

to the head of government rather than to the head of state. This practice has been maintained despite the decision of many Commonwealth countries not to retain the British monarch as their common head of state. It is today a valued reflection of the special relationship between members of the association. Most Commonwealth countries have now exchanged high commissioners among themselves as well as with Britain.

In part as a result of developments during the Second World War, the movement toward independence in the colonial areas of South and Southeast Asia became irresistible. On August 15, 1947, the Indian subcontinent was divided, to create the two sovereign countries of India and Pakistan. A year later, Ceylon (since 1972, Sri Lanka) achieved complete independence.

An important step in the evolution of the modern Commonwealth was taken soon after these countries attained independence. When India decided to become a republic yet wished to remain within the Commonwealth, it became clear that common allegiance to the Crown could no longer be a suitable criterion for membership in the association. The communiqué of the April 1949 prime ministers' meeting expressed the freshly-determined role for the British monarch within the Commonwealth -- that of symbol of the free association of its independent member nations and, as such, the Head of the Commonwealth. This new definition enabled countries to join or to continue as members of the Commonwealth without any strict uniformity of constitutions.

During the 1960s, membership in the Commonwealth increased tremendously as practically all Africa became independent, and all except three of the British African territories (Sudan, British Cameroons, Southern Togoland) decided to remain within the association. This development was crucial to the evolution of the Commonwealth, as it reinforced its multiracial character. This point was perhaps most significantly registered at the prime ministers' meeting in London in March 1961, when Commonwealth representatives discussed, with the assent of the South African leader, racial policies within that country. So great a number of representatives expressed their disapproval of the principles of *apartheid* contained in the new constitution of South Africa that the South African Prime Minister decided to reassess his Government's desire to remain within the Commonwealth, and later withdrew from the association.

The issue of white minority rule in Rhodesia has also been prominent within the association. The Commonwealth Sanctions Committee was established by heads of government at their meeting in Lagos