VOICE FILE NAME: COHP Stuart Mole (Part Two)

Key:
SO: Dr Sue Onslow (Interviewer)
SM: Mr Stuart Mole (Respondent)

Part Two:

SO: This is Sue Onslow talking to Mr Stuart Mole in Axminster on Friday, 14th February 2014. Stuart, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to talk again to us for the project. I wonder if you could begin, please, with your observations on the Commonwealth Games of 1986. 32 countries boycotted these games, including almost all African, Caribbean and Asian nations in protest against the British government's attitude towards apartheid South Africa. The Games opened in July 1986 but of course, the diplomacy and politicking beforehand seems to have been particularly intense.

SM: Yes. It was very much bound up with all that was happening with the initiative of the Eminent Persons Group mission. Looking at it from the view of Sonny Ramphal and the Commonwealth Secretariat, I think the major preoccupation there was with what was happening politically. But at the same time, I do recall Sonny Ramphal doing his utmost to try and dissuade those Commonwealth African nations who wanted to boycott the games from doing so. But in that, he was unsuccessful. Often when people talk about Sonny and his near magical powers in being able to bend the Commonwealth to his will, as it were, they forget instances like this when in fact, he was entirely unsuccessful in trying to dissuade African and Asian countries from boycotting the Games - even though he would have argued that these were *Commonwealth* games; they were not Mrs Thatcher's Games. They were also Scotland's games, and Scotland had a fantastic reputation in terms of the anti-apartheid cause. The Commonwealth was part of a process which had seen this major initiative in South Africa through the Eminent Persons Group, and so on. He would have said all those things but still the boycott went ahead. But of course, the atmosphere was terribly bad. For a start, the Commonwealth Games Federation at that point wasn't very receptive to having any kind of political input. It was only after those Games, as far as I

recall, that they recognised that they needed political help; that they needed to deal with the political dimension of something as major as this crisis. So, the '86 Games ended up being a big wakeup call for all sorts of reasons and the very survival of the Commonwealth Games in the future hung in the balance. From that period, it became much more professional in all sorts of ways.

But I think that Sonny's ability to work on behalf of the Games and in saving the Games was limited, even though he did all that he could. This was all in the period when the Eminent Persons Group had come back and had issued its report, which had become a Penguin bestseller. It had been published in different language editions around the world and was given prominence at the Sanctions Conference in Paris during the summer, as it was in the debate in the US Senate where the United States Congress adopted measures against the wishes of Ronald Reagan. As far as I recall, Reagan vetoed the legislation because, of course, the axis with Mrs Thatcher there was very strong. And we were coming up to the London Commonwealth mini-summit just a week or so later from the end of the Games - the mini-summit where Mrs Thatcher was going to go head-to-head with her fellow heads and looked like being very hostile to the idea of any kind of further sanctions resulting from the Eminent Persons Group Report.

So it was a horrendous time but of course, the Games were made all the worse by the kind of financial mismanagement that occurred: the fact that there wasn't adequate funding from the word 'go'; and that when they were looking for a financial 'white knight', they turned to Robert Maxwell. That was a disaster too. So from all sorts of angles, the '86 Games were terrible.

SO: Stuart, do you remember when the possibility of a boycott first raised its head? The Eminent Persons Group had come out of the Nassau meeting of 1985 and had gone down to South Africa in February of '86; so even at that point, was there gathering momentum for boycotting the Commonwealth Games or was there a precipitating event?

SM: I really can't remember that, Sue. I was going backwards and forwards between London and South Africa between February and May. And therefore, I may well have been unaware of what was developing. My recollection was that the boycott movement didn't gather strength until later in the year. I mean, what I suspect may well have been the case is that it was only after the publication of the EPG report that it gathered momentum. I think the EPG left South Africa on 19th May and the report was published in June. And I think that Mrs Thatcher reacted very strongly at that stage. There were all the other pressures for sanctions. She, of course, sent, well, Geoffrey Howe went to South Africa on behalf of the European Union. So she would have been still hoping to salvage something from negotiations rather than further sanctions. And my feeling was that the boycott came rather late and rather out of the blue. I don't think it was something that had been festering for a very long time but I stand to be corrected on that.

SO: Do you remember who, or which country was the main swing behind the boycott?

SM: No, I don't.

SO: It will be in the Secretariat archives.

SM: Yes.

SO: Was there a debriefing after the Commonwealth Games? Did Sonny sit down with his key lieutenants at the Secretariat to think about how to manage the Commonwealth Games thereafter? You said that the Commonwealth Games Federation realised that they needed some political guidance.

SM: Yes.

SO: And was this provided by the Secretariat, or did they go elsewhere?

SM: I don't remember specifically, but I do know that there was a clear understanding from here on that the Secretary General had to be much more involved in these issues and that there needed to be a closer relationship between the intergovernmental political side and Commonwealth sport. Now, I can't quite remember in what year the CHOGM Committee on Sport was established but Terry Dormer was certainly the Liaison Officer for Sport for quite a while.

SO: So, as you say, it was an instance of Sonny being thwarted in terms of his charismatic diplomacy. He was not able to persuade African Commonwealth countries that they shouldn't use the venue of the Edinburgh Games as a boycott...

SM: Because of Mrs Thatcher, effectively.

SO: It's interesting too because you refer to Scotland having a strong record on sport and apartheid, in the Gleneagles Agreement of 1977.

SM: Yes. That wasn't a specific Scottish initiative. It just happened to be in Scotland. But even so, Scotland had had a very long-lasting and strong record in terms of opposing apartheid, so they felt particularly cheated by the outcome, and they had had such a good Commonwealth Games in 1970. I think many thought they would simply repeat that great success and instead it turned into this terrible disaster.

SO: Do you recall Sonny trying to press Mrs Thatcher to take a firmer stance against a British Lions tour of South Africa?

SM: I really can't remember the British Lions tour at all. Of course, the controversies surrounding the New Zealand tour of South Africa, and then the Springbok tour of New Zealand were ferocious. My personal feeling is that it was less a question about apartheid in sport and more a question of reacting to Mrs Thatcher on sanctions. There may have been some justification in terms of supporting apartheid but actually, the real essence of the disagreement and the boycott was disagreement with Mrs Thatcher about sanctions. It sat in the very middle of all that debate.

SO: Well, speaking of 'sitting in the very middle of it', you referred to the London mini-summit which was convened in August of 1986, and attended by seven Commonwealth heads.

SM: Yes.

SO: The Prime Ministers of Australia, India, Zimbabwe, Canada, Zambia and the Bahamas, with Prime Minister Pindling...

SM: …in the chair.

SO: How clearly do you remember that mini-summit?

SM: Well, I remember that pretty well compared with other things I don't remember! What was particularly interesting, first of all, was that Marlborough House was the venue. Marlborough House hadn't been used for a heads of government meeting of any kind since '69. It had simply become too small – or, rather, the Commonwealth had got too big to fit into Marlborough House. This being a special summit, that was different. They reduced the table in the main Conference Hall to accommodate the seven heads. They used the Green Room as the lounge for the heads of government and we made various rooms available for heads of delegation. We had a security cordon around Marlborough House with military police on the roof and so on. Second, it was a fascinating summit. In particular, I think there was a mood of great confrontation which I think comes back to what happened over the Games, and a feeling that Mrs Thatcher was not going to give an inch on this. There is Sonny's famous story of the dinner the night before at Buckingham Palace where the Queen was alone with the seven heads of government and with Sonny, and where, in Sonny's words, she left the gathering in no doubt that she expected them to reach a result. Of course, it's worth remembering that there had been that newspaper article.

SO: In the *Sunday Times*.

SM: In the *Sunday Times*. Yes.

SO: Yes, when Michael Shea, the Queen's private secretary, was the reputed source.

SM: That's right. And that added fuel to the flames. It was of course denied by Buckingham Palace but I think that a lot of people felt that it probably represented the private views of the Queen. Looking at it nowadays, it wouldn't be very remarkable, would it? To deduce from that she was devoted to the Commonwealth. She would have grown up with it developing as a multiracial association and she would not have wanted a situation where it was being forced to the point of dissolution. However, at the beginning of the London meeting, Mrs Thatcher was immovable and she was also very insensitive in her reading of apartheid in South Africa. A lot has been made recently about how committed she was against apartheid and what a wonderful record she had. That wasn't what came across. In front of notable African leaders, she gave a perspective that was very narrow, very white based, (showing) very little appreciation of what apartheid meant for black Africans or for Indians, or for coloured people. And she left the meeting at lunchtime and left Sir Geoffrey Howe to take over; it was in a very dangerous state as a result and it took Geoffrey Howe the afternoon to pull things back together.

SO: Peter Marshall said that the order of speakers was deliberately chosen so that Geoffrey Howe would speak early on in the proceedings - to ensure the voice of reason would be read into the record, as he put it - and to provide a certain calm to the very confrontational atmospherics of this meeting. What you are describing is that Thatcher was there and in obvious competitive mood at the start and then had to leave for other government business. So there was a degree of fortuitous rearrangement of the chairs and Geoffrey Howe was then speaking and able to calm discussion?

SM: Well, I stand to be corrected by the record and it would be really interesting to read. My recollection was that Mrs Thatcher spoke early in the conference in the morning, and then left at lunchtime; and it was in the afternoon that Geoffrey Howe came in and rescued things.

SO: Do you remember how he did it? The record will show his use of language, but not the manner of delivery.

SM: He had a much more emollient attitude and so he was much more soothing. He came across as being much more understanding of the total perspective.

SO: Had you known that when Mrs Thatcher met President PW Botha in 1984 that Geoffrey Howe's son, as well as the British Ambassador to South Africa, John Leahy's son, were at the anti-apartheid demonstration in Trafalgar Square?

SM: Oh really?

SO: Yes.

SM: *[Laughter].* Brilliant. So I don't recall the detail of what was said. If I read the record, I would be reminded of some of the key elements of the debate. Obviously, the meeting came to a conclusion that did admit some further agreed sanctions, as well as a list of measures which Britain absented itself from. Strangely, after that high water mark of getting Mrs Thatcher on board, she then had a period of hardening her stance. This was so at the '87 Vancouver CHOGM and her attitude to the ANC as a terrorist organisation. And even up to the '89 Kuala Lumpur CHOGM, on the eve of Mandela's release, she was taking a very hard line.

SO: And the paradox is that this is the period – as you know better than most – in which Mrs Thatcher was recommending to President Botha that Nelson Mandela should be released; there were the exploratory probes to the ANC, and the Mells Park discussions. She was aware of the private contacts between South African business, and the exiles and opponents of the apartheid regime.

SM: Yes. It is very paradoxical and I don't think I have a proper answer for that. Of course, she always had a very close and perhaps primary interest in East-West relations, the end of the Cold War and German reunification. The problems of apartheid in South Africa were of secondary importance in that respect and perhaps she was, in some respect, on autopilot in her approach. But I don't know why she persisted for so long in such a negative view.

SO: Well, her negativity was on the question of economic and financial sanctions.

SM: Yes.

SO: Rather than on the question of change in South Africa.

SM: Yes, but she didn't appear sincere about change in South Africa either. That was the key thing and that's what came across in the special summit meeting. And it's what came across in 1987, when she described the ANC as 'a typical terrorist organisation'. By implication, at that point, three years before Mandela's release when the South Africans were negotiating on this and other measures, she believed that Mandela was a terrorist. It's a strangely contrary position to be in, I think.

SO: Of course, as you say, it's not just the actual words used; it's the impression that's conveyed.

SM: Yes.

SO: Which is as powerful in politics, and can be longer lasting and susceptible to a degree of distortion: the presentation of policy, not simply its content.

SM: Yes.

SO: In terms of other issues which were starting to challenge the Commonwealth, between '86 and '87, there was also the question of the coups in Fiji in 1987.

SM: Yes.

SO: Fiji's membership of the Commonwealth lapsed at the Vancouver meeting. How clear are your recollections of the diplomacy around that military overthrow of an elective government in Fiji? The first coup was in the May when Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka overthrew the elected government of Prime Minister Timoci Bavadra.

SM: At that stage there was no facility for suspension, so Fiji was effectively expelled. At the time of the second coup, they went through the same formula about a change to republican status that South Africa took in 1961 and with much the same outcome. They were reapplying for membership which, in most cases, would be a formality; but at that stage, it was clear from the results of the Retreat discussion at Lake Okanagan in the wings of the Vancouver CHOGM that they would not be welcome as a Republic or anything else within the Commonwealth membership. So it was not suspension; it was effectively expulsion.

SO: The politics and the diplomacy of all of this rolled out over the summer of 1987, because Prime Minister Bavadra tried to come to London. Was he in touch with Marlborough House that you recall? Was he trying to get into the Palace?

SM: I honestly don't remember what contacts there were between Sonny and Bavadra in the summer, but I do think that one should appreciate that Sonny took a very strong line about Fiji. This was a 'pro Bavadra line', if you like, and this was by no means an issue that was unanimous in Commonwealth circles. There was some sympathy for the indigenous Fijian position and some were critical of Sonny, arguing that as the public servant of the Commonwealth, there was a limit to how far he could go – and a limit to how far it was wise for him to go – in trying to get the result that he wanted. And the result that he wanted in Vancouver at the Retreat was for the Commonwealth to make a clear statement about its values and about how these values had been abused by what had happened with the two coups. And he managed to do that, although he got criticism for putting himself on the line in that respect. I think Mrs Thatcher had some sympathy for the indigenous Fijians. She supported the line but with a degree of personal reservation. I think some in the Pacific felt that this kind of almost legalistic view was perhaps not the whole story. If anything, Sonny was criticised [on the grounds] that he went too far in effectively leading Fiji's expulsion at Vancouver, rather than the other way around.

SO: Stuart, do you remember any discussion, or any concern that Fiji risked being another Sri Lanka? By that I mean that there was a potential for civil strife? There were press reports (I don't know how reliable these were) of Indian arms shipments to Lautoka. Was there any sort of underlying, or indeed overt concern at Marlborough House that things could become violent?

SM: I don't recall that. I think a coup in itself is a violent act, so even bloodless coups are violent in that respect, but I don't think there was an immediate anxiety at that point. That came in 2000...

SO: When George Speight took the hostages in the Fijian Parliament.

SM: Yes, that was a very serious turn for the worse. But I think at that stage in the summer of 1987, here was a case where the Governor General continued, didn't he?

SO: Yes, he did. It was Ratu Penaia Ganilau.

SM: Yes. And he continued for some while as a separate point of contact with Buckingham Palace keeping in very close touch with him. You know, rather similar to the Rhodesian experience after UDI.

SO: Sir Humphrey Gibb, holding out in Government House.

SM: Yes, but still continuing to try and maintain the Queen's writ, as it were.

SO: Do you recall if Sonny was in contact in any way with Ratu Penaia?

SM: I know that there was contact. This was principally through the Palace and I don't recall whether Sonny was in contact direct or how that was maintained. Of course, Fiji returned to the Commonwealth in '97 at the Edinburgh CHOGM, and there was quite a lot of Commonwealth activity prior to that in terms of trying to redraft a constitution. I can't remember when that process

was put in train but it would have been probably the end of Sonny's period, about '89, or '90. I can't remember.

SO: One closely-involved journalist observer has speculated – I'm not quite sure on what basis – that there may have been a conditioning element for Sonny of 'a wider Indian world' - of a view of Indians in Fiji as now becoming 'merely Fijian', rather than the implicitly superior 'indigenous Fijian'; and a concern that Indian communities had not been permitted to achieve positions of political influence and power in Guyana, and elsewhere. And that this may have subtly but importantly conditioned how he managed that particular challenge in Fiji in '87. Did he ever comment, that you recall?

SM: No. *[Pause].* And I would be very surprised if that was a real issue because after all, his own experience in Guyana, although he was an Indo-Guyanese himself by background, certainly didn't impede his own participation in Guyanese politics and the predominance of the Afro-Guyanese leadership. I never heard that as an aspect. What would be much more important for him as Secretary General, would be the fact that a very major member like India was taking a hard line, understandably. And therefore, he would want to listen carefully to what India said and would want to balance that against a lot of other things. So people, as they do, want to write in those motives, no doubt, but I would have thought it was much more important to accommodate India and India's wishes in any Commonwealth consensus on the issue.

SO: That was very much my sense, having lived in Fiji and followed Fiji politics since then. I personally identified India as being the crunch point, the linchpin of wider international political influence.

Stuart, you've commented before we started that the Vancouver CHOGM saw the setting up of the Foreign Ministers Committee on Southern Africa, chaired by Joe Clark. Joe Clark has taken part in this interview project, and given us considerable detail on CCFMSA. Please, if I could take you forward to the Kuala Lumpur summit. Dr Mahathir has been described as not being necessarily particularly sympathetic to the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth ideals before he came to power in Malaysia. I just wonder if you could add some reflections on Mahathir's gradual acceptance of the value and the possibilities provided by the Commonwealth in its multiple fora?

SM: Yes. Well, I think the first summit that Mahathir came to as Malaysia's Prime Minister was the Nassau CHOGM of 1985. And he began by being very critical of the Commonwealth, very dismissive of its value, and he set up a committee of officials to look at what possible value the Commonwealth had for Malaysia. After all, before that he had been very hostile to the UK with the 'Buy British Last' movement and so on.

SO: Yes.

SM: But the result of his internal inquiry in Malaysia was a positive one for the Commonwealth. It concluded that Malaysia could benefit very much from its membership. That led him to become a total convert to using the Commonwealth in a positive way and in particular, as part of his 20/20 Vision for Malaysia. The 20/20 Vision included the kind of major infrastructural

issues that would help Malaysia to move down that path and certainly, Kuala Lumpur's hosting of the Commonwealth Games in 1998 was important. These were the first Games held in Asia and the first Games, apart from Kingston in Jamaica, held in a developing Commonwealth country. So, certainly the 1998 Games; the Kuala Lumpur summit was '89, wasn't it?

SO: Yes.

SM: I believe he spoke in Vancouver at the '87 CHOGM about his, as it were, conversion, when he offered Kuala Lumpur for the '89 summit. He had the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference, I think, around that time, and the annual Finance Ministers meeting. He had the Games, he had a whole string of other meetings, including the Commonwealth Press Union Conference in Malaysia. These meetings and events resulted in tremendous improvements to the sporting, the conference, transport and the hotel infrastructure in Malaysia. That's not to say that there weren't also continuing points of tension with the Commonwealth, as much as with anyone else. Chief Anyaoku admired him and had a lot of sympathy for him. He saw that he was the darling of the developing world, and recognised his leadership there and would have been less worried about some of the differences that would have upset developed countries. But that's not to say that the Chief himself did not have difficulties with Mahathir. He did; and most notably was when the Chief was just beginning to institute a programme of election observer missions and when an election observer mission went to Malaysia...

SO: Neville Linton talked about that in the interview he gave me.

SM: Yes, and it took a lot of exchanges between Chief and Mahathir before they could agree. Emeka had to put his foot down in terms of the independence and integrity of observer missions. That was really quite important because the Kuala Lumpur meeting led onto the Harare CHOGM in '91 and it was in Harare that Commonwealth Observer Missions were enshrined in the whole democracy programme. And of course, Mahathir chaired the High Level Appraisal Group that met immediately before Harare; so he was very much associated with this change. So if he couldn't personally, in his own country accept the change, then it was going to be a fairly hollow policy to present to the world.

SO: How much was there also a geostrategic regional dynamic in Mahathir's conversion to accepting the value of the Commonwealth, and its possibilities for providing an important platform for Malaysia? Do you know if Singapore and particularly Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was influential in persuading Dr Mahathir of the value of the Commonwealth – even if this was in a negative way? Whether in fact, there was a regional dynamic and dimension of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei here, and the Commonwealth provided an additional platform to advance Malaysia's individual national interests in the region?

SM: Well, again, I can only speculate. It's a very interesting question but I think my interpretation would be exactly the opposite. I would think that the kind of pre-eminence of Lee Kuan Yew from Singapore would have been a reason why Malaysia was less interested in the Commonwealth. I think because of the whole history of Malaysia and Singapore...

SO: Of 'Confrontation' and the rupture of Federation?

SM: And the racial difference between the two states and all the rest of it. I think the last person who would be taking advice on the Commonwealth from Lee Kuan Yew would be Mahathir. Lee Kuan Yew embraced the Commonwealth in an intellectual sense, but not in a very practical sense. And Singapore has always seemed to struggle with some of the practical contributions. Some would say it was a reflection of a Chinese culture that saw greater virtue in self-help rather than charity, contributing to aid programmes or that kind of thing.

SO: So not a natural generosity towards the CFTC?

SM: No, not at all. Very small contributions to CFTC from Singapore and likewise to other Commonwealth programmes. Although their prosperity was rising very rapidly, this was not reflected in their generosity in contributing to Commonwealth programmes. So in a sense, Malaysia leapfrogged Singapore and went from being a sceptic to being an enthusiastic, and that gave Mahathir a much stronger voice in Commonwealth circles; and by then, of course, Lee Kuan Yew was no longer coming to meetings representing Singapore and although Mahathir didn't take the mantle of an elder statesman, he was certainly a major player in the Commonwealth at that stage.

SO: I was just trying to situate the regional rivalry.

SM: Yes. I am not sure that Brunei would have featured very strongly in the mix. All credit to Don McKinnon that he has now brought the status of Brunei more to the fore. But amidst the growth of the democracy movement was this ambivalence about the status of Brunei.

SO: Yes.

SM: And that has now in recent years become rather more acute. On these very tricky issues, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group looked simply at the unconstitutional overthrow of governments and military regimes, and so on. Don McKinnon moved things further on, or attempted to, in terms of a focus on countries like Tonga and Swaziland. One could scarcely describe them as constitutional monarchies; no, they were absolute monarchies. But they are traditional societies with apparently a wide measure of political support.

SO: And these were hierarchical political cultures.

SM: Hierarchical, yes, possessing traditional forms of government but with some democratic structures also. So, in terms of the Secretary General's good offices, there has been an attempt to move onto these last remaining countries, of which Brunei is one, where with the best will in the world, their democratic credentials are not particularly high.

SO: Nicely put. Going back to trying to encourage democratic credentials at the Harare CHOGM, to what extent were you actively involved in the drafting of the Harare Declaration? I understand that Sir Robert Armstrong 'had another draft ready,' but Chief Emeka has presented

this as the product of having gone away on his own personal retreat and thinking about the Commonwealth in the changing international system, what was going on in South Africa, etc; and that he had to come forward with a new mission statement.

SM: Yes.

SO: Where were you personally in this drafting process?

SM: *[Pause]* I can't remember in detail. All I can remember in general terms is that there was a lot of work in '89, following the Kuala Lumpur meeting and the election of Chief Anyaoku. Much of this was centred on the Working Group of Senior Officials on the High Level Appraisal, commissioned by the 1989 CHOGM. This appraisal process was important to Chief Anyaoku and to the tone of his period in office as Secretary General. He had his personal retreat and then came into office in 1990 and involved himself in the final meetings of the Working Group. So, he was very involved in the build up to Harare, including with the Working Group. That was going to feed into the High Level Appraisal Group which had a one-day meeting of ten heads of government, chaired by Mahathir before the Harare meeting opened. There was a draft declaration which the Secretariat had worked on.

SO: Would this have been principally Max Gaylard as head of Political Affairs?

SM: It would have originated in Political Affairs, and Moses Anafu would have been involved and also SK Rao, but the Secretary General would have had a very close hold on the document. We went to Harare with the Secretariat draft which had been circulated around governments and certainly, Armstrong had a British draft. My recollection was that essentially, there was a marrying of the British draft and the Secretariat draft; that's what I recall. And we went to the Retreat, which was at Elephant Hills by Victoria Falls. There were three of us from the Secretariat at the Retreat: myself, Lorna McLaren and SK Rao, tasked with helping service the Retreat discussions. The Harare Declaration was finally agreed at the Retreat by all heads, and then brought back to a full Executive Session in Harare. That's my recollection.

SO: In terms also of other influences and inputs, how far did the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative have an ancillary role in encouraging a push towards the Harare Declaration? Or was that in fact incidental and autonomous, and really didn't have any bearing on...?

SM: When was the...

SO: Well, let's see. Richard Bourne considered the idea in 1988, so 1989 is when it was really gathering momentum. I'm just wondering when the CHRI set up offices in New Delhi.

SM: No, that move to New Delhi was later.

SO: It was '93, wasn't it?

SM: The New Delhi offices were established later. CHRI first of all had a presence in London, didn't it?

SO: Yes. I'm just wondering if the CHRI and human rights discourse within the Commonwealth were in any way influential?

SM: I think it would have added to the mix. I think that there was a lot of debate going on in the late '80s about the Commonwealth putting its own house in order, so that would have been a contributing influence, certainly.

SO: If Mrs Thatcher was under increasing fire for having been 'the odd one out' on the question of sanctions toward South Africa, was then the British riposte to this pressure a demand that the Commonwealth set its own house in order? That if Commonwealth countries were going to criticise the internal affairs of another sovereign nation, they should look at their own political rights record?

SM: Well, I don't think it was quite in those terms. I think it was played out much more in the media and in particular between 1985 and 1990 as the debates about South Africa and sanctions got more acute. And some of the opinion expressed in the media in the UK would have been accusing the rest of Africa and the rest of the Commonwealth, in lots of cases, of being dictatorial, of ignoring human rights, of corruption and therefore double standards. But it would have been a much more sophisticated, nuanced version of that in the exchanges involving governments. I think that here was something that Chief Anyaoku himself became personally committed to and it became his mantra when he became Secretary General, resulting from his six month retreat before taking office. He understood that charge of double-standards and he set about persuading governments and helping them to realise that they ought to change. So I'm not sure that I think it would have been a British view exclusively that more needed to be done for the Commonwealth to put its house in order. I think a lot of the impetus would have come from the SG himself.

SO: Stuart, coming out of the Harare Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting was a Commonwealth initiative, a Commonwealth push led by Chief Emeka, to help South African transition. The Commonwealth had just successfully formally promoted democracy through the Harare Declaration. Nelson Mandela of course attended the Harare CHOGM and, it is said, advised delegates on how best to facilitate South Africa's transition. I wonder if you could add some reflections, please, from your own personal stand point of where was the Commonwealth in that critical four year period, between 1990 and 1994, in helping and supporting South African transition?

SM: Yes, as far as I recall, Mandela had a closed session with heads. So, he would have had the opportunity of sharing his thoughts with heads of government in Harare, but I don't know whether this formed part of the record at all. It would have been very much a closed session. I don't think it had senior officials there: I'm not even sure it had Secretariat staff there, but from that point there was a fundamental change in the Commonwealth's attitude to South Africa. The Chief was cautious about how warm the relationship with the South African government should become and at what speed. Later on, when the whole question of relaxing sanctions became an issue he talked about what he called the 'Programme Management Approach to Sanctions' because when things started to move in a positive direction, there were some

who said, “Oh, sanctions should be lifted immediately.” Chief was very cautious about there being a gradual relaxation of sanctions and that each positive movement should be rewarded by a comparable relaxation of sanctions. It shouldn’t all be done in one go but in a managed way. Anyway, from Harare he went down to South Africa and he took me with him. I can’t remember, I have a feeling that we saw de Klerk, but we certainly saw Pik Botha.

I remember there being a lot of suspicion from the South African government initially. Here was this Commonwealth that had been a thorn in their side for so long, now saying it wanted to come along and help. I remember Chief with Pik Botha being quite disarming: when we first came into Pik Botha’s office being offered refreshments and Chief saying that he’d like a cup of rooibos - which I thought was a typical Chief touch to choose a…

SO: A quintessentially South African tea?

SM: …yes, and it was a very important ground breaker really in terms of changing mind-set and in seeing how the Commonwealth could help. I have to remind myself of the direct chronology, but CODESA I was ’91, was it?

SO: 1991, yes.

SM: ’91, yes. So one of the first things was to provide an international element to the negotiations. This was one of the Chief’s initiatives that it would provide local negotiators and the participants in the negotiations with some kind of reassurance if there was an international observation dimension at the negotiations.

SO: Was this formal observer status because CODESA was formed by the South African government to negotiate with the ANC for a new democratic constitution, but these were internal discussions?

SM: Yes, it was an internal process, but what the South African government and all parties agreed to, on the initiative of Chief Emeka, was that there should be international observers present as a means of reassurance. There is a report on the record of the Commonwealth’s observation of the CODESA process.

SO: Were the distinguished observers selected primarily because of their legal background?

SM: No, but the legal background would have helped. It was helpful that Geoffrey Howe was a lawyer, but certainly not a primary reason why he was there. Then of course as we went on, there was the development of COMSA, the Commonwealth Observer Mission in South Africa, and the effort around that.

SO: So again an initiative from Chief, a recommendation…

SM: Yes, the Chief actually got a UN Security Council resolution on South Africa and on the growing violence in particular between Inkatha, the PAC and the ANC. This resulted from his discussions, first, with Mandela, De Klerk and others, and, subsequently, with Boutros Boutros-Ghali and with Cyrus Vance, then the UN’s Special Representative to South Africa.

It was very much Chief's initiative to deploy international observers in the flashpoints of violence in the East Rand and Natal in particular. That led to the deployment of the United Nations, Commonwealth, African Union and also European Union observers, under that UNSC Resolution [772, adopted unanimously 17 August 1992].[1] Now, in addition to the work of the observers trying to deal with the violence, the Commonwealth was putting in technical assistance, such as in the area of policing. There were a number of experts who were trying to help move the South African police from a very para-military kind of mind-set into a much more community policing approach.

SO: Was that under the auspices of the Commonwealth, or was that more a British bilateral assistance mission? They're not necessarily contradictory, but…

SM: No, it was under the auspices of Commonwealth in that respect, though there was a lot of bilateral British funded support going in. But there was a Commonwealth presence on the ground which not only was there to deploy observers in potential flash points to address the violence, but also was providing technical assistance to the South African police; to the judiciary and to a whole range of other elements. That was done under the auspices of this Commonwealth mission, but quite a few of the personnel were British, including British policing experts. So my answer to you was that some of the funding for this was bilateral British funding, without necessarily going through a Commonwealth fund, but the delivery point was a Commonwealth delivery point.

Now, there was also another initiative which I think the British exclusively funded which was to do with police training and that exercise certainly involved Indian, Caribbean and British police. A whole number of Commonwealth police forces were involved. There was a proposal in '93 or thereabouts to set up National Peace-keeping force which would go into the townships as a peacekeeping force and with the confidence of local people. I believe the acronym was NPKF, or something like that.

SO: **It sounds like an early Soviet security service!**

SM: Yes it does, doesn't it? I know that once again there was an agreement that the Commonwealth would help with the training of this particular mission, but in the end I don't think it came to anything or maybe it had a couple of months of rather unsatisfactory deployment and then it was scrapped. But the crucial thing that the Commonwealth was able to do was to move quickly, in a couple of months, to put something together which other participants wouldn't have been able to do in anything like the same timeframe. I think that was important.

[1] UNSC 772 "authorised the secretary-general to deploy, as a matter of urgency, UN observers in South Africa to work in coordination with the structures set up under the National Peace Accord. It invited him to assist in the strengthening of those structures in consultation with the relevant parties. It also called upon international organisations such as the OAU, the Commonwealth and the European Community to consider deploying their own observers in South Africa. Angela King, a senior official of the UN from Jamaica, was appointed to head up the UN Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA); she took up her post on 23 September. By the end of October 1992, 50 UNOMSA observers were deployed in all 11 regions of South Africa designated in the National Peace Accord. By 22 December, there were 17 observers from the Commonwealth, 14 from the EC and 11 from the OAU in South Africa. UNOMSA's deployment was weighted towards the Witwatersrand/Vaal and Natal/KwaZulu regions, where 70 per cent of the political violence had occurred." Taken from Enuga S Reddy: *The United Nations and the Struggle For Liberation in South Africa*,p.94, http://www.anc.org.za/docs/misc/1992/roadtodemocracyl.pdf

SO: Stuart, what was going on in Natal in this particular period? There were violent incidents all over South Africa at this time, but Natal was the scene of the worst fighting. Some people have described it as a civil war between Inkatha and the United Democratic Front, which represented the ANC.

SM: A low level civil war, yes.

SO: Certainly the violence was appalling. It's estimated that approximately 14,000 people died in horrific circumstances, with approximately 22,000 casualties. What authority did the Commonwealth observers have to negotiate or mediate?

SM: There was an office in Natal. There were people permanently stationed there. Moses Anafu was in that category, and Moses did a lot of personal negotiation working with local churches, community groups and so on. Moses was a fantastic presence there; he was highly respected. I went down there briefly, to join the team. I remember going on Sharpeville Day in March 1993 to the East Rand where the Inkatha supporters were based in the hostels and were challenging the ANC. There was this whole debate about whether they could display their traditional weapons, which they successfully argued were 'cultural symbols', which they should retain.

At the end of the rally, there was a great danger that the Inkatha supporters would come out of the stadium and would start attacking the neighbouring ANC-supported areas. A little bit of that began, but Commonwealth and other observers were interposing ourselves to try and stop that happening. You don't just observe in those circumstances; you try and persuade a very large Zulu brandishing a spear that perhaps it would be better if he went home, or whatever. So, yes, we did attempt to place ourselves between warring parties, and that would involve trying to explain what we were doing and what we hoped would happen. On occasions the violence got quite close. I know that some international observers got shot at and rocks were hurled at their vehicles and all the rest of it. But that was the purpose of the mission. Linked to that, Moses played a sustained part in negotiations and meditation in Natal.

SO: Was he in close contact with the ANC leadership and the negotiations back at Kempton Park?

SM: He would have maintained contact with key people, though I don't think that he had a permanent presence in the room as an advisor. He certainly would be keeping in touch and feeding reports back to Chief Anyaoku, so that at crucial moments, when Chief's intervention was needed, the Secretary General could ring up key people and see to what extent he or the Commonwealth could help. So that was going on certainly.

SO: I do know that on occasions when Mandela went to Natal and appealed for calm on both sides. There were sections of the ANC who felt that he was depleting his moral authority, that he was spending his political capital by appealing for moderation rather than keeping a united ANC stance against Inkatha.

SM: Yes, well that concern ran all the way through to the elections, didn't it? When the elections finally happened, there was, by Commonwealth

standards, a very big observer mission there for those elections. Whereas in the rest of South Africa, by and large, I think we felt the elections were free and fair. In Natal, I think many recognised that the niceties of the election were something else and that what the result there represented was some kind of political compromise. I think the Commonwealth observers there were pretty unhappy with what they saw and the travesty of the democratic process there; but it was recognised that there had to be some agreed result to give Inkatha its place in the sun. So these elections were not disputed.

SO: So, did the Chief play any particular personal role in his diplomacy of encouraging Chief Buthelezi to take part in those elections?

SM: Oh, yes, very strongly.

SO: So was he responsible in getting the Kenyan Professor, Washington J Okumu, there at the very last minute?

SM: Certainly Chief had many meetings with Buthelezi and his advisers. He also had meetings with forces on the right, including the Conservative party, with all sorts of people he was attempting to keep on board. Moses Anafu would certainly, on Chief's behalf, go and keep in regular contact with Buthelezi. I went up several times with Chief to Ulundi to see Buthelezi.

SO: How did Buthelezi respond to this Commonwealth mission?

SM: I think, on the whole, quite well. There were all sorts of suspicions. There were fears that the Commonwealth was too much in the pocket of the ANC. Equally, the ANC would have been suspicious about the Chief being too friendly with Buthelezi. But I think Chief was well aware that there had to be a meeting of minds on the key issues. After all, when finally South Africa came to the elections there were about five apparently insuperable obstacles to them holding those elections. One of them was the sheer logistics of getting a country – most of whose people had not voted before in their lives – to take part in a very complicated election.

One of the small technical imperfections of the recently-released Mandela film [*Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013)] was that it gave a very simplified view of what those elections were like. The film provided a glimpse of a polling station. Actually, it was immensely complicated: the ballot paper was huge because it had a large number of parties on it. There was this last minute negotiation about whether Inkatha would boycott the election, or whether Inkatha would fight. Then, once they agreed to stay in, there had to be a strip stuck on the bottom of the ballot paper to include Inkatha. That was a massive task. People worried about the timing of all this. Voters were certainly voting for the presidency and I think they were voting in three lots of elections, the presidency; the national parliament...

SO: And the province.

SM: …and the province. That meant that you couldn't expect a single voter to be out of the polling station under, whatever it was, six minutes or something. It couldn't be done, and of course the only way it was possible was because people threw out of the window any ideas of starting and finishing times. They just went on until it was over.

SO: Was the Commonwealth giving advice to the South African electoral commission in drawing up of the ballot, in voter registration, voter education, in preparation of the ballet paper? Or was that entirely a domestic process?

SM: I would need to refresh my memory, but I'm pretty certain there was technical assistance going in on all these issues. So often, it isn't just a case of deploying an election observer mission, there's a lot of activity going in…

SO: Absolutely. It's the preparatory work beforehand.

SM: A lot of people would say not enough, but certainly there was technical expertise going in. Then this was followed by the observer mission. But as I say, for a lot of people it was a miracle election because all these aspects, including the whole threat of a right-wing coup and right-wing violence. There were bombs going off and so on, a fear that…

SO: The very recent memory of the assassination of Chris Hani in '93.

SM: Yes. So in that respect it was a miracle.

SO: Did you stay in touch with Pik Botha? I know he was not involved in the constitutional negotiations, even though a lawyer, but before 1994 while he was still Foreign Minister? Certainly foreign governments were beating a path to South Africa's door, wanting to put up missions in South Africa, and as Foreign Minister, Pik Botha still had responsibility for the international dimension of South Africa emerging from its pariah status. Was Chief part of that process in any way?

SM: He was in touch with Pik Botha. There were regular exchanges with all the parties, as he attempted to exercise some influence for the better, yes.

SO: In terms of the Commonwealth and conflict mediation, South Africa is a remarkable success story with the Commonwealth as a significant, not overwhelming, but a significant contributory player. What about the possibilities of mediation in the Sri Lankan civil war because that was also becoming increasingly violent in the 1990s.

SM: Yes.

SO: Could your reflect on that?

SM: Yes, again I'd have to check the dates, but there was a window that opened. Chief certainly found that he was under a lot of pressure in the early '90s from certain Australian parliamentarians, because at that stage the Australian Tamil communities were rather more vocal than the Canadian. We now think of Canada as being a major source of Tamil lobbying, but initially it was Australia pressing for Commonwealth involvement in some sort of mediation. Chief of course rehearsed the familiar argument that the Commonwealth could only be involved with the consent of both parties. But he was working behind the scenes to see if he could be of help in this way. As he worked with President Kumaratunga, he got her assent to develop an initiative and he had a series of meetings with the Tamil Tigers, in Paris and in London. From that he developed some plans for Commonwealth mediation. The very first

steps would have been 'talks about talks', and it would have been in a neutral venue, below the radar. I think initially there was some talk of the UK being the venue. The initiative got quite advanced to the point that he was prepared to send emissaries to see the Tamil leader Prabhakaran in his HQ in the Vanni, northern Sri Lanka. That was about to happen; but the Red Cross needed written agreement from the LTT that we could have safe access, but in the end that was not forthcoming. The Tigers gave a verbal agreement, but the Red Cross would not facilitate the visit without the written consent of both sides, so it became too problematic.

What we didn't know at the time was that the initiative was widely known about in Sri Lanka and the Catholic Bishops in the north were very much behind it and were urging it on. I think had we realised then, and had the Commonwealth had more resources, one of the things that we could have done was to have established a presence on the ground, say in Jaffna, for liaison and for gathering local intelligence. Obviously, Chief was pursuing the approach in a highly confidential way, but it would have been, I think, very valuable to have some kind of related Commonwealth presence on the ground.

SO: Was he keeping a core group of Commonwealth heads informed of what he was doing? Or was he trying to be highly discreet and autonomous, and so was not in fact in touch with key Commonwealth leaders?

SM: He would have told the British because he needed to have some initial approval from the British to facilitate any such negotiations. In fact, I believe the British may have facilitated the talks with the Tigers that took place in London with the Chief, in terms of visas and so on. In principle, I think the UK government hinted that it would be willing to assist in terms of the UK as a location for any formal talks. Now, whether Chief talked more widely to other governments… It wouldn't surprise me if he talked to the Indians, given their position and previous involvement.

SO: The political vital necessity of India's involvement, given proximity and the whole question of flow of arms.

SM: Yes. Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated…

SO: He was assassinated in '91.

SM: …in '91. India had had a very directive involvement and a very painful involvement in Sri Lanka.

SO: Indeed.

SM: …which the Chief would have been sensitive to, I'm sure.

SO: Do you know if Chief had advanced discussions about particular Commonwealth funding for a permanent Commonwealth presence on the ground as a point of observation, as a mediation resource?

SM: It didn't really arise at the time and I think he would have probably needed some persuasion on that because he liked to play things very close to his chest. He would see this very much as a personal initiative that he wouldn't

want to talk about widely. So, he probably might not have been attracted by the idea of any kind of permanent presence on the ground, unless he could be persuaded that actually the initiative was more widely known about than he suspected. And that presence might have been dressed up in some different way: I think he would also have feared that he might risk losing control of the process if he had a presence on the ground, and anyway, the Commonwealth couldn't afford it.

SO: I was going to ask was it lack of funds that actually stopped this particular initiative? You said about the Red Cross required written confirmation from the LTTE of your safe conduct, but…?

SM: No, funds wouldn't have prevented us undertaking that aspect of the operation, but certainly funds would've been an issue if we wanted to set up an office for six months or a year. Like the operations in South Africa in Natal, it would have involved securing bilateral funding for that from sympathetic governments – probably the Canadians and the British. That would have taken the initiative away from the kind of very confidential area that he would have wanted. So, I can see why he would have needed to be persuaded of the value of it, and we certainly didn't get that stage.

SO: And there was no revival of the initiative during your time after that?

SM: Not after that, no, because the Norwegians took over and then the Norwegians were there for quite some while before that initiative failed.

SO: Did they in any way draw on your particular contacts or your experience to help them form any contacts, or was it an entirely autonomous peace initiative?

SM: I'm not aware of that. Whether Chief had any contact with Norwegian government I don't know; he may have done.

SO: Please, Stuart, if I could ask you as my last questions on conflict mediation and dealing with military coups: the Auckland Summit saw the emergence of the Millbrook Declaration and CMAG. How much had the CMAG idea been in gestation before Auckland? I have been told repeatedly that it was Mandela's outrage at the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa – his sense of moral affront at the Abacha regime's decision to ignore his personal plea for clemency – which was key at this particular Commonwealth heads of government meeting. But there must have been important preparatory ground work before Auckland on CMAG.

SM: Yes. Well, I think Chief Emeka felt at an early stage that something more was needed beyond the Harare Declaration. The programme for democracy that he had instituted had to be more than a basket full of carrots in that respect. There had to be a hint of a stick there as well and I think he was clear on that quite early on; but it was a question of when could that become a realistic proposition. He was certainly talking about a mechanism of some sort well in advance of the Auckland meeting. I know the British had their own views about it. It wasn't called CMAG, but I believe they talked about a committee or action group of some sort.

SO: With the Foreign Office? With Number 10?

SM: I think it was with the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office.

SO: Not the Cabinet Secretary, the Permanent Under-Secretary?

SM: I think so. He may well have talked elsewhere as well. Of course this was immensely sensitive because in his own country he was in the firing line and I think he was very courageous on this as well. It showed a lot of personal courage to pursue the principle regardless of what it might mean for him. Because, after all, Nigeria's departure from the Commonwealth – which was highly likely, in the light of their suspension – would have put his own personal position in jeopardy.

SO: Do you think it would have made his position as Secretary General untenable?

SM: I think it might have done, yes. I think technically he might have been able to carry on because the rule that we had in the Secretariat was that you served out your contract until its end. Then, if your country is no longer a member of the Commonwealth, you leave. I think in the case of a Secretary General, it would be very odd for a Secretary General from a country no longer in membership to continue. I would have thought it would have made his position untenable. For years I had a pre-prepared statement in my in-tray on Nigeria's departure from the Commonwealth, awaiting that eventuality, because we expected it at any moment. Nigeria is a big and proud country and to be suspended from membership and be treated in this way is not something that they would have treated lightly. After all, the Abacha regime was itself a very unpredictable and volatile form of governance which seemed to only operate at night time.

SO: In terms of drawing up the idea of a Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, you're suggesting that this was a cross fertilisation of ideas between Political Affairs, the Office of the SG and possibly the Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office? Or do you think there were separate drafts that were developed in different camps?

SM: The initiative would have very much come from the Chief himself. It wouldn't have originated in Political Affairs, though he would have got the Division involved. I certainly remember the drafting of the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme. That would have involved Political Affairs as well as the Office of the SG but the specific mechanism was something which I think the Chief kept pretty much under wraps; but he was insistent that the whole furore about Ken Saro-Wiwa and Nigeria's execution of the Ogoni Eight should be separated out from the question of establishing CMAG. So from my recollection, at the Retreat, first of all the question of the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme and the question of CMAG was agreed, and then the issue of Nigeria was addressed. I think that was the sequence.

SO: How much preparatory diplomacy did the Chief embark upon in the run up to Auckland to try and set the stage for the acceptance of a Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group?

SM: I think it was very significant. He always prepared for heads of government meetings very carefully with many bilateral meetings with heads of government. He would have had some of these meetings 'above the line', as

it were, and some of them would have been tête-à-têtes with the head concerned. It may well have been that he would have reserved something like this for 'below the line' discussion which the official record wouldn't reveal at all. It would be inconceivable for Chief to go to Auckland with a proposal like CMAG and not to have had substantial backing from all the major players. Though it still would not have been a 'done deal'!

SO: Do you remember any apprehension on his part that he wasn't going to be able to persuade heads of the need to endorse the CMAG idea?

SM: Yes, absolutely. I know that he felt that he was sailing close to the wind on this, but this is where paradoxically the whole Ken Saro-Wiwa tragedy was a bonus in that regard…

SO: It helped to make sure there was no opposition, but the preparatory ground work beforehand would also have been critical in leading up to heads' acceptance?

SM: Yes, it was critical, but it wasn't necessarily decisive and it was actually the behaviour of Chief Tom Ikimi, the Nigerian Foreign Minister, who at the Opening Executive Session behaved so boorishly. That, coupled with the terrible circumstances of the execution, made CMAG much more of a certainty. The execution of Saro-Wiwa was badly bungled.

SO: Yes it was.

SM: It was horrific, coupled with the fact that Ken Saro-Wiwa's son was present in Auckland and was trying to lobby for his father. As you say, Mandela felt that he had invested personal capital when pleading for Saro-Wiwa's life and then he felt betrayed. That was the thing I think that pushed heads firmly into the CMAG camp and that's why Chief's approach was to say, "Let's first of all deal with the principle of this mechanism. Then, once we've agreed the principle, we move on to how we deal with Nigeria." Mandela was initially leading the charge for Nigeria's expulsion, and not for anything short of that. But then heads invoked – I think Chief would have argued for this – the procedures in Millbrook that they'd just adopted and the idea of there being a substantial process of engagement thereafter. I think in the period from Auckland through to the caretaker administration and the return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999, there were something like sixteen missions or meetings. It was an intensive period of activity involving Nigeria. I'm not just talking about SG's meeting – these were CMAG or CMAG-related. It was a baptism of fire for CMAG, which was set up with Don McKinnon as the Vice Chair and Stan Mudenge as Chair.

SO: He was the Foreign Minister from Zimbabwe?

SM: Yes. That perhaps again is one of the ironies. I think, the work was very positive and of course the military coup in Pakistan was in '99, wasn't it?

SO: Yes, it was.

SM: I went on a CMAG mission there to meet Musharraf, the new military leader. Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian Foreign Minister, was leading the mission, and I was coordinating the Secretariat support team. We produced a report for the

Durban CHOGM on Pakistan. There was CMAG engagement with Pakistan, but nonetheless they were immediately suspended.

SO: Yes, they were. The coup took place on 12th October, CMAG suspended Pakistan six days later, on 18th October. That's pretty prompt.

SM: Yes.

SO: Stuart, I'm going to stop there. Thank you very much indeed. I'm really grateful.

[END OF AUDIOFILE PART TWO]