anyway, I told him, "Well, you know, I'm following the SG, so that is that." But I can't vouch that his relationship with Tom Adams was deceitful or anything like that, so far as Sonny was concerned, but that was the corridor whispering.

On the question of elections, there was a conflict, and that conflict came about because I was in what we called the Technical Assistance Group doing negotiations and so on. But then, at that time, I was considered – rightly or wrongly – the only expert on elections in the Secretariat. So, I was leading all these missions as the head of the support team to Commonwealth Observation Missions, starting with Malaysia. I was the technical adviser to the team in Namibia, but that was a pre-election mission. So, on the observation side of things, I was always leading the mission, and [those] in the Secretariat, the Secretary General's office and the Political Affairs Division were... I don't know what you call it. In ordinary parlance, one would say [they were] maybe jealous of that situation, and they tried to take it out by various means and so on. There was a lot of petty bureaucratic approaches and things. So, that fitted into the scenario where the Chief felt a little bit concerned and then, of course, he was just coming back from his experience in Nigeria.

SO: Excuse me, Mr Dundas, but the Commonwealth election observer mission to Namibia was in 1989, the Malaysia observer mission was after the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM in 1990, and Chief Emeka was elected Secretary General at Kuala Lumpur. So, I'm just trying to tease out what was happening in the 1980s and then what happened in the 1990s after Chief had become Secretary General.

CD: Okay, yes, I think I can help. I'm just running through the personalities.

SO: I understand.

CD: But you're right. The Namibian situation was one where the Commonwealth sent a pre-election mission, and I was on that mission as a technical adviser. The mission was actually chaired by an Australian person and we had a problem there. Dudley Thompson, who was on that mission... He was naughty. Yeah, well, he had subsequently done quite a few missions with us.

Anyway, so 1990, in terms of observations, was the mission resulting from an offer made by Mahathir the year before to be the first example of what we would call free, fair, credible elections in the Commonwealth. And that was in line with the Commonwealth's new position of making democratic elections a priority consideration for the Commonwealth.

SO: Was this at all connected with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent ending of the Cold War – this renewed, international idea of democracy, with plural politics and elections forming a critical part of that process?

CD: I think [it was], yes. In some of my writings, I have looked at that. I think it was part of that wave of demise of the one-party state and military regimes, including and resulting from the ending of the Cold War. It was in that mix. So, yes. And then we have South Africa coming up and so on. But the Commonwealth had started, I would say, maybe from 1990, shifting its primary concern from economic development – which, as I mentioned, was a shift I don't think Sonny liked too much – to the emphasis on the democratic development of the developing Commonwealth countries. Actually, from an academic point of view, it's a very nice little niche to look at carefully because that change took place just at the time when a number of things were happening in the old Cold War: the demise of the one-party state and the

demise of apartheid and the military-type thing later in Nigeria. So, that's where we were at in the 1990s when Emeka took over, and that continued for the next ten years, I would say. I retired from the Secretariat in 2001, which is a long time ago.

SO: In your autobiography, you describe that you had conducted eleven election missions for Sir Sonny Ramphal, twelve election missions for Chief Emeka, and that you were an election emissary for Sir Don McKinnon to Guyana.

CD: Yes.

SO: Sir, thank you for giving me that overview. Please, if I may, I'm going to take you back to ask you to add some more detail. How did you come to be appointed to the Secretariat? Were you a diplomatic appointment, or did you apply for the position?

CD: I applied for the position. Actually, it's very interesting, because it's bringing back memories. It was one of my colleagues in Jamaica, because I was in the Attorney General's Office. I had finished with Guyana, and I went back to the Attorney General's Office in Jamaica. A colleague of mine brought this advertisement to my attention. He applied and I applied. So, it wasn't any hand-picked situation, although I knew Sonny. My application was successful. So, I joined – not as a diplomat, really. It was really essentially as an international lawyer. So, when I joined in 1980, I was doing basically international agreements, negotiations and all manner of things – things that I had skills in, but had never used. I used to negotiate with Jamaica on fisheries agreements and so on, but in our Technical Assistance Group at the Secretariat, we were taking on everything. It was a glorious time, because the Secretariat and its Technical Assistance Group was modelling itself after what was thought to be current then among successful firms, successful financial institutions and so on, where you set apart a small group of technical experts to do things, to solve problems. It was a kind of problem-solving unit. That's what it really was.

SO: You seem to be describing a peripatetic group of international trouble shooters who had the legal and technical skills, who could be fast tracked, parachuted...

CD: Yes, yes.

SO: ...at the identified point of need, that TAG was pre-eminently 'nimble' in terms of delivery?

CD: Yes, to solve problems, and a lot of the problems that came up then were poor contracts. I remember it started with copper contracts in Zambia and Mike Faber. I don't know if you know Mike Faber?

SO: I interviewed him three weeks ago.

CD: Oh, I see. He is still around then? Yes, well, Mike was head of the Technical Assistance Group when I joined, and Mike was also the type of person who understood that we could make a difference.

SO: As an applied economist, rather than a theoretical one?

- CD: Yes, it could make a difference for these countries. He understood that. Sadly, in my view, quite frankly, the Secretariat has lost that edge and will never regain it. But it was good while it lasted. I'm happy that I was there at the time.
- SO: There is a long article by Trevor Grundy on the South African news site *Politicsweb.co.za* [['Kenneth Kaunda and the White Boys'](#), 23 October 2014] which details Mike's experience when he was negotiating the Zambian copper royalties contract post-independence. He and his colleague, Robert Oakeshott, managed to get the better of the British South Africa Company and secure a much more favourable deal for President Kaunda's new government in the 1960s.**
- CD: Yes. The time was right for that, but unfortunately those things don't last for too long.
- SO: I'm just thinking that if you have the leadership in a Technical Assistance Group and a philosophy of in-house skills capacity and flexibility, and that if there was a particular belief in the value of your activities, then TAG could be highly effective.**
- CD: Yes. But also, you see, you had the support to take on new fields, which someone like myself, say, did. You know, I did so many things by using some basic skills. Many things were started when Mike was there. For instance, I used to do geothermal contracts for Kenya – advising on that. When you are bold enough to do these things and you have the basic skills that you can apply, I think you can help a lot of small countries in the Commonwealth. That's why I thought the Commonwealth lost something. I don't know what that thing is. I would say 'the edge' in many areas: in helping small countries. But we had, for instance, this huge debt programme. We had the maritime boundaries limitations which I started and spearheaded for some time. Civil aviation, I think. Basically, from the Technical Assistance Group's point of view, many of those areas were very successfully executed but had to be discontinued. They were not sustainable to an extent.
- SO: I was going to ask you about the financial resources required to back up these activities.**
- CD: Yes, well, you know... Actually, they were not very expensive activities because we had the in-house skills. We would have a couple of experts to complement our expertise where there were gaps and that was it. So, you were talking about a few £10,000 projects and so on.
- SO: Did you have an international directory where, if you didn't have the skills in-house, you knew immediately whom you could contact within the Commonwealth?**
- CD: Yes, we had a roster of experts in various fields. I think they still have that. So, once we had put together experts on whom we could call at short notice, it was in place. When I went to Ethiopia to set up a unit for the African Union on elections, that's one of the things I did: I set up an in-house database. So, yes, anyway, you asked for details of how I arrived at the Secretariat, so I think I have given you a fair amount...

SO: You have indeed. You arrived as an international lawyer and you were then involved in the negotiations on behalf of individual Commonwealth countries on specific sectorial issues. You also made reference to using skills that you didn't realise you had.

CD: Not that I didn't realise I had, but I never had to use them! Because when I was Legal Counsel in CARICOM, actually, that's where I probably tested my versatility having drafted or helped to draft a CARICOM treaty. I had some good colleagues. We did a number of agreements in the trade area and customs area. So, I did have a lot of background and useful materials on matters related to international agreements. As a legal counsel of CARICOM, I had to chair or head most of these negotiations, whether we're dealing with Canada or with the ACP Group. Sometimes I'd go to ACP meetings with PJ Paterson and so on. So, yes, I managed to call on some of my latent skills, I would say, and ventured into fields that were satisfying.

SO: So, in addition to this, as you said, you were also called upon for 'diplomatic chores'.

CD: Yes, well, in the Secretariat. I mentioned some of those like the Grenada thing, which I categorise as some kind of diplomatic chore because Grenada was over a long period.

SO: It had been gathering and causing tension in the Commonwealth from 1979.

CD: Yes, but one had to offer assistance throughout the period. This was the thing. Like Nick Brathwaite, when he took over as interim Prime Minister [1983-84]...I knew him before he took over, and we became good friends. And then when Herbert Blaize took over...I'll tell you some more about Blaize. I went to see Mr Blaize just when he was sworn in as Prime Minister. I had met him before. I said, "Greetings, Mr Prime Minister. Welcome back." Sonny had asked me to welcome him back to the Commonwealth. And he had no humour at all – dry humour. He said, "Why are you welcoming me back in to the Commonwealth? I never left the Commonwealth!" *[Laughter]* It was very funny. The way he said it – I don't know whether you knew him – but the way he said it! He didn't show any humour at all. He was dead serious.

When the new Prime Minister was putting together his new Cabinet – he was just sworn in – at the same time [he] was putting together a Constitutional Commission to enquire into what had transpired in Grenada. Sonny had sent me to assist the PM to put the Commission together. I was thinking of a person and Ralph Carnegie came to my mind. So, I phoned Carnegie from the Prime Minister's house and asked Ralph if he would be interested in becoming a member of the Commission. He was interested and was appointed a member. He saw me afterwards. He said, "I didn't know you were involved." Well, I phoned him but it was as good as appointing him. But the funny thing about this was [that] we wanted a certain person to become the chairman. It's like going to a place with something in your back pocket. And Mr Blaize was his own man: he wanted somebody else. We were hoping that Ralph would probably be the chairman, but he wanted this guy, Sir Fred Phillips, a good friend of mine, who was a former Governor General of St Kitts. But we never really thought too much of Sir Fred Phillips, quite frankly – including myself, and I knew him very well. But we couldn't make Blaize change his mind, no matter what arm-twisting was done – and we used to do

a lot of arm-twisting, terrible things. I have to laugh. But Blaize appointed Sir Fred Phillips. Anyway, that was part of the kind of diplomatics that I'm talking about...

SO: Please, if I could ask you about the British Governor General of Grenada. You mention in your autobiography your meeting with Sir Paul Scoon.

CD: Oh, yes. Well, that was a very great experience. I'm glad you mentioned that – I was going to. I went to see Sir Paul Scoon and he was supposed to be one of these larger-than-life guys. When I went to see him, he was telling me about the whole thing. He saw it from the window when they were arresting them [Maurice Bishop and others]. Anyway, Sir Paul Scoon is telling me, "Mr Dundas, I have to tell you this, I have to tell you this. When these bullets started flying around the place, my dear wife and I had to creep beneath the bed and hide beneath the bed." [Laughter] It was very funny. Yeah, I had some funny experiences.

SO: Do you know whether Sir Paul Scoon actually invited or approached Tom Adams to say, "We need help here"? I appreciate this was an interesting constitutional position for him, as the Queen's representative. There had been the assassination of a Prime Minister who had himself acquired power through a coup. Did Sir Paul add any detail at your meeting on what had happened?

CD: Oh, well, he told me all the things that he saw from his window, this is the point. That's why he had to later say he had to go under the bed. Yes, he did tell me about Tom Adams' role, that he invited him.

SO: He invited Tom Adams?

CD: Yeah, yeah.

SO: Do you know if he did it by telephone, or if he did it by formal letter?

CD: Well, I don't know.

SO: I just wondered if you recall whether he mentioned it.

CD: Well, I think it would be by telephone, in the first place. I don't know if it was followed up by in writing. But of course, the situation was pretty confused, because Scoon wasn't sure what his fate would be, so...And one of the things I had to do when I went to Grenada, going back, was I had a meeting with Chief Justice Archibald Nedd. These things just come back to me, you know. I was discussing with him possibilities of what steps they could take constitutionally, and we had this notion of invoking the 'doctrine of necessity' – [wherein extra-legal actions, designed to restore order to the state, are found to be constitutional]. But that scene with the Governor General was a very pathetic one. He was a very talkative man. I remember he was telling me the whole story because it was still fresh.

SO: Indeed. But he was traumatised, too.

CD: Yeah, he was talking about that. He was admitting that. But nobody would expect a Governor General to admit that he had to crawl under the bed and

so on. So, basically, yes, that was the scene. Those were the diplomatic moves that I was involved with.

SO: Just one last question about Grenada before I ask you about your other diplomatic emissary roles... You made mention in your autobiography that you found Mrs Thatcher surprisingly accommodating and supportive at the New Delhi CHOGM in 1983.

CD: Yeah. Well, yes, she was very helpful and very polite. I mean, there was an aspect of her dealing with what I would call petty bureaucratic personalities: they can be charming and so on. But we went to the Retreat in Goa, and I was staying with Sonny. And Sonny wanted me to do some...I don't know what to call that kind of role, but a helpful role, and that created a storm in the Secretariat. And that was when I knew how my guys were mean and cagey, because when Sonny told them that he wanted me to go – I'm digressing here – that he wanted me to go with him on a Retreat, these guys in his office were nasty.

SO: This would have been Stuart Mole in the SG's office, and Hugh Craft, as head of Political Affairs?

CD: And Roland Brown, who was my colleague, and John Syson. Roland Brown was the former Attorney General in Tanzania. So, Sonny asked them to brief me and give me some documents or something, but they refused. They wouldn't give them to me, because some who didn't know me properly were like, "Who is this Dundas?" [*Laughter*] Really funny. So, anyway, I went and Mrs Thatcher and Dennis were staying just next door. So, every morning, I went out and said, "Hello" and so on. But the Grenada thing was the main thing at that meeting, and she was against the invasion and against Reagan. So, again you had the Caribbean split, and Mrs Thatcher came here and Sonny suggested that I discuss with her and she gave me her whole brief to read on Grenada, which was very kind of her. Very helpful. I found her very helpful. So, we had that kind of thing which was very, very interesting, because again it was 1983, so the Grenada thing was one of the main items on the agenda and so on. I had gone there to recruit Mac and so on. So, I was carrying the thing along, and it was interesting.

SO: Did you feel that Mrs Thatcher was a Commonwealth asset?

CD: I thought so. But, you see...I wouldn't say Mrs Thatcher had a jaundiced view of the Commonwealth – that's too strong – but there was a view that she got hoodwinked, mainly by Michael Manley and his charisma and so on in 1979 in Zimbabwe.

SO: In what way?

CD: She was 'bounced into' – to use the phrase that some of my colleagues used – agreeing certain things before the Lancaster Agreement, and she probably thought she gave away too much. Mrs Thatcher and some of her advisers thought they gave away too much in setting the stage for the Lancaster House Agreement. Yes. I don't know whether that was a factor or not. Maybe it's something for your research. But there was this view that Mrs Thatcher was rather unhappy with the developments after the Lusaka meeting, as they relate to aspects of the Zimbabwe settlement. So, it was felt that she had that in her mind when Grenada came up, and at the 1983 meeting in New Delhi.

Now, I'm not sure that that was something of significance about Mrs Thatcher...

SO: Another way to look at it is that she had been heartened by Commonwealth support – particularly from Sir Sonny and other key members of the Caribbean – during the Falklands War in 1982. So, in other words, rather than going back to Zimbabwe of 1979-1980, there was a much more immediate value of the Commonwealth for Mrs Thatcher.

CD: Yes, well... Mrs Thatcher was very appreciative of that particular support for the Commonwealth as a whole, and in terms of the Caribbean, because there was a lot of lobbying going on against the British in the Caribbean. But you know, there are so many currents. You never know what might really be the deciding or the determining factor, but some of these factors do add up.

SO: They do, and it's interesting how impressions can shape and form people's perceptions and the lenses through which they interpret events. They could be completely wrong. You also saw Mrs Gandhi at close quarters in New Delhi and Goa...?

CD: Oh, yes. Well, Mrs Gandhi, yes, she was chairperson and actually she was staying the other side of Sonny's villa. Mrs Gandhi was a forceful chairperson. She took on Tom Adams – that was a scenario that I wouldn't forget, because Tom Adams was babbling away on the same Grenada thing. He was a staunch supporter of Reagan's intervention, and Mrs Gandhi was instinctively against that. So Tom, in the plenary session, was trying to defend ...I don't know if it was defending anything, but anyway, it has to sound like he was defending something. But he compared the incident in Grenada with the threat to bomb and damage the Taj Mahal.

SO: Well, he touched a very raw nerve there, because of Mrs Gandhi's concerns at the time.

CD: Yeah, so Mrs Gandhi decided that she could not allow that to pass. She took off the gloves and said she was not in the Chair for these comments. Then she launched in and tore off a strip. [*Laughter*] It was humiliating. She was really mad; she was really mad. So, the irony was that when Tom was at the Retreat, he hardly said a word! It was really funny.

SO: It was not just Mrs Thatcher who 'handbagged' people! [*Laughter*]

CD: Yeah. You get some funny insights when you go to these places, you know.

SO: When you were at the Retreat, did you pick up on this concern in India about Sikh extremism? Mrs Gandhi was, of course, assassinated towards the end of the following year, in 1984.

CD: Yeah, not that much surfaced, really. I don't think they had much of a warning that you would have had of that kind of violence. I think it was kind of spontaneous, in terms of the religious sectarianism, you know.

SO: So, what was your impression of Zimbabwe's leader, Robert Mugabe? Mugabe had also been an outspoken critic of the action of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the United States in

Grenada. Mugabe, of course, was acutely aware of the possibility – indeed, the reality – of South African incursions outside South African frontiers.

CD: Well, basically, the African bloc was against the American action. And of course Thatcher was against it, although she was a bit muted, basically. But I don't think there was much support in many parts of the Commonwealth, outside of those supporters in the Caribbean, for the action by the US, and that is why when we were at the Retreat the actions that were proposed went through without much difficulty, despite the opposition by the supporters in there.

I'll give you a joke now. Miss Charles was my great friend, and I'd been her chief negotiator for years with the French. We travelled from Dominica to Guadeloupe to Martinique together – under her tutelage, as it were, as Prime Minister. When we were at the Retreat, Sonny asked me to lobby the various heads of government for two things. I think [the first] was a kind of statement or something on Grenada, and [the second was that] the next heads of government meeting [should be] in the Bahamas. When I was talking to all these people, Miss Charles, at the top of her voice, said "I don't agree with this thing at all. I won't support it." So, you're talking to all the other heads here, in the small room. I was one of the few non-politicians there, probably. Mrs Gandhi had a couple of other [officials] there. So, there were no advisors in the place, and Miss Charles just calling out like that, for everybody to hear that she was objecting to it. [*Laughter*] I thought it very funny.

SO: How important do you think the Retreat was in Sonny's time, in terms of the private diplomacy of the Commonwealth and the personal chemistry between the heads?

CD: Well, good, you know. Well, what I saw.

SO: And you saw it at close quarters.

CD: Yes, and also in the Bahamas – I was there at the Bahamas during the Retreat. I don't know what the main scene was there...

SO: At the Nassau meeting, it was a discussion about the Commonwealth bringing in economic sanctions against South Africa, and Mrs Thatcher's resistance to this.

CD: Yeah, and the young Gandhi was there.

SO: Yes, Rajiv Gandhi was deputed to go and talk to Mrs Thatcher about that.

CD: Let me put it this way. Sonny had his detractors, but there were not many among the Commonwealth heads, and he usually prepared the ground very well. He had a way of roping in the potential loose cannons, like the former Prime Minister of Fiji, Ratu Mara, that big guy. So, Sonny would always make sure that requests or anything that came from Fiji before or near to heads of government meetings got serious consideration. Maybe [it was] out of, I don't know, his natural posture or a liking for small states and so on, but also because Ratu Mara had that sort of tendency to spout out. So, it was good to

get him on his – Sonny’s – side for taking care of this. But looking back, [they were] interesting times. Things have to change.

SO: Well, indeed. You mentioned Fiji. Please, could you comment on your view and involvement in things Fijian? Was this in the 1980s or in the 1990s?

CD: Both. And recently – I was there recently.

SO: Please, could we talk first about the 1980s and the coup in 1987?

CD: I was there, would you believe it. Well, I’d just left Suva. I had gone to see the then-Attorney General, who was an Indian, and had lunch with. I had lunch with him and I was going from Fiji to Canada – to Halifax – and by the time I reached Halifax, I learnt that the Parliament was surrounded.

SO: So, this was the coup launched by Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka?

CD: Yes, Rabuka. Anyway, I went back to Fiji many times – many, many times – because I also used to travel through Fiji to Tuvalu. I did air transport assistance for Tuvalu, it was very successful. Anyway, so, on Fiji, I used to help them – Rabuka – with this gold mine that they had...

SO: The Vatukoula gold mine?

CD: ...which was being mined by indigenous people, by and large, and so on. But I was there – when was it? – in March, April, 2014, to help them with elections. Well, we were working with the Attorney General and the electoral office, but I was there for the Commonwealth as a consultant. And the Commonwealth had a funny position. That’s why I had gone back, and that’s my last consultancy job. I went there twice about the elections. The second time I went as part of a team – one from the EU, one from New Zealand and one from the Commonwealth, meaning myself – and we were looking, essentially, at a time schedule for the elections, which clearly worked because we said they could hold elections by September last year. They wanted to do it by maybe July, but it worked out September. We had said probably October. So, it worked out fairly well. But Fiji was so different from the Fiji I used to know in the 1980s. Well, when you get involved with politics and elections... I have been doing elections more than half of my life, so I know it is disgusting but it’s exciting.

SO: [Laughter] Exciting to you, you mean?

CD: Well, yes, to me and to a lot of people. Elections have their own ups and downs and so on. But, you know, it’s wonderful, because – I was saying [this] to myself – how can you dismiss elections when sometimes they produce startling results? Like this little man who was in Sri Lanka...

SO: Mahinda Rajapaksa?

CD: I was so happy when he got thrown out.

SO: Oh my, that was a surprise.

CD: Because he was becoming a dictator. I know that scene very well, and I remember in 1980 I was talking to one of his predecessors as President

there, JR Jayewardene, and he was always quoting peace and so on, and then you had this war going on. Rajapaksa put an end to the war but he was becoming a dictator – a disgusting dictator. Anyway, the elections... So, when I saw that democracy produced that result, it was wonderful to me. And also I was looking at the Nigerian thing which I know. I spent twenty months in Nigeria up to 2013, so I like it; it's exciting. I also saw some results. But in Fiji, they seemed to have pulled it off. But the Commonwealth never had its position worked out clearly, because, you see, they sent several teams there to go and see the position and so on, and I was a member of one of the teams. Then I went back to work out something with New Zealand.

But it was clear that there was a serious division and the Commonwealth was in the middle of it. You see, one section of the diplomatic work in the Fiji area supported the elections; another group did not support the elections. So, the Commonwealth was in a bind.

SO: Yes, between the Melanesian Spearhead Group, the Pacific Island Forum and the whole view from Australia and New Zealand, it was very complicated.

CD: But it became even more complicated, you see, because the Australians were staunchly against the Bainimarama coup, and so they had sanctions. What happened was that Bainimarama obviously was not running a proper democracy, and the Commonwealth had problems because Australia and at first New Zealand were in the group of countries against the elections. There was a slight change in Australia – which became very confusing – when the lady Prime Minister of Australia...

SO: Julia Gillard.

CD: Gillard, when she left office. I think there were some changes in the diplomatic team: although these were not big changes, there was a slight difference. I think they had come a bit closer to New Zealand's position and were being somewhat supportive of the elections. But the Commonwealth still couldn't move, because the bloc that didn't support the elections were not in favour of the Commonwealth playing a major role. The stumbling block, it seems to me, surrounded Mahendra Chaudhry, the former Prime Minister, because we met them and they were so vicious against participating in the elections, [as were] a number of civil society organisations. So, there was not a clear signal that the Secretariat could follow in supporting the elections. So, I was advising the Secretariat and I spoke to Amitav Banerji. They didn't know where they were, because the SG probably couldn't...well, you know, I don't know if his nationality made a difference, but it didn't seem to me that the environment was such that it could have free and fair elections in the view of the side or the group that didn't support elections. Anyway, the elections seem to have come off well. I follow them on Twitter sometimes.

SO: Organising the election was certainly a challenge. I was there in April 2014. They had just announced the date of the elections to be held in September and I was thinking of the challenge of organising the poll in a relatively short period of time: holding the vote on one day, across all 110 inhabited Fijian islands, on the basis of no one being quite sure what the arrangements would be. There was not a reliable electoral roll,

there were critical issues of voter education – all those issues that you talk about in your work. It struck me as a pretty tall order.

CD: It was, but I thought the roll was probably fairly okay, strangely enough, because I was giving them a lot of advice. The chap who ultimately became the head of the election office [was] a young man, and he took over. But they had some very good officers in the election office. A little dusty – the sort of remnants, as it were – but they were good; they were good. I don't know how democratic the government will turn out to be, but with some assistance they could come around. They could come around.

SO: Sir, please, could I just ask that we take a short break?

[END OF AUDIOFILE PART ONE]

Part Two:

SO: Sir, I would like to ask you more, please, about your observations on South Africa in the 1980s, but also going forward for the national elections in 1994 and local government elections of 1995. You made express reference to your quiet diplomacy on Sir Sonny's behalf on identifying a Caribbean member of the EPG. Did you go down with the EPG group when they went to South Africa in 1986?

CD: No.

SO: So, you were not involved with Jeremy Pope and Moni Malhoutra in the Secretariat's support for that mission?

CD: No. That was the SG's office and Jeremy was with the legal office. But no, I wasn't involved. That's what created some of the maybe hard feelings that I mentioned, because I was a kind of outsider being brought in to do what – to somebody [else] – was the juicy bits. But it was just another aspect of my work and I would cooperate to help the SG. Why the SG? Because we usually relate to one another directly.

SO: What was your view of the particular contribution of Commonwealth diplomacy to the end of apartheid in South Africa? The Commonwealth now often claims that this was one of its great diplomatic triumphs, that it was a leading actor in the international system opposing apartheid. You have described yourself as a mid-rank bureaucrat in the Secretariat, but you were in a particular and privileged position to observe the range of attitudes and diplomacy.

CD: Yeah, I thought the Commonwealth was [a leading actor opposing apartheid], if only because Britain is seen by many still as sort of the head of the Commonwealth, the leading country, certainly by many outsiders. And the Commonwealth played a significant role from the earliest times, really, in putting the case advocating that apartheid should go – against, as it was perceived then, the main thrust of the British public, unfortunately. So, to that extent, the Commonwealth role was seen as distinguishing the Commonwealth from the British position, which was not often the case then. So, I thought [that], so far as, for instance, the Caribbean people were

concerned, they would see the Commonwealth as playing a role against apartheid as distinct from, say, the British and what the British position was perceived to be. But if one were to assess and evaluate, I think the Commonwealth played a role. I wouldn't say the dominant role, in my judgment, but I can understand other people think so. I am kind of a strident defender of the Commonwealth role and the Secretariat's role, but I think they certainly made a significant contribution to the conversation against apartheid.

SO: What was your particular view of Chief Emeka's contribution to transition after the Harare Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 1991 and up to the South African elections in 1994? It seems so often that the public narrative of the Commonwealth and South Africa leads up to the release of Mandela in February of 1990, but the next four years were very hard fought in terms of the negotiated transition.

CD: Yes. Well, there are a couple of points there. I think Emeka came [to live] under the shadow, to an extent, of Sonny in terms of perceived Commonwealth Secretariat's influence, so far as South Africa was concerned. The years of advocating the demise of apartheid or the apartheid system were really under Sonny's leadership and Emeka, although he was African, was never able to put across the same sort of perception of being anti-apartheid as Sonny was.

SO: Do you think that was in part his style of diplomacy? His preference for a degree of diplomatic discretion, rather than adopting a more public stance?

CD: I think it was, yes, in part – in part his style. He was less vocal on certain things than, say, Sonny. But also, I thought the atmosphere had changed. After Mandela was released, it was taken as a given that apartheid would go and was on its way out.

SO: But it could have ended terribly. There was the very real danger of ultra-right extremism, as well as the ongoing violence between ANC and Inkatha supporters.

CD: It could have; it could have. But you have to ascribe a lot of that to Mandela's own intuitive wisdom in dealing with that kind of thing.

SO: But for Mandela himself, having been the incarcerated icon of the ANC, the difficulty then became this process of going into political negotiations and accepting necessary compromises, when he had the enormous weight of expectation in the rank and file ANC supporters in the country. What type of South Africa was to emerge – a unitary state or a federal state? The National Party was determined that they would keep the reins of power and were increasingly facing their own right wing conservative resistance – a possible counter-revolution. It was a highly combustible mix.

CD: Yes. It's fantastic, because the problem was that only somebody with the wisdom and patience of Mandela could probably have delivered the situation as he was able to do. The temptations were very grave and the signs were all around. When I went to Namibia in 1989...and after that I followed up several

times with technical assistance missions to see Sam Nujoma – before, actually, he became head of state – in his home in Katutura. I spent about a week in discussions with him on technical assistance that might be forthcoming from CFTC and assistance on the independence constitution. The situation had not really calmed down in terms of the environs. It was tense all around, and this was 1989, even before Mandela was released. So, the changes were dramatic; it had lost the mindset. There were so many little things there that the apartheid system carried with it. You're coming out of the plane and they would welcome us, but if you're black you are not properly received or welcomed by the stewardesses. If you are a black, [they] just looked away, you know, like you are nothing. I saw and met a lot of that, you know, even in the old stage. So, it was not funny or something unusual, you might say, to describe it. But to come back to your question, I don't think the Secretariat or the Commonwealth at that stage could do much up front. They had to work in the background, as it were, to give encouragement and in whatever way they could offer their support. So, I think perhaps it's not quite fair to compare, say, Sonny's impact against Emeka's and so on.

SO: It was a different diplomatic stage.

CD: Yes, and it needed a different style and so on. So, from where I used to sit in terms of dealing with...and I was pretty much up there when it came to elections. We played a big, major role, quite frankly.

SO: In what way?

CD: Well, personally, I did quite a lot in terms of assisting the South African guys to organise the elections, even before 1999, while they were preparing for the second election. I worked with the Home Affairs guys, where you had a lot of apartheid. I helped them to draft a law; they consulted me with the regulations and aspects of the constitution. And even then we had some ugly scenes, because the guys in Home Affairs would come up against entrenched racial attitudes. I was advising them, but when we went to places like Bloemfontein – the heartland of Afrikanerdom – the Afrikaner women refused to speak in English.

SO: Absolutely; in the middle of the Orange Free State.

CD: Yes. For instance, we had a meeting with mainly ladies, and my colleague – who was an Afrikaner – introduced me and asked them to oblige in speaking English, saying his colleague, me, spoke only English. They wouldn't oblige.

SO: So, they were determined to speak in Afrikaans?

CD: They did. Sure, they did. So, what I'm saying is that when you saw [this], and this was coming up to the elections, but they were not able to make even that token concession in their language. Some of them were even hostile, quite frankly. But the point is that in terms of the election preparation and so on, the Commonwealth and others – through myself and of course others on the political side who would have been playing a prominent role like myself – offered genuine support to the election effort.

SO: So, this is Max Gaylard's team.

CD: Yes, Max. Yeah, so we played a significant role.

SO: An educative role?

CD: In many directions and on many dimensions. We had some advisers from the UN and the Caribbean and so forth dealing with education. But in procedures...

SO: Because, of course, the constituencies had been for the white, Indian and coloured populations, rather than the black...

CD: Well, we were dealing with constituencies for the general election. When we come to local election, because it's PR, you never had to deal with constituencies and so on. But for the 1994 [elections]...I mean, I don't like to elevate my role, but quite frankly my role was very significant because we worked behind the scenes. We helped them with regulations. I used to liaise from London with a guy called Roomes in Cape Town. He was a lawyer, so he would draft a thing and send for my comments and we would correspond and a couple of times I went down to finalise things and so on. And I worked closely with Home Affairs. I was on their committee dealing with registration, which was not terribly impressive. Well, later on now, we got a lot of experts from the various Commonwealth countries: Pakistan, India...

SO: You said the observation team was some 40 strong.

CD: In addition, we had a lot of technical experts from the Commonwealth from India and so on. I recruited a lot of them. Some of these guys still correspond and are mindful of those days that we were there. And then, when it came to the 1994 elections, first of all, we had a number of Australians also and then people from the UN. Then I observed the 1994 elections; I went off for technical assistance. I also went on the observation team, and I observed the election in Thokoza, Johannesburg, with a team mate from Zimbabwe. He's dead now, unfortunately – a lawyer. But I always remember the irony. This guy had invited me to go to Zimbabwe to help draft a new election law to succeed Mugabe – can you imagine – if the old man should die!

SO: This was in the 1990s?

CD Yeah, this was. Yes.

SO: I do want to ask you about Zimbabwe, but please, if we could just go back to South Africa?

CD: I was telling of the observations. So, David came out, yes, and we observed the elections. There were a lot of problems, I knew. I'd gone to see the Commission many times, so I knew the chairman very well: Justice Kriegler [Johann Kriegler]. I have seen many places. So, I remember when we went to see the counting of the votes in the stadium in Soweto, and I met Kriegler, who knew me. He said, "Mr Dundas..." – and you know, I'm a Caribbean man, so he knew I'd like cricket. He said, "You know, the cricket ball is falling and every time I have to go down to catch it before it hits the ground." As the chairman, he had to go there because they couldn't reconcile the ballots distributed with those returned at the various stations. All the boxes from a certain catchment area came in in such a manner that they couldn't reconcile the ballot papers, so they had to discard them. The technical aspects of the elections were shambolic in many places. Manley didn't like me being there because he felt I was too technical. He remembered that I directed the

elections he had lost, but he did tell Sonny that I had nothing to do with it. But anyway, Manley was espousing the view that what mattered was the politics of the thing, “so don’t tell me no technical things about the elections.”

And Mosenyka had the same view, because I was saying, “Look, technically, this election couldn’t pass; it was hopeless,” but politically it did achieve its results. That kind of thing. But the interesting thing was that in July 1994, we went to an assessment of the elections with Helen Suzman, and we were assessing the elections – what happened and what did not. I think [that], on balance, a lot of people didn’t want to say, but they knew that technically the election was a fiasco: electorally, technically. But according to Manley and others, politically it was a great success, because apartheid was swept away.

SO: So, did the Commonwealth issue its interim report immediately after the South African election but before the report of the Commonwealth Observer Group was assembled?

CD: Yeah, I think we did have an interim report.

SO: Did you lodge this critique of the technical shortcomings?

CD: No, no, no. Those things wouldn’t be in it. No, no. You see, I can only say that because I am an election specialist and, as Manley would say, I look at the technical things. As far as he was concerned, there was no place for technicality. So, we had quite a few little problems with an Australian guy there. He was a kind of rogue. He later became Australian Attorney General... I forget his name. He was always telling me they had some Dundas down in Australia. Anyway, the thing is, nobody minded about the flaws and so on that accompanied the elections and the problems with the results and so on.

SO: Well, the ANC won by such a slamming margin.

CD: Yes, but...

SO: And also Inkatha Freedom Party took part. So, Manley’s point about the politics of the election had some cogency.

CD: Yeah, it was okay in one sense. The broad objective was achieved. Inkatha was... It’s funny, because Chief Buthelezi...that guy was thought to be disruptive. I met him in the lift and the guy was warm and nice and so on. I couldn’t imagine that he was perceived as so outrageous in his Zululand. But that’s the thing.

SO: Did you talk much with Moses Anafu about the politics of it all?

CD: Yes, Moses. Yes, but I think that I thought I understood the politics well because I was known on the ground, and I was with a lot of the people and institutions that counted. So, really I didn’t need to talk to...

SO: You were involved in the functional aspects of the election.

CD: Yes, that’s right: the functional side. I was there in the thick of things. And after the debacle, in my view, with the counting, it was impossible to reconcile and so on, which Kriegler was admitting when I met him at the stadium. Ballot

papers locked away and a fair amount of sabotage went on, you see. That's part of the problem. But it was just the sheer magnitude of this thing and the lack of experience organising an election that showed up in 1994. I thought that the 1995 elections...

SO: The local government elections?

CD: Yeah, 1996, were a bit more orderly. Of course, it was different then: you had wards and...

SO: As you say, as an election exercise, that was technically very different. You were coming in with a clean slate, because you were having to map out wards and constituencies that had not been there before in the black administrative areas.

CD: Yeah. The Commonwealth played a big part there. I'll never forget that we started working on the thing almost immediately. In fact, I was in Mozambique monitoring their election, and the Chief phoned me and said they had asked urgently for me to go back to South Africa because they had wanted to prepare for the local elections and they want some advice. They wanted something like 870 local areas on the model of the British. So, I had to turn around from Mozambique as soon as the election was over and go back to South Africa. By that time it was November, running into December and near to Christmas, and myself and the Australian guy, Alan Wall, we worked with the Treasury over the Christmas season to prepare a budget for the local elections. And then I went back and organised a team. I got people from India, from all parts of the Commonwealth, to assist with delimitation and training and voter registration. I had a bit of a problem there because the South Africans were a little bit confused, because voter registration is voluntary and the onus is on the person who wants to register. They didn't feel that there should be an aggressive awareness programme.

SO: Ah, that was not the responsibility of the state?

CD: Well, it was a misconception, because that's not the way it really works. But the consequence of them being very lukewarm about voter registration was that there was no training before the thing was started, and the actual content of voter registration left much to be desired, put it that way. So, it was not a good idea to de-emphasise voter registration and voter registration awareness programmes. But it went fairly well. We had a good four-part report on voters, on the local government elections, and I even got mentioned in it for the work that we did and I did on behalf of the Commonwealth. But a most extraordinary thing happened one evening in the preparation of the local elections. Three or four of us from the Commonwealth Technical Assistance team were invited by the Mayor of Rustenberg to witness a kind of tender. There were three or four tenders submitted, and each of us assessed the documents separately and came to our separate conclusions. Strangely enough we all came down to one person, one firm. But the Mayor then promptly said, well, he didn't agree with us and they would select somebody else. So, we came to the conclusion that he just invited us to be present for purposes of apparent transparency.

SO: Oh, you were [supposed] to rubber stamp his choice?

CD: Yeah, that's how it turned out, and we were trapped there. There was nothing we could do. But then when we investigated it, we discovered that there were some strings attached with the firm that got it. It was a sort of...

SO: Connection.

CD: Yeah.

SO: Yes, indeed. Thank you, Mr Dundas, for giving so much detail of Commonwealth facilitation for South Africa's transition. As you say, Chief Emeka was dealing with a different diplomatic stage, and the Commonwealth performed different functions and used different support strategies and networks. Before we leave the topic of South Africa, you mentioned earlier FW de Klerk...

CD: De Klerk was fascinating. The support team was led by Hugh Craft. It was Hugh Craft – Max Gaylard didn't come on that – and I was the deputy. It was a big thing, so they made a big fuss in the Secretariat that I should lead the team as I was leading all the other teams. Anyway, so, Hugh Craft was called away to go to Lesotho where they had a problem. So, I replaced Hugh Craft for some days – maybe five days or so – and during that period we went to see de Klerk. And I think it was just a couple of us went to see de Klerk. It wasn't the full team. We had a most interesting meeting with de Klerk, and somebody asked whether he would, if he won, join the Commonwealth. And he hesitated and said he wasn't sure. So, it was clear that he was not...

SO: As an Afrikaner, he still saw it as the British Commonwealth?

CD: Yeah, well, he didn't... Even then he was not inclined to be supportive of the Commonwealth. So, I think he received the team. Okay, all the protocol was there, but you could see that it was done somewhat grudgingly. It's fascinating, because some of what you see sometimes is your personality. So, I found that a very interesting – a very interesting event, really.

SO: Contrast that with Sir Sonny's question to Oliver Tambo, asking him that, if the ANC was elected as the black majority government, would South Africa re-join the Commonwealth. Apparently Oliver Tambo said, "The South African people have never left."

CD: He's like Blaize. Blaize said Grenada never left the Commonwealth. That was his words.

SO: Just so. Please, Mr Dundas, if I could ask you about Malaysia? You've said elsewhere that Malaysia was the early days of systematic election observer missions. This was the relative surprise at the Kuala Lumpur heads of government meeting, when Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia had an election that was coming up and that the Commonwealth could send its observation team. I'm aware that Sir Anthony Siaguru and also Neville Linton went to Kuala Lumpur...

CD: They went on a planning mission.

SO: They went on a planning mission, indeed, and you went on the election observer mission.

CD: Yeah, I was the leader of the technical team that supported the Commonwealth mission, which was headed by Dudley Thompson, my old sparring partner in Jamaica. When I directed elections in Jamaica and they raided Dudley's constituency, and Labour had tampered with the ballot papers, Dudley wrote me a letter and said, "I asked you to remove the ballot papers to the election office, and you didn't. And the rest is history." He wrote the letter. [*Laughter*] Anyway, it went to court and he got the thing sorted and he recovered his seat. Anyway, Malaysia... Siaguru went on this planning mission with Neville, I think, and he committed a booboo.

SO: In what way?

CD: I think he probably got under the skin of the Malaysians. I don't remember precisely what he did, but they were not happy. So, I was certainly briefed to avoid certain things.

SO: Such as?

CD: The Malaysians were very sensitive. I think he was discussing the approach and so on. You see, Mahathir, when he gave the offer, had certain things in mind. He thought Malaysia was the ideal, and I think the procedure that Mahathir was setting out was not entirely agreeable with Siaguru. That was one of the problems. So, I think he said something [that] he maybe shouldn't have said, so it was not diplomatic. You know, [there are] certain things that they say it's undiplomatic, and I think he did that. But when I went, I had to go ahead as an advance team, as it were, and Dudley was late so I had to be the head of this thing, as it were – just to present. So, when we had a meeting with the Prime Minister's Permanent Secretary, and [we] were discussing some aspects of the procedure, we ran into difficulty. The Malaysians said that they didn't agree with the interim statement. I said, "Well, I'm afraid that is the Secretariat's procedure."

SO: Indeed. Immediately after the poll, give a statement.

CD: And I said that was agreed: that was the Commonwealth position. The Malaysians said [that] they had voted against it and they didn't agree with it. So, I said, "Well, you know, Mr PS, perhaps we have to agree to disagree here, because my mandate from the Secretary General to the observers" – I was speaking on behalf of the observers – "was that the interim statement should be issued at the end of polling." And he said, well, they didn't agree with it. He will take note. So, we almost didn't issue a statement, but not because of that. We had a problem in terms of... I have a little book... [*presents book*]

SO: *Observing Elections the Commonwealth Way*. Yes, that is available on the internet.

CD: I see, okay. Anyway, this incident in Malaysia was interesting because we had a Miss Hollingworth, a British lady – I think she is a Dame now – and she took a very funny problem on to herself, as though she had a different mandate. But the problem is that she was recommended by the then-Leader of the Opposition Neil Kinnock himself. So, Miss Hollingworth...

SO: Clare Hollingworth. She's a Dame.

CD: Anyway, she had been doing some reconnaissance work and discovered that nearly 400,000 or so people were missing from the list. She was creating a scene to say that we can't declare the election fair. Well, she was giving off some sounds against the whole thing, which was not in line with our kind of approach. So, Dudley and I have a long history, as I told you; we go back a long time. We decided that, look, we're not going to let her loose in Malaysia to cause trouble. So...

SO: [Laughter] It sounds like you're letting off an attack dog!

CD: So, in fashioning the deployment list, we deployed her to our team because, you see, normally what we have is the chairman and myself as leader of the support team and we would travel in the same vehicle together and so on. But we strengthened the team and put Miss Hollingworth in the car with us. She was not so dumb. She became wise to the trick. Anyway, she couldn't do anything about that, in spite of our rule, so she had to travel with us all over the country. [Laughter]

SO: And so you kept her on a leash, so to speak?

CD: Yes, but she was unhappy. So, she decided that because there were something like 400,000 people missing from the register, the election could not be fair. So, we had a long argument. I was the senior steward in the elections, so I began to discuss with her. I said, "You know what the position is, even in the UK? You have more than 400,000" – or whatever the percentage worked out to be – "missing. Given the size of the electorate in Malaysia and the electorate in Britain, your proportion is higher than the list, the irregularity, because you are running about 7%," or whatever it was in England. And at the point we were talking, I think it was just about five percent in Malaysia. So, I said, "Quiet, quiet!" [Laughter] So, we found a way of dealing with that. She had threatened not to sign that interim statement. That was our position. That was how to get her, after we kept her in the car! [Laughter]

SO: I'm just thinking of the diplomacy of managing these election observer groups!

CD: I tell you, it's not easy! It's very interesting, actually, because... That was only one experience, but it was important, because it was the first. It was the first systematic mission – creating a systematic line of election observation by the Commonwealth. We had done it before, as you would have seen in Gibraltar...

SO: In the 1967 referendum, yes.

CD: And to an extent – although it wasn't the Commonwealth then – in 1963 in Guyana. But it was interesting.

SO: What about Africa and bringing in multi-party democracy and elections in the 1990s? The Commonwealth sent an election observer group to Zambia and also you had the experience in Kenya.

CD: Well, yes, I did a whole lot – the whole string coming up there.

SO: As well as Tanzania and Malawi.

CD: Tanzania, Malawi...

SO: And Mozambique.

CD: Mozambique, yes. We did work in Lesotho, but I was ill.

SO: Obviously, in Zambia, it was the end of Kenneth Kaunda's long dominance of Zambian politics.

CD: Well, Zambia was interesting – and, in a way, uninteresting – for two things. That Kaunda... We went to see him the Friday, [and] I think the election was Monday. I went to see him the Friday, but it was clear that KK was in a world of his own. The way he was talking with us suggested that he genuinely thought that his party, UNIP, would have won, when everybody in Zambia knew that he wouldn't. So, I thought he was out of touch. But the other thing is that, when the interim statement came out, the Chief phoned me. I said, "Chief, KK will be out." And he paused and said, "Carl, an era has ended." Because, you see, I suppose [that], being an African, these guys revered these older leaders. When I went to Tanzania in 1995, we had a very interesting thing because there was an African who is now the Nigerian Ambassador to the US. He was very close to the Chief. And we had to write a very harsh report of Tanzania. You know, Tanzania was revered, again – certainly in the Secretariat circles – as an outstanding example of African statesmanship. So, this guy went to meet Nyerere informally: "I was taken up with this awe-inspiring feeling." He was very unhappy about the report that we put in, because the election was by and large a shambles. And he wrote a report which I thought was really commenting on *our* report – disagreeing with it and writing to the Chief – and I wasn't happy about it. So, I wrote a counter-account, as it were. I was telling him that the Secretariat cannot be seen as preaching free and fair elections and then compromise. So, I wrote that to the Chief and the deputy, but the Chief believed in me as an election man, so he understood. He understood these are not sentiments: [just] because Nyerere was a respected figure, one shouldn't say nice things that are not there about [the] election, and you set down irregularities and come to an objective conclusion. But that is the kind of temptation, sometimes, where sentiments come in. I have to try and see above that, so, sometimes you get into loggerheads with people who would like to see a rosier report when there's nothing to sustain it. The foundation was built on that, because it's a no-nonsense business: the foundation for observing elections in the Commonwealth, in the Commonwealth Secretariat...

SO: Impartial, clear criteria, yardsticks of excellence or acceptability...

CD: That's right; that's right. Well, if you read my account anywhere about Kenya you would see. Kenya was in 1992. It was a unique situation and I didn't agree with it, but I understood it. But again, we were undermined, you see.

SO: In what way?

CD: Political bureaucracy is a terrible thing, you know.

SO: Why were you undermined?

CD: You see, my good friend Max Gaylard... He nursed a grudge that I didn't understand.

SO: Really? That doesn't sound like Max.

CD: Well, it surprised me. It came out of Kenya, and I believe that explained why they waged war to get leadership of the South African election. Because in 1992... I had done – with Telford Georges, another Caribbeanite – Zambia in 1991 and Kenya in 1992, and the Commonwealth group found Kenya to be extremely difficult and agonising. It was one of the most testing observation missions that we had when I was there.

SO: In what way? Because of personal insecurity? The politicisation? The level of violence?

CD: No, no. Those and more. There was a lot of violence. I'm an election man. When I directed the election in Jamaica, 900 people died. But what I saw in the Rift Valley was just terrible. People burnt out and... Really terrible. They were not quite as bad as in 2007, but not far behind.

SO: I was going to say... In the 2007 election campaign, 1300 people died, as well as the huge forced internal displacement.

CD: Yeah, but there were thousands of people all over the Rift Valley in churchyards: women, children and so on. Outdoors, but on church premises. They had had to seek refuge, yeah. They'd been burnt out of their homes, and we went to see the houses smouldering and so on. And it's a beautiful place, actually. Terrible. What happened there with my good friend Max [was that] he felt – erroneously, I felt – that there was a certain Caribbean mafia striding the places in observation and operation missions. After we were labouring, my good friend Patsy [Robertson] came under fire – very heavy fire.

SO: She did.

CD: It was only because, one, she's a countrywoman of my own, and she was very close to the Chief. She was a sort of chaperone of the Chief in the early days. But anyway, let me not go too far. But what happened was – backing up a little – Patsy was briefing the press. Not on her own, but not mischievously. It was factual, but in poor taste, along lines that were not agreeable to the Secretariat and to the Chief.

SO: On the Kenyan election?

CD: Yes, and with the press. The press was vigorously against the mission and against the Moi regime, and Patsy admitted it, and we knew that she was briefing guys she knew at *The Times* in London at the time, and it was not always in line with our official approach at the Secretariat. Now, we're working there. Patsy wanted decisions to be released in time for the press – at that time about 5 or 6 o'clock. All of a sudden, after I had been working on something and I had a strategy... If you read the book, you will probably pick it up; I was pretty discreet about it. So, we had worked out an approach for the report. All of a sudden, I see a paper coming around summarising conclusions. Apparently it came from Max Gaylard. There is Max Gaylard, now. And we couldn't really do anything. It was so embarrassing. It was the most embarrassing moment I've had – one of the most embarrassing things I've had in my Secretariat life. Everybody – my good friend Patsy at the forefront – wanted this to go to the bloody press and say, "Okay, yes, you can

take this, you can take this.” That was a summary, a conclusion, which was not good enough. Now, how do I know all that? I was seething, but diplomatically, you have to take it. There’s forty people there and so on, and one of our team like Patsy wanting to go the press, and we weren’t ready.

Anyway, the problem – I’m going to back up a little – the problem with Kenya was that the election was really below par, as the report would have shown. But mainly, one of the guys who spearheaded it – he is now Lord something, from the Conservative party; he was a minister twice – he left a little note. He had to leave early. I get a little note that it was, “Not free and not un-free.” It was just about...

SO: “Free-ish and fair-ish”?

CD: Yeah, that kind of thing. And everyone – I can’t remember his name – everybody took their cue from that, and they gave it a pass mark. Because in the discussion we had, they feared that if you had declared the election invalid, Kenya might drift along the line of what was happening then in Somalia, [which] became a failed state. That was on the table. So, that was what moved the thing and brought it above the line, as it were, when it really was below the line. Now, so, our report was wishy-washy, and the press went to town with us. The British press in particular, because they were not in favour of Moi.

Now, when I was coming back on the plane, this good friend of mine from Canada, Ron Gould, came up to me and said, “Carl, I owe you an apology.” I said, “What about?” He said, “You know, that conclusion was my conclusion for internal domestic purposes in Canada. I showed it to Max and Max said, ‘Okay, it will do well for the report.’” And because he was peeved, he ran with it and got it into the system without proper discussion and all the observers went along with it. So, what I had done was to write out irregularities that we had detected, and based on that, we had a sort of conclusion. And then, when the press in London saw the full report and conclusions, many of them reversed their stance, because they were really lambasting the Secretariat for a weak report. All because of internal compromises and deceptions. Anyway...

SO: But Carl, that sort of diplomacy within a group – the selection of its membership that you’ve alluded to, the dynamic of personalities each with their own agenda and own back history, the crafting of any report and the consensus view – that, in itself, is diplomacy in a microcosm that is played out on a bigger stage.

CD: Yes, but you see, where politics come into play, that is what can make it become a little murky, because people have their agendas. Where you have a situation as we had in Kenya, where manifestly it was very bad, at various stages of the election... Like, for instance, the nominations, they were terrible, compared with the Ugandan election in 1980 where so many were unopposed and so on. You see, in Kenya, I was embedded in the elections office. So, I got the Chief down to Nairobi twice to go and see Moi, and the only thing I can remember is that President Moi always had a wonderful flow of scented cashew...

SO: You write that Moi was a tough leader.

CD: Yes. But he was not one that I admired, that was to be admired, because I mentioned the violence [and] everything. So, he's a tough leader, but he was not a good leader in the sense to be admired. Nevertheless, I was actually embedded for a long time in the Kenyan elections office. I costed the elections, I observed the registration, I was advising [the Election Commissioner] Zacchaeus Chesoni. So, I was very much up to my neck there. Then, of course, I led the [observer] team, which some would say isn't right, because you can't be a technical adviser *and* an observer. So, the problem was that my colleagues – I think it was mainly Max and Patsy – found Kenya's 1992 elections trying. But then again, if I can get the joke in, when Max was leaving the Secretariat [in 1996/97], he wrote me a letter. In this letter, Max said he had to bring it to my attention that he was peeved because of the way "the Caribbean-ites" took over elections, and that he had this thing to tell me all along but he never got around to doing that. *[Laughter]* He was writing me all that while he was leaving. I said I was going to frame the letter, but I might have decided that it wasn't worth the while because it was, in a way, a pack of nonsense. As professionals and so on, you discuss disagreement and differences; you don't really keep it to your chest. He kept it for years, because whenever he left, Kenya was 1992 and most of these things were generated...

SO: So, who were the 'Caribbean-ites'?

CD: I think he was talking about Telford Georges...

SO: And Dudley Thompson?

CD: Yeah, those were both in quick succession. And myself, and Patsy Robertson. So, Max was not happy about that, and he managed to campaign to be able to have South Africa in 1994.

SO: Did you go back to Kenya in 2007 for the election/ Were you involved in any way as a consultant or as an observer?

CD: No, no. In Kenya, after the debacle, I went there but I was with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, IFES. It was a guy from IFES Washington and myself. I was in Ethiopia and I went down to Kenya to see what was happening. We spoke with the then-disgraced former chairman, who was...What was his name again? Sam something. Sam knew me from when I was embedded in the Commission of 1992. He was there when Chesoni was there. And so he was there. In fact, he said I was his champion for elections. But no, I never went back after Chesoni, after '92. I don't think I ever went back to Kenya on elections.

SO: The other encounter that you had in the 1990s was your mission to Cameroon with President Paul Biya.

CD: I went there twice, actually – on two missions. Yes. I think Paul Biya... Well, you see, he's still there...

SO: Yes, he is indeed.

CD: I don't think he's a democrat.

SO: Why had the Chief pressed so hard for Cameroon to be included as a member of the Commonwealth?

CD: Well, because he is next door to begin with. He thought that he could win over Biya and he probably did, because what some of the ministers told me – and I think one Attorney General – is that they felt that Biya himself wanted to convert the system into a genuine democratic one. But his ministers, his senior cabinet guys, would have none of it, because they felt they would be out. So that was the problem. But digging deeper, there was a chap who, coincidentally, was my director at Caribbean National... I think he was married to Bird's sister. He was head of the Legal Society then. And he was explaining to me that part of the problem in Cameroon was that Biya, the President, uses administrative regions as constituencies, and he just changes them as he wishes because he hasn't got to consult the opposition or anybody. Strangely enough, that argument was confirmed off the record by the President's advisers, and when I went there, they always detailed two advisers from his office, the President's office. They were telling me that in Cameroon, you don't have to steal elections as such, because they know how many constituencies they will win before the election. One of the reasons why I think they can do that is because they use the French system of constituencies being administrative units. And then, of course, it's bilingual, so the majority of the people are in the French-speaking side, and the opposition, as it were, largely are from the English speaking side. So, I think that is part of the problem. But it was fascinating. Not making any sense, but the root of the matter is still there. It's that Biya-'old style' African politics.

SO: The other contribution you made was in Nigeria in 1998/99: your role in election monitoring there after the death of General Sani Abacha.

CD: I just actually returned from Nigeria. We got back there this...well, after 2013. But I worked in Nigeria in all the elections since 1998/99. All of them. I know Nigeria so well in elections. And sadly, they just had another debacle in a way.

SO: With the postponement of the Presidential election for six weeks?

CD: Yeah. Now, I have a nasty feeling. I am a great admirer of Professor Attahiru Jega, but I think [Nigeria's] Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, in my view, perhaps didn't do as well as they might, because it is clear that nearly a third of the voter cards have not been issued – what they called the PVC – and therefore that could not be construed as a full preparedness for the election for this 14th February. So, I think something went drastically wrong there, quite apart from the security situation. The security aspect raises a very interesting issue because yes, if you have genuine security problem, which they do...

SO: Yes. There is a Declaration of Emergency in three states in Northern Nigeria.

CD: Yes. But it's the ongoing armed violence and so on. So, it cannot be denied. But whether you could hold elections in the other states and it be fair, I don't know, because it may very well be that people would feel that if four or five states are not included then the opposition would be disadvantaged, because they might feel otherwise. But the Nigerian scene is complex. I wrote something on the Nigerian issue. Have you seen it?

SO: Yes, I have read it. Do you feel that there was a particular importance to Nigeria's return to democracy in the 1990s for Chief Emeka? As a Nigerian patriot, as a former foreign minister – even if it was for a very short time – and as a Nigerian Secretary General?

CD: Yes. And he put a lot of work in it. I was his emissary, and I never wrote about that. I was, I think, one of the first persons representing that institution to be down on the ground there after they announced elections in 1998. I was in Belize when the Chief phoned me that I had to come right away, and I was dispatched to Nigeria as an emissary. I spent what amounted to months in the Sheraton, on the 8th floor, in Abuja, as the guest of the INEC [and] the late Justice Ephraim Akpata. So, the Nigerian scene is very interesting and perplexing. You know, I don't talk politics so much in the election, but it's a very funny feeling. That's how I felt about that Sri Lankan man, Rajapaksa – that his time is now gone. I was literally laughing when I heard the results. And I have a funny feeling about People's Democratic Party in Nigeria – that it's time for them to go. But I'm not sure about the opposition. That's the real problem. The PDP has a lot of corruption surrounding it. A lot of blatant corruption. But, I mean, I don't know. I await the results with interest.

SO: And with some degree of trepidation?

CD: Yeah. They're well organised, the PDP. Well organised on the ground. I don't know if the opposition can get the number of states. They have the popular votes, but I don't know if they'll get the number of states.

SO: What of Zimbabwe in the 1990s and, of course, the 2000s? Were you involved in any way in election monitoring – offering election advice – or in the diplomacy around any of that?

CD: Well, you know, I had some very good friends in Zimbabwe in the elections, because I ran some workshops in Zimbabwe. I knew the guy who is said to be Mugabe's cousin. Last time I saw him was 2000 in Mauritius. He was at a workshop I was conducting and we had lunch together. He's also the Chief of the Registration. Well, they do voter registration, but he's the Registrar-General. Tobaiwa Mudede. He's the big man. And Mudede, they say [that] he's Mugabe's cousin. He didn't tell me so, but I've heard so from many sources. They had a good team of technicians, just like Zambia. They had a good team of election technicians.

SO: Everything I've read about Zimbabwe is that the Election Commission is technically competent and that the focus on structures and techniques is well done, but the stealing of the election goes on in the run up to the poll in terms of voter rolls, registration, education, [and] access.

CD: Yes, and that is where Mudede comes in, because he's head of the registration. Yes, but like so many countries in Africa, you have parts that are not transparent. You don't know really what happened there. And that's what I was trying to get them to try and sort out when I was in Ethiopia, setting up at that unit. I've got a few book titles I hope to get out this year, and the latest one I'm working on is how to reduce election irregularities – just a broad phase. Because when you talk about Zimbabwe, the problem with Zimbabwe was that they had too many electoral management bodies. Even though they have re-modelled and re-fashioned it, in a subtle way the influences are still elsewhere in the main EMB. And that's one of the things, that in many African

countries you have too many crevices that you can hide and rig elections or steal elections by stealth. I was helping in Nigeria with delimitation of boundaries just before I left, but I don't know how far that reached because, in any event, it wouldn't come into effect this side of the elections. But I hope they do get to it because they're badly overdue. It should have happened either in 2006 – the census was 2006 – or any time after that, because it's either after a census or after ten years, and the last one was in 1996. There's so much to be said about Nigeria and so many things that are not so right, but Jega was trying and that's the most you can do. He's trying. I'll always give him the benefit of the doubt, but clearly, in my view, if you have not issued roughly a third or 24 million voter cards, that election can't be fair. You start out on a situation where somebody is going to be disadvantaged.

SO: So, Mr Dundas, in your view, what was the particular contribution of the Commonwealth in the work of election monitoring and election observation?

CD: I believe – and here I'm going to almost stick my neck out – that the contribution of the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Secretariat to election observation, election technical assistance [and] election literature has been considerable, bearing in mind that the Commonwealth initiatives in these areas predate quite a few of the institutions which are now pretty popular and vigorous, like International IDEA. I was one of the putative fathers of IDEA. Just recently I came upon letters that were written to me from a guy who was at that time researching whether this thing was a good idea or whether it could work and how we should go about it. Then he launched it and so on, and I have done a lot of work for them. We predated IFES, we collaborated with the Carter Center...

SO: I was going to ask you the extent to which the Carter Center may have used Commonwealth methodology and techniques, or whether they felt you were their competitors.

CD: Well, in elections, there's certain measure of competition and fear: unhealthy competition, let's put it that way. And you have the UN also...

SO: You make express reference to someone who was not particularly helpful: Michael Meadowcroft.

CD: Oh, that guy: he was a disaster! And he was a very good friend. It was in Malawi. He was a Liberal Democrat MP. Yes, Michael was a deceitful character. I'm not slandering the man, but you know, it shows how people can be strange. I was a kind of putative father for Malawi in terms of elections because, again, I was the Secretariat liaison person in Malawi in establishing democratic elections. Now, Meadowcroft had a grouse. His grouse was not even as clear as my Australian friend's. Meadowcroft felt – and he was representing the UN – that the Commonwealth should not be allowed to come in to Malawi because, at the Chief's insistence, we didn't monitor the referendum. The Chief's philosophy was that you don't need the referendum to say you must hold multi-party elections, and I agree with him. Now, when we went on the scene, Meadowcroft had a team there from the UN but they couldn't compare with the Commonwealth. We were high-powered. So, he feared that. And I was friendly with him. We had dinner. We had lunch sometimes. But to my surprise, Meadowcroft went and put in a report – copied to the Foreign Office – that we were... In fact, one phrase he used

was that I was “bamboozling their new chairperson”. Now, the cheek! I wrote the electoral law – I’m a lawyer – with the Solicitor General, and also had inputs in the constitution to make sure that independent candidates could run and all that kind of thing. This Mr Meadowcroft, he thought now that the Commonwealth shouldn’t come in and show its face because they didn’t support the referendum. Anyway, what he was apparently desperately afraid of was that the Commonwealth team would come and overshadow the UN. You know, that’s not untypical of the UN, unfortunately. I take a jab at them in a book I’m writing, too. Not all of them – some are good friends. But sometimes they have this ‘Big Brother’ approach, even in observation. [And idea] that the UN must take everything.

So, Meadowcroft went to the Foreign Office. [He] wrote to the Foreign Office and gave the impression that they had a big problem with the Commonwealth. So, I went there merely now to observe the elections. I went with Amitav Banerji from the Secretariat. He was a young man then, and we had a meeting with the Commonwealth High Commissioners the evening we landed. We got the message that Mr Meadowcroft had complained that there is a problem with the Commonwealth, between the UN and the Commonwealth, and that the British High Commissioner is inviting us for breakfast to discuss the matter. Okay. So, I went to the breakfast. I think I took Banerji with me, and I don’t remember who was the ambassador then. I said, “Mr Ambassador, as far as I am concerned, I have no problem with the UN.” I said, “We work with the UN with open arms.” I said, “On Mr Meadowcroft, we are all going to dinner and lunch whenever I’m here and he’s around, so we have nothing to discuss.” And I ended it right there.

But what happened was, sadly, the very thing that should have happened, because I put together a small Commonwealth team of about three to advise the Commission about voter education, training and so on. Then I was helping the Commission itself, Mrs Misosa, with technical matters. And we outshone the UN so much so that Meadowcroft was reported by certain members of the observer team who were British – I think one lady from the House of Lords – who did not think much of Meadowcroft’s performance on the ground. She felt that Michael didn’t assist her, didn’t render proper services, didn’t have proper organisation for the team and so on. So, he was reported. I don’t know if that caused him to lose his job, but he lost his job. But, you know, it was really funny because this was an undeserving report. I don’t know why he did it. But my folks from the Commonwealth outshone the UN people. In fact, I had to help out some of them.

SO: Mr Dundas, what is your view of the contribution of civil society organisations and NGOs, in terms...?

CD: Wonderful. I’ve written on a lot of it and I’ve done a lot of research on it, actually, and I’ve done evaluations. I’ve done evaluations of what they call ‘TMG’ in Nigeria for the UN some years ago. I think they have great potential, CSOs. And actually, in Nigeria, through my instrumentality, I was doing some consultancy for the DFID and I managed to get the Supreme Council of Islam in Nigeria for the first time to offer some assistance in education to the INEC. I think civil society has great potential, certainly in emerging democracies in Africa. They need to be better equipped, better resourced, better trained, but the fact is that the numbers are so great in some of these countries. In South Africa, I think there are about 20,000. In Nigeria, in different places, the extent

to which you can really help to equip them in terms of training and sometimes monitoring... Sometimes they have to be monitored because some of them are partisan, so you have to screen them when they are equipped. Well, it's very costly. Very costly. Add this to the international CSOs like IFES, the Carter Center and so on, but there's great potential there for the future in terms of elections, anyway. But you see, one of the things – if I might come back a little bit to the Commonwealth and its contribution – is that the Commonwealth developed and set certain standards which filter through internationally. There are certain instruments now where you can have an international dimension, a code of conduct and so on for observers, and there's an equivalence acknowledged by the UN for independent CSOs observation. So, in the future, the prospects of CSOs following proper rules and codes of conduct will be more or less harmonised or standardised to an extent. So, that part is, I suppose, in good hands, and the awareness programmes will have to relate to that. So, in terms of CSOs performing, say, in emerging democracies, I think they're likely to gain strength.

SO: I've noticed that governments and politicians can have a particularly suspicious and cautious view towards CSOs if they're identified as arguing not simply for political rights but also for human rights. So, there can be a not-necessarily-healthy constructive tension between political parties – parties in power – and the activities of CSOs.

CD: Yes. Well, there is a problem because some countries... And it goes way back to a country like Guyana, in their legislation, where they never included CSOs as observers – domestic CSOs. When I was in Kenya in 1992, I actually helped their Attorney General and his office to draft certain things on CSO observers, and their view – to use his words – is that “they have their own agenda”. There is a fairly widespread belief still that a lot of CSOs have their own agendas. In other words, they are partisan; they are not neutral at all. So, that has to be overcome. And as I referred to, these international instruments, these codes of conduct, they have pledged and so on so that the burden is on the individual – on the individual's honour, so to speak – to operate in a non-partisan and impartial manner. But in short, that is being overcome in a lot of countries. I think more and more countries are accepting that there is a respectable role for domestic observers and independent observers of elections. That is catching on, and we're trying to par the literature to support that kind of thing.

SO: Mr Dundas, please, if I could just ask as my last question, as a long-term observer of the Commonwealth in your work at the Secretariat – in your work as a pre-election planning adviser, providing technical assistance to election commissions, and as an international consultant afterwards – how much do you feel that the Commonwealth has been defined or shaped by the Secretary General? You have observed several Secretaries General now: Sonny Ramphal, Chief Emeka, Sir Don and now Kamallesh Sharma.

CD: Well, I think significantly, really, because... I don't think one wants to over-emphasise the role, because it's still a fairly small role in the world as a whole – compared, even in the election world, to the UN – but the Secretary General in, for instance, formulating the mandate of observers and monitors contributes to the clarity and the appropriateness of the conduct and execution of the business of observation and monitoring of activities

internationally and of course regionally. So, I think in those ways, the Secretary General post and the Secretary General for the time being does contribute to the development of international observation and so on. So, I think it is fair to say that they occupy a position of influence. A lot of the institutions that have come on board – for instance, like International IDEA and others – they always keep in touch with what the Secretariat, on behalf of the Commonwealth, is doing: certainly, in the election field [and] on technical assistance, also. We started out blazing the trail in many areas in offering technical assistance to governments or to EMBs in elections, and by so doing we helped them to improve the quality of election organisation. That process is still going on. There's still a lot to be done to improve election organisation and to dampen, to de-emphasise, the influence of governments on election arrangements. That hasn't been achieved, I'm afraid, in the Commonwealth and also in the African Union. I had a chapter, I think, in one of my books on best practices, comparing the Commonwealth and African Union. In so doing, you get to assess where they are and how far... One of my books talks about "the lagging of democracy" in some of these countries in the AU.

But it is fair to say that, even when you think you are there in elections, you find you are not so sure you're there. Even Britain, here, has room for improvement. And America...

SO: We have to have an election commissioner here. The recent public spat about the BBC and how much airtime they should give to the various parties in the upcoming general election is just an indicator of this.

CD: Yes. And also when the commission here is... It's not formally responsible for organising elections, but in many areas in election organisation, Britain really lags behind – or Britain in terms of the House of Commons. On postal voting, they did not do well at all. Well, probably they're trying to...

SO: Well, we certainly should produce voter ID when going to vote.

CD: Well, this is it. Voter ID. And the Americans are struggling with that. And for many countries, that is a given. There's so much fuss in America.

SO: I know; I agree. Mr Dundas, thank you very much for an extremely long and very detailed discussion. I'm very grateful indeed.

[END OF AUDIOFILE PART TWO]