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VOICE FILE NAME: COHP Sir Shridath Ramphal (Part Two)

Key:
SO: Dr Sue Onslow (Interviewer)
SR: Sir Shridath Ramphal (Respondent)

PART TWO:

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SO: In your interview with me in 2007, I remember you describing your involvement in resolving the [Zimbabwe] land issue behind the scenes at the Lancaster House talks in 1979: your discussions with the American Ambassador, Kingman Brewster; his immediate contact with the State Department to get Cyrus Vance's agreement; and President Jimmy Carter's endorsement of unspecified American funding for land restitution. Do you feel that the advent of Ronald Reagan's presidency contributed to the unravelling of the Zimbabwe land story?

SR: Yes, of course. Because, had Carter remained, he might have even pushed Thatcher and Carrington in the direction that we had agreed. But that whole scene changed.

SO: Indeed. At the time, in 1980, did you have a conviction that the British Government would hold good to its promises? I know that Christopher Soames came back when he was Governor – after the election but before Independence – and was pressing people in the Treasury, and the Chancellor, Geoffrey Howe, saying, "We have to commit more to address Rhodesia/Zimbabwe's problems." I understand the Secretariat was encouraging this, arguing, "Forget this relatively small promised figure. They need a massive injection of funds."

SR: That's right.

SO: So, were you part of that lobbying process?

SR: Yes, of course. Because I felt I had persuaded – or helped to persuade – Mugabe to stay [in the Lancaster House talks in October 1979]…They were on the point of going!

SO: Yes, indeed.

SR: And Lancaster House would have been abandoned. And Carrington had his plan for that end; he would have negotiated with Muzorewa and Smith.

SO: He would have done, yes. The 'second best' option, it was called.

SR: Yes, that's right. So, I felt a personal responsibility, as it were. But I had grave doubts whether Carrington was going to fulfil his promises and, much less, go further. But Mugabe himself had bought into the promise. He believed things were going to happen, and he became this angelic figure to the whites – to the Foreign Office, to everybody.

SO: Sir, so much attention on Zimbabwe is identified with the persona of Robert Mugabe and yet he obviously was under pressure from his own party: from the radicals within ZANU-PF who wanted to go further, to go faster. So, he – to a degree – needed to 'ride the tiger', right back in 1980. There were those in ZANU-PF who thought they had power now. They needed control of the commanding heights of the economy to accelerate change, and the agricultural sector was a vital element of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe's political economy.

We identify very much the story of Zimbabwe since independence with the story of Robert Mugabe. Surely we need to look wider than that to understand why what happened did happen.

SR: He was pretty dominant. He won the war; he won the election. He was the father figure of independence. He was, by disposition, authoritarian. I don't think the others could have influenced him too much. Josiah Tongogara had passed on.

SO: Yes, he died in a car crash on 26 December 1979.

SR: Nathan Shamuyarira was not strong enough, politically. They all knew these things were happening, but there wasn't really any redistribution.

SO: So, what about the political problems in Zimbabwe after independence? The Commonwealth had invested so much into a successful Zimbabwean transition; hence the added joy of Zimbabwean Independence in 1980. But once the violence started in Matabeleland in 1983, were you in any way able to reach out to Robert Mugabe, to moderate the treatment of Joshua Nkomo's supporters?

SR: Robert distanced himself a little from the Secretariat.

SO: Did he now?

SR: He became the darling of the Foreign Office. He drew closer to Carrington, which was the British game plan anyway. So, we weren't able to exercise the same influence that we did during the struggle.

SO: Were you in any way trying to use discreet, quiet diplomacy to stop the violence in Matabeleland?

SR: Oh, we were. It began with, you know, what we tried to do when the Government was formed: try to keep Joshua involved. And we tried to persuade him to accept Mugabe's offer, but he was caught up with his own belief – which was wrong – that he won the election: that Britain had stolen the election result, that he was really the Father of the Nation [and] then this upstart has stolen it, all of which was really quite wrong. And Joshua was himself not free of his own game plan, because he would have joined into any kind of power structure that emerged without Mugabe from Lancaster House.

SO: Indeed. I know that British Foreign Secretary David Owen, for instance, had been trying to reach out to him in 1979, and [of] Owen's secret diplomacy to try to expand the Internal Settlement to include Nkomo. As you say, behind the scenes at Lancaster House, there were those in the Foreign Office who were thinking of getting rid of Mugabe, trying to drive a wedge between him and Joshua Nkomo, with a view to a Nkomo/Muzorewa deal. Richard Luce and Ian Gilmour, who were both members of Carrington's team, protested very strongly against this.

So, when you started to hear of violence in Matabeleland, the *Gukuruhundi* campaign, did you feel you could speak out? To say, "The Commonwealth is going to take a stand on this", or not?

SR: You know, we didn't, because we were becoming caught up in South Africa. There is a story – which I can't vouch for – that one influence on Mugabe was the ANC: that it did not suit the ANC for things to be going bad in Zimbabwe. Not 'bad' as between Joshua and Mugabe, but 'bad' as between the whites and Mugabe. In other words, that moratorium period on accelerated land reform suited the ANC, because that was the period of negotiation in South Africa. And the message [that] Mugabe may have been getting from the ANC was, "Cool it. We don't want this stirred up in Zimbabwe."

SO: "Cool it" on the land question? That I can understand, in the context of the early 1990s, once the ANC had been unbanned as a political party and [was] in negotiations with the NP government…

SR: Yes, and it was mainly the land.

SO: …but you feel that this was also a knock-on factor in the 1980s? Such that it influenced ANC attitudes to the news of what was coming out of the violence in Matabeleland?

SR: Yes. If you notice, the ANC didn't, as it were, intervene.

SO: But if they were focussing on their own struggle…?

SR: That's right, which is understandable.

SO: And if, indeed, it was believed that South Africa was behind what was going on in Matabeleland – with Super ZAPU and associated stimulated unrest – the logic then would be to keep the focus on the struggle in South Africa, from the ANC leadership in exile – from Oliver Tambo, from Thabo Mbeki. That has a logic.

I've wondered, Sir, given your extraordinary diplomatic, intellectual and emotional investment in Zimbabwe's Independence, whether you felt a particular commitment to make sure that Zimbabwe worked as well as possible.

SR: Yes, it was, but Mugabe made it difficult.

SO: Indeed, he did.

SR: As I say, he distanced himself from us. He became closer to Carrington – did you know that?

SO: I did. And I also know that, for instance, he permitted the British and the Americans to bug the Soviet Embassy when this was finally opened in Salisbury/Harare.

SR: Yes. It would be unthinkable of the Mugabe we know.

SO: I know, exactly. I think it was quite a revelation to some Americans and some of the Brits who had convinced themselves before 1980 that Robert Mugabe was close to Moscow.

Sir, I'm also aware that Sir Don McKinnon asked you if you could contact Mugabe when things started to deteriorate after the referendum and Presidential election in 2000.

SR: Yes, Don asked me to write him, and I did. I never got a reply.

SO: Did you not?

SR: I pleaded with him.

SO: I must admit, I have been asked by the LSE Africa programme to prepare an obituary for the eventual day when Robert Mugabe is no more.

SR: [*Laughter*].

SO: **I am going to take the line that this has been the tragedy of Robert Mugabe – as well as the tragedy of Zimbabwe – because I genuinely believe that.**

Sir, another question I have coming out of your book is this: given your emphasis as Secretary General on supporting post-Independence, nation-state building – supporting everything that young states needed – and on joining the Commonwealth, it seems to me that you fostered

diplomatic independence [and] support for bureaucrats where you could. You gave the lead on opposition to the apartheid state in South Africa. I was wondering why you didn't talk more about the Commonwealth and development. You obviously make express reference to your participation in the Commissions and the expert groups…

SR: Yes, the expert groups.

SO: Yes. And your membership and contribution to the Brundtland Commission, the Brandt Commission, and the importance of those Commissions in dealing with the challenges of the day that were not being addressed elsewhere because of the Cold War. It is excellent to have that detail. But I was also wondering about the Commonwealth and the Secretariat and development, on your watch?

SR: I thought I had looked at that in detail, actually. There certainly was no policy on my part to downplay this. I was anxious to get across that the Commonwealth was not just about Africa, that the development dimension was very big: all about the New International Economic order, the part that all the expert groups played. Maybe I didn't do it strongly enough in my book.

SO: Perhaps I was just greedy for more!

SR: [*Laughter*] Maybe. I was also conscious that, when you went deep into the development issues, a lot of their arguments were technical, and I didn't want to load it with technical stuff that the reader I was aiming for would find dull.

SO: Well, Sir, I understood you were writing to appeal to a wide-ranging audience – just as when you give a keynote lecture, you pitch it for a specialist audience, for those who have lived the experience, as well as to a generalist audience. It's very difficult to satisfy all who are going to read it.

SR: Yes.

SO: Please could you add more, now, on CFTC and its role? I am aware it had considerable autonomy in the Secretariat during your time…

SR: Now, I didn't regard CFTC as the heart of the development effort. The heart of that development effort was in the Economic Affairs Division, with people like Vishnu Persaud and Vince Cable…

SO: Yes, and Peter Marshall.

SR: Led by Peter Marshall. And the Commissions provided an opportunity for them to further ideas developed in the Secretariat in an international forum, like the work we did with the Brandt Commission. I don't know how much further I could have gone.

SO: As you say, so much of the work was technical and it was – to use a modern expression – 'slow burn'. The Secretariat seems to have been a real powerhouse for economic ideas…

SR: That's right.

SO: …for practicalities: the 'applied economics' approach of, say, Professor Mike Faber, rather than the theoretical economic, academic approach.

SR: Right. Maybe I didn't say enough about CFTC. Well, CFTC was that practical arm in which we helped countries, at the practical level. I would say. That may be relevant. But it does not reflect any lack of conviction, on my part, that CFTC was a very central feature of our work and a very successful dimension of our work.

SO: In that it was a key feature, did you work expressly to expand its activities?

SR: Yes.

SO: To boost its funding?

SR: Absolutely. I don't have the figures now, but it was the great day of CFTC – the great time of CFTC. I was conscious that, for many Commonwealth leaders, that's what the Commonwealth meant to them. When Ratu Mara could pick up a telephone and tell me he wanted a harbour master next week, and we could deliver it, because we could pick up another telephone and call Lee Kuan Yew and say, "Ratu Mara's in trouble. We need a harbour master. Can you get one?", and they did. That was the Commonwealth in action.

SO: You are emphasising the element of personal, high-powered networks for immediate delivery at point of need.

SR: That's right. And at the country level they then compared that with everything else: with the UN Agencies and bilateralism, things which took months and months. So, the Commonwealth was delivering in a practical way.

SO: So it was – to use more recent expressions – 'nimble'? It might have been relatively small scale in terms of multilateral aid, but it was the speed of delivery and flexibility that was key.

SR: That's right. I accept that: you're the first person to mention that to me, that maybe I could have said some more on CFTC.

SO: Well, Sir, your memoir was over 650 pages.

SR: [*Laughter*] Yes.

SO: So, there is a point when one's publisher says, "Stop!", even though you want to go on. [*Laughter*]

You say, Sir, that it was the heyday of what the Commonwealth meant. In the 1970s, it was the time of the independence of the 'Pacific empire' for Britain…

SR: Yes.

SO: Shortly after this, many smaller and micro states became independent. The debate about the New International Economic Order was under increasing attack from the World Bank – with the publication of the Berg Report – and from Thatcherism, Reaganism, and the associated international finance institutions' demands for 'rolling back the state': deregulation, the floatation of currencies, and privatisation. So, particular emphasis on the continuing need for development and development funds was under attack in economic discussions from a number of powerful financial quarters. Do you recall how you continued to fight this in the 1980s?

SR: Well, first of all, I dealt with this issue, this problem, in the chapter on 'The Other World' [in Shridath Ramphal, *Glimpses of a Global Life* (Hertfordshire: Hansib, 2014)] – all about McNamara and poverty, and all of that. I tried to deal with the small states dimension and the particular emphasis that the Commonwealth began to place on small states in the conclusion of the 'Grenada' chapter. But, really, what it boils down to on the Grenada issue was [the] vulnerability of small states and all of that, which continues to this day. So, that's what I would say to you.

SO: I was just wondering whether your championing of CFTC – its work and its funding – became more problematic as the international economic climate shifted?

SR: Not in my time. I think the waning of CFTC came afterwards.

SO: I know the High Level Appraisal Group which was launched at Kuala Lumpur – your final Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting which saw the selection of Chief Emeka as your successor – included the review of the working of the Secretariat. As Secretary General, Chief Emeka had the intention of bringing CFTC much more under his control within the Secretariat, which had not been your style.

SR: No.

SO: Please, could I ask you about Malcolm Fraser and Michael Manley's idea of a Common Fund?

SR: Yes, the Common Fund negotiations in Geneva?

SO: I am aware that Prime Ministers Fraser and Manley's Common Fund idea was to create a fund to help compensate for fluctuations in commodity prices. But there was also a Commodity Fund idea which was something rather different: [aiming] to intervene actively in the market to ameliorate price fluctuations.

SR: Yes, but they kind of got merged. You have to bear in mind [that] Malcolm Fraser was a sheep farmer. He understood commodities; he understood price fluctuations and so on. He understood a farmer's point of view. Michael Manley was seeing it in developmental terms. But they clicked, and they clicked in personalities, too.

SO: And over cricket, as well!

SR: I haven't said it in the book, but Malcolm Fraser went down to Jamaica [and] visited Michael Manley…

SO: He did, yes. They met at a 'mini-summit' on North-South issues at Runaway Bay in 1979, with the West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt.

SR: Yes, that's right. And this was among the things they talked about. But developing at the same time in Geneva was the larger international thrust for a Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) writ large. And I think the things merged later so that they didn't become a Commonwealth proposal.

SO: Okay, I see.

SR: But we worked very hard in support of the Common Fund negotiations. And the person who got drawn into that – and again, you know, I forgot to add this in my memoirs, but can now –…

SO: Please do.

SR: …was Pierre Trudeau. Pierre Trudeau actually angered his bureaucracy by responding to my entreaties to change the position of Canada in Geneva, to be more flexible.

SO: He went against his officials and his advisors?

SR: Well, he went against the Cabinet decision. They had had a Canadian position, which he changed, and they were very angry with me. [*Laughter*]

SO: Yes, I can just imagine the wrath of the Cabinet: they'd not been able to stamp on their Prime Minister!

SR: And that was really because he'd developed the conviction of Michael and Malcolm; it wasn't just that he bludgeoned into it. That was Trudeau. Trudeau was an intellectual. That was what the Common Fund argument was all about: this was the way out of poverty.

SO: So, why did that Common Fund for Commodities stumble and fall?

SR: Ah, that was the international community. That was the Americans. That was a bigger fight.

SO: Okay, so that was bigger fight?

SR: Yes. And it became ideological. It was a fight against Milton Friedman, monetarism and market forces. This was a big idea to create an international…

SO: This was intervention at a macro level…

SR: That's right.

SO: …which was designed to iron out fluctuations in commodity prices.

SR: That's right. So, it never really happened in the big way we wanted, but the ideas influenced a whole series of developments all around it.

SO: In what way did it influence developments around it?

SR: I think it influenced the whole development debate. [It] changed the climate of delivery. These big UN ideas – that so seldom get accepted as 'big ideas' – do infiltrate the thinking of the discussants in a whole variety of other ways and change the climate slightly. And it did change it. It was never the pure monetarist formula after that.

SO: So, the Commonwealth made a contribution to the amelioration of a hard ideological line?

SR: Yes.

SO: There is another question I would like to put to you, as a researcher. I'd like to suggest that, under your leadership, the Commonwealth manifest very much a Non-Aligned philosophy. I've done a lot of work looking at the struggle against white minority regimes in Southern Africa from a Cold War angle: the ideological debates, perceptions of the opposition, the role of the Soviet Union, the PRC, [and] Cuba. Having done this oral history project now for two and a half years, I've become increasingly conscious of how the Commonwealth, in its myriad forms, operated as a 'global sub-system', but deliberately outside of the Cold War environment.

SR: Yes, and it had to be so. After all, India was of the Commonwealth, and India was the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement. My own personal predilections were non-aligned, and I came to the Commonwealth almost straight from chairing the Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers meeting.

SO: In Guyana, in 1972. I saw the site of the meeting earlier this week.

SR: Yes, but it burnt down.

SO: Well, there's a space there in the middle of Georgetown with a big sign saying, 'The Non-Aligned Meeting'!

SR: Yes.

SO: I was looking for the huge palm-roof construction you described in your book.

SR: That's right. And, anyway, I've persuaded them to rebuild it, as it was [done] by the Amerindian tribe that had built it, and all that is going to happen.

SO: Good. So, the input of India, as you say, together with your own political background, your own philosophy, ensured the influence of Non-Alignment on the Commonwealth?

SR: And by then, the Cold War antagonism to Non-Alignment was abating. The Cold War was not as 'cold' in the 1970s and 80s as it was in the 60s.

SO: No, the 1970s was the period of détente, of course. But the Cold War was also starting to hot up in Southern Africa, with the disintegration of the Portuguese Empire in 1974-75.

SR: Yes, and, of course, PW Botha and the white community's stand kept the Cold War dimension going in Southern Africa. It suited them. The West would be more steadfast in its support if South Africa could be seen not in apartheid terms, but in Cold War terms.

SO: Well, the National Party leaders were convinced to their very bone marrow of the ideological justification of their policies.

SR: Yes, I know. I saw the beginning of the end of the Cold War in the Commonwealth, even before I went to the Secretariat, because…I think that you saw it in Singapore, in 1971, in the stand that Heath was making for this Simonstown Agreement and so on. But that was fading. Within a year or two, Wilson had actually scrapped the Simonstown deal.

SO: In 1974, yes. Sir, you mentioned India, the largest democracy in the Commonwealth. Please could I ask you to reflect on Mrs Gandhi and on India's attitude and policy towards the Commonwealth during your time?

SR: Well, I was always very conscious that a modern Commonwealth needed India and, in fact, if ever India was lost in the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth would be diminished. That is why, as you see in the book, I said [that], when the idea came up about my going to London, I talked to Mrs Gandhi. I wanted to talk to her: I wanted India on my side. And she was uneasy at first and then I said, "Well, you know, maybe we can do something."

SO: Her unease was because she felt that the Commonwealth was insignificant?

SR: She felt I was doing a great job with Non-Alignment and she had scepticism about the Commonwealth. So, she said, "Why are you leaving this winning thing to come here?" And I said that we can win here. We can make the Commonwealth something. And she reflected on it and she said, "Okay but, if you go there, you give it a good kick in the balls. It must be vigorous!"

SO: "Shake it up"?

SR: Yes, "shake it up, I tell you."

SO: Yes, those are the words in your book.

SR: And so, that helped me, that was enabling, and India turned out to be absolutely crucial.

SO: Reflected in your headhunting of Moni Malhoutra?

SR: Oh, that was it. [*Laughter*] That was very considerable. And that started at Kingston when I got elected.

SO: Is that where you first met him?

SR: That's right, at Kingston, where I was elected. I knew nobody in the Secretariat, no one, because I wasn't a frequenter in the Secretariat. I had the Government meetings as a foreign minister, but I didn't know the staff. I knew Patsy [Robertson], as a West Indian, and I said to Patsy in Kingston, when I was elected, "Tell me about the staff. First of all, tell me who you think is the brightest person?" And she said, "Moni." So, I said, "I must meet him." And I explained to her, "Look, if I'm coming here, I want bright people and I want them to be prominent. Is he here? I want to meet him here." So, I met Moni, I talked to him…

SO: So, he was part of Mrs Gandhi's entourage at the Kingston CHOGM?

SR: No, Arnold Smith had recruited him, just before.

SO: Ah, because I had believed that he was your appointment to the Secretariat.

SR: No, Arnold had recruited him. He had wanted to leave Mrs Gandhi's private office – which is what she had used him for, very wisely! So, he wanted a break from that. So, Arnold found him, recruited him, but not very long before [the 1975 CHOGM]. And he was languishing somewhere in the Secretariat, and I said to him at Kingston, "I hear all this about you and so on. I would like you close to me, in my private office." And I remember his reaction. He said, "Look, I fled from Delhi, from Mrs Gandhi's private office! [*Laughter*] I don't necessarily want to be in a private office." And I said, "All right, we will talk, but I'm glad you're there." You know, he'd been a Rhodes Scholar; he'd been at Balliol. He was brilliant...

SO: A brilliant mind.

SR: …and I identified him straight away as the kind of person we wanted. So, he agreed. I think he became Head of International Affairs Division, and then eventually I got him into the private office. And so, then, at the time of the EPG, he was head of the private office.

SO: Yes, his draughtsmanship of the Commonwealth's mission's report…

SR: Oh, it was marvellous.

SO: …together with Jeremy Pope.

SR: Jeremy Pope was the first person I recruited to the Secretariat. He came as Assistant Director and then he became the Director of Legal Division. And he was the Director of the Legal Division for all of my time.

SO: Was that because you identified a particular need for an expert in international or constitutional law? Or just legal drafting?

SR: Just for a good lawyer with good, legal liberal instincts, not a stick-in-the-mud kind of lawyer. And that Jeremy was.

SO: It seems that the calibre of appointments during your time as Secretary General was particularly very high. It was not simply leadership issues: it was also the calibre of appointments across the board.

SR: That's right. Do you know Peter Williams?

SO: I do, yes.

SR: Just brilliant. Getting people there was really crucial for advancing education. I knew that we had – and would always have – a very small bureaucracy. Therefore, we had to have the best. We were going to be few, but we had to be good. And I had no insecurity that would keep bright people away from me. I wanted them near to me, and I think that was part of whatever success I had at the Secretariat – having around me these people who were respected in their fields, who were activists and [who], because I was giving them their head, were happy in the Secretariat.

SO: Others have commented on the energy when coming to Marlborough House during your time, and the sense of pride in an institution, however small.

SR: I think one of the things that helped is that I would never ask anybody to do what I wasn't willing to do and join them in doing. I wasn't a 'boss', delegating these hard things to them. Yes, I was delegating, but I was willing to do the 24 hours I expected them to work, and I was willing to sit down and work with them and draft with them.

SO: But also, Sir, inevitably, in any organisation, there are going to be particular areas that draw your time and your attention, so some divisions, departments and units are necessarily on an outer…not an outer burner, because that implies they were of lesser importance, but just that there's only so much intellectual energy one individual can commit to various portfolios. Did you adopt a highly conscious way of identifying, "This is the prime focus of my work; this is my strategy. On other issues, I have appointed good people. I trust them to do an excellent job and to alert me when there are problems"?

SR: Yes, but it was a broad range that I interacted with. I mean, the Economic Affairs Division…I'm not an economist, but bear in mind we were arguing the case for development [on the world stage]. It was not only a particular thing, it was arguing in the international community.

SO: Yes.

SR: That McNamara is right.

SO: Sir, as Secretary General, you oversaw the creation of the first Women and Development post.

SR: That's right.

SO: I just finished interviewing Dorienne Rowan Campbell [appointed when Dorienne Rowan Smillie], which was a pleasure to do.

SR: Yes.

SO: How political was that appointment?

SR: Oh, very. We were responding to the mood, to the need. I myself was part of that sentiment that not enough had been done, and nothing was being done in the Secretariat except peripherally. And we had to be part of this, and we were lucky in getting her.

SO: Very, very lucky to get her.

SR: Yes.

SO: She is extraordinarily articulate, energetic and clearly highly adept at networking! When you say it was 'very' political, was there any particular group within the Commonwealth – among Commonwealth heads or bureaucrats – who were urging for this, against others who were resistant? I'm just wondering if you can remember where the impulse came from.

SR: I think it came from outside. Well, not outside, because we were part of that outside…It came from the environment. The argument was an international argument, and the Commonwealth was there for part of it. In all major Commonwealth countries, the women's movement was prominent, so there were all of those pressures. And I believed in it; people in the Secretariat believed in it. So, she didn't come to a hostile environment. I hope she didn't find it so.

SO: Sir, if it had been a hostile environment, she would not have been able to achieve what she did.

SR: No.

SO: Sir, if I could go back to asking you about India. I asked about Mrs Gandhi's particular attitude to the Commonwealth because she, obviously, was the Prime Minister of India when you became Secretary General. She was assassinated nine years later, and her son, Rajiv Gandhi, became her successor as Prime Minister before himself being assassinated in 1991. Mrs Gandhi, you indicated, placed most of her international political energies into the Non-Aligned Movement. How great was her commitment to the Commonwealth after you arrived there to start to 'shake it up'? Was she one of the key heads on whose advice you drew?

SR: Yes, I was close to her. I think she related to me. She was a very special kind of person. She was not effusive, but if she was with you, she was with you. And I think I have, by that personal relationship, [been able] to keep India with the Commonwealth. And that is going to be necessary now.

SO: Did you ever have the sense that she was withdrawing from the Commonwealth?

SR: No, no.

SO: So, there was no undertow of India's disengagement or contemplated withdrawal – comparable to what Michael Manley suggested in 1979, saying to a Soviet journalist that he was thinking of leaving the Commonwealth and emphasising instead the Non-Aligned Movement?

SR: Yes, well, that was typically Michael! [*Laughter*]

SO: Oh, he was given to those grandiose statements, was he?

SR: Yes.

SO: Were you ever worried about that?

SR: No, that was Michael. Mrs Gandhi drew closer to the Commonwealth. I persuaded her to have the Heads of the Government Meeting there [in Delhi in 1983]. I persuaded India to host the Commonwealth Games [in 2010]. Things that you wouldn't have taken for granted, given their distance.

SO: So, the fact that Mrs Gandhi hosted the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in March of 1983 and then, in October of the same year, hosted the Commonwealth Heads meeting…

SR: That's right. That said something.

SO: Indeed. At what point did you ask her if she would be prepared to host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting?

SR: Oh, it would have been a year…maybe a couple of years before. You see, one of the things I was very jealous of was the decision about the venue of a Commonwealth Heads meeting. And I guarded it because I felt that the venue of a Commonwealth Summit was a Commonwealth asset, which should not be left to the ambitions of Heads of Government or a particular Head of Government. It should be used to forward the interests of the Commonwealth. It was necessary, I felt, that India should host the summit meeting. So, it was never in my time a situation where you had a summit meeting and then you came to an agenda item where the next one would be, and somebody puts up their hand. It was not on the agenda. The Secretary General would, in consultation, over the next few months, develop the venue of the next meeting.

If you go through all of my summits, they were all in places that have a special meaning in terms of benefiting the Commonwealth. Now, I thought it was necessary that India identified at the summit level. I thought it was

necessary that India hosted the Commonwealth Games and brought the Commonwealth to India. I was conscious that India was not Nehru; Nehru had a close ownership and involvement.

SO: Indeed, it would have been a much smaller Commonwealth between 1949 and 1964: originally, a Commonwealth of seven nations.

SR: Well, precisely. Also, I didn't have arguments with India because India related naturally to the whole South African agenda. This dated back to [Mahatma] Gandhi in South Africa. India was one of the first to apply sanctions and things like that. So, there was never a problem. And Mrs Gandhi played her part, and then Rajiv. Rajiv was very prominent in Nassau and Vancouver [CHOGMs]. So, I had a good relationship with her, and I had Moni. I had all the access I wanted, behind and in the private office.

SO: So, when Mrs Gandhi declared the State of Emergency in India [from 1975-77], and there was that time of increasing political authoritarianism, did that in any way complicate your particular responsibility as the figurehead for the Commonwealth, as Secretary General?

SR: Not really. Not really. I didn't have the best of relations with her successor – Morarji Desai [of the Janata Party] - because he was sceptical about the Commonwealth. And the one time that some name emerged against me was under Morarji, and I forget the fellow's name, but it didn't get very far. And Indira made it clear that this was not her will – this was not her wish – and, of course, it would never have happened had she been Prime Minster. But, then, Morarji didn't last very long. [*Laughter*]

SO: And, as you say, that bid to put up an alternative Secretary General in the run up to the 1979 Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting hadn't been widely canvassed through the Commonwealth. It was obviously very much the product of Indian domestic politics?

SR: That's right.

SO: Given that there were considerable political tensions within India leading to the State of Emergency, was this something that you felt needed your particular contact with Mrs Gandhi? Or was this something that was a domestic issue within the Indian state, and it was not the responsibility of the Secretary General…

SR: I think it was the latter. I mean, you could be critical of the policy, but this wasn't a cause for the Commonwealth to take up.

SO: My question comes out of the challenges presented for your job by those various members of the Commonwealth going through periods of authoritarianism and one-party rule, periods of dissent and violence, despite pressing, understandably, for racial justice and universal political rights in South Africa.

SR: Yes, but Amin in Uganda…I took on Amin, and I didn't just take it on as an event, but tried to argue why the Commonwealth had the right and the duty to

intervene and to speak out. And, bear in mind, those were days when the UN never spoke out because of the Charter interpretation. It was the Commonwealth that really – with Uganda – broke the ice.

SO: **And those were the discussions you had at the Gleneagles retreat in 1977?**

SR: Yes.

SO: This was in conjunction with the Gleneagles Declaration and sports sanctions coming in?

SR: That's right. Because the international environment said, “Don't interfere, this is domestic,” and I tried to argue, “But we know the line is crossed - I don't know where the line is but it has been crossed in Uganda.” And they bought it, and they spoke out.

SO: Yes. Sir, as a lawyer, after all, one of the fundamental tenets of international law – embedded into the United Nations Charter – is sovereignty and associated non-intervention in a country's domestic affairs. This was the consistent and perennial argument by the National Party government of South Africa, claiming that they were abiding by the UN Charter…

SR: Right.

SO: Of course, South Africa had been one of the founder signatories, because of Smuts in San Francisco in 1945. How did you address that, as a lawyer?

SR: That it needed an interpretation which squared with the rest of the Charter, and in particular with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Yes, you had to respect it, but there were limits to it. There was a time when sovereignty could get so bad that it had to be trimmed. So it was in South Africa; so it was in Uganda. You know, and you could go…well, and the next encounter was Grenada.

SO: Indeed. So, in a sense, this is one of the antecedents of the doctrines that emerged by the end of the 1990s: of the responsibility to protect, and duty to assist?

SR: Yes, that's right. It evolved – and it evolved slowly – but it was consistent with what we were doing. I mentioned Grenada because that was particularly poignant for me, because it was in the Caribbean. There were people I knew closely. Before they intervened in there and all that, the Commonwealth was the first to go down to Grenada when they had the coup.

SO: In 1979?

SR: Yes, and I said, “This isn't on, this. Gairy was an ogre and all that, but you've got to regularise this. You have to have the election here.” And, of course, they rejected me. But that was the Commonwealth line, and I had many Caribbean countries against me.

SO: Before the interview started, I'd mentioned Rashleigh Jackson's recollection of the concern around the precedent that the New Jewel Movement coup of 1979 had set, as well as their relief that the 'ogre', as you put it, had gone. The first time in a Caribbean country…although, it was 'coup by radio'…

SR: That's right.

SO: I've also seen in Mrs Thatcher's papers [via the Margaret Thatcher Foundation website] the response from her Private Office to you, Sir, when you forwarded the Grenadian Government's letter…

SR: [*Laughter*] Right.

SO: …saying that they were acutely concerned that there was about to be an American invasion – this is the March-April of 1983 – and asking for British assistance.

SR: Right. Isn't that wonderful to have those documents now?

SO: It's terrific. But what is also disconcerting, with the benefit of hindsight, is the response of the British Government. Because you forwarded the letter, and…

SR: She scribbled in the margin, "Why did he do that?" [*Laughter*]

SO: Yes, she did indeed! And then the Foreign Office were sending messages back to Prime Minister Maurice Bishop, saying these acute concerns about a US invasion are "fanciful" – I apologise, but my father's name [Cranley Onslow] is at the bottom of that FCO letter! But the concern of the Grenadian Government that there would be a violent overthrow of the New Jewel government was very obvious and sincere.

SR: And [that's] why I spent so much time on Grenada in my book, because it reflected lot of things: the Thatcher-Reagan relationship…

SO: But also, Sir, [it reflected] what was felt about that relationship between countries within the Caribbean…

SR: Oh, yes.

SO: …and the broader context of the Cold War in the Caribbean from the viewpoint of those smaller states. When I was in Georgetown at the beginning of this week, I was reading newspaper reports on the Commission of Enquiry into the assassination of Dr Walter Rodney in 1980. There was lengthy reporting of the evidence provided by Robert Allan Gates, who seemed a rather questionable witness. Gates had given his statement to the Commission two or three days before, and what came through powerfully was his description of the concern among certain elements of the Guyanese security forces, his account of the autonomy of the particular unit within the police, the justification of "arms and ammunition" in the Joint Intelligence Command in

eliminating a radical politician and head of the Workers People's Alliance (WPA), who was on the extreme left. As I was reading, I was thinking, "This is really the climate of the Cold War."

SR: Yes, and, you know, Reagan was a 'Cold Warrior'; so was Thatcher. And it was probably easy for him to believe – if he did believe – that the Cubans were militarizing Grenada, which they weren't. But, if you're a Cold Warrior, it doesn't take a lot to believe that.

SO: Former Jamaican Prime Minister Eddie Seaga made reference to Cuban 'soldiers' firing at the landing American troops – saying that, when the Americans arrived, it was the Cubans who fought back, because they were all soldiers; they were not workers on the airstrip. I was thinking, "But wait! They would have done their compulsory military service as Cuban nationals on leaving school; they weren't 'soldiers'!"

SR: That's right! That's what all Cubans did. Oh dear! Seaga did not cover himself with glory over that.

SO: And he didn't come to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Delhi, either.

SR: No, he didn't. He dared not.

SO: Seaga said, "I needed to stay in the region. There were demands of national security."

SR: I don't know if he has looked at the Grenada chapters.

SO: Well, I don't know, but he was very keen, understandably, that I should read his book on Grenada.

SR: There are two books. [*Laughter*] He was locked into the inner group in Washington, and there, Tom Adams was his buddy. But here, they had begun to have a real fear of the radical movements, because those fellows used to talk wildly about overthrowing governments.

SO: There really seems to have been that perception: of being on the back foot. And the rest of it, as with so much of the Cold War, was conditioned by that climate of fear.

SR: Yes. And, you see, you take little islands – like here, Barbados, or St Vincent. If you have a little radical movement that is developing on a regional scale, and is talking about revolution, you are defenceless. And fear…

SO: Well, looking at police or the armed forces' numbers at the time, Barbados had the largest in the region – with 270 members in its defence force.

SR: [*Laughter*] Right. So, that played a big part in their reaction. You know, I think [their] reaction was bad and wrong and all that, but I know what forces played on them. And with Seaga urging, locking in to the Americans, and being able to say, "The Americans will do this for you, but you must give them cover."

SO: Sir, what was your former Prime Minister Forbes Burnham's particular approach? I understand that Belize, Trinidad and Guyana were all against intervention.

SR: [George Cadle] Price was a good man, but he had his own problems in Guatemala. In the Eastern Caribbean, it was Guyana and Trinidad – Burnham [in Guyana] and Chambers in Trinidad – who tried to make a stand, but…

SO: Were they on the phone to you straight away when the news of the invasion came through?

SR: Oh, yes. I was on the phone constantly – not only with them, but I was talking with people like Tom Adams and so on.

SO: Yes, I understand Tom Adams' own cabinet was divided. Dame Billie Miller confirmed this.

SR: Yes, that's right. But, well, it wasn't a good time.

SO: No, not at all.

SR: You didn't go to Grenada, then?

SO: **Sadly, no. But the project funds, sadly, don't stretch to this.**

SR: I wouldn't know who to tell you to talk to in Grenada now…

SO: It's been thirty years since Operation Urgent Fury.

SR: And they are still very confused.

SO: Indeed, it was a very large rock to drop into a small pool.

SR: Yes, but, the thing about writing – and writing as late as I did – was the benefit of the thirty-year rule [on the declassification of documents]. I've actually seen the US Army report on the operation in Grenada.

SO: Sir, I wanted to ask you about this. I have a little note saying that you used documents from the Thatcher archives, under the thirty-year rule, but that you wouldn't have seen [these documents] at the time.

SR: No.

SO: I'm fascinated by how you tell your story in your memoir, because any memoir is retrospective, yet you would not have been privy to these inner discussions in Whitehall or in Thatcher's Cabinet office.

SR: Well, what those documents did, really, was to confirm all we thought at the time. I mean, we thought Thatcher was locked in with Botha, and we could have said that, but not until you see the letters.

SO: So, your usage of these documents in your book is to illustrate that these prove to be later confirmations of your beliefs at the time?

SR: Yes.

SO: I would like to ask you…As a lawyer, though, is there a problem of thinking, "Yes, I believe I thought that," or, actually, "Goodness me, that causes me to revisit what I believed at the time." Were there any revelations in those documents, once you got hold of them? Which prompted you to think, "I don't remember that particular conviction"?

SR: Not really. They were a confirmation. Sometimes there were indications that it was really worse than I thought it was. I think that initial letter by PW Botha was striking: the long letter he wrote to her on [the] strategy of Apartheid.

SO: Now, let's think…He wrote her a long letter on the strategy of apartheid in February of 1980: is that the one you're thinking of?

SR: [*Laughter*]

SO: No, I remember, because I've looked at it. At that point, PW Botha was reaching out to Thatcher – just at the time of Zimbabwe's transition to independence, after the Lancaster House settlement. The letter was written during the election campaign period, before the actual elections, because he wanted a united stand in Southern Africa. And, actually, if you look at all of the British notes, Carrington was warning Thatcher to be careful with this one, and to proceed with extreme caution. And Thatcher was listening to her Foreign Secretary at this particular moment. She was a relative novice in international affairs, and was focussing principally on the economy. It's very interesting to see how the British were calculating to send Lord Hunt as a trusted but relatively low-key emissary down to South Africa after the Zimbabwe elections.

SR: Yes, one of the things that emerged more clearly for me was the complex nature of Thatcher's personality. You know, I may have said it there: she was more than one person.

SO: Do you think it was a case that she presented different sides of herself, as we do as human beings?

SR: Yes.

SO: Or, perhaps, that she actually had this complex persona in every situation, despite her well-known combative carapace?

SR: And many things played in, you know. She might work out the Cabinet position but then you get into a situation, like in Rhodesia. Then, all kinds of forces begin to enter the picture – like the Queen and Malcolm Fraser and the Church – and how does she react? And she sometimes, in those situations, reacted differently; unpredictably. And I think she was a little unpredictable to Carrington, as well.

SO: Oh, yes. He used to describe his debriefing sessions with Thatcher during the Lancaster House talks as his 'other negotiations'.

SR: Yes. [*Laughter*] And that was part of British politics. He was not loved in the right wing of Tory party.

SO: I know. He went to the Conservative Party Annual Conference in October 1979 and there were banners in the hall saying, 'Hang Carrington!' Indeed. Although, Julian Amery – his most fearsome critic from the platform – then shared a carriage with Carrington back to London and they drank some wine together. So, that's British politics!

SR: That's British politics, yes. But I think he promised her a result other than Mugabe. His whole handling of the Lancaster House Conference…

SO: Well, it's interesting you should say that, Sir, because I've read elsewhere that Lord Carrington was more pessimistic about the outcome of the Lancaster House negotiations. Although, as things developed, he felt that these negotiations were acquiring their own momentum, which is an important thing in negotiations. But that Thatcher, in contrast, was more positive, in the sense that these negotiations would work and win through. Obviously, this sense was not something either Thatcher or Carrington conveyed to you…

SR: I think that was what he conveyed to her.

SO: There was a lovely description, recently, from Michael Heseltine, talking about Mrs Thatcher, in which he said, "There is an extraordinary gap between what Mrs Thatcher thought and said, and what people thought she thought and said." And I thought, "That's a beautiful summary!" It goes back to your point about complexity.

SR: Yes, very complex.

SO: Sir, do you think overall, then, that she was a Commonwealth asset in a strange way?

SR: Yes, in a strange way, because she made it happen.

SO: But was she a Commonwealth asset…

SR: Well, to say a 'Commonwealth asset' implies too much.

SO: I'm trying to be provocative here, because there's so much negativity attached to her because of South Africa, and yet…

SR: Yes. No, you can't say she was a Commonwealth asset.

SO: She was also arguing for PW Botha to accept the Eminent Persons Group. If it hadn't been for her, PW Botha would not have allowed the Commonwealth mission to visit the country at all.

SR: Yes, allow them to go? Yes, because that was their answer…She needed that to stave off sanctions. The burden of the argument coming at her from Australia, from Canada, [and] from India on sanctions was considerable. The EPG held that. So, getting the EPG to be accepted by South Africa was very important to her. You know, she didn't expect it to come out the way it did. Yes, she persuaded Botha to accept it, but for her own reasons. It was very important to her.

SO: She also came to Kuala Lumpur arguing that the Commonwealth could start rolling back sanctions because Walter Sisulu had been released, as had others. Although Mandela, of course, was still a prisoner.

SR: That's right, and that's why she kept urging Botha to release Mandela. That wasn't the end of Apartheid.

SO: No, indeed. It was the beginning of the negotiations.

SR: Right. And so, yes, she did do that – but in that context.

SO: I'm not saying that she was driven by altruism – far from it.

SR: [*Laughter*] No. Actually, she still in her mind regarded Mandela as a terrorist – after the EPG. And I've said it.

SO: It's interesting. I've looked at that press release from the Vancouver press conference, which must have made her officials just tear their hair out. And, when the reporter said the ANC have announced that they would target British-owned companies in South Africa as a legitimate target, Thatcher's response was, "Well, if they say that, then the ANC is a typical terrorist organisation." She never actually said, "Mandela is a terrorist."

SR: [*Laughter*] Yes.

SO: With the benefit of hindsight, it seems to me that she was certainly a lady who would *not* be told, and who was being wound up by the press.

SR: Yes. But I think in her mind – forget Mandela - she never got rid of the notion that the ANC was a terrorist organisation. And her concept of terrorism was the IRA. The IRA influenced her thinking enormously, and you can understand why.

SO: Totally. Those were the lenses through which she saw another three-letter organisation.

SR: That's right. "Yes, they're just like the IRA," is what she told me. And I'm saying, "They're not. Think of them as partisans, think of Yugoslavia. You know, the British public have embraced them because they're fighting for their freedom. That is what these people think they are doing. They're not terrorists." "Of course they're terrorists. They're just like the IRA."

SO: Did she also make the connection with the PLO?

SR: No, no. I don't remember that.

SO: Okay, that's interesting. Because I have heard it said that Mrs Thatcher had a fundamental loathing of all three-letter political organisations – [*Laughter*] ANC, IRA and PLO. But the direct domestic analogy was understandable.

SR: That's the one she made to me. I mean, in another context, she might include the PLO, but…

SO: No, but that is highly specific in the context of the ANC.

SR: Yes, and I understood the IRA thing, because it was so central to her reality: attempts on the Cabinet and all that.

SO: Well, you were living in London. Margaret Thatcher's great friend and political adviser, Airey Neave, was blown up on the ramp of the car park at the House of Commons, in the run up to the 1979 election. And then there was the attack at the Conservative Party Conference in Brighton, where she was nearly killed, and friends of hers were. Actually, my father was on an IRA hit list in the late 1980s, and he had to have 24-hour police protection.

SR: Really. Well, he would have been.

SO: And I remember staying with my parents when my son was tiny, running downstairs in the middle of the night, and there were three men sitting round the kitchen table. They put down their assault rifles on the table and I said, "Er, wait a minute…", and they said, "No, no, it's fine. We'll take the baby." [*Laughter*]

SR: Really. [*Laughter*] You had some protection.

SO: Well, my father had to. I had to check under the car every morning if I was staying there. It became very normal.

SR: Well, I understood her IRA thing. And the other thing is, Mrs Thatcher never knew South Africa. You know? I was sorely tempted to say what I have often said: the degree to which she was influenced by the 'pillow talk'.

SO: By Denis Thatcher? Indeed.

SR: Who knew South Africa well, who…

SO: Well, he knew a type – a version – of life in South Africa. He didn't know the full, appalling reality of apartheid for black South Africans.

SR: That's right, no, he didn't. And there's that guy who's so close to Charles…

SO: Oh, Laurens Van der Post.

SR: Those were the lenses. But, you know, you have the other peculiarities. She was many people. It was Margaret Thatcher who nominated me for a second and third term.

SO: Indeed, she had a very high regard for you as an effective Secretary General, hence the signing of the photograph…

SR: Right.

SO: …and the lunch that she gave you before you stepped down, that you talk about in your book. She was a generous political adversary, a generous politician.

SR: Yes. But that is not how she would be generally regarded! [*Laughter*]

SO: No, indeed. It's the dichotomy of Thatcher, the Iron Lady, hitting people with her handbag, her increasingly authoritarian style in Cabinet, compared with her enormous sensitivity and private kindness to her staff.

SR: At that dinner – and my wife tells me, or reminds me, all the time – she reached out and held her hand all through my speech, and said to her, "Family is so important." That was the other Mrs Thatcher.

SO: Yes, as you say, that was the other Mrs Thatcher. Sir, please, could I ask you about Dr Mahathir and his changing attitude towards the Commonwealth? Earlier you made reference to the importance of hosting the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the Commonwealth Games…

SR: Yes, well, I take a lot of credit for his change. I spoke to him at great length. I was very anxious to bring Malaysia into the Commonwealth. It was a Commonwealth member, but Mahathir was more sceptical than Trudeau was, in the beginning.

SO: Really?

SR: Very sceptical.

SO: Do you know why?

SR: Nothing in particular.

SO: Do you think he remained convinced – erroneously, it must be said – that it was, to a degree, a 'British' Commonwealth? The beginning of the 1980s was a time when there was, of course, intense animosity towards the British over the student visa issue: the 'Buy British Last' campaign, landing rights…

SR: I think there was that, and I think he was slightly anti-monarchical and translated this into the Commonwealth.

SO: Dr Mahathir had had a particular personal experience of British colonialism, given his age and his own personal background.

SR: Right. And, for all that, I was very keen. And I argued with him.

SO: When did you argue?

SR: Before the Malaysia meeting [in 1989]. Because my object was to try to get a summit in Malaysia. That's what I meant by saying to you [that] I saw the venues as an asset, and that was the asset: to get Mahathir to hold a meeting. Now, here's a great sceptic. He really doesn't believe in it, and I'm telling him, "I understand all the problems you have with the Commonwealth. Change it. Have a hand in doing something about it, not sulking."

SO: "If you want to change it, get inside and change it"?

SR: "And to do that, you host the summit. You run the summit." And he did. He rose to the challenge. And then, as it went along, he began to see advantages in hosting the summit. He held a retreat at Langkawi, which was his constituency. He developed this huge conference complex there, and it was a brilliant summit.

SO: Indeed, and the Langkawi Declaration that came out of it: he was determined it was not going to be a single issue summit on South Africa…

SR: That's right.

SO: And he had to manage the election of the next Secretary General.

SR: Yes, that's right. And, you know, from there on, he and his wife – his wife played an important part in it – were enthusiastic hosts. They held a sing-song at their retreat, led by the two of them. They are both doctors.

SO: So, how long was this campaign by you to acculturate Dr Mahathir to the advantages of the Commonwealth?

SR: Well, certainly two years.

SO: He made the offer to host the Commonwealth Games at the Vancouver CHOGM; that I know.

SR: Because, by Vancouver, he'd got turned on.

SO: Yes. Were you aware that he had also requested a briefing document from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Malaysia and from ISIS – which was his independent think-tank – on the benefits or the disadvantages of Commonwealth membership?

SR: I don't think so, no.

SO: Both documents argued that, on balance, it was to Malaysia's advantage to remain in the Commonwealth.

SR: Now you mention it, I seem to recall…I seem to recall the ISIS contents.

SO: Yes.

SR: Yes. But they were good: I admired the Malaysian Civil Service and the Foreign Ministry.

SO: Mahathir was certainly assisted by a small, high calibre team…

SR: Oh, yes.

SO: …[including] Kamil Jaafar, Musa Hitam and Razali Ismail.

SR: Musa was an ally, because Musa Hitam had been the Chairman of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

SO: Ah, yes.

SR: And there's much store by that. So, in a sense, he was a Commonwealth man, and I knew I had him on my side.

SO: Razali Ismail was another key Malaysian diplomat who went to New York as their Permanent Representative [to the United Nations]. I know that these figures were very important contributory influences, with whom Dr Mahathir would discuss his foreign policy and use as his sounding board.

SR: Over that period, Mahathir became – and very much through the Commonwealth and through all that we were talking about – very much a man of the South.

SO: Yes, and it's interesting to see how ASEAN also started to gain a degree of solidity and functional cooperation with the creation of their Secretariat. There appear to have been echoes of the way that the Commonwealth's bureaucracy was structured and behaved, even if the Commonwealth was not used as a deliberate template.

SR: And, you see, Mahathir began to interact with people like Nyerere – particularly Nyerere – and Kaunda. So, Malaysia, which had always been a little distant from these things, became, under Mahathir…

SO: I've been told that: that he was very much reaching out to African brothers…

SR: Oh, yes.

SO: …and that the Commonwealth provided a platform for Malaysia to reach out towards a relatively unknown continent, but one that for Malaysia could prove advantageous.

Sir, with your benefit of the long view, what do you feel about the future of the Commonwealth now?

SR: I'm troubled now; it's true – very troubled. I think it has lost its way. I mean, my years, in a sense, were lucky because I had a cause.

SO: You did, with development and the struggle against apartheid. And you had a high value media cause.

SR: Right. I think the Commonwealth could have a cause – could have causes – and fight for them and pursue them, but it seems to have lost [its] fight. So, I am troubled, and the choice of the next Secretary General is going to be absolutely crucial.

SO: Yes, Sir, it is.

SR: And I don't know where it's going, really.

SO: It seems that the Secretariat is a whisper of its former self.

SR: [*Laughter*] Yes, it is always hard for me to concur in that, but…

SO: Well, the physical size of it…It's a much smaller organisation than it was in your day. There has been a dramatic contraction in the number of personnel, and…

SR: In the number and in the quality.

SO: Indeed. It's diminished in a number of ways. It's not just a question of the size of the bureaucracy.

SR: No, I know. It's a hard discussion for me always, because so many people talk about it. "Oh, well, we had the glory days." But it is bad. And to me, because I really do believe that it is a global asset, it diminishes the global nature [of the organisation]. I was very moved when Kofi Annan did the endorsement of my book – it's just two lines there, but what he implied about the importance of the Commonwealth, as he saw it from the Secretariat, the UN…

SO: Yes, and, of course, he was a long-standing UN official…

SR: And, as a Ghanaian, you know, I suppose he saw the Commonwealth in larger terms.

Well, it's a very important thing you're doing.

SO: It's been a privilege to do this interview project, Sir, it really has. I'm lucky enough to have talked to an extraordinary range of people who've made a difference, and each of whom is a fascinating personal study.

Sir Sonny, thank you so much indeed for a wonderful discussion. I am very grateful indeed.

[END OF AUDIOFILE PART TWO]