

phony issue. The real issues were what kind of Britain would there be, and what kind of Europe. What would their relations be with developing countries — an attempt to carve out privileged spheres of influence, with reverse preferences, along the lines of the Yaoundé tradition established by de Gaulle? What about Asia? What would be Europe's relations with North America and other industrialized countries?

Commonwealth finance ministers, meeting in the Bahamas in 1971, asked me to organize studies and consultative meetings on the issues that the developing member countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific would have to face in deciding what response to make to the EEC's offer of "association". I urged these countries to reject Yaoundé and any notion of reverse preferences, but to put forward their own counter-proposals for favourable market access and aid, with no discriminatory spheres of interest. Above all, I urged these Commonwealth countries to stick together for maximum bargaining power, and to try to persuade the *francophone* Yaoundé countries to join them in seeking a new deal.

This line of advice made the Commonwealth Secretariat very unpopular in certain circles for a while. But, in the end, the line we had been urging was adopted or acquiesced in by all concerned. The OAU Secretary-General, with whom I maintained close contact on this issue, played a key role in bringing the French-speaking and English-speaking countries of Africa together.

The resulting Lomé Convention, in negotiating which Mr. Sonny Ramphal, then the Foreign Minister of Guyana and now my successor as Commonwealth Secretary-General, played so key a role, is a good start. The African, West Indian and Pacific countries are not split in resentment and bitterness on this issue, as at one time seemed very likely, nor are the EEC and the other industrialized countries. Everyone gained.

I especially valued the contacts and co-operation worked out between Commonwealth and *francophone* countries on this issue, as on some others. I have welcomed also the development in recent years of a secretariat for *francophone* countries (l'Agence de Coopération culturelle et technique). Though there are many differences, I see in "La Francophonie" a possible parallel with the Commonwealth, using similarities of working language and methods to improve understanding among nations of different races, continents and economic wealth. The two

secretariats have been in close touch, and look forward to practical programs of co-operation. It is, I think, a happy fact that Canada and Mauritius are members of both groups, and that the Seychelles may soon be a third.

The record of the practical uses of the Commonwealth on major political issues, like that of other major agencies in world politics, is mixed. But it is, I think, clear that, without it, the world would be more daunting, the prospects less promising.

What of the future?

As technological changes make the world even more interdependent, the need for understanding and co-operation on a broad international scale grows. Unless political leaders are singularly shortsighted (this is never impossible), I expect that Commonwealth links and machinery will be used increasingly to help achieve this. It is not an alternative to the UN or continental and regional organizations; it is a valuable complement to them.

In the area of economic relations between rich countries and developing ones, the Commonwealth has a particularly important opportunity and an increasingly significant role to play if confrontation is to be avoided and practical adjustments of policy are to be worked out. Problems will continue, and indeed increase, as the pace of change increases. But I hope the strains will ease.

Causes of strains

Strains in politics can be caused not only by the intrinsic complexity of issues faced but by ambivalence of attitudes (these are particularly difficult to avoid at first between former rulers and ruled); by insensitivities, sometimes, on the part of leaders, and by ignorance and prejudice on the part of sections of public opinion in nations differing in race or culture or affluence; by isolationist, or other narrow horizons, geographic or economic or social. We have been over many of these humps by now. They could recur, but need not.

In politics there are inevitably, at times, temptations to posture or play to the gallery of public opinion back home, even at the cost of exacerbating the real problems. Commonwealth leaders, like others, have, of course, not been exempt from these pressures or temptations. But Commonwealth meetings, governmental and non-governmental, have provided as a by-product a remarkably valuable educational process for participants, broadening contacts, knowledge, understanding, and friendships across the lines of racial, cultural, economic, or geographic differ-

*Constructive role
for Commonwealth
in avoiding
confrontation
of rich and poor*