

**AFRICAN ROLE IN THE COMMONWEALTH
(1957-1979)**

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PREFACE

The transformation of the Euro-Afro-Asian Commonwealth has been so rapid that it eludes a proper understanding of its nature.

The Commonwealth has acquired a new look during the past decade. The Africanisation of the Commonwealth in 1960s brought about inner contradictions on the issues of decolonization and racism. Yet the multi-racial and multinational Commonwealth showed great resilience. The contemporary Commonwealth has forged new links in the direction of voluntary co-operative endeavour in the sphere of socio-economic development.

Sir Keith Hancock, Nicholas Mansergh, Kenneth Robinson, Patrick Gordon Walker and M. S. Rajan are the pioneers in the field of Commonwealth studies. But the role of the African members of the Commonwealth and their impact on the nature and forms of Commonwealth activity have not been studied in depth. The only study in the field was made by Ali A. Mazrui in his book Anglo African Commonwealth: Political Friction and Cultural Fusion (Oxford, 1967), but the study is out of date now as its scope is limited to developments upto 1966 only.

The present dissertation makes an humble effort in this direction. Some of the dimensions which have been studied include - African entry into the Commonwealth and South Africa's

exit from it, Rhodesian crisis and the problems arising out of the expulsion of Asians from East African countries, the institutional transformation of the Commonwealth and the role of the Commonwealth conferences, specially at Lagos, Singapore and Lusaka.

The present study is based mainly on secondary sources including books and periodicals. It is, however, felt that a comprehensive study cannot be properly undertaken without reference to the primary records of the Commonwealth Secretariat and field study in some of the African countries. The researcher looks forward to such a fruitful study as and when resources and opportunities are forthcoming.

A dissertation of this nature could not have been completed without a great deal of help and advice from various sources. I am grateful to Prof. Anirudha Gupta, my Supervisor, without whose inspiring guidance and painstaking supervision at every step I could not have succeeded in submitting this dissertation. He has contributed much to my understanding of the various facets of the African Commonwealth. I thank the Librarians of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Council of World Affairs, Nehru Memorial Library, the Indian Centre of Africa of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations who provided me free access to their respective libraries.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND: TRANSFORMATION OF EMPIRE INTO COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS

The transformation of the British Empire into a Commonwealth of Nations was brought about partly by conviction and experience but mostly by the force of circumstances. The evolutionary process of transformation was based on continuity rather than change. There was, as a consequence, no dividing line between the Empire and the Commonwealth, but there was a long process of transition during which the two existed side by side. The continuing association of the Commonwealth with the Empire was not due to an overall conception, but was the product of time and circumstances. Patrick Gordon Walker rightly observes, "There could have been no Commonwealth, had not there been a British Empire. Equally there could have been no Commonwealth but for the negative withdrawal and transformation of British imperialism".¹

'Empire' and 'Commonwealth', both the terms were, therefore, used loosely for more than half a century, sometimes synonymously though the two concepts are antithetical. As early as 1884 Lord Rosebury described the British Empire as a 'Commonwealth of Nations'.² The description was, however, misleading because the Empire was highly centralized and was the

1. Patrick Gordon Walker, The Commonwealth, (Secker and Warburg, London, 1968), p. 15.

2. Nicholas Mansergh, The Commonwealth Experience (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969), p.19.

government of men by a superior authority. But the statement took account of the fact that the white colonies were growing towards self-government. Afterwards the term 'British Commonwealth of Nations' was used to designate the group of units comprising Britain and the 'Constitutional Colonies' which were spoken of as 'sister nations'. Lord Milner spoke of the 'Self-governing Empire' and the 'Dependent Empire'.³ He made a distinction between the self-governing communities of European blood such as United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and the coloured communities of Asia and Africa which enjoyed some measure of autonomy but were mainly subject to the government of U.K. In 1907 the term 'Dominion' was adopted for the white colonies.⁴

At the Imperial War Conference of 1917 Sir Robert Borden of Canada spoke of the 'Imperial Commonwealth of United Nations' and General Smuts of the 'British Commonwealth'.⁵ In legal parlance the term 'British Commonwealth of Nations' made its first appearance in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921.⁶ It was reaffirmed in the Balfour Report of 1926.⁷ The period 1926-1981 may be described as a

3. H. Victor Wiseman, Britain and the Commonwealth (Allen and Unwin, London, 1967), p.12.

4. If a single year is sought as the birth date of the Commonwealth, 1907 will serve as better than any other. The term 'dominion' was adopted by the Colonial Conference to describe the self-governing countries of the Empire.

5. Mansergh, n.2, p.21.

6. Ibid., p.22.

7. Ibid., p.27.

constitutional plateau as the 'British Empire' quietly gave way to the 'British Commonwealth of Nations'. The term 'British Commonwealth of Nations' was used in the Statute of Westminster (1931). By usage the term 'Empire' came to be reserved for the 'Non self-governing territories'. Sir Kieth Hancock used the term 'Empire' to describe the 'whole of what had been the British Empire', but saw the 'Commonwealth' as the end sought and the 'Empire' as the developing organism whose nature was to become the 'Commonwealth'.⁸

The term 'Empire' was largely discarded after the Second World War. There was less talk about imperial cooperation in the Second than in the First World War. With the accession of Republican India to the Commonwealth of Nations the voice of non-European anti-imperialism began to be heard persistently in the councils of the Commonwealth. By 1950 the term 'dominion' was discarded. There emerged the more flexible term 'member of the Commonwealth'. The adjective 'British' was dropped and the organization came to be known as the 'Commonwealth of Nations' or simply the 'Commonwealth'.

In order to facilitate the study we may consider the evolution of the Commonwealth in three phases. It should, however, be noted that this is only a broad division and one period overlaps with another. (1) The first phase started with the Durham Report (1839)

8. J. D. B. Miller, The Commonwealth in the World (Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., London, 1958), p. 58.

and ended in 1940s. It was the stage during which the white dominions achieved equality of status with Britain, the mother country. (2) The second phase opened with the achievement of independence by India and Pakistan in 1947. Asian membership led to the transformation of the erstwhile British Commonwealth. The Asian dimension brought about a comprehensive change in Commonwealth concepts and practices during the decade 1947-57. (3) The third phase opened with the accession of Ghana to the Commonwealth in 1957. Thereafter the Commonwealth became a multi-racial and multi-national Euro-Afro-Asian Commonwealth.

The First Phase - From Empire to Dominion Status

The nineteenth century was the Augustan Age of the British Empire. It had colonies of settlement as well as conquered peoples of different races under its sway. Whereas the conquered peoples in the last resort were governed by the sword, the British settlements were not held by force. Self-interest and expediency prompted the mother country to transfer responsibilities of domestic government to the colonies. Every colony was treated as an entity with its own local government. This encouraged nationalism, democracy and rule of law. Canada led the way to set a pattern for the establishment of self-government in the colonies of settlement. The proposals of the Durham Report (1839) became widely acceptable as the basis of the Commonwealth. "The establishment of responsible self-government and the Cabinet type of government would eliminate friction

between the colonies and the mother country. A new era in the colonial policy of nations, thus, began with Lotd Durham's Report".⁹

The principles enunciated in the Durham Report were adopted in the Australian colonies. New South Wales achieved internal self-government in 1853; Tasmania and Victoria in 1855; South Australia in 1858; Queensland in 1859 and Western Australia in 1890. The Six formed the Federal Commonwealth of Australia in 1900 having agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown of United Kingdom. Newzealand became a self-governing colony in 1855 and achieved dominion status in 1907.

In South Africa the Cape Colony became self-governing in 1872 and Natal in 1893. After the South African War responsible government was restored to the Boer Republics of Transvaal in 1906 and to Orange Free State in 1907. The constitution of the Union of South Africa as shaped in the Conventions (1908-09) aimed at the fusion of two races and cultures. The four units formed the Union of South Africa in 1909 as contemplated by the South Africa Act 1909.

The growing importance of the self-governing colonies was recognized in 1907 when they were officially granted the special name of 'dominions' and provided with a special means of

9. J. S. Mill, "Representative Government" in Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government (London, 1910), p. 877.

expression in the Imperial Conferences. It was resolved at the Colonial Conference 1907 that the countries represented must be self-governing and that they should meet every four years to discuss common problems.¹⁰ The first Imperial Conference held in 1911 was followed by a series of such meetings between the Prime Ministers of dominions. Questions of common interest were discussed and considered as between His Majesty's Government and His Governments of the self-governing dominions beyond the seas.¹¹

The dominions had no independent role in foreign affairs. The British Empire was assumed to be a single entity in international law. The British decision to go to War in 1914 was taken without any consultation of the dominions and involved them automatically in the War. King George V declared War on behalf of the whole Empire on the advice of the Cabinet of the United Kingdom. In practice, however, the dominions determined the extent of their own participation.¹²

The First World War fostered national aspirations in the dominions. The War provided new opportunities to the dominion Prime Ministers to act as significant figures on the British

10. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom acted as the ex-officio President and Prime Ministers of self-governing dominions ex-officio members of the Conference.

11. I. N. Compston, ed., The Growth of British Commonwealth 1880-1932: Documents of Modern History (London, 1973) pp. 19-20.

12. Mansergh, n.2, p.166.

political scene. As the report of the Imperial Conference of 1917 recorded, "The feeling continued to grow that in view of the ever increasing part played by the dominions in the War, it was necessary that the governments should not only be informed as fully as possible of the situation but that as far as practicable, they should participate on the basis of complete equality in the deliberations which determined the main outline of imperial policy."¹³

The dominions were accordingly invited to meet at an Imperial Conference in the spring of 1917. Its proceedings were remembered for the debate on the future constitution of the Empire. An Imperial War Cabinet was formed for the conduct of War and definition of peace aims in their imperial aspect. In the War Cabinet Prime Ministers and other representatives of dominions met the Prime Minister and other ministers of U.K. Cabinet as equals.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed by the U.K. government for the British Empire. During the peace negotiations representatives of Great Britain, the dominions and India formed the British Empire delegation to decide a common policy at the Conference. The dominions signed the Treaty on their own behalf. The U.K. represented the British Empire in the League of Nations, while the dominions sat and voted separately. Equality of status came to be recognized as the basic principle governing inter-imperial relations. The Anglo-Irish Treaty signed on 6 Dec 1921

13. Miller, n.8, p.40.

was a landmark in the history of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Dominion status was confirmed by the Treaty, for the first time, on a country which was not in origin a colony of settlement and had not progressed by stages towards the politico-constitutional relationship with Britain.¹⁴

Dominion status itself lacked precision. It was conceived of as something in the process of continuous development; it did not possess final form at any given point of time. There was accordingly strong pressure from Ireland, Canada and South Africa for a clear statement of the constitutional status of the dominions. The Report of the Committee on the inter-imperial relations set up by the Imperial Conference of 1926 with Lord Balfour as the Chairman made explicit the principles on which the British Commonwealth had so far rested. The Report was adopted by the Imperial Conference. The dominions were spoken of as "autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations".¹⁵

In essence the Balfour formula amounted to a declaration that the two roles of the Crown as the symbol of the territorial

14. The Treaty did not, however, solve the Irish problem because Ireland sought independence and recognition of a separate national identity whereas dominion status was not compatible with republican status.

15. Mansergh, n.2, p.104.

sovereignty of the members and as the object of an undifferentiated common allegiance were inseparable. The dominions were within the Empire but not of it. The formula helped to shape the pattern of the future developments in the British Commonwealth of Nations. Equality of status of the dominions was recognized, though in practice Britain would remain the dominant partner during the transitional period in matters of defence and diplomacy.

The Statute of Westminster 1931 gave legal effect to the Balfour Declaration. The Preamble of the Statute closely associated the dominions which were listed therein by names with the British Commonwealth of Nations.¹⁶

The dominions were given power to make laws with extra-territorial effect. The statute enumerated the fundamental principle that the U.K. Parliament was precluded from legislating for a dominion without the request or consent of its government or parliament. The Colonial Laws Validity Act would no longer be applicable to the dominions.¹⁷ The legal sovereignty of the dominions could, henceforth, be exercised in whatever manner was stated in their constitution.

16. South Africa, Canada, Australia, Newzealand and Ireland were listed as dominions.

17. The text of the statute is reprinted in Nicholas Mansergh, Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs, 1931-1952 (London, 1953), sections 1 to 7, pp. 21-28.

The problem of how the dominions were to act as sovereign states in the field of international politics remained a difficult one. In sum common allegiance to the Crown was the connecting link between the dominions and the U.K. Racial homogeneity, parliamentary government, rule of law, common language and liberal traditions were some of the other bonds.

The Second World War brought the dominions closer to the international politics. The dominions participated increasingly in matters of defence and diplomacy. As compared with the First World War there was less talk of imperial cooperation; the significant councils were those of the Allies, not of the Empire. Thus the white dominions, largely of British stock, achieved independence and equality of status with the United Kingdom.

The Second Phase - Eurasian Commonwealth -

The second phase in the evolution of the Commonwealth opened with the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947. The Commonwealth was completely transformed as a result of the transfer of power to India and Pakistan by the Indian Independence Act 1947. For two years - May 1947 to April 1949 eight governments of the Commonwealth searched for a formula which would permit India to continue its membership of the Commonwealth if and when it chose to become a republic without damaging the monarchical basis of the Commonwealth or destroying the common bond of the Crown.¹⁸ The meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers

18. H. Duncan Hall, Commonwealth: A History of the British Commonwealth of Nations (London, 1971), p. 881.

held in London in October 1948, discussed matters of common concern. This was the first such meeting attended by three Asian Prime Ministers - Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan and D.S. Senanayake of Ceylon.¹⁹

The second Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting held in London in April 1949 considered the important constitutional issues arising from India's decision to adopt a republican form of constitution and her decision to continue membership of the Commonwealth. The meeting adopted the Declaration of London as the final communique incorporating the conclusions reached by the respective governments. The Indian government affirmed the desire to continue "full membership of the Commonwealth of Nations and her acceptance of the King as the symbol of free association and as such the Head of the Commonwealth".²⁰ The governments of the other countries of the Commonwealth, the basis of whose membership was not changed, accepted India's continuing membership. They declared themselves to be united as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, owing common allegiance to the Crown, which is also the symbol of their free association".²¹

19. H. Duncan Hall, Commonwealth: A History of the British Commonwealth of Nations (Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, London, 1971) p. 831.

20. Prime Ministers of four other Commonwealth countries attended: C.R. Atlee (United Kingdom), Ben Chifflery (Australia), Peter Fraser (Newzealand), D.F. Malan (South Africa).

21. Ibid., p. 5.

The Prime Ministers avoided any attempt to explain the meaning and role of the 'Head of the Commonwealth'. After the Prime Ministers' meeting, Liaquat Ali Khan issued a statement saying that, "It followed logically from the doctrine of equality of membership that any other member of the Commonwealth was now free to declare itself a republic and to continue to be a full member of the Commonwealth".²² A country proposing to become a republic would be required to inform the other members and secure their agreement. The decision taken in 1949 became the precedent on which the decisions regarding membership of the Commonwealth were to be taken in future. The incompatibility between republican membership and a monarchical Commonwealth was thus resolved. The recognition that a member nation could choose to be a republic and still retain its membership brought about a major change in the constitutional forms of the Commonwealth relationship. More than that, the transformation was mainly psychological and political. The Indian decision to remain in the Commonwealth had far-reaching consequences. "Nationalism was shown to be compatible with Commonwealth membership. It made way for further accession to Commonwealth membership by other Asian-African nations on attaining independence".²³ The Commonwealth became a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-lingual association.

22. Mansergh, n.2, p.383.

23. M. S. Rajan, The Post War Transformation of the Commonwealth (Asia Publishing House, Delhi, 1963), p.5.

It sounds like a paradox that Ireland seceded from the Commonwealth in the same year 1949 that India as a republic chose to be a member. The decision was taken in pursuance of the Irish Government's perception of its state interest. Ireland and Burma exercised the right of members to secede from the Commonwealth. The voluntary character of Commonwealth membership was thereby amply demonstrated.

Malaya accepted Commonwealth membership in 1957. The constitution of Malaya created a new monarchy within the Commonwealth. Malayan citizens would owe allegiance to their monarch and not to the British Queen. At the same time the appeal to the Privy Council was retained and to that extent the residual authority of the British Crown was retained.

Thus by 1957 the confluence of the two streams of Commonwealth evolution was achieved; the growth of separate national identities in the 'four old' dominions and the urge of the former dependencies to achieve independence of imperial control. The erstwhile British Commonwealth emerged as a Commonwealth of realms, republics and an independent monarchy, all of which accepted the Crown as the Head of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth system in the middle of the 1950s became a complex of two interlocking cultures, European and Asian. Both white and coloured nations came to be associated in the Commonwealth. Asian membership implied an implicit acceptance by all except one Commonwealth country, South Africa, of racial equality as an obligation of membership. The pre-War

informality befitting a family of nations disappeared. But for India's membership the Commonwealth would have retained its racial cohesion. It must, however, be noted that the racial homogeneity of the pre-War Commonwealth has been unduly exaggerated by European critics.²⁴ The old cultural and racial bonds tended to grow weak. Racial affinity did not prevent Eire to quit the Commonwealth. Other traditional links were also in the process of breaking down. As Gordon Walker observes, "Transformation was the logical and smooth culmination of trends and tendencies that were inherent in the nature of the Commonwealth and which had been at work throughout history".²⁵

Walker speaks of the constitutional and legal changes which coincided with Asian membership, but ignored the political and psychological import of the changes which were brought about as the result of India's voluntary accession to the Commonwealth. In the countries of the Commonwealth the common bonds were said to be their acceptance of the Queen as the Head of the Executive (Head of the Commonwealth in India), their devotion to parliamentary government and their system of free cooperation through continuous consultation. The Crown remained the only link of a formal character. In Asian countries Queen as the Head of the Commonwealth proved to be only a symbol.

24. Canada had two main linguistic and ethnic groups. There were three different racial groups in the South African population - Afrikaners, English-speaking South Africans and the coloureds.

25. Gordon Walker, n.1, p.65.

The common practice of parliamentary government and faith in democracy used to be recognized as the basis of the Commonwealth relationship before the Second World War. "Peoples of British descent had inherited the democratic traditions, while those of non-British extraction emulated them".²⁶ There has been deviation from parliamentary self-government in South Africa where the Black majority was denied due participation in government. Pakistan was alienated from democratic institutions after the establishment of military dictatorship. All the British political institutions which were transplanted in the Commonwealth countries have not survived. They have been modified by indigenous elements.²⁷

Parliamentary government predetermined the Commonwealth system of cooperation and consultation through Imperial Conferences to meetings of the Prime Ministers. Meetings of the Prime Ministers became a regular feature for the exchange of information. Decisions were not taken by majority at such meetings but communique were issued. By convention issues involving any two members which lay within the domestic jurisdiction of the respective countries were excluded from

26. "What is Commonwealth", Central Office of Information, Pamphlet No. 15 (HMSO, London, 1956), p.2.

27. The ruling elites of Commonwealth countries do share a common culture as they have been exposed to British standards of conduct, but this could not by itself bring about the cohesion of the Commonwealth.

discussion. The British Queen in her Speech from the Throne at the opening of Parliament in 1955 assured, "My government will maintain and strengthen consultation within the Commonwealth for the fulfilment of our common aims and purposes".²⁸

The newly enlarged Commonwealth was subjected to conflicting pulls and pressures in the immediate post-War years. Commonwealth thinking was dominated by problems of cold war and regional security. Alignment and non-alignment divided the member states. Although the 'old members' were allied to the United States of America, they did not subscribe to all its policies. The member states shared a common negative attitude in so far as they did not condemn the American policy of encirclement. South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and American military aid to Pakistan created further intra-Commonwealth tensions. The growing involvement of older members in alliances outside the Commonwealth led to a depreciation of the Commonwealth system. Some countries were bound by the regional pacts, while others were not. Canada was a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but Australia was not; U.K. was a member of both NATO and SEATO but it was not a member of ANZUS pact to which Australia and Newzealand adhered.

The members of the Commonwealth responded in different ways to the Suez Crisis (1956). The failure of the British

28. Quoted in Nicholas Mansergh, n.1, p.346.

Government to inform the Commonwealth members in advance about joint Anglo-French intervention in Suez was a departure from the traditional practice of Commonwealth consultation. Canada and India condemned in strong terms this omission on the part of the British Government.²⁹ Thus the cleavages in Commonwealth opinion on an important issue of international politics discouraged attempts to use it as a third force for diplomatic or defence purposes.

There was a shift in emphasis from the controversies of international politics to cooperative endeavour in the politics of development and welfare. The 'Empire' was out and the 'Commonwealth' was in. In fact, economic compulsions rather than identity of political interest held the Eurasian Commonwealth together. Intra-Commonwealth aid for welfare and development would promote agreed economic and social purposes. The Commonwealth's most obvious dimension in 1950s was an Asian one.³⁰ At the fifth unofficial Commonwealth Relations Conference at Lahore in 1954 much emphasis was placed rightly and inevitably on the Asian viewpoint in Commonwealth and World affairs.³¹

29. The Indian Prime Minister labelled Anglo-French intervention as a "gross case of naked aggression", and felt that, "in the middle of the twentieth century we are going back to the predatory methods of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries". Quoted in Nicholas Mansergh, Documents and Speeches on Commonwealth Affairs 1952-62 (London, 1963), p.521.

30. J.D.B. Miller, Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1953-1969(London, 1974), p.372.

31. J.D.B. Miller, Commonwealth Review n.8, p.275.

But Miller's observation does not correspond with the realities of the situation in the mid fifties. The Asian members of the Commonwealth did not display any unity of outlook except on such vague issues as anti-imperialism and anti-racialism. Breach between India and Pakistan over Kashmir was the major cause of split in Commonwealth relations. Even though the Kashmir question was not allowed to be raised in Commonwealth forums, both India and Pakistan tried to outwit one another and viewed Asian issues in that light. No distinctly Asian viewpoint could emerge under such circumstances. Kashmir remained the symbol of why India and Pakistan could make no major impact upon the Commonwealth.

The European Commonwealth showed resilience and flexibility which prompted its longevity. Little was left of the traditional bonds which united the 'Old Four'. Each member voluntarily decided to retain Commonwealth membership. The uniting links were not uniform. The Commonwealth, however, became less Anglo-centric. Members retained Commonwealth membership because they considered it more in their interest to be in the Commonwealth than out of it. No element of obligation or responsibility was attached to membership. It was a means of partnership between the technological achievements of the West with the age old system of the East. "The Eurasian Commonwealth came to be a 'concert of convenience', it was

convenient to be in it, it was convenient not to be out".³²

The Third Phase - African entry in the Commonwealth -

In 1956 the British Government decided that the colony of Gold Coast and trusteeship colony of Togoland should become established as the dominion of Ghana. The Under Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Lord John Hope declared in the House of Commons on 11 December 1956, "Ghana would have fully responsible status within the British Commonwealth so that yet another stage would have been reached in the journey of the Great Commonwealth of Nations towards its destiny".³³ 6 March 1957 was fixed as the Independence day for Ghana. Thus an African state was established with a unitary government on the U.K. model and with Kwame Nkrumah as Prime Minister. Ghana immediately asked to be admitted to full membership of the Commonwealth and became one of the Queen's realms.

Nkrumah attended the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting held in London 26 June - 5 July 1957. Nkrumah's bright national costume added a dash of colour to the Conference.³⁴

32. Miller, n.8, p. 275.

33. Extract from a speech by Lord John Hope on the second reading of the Ghana Independence Bill in the House of Commons on 11 December 1956. Quoted in Mansergh, no.28, p. 50.

34. W. David McIntyre, The Commonwealth of Nations: Origins and Impact 1869-1971 Europe and World in the Age of Expansion (London, 1977), p.394.

For four years Nkrumah had the Commonwealth stage to himself. No other African Prime Minister attended the meetings until 1961. Ghana emerged as the first all-black member of the Commonwealth. It was a prelude to the emergence of a new Afro-Asian Commonwealth. "The political transformation of the continent of Africa dominated the Commonwealth and indeed the world affairs in the decade 1957-67".³⁵

Ghana adopted a republican constitution in 1960 and following India's precedent "accepted the Queen as the symbol of the free association and as such the Head of the Commonwealth. Member countries of the Commonwealth accepted and recognized Ghana's continued membership of the Commonwealth".³⁶

Nigeria followed Ghana's example in 1960. At a Conference in London in 1958 it was agreed that Nigeria should become independent in 1960. When the Federal House of Assembly met in January 1960 after a general election, they adopted a formal resolution for independence and admission to full membership of the Commonwealth in the presence of the British Prime Minister. At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference held in May 1960 Nigeria's membership was readily acceded

35. W. B. Hamilton and others, ed., A Decade of the Commonwealth 1955-64, (Duke Univ. Press, Durham, N. C., 1966), p. 9.

36. Mansergh, n. 1, p. 298.

to and on 1 October 1960 the Federation of Nigeria became an independent member of the Commonwealth. In 1963 Nigeria became a Federal Republic within the Commonwealth.

The rapid pace of the emergence of independent African states was largely due to the resolution of the British Conservative Government to end its colonial responsibilities. The British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan told a joint session of the South African Parliament on 3 February 1960, "The wind of change is blowing through this (African) continent, and whether we like it or not, the growth of national consciousness is a political fact. We must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it. - What Governments and Parliaments in the United Kingdom have done since the War in according independence to India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya and Ghana, and what they will do for Nigeria and other countries now nearing independence, all this though we take full and sole responsibility for that, we do in the belief that it is the only way to establish the future of the Commonwealth and of the free world on sound foundations".⁸⁷

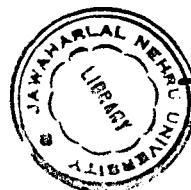
There was at the same time a 'wind of change' in the Downing Street. The British government decided to apply in its dependencies the principle of unqualified self-determination,

87. T. E. Utley and John Udal, ed., The Wind of Change: The Challenge of the Commonwealth (Sussex, 1960), p.1.

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majority rule and safeguard for minorities. The key note of the British imperial policy in the 1960s came to be 'unite and abdicate'. The Sierra Leone Independence Act 1961 granted Sierra Leone full responsible status within the Commonwealth.

Kenya became independent and member of the Commonwealth on 12 December 1963. The Duke of Edinburgh attended the Independence Day celebrations in Nairobi as the Queen's special representative. The Duke read the Queen's message: "On this momentous day Kenya takes her place among the sovereign nations of the world, and I am happy to welcome her as the member of our great Commonwealth family. I am sure in the counsels of the Commonwealth and beyond, your country will have a valuable and distinctive contribution to make".³⁸ Kenya became a republic in December 1964. Other African countries attained freedom and Commonwealth membership in quick succession : Gambia in 1965, Bechuanaland as Botswana in September 1966, Basutoland as Lesotho on 4 October 1966, Swaziland on 6 September 1968.

The Tanganyika Independence Act 1961 made provision for the attainment by Tanganyika of full responsible status within the Commonwealth. Tanzania became a member of the Commonwealth on achieving independence on 19 December 1961. On

38. Commonwealth Survey: Record of United Kingdom and Commonwealth Affairs, vol. 10, No.2, 21 January 1964, p. 74.

15 February 1962 the Tanzanian National Assembly unanimously adopted a government resolution that the Constitution be amended to provide for Tanzania to become a republic within the Commonwealth.³⁹ The Meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers held in London on 10 September 1962 declared that the relations between their countries and Tanzania would remain unaffected by the constitutional change. The republic of Tanzania was inaugurated on 19 December 1962.

In Central Africa the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (consisting of the self-governing territory of Southern Rhodesia and the Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland) was constituted by an Order-in-Council issued under the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Act 1958. The politically self-conscious Africans regarded the Federation as a device for extending the colonial period and economic exploitation to the advantage of the European settler minorities. Federation implied the domination of Southern Rhodesia. The Commonwealth was confronted with the last major problem of decolonization. The federal experiment was shortlived and was dissolved by the British Government in December 1963. Nyasaland renamed Malawi emerged as an independent state on 6 July 1964; Northern Rhodesia as Zambia became an independent republic. Both the states were admitted to Commonwealth membership.⁴⁰

39. Commonwealth Yearbook, 1979, p.835.

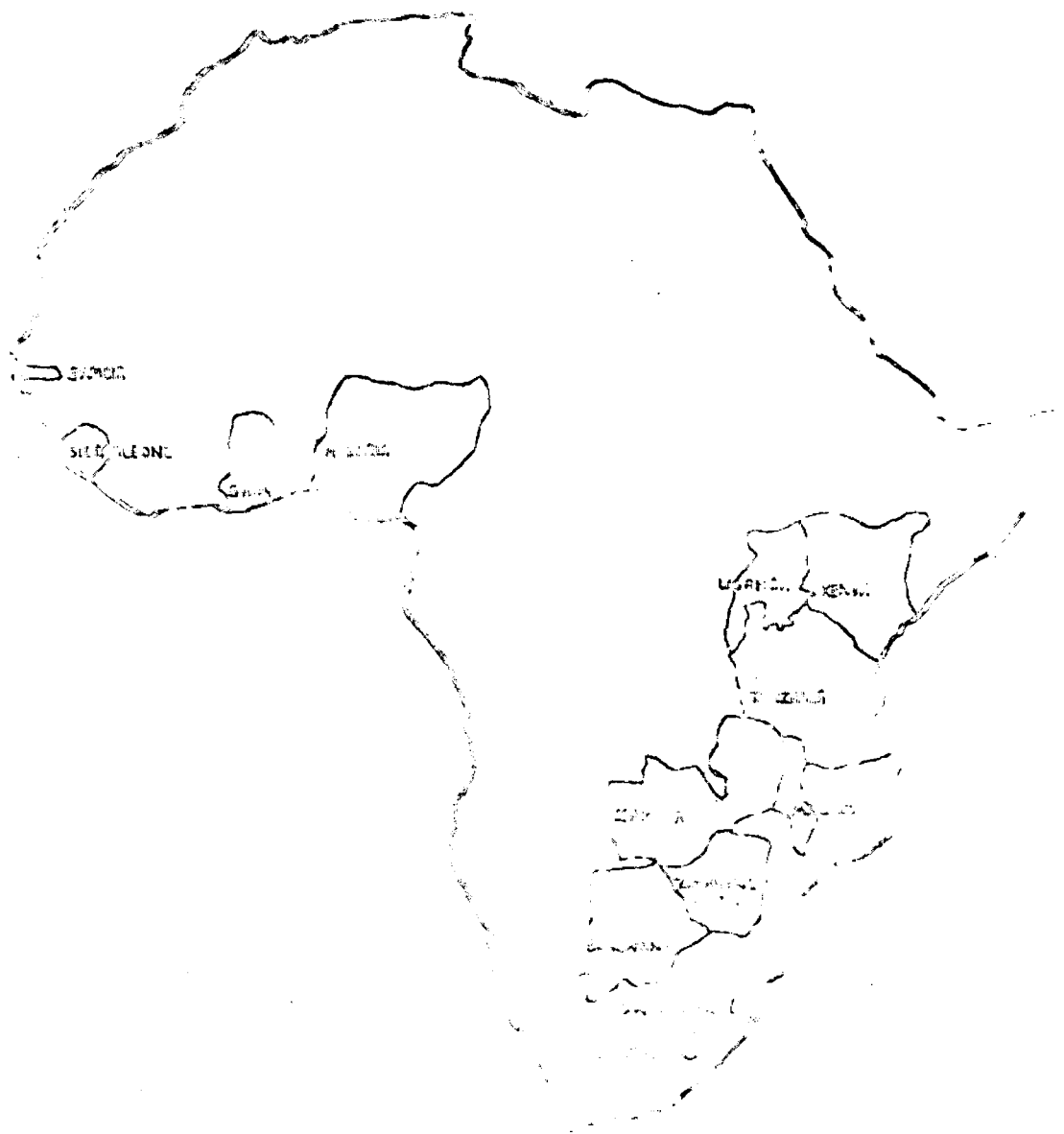
40. In case of Southern Rhodesia independence and Commonwealth membership were made conditional on assurances of majority rule.

Thus by 1968 all the twelve newly independent countries of Africa opted voluntarily for Commonwealth membership and were accepted as such by the member states of the Commonwealth.⁴¹ Their entry in the Commonwealth followed a set pattern. Power was transferred by British parliamentary enactments to the successor authorities mostly monarchical. Independence tended to be followed in due course by a declaration of Republics remaining within the framework of the Commonwealth with the explicit consent of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers. The process was inspired by the Indian example; the transfer of power was made in a spirit of goodwill both on the part of the former imperial power and the emerging independent states. The consequent Africanization of Commonwealth membership brought about a transformation in the character of the erstwhile Eurasian Commonwealth. Pan African sentiment began to make itself felt in the Commonwealth councils. As the Asian dimension declined, the African dimension grew in prominence. By 1968 the matters which engrossed the attention of the Commonwealth leaders became largely African. The African transformation was more than a matter of decolonisation. African diplomacy became vigorous in the pursuit of anti-colonialism and anti-racialism in the Commonwealth forums.

41. The twelve African members of the Commonwealth are : Ghana, Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and The Gambia.

AFRICA

COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES



It was at the same time a shock to Britain and other old Commonwealth members when military regimes and one-party rule was established in many African countries. "Two centres of influence emerged within the Commonwealth: One was Britain and the other was the African group of nations".⁴² While there emerged an African bloc in the Commonwealth and a common African policy developed in certain matters, there also appeared division among the Africans.

42. Ali A. Mazuri, The Anglo-African Commonwealth, Political Friction and Cultural Fusion(Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1967), p. 27.

CHAPTER II

SOUTH AFRICA AND THE COMMONWEALTH

The most important development in the multi-racial Commonwealth as a result of the African entry was the elevation of racial equality as a basic principle shared by the community of States. The predominance of coloured nations in the Commonwealth led to the acceptance of racial equality as the principle of membership. The Africanisation of the Commonwealth led logically to the exit of the Union of South Africa which symbolized resistance to the principle of racial equality. We must, therefore, evaluate the role of South Africa and the impact of its exit on developments in the Commonwealth.

South Africa's Contribution to the Evolution of the Commonwealth.

Britain, Canada, Australia and Newzealand are considered to be the founder members of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The union of South Africa became a dominion only in 1910, but conceptually her place is with the 'Old Four' because she played a crucial role at important stages in the evolution of the Commonwealth. In 1921 General J.C. Smuts drafted a memorandum entitled 'The Constitution of the British Commonwealth' which was to serve as a basis for discussion of questions which might come before the Constitutional Conference recommended by the Imperial War Conference 1917.¹ It was suggested that legal

1. Nicholas Mansergh, The Commonwealth Experience (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1969), p.379.

Recognition be given to the dominion sense of nationhood and statehood. The dominion governments should become coordinate governments of the Crown with full equality of status with direct access to the sovereign. Smuts also proposed a new name for the organization - The British Commonwealth of Nations.

The memorandum anticipated the possibilities and contents of the Balfour Declaration (1926) and the Statute of Westminster 1931. General Hertzog who assumed office as Prime Minister in 1924 wanted to advance South Africa's Commonwealth standing by securing international recognition of her independent status. At the imperial Conference of 1926 he publicly asserted the principle of dominion sovereignty on the basis of full equality of the dominions with Britain within the Commonwealth.² The Statute of Westminster enshrined the principles of dominion equality and supremacy of the dominion Parliament.³ General Smuts/Hertzog /and agreed to enact the Status of the Union Act (1934) which empowered the Parliament of the Union to be sovereign legislative power in and over the Union. The king of the United Kingdom could thereafter act as the king of South Africa. Afrikaner legalism could justify, if necessary, a separatist policy by advocating the doctrine of a divisible Crown. Until 1945 Smut's faith in the Commonwealth was not diminished but enhanced. "For him it was the continuing basis of Anglo-Afrikaner reconciliation at home and the chief hope of peace abroad".⁴

2. Mansergh, n.1, p.231.

3. See Chapter I, p.8.

4. Mansergh, n.1, p.379.

Attitude to Decolonization

Decolonization and apartheid were the two issues which led to the alienation of South Africa from the Commonwealth. In the early 1950s the British government aimed at helping its dependencies in Africa to attain self-government (not independence) within the British Commonwealth. Political advance was to synchronise with social and economic development. It was in Gold Coast, a British colony, that elected Africans assumed ministerial office for the first time in 1951. Malan lost his enthusiasm for the Commonwealth when Britain decided to grant self-government to its African colonies at a rapid pace. He criticized Britain for adding new members to the Commonwealth "acting on her own accord and without consultation with or approval of the other group members..... And now she intends to continue the process without limitation".⁵

Malan's government became perturbed over the accession of 'negro states' to the Commonwealth. He took a tough line on the issue of Gold Coast as a candidate for Commonwealth membership. This is confirmed by what Chester Bowles said on his return from a visit to Africa in 1955. "The Gold Coast will request for membership in the British Commonwealth as soon as it achieves independence. Race conscious South Africa indicates that if Gold

5. The statement was made in Cape Town on 23 February 1951 and was published in Die Burger (Cape Town). Extracts of the statement are given in Nicholas Mansergh, ed., Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs 1931-52 (London, 1953) pp. 1278-80.

Coast is accepted, it will withdraw".⁶ Malan's successor Strijdom, however, accepted Ghana's membership of the Commonwealth in 1957. South Africa was represented at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference 1957 but not by her Prime Minister. The admission of Ghana into the Commonwealth was both a measure of South Africa's waning influence on Commonwealth decisions and a casual factor of further decline. From then on the Commonwealth limelight was turned on the new emerging States of Black Africa".⁷

Nkrumah invited South Africa at the meeting of the African States at Accra (January 1958) but South Africa declined to attend on the ground that "the objectives of the meeting could not be achieved unless the colonial governments with direct responsibility in Africa were also invited".⁸ Thereafter relations between Ghana and South Africa gradually deteriorated. Nkrumah symbolized the Pan African methods of pursuing vigorous diplomacy in international forums and elsewhere to quicken the pace of decolonization during the period 1957-66. Harold Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech to the South African Parliament on 3 February 1960 marks the turning point from gradualism to rapid advance in the progress towards decolonization.⁹ It was a clear warning to South Africa that Britain would no longer support the interests of white settlers in South Africa.

7. Ali A. Mazrui, The Anglo African Commonwealth: Political Friction and Cultural Fusion (Pergamon Press, 1967), p.33.

8. J.D.B. Miller, Survey of Commonwealth Affairs 1958-1969 (Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1974), p.134.

9. See Chapter I, p.17.

The rapid emergence of independent African States as members of the Commonwealth in early 1960s led to persistent attacks on South Africa in Commonwealth and United Nations forums. South Africa, governed by a white minority, stood out as a glaring anomaly in the transformed African continent. The independent black African States exerted pressure on Britain to enforce economic sanctions against South Africa. Consequently, divisions were created between the new African members of the Commonwealth and those older members who in pursuance of their national self-interest were not prepared to take hurried action against South Africa.

Racialism in South Africa

The racial problem in South Africa is rooted in its socio-economic structure. In 1960 the Union of South Africa had an area of 472,359 sq.miles and a population of about 15.9 million,¹⁰ The racial composition varies from province to province, but on the whole the population was divided among the races as follows: whites 3,088,492; Bantu 10,907,789; coloureds 1,509,208; Asians 477,125. Thus the whites constituted 19.3%, Bantus 68.2%, coloreds 9.4%, and Asians 3% of the total population.¹¹ Social, economic, cultural and historical factors were instrumental in the development of Afrikaner nationalism. Afrikaans, originally the Dutch settlers, regarded themselves as the only genuine South Africans.

10. Vadenbosch, South Africa and the World (Kentucky, 1970), pp. 13-14.

11. Ibid., p.15.

Traditionally South African politics has been dominated by the conflict between the British imperial and the Afrikaner national ideals for supremacy. The Afrikaner nationalists had resisted integration with the English for fear of losing their distinct identity. They suffered from an inferiority complex.¹² At the same time the Afrikaners had to cooperate with the English lest European civilization should disappear from South Africa. This unity of the whites was considered necessary for political survival. Anglo-Afrikaner cooperation remained Smuts' first priority. The politics of conciliation between the two was, therefore, pursued by the Nationalist Party also which came to power in 1948 and an exclusively Afrikaner Cabinet was formed.

The triumph of the Nationalists in 1948 represented a watershed in South African history. The Nationalists made racial policy the main issue in the election campaign using for the first time the term 'apartheid' to designate their policy of race relations. Apartheid was thereafter applied consistently to every phase of life. It had two aspects: (1) little apartheid implying social segregation and denial of civil and political rights to non-Europeans; (2) big apartheid which led to the territorial segregation of races. This ultimately led to a division of South Africa into a white State and a number of small black States. The fundamental principle in this was the supremacy of the Europeans in all walks of life. The registration of

12. The Afrikaners were still hawers of wood and drawers of water in their own fatherland. In 1967 their share in trade was 28%, in finance 14% and in mining 10%. Ibid, p.19.

population on the basis of race was provided for by the Population Registration Act passed in 1950. Persons were classified as whites, natives, coloreds or Asians. The Group Areas Act of 1950 empowered the government to proclaim an area reserved for occupation or ownership by the members of a specified racial group. The coloreds and Indians were accorded neither independence in separate areas nor political participation at national level. It was desired to unite the whites behind the policy of apartheid against attacks from the outside as well as against resistance from the non-whites in the country.

With the transformation of Empire into Commonwealth the emotional intensity of anti-white feeling was carried into the Commonwealth. By 1960 more than half the members of the Commonwealth were non-whites. The future of the Commonwealth depended upon continuing relations between European, Asian and African member States. The very increase in Commonwealth membership led to strong condemnation of South Africa's racist policies". South Africa's race policy constituted for another reason a special Commonwealth problem. It brought into sharp conflict the two basic principles upon which the Commonwealth rested—that of national equality and non-interference in each other's affairs and that of equality of race as well as of nation".¹⁸

The United Nations provided the main arena for attack on South Africa on the questions of the mandate over South West

18. Patrick Gordon Walker, The Commonwealth (London, 1962), p.346.

Africa, of the treatment of people of Indian origin and of race conflict. It was at the United Nations that India and Pakistan, then Ceylon and Ghana led the attack. In 1950s debates in the United Nations had repercussions on the Commonwealth. It seemed desirable to clarify whether the Commonwealth stood in relation to human equality and rights. The Commonwealth, as distinct from individual members, had to take a position. The members had to determine their attitude. The only Commonwealth countries that voted against South Africa on the question of race conflict in 1955 were India and Pakistan. Australia, Canada, Newzealand and the United Kingdom voted on the other side.¹⁴ The line-up in 1958 was different. India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Malaya, Ghana, Canada, and Newzealand voted against South Africa; only Australia and United Kingdom (of the members of the Commonwealth) voted for South Africa.¹⁵ South Africa supported by Britain and Australia challenged under Article A-2(7) of the United Nations' Charter General Assembly's competence to consider the question of apartheid. It was argued that these were all matters of domestic jurisdiction. On the other hand the African black States regarded South Africa's racial policy as affecting the whole of Africa. It was an infringement of human rights.

The situation changed drastically early in 1960. The change was mainly due to the new policy pronouncements made by the British Conservative government, the Sharpville incident and South Africa's

14. United Nations Year Book 1958 (New York, 1960), pp. 69-72).

15. United Nations Year Book (New York, 1961), pp. 56-58.

move to opt for a republican constitution.

On 3 February, 1960 Harold Macmillan, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, in what has become famous as the 'Wind of change' speech, rejected the idea of any inherent superiority of one race over another. He disengaged Britain from public support to South Africa in pursuing the apartheid policy. He said, "It is the basic principle of our modern Commonwealth that we respect each other's sovereignty in matters of internal policy. At the same time, we must recognise that, in the shrinking world in which we live today, the internal policies of one nation may have effects outside it. We may be sometimes tempted to say to each other 'Mind your own business'. But in these days I would myself expand the old saying so that it runs 'Mind your own business, of course, but mind how it affects my business too.... As a fellow member of the Commonwealth, it is our earnest desire to give South Africa our support and encouragement, but..... there are some aspects of your policy which make it impossible for us to do this without being false to our deep convictions about the political destinies of free men, to which in our own territories we are trying to give effect".¹⁶

It was, therefore, amply clear that Britain would no longer support South Africa's racism on the plea of domestic jurisdiction.

16. The Times, 4 February 1960, Quoted in T. B. Miller, Commonwealth and United Nations (Sydney, 1967) UN Press. P. 159.

67 Africans were killed and 180 injured as a result of police firing on a popular demonstration at Sharpville in South Africa on 21 March 1960. The incident served as a watershed in African affairs. It caused indignation around the world. On 25 March 1960 twenty nine Asian and African states requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council "to consider the situation arising out of the large scale killing of peaceful demonstrators against racial discrimination".¹⁷ The reactions of white members of the Commonwealth were strong and outspoken.¹⁸

On 20 January 1960 Verwoerd declared his plan of referendum to decide if South Africa would become a republic. It was to be a republic which will seek to retain its membership of the Commonwealth. On 5 October 1960 a referendum was held among the persons entitled to vote in elections to the House of Assembly. Out of a total of 1,633,272 votes cast there was a majority of 74,080 in favour of a republic.¹⁹

The Commonwealth was, therefore, called upon to formulate its attitude to South Africa's continued membership.

17. Miller, n.13, p.154.

18. Diefenbaker, the Canadian Prime Minister told his House of Commons that the Government deplored the loss of life and had no sympathy with policies of racial discrimination. The British House of Commons adopted a resolution on 8 April 1960: " This House, deploring the present racialist policies now being pursued by the South African Government, fearing that the repression is threatening the security and welfare of all races living in the Union of South Africa and good relations between the members of the Commonwealth urges Her Majesty's Government to bring home to the South African Government the strong feelings of the British people on this question". See Miller, n.8, p.146.

19. The Commonwealth Relations Office List 1961; an official Yearbook (Tenth edition, HMSO), p.206.

South Africa's exit

The issue of South Africa's racial policy dominated the Prime Ministers' Meeting held from 4 May to 14 May 1960 in London. Tunghu Abdul Rahman, Prime Minister of Malaya asked that the problem of racial discrimination in South Africa should be placed on the agenda. Eric Louw, the representative of the South African Government, resisted the proposal. The Meeting reaffirmed the traditional practice that Commonwealth Conferences do not discuss the internal affairs of member countries but it was agreed to discuss the question informally in a series of meetings between Eric Louw and the Prime Ministers.²⁰ The final communique issued by the Meeting stated, "In the event of South Africa deciding to become a republic, and if the desire was subsequently expressed to remain a member of the Commonwealth, the meeting suggested that the South African Government should then ask for the consent of the other Commonwealth Governments, either at the meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, or, if this were not practicable, by correspondence".²¹ The Ministers emphasized that the Commonwealth itself is a "multi-racial association and expressed the need to ensure good relations between all member States and peoples of the Commonwealth".²² The declaration about the multi-racial character of the Commonwealth was significant. It was affirmed for the

20. Gordon Walker, n.13, p.347.

21. Nicholas Mansergh, Documents and Speeches on British Commonwealth Affairs, 1952-62 (Oxford Univ. Press London, 1963) p.362.

22. Ibid, p.362.

first time that equality of race was vital to the Commonwealth.

The South African Government had set 13 May 1961 as the day for the inauguration of the republic and in view of this it applied for continued membership after that date. After the meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers African States, particularly Ghana and Tanganyika built up pressures in favour of South Africa's expulsion from the Commonwealth. In an address to the English Speaking Union Nkrumah said, "It is illogical and unreasonable to expect African States to be happy in joining and remaining in the Commonwealth if the Commonwealth tolerates governments which perpetuate policies of racialism and apartheid".²³ In June 1960 the conference of independent African States at Adis Ababa resolved to "invite the independent African States which are members of the British Commonwealth to take all possible steps to secure the exclusion of the Union of South Africa from the Commonwealth".²⁴

It was in this context that the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting began in London on 8 March 1961 to consider the continued membership of the republic of South Africa. This issue, however, got entangled with South Africa's racial policy. Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Jawahar Lal Nehru and Diefenbaker condemned apartheid and its incompatibility with the principles which the Commonwealth

23. The Guardian, 14 May 1960.

24. Miller, n.8, p.149.

embodied.²⁵ Britain wanted to condemn apartheid but would like to have retained South Africa as a member. The Prime Ministers of Australia and Newzealand were also in favour of South Africa's continued membership but Diefenbaker was opposed to it.²⁶ The strong pressure mounted by Ghana and Tanganyika against South Africa built up Commonwealth consensus against South Africa.²⁷ Abubakar Tafwa Balewa, the Prime Minister of Nigeria, was known to be strongly opposed to the South African case. But, as Harold Macmillan observed, "It was Verwoerd's attitude and method of arguing his case, as well as the inflexibility of his dogmatic position, which finally turned the balance. Had he made the slightest concession, for instance regarding the acceptance of diplomatic representatives of African States without subjecting them to the indignity of separate treatment, the mood might have easily changed".²⁸

25. Nyerere declared that Tanganyika would not apply for membership in the Commonwealth if discrimination was condoned, "We believe that South African membership under present conditions makes a mockery of the inter-racial composition of the Commonwealth". See article entitled "Commonwealth Choice - South Africa or US" in Observer, 21 March 1961.

26. As early as 16 November 1960 Diefenbaker had sent a letter to Macmillan saying, "In view of....developments since May which give no indication of any change of attitude by the Government of South Africa, I feel obliged to let you know that unless significant changes occur in the Union Government's racial policies, Canada cannot be counted on to support South Africa's re-admission to the Commonwealth". See Harold Macmillan, Pointing the Way 1959-61 (London, Macmillan, 1972), pp.292-94.

27. Observer on March 12, 1961 stated the views of Nyerere that his government would not apply for membership of the Commonwealth if South Africa were still member. It was reported that the Ghana delegation had decided to oppose South Africa's application. See J. D. B. Miller, "South Africa's Departure", Journal of Commonwealth Studies, vol. I, 1961-63, pp.56-74.

28. Harold Macmillan, Pointing the Way 1959-61 (Macmillan, London, 1972) p. 2

Sensing the strong opposition of the majority of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers, Verwoerd chose to withdraw South Africa's request for membership. The communique issued by the Prime Ministers' Meeting on 15 March 1961 concluded, "The Prime Minister of South Africa informed the other Prime Ministers this evening that in light of the views expressed on behalf of the other member-governments and the indications of their future intentions regarding the racial policy of the Union Government he had decided to withdraw his application for South Africa's continued membership of the Commonwealth as a republic".²⁹

The withdrawal was thus a case of resignation in anticipation of expulsion. The resignation became effective from 31 March 1961. Verwoerd in a statement made on giving notice of the withdrawal of South Africa's application stated that the step "marked a beginning of the disintegration of the Commonwealth".³⁰ He proved to be right only in the sense that the old Commonwealth in which white superiority was taken for granted finally died on 15 March 1961. In its place emerged the new Commonwealth in which all races met in complete equality. Mrs. Bandarnaike of Ceylon saw it as a dramatic vindication of the equality and human dignity for which the Commonwealth stands".³¹ Diefenbaker, the Prime Minister of Canada, aptly epitomized the significance of this

29. Mansergh, n. 21, p. 365.

30. Ibid., p. 389.

31. Andrew Walker, The Commonwealth : A New Look (Pergamon Press Oxford, 1978), p. 16.

event: "We have declared that non-discrimination on the basis of colour and race is the foundation stone of a multi-racial association composed of the representatives from all parts of the world... We accepted the basic principle and established it as a Commonwealth custom for the future".³²

The step, in fact, strengthened the Commonwealth instead of weakening it. The rule of non-interference in the domestic affairs of member countries was broken. The principle of racial equality took precedence over the preservation of family ties. The Commonwealth became genuinely multi-racial and inter-continental. The whole structure became more significant and at the same time more flexible.

The exit of South Africa was directly attributable to the arrival of new African members in the Commonwealth. It was not only the States present at the Prime Ministers' Meeting in 1961 but also prospective members who forced the departure of South Africa. When Nyerere warned that Tanganyika would reconsider its position in the Commonwealth, if South African policies were condoned, he put at stake that continuing programme of dependent territories to Commonwealth status which had become the chief glory and justification of the institution. It was the African who swung the balance.³³

32. Mansergh, n. 21, p. 866.

33. W. John Homes, "The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa", International Organization, No. 19 (1962), p. 298.

The South African problem as such ceased to be a Commonwealth problem. The Commonwealth became crucially African. The African States exercised considerable influence on Commonwealth decisions. The ultimate measure of racial equality was to accord the black man full dignity.

While South Africa got a sense of relief from the embarrassments of an Africanized Commonwealth, it continued to have fruitful bilateral relations with Britain and Australia. Apartheid, however, continued to disturb cordial relations between Britain and most of the African States of the Commonwealth. The black African States failed to bring down the South African regime through militant policies followed in United Nations forum and elsewhere. But the African members of the Commonwealth remained a potent force and their voice could not be ignored by Britain.

CHAPTER III

RHODESIA AND ARMS AID TO SOUTH AFRICA

It was expected that the departure of South Africa from the Commonwealth would lead to a greater understanding between the Africans and other older members. But the Rhodesian issue in 1960s brought about prolonged convulsions in Commonwealth relations. Yet the Rhodesian crisis provided a remarkable example of the Commonwealth's strength and unity.

The whites were outnumbered by the blacks in the ratio of 1 to 20 in Rhodesia.¹ But they were determined to resist growing African consciousness in favour of the 'winds of change'. The problem was accentuated by the existence of the Central African Federation of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland between 1953 and 1963. The Federation was an association of unequals. While Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland continued to be dependent on the colonial office, Southern Rhodesia had already secured internal self-government. The Federation was not a member of the Commonwealth though the Federal Prime Ministers Roy Welensky and Godfrey Huggins participated in some meetings of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers. Huggins wanted the Federation to be independent. This would perpetuate the rule of white minority. But the pressure of African nationalism in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland led to violent

1. There were 224,000 whites and four million blacks in 1965. See Kenneth Young, Rhodesia and Independence: A Study in British Colonial Policy (Spottiswoode, London, 1967), p.9.

disturbances. As a result the Federation was dissolved on 31 December 1963. Meanwhile the Macmillan government decided in favour of African control of the two territories and proceeded with the scheme of new constitutional arrangements for them.

The basic political aim in Southern Rhodesia was to ensure that the British Government did not interfere with the rule of the white minority. Ian Smith who became Prime Minister in April 1964 insisted on the control of Southern Rhodesia by 'civilized people'. The Commonwealth became concerned in the matter only after the Federation was dissolved and Southern Rhodesia actively sought independence. The British Government tackled the Rhodesian issue on two fronts; on the one hand Britain tried to persuade the Rhodesians to liberalise the franchise so that an African majority might be assured in course of time; on the other hand Britain resisted pressure from the Commonwealth States to impose majority rule despite opposition from the Rhodesian Government. Thus the question of Southern Rhodesia's independence became one "in which the whole Commonwealth is actually interested ... if we were to give independence to Southern Rhodesia on terms which were unacceptable to our fellow members, we would be likely to cause grievous injury to the unity of the Commonwealth and to the image it presents to the world. It is, therefore, clear that the whole Commonwealth will have to be consulted".²

2. J. D. B. Miller, Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1953-1969 (Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1974), p. 188.

If Southern Rhodesia were to be offered independence on a basis which was unacceptable to Commonwealth opinion, not only would Southern Rhodesia's application for membership be rejected, but also the unity of the Commonwealth itself might be threatened.

In 1963 Joshua Nkomo appealed to the Commonwealth Heads of Governments to thwart independence for Southern Rhodesia under its existing constitution. Tanzania, Sierra Leone and Nigeria exerted similar pressure.³ The first Commonwealth action against Southern Rhodesia was taken in July 1964 when Ian Smith was excluded from attending the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting because several member countries had objected to it. This was in violation of the convention. Until 1953 the Prime Ministers of Southern Rhodesia and after that the Federal Prime Minister customarily attended the meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers.

The final communique adopted by the Prime Ministers' Meeting reflected the gap between Britain and the African States in their attitude to Southern Rhodesia: "The Prime Minister of Britain told his colleagues that he was endeavouring to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia to discuss the question of Independence for that territory. Other Prime Ministers expressed the view that an independence conference should be convened which the leaders of all parties in Southern Rhodesia should be free to attend. The object would be to seek

3. Miller, n.2, p.190.

agreement on the steps by which Southern Rhodesia might proceed to independence within the Commonwealth. They urged the Prime Minister of Britain to take necessary initiatives in this regard".⁴ The British Government remained non-committal and only suggested that "sufficiently representative institutions would be necessary before independence".⁵ There was no specific reference to majority rule. It led to great bitterness in Southern Rhodesia. Ian Smith ruled out a Constitutional Conference and described the Prime Ministers' discussions as interference.⁶

Harold Wilson announced in February 1965 that a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting would be held in London in the second half of June 1965 and the British Government would be ready to consider promoting a Constitution Conference in order to ensure Rhodesia's progress to independence acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole.⁷ The Prime Ministers' Conference opened in London in June 1965. Differences of view appeared among African leaders. Kenneth Kaunda was convinced that Britain should take the responsibility for whatever happened in Southern Rhodesia. He offered Britain Zambian facilities if military action should be needed against Rhodesia. Nyerere held that Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) would be a rebellion. Abubaker Tafawa Balewa

4. The Rhodesia Herald, 17 July 1964.

5. The Times, 16th July 1964.

6. The Rhodesia Herald, 17 July 1964.

7. Commonwealth Survey, vol.2, No.14, 6 July 1965, p.624.

wanted the Africans in Rhodesia to have some experience of government before they took over full control. Nkrumah played a moderate role.⁸ Eventually the final communique issued on 25 June contained the following statement on Southern Rhodesia:

"The Prime Ministers welcomed a statement of the British Government that the principle of 'one man, one vote' was regarded as the very basis of democracy and this should be applied to Rhodesia.... The British Government said that they were actively engaged with the government of Rhodesia and it undertook to take account of all the views which have been expressed during the meeting. In this process a constitutional conference at the appropriate time would be a natural step. If the discussions did not develop satisfactorily in the direction in a reasonably speedy time, the British government, having regard to the principle enunciated by the Commonwealth Secretary of unimpeded progress towards majority rule, would be ready to consider promoting such a conference in order to ensure Rhodesia's progress to independence on a basis acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole".⁹

In September 1965 Arthur Bottomley on behalf of the British Conservative government formulated the 'five principles' specifying the conditions on the basis of which independence might be conceded to Rhodesia:

- (1) The principle and intention of unimpeded progress to majority rule already enshrined in the territory's 1961 constitution would have to be maintained and

8. Colin Legum, ed., Zambia: Independence and Beyond: The Speeches of Kenneth Kaunda (London, 1966), pp. 217-21.

9. Times of India (New Delhi), 28 June 1965.

guaranteed.

- (2) There would also have to be guarantee against retrogressive amendment of the constitution.
- (3) There would have to be immediate improvement in the condition of the African population.
- (4) There would have to be progress towards the ending of racial discrimination.
- (5) The British government would need to be satisfied that any basis proposed for independence would be acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole.¹⁰

Further negotiations between Harold Wilson and Ian Smith were held, but these were of no avail. On 11 November 1965 Ian Smith made the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).

Commonwealth and UDI

UDI was interpreted in Africa as a challenge to new Africanism and a test of Commonwealth good faith. It reflected the settlers' intention to disregard fundamental human rights. For the first time the Commonwealth secured collectively an active role in a matter which in principle lay between the British government in London and a colony in Africa under its jurisdiction. But the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meetings held in 1964 and 1965 failed to adopt unanimous policies on

10. The 'five principles' were restated by the British Labour government with the addition of the sixth principle in January 1966. "It would be necessary to ensure that there was no oppression of majority by minority or of minority by majority". See Nicholas Mansergh, The Commonwealth Experience (London, 1969), pp.361-62.

Rhodesia.

There were discordant elements within the Commonwealth. Julius Nyerere threatened to withdraw from the Commonwealth if Britain granted independence to Southern Rhodesia before making arrangements for majority rule. The African leaders in general wanted Britain to use force against the Smith regime. The Canadian government gave general support to the Africans, but it did not advocate the use of force. Menzies of Australia did not want Commonwealth interference in the matter. He wanted Rhodesia to be viewed as a problem to be solved by Britain alone. Britain differed from the African governments regarding the use of force and majority rule. The British policy was not to accept UDI, but at the same time not to use force against the Smith regime. The British government would work for a viable constitutional government in Rhodesia, majority rule not being regarded as feasible for the time being. It was hoped that the imposition of economic sanctions would bring about change of government in Rhodesia.

The differences of Commonwealth opinion were brought to the limelight at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference held in Wellington (December 1965). The use of military force was urged on Britain by the leaders of delegations from Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Ghana and Tanzania. The Zambian delegation described economic sanctions as 'unworkable, weak and silly'. Uganda believed that,

if effective, they would only make the Africans suffer.¹¹ On the other hand Britain, Australia and Newzealand deplored the use of force. The Commonwealth, thus, provided a forum for criticism. It helped to blunt the cutting edge of Afro-Asian criticism of Britain but could not help to resolve the Rhodesian problem.

The Meeting of African Heads of States at Accra in October 1965 vehemently criticised British policy. They called upon the United Nations to regard UDI as a threat to international peace. At an extraordinary meeting of the Organization of African Unity Council of Ministers' special Foreign Ministers' Meeting (8 December 1965) it was resolved that members should sever relations with Britain if by 15 December, it had not crushed the rebellion preparing the way for majority government.¹² The Organization of African Unity was called upon to reconsider their political, diplomatic and financial relations with Britain.

Rhodesia had thrust Zambia into the frontline of racial division in Africa. Zambia and Rhodesia shared common industries and Kariba Dam. Kaunda asked for and got RAF planes for its protection. Ghana and Tanzania broke off diplomatic relations with Britain but they did not leave the Commonwealth. Zambia was faced with the rebel regime across its border. She had respect for Britain and the Commonwealth but the Rhodesian issue poisoned Zambia-British relations.

11. Miller, n.2, p.218.

12. Ibid, pp.214-15.

Sir Abubaker Tafawa Balewa suggested a special Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting at Lagos in order to resolve the strains between African and British points of view. Arnold Smith, Secretary General of Commonwealth Secretariat went on a tour of East and Central Africa Commonwealth countries in October 1965 in search of a compromise. He warned that the Rhodesian crisis would lead to the disintegration of the Commonwealth if it was not properly handled.

The Meeting at Lagos was held in January 1966. It was presided over by the Prime Minister of the host country and was attended by nineteen member States.¹³ The communique issued at the end of the Conference on January 12, 1966 referred to the ways in which the meeting differed from those of its predecessors: "It was the first meeting to be organized outside London by the Commonwealth Secretariat and was exclusively devoted to the Rhodesian issue ... The Prime Ministers reaffirmed British responsibility for Rhodesia but acknowledged that the problem was of wider concern to Africa, the Commonwealth and the world... They noted the British Government's view that a period of direct rule would be needed in Rhodesia preparatory to a Constitutional Conference, which would be for the purpose of recommending a constitution leading to majority rule on a basis acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole ... They noted the statement by the British Prime Minister that the cumulative effects of the

13. Britain, Nigeria, Cyprus, Canada, Gambia, Malawi, Malta, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Uganda and Jamaica were represented by Heads of their governments; Zambia, Malaya, Trinidad, Ceylon, India, Kenya, Newzealand and Pakistan by ministers or officials. Ghana and Tanzania boycotted the meeting.

economic sanctions might well bring the rebellion to an end within the matter of weeks rather than months".¹⁴ The Conference appointed two continuing committees to work with the Secretary General in London. One would review the effects of sanctions and the other would consider special Commonwealth programme of assistance of training Rhodesian Africans for future responsibilities. Thus the Commonwealth would act as a watchdog on Britain.

The communique issued at Lagos largely accorded with the British position. Wilson was able to secure a compromise. The militant African leaders Nkrumah and Nyerere had not attended the Conference; Kaunda did not participate in the deliberations, but was reported to be largely satisfied. The success of the Conference lay in the fact that on a very controversial issue involving racial and colour problems the Commonwealth as a whole reached general agreement in condemning racialism and reiterated its stand that the Commonwealth was at war with racial regimes inside and outside the organization. The Commonwealth made firm political commitment not only to end the rebellion but also to move Rhodesia forward to independence on the basis of majority rule and the recognition that 'one man, one vote' was the essence of democracy.

It became clear soon after the Lagos meeting that Wilson had miscalculated the effectiveness of economic sanctions

14. The Commonwealth Office Yearbook 1967 (HMSO), pp.66-67.

against the Smith regime. In fact South Africa, Zambia and Rhodesia formed something of a single economy, Zambia could not cut off trade with Rhodesia on which it depended for a large part of its food supply. This is why Zambia did not show any enthusiasm for the enforcement of sanctions but desired quick action by or resort to force. Kaunda continued to demand use of force but to no avail as he had no means to assert effective pressure on Britain.

In the meantime Wilson announced that a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting would be held at London from 6 to 15 September 1966. The British Government refused to use force unless there was a breakdown of law and order in Rhodesia. The African States were not able to overthrow the Rhodesian regime as they could not by themselves muster the necessary force to do so. As a protest Kaunda and Nyerere did not attend the London Meeting.

The most important point that emerged from the Conference was that Afro-Asian caucus under the leadership of militant African States indulged in extravagant denunciation of British policy. Wilson was under pressure from Simon Kapwepwe, Foreign Minister of Zambia that Britain should use force against Rhodesia or submit the matter to the United Nations. He declared that Zambia would leave the Commonwealth unless the use of force was accepted. He accused Wilson as a racialist and left the Conference while it was still in progress.¹⁵ The communique asserted that any political

15. H. P. W. Hutson, Rhodesia: Ending an Era (New Delhi, 1979), p.63.

system based on racial discrimination was intolerable and that most of the Heads of Governments affirmed the desirability of NIEMAR (no independence before majority rule). Wilson assured the meeting that if his negotiations with Smith failed, he would seek U.N. mandatory sanctions. The Six Principles were reaffirmed. The Conference was adjourned for three months to enable the British to meet with the Rhodesian representatives. Wilson described the Conference as a nightmare conference, by common consent, the worst ever held.¹⁶

Wilson met Smith aboard the Tiger for talks (3 December 1966) which failed. There was another meeting on HMS Fearless at Gibraltar in October 1967. The Fearless proposals repeated the former notion of a royal commission 'for the purpose of testing the acceptability to the people of Rhodesia as a whole of a new Independence Constitution based on any agreement to be reached. Doubts were expressed by some member States that the proposals would not ensure African majority rule in Rhodesia and were a departure from Wilson's NIEMAR pledge.

Twenty four of the twenty eight Heads of Governments participated in the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference held in London from January 7 to 15, 1969. African demands were not pressed with the same vehemence as in 1966. Each member State

16. Harold Wilson, The Labour Government 1964-70: A Personal Record (London, 1971), p.277.

Valued the Commonwealth connection and there was wide support for non-political aspects of Commonwealth cooperation. Besides Rhodesia there were other issues to be considered such as Nigerian civil war and immigration policies. Rhodesia was no longer the issue it had been. By 1969 it was clear that Britain would not use force against Rhodesia though "sanctions had embarrassed but not disabled the regime, and that whatever other Africans might say or whatever stern resolutions might be passed by the General Assembly, the prospects of effective African revolt did not exist in Rhodesia itself".¹⁷

The conference spent only two of its eight days on Rhodesia. Its conclusions were more realistic. A new sort of emphasis on Commonwealth relations appeared. There was an end to NIBMAR. Smith brought forward proposals for a new Rhodesian constitution which would not lead to majority rule. In June 1969 Rhodesian voters approved the Constitutional Proposals and opted for a republican constitution. Rhodesia was, therefore, declared a republic on 2 March 1970.

The dominating character of the Rhodesian issue coming so soon after the South African one caused a kind of equation of the Commonwealth with Africa in the 1960. To large sections of the British public, the identification must have been complete and might have led to the disapproval of the Commonwealth because it

17. J. D. B. Miller, "Reluctance about the Commonwealth", Round Table (London), 1968-69, p.308.

was the means through which African demands were made on Britain. The Rhodesian issue provided new opportunities to the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Secretary General, Arnold Smith, a detached figure with a Commonwealth focus, could contact the parties to the dispute during his tour of the African continent in 1965. The Secretariat provided a bridge between Britain and some of the other African States during the split. It organized the special Prime Ministers' Meeting at Lagos; it became the agency through which the Commonwealth Sanctions Committee operated.

The Rhodesian issue had an adverse effect on the Commonwealth as an institution based upon some degree of mutual trust and understanding among the member States. The sharpness of the African attack on British policy was something new in Commonwealth affairs. At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting (1969) Kapwepwe called Wilson a racist and Wilson affecting a fit of anger replied hotly; bad feelings were generated.

An African interpretation in 1964 had described the Commonwealth as an Anglo-African Association....". It was British because the United Kingdom was still a focal point of Commonwealth relations..... The Commonwealth became crucially African because the African States now constituted the largest single group of States and exerted substantial influence on Commonwealth discussions. There had, in fact, developed two centres of influence within the Commonwealth - Britain herself was one

centre and African group of nations was the other".¹⁸

The confrontation between the militant African members of the Commonwealth and Britain over Rhodesia brought about a rapid change in the attitude of both Britain and the African States towards the Commonwealth in the second half of the mid-sixties. British government and public opinion became apathetic towards the Africanized Commonwealth. Britain no longer remained a centre of influence when the crucial Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting was held at Lagos in January in 1966. For the African States also Rhodesia remained a source of frustration. They could not provide sufficient resources of their own to help the Rhodesian guerillas to destabilise the Rhodesian regime. They tested the Commonwealth and found it wanting. Neither the Commonwealth nor the United Nations could resolve the Rhodesian problem. Ghana and Tanzania severed relations with Britain in 1965 but Nigeria took the lead in preventing any further break-up of the Commonwealth over Rhodesia. African States would, however, go so far and no further. Moreover the unity of African States was fragile: there were militants, radicals and moderates among them.

The Commonwealth, though damaged, did not break up. By 1970 both the sides within the Commonwealth realized that little

18. Ali A. Mazrui, The Anglo African Commonwealth: Political Friction and Cultural Fusion (Pergamon Press, 1967), p.28.

was to be gained from further confrontation and disputation over the Rhodesian issue. The crisis had destroyed the myth of the Commonwealth - the notion that the Commonwealth stood for multi-racialism and 'government of men by themselves'. The British government could not enforce the myth on Rhodesia. This crucial point was emphasized by Nyerere: "The Commonwealth is united in its anti-racialism. It is my belief that this is the central issue of the Commonwealth today. If non-racialism and human equality is not the basis of the Commonwealth, then it has no basis..... On the Rhodesian issue we are dealing with the question whether all Commonwealth members do accept the equal human rights of all peoples, or whether the Commonwealth is willing to accept lesser rights for the African peoples of Rhodesia than they would be willing to accept for any other peoples".¹⁹

ARMS SALES TO SOUTH AFRICA : Simonstown Agreement

A toppling of the Smith regime in Rhodesia would be troublesome for South Africa. After her withdrawal from the Commonwealth, the success of South Africa's 'outward policy' was a blow to Pan Africanism. More and more African States had started a 'dialogue' with South Africa in the late 1960s. The members of the Commonwealth opposed to South Africa made another effort to isolate South Africa over the issue of arms supply by Britain. The issue arose largely from the Simonstown Agreement.

19. Julius Nyerere, "The African view on Rhodesia: Objections to Fearless Proposals", Round Table, vol.59, Nos.233-36, 1969, p.133.

The South African government during the 1950s saw the Communist and Afro-Asian States as natural opponents. South Africa wanted to gain membership of the Western defence alliance". "The search for alliances was conditioned first by South Africa's view of a world divided between the Communists and anti-Communists, secondly by their particular interests in the African continent and third by their continued membership of the Commonwealth".²⁰ Together with the British government they took the initiative in sponsoring a defence Conference at Nairobi²¹ in 1951 and at Dakar in 1954 but an African alliance could not emerge.

It is largely in terms of the search for alliances that the Simonstown Agreement of 1955 should be seen. It was not a treaty but an exchange of letters between the British and the South African governments. The memorandum stated, "The defence of South Africa against external aggression lies not only in Africa but also in the gateways to Africa namely the Middle East. The United Kingdom would, therefore, contribute forces for the defence of Africa including South Africa and the Middle East, and South Africa would contribute forces in order to keep the potential enemy as far as possible from the borders of South Africa...."²² Britain was assured the use of facilities of the

20. James Barber, South Africa's Foreign policy 1945-70 (Oxford Univ.Press London, 1973), p.81.

21. The Conference was attended by France, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Ethiopia, Egypt, South Rhodesia, Britain and South Africa.

22. Barber, n.20, p.88.

Simonstown base in both peace and war, whether or not South Africa was a belligerent. The Agreement also provided for the joint defence of sea routes around South Africa and the purchase of naval vessels by South Africa in Britain.²³

The Agreement can be interpreted as a direct continuation of the old Commonwealth link. Britain accepted a continuing military role and continued to provide South Africa's main external military support. Training and defence exercises were shared; military information was exchanged. The South African government interpreted the Agreement as conferring legitimacy to its aspirations to enjoy the benefits of association with the Western alliance system.

During the 1960s the harmony in Anglo-South African defence cooperation was subjected to increasing strain. South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth in 1961 meant the end of any immediate prospect of capitalizing upon the provisions of the Simonstown Agreement. At a time when South Africa faced isolation, the government tried to build up its own military strength.²⁴ External sources of arms procurement were diversified.²⁵ The African

23. South Africa undertook to purchase six anti-submarine frigates, two coastal mine sweepers and four defence boats from Britain. See *Ibid.*, pp 88-89.

24. In 1959-60 expenditure on defence was 7% of the total expenditure. By 1966-67 it rose to 17% R. 216.3 million out of R.1252.2 million. *Ibid.*, p.89.

25. France became a major supplier of arms including Mirage interceptors and Alouette helicopters. In 1969 alone France sold 42 Mirage III and three Mirage IIIB jets. See Anirudha Gupta, "Arms, African States and the Commonwealth" in Economic and Political Weekly, vol.6, No.14, April 3, 1971.

States brought the question of an arms' embargo before the Security Council. Two resolutions adopted by the Council in 1963 called for an embargo on the shipment of arms, ammunition and other military equipment to South Africa.²⁶ But the major Western powers made it clear that this was a recommendation and did not require action under Chapter VII of the Charter. The Conservative government in Britain agreed to stop the sale of arms for internal use but reserved the right to supply arms for external use.

Anglo-South African relations deteriorated during the six year period of Labour government in Britain. Wilson's decision to extend the arms' embargo to cover the weapons which the Conservative government was prepared to sell on the ground that their function was related solely to external defence was resented by the South African government. Britain was accused of failing to honour the spirit of the Simonstown Agreement.

Resumption of Arms' Sales

The Conservatives won the general elections of 1970. A part of their programme was to reverse the arms' embargo on South Africa to the extent of permitting sales of frigates and other naval equipment. The issue was intensely debated within and outside the country. The British Prime Minister Edward Heath's

26. S/5386, adopted on 9 August 1963 by 9 votes to 0 with two absentions (Britain and France), reiterated in S/5469 adopted unanimously on 4 December 1963. See T.B. Miller, The Commonwealth and the United Nations (Sydney, 1967), p.167.

argument was that the supply of certain items of equipment was legally required under the terms of the Simonstown Agreement, under which the Royal Navy received facilities at the Simonstown base in South Africa. Opponents of the policy argued that would help the South African government to hold down their black population under a policy which was deeply immoral.

The stage was, thus, set for a fierce controversy at the Commonwealth conference held at Singapore in January 1971. The British argument was that the use of Simonstown was essential to Britain's keeping watch on the sea lanes in South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. The sale of 'maritime equipment' to South Africa was the price to be paid for the continued use of Simonstown. "The Commonwealth was not a court of judgement; and it had no right to stop member governments making their own decision".²⁷ The African States considered any form of support to South Africa as support for its racist regime. Threats were held out that if Britain persisted with the proposal, some African States might restrict British trade and consider leaving the Commonwealth. "Britain was asked to combine its interests with those of free Africa, and of those members of the Commonwealth who share our bitter hostility to racialism and colonialism".²⁸ (Nyerere)

The conference appointed a study group to look into the question of the defence of the Indian Ocean, thus sidetracking

27. Andrew Walker, The Commonwealth: A New Look (Pergamon Press Oxford, 1978), p. 21.

28. Miller, n. 2. p. 165.

the main issue of arms' sales. The British government decided that its legal obligation to South Africa involved the sale of only seven helicopters. "The announcement that Britain would supply wasp helicopters to South Africa has aroused, understably enough, the indignation of Afro-Asian members of the Commonwealth. Nigeria has already decided to leave the eight member study group set up by the Singapore conference to look into the security of maritime routes in the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean".²⁹ Anirudha Gupta considers the formation of the study group as a 'face saving device' so that by quitting it the Afro-Asians could prove that they were still capable of some action".³⁰

Resumption of arms' sales by Britain was a product of many domestic and external compulsions. Heath wanted to play the role of a 'man of iron' "It is precisely because he agreed to the formation of the Commonwealth study group, that it also became necessary for him to act on the arms issue before the group met".³¹ The African States did not remain united on the arms issue. Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Uganda and Gambia did not object to it while the position of Kenya and Ghana was not clear. Only Nigeria, Tanzania and perhaps Zambia may offer some opposition, but this may not amount to much in view of the cracks in African unity.³² The Study Group never met; no further arms were sold. Commonwealth pressures had to some extent pressurised Heath to modify his stand.

29. Anirudha Gupta, n.25, p.747.

30. Ibid, p.748.

31. Ibid, p.748.

32. Ibid, p.749.

No member left the Commonwealth; no restrictions were placed on British trade and investment. The storm blew itself out. But the most notable achievement of the Singapore Conference was the adoption of a declaration under which member-governments were to subscribe to a number of principles. The draft declaration proposed by President Kaunda was part of the strategy to prevent the British arms' sales. The declaration came to be known as the Commonwealth Declaration of Principles.³³

33. The Declaration has been reproduced in the Appendix.

CHAPTER IV

THE ASIAN QUESTION IN EAST AFRICA

The expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 was the culmination of tendencies inherent in the process of African decolonization and the growth of racial antagonism within the Commonwealth. For a proper understanding of the crisis in Uganda and Kenya it may be useful if we consider firstly the factors responsible for the tension, secondly review the main stages of discrimination and thirdly examine the consequences of the crisis in so far as they affected Britain, India and the Commonwealth.

Asians in East Africa - Factors of Friction

In 1969 there were 18,200 Indians in Kenya, 105,000 in Tanzania and 76,000 in Uganda. They formed 2.3% of the population in Kenya and about 1% in Uganda and Tanzania.¹ Asian population in East Africa had nearly doubled between 1948 and 1968. In 1969 non-citizens in Uganda formed over 5% of the total population (546,396 out of 9,548,847). Non-Asian citizens formed less than 9% of this immigrant community.² The increase in population was absorbed in urban areas. The trend towards urbanization continued increasing in the post-independence

1. Hugh Tinker; "Indians Abroad: Emigration, Restriction and Rejection" in Michael Twaddle, ed., Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Ugandan Asians (Athlone Press, London, 1975), pp.15-16.

2. D.P. Ghai, ed., Portrait of a Minority: Asians in East Africa (Nairobi, 1965), p.91.

period. In the 1960s the Asians provided a quarter of the entire East African professional and managerial personnel. On the other hand, the Africans occupied only the lower jobs.... In 1962 the average earning of Asians was eight times more than that of the average Africans. Incensed at this inequality the Africans demanded a restructuring of their socio-economic set up". The Africans considered the Asians not only as aliens but also an irritating obstacle to their economic advancement. Hence the various measures initiated under the programmes of Africanization were directly aimed at removing the Asians from commerce, services and other sectors".³

Asians maintained a social exclusiveness; they were looked upon in East Africa as an exploiter community who would make money through unfair business practices. Their cultural ethnocentricism and 'Indian-ness' was irritating to the Africans. The Asians were often viewed as a 'handful of aliens' who because of their own inadequacies or those of others have found it increasingly difficult to adjust to their new surroundings".⁴ Jomo Kenyatta and other leading Africans were at heart as anti-Asians as anti-Europeans and Kenyatta often made it clear that he had no intention of being tied to the coat tails of India.... Indeed,

3. Anirudha Gupta, "India and the Asians in East Africa" in Michael Twaddle, n.1, p.133.

4. Anirudha Gupta, "The Asians in East Africa: Problems and Prospects", International Studies, vol.10,(1968-69), p.270.

the Asians were probably a more hated minority than the Europeans with the mass of Africans.⁵

The anti-Indian instance of the average African was rooted in racism. This was, in part, the reaction of modern nation States themselves, the creation of colonialism, against the policies of freedom of movement within former regional-colonial boundaries which the same colonialism has facilitated.

The expulsion policies were thus the responses of governments anxious to demonstrate to their own citizens that the satisfaction of their own rising expectations was not to be unduly deferred while foreigners apparently prospered at their expense".⁶

Discriminatory Legislation

The legal status of Asian settlers was precarious. This was largely due to the immigration policies followed by Britain as well as India. Even after the acceptance of separate nationality within the Commonwealth by the British Nationality Act 1948, the principle of free entry to the United Kingdom was preserved in the 1950s. Increasing numbers continued to exercise this right with the result that by 1961 (in which year it was estimated 170,000 immigrants from other Commonwealth countries

5. Roger K. Tangri, "Asians in Kenya: A Political History", Africa Quarterly, (Delhi) vol.6 (1966-67), p.123.

6. James S. Reed, "Some Legal Aspects of Expulsion", in Twaddle, n.1, p.208.

entered Britain) it became clear that the rate of flow of Commonwealth immigrants was exceeding Britain's capacity to absorb them, particularly since the majority tended to congregate in already overcrowded areas of the country.⁷ The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 imposed controls on the entry of all Commonwealth citizens except U.K. citizens born in the U.K. or holding U.K. passports issued by the U.K. Government. The intending immigrants had to obtain work vouchers from the Ministry of Labour. The object was to restrict the small scale exodus of coloured immigrants from East Africa and India. After independence in Uganda Asian residents could retain their status as British protected persons or U.K. citizens as the case may be. They continued to be entitled to U.K. passports if they did not choose to become citizens of Uganda. The option of Ugandan citizenship as of right for others was not available for those who had some other citizenship i.e. of India, Pakistan or Tanzania. Kenya in 1967 enacted the Immigration Act and the Trade Licensing Act. The Act would replace locally employed Asians by Africans where the Asians had not registered as Kenyan citizens. As discriminatory measures increased in Kenya, those with British citizenship moved in greater numbers to Britain. In the three months ending January 1968, 7,000 arrived.⁸

This prompted the U.K. government to enact the Commonwealth Immigrants' Act 1968. An additional condition for free

7. A Yearbook of the Commonwealth (HMSO, 1979), p.483.

8. J. D. B. Miller, Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1958-1969 (Oxford Univ. Press London, 1974), p.346.

entry into the U.K. was imposed - the intending immigrant or one of his parents or grand parents must have been born, nationalized, registered or adopted in the U.K. He should also hold a U.K. passport. The Act thus restricted the admission to the U.K. of her own citizens within a narrow legal definition. As Nicholas Deakin wrote at the time, "The Act provided the retrospective deprivation of the rights of a group of citizens in defiance of solemn obligations solemnly made".⁹ O'Brien noted, Race relations in East Africa suffered as a result because the occasion vividly demonstrated the Asian sense of security. British-East African relations suffered also because it created misgivings in the minds of the East African governments about the credibility of British obligations towards its citizens in East Africa. And it introduced in the U.K. the new dimension of race in calculation of who should enter Britain".¹⁰

The non-citizens in East Africa became the centre of controversy involving the British and the African governments. Britain was widely accused of racial discrimination; it was involved in prolonged dispute with Kenya, Uganda and India. In March 1968 India also introduced visa requirements for Asians coming from Kenya. Finally the Immigration Act of 1971 established a unified body of law for all immigrants. It introduced a new concept of partials-who have the right to abode in U.K. It made a distinction between U.K. and Commonwealth citizens on race basis.

9. Nicholas Deakin, "Citizens and Immigrants in Britain", Round Table, April 1971.

10. Quoted in Anirudha Gupta, "Ugandan Asians, Britain, India and the Commonwealth", African Affairs, Oxford 73 (1974) p.314.

The majority of Asians in independent Uganda chose to retain their British passports. The Indian settlers opted for British citizenship primarily because of the assurances given to them by the British government that they would have free entry to Britain.¹¹ The African governments were averse to giving citizenship to Asians. In 1967 the Kenyan government enacted Licensing and Immigration laws to replace Asian businessmen by Africans. The Immigrants' Act of 1958 restricted the entry of Asians to Britain. Asians in East Africa panicked and wanted to find quick means of escape to Britain or India. The exodus from Kenya unnerved both the British and the Indian governments. The Kenyan government was not prepared to accept Indian persuasion or intercession on behalf of non-citizen Asians. Both African and Indian governments believed that the responsibility for British Asians rested solely on Britain.

The Africanized Commonwealth would not take any collective action though the matter was debated at the Prime Ministers' Meeting held in January 1969. The member countries held such conflicting opinions that the communique recorded only a request made "by some Commonwealth countries to the Secretary General to examine in consultation with them general principles relating to short and long term movement of peoples between their countries... on a continuing basis with a view to providing relevant

11. Chanan Singh, "The Problem of Citizenship" in Anirudha Gupta, ed., Indians Abroad; Asia and Africa (New Delhi, 1971), pp.180-90.

information".¹² This amounted to a brief for inaction. The Prime Ministers reaffirmed the declaration made in the communique of 1964 that for all Commonwealth governments "it should be an objective of policy to build in each country a structure of society which offers equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all its people, irrespective of race, colour or creed. The Commonwealth should be able to exercise constructive leadership in the application of democratic principles in a manner which will enable the people of each country of different racial and cultural groups to exist and develop as free and equal citizens".¹³

The Asian community in Uganda was adversely affected by legislative measures of Obote's Government in 1969. The Trade Licensing Act 1969 was to facilitate the Ugandanization of trade. Non-citizens were prohibited from trading except in 'General business areas'. The Immigration Act 1969 increased the pressure on non-citizen Asians to leave Uganda. Pressure was also building upon Britain to admit her passport holders in East Africa. In January 1971 General Amin came to power. An announcement was made on 8 December 1971 that all applications for citizenship outstanding when the President took power in January 1971 had been cancelled. The starting date for the crisis was August 4 when President Amin in an address in Tororo said that there was no room in Uganda for 80,000 Asians holding British passports and

13. Round Table, vol.59 (1969), Nos. 233-36.

who, he said, were sabotaging the economy and encouraging corruption.¹⁴ As from August 9, 1972 entry permits and certificates of persons of Asian origin were cancelled. On August 20 General Amin declared that all Asians including the 23,000 claiming Ugandan nationality would have to leave the country within ninety days although those who could prove their citizenship would be allowed to stay longer.

Consequences of the Crisis

Let us consider the Ugandan crisis in so far as it affected Indo-British relations and the Commonwealth. Amin described the expulsion 'as part of the war of liberation'. His outburst of violence and racist attitude caused an outcry in Britain, India and the Commonwealth". For the first time one witnessed Asian, African and European members of the Commonwealth joining ranks to condemn an African government. This was something unheard of in the history of the Commonwealth. During the entire decade beginning with 1960, all that one had known was a concerted attack on Britain launched by coloured members of the Commonwealth. Now there was a very different reaction".¹⁵

It must, however, be noted that expulsion policies were the responses of African governments to satisfy the rising expectations of their citizens as against the alien communities whom they

14. Africa Digest, vol.19, no.57, October, 1972, p.96.

15. Anirudha Gupta, n.10, p.322.

considered to be their exploiters. This is why, with a few exceptions, there was not criticism but approbation in Africa itself. In fact, the racial factor in national policy formation cannot be ignored. Public opinion in the U.K. which forcefully opposed the entry of Asians in Britain mirrored the very racist attitude which the same section condemned in Uganda. While itself based on racialism, the expulsion revealed further the discrimination between the coloured and white citizens embodied in the Immigrants' Act 1968.

The expulsion of Asians brought about a confrontation between the British and the Ugandan governments. It created bad blood between India on the one hand and Britain and Uganda on the other. The Commonwealth and the community at large was also involved. Afro-Asian solidarity broke up and the cohesion within the Commonwealth was lost. When British persuasion and threats proved useless, the British Government accepted its responsibility towards the Asians and constituted the Uganda Settlement Board to resettle the refugees. After negotiations the British and the Indian governments agreed on a formula which would enable any Kenyan Asian with a British passport who was compelled to leave Kenya to choose to come to India or to Britain. If he chose India, the British Government would promise that he could come to Britain in future if he so wished. Thus the principle of ultimate British responsibility was satisfied.

The Commonwealth in particular and the international community in general were asked by Britain to help in tackling

this human problem. Though the matter was raised in the General Assembly, Britain did not move for a debate or censure motion against the Ugandan government either in the United Nations or Commonwealth forums. Amin remained adamant in face of verbal condemnation unbacked by punitive action. Britain did not wish to get involved in direct confrontation with Uganda because of diplomatic considerations. British efforts won world sympathy and help in their lift of the Asians. Some 23,000 Asians came to Britain; 5,000 were allowed temporary residence in India and the rest were flown to Canada, Australia and some European countries.¹⁶ By 8 November all British Asians had left Uganda. The social tensions arising from Commonwealth immigration contributed much to British disillusionment with the Commonwealth and led to changes in the British approach towards the Commonwealth in the 1970s. As far as the Commonwealth was concerned, the exodus showed how elastic was the conception of the Commonwealth particularly in racial terms.

India would not take a tough line with the East African governments because foreign policy goals impelled her to support Pan Africanism and uphold Afro-Asian solidarity. India faced a dilemma. Pressure on Kenya and Uganda on behalf of the non-citizens of Indian origin would be considered as interference in internal affairs; on the other hand inactivity in the matter would

16. Anirudha Gupta, n. 10, p. 321.

not be morally defensible. This is why India vacillated between action and inaction. India took the stand that the responsibility to take back the Asians rested only on Britain. This is why it imposed on 11 August the visa system to prevent the entry into India of a large number of British passport holders. The demand was made in the Indian parliament that India should quit the Commonwealth and nationalise British firms.¹⁷ Much of the misunderstanding between Britain and India was dispelled when Britain accepted responsibility towards the Asians holding British passports. India as the parent country assumed some responsibility towards the Asians and cooperated with Britain in resettling them.

India, however, used strong language against the Ugandan regime. India's President V.V. Giri declared in Lusaka, "The happenings in Uganda have thrown a heavy cloud of doubt and uncertainty over the minds of many people of Indian origin in several countries of Africa.... The pernicious doctrine of racialism may permeate even free Africa".¹⁸ But brave words without effective action could be of no avail. India could not afford to get alienated from Pan-Africanism and so direct confrontation with Kenya and Uganda had to be avoided.

17. Anirudha Gupta, n.3, p.136.

18. Anirudha Gupta, n.10, p.322.

CHAPTER V

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Commonwealth Machinery

The European Commonwealth had a family touch about it. Its membership was limited and its occasional meetings were held in an informal atmosphere for consultation, exchange of information and negotiation. Conventions were observed. No formal decisions were made; no resolutions were passed; internal affairs of a member country or bilateral disputes were not discussed. The meetings were largely the efforts of the British government at whose initiative they were held in London under the chairmanship of the British Prime Minister. The Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) together with the Cabinet Office shared the responsibility for conducting the Prime Ministers' Meetings. The CRO remained an effective means of communication among the Commonwealth governments and it acted as a collecting house of information in matters of common concern.

The CRO was responsible to the British government alone; it would, therefore, serve essentially British interests. It was an appendage of the British government. The growth in numbers of the Commonwealth members after 1957 brought to the fore procedural problems in conducting the Prime Ministers' meetings. A body comprising of two dozen members could not conduct itself like a

committee or six or eight. As the Commonwealth membership rose from eight to twenty-one in 1964, new procedures had to be evolved in accordance with the change in tone and atmosphere of the meetings. The old members of the Commonwealth observed the rules of the game; goodwill and cordiality was maintained despite sharp differences of opinion. Rapid Africanization of the Commonwealth during 1957-64 introduced discordant elements in the Prime Ministers' or the Heads of Governments' meetings. Restricted sessions began to be held. As a matter of policy the African members adopted militant diplomacy at such meetings to further the interests of decolonization and Pan Africanism. The conduct and procedure of the Prime Ministers' meetings were so traditionally circumscribed that it was not possible to resolve acute controversies relating to South Africa and Rhodesia especially when African states were bent upon pressurizing and humiliating Britain - the host country.

It was, therefore, necessary that changes in size, content and procedures of the Commonwealth meetings and forums were reflected in their conduct and control. An institutional transformation of the Commonwealth system was urgently needed. The establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat was a step in the evolutionary process of providing a tangible link among the Commonwealth countries. It marked a further stage in the devolution of the Commonwealth towards the equality of all members away from Anglo-centrism. It would complete the process of

decolonization by taking out the management of the Commonwealth from British hands. The Secretariat would take over all Commonwealth affairs from the CRO and emerge a distinctly independent organ owned, managed and staffed by the Commonwealth as a whole.

The immediate reason for the acceptance of a proposal for a Commonwealth Secretariat was the attempt of the United Kingdom in the 1964 Conference to accord the Rhodesian issue very low priority on the agenda. This move met stiff opposition from the African members. Thus the African resentment at the British manipulation of the procedures seems to have been a factor that led to the suggestion for a Secretariat.¹

Concrete suggestions for the establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat were put forward at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' London Meet in July, 1964 by the younger members. Various proposals for strengthening the Commonwealth were made but the idea of a Secretariat was first mooted by Eric Williams, Prime Minister of Trinidad and President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. Nkrumah proposed a 'Central Clearing House' to prepare plans for trade, aid and development and serve all Commonwealth members equally.² On earlier occasions similar proposals

1. B. Vivekanandan, "The Commonwealth Secretariat", International Studies (New Delhi), vol. 9, July-April 1967-68, p. 318.

2. Hindustan Times (New Delhi) 13 July 1963.

were put forward by the older 'white' members but were condemned by the new members as 'neo-colonial'.³

Nkrumah propounded a set of basic principles for the new Commonwealth. Having emphasised the looseness of the Commonwealth, he went on to propose a 'properly staffed clearing house in London'. It was to be a visible symbol of Commonwealth cooperation to 'disseminate information, assist existing agencies of cooperation and to organize future conferences'.⁴

The proposal was finally accepted by the Prime Ministers. They instructed their officials to consider the machinery for the proposed Secretariat which would among other things, "disseminate information to the member countries on matters of common concern, assist existing official and unofficial agencies

3. Sir Robert Menzies, the Prime Minister of Newzealand had pleaded for the creation of some such central agency for the Commonwealth but the suggestion was resisted by other members of the Commonwealth. He was glad that "for the first time in the history of the Commonwealth there is to be established a Secretariat which is based on the proposition that the Commonwealth is a continuing thing, an enduring thing, and the machinery ought to be available to enable it to continue more effectively. That, I think, is quite a remarkable achievement and a very powerful answer to the pessimists". See Observer, 12 July 1964.

4. W. D. McIntyre, Colonies into Commonwealth (Blandford Press, London, 1966), p.354.

to promote Commonwealth links and help to coordinate the preparations for future Heads of Governments meetings". The Secretariat would be a visible symbol of the spirit of cooperation which animates the Commonwealth.⁵

The officials gave final shape to the Agreed Memorandum in June 1965. The Secretariat being recruited from member countries and financed by their contributions would be at the service of all Commonwealth Governments.⁶ The Agreed Memorandum on Commonwealth Secretariat (1965) clearly stated that the Secretariat would not arrogate to itself executive functions. No collective decisions were to be made. The functions were grouped under (1) international affairs, (2) economic affairs, and (3) administrative. As consultation is the life blood of Commonwealth association, the Secretary General will arrange to prepare and circulate papers on international matters of common concern to all Commonwealth governments. The main object was dissemination of factual information.⁷ The main role of the Secretariat was to promote consultation and practical functional cooperation across the lines of race and region.

5. Commonwealth Survey, 21 July 1964, p. 724.

6. Britain was to pay 30% of the cost, Canada 20.0%, India 11.4% Australia 10% and other members 1.5%, except for Newzealand and Pakistan which would pay 2.5% and 2.4% respectively. The staff was to be recruited on as wide a geographical basis as possible.

7. Based on paras 6-12 of the Agreed Memorandum as reproduced in T.B. Miller, The Commonwealth and United Nations (Sydney, 1970), pp. 216-18.

Differences cropped up among the old and new members of the Commonwealth on the question of the choice of the first Secretary General. After much deliberation and on the recommendation of the Committee of civil servants representing twenty-one Commonwealth countries a Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith was chosen as Secretary General in June 1965.⁸

Most of the Secretariat's work related to economic and allied fields rather than political. It paid special attention to the needs of the smaller underdeveloped members of the Commonwealth. A scheme of financial assistance was pioneered. In the course of time the Secretariat became involved in the new international economic order. Tourism, youth welfare and promotion of trade soon attracted its attention. It organized the Commonwealth Education conferences and their machinery. By the end of 1970 the Secretariat had divisions of Establishment and Finance, Development Aid and Planning, Trade and Commodities, International Affairs, Education and Legal division. Medical and scientific advisers as well as Information Officers were appointed.⁹ A Fund for Technical Cooperation (1971), a Youth division (1973), a division for Applied Studies in Governments (1975) and a Rural Development division (1975) were added. By 1976, the staff had grown to over 300 and the budget to some two million pounds a year.

8. Commonwealth Secretariat. Reports of Commonwealth Secretary-General; First report 1966, Third report November 1968 - November 1970 provides the primary source material for the activities of the Secretariat.

9. Andrew Walker, The Commonwealth: A New Look (Pergamon Press, 1978), p. 29.

The utility of the Secretariat was amply demonstrated in the Rhodesian crisis which overshadowed the first year of its life. The Secretary General utilized his right of access to the Heads of Governments. In October 1965 he undertook a tour of the East and Central African countries. He acted as a bridge between the rival parties. He warned that the Rhodesian issue, if not properly handled, would lead to the disintegration of the Commonwealth.

The Secretariat organized the first meeting of the Prime Ministers held outside London - the Lagos conference to discuss the Rhodesian issue. The Lagos conference strengthened and stabilized the position of the Secretariat. It provided the basis for the continuance of the Sanctions Committee. The outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in July 1967 intensified the efforts of the Secretary-general to reach a negotiated settlement. In October 1967 he arranged secret discussions between representatives of both sides in London. The Kampala talks in Uganda (23 to 31 May 1968) were organized and serviced by the Secretariat.

Thus the Secretariat gained much of its stature from the urgency of African issues. It provided a bridge between Britain and some of the African countries during the split over Rhodesia. It was the agency through which the Commonwealth Sanction committee operated. It tried hard to resolve the Nigerian civil war. Its economic activities owed much to African needs. While never

a passive instrument of African demands, as some of its critics claimed, the Secretariat was clearly consonant with the new African dimension which the Commonwealth had acquired. Under the stewardship of Arnold Smith the Secretariat became accepted by Commonwealth leaders and additional tasks were entrusted to it. The development aspect of the Secretariat's work will predominate in future. The Secretariat has become involved in the search for the new international economic order.

TRADE

Commonwealth cooperation in the sphere of sterling and trade was the most tangible of all Commonwealth links. Sterling provided an alternative to gold as an exchange-standard. In 1931 Britain went off the gold standard and colonial currencies were directly linked to sterling. It was at this point that the Sterling Bloc was formed, and those countries which decided to maintain their currency in terms of sterling rather than gold became members of the bloc.¹⁰

Sterling area arrangements provided a bond of unity to the Eurasian Commonwealth even though the Commonwealth and the sterling area was not identical.¹¹ Britain remained at the

10. They consisted at the time of Dominions (less Canada) and the Empire; later Portugal, the Scandinavian countries, Iran and Latvia joined the Bloc.

11. Canada was a member of the Commonwealth, but not of the sterling area.

centre of the sterling area and operated its mechanism. After the Second World War America's pressure to end the sterling area weakened Britain's position. The attempt by Britain in 1947 to make sterling convertible led to financial crisis.

Despite the fluctuations in sterling, membership of the sterling area gave easy access to London Capital Market and increased chances of aid. Movement of capital from Britain to a sterling country was easier than outside the sterling area. It provided an important technical link that helped bind the Commonwealth together. The Commonwealth and the sterling area always looked to Britain for capital. The sterling was the only rival to the dollar as a world currency. In 1966 Zambia and Malaysia converted a part of their reserves into gold and dollars rather than sterling. Such moves, together with the establishment of central banks in Commonwealth countries, weakened British dominance of the area. African dimension of the Commonwealth demanded new policies in economics as in politics. Ghana and Nigeria were the principal dollar earners for the sterling area. If on achieving independence, they chose to draw heavily on their sterling balances in order to finance developmental schemes, sterling would be under much pressure. Sterling was made convertible soon after the Montreal conference 1958. Thus the foreign side of sterling area became more important than the Commonwealth side.¹² The pound was devalued in 1967. It

12. In 1968, there were six major holders of sterling: Australia, Malaysia, Eire, Hongkong, Kuwait and Libya. Of these only two - Australia and Malaysia was Commonwealth members. See Susan Stange, Sterling and British Policy (London, 1970), p. 89.

was a move away from sterling. The sterling area officially died in 1972 when Britain finally joined the East European Community. The cohesion of the Commonwealth on the economic plane was lost.

The Commonwealth never formed an economic bloc in the sense of pursuing integrated economic policies with a protectionist bias towards the other countries of the world. Britain dominated the trade and investment in the Empire by following a free trade policy. But the dominions continued to press Britain to adopt a system of imperial preferences. As a result of the deliberations at the Imperial Economic Conference Ottawa (1932) Britain abandoned free trade and adopted imperial preferences. A series of bilateral Commonwealth Agreements were drawn up covering Britain and the dominions. At the same time higher Empire tariffs were enacted against foreign goods. There was, however, a steady erosion of preferences after the Ottawa agreements. The number of British exports receiving Commonwealth preferences declined from 55% to 50% between 1937 and 1948.¹³

The Commonwealth Economic Conference (1952) decided to follow a collective approach with a view to expansion of world trade. This would create an effective multilateral trade and payment system covering the widest possible area. In fact,

13. Guy Arnold, Economic Cooperation in the Commonwealth (Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1967), p. 64.

Commonwealth trade in 1956 represented about a quarter of the total of the world trade. A great proportion of this was between one Commonwealth country and another.¹⁴ Trade arrangements between the Commonwealth countries varied; there was no uniformity about preferences.¹⁵ Apart from Britain, the volume of trade between one Commonwealth country and another was not particularly high.¹⁶

The Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference held in Montreal in 1958 urged the Commonwealth countries to work towards an expansion of Commonwealth trade by all practicable means.¹⁷ Britain announced its intention of providing development loans to independent Commonwealth countries and of further relaxing restrictions on dollar imports. The system of Commonwealth preferences hardly applied to Africa. The newly independent African states needed economic aid for development. Their needs surpassed anything which Britain alone could provide. The

14. Ibid., p.17.

15. Thus Britain gave preferences on about 50% of her Commonwealth imports, while most East and West African countries gave no preferences to Britain.

16. Thus Ghana carried on 30% of her trade within the Commonwealth. But if the figure for the British-Ghanaian trade is subtracted from this, her total trade with all other Commonwealth countries would fall to 8% only. See Arnold, n. 13, p.58.

17. The conference was attended by Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Sierra Leone.

proposal for generalized preference was made by less developed countries at UNCTAD in 1964. It was a scheme for tariff preferences for the industrial products of the less developed countries in the markets of developed countries. The proposal was accepted by Britain and Australia.

The Commonwealth countries were widely scattered and differed much in their economic development. When African states achieved independence, the economic relations of the Commonwealth with Britain changed. In 1960s the Commonwealth countries developed trade and investment arrangements with the countries outside the Commonwealth. British investments in Western Europe and U.S.A. increased while investments in the African countries remained at a low level. British investment in non-sterling areas was £ 232.9 million while in sterling areas it was only £ 176.8 million in 1960.¹⁸ Britain's share of Commonwealth trade also declined.

The first move to integrate Britain with the tariff system of the E. E. C. was made in 1973. For a number of Commonwealth countries trade relations with E. E. C. countries grew in importance after 1973. British exports to the rest of the E. E. C., as a proportion of its export to all destinations, rose from 28% in 1969 to 32% in 1973 while the proportion of British imports

18. J. D. B. Miller, Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Attrition and Expansion 1953-1969 (London, 1974), p. 449.

supplied by the rest of the E. E. C. grew from 29% to 33%.¹⁹

In Britain also there was a turning away from the Commonwealth to Europe. European economy seemed to be more attractive, for large scale British activity. The Commonwealth preference operated to Britain's disadvantage. The sterling area aggravated Britain's balance of payments. Economically, the Commonwealth connection was no longer as an asset for Britain whose natural markets were the sophisticated markets of the developed world. Britain found the Commonwealth less of a growth area for trade and investment; it proved to be less attractive as a support for sterling. The programme for increasing the volume of Commonwealth trade languished because it was not gainsome for Britain.

While negotiations regarding British membership of E. E. C. continued during the 1960s, Commonwealth aspects of the problem overshadowed all others. The matter was discussed at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting 1960. Discussion with the Commonwealth countries on the implications of the British decision to join the Six were held. In their communique the Finance Ministers accepted that "in any negotiations that take place the essential interests of the Commonwealth countries should be safeguarded and full account taken of the continuing

19. Commonwealth in World Trade 1973-74 (Commonwealth Secretariat, London) p. 37.

importance of intra-Commonwealth trade".²⁰

Britain had acquired certain responsibility for the products of Commonwealth countries. Under the preference system most Commonwealth products entered Britain duty free. Britain agreed to pay a higher price and guaranteed certain quotas to East African Commonwealth countries. The quota arrangement for wheat, butter and meat favoured Commonwealth producers. Terms of Britain's possible entry to E. E. C. were discussed further by the Prime Ministers' meeting of 1962. Ghana rejected the idea of 'associated status' on the ground that it would perpetuate the colonial economic status of Africa. Nigeria would be satisfied if it could obtain free entry for its products into the enlarged common market.

By 1968 it was clear that the Commonwealth was no longer an obstacle to British membership of E. E. C. Britain had begun to consider its European interests to be more important than its Commonwealth interests; the Commonwealth countries also looked outside the Commonwealth for trade and aid. Nigeria concluded a special Treaty of Association with E. E. C. under which it would operate reverse preferences for Britain. Kenya and Tanzania had also begun such negotiations. During the 1960s intra-Commonwealth trade declined sharply as the following table would show.

20. Camps, Miriam, Britain and the European Community 1955-1963 (London, 1964), p. 317.

TABLE I

Proportion of intra-Commonwealth trade to total trade
(in percentages)

	E X P O R T				:	I M P O R T			
	1961	1964	1968	1978		1961	1964	1968	1978
Britain	85	28	22	17	:	35	20	23	17
Canada	20	20	13	9	:	16	13	9	8
Australia	38	37	34	26	:	48	39	36	31
India	44	35	25	25	:	31	20	16	23
Ghana	26	20	27	22	:	43	36	39	28
Nigeria	46	42	32	32	:	46	37	37	30

Source: Figures analysed from Commonwealth Trade 1969 (Commonwealth Secretariat), pp. 138-39.

Figures relating to the year 1978 have been taken from Commonwealth in World Trade (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1975), pp. 34-36.

As compared with the position in 1961 the decline in intra-commonwealth trade except in the case of Ghana declined between seven to two per cent. Commonwealth trade assumed an increasingly multilateral character.

A I D

In contrast with trade Britain maintained a Commonwealth bias in the matter of aid. The concept of economic aid - the transfer of real resources from the rich to the poor countries is of the recent origin. The wide gap between the developed and the underdeveloped countries of the Commonwealth has to be bridged by cooperative endeavour to further agreed social and economic purposes. Organization of intra-Commonwealth aid for welfare and development was a step in this direction. Britain remains the major aid donor to Commonwealth countries. The rich members of the Commonwealth - Canada, Australia and New-zealand joined Britain as aid donors.

The Commonwealth Development Corporation, a purely British organization was set up in 1948 to help in the economic development of the British colonies. At the Montreal Conference of 1958 it was decided to give Commonwealth assistance loans to independent Commonwealth countries as well as colonies. In May 1960 the Commonwealth Prime Ministers decided to set up a Special Commonwealth Aid to Africa Plan (SCAAP) under which aid would be given to African members by the more developed countries.²⁰ The Commonwealth Development Corporation invested in projects by itself or in partnership with

20. Arnold, n.13, p.80.

governments or private concerns. It invested in an irrigation scheme in Swaziland, a small holders' scheme for growing tea in Kenya and Uganda, cement factories in Nigeria and Zambia. It has concentrated on rural development and the training of local people as managers.²¹

The Colombo Plan owes its origin to Commonwealth initiative in 1950. "The Plan signifies the real beginning of aid-cooperation, the recognition by all that the developmental problems of the poorer members are a common concern; the need to consult closely and formally; and the subsequent increasing flow of aid from the 'four' rich and technologically advanced countries to the developing members of the association, really began in any coordinated sense from the inception of the Colombo Plan in 1950."²¹

The Plan was the main vehicle of direct assistance in providing technical cooperation rather than aid. In due course the Plan became a widely international affair having been joined by Canada, U.S.A. and Japan. It, therefore, lost the Commonwealth focus derived from its origin.²²

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) established in 1971 is another source of technical aid. It

21. Arnold, n.13, p.40

22. The Plan was extended to non-Commonwealth countries - Burma, Indonesia and Indo-China while U.S.A. became an aid-contributing member.

provides advice to all member States. The Fund is administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat, although it is funded separately. Its resources rose to £ 7 million in 1976-77.²³ It is a cooperative endeavour of all the Commonwealth governments who contribute in expertise as well as money. The CFTC also helps regional economic bodies within the Commonwealth: the East African Community and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Cooperation. Some other regional groupings such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) contain non-Commonwealth countries as well. Cooperation among regions is useful for a Commonwealth which has members in every continent.

Britain's aid to Africa consists of grants and loans. Loans could be extended to a period of thirty years. The following table gives a broad view of the bilateral aid during the 1960s.

TABLE II

U.K. Government's Bilateral Aid (In £ million)

Year	Total bilateral aid		Aid to African countries	
	Loans	Grants	Loans	Grants
1960-61	70.4	59.80.7	31.5	25.2
1968-69	86.4	90.7	22.2	38.6

Source: United Kingdom, Annual Abstract of Statistics, 1970, p.266-67
(Figures analysed by the writer herself)

23. Walker, n.9, p.41.

Commonwealth recipients of aid did not depend on Britain alone. It was estimated that during 1960-65 developing countries of the Commonwealth received £ 980 million from Commonwealth donors but £ 25.23 million from other donors.²⁴ During 1945 to 1970 Britain gave as gift about £ 800 million to members of the Commonwealth. By 1970 Britain was spending in aid £ 200 million annually, 80% of it within the Commonwealth.²⁵

We may conclude that the outside world became more significant to most of the Commonwealth countries in trade and aid.²⁶ There was a growing institutionalization and sharing of responsibilities through the activities of the World Bank. The Commonwealth Declaration of Principles 1971 enshrines the new concept of trade and aid. Aid funds are being provided for specific projects with emphasis on rural development so that the poorest people in the poorest countries are helped. The motives behind aid may be political and humanitarian but the main consideration is the political advantage or self interest of the donor. The recipients take aid to bring about economic development. Economic aid has also provided a powerful economic link.

24. Commonwealth Secretariat, Flow of Intra-Commonwealth Aid 1966 (1968), p.14.

25. Ibid, pp.25-30.

26. The developmental problems of the Commonwealth countries are too great to be tackled by the Commonwealth alone. The 'Four' rich Commonwealth donor countries represent only 8.6% of the developed world while the developing countries of the Commonwealth represent 32% of the world's developing population. 8.6% of the developed countries cannot obviously shoulder 32% of the world's aid needs. See Arnold, n.13, p.112.

CHAPTER VI

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LUSAKA DECLARATION

The Lusaka Conference was an important milestone in the evolution of the Commonwealth. It was a significant step forward in resolving the Rhodesian impasse which had threatened to break-up the Commonwealth. The full significance of the Lusaka Conference will be brought out if we consider (1) the background of the Conference; (2) analyze the attitudes of the leading participants and (3) assess the decisions made.

After the declaration of Southern Rhodesia as a republic in 1970, desultory negotiations for a settlement continued between the various British governments and the Ian Smith regime. The Rhodesian issue was considered at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference at Ottawa in 1973. The section of the communique dealing with Rhodesia expressed satisfaction at "the efforts of the British government in seeking a negotiated settlement and offered the help of the Commonwealth in supervising the terms of the settlement".¹ A spirit of goodwill prevailed at the next Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers held at Kingston, Jamaica in 1975. Representatives of the African National Council talked to Commonwealth leaders at Kingston. The communique spoke of their determination to achieve independence by peaceful means, but recognised the inevitability of armed struggle if peaceful

1. Andrew Walker, The Commonwealth: A New Look (Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1978), p. 23

negotiation was blocked by the white regime. As a follow up of the Anglo-U.S. diplomatic parleys with the front-line African States, the British government convened a constitutional conference at Geneva in late 1976. Representatives of the Patriotic Front as well as of the white regime participated in the deliberations. Britain, as the administering power of a non-self-governing territory, was held accountable to the United Nations. While the negotiations continued, the white regime threatened to arrive at an 'internal settlement' with the African leaders in Africa and entrust their henchmen with power.

The developing situation in Rhodesia was closely monitored by the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa during the period April 1977-May 1979. The Committee provided a valuable forum for frank exchanges of views on developments from time to time as well as for the expression of collective Commonwealth position on matters of significance. The Commonwealth Secretary General announced on 15 February 1978 that he had reached an 'internal settlement' with the three African leaders in Salisbury. This agreement signed on 3 March provided, *inter alia*, for the creation of an Executive Council composed of Ian Smith and the three black leaders, a ministerial council composed of equal number of black and white ministers, with general election to be held before 31 December 1978 on the basis of the so-called 'majority rule' constitution.²

2. Report of the Commonwealth Secretary General: April 1977 to May 1979 (Commonwealth Secretariat, London, 1979), p.22.

The 'internal settlement' was promptly rejected by the Patriotic Front. Commonwealth Heads of governments of the Asian and Pacific region meeting in Sydney from 13-16 February 'stressed their belief that any solution from which the Patriotic Front was excluded would be unacceptable to the international community'.³ The Commonwealth Committee at a meeting on 19 June 1978 reiterated that the Anglo-American Proposals (1 September 1977) provided the best basis for a satisfactory settlement. It welcomed the progress achieved in the talks held in Dar-es-Salaam on 14-15 April between American and British officials and the Patriotic Front. It also expressed strong Commonwealth support for the Anglo-American efforts to convene an all-party round table conference. On 19 March 1979, the Committee condemned the proposal to hold illegal elections on 20 April, which it believed could not, and were not intended to produce majority rule and would, therefore, lead to further widening of the conflict. The Committee called on "all the Governments to refrain from sending observers, or from any other action that might give any semblance of legitimacy to the election or to any regime or arrangement emanating from them".⁴

It was through a British initiative that the United Nations had imposed selective and then mandatory sanctions against Southern Rhodesia in 1968. Britain lost primacy in Rhodesia when

3. Ibid., p. 29.

4. Report of the Commonwealth Secretary General, n. 2., p. 24.

the United Nations became involved in the matter. In the meantime the role of external parties added a new dimension to the crisis. South Africa and the Portugese held territories extended help to the beleaguered Smith regime. South Africa supplied essential goods to Rhodesia and acted as an intermediary to sell Rhodesian goods in the world market. The Portugese, on the other hand, kept the Beira route open in order to break the oil sanctions. Thus sprang up, to borrow a phrase from President Kaunda", an unholy alliance between Pretoria, Salisbury and Lisbon".⁵

Another dimension to the problem was added by the involvement of U.S.S.R. and China in giving military assistance to the resistance movement in Rhodesia. ZAPU enjoyed Moscow's special support while ZANU retained connections with Beijing. The ZAPU-ZANU split was as much due to Sino-Soviet rivalry as to the guerilla armies and their tribal nature. The Shonas predominate in the ZANLA, while Nkomo's tribe the Ndebele, constituted the ZIPRA.⁶ The guerilla war which gained momentum only in 1973 polarized the party into tribal factions.

ZANLA, the guerilla army of Robert Mugabe and ZIPRA, the guerilla army of Joshu Nkomo did not accept the authority of political wings of their respective parties. The formation of the Patriotic Front and its endorsement by the FIPs in 1977 helped to

5. Anirudha Gupta, "Decolonization on Zimbabwe Model", World Focus (New Delhi), vol.1, No.4, April 1980, p.11.

6. Hari Sharan Chhabra, "Issues and Prospects", World Focus, Vol.1, No.4, April 1980, p.4.

restore the leadership of both Nkomo and Mugabe. The FIPs used the Patriotic Front as a means for negotiating terms with Britain. This explains the increasing ascendancy the FIPs acquired to pressurize, cajole or simply direct the Zimbabwe Nationalists to enter into negotiations commencing from Geneva (1977), via Malta (1978) and, finally, the Commonwealth summit at Lusaka.

The conflict situation in Southern Rhodesia had reached a stage early in 1979 when internal and external compulsion impelled the concerned parties to strive for a negotiated settlement. The economic sanctions were hurting the Smith regime. The relentless warfare by the Patriotic Front for almost seven years resulted in an exodus of the whites from the territory. More than one thousand whites were leaving the country every month.⁷ The 'internal settlement failed as Ndabaningi Sithole left the Muzorewa Government and dubbed the Bishop as a 'stooge of the whites'. On the other hand the leaders of the Patriotic Front found warfare a costly business in terms of materials and manpower. About a million rural Africans were displaced by the war as refugees. The Cubans with Soviet logistic support were encouraging the Patriotic Front to establish a liberated zone inside Rhodesia. Continuation of armed struggle was, therefore, likely to lead to internalization and escalation of war. The OAU nations wanted Britain to accept its responsibility towards

7. Anirudha Gupta, n.5, p.12.

Rhodesia in which blacks would be assured of their rightful place by way of majority rule, while at the same time, obtained co-operation of the white minority by safeguarding their legitimate rights was too compelling a logic to be ignored. Time was ripe to avoid the way of armed struggle and seek a solution of the crisis through a 'consensual model'.

The conference of thirty nine Commonwealth countries was held in Lusaka, Zambia from August 1 to 7, 1979. Twenty seven member countries were represented by their Presidents or Prime Ministers. They assembled in the Mulungushi conference hall on the outskirts of Lusaka against the backdrop of continuing guerilla warfare in neighbouring Rhodesia. The Zambians felt that the holding of the summit at Lusaka was a moral victory for Zimbabweans and their well wishers. It was the Commonwealth's first meeting held in Africa except the consultative meeting held at Lagos in 1966. The importance of African countries was thus recognised. Choice of Zambia as the host country was not accidental. As early as 1975, Kenneth Kaunda had offered to host a Commonwealth summit. But the next one (1977) was held at London, because it was to be the Queen's silver jubilee year. Kaunda, however, renewed his offer in 1979. S.D. Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary General, in his opening address at the Lusaka Conference underscored the significance of selecting Lusaka as the venue, saying that it was an indication that the organization had now

come of age.⁸

The problems of Africa were given high priority on the agenda of the conference held in Africa. The leaders at the summit were convinced that it would not be possible to hold deliberations on other global problems without first disposing off the Zimbabwe impasse. It was pointed out by the participants on the eve of the conference that all the concerned parties had to modify their rigid stands in order to reach a negotiated settlement towards the achievement of independence for Zimbabwe under genuine majority rule. Though the Rhodesian issue dominated the agenda, the conference also discussed the problems of Namibian independence, apartheid and economic aid.

The African members of the Commonwealth persuaded Britain, during the deliberations, to accept the responsibility for holding a consensus, so that a free Zimbabwe would emerge within the Commonwealth fold. The success of the conference was due to several factors. The preparatory work done by the Commonwealth civil servants, the conciliatory attitude of Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere who carried weight with the Patriotic Front, the unexpected attitude of Mrs. Margaret Thatcher and the efforts of the Consultative Group of Six who together with the Commonwealth Secretary General drafted the Lusaka Declaration.⁹

8. M. R. Rosseau, "Lusaka Summit in Retrospect", Bangla Desh Times, (Dacca), 21 August 1979.

9. The Six members were - Kaunda (Zambia), Nyerere (Tanzania), Mrs. Thatcher (Britain), Manley (Jamaica), Malcolm Fraser (Australia) and Adefople (Nigeria).

President Kaunda, the host chairman of the conference, in his keynote address highlighted the gravity of Rhodesian and Namibian situations which posed a threat to peace in South Africa. He described the April election which brought Muzorewa to power a merely cosmetic exercise. "Power was not really transferred to the majority in Rhodesia, for majority rule must mean the total transfer of power from the minority". He added, "What we have in Salisbury today is white power clad in white habitament".¹⁰ Julius Nyerere, Chairman of the Five Front Line States adopted a softer line.¹¹ He called for internationally supervised elections and the implementation of the democratic constitution to end the guerilla war. He renewed the idea of the Commonwealth Resettlement Plan to assist the Rhodesian whites unwilling to live under black majority rule. He did not rule out reservation of seats for Europeans even if they were not in proportion to their numbers. Henry Adefobele of Nigeria struck a jarring note: "If we do not get some thing concrete to take away from this conference, "he warned, "we shall regard it as a failure".....We will have to reconsider the usefulness of such an association".¹⁸

The Nigerian move was really meant to serve as a warning to Britain in case it allowed the British sanctions against

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10. Africa Research Bulletin: Political Social and Cultural Series (City of Exeter England, vol.16, No.8, 1979, p.5358.
 11. The Five States were: Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana.
 12. Vanita Ray, "The Lusaka Commonwealth Conference", Africa Quarterly, July-September 1979, p.217.
 13. Patriot (New Delhi), 4 August 1979.

Rhodesia to lapse and proceeded to recognize the Smith-Muzorewa government. The ZAPU guerilla leader, Nkomo, accused Britain of being the main stumbling bloc in the implementation of the Commonwealth recommendation to restore legality in Rhodesia. He also accused Britain of having connived at with the Rhodesian regime in making it difficult to remove Muzorewa.¹⁴ Thus the African members of the Commonwealth exerted pressure to reason out with Britain the immediate need for sorting out the Rhodesian imbroglio on a broadly based consensus.¹⁵

It was the flexibility of Mrs. Thatcher's strategy at the Lusaka summit that the Commonwealth had averted a possible split. A confrontation between her and the black African leaders was avoided. Mrs. Thatcher warned, "Isolated British recognition of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, supported only by South Africa, would result in an intensification and further internationalization of the war. It would be potentially most dangerous to British interests and it would also be of dubious benefit to Salisbury".¹⁶

Mrs. Thatcher tactically acknowledged the criticism by African leaders of the constitutional clauses which gave the whites

14. Hindu (Madras), August 4, 1979.

15. Anirudha Gupta, n.5, pp.12-13.

16. Martin Gregory, "Rhodesia from Lusaka to Lancaster House", The World Today, (Royal Institute of World Affairs), vol.36, No.1, January 1980.

the power to block the changes.¹⁷ She also gave an undertaking to grant independence to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, an independence which would usher in genuine black majority-rule and to organise fresh general elections under British or international supervision in which all the parties including the Patriotic Front would be able to participate.

Thus Britain's constitutional responsibility to grant legal independence was accepted. At the same time the concerned parties were called upon to cease hostilities and move forward to a settlement.¹⁸

The Lusaka summit was unique in the history of the Commonwealth in the sense that an unexpectedly close accord emerged among the participants over the Zimbabwe issue. The Group of Six agreed on a nine point programme on Rhodesia. It was no mean achievement that the Conference unanimously adopted a nine point formula for solving the Zimbabwe problem.¹⁹ The Heads of Government confirmed that :

- (1) they were wholly committed to genuine black majority rule for the people of Zimbabwe;
- (2) recognized in this context that the 'internal settlement' constitution is defective in certain important aspects;

17. The British Prime Minister had originally endorsed the view of the British Observer Team that the Rhodesian elections were free and fair. Departing from her Canberra statement Mrs. Thatcher at Lusaka accepted a valid criticism of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia constitution

18. Africa Research Bulletin, No.13, p.5859.

19. The consensus was achieved after talks convened by a contact group consisting of the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, Mrs. Thatcher, Michael Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica, Nyerere, Kaunda & Adefole, the External Affairs Minister of Nigeria.

- (3) fully accepted that it is the constitutional responsibility of the British government to grant legal independence to Zimbabwe on the basis of majority rule;
- (4) recognized the search for a lasting settlement must involve all parties to the contract;
- (5) were deeply conscious of the urgent need to achieve such a settlement and bring peace to the people of Zimbabwe and their neighbours;
- (6) accepted that the independence on the basis of majority rule requires the adoption of a democratic constitution including appropriate safeguards for the minority;
- (7) acknowledged that the government formed under such an independent constitution must be chosen through fair and free elections supervised by the British government authority, and with Commonwealth observers;
- (8) welcomed the British government's indication that an appropriate procedure for advancing towards the objectives would be for them to call a constitutional conference to which all the parties would be invited;
- (9) consequently accepted that it must be a major objective to bring about a cessation of hostilities and an end to sanctions as part of the process of implementation of a lasting settlement.²⁰

The above collective decisions of the conference constituted the 'Commonwealth compromise'. The African members of the Commonwealth accepted two conditions proposed by Mrs. Thatcher i.e. agreement on a ceasefire and withdrawal of sanctions. The Patriotic Front no longer insisted on the restructuring of armed forces. On the other hand Britain joined in the condemnation of Muzorewa-Smith regime in Zimbabwe and accepted responsibility to grant independence on the basis of majority rule. This was the

20. The Lusaka communique, August 1979 (Commonwealth Secretariat, London), p.15.

major issue on which the Patriotic Front had broken off negotiations at Geneva and Malta conferences.

Thus the Commonwealth formula led to the voluntary withdrawal of guerilla armed struggle and agreement to establish majority rule through the battle of the ballot.

The Lusaka Declaration called for an end of the evils of racism and for a fair treatment of minorities and agreements:

United in their desire to rid the world of evils of racism and racial prejudice, the Heads of Commonwealth governments declared that :

- (1) the peoples of the Commonwealth have the right to live freely in dignity and equality without any distinction or exclusion based on race, colour, sex, descent, national or ethnic origin;
- (2) every one has the right to equality before law and equal justice under law;
- (3) every one has the right to effective remedies and protection against any form of discrimination based on the grounds of race, colour or national or ethnic origin.²¹

All policies designed to perpetuate apartheid and racial segregation were rejected as intolerable. The Declaration asserted the duty of 'all the people of the Commonwealth to work together for the total eradication of the infamous policy of apartheid'.²²

21. Ibid, p. 22.

22. Lusaka Communique, n. 20, p. 23.

The Heads of governments had a frank discussion on the problems of South Africa and their implications for the Commonwealth. It was stressed that the grave problems afflicting the South African region stemmed from the racist policies followed by South Africa. The Commonwealth made a special declaration on racialism and racial prejudice in order to express abhorrence of all forms of racial policy.

The communique deplored South Africa's continued refusal to implement the relevant resolutions of the Security Council providing for Namibia's independence and Secretary General's proposals outlined in his report of 26 February 1979. The positive response of the Commonwealth governments to provide military or civilian personnel as part of the proposed U.N. Transition Assistance Group for Namibia was condemned; South Africa was condemned for the steps taken to establish an illegal National Assembly following holding of the so-called elections last December. Heads of governments endorsed the recommendations of the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa. They authorized the Committee to continue its work and to intensify its collaboration with the United Nations regarding humanitarian assistance to South Africa. They noted with approval the contribution of the Commonwealth both bilaterally and multilaterally to render assistance for man power development in Zimbabwe and Namibia. The conference called upon the international community to increase its assistance to front line States in order to alleviate the damage

to their development caused by the persistent problems of South Africa. Finally the Heads of Governments paid tribute to the outstanding contribution made by the African members of the Commonwealth "to the development of a more humanitarian international community and the evolution of the Commonwealth along enlightened lines".

The Lusaka conference, thus, took a major step towards the solution of the Rhodesian problem. The Lusaka agreement provided the last chance for a peaceful settlement, the alternative being an internationalized disastrous war. "The settlement offered a positive and realistic stand on one of the most intractable issue it had to deal with for many years".²⁸ Lusaka summit via the London conference (1978) and the Lancaster House Agreement (December 1979) led to the settlement of the Zimbabwe problem. With the victory of the Patriotic Front in the elections of February 1980, Zimbabwe emerged independent with Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister.

Lusaka was a diplomatic triumph for the Commonwealth. It was a combined effort that showed the Commonwealth network operating at the diplomatic level as never before.

28. The Standard (Nairobi), 8 August 1979.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

An attempt has been made in the foregoing pages to assess the African dimension of the Commonwealth. Intra-Commonwealth tensions arising out of South Africa's racist policies, Rhodesian crisis and expulsion of Asians from East African countries have been described and their impact on the Commonwealth has been evaluated.

The Africanization of the Commonwealth led to the acceptance of racial equality as a basis for membership. South Africa became alienated from the Commonwealth on issues of decolonization and apartheid. Malen's government was perturbed over the accession of the black states to the Commonwealth. South Africa remained an anomaly in the transformed African continent. Independent African states attacked South Africa's racist policies in the United Nations and the Commonwealth. Britain also decided not to support racism in South Africa. At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference in 1961, a majority of prime Ministers opposed South Africa's continued membership in view of her racist policies. Sensing this, South Africa withdrew her application for membership of the Commonwealth as a republic.

The Rhodesian crisis caused strong convulsions in Commonwealth relations. Ian Smith insisted on the continued

control of Southern Rhodesia by the white minority. In 1963 a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference was held in London to consider the problem of Rhodesia's independence acceptable to the people of Rhodesia as a whole. In 1965, Britain's Conservative Government formulated the 'Five Principles' specifying the conditions on which independence might be conceded. Ian Smith made Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on 11 Nov. 1965. UDI became a challenge to the new African States. The Prime Ministers' meeting at Lagos and London in 1966 tried to resolve the strains between the British and African points of view. Militant African States urged Britain to use force against Rhodesia. The confrontation between the militant African members of the Commonwealth and Britain brought about change in the attitude of both Britain and African States towards the Commonwealth. Britain no longer remained the centre of influence and became apathetic towards the Africanized Commonwealth. The Commonwealth, though damaged, did not break up. The crisis destroyed the Commonwealth myth - that the Commonwealth stood for multiracialism and 'government of men by themselves'.

Another fierce controversy started over the resumption of arms' sales to South Africa. At the Singapore Conference held in 1971, some African States threatened to leave the Commonwealth on this issue. The situation, however, was saved by the appointment of a 'study group' to look into the question

of defence of the Indian Ocean. This acted as a face-saving device. The Singapore Conference, for the first time, adopted a declaration of Commonwealth Principles.

The expulsions of Asians from Uganda and Kenya was the culmination of tendencies inherent in the process of decolonization and the growth of racial antagonism within the Commonwealth. The status of the Asian settlers became precarious as a result of the Commonwealth Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1968. Non-citizens in East Africa became the centre of controversy. Britain became involved in a prolonged dispute with Kenya, Uganda, and India over the problem of racial-discrimination. While Amin described the expulsion order of August 1972 as 'part of war of liberation', most of the Asian, African and European members of the Commonwealth condemned the Ugandan action. Afro-Asian Solidarity broke up and cohesion within the Commonwealth was lost. Misunderstanding between Britain and India was dispelled when Britain accepted the responsibility towards the Asians holding the British passports.

In view of the change in size, contents and procedure of the Commonwealth meetings - an institutional transformation became necessary. Nkrumah's proposal to establish 'a properly staffed clearing house in London to disseminate information and assist existing agencies of

cooperation' was accepted by the Prime Ministers' Conference of 1965. The Secretariat was to promote consultation and practical functional cooperation among members of the Commonwealth. It acted as bridge between Britain and some of the African countries during the split over Rhodesia. It organized the Lagos meeting, the first to be held outside London. The Secretariat was consonant with the new African dimension of the Commonwealth.

During the 1960s Britain found the Commonwealth less of a growth area for trade and investment. The volume of Commonwealth trade languished. Britain considered its European interest to be more important than its Commonwealth interest. The Commonwealth countries also looked outside the Commonwealth for trade and aid. The Commonwealth Development Cooperation was set up to provide aid and investment for the economic development of the African countries. Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) was set up to provide technical aid. Britain was not, however, the only donor of aid. The outside world became more significant to the African members in trade and aid.

The conflict situation in Southern Rhodesia had reached a stage in 1979 when internal and external compulsion urged the concerned parties to reach a negotiated settlement. The Lusaka Conference gave priority to African

problems. The African members pressurised Britain to sort out Rhodesian problem on a 'broadly based consensus'. Britain's constitutional responsibility to grant legal independence to Rhodesia was accepted, the concerned parties were called upon to end hostilities. The Conference adopted a 'nine-point' formula for solving the Zimbabwe problem. The Commonwealth formula led to the withdrawal of guerilla armed struggle and the establishment of the majority rule. Policies of apartheid were condemned. Lusaka proved to be a diplomatic triumph for the Commonwealth.

In sum the Commonwealth lost its Anglo-centric character as a result of African membership. The Commonwealth leaders became engrossed mostly with the African issues and Africa became the centre of influence within the multi-racial Commonwealth. The exit of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961 led to the acceptance of racial equality as a requisite of Commonwealth membership. The Declaration of Commonwealth Principles made at Singapore, in 1971 and the Lusaka Declaration on Racism and Racial Prejudice 1979 reiterated adherence to the principles of freedom and equality without any distinction of race, colour, sex or ethnic origin.

Despite recurring crisis and antagonism the Commonwealth showed longevity. Old loyalties and links gave way

to a 'Concert of Convenience' and mutual advantage. Institutional transformation of the Commonwealth was brought about by the establishment of the Secretariat and various formal and informal agencies for cooperative endeavour with a view to socio-economic and technological development.

APPENDIX I

AFRICAN MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Country	Date of Independence	Area (Sq. miles)	Estimates of Gross National Products		
			Year	GNP at Market Price US\$ M(1)	GNP at capita (Market Prices) US\$ (1)
Botswana	30 Sep 1966	220,000	1977	300	440
The Gambia	18 Feb 1965	4,003	1977	110	200
Ghana	6 March 1957	91,843	1977	4,080	380
Kenya	12 Dec 1963	224,960	1977	3,910	270
Lesotho	4 Oct 1966	11,716	1977	800	140
Malawi	6 Jul 1964	45,747	1977	800	140
Nigeria	1 Oct 1960	356,669	1977	83,340	420
Sierra Leone	27 Apr 1961	27,925	1977	610	200
Swaziland	6 Sept 1968	6,705	1977	310	580
Tanzania	9 Dec 1961	863,708	1977	3,100	200
Uganda	9 Oct 1962	91,076	1977	3,220	260
Zambia	24 Oct 1964	752,620	1977	2,830	450
Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)	18 Apr 1980	150,820	1977	N/A.	N. A.

SOURCE: A yearbook of the Commonwealth, 1979 (H. M. S. O., London, 1979).

Appendix II

THE COMMONWEALTH DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

Commonwealth Heads of government unanimously approved the following Declaration of Principles at their meeting in Singapore in January 1971 :

The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of independent sovereign States, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and cooperating in the common interests of their people and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace.

Members of the Commonwealth come from territories in the six continents and five oceans, including people of different races, languages and religions, and display every stage of economic development from poor developing nations to wealthy industrialized nations. They encompass a rich variety of cultures, traditions and institutions.

Membership of the Commonwealth is compatible with the freedom of member governments to be non-aligned or to belong to any other grouping, association or alliance. Within this diversity all members of the Commonwealth hold certain principles in common. It is by pursuing these principles that the Commonwealth can continue to influence international society for the benefit of mankind. We believe that international peace and order are essential to the security and prosperity of mankind; we therefore support the United Nations and seek to strengthen

its influence for peace in the world and its efforts to remove the causes of tension between nations.

We believe in the liberty of the individual, in equal rights for all citizens regardless of race, colour, creed or political belief, and in their inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic political process in framing the society in which they live. We therefore strive to promote in each of our countries those representative institutions and guarantees for personal freedom under the common law that are our common heritage.

We recognise racial prejudice as a dangerous sickness threatening the healthy development of human race and racial discrimination as an unmitigated evil of society. Each of us will vigorously combat this evil within our own nation. No country will afford assistance to regimes which practise racial discrimination which in its own judgment directly contributes to the pursuit or consolidation of this evil policy. We oppose all forms of colonial domination and racial oppression and are committed to the principles of human dignity and equality. We will, therefore, use all our efforts to foster human equality and dignity everywhere and to further the principles of self-determination and non-racialism. We believe that the wide disparities in wealth now existing between the different sections of mankind are too great to be tolerated. They also create world

tensions. Our aim is their progressive removal. We therefore seek to use our efforts to overcome poverty, ignorance and disease, in raising standards of life and achieving a more equitable international society. To this end our aim is to achieve the freest possible flow of international trade on terms fair and equitable to all, taking into account the special requirements of the developing countries, and to encourage the flow of adequate resources, including governmental and private resources, to the developing countries, bearing in mind the importance of doing this in the true spirit of partnership and of establishing for this purpose in the developing countries conditions which are conducive to sustained investment and growth.

We believe that international cooperation is essential to remove the cause of war, promote tolerance, combat injustice and secure development among the peoples of the world. We are convinced that the Commonwealth is one of the most fruitful associations for this purpose.

In pursuing these principles the members of the Commonwealth believe that they can provide a constructive example of the multi-national approach which is vital to peace and progress in the modern world. The association is based on consultation, discussion and cooperation.

In rejecting coercion as an instrument of policy they recognise that the security of each member State from external aggression is a matter of concern to all members. It provides

many channels for continuing exchanges of knowledge and views on professional, cultural, economic, legal and political issues among member States.

These relationships we intend to foster and extend, for we believe that our multi-national association can expand human understanding and understanding among nations, assist in the elimination of discrimination based on differences of race, colour or creed, maintain and strengthen personal liberty, contribute to the enrichment of life for all and provide a powerful influence for peace among nations.

APPENDIX III

COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT

MEETING IN LUSAKA 1-7 AUGUST 1979

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Lusaka from 1 to 7 August, 1979. Of the 89 countries which attended the Meeting, 27 were represented by their Presidents or Prime Ministers. The President of Zambia, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, was in the Chair.

They sent a message of felicitations to Her Majesty the Queen as Head of the Commonwealth. They welcomed with special pleasure the opportunity of meeting in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, an African nation in the forefront of the struggle for human emancipation. They expressed deep appreciation for the excellent arrangements for the Meeting made by the Zambian Government and gratitude for the hospitality extended to them.

Heads of Government had a frank discussion on the current problems of Southern Africa and their implications for the Commonwealth and the wider international community. While recognising that certain developments since their Meeting in London have added new dimensions, they remained concerned by the potential dangers inherent in the existing situation. They therefore stressed the urgent need for finding satisfactory solutions to the remaining problems of this region.

In relation to the situation in Rhodesia, Heads of Government therefore :

- a. confirmed that they were wholly committed to genuine black majority rule for the people of Zimbabwe;

- b. recognised, in this context, that the internal settlement constitution is defective in certain important respects;
- c. fully accepted that it is the constitutional responsibility of the British Government to grant legal independence to Zimbabwe on the basis of majority rule;
- d. recognised that the search for a lasting settlement must involve all parties to the conflict;
- e. were deeply conscious of the urgent need to achieve such a settlement and bring peace to the people of Zimbabwe and their neighbours;
- f. accepted that independence on the basis of majority rule requires the adoption of a democratic constitution including appropriate safeguards for minorities;
- g. acknowledged that the government formed under such an independence constitution must be chosen through free and fair elections properly supervised under British Government authority, and with Commonwealth observers;
- h. welcomed the British Government's indication that an appropriate procedure for advancing towards these objectives would be for them to call a constitutional conference to which all the parties would be invited; and
- i. consequently, accepted that it must be a major objective to bring about a cessation of hostilities and an end to sanctions as part of the process of implementation of a lasting settlement.

Heads of Government stressed that the grave problems afflicting the Southern Africa region stemmed from the racist policies

of the South African regime embodied in the system of apartheid. In order formally to express their abhorrence of all forms of racist policy, wherever and however they might be manifested, they had agreed to make a special declaration on this subject. This has been published as the Lusaka Declaration of the Commonwealth on Racism and Racial Prejudice. This declaration reaffirms the Commonwealth rejection of all policies designed to perpetuate apartheid, racial segregation or other policies based on theories that racial groups are or may be inherently superior or inferior.

Heads of Government deplored South Africa's continued refusal to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions providing for Namibia's independence and the UN Secretary-General's proposals outlined in his report of 26 February 1979. They commended the positive response of those Commonwealth Governments which had been requested by the Secretary-General to provide military or civilian personnel as part of the proposed UN Transitional Assistance Group for Namibia.

Heads of Government recalled that in repeatedly condemning South Africa's policies, the UN General Assembly and Security Council had warned South Africa that it faced international action under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter if it did not agree to the implementation of the UN proposals for Namibia. They therefore called upon South Africa to comply with the decisions of the international community.

Taking note that two of their members had played a role as part of a Five-Power Initiative with the South African authorities in attempting to secure Africa's co-operation in implementing the decisions of the Security Council with regard to Namibia, Heads of Government expressed the earnest hope that this effort would contribute to expediting Namibia's passage to genuine independence.

Meeting for the first time in full Session in Africa, Heads of Government paid tribute to the outstanding contribution of African countries in general and African Commonwealth countries in particular, to the development of a more humanitarian international community and to the evolution of the Commonwealth along relevant and enlightened lines. They paid special tribute to the Front-Line States and to Nigeria for their active support to the various initiatives seeking negotiated solutions to the problems of Rhodesia and Namibia.

Heads of Government expressed satisfaction at the effective manner in which the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa had discharged its responsibilities in the past two years. Having considered its Report, Heads of Government endorsed those recommendations which were put forward unanimously. They authorised the Committee to continue its work, and to intensify its collaboration with the United Nations on all questions of mutual concern and interest.

In endorsing the recommendations of the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa regarding Commonwealth humanitarian

assistance to Southern Africa, Heads of Government noted with approval the contribution of the Commonwealth, made both bilaterally and multilaterally, to international assistance for manpower development for Zimbabwe and Namibia. In this context, Heads of Government commended the Secretariat's assistance programmes as cost-effective and efficiently administered and agreed that they should be expanded in scope, subject to the availability of resources.

Heads of Government noted with concern that as the conflict has escalated in Zimbabwe, its effects have increasingly spilled over into the neighbouring Commonwealth States of Botswana and Zambia as well as into Mozambique. The Meeting called on the international community to increase its assistance to the Front-Line States in order to alleviate the damage to their development caused by the persistent problems of Southern Africa. Heads of Government, noting with approval the technical assistance programme financed by the Commonwealth Fund for Mozambique and recognising that the Government of Mozambique would welcome continued Commonwealth assistance, agreed that the Fund should continue to remain available to member Governments as a channel for such assistance. The Meeting concluded that, while significant bilateral and multilateral assistance is already being provided to the Front-Line States and Southern Africa to which individual Commonwealth countries make an important contribution, the needs of the region justify further international assistance on a substantial scale. Against the background of a collective

Commonwealth commitment and in response to the requests of member Governments, the Secretary-General was asked to supplement the activities of other international agencies by assisting in contingency planning including regional studies in anticipation of the emergence of independent and internationally accepted governments in Zimbabwe and Namibia.

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