

EMBARGO: 7.30 pm -20.1.09

GLIMPSES OF THE COMMONWEALTH AT SIXTY

The 2009 ERROL BARROW MEMORIAL LECTURE

by

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Bridgetown, Barbados
20 January 2009

GREETINGS

'The Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow': *'Errol'* to many, *'The Skipper'* to some, *'Dipper'* to others. It is for me a special and substantial honour to have been asked to give the *Errol Barrow Memorial Lecture*, and I do so with a deep sense of privilege. I know that this Lecture Series is not intended to be confined to reminiscences about this Barbados National Hero, but to mark his life and work on the anniversary of his birth with reflections apposite to the moment. I hope you will allow me, however, to reflect at the outset on the man I came to know and respect as a cherished West Indian friend and colleague.

I was not, of course, his equal at any stage of the 25 or more years that I was close to him; but Errol Barrow had an almost unique way of bestowing his friendship on individuals whatever their station or origin; and I was favoured thus. These days when I see the boardings around what will be the new *Four Seasons Hotel* where Errol's cottage, *Kampala*, was located, I cannot but reflect on happy days there drinking Scotch and coconut water while Dipper settled for Kola Tonic - and cooking. For ten years from 1965 until 1975 – the year in which I was elected Commonwealth Secretary-General – we bonded in ways that only men who shared common passions could.

Prudence dictates that I should not presume to reminisce about Errol Barrow in his domestic political scene; but the truth is I did not know him in that scene. I knew him as a West Indian; and in that common belonging we were in a shared regional home. When he came to Guyana and we went duck shooting – strictly in the interest of saving Guyana's rice farmers from the pestilence of ravaging *Wisi-Wisi* ducks – Errol was in his West Indian home as well. And I know it was the same when he went sailing with St Vincent's 'Son' Mitchell or St Lucia's John Compton in the Grenadines, or 'limed' with Michael Manley in Jamaica. At those times, Errol Barrow displayed a capacity - rare among politicians - for switching off politics; yet there is no question that the fellowship of those moments enhanced the levels of fraternity and civility that characterized his serious regional political encounters – whatever the 'Barrowisms' that coloured his debates. We can do with some

of that easy sociability now within the Region's political directorate – camaraderie beyond Conference rooms.

Those encounters are an important part of Errol Barrow's legacy; and he has not been given sufficient credit for the regional accomplishments that were their handiwork. One, in particular, stands out for me. The 1973 Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community and Common Market – CARICOM – is today sometimes regarded as the resumption of West Indian regionalism after the debacle of 'federation'. The truth is otherwise. The event that marked that resumption was the Agreement of Dickenson Bay in Antigua – the CARIFTA Agreement of 1965; and the credit for that resumption must go primarily to Errol Barrow – as he testified with becoming modesty in his speech at the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas on July 4th 1973 in Trinidad. It was he that initiated the post-federal *détente*.

After recalling his association with Forbes Burnham and Michael Manley in the early years of the West Indian Students Union in London (both of them now on the platform with him as fellow West Indian Heads of Government) and their activist years of the 1940s in London, he said this:

Occasions for making disclosures of this kind are not frequent. I can now disclose that it was on 4th July, 1965, that the Prime Minister of Guyana met with me in Barbados, at my invitation to discuss the possibility of establishing a free trade area between our two countries in the first instance, and the rest of the Caribbean at such time as they would be ready to follow our example.

The letter which I wrote was in my own fine Barbadian hand which is sometimes illegible. But apparently, the Prime Minister of Guyana was able to read that letter, because of his, he informs me, Barbadian ancestry. Therefore, the hieroglyphics were not entirely strange to him.

In that letter, I invited the Prime Minister of Guyana to come to Barbados so that we could hold these discussions and today, I am very happy to be here, some eight years later to be a signatory to the documents for whose signing we have been summoned by the distinguished Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

That was indeed modest. Barrow, Burnham and (with Errol's encouragement) Antigua's V.C. Bird signed the initial CARIFTA Agreement in December 1965 but they suspended its coming into force with a view to making it region-wide from the beginning. When it did become operational, in 1968, eleven Caribbean countries were signatories to CARIFTA. It was by CARIFTA that the regional journey was resumed – CARIFTA that was to evolve into the Common Market and Community and, if the vision of the founder countries is to be sustained over the coming months, into the Single Market and Economy. Errol Barrow did not carry federal baggage; he had some scars from the 'agony of the eight'; but he was so passionately West Indian that as early as mid 1965, just three years after the rancorous dissolution of the Federation, and even before Barbados' independence, he initiated that resumption. I speak of these works of Errol Barrow with nostalgia, for I was privileged to be there through them all.

It was a time of a special relationship between Barbados and 'BG' - British Guiana- as Guyana then was. Trinidad and Jamaica were already independent – and so a bit apart. The Leewards and Windwards could not entertain that ambition; but Barbados and 'B.G' could, and did, and that put them in a shared constitutional category. But beyond their aspiration for independence, there were other ties that bound the two countries. For decades, Barbadians had been settling in Guyana – they were amongst our finest teachers and our most solid policemen. They started families there – Burnham, as Errol testified, was the grandchild of Barbadians as was another future President of Guyana, Desmond Hoyte. Guyanese too were to have Barbadian grandchildren – none more eminent now than one of Errol Barrow's successors, the leader of the Democratic Labour Party and Prime Minister of Barbados – the Honourable David Thompson.

And, of course, many Guyanese businessmen had invested in Barbados in a range of enterprises from the Banks Beer factory to hotels.

So, when Burnham's PNC won the 1964 election the old fraternity of Knutsford House – the West Indian Students hostel in London that Barrow and Burnham shared - translated into close political, social and economic relations between Barbados and the soon to be Guyana. By 1966, when the two countries were to stride out into the international community as independent states, they had already together spawned CARIFTA.

Guyana became independent on 26 May 1966; Barbados on 30 November the same year. I was here for the Barbados flag-raising, in the Guyana party - staying of course at Paradise Beach. So too was Guyana's High Commissioner to London, Sir Lionel Luckhoo. Out of his congenial practicality, but bolstered by the reality of the special relationship that existed between Barbados and Guyana, Barbados' new Prime Minister proposed that the two 1966 Commonwealth Members from the Caribbean share a single High Commissioner in London. Guyana readily concurred. It was a diplomatic first; and a much admired one. Two new Caribbean flags flew together over the shared Chancery in London's Cockspur Street. It could only have happened on the basis of the close fraternity of our two countries – kinship of a kind that went beyond regionalism.

There was another element of Errol Barrow's character that he exuded with naturalness; an element we claim to be true of all West Indians – though in our broader community it is often more an aspiration than a truth. At the personal level, Errol Barrow was wholly devoid of considerations of class, of colour, of race. He did not need to assert it as a credo; he simply lived it. The aphorism '*he walked with kings, but kept the common touch*' so typically spoken of him had, in relation to Errol Barrow the man, a larger dimension than is usual in our multicoloured, multiethnic Caribbean community. They are virtues we need to recall and reinstall in our societies as we face the threat of losing them – everywhere.

In our severely challenging and rapidly changing world, the peoples of our Region can ill afford to drift, much less be driven, apart; especially now. From the earliest CARIFTA

days – and of this I speak with personal assurance - Errol Barrow knew well the importance of the West Indian market to Barbados – an importance that has only increased over time. In 2007, (on CARICOM Secretariat figures) the CARICOM market accounted for 58.4% of Barbados’ total exports of goods – a higher percentage than that enjoyed by the three other ‘more developed countries’ of CARICOM. It also had a balance of trade surplus in value terms that was second only to Trinidad & Tobago’s – with all that means for Barbadian jobs, revenues and the private sector. So, while Errol was committed to deeper Caribbean integration because he firmly believed in the validity and importance of a West Indian identity, he also recognized and keenly promoted the value of its economic dimension. Today, we devalue the goals of the CSME at our peril.

What Margaret Atwood once wrote of nations generally at an earlier time is particularly true of us in our Caribbean Community today:

*It is cold and getting colder,
we need each other’s
breathing, warmth, surviving
is the only war
we can afford*

On this anniversary eve of Errol Barrow’s birth I honour his memory on behalf of all who dwell in his regional home. That today has marked, with Barack Obama’s historic inauguration as President of the United States, an astounding ennoblement of our human civilization - seems fitting to our marking of Errol Barrow Day tomorrow. The deep human qualities we have seen in President Obama so far, suggest that he is an ‘Errol Barrow’ kind of man. And that can only be good for America – and the world.

Inevitably, Errol Barrow’s vision went beyond the Caribbean archipelago. He had a larger view of Barbados’ place in the world; and his first stop was the Commonwealth. In the vintage ‘Barrow’ statement at the start of the Barbados Independence Conference in July 1966 when he assured the bemused Chairman of the Conference, the British Minister Fred Lee, that his *‘Government will not be found loitering on colonial premises after closing time’*, he had earlier said this:

Neither the smallness of their territory nor the slenderness of their physical resources deters (the people of Barbados) in the path to nationhood. They have a modest part to play in the affairs of their region, the Commonwealth and the world, and all they require from you, is that you should speed them to their rendezvous with destiny some time in 1966.

The modern Commonwealth, the Commonwealth of which Errol Barrow spoke in 1966, will be sixty years old this year – on 28 April 2009. I was intimately involved with it for fifteen of those years from 1975 to 1990, but in reality for many more. It is to a retrospective of that Commonwealth which has been part of Caribbean lives – glimpses of the Commonwealth over time - that I should like to devote the rest of this Lecture. I think Errol would have concurred.

In *One World to Share* – the book I wrote in 1977 - there are two photographs of ‘Commonwealth’ Prime Ministers. The first, taken (I suspect) in the garden of No 10 Downing Street, is of Winston Churchill and four colleagues: Mackenzie King of Canada, Field Marshal Jan Smuts of South Africa, Peter Fraser of New Zealand and John Curtin of Australia. It was May 1944; and this was the old Empire club. But the war was ending and with it - ironically for ‘the victor’ - so was *pax Britannica*. ‘Winds of change’ were howling, and were acknowledged to be transforming Empire into Commonwealth. The rules of the club were changing.

The other photograph was also of Commonwealth Prime Ministers; still in a garden, but arranged more formally. It was June 1957, thirteen years later, and a new and larger coterie of leaders. In the front row were Nkrumah of Ghana, Nehru of India, Diefenbaker of Canada, Harold Macmillan of Britain, Menzies of Australia and Suhrawardy of Pakistan. Behind them were Ministers of Sri Lanka, New Zealand, South Africa and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. In the time between these two photographs the modern Commonwealth had emerged. Great vision had made the transformation possible – the vision of great men.

Between those gatherings, in April 1949, Britain's post-war Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, hosted his Commonwealth colleagues at a special meeting at 'No.10 Downing Street'. It was to be the end game of Britain's withdrawal from the Indian sub-continent. In the 5 years since the 1944 photograph the 'British Commonwealth of Nations' had been challenged. Did it have the capacity to respond to the palpable need for change? India, Pakistan and Ceylon had become independent Dominions; but for India, in particular, independence on 15th August 1947 (independence by virtue of an Act of the British Parliament) was not the end of change. Before 1947 began, the Indian Constituent Assembly had already met to draft a Constitution for the proposed new Dominion. In February 1948, barely six months into independence, the draft of India's home-made Constitution was published. As expected, it provided for India to be an "Independent Sovereign Republic". Alive to the implications of this intent, the Constituent Assembly acknowledged with great delicacy that the relationship between the new Republic and the British Commonwealth of Nations was a matter "to be subsequently decided".

It was in furtherance of this that on 22nd April 1949 (and for six days thereafter) the leaders of the still 'British' Commonwealth laboured to find a consensual way forward. With Atlee, were the Prime Ministers of Australia, Ceylon, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa and Canada's Foreign Minister. It was not an easy task that faced them; and had it not been for men of the very special quality of Atlee and Nehru and Lester Pearson (then Canada's Foreign Minister) that way forward might never have been found, nor anything like the present Commonwealth ever have emerged.

India had both precipitated the problem and offered a solution. On 3rd April, before leaving for London, Nehru (speaking in Lucknow) had expressed the hope that "without restricting our freedom, India may form some sort of link with the Commonwealth which will benefit and enable us to contribute to the peace of the world". In short, India would become a Republic and wished, as a Republic, to remain in the Commonwealth. Until Nehru raised the matter thus, the proposition for most people was an oxymoron; republican Ireland had left the Commonwealth only months before, centrally on the issue of 'allegiance'. In reality, it was a challenge to the British Commonwealth to adapt or wither on the vine - a

challenge that could not be refused if the Commonwealth was to be meaningful in the aftermath of decolonization.

But not everyone saw it that way. Smuts, for example, and he spoke for many, emphatically denied any possibility of accommodation: “There is”, he said, “no middle course between Crown and Republic, between in and out of the Commonwealth”. Menzies, then Leader of the Opposition in Australia, speaking to the Canadian Club in Ottawa on 21st October said he did not think a formula by which a Republic could be included with the Dominions in one political organization could be devised, adding: “If we spread the butter of the British Association until it is too thin it will disappear”. He failed utterly to see that it was precisely ‘the butter of the British association’ spread too thick – the issue of allegiance to the British Crown - that was the problem.

Fortunately for the Commonwealth, and I believe for the post-war world, wiser counsels prevailed. Great vision characterised the Declaration that issued from Downing Street on 28 April 1949 – one must assume, not without consultation with the Palace. The critical paragraph was the second, which stated that India is soon to become an Independent Sovereign Republic, but that she still desires to retain her membership of the organization – now described as ‘the Commonwealth of Nations’ – and is prepared to continue to accept the “King as the symbol of the free association of its independent member nations and as such the Head of the Commonwealth”. It was a supreme example of enlightened statesmanship and consummate political skill – and a masterpiece of drafting.

But, again, not everyone shared that judgment. Writing in the *Times* the next day L.S. Amery – an influential conservative politician and journalist born in India of the British raj - suggested, predictably, that the effect of the Declaration was that “it has changed in respect of India alone the historic conception of allegiance as an element of our unity”. How often those timid of change minimize great moments of transition when they come?

In that same year, in 1949, with these momentous events unfolding, I was a law student at King’s College, London. With the brashness of youth, I offered an article on the ‘April

Declaration' for *King's Counsel* – the Journal of the Faculty of Laws. It was written as a constitutional law answer to the 'Amery' view. I called it "The Second Commonwealth of Nations"; and in it I asserted that the concept of 'allegiance' as a basis of Commonwealth membership had gone; that the Commonwealth was now a free association of nations, independent in form as they are in status, each free to go its own way in regional and international affairs; but united by common ideals and common interests. The Article concluded:

It may well be that this new bond will prove more acceptable and so more lasting than the now rusted links of allegiance: if that is so the April Declaration augurs well not only for Commonwealth harmony, but for world peace as well.

Altogether, this was my first glimpse of the Commonwealth – 60 years ago. I don't think I ever lost my sense of wonderment at its potential for achieving change through inspired and enlightened leadership.

But not all aspects of the Commonwealth in those early days were reassuring. The outstanding negative was the Commonwealth's relative passivity over apartheid in South Africa and Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in Rhodesia: instincts of 'kith and kin' smothering human imperatives. African and Asian countries and the mass of non-white countries in the world, including our newly independent countries in the Caribbean, – and people worldwide from whatever country and race who felt their humanity ravaged by apartheid – sought responses through other agencies: the United Nations, the Non-aligned Movement, International NGOs, the worldwide anti-apartheid movement, national protest action and self imposed sanctions. The Commonwealth's abstention questioned its validity; and, had it persisted, would have threatened its survival.

When I went to the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1975 – sent there with a history of fighting for the causes of the developing world and with the expectation that I would continue to do so - I knew I could only be effective in helping to mould this 'Second Commonwealth of Nations' into a modern instrument for change if its leadership would

match that early vision of 1949. Four leaders in particular helped me to reach the conclusion that the Commonwealth could be an valuable instrument for change: Pierre Trudeau, Indira Gandhi, Kenneth Kaunda and Michael Manley. Trudeau and Indira Gandhi were known Commonwealth agnostics; but each believed that the Commonwealth had the potential to contribute much more than it had done to meeting global challenges. Each encouraged me to go forward.

Kenneth Kaunda and Michael Manley were less cynical about the Commonwealth; perhaps because their countries were newer members. But it was more than that. Kaunda's preoccupation was with the dire situation in Southern Africa and he saw the Commonwealth as being critical to bringing Britain to the front-line of the struggle. He had faith in the reservoir of goodness within Britain – almost to a point of naievity; and he saw the Commonwealth Secretariat as a primary instrument for tapping into that reservoir. And beyond Britain, he believed that the old Dominions could be brought into a mission of Commonwealth solidarity for change in Southern Africa.

Michael Manley shared Kaunda's belief that the Commonwealth could make a difference in the struggle in Southern Africa, and he was resolute that it should. But there was another dimension to his urging. Michael had by 1975 become a passionate advocate of the cause of development and of the need for global economic change. He saw the Commonwealth as a means of bridging the pernicious North-South divide. We were, he and I, foot-soldiers in that struggle.

In my early years in Marlborough House I reflected often on the conjuncture between that early student article in 1950 on 'The Second Commonwealth of Nations' and my mandate, as I saw it twenty-five years later (in 1975), to help the Commonwealth to be 'united by common ideals and common interests' and to be an instrument 'not only for Commonwealth harmony, but for world peace as well'. The conjuncture was not, of course, an act of will. Was it the product of cumulative glimpses?

One of the greatest tests of the Commonwealth's capacity to survive remained racism in Southern Africa. The vile system of Apartheid in South Africa and its growing mirror image in Southern Rhodesia tested the British government's resolve when Ian Smith made his arrogant Unilateral Declaration of Independence. The response of Harold Wilson's Labour Government was never more than listless; while Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government was actually quietly comfortable. But, as has happened throughout the history of the Commonwealth, wise leadership – and significantly wise, “white” leadership - emerged as allies with the leaders of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (with some encouragement from the Secretary General) to make the Commonwealth the agent of change.

Malcolm Fraser of Australia was regarded by many Australians as aloof and even arrogant. He was a Conservative in Australia; in domestic politics he would have been bracketed with Margaret Thatcher. But Malcolm Fraser bloomed in the Commonwealth and especially in the Commonwealth's efforts against racism in Southern Africa: against Ian Smith's UDI, against Apartheid in South Africa. Malcolm Fraser was one of the six leaders who worked in President Kaunda's Study on the Retreat weekend of the Commonwealth Summit in Lusaka in 1979 to produce the Lusaka Accord – leading to the Lancaster House Conference and a free Zimbabwe. He was CoChairman with President Obasanjo of Nigeria of the Commonwealth's Eminent Persons' Group that played such a critically important role in the freeing of Nelson Mandela and the ending of apartheid.

The Caribbean member of that Group came from Barbados – the incomparable Dame Nita Barrow, who accepted my invitation with enthusiasm and played a formidable role in the Group's work. Errol Barrow often described himself as ‘Nita Barrow's brother’; he, I am sure, would have welcomed my seizing this occasion to recognize the memorable qualities of this great Caribbean woman from Barbados who rendered the Commonwealth and its causes great service.

Like Malcolm Fraser, Canada's Brian Mulroney's politics were conservative, and he was not a great internationalist. He was to suffer mixed fortunes in domestic politics. But in the

Commonwealth in the 80s Brian Mulroney was a star. Together with Fraser he ensured that the Commonwealth did not divide on black-white lines on Southern African issues – that within the Commonwealth Margaret Thatcher was isolated. On sanctions against South Africa, Brian Mulroney was a stalwart, joining with Rajiv Gandhi of India and Bob Hawke of Australia in bringing political pressure on Margaret Thatcher to join the Commonwealth consensus on sanctions.

As with Fraser, there were no votes back home for these heroic stands in the Commonwealth. Quite the contrary. Why then the steadfastness of Australia's Fraser and Hawke, and Canada's Mulroney? Somehow, the environment of the Commonwealth helped these hard-headed men of politics to reach beyond their normal grasp to hold aloft the Commonwealth's highest non-racial ideals. It is a glimpse of the Commonwealth that is worth keeping in focus.

Throughout much of the Commonwealth's sixty years, it has grappled with the challenge of ending military coups and restoring democracy. It has also had to cope with governments withdrawing their states from membership of the Commonwealth because Commonwealth action or Commonwealth judgments did not sit well with their narrow political ambitions. South Africa was withdrawn because of the Commonwealth's stand on the repugnance of apartheid, and Pakistan withdrew in 1977 in the context of the secession of Bangladesh and its admission as a member of the Commonwealth.

For most of the years following, when the military dictator Zia ul Haq held sway, Pakistan's non-membership of the Commonwealth was not a situation that I bemoaned. But when Zia died suddenly in 1988 (in that mysterious plane crash that killed the US Ambassador as well), I immediately began to look to the possibility of Pakistan's return to membership, and to hope that it might happen on my watch. As Oliver Tambo (the ANC's President in exile) reminded me in the case of South Africa, it was not the people of the country who left the Commonwealth, it was the government serving apartheid's ends. So with Pakistan. The return of the Pakistani people to the Commonwealth fold was, in my

view, important for them as much as for the Commonwealth's promotion of democracy and stability that Pakistan membership would acknowledge.

It was to be a close thing; but timely preparation had helped me. Nearly five years before, a Debate at the Oxford Union had provided a perfect setting – one that only the Commonwealth could provide - for exploring the future. The motion was – in the best tradition of Union Debates “That the Commonwealth is a drag on Britain”. Benazir Bhutto, who (not so long before) had been President of the Union when she was at Lady Margaret Hall, was one of a two-person team that proposed the motion. I, along with David Steel, (now Lord Steel and former Leader of the British Liberal Party) opposed it. As I recall, the motion was lost.

Over dinner afterward I spoke with Benazir. I told her that Zia had to go sooner or later. I encouraged her to stay with the resistance to him, even in exile, and assured her that I and many others expected her to win the elections that must then inevitably be held. In that event, I said, I would be ready to orchestrate Pakistan's return to membership – provided I knew that she wanted it. Benazir assured me without hesitation (as I expected, the debate notwithstanding) that when the time came she would certainly want Pakistan to be back in the Commonwealth. I never forgot that; I regarded it as bankable. I recall sharing the discussion with Benazir later with Errol Barrow's Foreign Minister, Cameron Tudor, in the context of his much earlier Presidency of the Oxford Union. As I fully expected, he claimed credit for the ambience of the Union in fostering the potential break-through.

On 2 December 1988 – almost exactly 5 years after our Oxford Union encounter, Benazir Bhutto was sworn in as the duly elected Prime Minister of Pakistan. I lost no time in holding consultations with her, visiting Islamabad in the process. By then, a new generation was at the helm in the sub-continent. Rajiv Gandhi was Prime Minister in India (whose relations with Pakistan had deteriorated to the point of war over Kashmir). His response to Pakistan's return to the Commonwealth was crucial, but I had his confidence, and was soon able to assure Benazir that an application from Pakistan would be welcomed - unanimously.

It was then 1989, and Commonwealth Heads would be meeting in Kuala Lumpur in late October – my last Summit; and as it turned out, Rajiv’s as well. Assassination would cut him down as it did his mother, Indira, and would later strike down Benazir. But, in happier times, on 15th September 1989, after Commonwealth-wide consultation I announced from Marlborough House that “Pakistan will rejoin the Commonwealth as its 49th member state with effect from 1 October 1989”.

When Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Kuala Lumpur on 18 October 1989, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was among them. Sadly and tragically, history effectively was to repeat itself: another coup, another exile, another suspension from the Commonwealth and eventually another renewal of democracy – with Pakistan now back in the Commonwealth, and Benazir’s husband its President. The Commonwealth’s work in this area is by no means done. Indeed, it has now been drawn close to the cauldron of instability, war and terror that resides in that part of the world as interests vie for supremacy in neighbouring Afghanistan.

No glimpse of the Commonwealth in a Caribbean setting, as we are tonight, can miss altogether the shadows of the US led intervention in Grenada in 1983 - both for themselves and for what they led to. The American military intervention in Grenada divided not only the Caribbean but also most of the Commonwealth from the Caribbean. This is not the occasion for exploring those divisions; but for recalling the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in New Delhi under Indira Gandhi’s Chairmanship exactly one month after the American invasion.

Most Commonwealth countries, including Britain (publicly), Canada and most importantly, our African and Asian friends had already made their positions clear in the United Nations. By a vote of 122 to 9 (the latter including 7 Caribbean countries, the US and Israel) the UN General Assembly had deeply deplored the armed intervention in Grenada as a flagrant violation of international law and of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of that State. A similar resolution received widespread support in the Security Council, but

was ultimately vetoed by the US. The prospects at the New Delhi Summit for Caribbean countries who had supported the invasion were not good, and the Jamaican Prime Minister, who had led that support group, stayed away. It was a dark time for the Region

I was, of course, deeply unhappy with Caribbean participation in the US-led intervention, and said so; but I was as distressed by the prospect of Caribbean divisions on display before the Commonwealth. I used my role as Secretary General and such influence as I had with Presidents and Prime Ministers to shift the Commonwealth's emphasis at New Delhi away from recrimination to "the recuperation of Grenada and a return to constitutional Government". A key element of this approach was to secure agreement to a Commonwealth study of "the special needs of small states consonant with the right to sovereignty and territorial integrity".

There was much more besides, like securing the withdrawal of American troops. The point I wish to make here, however, is about the resulting Commonwealth Study by an eminent Consultative Group which included Sir Henry Forde of Barbados. The Group's Report entitled: *'Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society'* was to become 'a seminal document on the problems of small states' and to contribute significantly to placing 'small states' – Caribbean countries prominent among them – on the international agenda. Barbados was to play a major role in elaborating that agenda and today the Commonwealth is the veritable champion of 'small states'.

So, some glimpses are fraught with pain and disappointment; but others evoke nothing short of outrage. So it is with Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Ending UDI and securing the independence of Zimbabwe was one of the Commonwealth's noblest achievements. Let none of the horrors that have unfolded in that sad place give us doubt about that. And let us be in no doubt either, that Britain and the US reneged on the assurances with which the Patriotic Front left the Lancaster House Conference in 1980 that a land redistribution programme would be facilitated in an independent Zimbabwe. But that does not excuse what is going on now in Zimbabwe where the substantial black population of the country

faces human destitution and insecurity on a catastrophic scale, and Zimbabwe itself the calamity of being a 'failed state'

Yet we must accept that the Commonwealth's very triumph over the villainy of UDI and its complicity with apartheid in South Africa leaves the Commonwealth with obligations to the people of Zimbabwe - obligations that go beyond expulsion or withdrawal of the state. The first struggle for freedom in Zimbabwe was against Smith and UDI. Its bedrock was the demand for 'majority rule': NIBMAR. With substantial Commonwealth help, it was won. Yet those who were its trustees were to become its traducers. Majority rule in Zimbabwe was to be denied and disgraced in the most blatant and brutal way.

But that cannot be the end of the story. Clearly, the world must mobilize, as it did before, to help the people of Zimbabwe to recover their birthright of freedom. The long-suffering people of Zimbabwe must be rescued from this second denial of that birthright and the catastrophe that is already at hand.

This is a time to be by the side of the people of Zimbabwe; not aloof from them. The UN must lead the way – not watch from New York. But many must follow. Africa especially must bring Robert Mugabe to heel. It must be as activist now as it was in rescuing Zimbabwe from UDI. And Caribbean governments cannot abstain without tarnishing their own earlier participation in the salvation of the Zimbabwean people. When in the interest of humanity we all know that it is time for Mugabe to go, abstention becomes complicity. We know well that this is not the outcome in Southern Africa for which men like Oliver Tambo, and women like Sally Mugabe, gave their lives; and Nelson Mandela his freedom; and the world its solemn guarantee. For the struggle in southern Africa was all one. It remains so.

So, a very large obligation lies on the Commonwealth - as large as when it responded to the brutal tyranny of Idi Amin in Uganda in the 1970s. It is easy to forget now that in 1977 when the Commonwealth took a stand against Amin's regime it was breaking new ground. Even 'condemnation' in many minds in those days was 'interference' in a state's internal

affairs. That was the mantra of human rights deviants at that time. That too broad notion of 'sovereignty' and 'domestic affairs' was Amin's shield against UN action of any kind. At Gleneagles in 1977, the Commonwealth broke the mould.

'Cognisant of the accumulated evidence of sustained disregard for the sanctity of life and of massive violation of basic human rights in Uganda, it was the overwhelming view of Commonwealth leaders that these excesses were so gross as to warrant the world's concern and to evoke condemnation by Heads of Government in strong and unequivocal terms'.

Thus read the Communique from the London Summit. Within weeks, the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva broke its silence. And global institutions have not been constrained since. The Commonwealth had shown the way to the world.

Let me end, however, on a less somber note by looking ahead to the Commonwealth's sixtieth birthday occasion here in the Caribbean. In October this year Commonwealth Heads of Government will meet in Port of Spain – the third such Summit in the Region following Kingston in 1975 and Nassau in 1987. The Kingston Summit is remembered for the Report of a Commonwealth Expert Group - *Towards a New International Economic Order*. That Group was chaired by the Caribbean's Sir Alister McIntyre. The Nassau Summit will ever be remembered for the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group's Report: *Mission to South Africa*, to which I have already referred. Both Reports looked beyond the Caribbean and the Commonwealth to global crises and their alleviation – bringing together Commonwealth human resources of the highest quality and diversity in a unique way to the search for solutions. Both served the world.

2009 is palpably a year of global crisis; one the world as an entire global community has not encountered before. It could be a year that sees the evolution of a new global economic order with implications of survival for many economies, many people. The Commonwealth will be challenged at Port of Spain in October to make its unique contribution to human salvation remembering - as we in the Caribbean must require it to remember - that 32 of its

53 members are 'small states'. Over the Commonwealth's 60 years, Caribbean countries have helped to shape its character and roles for 47 of them. We have an obligation to ourselves, to the Commonwealth and to the world to ensure that the Summit in Port of Spain in October is remembered for its practical contributions to all three. Not only Trinidad and Tobago, but also all of CARICOM should be strategizing now to secure that outcome.

These glimpses of the Commonwealth over sixty years have allowed me to end by looking forward to the path we choose for it in the challenging years ahead. The reality of change and the symbolism of continuity - wisely conjoined and caringly sustained - have preserved the Commonwealth beyond expectations to the point where, today, it is an asset in our many layered world. It is a Commonwealth vitalized eternally by glimpses of its ineffable worth, but one that must be sustained by the constant invigoration of both its functional and ethical roles. The Port of Spain Summit, enriched by Caribbean insights, can be such a time of strengthening, if we apply to ourselves as West Indians those already famous words, spoken earlier today:

our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions - that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking... the Caribbean.

Thank you for giving me this chance to share these glimpses of time past and prospects of time future with you. And to do so in honour of the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, National Hero of Barbados.

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