

THE COMMONWEALTH AND SOUTHERN AFRICA
LANCASTER HOUSE REVISITED

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Introduction

This is not a paper on the development of Australia's policy on South Africa, as originally advertised. There are several reasons for this. One is the fact that the subject has already been covered recently in an excellent article by David Goddsworthy.¹ Another is that there are a wide range of papers being presented on South Africa. A third is that to cover the subject in the depth it requires would take a PhD thesis, not a conference paper.

But the most important reason for the change in emphasis is that while Australia's policy towards southern Africa has tended to develop in a Commonwealth context the Commonwealth has not generally been given its due. Even today all Australia's diplomatic posts in sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of Pretoria and the recently created mission in Addis Ababa, are in Commonwealth countries.

The development of Australia's policy from one of warm friendship with South Africa to active opposition to apartheid can be charted through Commonwealth initiatives. Thus Menzies was the person most disappointed at South Africa's forced withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 1961². Gorton with some reluctance accepted the 1971 Singapore Declaration on Common Principles, including its condemnation of racism. The Fraser government in 1977 with greater enthusiasm embraced and

1. D. Goddsworthy, 'The Hawke Government and Africa', Australian Outlook, Vol 39, No 3, December 1985.

1. R. Menzies, Afternoon Light, Penguin 1969 p.

implementing the Gleneagles Declaration on Sporting Contacts. Fraser played an even more active role at the Lusaka Conference, which apart from the agreement on Rhodesia also produced the Commonwealth Declaration on Racism. Most recently Prime Minister Hawke has played a leading role in the Commonwealth's adoption of economic measures at Nassau in 1985 and the mini CHOGM in London this month.

Another special feature of this relationship with Africa through the Commonwealth has been that relevant policy on South Africa has tended to be developed by the Australian Prime Minister rather than Foreign Minister. This as noted by Edwards,¹ is because Commonwealth policy initiatives are developed at Heads of Government meetings (inelegantly dubbed CHOGMs) which are traditionally attended by the Prime Minister and the other eminent HOGs. Perhaps this is also another reason, apart from geopolitical interests, why the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs has traditionally accorded little priority to Africa!

Australia's experience is not unique. The reality is that as a body the Commonwealth has taken a significant interest in southern Africa, as a study of the Rhodesian crisis shows. It is now leading the field of international action with its initiatives over South Africa. Yet the press has reacted with surprise that this so called relic of Empire should even exist, let alone be able to act. This no doubt is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the very non imperial nature of the contemporary Commonwealth. Indeed, rather than being a British creature, the Commonwealth has increasingly gone its own way with Britain rather reluctantly being dragged along, thus tending to give an image of Britain

1. P.G. Edwards, Prime Minister and Diplomats - The Making of Australian Foreign Policy 1901-1949, OUP, Melbourne 1983

versus the rest. But it is also because the Commonwealth is frequently not given the credit due to it. A good example of this was the Commonwealth's role at the Lancaster House Talks which resulted from the agreement reached on Rhodesia at the Lusaka CHOGM. It is this episode which we shall now examine.

The magnificent surroundings of Lancaster house in London were the traditional venue for constitutional conferences during the era of Britain's decolonisation of Africa from the 1950s. Its choice for the last but perhaps the most important of these added to the sense of determination on Britain's side to bring about a successful outcome where so many other successes had been achieved. Much of the credit for the result, ^{of} perhaps the most difficult talks yet, has gone to Lord Carrington for his firmness and adroitness,¹ and to a lesser extent to Mrs. Thatcher for her support.²

While not wishing to detract from Carrington's masterful performance, these accounts have tended to undervalue or even ignore the ~~role~~ *part* played by the Commonwealth. Its role was not so obvious because it was not a party to the talks. Yet writing of the Secretary-General's role, Chan said,

"Rampal's was an amazing role. Many would attribute to him, rather than Carrington, the most important single role in the Zimbabwe episode" ³

The fact is, most did not. Only recently has the revisionist work of Anthony Verrier argued that a greater recognition should be given to the Commonwealth's and more precisely the Commonwealth Secretary General's role.⁴ The evidence bears him out, particularly at several crucial stages in the talks, when a breakdown appeared inevitable.

While Britain was committed to finding a solution which would allow them to recognise an independent government in Zimbabwe, it was always somewhat debatable which solution they would be prepared to accept. There

1. See Hudson. op.cit. p.167; also Davidow op.cit. p.14. Heredit op.cit.
2. Cosgrave op.cit. p.148 goes so far as to quote Edison Zvobgo saying "The voice was his voice, the thought was hers".
3. S.Chan "Three Birds of Different Feathers: The Commonwealth, The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Secretary-General". Round Table 1948 Vol. 28 pp.299-310 at p.30.

has been much discussion of a "second class solution" in the literature.¹ There is little doubt that Britain was prepared for a walk out by the Patriotic Front (Nkomo, Mugabe), and a "second class" solution involving elections by the remaining parties.² However they also appeared to be attempting to drive a wedge between Nkomo and Mugabe within the Patriotic Front. It is no secret that the British preferred the veteran nationalist leader Joshua Nkomo, who they expected to do best in the elections.³ The little known, Jesuit educated Marxist Mugabe who took a hard line at the conference did not appeal to them.⁴ Indeed Carrington is said to have scribbled ABM on his note pad, standing not for anti-ballistic missile negotiations, but "Anybody But Mugabe".⁵

Davidow in his analysis of the Lancaster House as a case study in Dominant Third Party Mediation points to certain factors of success including clarity of goals, absence of superpower involvement (although the US was to play a helpful role at one point), British diplomatic heritage, Carrington as a trusted establishment symbol, his own personal qualities, skilful management of the press, and intelligence. He also pays tribute to his tactics - a step by step approach, manipulation of supporting players such as the Commonwealth, insistence on his own centrality, creation of 'crises', tacit bargaining, including extra conference pressure, compellance and promises.⁶

While this is all true, it perhaps makes the conference seem as better organised than it was and underestimates some of the dangers of Carrington's approach. With the "second class" solution in the background, and the Foreign Office's pessimism, it was easier for Carrington to take a firm stand on the proposals put forward by the British as he was prepared to lose some of the parties. Whether this would have been a satisfactory outcome, however, is much more debatable. Certainly the Commonwealth would not have

1. Cosgrave op.cit. p.147, Meredith op.cit. p.

2. Cosgrave op.cit. p.147 Interview with Rampnal 17 April 1986

3. Cosgrave op.cit. p.149

4. ibid

5. Interview with P. Heatley 6 March 1986

6. J.Davidow op.cit. p.101

thought so, and probably neither would the world in general. Thus Ramphal as Commonwealth Secretary-General felt compelled to play an active role of "behind the scenes broker"¹ in order to keep the British honest to their agreement at Lusaka. Ramphal was also very conscious that the talks were going ahead largely on the basis of credibility given to the Lusaka Agreement by Commonwealth involvement and he needed to defend that credibility. This is borne out by a perceptive comment in the Scotsman noting the "Commonwealth is crucial to the London talks. Without Commonwealth Agreement British recognition of the government in Salisbury would lack credibility".² In doing so his interventions saved the game for Britain at certain times, particularly near the end when even a "second class" solution might not have been feasible. Indeed at times it appeared to be him, not Carrington who was manipulating the parties and the issues.

Central to Ramphal's role was the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa, meeting weekly ^{or more often when necessary} throughout the talks and being briefed by the British.³

Early in the talks the Financial Times reported that

"perhaps the most crucial of (the unofficial negotiations) have taken place in the neutrality of Malborough House, headquarters of the Commonwealth. At least twice a week, with Sonny Ramphal the Commonwealth Secretary-General or his deputy Mr. Emeka Anyaoku in the chair, Sir Anthony Duff has discussed progress at the Conference with the representatives of five key African Governments, all of whom have a major interest in seeing a Rhodesian solution." 4

Thus whilst the Commonwealth was not directly involved in the talks, it was able to play a watching role through a mechanism, which had been developed originally as a specific Commonwealth response to the Rhodesian Crisis in 1966.

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1. Chan op.cit. p.304 Interview with Ramphal
 2. Scotsman 17 October 1979
 3. S.Chan op.cit. p.305
 4. Financial Times 29 September 1979

In addition both the Secretary-General and several Commonwealth members were to have an even more direct role by the nature of their influence on the parties. Mugabe and Nkomo visited the Secretariat regularly to discuss negotiating strategy.¹ This in itself illustrated how far the Commonwealth Secretariat was seen as being completely distinct from the British, whom Nkomo,² and more particularly Mugabe, distrusted.³ Ramphal meanwhile spent much of his time talking by telephone to key leaders, an opportunity allowed to him by his position. The Financial Times was wrong however, in suggesting that Mozambique was a member of that Committee.⁴ As a non-Commonwealth country it could not be. However Ramphal would brief the Mozambique representatives immediately after the Committee meetings. Given the role Machel was to play in bringing pressure on to Mugabe to join in the final agreement, this was a most important connection.

The ^{Lancaster House} talks which began on 10th September were addressed by Carrington, Muzorewa and Nkomo, speaking for both himself and Mugabe.⁵ Mugabe was not however to stay in the background for long, as he soon became identified as the hard line participant.⁶ While the British negotiating tactics were both "audacious" and successful in responding with a hard line of their own, there were to be crucial times when only the intervention of the Commonwealth leaders and the Secretary-General prevented the negotiations from coming apart. These included the land issue, the acceptance of the constitutional proposals by the Patriotic Front, the question of a ceasefire monitoring force, the nature of the Commonwealth observer group, and finally at the last minute the acceptance of the ceasefire terms. These often meant some modification of the British line, thus leading Carrington to be "heartily sick of Ramphal's

1. *ibid* p.304

2. Nkomo *op.cit.* p.195

3. D.Smith and C. Simpson Mugabe Sphere Books London. 1981 p.131

4. Financial Times 29 September 1979

5. HMSO Southern Rhodesia: Report of the Constitutional Conference
Lancaster House London September-December 1979 Cmd 7802

6. D.Smith and C. Simpson *op.cit.* p.126

involvement",¹ but in the end he did give him somewhat reluctant thanks for his efforts.²

Indeed the Commonwealth acted as something of a safety net which allowed the British to take a tough line. Then if talks broke down, the pattern was for the Commonwealth to remain as a back-door channel of communications with the Patriotic Front.³ This was important to the British who were able to concentrate on their main problem of bringing the whites, led by Walls and Smith into line.⁴

The first controversial issue was land compensation. The Patriotic Front wanted the British to fund a scheme, as they had done in Kenya, to compensate European farmers for land which would be purchased from them and then be distributed to African peasants. Such a scheme was of great political importance to the nationalists in retaining the support of the people, who had been promised land as one of the rewards of independence.⁵ The British however, conscious of the expense and problems involved did not wish to undertake this responsibility, particularly as they had not administered Rhodesia for so long.

The issue came to a head in mid October and Carrington decided to push the Patriotic Front, rather than allow the issue to hold up the talks. In a press release on 15 October, Carrington noted he had asked Mr. Nkomo and Mr. Mugabe in a meeting at 11.30 that morning whether they could accept the independence constitution subject to agreement on pre-independence arrangements. They did not give a positive reply. He then said he would begin discussion for implementation of the constitution with "the Delegation which had accepted it" (i.e. Muzorewa) the next day. He hoped the Patriotic Front would participate.⁶

1. S.Chan op.cit. p.304

2. Daily Telegraph 7 December 1979

3. Davidow, op.cit. p.661

4. Interview with Sir Anthony Duff 1 May 1986

5. Nkomo op.cit. p.195

6. F.C.O. Press Release 15 October 1979 Southern Rhodesia Constitutional Conference - Commonwealth Secretariat Archives.

...and he warned the British through the press that their action was not "in the letter or the spirit of the Lusaka Agreement" (in particular its (a) requiring the involvement of all parties in a settlement) and "it would be a mistake to assume Commonwealth support for any procedure at variance with it".¹ Then he contacted his friend the US Ambassador in London, Brewster, and asked for assistance from Washington.

Within 48 hours of Ramphal's appeal word was received from President Carter that the United States would be willing to help financially with the implementation of an aid programme to Zimbabwe which would encompass a land reform scheme. Two senior US officials then met at Ramphal's house with Nkomo and Mugabe to convey US willingness to provide this assistance.²

Meanwhile Ramphal also met with Carrington on October 16, for what the Guardian called a "sharp discussion".³ Ramphal himself recalls the conversation as cordial⁴ and the conclusion at least was positive and the British agreed to co-operate with the US with aid for agricultural development and settlement. For on October 18 the Patriotic Front agreed to return to the Conference table announcing it had been assured about a "multi-national financial donor effort to assist in land, agricultural and economic development programmes".⁵ The Constitutional proposals were accepted and the transitional arrangements were released on October 22.

Although Ramphal could be accused of going beyond the limits of his position by executive action in his statement of 15 October, he moved quickly to ensure he had the support of the rest of the Commonwealth. The approval shown at a meeting of the Commonwealth High Commissioners on the night 16 October showed he had got the tenor of their feelings right.⁶ The Daily Telegraph was thus forced to eat its editorial words of the day before, in

1. Comments by Commonwealth Secretary-General in response to press enquiries 15 Oct. 79, Commonwealth Secretariat Archives.
2. Davidow op.cit. p.65, N. Gelb "New hole for the Commonwealth" The New Leader February 25, 1980 p.13
3. Guardian 17 October 1979
4. Interview with Ramphal
5. Financial Times 19 October 1979 J. M. M. & A. M. Taylor From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe Pergamon New York 1980 p. 9
6. Daily Telegraph 18 October, 1979

which is viewed Ramphal of taking up the Patriotic Front's case without a Commonwealth mandate and sabotaging the negotiations.¹ The British were also forced to take this whole event more seriously with Sir Anthony Duff meeting immediately with Commonwealth High Commissioners.²

Other records indicate just how seriously other governments reacted to the British stand. An example of this reaction was a telex from Kaunda to Ramphal on 17 October stating

"Zambia strongly supports your public statement...We view with distaste the way the meeting is being conducted...Anything that leaves the Patriotic Front out we shall condemn for it will not stop the war. The present Carrington way is, I am afraid, a recipe for war to continue".

Kaunda also noted that he shared the PF's anxieties regarding land and urged Ramphal to use his good offices to get the British to approach other governments to support a land fund.³ The Front Line States also issued a statement supporting Ramphal's views and reiterating the "conviction that the objectives endorsed by the Commonwealth at Lusaka cannot be achieved with the exclusion of the Patriotic Front".⁴

The multi-donor package was vaguely worded, and the financial commitments unspecified. This was to lead to considerable problems in its implementation, but as a device to prevent the talks breaking down it was extremely valuable. The land issue was more than just a storm in a teacup and most commentators when they discuss it fail to give credit to the role played by the Commonwealth in its resolution.⁵ Where any explanation is attempted at all, it tends to be along the lines suggested by Meredith, namely that the incident was a successful exercise in brinkmanship by Carrington which he won with a vague commitment to a land development project combined with

1. Daily Telegraph 17 October 1979

2. Guardian 17 October 1979

3. Telex Kaunda to Ramphal 17 October 1979 Southern Rhodesia File Commonwealth Secretariat Press Archives

4. Statement issued by representatives of the Front Line States in London 16 October 1979

5. Meredith op.cit. p.9 and Meredith op.cit. p.381

combined with pressure from the Front Line States on the Patriotic Front not to allow the conference to fail.¹ As shown above however, the reality was more complex and the Front Line States more annoyed with Britain than Meredith suggests. The Commonwealth intervention was central to the resolution of the problem.

Within less than two weeks, the talks were to face another crisis. This time it was to be over the ceasefire arrangements. Once again the Commonwealth was to play a central mediating role.

On October 22 the British released the details of their proposed transitional arrangements. These included the establishment of a transitional government under a British Governor,⁴ elections to be witnessed by Commonwealth representatives but without any peacekeeping force.² Under pressure from Britain, Muzorewa agreed to hand over power to the incoming Governor. The Patriotic Front were very unhappy however about the shortness of the transitional period and the absence of any neutral peacekeeping force.³ They feared, with justification, that the Zimbabwe-Rhodesian army, which would remain responsible for law and order, might use the opportunity to crush them.

The Commonwealth went into action again. At a meeting on the evening of 26 October, the Commonwealth High Commissioners were "deeply concerned" at the British attitude that it had received full power at Lusaka. They were also concerned that Britain might legalise illegality by basing the transitional Government on the existing Rhodesian military civilian structures.⁴ The major issues were the time for transition and the nature of cease fire monitoring. The first issue was raised by Ramphal with the Americans. President Carter agreed that the transitional period was too short and had Ambassador Brewster tell Carrington that a 4-6 month transitional period was necessary.⁵

1. *ibid.*

2. Davidow *op.cit.* p.64

4. Financial Times 27 October 1979

3. *ibid* p.70

5. Davidow *op.cit.* p.70

The more difficult issue was ceasefire monitoring. The Patriotic Front had called for a United Nations peace keeping force to monitor the ceasefire.¹ This was clearly unacceptable to Britain and Muzorewa² but equally it was clear that some neutral force was needed. Ramphal was busy behind the scenes to avoid a showdown, assisted by the Jamaican Prime Minister Manley, who was visiting London at the time.³ Manley phoned Fraser in Australia to discuss the issue. Fraser told Manley he also was opposed to the use of a UN force, but thought a Commonwealth Monitoring Force would be a possibility. After first calling Nyerere, he then appears to have put forward the idea to Mrs. Thatcher saying "it may be worth considering a joint Commonwealth group, under U.K. Government authority to monitor the situation".⁴ Australia was prepared to participate.

On the evening of 30th October, after meeting first with Ramphal for an hour, Carrington spoke with the Commonwealth High Commissioners.⁵ The meeting went well, apparently because Carrington showed flexibility, particularly with the extensions of the transition period.⁶ The British were also taking the idea of a Commonwealth Monitoring Force seriously. Meanwhile President Kaunda visited Britain. He supported the Commonwealth forces idea, advocating it to both the Patriotic Front and to the British Government.⁷

In a "leak" reminiscent of Lusaka, the Australian Government announced in the second week of November that it had been asked to supply 110 men to a Commonwealth force.⁸ The British Government then announced on 16 November that it was establishing a Commonwealth Ceasefire Monitoring Group,⁹ although it had in fact confirmed the Australian reports on 9 November.¹⁰

1. Daily Telegraph 29 October 1979
3. Financial Times 29 October 1979
5. Daily Telegraph 31 October 1979
7. Observer 11 November 1979
9. FCO Press Release 16 November 1979

2. Meredith p.382
4. The Australian 19 November 1979
6. Davidow op.cit. p.70
8. Financial Times 10 November 1979
10. Financial Times 10 November 1979

Then under the urging of the US and Ramphal the size of the force was increased to over 1,000.¹ Thus by providing for more satisfactory transitional arrangements the Commonwealth once more played a crucial role in keeping the talks going.

It had also produced a significant change in British policy. A force was not in Carrington's original pre Conference planning,² and at the Lusaka Conference Thatcher had ruled out British troops being sent to Rhodesia.³ Although the force that was actually sent was basically a British one commanded by a British General, the fact that it was based upon an initiative of several Commonwealth countries, carried the Commonwealth name, and had other Commonwealth members made it acceptable to the Patriotic Front, and avoided UN involvement, which was unacceptable to the British.

Concurrently a particularly Commonwealth crisis was running. The British Government had proposed in the Pre-independence Arrangements that:

"Commonwealth Governments will be invited to send observers to the elections. Their role will be to observe that the elections are genuinely free and fair." 4

Ramphal was appalled. He realised that such a scheme would weaken the united stand of the Commonwealth on the issue. He met with Kaunda during his visit to London and they agreed that the Lusaka Agreement envisaged a collective role for Commonwealth Observers. This Group was

- a. to be independent of the British Government
- b. to be organised and co-ordinated by the Secretariat on the basis of an observer team from a minimum number of Commonwealth countries with appropriate supporting staff and
- c. to have their own Chairman and Secretary and report as a team to Commonwealth Heads of Government. 5

Ramphal met with Carrington to discuss the Observer Group in mid November, but without success.⁶ He then despatched his letter to Commonwealth

1. Davidow op.cit. p.81

2. ibid p.73

3. Daily Mail 10 November 1979

4. British Press Release 2 November 1979. Rhodesia: The Pre-Independence Arrangements No. 20

5. Letter, Secretary-General to Commonwealth Heads of Government 19 November 1979 Commonwealth Secretariat

6. Daily Telegraph 19 November 1979

Heads of Government, prior to a meeting of the Commonwealth Committee on Southern Africa. At the same time Ramphal issued a news release setting out his view that the Observer Group should be collective. He cleverly, as in the letter, referred to President Kaunda's views, and went on to say that this understanding was shared by most Heads of Government who had replied to his letter.¹ Still there can be little doubt that he was taking the initiative and thus practically exercising an executive role.

Such is the nature of the Commonwealth today and the expanded nature of the Secretary-General's role that Ramphal's actions were not only accepted but strongly supported at the meeting of High Commissioners on 23rd November. This was even despite the fact that some countries like Australia had already accepted the British invitation and thus ostensibly agreed to the British interpretation

In the face of this collective Commonwealth approval Carrington quickly backed down, and Ramphal won his fight for a Commonwealth Observers Group,² co-ordinated by the Secretariat, unlike the British co-ordinated Monitoring Force. Thus the group would be truly international, reflecting third world opinion, not just Britain's "friends" in the Commonwealth. It made international, particularly crucial third world, recognition of the result that much more likely.

Meanwhile the negotiations continued fitfully. They were not helped by attacks on Zambia by Zimbabwe Rhodesia towards the end of November. These were followed by riots in Lusaka outside the British High Commission, blaming Britain as responsible for Zimbabwe Rhodesia. The raids, combined with the cutting off of rail links bringing maize to drought stricken Zambia, did however indicate Zambia's vulnerability. The effect was that it, like other Front Line States, put pressure on the Patriotic Front not to wreck the talks.³

In order to head off the scheduled Parliamentary vote on sanctions and force the pace of the talks, Carrington introduced enabling legislation in the House of Commons on 7 November.⁴ However the talks were beginning to founder as they reached their last stage over the question of the ceasefire

1. Commonwealth Secretariat News Release 79/34 23 November 1979

2. Daily Telegraph 24 November 1979

arrangement. Mugabe was the main problem. The British South African forces withdrew from Rhodesia and the Rhodesian forces back in their bases before the guerrillas laid down their arms. Ramphal once again set out to play a crucial role. Carrington became very worried that the talks would collapse, particularly as now the second class option seemed less feasible. Mugabe was most concerned about South African involvement. He insisted that to the ceasefire proposals which stated that

"There will be no external involvement in Rhodesia under the British Governor. The position has been made clear to all the Governments concerned"

should be added the specific words "including South Africa". Ramphal advocated to Carrington that these words should go in, and indeed drafted the final text in his office with an FCO official² Carrington finally agreed and got Wall's reluctant agreement. A relieved Carrington said on TV he was now optimistic of a settlement, although "I thought two days ago it was going to collapse".³

The settlement was still not signed. The British nevertheless maintained the momentum. Lord Soames, a member of the Cabinet, protege of Macmillan and son-in-law of Sir Winston Churchill, was announced as Governor.⁴ A four man reconnaissance team of the Monitoring Force had already been sent. Its commander Acland and Deputy - Learmont, accompanied Soames to Rhodesia on 11 December,⁵ and the government was formally handed over to him by Muzorewa.

Yet Mugabe would still not sign. He objected to the final plans for the ceasefire assembly points. Carrington this time confidently set a deadline of Saturday 15 December. He was able to do this because he knew the Commonwealth, the Front Line States, and most importantly Mozambique, were all insisting that Mugabe should sign.⁶ Without his bases in Mozambique Mugabe could not continue the war. Once again the Commonwealth Secretariat had played a role, for it had helped keep Mozambique in tune with the negotiations, and thus sufficiently informed to know the time was right to provide the final

1. D. Smith op.cit. p.142

2. ibid p.145 Interview with Ramphal

3. Interview, David Smith & Carrington ITN

4. Smith op.cit. p.147

5. J.E. Learmont "Reflections from Rhodesia" RUSI December 1980 Vol.125, No.6 p.48

6. Smith op.cit. p.151

push to Mugabe.¹ The agreement was finally signed on 21 December, a Christmas present to a new nation.

Conclusion

The Commonwealth's role was not over with successful conclusion of the talks. The Commonwealth Observer Group in particular was to play a significant part in monitoring the electoral process which resulted in the Mugabe government, independence and international recognition.

The birth of Zimbabwe is often seen as the Commonwealth's greatest success. But it was not its swansong. Since then, with South Africa, it has gone on to tackle bigger if not better issues. South Africa is of course not Rhodesia. The issues are much more complex, the actors greater and the role the Commonwealth can play much smaller. However the Report of the Eminent Persons Group has already shown it can play a significant part.

Like all international organisations the Commonwealth, with its wide ranging disparities of interests between its members has its weaknesses and divisions. They could even cause it to collapse one day. However it has proved remarkably resilient. It has also frequently not been given credit for what it has achieved. My hope is that this paper may have helped to redress the balance somewhat and indicated what the Commonwealth is capable of doing even when it is not encouraged.

1. Interview with Ramphal, 17 April 1986.

