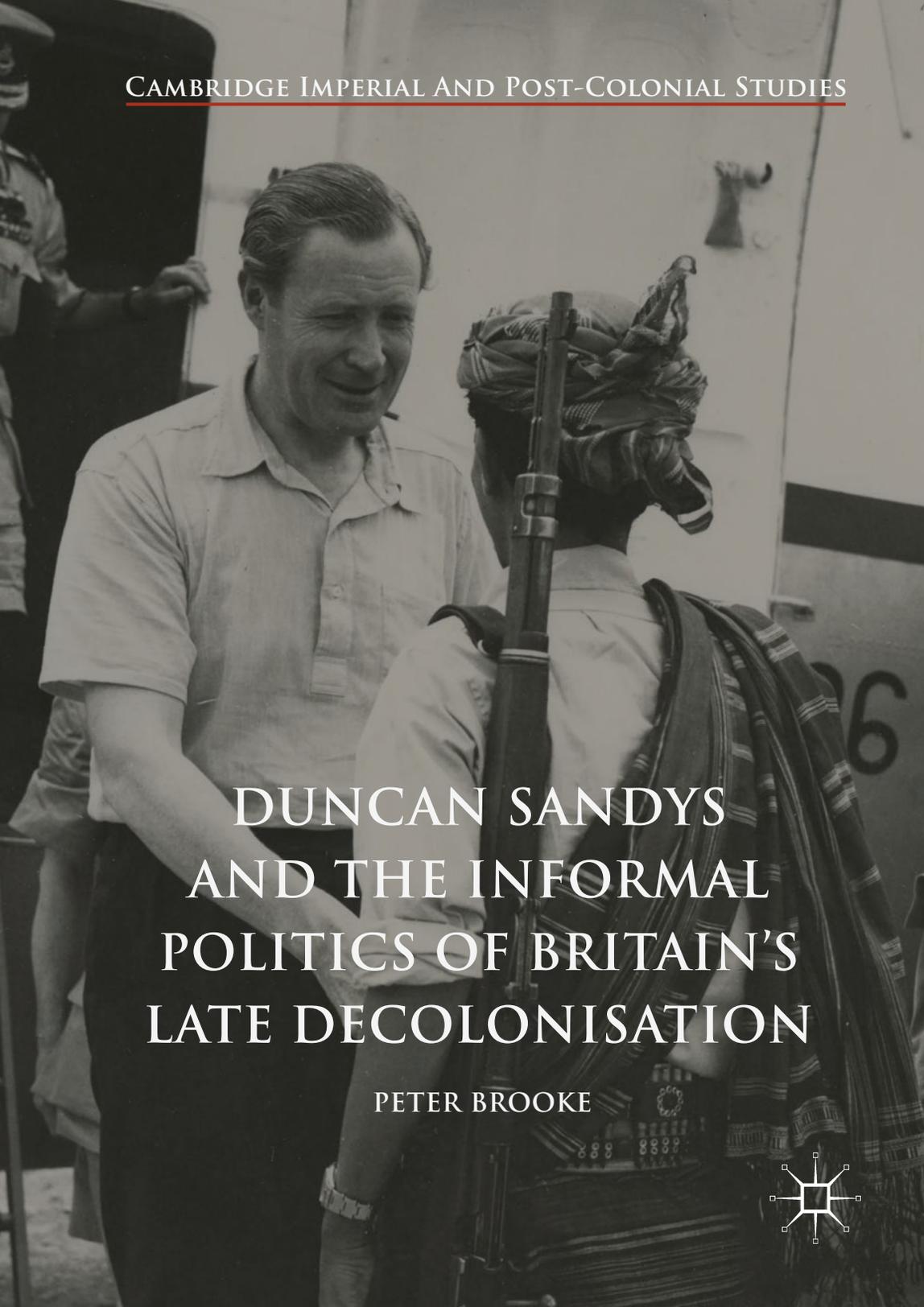


CAMBRIDGE IMPERIAL AND POST-COLONIAL STUDIES



DUNCAN SANDYS
AND THE INFORMAL
POLITICS OF BRITAIN'S
LATE DECOLONISATION

PETER BROOKE



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Peter Brooke

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Peter Brooke
Faculty of History
University of Oxford
Oxford, UK

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Cover credit: Visiting South Arabia as Secretary of State for the Colonies, with a Federali soldier and High Commissioner Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, 1964. Duncan Sandys Papers

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
AGC	Ashanti Goldfields Corporation (Ghana)
AGF	Anglo-German Fellowship
APS	Assistant Private Secretary
ATUC	Aden Trade Union Council
CAC	Churchill Archives Centre, University of Cambridge
CAF	Central African Federation
CARD	Campaign Against Racial Discrimination
CO	Colonial Office/Commonwealth Office (combined with CRO 1966–1968)
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CUKC	Citizen of United Kingdom and Colonies
FO	Foreign Office
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (combined with CO in 1968)
HO	Home Office
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KPU	Kenya Political Union
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NIBMAR	No Independence Before Majority Rule (Rhodesia)
NLF	National Liberation Front (South Arabia)
NSM	National Socialist Movement
NUS	National Union of Seamen
PS	Private Secretary
PSP	People's Socialist Party (Aden)

x ABBREVIATIONS

PUS	Permanent Under-Secretary
RAAS	Racial Action Adjustment Society
RPS	Racial Preservation Society
TNA	The National Archive
UCPA	Universal Coloured People's Association
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence (Rhodesia)
WISC	West Indian Standing Committee
WST	World Security Trust

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Introduction

Duncan Sandys' political career offers a unique insight into the nature of decolonisation and its impact on British politics. This book is a study of Sandys' personal contribution to the end of empire: as a minister, between 1960 and 1964, and, more remarkably, as a backbench rebel from 1964 to 1968. The history of decolonisation has traditionally been dominated by accounts of formal negotiations between metropolitan and colonial governments. But this account demonstrates that the decolonisation period also offered unusual opportunities for informal influence on policy-making. No one took better advantage of these opportunities than Sandys who became the most successful of a number of 'die-hard' Conservative rebels seeking to slow the process of decolonisation through irregular channels.

Sandys cut a prominent figure in the early 1960s as Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Colonies in the Conservative Governments of Harold Macmillan and Alec Douglas-Home. He played a critical role in bringing Macmillan's 'Wind of Change' to the colonial world. His ministerial career came to an end with the General Election of 1964, and after a short period as Shadow Secretary of State for the Colonies until 1966, his official role was over. But Sandys' involvement with colonial and Commonwealth issues did not end there. The following years were a period of dynamic *post-officio* activism for the former minister. Sandys won considerable parliamentary and popular support, and became a serious if short-lived Rightist threat to Edward Heath's leadership. In a series of populist campaigns Sandys drew

on an emotive and distinctively colonial blend of racial fears and dreams of ‘Great Power’ status. He was the first prominent Conservative in the mid-1960s to galvanise opposition to withdrawal from Aden, majority rule in Rhodesia, race relations legislation and, most effectively, mass immigration from the ‘New Commonwealth’. This public campaigning was complemented by private lobbying. Falling back on the ‘old boy’ networks that he had developed during his time in office, Sandys exploited his contacts with colonial and Commonwealth politicians and British civil servants to put pressure on Harold Wilson’s Labour Government. The success of his efforts constitutes a remarkable and so far undocumented feature of British politics in the late 1960s and invites scholars to reassess the significance of the informal politics of decolonisation.

Sandys has yet to be the subject of a biography. Chapter 2 therefore presents an overview of his career. Particular attention is given to Sandys’ tenure at the Commonwealth Relations and Colonial Offices from 1960 to 1964. The chapter details his ambiguous attitude towards the end of empire, his interpretation of colonial ‘multiracialism’, a sympathy for traditional rulers, and his enthusiasm for direct intervention both in dependencies and newly independent Commonwealth states. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 then consider Sandys’ backbench activism. Chapter 3 evaluates the success of his South Arabia campaign, from 1965 to 1967. Although the British public showed limited interest in the region, Sandys had considerable short-term success in exercising private leverage over the Labour Government. His efforts contributed to a significant shift in British policy, as ministers abandoned Aden’s elected socialist leaders and became increasingly sympathetic to the unelected and reactionary traditional rulers championed by Sandys. This confused approach led in turn to a collapse of power and Britain’s hasty withdrawal in 1967. Chapter 4 details the impact of Sandys’ first popular campaign, for ‘Peace with Rhodesia’ in 1967. The chapter demonstrates that the management of decolonisation attracted more public interest when expressed in ‘kith and kin’ terms of racial difference, but finds that Sandys failed to gain any direct influence on Wilson’s Rhodesia policy.

Sandys’ later campaigns were more successful. Chapter 5 considers his public efforts to rally opposition to Commonwealth immigration and race relations legislation in 1967 and 1968. This was his most effective public campaign, shattering a period of bipartisan consensus at Westminster some time before Enoch Powell’s more infamous intervention. The chapter also traces the colonial origins of Sandys’ thoughts on

race relations in Britain. Lastly, Chap. 6 presents an analysis of Sandys' private efforts to halt the arrival of British citizens of South Asian origin from Kenya in the same period. Sandys' residual influence in Kenya, combined with his popular support in Britain, proved a potent weapon in his tussle with Labour ministers. The chapter demonstrates that Sandys played a critical role in the Labour Government's tortured decision to introduce a restrictive and highly controversial Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in 1968.

Several themes are shared between Sandys' time in office and his backbench campaigns, and recur throughout this study. Sandys refused to accept Dean Acheson's dictum that Britain had 'lost an empire and has not yet found a role'.¹ His belief that Britain should continue to exercise a global influence was evident in the interventionism of his time in office and his later defence of Britain's interests in Africa and Arabia. Racial difference was another major concern for Sandys and, on a number of occasions both in and out of office, he sought to defend white privilege. Like many others at the time, Sandys found the prospect of racial violence particularly frightening and believed that it was a universal 'problem', whether in the Commonwealth, the USA, or Britain. The role of pledges in the management of decolonisation is also a recurrent theme. Sandys fought tirelessly to defend his ministerial promise that Britain would conclude a post-independence defence treaty with South Arabia's rulers. Yet he was equally passionate in rejecting the right of entry to Britain that he himself had pledged the Kenyan Asians at the time of independence. Sandys' double standards were symptomatic of a paradox at the heart of decolonisation: many pledges were made to smooth the transition to independence throughout the empire, yet no constitutional mechanism existed to bind either successive governments at Westminster or the leaders of newly independent Commonwealth states.

The starting point for the current study was a well-established body of literature on the causes of decolonisation, dominated by a number of excellent surveys by John Darwin, John Gallagher, David Low and Ronald Hyam amongst others.² Various 'push' factors have been highlighted by scholars. Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson's seminal

¹D. Brinkley 'Dean Acheson and the 'Special Relationship': The West Point Speech of December 1962.' *The Historical Journal* 33, 3 (1990), pp. 601.

²J. Darwin *Britain and Decolonisation: The retreat from empire in the post-war world* (Basingstoke, 1988); J. Gallagher *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire*

article on the ‘imperialism of decolonisation’ did much to focus attention on the influence of international pressure, notably from the USA and John Darwin points to the importance of Cold War imperatives.³ Other international perspectives have looked to the influence of the Committee of 24 at the United Nations, and the EEC.⁴ The role of colonial nationalists who ‘hustled and harried’ the British before and after they decided to leave has also attracted attention, particularly in regard to Palestine, Kenya and Aden, the colonies that experienced a violent endgame.⁵

Underpinning much of this literature is the premise that the concerns of the metropolitan ‘official mind’ were of primary importance and that policy-makers consciously chose to dismantle the empire as a calculated response to domestic and international challenges.⁶ My own research argues that domestic politics did indeed play a critical role in shaping the course of Britain’s decolonisation, but emphasises the importance of domestic political pressures outside of the ‘official mind’. General surveys also raise a question of periodisation as they tend to focus on the period between 1945 and 1964. Although the rate of decolonisation was certainly slower after 1964 this study argues that the complexities of dealing with the last few ‘problem children’ (as the Colonial Office sometimes termed them) resulted in a more politicised and public debate about colonial policy in the late 1960s than earlier in the decade.

(Cambridge, 1982); D. Low *Eclipse of empire* (Cambridge, 1991); Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*.

³W. R. Louis and R. Robinson ‘The Imperialism of Decolonisation’ *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22, 3 (1994), pp. 462–511; Darwin *The Empire Project*, p. 654; see also H. Brasted, C. Bridge and J. Kent ‘Cold War, Informal Empire and the Transfer of Power: some “paradoxes” of British Decolonisation Resolved?’ in M. Dockrill (ed.) *Europe within the Global System 1938–1960: Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany: From Great Powers to Regional Powers* (1995), p. 2.

⁴W. R. Louis ‘Public Enemy Number One: the British Empire in the dock at the United Nations, 1957–1971’ in M. Lynn (ed.) *The British Empire in 1950s: Retreat or Revival?* (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 186–213; W. Kaiser ‘To join or not to join: the “Appeasement” policy of Britain’s first EEC application’, in B. Brivati and H. Jones (eds.) *From Reconstruction to integration: Britain and Europe since 1945* (Leicester, 1993), p. 149; Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*, p. xiv.

⁵Low *Eclipse of Empire*, pp. 262–263; F. Heinlein *British Government Policy and Decolonisation, 1945–1963: scrutinising the official mind* (London, 2002), p. 238; B. Porter *The Lion’s share: a short history of British imperialism, 1850–1995* (London, 1996), p. 342; D. Anderson *Histories of the Hanged* (London, 2005).

⁶Heinlein *British Government Policy*.

A number of studies have explored the relationship between domestic extra-governmental pressures and the course of decolonisation in the period before 1964, and have been particularly helpful for my research. Philip Murphy's early monograph on the Conservative Party offers the most sustained consideration of the degree to which policy-making was subject to unofficial influence from front and backbench Party groups, settler lobbyists and African business interests, detailing the range and complexity of dynamics within the Party.⁷ Biographical studies of other colonial ministers have also been useful. Murphy's study of Alan Lennox-Boyd and Robert Shepherd's biography of Ian Macleod demonstrate that Sandys was not alone in taking an interest in colonial affairs after he had left office.⁸ Murphy's recent work on decolonisation and the monarchy also offers an initial analysis of the still under-explored realm of informal influence from royal quarters, making tantalising mention of Rhodesia and the 'problem' of the Queen Mother, who repeatedly encouraged ministers 'not to be nasty to Smithy' in the years following UDI.⁹

Most pertinently, two historians—Nicholas Owen and Simon Ball—have demonstrated the sensitivity of colonial policy to pressure from former ministers. A former Secretary of State for the Colonies and Sandys' father-in-law, Winston Churchill exploited his personal contacts with conservative Indian Princes when mounting a backbench campaign against the India Bill in 1935. Churchill later took a similar approach in his attempts to halt India's progress towards independence in 1947. 'Bobbety' Cecil, the 5th Marquess of Salisbury, was another associate of Sandys and former Secretary of State for the Colonies who mounted a campaign against government policy. Like Churchill, Salisbury sought to use his links with colonial politicians, in this instance in Southern Rhodesia, to gain leverage over British ministers when opposing the dissolution of the Central African Federation (CAF) under Macmillan. This literature has been of great use

⁷P. Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization: The Conservative Party and British Colonial Policy in Tropical Africa, 1951–1964* (Oxford, 1995); see also D. Horowitz 'Attitudes of British Conservatives towards decolonisation in Africa' *African Affairs* 69 (1970) for an earlier analysis of Party opinion.

⁸P. Murphy *Alan Lennox-Boyd: A Biography* (London, 1999); R. Shepherd *Iain Macleod: A Biography* (London, 1994).

⁹P. Murphy *Monarchy and the End of Empire: The House of Windsor, the British Government and the Post-War Commonwealth* (Oxford, 2013), p. 103.

in locating Sandys' activism within broader trends of unofficial political influence on policy-making during the end of empire.¹⁰

Accounting for the expansion of empire, John Darwin counsels against the too-ready invocation of the 'cool rationality...of the "official mind",' expansion being 'driven not by official designs but by the chaotic pluralism of British interests at home and of their agents and allies abroad'.¹¹ Since Darwin's characterisation of earlier imperial rule can equally well be applied to the era of decolonisation, the degree of informal influence on decolonisation has been the subject of some debate. Ronald Hyam has argued that lobbyists and pressure groups were 'treated in Whitehall with disdain'. Their interventions produced little more than a degree of ministerial caution about the presentation of policy. Ministers remained confident in the assumption (rightly or wrongly) that office bestowed privileged knowledge denied to MPs and the public alike.¹² Similarly, Murphy is less willing to attribute significant agency to the 'die-hards' of the Conservative Right than Ball.¹³

By contrast, as early as 1971 David Goldsworthy noted that backbench MPs on the Left 'could be useful' to colonial nationalists seeking to lobby ministers as well, concluding that the Labour Party's support for colonial nationalists 'must have played a real, if minor, part in bringing about the changed political climate to which the Conservatives eventually responded' in 1960. This theme has been developed further by Owen's more recent work on the anticolonial Left.¹⁴ In a similar fashion Stephen

¹⁰N. Owen 'The Conservative Party and Indian Independence, 1945–1947' *Historical Journal* 46, 2 (2003), pp. 403–436; R. Toye *Churchill's Empire: the World That Made Him and the World He Made* (Basingstoke, 2010); Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization*, p. 26; S. Ball 'Banquo's Ghost: Lord Salisbury, Harold Macmillan, and the High Politics of Decolonization, 1957–1963' *Twentieth Century British History* 16, 1 (2005), pp. 74–102.

¹¹J. Darwin *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹²R. Hyam *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation 1918–1968* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 404–405.

¹³Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization*, pp. 23–24; Ball 'Banquo's Ghost', pp. 74–102.

¹⁴D. Goldsworthy *Colonial Issues in British Politics 1945–1961* (Oxford, 1971), p. 383; N. Owen *The British Left and India: Metropolitan anti-imperialism 1885–1947* (Oxford, 2007); N. Owen 'Four straws in the Wind: metropolitan anti-imperialism, January – February 1960' in L. Butler & S. Stockwell (eds.) *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 116–139.

Howe observed that pressure groups such as the Movement for Colonial Freedom and individuals such as Fenner Brockway ‘may have had unusual weight comparative to the role of the official Opposition’ in relation to colonial affairs.¹⁵ Historians of business and commerce have also long argued that governments were not immune to unofficial pressures at the time of decolonisation, although they differ over the degree of corporate influence. Cain and Hopkins’ ‘gentlemanly capitalist’ theory suggests that imperial policy often served British financial and business interests, but Murphy and Sarah Stockwell have argued by contrast that companies’ attempts to influence policy were largely unsuccessful.¹⁶ In Sandys’ case I will argue *pace* Cain and Hopkins that his approach towards colonial and Commonwealth affairs was primarily driven by political imperatives despite his close personal links to British business interests in Africa (see Chap. 2).

The current study seeks to address a number of other weaknesses in the literature on decolonisation. Too often a teleology is assumed, both in regard to the supposed inevitability of colonial withdrawal and the subsequent rise of the independent nation state. Even the term ‘decolonisation’ is misleading, implying as it does a simple reversal of colonisation, and sitting uncomfortably with the more accurate ‘post-colonial’ adjective. Frederick Cooper and Michael Collins’ work on colonial federations illustrates well the significance of attempts to find alternatives to the independent nation state, and comparisons between the British Commonwealth and the French Community demonstrate a degree of interest in transnational postcolonial structures.¹⁷ Since not even the intransigence of the Rhodesian Front was able to halt the course of decolonisation, hindsight has (understandably) given historians more interest in the pressures that accelerated Britain’s

¹⁵S. Howe *Anticolonialism in British Politics: the Left and the end of empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 320–322.

¹⁶P. Cain & A. Hopkins *British Imperialism: Crisis and Deconstruction 1914–1990* (London, 1993), pp. 297–315; Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization*, pp. 117–119; S. Stockwell *The business of decolonisation: British business strategies in the Gold Coast* (Oxford, 2000), p. 232; and in the same vein Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*, pp. 404–405.

¹⁷M. Collins ‘Decolonisation and the “Federal Moment”’ *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24, 1 (2013), pp. 21–40; of Cooper’s various interventions see particularly ‘Alternatives to Nationalism in French Africa, 1945–1960’, in J. Dülffer and M. Frey (eds.) *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 110–137; M. Shipway ‘The Wind of Change and the Tides of History: de Gaulle, Macmillan and the Beginnings of the French Decolonizing Endgame’ in L. Butler and S. Stockwell (eds.) *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization* (Basingstoke 2013), pp. 180–194; see also L. Butler and S. Stockwell (eds.) ‘Introduction’ in *The Wind of Change*, pp. 10–12.

departure than those who slowed it. By contrast, many excellent local studies have given fuller attention to the success of conservative influences—often white settlers, or local regionalists—on independence constitutions and the timing of independence however inevitable its arrival.¹⁸ Applying the approach of such local studies to decolonisation more generally, the following analysis of Sandys' efforts gives due attention to these restraining pressures and their linkages with domestic politics.

The current study also raises a more general methodological problem with the literature on decolonisation, namely the lack of attention given to the role of officialdom. Anthony Kirk-Greene has offered detailed histories of the Colonial Service and District Officers, and individual 'proconsuls' have attracted attention, notably in Ronald Robinson's work on the 'King of Africa' Andrew Cohen, and John Darwin's study of Robert Armitage.¹⁹ But more general studies have tended to ignore this aspect, even Frank Heinlein's tantalisingly subtitled monograph *Scrutinising the Official Mind* rarely ventures below ministerial level.²⁰ This gap is particularly pronounced in work on the post-colonial period. The significance of High Commission staff in negotiating uncharted Commonwealth relationships in the immediate post-independence period has yet to attract the scholarly attention that it deserves, and is a weakness that my research seeks to address.

Since Antony Sampson's celebrated *Anatomy of Britain*, first published in 1962, the influence of home civil servants has attracted much

¹⁸For example, R. Maxon *Kenya's Independence Constitution: constitution-making and the end of empire* (Madison, 2011)

¹⁹A. Kirk-Greene *On Crown Service: a history of HM Colonial and Overseas Civil Services 1837–1997* (London, 1999) and *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858–1966* (Basingstoke, 2000); R. Robinson 'Andrew Cohen and the Transfer of Power in Tropical Africa, 1940–1951' in W. H. Morris-Jones and G. Fischer (eds.) *Decolonization and After* (London, 1980), pp. 50–72; R. Robinson 'Sir Andrew Cohen: Proconsul of African nationalism' in L. H. Gann and P. Duignan (eds.) *African Proconsuls: European Governors in Africa*, pp. 353–364 (London, 1978); J. Darwin 'The Central African Emergency, 1959' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 21 (1993), pp. 217–234; see also C. Sanger *Malcolm MacDonald* (Montreal, 1995) and Goldsworthy *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, pp. 52–53.

²⁰Heinlein *British Government Policy*.

scholarly attention, as popularised by the BBC comedy ‘Yes, Minister’. The research of Peter Hennessy and Kevin Theakston, amongst others, has suggested that Labour ministers’ concerns about an institutional bias after thirteen years of Conservative government were unfounded.²¹ As far as they have attracted attention in relation to decolonisation, senior civil servants have been presented as proponents of a ‘culture of decolonisation’ that, if anything, pushed ministers ever faster towards withdrawal.²² The current study suggests, however, that less eminent ‘subaltern’ officials also merit attention, and considers staff at the Colonial Office (CO), Commonwealth Relations Office and High Commission more widely, taking its lead from Joe Garner and Bill Kirkman’s earlier work on the departments.²³ The conduct of late decolonisation would suggest that it was not the progressive tendencies of senior home civil servants but the conservatism of overseas colonial and High Commission staff that presented the greater challenge to policy-makers, especially when working in concert with a powerful backbencher such as Sandys.²⁴

One further failing of the literature on decolonisation is the lack of historical attention given to the immediate post-colonial period in former colonies, an area traditionally dominated by social science studies or neo-colonial polemic. A number of historians, including Sarah Stockwell and Daniel Branch, have recently begun to address this weakness, taking a particular interest in continuities of personnel and paradigm.²⁵ In a similar vein, this study considers the development of early postcolonial relations between Britain and Kenya and offers

²¹A. Sampson *Anatomy of Britain* (London, 1962); P. Hennessy *Whitehall* (London, 2001); K. Theakston *The Labour Party and Whitehall* (London, 1992), pp. 15–19, 32–45.

²²Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*, p. 407.

²³J. Garner *The Commonwealth Office* (London, 1978); W. Kirkman *Unscrambling an Empire: a critique of British colonial policy, 1956–1966* (London, 1966).

²⁴The value of such ‘subaltern’ official studies is exemplified by P. Hinchcliffe, J. Ducker and M. Holt *Without Glory in Arabia: British retreat from Aden* (London, 2006).

²⁵S. Stockwell ‘Exporting Britishness: Decolonisation in Africa, the British State and its Clients’ in M. Jeronimo and A. Costa Pinto (eds.) *Ends of European Colonial Empires: Cases and Comparisons* (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 148–177; D. Branch *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963–2011* (Yale, 2011).

for the first time a Kenyan perspective on the Kenyan Asian exodus of 1967–1968.²⁶

The archival foundation of my research has been Sandys' collection of personal papers, held at Churchill Archives Centre. Other studies of the 'official mind' of decolonisation have found that similar private collections of leading politicians can offer an unparalleled insight into the high politics of the late empire, but the Sandys Papers have remained largely unused for this purpose. My research is also unusual, as a high political study, in considering a leading minister's backbench activity in the years immediately following his departure from office. In this it reflects one of the great strengths of the Sandys Papers that document his private campaigns in almost as much detail as his official work. The selection of the case studies presented in Chaps. 3, 4, 5 and 6—South Arabia, Rhodesia, Kenya, race relations and immigration—reflects the dominance of these subjects in the Papers. Sandys showed little or no concern for other colonial or Commonwealth issues at the time, notably the Biafran conflict. It would appear that his interests extended only to those countries or issues with which he had been extensively involved in office, unlike Nigeria.

Another feature of the Papers is a large number of letters written by members of the public, previously unused by historians, and mainly relating to race and immigration. For reasons of confidentiality the authors of these letters have been anonymised here. Enoch Powell's comparable but far larger collection has attracted more interest, but scholars have yet to progress beyond an initial sampling.²⁷ By contrast, Sandys' postbag has been read in its entirety for the purposes of this study and has proved a more manageable source. Like Powell's correspondence, Sandys' collection of letters is weakened by a lack of moderate opinion and is far from a reliable cross-section of public opinion. But it has nonetheless proved an invaluable source of material for analysing the nature of extremist opinion and Sandys' impact on the popular Right.

²⁶Branch *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*; C. Hornsby *Kenya: A History Since Independence* (London, 2012).

²⁷A. Whipple 'Revisiting the "Rivers of Blood" Controversy: Letters to Enoch Powell' *Journal of British Studies* 48, 3 (2009), pp. 717–737 and my own work on 'India, Post-Imperialism and the Origins of Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' Speech', pp. 669–687 provide (different) samples of approximately 2.5% of the collection.

The Sandys Papers raise a number of other methodological problems. The collection is an incomplete and indeed purposefully edited record, as Sandys ‘weeded’ his archive six years after he made the original deposit. A number of files were removed entirely, including those relating to his inter-war far-Right sympathies, and others may have been partially depleted. It has been both a help and a hindrance that Sandys has yet to be the subject of a published biography. But despite these limitations, the Sandys Papers contain a wealth of highly revealing and sometimes controversial records and offer a frank if incomplete record of his career.

Official records held at The National Archive and the India Office Records at the British Library have been used extensively. A selection of these papers has been published in the invaluable *British Documents on the End of Empire* series.²⁸ In recent decades the opening of files relating to decolonisation under the 30 year rule has enabled historians to make extensive and effective use of official records, and the same has been true of my own research. However, a number of pertinent files remain closed and many feature removed folios, despite Freedom of Information requests. Most significantly the ongoing release of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s large ‘Migrated Archives’ (FCO 141) has yet to invite any significant revision of the established narrative, and indeed few of the documents dating from the 1960s have been released, as highlighted by historians such as Richard Drayton.²⁹ The Conservative Party Archive has been of some use, although as a political arena Sandys always preferred Parliament or press to Party.³⁰ Other personal archives of politicians and officials, particularly those of Enoch Powell and Julian Amery, have also played an important role. These collections have proved a useful source of comparison and have

²⁸R. Hyam & W. R. Louis (eds.) *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire, 1957–1964 (British Documents on the End of Empire) A:4* (London, 2000); P. Murphy (ed.) *Central Africa (British Documents on the End of Empire) B:9* (London, 2005); S. Ashton & W. R. Louis (eds.) *East of Suez and the Commonwealth 1964–1971 (British Documents on the End of Empire) A:5* (London, 2004).

²⁹R. Drayton ‘The Archives of Britain’s Colonial Rulers’ letter to *The Times* 19/4/2012; this conclusion was also reached by an Institute of Commonwealth Studies/ King’s College London conference on the ‘Hidden Histories of Decolonization’ held on 20/2/15.

³⁰Leader’s Consultative Committee Minutes (LCC 1/2/1–4), Conservative Party Archive (CPA), Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

helped to complete some of the gaps in the Sandys Papers and the official record.

Thanks to the ready availability of British official records, research on the high politics of decolonisation has naturally tended to foreground metropolitan elites. Seeking to provide greater balance, I have tried to give attention to other significant voices. The records of Kenyan regional administrators, held at the National Archives in Nairobi, offer a rich insight into the dynamics that drove Africanisation in the mid-1960s. Unfortunately too many of the relevant central government files remain closed or lost within the Archive to give fulsome coverage of the independent Kenyan ‘official mind’ in the immediate postcolonial period from the Archive alone.³¹ However, combined with archived Kenyan newspapers, the Kenyan *Hansard*—an invaluable source of front and particularly backbench opinion—and records of discussions between British and Kenyan officials in the Commonwealth Relations Office files, it has been possible to go a long way towards a more two-sided representation of Anglo–Kenyan relations in the early post-colonial period. In an original contribution to the historical literature on Kenya, I have also sought to give voice to the Kenyan Asian community, using Kenyan Asian newspapers, contemporary surveys and interviews with individuals involved in the exodus of 1967–1968.³²

Commonwealth and foreign media comment has also featured in my work thanks to the records of the BBC Monitoring Service, held at the BBC’s Written Archive at Caversham Park. In using this remarkable archive I have benefited from Simon Potter’s recent research on the BBC during the colonial period.³³ The Service’s product is problematic in many ways, as Commonwealth broadcasting was rarely independent and sometimes aggressively propagandist. The programmes monitored also represent only a tiny percentage of broadcasts made, and the selection made was often determined purely on technical grounds such as signal strength and staffing. Nonetheless, it gives an unparalleled insight into

³¹See author’s forthcoming article on Kenyan motives for the ‘Kenyanisation’ policy, 1963–1968. Branch *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair* notes the problems of archival research in Nairobi, p. 20.

³²Notably lacking in the two most significant recent works on postcolonial Kenya: Branch *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair* and Hornsby *Kenya: A History*.

³³S. Potter *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922–1970* (Oxford, 2012).

the under-researched area of how Britain was perceived in the new states of the former empire.

Interviews have also proved useful in developing a more nuanced understanding of the metropolitan ‘official mind’. I am grateful to a number of senior Colonial and Commonwealth civil servants who have offered rich accounts of their work with Sandys. Taken on their own, such accounts can raise methodological issues of memory, hindsight and subjectivity, not least because Sandys was widely unpopular with his staff. Yet they have proved a useful source of official opinion, departmental culture and personal insight into Sandys’ undocumented traits. Interviews with a number of Sandys’ critics including Kenyan Asians and the Black Power activist Darcus Howe have also been useful, if often emotive. Above all I am very grateful for the cooperation of the Sandys family and I was fortunate to be granted interviews by Sandys’ wife, Marie-Claire, and his daughter Celia, both of whom offered many insights into Sandys’ character and private life.

Duncan Sandys' Career and Decolonisation

Since Sandys has yet to be the subject of a biography, the following chapter presents a brief overview of his career with particular attention to his Commonwealth and colonial responsibilities between 1960 and 1964. Tracing the long roots of his backbench campaigns, it demonstrates that Sandys' later thinking on race, democracy, direct intervention and Britain's world role were largely born of his colonial experience as a minister.

Sandys played a central role in shaping Conservative policy-making from the 1940 until the 1960s. His ministerial work was latterly dominated by decolonisation but was earlier concerned with defence, housing, local government, denationalisation and nuclear power. During and after his ministerial career he also pursued a number of personal interests, seeking to promote British influence in Europe and the former empire and, at home, taking a conservative view on issues such as capital punishment and town planning as well as race and immigration. Aside from his political work he also maintained an active business career.

Although unfairly ignored by biographers, Sandys was a heavyweight of the Conservative Right for over three decades. Unashamedly seeking to adopt the mantle of his father-in-law and mentor, Winston Churchill, Sandys espoused a distinctive ideology of Conservative internationalism, seeking to regain British global prestige by promoting Britain's role in a united Europe and, more controversially, by managing decolonisation to best ensure Britain's ongoing influence in its former empire. It was these priorities that respectively drove his founding of the European

Movement in 1947, and—in what proved to be the apogee of his career—his extensive influence on the course of decolonisation whilst Secretary of State for the Commonwealth and latterly Colonies from 1960–1964. Sandys’ involvement with decolonisation, at times highly interventionist, was most remarkable for its continuity once he had left office in 1964, the former minister waging a series of campaigns on colonial and Commonwealth issues from the backbenches in the later 1960s. These form the subject of the remaining chapters of this book.

On a personal level Sandys was largely a private man and had a reputation for being ‘unclubable’ if charming to women.¹ An only child, he was born in 1908 to George John Sandys, Conservative MP for Wells and soldier in both the Boer War and World War I, and Mildred (*née* Cameron), the daughter of a New Zealander, remembered by Sandys’ second wife as a ‘tough’ type.² He was brought up in the West Country, then schooled at Eton and read History at Magdalen College, Oxford. Sandys graduated in 1929, found a job at the Foreign Office (FO), and then in 1935 was elected MP for Norwood at the age of 27. Having successfully seen off an independent challenge at Norwood from Randolph Churchill, Sandys became an intimate of the Churchill family. Later in 1935 he married Diana Churchill, with whom he had three children, and during the following years his friendship with her father, Winston, became well known. The marriage ended unhappily with an estrangement between Sandys and his wife and the Churchill family from the mid-1950s and a divorce in 1960, accompanied by several nervous breakdowns for Diana before her suicide in 1963.³ In 1962 Sandys remarried a French divorcée, Marie-Claire Hudson (*née* Schmitt), with whom he had one daughter.⁴ During World War II he saw active service in 1940 and 1941, notably in Norway, cut short by a serious car crash that left him in constant pain for the rest of his life thanks to permanent injuries to his ankles.⁵ Only one episode attracted sensationalist press interest in his private life, namely the Duchess of Argyll divorce scandal

¹Correspondence between author and Richard Davenport-Hines, 2013; interview with Marie-Claire Sandys.

²Interview with Marie-Claire Sandys.

³C. Moseley (ed.) *The Mitfords: Letters Between Six Sisters* (London, 2007), p. 462.

⁴P. Ludlow ‘Duncan Sandys’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

⁵Interview with Marie-Claire Sandys.

that broke in the wake of the Profumo Affair in 1963 and coincided with Diana's death. Sandys was widely reputed to be the 'Headless Man' depicted in a compromising photograph with the Duchess, but although he offered to resign and indeed had been having an affair with the Duchess at the time, he always denied any involvement in the scandal.⁶

No understanding of Sandys would be complete without mention of his notorious personality. His contemporaries were almost unanimous in finding him to be tireless and headstrong, his daughter comparing him to a 'bull in a china shop'.⁷ Renowned amongst civil servants as a minister of 'extraordinary "difficultness"', Selwyn Lloyd was typical of Sandys' successors in being greeted with considerable relief on his arrival at the Ministry of Supply in 1954.⁸ His predecessor had 'worked unnecessarily long hours, which at times had driven his staff to distraction with the constant attention to the most pettifogging detail', compounded by a legendary temper which Macmillan put down to Sandys' wartime injuries; in Deborah Mitford's opinion her husband had found him a 'petrifying boss'.⁹ Sandys also inspired strong feelings amongst politicians. The former Defence minister, Anthony Head, initially refused to accept the post of High Commissioner to Nigeria in 1960 solely on the basis of Sandys' recent appointment as Commonwealth Relations Secretary in 1960. Macmillan noted in his diary that Head 'hates Sandys with an unreasoning and almost insane hatred'.¹⁰ Iain Macleod, Secretary of State for the Colonies in the same period, also struggled to work with Sandys, a tension that would later culminate in Macleod's public accusation of perfidy in relation to the fate of the Kenyan Asians (see Chap. 6).¹¹ Roy Welensky judged Sandys—with typically Rhodesian humour—to be the 'white man in the woodpile', the Prime Minister of the CAF believing that they were 'condemned to mutual suspicion from outset'.

⁶D. Sandbrook *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London, 2005), pp. 673–674.

⁷Interview with Celia Sandys (daughter of Duncan and Diana), Pimlico, 7/12/15.

⁸N. Forward (Private Secretary to Ministry of Defence 1956–1957) 'My Life with Duncan' 24/4/57, p. 6 (Nigel Forward Papers, private archive).

⁹D. Thorpe *Selwyn Lloyd* (London, 1989), p. 181; A. Horne *Macmillan 1957–1986* (London, 1989), p. 48; Moseley (ed.) *The Mitfords*, p. 366: Mitford was married to Andrew Devonshire, Sandys' Under-Secretary at Commonwealth Relations.

¹⁰P. Catterall (ed.) *The Macmillan Diaries II: 1959–1966* (London, 2011), p. 313.

¹¹Open letter from Iain Macleod to Sandys *The Spectator* 23/2/68.

Sandys was ‘tenacious of his own point of view, slow to see that of others, dogged and ruthless’.¹²

To his friends, however, these qualities could be a positive asset. In Churchill’s admiring opinion Sandys was a ‘devilish thoroughgoing fellow’ while Macmillan believed that he was ‘always reliable and sometimes brilliant’, the ideal ‘hatchet man’ to deal with awkward customers such as the Chiefs of Staff or indeed Welensky.¹³ Others found Sandys helpful, kindly and always polite. Enoch Powell judged that his time working under Sandys as a junior minister at the Department for Housing and Local Affairs was ‘an excellent training’ and could ‘remember him saying to me once, perhaps over kindly, when we were seeing a Bill through and I was sitting by him on the Front Bench, that it was like having the Box on the Bench with him’.¹⁴ A number of civil servants who worked with him found that he was loyal and respectful towards those he deemed ‘strong men’ and his Permanent Under-Secretary (PUS) at the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), Joe Garner, found that ‘contrary to the legend which surrounded him in Whitehall he was neither bad-tempered, nor impatient nor even intolerant’.¹⁵

Considering Sandys’ tough reputation and the longevity of his front-bench career, it is perhaps surprising that he never stood for the leadership of the Conservative Party. However, he was not without ambition and, like Powell, his attempts to galvanise a populist Right in the later 1960s reflected a deep frustration with the moderate leadership of Edward Heath. Sandys made a ‘conscious attempt to ape Churchill’, as one of his private secretaries noted, napping in the office, working late

¹²P. Brendon *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire 1781–1997* (London, 2007), p. 584; R. Welensky *Welensky’s 4000 Days: The Life and Death of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland* (London, 1964), p. 270.

¹³Forward ‘My Life with Duncan’; H. Macmillan *Riding the Storm 1956–1959* (London, 1971), p. 704; Sandbrook *Never Had It So Good*, p. 240; P. Hennessy *Having it so Good: A History of Britain in the Fifties* (London, 2005), p. 464.

¹⁴Transcript of an interview between Anthony Seldon and Enoch Powell, British Oral Archive of Political and Administrative History, 1920–1980, 5252, (British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics). Sandys’ comment may well have been intended to be less complimentary than the over-earnest young Powell understood.

¹⁵Interview with Stanley Martin (Assistant Private Secretary (APS) to Sandys, CRO, 1960–1962), Westminster, 20/11/12; Garner *The Commonwealth Office*, p. 357.

and even dictating 'in his underpants' when on tour.¹⁶ More publicly, he drew on Churchill's rhetorical style and tried whenever possible to sit in his former father-in-law's seat in the House of Commons, below the gangway. Sandys showed little interest in non-ministerial duties, either in visiting his constituency, or later in the Shadow Cabinet, rarely contributing to debates and achieving an unusually high level of absence, especially under Heath.¹⁷ In office it seemed that he aspired at least to the position of Foreign Secretary if not Prime Minister, and having been demoted from the front bench by Heath in April 1966 aged only 58, he became a regular irritant to the Conservative leader, in the same vein as Powell.¹⁸ As early as July 1966 *The Spectator* noted with interest that 'the Conservative who is heard with the most respect and attention in the House is Mr. Duncan Sandys', a 'chastening thought for Mr. Edward Heath'.¹⁹ By 1967 journalists and even Harold Wilson himself were referring to Sandys as the 'Shadow Leader of the Opposition' to Heath's great discomfort, reflecting his prominence in debates on Rhodesia and immigration.²⁰ As one waggish hack put it, 'like Macbeth, Mr. Heath is finding that doing away with Duncan was only the start of his troubles'. Heath's decision to demote such an influential critic to the backbenches proved a serious tactical error as it liberated Sandys from the constraints of the Shadow Cabinet's collective responsibility.²¹

Although irritation with Heath undoubtedly fuelled Sandys' back-bench campaigns, there is however no evidence to suggest that the former minister was driven by cynical populism, nor is it clear that he desired either a front-bench position or the leadership of the Party after

¹⁶'Interview with Denis Doble' (2004) British Diplomatic Oral History Project 84 (Churchill Archives Centre); interview with Denis Doble (APS to Sandys, CO 1963–1964), Lambeth, 28/6/13.

¹⁷Interviews with various CRO and CO officials: Stanley Martin, Denis Doble, Brian Gilmour Brian Gilmour (APS CRO 1962–1964), Westminster, 11/6/13, Derek Milton (APS, CO, 1962–1964), Camden, 10/7/13; LCC 1/2/1–4, CPA.

¹⁸Interview with Derek Milton; interview with Marie-Claire Sandys; interview with Stanley Martin, the only official to suggest Sandys' interest in the premiership.

¹⁹'Midsummer madness' *The Spectator* 30/6/66.

²⁰'Children leave by air for Aden' *The Times* 17/3/67; Peter Dunn 'The Tory Maverick' *The Sunday Times* 10/12/67.

²¹Draft transcript of unpublished press interview, 15/4/67, Papers of Lord Duncan Sandys (DSND) 14/26 (Churchill Archives Centre (CAC), University of Cambridge).

his demotion from the Shadow Cabinet. In a revealing unpublished press interview from 1967 Sandys claimed to find speculation about his leadership aspirations ‘totally without foundation’ and ‘extremely embarrassing’ yet admitted that ‘I say what I believe to be right and true, without hedging; and perhaps I put rather more spunk into it than others would think it wise to do’. While pledging his loyalty to Heath, he conceded that he would ‘sometimes express the party point-of-view more vigorously and with more precision’ than the Party leader, and it was not his fault if ‘sometimes the party adopt the views which I have expressed’.²² Sandys’ own archive is otherwise lacking in clues as to extent of his ambitions, but Julian Amery’s papers offer a further glimpse. In 1965 Amery broached the question of the Party leadership in a private conversation. Like Amery, Sandys thought that ‘it would be a great mistake to throw over Home’ as he had ‘no use for Maudling or Macleod and regards Heath as intelligent enough but too cold’. Amery then suggested that if only Sandys ‘would take the trouble to make himself popular he could become the leader in three or four years from now’, to which Sandys replied enigmatically that he was ‘not interested in people, I am only interested in power and that is not enough’. That Sandys went on to talk of ‘leaving politics altogether’ hints of a man becoming reconciled to frustrated ambition.²³ Sandys’ very public efforts to undermine Heath’s authority were symptomatic of a Conservative Party struggling to retain unity in the face not only of perceived national economic decline but also the sense of humiliation that accompanied the end-game of decolonisation, contributing to a groundswell of frustration on the Conservative Right that would first espouse Powellism, and in due course Thatcherism.

Sandys’ ministerial career lasted continuously from 1951 until 1964, and reached its apogee during his tenure at the Commonwealth Relations (1960–1964) and Colonial (1962–1964) Offices, a period that will be considered separately in the second half of this chapter. However his two years at Defence have attracted the most scholarly interest. Between January 1957 and October 1959 he was responsible for implementing a radical strategic shift from reliance on conventional

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Record of a conversation between Julian Amery and Sandys [Jan 1965], Papers of Julian Amery (AMEJ 1/7/7, file 1, CAC).

forces to nuclear weaponry, with a brief to achieve extensive cuts. The Defence White Paper of 1957, which lay at the heart of Sandys' reforms, billed itself as 'the biggest change in military policy ever made in normal times', and indeed most historians concur with Macmillan's biographer, Alistair Horne, that it was 'the most drastic of any White Paper on Defence since the end of the war' casting a long shadow on subsequent Cold War policy-making.²⁴ In Macmillan's view Sandys had been the ideal man for the job as he 'showed throughout all his notable characteristics: thoroughness, tenacity and immense application' and his White Paper 'undoubtedly raised the somewhat battered reputation of the government' in the post-Suez climate.²⁵ Put less charitably, as a 'relentless brute' Sandys was ideally suited to challenging the entrenched power of the Chiefs of Staff, with whom relations were 'unrelievedly bad', Peter Hennessey judging that 'there was blood on every page'.²⁶ Along with the establishment of an independent nuclear deterrent, the essence of the Paper was a dramatic cut in defence spending from ten to seven percent of GDP, the phased ending of conscription by 1960, and extensive personnel cuts from 690,000 to 375,000 by the end of 1962.²⁷ Matthew Grant's recent research has further highlighted that the home defence budget was 'slashed to the bone—on the pessimistic, or realistic, assumption that there could be no effective protection for the civil population against the dreadful power of the H-Bomb'.²⁸ This last, and bleakest, aspect of the Paper was directly responsible for provoking the establishment of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament shortly afterwards.²⁹

Many of the Paper's proposals were successfully implemented. However, Britain's nuclear capability remained limited and never truly independent of Washington. Sandys' own promotion of the Blue Streak

²⁴Horne *Macmillan 1957–1986*, p. 45; see also S. Ball 'Harold Macmillan and the Politics of Defence' *Twentieth Century British History* (6,1) 1995, pp. 78–100.

²⁵Macmillan *Riding the Storm*, pp. 265–266.

²⁶Lord Carver, quoted in A. Deighton 'British Foreign Policy-Making: The Macmillan Years' in W. Kaiser & G. Staerk (eds.) *British Foreign Policy 1955–1964: Contracting Opinions* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 4; Hennessey *Having it so Good*, pp. 464–465.

²⁷D. Reynolds *Britannia Overruled* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 198–200; Horne *Macmillan 1957–1986*, p. 49.

²⁸M. Grant 'Home defence and the Sandys Defence White Paper' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, 6 (2008), pp. 925–949.

²⁹Hennessey *Having it so Good*, p. 466.

missile project cost £60 million and ended in ignominy as it was out-dated by 1960 before it had even been completed, affording Harold Wilson a moment of comic eloquence:

We all know why Blue Streak was kept on although it was an obvious failure. It was to save the Minister's face. We are, in fact, looking at the most expensive face in history. Helen of Troy's face, it is true, may only have launched a thousand ships, but at least they were operational.³⁰

Although Sandys left Defence in 1959 Macmillan continued to draw on his experience, for instance, in negotiating arms deals with India in June and November 1962, and as part of the British team at the Nassau Polaris talks with Kennedy in December of the same year.³¹

Whilst Sandys' most weighty ministerial contributions were to colonial, Commonwealth and defence policy, he also played a significant role in other areas. Appointed Financial Secretary to the War Office in 1941 by his father-in-law, he went on to become Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply in 1943 where he did much to improve Britain's response to the V-weapon threat (commemorated on screen by the 1965 thriller *Operation Crossbow*). These were perhaps surprising appointments in view of the brief notoriety that Sandys had gained in 1938 when he had had to claim parliamentary privilege to escape court martial for publicising confidential information documenting the poor state of Britain's air defences.³² The following year he was moved to the Ministry of Works to revitalise the programme of house reconstruction. Sandys lost his seat in the General Election of 1945, after which Churchill proposed that he take charge of the Conservative Research Department. In the event Rab Butler proved a more popular choice and Sandys retreated to Hampshire for a spell on the family farm.³³ Returned for Streatham in 1950, he was appointed Minister of Supply from 1951 until 1954, tasked with reversing the recent nationalisation of iron and steel and initiating Britain's civil

³⁰Sandbrook *Never Had It So Good*, p. 243.

³¹H. Macmillan *At the End of the Day, 1961–1963* (London, 1973), pp. 227, 231, 355.

³²P. Harris 'The "Sandys Storm": the politics of British air defence in 1938' *Historical Research* 62 (1989), pp. 318–336; Ludlow 'Duncan Sandys': Sandys was a member of the Territorial Army at the time but was exonerated from the charge by the parliamentary select committee on privileges.

³³*Ibid.*; interview with Celia Sandys.

nuclear power programme. He went on to promote high-rise housing and a reform of the rental system at Housing and Local Government between 1954 and 1957, assisted by Powell.³⁴ Sandys set up the Civic Trust in 1957 with the aim of encouraging urban building to improve quality of life, and sustained an active involvement with the organisation for rest of his career. Indeed officials at the CRO were surprised to find that Sandys would regularly have Civic Trust meetings in his office during working hours.³⁵ On leaving Defence in 1959, Sandys spent a brief further period as Minister of Supply, during which time he created the new Ministry of Aviation.

Aside from his ministerial work, Sandys, as mentioned, had a number of personal political projects. To a degree he showed an interest in domestic policy, advocating the reintroduction of capital punishment in the late 1960s and greater rigour in town planning, drawing on his involvement with the Civic Trust.³⁶ However, it was the question of Britain's global role that afforded him an enduring passion, both in and out of office. The most sustained of these interests was the promotion of European integration, reflecting strong personal links with the Continent.³⁷ As a child he had grown up with an adopted Belgian refugee for a brother, welcomed into the family home in 1914.³⁸ Sandys went on to become a skilled linguist, working in Berlin in the early 1930s. He also travelled widely in Europe, including an extraordinary unofficial trip to USSR in 1931 during which he successfully impersonated a Soviet school inspector to gain access to a sanatorium near Leningrad.³⁹ Deprived of his constituency at the end of the war

³⁴Hennessy *Having it so Good*, p. 225; L. Butler 'The central African federation and Britain's post-war nuclear power programme: reconsidering the connections' in R. Holland & S. Stockwell (eds.) *Ambiguities of Empire: Essays in Honour of Andrew Porter* (London, 2009), p. 172; R. Shepherd *Enoch Powell* (London, 1996), pp. 139, 147; Hennessy *Having it so Good*, p. 493.

³⁵Interview with Denis Doble; interview with Stanley Martin.

³⁶See DNSD 12/1-15 and 10/1-12.

³⁷A. Seldon & S. Ball *Conservative Century: the Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, 1994), p. 341.

³⁸Interview with Marie-Claire Sandys.

³⁹Christopher Fleetwood Fuller, entry in diary 27/7/31 (1196/52 'Journal of Visit to USSR', Papers of the Fuller Family of Jaggards, Corsham, 1196/52 'Journal of Visit to USSR', Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre). His companion on the USSR trip, Fuller was a keen aviator and close friend of Sandys. On another occasion the pair successfully flew a light aircraft under Tower Bridge (interview with Celia Sandys).

and finding insufficient diversion in farming, Sandys became a driving force behind Churchill's campaign for European unity and was General Secretary of the United Europe Committee, established in 1947, in which capacity he attended the Gstaad and Montreux conferences. Working with Joseph Retinger he organised a 'Congress of Europe' at The Hague in 1948 and became Chairman of the International Executive of the European Movement, which was part-funded by the CIA.⁴⁰ In 1950 he was a vocal supporter of Churchill's proposal for a European Army although, surprisingly, Sandys appears to have had reservations about the Monnet Plan four years later, telling Monnet that British steel would be disadvantaged.⁴¹ A decade later Sandys assisted Macmillan in preparing Britain's first application to join the EEC and, having left office, even talked of giving up domestic politics to focus on promoting the Common Market.⁴²

If pragmatism characterised his time in office, there can be no doubt that Sandys was nonetheless by sentiment an ardent imperialist. As Gary Love's research has documented, Sandys first entered politics not as a Conservative candidate but as the leader of a radical new political organisation—his own short-lived British Movement—which he founded in 1934. Although historians have debated the extent to which the Movement's association with the British Union of Fascists was intended or accidental, Sandys' programme combined corporatist economic policies and concerns about the weakness of parliamentary democracy with a firm commitment to the Empire.⁴³ Indeed his later interest in the European project was symptomatic of a broader Conservative internationalist desire to promote Britain's world role as a more or less formal imperial power. It was with good reason that Macmillan appointed Sandys to the Commonwealth Relations Office in 1960 with the unenviable brief of persuading Commonwealth members

⁴⁰Ludlow 'Duncan Sandys'; R. Aldrich *The Hidden Hand. Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London, 2001), pp. 342–370.

⁴¹P. Stirk & D. Willis (eds.) *Shaping Post War Europe: European Unity and Disunity 1945–1957* (London, 1991), p. 122.

⁴²H. Macmillan *Pointing the Way: 1959–1961* (London, 1972), p. 317; C. King *The Cecil King Diary, 1965–1970* (London, 1972), p. 212.

⁴³G. Love 'The British Movement, Duncan Sandys and the Politics of Constitutionalism in 1930s' *Contemporary British History* 23, 4 (2009), pp. 543–558.

that British membership of the EEC would be in their interests.⁴⁴ Like Churchill, whose bust surveyed his desk, Sandys' commitment to the European project was born not only of Cold War fears but also an imperialist agenda: speaking at the Conservative Party Conference in 1949, he argued that European integration was not only 'the surest means of turning the tide against Communism and tyranny' but also 'consistent with the full maintenance of the unity of the British Empire'.⁴⁵ In contrast to Powell, embittered by the loss of India, Sandys never abandoned his belief in the importance of a global role for Britain and he consistently advocated an ongoing imperial presence in the face of Wilson's decision to withdraw from 'East of Suez' in 1968.

Sandys' attitude to empire was characterised by both affection and pragmatism. An enthusiastic empire loyalist in 1930s, he was largely preoccupied with the European movement in the later 1940s and was seemingly happy to preside over the dissolution of much of the colonial empire. At the time of the Suez Crisis, an acid test for many politicians, Sandys pushed for military action.⁴⁶ Although he never joined the likes of Julian Amery in the Suez Group, he commented shortly afterwards that 'the Suez crisis has altered nothing'. Judging it to have 'sadly impaired Britain's prestige' in the short term, he refused to accept that the country had suddenly become a 'second class power' and he expected a 'swift revolution of world opinion in our favour'.⁴⁷

In the same spirit of Conservative 'great power' internationalism that had led him to the European Movement, Sandys extended his horizons in 1965 when he was invited to become the founding chairman of the non-partisan World Security Trust by George Thomson, Minister of State at the FO at the time.⁴⁸ Sandys had first proposed the creation of an international body with inspection and enforcement powers to promote both nuclear and conventional disarmament when still at the

⁴⁴J. Miller *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition 1953-1969* (Oxford, 1974), p. 314.

⁴⁵Interview with Brian Gilmour; Verbatim Conference Report 1949, quoted in N. Ashford 'The Conservative Party and European Integration' (unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Warwick), p. 51.

⁴⁶D. Thorpe *Alec Douglas-Home* (London, 1996), p. 180.

⁴⁷'Suez Operation Reports 1956-1957', undated paper (probably 1957) (DSND 6/29), quoted in Brendon *Decline and Fall*, p. 498.

⁴⁸Letter from George Thomson to Sandys, 15/11/64 (DSND 11/2/16).

Ministry of Defence in 1958, with the aim of revitalising the United Nations more generally, the authority of which had been, in his opinion, dealt a body blow by repeated Russian abuse of veto powers.⁴⁹ Sandys came back to the project during his time at the CRO, suggesting that ‘no group of nations is more naturally fitted to discharge’ the task of disarmament than the Commonwealth, but with no concrete success.⁵⁰ He then returned to the idea of a global authority when he left office in 1964. Shortly after, Amery recorded that Sandys was considering retiring from Westminster and ‘dedicating himself to some new cause’, noting that ‘some kind of World Government seems to be his favourite theme just now’.⁵¹ Indulging the love of international travel that had so characterised his time at the CO and CRO, Sandys took two world tours in 1965 and in 1968 to canvas support for the project, and successfully garnered a degree of interest from non-aligned countries such as Sweden, Ethiopia and Kenya. However, the plan appears to have been dropped after 1968, when Sandys failed to win official backing from the FO, which judged the proposed institution to be a challenge to the authority of the United Nations.⁵²

Sandys set much faith in unelected international elite bodies and had a healthy appetite for direct action in both colonies and Commonwealth states. It is hardly surprising therefore that he harboured fundamental reservations about the efficacy of parliamentary democracy. Sandys’ youthful political interest appears to have been awakened not by events in Westminster, but in Berlin, where as a graduate recruit to the FO he experienced Adolf Hitler’s rise to power in the years 1932–1933. Sandys was far from being a detached observer. Thanks to personal friendships with the Crown Prince Hohenzollern and the Vice-Chancellor, Franz von Papen, he was closely associated with the ultra-conservative monarchist cause. Indeed, shortly after achieving the Chancellorship, Hitler sought to make initial contact with the British Embassy in Berlin by

⁴⁹ *HC Deb* 10 June 1958, vol. 589, col. 76–78.

⁵⁰ Sandys *The Modern Commonwealth*, p. 24 (DSND 8/22/6); ‘Total world-wide disarmament aim’ *The Guardian* 18/3/61.

⁵¹ Record of conversation between Amery and Sandys [Jan 1965] (AMEJ 1/7/7, file 1).

⁵² (5) ‘World Peacekeeping Authority’ memorandum (FCO 10/73).

requesting a meeting not with the ambassador, but with Sandys; an audience that was prevented only by protocol.⁵³

On his return from Germany, Sandys became involved with the British far-Right, exploring fascist and other corporatist alternatives to parliamentary democracy in the mid-1930s. Alongside instituting the British Movement, as mentioned earlier, Sandys spent a number of months working at the highly conservative India Defence League. Joining another future Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, Sandys became a member of the January Club in 1934, described by Martin Pugh as 'a front organisation for the B. U. F.', and by 1936 he had joined the Anglo-German Fellowship (AGF) whose members expressed genteel support for Hitler's ideas at country house dinner tables.⁵⁴ As Robert Waddington's research has suggested, the activities of the AGF demonstrated that members of the British Establishment were willing to act as 'mouthpieces for Nazi propaganda'. Sandys, for one, urged parliament in 1935 that Germany should be allowed a predominant place in central Europe to avoid tensions with imperial Britain and the following year he visited Mussolini.⁵⁵ Ironically, once Churchill had consented to his marriage with Diana in 1935 Sandys quickly became known as a prominent anti-appeaser. However seriously Sandys did toy with fascism, it is certain his later interest in constitutional innovation as a solution to colonial social instability and his right-wing activism in the later 1960s had a lengthy pedigree and unconventional roots.

THE MINISTER OF DECOLONISATION: INTERVENTIONISM AND MULTI-RACIALISM, 1960–1964

Sandys' surprise appointment to the Chair of Lonrho in 1972 was met with more than a few raised eyebrows in the City, the *Financial Times* finding it curious that a company so sensitive about its imperialist past should choose 'perhaps the last of the paternalist-imperialist

⁵³Postcard from Franz Von Papen to Sandys, 17/12/32; postcard from Crown Prince to Sandys, 17/3/33; '1933' note by Sandys (DSND 1/4).

⁵⁴M. Pugh *Hurrah for the Blackshirts* (London, 2005), pp. 189, 146, 269.

⁵⁵G. Waddington "An idyllic and unruffled atmosphere of complete Anglo-German misunderstanding": Aspects of the Operations of the Dienststelle Ribbentrop in Great Britain, 1934–1938' *History* 82, 265 (1997), p. 67; *HC Deb* 2 November 1935, vol. 306, cols. 595–598.

Secretaries'.⁵⁶ Although dubbed 'the minister of "decolonization"' by Joe Garner, the newspaper's characterisation of his time in office was fair.⁵⁷ Indeed Sandys' substantial contribution to the management of decolonisation presents something of a paradox thanks to his interventionist, and pro-settler tendencies, and he frequently attracted accusations of 'neo-colonialism' in Commonwealth media.⁵⁸ His unremitting programme of constitutional conferences and colonial visits was dominated by the complex question of how best to achieve speedy independence without forfeiting stability and the promise of friendly post-independence relations with Britain, a major concern not only for British business but also for Cold War planners. It was this experience of colonial and Commonwealth policy-making that would so profoundly inform his private campaigns in the late-1960s.

Macmillan had appointed Sandys Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations in 1960 and in 1962 his brief was extended to cover the work of the Colonial Office. The Prime Minister believed him to be an obvious choice for a number of reasons. The rapid decolonisation programme that had been heralded by his 'Wind of Change' speech was a natural progression from Sandys' defence work, which had reduced the need for tropical airbases and cut Britain's army strength in the colonies by nearly two-thirds leaving the country increasingly unable to deal with colonial 'emergencies'.⁵⁹ Macmillan hoped that Sandys' long-established commitment to European integration would be beneficial in paving the way towards Britain's membership of the EEC, which remained highly suspicious of residual imperialist tendencies.⁶⁰ Above all Macmillan believed that his '*cassant*' manner was well-suited to dealing with intransigent colonial nationalists, not least white settlers, and that his conservative tendencies would 'act as a brake to Macleod's accelerator in Africa'.⁶¹ Observing the differences between the two, Macmillan

⁵⁶ *Financial Times* 8/4/72.

⁵⁷ Garner *The Commonwealth Office*, p. 359.

⁵⁸ See Summaries of World Broadcasts, Second Series, IV, 1960–1964 (BBC Written Archives Centre, WAC).

⁵⁹ J. Kent *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War 1944–1949* (Leicester, 1993), p. x; Hyam *Britain's Declining Empire*, p. 253.

⁶⁰ Macmillan *Pointing the Way*, p. 317.

⁶¹ J. Ramsden *The Winds of Change: Macmillan to Heath 1957–1975* (London, 1996), p. 147.

noted that 'Sandys is a great contrast to Macleod. As cool as a cucumber; methodical; very strong in character; has gradually mastered the act of parliamentary speaking; tremendously hard-working; not easily shaken from his course', a contrast also reflected in ideological terms: 'Macleod was moved throughout by a high idealism and a deep sympathy with African aspirations' while 'Sandys, no less conscious of the march of events, sought with unflinching diligence some means to secure progress without disaster'.⁶²

In practice, this combination proved so unworkable that Macmillan had to replace Macleod with Reginald Maudling after barely a year, a pairing that soon became equally unworkable, Maudling proving 'plus noir que les nègres' to Macmillan's disappointment.⁶³ Sandys' inability to collaborate effectively with his more progressive counterparts at the Colonial Office eventually led Macmillan to add the Colonies to Sandys' Commonwealth brief in 1962, lending a more reactionary flavour to the decolonisation of the following two years, not seen since Lennox-Boyd's tenure. With Alec Douglas-Home becoming Prime Minister in October 1963 aided by Sandys' support—the influential position of the Commonwealth Secretary (as he sometimes styled himself) in the Cabinet was unassailable. Indeed it seemed to his officials judging that he 'tried to bully' the Prime Minister with a 'certain amount of success'.⁶⁴

During his time at the Colonial Office from 1962 to 1964 Sandys oversaw the independence of ten colonial dependencies at a speed that was almost inconceivable prior to Macmillan and Macleod's advancement of African decolonisation from 1959. 'Never before or since' recalled Garner 'would the pace be so accelerated', his tenure proving as much a 'challenge' as an 'ordeal' for the department, and leaving his Labour successors unable to make the 'lasting impact which Sandys' dominance had achieved'.⁶⁵ During his partially coterminous tenure at the Commonwealth Relations Office from 1960 to 1964 he also coordinated the preparation of numerous colonies for independence and

⁶²Macmillan *At the End of the Day*, pp. 313–314.

⁶³Catterall (ed.) *The Macmillan Diaries II*, p. 442.

⁶⁴Horne *Macmillan 1957–1986*, p. 561; Catterall (ed.) *The Macmillan Diaries II*, p. 608; 'Interview with Denis Doble' (BDOHP 84).

⁶⁵Garner *The Commonwealth Office*, pp. 359–360.

did much to set the tone for Britain's post-colonial relationship with the Commonwealth at the time of its most rapid expansion. Indeed along with Alec Douglas-Home he has rightly been credited with being the only minister to have come close to officially announcing the end of empire.⁶⁶ In typically blunt fashion, Sandys declared in 1962 that 'Britain has no desire to hold on to her remaining Colonies a day longer than is necessary'; 'they involve us in much unwelcome controversy with the outside world; and economically we draw no profit from our sovereignty'.⁶⁷

Policy-making relied heavily on civil servants at both the CO and CRO, not least due to the huge volume of work during this period. From the time that he acquired both briefs in 1962 Sandys had an unusually large private office, consisting of two Private Secretaries and two Assistant Private Secretaries, one each from the CO and CRO. The atmosphere was rendered more unusual by the fierce loyalty of his personal secretary Frieda Smith. Believed by officials to have been Sandys' girlfriend between his separation from Diana and his remarriage in 1962, Marie-Claire described her as a 'Rottweiler'.⁶⁸ The office gossip was that Sandys was just 'being nice' and 'keeping her on' to make up for ending the relationship. Since it was believed that she would 'report' any critical comments to Sandys, it is unsurprising that one Assistant Private Secretary recalled 'all five of us sat in a rather uneasy relationship' in his cramped office.⁶⁹ Sandys appeared to struggle with the increased workload of his double brief, often ignoring Commonwealth issues when preparing colonies for independence. Indeed one official judged that 'a lot of the goodwill he might have earned went rather by the board' since he kept such late hours, was 'so elephantine in his dealings' and in general came across as a 'rather strange beast'.⁷⁰

Oblivious to the strained atmosphere, Sandys was an unusually hands-on minister. As Anthony Sampson put it at the time, he belonged to the group of ministers who 'run their departments' by contrast to those who

⁶⁶ Hyam *Britain's Declining Empire*, p. 262.

⁶⁷ D. Sandys *The Modern Commonwealth* (London, 1962).

⁶⁸ 'Interview with Denis Doble' (BDOHP 84); interview with Marie-Claire Sandys.

⁶⁹ 'Interview with Denis Doble' (BDOHP 84).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

were 'run by them'.⁷¹ Sandys was an infamous meddler and frequently involved himself in the minutiae of policy-making to the intense irritation of his civil servants.⁷² By an equally-energating exception (which proved the rule), Sandys would also refuse to deal with certain colonies on occasion, notably Fiji, claiming that he was 'tired' of dealing with the legacy of indentured labour in the Indian Ocean.⁷³ Sandys also believed that nothing softened intransigent colonial leaders quite like attritional, all-night negotiations, to the frustration of his exhausted staff who rightly feared that agreements hammered out in this way would rarely last.⁷⁴ Nonetheless Sandys' officials took solace in the knowledge that their minister could be as 'domineering' in Cabinet as he was in his own departments, and it was believed that he was 'able to bully Rab' in meetings, leaving civil servants at the FO 'hopping mad'.⁷⁵

Chief among Sandys' achievements should be listed his role in the dissolution of the Central African Federation. Sandys sought to dismantle the CAF as early February 1962, explaining to its premier Roy Welensky that 'Britain was no longer prepared to govern anyone indefinitely *by force* nor did he believe that the Federal Government had the will or power to do [so] either'.⁷⁶ Side-lining Welensky, Sandys himself met with Hastings Banda in 1962 and acceded to his demand that Nyasaland should be freed from the Federation and colonial rule, setting a course that the Cabinet Secretary for one realised would 'mean, almost inevitably, the end of the Federation'.⁷⁷ With Kenneth Kaunda following Banda's lead in Northern Rhodesia, the dissolution of the Federation came at the end of the following year. During this period Sandys also

⁷¹Sampson *Anatomy of Britain*, p. 235. Also included in the first group were Iain Macleod, Peter Thorneycroft, Selwyn Lloyd and Enoch Powell.

⁷²Interviews with officials: Stanley Martin, Denis Doble, Brian Gilmour, Derek Milton, Brian Unwin (Private Secretary to Minister of State, CRO, 1961–1964), Lambeth, 24/6/13.

⁷³Interview with Brian Gilmour.

⁷⁴Interview with Derek Milton.

⁷⁵'Interview with Denis Doble' (BDOHP 84); interview with Derek Milton.

⁷⁶C. Alport *The Sudden Assignment* (London, 1965), p. 167–168; Welensky *Welensky's 4000 Days*, p. 319.

⁷⁷(322) Memorandum from Sir N. Brook to Macmillan, 13/2/62 (PREM 11/3943, TNA) in Murphy (ed.) *Central Africa*, p. 305; Brendon *Decline and Fall* chap. 20; Hyam *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 282–288.

spent much time preparing Kenya for independence in December 1963, seeking to overcome the bitter legacy of Mau Mau, and to broker a balance between the conflicting demands of white and Asian settlers and African leaders, with whom he spent much time at conferences and during visits to the country. Reflecting on one such trip the Governor, Malcolm MacDonald, confided to a friend that Sandys had ‘won the respect and trust’ of African leaders ‘in a remarkable way’, constituting a ‘true piece of statesmanship’.⁷⁸ Many colonial governors and High Commissioners commented on Sandys’ talent for developing a strong and useful rapport with local nationalists; in a typical letter MacDonald sent Sandys his ‘heartiest congratulations’ on the ‘friendly and trustful personal relations’ that he had built with nationalist politicians in Kenya thanks to his ‘customary energy and decision’, which ‘makes all the difference to us here’.⁷⁹ As Chap. 6 will demonstrate, such relationships proved both lasting and useful in the years after Sandys left office.

While one Federation was being dissolved, Sandys was intimately involved with the creation of another in the Far East. Inaugurated in 1963, the construction of the Malaysian Federation saw prolonged wrangling with Tunku Abdul Rahman of Malaya and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore to ensure the inclusion and granting of independence to Singapore (which then left in 1965), Sarawak and North Borneo.⁸⁰ In Garner’s opinion, it was Sandys’ readiness to dash half-way across the globe at a moment’s notice that had saved the resolve of the wavering Tunku.⁸¹ In a rare tribute to Sandys’ notorious faith in gruelling nocturnal negotiations, one senior civil servant remembered that ‘at some of those constructive midnight sessions I used sometimes to think of Henry V’s words—“Gentlemen in England now a-bed shall think themselves accurs’d they were not here!”’.⁸²

⁷⁸Letter from M. MacDonald to Mrs. Presland, Battersea, 12/4/63 (Malcolm MacDonald Papers, University of Durham, MM 46/4/121).

⁷⁹Letter from MacDonald to Sandys, 22/6/63 (MM 46/7/18).

⁸⁰U. Lehmkuhl ‘Difficult Challenges: The Far East’ in Kaiser & Staerk (eds.) *British Foreign Policy*, pp. 272–274; Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*, p. 296; Garner *The Commonwealth Office*, p. 359.

⁸¹Garner *The Commonwealth Office*, p. 405.

⁸²Letter from John Martin (Deputy Under-Sec. CO) to Sandys, 19/10/64 (DSND 8/22/7).

Sandys also had an unsentimental belief in the Commonwealth. Differing from those like Powell who insisted that the organisation was a 'chimera', his was a genuine enthusiasm rooted in a faith that the 'task of building a world-wide fellowship of free peoples and of forging links of understanding between them has inspired us with a new sense of mission'.⁸³ And although he felt that the 'British race will, to the end of time, remain profoundly proud of the glorious achievements of the old British Empire', Sandys was 'equally proud of having converted it peacefully and amicably into the new independent Commonwealth—a development without parallel in history'.⁸⁴ Although he was often frustrated by the 'extreme sensitivity' of Commonwealth states 'to any patronising word or deed which might appear to call in question our recognition of their sovereign status' he 'always enjoyed a set to' with the likes of Kwame Nkrumah and developed lasting friendships with a number of more conservative Commonwealth leaders such as Jomo Kenyatta.⁸⁵ Macmillan reflected that 'Sandys handles these people with extraordinary patience', on one evening bearing an East African snub at both dinner and ballet with equanimity.⁸⁶ In a typical gesture Sandys wrote to the Director of the Tate Gallery soon after arriving at the CRO about the collection of paintings in his office, requesting 'some pictures that are free of historical associations' to replace those 'which may not be altogether congenial to visitors, for example, from India and Pakistan'. Sandys suggested that 'a few landscapes by Canadian, Australian or New Zealand painters' might make for a more suitable subject than the vast tableau of the annexation of Oudh that dominated the office.⁸⁷

An effective manager of decolonisation he may have been, but Sandys' sympathies remained reactionary, favouring both colonial and neo-colonial intervention on a number of occasions and offering a sympathetic ear to the cause of white settlers. At least one of his private secretaries believed that he was 'unhappy' about decolonisation on principle and noted a 'Churchillian' presumption that the Empire was 'worth

⁸³Low *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 332.

⁸⁴Sandys: Draft speech to Conservative Commonwealth Council, 6/5/62 (DSND 8/22/3).

⁸⁵*Ibid.*; (12) Letter from J. Chadwick (Asst. Under-Sec., CRO) to H. Smedley (Head of Information Policy Dept., CRO), [April 1961] (DO 121/258, TNA).

⁸⁶Catterall (ed.) *The Macmillan Diaries II*, p. 539.

⁸⁷Letter from Sandys to Sir John Rothstein (Dir. Tate Gallery), 9/12/60 (DSND 8/8).

keeping for as long as possible'.⁸⁸ Hyam and Louis judge Sandys to have been 'less clever, more ponderous, and more to the right politically' than his immediate predecessors, Macleod and Maudling, if a 'tough and patient negotiator'.⁸⁹ Philip Murphy suggests that Sandys was 'instinctively sympathetic' to the white Rhodesians in his Central African policy; Jawarhalal Nehru was reminded of the kind of Englishman who used to put him in jail.⁹⁰ Sandys' working methods were reminiscent of the more adventurist heyday of the CO and officials found that there was something of the colonial 'big man' in his style.⁹¹ Garner believed him to be a 'man of immense courage, both moral and physical, of vigour, determination and extraordinary single-mindedness of purpose' who could be 'forceful and, where necessary, brutal'. This was particularly apparent in his penchant for impulsive missions to far-flung colonies, believing—with some reason—that he had a talent for salvaging deadlocked negotiations. Increasingly Sandys' time at the Commonwealth and Colonial Offices thus became something of a last gasp for the interventionism that had characterised the Malayan, Kenyan and Cypriot Emergencies of the 1950s, his belief in the power of direct intervention and, in particular, the efficacy of his own personal contributions later sustaining his back-bench campaigns.⁹²

Officials in his departments found that behind Sandys' pursuit of decolonisation lay the assumption that while it should be rapid, it should also be managed in such a way that British interests be best preserved.⁹³ To this end a number of interventionist tactics came to characterise his time in office. Most obvious was the use of military deployment, both in colonies and in former dependencies, while more deft political interventions ranged from the resumption of direct colonial rule to discreet attempts to influence local politicians. Unsurprisingly, this willingness to flex late-imperial muscle reflected an ambivalence towards the value of democratic forms and, in 'multi-racial' dependencies, a willingness

⁸⁸Interview with Denis Doble.

⁸⁹Hyam & Louis (eds.) *The Conservative Government*, p. xxix.

⁹⁰Murphy (ed.) *Central Africa*, p. ci; Hyam *Britain's Declining Empire*, p. 246.

⁹¹Interview with Denis Doble.

⁹²Garner *The Commonwealth Office*, pp. 357–359.

⁹³Interview with Brian Gilmour.

to give preferential treatment to white settlers and other conservatively inclined racial groups.

Although Macmillan was committed to reducing defence expenditure, a significant colonial or Commonwealth military presence was maintained during Sandys' tenure by way of existing defence treaties with Cyprus, Aden, Singapore, Malaya, Libya (until 1964) and Kuwait (from 1961). These were complimented by agreements negotiated by Sandys himself with Malta (from 1964) and with Kenya, resulting in a temporary defence arrangement that lasted for a year after independence in 1963. What characterised Sandys' time in office was the use of direct force not only in British colonies but also in newly independent Commonwealth members, operations seeing a marked increase in frequency and scale between 1962 and 1964.⁹⁴ Sandys' readiness to deploy troops to Malaysia (Borneo) in 1964 in the so-called 'confrontation' with Indonesia, and to East Africa to stabilise the Kenyan, Tanganyikan and Ugandan governments in the face of army mutiny has been well-documented.⁹⁵ If Sandys refused to sanction the deployment of troops to nearby Zanzibar during the socialist revolution that deposed the conservative Arab leaders (to whom control had been passed at independence), it was not for any lack of resolve on his part but the failure of a 'spontaneous or engineered invitation' from East African leaders.⁹⁶ One official recalled that Sandys was 'still trying to run matters' in the months after Zanzibar's independence, and 'spent some time trying to get a request [for British troops] out of Zanzibar ... and for the British to go in and sort out [the radical socialist leader John] Okello'.⁹⁷

⁹⁴S. Dockrill *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 36.

⁹⁵R. Jackson *The Malayan Emergency: The Commonwealth's Wars 1948–1966* (London, 1991), pp. 119–122; T. Mockaitis *British Counter-Insurgency in the Post-Imperial Era* (Manchester, 1995), pp. 14–43; T. Parsons *The 1964 army mutinies and the making of modern East Africa* (Athens, 2004); D. Percox *Britain, Kenya and the Cold War: Imperial Defence, Colonial Security and Decolonisation* (London, 2004), pp. 168–169.

⁹⁶Record of Meeting CRO and M.o.D., 29/1/64 (DSND 8/21); D. Petterson *Revolution in Zanzibar* (Boulder, 2002), pp. 128–129; see also I. Speller 'An African Cuba? Britain and the Zanzibar Revolution, 1964' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35, 2 (2007), pp. 1–35.

⁹⁷'Interview with Denis Doble' (BDOHP 84).

These two major operations in former colonies gave unusual force to the accusations of ‘neo-colonialism’ that Britain faced regularly during this period in the Commonwealth and at the United Nations, and was reflected in vitriolic media coverage in Egypt, USSR, China and a number of Commonwealth states. Ghanaian radio, always sensitive to the perceived machinations of colonial powers, broadcast that the people of Malaysia and Indonesia would live in peace were it not for ‘neo-colonialist intervention’. Elsewhere, ‘what should have been the forgotten spectacle of British colonialist troops gunning down Africans in Africa became the unavoidable security measure for the restoration of military discipline in independent Tanganyika’. The East African mutinies thus begged the question: ‘wherein lies our sovereignty if we need British troops to keep order in our country?’⁹⁸ To Somali commentators, it was the British who were ‘primarily responsible’ for the mutinies as it was their policy to ‘divide the people and incite them against each other, and then reap the spoils for their own benefit’.⁹⁹

In a more conventionally colonial vein, Sandys’ decision to send a Middle East Command battalion to colonial Swaziland to quash a nascent general strike in 1963 also courted controversy. Entrenching the power of King Sobhuza II and placating South African qualms about the rise of radical nationalism in the territory, the ongoing presence of British troops for the next four years stunted its political progress and culminated in an independence constitution that gifted the monarch near-autocratic power.¹⁰⁰ However, the most sustained and brutal colonial deployment for which Sandys can claim credit was on the Arabian Peninsula. He had first become familiar with the South Arabian Federation as Defence Secretary when negotiating the terms of a new Treaty of Friendship and Protection with the Federal rulers in 1959. Shortly after becoming Colonial Secretary in 1962, Sandys was faced with a revolution in Yemen. Successfully persuading Macmillan to refuse recognition of the new regime in Sana’a in the face of opposition from the FO and from Washington, Sandys then found it necessary to deploy

⁹⁸SWB, Accra, Second Series, IV, ME/1465, 29/1/64 165817; SWB, Accra, Second Series, IV, ME/1467, 31/1/64 (WAC).

⁹⁹SWB, Mogadishu, Second Series, IV, ME/1466 30/1/64 (WAC).

¹⁰⁰Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*, p. 381; A. Booth *Swaziland: Tradition and Change in a Southern African Kingdom* (Gower, 1983), p. 32.

extensive military force to save the Federali rulers of the Protectorate from Yemeni-backed insurgents. As the following chapter will outline, Sandys' relationship with the Federalis would continue long after independence.

A well-documented episode, the South Arabian campaign was at its most intense in the state of Radfan, which Sandys visited in 1964.¹⁰¹ Recalling that the minister was 'in his element' with such 'boys own, gung ho' military adventurism, his secretary described the deployment of tanks, helicopters and ground-attack aircraft and the so-called policy of 'proscription' (crop-burning) as 'a pretty nasty policy, a real throw-back to colonial times', which moreover 'didn't work'.¹⁰² Drawing on characteristically stentorian rhetoric, it was Sandys argued who that 'the British lion is a very tolerant and long-suffering old beast' since 'when other animals bite his tail, he asks them politely to stop'; but 'if they still go on, they must not be surprised if, in the end, he snaps back'.¹⁰³ More controversially Sandys was also responsible, along with his Under-Secretary Nigel Fisher and Julian Amery at the Ministry of Aviation, for encouraging an unofficial mercenary campaign to support the Royalist cause in Yemen, co-ordinated by the maverick Conservative Neil 'Billy' Maclean.¹⁰⁴

In the civilian realm the most infamous example of Sandys' influence on the course of decolonisation was the case of British Guiana. By 1960 Britain was preparing to grant independence to a socialist government led by Cheddi Jagan. However, with the rise of Fidel Castro's influence, increasing Soviet influence in the Caribbean and the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Kennedy administration judged Jagan

¹⁰¹The best account of the Radfan campaign is provided by J. Walker *Aden Insurgency: The Savage War in South Arabia 1962–1967* (Staplehurst, 2005), chap. 5; see also S. Mawby *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates 1955–1967: Last Outpost of a Middle-East Empire* (Abingdon, 2005), pp. 102–104.

¹⁰²Interview with Denis Doble; Doble, quoted in Brendon *Decline and Fall*, p. 504; see also S. Dorril *MI6: 50 years of special operations* (London, 2000) chap. 31; D. Hart-Davis *The War that Never Was* (London, 2011).

¹⁰³Sandys, draft speech to Cutlers' Feast, Sheffield, 8/4/64 (DSND 8/22/5).

¹⁰⁴Letters from Nigel Fisher to Neil 'Billy' Maclean MP, 1963, (Box 20, Neil Maclean Papers, Imperial War Museum, MAC); Hart-Davis *The War that Never Was*, pp. 7–8, 172–173; Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, pp. 110–111; C. Jones *Britain and the Yemen Civil War 1962–1965: Ministers, Mandarins and Mercenaries* (Portland, 2004), pp. 118–119.

too dangerous to tolerate. Sandys himself was no less critical, officials recalling that he viewed the colony as a ‘cesspit’, and deemed the Jaganites ‘poisonous’.¹⁰⁵ While the Secretary of State Dean Rusk and the CIA orchestrated a series of riots, strikes and arson attacks, Sandys redrew the constitution, duly producing Kennedy’s desired ‘good result’ in 1964 in the form of a repressive anti-socialist government under Forbes Burnham. At the heart of this exercise lay the conscious exploitation of racial divisions in the country, Burnham’s People’s National Congress largely appealing to the descendants of African slaves, and Jagan’s People’s Progressive Party to those of indentured Indian labourers. With good cause Jagan complained that ‘the Colonial Secretary has used divisions and differences in British Guiana as excuses for altering the constitution and rigging the election...it is incomprehensible and unprincipled’.¹⁰⁶ At Birch Grove in 1963 Kennedy and Sandys discussed the geopolitical ramifications of independence at length, the President’s logic being that ‘if the UK were to get out of British Guiana now it would become a communist state’. This might precipitate a global conflict as it would ‘create irresistible pressures in the United States to strike militarily against Cuba’ following a probable Republican victory in the 1964 election. In return for Sandys’ intervention in British Guiana Kennedy offered to be more sympathetic to the slow pace of decolonisation in countries such as Southern Rhodesia.¹⁰⁷

The so-called ‘Sandys plan’ for British Guiana provides a telling illustration of the extent of the United States’ influence over British policy-making at the time, although Macmillan consoled himself that it had been ‘rather fun making the Americans repeat over and over again their passionate pleas to stick to “colonialism” and “imperialism” at all costs’.¹⁰⁸ But it is equally remarkable as evidence of a renewed willingness on the part of the Colonial Office—on Sandys’ initiative—to fall back on traditional forms of direct interference even when preparing a

¹⁰⁵Interview with Brian Gilmour.

¹⁰⁶C. Fraser ‘The “New Frontier” of Empire in the Caribbean: The Transfer of Power in British Guiana 1961–1964’ *The International History Review* 22, 3 (2000), p. 609; Brendon *Decline and Fall*, p. 608.

¹⁰⁷G. Rabe *US Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story* (Chapel Hill, 2005), p. 117–118.

¹⁰⁸Fraser ‘The “New Frontier” of Empire in the Caribbean’, p. 603; quoted in Rabe *US Intervention in British Guiana*, p. 118.

colony for independence. The readiness to resort to the traditional tactic of racial 'divide and rule' is also potent illustration of Sandys' belief that racial tension could pose a powerful threat to democracy. He would later apply this premise to British politics to argue against mass non-white immigration. Macmillan judged that it would be 'quite disastrous' if Sandys' plan to let British Guiana's decolonisation founder on racial violence were leaked; it was, therefore, not without irony that the policy was finally exposed in the spring of 1967 at exactly the time that Sandys' personal campaigns—both interventionist and racial in tone—were gathering momentum.¹⁰⁹

Sandys' attempts to influence the course of events in former colonies suggest that his view of the Commonwealth relationship also owed much to long-established colonial norms. His opinion of Commonwealth states was essentially paternalist: 'young nations are like young people' as they were 'idealistic, optimistic, enthusiastic, impatient, intolerant, and often over-critical'.¹¹⁰ It seemed to one of his Assistant Private Secretaries that he was 'not a great democrat' and that he was known to have an 'authoritarian streak'. He respected and worked best with 'strong men', judging that 'the right sort of dictator would be his cup of tea, like Nkrumah'.¹¹¹ To another official it was apparent that he believed African leaders to be 'rather feckless'.¹¹²

Sandys' management of Anglo-Ghanaian relations during his time in office illustrates well the degree to which he was willing to lean on the rulers of newly independent states. Becoming increasingly concerned about the length of a tour of the Eastern Bloc taken by the Ghanaian President in 1961, Sandys explained to Macmillan that if Nkrumah 'has not irrevocably sold himself to the Russians (and I do not believe he has) it is important to try and get him back on the rails before he returns to Ghana and makes a lot of statements which he might find it difficult to retract'.¹¹³ Sandys also appears to have found the Ghanaian High Commissioner in London particularly irksome. On at least one

¹⁰⁹Fraser 'The "New Frontier" of Empire in the Caribbean', p. 602.

¹¹⁰Sandys: Draft speech to Conservative Commonwealth Council, 6/5/62 (DSND 8/22/3).

¹¹¹Interview with Stanley Martin.

¹¹²Interview with Brian Gilmour.

¹¹³Memorandum from Sandys to Prime Minister, 1/9/61 (DSND 8/9).

occasion the two men had ‘something of a rough and tumble’ when the subject of Ghanaian press criticism of Britain arose, Sandys telling the High Commissioner that ‘we have as much “right” to interest ourselves in your democratic affairs as you have in our colonial problems’. His secretary’s record of the meeting suggests a considerable official antipathy towards the Ghanaian as well, complaining that ‘words fail me in describing the attitude, cocksureness and general performance’ and sneering at ‘what passed for a blush on the High Commissioner’s swarthy features’.¹¹⁴

Yet Sandys was willing to work with Nkrumah. On the eve of Ghana’s independence the Governor of the Gold Coast, Charles Arden-Clarke, had begrudgingly accepted that ‘we have only one dog in the kennel’, and Sandys felt the same in the early 1960s.¹¹⁵ Indeed, one of Sandys’ officials recalled that he ‘quite admired him’.¹¹⁶ In 1961 Sandys was personally responsible for the success of the Queen’s first visit to an African Commonwealth member, as documented by Philip Murphy’s recent monograph on the monarchy.¹¹⁷ Flying twice to Accra, and on one occasion returning in the empty bomb bay of an RAF bomber in order to get to a Cabinet meeting on time, Sandys trialled the Queen’s route himself, riding in an open-top car with Nkrumah at considerable risk to himself thanks to the *Osoagyefo*’s unpopularity. The British High Commissioner in Accra told Sandys later that ‘it was solely owing to your steady nerve that the Queen came at all’.¹¹⁸ Despite vehement criticism in the Cabinet and Parliament and a bomb scare in Ghana, Sandys’ efforts were motivated not only by concern for the Commonwealth relationship—Ghana being its African ‘showpiece’ at the time—but also the desire to lend legitimacy to Nkrumah’s increasingly autocratic and unpopular regime in the face of radical opposition.¹¹⁹

Indeed, Sandys was to show a distinct ambiguity towards the value of parliamentary democracy in the Commonwealth throughout his time

¹¹⁴(7) Letter from Chadwick to Snelling, 23/10/61 (DO 121/258).

¹¹⁵Quoted in W. R. Louis *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (London, 2006), p. 488.

¹¹⁶Interview with Brian Gilmour.

¹¹⁷P. Murphy *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, pp. 76–77.

¹¹⁸Letter from Snelling to Sandys, 22/11/61 (DSND 8/9).

¹¹⁹Interview with Brian Gilmour.

in office, reflecting his youthful interest in elite and corporatist political innovation. On occasion Sandys appeared to espouse the common official assumption that decolonisation should leave newly independent states with the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. In a pamphlet of 1962 that sought to promote the Commonwealth relationship Sandys proposed that

our common political institutions are a particularly powerful bond between us ... we in Britain are fortunate in being a politically united, relatively prosperous and racially homogeneous society. Our Westminster system of parliamentary democracy was evolved over the years to suit those conditions; and it is remarkable how well it has proved its worth in circumstances so different from our own.

But he also felt that it had limitations, suggesting that 'some variations may, however, be required in countries where an economic and social revolution is in progress or where there are deep racial, religious, or regional cleavages'.¹²⁰ As will be considered in Chap. 5, this assumption that racial tension was inimical to democracy underpinned both Sandys' and also Powell's opposition to mass immigration from the New Commonwealth to Britain. In private Sandys was less bashful about his reservations, telling the Ghanaian High Commissioner on one occasion that the 'British brand of democracy is not something that can be packaged and exported', and making it clear to his officials he felt Africans were best governed by 'benevolent dictatorship'.¹²¹

For this reason it is hard to escape the conclusion that Sandys approached the numerous colonial constitutional conferences, at which he was ostensibly aiming to do exactly that, with a degree of cynicism. As Sandys wrote in a draft speech to be given to the Conservative Commonwealth Council:

We launched them all at Independence with the British Parliamentary system. Some, like India and Nigeria, have maintained it and made it work, while others like Ghana and Pakistan have substituted more authoritarian systems of their own. Before being too critical we must not forget that ...

¹²⁰Sandys *The Modern Commonwealth* (DSND 8/22/6), p. 8.

¹²¹Letter from Sandys to Kwesi Armah (Ghanaian High Commissioner), 15/10/62 (DSND 8/12); interview with Derek Milton.

up to the very moment of Independence in most of these new countries, the British Colonial Government found it necessary to possess and to use powers of arbitrary detention in order to maintain law and order. I do not wish to condone arbitrary arrests or the suppression of political opposition. I hate all these things. All I am saying is that if we were obliged to use these powers, we should not be surprised if the young and much weaker Governments of these new states may sometimes find that they need them also.

As far as Sandys was concerned, the exportation of the Westminster model, with which he himself was so intimately involved at the time, was being pursued for no better reason than official '*faute de mieux* and at the instance of nationalist leaders'. But it was a constitutional form that was 'in most cases foreign to the traditions of native democracy where decisions are reached after a general palaver and when so reached are to be strictly adhered by all'. In the context of the 'emergency conditions' that often attended independence, it came as no surprise to Sandys that 'these countries forego the luxury of a two-party system in the interest of an effective executive in a period of ultra-rapid economic and social revolution'; and for this reason he felt that 'British criticism has sometimes been insufficiently informed, strident and governessy'.¹²²

Many colonial nationalists would, in fact, have preferred a more 'governessy' Colonial Secretary, or at least one who showed a greater interest in the value of democratic forms in the crucial period immediately prior to independence. Kenya provides a case in point: despite the Kenya African National Union's electoral success in May 1963, after which Jomo Kenyatta formed an interim government, Sandys insisted that Kenya should be left with a federal constitution—a policy of 'majimboism'—which would favour KANU's more anglo-philic rival the Kenya African Democratic Union.¹²³ During the third and final Lancaster House Conference, held only two months before Independence, Kenyatta wrote to Sandys to plead that it was 'entirely strange and illogical' to host two weeks of discussions 'only to keep us

¹²²Sandys: Draft speech to Conservative Commonwealth Council, 6/5/62 (DSND 8/22/3).

¹²³D. Anderson "Yours in struggle for Majimbo". Nationalism and the Party Politics of Decolonization in Kenya, 1955–1964' *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, 3 (2005), pp. 561–562.

in London under pretence'. It seemed evident to the Kenyan Prime Minister that 'KADU threats and blackmail have weighed heavily with you and that our position as the Government of Kenya, popularly supported and elected by the people has no significance', while 'nothing has depressed us more than this attempt on your part to belittle and even ridicule our Government and to build a giant out of KADU'. Threatening to walk out of the conference, and predicting 'bloodshed' in Kenya, Kenyatta despaired that 'you are not giving us any alternative but threatening us with the delay of independence unless we submit to KADU'.¹²⁴ Under pressure from the more enlightened Governor, Malcolm MacDonald, and the threat of civil war in Kenya, Sandys agreed to abandon KADU and Kenyatta was able to bury *majimboism* as soon as Kenya became independent in December 1963. Sandys' concern that Britain should only offer independence once a friendly nationalist leader had been suitably manoeuvred into position had brought Kenya to the brink of violent uprising once again barely a decade after Mau Mau.

Failing to exclude Kenyatta from power, Sandys successfully guided the transfer of power in the same month to more friendly hands in Zanzibar, without recourse to elections, only to see the constitutional monarchy of Sultan Jamshid bin Abdullah overrun by a violent socialist revolution within weeks. That Zanzibar returned to peace and stability in April 1964 owed nothing to the Colonial Office and everything to Julius Nyerere's offer of a union with Tanganyika. By contrast, the presence of British troops in Swaziland and 'endless talks' at the CO enabled a coalition of monarch, traditional chiefs and white settlers to ignore popular demands for democracy and pursue an autocratic rule that would last long after the Wilson government granted independence in 1968.¹²⁵

The other leitmotif of Sandys' work at the CRO and CO was racial tension. Writing in 1962 Sandys judged that 'the most complex and intractable problem of the second half of the twentieth century is undoubtedly that of race relations'.¹²⁶ Racial tensions were an unavoidable feature of the politics of many of the countries that dominated Sandys' brief, notably in Central Africa, Kenya, British Guiana, Malaysia, Mauritius and Fiji. Indeed it was no coincidence that racial division was

¹²⁴Letter from Kenyatta to Sandys, 14/10/63 (DSND 8/15).

¹²⁵Interview with Derek Milton.

¹²⁶Sandys *The Modern Commonwealth*.

a character of many of the states that achieved independence late, after the initial rush of Macmillan's 'wind of change' initiative. As Sandys put it, in rather patronising terms, some colonies 'like Kenya or the [Central African] Federation, are "problem children" with difficult racial problems that have retarded their advance'.¹²⁷

Of these countries, it was British Guiana that witnessed the most intractable racial violence and, although Sandys publicly claimed in 1963 that his 'sole aim' was to 'put an end to racial politics which is the curse of British Guiana', Richard Drayton suggests that it was thanks in no small part to Sandys' intervention that 'racial self-segregation became the order of the day across the country'.¹²⁸ On occasion openly racist once he had left office (see Chap. 5), it is telling that Sandys also approached the problems of Southern Africa with little sympathy for the cause of universal suffrage let alone black nationalism, defending South Africa's membership of the Commonwealth even after Sharpeville, 'however much we dislike her racial policy'.¹²⁹ Officials found that Sandys respected Rhodesian settlers (if not their supposedly louche counterparts in Kenya) and had 'no particular love for Africans'.¹³⁰ Nor in such assumptions was Sandys alone, Cuthbert Alport's Private Secretary remembering a vocal minority of Colonial Service 'retreads' at the CRO who were cynical about the future prospects of Commonwealth states and 'couldn't stand bloody Africans', a feature of the department that will be explored in more detail in the following chapters.¹³¹

Despite the rise of the rebellious Rhodesian Front led by Ian Smith, Sandys continued to argue that it would not be 'sensible to hand over to the Africans at this moment' as 'too-rapid Africanisation' might cause a 'Zanzibar type situation'.¹³² Meanwhile on the vexed question of 'multi-racial' electoral rolls, Sandys urged Macleod not to 'upset' the 'balance of the constitution' in Northern Rhodesia, insisting that he should

¹²⁷Sandys: Draft speech to Conservative Commonwealth Council, 6/5/62 (DSND 8/22/3).

¹²⁸*HC Debs* 15/11/63, vol. 684, col. 582; R. Drayton 'Anglo-American "Liberal Imperialism", British Guiana 1953–1964, and the world since September 2011' in W. R. Louis (ed.) *Yet More Adventures with Britannia* (London, 2006), p. 336.

¹²⁹Letter from Sandys to Nkrumah, 7/9/60 (DSND 8/8).

¹³⁰Interviews with Brian Gilmour, Brian Unwin and Stanley Martin.

¹³¹Interview with Brian Unwin.

¹³²Record of meeting at CRO regarding Southern Rhodesia, 29/1/64 (DSND 8/21).

follow the example of Sandys' own Southern Rhodesian Constitution of 1961 and 'leave our hands free to ensure that only a minimum of additional African voters are included on the Upper Roll' for fear of a 'violent reaction among the European community in the Federation generally, together with the inevitable accusations of bad faith'.¹³³ Perhaps most revealing was his blank refusal to contemplate a military deployment against secessionist white settlers in Southern Rhodesia, despite his readiness to take direct action against black or Arab nationalists elsewhere.¹³⁴

No account of his work on colonial and Commonwealth policy would be complete without a consideration of Sandys' germane business interests. Although he was obliged to forfeit his directorships for the duration of his ministerial career Sandys retained an interest in West Africa and later, once out of office, resumed his direct involvement. Between 1946 and 1950 he was a director of the Gold Coast concerns Ashanti Goldfields Corporation (AGC), Bibiani (1927) Ltd., Tarkwa and Abosso Mines Ltd., then in 1966 he resumed his directorship of AGC and between 1972 and 1976 became Chairman of Lonrho (which bought out AGC in 1968).¹³⁵ Foreshadowing his ministerial preference for granting independence to conservative leaders, in 1946 he saw in growing labour unrest in the colony the 'possibility of trouble to come' and encouraged company officials to offer local chiefs a stake in the mining industry as a solution.¹³⁶ Later he was the only member of the Cabinet to oppose the granting of full self-government to Gold Coast in September 1956, reflecting AGC's hostility to an Nkrumah administration.¹³⁷ With Ghanaian independence, however, both AGC and Sandys moved to a more neutral position, Sandys becoming one of Nkrumah's 'inner circle' of advisers and visiting the President on Macmillan's behalf

¹³³Letter from Sandys to Macleod, 15/2/61 (DSND 8/9).

¹³⁴P. Murphy "'An intricate and distasteful subject": British planning for the use of force against European settlers of Central Africa, 1952–1965' *English Historical Review* 492 (2006), pp. 746–777; see also C. Watts, 'Killing Kith and Kin: The Viability of British Military Intervention in Rhodesia, 1964–1965', *Twentieth Century British History*, xvi (2005), pp. 382–415.

¹³⁵Stockwell *The Business of Decolonisation*, p. 29.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 69, 169.

¹³⁷Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization*, pp. 98, 111.

in 1960.¹³⁸ As mentioned earlier, his growing sympathy for Nkrumah was also critical to the success of the Queen's first official visit to the African Commonwealth.

Sandys kept abreast of developments at AGC during the 1950 and 1960s thanks to his friendship with Major General Sir Edward Spears, who was chairman of AGC and a former Conservative MP. Formerly Churchill's envoy to the Free French government, Spears was also a committed Europeanist like Sandys, and he would later become an enthusiastic supporter of his 'Peace with Rhodesia' campaign in 1967.¹³⁹ Spears relayed the discussions of the Conservative West Africa Group and kept Sandys informed of developments in Ghana. Although he had relinquished his directorship, Spears evidently viewed the Commonwealth Secretary as a useful ally in government. Sandys' archive offers occasional examples of collaboration when the interests of government and business overlapped. In 1961 the future security of Pensions and Provident Funds in Ghana began to look less certain. Sandys wrote to Spears reassuring him that he would 'of course, continue to keep a close watch on this in view of its extreme importance to our private stake in Ghana', inviting Spears to 'tell me if you think that there are any particular points that I could make to Nkrumah, either direct or through the Acting High Commissioner'.¹⁴⁰ However Spears found that he was offered little sympathy when AGC's interests ran contrary to those of the CRO, and it was characteristic of the relationship that an attempt by Spears to persuade Sandys to change the British High Commissioner met a curt refusal.¹⁴¹

Sandys' involvement with Lonrho and Southern Africa will be covered in Chap. 4. His Chairmanship would ultimately prove a sordid conclusion to his career. In 1973 he was publicly pilloried by Heath for having received a tax-free payment of \$100,000 from the company, via the Cayman Islands. Although the Prime Minister believed him to be 'a man of the highest integrity', he famously denounced Sandys' lack of probity

¹³⁸Stockwell *The Business of Decolonisation*, pp. 193–194; Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization*, p. 99.

¹³⁹Interview with Stanley Martin; letter from Edward Spears to *The Times*, 17/1/67.

¹⁴⁰Letter from Sandys to Spears, 22/12/61 (DSND 8/9).

¹⁴¹Letters from Spears to Sandys, 26/7/61 and 13/12/60 (DSND 15/26); letter from Sandys to Spears, 21/12/60 (DSND 8/8).

as 'the unpleasant and unacceptable face of capitalism'.¹⁴² Believing that her father was less guilty of dishonesty than 'stupid naivety', his daughter Celia recalled that Sandys was 'shattered' by the scandal.¹⁴³ An increasingly controversial figure at Lonrho, Sandys retired in 1976 and, although he sat in the Lords as Baron Duncan Sandys from 1974, he gradually retreated from public life. Following a lengthy illness, he died in 1987.

Proximate and inglorious at times, Sandys' involvement with business was nonetheless sufficiently sporadic to confirm Philip Murphy and Sarah Stockwell's conservative evaluation of the commercial influence on decolonisation. Although ministers did have close contact with companies and sought on occasion to make life easier for business, during this period there was not the degree of collaboration suggested by Peter Cain and Anthony Hopkins in their characterisation of the 'gentlemanly capitalist', nor indeed by 'neo-colonial' theorists. In fact relations between business and ministers were often poor.¹⁴⁴ In his work with both AGC and Lonrho Sandys was willing to offer companies influential political contacts and was generally sympathetic to the promotion of British commercial activity in Africa as an element of 'great power' status, but never to the disadvantage of his own over-riding political interests. His career would thus suggest that business interests had influence on the course of decolonisation, even in the case of one so closely associated with colonial companies.

¹⁴²E. Heath *The Course of my Life* (London, 1998), p. 418; J. Campbell *Edward Heath* (London, 1994), p. 528.

¹⁴³Interview with Celia Sandys.

¹⁴⁴Stockwell *The Business of Decolonisation*, pp. 232–233.

Saving South Arabia

British colonialism came to a chaotic and bloody end in South Arabia. When independence was finally granted to the dependency in 1967 all semblance of stability in the South Arabian Federation had been lost and the British Government was desperate to leave. Any future relationship with the territory seemed a uniquely unattractive prospect. The arid wadis of the Federation had neither yielded oil nor attracted expatriate settlers and had been left shamefully undeveloped. The strategic role of Aden port was finished thanks to the Labour Government's decision to withdraw from 'East of Suez', and its commercial importance had been destroyed by Nasser's recent closure of the Suez Canal. The choice of likely successors to British rule amounted to a depressing slate of violent Marxists or the autocratic, traditional rulers of the Federal Government. Aden town was blighted by terrorist violence. Tribal insurrection was a recurrent problem in the hinterland and the ongoing Yemeni civil war had infected the Federation's northern borders. For years British officials had actively discouraged any thoughts of a South Arabian application to join the Commonwealth. It is hardly surprising, though no less excusable, that the withdrawal culminated in a dramatic scuttle comparable only to the abandonment of Palestine.

Yet the sudden nature of British disengagement from the region and the chaos that was left in its wake was by no means inevitable. Throughout the mid-1960s Sandys fought strenuously to preserve a British toe-hold in South Arabia. In his opinion a permanent military presence in Aden was essential if Britain were to retain a global role and

if South Arabia were to survive as an independent state. Shortly before the withdrawal his campaign collapsed and ultimately contributed to the destabilisation of the region. But in the preceding years Sandys managed to exercise considerable influence over policy-making. Barely months before the British departure, South Arabia had the remarkable privilege of becoming the only colonial dependency to be offered a post-independence defence agreement by the cash-strapped Labour Government. This dramatic U-turn flew in face of the Government's strategy to withdraw from Arabia and the empire 'East of Suez' in its entirety, and was one of Sandys' greatest *post-officio* achievements.

This chapter presents an evaluation of Sandys' campaign to save South Arabia, his first experiment in backbench activism. It demonstrates that the Labour Government's policy towards the region was fundamentally shaped by the informal intervention of a powerful lobby of South Arabian and Conservative interests, aided by colonial officials and led by Sandys. The chapter takes as its subject three episodes in Anglo-South Arabian relations during which Sandys' influence was most apparent, namely the failed Constitutional Conference of 1965, the Defence Review of 1966 and the offer of a defence agreement to the Federali ministers in 1967. At each of these moments, Sandys used his former ministerial contacts to gain privileged access to confidential material, which he then used to embarrass the British government in public. At the same time he privately guided the Federalis in negotiations with their British counterparts, helping to undermine the chances of creating a broad-based government and—inadvertently—a peaceful withdrawal from Arabia.

An understanding of British policy towards South Arabia in the 1960s requires a brief explanation of the origins of Britain's relationship with the region.¹ The port of Aden and its immediate surroundings was a British possession from 1839, governed by the India Office as part of the Raj. In 1937 it became a Crown Colony under the terms of the Government of India Act of 1935. An ancient centre of trade, the port was a busy commercial entrepôt, coaling station and military base on the route to and from Britain to India throughout the colonial period,

¹The colonial period in Aden is summarised in J. Ducker 'Historical and constitutional background' in Hinchcliffe *et al.* (eds.) *Without Glory in Arabia*, pp. 8–59, on which the following summary draws unless otherwise indicated.

with a cosmopolitan, urban population of largely Arab, but also Somali, Indian and Jewish citizens, numbering about 220,000 by 1960. After the Suez crisis of 1956, the Colony also became the main strategic point for British military operations in the Indian Ocean and East Africa and the existing military base was rapidly enlarged at great cost. From 1958 Aden was given its own Legislative Assembly with a majority of elected representatives.

Aden Colony was tiny in size and lacked natural water supplies so colonial administrators surrounded it with an extensive Protectorate that grew over time to incorporate much of the southern seaboard and hinterland of the South West Arabian peninsula. In contrast to the bustling port of Aden the States that made up the Protectorate were sparsely populated by their 700,000 inhabitants, remote and largely tribal, ruled by a variety of more or less despotic sheiks and sultans who offered Britain allegiance in return for protection. As in Central Africa and Malaya, British policy from the 1950s sought an ever-closer relationship between the Protectorate States in the interests of regional stability and ultimately decolonisation. In 1959 the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South was created, with increased military and financial assistance offered by Sandys, then Defence Secretary, in the form of a new Treaty of Friendship and Protection. During Sandys' later spell at the Colonial Office he continued to further the policy of merger. Aden Colony, now State, was incorporated into the renamed Federation of South Arabia in 1962. A new Federal seat of government was established slightly inland from Aden town at Al-Ittihad. Confusingly for all involved, Aden retained its Crown Colony status in all but name, with its own Legislative Council and Chief Minister, yet was only accorded a quarter of the seats on the Federal Council. A number of Protectorate rulers refused to join the Federation either in 1959 or in 1962 and these states—Hadhrami in ethnicity, and roughly coterminous with the former administrative Eastern Area Protectorate—became the Protectorate of South Arabia in 1962.²

As this chapter will demonstrate, in negotiating the terms of South Arabia's independence the Labour Government had to negotiate with a vocal minority of socialist or Nasserite Adeni politicians who were lawfully, but unhappily, wed to a majority of highly conservative 'Federali'

²Ducker 'Historical and constitutional background', pp. 8–13.

rulers. Indeed, the Governor responsible for managing the merger compared the new Federation to ‘bringing modern Glasgow into a federation with the eighteenth-century Highlands of Scotland’.³ Initially it seemed that the Federation might work. A South Arabian League (SAL) emerged and gained some popularity on a gradualist and unitary ticket, but the colonial authorities became nervous and banned the party in the 1950s. Meanwhile Aden yielded two moderate Chief Ministers who were prepared to cooperate with the Federalis—Hassan al-Bayoumi and Zain Baharoon—but by 1964 the most influential Adeni politician was the radical nationalist Abdullah al-Asnag, leader of the Aden Trades Union Congress (ATUC) and the associated Peoples Socialist Party (PSP). Even more worryingly, two competing terrorist organisations gained momentum and in time came to dominate. The National Liberation Front (NLF) was founded in 1963 and drew support largely from the hinterland and Yemen. It also benefitted from Soviet arms supplies. By contrast the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY) was founded by Al-Asnag with Adeni and Egyptian support in 1966 and grew out of the PSP.⁴ Meanwhile, the more suspicious Hadhrami rulers of the remaining Protectorate steadfastly refused to join the Federation and became increasingly marginalised, Federali and British (though not Adeni) overtures notwithstanding.

Britain’s South Arabia policy was subject to much international criticism, most noisily in the Egyptian broadcasts of the Voice of Cairo radio station, but also from the Committee of 24 at the UN and the Soviet Union, who were all highly critical of British policy and demanded a rapid exit. On the other hand, the USA felt that Britain was moving too fast, fearing that an over-hasty withdrawal would leave South Arabia vulnerable to Communist influence.⁵ Keen to dominate the Arabian Peninsula and to promote conservative Islamic rule, Saudi Arabia was also opposed to British withdrawal and offered support to the Federalis, as it did to Royalist forces in the Yemeni civil war.

³ Sir Charles Johnston, quoted in Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*, p. 355.

⁴ J. Ducker ‘The international context of South Arabia and British policy’ in Hinchcliffe et al. (eds.) *Without Glory in Arabia*, p. 73.

⁵ K. Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden: Abandoning Empire* (Basingstoke, 1991), p. 135.

Along with conflicting pressures in South Arabia itself and on the global stage, the Labour Government was also subjected to concerted campaigning at home. Although the fate of South Arabia did not attract the same public interest as the question of Rhodesia or immigration, feelings among MPs were strong. On the Government's own benches, there was criticism both from the Left and the Right of the Party. When it was announced in 1966 that the newly enlarged Aden base would be closed shortly the Minister for the Navy, Christopher Mayhew, resigned in protest. A year later, Foreign Secretary George Brown's offer of the post-independence defence agreement to the Federali rulers caused uproar amongst backbenchers on the Left. Meanwhile the Opposition were unanimously of the opinion that the Government was shirking its responsibilities in Arabia. Sandys was the leading critic in the Conservative Party, but his campaign had the support of front-benchers such as Heath, Douglas-Home and Powell (then Defence Spokesman). Sandys also benefited from the support of a number of Right-wing backbenchers associated with the Monday Club, including Patrick Wall, John Biggs-Davison and—temporarily without a seat from 1966—Julian Amery. Throughout the late 1960s, the Party promised that it would halt Labour's promised 'East of Suez' withdrawal, although Heath was persuaded to drop the pledge after his victory in 1970 by a more pragmatic Douglas-Home.⁶

Lastly, the government's efforts to cede power to a broad-based coalition were significantly hampered by a degree of obstruction on the part of present and former Aden High Commission staff. Their sympathies generally lay with the Federalis rather than the radicals of the PSP and they despised the terrorists of the NLF or FLOSY.⁷ These officials had an unusually significant impact on policy-making for South Arabia, at least one Colonial Office minister noting that a relatively high turnover of personnel at ministerial level meant that 'the official opinion prevailed'.⁸ The High Commissioner, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, was swiftly cashiered after the Labour victory in 1964 for being too closely associated

⁶Louis *Ends of British Imperialism*, pp. 897–898.

⁷Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, p. 116; Mawby *British Policy in Aden and the Protectorates*, p. 144; Hinchcliffe *et al.* (eds.) *Without Glory in Arabia*, pp. 154, 159.

⁸Letter from Lord Beswick (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Colonies) to Prime Minister, 18/4/67 (PREM 13/1296).

with both the Federalis and British Conservatives. But the dismissal failed to have the desired effect, and it was not without reason that a UN Mission walked out of Aden three years later in 1967, complaining of hostility on the part of High Commission staff. When the South Arabian brief was handed to the FO in May 1966, the Commonwealth Office minister, Lord Beswick, warned the Foreign Secretary that the High Commissioner was ‘most ably served by officials who are completely devoted to the cause of the Federal Council’, and little had evidently changed by the time Trevaskis’ successor, Richard Turnbull, was sacked in May 1967. Asked by Wilson to investigate the failure of the UN Mission, the Paymaster General, George Wigg, found that Turnbull had become ‘*plus Royalist que le roi*’ in his promotion of the Federali interest, with the effect that the Labour government had ‘slavishly followed the policies laid down by the Tories’.⁹ Even the American Consul in Aden noted in April 1967 that ‘the Conservative view is as strongly represented in Aden as ever’, pointing to Turnbull, his Deputy and Intelligence Officers and the Commander in Chief.¹⁰ This chapter will demonstrate that official obstruction to decolonisation in South Arabia not only affected the course of events in the Federation but also influenced events in Westminster, thanks to the regular leaking of confidential documents to Sandys, via Trevaskis.

When Labour came to office, the parameters of South Arabian policy had been set by a recent Constitutional Conference in July 1964, at which Sandys had pledged independence by 1968, a more democratic constitution in the interim, and also a Malaysian-style defence treaty to protect the newly independent state thereafter. These promises had yet to be passed into law but had, nonetheless, been formalised in a White Paper published after the conference. Over the following years leading to independence in November 1967, a number of imperatives drove Labour policy in South Arabia, partially, but not entirely, based on the pledges of the 1964 conference. A new unitary constitution, Hadhrami participation and then independence should be achieved as soon as was realistically possible. In the interests of creating stable conditions for

⁹Letter from Beswick to George Brown (Foreign Secretary), 6/5/66 (PREM 13/705); Letter from George Wigg (Paymaster General) to Prime Minister, 10/4/67 (PREM 13/1295).

¹⁰AMCONSUL ADEN, R 090850Z Apr 67 to SECSTATE, quoted in Pieragostini *Britain, Aden and South Arabia*, p. 206.

withdrawal, substantial financial and military aid would be offered to the Federal Government, a degree of UN supervision would be tolerated, and the extensive British military presence would be maintained.

All parties were broadly amenable to this programme but proved intransigent when it came to negotiating specifics. Labour ministers instinctively sought to woo radical leaders on the Left such as Al-Asnag, building on the friendship that the Labour Party had established with the ATUC and PSP when still in Opposition, and hoping to find an Arabian Kenyatta.¹¹ They were embarrassed by the Federalis rulers' conservative image, and their lack of interest in either democracy or development. The future seemed to lie in shackling the Federalis within a broad-based government dominated by progressive Adeni politicians. However, ministers were hampered by intransigence on all sides and the commitment to grant independence by 1968. The Colonial Office and then the FO found it impossible to secure either representative attendance or agreement at conferences right up until the day before independence, and then only with the NLF.¹²

While dialogue became increasingly difficult, some progress was made in creating a new interim constitution. In February 1966 a report was published by the respected constitutionalists Sir Ralph Hone and Sir Gawain Bell, which provided a framework for what might have become a workable arrangement. But local terrorists, encouraged by Nasser and the new Yemeni Arab Republican government, mounted a rising campaign of violence against British installations, personnel and civilians. Following a breakdown in relations with Aden's first radical Chief Minister, Abdulqawi Mackawee, the High Commissioner reluctantly decided to suspend the Aden government and imposed direct rule on the colony in September 1965.¹³ The Federalis felt that the British Army was taking too lenient an approach to policing terrorism in Aden, repeatedly asking to assume responsibility with their own less-accountable troops. But in practice British rule in Aden became increasingly violent both on the streets and in the detention centre at Fort Morbut where torture was secretly employed, though whitewashed by

¹¹Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, pp. 86–87.

¹²Ducker 'Historical and constitutional background', pp. 30–59.

¹³Ducker 'Historical and constitutional background', p. 36; Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, p. 144.

the Bowen Report of 1966.¹⁴ The government continued to make overtures to Mackawee and Al-Asnag, now leading FLOSY, sending Lord Shackleton (publicly) and the Labour MP Tom Driberg (privately) on missions in April 1967, and appointing the former Egyptian ambassador, Humphrey Trevelyan, as High Commissioner in May on the basis of his personal friendship with Nasser.¹⁵

However, as the date of independence approached, both FLOSY and the NLF became increasingly unwilling to come to the table, let alone enter into negotiations.¹⁶ With the failure of the UN Mission to Aden in April and then the Six Day War and a mutiny in the ranks of the Federal Regular Army in June, tensions were further raised and the infamous ‘Mad Mitch’ and the Argylls regiment were sent into the central Crater district of Aden to impose military rule.¹⁷ By September 1967 the Federal Government was fast losing control of events, compounded by the economic effects of the ongoing closure of the Suez Canal in the wake of the Six Day War. Independence was urgently brought forwards from January 1968 to November 1967 to enable a British withdrawal before there was a complete collapse. The last few months of British rule in South Arabia thus amounted to a scuttle. As critical of the Conservative ministers who had ‘dithered and procrastinated’ as the ‘cravenness and clumsiness’ of their Labour successors, Hyam judges that the departure from Aden ‘was to Wilson’s government what Palestine had been to Attlee’s – only worse’, a ‘humiliating withdrawal’ that left the Labour Government facing a ‘vicious successor regime dedicated to everything they found repugnant’.¹⁸

While the new constitution, policing and the date for independence were debated at length during these negotiations, the ‘one question that overshadowed’ all other problems—as Lord Beswick concluded in 1966—was whether Britain should offer South Arabia a

¹⁴Brendon *Decline and Fall*, p. 505; Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, pp. 167–168.

¹⁵Walker *Aden Insurgency*, pp. 224–226.

¹⁶Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, p. 209; see also ‘Delay over Aden independence’ *The Times* 28/4/67.

¹⁷For a full account of this episode see A. Edwards *Mad Mitch’s Tribal Law* (Edinburgh, 2014).

¹⁸Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*, p. 360.

post-independence defence treaty.¹⁹ In the context of the Yemeni Arab Republic's declared intention to overrun South Arabia aided by the Egyptian Army, the question was an existential one: did Britain intend to create a viable independent state or simply to cut and run? Initially, ministers tended to dodge the issue, or imply, as Healey did as late as February 1966, that a treaty was still on the table.²⁰ But in February 1966, Federali rulers were informed in no uncertain terms that as part of the Defence Review of that month, the Government had decided not only to close the base at Aden but also to refuse a treaty once Britain had withdrawn. More than a year of tense negotiations followed, culminating in a remarkable reversal in March 1967 when the FO offered naval and air support for the six months following independence. In the event, this hard-won concession was retracted shortly before independence when it became clear that the Federali government had lost control.

The bitter wrangling over the South Arabian defence treaty lies at the heart of this chapter. Sandys believed that he had made a solemn pledge to the Federalis in 1964. This controversial claim was the linchpin of his criticism of the Government's South Arabian policy. In office, Sandys had committed the government granting independence to the Federation in 1968. However, at the same time he had proposed a defence treaty that would secure a sovereign British base at Aden in perpetuity. Although, as mentioned, the proposed treaty had got no further than a White Paper, Sandys set about smothering Adeni anti-colonial radicalism with the dead weight of 'up-country' traditionalist loyalism to ensure the future of this bastion of British influence in Arabia. Sandys' specific goal was to prevent Al-Asnag and the PSP taking power, believing that the party would 'kick us out of Aden'. In 1963 he told 'Billy' Maclean that he would 'have to suspend the [Aden] constitution' and institute direct rule, as he had already done in British Guiana, were the party to win an election even at Legislative Council level.²¹

Out of office, Sandys' concern with the future of South Arabia continued to be a leitmotif in his speeches and public statements from 1965

¹⁹Tel. 120 from Beswick to Lord Longford (Secretary of State for the Commonwealth), 16/2/66 (PREM 13/704).

²⁰Brendon *Decline and Fall*, p. 505.

²¹'Duncan Sandys – 12th November 1963', record of conversation between Sandys and Maclean (Box 19, MAC).

until the withdrawal from Aden in November 1967. Sandys' position boiled down to a defence of his own policies in office and an attack on the perceived naivety of the Government front bench. In particular he argued that the Government's decision to abandon the defence agreement that he had pledged was a catastrophic error on two counts, namely that Britain's word would be rendered worthless in international diplomacy, and that giving independence to the South Arabian Federation without offering security after independence was tantamount to handing the territory to Nasser on a plate. Sandys had been a hawk at the time of the Suez Crisis of 1956. In 1960s his desire to avenge the loss of the Canal and his deep dislike of Nasser was as evident in his opposition to the radicals in South Arabia as it was in his support of the Yemeni Royalists.²² For this reason, he argued vehemently against treating with the 'terrorists' of the NLF and insisted on the necessity of repressive government in the Federation for the foreseeable future, advocating the robust use of British troops and emergency powers before independence, and that power be transferred to the conservative rulers of the Federal Council thereafter.

Sandys waged a public campaign in parliament, with occasional statements and articles in the press. A favourite tactic for bringing attention to South Arabian issues was to submit written questions to ministers, eighteen being posed for example between March and May 1967.²³ More commonly Sandys attracted press attention for his remorseless sniping during debates on defence and South Arabia, reaching a crescendo during the spring of 1967. In contrast to his other campaigns, as mentioned earlier, Sandys managed to carry Heath and the Opposition front bench with him. Indeed, it was as much the debates on Arabia as those about Rhodesia that gave political commentators cause to question whether

²²K. Kyle *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London, 2003), pp. 200–201.

²³*HC Deb* 16 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 141-2W; 16 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 142-3W; 16 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 151W; 20 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 184-5W; 23 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 335-6W; 23 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 336W; 23 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 336W; 04 April 1967, vol. 744, col. 33-6; 04 April 1967, vol. 744, col. 15-6W; 26 April 1967, vol. 745, col. 305-6W; 27 April 1967, vol. 745, col. 330-4W; 27 April 1967, vol. 745, col. 343W; 27 April 1967, vol. 745, col. 343-4W; 02 May 1967, vol. 746, col. 41-2W; 02 May 1967, vol. 746, col. 43-4W; 11 May 1967, vol. 746, col. 271W; 31 May 1967, vol. 747, col. 29-30W; 31 May 1967, vol. 747, col. 30-1W.

Sandys was not the de facto leader of the Opposition, as discussed in Chap. 2. Sandys' critics were incensed by his pro-Federali position. George Brown, among many others, denounced him as 'the architect of the mess we are in' as his campaign reached its peak in 1967.²⁴ To the Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe Sandys' criticism of the Government's Arabia policy was 'like Satan rebuking sin', while Michael Foot concluded that 'no person in the whole wide world bears greater guilt for the blood which is now being shed in Aden than himself'.²⁵

Sandys' public attempts to persuade the Government to return to his own pro-Federali policy certainly raised public awareness of the issue and occasioned a number of impassioned debates in Parliament. But unlike his Rhodesian, race relations and immigration campaigns, his statements about Aden did not attract extensive interest from the letter-writing public. By contrast, this chapter will demonstrate that the Aden campaign proved far more effective when conducted by more private means.

1965: THE FAILURE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE

The General Election of October 1964 and the advent of the first Labour Government since 1951 had a profound impact on the course of Britain's late decolonisation. The departure of Sandys from the Colonial Office and the appointment of Anthony Greenwood sent a clear message to Britain's remaining colonial administrators that radical change was in the air. The contrast with Sandys could not have been more dramatic. Greenwood was a gentle and courteous man from the left of the Labour Party who was a staunch supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Vice-President of the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports. He was also a minister who kept conventional working hours, to the great relief of his civil servants.²⁶

Within weeks of his arrival at the Colonial Office, it had been established that Greenwood wanted reconciliation with Al-Asnag and the PSP and a diminution of the power of the Federal leaders, with the aim of

²⁴ *HC Deb* 10 April 1967, vol. 744, col. 752.

²⁵ Speech by Jeremy Thorpe, Knutsford, quoted in 'Reward of High National Income' *The Guardian* 10/4/67; *HC Deb* 20 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 1070–1072.

²⁶ K. O. Morgan, 'Greenwood, Arthur William James' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004); K. Trevasakis *Shades of Amber: A South Arabian Episode* (London, 1968), p. 224.

building a broad-based government that would prepare the Federation for independence in 1968. To that end, he immediately demanded the release of Khalifa Abdullah Kalifah, who had been detained since December 1963 as the prime suspect in an assassination attempt on Trevaskis. Having made a hasty visit to Aden, he decided a month later to 'change the bowling' and dramatically dismissed Trevaskis himself, the High Commissioner having become well known for his sympathies for the Federal rulers and the policy of the previous Conservative administration.²⁷

Greenwood's sudden change of tack flew in the face of Sandys' bid to woo the Federal rulers at the London Conference of August 1964. It was remarkable that the reversal, and indeed a wave of terrorism that met his visit to the colony in November, did not occasion a political crisis.²⁸ Instead, Greenwood found that the LegCo election held in Aden on 16th October, the same day as the General Election in Britain, had produced a workable assembly under the moderate leadership of Zaiid Baharoon, helped by the release of Kalifah. Indeed, although Spencer Mawby presents a fairly bleak portrayal of the situation, Karl Pieragostini's suggestion that there was an easing of unrest in the colony would appear to be more accurate.²⁹ Meanwhile, at the Federal capital of Al-Ittihad, the Supreme Council was in a conciliatory mood and during the course of his visit to Aden in December Greenwood managed to broker a joint declaration by the Federal and Adeni leaders, announcing their support for a unitary state of South Arabia.³⁰ This was a commendable achievement, since the Federal rulers had long assumed that a full merger between Aden Colony and the autocratic Federal states would entail greater Adeni influence and the introduction of a degree of democracy throughout South Arabia.

On his return, Greenwood reported to Cabinet colleagues that it had been 'gratifying' to see 'so much progress'. He judged that it reflected a 'general acceptance' that democracy should finally be introduced in the

²⁷'Governor of Aden to retire' *The Guardian* 22/12/64; Trevaskis *Shades of Amber*, p. 225.

²⁸Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, p. 100.

²⁹Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, pp. 133-134; Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, pp. 93-94.

³⁰Ducker 'Historical and constitutional background', p. 31.

Federal states and he was encouraged that although the Federal rulers ‘had been moving in this direction before I arrived’, they had nonetheless managed to ‘overcome not only their mutual suspicions but also still graver suspicions about the intentions of a Labour Secretary of State’ perceived to be sympathetic to the PSP.³¹ As an editorial noted at the time, ‘an air of magic envelopes this unexpected conversion’, and ‘for the first time the official face of the Federation is set in a hopeful direction’.³²

To capitalise on such a promising atmosphere Greenwood decided to convene a further Constitutional Conference in London as soon as possible, with the aim of finalising the details of South Arabia’s path to independence. Guest lists were drawn up—with Sandys magnanimously placed at the top of the list of Members—and the renowned magician David Nixon was booked to perform. One can only imagine what the assembled Arabian dignitaries made of Nixon’s able assistant, Basil Brush.³³ However, barely two months later, Greenwood came to realise fully just how remarkable and also how fragile this spirit of unity was. Scheduled for March 1965, the Conference was boycotted by all parties in late February, triggering the resignation of Baharoon, and his replacement by the radical nationalist Abdulqawi Makkawi as Chief Minister in Aden. This collapse was particularly significant as it proved to be the high-water mark of co-operation and, as one Commonwealth Office minister later concluded, the last chance that the British Government would have to bring both Adeni and Federal leaders together in a formal conference.³⁴ In the following months until independence in 1967, the British Government found that those South Arabian politicians willing to enter into negotiations were ever fewer in number and ever more intransigent, ultimately leaving only the terrorist NLF to assume power at the eleventh hour.

³¹ ‘Policy in Aden and the Protectorate of South Arabia’ Memorandum to the Committee for Overseas Policy and Defence by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 30/12/64 (CAB 148/17/16, TNA).

³² ‘Unitary state for South Arabia worthwhile and hopeful aim’ *The Guardian*, 9/12/64, quoted in (2) ‘Extract from Reuters’ IOR/R/20/D/140 (India Office Records, British Library).

³³ (5) Note ‘UK delegation’; note ‘B. P. timetable for entertaining South Arabian visitors: Thursday 11th March’ (CO 1055/106, TNA).

³⁴ Letter from Beswick to Prime Minister, 18/4/67 (PREM 13/1296).

To the extent that it has attracted any interest in published accounts of the period, the failure of the conference has been caricatured as the result of supposedly Arab ‘posturing’ over points of honour, notably the number of radical Adeni delegates, the absence of representatives from the Eastern Aden Protectorate, and the supposed political immaturity of the Federalis who had stated their support for a unitary state ‘almost frivolously’ and ‘without the least thought of what it implied’.³⁵ Certainly Richard Turnbull, the new High Commissioner in Aden, was more than a little frustrated to be informed by the Federalis that their failure to warn him of their withdrawal from the conference was an ‘act of revenge for my having failed to spell some of their names properly on the envelopes that carried their invitations’.³⁶ And Turnbull’s acceptance of the resignation letter that was tendered shortly after by Baharoon does seem to have come as something of a surprise to the Chief Minister of the LegCo, who had blithely offered to resign several times before.³⁷

However, beneath the posturing there was evidence of a more deliberate political programme on the part of the Federalis and, only three months out of office, the first indication that Sandys might have an informal role to play in shaping South Arabia’s fortunes. On the eve of his resignation, Baharoon impressed on Turnbull that ‘he was convinced that [the Federal leaders] had no intention of going to London; they hoped to go on stalling for as long as possible, their aim being to retain the positions they already held in the feudal world’ of the hinterland.³⁸ Watching events closely from Dorset was Turnbull’s recently sacked predecessor. Sir Kennedy Trevaskis was still in close unofficial contact with both Federalis and High Commission staff. He was also inclined to blame the Federalis in the first instance, but he felt that the ‘real reasons’ were closer to home. He confided in Amery that the ‘sympathy shown by members of the Labour Party to Al-Asnaj and Labour criticisms of themselves as feudal despots’ had soured the atmosphere in Aden. It was less the posturing of the Federalis than that seen on the

³⁵Ducker ‘Historical and Constitutional Background’, p. 34; Trevaskis *Shades of Amber*, p. 231.

³⁶(70) Telegram from High Commissioner (Aden) to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23/2/65 (IOR/R/20/D/52).

³⁷Trevaskis, *Shades of Amber*, p. 231.

³⁸Record of meeting between Z. Baharoon and R. Turnbull 22/2/65 (CO 1055/105).

government benches that had made the Federalis 'suspicious of the Labour Government's intentions'. Trevaskis believed that such political inexperience contrasted with Sandys' time in office when 'at least we got them to conference...and we got results'.³⁹ Drawing on his friend's letter, Amery informed Douglas-Home that 'my general impression is that the confidence in H.M.G. which Duncan and Trevaskis had built up, has now been largely lost'.⁴⁰

The most authoritative account of the breakdown came in a letter from Turnbull himself. It is this document that first provides evidence of Sandys' ongoing influence and more broadly the role of the significance politics of decolonisation. Over the course of the lengthy missive sent back to the Colonial Office at the beginning of March 1965, the High Commissioner documented the complexities of the 'manoeuvring' of the previous month. Federali foot-dragging 'lit the fuse', then Adeni ministers failed to 'box cleverly with one eye on the referee' and 'lost their heads completely'. To a colonial administrator as experienced as Turnbull none of this seemed unduly worrying, renowned as he was for his tough stance as Chief Secretary of Kenya during the Mau Mau Emergency and his deft handling of Tanganyikan independence as Governor. Indeed, Turnbull is fondly remembered for his bullish comment to Denis Healey that the British Empire would have only two monuments, namely football and the phrase 'fuck off'.⁴¹ But his account concluded by raising 'one final point, a rather delicate one' that he felt was beyond his control, namely the unofficial influence of British Conservatives on affairs in South Arabia, and in particular that of Sandys.

At this time the Labour Government was struggling with a tiny majority of four in the House of Commons. Pieragostini's research draws on US official records to suggest that this uncertain state of affairs and the seeming likelihood of a Conservative return to power was having a damaging effect on the Labour Government's attempts to come to an agreement with the Federalis.⁴² This analysis is confirmed by British archives. It had come to Turnbull's attention that 'the explanation adopted in Aden for the reluctance of the Federalis to attend a

³⁹Letter from Kennedy Trevaskis to Amery, 24/2/65 (AMEJ 1/7/7, file 2).

⁴⁰Letter from Amery to Douglas-Home, 2/3/65 (DNSD 14/1/1).

⁴¹D. Healey *The Time of My Life* (London, 1989), p. 283.

⁴²Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, p. 96.

March conference is that they hope that there will be a general election within the next three or four months, and that by playing out time until a Conservative government is formed they will be certain of a favourable outcome to any conflict they have with the political parties', went on to venture that:

I have too a suspicion that during his visit to London for the Churchill funeral [on 30th January 1965], Sheikh Mohamed Farid [the Federali Foreign Minister] may have had one or two casual conversations with some of his 1964 [CO Conference] associates [i.e. Sandys and Trevaskis]. All this is conjecture but it is true to say that the Federalis have the feeling that their future would be far more assured by a conference under Conservative auspices than under the present dispensation. What I have referred to may sound silly but it is not an easy problem to deal with. One could scarcely ask the Conservative Shadow Minister [Sandys] to write to the Federal Government to explain to them that a Conservative administration would adopt precisely the same attitude towards the future of South Arabia as does the present Secretary of State, but somehow the idea needs to be implanted in them.

If the Conservative Party was guilty of undermining the work of the Colonial Office and the High Commission, Turnbull also felt that the Labour Party was too close to certain Arabian politicians. His letter finished with a guarded warning to Greenwood that his job would be less tricky if the Party could likewise do more to distance itself from the taint of informal association, in this case with Adeni radicals:

The position incidentally is not made any easier by Asnaj [leader of the PSP], who tries hard to give the impression that he is not only the chosen instrument of the present government in Great Britain, but that he is in [the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations] Mr. Bottomley's special confidence; he is said to rustle a packet of letters in a mysterious way, the inference being that he is in constant touch with Cabinet Ministers.⁴³

The weight of these remarkable assertions was not lost on the Colonial Office, as they were the subject of discussion in an unrecorded meeting between Greenwood and his Deputy Under-Secretary, Arthur

⁴³(48) Letter from Turnbull to J. E. Marnham (Asst. Under-Sec. CO), 1/3/65 (CO 1055/105).

Galsworthy, shortly after Turnbull's comments were received. The letter was subsequently kept 'at hand' for talks with the High Commissioner.⁴⁴

Over the coming months, Turnbull's suspicion that Sandys was keen to help the Federalis undermine the authority of the Labour Government proved evermore pertinent. After the failure of the March Constitutional Conference, Greenwood set about arranging for a three-man international Constitutional Commission to visit Aden in mid-July 1965 as an informal preliminary to another conference, while remaining non-committal on the subject of the promised defence treaty. When the Commission was threatened with a boycott by South Arabian politicians of all colours, Greenwood invited them to a Working Party meeting in London in August. The meeting was a success, to the extent that it actually took place, but it achieved little.⁴⁵ As preparations for the original Commission were being made, Sandys made a brief visit to Aden in mid-June. *En route* between Karachi and Addis Ababa, where he was canvassing support for his World Security Trust project (see Chap. 2), Turnbull arranged for Sandys to meet several 'local "characters"' including a number of the Federali rulers.⁴⁶ Although Sandys ostensibly encouraged the Federalis to give Greenwood the benefit of the doubt, his visit offered both succour to the rulers and a shot across Greenwood's bows. Sandys later recalled that they had discussed his pledge, of 1964, to conclude a post-independence defence treaty with South Arabia. The Federalis asked 'whether the position had been affected by the change of Government in Britain', to which he replied 'in the presence of the High Commissioner' that 'they need have no doubts' as 'Britain's word was her bond'. Sandys further 'advised them that they could have

⁴⁴Note in file by [G. Roberts] for [A. P.] Cumming-Bruce (Private Secretary, CO) 10/3/65 on (48) Letter from Turnbull to Marnham, 1/3/65 (CO 1055/105).

⁴⁵'Towards deadlock in South Arabia' *The Guardian* 17/7/65; 'Greenwood moves to end South Arabia crisis' *The Guardian* 25/7/65; Edwards *Mad Mitch's* Tribal Law, p. 94; Ducker 'Historical and Constitutional Background', p. 35.

⁴⁶Text of telegram from Sandys to Turnbull, enclosed in a letter from Sandys' secretary to Private Secretary to Greenwood, 28/5/65 (DSND 14/1/1); letter from Sandys to Greenwood, 27/5/65 (DSND 14/1/1).

absolute confidence that the Labour Government, like any other British Government, would scrupulously respect our treaty obligations'.⁴⁷

Prior to the trip, Sandys had promised Greenwood that he was well aware of the 'extreme difficulty of getting agreement among the various elements on any plan of any kind' and that the Colonial Secretary could be 'sure, therefore, that I shall not, while I am in Aden, do or say anything which would make your task more difficult'. Yet the effect of his trip was to do just that. Writing to Greenwood, Sandys had made it abundantly clear that he was deeply unhappy about the direction of policy in South Arabia, warning his successor that 'as you know, I do not at all approve' of the Commission planned for that summer. Sandys also felt that more could be done to defend the Federation's borders from Yemeni incursion in the North.⁴⁸ He was not alone in having reservations about the Commission. The PSP leader Al-Asnag also denounced the move as a 'trick' by which the 'British Government was merely going through the motions of being democratic', believing that 'under the pretence of an ostensibly liberally-minded Commission it was clearly their intention to confirm the Rulers in their present position'.⁴⁹ With the Adeni radicals already suspicious of Greenwood's intentions, Sandys' trip to Aden contrived to undermine the British Government's position even further by stiffening the Federalis' resolve to hold out for nothing less than a full defence treaty. And at the same time, the official presence of Turnbull at Sandys' meeting with the rulers meant that the encounter served as a clear warning to the Colonial Secretary that he could expect public accusations of betrayal if any attempt were made to depart from the pledges Sandys had made.

A month later, circumstances contrived to offer Sandys another opportunity to develop further his informal relationship with the Federalis. Since the Yemeni revolution of 1962, the ongoing civil war between Royalists and Republicans supported by Nasser had, on occasion, spilled across the border into the northerly states of the Federation,

⁴⁷Draft press statement by Sandys [18/2/66], enclosed in letter from Sandys to Trevaskis, 21/2/66, (DSND 14/1/1).

⁴⁸Letter from Sandys to Greenwood, 27/5/65 (DSND 14/1/1); Tel. from Sandys to Husain (via CO and Aden High Commission), 22/7/65 (DSND 14/1/1).

⁴⁹'Greenwood moves to end South Arabia crisis' *The Guardian* 25/7/65; record of Turnbull meeting with representatives of Peoples Socialist Party (PSP) 15/4/65, para. 8 (CO 1055/142).

notably that of Beihan. One such incursion occurred on 29th June 1965 in the form of an attack by Egyptian MiG fighters on a village in the State of Beihan, resulting in one fatality and four other casualties.⁵⁰ With Greenwood still refusing to commit to a defence treaty, the air attack on Beihan proved an acid test of British intentions. Greenwood refused to send any military support, despite being bound by the Treaty of Friendship and Protection of 1959, offering instead to secure financial compensation from Egypt for the damage caused.⁵¹ In consternation, the Amir of Beihan protested to Greenwood that he had been ‘greatly shocked’ by the ‘indifference’ of the minister’s response in Parliament, which he considered an ‘express violation of the [protection] agreement between my Government and HMG’.⁵²

Sharif Husain, Federal Minister of the Interior, father of the Amir and de facto ruler of the province, was also outraged by this snub. A few days later he decided to contact Sandys for advice. Husain recently met with Sandys, earlier in June, and they had corresponded about the matter of the ongoing cross-border attacks on Beihan. He now complained bitterly about the failure of the British Government to defend his State.⁵³ Sandys repeating the advice that he had offered during his trip to Aden, counselling Husain that ‘you may be absolutely certain that Britain will carry out to the full its duty to protect the people of Beihan and the rest of the Federation against aggression’. This advice raised false hopes of Greenwood, who had already made it clear in Parliament that there would not be military retaliation for the attack.⁵⁴ Initially counselling ‘patience’, Sandys noted that ‘in the past you have several times asked for my advice as a trusted friend’. He encouraged Husain to pay a personal visit to Greenwood, then visiting Aden, to ‘emphasise to him the

⁵⁰Greenwood, *HC Deb* 30 June 1965, vol. 715, col. 620–621.

⁵¹*HC Deb* 15 July 1965, vol. 716, col. 766–768.

⁵²Copy of letter from Amir of Baihan to Greenwood, 3/7/65 (DSND 14/1/1).

⁵³CO translation of letter from Sharif of Beihan to Sandys, 10/7/65, enclosed in letter from Margaret Fairlie (Private Secretary, CO) to Miss E. Alexander, 3/8/65 (DSND 14/1/1).

⁵⁴Tel. from Sandys to Sharif of Beihan, via Aden High Commission, 8/7/65 (DSND 14/1/1); Greenwood, *HC Deb* 30 June 1965, vol. 715, col. 620–621.

consequences which you foresee if the British Government give the impression of weakness, even if this is untrue'.⁵⁵

Husain's response illustrates well the ongoing influence that Sandys enjoyed with Federali ministers, confirming that 'indeed I have been several times asking for your advice in the past, and I will continue to ask for it now and in future. I will be bound by your advice as much as I can, and will observe patience until such patience leaps the bounds of reason. I will not embark upon any decisions unless I notify you'.⁵⁶ Such protestations of loyalty to a leading member of the British Opposition proved highly damaging for Husain after the British departed and the NLF took power, as his correspondence with Sandys was later seized from his house and used against him when he was tried for treason *in absentia* by the People's Court of South Yemen.⁵⁷

Sandys judged that his exchange with Husain 'had a steadying effect' on the Federalis. He also believed that he had the tacit approval of the British authorities since it was 'telegraphed through the Colonial Office, with the approval of the Secretary of State'.⁵⁸ Indeed not only was the correspondence conducted via official telegrams sent between the Colonial Office and the High Commission in Aden, but Husain's letters to Sandys were also translated from Arabic into English by departmental translators, with the blessing of the PUS, Hilton Poynton.⁵⁹ Fully aware of Sandys' interest in the region, Greenwood sought and respected his counsel, finding that both he and Julian Amery were 'well aware' of the situation in South Arabia during a meeting at the Colonial Office on 8th July, and later encouraging the Leader of the Opposition to 'consult Duncan' in making his response to the MiG attacks on Beihan.⁶⁰

Greenwood was also well aware of the potential for an Opposition-led debate in Parliament to disrupt delicate negotiations. In late July, Sandys intimated in the House that although he had encouraged the Federalis to

⁵⁵Tel. from Sandys to Sharif of Beihan, via Aden High Commission, 8/7/65 (DSND 14/1/1).

⁵⁶Tel. from Sharif of Beihan to Sandys, via Aden High Commission, 17/7/65 (DSND 14/1/1).

⁵⁷'Plea by Arabs to Britain "failed"' *The Times* 22/2/68.

⁵⁸Draft press statement by Sandys [18/2/66], enclosed in letter from Sandys to Trevasakis, 21/2/66 (DSND 14/1/1).

⁵⁹Letter from Sandys' secretary to M. Fairlie, 27/7/65 (DSND 14/1/1).

⁶⁰Letter from Greenwood to Douglas-Home, 22/7/65 (DSND 14/1/1).

‘co-operate with the Government’ over the Constitutional Commission and had ‘been as helpful as I could’ it was also ‘well known that I disagreed with that policy’.⁶¹ Shortly after, Amery proposed to table a debate in the House on the first day of the Working Party in August, eliciting a plea from Greenwood that ‘it would be difficult – indeed, I think impossible – to avoid things being said which would cause offence to one or other of the delegations at the talks’, and arguing that ‘a debate about South Arabia at this stage could seriously reduce the chances of success at the talks’.⁶² On this occasion Amery dropped the debate, but Greenwood’s concerns about the damaging potential of ill-timed Opposition-led debates was telling, and proved prophetic over the following two years.

A year on from the change of administration, the Labour Government’s performance in South Arabia already appeared weak. On a visit to Aden in late July 1965, Greenwood found a ‘very serious crisis of confidence between the Federal Supreme Council and the Government of Aden and, indeed ourselves’.⁶³ The atmosphere of co-operation that had greeted Greenwood in 1964 had proved brittle. Its demise had certainly been hastened by indecision on the part of the Colonial Office. But Sandys, supported by Amery and Trevaskis, had also played a part. Reporting on the situation in South Arabia later in the year, Beswick found a ‘prevailing atmosphere ... of uncertainty’ amongst officials, a malaise that he attributed in part to the failure of the conference in London, indecisive Government policy and ‘the feeling that they “didn’t really know what HMG wanted”’, but also the corrosive impact of the commonly held ‘belief/wish that the Labour Government was not going to last very long anyway’. With Federali Ministers now threatening to ‘do a Rhodesia in reverse’ by parodying Ian Smith’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) with their own ‘U. D. D[ependence]’, Sandys’ championing of the Federali cause in the year since he had left office had not only contributed to the hardening of Federali resolve but had also undermined the authority of the Labour Government. His interventions stifled the progress of negotiations by

⁶¹ *HC Deb* 21 July 1965, vol. 716, col. 1574.

⁶² Letter from Greenwood to Amery, 30/7/65 (AMEJ 1/7/7); Edwards *Mad Mitch’s* Tribal Law, p. 93 wrongly addresses Greenwood’s plea to Sandys.

⁶³ Letter from Greenwood to Amery, 30/7/65 (AMEJ 1/7/7).

raising the prospect of an imminent return to the former pro-Federali policy were the marginal Labour Government to collapse.⁶⁴

1966: THE DEFENCE REVIEW

In November 1965, Beswick had urged Greenwood to make the ‘earliest possible clarification in public of our future intentions in South Arabia’.⁶⁵ In February 1966, Greenwood sent his junior minister to Aden to do just that. On his arrival, Beswick told the Federalis that the Labour Government was still committed to granting South Arabia independence in 1968 and that they intended to create a new constitution in the interim. But the minister also created an uproar in both Al-Ittihad and Westminster by declaring quite unexpectedly that the British base in Aden would also be shut down by 1968 and that South Arabia would no longer be offered a defence treaty at independence.

The imperative for this radical change in British aims had come not from the Colonial Office but from Denis Healey at the Ministry of Defence. Since entering office in 1964, Healey had been wrestling with a brief to cut £400 million from the defence budget and, along with efficiency savings, it was his belief that it was necessary to ‘limit the scale of military tasks which may be imposed by the commitments which remain’, as he put it in the resulting White Paper of 1966. Implying as it did that Britain needed to fundamentally rethink its ‘great power’ status, Healey’s defence review was the first move in the direction of the dramatic announcement of Britain’s withdrawal ‘East of Suez’ in January 1968. In practical terms the 1966 review proposed that one of the remaining overseas military bases needed to be closed, and it was Healey’s decision that Aden should go.⁶⁶

Beswick’s mission to tell the Federalis that they would have to fight for themselves—in all likelihood quite literally—at independence, was more than just a courtesy call. The trip was timed to take place a week before the public announcement of Healey’s defence review on 23rd

⁶⁴‘Report by Lord Beswick Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations and the Colonies on his visit to South Arabia 5th–23rd November, 1965’, para. 4, 21, 30/11/65 (PREM 13/704).

⁶⁵Ibid., para. 4.

⁶⁶Defence Review of 1966 quoted in Healey *Time of My Life*, p. 279.

February. Although it carried the risk that the Federalis might embarrass the government by leaking the details of the review, Beswick hoped that he might be able to win their support for the new policy of withdrawal and prevent any unpleasantness when the White Paper was published a week later. Beswick impressed on officials the ‘need for putting the right picture across in South Arabia to the Press at the outset because the danger of misunderstandings and subsequent political difficulties in the territory is very great and these might seriously prejudice our efforts for bringing the territory to independence’.⁶⁷ In the event, Beswick’s mission failed on both counts: the Federalis quickly leaked the policy change and, more significantly, they vehemently rejected its terms and offered no hope of a compromise. The Federali response was both facilitated and shaped by Sandys.

The meeting between Beswick and the Federalis on 16th February was tense. While the decision to close the British base was met with mixed feelings, the announcement that a defence treaty was no longer to be signed was unanimously denounced as a breach of promise. In a subsidiary meeting with Beswick on 17th February, the Chairman of the Federal Supreme Council, Sultan Saleh, railed that the British Government ‘finds it suits its own interest to desert its friends and leave them in the lurch’. Quoting the minutes of the Constitutional Conference convened in 1964, Saleh insisted that Sandys had ‘announced the agreement of the British Government’ to the Federali request that Britain ‘should convene a conference for the purposes of fixing a date for independence not later than 1968, and of concluding a Defence Agreement under which Britain would retain her military base in Aden for the defence of the Federation and the fulfilment of her world-wide responsibilities’. Despite the change of government at Westminster shortly after, the Supreme Council argued that ‘all discussions about independence, and the mention of 1968 as the year of independence have been based on the assumption, in which we have been consistently encouraged by the British Government, that after independence there would be a Treaty providing for the British to continue to defend the Federation’. In fact, the Federalis were wrong to believe that the 1964 offer of a defence treaty constituted a ‘solemn agreement’

⁶⁷(6) Letter from Cumming-Bruce to R. M. Hastie-Smith [MoD], 8/2/66 (CO 1055/307).

since all that had been promised was a further conference.⁶⁸ However, the Government had given the impression as late as mid-1965 that the Aden base would be retained, and had confusingly persisted in treating the other pledge made in 1964—that independence would be granted by 1968—as binding.⁶⁹

When Beswick reported back to the Colonial Office, he described the meeting on 16th February as ‘long and stormy’, finding the Federalis ‘deeply and bitterly resentful’ about the cancellation of the treaty.⁷⁰ The Federalis argued that ‘as much as we desire independence, it would be worse than meaningless without the power to preserve it’, offering the opportunity ‘merely to exchange Egyptian for British rule’.⁷¹ As mentioned earlier, Beswick himself had found that the issue of the treaty was the ‘one question that overshadowed’ other debates over the nature of the constitution, the date of independence and the degree of development aid. He even admitted their concern was quite ‘reasonable’. But a U-turn was not to be countenanced and at best the Government could offer greater efforts to build up the Federal army before independence and more development aid thereafter.⁷² Officials had hoped that Beswick might have been able to win a genuine acceptance of the Defence Review from the Federalis. But in practice the change in policy had to be forced through as an awkward *fait accompli*.⁷³

Beswick had told the Federalis ‘to regard what I have said as in absolute confidence’. But in the face of such a sudden reversal in their fortunes, their immediate response was to leak the details of the meeting to Sandys, via Trevaskis.⁷⁴ Two days later Sandys told journalists that he was

⁶⁸(23 E.iii) ‘English translation of address to Lord Beswick by the Chairman of the Federal Supreme Council on the 17th February, 1966’, paras. 2–5 (CO 1055/307).

⁶⁹Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, p. 115.

⁷⁰Tel. 120 from Beswick to Longford, 16/2/66; tel. 122 from Beswick to Longford, 17/2/66 (PREM 13/704).

⁷¹‘Letter to Foreign Secretary from Federal Ministers 8.3.66’ (DSND 14/1/2).

⁷²Tel. 120 from Beswick to Longford, 16/2/66; tel. 122 from Beswick to Longford, 17/2/66 (PREM 13/704).

⁷³‘Comments by Lord Beswick on the Draft Reply to Aden P. Q. (Mr. Duncan Sandys) [14/6/66]’, para 1.a), enclosed in letter from Beswick to Prime Minister, 14/6/66 (PREM 13/705).

⁷⁴(23 E.i) ‘Lord Beswick’s Statement to Federal Supreme Council, 9.30 A.M., 16th February, 1966’ (CO 1055/307); letter from Sandys to Trevaskis, 21/2/66 (DSND 14/1/1).

in possession of ‘reports from authoritative sources’ suggesting that the ‘Government might be on the point of announcing a decision to close the British base at Aden by 1968, when the South Arabian Federation would become independent, and that in this connection might be thinking of abrogating the treaty of protection with the Federation’. In his press statement, Sandys argued that ‘if this is true, it would be an irresponsible and discreditable decision and I would appeal to them to have second thoughts, even at the eleventh hour’. Echoing Sultan Saleh’s refutation, Sandys urged ministers ‘immediately to make it absolutely clear that they have no thought of going back on the solemn undertakings given to the Federation, or of bringing pressure to bear on the Federal Government to acquiesce reluctantly in the withdrawal of British protection’.⁷⁵

That Sandys’ statement should echo the Federalis’ line of argument was of course no coincidence. Writing to Trevaskis shortly after, Sandys thanked the former High Commissioner for passing on the details of the Federalis’ meetings with Beswick, noting that ‘it was very helpful to receive from you authoritative advance warning about the future plans for Aden’ on which he had based his statement to the press. Sandys also suggested that ‘it would be a good thing if you, Julian [Amery] and I were to have another word together very soon after the White Paper is published’ to ‘consider what advice should be given to our friends in South Arabia’.⁷⁶ Indeed, Sandys had already made it clear to the press that he wished to play an active role in shaping policy in South Arabia. Having given ‘unequivocal assurances to the Government and people of South Arabia in the name of Britain’ as a minister, Sandys now announced that he felt a ‘personal duty to do all in my power to ensure that they are honoured’, and he revealed that the British Government had given tacit support to the promises that he had made to that effect when visiting the Federation during the previous summer.⁷⁷

In fact on this occasion Trevaskis had already taken the initiative, urging the Federalis to treat Beswick’s ultimatum as a bluff. In February 1968, during the treason trial of the Federali ministers that followed

⁷⁵Sandys press statement, 18/2/66, quoted in “Utter folly” to lose Aden Base’ *The Guardian* 19/2/66.

⁷⁶Letter from Sandys to Trevaskis, 21/2/66 (DSND 14/1/1).

⁷⁷Sandys press statement, [18/2/66] (DSND 14/1/1).

shortly after independence, the Peoples' Court of South Yemen presented a letter from the Foreign Minister, Mohammed Farid Al-Aulaqi, to the ruler of Beihan, Emir Husain dated 18th February 1966. The letter revealed that 'today we have received a message from Trevaskis saying we should not heed Beswick but should immediately send a delegation to London to reach an understanding'. Farid denounced the 'hopeless' Labour Government—'a curse be upon them'—and was much encouraged by Trevaskis' suggestion that British ministers would prove spineless. At the time of the trial in 1968, *The Times* contacted Trevaskis, who told the newspaper that he knew 'absolutely nothing about the letter', and that he 'would not have advised Federal Ministers not to heed Lord Beswick'. Trevaskis ridiculed the evidence presented by the court, assuming that 'these chaps can invent anything they like'.⁷⁸ That Trevaskis was unabashedly lying to the press is evident from his personal diary, in which he recorded that '*The Times* rings up to say that an NLF Court has produced a letter from M[ohammed] F[arid] to [Sultan] Saleh in which I am quoted as advising them to ignore Beswick and come to make a fuss in London. This, of course, I did do'.⁷⁹

Meanwhile Sandys lobbied hard for the Federalis in Parliament and in the Colonial Office, winning Sultan Saleh's gratitude for the 'profound interest' that he had shown in their cause.⁸⁰ Sandys' leaking of the proceedings of the meetings between Beswick and the Federalis won him an invitation to the Colonial Office to meet with the new Secretary of State, Lord Longford, joined by fellow traveller, Christopher Soames. With Longford unashamedly admitting that it was his intention to abrogate the Treaty of Friendship and Protection of 1959, the discussion turned fractious. Longford complained that Sandys had made it 'clear to the public that he was attacking our position' and stating that there was 'no point in his submitting to this cross-examination on the terms of the White Paper'. Sandys, in turn, accused the Secretary of State of abandoning his responsibilities in Arabia in order to pander to opinion at the United Nations. He warned that Longford's 'attitude would be "a terrible let-down" to the Federation and would not last twelve

⁷⁸'Interference in Yemen alleged' *The Times* 20/2/68.

⁷⁹Trevaskis entry for 19/2/68, personal diary 1967–1968 (Box 1(B) File 7, MSS.Brit. Emp. S 367 Papers of Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford).

⁸⁰Letter from Sultan Saleh to Trevaskis, 14/3/66 (DSND 14/1/1).

months without our protection'. Sandys also felt that the Colonial Office was forcing an ultimatum on the Federalis by which means they would be 'jockeyed into the position of appearing to acquiesce in our withdrawal of our protection'. The crux of the conversation was a plea from Longford that Sandys should keep quiet about the details of the meeting between Beswick and the Federalis. Since the Government was intending to announce only the closure of the base in Aden, and 'there was nothing in the White Paper itself declaring that we would abandon our [intended] commitment to defend the Federation after independence' Longford insisted that what had been discussed 'must therefore be regarded as in confidence'.⁸¹

A day later Healey finally published the Defence Review. In the course of a heated parliamentary debate on the matter, Sandys rejected Longford's plea for silence, attacking the Government by declaring to the House that he himself had pledged a defence treaty with South Arabia in 1964. He asked Healey whether he would 'now give an assurance that this promise that we would conclude a defence agreement for the protection of the South Arabian Federation after independence will be honoured?'. Caught off-guard, Healey retorted that 'a large number of promises were made by the right hon. Gentleman when he was Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary with a Government of South Arabia which has now disappeared'.⁸² In an embarrassing error, Healey had confused the suspension of the Adeni Government in September 1964 with a change in the constitution. The following day he was obliged to make a statement to the House in which he admitted that he had 'misled' the honourable members and that Sandys' 'promise was given to the same Government as exists today'.⁸³

The confusion caused by Sandys' assertion triggered a deeper concern at the highest levels. Wilson demanded of Longford whether Sandys' pledge constituted a binding commitment and, if so, why the department had not brought it to the attention of the Cabinet.⁸⁴ Senior

⁸¹Record of a meeting between Secretary of State, Sandys and Christopher Soames, 21/2/66 (CO 1055/299).

⁸²*HC Deb* 22 February 1966, vol. 725, col. 251.

⁸³*HC Deb* 23 February 1966, vol. 725, col. 419.

⁸⁴'Defence Review: South Arabia' memorandum from Longford to Prime Minister, 25/2/66 (PREM 13/704).

officials at the Colonial Office had been ambushed by Sandys and offered ministers their ‘sincere apologies for causing them embarrassment which, too late, we all realise ought to have been avoided’. According to the Assistant Under-Secretary, it appeared that only a month before the forthcoming General Election officials had unfortunately ‘allowed [ministers] to be taken unawares by the accusation’. Staff had considered only the ‘question of the actual treaties’ and seemed to have forgotten about the White Paper arising from the Constitutional Conference of 1964, which officials felt ‘bound to admit has caught us – I hope only temporarily – off balance’. Surprisingly, the pledges made at the conference had ‘not since then been present in any of our minds ... in deciding whether to give up the base and the defence commitment’.⁸⁵ However, having reviewed the evidence, the Deputy Under-Secretary concluded that it would be ‘stretching things to the utmost to maintain that there is an obligation to defend South Arabia after independence’ with an ‘independent validity of its own irrespective of our desire to maintain the base’.⁸⁶ And, indeed, his Assistant Under-Secretary’s advice on the matter suggested that any pledge of assistance made to South Arabian politicians in 1964 need not be treated as binding since ‘we have always thought of it as constituting *our* safeguard for the continued use of the base, rather than as imposing an obligation on us to defend South Arabia, even if we no longer needed the base’.⁸⁷ That this caveat was notably lacking from the White Paper of 1964.

Sandys’ assertion also invited some critical reflection at the Colonial Office on the disruptive effects of the Defence Review of 1966. This had implications for the more fundamental question of whether it was morally defensible to favour Britain’s interests over those of its colonies when decolonising. There was no explicit criticism of the decision to close the base in Aden, but the Deputy Under-Secretary (DUS) pointedly reminded the Permanent Under-Secretary that the ‘whole of our policy with regard to South Arabia since the mid-1950s at least had been governed by the over-riding objective of enabling us to maintain a strategic

⁸⁵(81 E.) ‘South Arabia Defence Review’ memorandum from Marnham to A. N. Galsworthy (Deputy Under-Sec. of State, CO), 24/2/66 (CO 1055/299).

⁸⁶(E/81) minute from Galsworthy to H. Poynton (Permanent Under-Sec. of State, CO), 25/2/66 (CO 1055/299).

⁸⁷(81 E) ‘South Arabia Defence Review’ memorandum from Marnham to Galsworthy, 24/2/66 (CO 1055/299).

Base in Aden'. This had been the 'prime raison d'être in building up the Federation', and all future planning at the CO had been predicated on the 'intention to negotiate a Defence Agreement with South Arabia, to come into effect on independence'. The problem now was that this assumption had been 'explicitly conveyed to, and was supported by, the Federal Rulers and Ministers' and therefore a 'decision *not* to negotiate a Defence Agreement after independence would be regarded by the Federals as a tremendous let-down'.⁸⁸ The Chairman of the Federal Supreme Council was thus quite correct in complaining to Beswick that 'all discussions about independence, and the mention of 1968 as the year of independence have been based on the assumption, in which we have been consistently encouraged by the British Government, that after independence there would be a Treaty providing for the British to continue to defend the Federation'.⁸⁹ Even if Sandys had technically committed the government to nothing more than another conference—and officials were prepared to admit that this was an 'admittedly rather narrow interpretation'—staff evidently had a sense of a moral obligation to the Federals.⁹⁰ It was on this more diffuse conception of Britain's post-colonial obligations that the Aden debate increasingly focussed as independence approached.

Nevertheless, Longford chose to ignore the critical implications of his DUS' analysis at this stage. He replied to Wilson's enquiry confirming that Sandys' promises in 1964 did not constitute a 'binding obligation such as one entered into by a Treaty' and that 'taken literally, the undertaking was to do no more than convene a Conference'. Wilson returned with relief that 'surely this is right. We offered to convene a conference. They have turned it down—even after the No. 10 lunch', in reference to the Working Party of August 1965.⁹¹ With Longford quashing Sandys' claim in a press release stating that 'it would be unreasonable to expect us to conclude a defence agreement when we no longer need the base',

⁸⁸(E/81) minute from Galsworthy to Poynton, 25/2/66 (CO 1055/299).

⁸⁹(23 E.iii) 'English translation of address to Lord Beswick by the Chairman of the Federal Supreme Council on the 17th February, 1966', para's 2–5, (CO 1055/307).

⁹⁰(66) Colonial Office 'Debate on the Defence White Paper: Draft notes for Speech', enclosed in letter from J. A. Peduzie (Asst. Private Sec., Ministry of Defence) to R. G. Lavelle (Private Sec., Treasury), 9/3/66 (CO 1055/299).

⁹¹'Defence Review: South Arabia' memorandum from Longford to Prime Minister, 25/2/66, including Wilson marginalia (PREM 13/704).

it seemed that the episode had been brought to an effective conclusion.⁹² During the course of the full debate on the Defence Review in March, Sandys once again accused Healey of trying to ‘rat’ on promises that the Defence Secretary had himself made, but in contrast to the minister’s earlier embarrassment, Healey was able to dismiss Sandys’ claims with confidence on this occasion.⁹³

Sandys had failed to convince the Government that the pledge he had made in office was still legally binding. Instead he set about pulling the debate into the moral realm by debunking the myth that the Federalis had willingly accepted the Defence Review. If the Government were satisfied that they had dismissed their legal obligations to defend an independent South Arabia, there still remained the more awkward question of whether there had been a ‘total breach of faith’—as the Federalis put it—implying a residual moral obligation.⁹⁴ This was a thorny issue for a Labour Party that had always drawn heavily on a rhetoric of moral obligation in their opposition to colonialism, and continued to do so in office. Indeed, one particularly pertinent example was the decision to uphold Sandys’ pledge to grant South Arabia independence in 1968, which was no more legally binding than his offer of a defence treaty.

The question of the morality of Britain’s policy in South Arabia, and indeed of the moral character of the Government in general, was heightened by Wilson’s announcement on 28th February 1966 that he would be calling a snap General Election on 31st March. In this context, Beswick wrote to both Healey and the Prime Minister to warn that they may be ‘faced during the election with this charge about “dishonouring pledges” over Aden’.⁹⁵ To that end, Beswick alerted his colleagues to a helpful press statement given to Reuters by the Chairman of the Federal Supreme Council, in which Saleh was quoted as saying that the ‘South Arabian Federal Government has no intention of seeking a Defence Treaty with Britain after she quits her bases in the area’ and that the ‘presence of the British base has not only marred our reputation

⁹²F. Longford ‘South Arabia Conference, 1964’ press statement, [24/2/66] (PREM 13/704).

⁹³*HC Deb* 07 March 1966, vol 725, col. 1782–1786.

⁹⁴‘Letter to Foreign Secretary from Federal Ministers 8.3.66’ (DSND 14/1/2).

⁹⁵(77) Beswick letter to Healey, 16/3/66 (CO 1055/299); (76) Beswick letter to Prime Minister, 16/3/66 (CO 1055/299).

but has also created an iron curtain between the Federation and Arab countries'. Although the High Commission in Aden had warned Beswick that Saleh had actually 'put a different complexion' on the termination of the defence treaty in discussion with officials, Beswick nonetheless noted with relief that Saleh's comments appeared to invite the conclusion that the only 'moral obligation with which we are left is to reshape and strengthen their own Federal forces' prior to independence.⁹⁶

REVISITING THE DEFENCE REVIEW IN 1966: THE MORAL DEBATE

In the event, South Arabia did not become an issue during the brief General Election period, dominated as it was by economic policy. By early May 1966 there even were grounds for cautious optimism. The Federalis had agreed to further talks in London and offered an olive branch to radicals by conceding their demand for the adoption of the United Nations' resolutions on the territory, including a pledge to hold a general election across the Federation.⁹⁷ More immediately, the Federal Government announced that it would lift the State of Emergency that had been in force since the attempted assassination of Trevaskis in December 1963, issuing a general amnesty to exiled radical leaders such as Al-Asnag and Mackawee, and releasing all political detainees.⁹⁸ However, although the Labour Party had comfortably won the election, increasing their majority from four to ninety six, the post-election honeymoon period proved brief. On 16th May the National Union of Seamen (NUS) called a strike that triggered the Government's worst sterling crisis to date and did serious damage to Britain's balance of payments, dragging on until 1st July.⁹⁹ Thus as one State of Emergency came to an end in South Arabia, Wilson found himself declaring another, at home, on 23rd May.

As the seamen's strike began to take hold, Federali ministers arrived in London for talks. To Wilson's dismay, the Government quickly found

⁹⁶(76) Beswick letter to Prime Minister, 16/3/66 (CO 1055/299).

⁹⁷Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, p. 152; B. Pimlott *Harold Wilson* (London, 1992), pp. 396–400; 'General Election for South Arabia: Federal Government accepts U.N. resolutions' *The Times* 14/5/66.

⁹⁸'S. Arabia agrees to UN terms' *The Guardian* 14/5/66.

⁹⁹Pimlott *Harold Wilson*, p. 408.

itself faced with another ‘parliamentary crisis’—as Wilson put it—initiated by Sandys. Once again the former Colonial Secretary sought to call the honour of the government into doubt, and to sour its relationship with the Federalis at a time of rapprochement.¹⁰⁰ Wilson inadvertently initiated the crisis himself with a passing reference to Sultan Saleh’s comments in February during Prime Minister’s Questions on 10th May.¹⁰¹ Questioned about South Arabia’s chances of success by a critical Viscount Lambton, Wilson responded that ‘it happens to be the fact that the noble Lord’s criticisms are not shared by at any rate [Sultan Saleh] the Federal Internal Security Minister, who has said that the presence of the British base has not only marred the reputation of South Arabia but has created an Iron Curtain between the Federation and other Arab countries’.¹⁰² Beswick had previously warned Wilson that ‘we should be wise not to make too much play in public with the Reuter version’ of Sultan Saleh’s comments. But the Prime Minister decided that it was too valuable a gift not to be used, whatever Saleh may have later said in private to High Commission officials.¹⁰³ This passing comment in the House proved to be a major tactical error on Wilson’s part, as it gave the Opposition an opportunity to return to the question of the Federalis’ reaction to the Defence Review and push the South Arabia debate into the murkier waters of Britain’s moral obligations.

In raising concerns about using Saleh’s comments, Beswick had warned Wilson in February that ‘we do not want anyone to be provoked into claiming that “they never said they don’t want a Treaty; all they said was that they see no hope of getting one”’.¹⁰⁴ Beswick’s fears proved to be entirely justified, with Sandys immediately joining the Question Time debate to demand that the Prime Minister ‘recognise that, whatever [Saleh]...may have said in very difficult circumstances, the Government of South Arabia still want a defence agreement with Britain’. Wilson refused to accept Sandys’ gloss on the Federali position, implying that the Federalis were in support of the Defence Review. Wilson returned

¹⁰⁰H. Wilson *The Labour Government 1964–1970: A Personal Record* (London, 1971), pp. 233, 230–231.

¹⁰¹This episode is noted by Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, p. 153.

¹⁰²*HC Deb* 10 May 1966, vol. 728, col. 217.

¹⁰³(76) Beswick letter to Prime Minister, 16/3/66 (CO 1055/299).

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

that the ‘Federal Government understand that we do not need to be – do not intend to be – in a position to maintain troops either in Aden or near that base which would enable us to have the kind of treaty that the right hon. Gentleman would want us to have’.¹⁰⁵

Sensing an opportunity for a showdown, Sandys once more sought to gain the advantage by exploiting his personal connections with the Federalis, via Trevaskis. A week later he came back to the House with a private member’s bill accusing the Prime Minister of misleading Parliament, signed by some one-hundred-and-forty members. Although the bill itself was easily defeated, the fact that it was based on confidential records leaked by the Federalis to Sandys infuriated Wilson, leading him to accuse the Opposition of undermining his own authority by aligning itself with a foreign government.¹⁰⁶

To prepare his bill, Sandys went straight to Trevaskis. Two days after Wilson’s reference to Saleh in Parliament, Trevaskis got back to Sandys enclosing a copy of the confidential statement made by Saleh to Beswick on 17th February. The former High Commissioner had ‘received it from Moh[amme]d Farid’, the Federal Foreign Minister. Trevaskis explained to Sandys that ‘it completely contradicts the impression – which the Government seeks to convey – that the Federation ‘welcomes’ the proposal to withdraw a British presence from Aden’. Trevaskis admitted that ‘of course, it is true that Sultan Saleh made his indiscreet comment suggesting that it does’, but ‘his reaction was that of a person who has been slapped in the face, saying as bravely as he could that it did not hurt’ and ‘for the Government to quote it as evidence of the Federation’s favourable reactions, when they know very well what Sultan Saleh said to Beswick in his formal statement, is palpably dishonest’.¹⁰⁷ The text of Saleh’s statement to Beswick was indeed unequivocal. The Sultan believed that the closure of the base would cause ‘thousands of our people’ to be ‘thrown on the streets without work’, and would compromise the implementation of the constitutional proposals recently made by the Hone-Bell Report. Moreover, the refusal to sign a defence treaty was flagrantly ‘dishonourable’ and would cause the ‘whole Arab world’

¹⁰⁵ *HC Deb* 10 May 1966, vol. 728, col. 218–219.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Heath to Prime Minister, 17/5/66 (PREM 13/705); ‘Draft letter from the Prime Minister to the Rt. Hon. Edward Heath’ [c.18/5/66] (PREM 13/705).

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Trevaskis to Sandys, 12/5/66 (DSND 14/1/14).

to ‘regard us as fools for having placed so much reliance on the solemn promises of the British Government’.¹⁰⁸

As had been the case with the Defence Review in February, the leakage of the details of confidential negotiations between the British Government and the Federalis, via Trevaskis, gave Sandys the means to embarrass the government publicly and undermine its authority at a particularly sensitive juncture, this time on the eve of the arrival of Federal ministers in London on 23rd May. On receiving Trevaskis’ letter and enclosure, Sandys issued a press release through Conservative Central Office criticising the Prime Minister for having ‘avoided giving any direct reply’ in Questions on 10th May, and claiming that Wilson had ‘sheltered behind the remark of Sultan Saleh’ that had been made ‘in a moment of annoyance’. He continued:

By his answers and his evasions, the Prime Minister grossly misled Parliament. For he knew perfectly well that the Federal Government, far from welcoming Britain’s withdrawal, were shattered by the British Government’s incredible decision to rat on Britain’s solemn obligation... Mr. Wilson knew also that Sultan Saleh had himself, on behalf of the whole Federal Government, delivered the most forceful protest, accusing the British Government of dishonourable conduct and breach of faith.

Flaunting his private contacts, Sandys boasted that the ‘full text of this declaration has just come into my hands; and I feel it my duty to publish it at once’, the entire statement then following in the release.¹⁰⁹

The statement was published in some detail by *The Observer*. The newspaper noted that since Sandys had also made it clear that he was ‘determined to raise this question at an early moment in Parliament’, Wilson ‘looks like having a first-class parliamentary row on his hands’ and ‘at a time when the South Arabian leaders are in London to ask for

¹⁰⁸Conservative Central Office News Service press release ‘English translation of address to Lord Beswick by the Chairman of the Federal Supreme Council on the 17th February, 1966 (in Aden)’, 14/5/66 (DSND 14/1/14). This release was a copy of (23 E.iii) ‘English translation of address to Lord Beswick by the Chairman of the Federal Supreme Council on the 17th February, 1966’, para’s 2–5 (CO 1055/307).

¹⁰⁹Sandys ‘British withdrawal from Aden: Prime Minister misled Parliament’, press statement, 14/5/66 (DSND 14/1/14).

British military and economic support'.¹¹⁰ Beswick was unnerved by Sandys' release and made a counter-statement on 15th May, claiming that Sandys was 'doing Sultan Saleh a great disservice by purporting to publish one part of a long confidential discussion in which many views were exchanged and which ended on a friendly basis'. Beswick insisted that that 'we parted very good friends – very good friends in deed'.¹¹¹ The colonial minister's line was supported in Parliament the next day by the Foreign Minister Michael Stewart, who dismissed Sandys as 'anxious to make mischief'.¹¹² But Beswick was deliberately misleading Parliament, as Sandys well knew. Far from parting as 'very good friends' in February, the minister himself recorded that he had left the Federalis 'deeply and bitterly resentful'.¹¹³

By this time, Wilson was also beginning to attract criticism in the press. Reflecting on the reasons why Sandys' 'attacks' were 'being taken very seriously by the Government and are deeply resented', *The Times*' political correspondent asserted that the Prime Minister knew only too well that

the grave charge of bad faith...cannot be shrugged off when it comes from a former Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary who has considerable personal experience of dealing with South Arabian political leaders and whose contacts within the territory are known to continue. The Government believes it becomes much more serious when it directly involves Sultan Saleh bin Husain al-Audhali, the leader on whom the stability of the area in the future may much depend.

The article went on to suggest that 'undoubtedly Mr. Sandys is focussing attention on the dispute in the hope that the issues will be cleared up' before the arrival of South Arabian ministers in London a week later.¹¹⁴ An editorial printed the following day developed the theme, reporting

¹¹⁰'Sandys hits at Wilson on Aden' *The Observer* 15/5/66.

¹¹¹Beswick press statement quoted in 'Cabinet stung by charges over South Arabia: early reply to Sandys challenge' *The Times* 16/5/66; and in 'Prime Minister may reply to Aden charge today' *The Guardian* 16/5/66.

¹¹²*HC Deb* 16 May 1966, vol. 728, col. 933.

¹¹³Tel. 122 from Beswick to Longford, 17/2/66 (PREM 13/704).

¹¹⁴'Cabinet stung by charges over South Arabia: early reply to Sandys challenge' *The Times* 16/5/66.

that Wilson had ‘climbed down’ in the face of Sandys’ repeated accusations and that the Prime Minister should now ‘make a clean breast of it’ or face ‘suspicions that will create uncertainty and lack of confidence’.¹¹⁵

Not for the last time, Wilson felt himself surrounded by plotters seeking his downfall, with the unions angry over the NUS strike, and now the Conservative Party militating over Arabia.¹¹⁶ Correspondence between Wilson and Heath at the time would appear to confirm that Sandys’ manoeuvring was indeed perceived as a threat not only to the Government’s authority but also to that of the Leader of the Opposition. By 17th May Sandys had tabled an Early Day Motion to the effect that Wilson had misled the House at Questions on 10th May, with support from a cross-section of the Party including Selwyn Lloyd, Tufton Beamish and Patrick Wall.¹¹⁷ Judged by Wilson to be ‘willing to wound but fearing to lead’, Heath wrote a public letter to the Prime Minister to inform him of the Motion and suggested that ‘in accordance with tradition you will take the earliest opportunity of clearing the matter up by making a statement to the House, as I feel sure that you would be the first to acknowledge that your personal faith is being questioned’.¹¹⁸

Wilson refused to be drawn, replying in a letter also sent to the press that ‘it is not the practice for any Government to act on an Early Day Motion tabled by Opposition backbenchers’. Indeed Heath’s ‘interest in the Duncan Sandys operation’, as Wilson put it, suggested a lack of authority on the part of the Leader of the Opposition.¹¹⁹ Although not included in the published letter, Wilson’s earlier draft pointed out that ‘despite the fact that last weekend’s manoeuvre was carried out by and through Conservative Central Office the matter has now been raised in Parliament by Duncan Sandys himself’. Whatever the relationship between Heath and his backbenchers, Wilson’s specific complaint was that

¹¹⁵Editorial ‘The Charge still stands’ *The Times* 17/5/66.

¹¹⁶Pimlott *Harold Wilson*, pp. 406–408; E. Short *Whip to Wilson* (London 1989), pp. 267–268.

¹¹⁷‘Renewed pressure by Tories’ *The Times* 17/5/66.

¹¹⁸Wilson *The Labour Government*, p. 231; Letter from Heath to Wilson, 17/5/66 (PREM 13/705); ‘Mr. Heath’s challenge on South Arabia’ *The Guardian* 18/5/66; ‘Labour counterblast to Mr. Sandys’ *The Times* 18/5/66.

¹¹⁹‘Mr. Wilson suggests Whips meeting about Aden row’ *The Guardian* 19/5/66.

over our 13 years of Opposition the Labour Party went to great lengths, whatever our feelings about the then Government policies, to avoid being drawn into direct association with the foreign governments concerned, in opposition to the then Government of this country. I feel that the Government and Opposition Whips should now meet to consider, in this new and unprecedented situation, what appropriate Parliamentary procedures should be followed.

Marginalia in an official's hand went even further, suggesting that Sandys was guilty of 'action tending to undermine the British Government's position in negotiations with other Governments'.¹²⁰ Indeed on 17th May, Manny Shinwell and other MPs tabled a motion regretting the 'fact that on the eve of important talks on the future of South Arabia Mr. Sandys should have sought to intervene in a way not conducive to a constructive settlement'. The motion demanded that Sandys should curtail his activities and drew 'his attention to the fact that he is now not a Minister but a backbencher'.¹²¹

A similar point was also made by Beswick in a letter to Michael Stewart. As the FO had recently taken over responsibility for South Arabia from the CO, Beswick felt it appropriate to send some reflections on the Sandys episode. The minister told Stewart that 'whilst our position about the defence agreement has been made perfectly clear to the Federal Ministers, and they understand it without accepting it, this issue was clouded at the time of the White Paper publication [in February] by the charge made by Duncan Sandys that we were under some solemn obligation to enter into a defence agreement'. Although Beswick felt that this had been indisputably refuted, the awkward fact remained that, encouraged by Sandys' intervention, 'the Federals still want a defence agreement and will press for it when they come here next week'.

This moral argument had 'clouded' and weakened the entirely legal abrogation of Britain's obligations. Although Beswick remained firm in his belief that Wilson had not misled the House, he was willing to concede in private that Saleh's comments welcoming the British withdrawal were not a fair reflection of the Federalists' true feelings. Rather it was consistent with their efforts to 'put themselves in a patriotic posture

¹²⁰'Draft letter from the Prime Minister to the Rt. Hon. Edward Heath' [c. 18/5/66] (PREM 13/705).

¹²¹'Labour counterblast to Mr. Sandys' *The Times* 18/5/66.

no less aggressive than that of the Adenis and the Liberation groups who have demanded our withdrawal'. Beswick assumed that 'it was this same thought, no doubt, which led Sultan Saleh to make the statement about the base having marred the reputation of South Arabia which, quite reasonably, the Prime Minister quoted', and indeed Beswick was reminded of a conversation with Farid in January, in which the Minister for Foreign Affairs had requested, with admirable foresight, that 'if you are going to withdraw from the base will you please tell us first so that we can demand you leave'.¹²² If Labour ministers did indeed have an accurate understanding of the Federalis' position, Beswick's letter to Stewart suggests that behind the vigorous public efforts to show that the Federalis were willing participants in the British withdrawal, lay a fear that the public might realise the extent to which an ostensibly anti-colonial Labour government was forcing 'neo-colonial' metropolitan policy choices down the throats of unwilling colonial leaders for purely metropolitan interests.

The long-awaited talks between British officials and Federal ministers opened at the FO on 23rd May 1966, coinciding with the declaration of the State of Emergency over the seamen's strike. The negotiations were chaired by the Deputy Under-Secretary, Sir Roger Allen, and with occasional appearances by Michael Stewart.¹²³ Finding that the Federalis were now in a much less co-operative mood than they had been when they had accepted the UN resolutions earlier in the month, and also more interested in discussing post-independence defence arrangements than the implementation of the resolutions, the talks dragged on until on until mid-June. This change in attitude was easily explained. Julian Amery noted in his diary that none other than Sandys 'was guiding [the Minister for Foreign Affairs] Mahommed Farid in his negotiations with the Government'.¹²⁴ The Federalis abandoned the surly acquiescence that had been their position since Beswick's visit, encouraged by Sandys to push hard once again for a defence treaty and emboldened by his recent publication of Saleh's February statement to Beswick. On the evening before the conference met, they made a statement announcing

¹²²Letter from Beswick to Michael Stewart, 17/5/66 (PREM 13/705).

¹²³'New Dispute over South Arabia: support for charge by Mr. Sandys' *The Times* 23/5/66; S. Arabians "spurned Aden offer by Nasser" *The Guardian* 2/6/66.

¹²⁴Amery entry for 22/6/66, personal diary 1966 (AMEJ 4/1/15).

that their demands for a defence treaty ‘remain unchanged and have never been retracted’, denouncing the Labour Government for its decision to let the South Arabian Government be ‘sacrificed’ on the altar of Britain’s ‘own self-interest’.¹²⁵ The Federalis statement also added that the text of Saleh’s statement, as published by Sandys, was both accurate and a fair reflection of their present views, newspapers noting that ‘Mr. Sandys must be gratified by the South Arabian Federal Government’s statement supporting his charges against Mr. Wilson’.¹²⁶

Over the coming weeks it became clear, according to one FO staffer, that although the Federalis were ‘resigned to the fact that there is no present prospect of persuading H.M.G. to provide them with a defence agreement they still nurse the feeling that H.M.G. is under at least a moral obligation to do this’ and that ‘when they saw Mr. Healey, Sheikh Mohammed Farid said that the decision had seemed to them a “stab in the back”’.¹²⁷ Indeed, before departing for London, Farid had told the US Consul in Aden that he had ‘not yet given up hope of securing post-independence defence agreement with UK’, criticizing Wilson and Beswick for ‘playing politics in [the] Commons’ and ‘twisting words of South Arabian ministers in their efforts to get off the hook on which Sandys has impaled them’.¹²⁸ Foreign Office officials felt that the Prime Minister’s position was looking increasingly indefensible. In a briefing with Wilson’s Private Secretary on 14th June, when Sandys tabled his last Question on the subject, they counselled that ‘it would be unwise for the Prime Minister, in answering Mr. Sandys’ Question to say anything which might suggest that the Federal Ministers are no longer anxious for a defence agreement, or that they accept that we have every right to deny them this’.¹²⁹

¹²⁵Amery entry for 22/6/66, personal diary 1966 (AMEJ 4/1/15); statement by Abdurrahman Girgirah (Federal Minister of Information), quoted in ‘Support from S. Arabia for Tory charges’ *The Guardian* 23/5/66.

¹²⁶‘Party conflicts in South Arabia’ *The Guardian* 24/5/66.

¹²⁷Letter from N.M. Fenn (Asst. Private Sec., F. O.) to M. Palliser (Private Sec. to P. M., Foreign Affairs), 4/6/66 (PREM 13/705).

¹²⁸(72) Telegram from the Consulate in Aden to the Department of State, Aden, 18/5/66, 0345Z., in N. Howland (ed.) *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968: Vol. XXI, Near East Region; Arabian Peninsula* (Washington, 2000).

¹²⁹Letter from Fenn to Palliser, 4/6/66 (PREM 13/705).

The Aden debate was now firmly located in the moral realm. With the Federalis and increasingly even FO officials warning Wilson that he had effectively misled the House, the Opposition found themselves in a strong position when the Prime Minister addressed Sandys' motion in the House on 24th May. The publication of Saleh's statement and the Federalis' confirmation of its accuracy only two days before had enabled Sandys to charge that 'nothing that the Prime Minister has said today gives me cause to withdraw my charge'.¹³⁰ In the House, Wilson attacked Sandys for leaking a confidential document and for using his influence in South Arabia to undermine the Government's position (both recurrent themes in the following chapters). Asked by Shinwell to 'clear up the mystery' of the 'document published by the right hon. Member for Streatham', Wilson replied that

I have no information at all; but I do know that over the last 18 months, when we have had this extremely difficult situation in Aden, where we have had to deal with the feelings not only of the Federal members, but also of the Aden population itself, which some right hon. Gentlemen seem to dismiss out of the reckoning altogether, we have had the clear fact that certain right hon. Gentlemen have been in very close touch with certain groups and individuals in South Arabia and have done nothing but harm to what we have been trying to do.

Sandys himself was absent from the debate, as a guest of Forbes Burnham—another reactionary colonial leader to have benefitted from Sandys' support—at the celebration of British Guiana's independence in Georgetown.¹³¹ It therefore fell to Heath to counter that 'were it not for the issue of the statement' by Sandys 'the whole House would never have known the real circumstances of this case'.¹³²

Wilson had found the whole episode a matter of considerable frustration. Reflecting on the debate five years later, he concluded that Sandys' legacy and influence had constituted more general challenge to his authority when it came to colonial matters. Wilson recalled that in

¹³⁰Sandys press statement from Georgetown, British Guiana quoted in 'Challenge by Mr. Sandys' *The Times* 26/5/66.

¹³¹Letter from Sandys to Wilson, 19/5/66 (DSND 14/1/1); Rabe *US Intervention in British Guiana*.

¹³²*HC Deb* 24 May 1966, vol. 729, col. 287.

‘criticising certain ex-ministers for making our task more difficult by their manoeuvrings’ he ‘could have gone further’:

We had one difficulty after another arising out of Mr. Sandys’ ministerial obsession with federations: Rhodesia was a problem deriving from the failure of the Central African Federation; there had been the Malaysia break-up and now there was South Arabia. Still more difficult was the problem I met in dealing with ministers of more than one country. ‘But Mr. Sandys’, they said ‘had given us a pledge’ that the British Government would do this or that. The trouble was there was no written record, note or minutes, and we were more than once accused of bad faith over an alleged Government pledge whose existence we could neither confirm or deny.¹³³

With the author of those pledges acting as a powerful lobbyist in Parliament and repeatedly encouraging their recipients to press the Government for their fulfilment, Wilson was well aware that negotiation with colonial leaders, be they Rhodesian or South Arabian, was becoming far more difficult than it ought to be.

While this carefully timed public challenge to Wilson’s authority played out, the Federalis found that the FO was becoming unexpectedly sympathetic to their demands. Although officials continued to refuse a formal defence treaty, or to let the Federalis take control of counter-terrorist policing in Aden, the South Arabians successfully secured sufficient financial support to double the size of the Federali Regular Army from five to ten battalions—an increase in military spending from £4.6 to £10.1 million *per annum*—in the remaining two years prior to independence. Officials also agreed to continue giving military aid for three years after independence at a rate of £2.5 million *per annum* ‘provided there is no change in political conditions in South Arabia’, or in other words, conditional upon the Federalis retaining power.¹³⁴ This represented a considerable victory for the Federalis, and indeed Stewart and Healey, who had fought off stiff opposition from an economising Exchequer during Cabinet discussions.

The Cabinet minutes from the time reveal a subtle but significant change in official thinking on the South Arabian question. The strictly

¹³³Wilson *The Labour Government*, p. 232.

¹³⁴‘Aden seeks to run its own security’ *The Guardian* 21/5/66; *HC Deb* 13 June 1966, vol. 729, col. 224W; ‘Additional aid for South Arabia’ *The Guardian* 14/6/66.

legal interpretation of the obligation to protect the Federation, that had previously held sway, began to give way to one more influenced by the moral argument that had been pushed so hard by Sandys and the Federalis. Callaghan feared that the cost to the Exchequer would be ‘unacceptably high’ and may have to be continued for more than three years after independence, but Stewart and Healey made a strong case for the Federali cause. The aim must be, Healey argued, to withdraw in ‘good order’ and ‘with honour’, Stewart warning the Cabinet that the alternative would be a disintegration of the Federal government and a ‘relapse into chaos’. A ‘fighting withdrawal’ would not only cost Britain men and material, but ‘we should also be accused of betraying our friends in South Arabia’. At the same time, ‘the humiliation of a disorderly withdrawal would weaken confidence in us in the Persian Gulf: and our failure to bring South Arabia to independence in an orderly manner would damage our prestige throughout the world’.¹³⁵ The tone of this discussion was markedly different from the previous focus on treaty obligations and fears of criticism from the Committee of 24, and it represented a clear acknowledgement of the influence of public accusations of betrayal on policy-making.

Over the course of the Federalis’ visit to London in May and June 1966 it became apparent that the power relationship between Westminster and Al-Ittihad was changing, mirroring the inexorable drift towards decolonisation. Gone was the autocratic enforcement of British policy that had characterised Beswick’s visit in February, and gone was the Federali spirit of compromise that had led ministers to accept the UN’s resolutions and to drop the demand for a post-independence defence treaty during the spring. Helped by Sandys support and advice, the Federalis had won a considerable financial prize by mid-June by adopting a far more bullish position and by making moral rather than legal arguments. Meanwhile, Wilson’s authority was left looking increasingly tarnished in the face of ongoing questions about his honesty and his disregard for Britain’s moral obligations overseas. Although there had been no breakdown in relations, South Arabia was seemingly no closer to achieving lasting stability, as the NLF and FLOSY were now refusing to co-operate with the Federalis in implementing the UN resolutions. In the autumn of 1964, the government had proved incapable of exploiting

¹³⁵ Cabinet Conclusions, 26/5/66, pp. 9–10 (CAB/128/41).

a passing moment of Federali goodwill, remaining as it did fundamentally opposed to building up a strong Federal Government.

Reflecting on the events of the Federalis' visit, Wilson recorded that it had seemed to him that 'day after day the press screamed such headlines as 'Challenge to Wilson', 'Wilson faces new crisis' and other such embarrassments.¹³⁶ And while in public he continued to defend not only his honour but also his claim that Britain had made no solemn pledge to protect South Arabia after independence, in private he seemed less sure of his convictions, ordering an examination of all the records from the conference of 1964 in response to Sandys' parliamentary question on 14th June. Since the FO was obliquely warning that it was 'far from certain' that the files would prove 'innocuous' and the 'disclosure of which might be damaging to our defence and security interests', Wilson stressed the importance of maintaining as much secrecy as possible and was 'very much against an all-party committee unless the thing really does open up again'.¹³⁷

Meanwhile, the Federalis were growing in confidence thanks to Sandys' guidance. In a draft letter written by the Federalis to Wilson at the end of the talks, with corrections in Sandys' hand, they high-handedly thanked the Prime Minister for the 'help you have promised us in building up the efficiency of our armed forces' but reminded him that 'as we have emphasised to you, this is no substitute for a defence agreement', or at least a 'minimum British military presence, including an element of air power, and the necessary facilities for reinforcement'. Not only did it seem unfair that Wilson should be continuing to actively honour the defence agreement with Malaysia, but in the face of the Nasserite threat it seemed to them that 'you will be leaving us like a tethered goat waiting to be devoured by a beast of prey'. Rather than offering gratitude for the offer of substantial financial aid, the letter concluded by noting ministers' 'deep disappointment about the outcome of our talks in London'. The Federalis maintained that since a 'breach of faith' had been committed, 'we still hope that, after further consideration has

¹³⁶Wilson *The Labour Government*, p. 231.

¹³⁷Wilson marginalia on 'Aden' note from Palliser to Prime Minister, 12/6/66; letter from Palliser to Fenn, 20/6/66; letter from Fenn to Palliser, 14/6/66 (PREM 13/705).

been given to the strong representations we have made, Her Majesty's Government will reconsider their unfortunate decision'.¹³⁸

In Anglo-South Arabian relations 1966 was a complicated a fluid year one shaped by numerous conflicting interests. Sandys' voice was only one among many. However, his efforts were often significant, sometimes critical and, on a fundamental level, a clear example of the role of informal politics in the process of decolonisation. Overall, as in 1965, he contributed to the souring of relations between the British Government and the Federalis, and by intervening publicly he undermined the Government's position in negotiations, while privately stiffening the Federalis' resolve. It can also be concluded with certainty that his influence on events was taken as read by both sides. Months after Sandys' leak of Sultan Saleh's statement, Wilson's private secretary was still convinced—correctly on this occasion—that any private correspondence between the Federalis and the Prime Minister 'will no doubt find its way to Duncan S'.¹³⁹ This was a major obstacle to effective, private negotiations between the two governments and continuously raised the possibility of embarrassment in public, as did Sandys' repeated charge that Wilson had misled the House. Meanwhile, it did not escape Beswick's notice that Sandys' interference might also have had the unintended consequence of harming the Federali negotiating position, commenting to Wilson that 'Sandys was not helping the Federali cause' as Beswick had 'always understood that they did not wish to appear in public as pleading for British military assistance'.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the Federalis evidently found Sandys' advice invaluable, taking a position much closer to his own once he started to guide them in the negotiations, and abandoning their more moderate stance of February to May 1966.

¹³⁸'Draft letter to Prime Minister' [mid-June 1966, at the end of the talks] (DSND 14/1/1).

¹³⁹Palliser marginalia to Prime Minister, 9/9/66, on letter from D. F. Murray (Head of S. E. Asia Dept., F. O.) to Palliser 8/9/66 (PREM 13/1295). The letter in question was from Chairman of Federal Supreme Council (Darwish) to Prime Minister, 1/9/66 (PREM 13/1295), a copy of which was indeed sent to Sandys and can be found in DSND 14/1/1.

¹⁴⁰'Comments by Lord Beswick on the Draft Reply to Aden P. Q. (Mr. Duncan Sandys) [14/6/66]', para. 2, enclosed in letter from Beswick to Prime Minister, 14/6/66 (PREM 13/705).

1967: THE DEFENCE OFFER

Following two years of Federali and Conservative pressure, the Labour Government made a surprise reversal in its South Arabian policy and offered the Federal Government a post-independence defence deal in the spring of 1967. Although under the terms of the agreement there would be no British troops on the ground, the FO pledged to station a carrier-based force off Aden for a period of six months, and promised RAF bomber protection thereafter from bases in the Gulf in the event of ‘military aggression’.¹⁴¹ Sandys was jubilant and told Mohammed Farid that the change in policy represented a ‘complete reversal of the British Government’s general attitude’.¹⁴² Appreciative as ever, Farid thanked Sandys ‘for all your help and encouragement, without which there might have been no change whatsoever in H.M.G.’s policy’.¹⁴³

This surprising change in policy has attracted little attention from historians. Of the two surveys of South Arabian policy that draw on official records, neither Mawby nor Pieragostini give sufficient prominence to the pro-Federali turn in 1967. Indeed the latter gives little attention to policy-making after the Defence Review of 1966.¹⁴⁴ In his general survey of decolonisation, Hyam’s conclusion that the Federalis were ‘cynically ditched’ was a fair judgment on the early direction of Labour’s South Arabian policy, but ignores the late pro-Federali turn.¹⁴⁵ To the extent that they have attracted scholarly attention, the origins of the defence deal have been attributed to an attempt to woo the Adeni population away from Nasser, and pressure from Saudi Arabia and the USA.¹⁴⁶

Official and unofficial documents from the period demonstrate that this radical redirection of policy in fact represented not only an effort to outmanoeuvre the UN, but was also the apogee of Sandys’ and the

¹⁴¹ *HC Deb* 19 June 1967, vol. 748, col. 1136.

¹⁴² Letter from Sandys to Sheikh Mohammed Farid al-’Aulaqi, 22/6/67 (DSND 14/1/1).

¹⁴³ Letter from Farid to Sandys, 31/3/67 (DSND 14/1/2).

¹⁴⁴ Mawby *British Policy in Aden*; Pieragostini *Britain, Aden and South Arabia*.

¹⁴⁵ Hyam *Britain’s Declining Empire*, p. 360.

¹⁴⁶ Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, p. 152; J. Ducker ‘The international context of South Arabia and British policy’ in Hinchcliffe et al. (eds.) *Without Glory in Arabia*, p. 74; H. von Bismarck *British Policy in the Persian Gulf, 1961–1968: Conceptions of Informal Empire* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 188, 220.

Federali ministers' influence on Labour's policy-making. In as late as March 1967 little seemed to have changed since the previous spring. While the Foreign and Defence Secretaries continued to maintain in Parliament that Britain had no obligation to defend South Arabia after independence, Sandys was still repeating his claim that ministers were misleading the House and that the 'honour of Britain' was at stake, as he complained in a further open letter to the Prime Minister.¹⁴⁷ In early March, Federali ministers came to London to ask the FO, once again, to honour the 'Sandys agreement to give a defence treaty'.¹⁴⁸ However, change was in the air. Although Wilson still denied Sandys' claim that a solemn pledge had been made, he acknowledged for the first time that there had at least been 'considerable confusion at the time about the outcome of the constitutional conference over which you presided in June 1964'.¹⁴⁹

Meanwhile, a radical reassessment of South Arabian policy was drawn up at the FO in the first two weeks of March. In December 1966 the UN had resolved to send a mission to Aden to help prepare South Arabia for independence by 1968.¹⁵⁰ Although the departure of the Mission was delayed by several months thanks to an *impasse* over its composition, it was announced in February 1967 that three representatives had been found and that it would be arriving in the colony in a matter of weeks.¹⁵¹ The prospect of imminent UN scrutiny sharpened fears at the FO that the Mission might set the terms of Britain's withdrawal unless a final agreement could be settled with the Federalis before the arrival of the Mission. The resulting proposal amounted to 'fairly radical changes', the essence of which was the suggestion that 'we should effectively go part of the way towards giving South Arabia a defence guarantee, although only against external aggression, for only the first six months after independence and without any major delay in our own planned departure'.

¹⁴⁷ *HC Deb* 28 February 1967, vol. 742, col. 281–404; letter from Sandys to Prime Minister, 1/3/67 (DSND 14/1/1).

¹⁴⁸ 'S. Arabia anxiety unallayed' *The Times* 8/3/67; 'Second meeting of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs with the Supreme Council held on the evening of 17th March, 1967', copy of minutes (DSND 14/1/2).

¹⁴⁹ Draft letter from Prime Minister to Sandys, in reply to letter from Sandys to Prime Minister, 1/3/67, written by [Murray] F. O. (PREM 131295).

¹⁵⁰ 'Vote in U.N. for Aden Mission' *The Times* 3/12/67.

¹⁵¹ 'Leader found for Aden Mission' *The Times* 22/2/67.

Despite these caveats, the Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that this ‘does mean conceding in substance, if not in form, a defence agreement with South Arabia for a short period after independence’.¹⁵²

This plan was then confidentially proposed to the Federalis by George Thomson—Minister of State at the Foreign Office—on 17th March, conditional upon an early British withdrawal in November 1967, rather than the planned departure in January 1968.¹⁵³ Thomson explained to a surprised Supreme Council that, although they had strongly expressed their desire that independence should be granted in late 1968, it was not a matter for negotiation as ‘our history of decolonisation shows that the final decision on any independence date lies with H.M.G.’.¹⁵⁴ However, the Government offered ‘great admiration for the courageous stand of the Federal Government’ and ‘in view of the strength of your ministers’ case’ the Government announced that it had ‘changed its position over carrying on of military role after Independence’. The Federalis were told in no uncertain terms that ‘this is most important and do not underestimate it’.¹⁵⁵

Over the coming weeks, events took a dramatic turn when the UN Mission arrived in Aden on 2nd April, only to leave five days later claiming non-co-operation on the part of British officials.¹⁵⁶ In the aftermath of this public relations disaster, the Minister without Portfolio—Lord Shackleton—was twice sent to Aden in April and May to assess what had gone wrong, to promote a broad-based government and to push the Federalis for an answer to Thomson’s offer.¹⁵⁷ Shackleton’s prognosis was that it was not only time for a new High Commissioner, but that it would also be prudent to take a stronger pro-Federali line,

¹⁵²Memorandum from B. Trend (Cabinet Sec.) to Prime Minister, 9/3/67, para’s. 2 and 6, (PREM 13/1295).

¹⁵³Memorandum from Trend to Prime Minister, 14/3/67 (PREM 13/1295); the offer is noted by Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, p. 155.

¹⁵⁴‘Second meeting of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs with the Supreme Council held on the evening of 17th March, 1967’, copy of minutes (DSND 14/1/2).

¹⁵⁵‘First meeting of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs with the Supreme Council held at 100 hours on 17th March, 1967’, copy of minutes (DSND 14/1/2).

¹⁵⁶‘Aden strike-bound as U.N. group arrives’ *The Times* 3/4/67; ‘Departing U.N. Mission denounce Britain’ *The Times* 8/4/67.

¹⁵⁷‘Lord Shackleton has two main hopes’ *The Times* 14/4/67; ‘Mr. Brown Denies Rift’ *The Times* 12/5/67.

recommending that the RAF retain a small force at Khormaksar airfield for two years after independence.¹⁵⁸ Following George Brown's surprise decision to recall Richard Turnbull from Aden and to replace him with Nasser's confidant, Sir Humphrey Trevelyan, press rumours began to hint on 11th May at a major reversal.¹⁵⁹

Brown finally made the defence offer public in June. Announcing the policy reversal to the House, the Foreign Secretary admitted that he had come to 'recognise the force of some of the arguments' made by the Opposition and in consideration of the likelihood of an Egyptian invasion of an independent South Arabia, had now offered a 'major reassurance' to the Federal Government. Alongside further increases in military aid—notably the creation of a substantial South Arabian air force—the final details of the plan first proposed in March amounted to a 'strong naval force in South Arabian waters for the critical first six months' and a force of V-bombers stationed 'within easy range' on the Omani island of Masirah for at least six months and 'for as long thereafter as Her Majesty's Government may determine'.¹⁶⁰ Although a ban on radical political parties was to be lifted, Brown also announced two further concessions to the Federal cause: trial by jury was to be suspended, and independence would not come—as threatened by Thomson—in November, but would be granted on 9th January 1968, allowing more time for the development of the Federal armed forces.¹⁶¹

Underpinning these specific measures was a sea-change in Labour front-bench attitudes towards South Arabian politicians. Previously it had been a commonplace amongst ministers, including Thomson, to dismiss the Federal rulers as feudal stooges while making overtures to the supposedly progressive NLF and FLOSY.¹⁶² Now Thomson courted vociferous opposition from his own backbenches by suggesting that the 'present South Arabian ministers have been often unfairly criticised for their unwillingness to accept democratic procedures' and had 'stuck it out in great difficulty'. Thomson had 'tried and tried and tried again'

¹⁵⁸Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, pp. 155–156.

¹⁵⁹'Aden post given to Sir H. Trevelyan' *The Times* 11/5/67; 'Premier will resist pressure from Faisal' *The Guardian* 7/5/67; 'S. Arabia rejects new offer' *The Times* 15/5/67.

¹⁶⁰*HC Deb* 19 June 1967, vol. 748, col. 1133–1136; see also Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, p. 157.

¹⁶¹*HC Deb* 19 June 1967, vol. 748, col. 1139, 1142.

¹⁶²Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, p. 117.

to bring radical politicians to the negotiating table, but the Government had been left with no option other than to back the Federalis ‘as a result of the failure’ of the radicals ‘to respond to the initiatives we took’.¹⁶³

Brown’s announcement, which was met with strong feelings on both sides of the House, was remarkable as it constituted the only offer of a post-independence defence agreement to be made by the Wilson Government to a British dependency. It was also recognised as a major triumph for the Opposition, sparking a backbench revolt amongst Labour MPs who denounced Brown’s ‘Palmerstonian’ speech as a ‘policy take-over by Mr. Sandys’. Brown was called to account for his actions at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Brown sought to placate his critics. Trying to placate his critics, he reportedly told backbenchers that he ‘had been anxious to get as much bipartisan support for the Government’s package settlement as he could contrive, and so had won Mr. Sandys by losing Labour’.¹⁶⁴ An exultant Sandys crowed that Brown had ‘belatedly decided to do exactly what we have long been pressing him to do’, joking that ‘once or twice I thought I was listening to myself’.¹⁶⁵

As had been the case in 1965 and 1966, Sandys exploited privileged informal access to confidential records of the negotiations between Whitehall and Al-Ittihad and, at the request of the Federalis, guided ministers in their negotiations with the Foreign Office. On 17th March he received the confidential minutes of Thomson’s meeting with the Federalis that very day from the ever-loyal Trevaskis. Sandys was then able to pass their contents to Heath two months before they were made public.¹⁶⁶ While Sandys and the Conservative leadership were kept up to date about Thomson’s visit to Aden in March, the press was left in comparative ignorance. *The Times* only managed to get wind of the plan to bring independence forward to November and a mention of ‘air cover’ for a few months, while *The Guardian* reported quite mistakenly that the trip had ‘convinced the South Arabian leaders that Britain

¹⁶³ *HC Deb* 19 June 1967, vol. 748, col. 1259, 1251–1252.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Mr. Brown surprised by Party disquiet on Aden’ *The Times* 29/6/67; 26/6/67 *The Guardian* ‘Brown ‘tones down’ UN speech on Israel’; ‘Crisis in Aden: analysing some of the ingredients’ *The Times* 30/6/67.

¹⁶⁵ *HC Deb* 19 June 1967, vol. 748, col. 1178.

¹⁶⁶ Letter from Trevaskis to Sandys, 25/4/67; letter from Sandys to Heath, 28/4/67 (DSND 14/1/1).

would on no account offer a defence agreement after independence was proclaimed'.¹⁶⁷

Two weeks after Thomson's visit in March, Farid wrote to Sandys asking for guidance. Thomson had given the Federalis a month to respond to his offer, and they found themselves torn between accepting the time-limited terms or holding out for an indefinite defence treaty. Farid explained that his arrival had been unexpected and that 'in the beginning, we refused the offer completely, but later on we took the line that while we welcome the change of heart on the part of H.M.G., we hope it will be a complete change'. When the Federalis asked for more time to consider, Thomson tried unsuccessfully to threaten them into an immediate acceptance by claiming that 'H.M.G. might unilaterally fix a date of Independence and withdraw the defence offer'. The British minister finished with a plea—rendered futile by Farid's letter to Sandys—'not to reveal any details'. Unsure how to proceed, Farid asked for Sandys' assistance once again. The moral argument for obligation so frequently deployed by Federal ministers and Sandys alike was seeming to have an impact on the Government. Farid felt that 'sure H.M.G is beginning to have pangs of conscience' and surmised 'now that the door is half open we must all work hard to have it fully opened'. To that end, he informed Sandys that a future meeting with Thomson was on the table, hoping that it would take place not in Aden but in London 'because then we will have the benefit of your advice'.¹⁶⁸

Sandys' advice to the Federalis was to stand firm and refuse Thomson's offer. In an impassioned speech made in Parliament on Thomson's return—which Sandys had already sent to Farid—he demanded stricter anti-terrorist measures and denounced the Government for its 'shameful story of deceit and bad faith'. Sandys believed that ministers had 'double-crossed the Government of the Federation' and 'blackened the name of Britain throughout the Middle East'. Brown gave a tart riposte that Sandys' was 'doing his best, as he has done so often in the past, to ensure that bloodshed goes on, instead of helping to bring about a reasonable stability in that area'.¹⁶⁹ To *The*

¹⁶⁷'Aden speed up on Independence' *The Times* 20/3/67; 'Mr. Brown spells out his terms on Aden' *The Guardian* 21/3/67.

¹⁶⁸Letter from Farid to Sandys, 31/3/67 (DSND 14/1/2).

¹⁶⁹*HC Deb* 20 March 1967, vol. 743, col. 1066, 1087.

Times' parliamentary correspondent, waxing lyrical from the press gallery, the debate was dominated by Sandys: 'battered but still dangerous, the hulk of the last surviving Tory gunboat' launching a 'bitter broadside against Government policy in Aden'.¹⁷⁰

Farid greatly enjoyed reading Sandys' 'excellent and strong speech' and was grateful to him for 'fighting our case so hard'. He also asked him for more specific guidance.¹⁷¹ It so happened that Sandys had recently received an invitation to visit King Faisal. Since Sandys also wished to talk with Farid 'urgently before any new decisions are taken' but felt that 'it would not be a good thing for me to visit Aden at the moment', Sandys suggested that the Federali minister meet him in Jeddah. In the meantime he urged Farid to 'stand firm in your present position', since in view of the 'fiasco of the United Nations visit the British Government are reviewing the whole of their policy' and would be 'greatly influenced by the attitude which you adopt'. Sandys ventured that in his opinion

you should continue to refuse to agree to a date for independence without a firm promise of a defence agreement. If the British Government threaten to fix a date for independence unilaterally it is better to allow them to do so rather than to commit yourselves to the acceptance of a decision with which you do not agree. Whatever they may say now I do not believe that the British Government will be able just to walk out and leave South Arabia totally defenceless.¹⁷²

As will be seen, this bullish advice was probably sound in the short term, but judged in the light of the collapse of the Federali position at independence, it was nothing but damaging for both Federali and British interests in the long run.

While Lord Shackleton was in Aden seeking Federali agreement for the new defence plan, Sandys finally decided to expose publicly the details of Thomson's offer to the Federalis in Parliament on 10th April. He then left for Saudi Arabia on 15th April with the aim of stiffening

¹⁷⁰'Verbal grenades tossed in Commons debate' *The Times* 21/3/67.

¹⁷¹Letter from Farid to Sandys, 31/3/67 (DSND 14/1/2).

¹⁷²Letter from Saudi Arabian ambassador to London to Sandys, 10/4/67 (DSND 14/26); tel. from Sandys to Farid, 10/4/67 (DSND 14/1/2).

Saudi support for the Federal government.¹⁷³ Anglo-Saudi relations had seen a marked improvement in recent years, the Saudis increasingly looking to Britain rather than the USA as their preferred Western ally. Following the Suez Crisis of 1956, the Riyadh government had suspended relations with Britain, but in the wake of the Yemeni Revolution of 1962—recognised by the USA but not by Britain—relations between the two countries had warmed. By the spring of 1966, Wilson was being briefed that ‘we are largely dependent on Saudi Arabian co-operation, if we are to carry out our disengagement programme [from South Arabia] successfully’ and the Saudis were being offered a generous and controversial ‘Magic Carpet’ air defence contract.¹⁷⁴ King Faisal, like Shah Reza Pahlavi in Iran, had been dismayed by the announcement of Britain’s plan to withdraw. However any Saudi commitment to provide active support for the Federation of South Arabia was proving elusive, and it was Sandys’ hope that his personal standing with the King might yield results.¹⁷⁵

His secretary’s notes for the trip in April 1967 reveal that over the next week Sandys met with a variety of ministers and politicians.¹⁷⁶ One influential figure with whom Sandys tried but failed to meet was Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden, the wealthy leader of the expatriate South Arabian Hadhrami community in Saudi Arabia, and father of Osama. Bin Laden had recently contacted the High Commission in Aden to the effect that he wished to ‘cooperate with HMG in ensuring a sound future for South Arabia’, claiming that he ‘had the full support of King Faisal and could draw on Saudi funds as well as his own means if there were a British policy for the future of South Arabia which had reasonable prospects of building a viable independent state’.¹⁷⁷ This initiative came to nothing. Farid also failed to meet Sandys as he was busy with Shackleton, putting ‘our case as strongly as you would like us to’. He sent the Federal Minister for Information, Abdul Rahman Girgirah,

¹⁷³ *HC Deb* 10 April 1967, vol. 744, col. 847.

¹⁷⁴ N. Gardner ‘The Harold Wilson Government, Airwork Services Limited, and the Saudi Arabian Air Defence Scheme, 1965-73’ *Journal of Contemporary History* 42, 2 (2007), pp. 352–353.

¹⁷⁵ Bismarck *British Policy in the Persian Gulf*, p. 193; Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, p. 137.

¹⁷⁶ Appointment notes for Saudi Arabian trip, April 1967 (DSND 14/26).

¹⁷⁷ (4) Tel. 295 from CO to Turnbull, 20/4/66 (IOR/20/D/393).

in his place. Sandys met various other South Arabian politicians, including exiled members of the South Arabian League in Beirut on his return journey.¹⁷⁸ During his visit, Sandys also met with Billy Maclean—a former Conservative MP and leading supporter of the mercenary effort in the Yemen—and took a two-day trip to see Royalist operations inside the war-torn country. Acting as host, David Smiley later recalled that Sandys was taken to the British mercenary headquarters at Amara and stayed overnight in the mountains at some personal risk: the ‘comfortable cave’ that Smiley had arranged was detonated two days later by hidden time bombs.¹⁷⁹ Sandys was ‘impressed with the high morale of the Royalist forces’ and was no doubt gratified to see that the mercenary operation that he had helped initiate when in office (see Chap. 2) was still holding up in the face of Republican forces backed by Nasser, with positive implications for the future of an independent Federali South Arabia.¹⁸⁰

More importantly, Sandys enjoyed a ‘full and frank exchange of views’ on the South Arabian problem during two meetings with King Faisal and was ‘encouraged to find that there was such a close identity of opinion’.¹⁸¹ Writing afterwards to the British Ambassador in Jeddah, Sandys reflected that the King and his chief ministers were evidently ‘acutely worried about the future outlook in South Arabia; and though they speak with great politeness, they undoubtedly feel that Britain has a duty to restore order in Aden before pulling out’.¹⁸² Although the Saudis represented the Federal Government’s only significant hope for friendship after independence, Faisal’s position had been characterised by vacillation and he had yet to make any firm offer of support. Sandys was not alone in thinking that his visit might help matters. Another Conservative Arabia watcher, Viscount Lambton, wrote to encourage Sandys in his efforts. Lambton had heard on a recent trip to the country ‘from all sides the appreciation expressed over the lead that you were giving regarding Aden, and I believe your name stands higher than any other

¹⁷⁸Letter from Farid to Sandys, 28/4/67 (DSND 14/1/2); telephoned message from Farid to Sandys, 12/4/[67] (DSND 14/1/1); letter from Sandys to Farid, 24/4/67 (DSND 14/1/1).

¹⁷⁹D. Smiley *Arabian Assignment* (London, 1975), pp. 216–217.

¹⁸⁰‘Visit by Mr. Duncan Sandys to the Yemen’, Sandys press statement, 24/4/67 (DSND 14/32).

¹⁸¹Letter from Sandys to King Faisal, 25/4/67 (DSND 14/26).

¹⁸²Letter from Sandys to British Ambassador, Saudi Arabia, 26/4/67 (DSND 14/26).

Conservative politician there'. Congratulating Sandys on his decision to go, Lambton judged that a 'visit from you to the country could do more than anything else to persuade the King and Prince Sultan to increase the aid which they are giving to Yemen' and the Federalis.¹⁸³

Sandys' visit does appear to have encouraged Faisal to offer more concrete support to the Federalis, along with pressure from Amery. Whilst Sandys was visiting Saudi Arabia, it was announced publicly that Faisal was expanding his air force with British Lightning and Hawker Hunter jet aircraft and with surface-to-air missiles from the USA, with the aim of getting Nasser out of Yemen before the British left South Arabia.¹⁸⁴ Meanwhile in a meeting with Healey in May, Amery reported from his own recent trip that British policy in South Arabia was now 'beginning to cause serious concern' in Saudi Arabia. To the Saudis, the proposed withdrawal seemed to open the door to Nasser not only in the Yemen but also in the Gulf, and accordingly Amery believed that Faisal 'might well offer HMG some financial incentive to prolong the retention of a British military presence in Aden'.¹⁸⁵

Faisal was indeed beginning to change his stance. Having initially discarded the British departure as a political manoeuvre, the King seemed now to have decided to help the Federalis put pressure on Whitehall. The Yemeni mercenary leader, Jim Johnson, noted in May that Faisal had decided to come to London 'encouraged by Julian [Amery] and Duncan Sandys, with the intention of trying to persuade the British Govt to change its mind' about South Arabia. Sandys and Amery had led Faisal to 'believe that they may delay their departure from Aden and that they will then give some sort of defence agreement up to three years after the departure'. However, Johnson judged that Sandys' and Amery's bluff had proved counter-productive: the Government's position was so far from 'what the King expected on his arrival' that 'far from strengthening his will to fight, it will tend to encourage the present vacillation of Saudi policy'.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³Letter from Viscount Anthony Lambton MP to Sandys, 7/4/67 (DSND 14/1/1).

¹⁸⁴'King Faisal preparing for Yemen showdown' *The Times* 18/4/67.

¹⁸⁵(8) 'Note of meeting between the Rt. Hon. Julian Amery PC, and the Secretary of State for Defence on Wednesday 10th May [1967]' (CAB 164/139).

¹⁸⁶Letter from J. Johnson to Gooley (British embassy at Jeddah), 19/5/67 quoted in Hart-Davis *The War that Never Was*, p. 323.

Between Sandys' trip to Saudi Arabia in April and Brown's announcement of the new defence deal with South Arabia in June, the Government continued unsuccessfully to seek an accommodation with Al-Asnag, as it had done since 1964. But official records show a creeping note of frustration with Al-Asnag and a growing sympathy for the Federalis.¹⁸⁷ Shackleton was sent to Aden again on 11th May, following the failure of the UN Mission. He offered to move the date of independence from November 1967 to January 1968. However the Federalis continued to drive a hard bargain, demanding independence no earlier than September 1968, and making it conditional upon another three years of air support.¹⁸⁸ Throughout this period of negotiation prior to Brown's announcement, the Federalis adopted a highly intransigent negotiating position, reflecting Sandys' contention that the Government was bluffing and would still offer a full defence treaty if pushed.

The new High Commissioner, Humphrey Trevelyan, arrived in Aden in May 1967. He was concerned to find that the Federalis were still 'not yet convinced that we shall not give them a Defence Agreement and leave ground forces'. Trevelyan was even more disturbed that 'as they come to realize that we are not going to meet them on this or on the date of independence, there is a danger that the Federal Government will disintegrate'.¹⁸⁹ Trevelyan's warning proved prescient, as a week later his Political Officer reported a conversation with the Sharif of Beihan in which the ruler had rejected 'talk of aircraft carriers' as 'nonsense' and proposed that 'if Britain refused to give a defence treaty, all the Rulers should withdraw from Al-Ittihad and return to their States and then publicly announce that they had dissolved the Federation because Britain had failed to honour its pledge'. It was the Sharif's opinion that, without a full defence treaty, an Egyptian invasion was inevitable and, he for one, felt that the Federalis would be better off having 'broken with the British beforehand' rather than face Nasser's troops as 'British stooges'.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, only a fortnight before Brown's announcement, Trevelyan was reporting that the Federalis 'still seem to expect something more' and that the FO had to face the possibility that 'when Federal ministers are

¹⁸⁷ Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, p. 170.

¹⁸⁸ (82) tel. 103 F. O. to Missions, 16/5/67 (FCO 27/4).

¹⁸⁹ (90) tel. 616 Aden High Commission (Trevelyan) to F. O., 28/5/67 (FCO 27/4).

¹⁹⁰ (106) Tel. 645 Aden H. C. (Trevelyan) to F. O., 3/6/67 (FCO 27/4).

finally convinced that we are not going to change our policy they will give up, following the Sharif's example'.¹⁹¹

Brown's announcement of the defence deal in June 1967 signalled the end of Sandys' exchanges with Farid and all but brought to an end his involvement with the South Arabian issue. Although all sides felt the deal was unsatisfactory in various respects, there was an acknowledgement that it was probably the best that the Federalis could hope to get. The focus of events then moved almost immediately to the Crater District of Aden Town, where the impact of the Six Day War had helped to cause a spasm of violence, quelled only by the arrival of 'Mad Mitch' and the Argyll Regiment.

However, one other issue still concerned Sandys at this late stage. Drawing on his experience of decolonisation in East Africa when in office, he suggested that the 'most disturbing feature in the whole situation' was however the 'unsatisfactory state of the Federal army and police'. He had raised the point once before in April 1967, when he had warned Farid that

from various quarters, I have heard that there are a number of officers who make no attempt to conceal their strong Nasserite sympathies. These men, who can easily be identified, must be removed as quickly as possible. This may cause criticism; but you cannot risk keeping disloyal people in key positions. If any purging has to be done, now is the time to do it, while the British authorities are still there to help you in case of trouble. After independence, it may be too late. The Federation could not hope to survive a combined coup by the Army and FLOSY.¹⁹²

Sandys stood by this prophetic advice when the Federal Army did indeed mutiny on 20th June,¹⁹³ urging Farid to carry out a 'purge in consultation with the British military authorities' since

if they have advance warning of the possibility of a further mutiny, they can make a show of force which will probably be sufficient to prevent trouble, or, if it occurs, to suppress it instantly, as we did in the Kenya mutiny in 1964. I realise the difficulty and the danger of doing what I propose. But I

¹⁹¹(110) Tel. 885 Aden H. C. (Trevelyan) to F. O., 7/6/67 (FCO 27/4).

¹⁹²Letter from Sandys to Farid, 24/4/67 (DSND 14/1/1).

¹⁹³'18 British die in Aden army mutiny' *The Times* 21/6/67.

believe it would be fatal if you go into independence with forces on whose loyalty you cannot rely.

Yet for the first time since the summer of 1965, he also encouraged the Federalis to make their peace with the British Government. Sandys noted with relief that the ‘belated suspension of trial by jury is an important decision and will, I hope, give the impression that the British authorities mean to tackle terrorism more vigorously’. He also suggested that

while George Brown’s statement does not, in certain important respects, go far enough, I am sure you will agree that it is an enormous step in the right direction. It reflects a complete reversal of the British Government’s general attitude towards internal security and external defence. George Brown’s statement clearly commits Britain to come to the assistance of South Arabia in the event of ‘military aggression’.

And after months of urging the Government to back the Federalis, Sandys concluded that

Brown’s statement makes it clear that now, at last, the British Government are putting their money on the Federal Government, and have accepted that it is the Federal Government and none other to whom power would be transferred next January. I believe, therefore, that despite all your justifiable doubts and misgivings about the British Government’s intentions over the past year, you can now look upon them with rather more confidence and try and work out with them agreed solutions to your common problems.¹⁹⁴

Thus ended Sandys’ role as informal adviser to the Federalis. Although he continued to press for an indefinite defence treaty and a slower withdrawal in Parliament, the rapid descent into chaos over the summer and autumn of 1967 rendered not only the British Government but also the Federalis and therefore Sandys largely irrelevant by September 1967.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴Letter from Sandys to Farid, 22/6/67 (DSND 14/1/1).

¹⁹⁵The final collapse of the Federal government is well documented by Mawby *British Policy in Aden*, pp. 170–175.

CONCLUSION

This analysis of Sandys' influence on British policy in South Arabia between 1964 and 1967 adds a new dimension to the conventional explanation of the collapse of authority in the territory by revealing his own *post-officio* role, the power of the Federali lobby and the growing sympathy of the Labour government for the Federali cause. In turn, these features of the late-colonial presence in South Arabia were symptomatic of the Labour Government's more general vulnerability to informal influence from politicians, officials and colonial nationalists who remained committed to the previous Conservative Government's approach to decolonisation (a theme most clearly illustrated in Chap. 6).

Sandys was the most prominent and persistent supporter of the Federali cause in Britain. His campaign succeeded in weakening the Labour Government's position by exploiting privileged access to the confidential records of negotiations with South Arabian leaders. With considerable support from the Conservative Party and, crucially, aided by Trevaskis, Sandys fought the Federali cause in public by repeatedly embarrassing the government on moral grounds with claims of bad faith in Parliament, and reducing the Government's room for manoeuvre by compromising the secrecy of negotiations. At the same time, in private, he encouraged the Federalis to believe that the Government's pledge to withdraw wholesale from Aden was a bluff and that ministers could still be persuaded to grant a defence agreement.

Sandys' meddling did contribute to a temporary victory in the form of the defence offer of 1967 but, in the long run, its effects ran quite contrary to his intentions. By contributing to a fatal delay in finding a settlement, Sandys and the Federali lobby played a critical role in keeping the PSP out of power, as they had always hoped. But in so doing, they helped to bring about the collapse of authority in the summer of 1967, which left the British Government little option but to bring forward the date of independence, give up on the Federalis and, soon after, to abandon the colony. Struggling with the divided nature of the Federation—a legacy of Sandys' own time in office—the Government's policy of seeking a broad-based South Arabian government was well-intentioned and had a chance of success in March 1965. But after the failure of the conference, the approach proved unrealistic thanks to Nasser's support of the PSP and FLOSY, the increasing recourse to violence, and the

fundamental differences between the radical politicians of Aden and the reactionary rulers of the hinterland.

Ultimately, the Federalis represented the only serious chance for stability after independence. As its other options ran out, the Government finally decided to put aside its ideological objections to the seemingly feudal sheiks and increasingly backed the Federal Government from March 1967. South Arabian policy began to resemble the approach in the Trucial States where traditional rulers were successfully being groomed for independence. However, thanks to the intransigent position recommended by Sandys and adopted by the Federalis—which ultimately achieved almost no advance on the original defence offer—three months elapsed, during which tensions in both Aden and the Middle East rose, culminating in the Six Day war, the Federal Army mutiny and the loss of government control in Aden. Nasser's defeat by Israel fatally undermined the authority of Al-Asnag and FLOSY but the Federalis were too weak to take back the initiative and from July onwards the NLF was able to occupy state after state as the Federation collapsed.

If Sandys was the most prominent actor in the Federali lobby, he was by no means alone. One other former Conservative minister features in the Colonial Office and Foreign Office records. Having developed an interest in South Arabia when Minister for Aviation, Julian Amery, was also, to a greater degree than Sandys, a friend of Trevaskis was responsible for establishing British mercenary support for the Yemeni Royalists thanks to his association with 'Billy' Maclean.¹⁹⁶ In late 1964, Amery created a flurry of concerned exchanges between officials by proposing to visit Aden at the same time as Turnbull was due to arrive in January 1965. Hilton Poynton's opposition to the visit demonstrates that Greenwood's PUS was well aware of Amery's potential influence on the colony. In Poynton's opinion 'it would be an intolerable embarrassment to the new High Commissioner to have this party arrive on his heels, and it is not really fair to ask him to cope with [Amery] until he has been in the saddle for some weeks and got his bearings' since Amery was an 'opposition ex-Minister who is known to favour policies which are, I think, more pro-Ruler, pro-Yemeni Royalist and anti-Nasser than those pursued by Mr. Sandys'. Amery's proposal to take Billy Maclean with him was even more worrying. Poynton felt that it would be 'disastrous

¹⁹⁶Hart-Davis *The War That Never Was*, pp. 7–8.

if Colonel Maclean were to be seen swanning round South Arabia' and it would be 'worse still if he were seen doing so in the company of a senior ex-Minister (who it is far from certain is not himself an active con- niver at Colonel Maclean's activities)'.¹⁹⁷ Amery was aware that his 'pres- ence could give rise to undesirable speculation', but he refused to cancel his trip. This left the Colonial Office with no option but to put him under surveillance and curtail his movements with flimsy excuses about aircraft maintenance.¹⁹⁸ Although Amery lost his seat in 1966 and was ultimately more interested in the Yemeni civil war than events in South Arabia, he continued to lend his support to the Federali lobby alongside Sandys.

The Federali lobby was heavily reliant on the goodwill of British offi- cials at the Aden High Commission and in the civil service of the Federal Government at Al-Ittihad. The Federali sympathies of officials have not gone unnoticed in accounts of the period. Pieragostini suggests that offi- cials forced the suspension of the Aden constitution in September 1965 on an unwilling Greenwood, and leaked a document suggesting that the closure of the base was under consideration in the same month.¹⁹⁹ But what is lacking from these accounts of civil servants' influence over pol- icy-making is their potential for influence that was enhanced by friend- ships with Opposition politicians. This course of action was far more attractive than outright subordination as it was decidedly less risky for staff supposedly bound by the Official Secrets Act.

Of these the most prominent was Trevaskis. His *post-officio* commit- ment to the Federali cause was in part a reflection of his personal contri- bution to the general direction of policy making under the Conservative government. But it was also driven by his constrained personal cir- cumstances and a belief that Sandys was in a position to find him new employment, as a director of Ashanti Goldfields Corporation and then Lonrho. Time and again, when sending Sandys confidential documents from Aden, Trevaskis reminded him that his early dismissal from the Colonial Service had caused him great financial difficulties. Trevaskis'

¹⁹⁷(3) Memorandum from Poynton to Greenwood, 18/12/64 (CO 1055/241).

¹⁹⁸Letter from Amery to Greenwood, 5/1/65; (E/12) copy of tel. from T. Oates (Deputy H. C. Aden) to Marnham 'Visit of VIP' (CO 1055/241).

¹⁹⁹Pieragostini *Britain, South Arabia and Aden*, pp. 145, 199, 142; see also Mawby on official sympathies, p. 144.

efforts proved fruitless, despite Sandys' repeated promises to help, but it is clear that the limitations of his Colonial Office pension were a significant factor in the promotion of the Federali cause.

Trevaskis was not alone in viewing Sandys as a useful tool for serving his own agenda. Another High Commission official Peter Hinchcliffe has wrote a fascinating account of the period based on the diaries of his colleague Robin Young. Hinchcliffe recalled in a tantalisingly brief anecdote that Mohammed Farid had a 'private channel', or what Young termed 'Keeni Meeni', to 'Uncle Ken'. This network also 'extended to Sandys and Fisher'.²⁰⁰ After Healey's Defence Review had been announced in February 1966, Robin Young and other senior officials 'worked actively to modify UK policy on Aden and indeed to oppose some of its features perceived to be damaging to the viability of the Federal project'. Young even confessed that he had contemplated 'putting a Federal Guard or F[ederal] R[eserve] A[rmy] officer up to doing a coup'. Convinced that South Arabia would not survive without a post-independence defence treaty, Young decided that 'we should enlist [the] help of senior military and political friends to fight [the] Labour Government: Sandys and Amery in particular'.²⁰¹ With Young's diary still unavailable to the public, this chapter provides the first demonstration of the extent to which such 'Keeni Meeni' influenced events in Westminster.

This account of Sandy's role in South Arabia also has broader implications as it invites a more nuanced understanding of the Labour Government's approach towards decolonisation and Britain's global role more generally. The refusal to grant South Arabia military protection after independence was central to the Government's flagship 'East of Suez' policy. The decision to close Aden base in 1968, announced in 1966, was just the start of a comprehensive withdrawal from all bases in the Indo-Pacific region by the end of 1971, announced in January 1968. Wilson had come to office in 1964 claiming that 'our frontiers are on the Himalayas' and that Britain was a 'world power and a world influence or we are nothing'. But such global aspirations did not last long.²⁰² A number of historians have tended to point to the trauma of devaluation

²⁰⁰P. Hinchcliffe 'Robin Young's Diaries' in Hinchcliffe *et al.* (eds.) *Without Glory in Arabia*, p. 155.

²⁰¹*Ibid.*, pp. 158–159.

²⁰²Hyam *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 327–328.

in November 1967 as the primary reason for this policy reversal.²⁰³ By contrast, Saki Dockrill's persuasive account of the origins of the policy demonstrates that officials had been working on the assumption of a withdrawal from 'East of Suez' since at least the summer of 1964. Long-term budgetary pressures combined with growing enthusiasm for Britain's second application for membership of Europe in 1967 and the ending of the *Konfrontasi* with Indonesia in 1966 provided more sustained reasons for the withdrawal than devaluation.²⁰⁴

However, the negotiations between the FO and the Federal Government at this time document the willingness to make costly, if temporary, exceptions to the overall policy of withdrawal. They evidence the strength of the desire to create a stable independent South Arabia, despite budgetary pressures and the political awkwardness of the Federalis' conservatism. The generous nature of the defence agreement that was offered to the Federali government therefore suggests that as late as the summer of 1967 ministers were not yet fully committed to the general policy of withdrawal from 'East of Suez'.

The South Arabian defence offer is also significant as it demonstrates an ongoing sense of moral obligation to former colonies even when, as in this instance, there was no legally binding commitment. The offer provides a marked contrast to the denial of both legal and moral obligations in the case of Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 (as discussed in Chap. 6). Lastly, this reassessment of Britain's South Arabian policy throws light on the Labour Government's readiness to accommodate reactionary successor regimes. Wherever possible, it sought to hand power to progressive and democratic rulers, as in the case of Basutoland and Bechuanaland. But by 1967 there was a growing sense of pragmatism, and an increasing sympathy for the approach of the previous Conservative Government. The wave of violence that swept the Federal Government away in the weeks before independence, and the late emergence of the NLF have tended to obscure British intentions. But the offer of a defence agreement to the Federalis constituted a public affirmation of their legitimacy and marked a rejection of Al-Asnag and the radicals.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 393; W. R. Louis 'The British withdrawal from the Gulf, 1967–1971' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3, 1 (2003), pp. 83–108; G. Pickering *Britain's Withdrawal from East of Suez* (Basingstoke 1998), p. 159; C. Ponting *Breach of Promise: Labour in Power 1964–1970* (London, 1989), pp. 105, 308–330.

²⁰⁴ Dockrill *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez*, pp. 51, 176, 178, 209–212.

The Labour Government's late decision to back the Federalis should therefore be seen as part of an increasing preference for stability over democracy when managing decolonisation in the later 1960s. The decision to gift independence to Forbes Burnham in Guyana and to King Sobhuza II in Swaziland are cases in point. But the most controversial manifestation of this trend was Wilson's refusal to take military action against the Rhodesian Front Government (Images 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8).²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵Rabe *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana*; Hyam *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 373–386.



Image 3.1 Sandys with Winston Churchill, inspecting defences at Shoeburyness, winter 1940/1941 (Crown Copyright)



Image 3.2 Visiting South Arabia as Secretary of State for the Colonies, with a Federali soldier and High Commissioner Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, 1964. Duncan Sandys Papers (Crown Copyright)

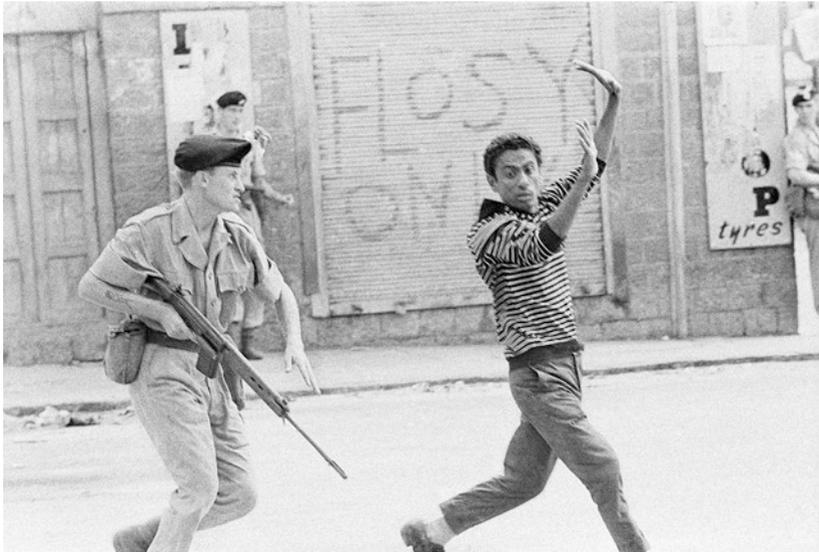


Image 3.3 British troops on high alert as they patrol the streets in Aden during the visit of the United Nations mission, April 1967 (© Trinity Mirror/Mirrormix/Alamy Stock Photo)



Image 3.4 'Peace with Rhodesia Rally', Trafalgar Square, London, 15th January 1967. (© Keystone Pictures USA/Alamy Stock Photo)



Image 3.5 Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, George Brown and Barbara Castle, 1965. (© Trinity Mirror/Mirrorpix/Alamy Stock Photo)



Image 3.6 Tom Mboya, Kenyan Minister for Constitutional Affairs, arrives in London for talks with Sandys, June 1963. (© Keystone Pictures USA/Alamy Stock Photo)



Image 3.7 Kenyan Asians demonstrating at Nairobi airport, February 1968. (© Trinity Mirror/Mirrorpix/Alamy Stock Photo)

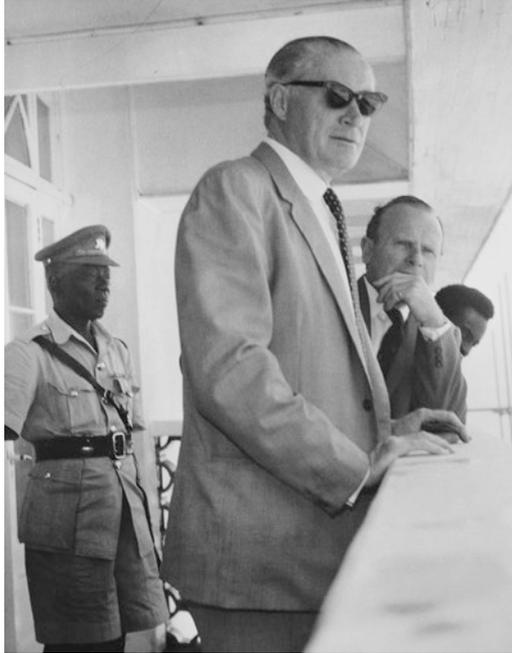


Image 3.8 On tour in Africa, 1967. Duncan Sandys Papers (Reproduced by the kind permission of the Estate of Lord Duncan Sandys)

Making Peace with Rhodesia

In early 1967 Sandys launched a new attack on the Labour Government's decolonisation policy. With his efforts to promote the Federali South Arabian cause beginning to bear fruit, Sandys turned to another messy legacy of his own time in office. The future of white settlers in central Africa had been a thorny issue throughout the early 1960s. As a minister, Sandys' approach had been to support the break-up of the CAF and to commit Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland to independence and majority rule. In Southern Rhodesia, Sandys sought to neutralise the white-supremacist and separatist Rhodesian Front by prioritising settler rights and self-government in return for a vague commitment to majority rule at an undefined point in the future. However, the uneasy truce bought by Sandys' Southern Rhodesian Constitution of 1961 collapsed shortly after Sandys left office and in 1965 the leader of the Rhodesian Front, Ian Smith, declared a UDI.

Sandys' Rhodesia campaign of 1967 sought to resolve the UDI crisis by bringing Harold Wilson and Ian Smith back to the negotiating table. Adapting his ministerial position, he sought to persuade Wilson that the only solution to the Rhodesian crisis was to grant Rhodesia independence in return for an informal Rhodesian commitment to the introduction of majority rule before long. Sandys' efforts had less direct impact on policy-making than his South Arabian lobbying, and his private attempt to broker a rapprochement between the British and

Rhodesian Governments resulted in failure. But his concurrent series of public ‘Peace with Rhodesia’ rallies attracted considerable attention, notably in Trafalgar Square in January 1967. This debut in the art of mass campaigning highlighted the power of decolonisation to unleash popular passions on the subject of race in Britain. It also offered useful lessons for future campaigns. In this way, as Chap. 5 will argue, Sandys’ Rhodesia campaign foreshadowed the success of his later opposition to race relations legislation and immigration.

When talks between Wilson and Smith on HMS *Tiger* broke down in December 1966, relations between Britain and Rhodesia seemed to have reached a deadlock. As Commonwealth Relations Secretary, Sandys had been responsible for Southern Rhodesia at the time of the collapse of the CAF and had continued to take a keen interest in the country once he left office. Indeed, on a number of occasions, Wilson invited him to Downing Street for advice on what developed into the most arduous and fraught chapter in Britain’s experience of decolonisation. When the Rhodesian Front Government declared a UDI, Sandys was initially sympathetic to the British Government’s efforts to resolve the crisis. But when Wilson announced at a Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ meeting in September 1966 that there would be ‘No Independence Before Majority Rule’ (or ‘NIBMAR’ as the pledge quickly became known), Sandys became one of the Prime Minister’s most implacable critics.

The failure of the HMS *Tiger* talks and Wilson’s reassertion of NIBMAR in December 1966 prompted Sandys to inaugurate his public campaign to pressure Wilson into re-opening talks. At the same time, in private, Sandys tried to establish himself as an unofficial intermediary between Salisbury and Whitehall. His campaign lasted until late 1967, by which time Wilson was once again entertaining the idea of opening dialogue with Smith, culminating in talks on HMS *Fearless* in October 1968. Although short-lived, Sandys’ efforts have hitherto been ignored in the literature on the period and demonstrate the significance of unofficial influence in the developing relationship between Britain and Rhodesia. Thanks to the wide range of responses that Sandys’ campaigning elicited from the public and officials in both Britain and Rhodesia, the episode also offers a significant insight into the nature of popular and official attitudes towards decolonisation and race in the mid-1960s.

PUBLIC CAMPAIGN

The keystone of Sandys' 'Peace with Rhodesia' campaign was the inaugural rally of January 1967.¹ The first massed political meeting to be concerned with colonial policy since the anti-Suez rally of November 1956, the event was held at 2.30 p.m. in Trafalgar Square on Sunday 15th January, attracting front-page newspaper coverage and between 5000 and 9000 people despite freezing weather.² To give a sense of scale, the only comparable event in this period was the 4000 strong anti-Smith demonstration held on 12 January 1969.³ On a platform erected by Nelson's Column, Sandys was joined by John Biggs-Davison and Patrick Wall, both leading members of the stridently pro-Smith Monday Club, and also Sir Tufton Beamish and Nigel Fisher, who took a more moderate Conservative stance. Each of the speakers took a turn on the microphone in a meeting that lasted for over an hour, united in their call that Wilson should 'start talks again!'⁴

Sandys nailed his colours firmly to the mast, arguing that sanctions were damaging to British trade, that NIBMAR was naive, and that all sides should accept the 'Tiger Constitution' of 1966 which proposed a modest extension of African voting rights and postponed the imposition of majority rule for several decades. In what one journalist described as a 'sub-Churchillian manner', Sandys denounced Wilson's 'monstrous' threat of force, claiming that 'if he ever orders British troops to try to impose a settlement on Rhodesia by force there will be an explosion of public indignation which no Government could survive'.⁵

¹The rally receives passing mention in J. Wood *A Matter of Weeks rather than Months: The Impasse between Harold and Wilson and Ian Smith: Sanctions, Aborted Settlements and War 1965–1969* (2012), pp. 288, 306; also Whiting 'The Empire and British Politics', pp. 199–200; and Schwarz *White Man's World*, p. 428.

²'Tory "Cart" will run for Smith' *Morning Star* 13/12/66 (FCO 36/157); "Dishonourable deed founded on a filthy lie" [unattributed newspaper article] 19/1/67 (FCO 36/157); 'Marchers Surge on Downing Street: Rival Groups Clash after Rhodesia Rally' *The Times* 16/1/67; 'Weather Forecast and Recordings' *The Times* 16/1/67.

³J. Brownell "'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand": Rhodesia House during the UDI Rebellion (1965–1980)' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 38, 3 (2010), p. 484.

⁴Rally handbill (DSND 14/25/2/1).

⁵'Rhodesia Rally Ends in Arrests and Downing Street March' *The Guardian* 16/1/67.

The speeches finished, it was reported that Sandys ‘made an abortive attempt to galvanise the confused orgy of slogan-shouting into a solid cry of “Peace for Rhodesia”’ and ‘strains of the National Anthem in a quite unapproachable key came drifting over the loud speakers’.⁶ At this point the rally turned sour and fighting broke out. Sandys had to be escorted to his car by the police. Attempting to drive away down the Mall, it was reported that a large crowd ‘closed around it banging on the roof and rocking it’, requiring some ‘fairly brisk handling’ by the police to clear a passage. The crowd then moved on to Downing Street where demonstrators were ‘kicked and punched as each side tried to wreck the banners and placards displayed by the other’ for another hour, before mounted police were called in.⁷ Mayhem ensued as ‘hats and umbrellas soared’ and ‘flying wedges of police tore into the crowd’, leaving Downing Street ‘in a litter of torn slogans, discarded shoes, broken wood and horse dung’.⁸ Seven men were fined at Bow Street shortly after for threatening behaviour.⁹ Sadly for the demonstrators, Wilson was at Chequers.

In Sandys’ opinion the Trafalgar Square rally was a great success, a letter of apology to Scotland Yard for its disorderly finale notwithstanding.¹⁰ He decided to organise similar events in Bradford on 7th April and in Glasgow on 23rd June. On the stage of St George’s Hall, Bradford, Sandys was again joined by Patrick Wall and two other Conservative MPs, Michael Shaw and Paul Bryan.¹¹ The event was hosted by the Anglo-Rhodesian Society, led by the ‘die-hard’ defender of the Central African Federation, Lord ‘Bobbetty’ Salisbury, and heavily funded by the Rhodesian Front itself.¹² Sandys presented a ‘Ten-Point Plan’ in which he continued to advocate a future constitution based on the HMS *Tiger* talks, but also an interim arrangement whereby Rhodesia would return to the constitution of 1961 (that Sandys himself had implemented),

⁶‘Marchers Surge on Downing Street’ *The Times* 16/1/67.

⁷‘Rhodesia Rally Ends in Arrests and Downing Street March’ *The Guardian* 16/1/67.

⁸‘Marchers Surge on Downing Street’ *The Times* 16/1/67.

⁹‘£5 Fines after Rhodesian Rally’ *The Guardian* 17/1/67.

¹⁰Letter from Sandys to Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, 16/1/67 (DSND 14/25/2/2).

¹¹‘Peace With Rhodesia!’ handbill (DSND 14/25/2/2); ‘Sandys Reveals Rhodesia Peace Plan’ *Daily Mail* 8/4/67 (FCO 36/157).

¹²M. Stuart ‘A Party in Three Pieces: The Conservative Split over Rhodesian Oil Sanctions, 1965’ *Contemporary British History* 16, 1 (2002), p. 70.

having been granted legal independence and freed from sanctions in return for a repudiation of UDI.¹³ Sandys found the audience of 800 ‘very responsive’ despite ‘the necessary admixture of hecklers’.¹⁴

At the third and final rally of the ‘Peace with Rhodesia’ campaign, in Glasgow, a smaller venue was found in the form of the Couper Institute. Wall was again present, joined this time by fellow MPs Esmond Wright and Edward Taylor.¹⁵ Sandys reiterated the suggestions made at Bradford. He also claimed that his efforts had directly influenced Smith’s growing flexibility and Wilson’s recent decision to send Lord Alport on a fact-finding mission to Rhodesia.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

Sandys’ campaign elicited a powerful, if mixed, public response. The Labour backbench was largely hostile, particularly in response to the Trafalgar Square rally. Two days after the event, it was reported that ‘near-bedlam broke out’ in the House when Sandys rose to his feet. Labour MPs ‘made loud hissing noises’, and Raphael Tuck gave an ironic Nazi salute.¹⁶ From the Conservative benches, the most prominent criticism came from Humphrey Berkeley who publicly vilified Sandys for his campaign and the legacy of his ‘disastrous’ Southern Rhodesian Constitution of 1961.¹⁷ On the front bench Edward Heath seemed uncomfortable, refusing an invitation to speak at the rally and stopping a circular letter advertising the event to party members in Greater London.¹⁸ However, he did advise Sandys that he would be ‘very happy’ for Maudling and Douglas-Home to speak instead, although this evidently came to nothing.¹⁹ A variety of Conservative MPs offered support

¹³‘Ten Step Plan for Peace with Rhodesia: Extract from speech to be made by Mr. Duncan Sandys, M.P. at Bradford, on Friday, 7th April, at 7.30 p.m.’ (FCO 36/157).

¹⁴Draft letter from Sandys, 12/4/67 (DSND 14/25/2/2).

¹⁵Cathcart Conservative and Unionist Association: Peace with Rhodesia Public Meeting’ handbill (DSND 14/25/2/2).

¹⁶Letter from Raphael Tuck MP to Sandys, 17/1/67 (DSND 14/25/2/2).

¹⁷‘Sandys has it all wrong’ *The Observer* 16/7/67.

¹⁸Letter from Heath to Sandys, 19/12/66; Sandys marginalia on draft circular from Conservative and Unionist Central Office Greater London Area (DSND 14/25/2/2).

¹⁹Letter from Heath to Sandys 19/12/66 (DSND 14/25/2/2).

to Sandys during the campaign, in particular Amery, Douglas-Home, Frederic Bennett, Arthur Jones and Beresford Craddock.²⁰ Sandys also received enthusiastic support from the Monday Club, which provided stewards for the Trafalgar Square rally, described by its Chairman Paul Williams as a ‘most splendid occasion’.²¹ The campaign had a positive response ‘all over the country’ according to Sandys, from Conservative Associations such as Sunbury, Ashford West and Shepperton, and from Young Conservatives especially in south and west London.²²

Amongst the public at large, evidence suggests that Sandys’ campaign also elicited great interest and strong views. This begs a reassessment of Elaine Windrich’s judgement that ‘so far as the British public were concerned, any interest in the [Rhodesian] issue, which might have been temporarily aroused by the HMS *Tiger* confrontation, was rapidly dissipated in the aftermath of the Rhodesian rejection’.²³ At the rally itself, Young Liberals, Young Socialists, the Movement for Colonial Freedom, the Zimbabwe African National Union and the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) were particularly vocal in their opposition, reportedly aiming to drown out the ‘pro-Smith demonstrations being organised by Colin Jordan and other Fascists’ with their ‘roaring antiphony’.²⁴ The turnout was ‘most impressive’ according to the AAM and ‘considerably outnumbered the Sandys supporters’.²⁵ To the Young Liberals, it seemed that Sandys was giving ‘respectability to... the extreme right wing’ and his stance as a ‘martyr in the cause of free speech’ was ironic and offensive ‘when the men with whom you want compromise have no idea of what

²⁰Collected letters from MPs to Sandys (DSND 14/25/1/1–2).

²¹Letter from Frederick Stockwell to Duncan Sandys, 17/1/67 (DSND 14/25/2/2); letter from Paul Williams (Chairman of Monday Club) to Sandys, 19/1/67 (DSND 14/25/2/1).

²²Letter from Sandys to Beresford Craddock, 4/4/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1); ‘Y.C.s expected’ note by Sandys (DSND 14/25/2/1).

²³E. Windrich *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence* (London, 1978), p. 107.

²⁴Draft text of CO tel. in reply to tel. no. 83 from Canberra to CO (FCO 36/157); ‘George Kiloh Calls Out The “Guard”’ *Liberal* 13/1/67 (DSND 14/25/2/2); ‘Marchers Surge on Downing Street’ *The Times* 16/1/67.

²⁵‘A. A. M. Annual Report’, September 1967 (MSS.AAM 13, Archive of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford).

that cause is'.²⁶ Placards proclaiming 'Down Smith' and 'Up Wilson' contrasted with 'Start Talks Now' and 'Avanti Smith'.²⁷ Alongside the Monday Club, the largest organisation to send supporters to the rally was the 6000-strong Anglo-Rhodesian Society, its members expressing 'delight at seeing such gallantry'.²⁸ The League of Empire Loyalists, Mosleyites and followers of Colin Jordan were also in evidence.²⁹

Sandys received many letters from members of the British and Rhodesian public over the following months, of which roughly two-thirds expressed support. As the Commonwealth Office noted, 'there is no doubt that while Sandys' campaign does not enjoy official Conservative backing his views nevertheless invoke support from an appreciable number of people in this country'.³⁰ While it is hard to quantify support for the campaign, the correspondence sheds useful light on the issues that underpinned popular feelings about Rhodesia. A number of recurrent themes are evident, in particular a broader dislike of Wilson's policies, 'kith and kin' concerns for Rhodesian whites, perceived weakness on the Conservative Frontbench and unease about multi-racialism both abroad and in Britain. The correspondence mirrors the broad trend of contemporary public opinion, which offered limited sympathy for Smith (14% in a poll of 1966), confirmed by the strength of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, but was also increasingly characterised by a popular apathy towards the Commonwealth and the multi-racial ideal, and a growing tendency on the Right to see South African apartheid as the only alternative to African disorder.³¹

²⁶Letter from George Kiloh (Chairman of Young Liberals) to Sandys [early January 1967] (DSND 14/25/2/3).

²⁷"Dishonourable deed founded on a filthy lie" [unattributed newspaper article] 19/1/67 (FCO 36/157).

²⁸Sandys' campaign later split the increasingly extremist society: 'Secret Row Splits Smith's friends in UK' *The Observer* 29/10/67; letter from Mildred Hopkins (Secretary to Manchester Branch of the Anglo-Rhodesian Society) to Sandys, 15/1/67 (DSND 14/25/3).

²⁹"Dishonourable deed founded on a filthy lie" [unattributed newspaper article] 19/1/67 (FCO 36/157).

³⁰Draft text of CO tel. in reply to tel. no. 83 from Canberra to CO (FCO 36/157).

³¹R. Hyam & P. Henshaw *The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 320–321; (61) letter from S. Witzendorf (Central Office of Information) to J. S. Ellis (CO) on the latest opinion poll findings on the Commonwealth and Rhodesia (DO 207/5), in Ashton & Louis (eds.) *East of Suez and the Commonwealth 1964–1971*, pp. 267–268.

Many of the letters written in support of the campaign were relatively moderate in tone, as in the case of a retired Indian cavalry officer who wrote to Sandys from Bulawayo: ‘what a mistake and un-kind thing it was to have given African States the Independence they have received. They all lack Background, and Desperately need the kindness and understanding good administrators give. You have got to recognise our Independence’.³² Meanwhile a sixteen year old from Maida Vale blamed Wilson’s ‘socialist cancer’ for the Rhodesian crisis and thanked Sandys for his campaign.³³

Although the letters from Sandys’ critics were slightly fewer in number, they were more impassioned, characterised by accusations of fascism and racialism, cynical attempts to oust Heath and suggestions of hypocrisy on the basis of Sandys’ record at the CRO. One critic who had attended the Trafalgar Square rally quoted three remarks she had heard made by Sandys’ supporters: (1) there are 10 million political prisoners in Russia, (2) The worst thing the government ever did was to give votes to women, (3) the “blacks” in Rhodesia can’t even write their own names’. The correspondent recognised that ‘all are stupid nonsense’ and found them to be a sad ‘indictment of your policies!’.³⁴ Meanwhile the Board of Deputies of British Jews, which regularly sent members to observe Oswald Mosley’s Union Movement meetings, found that Mosleyites were offering warm support to Sandys.³⁵

PRIVATE LOBBYING

While the public response to the ‘Peace with Rhodesia’ campaign was mixed, it certainly won Sandys the publicity that he had sought. Building on the ongoing successes of his efforts to lobby the Government on behalf of the South Arabian Federalis, Sandys sought to exploit his new found popular following to put private pressure on Smith, Wilson,

³²Letter from Cpt. D. (Bulawayo) to Sandys, 15/7/67 (DSND 14/25/3/1).

³³Letter from R.W. (Ipswich) to Sandys [undated] (DSND 14/25/2/3); letter from Mr. G (W9) to Sandys, 10/4/67 (DSND 14/25/2/3).

³⁴Letter from Mrs E. (Thornton Heath, Surrey) to Sandys, 18/1/67 (DSND 14/25/3/1).

³⁵Letter from Mr. M. (Board of Deputies of British Jews) to Sandys, 12/1/67 (DSND 14/25/2/1).

Herbert Bowden and George Thomson (the two Secretaries of State for Commonwealth Affairs during this period), and the Governor of Rhodesia, Humphrey Gibbs. In doing so he was much aided by Sidney Brice, the de facto Rhodesian High Commissioner in London, still unofficially in post at Rhodesia House following the UDI.

Throughout much of 1967 Sandys was one of the very few conduits that existed between London and Salisbury and his activities excited considerable interest in Whitehall, a point ignored by scholars to date.³⁶ Between the collapse of the talks on HMS *Tiger* in December 1966 and the resumption of dialogue on HMS *Fearless* in October 1968, there was no direct contact between Wilson and Smith, negotiations having foundered on Wilson's newly intransigent demand for NIBMAR in 1966.³⁷ By 6th December it appeared to the Lord President, Richard Crossman, that Wilson 'was beginning to feel a deep indignation against Smith and to treat him as an absolutely contemptible character, a crook and a waverer'.³⁸ On the same day, a Rhodesian Government statement claimed that Wilson was demanding 'the dismissal of the Rhodesian parliament and the substitution of a quisling Government by Britain', defending itself on the grounds that racialism was present in all societies even Britain.³⁹ Smith found Wilson 'obdurate and ignorant'.⁴⁰ Deadlock ensued.

Wilson initially found some comfort in the possibility of a Rhodesian coup against Smith, sending Lord Head to Salisbury in January 1967 to assess the situation, but the rumours proved to be groundless.⁴¹ With the imposition of mandatory UN sanctions in the same month,

³⁶'Rhodesia Meetings: the activities of Mr Duncan Sandys' (FCO 36/157); Garner, Windrich and even Wood make no mention of this contact: Garner *The Commonwealth Office*; Windrich *Britain and the Politics of Rhodesian Independence*, pp. 107–110; Wood *A Matter of Weeks rather than Months*.

³⁷Wilson was responding to pressure from Nyerere and the Commonwealth, contrary to CO advice: Garner *The Commonwealth Office*, p. 395.

³⁸R. Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* (Vol II) (London, 1976), p. 153.

³⁹Tel. no. 1718, J. D. Hennings (Counsellor, British Residual Mission in Rhodesia) to CO, 6/12/66 (PREM 13/1134) quoted in Wood *A Matter of Weeks rather than Months*, pp. 248–249.

⁴⁰Wood *A Matter of Weeks rather than Months*, p. 251.

⁴¹Wood *A Matter of Weeks rather than Months*, pp. 276–277.

Wilson's policy became a waiting game while Smith busied himself with 'sanction busting' and counter-terrorist insurgency. However, the stand-off did begin to ease from June 1967, when Wilson decided to send Lord Alport to meet with Smith as an independent envoy, followed by the first ministerial contact with the visit of George Thomson in November.

During the frostiest period of relations, between January and June 1967, such dialogue as there was between the governments was largely conducted indirectly through press statements. The Commonwealth Office did retain an abnormal Residual Mission in Salisbury, and its Deputy High Commissioner, John Hennings, who was head of the Mission, kept in close contact with the Governor, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, who in turn had occasional meetings with Smith.⁴² However, Gibbs was deprived of a car, telephone and salary and was practically under arrest at Government House where an atmosphere of gloom pervaded.⁴³ During his visit, Lord Head found that Gibbs' 'batteries were completely flat'. The Governor seemed to be overly influenced by the Chief Justice, Sir Hugh Beadle, proving a matter of considerable frustration for Hennings and rendering the conduit ineffective.⁴⁴ As a Privy Councillor, Beadle had been a useful point of contact between the two governments especially at the time of the HMS *Tiger* meeting, but by 1967 he had lost interest in negotiating with Wilson and was becoming increasingly sympathetic to the Rhodesian Front.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, official British overtures were limited to occasional fact-finding meetings with individuals who had recently met members of Smith's government. Herbert Bowden thus met with David Smith, a Rhodesian Front MP, in June, and between March and May Bowden also drew on the advice of Julian Amery, Sir Albert Robinson (former Federal High Commissioner),

⁴² Garner *The Commonwealth Office*, p. 392.

⁴³M. Facchini 'The "Evil Genius": Sir Hugh Beadle and the Rhodesian Crisis, 1965–1972' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33, 3 (2007), p. 675; K. Flower *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record, Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, 1964–1981* (London, 1987), pp. 80–81; A. Megahey *Humphrey Gibbs, Beleaguered Governor: Southern Rhodesia, 1929–1969* (Basingstoke, 1998), p. 140.

⁴⁴Wood *A Matter of Weeks rather than Months*, p. 289.

⁴⁵Facchini 'The "Evil Genius": Sir Hugh Beadle and the Rhodesian Crisis', pp. 683–684; Flower *Serving Secretly*, p. 86.

Sir Nicholas Cayzer (chairman of the Union-Castle line) and a Mr Peppercorn of the Dunlop Tyre Company. Robinson, a Rhodesian resident, went on to convey some of Bowden's comments to the Finance Minister John Wrathall on his return but the communication went no further.⁴⁶

During this period it would appear that Sandys was the only member of British political establishment other than Gibbs to have any direct contact with Smith, a point ignored by J.R.T. Wood whose otherwise detailed work on this period mentions only Sandys' public campaign.⁴⁷ Keeping a wary eye on his former boss's activities from the Commonwealth Office, Garner noted that during this period Sandys maintained a 'relentless' pressure on members of the Shadow Cabinet, but none consented to support his campaign publicly.⁴⁸ Failing to win over his own Party, Sandys wrote privately to Smith eight times between March and December 1967, urging the Rhodesian premier to resume talks with Britain. During the same period he also petitioned Wilson in a similar vein on at least five occasions.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Sandys maintained regular contact with Sydney Brice, at Rhodesia House, who sent his letters to Smith in the diplomatic bag and passed on Smith's replies.⁵⁰

The tenor of Sandys' letters was that despite their public intransigence, both governments were privately willing to negotiate. This proposition generally received more interest in Salisbury than London. Sandys' letter of 30th April 1967 to Smith was typical of his overtures, arguing that:

⁴⁶Wood *A Matter of Weeks rather than Months*, Chap. 21; Flower only mentions contact between Smith and Gibbs in *Serving Secretly*, p. 86.

⁴⁷Wood *A Matter of Weeks rather than Months*, Part III.

⁴⁸Memorandum from Garner to Bowden (Secretary of State, CO), 17/5/67 (DO 121/264).

⁴⁹Letters from Sandys to Ian Smith: 22/3/67; 6/4/67; 30/4/67; 11/5/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1); 19/6/67; 2/10/67; 10/11/67; 13/12/67 (DSND 14/25/1/2); letters from Sandys to Harold Wilson: 6/4/67; 28/4/67; 7/6/67; 9/6/67; and later 29/5/68 (PREM 13/2316).

⁵⁰For example 'Message [from Ian Smith] delivered by Mr. Brice', 5/4/67; letter from Sandys to [Sydney Brice (Rhodesia House)] 6/4/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1); Commonwealth Office memorandum 'Leakage of Minutes of the 1966 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting' [late February 1967] (PREM 13/1797).

There is a growing body of British opinion in all parties and in the press in favour of a negotiated settlement with Rhodesia; and it is realised that, as time goes on, this will become more difficult. If all these people were to raise their voices, they could exercise a powerful influence and might well be able to induce Wilson, who is not at all happy about the prospect of interminable sanctions, to drop NIBMAR and resume negotiations. But nothing effective can be done at this end so long as it is generally believed that you, on your side, are not interested in further talks... Some statement to the press by yourself is urgently needed... [as] it would make it possible for us here to step up the pressure for resumed talks, without our being told that we are wasting our breath, because the door is bolted in Salisbury'.⁵¹

While Sandys presented himself as the leader of an influential pressure group in his letters to Smith, his communications with Wilson implied that he was in close contact with Smith's administration. Having argued the case against sanctions, he explained to the Prime Minister on 28th April that 'there is still a body of moderate people in Rhodesia, who sincerely want to solve the dispute by agreement rather than by a fight to the finish'. Sandys had 'no doubt that Smith would be prepared to return for a short while to the 1961 Constitution, provided that he was assured that after an interval he would secure legal independence on the basis of the HMS *Tiger* constitution'. A postscript added: 'if you have a moment to spare, I would like to come and give you a rather important piece of information which I have received from Salisbury'.⁵² Although it transpired that Sandys was either unable or unwilling to pass this information on, the hint was enough to attract Wilson's attention and won him a meeting with Herbert Bowden soon after.⁵³

As late as May 1968, Sandys was still impressing upon Wilson that he was Smith's preferred channel for dialogue. Sandys explained that he had asked Brice whether negotiations were now impossible, and that a week later Brice had 'informed me that ... he had now received instructions from his Government' to the effect that the Rhodesians were willing to

⁵¹Letter from Sandys to Ian Smith, 30/4/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1).

⁵²Letter from Sandys to Prime Minister, 28/4/67 (PREM 13/2316).

⁵³Letter from Palliser to Oliver Forster (Principal Private Sec., CO) 2/5/67; Forster 'Note for the Record' 22/5/67 (PREM 13/2316).

start talks again. Brice had told Sandys that ‘Mr. Smith has no objection to the above information being conveyed to Mr. Wilson’, presumably by Sandys himself.⁵⁴ Indeed Sandys claimed to have better knowledge of the situation in Salisbury than the Prime Minister. On 7th June he dismissed Wilson’s recent report that ‘we have had no new approach whatsoever from Mr. Smith’ and asserted that Smith had ‘made it known clearly to the Governor that he would be prepared to talk’.⁵⁵ Although Wilson decided to ignore the suggestion, his Assistant Secretary evidently felt that Sandys could still play a useful if highly partial role as a conduit. His advice to the Prime Minister was that ‘you might feel that Mr. Sandys is trying in his own way to be helpful and that the fact that he has written to you in confidence gives an opening for telling him—also in confidence—and perhaps thereby through him the Rhodesians, some of the facts of life’.⁵⁶

Sandys found a more sympathetic official ear in the person of Joe Garner. Later in June, Sandys took advantage of a chance meeting with Garner at the Queen’s Birthday Party. Subjecting his old PUS to a ‘barage’ of questions about the motives for the Alport Mission, Sandys impressed upon Garner that he was in ‘extremely close touch with Mr. Smith’, and that the Rhodesian premier was ‘most anxious to reach a settlement’. Sandys even claimed that he himself had ‘played some part in inducing Mr. Smith to come forward’. Although Garner may not have enjoyed being lectured by his former minister, he did not dismiss the claims out of hand. In a memorandum to Bowden, Garner gave serious consideration to Sandys’ suggestion that Smith had ‘deliberately brought forward the announcement about the tobacco crop by two weeks as soon as he had heard of the Alport Mission in the hope of having some effect on his own “hard liners”’.⁵⁷ ‘Harangued’ again at a party several months later, Garner reported to Bowden that Sandys had explained his own ten-point plan ‘with a persuasiveness which I had not previously understood’. It would appear that Garner had some sympathy for Sandys’ efforts, urging Bowden that from a ‘practical point of view, there is something in this’. Significantly, it is also apparent that Garner believed

⁵⁴Letter from Sandys to Prime Minister, 29/5/68 (PREM 13/2316).

⁵⁵Letter from Sandys to Prime Minister, 7/6/67 (PREM 13/2316).

⁵⁶Note from [Peter Le Cheminant, Asst. Sec to P. M.] to Prime Minister, 9/6/67 (PREM 13/2316).

⁵⁷(54) Memorandum from Garner to Bowden, 16/6/67 (FCO 36/157).

that Wilson's declaration of NIBMAR had been an unfortunate, if irreversible, mistake.⁵⁸

It was not entirely unrealistic that Sandys should expect to become an intermediary. In the summer of 1966, Sandys had met with Bowden and then Wilson to discuss his impressions of Smith (on meeting him for a second time), following a recent trip to Salisbury. His report was deemed 'useful confirmation' of what the CO already knew.⁵⁹ Sandys had gone out of his way to 'talk roughly to the Rhodesians' and to convince them that it was 'very much in the interests of the white Rhodesians to reach a settlement', 'whatever his disagreements with H.M.G's Rhodesia policy'.⁶⁰ Officials had gratefully received, Sandys' 'very confidential account' of Smith's views, as the Rhodesian Prime Minister 'asked him not to pass on some of his remarks to the British Government'.⁶¹

But although Sandys may have sought single-handedly to broker a resumption of talks between Smith and Wilson, both parties remained wary of his overtures. Shortly afterwards Sandys was instructed by Wilson that 'the best thing now is to leave these matters in the hands of the Secretary of State... the difficulty of whose task you would not wish to underrate or aggravate'. The Prime Minister also hinted that Sandys' conciliatory position was hypocritical, considering the continuities between the current policy and 'the robust statements [about Rhodesian secessionists] you made when you had the responsibilities of office'.⁶² In January 1967, the Commonwealth Office minister Judith Hart expressed the Government's growing frustration with Sandys' interventions, condemning the Trafalgar Square rally as 'disgraceful' and claiming that 'Sandys has given succour and comfort to Ian Smith and his racialist colleagues'.⁶³

⁵⁸(66) Memorandum from Garner to Bowden, 13/10/67 (FCO 36/157); memorandum from Garner to Bowden, 17/5/67 (DO 121/264).

⁵⁹Sandys had first met Smith in London in September 1964: C. Watts 'The Rhodesian crisis in British and international politics, 1964–1965' unpublished PhD thesis (University of Birmingham); letter from Forster to Palliser, 19/7/66; 'Record of a conversation between the Prime Minister and the Right Honourable Duncan Sandys, M.P.', 5/8/66 (PREM 13/2316).

⁶⁰Note for the record: meeting between Duncan Sandys and Prime Minister, 5/8/66 (PREM 13/2316).

⁶¹Record of meeting between Bowden and Sandys, 18/7/66 (PREM 13/2316).

⁶²Letter from Prime Minister to Sandys, 19/9/66 (PREM 13/2316).

⁶³Statement by Mrs Judith Hart, M.P., 5/1/67 (FCO 26/157).

Wilson's irritation with the former minister reached its high point in February 1967 when the Prime Minister threatened Sandys with prosecution under the Official Secrets Act for 'hawking around' a leaked Commonwealth Secretariat paper. The document suggested that Rhodesian sanctions were having a deleterious effect of sanctions on the British economy and called the Government's Rhodesia policy into question. This was not the first time that Sandys' had been threatened with the Act, to Wilson's amusement. It was common knowledge that Sandys had got into considerable trouble as a young MP for publicising confidential evidence that Britain's air defences were inadequate in 1938 (see Chap. 2).⁶⁴ The episode was also reminiscent of the South Arabia campaign. In the same way that he had exploited official documents leaked by Federal ministers and Aden High Commission officials over the previous year, Sandys did his best to exploit the revelation to embarrass the Government and bring Wilson back to the negotiating table.⁶⁵ Sandys refused to divulge the origin of the sanctions document, but it would appear that the most likely source was an official at Rhodesia House, either Sydney Brice himself or possibly Norman Blackburn, who was an agent for both Rhodesian and South African intelligence services.⁶⁶

Evidently concerned about Sandys' influence on opinion in Rhodesia, Wilson was also angered by a press statement given in July 1967, in which Sandys misleadingly claimed that Wilson was making an 'absurd demand for immediate African rule'.⁶⁷ When the comment was later reported in the *Bulawayo Chronicle*, the Prime Minister wrote to Sandys, in no uncertain terms, that the former minister had 'done considerable harm especially in Rhodesia to the prospects of any honourable settlement'. Piqued, and refusing to rescind his statement, Sandys threatened to publish their private exchange of letters.⁶⁸ However, Wilson refused to be intimidated by Sandys' efforts and showed scant interest in using

⁶⁴Harris 'The "Sandys Storm": the politics of British air defence in 1938', pp. 318–336.

⁶⁵Letter from Prime Minister to Sandys, 16/4/67 (PREM 13/2316); 'Note by Commonwealth Office: Leakage of Minute of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference', 15/2/67 (PREM 13/1797).

⁶⁶PREM 13/1797; *HC Deb* 21 February 1967, vol. 741, col. 1434–1435; Brownell 'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand': Rhodesia House during the UDI Rebellion', p. 478.

⁶⁷'Mr Sandys Calls for Talks to be Reopened' *The Times* 15/7/67.

⁶⁸Letter from Prime Minister to Sandys, 24/7/67; letter from Sandys to Prime Minister, 24/7/67 (PREM 13/2316).

him as a conduit. The Prime Minister denounced his ‘Ten Step Plan’ believing that it had been ‘rejected by the illegal regime’ due to minimal support for Sandys’ campaign in Salisbury. And although Sandys perceived a ‘slight softening’ of Wilson’s attitudes towards negotiations in May, such exchanges as there were between the two men were terminated in July.⁶⁹

Sandys’ efforts found a warmer reception in Salisbury. Only two days after the Peace with Rhodesia rally, the Leader of the Rhodesian Opposition wrote to Sandys complaining that the former minister still had considerable influence in Rhodesia and that since ‘you are thought to be an extreme Right Winger these days’ the campaign was giving ‘much joy to the reactionaries in this country’.⁷⁰

Smith’s first message to Sandys, sent via Brice, set the tone: Smith concurred that the Constitution proposed on HMS *Tiger* could still be ‘used as the basis for a settlement’ but he felt that time was running out. For that reason Smith attached ‘importance to the “Peace with Rhodesia” Campaign and would be sorry to see it slow up’.⁷¹ When the ‘Ten Step Plan’ that Sandys announced in April was rejected by Lance Smith, Minister of Agriculture, claiming that Sandys was ‘interested in Rhodesia only in as far as it furthered his own ideologies and political advancement’, Brice urgently relayed a message of reassurance that Ian Smith ‘wishes you to know that any adverse comments on your plan were made without consultation with him and should not be regarded as an official expression of the Rhodesian Government’s opinion’. As Brice explained, ‘Mr. Smith has decided for the present to make no comment on your proposals, lest this should be interpreted in Rhodesia and in Britain as a sign of weakness’.⁷² The tacit official support for Sandys in Salisbury was confirmed by Hennings shortly after, in contradiction to Wilson’s claims.⁷³ However, by the end of 1967, dialogue had largely dried up bar sporadic messages between Brice and Sandys, which

⁶⁹Letter from Sandys to Maurice Green (CO), 3/5/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1).

⁷⁰Letter from David Butler (Salisbury) to Sandys, 17/1/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1).

⁷¹‘Message Delivered by Mr. Brice’, 5/4/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1).

⁷²Transcript of Salisbury Radio, 1600 h, 11/4/67 (FCO 36/157); ‘Message from Rhodesia House’, 11/4/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1).

⁷³Tel. 643 from Hennings to Rhodesia Political Department (CO), 3/5/67 (FCO 36/157).

continued into the 1970s. The last direct message from Smith suggested why. 'It would be unwise for Mr. Sandys, or indeed any of the Conservative Party as a whole', Smith explained, 'to make capital out of the present exchange of letters between Governments, or embarrass Mr. Wilson over the Rhodesian issue at this juncture'. Evidently Smith felt the contact had become more of a hindrance than a help, although as a consolation Brice explained that 'Mr. Smith will hasten to communicate in more specific terms with Mr. Sandys'. To Sandys' disappointment, the promise proved empty.⁷⁴

Sandys' activities also aroused concern in Salisbury amongst Commonwealth Office staff at the British Residual Mission. Hennings was well aware that Sandys was seeking to persuade the Governor to 'take [the] initiative to break [the] deadlock' but it was correctly predicted that Sandys' efforts would be in vain since Gibbs 'could see no hope of getting anything like that out of Smith'. Indeed, the Governor had little respect for Smith, believing that the Rhodesian Prime Minister was 'a weak little man under [the] thumb of extremists'.⁷⁵ Hennings also took comfort that the former Federal Prime Minister, Roy Welensky, 'turned down flat' an invitation to speak at the Trafalgar Square rally. Nonetheless, the Mission was worried by the rally and throughout this period it remained suspicious of Sandys' activities, seeking to distance the British Government from Sandys' overtures.⁷⁶ Sandys made use of the Rhodesia House diplomatic bag to communicate with Salisbury, Sydney Brice proving to be 'most helpful' in allowing this arrangement and also in writing to the *Daily Telegraph* in support of Sandys' campaign.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Gibbs used his own bag to send letters to Sandys, prompting Hennings to consider opening the Governor's mail.⁷⁸

⁷⁴'Message delivered verbally by Mr. Brice', 6/10/67 (DSND 14/25/1/2).

⁷⁵Tel. 718 from Hennings to Rhodesia Political Department, 16/5/67 (FCO 36/157).

⁷⁶Tel. 59 from Hennings to Rhodesia Political Department, 13/1/67 (FCO 36/157); letter from Roy Welensky to Sandys, 9/1/67; a personal friend, Welensky did however send a message of support 'Welensky message: sent to PA' (DSND 14/25/2/1).

⁷⁷Draft letter from Sandys to [Brice], 6/4/67; letter from Sandys to Ian Smith, 30/4/67 (DSND 14/25/1/1); Brice sought to defend the Rhodesian government in the British press on a number of occasions, see Brownell "'A Sordid Tussle on the Strand": Rhodesia House during the UDI Rebellion', p. 482.

⁷⁸Letter from Hennings to K. J. Neale (Head of Rhodesia Political Dept.) 22/5/67 (FCO 36/157).

In addressing this issue Hennings raised concerns about damaging rumours of ‘low-level pourparlers’ between Westminster and Salisbury involving the Governor. To the head of the Mission it seemed that the story might have been prompted by a mistaken assumption on the part of Gibbs and Beadle that ‘Sandys is being used as an intermediary by us’ on the basis that ‘we would not have allowed him the facilities of the diplomatic bag for a confidential letter unless we were privy to his design’.⁷⁹ In contrast to the sympathy with which Sandys’ efforts met at the High Commission in Aden, the Mission in Salisbury remained opposed to his cause throughout.

Sandys’ Rhodesia campaign was essentially over by 1968. But his interest in Southern Africa converged with his private business career in the early 1970s in a brief epilogue to the campaign. In 1972 Sandys was offered the chairmanship of Lonrho by ‘Tiny’ Rowland. The aim was to exploit the personal links with African leaders that Sandys had developed during his time in office. As a spokesman for the company put it, Sandys was believed to be ‘very familiar with the African scene and is a strong man’.⁸⁰ Although he had indeed maintained friendships with African nationalists such as Kenyatta, it would appear that Rowland—himself widely respected in Africa—was more interested in Sandys’ Southern African contacts.

Sandys came to the Lonrho chairmanship as an ‘independent’ appointment in 1972. But he had in fact been engaged as a consultant on South African affairs in 1971, shortly after a Lonrho director and three other directors of Lonrho subsidiaries had been arrested in Johannesburg on fraud charges. Thanks to ‘Peace with Rhodesia’ Sandys was known to be an established friend of the Rhodesian regime. He was also on good terms with Hendrik Luttig, the South African ambassador in London, and Hilgard Muller, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs. Shortly after the arrests, Sandys was sent to Johannesburg. He was reported in the local press to have ‘had chats with both men about the Lonrho indictments’ and he also suggested that arms sales should be

⁷⁹Telegram no. 730 from Hennings to Rhodesia Political Department 17/5/67 (FCO 36/157).

⁸⁰S. Cronjé *Lonrho: Portrait of a Multinational* (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 82.

resumed to South Africa.⁸¹ Thanks in part to Sandys' intervention the charges were dropped two years later.⁸²

When Sandys left Johannesburg in 1971 he travelled north to resume his earlier efforts to encourage Ian Smith to make a settlement with the British government. His campaign of 1967 had not been forgotten in Rhodesia. Sandys still cut a prominent figure in Salisbury and met with Smith on a number of occasions, before dramatically capturing headlines by announcing that he believed that British sanctions would be lifted within three months.⁸³ Lonrho took a sympathetic view of Sandys' attempts to broker a resolution of the Rhodesian problem. Although the company had publicly criticised Smith's UDI and announced its intention to leave the country, its operations had in fact expanded after 1965 and were poised to grow exponentially as soon as sanctions were lifted, the restrictions costing the company an estimated 7% of its profits.⁸⁴ Facing repeated accusations of sanctions busting—and with evidence suggesting that at the very least Lonrho's subsidiaries were culpable—Sandys' appointment freed up Rowland to continue his criticism of the Rhodesian government safe in the knowledge that the company's Chairman would nonetheless be viewed favourably in Rhodesia itself.⁸⁵

CONCLUSION

Sandys' 'Peace with Rhodesia' campaign was a failure. By the summer of 1967 it was evident that public interest was waning and that neither Wilson, Smith, nor staff at the Residual Mission would take his attempts to mediate seriously. Nevertheless, it was a significant milestone in Sandys' developing backbench career, drawing on the successes of his South Arabian lobbying and offering valuable lessons for the anti-immigration and race-relations campaign that was to follow later that year.

There were a number of continuities with Sandys' South Arabian campaign. Once again, his position as a former colonial minister was

⁸¹(2) Record of meeting between Sandys and Douglas-Home, 18/3/71.

⁸²Cronjé *Lonrho*, pp. 161–163.

⁸³(3) Memo from E. M. Booker (FCO) to J. H. G. Leahy (FCO), 7/4/71 (FCO 36/1012).

⁸⁴Cronjé *Lonrho*, pp. 147, 153, 173–174.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 145, 153 170.

crucial. No longer bound by collective responsibility, Sandys was free to say ‘things that he would never say if he was now the responsible Minister’, as Beadle noted.⁸⁶ And Wilson himself knew full well that the personal relationships that Sandys had developed with colonial leaders in office, along with his public status, offered him ‘still considerable influence in Rhodesia’.⁸⁷ As Sandys put it in a meeting with one of his former Assistant Under-Secretaries, Leslie Monson, his aim was to ‘speak strongly to Smith’ like a ‘Dutch uncle’, believing that he ‘had sufficient goodwill in Rhodesia for him to be able to do this effectively’.⁸⁸ When Sandys briefly resumed his campaign in 1971, his friend (and now Foreign Secretary) Douglas-Home begged him to ‘make absolutely sure that he did not get involved’ with the new Conservative government’s efforts to reopen talks with Smith.⁸⁹ That a close associate, who sympathised to a great degree with Sandys’ approach to the Rhodesian problem, should have been so opposed to further overtures was indicative of Sandys’ ongoing ability to influence the course of events. As it happened, Douglas-Home’s worst fears were confirmed when Sandys made his announcement about the likely withdrawal of sanctions. This was an inaccurate and embarrassing claim that lent much comfort to Ian Smith and which the British Government had to strenuously disown.⁹⁰

Well-timed Parliamentary Questions again proved a useful tactic for embarrassing the government and influencing the course of confidential negotiations between ministers and colonial leaders. The moderate Rhodesian MP, David Smith, for one, went so far as to approach Bowden in June 1967, asking that Sandys be dissuaded from tabling a Question about Ian Smith’s willingness to negotiate lest the Wilson should feel obliged to take a public stance that would jeopardise talks.⁹¹

⁸⁶Record of meeting between Cledwyn Hughes and Hugh Beadle, 21/1/66 (DO 121/261).

⁸⁷*HC Deb* 25 July 1967, vol. 751, col. 229.

⁸⁸(72) Letter from R. S. Faber (Rhodesia Political Dept.) to Hennings, 1/12/67 (FCO 36/157).

⁸⁹(2) Record of meeting between Sandys and Douglas-Home, 18/6/71 (FCO 36/1012).

⁹⁰(3) Note from Booker to Leahy, 7/4/71; Note ‘Question about Mr Sandys visit to Rhodesia’, [1971] (FCO 36/1012).

⁹¹Record of meeting between David Smith (Rhodesian MP) and Bowden, 12/6/67 (DO 121/261).

The publication of private exchanges between Sandys and Wilson in the press was also a tactic that Sandys repeated, to the irritation of Wilson. And in the same way for the Rhodesians as for the Federalis, Sandys lobbied officials and ministers on behalf of colonial leaders and in turn offered his advice on how best they should negotiate with the British Government.

However, the failure of 'Peace with Rhodesia', in contrast to the relative success of the South Arabian campaign, did reflect a major difference, namely the lack of access to confidential official documents equivalent to those repeatedly offered by Trevaskis. By contrast, the Commonwealth Secretariat's report on sanctions was the only leaked document that Sandys could get hold of in relation to Rhodesia. Alone, it simply did not carry enough weight to offer Sandys a bargaining tool in Westminster. In contrast to his links, via Trevaskis, to influential High Commission staff at Aden, Sandys failed to gain the sympathy of officials at the Residual Mission in Salisbury. Hennings was concerned about the close relationship between Sandys and Gibbs, but by this period the Governor was effectively under house arrest and marginalised by Wilson's direct involvement.⁹² Sandys' efforts were also hampered by the uncomfortable legacy of his time in office. In contrast to the strong personal relationships established with Federalis such as Mohammed Farid, his standing in Rhodesia was fatally weakened by his leading role in the dismantling of the CAF in 1963. As mentioned, Sandys had hoped that Welensky would prove a useful ally and even invited him to speak at the Trafalgar Square rally. Yet the former Federal Prime Minister could not help but 'despise' Sandys for his seeming hypocrisy, suspecting that the 'real reason for Sandys' attitude is the fact that he was dropped from the Front Bench, is now at daggers drawn with Heath and is out to be as embarrassing as he possibly can'.⁹³

Nonetheless, in other ways the 'Peace with Rhodesia' campaign represented progress on the path to greater influence for Sandys. In June 1967, Sandys' 'old friend' in Salisbury, David Smith, informed Bowden that the Rhodesian premier would be 'prepared, without any pre-conditions, to resume discussions with the British government with the object

⁹²See FCO 36/157.

⁹³(24) Letter from Welensky to Sarah Millin 23/1/67 (MSS. Welensky 761/4, Papers of Sir Roy Welensky, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford).

of making a further attempt to reaching a mutually acceptable settlement'. This was the first indication of a rapprochement since 1966 and would in time lead to formal talks on HMS *Fearless* in 1968.⁹⁴ If the official record offers no tangible evidence of Sandys' role in brokering this thaw in relations, it is indisputable that he was one of a small number of prominent voices advocating a return to negotiations in the first half of 1967, and one of an even smaller number who could command the respect of Ian Smith. In a telling comment on meeting Sandys again in 1971, Smith even suggested that he would never have proclaimed UDI had the Conservatives won the General Election of 1964.⁹⁵

More significantly, while the public remained largely unmoved by the prospect of abandoned Arabian colonial leaders and even the loss of Britain's 'great power' status, Sandys discovered that the plight of Rhodesia's European settlers and particularly the growing popular interest in the issue of racial tension clearly struck a chord with many on the Right. The short-lived but significant popular following that Sandys achieved in the wake of the Trafalgar Square rally did not go unnoticed by Wilson or Smith and therefore proved to be a significant source of leverage when lobbying. It was this tactic of exploiting popular fears about racial tension that would play such a critical role in the success of Sandys' following campaigns on race relations and immigration.

⁹⁴Record of meetings between Sandys and Douglas-Home, 14–15/4/71 (FCO 36/1012); note from David Smith to Bowden, 12/6/67 (DO 121/261).

⁹⁵Record of meetings between Sandys and Douglas-Home, 14–15/4/71 (FCO 36/1012).

‘Turn off the Tap’: Immigration and Race Relations

Of all the features of decolonisation, it was mass immigration from the New Commonwealth and the appearance of a supposed ‘race problem’ that excited the most passionate feelings in the British public in 1960s. Building on the success of his public campaign for ‘Peace with Rhodesia’, Sandys launched a vociferous attack on the Labour Government’s race relations and immigration policies in mid-1967. As this chapter will demonstrate, Sandys was the first prominent politician in the late 1960s to lead a popular campaign against both immigration and racial integration. At the heart of the controversy lay the two related questions: how far immigration should be limited and the degree to which immigrants should be integrated having arrived. Going beyond the official Conservative Party policy of limited entry and assisted voluntary repatriation, Sandys called for ‘a complete stop on all immigration including the entry of relatives’ and, going further, demanded that the government should ‘reduce the number’ already living in Britain. At the same time he also called for the repeal of the Race Relations Act of 1965, drawing on his colonial experience of ‘multi-racialism’.¹

Sandys’ activism opened the floodgates of anti-immigrant reaction, later exploited to even greater effect by Enoch Powell. This chapter will demonstrate that Sandys’ public campaign was widely popular. As Chap. 6

¹Extract from News at Ten – Tuesday, 25th July 1967: Interview with the Rt. Hon. Duncan Sandys. M.P. by George Ffitch’ transcript of television programme (DSND 13/20/2).

will argue, this success would make Sandys a potent enemy of the Labour Government when Asians started to flee in large numbers from Kenya to Britain in 1967 and 1968.

The period of mass immigration from the Indian subcontinent, the Caribbean and Africa that had been heralded by the British Nationality Act of 1948 and initiated by the arrival of the *Empire Windrush* in the same year came to an end in the 1960s. The rate of immigration rose dramatically in the late 1950s and early 1960s, fuelled by fears of a ban and accompanied by sporadic race riots in areas such as Notting Hill. Immigration became a major political issue and the Macmillan Government decided to introduce restrictive legislation, which passed into law in 1962. However, by the General Election of 1966 the sociologist Nicholas Deakin, observed that ‘the political heat had gone out of the issue’, and concluded that the significance of ‘immigration in British politics is now being written off altogether’.² This was in large part thanks to the limits introduced by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962. It also reflected Peter Griffiths’ electoral victory at Smethwick in 1964 on a scurrilous ticket of ‘If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Liberal or Labour’. Griffiths’ notorious defeat of the sitting Labour Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon-Walker, helped to effect what was termed the ‘Birmingham syndrome’ by another leading sociologist, Sheila Patterson, as the two major parties engaged in what was commonly termed a ‘Dutch auction of illiberalism’.³ Despite his party’s traditionally pro-immigrant stance, the Home Secretary, Frank Soskice, declared in February 1965 that Labour had in fact ‘always been in favour of control’.⁴ The reactionary drift at Westminster disappointed many liberals but seemed to be a solution of sorts. In private, even Powell observed in early 1967 that there was a ‘feeling of stabilization’ as concerns about immigration had ‘disappeared below the surface of public consciousness’.⁵

With this general shift to the right muting the anti-immigration lobby, a simultaneous bipartisan consensus on the need to legislate against racial discrimination also helped to calm the atmosphere. In 1965 the Government

²N. Deakin ‘The 1966 General Election’ in S. Patterson *Immigration and Race Relations in Britain 1960–1967* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 414–408.

³D. Sandbrook *White Heat: a history of Britain in the Swinging Sixties* (London, 2006), p. 669; Patterson *Immigration and Race Relations*, p. 36.

⁴W. Webster ‘The Empire Comes Home: Commonwealth Migration to Britain’ in Thompson (ed.) *Britain’s Experience of Empire*, p. 134.

⁵Shepherd *Enoch Powell*, p. 328.

successfully added a Race Relations Act to the statute book with the support of the Shadow Cabinet, constituting the first, limited, attempt to combat racial discrimination.⁶ The Shadow Home Secretary Quentin Hogg's emollient if paternalistic view on race relations was typical of the consensus between the front benches, recognising that 'there is no moral or scientific basis for believing that one race is naturally more talented than another'. Although 'of course, it is true that at one time or another one nationality or one race develops more technologically, sometimes culturally' there was 'no basis for believing that we are in any way superior animals'.⁷

However, the political landscape changed dramatically in the autumn of 1967 when a second and more vehement wave of anti-immigrant lobbying began to demand the complete curtailment of immigration, and even repatriation, while at the same time denouncing a government proposal to extend the powers of the Race Relations Act. Opinion polls taken at the time illustrate this transformation: a Gallup Poll taken in March 1966 found that only 5% of 6000 questioned named immigration as the 'most urgent [problem] facing the country at the present time', while a later Gallup Poll taken in the aftermath of the 'Rivers of Blood' speech two years later showed that 74% of respondents supported Powell's stance.⁸

The origins of popular anti-immigrant feeling have received much scholarly attention. Many historians have argued that it was the domestic conditions of post-war Britain that engendered a new emphasis on racial identity.⁹ Indeed a considerable literature suggests that the 'new

⁶Shadow Cabinet minutes (8) 9th Meeting, 9/3/65, pp. 1–3 (LCC 1/2/2, CPA).

⁷*HC Deb* 8 November 1966, vol. 735, col. 1233–1234, 1260.

⁸Patterson *Immigration and Race Relations*, p. 421; Schwarz *White Man's World*, p. 48. Those opposed to Powell numbered 15%.

⁹P. Gilroy *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack?: The cultural politics of race and nation* (London, 1987), pp. 46–47; H. Kearney 'The importance of being British' *Political Quarterly* 71, 1 (2000), pp. 15–25; T. Kushner 'The spice of life? Ethnic difference, politics and culture in modern Britain' in Cesarani & Fulbrook *Citizenship, nationality and migration in Europe*, pp. 125–145; B. Parekh 'Defining British national identity' *Political Quarterly* 71, 1 (2000), pp. 8–12; K. Paul *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca, 1997), p. 189; K. Paul 'From subjects to immigrants: black Britons and national identity, 1948–1962' in R. Weight & A. Beach *The Right to Belong: Citizenship and National Identity in Britain 1930–1960* (London, 1998), pp. 223–248; S. Sagar 'Immigration and economics: The politics of race in the postwar period' in H. Fawcett & R. Lowe (eds.) *Welfare Policy in Britain: The road from 1945* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 172–195; B. Schwarz 'Black Metropolis, White England' in M. Nava & A. O'Shea *Modern Times: Reflections on a century of English Modernity* (London, 1996), pp. 176–209; Waters 'Dark Strangers', p. 208; Weight *Patriots*, pp. 435–439.

racism’—as Chris Waters has termed it—was a modern domestic phenomenon that owed little to colonial attitudes to race.¹⁰ Paul Gilroy has presented it as a ‘populist protest against Britain’s post-imperial plight’, a ‘postcolonial melancholia’ stimulating the racialisation of an ‘increasingly brittle’ national identity, and in his earlier work Bill Schwarz similarly stressed the ‘modernity – not the apparent archaism – of the discovery of ethnicity and of a popular white racism’.¹¹ Bernard Porter warns in a similar vein that racial ideas ‘are so often attributed or connected in other ways with imperialism as to almost identify them together in some people’s minds’, historians misreading the coincidental prejudice of a nation of ‘absent-minded imperialists’.¹² More recently Camilla Schofield’s work has located Enoch Powell’s ideas in Britain’s experience of the Second World War.¹³ Without exception, historians have concurred that it was Powell who was primarily responsible for giving voice to the resurgence of popular racial feeling in the late 1960s with his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech of April 1968.¹⁴ Zig Layton-Henry, for one, suggests that the public concern about immigration that had ‘remained at a high level since 1958’ and that had been ‘stifled between 1965 and early 1968 by the bipartisan consensus’ was dramatically shattered by Powell alone.¹⁵ Richard Weight similarly argues that it was Powell who sought to ‘take the puckered thumb of imperialism out of the English mouth’.¹⁶

¹⁰Waters ‘Dark Strangers’, p. 237; T. Kushner *We Europeans? Mass Observation, ‘Race’ and British Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 31–32, 128.

¹¹Gilroy ‘*There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*’, p. 48; P. Gilroy *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London, 2004), p. 116; B. Schwarz ‘Black Metropolis, White England’ in M. Nava & A O’Shea *Modern Times*, p. 199.

¹²Waters ‘Dark Strangers’, pp. 215–221, 236–238; Weight *Patriots*, pp. 432–433; B. Porter *The Absent Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 314–318.

¹³Schofield *Enoch Powell*.

¹⁴D. Cesarani ‘The changing character of citizenship and nationality in Britain’ in D. Cesarani & M. Fulbrook *Citizenship, nationality and migration in Europe*, pp. 63–70 (London, 1996); P. Gilroy ‘*There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*’, pp. 47, 88; Z. Layton-Henry *The Politics of Race in Britain* (London, 1984), pp. 70–72; B. Parekh ‘Defining British national identity’, p. 9; Reynolds *Britannia Overruled*, p. 212; Rich *Race and Empire*, pp. 211–212.

¹⁵Layton-Henry *The Politics of Immigration*, pp. 79–80; see also Schwarz *White Man’s World*, pp. 11–19.

¹⁶Weight *Patriots: National Identity in Britain*, pp. 433–435.

However, a re-assessment of the rise of the anti-immigration lobby in the light of Sandys' contribution renders this narrative problematic on two counts. Firstly, it would appear that Powell's prominence in the race relations debate prior to February 1968 has been considerably overstated in the context of Sandys' more outspoken views and leading role in 1967.¹⁷ And secondly, the origins of the racist response to immigration cannot simply be located in wartime or post-war domestic experience because, even more than Powell, Sandys' response to Britain's 'race problem' was conditioned by his colonial experience.¹⁸

As early as 1955, a BBC television documentary observed that 'not for the first time in our history we have a Colonial problem on our hands, but it's a Colonial problem with a difference'; no longer 'thousands of miles away and worrying other people, it's right here, on the spot, worrying us'. Such comments were echoed by contemporary sociologists including Michael Banton and Judith Henderson who noted the influence of colonial racial stereotypes, a theme that Salman Rushdie turned into an anti-colonial call to arms after the black 'citizens of the new, imported empire' rioted against the 'colonising army' of the Metropolitan Police in 1981.¹⁹

Subsequently, a number of historians have argued that post-war racial attitudes represent a clear example of the ongoing influence of the colonial experience on the metropole, notably Wendy Webster and also Schwarz in his more recent work.²⁰ For Schwarz, as 'decolonisation progressed, black

¹⁷With the exceptions of D. Steel *No Entry: the Background and Implications of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968* (London, 1969), Chap. 11; and R. Hansen 'The Kenyan Asians, British Politics, and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968' *Historical Journal* 42, 3 (1999), pp. 809–834.

¹⁸For the colonial origins of Powell's thinking see my article on 'India, Post-Imperialism and the Origins of Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" Speech', pp. 669–687.

¹⁹Robert Reid *Has Britain a Colour Bar?*, BBC TV programme, 31/1/55, quoted in Webster 'The Empire Comes Home', p. 146; Waters "Dark Strangers", p. 216; S. Rushdie 'The New Empire within Britain' *New Society* 9/12/82.

²⁰A. Nandy *The intimate enemy: The Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (Delhi, 1983), p. 32; B. Williamson, 'Memories, Vision and Hope: Themes in an Historical Sociology of Britain since the Second World War' *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, 2 (1988), p. 170; Rich *Race and Empire*, p. 213; Said *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 11; Z. Layton-Henry *The Politics of Immigration* (Oxford, 1992), p. 9; W. Webster "'There'll always be an England": Representations of Colonial Wars and Immigration, 1948-1968' *Journal of British Studies* 40, 4 (2001), pp. 557–584; Schwarz *White Man's World*, pp. 1–52; Webster 'The Empire Comes Home', pp. 122–160.

migration to the metropole functioned as the trigger which released and organised new memories of empire', serving not to lessen but to intensify the impact of colonial attitudes.²¹ Webster suggests that the experience of the colonial wars or 'Emergencies' that accompanied decolonisation was reconstructed as an urban narrative of 'whites under siege from "blacks next door"', and specifically that 'a focus on boundary maintenance, characteristic of the colonies, came home to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s in intense concern about sexual boundaries' with miscegenation 'identified as a central feature of the "colour problem"'.²²

In a re-assessment of his earlier case for the modernity of Powell's views, Schwarz also argues that his 'racial encoding of order, as whiteness, and disorder, as blackness' carried into the post-colonial world 'the political instincts of proconsular imperialism'. Indeed, in British society at large, 'at the very moment of decolonisation, a language of racial whiteness assumed a new prominence *at home*' as a 'nominally archaic, colonial vocabulary was called upon to make sense of a peculiarly contemporary domestic situation: the impact of extensive non-white immigration'. Discovering themselves to be a 'species of white settler' the former colonists believed that they were being 'subjected to incessant indignities by the natives who were now inexplicably in their midst ... conqueror, it seemed, had become conquered' and 'what had occurred in the colonies now appeared to be happening in England'.²³ However, in presenting Powell as the exemplar of this paradigm, Schwarz's argument is hampered by two issues, namely that Powell avoided direct discussion of race in public and that his interest in colonial issues after the Hola Camp scandal was scant. As this chapter will demonstrate, no such problems are presented by Sandys whose thinking on race and immigration had a demonstrably colonial pedigree.

SANDYS' IDEOLOGY: RACE AND IMMIGRATION

Ironically, Sandys had promoted an open-door policy for Commonwealth immigrants as Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations. In 1962 he had opposed the Commonwealth Immigration

²¹ Schwarz *White Man's World*, p. 10.

²² Webster 'The Empire Comes Home', pp. 144–143.

²³ Schwarz *White Man's World*, p. 11–12, 29.

Bill of 1962 and personally negotiating the terms of Kenya's independence in 1962–1963, part of which entitled Kenyan Asians to retain their UK citizenship. Indeed Sandys and Iain Macleod, his counterpart at the Colonial Office, were the only Cabinet members to oppose the Bill in the face of overwhelming Tory support.²⁴ Macleod went on to affirm his liberal credentials at the time of the Kenyan Asian controversy in 1968. But it would appear that Sandys' stance in office was a tactical one, reflecting the practical difficulties of retaining close relations with colonial nationalist leaders. In a memorandum written shortly before the introduction of the first Commonwealth Immigrants Bill of 1962, he stated that he was 'in complete agreement with the need to impose some restrictions on immigrants from the Commonwealth' but he was 'unhappy about the idea of giving citizens of the Irish Republic privileges which will not be enjoyed by Commonwealth citizens'.²⁵ Tom Utley's claim that Sandys 'was still worshipping at the imperialist idol of the "open door"' should best be seen in the light of such managerial concerns rather than ideological motives: with a Commonwealth Relations brief he certainly had nothing to gain in further alienating critics such as Kwame Nkrumah.

Sandys was able to offer a more honest account of his personal views after he left office. In June 1965 Sandys took the opportunity during a debate about a forthcoming Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference to assert that renewed 'discussion' was overdue because there had 'been altogether much too much woolly talk on the question of immigration' criticising the assumption that 'this is not a racial problem' and simply one of numbers. 'We all know', Sandys opined, that if the immigrants were 'Australians it would be quite easy to absorb them, but when they are people of different races, sometimes of different religions, and speak different languages, the problem of integration is very much more difficult'. Although he was careful to add that 'once he is here an immigrant must be treated as one of us, without any racial discrimination of any kind whatsoever', he remained opposed to interventionist race relations legislation. Only immigration control could prevent

²⁴Utley *Enoch Powell*, p. 37; *Steel No Entry*, p. 41.

²⁵'Commonwealth Migrants: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations', 26/5/61 (CAB/129/105 (C. (61) 69)).

the ‘development of a racial problem’ that would lead to ‘further friction and tension, and, I am afraid, sooner or later, to shameful incidents which would have a most disastrous effect on our relations with other Commonwealth countries’.²⁶

Although this position constituted a marked departure from his stance in office, it was not until 1966 that Sandys decided to go beyond the Conservative Party line. Thanks to Heath’s decision to demote him from the Shadow Cabinet after the General Election of that year, Sandys now began to enjoy the freedom of the backbenches for the first time in fifteen years. He soon became the doyen of the anti-immigration lobby by advocating a complete ban on immigration—including the families (‘dependants’) of those already in Britain—and the repeal of the Race Relations Act.

In November 1966 he made his first speech on immigration, inviting the House to ‘examine our whole attitude towards this question’ and ‘in particular, I want frankly to discuss what is perhaps the most delicate aspect of the question, namely, the racial aspect’: it was time to recognise that when ‘we talk about the new Commonwealth and the old Commonwealth’ undoubtedly ‘we all know what we mean’. Indeed in an earlier draft of the speech he compared himself to Peter Griffiths by adding that he was prepared to take the ‘risk of being called a “Parliamentary leper” by the Prime Minister’.²⁷ Although Sandys admitted that closing the door to the dependants of immigrants would ‘cause untold family distress’, he appealed to a racial formulation of ‘One Nation’ Conservatism by insisting that

we have admitted many more immigrants of non-European stock than we have been able to assimilate, and there are at least another half million dependants who, under present regulations, are entitled to settle here whenever they choose. Everyone agrees that we do not wish to create two

²⁶ *HC Deb* 1 June 1965, vol. 713, col. 1631–1632.

²⁷ ‘Commonwealth Immigrants Bill’ speech [November, 1966] (DSND 13/20/1); Wilson had branded Griffiths with the epithet in the aftermath of the General Election of 1964: *HC Debs* 3 November 1964, vol. 701, col. 71.

classes of citizen. Nor do we wish to create a nation within a nation. But that is precisely what we are doing.²⁸

Regardless of the numbers arriving, Sandys felt that 'it is much easier to assimilate immigrants from Australia and New Zealand than from India and Jamaica'. He concluded that 'when differences in occupation, earnings and national habits coincide with differences of colour we are a long way towards building two nations'.

The speech of November 1966 was particularly significant as it offered an insight into the colonial influence on Sandys' thinking about Britain. On a trip to the USA in 1966 he had been 'painfully impressed with the extent of the violence, bitterness and misery caused in that country through the tensions between white and coloured citizens'. But it was Sandys' colonial experience that most heavily influenced his ideas about race. Referencing a number of former British possessions, the decolonisation of which he had personally managed, Sandys developed a universalised view of racial tension:

It would be quite wrong to suggest that this is an issue between the white and coloured races. These same difficulties have arisen between Africans and Asians in East Africa, Malays and Chinese in Malaysia, Indians and Negroes in Guyana, and Fijians and Indians in Fiji, and in many other countries with mixed populations. But the difference between us and these other countries is that they, for the most part, inherited this problem from the past, whereas we are creating it today. Despite the unhappy experience elsewhere we are deliberately building up trouble for ourselves in the future.

Accused by the Labour member Donald Chapman of suggesting that the 'racial strife which one sees around the world is inevitable and that we are heading for the same trouble in this country', Sandys nodded assent. A lengthy and impassioned debate ensued.²⁹

It was not until the summer of 1967 that Sandys gave full vent to his fears about racial tension and also, in a new departure, miscegenation.

²⁸ *HC Deb* 08/11/66, vol. 735, col. 1188–1191.

²⁹ *HC Deb* 8 November 1966, vol. 735, col. 1188–1191.

His comments stand out as the most inflammatory statements to come from a leading politician during this period, most notoriously his claim that ‘the breeding of half-caste children would merely produce a generation of misfits and create increased tensions’. Responding to a recently published government report on *Immigrants and the Youth Service*, which supposedly ‘urges us to accept a large increase in mixed marriages as an essential element in “our declared policy of integration”’, he sought to ‘grasp the nettle’ and go beyond what he felt was a euphemistic debate about the rate of immigration to the more fundamental issue, namely race. ‘The problem is simply not one of numbers’, he warned again, announcing in apocalyptic terms that ‘if we just sit mesmerised and do nothing, we shall have no one to blame but ourselves when race violence breaks out in Britain’.³⁰ Indeed, when asked in an ITN interview the next day whether he accepted that ‘the vast majority of coloured people in this country are very decent law abiding people’, Sandys warned that ‘when they get inflamed and worked up anything can happen’; in his opinion there was ‘absolutely no reason why we should assume that what’s happening in America now couldn’t happen to Britain in a few years’ time.³¹ Within weeks Sandys had become the subject of a police investigation, accused of inciting racial violence.³²

Race riots in the USA were clearly troubling Sandys, reinforcing his colonial experience. His remarkable statement about miscegenation was followed shortly by an article in the *News of the World* on ‘Race Riots: could they ever happen in Britain?’. Tending an emphatic ‘yes’ to the titular question, Sandys quoted a ‘British Negro agitator’ who had recently threatened “‘Detroit today, London tomorrow””, claiming that ‘unless immigration is stopped now, by 1997 one in 10 people in Britain

³⁰Press statement made by Duncan Sandys on 24th July, reported in greatest detail in ‘What we think’ *Marylebone Chronicle* 4/8/67 (DSDN 18/19); the statement also received coverage in: ‘Mr. Sandys calls for end of immigration’ *The Guardian* 25/7/67; ‘Race Relations: British happenings’ *The Economist* 29/7/67; ‘Black Power leader leaves mark on Britain’ *The Observer* 6/8/67.

³¹‘Extract from News at Ten – Tuesday, 25th July 1967: Interview with the Rt. Hon. Duncan Sandys. M.P. by George Ffitch’, transcript of television programme (DSND 13/20/2).

³²‘Applications for the attorney-general’s fiat under the Race Relations Act 1965: Sandys, D: no consent’ (LO 2/446, TNA).

will be coloured – and the scene could be set for hatred'. He suggested that 'the next generation, will not be content to take over their fathers' [unskilled] jobs and pay'. It was time to 'turn off the tap', since 'having seen America torn apart by violence and hatred, it would be criminal folly to allow the same to happen here'.³³

During August and September 1967 Sandys was considered for prosecution under Section 6 of the Race Relations Act, accused of attempting to 'stir up hatred against any section of the public in Great Britain distinguished by colour, race, or ethnic or national origins'.³⁴ Although it did not lead to a prosecution the episode prompted Sandys to lay bare his opposition to race relations legislation. It was Sandys' belief that 'there are those who think that even to suggest the existence of a colour problem in Britain is proof of racial prejudice'. Racial tension was undermining democracy and he denounced the Race Relations Act for threatening a 'monstrous encroachment on the right of free speech'.³⁵ Thanks to a similar speech on 20th September and a dispute with the Lambeth Council for Community Relations, Sandys comments were 'highly publicized', as the journalist Paul Foot noted.³⁶ The 'seeds of future violence' and the impossibility of full integration also featured in a 'tour de force' speech at the Conservative Party Conference in the following month, reportedly delivered in 'Churchillian style'. His thinly euphemistic demands to preserve the 'British character' of the country received cheers and a standing ovation from at least two-thirds of the delegates.³⁷

Sandys made his last major speech on racial tension in November 1967. Assuming a seemingly liberal defence, he argued that 'nobody

³³Duncan Sandys 'Race Riots: could they ever happen in Britain?' *News of the World* 30/7/67.

³⁴Race Relations Act (1965), quoted in G. Schaffer 'Legislating against Hatred: Meaning and Motive in Section Six of the Race Relations Act of 1965' *Twentieth Century British History* 25, 2 (2013), p. 6.

³⁵'Sandys in Immigration Row: one in ten will be coloured, he warns' *Streatham News* 22/9/67 (Lambeth Archives, LA); 'No action on statements by Mr. Sandys' *The Guardian* 21/9/67 (DSND 18/19); see also 'Try Sandys under Race Relations Act' *Daily Express* 11/8/67 (DSND 18/18).

³⁶Foot *The Rise of Enoch Powell*, p. 103.

³⁷'Do not fear to be Tories, says Mr. Sandys' *Yorkshire Post* 21/10/67 (DSND 18/16); Shepherd *Enoch Powell*, p. 330.

wants to see people penalised on grounds of race or religion' and that 'we must deal severely with anyone who tries to foment hatred'. He warned that politicians must be 'careful that, in combating discrimination, we do not stimulate it', ignoring the impact of his own controversial comments in July. Having argued against positive discrimination in police recruitment, he concluded that 'if we go down this road the next step will be to require or encourage schools to maintain a prescribed mixture of white and coloured pupils'.³⁸

After the autumn of 1967 Sandys generally avoided direct public reference to race relations, perhaps unnerved by the prosecution attempt under Section 6. Yet his concern about the rate of immigration was undiminished. With an aggressive Africanisation campaign starting in Kenya in the summer of 1967, many of the country's sizeable Asian population began to flee to Britain on UK passports, which had been granted by Sandys himself at the time of independence (as mentioned earlier). This issue would quickly become the dominant theme in Sandys' campaigning until the new Commonwealth Immigrants Bill passed into law at the beginning of March 1968. Sandys' role in the genesis of this legislation is the subject of the Chap. 6.

Sandys first raised the issue of the rate of arrivals from Kenya on 26th October 1967, asking the Home Secretary in the House 'what further steps he is taking to reduce the influx of ... persons in East Africa who have no connection with Great Britain but who are entitled to British passports' and to 'say how many Asians from East Africa entered Britain in August and September this year?'.³⁹ Shortly after he tabled an amendment to the Queen's Speech in which he suggested for the first time that the Government should legislate to restrict the flow of those East African Asians who held or were entitled to hold Citizens of UK and Colonies passports.⁴⁰

The following month Sandys made a full declaration of his position on the immigration question, in what would become the basis for all his subsequent statements in the following months. Fearing 'racial trouble' he repeated his complete opposition to the entry of dependants,

³⁸ *HC Deb* 15/11/67, vol. 754, col. 500–503.

³⁹ *HC Deb* 26 October 1967, vol. 751, col. 1861–1864.

⁴⁰ 'Sandys Motion on immigrant curbs backed' *Daily Telegraph* 1/11/67.

and then raised the 'fact that there are about 200,000 Asians in East Africa who either hold or are eligible for United Kingdom passports' who 'enjoy a legal right to come here without any restriction whatsoever'. Referencing his time in office, Sandys claimed that 'it was certainly never intended that this arrangement should provide a privileged back-door entry into the United Kingdom', forcing an incredulous David Ennals (then Minister for Immigration at the Home Office) to his feet to demand to know why the former Colonial Secretary 'did not at the time anticipate precisely the problem to which he is now referring' as chairman of Kenya's independence conference in 1963. Sandys countered that the Government should 'close without further delay' the legal 'loophole' that had arisen from the practice of applying the 'same arrangements as were applied to other Colonies when they became independent' and the assumption that 'it would have been a little invidious if we had said, "We think that there will be trouble in East Africa, and, therefore, we propose to introduce different nationality and citizenship arrangements".'

Sandys argued that the reason that they had been 'given this status was to ensure that they did not become Stateless' yet when 'many of them had the opportunity ... to take on Kenya citizenship ... they decided not to do so', causing them now to fall foul of Kenya's new Immigration Act (see Chap. 6). At the time Sandys had been 'hopeful that these people would be well-treated' and since he believed that this was still the case, he concluded that it was 'anxiety rather than ill-treatment' that was causing the exodus from Kenya and which now required urgent 'administrative action' rather than debate and legislation.⁴¹ Throughout the following months until the new Commonwealth Immigrants Bill was passed in February 1968 Sandys doggedly returned to this 'loophole' claim, asserting that the Government had no moral duty to uphold a pledge that was understood to be temporary at the time of independence, complemented by alarmist estimates of the numbers of UK passport holders likely to flee Kenya for Britain, and a cursory dismissal of the hardships being faced by the Asian community in Kenya.

With the Government still refusing either to take action or to make a firm pledge to the Asians that their UK passports would be honoured, Sandys took matters into his own hands. In mid-January 1968 he first proposed

⁴¹ *HC Deb* 15 November 1967, vol. 754, col. 504–507.

to introduce a Ten-Minute Rule Bill then choose instead to table a motion in the House on 12th February.⁴² In case there was any confusion as to why certain UK passport holders should be refused entry, Sandys told the Monday Club on the 8th February that Australians and New Zealanders (such as his own grandfather) would of course not be affected as ‘they are our kith and kin’ and ‘have got white faces’.⁴³ Sandys then publicly reiterated his position repeatedly over the following weeks, playing a central role in two lengthy debates on 27th and 28th of February and maintaining a prominent profile throughout the height of the Kenyan Asian ‘crisis’.⁴⁴

The Kenyan Asians lost their right of entry on the 1st March when the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill passed into law. However Sandys continued to push for ever-tighter restrictions on Commonwealth immigration. In April he was one of the first Conservatives to criticize Edward Heath’s decision to sack Powell after the ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech with which he ‘fully agreed’, one of only four Tory members to stand by Powell.⁴⁵ Thereafter Sandys tried twice to force the Government to legislate against the entry of dependants and to abolish the marginally favourable advantage for Commonwealth over alien immigrants, proposing an Early Day Motion in July 1968 and a Ten-Minute Rule Bill in February 1969.⁴⁶ Although the latter attracted the support of 126 MPs, Sandys was refused leave to bring the Bill to the Commons and thereafter he abandoned the cause.⁴⁷

All told, Sandys had played a leading role in the race and immigration debate from 1965 until 1969. Between late July 1967 and the end of February 1968 his repeated attempts to attract public support

⁴²Letter from Sandys to Quentin Hogg, 18/1/68 (DSND 13/20/2); Steel *No Entry* p. 138; ‘Race Speeches “Committed Tory Policy”’ *The Guardian* 13/2/68.

⁴³Steel *No Entry*, p. 137.

⁴⁴‘Immigrants from East Africa: Statement by Mr. Duncan Sandys, M.P.’ 16/2/68 (DSND 13/20/3); ‘Sandys says: I warned Jenkins on immigrants’ *Sunday Times* 18/2/68; *HC Deb* 22 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 666–667; *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1241–1368; *HC Deb* 28 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1543–1603.

⁴⁵*HC Deb* 11 April 1968, vol. 762, col. 294; ‘Powell Sacked’ *The Sunday Express* 21/4/68. Only three other Tories publicly endorsed Powell, namely Sir Harmor Nicholls, Edward Taylor and Gerald Nabarro.

⁴⁶Letter from Sandys to Heath, 15/7/68 (DSND 13/20/2); *HC Deb* 11 February 1969, vol. 777, col. 1127–1128.

⁴⁷Speech by Bernard Black, J.P. prospective Conservative Parliamentary candidate for Lambeth to AGM of Herne Hill branch of Norwood Conservative Association, 17/2/69 (DSND 13/20/2).

had achieved sustained press coverage: during February 1968 a total of twenty-seven articles or letters published in *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *The Times* mentioned his stance on race and immigration, in comparison with seventeen references to Powell. In the period July 1967–January 1968 the coverage received was, respectively, thirteen and four articles. This reflected the number of statements or speeches on the issue from Sandys, which totalled sixteen between July 1967 and February 1968, compared to three from Powell. In this way Sandys played a leading role in helping to return the issue, which had previously been avoided by all but extremists, to the centre stage at Westminster months before 'Rivers of Blood'. As one correspondent to *The Guardian* put it, 'I doubt whether even in America a public figure as highly placed as Mr. Sandys is in Britain could get away' with it.⁴⁸

The timing and nature of Sandys' controversial statements about race and immigration were most unusual even in the context of British politics in the mid-1960s. To the modern reader, the acceptable lexicon of race in the 1960s can appear misleadingly florid. This was true even on the Left, as illustrated by the BBC's creation Alf Garnett and satirical comments such as *Punch*'s claim that Sandys himself was a 'coon ... touch of the old tar-brush on his mother's side'.⁴⁹ Labour ministers such as Callaghan were happy to use phrases like 'non-European stock' in private.⁵⁰ Despite being reputed in the corridors of Whitehall as a 'hatchet man', Sandys' comments were nonetheless surprising.⁵¹ Comparison with Enoch Powell is again revealing. As former ministers, Powell and Sandys were the only high profile politicians to be considered by the Attorney General for prosecution under the Race Relations Act, but despite attracting more attention after February 1968, Powell was more coy than Sandys in his approach.⁵² He assumed the race relations

⁴⁸Letter from Rev R Gillett (Bury, Lancs) 'Wanted: a race relations leader' *The Guardian* 12/8/67.

⁴⁹'Diplomatically Speaking' *Punch* 8/11/67.

⁵⁰Letter from James Callaghan to Sandys, 13/12/67 (DSND 13/20/2).

⁵¹Sandbrook *Never Had It So Good* p. 240; Hennessy *Having it so Good*, p. 464.

⁵²'Applications for the attorney-general's fiat under the Race Relations Act 1965: Sandys, D: no consent' (LO2/446); 'Applications for the attorney-general's fiat under the Race Relations Act 1965: Powell, E: no consent' (LO2/486); one other M.P. was considered: 'Applications for the attorney-general's fiat under the Race Relations Act 1965: Nabarro, Sir G: no consent' (LO2/465).

platform much later than his former superior at the Ministry of Housing, showing little interest in the debate until the summer of 1967 and taking a supporting role until the following spring.⁵³ Eighteen months before the ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech shocked the nation, Sandys was tackling the ‘race problem’ head on.⁵⁴

Powell’s speech itself did draw on highly offensive racialised language, using phrases such as ‘wide-grinning piccaninnies’. However, unlike Sandys, Powell was uncomfortable with the term ‘race’, at least in public, claiming to be ignorant of its meaning and suggesting that ‘where there are marked physical differences, especially of colour, integration is difficult though, over a period, not impossible’.⁵⁵ Nor did he ever comment on miscegenation, focussing instead on numbers and the concentration of settlement, famously claiming that ‘if the immigrants were Germans or Russians’ the problems ‘would be serious – and in some respects more serious – than could follow from an introduction of a similar number of West Indians or Pakistanis’.⁵⁶ Most probably Powell and Sandys were largely in sympathy—it is telling that neither spoke out about mass immigration from Ireland—but it is certainly misleading to credit Powell alone for inflaming anti-immigrant opinion, as he spoke out months later than Sandys and in more guarded terms.⁵⁷

The only Member of Parliament who did make comments comparable to Sandys was the maverick Cyril Osborne. In 1966 he defended Sandys ‘for saying that black and white could not easily mix. It is the story the whole world over, wherever one goes, that there are problems of racial hatreds, black against brown, yellow against black, black against white, white against white, black against black’.⁵⁸ The member for Louth had been a voice in the wilderness on the matter of immigration since 1952 but, unlike Sandys who commanded considerable respect on both sides

⁵³T. Utley *Enoch Powell: the man and his thinking* (London, 1968), p. 29; P. Foot *The Rise of Enoch Powell* (London, 1969), p. 103.

⁵⁴‘Commonwealth Immigrants Bill’ draft of speech for House of Commons, 8/11/66 (DSND 13/20/1).

⁵⁵Enoch Powell speech, Birmingham, 20/4/68, quoted in R. Collings (ed.) *Reflections of a Statesman: The Writings and Speeches of Enoch Powell* (London, 1991), p. 373–379.

⁵⁶R. Hansen *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain* (Oxford, 2000), p. 181; BBC radio programme 29/11/68, quoted in Collings *Reflections of a Statesman*, p. 395.

⁵⁷E.g. Rich *Race and Empire*, pp. 211–212.

⁵⁸*HC Deb* 8 November 1966, vol. 735, col. 1220.

of the House, Osborne was widely dismissed by members as an 'antediluvian' eccentric.⁵⁹ Sandys' views were also echoed in more moderate form by two other backbench members of the Monday Club, Ronald Bell and Harold Gurden who had long suggested that assimilation was problematic though not impossible. However, such individuals caused 'little embarrassment to the Government' as David Steel observed.⁶⁰ Outside the confines of Westminster, a number of organisations did espouse overtly racist creeds, notably Colin Jordan's National Socialist Movement (NSM) and the Racial Preservation Society (RPS), whose views were far more extremist than Sandys'. But the successful prosecution of figures such as Jordan and the high-level of press interest that surrounded their trials gave an inaccurate impression of their significance: the RPS never claimed more than a few thousand members and Sheila Patterson estimated that in 1967 the NSM had between 30 and 50 disciples. None of these extremist organisations were ever able to claim public support from an MP let alone the likes of the 'Shadow Leader of the Opposition' and racist fringe parties such as the Union Movement and the National Front failed to gain a toehold even in local elections.⁶¹

REACTION TO SANDYS' CAMPAIGN

The significance of Sandys' campaign was demonstrated most forcibly by the noisy response that his comments elicited from critics and supporters alike. While the reaction in public was largely critical, Sandys' post-bag reveals that the great majority of his correspondents were privately in favour of his stance, their letters offering an invaluable sample of private views on the question of race and immigration in the mid-1960s. Indeed *The Observer* contended in February 1968 that Sandys 'probably receives a larger post-bag from the prejudiced than anyone else in public life today'.⁶²

Public criticism of Sandys came from many quarters, particularly after his comments about miscegenation in the summer of 1967. A common

⁵⁹ Paul Rose, *HC Deb* 15 November 1967, vol. 754, col. 525.

⁶⁰ *HC Deb* 8 November 1966, vol. 735, col. 1220, 1217; Steel *No Entry*, p. 132.

⁶¹ S. Patterson *Immigration and Race Relations in Britain 1960-1967* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 372-385.

⁶² 'Pride but no Prejudice' *The Observer* 18/2/68 (DSND 18/17).

response was exemplified by the *Morning Star*, which slammed Sandys for having ‘indulged in an outburst which can only encourage every racist in the country’. The paper denounced his views as ‘the kind of gross exaggeration indulged in by those who want to create prejudice’.⁶³ On the same day *The Economist* branded him ‘ridiculous’, commenting that ‘when it comes to mixing offensive sentiments with half-truths and non sequiturs, even the Trinidadian duo are novices compared with Sandys’, referring to the radical Black Power activists Stokely Carmichael and Michael de Freitas (also known as Abdul Malik or Michael X).⁶⁴ He was accused by *The Guardian* of being the primary catalyst of a ‘new mood of militancy’ amongst black rights organisations, outweighing even the impact of the Home Secretary’s ban on Carmichael and British criticism of the unrest in the USA.⁶⁵ On 6th August a Black Power activist denounced the former minister as a criminal at Speakers’ Corner, calling for his arrest.⁶⁶ Developing this theme the secretary to the London branch of the West Indian Standing Committee (WISC) reported Sandys to the police on 10th August 1967 for ‘what we consider a particularly degrading remark made ... about “half-castes who will become social misfits”’ on 24th and 25th of July, which was deemed ‘abusive and nauseating’.⁶⁷ Crawford had ‘received many complaints from his 10,000 membership’ who were ‘worried about tough measures being taken against black leaders’ following the arrest of Michael de Freitas on the same day; many members believed that ‘the authorities seem to be clamping down on only one side’.⁶⁸

⁶³‘LBJ’s wars in Detroit and Vietnam’ *Morning Star* 29/7/67 (DSND 18/17).

⁶⁴‘Race Relations: British happenings’ *The Economist* 29/7/67.

⁶⁵‘Black Power leader leaves mark on Britain’ *The Guardian* 6/8/67.

⁶⁶Transcript of shorthand notes taken by Det. Sgt. Battye, Special Branch, of parts of a speech made by Tony WATSON at a meeting held under the auspices of the Universal Coloured Peoples Association at Speakers’ Corner, Hyde Park, W.1, on 13th August 1967’, in ‘Brief for the Prosecution: WATSON, Alton, SAWH, Roy, GHOSE, Ajoy, EZEICIEL, Michael, “Racial Adjustment Action Society” and “Universal Coloured People’s Association”’: s 6(1) Race Relations Act 1965. Using threatening abusive, or insulting words in Hyde Park, London, 6 August 1967’ (DPP 2/4428, TNA).

⁶⁷“Prosecute him” demand after Sandys TV talk’ *Daily Mirror* 11/8/67.

⁶⁸“Prosecute Mr. Sandys” call by W. Indians’ *Scotsman* 11/8/67; ‘Sandys TV talk probed’ *The Sun* 11/8/67.

The WISC complaint was passed to Scotland Yard's A2 branch, where an inquiry under the terms of the Race Relations Act (as previously mentioned) was headed by Chief Superintendent Frank Merricks, then submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions. Ultimately the case was reviewed by the Attorney General, Elwyn Jones, at which point it was rejected.⁶⁹ The episode illustrates the limitations of Section 6 of the Act. Although the Attorney General's file on Sandys is remarkably closed for 100 years, the Director of Public Prosecution's papers on the similar case made against Powell in 1968 suggest that Jones wished to avoid prosecution of high-profile politicians, whether guilty or otherwise, as he feared that a trial would lend unwelcome publicity to the anti-immigration lobby. Jones was also worried that an experienced politician such as Powell, and presumably Sandys, might perform rather well in court.⁷⁰ In a comment that would also appear to confirm the WISC members' contention that white racists were being treated leniently, Merricks later wrote to Sandys personally to say that he was 'pleased' about the Attorney General's decision.⁷¹ Whatever the sympathies of the police, the wording of Section 6 was problematic, focussing as it did on incitement to violence rather than racist intent. For this reason, Sandys' lawyer maintained throughout that there was 'almost certainly nothing in the complaint' as it was 'necessary in any prosecution to prove *intent* to stir up hatred, and I do not see how this can be established from your remarks even if it can be suggested, which I doubt, that the words are threatening, abusive or insulting'.⁷²

As the attempt to prosecute Sandys foundered, other efforts were made to censure his actions. In September the Lambeth Council for Community Relations announced that it 'strongly deplores' the views expressed on 24th July 'in particular, those relating to the children of "mixed marriages"', believing that such statements hinder the efforts of

⁶⁹Letter from Chief Superintendent [Merricks] to Sandys, 19/9/67 (DSND 13/20/2).

⁷⁰Powell, Enoch, M.P: considered for prosecution under S6 Race Relations Act 1965 following speeches given in Birmingham, Eastbourne, Wolverhampton and Carshalton. Contains letters from members of the public. Not prosecuted' (DPP2/4504); Schaffer 'Legislating against Hatred', pp. 1–25.

⁷¹Letter from Chief Superintendent [of Police] to Sandys, 19/9/67 (DSND 13/20/2).

⁷²Letter from Charles Russell & Co., Solicitors to Sandys, 10/8/67 (DSND 13/20/2).

the Council in striving for an integrated community'.⁷³ Shortly after, a Commons motion by 28 Labour and Liberal MPs also 'deplored' the comments and 'called on him to withdraw his statement because it had "caused distress" to children of mixed marriages'.⁷⁴ Much of the criticism of Sandys suggested that he was responsible for stirring up popular prejudice, the Labour member Joan Lester accusing him of populism and condemning his views as 'malicious (because he knows better)'.⁷⁵ Anthony Lester QC reflected on Sandys' reference to events in the USA, concluding that the 'Riot Question is dangerous not because it titillates our latent fascination with violence but because it encourages an already widespread British conviction that the absence of violence indicates good race relations and that harmony should be our principle goal'. Lester tacitly criticised Section 6, of which he himself was an architect. In his opinion Sandys' intervention had been predictable and corrosive.⁷⁶ In October David Winnick tried in vain to re-instate the failed investigation initiated by WISC, demanding in the Commons that the Attorney General reconsider his judgement on Sandys' views which were 'a form of incitement to race hatred'.⁷⁷

The most intense criticism of Sandys in the House came later during the lengthy debate on Kenyan immigration on 27th February. During the debate the Labour member Andrew Faulds, who had defeated Peter Griffiths in 1966 to become the member for Smethwick, joined many others in judging that Sandys, like Powell, had 'totally and irresponsibly used this opportunity for propagating racialist prejudices'. While in Powell's case Faulds could 'only guess at the agonies of mind that impel this knight of the sad countenance' born of 'childhood traumas' and perhaps a 'too severe anal training in youth', the former actor took Sandys' motivation more seriously as 'it is no doubt the frenzied fever of leadership animosities that impels the right hon. Member for Streatham'. Indeed, 'the particularly nauseating thing about that gentleman ... is that the man responsible for the Kenya independence arrangements and the

⁷³Letter from Chairman of Lambeth Council for Community Relations to Duncan Sandys, 15/9/67 (DSND 13/20/4).

⁷⁴"No action" on race remarks by Sandys' *Daily Telegraph* 21/9/67 (DSND 18/19).

⁷⁵Joan Lester 'Legislation and discrimination' *The Tribune* 22/9/67 (DSDN 18/19).

⁷⁶Anthony Lester 'Why it shouldn't happen here' *The Sunday Times* 30/7/67 (DSND 18/17).

⁷⁷'Sandys "Race Hate" speech' *Evening Gazette* (Middlesbrough) 23/10/67.

promise of citizenship to the poor people we are discussing should now use that very issue both to propagate his own chances in the leadership stakes and bolster his party's short-term chances.⁷⁸

His critics were no less vehement in their private correspondence with Sandys, though much fewer in number. A typical letter accused him of personally effecting a 'worsening of the racial situation in this country' thanks to his overtly racialised 'contemptuous attitude towards black people, and *not* a matter of numbers, that has been the basis of the racial troubles in the United States'.⁷⁹ A more unusual criticism came from an expatriate Tory faithful in Mombasa who wished Sandys would 'welcome the E. A Hindus to Britain' on the unlikely grounds that 'they are to a man inclined towards the Conservative Party'.⁸⁰

The criticism that Sandys attracted from mid-1967 provides clear evidence of the grassroots liberal voice that is sometimes overlooked in debates about race and mass immigration. But what was new at this time was an overwhelming wave of prejudice towards black Britons both in the press and in private correspondence. Most criticism of immigration had previously tended to focus on numbers regardless of origin, and the pressure on social services such as housing, schools and the health services. However in the later 1960s a newly racialised critique began to emerge, legitimised and encouraged by Sandys, then later Powell. A number of editorials expressed concerns about the implications of the Race Relations Act for the future of democracy and freedom of speech, defending Sandys' right to speak out.⁸¹ Across the country, letters pages also expressed support, the most distinguished correspondent being the historian Lord Elton. In the view of the Labour peer, 'integration is not only a noble and ill-starred, but a pathetically impracticable ideal'.⁸² Couching the same argument in more biological terms, a letter to *The*

⁷⁸ *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1298–1299; see also *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1342.

⁷⁹ Letter from W2 to Sandys, 25/7/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

⁸⁰ Letter from Mombasa to Sandys, 20/9/67; see also letter from Chorley to Sandys, 25/7/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

⁸¹ For example, 'Dangerous Law' *Oldham Evening Chronicle and Standard* 11/8/67; 'Opinion: a menace to liberty' *Daily Express* 11/8/67; 'For their sake and ours' *Daily Mail* 31/7/67.

⁸² Letter to editor of *Daily Telegraph* from Lord Elton, 6/8/67 (DSND 18/19); for a typical letters-page see *Leicester Mercury* 15/8/67.

Economist drew on Carleton S. Coon's work to defend Sandys' attack on the 'wholesale immigration of non-compatible racial elements' whose skin colour made them easy prey to rickets in northern climes.⁸³ The editor of the *Leicester Mercury* reflected on a marked change in the tone of letters page over the summer of 1967, commenting that 'the thing which is stirring them at the moment is ... the operation of the Race Relations Act' and 'what really set them going was news the West Indian Standing Conference is demanding the prosecution of Duncan Sandys' for his 'mild-toned' views. For the *Mercury* the concern was that 'unless commonsense prevails and tolerance is cultivated, the "natives" of this country will find their tongues shackled by law' leaving no option but to 'fight for the right to be white!'.⁸⁴

However, the reactionary opinions expressed in the press appear moderate in comparison with those expressed in private, as exemplified by the letters sent to Sandys. A brief overview of this large collection is presented here. As noted in Chap. 1, politicians' postbags are problematic sources to the extent that extremists are usually over-represented: those holding moderate views rarely take the time to write letters to express them. Yet they provide a useful complement to opinion polls as correspondents are free of the constraint of pollsters' questions and can remain fully anonymous if so desired. It is thus of considerable significance that unlike the more balanced nature of the public debate about race and immigration, private views would appear to have been almost universally reactionary.

The only comparable collection of letters relating to this subject is to be found amongst Enoch Powell's papers. Of the extraordinary 100,000 letters that Powell received in April and May 1968, critical correspondents numbered approximately 800.⁸⁵ Although smaller in number, the same pattern was replicated in Sandys' correspondence months before Powell took the leading role in the immigration debate. Prior to the summer of 1967 he had received few letters about race or immigration but thereafter a steady flow of several hundred per month arrived from a wide variety of locations and social backgrounds, peaking in the week after his statement on immigration on 24th July at around 200

⁸³Letter to the editor of *The Economist* from I. W. Fotheringham, 16/9/67.

⁸⁴'Tolerance', editorial, *Leicester Mercury* 16/8/67 (DSND 18/16).

⁸⁵D. Spearman 'Enoch Powell's Postbag' *New Society* 9/5/68, p. 687.

per day.⁸⁶ Sandys retained approximately 2000 of the letters that he received between July and December of 1967 in his private archive. Of these, only eleven took issue with his claims.⁸⁷ A comparison of the flow of letters suggests that throughout 1967 Sandys commanded a much higher public profile on this issue: over July and August 1967 Powell received only 245 letters in total, and a mere 103 for the period August to December 1967.⁸⁸ That Sandys remained a focus of anti-immigrant feeling even after Powell shot to notoriety is demonstrated by the large number of letters—461 in all—that he received in the ten days immediately after ‘Rivers of Blood’.⁸⁹

Sandys’ postbag is in some ways a more useful archive than the mountain of letters sent to Powell as it offers a more manageable sample and the letters are spread over a longer period. An analysis of Sandys’ postbag serves to confirm the findings of research on Powell’s correspondence. Both Diana Spearman’s early analysis and Amy Whipple’s more recent work suggests that when specific concerns were articulated, most correspondents were fearful for British culture and traditions, including freedom of speech, or were worried about pressure on social services, anti-social behaviour and national decline more generally.⁹⁰ Similarly the majority of letters sent to Sandys also suggest that most of the British public was concerned less by racial difference *per se* than the numbers and concentration of immigrants, their behaviour in public, cultural differences, pressure on social services, fear of US-style riots and concerns about race relations legislation and its implications for freedom of speech.⁹¹

Meanwhile a small but significant minority of correspondents wrote to Sandys and Powell in overtly racial terms: in Sandys’ case, approximately

⁸⁶The high flow of letters in late July was sufficiently unusual to attract press comment: ‘The faces of Duncan Sandys’ *The Observer* 30/7/67; according to ‘Sandys Calls for halt to immigration’ *Streatham News* 28/7/67 (LA) Sandys ‘had received hundreds of letters from Streatham people’ alone by the date of publication.

⁸⁷DSND 13/20.

⁸⁸Wolverhampton South-West constituency correspondence (D3123/229–230, Enoch Powell Constituency Papers, Staffordshire Record Office [SRO]).

⁸⁹See DSND 13/20/1–5.

⁹⁰D. Spearman ‘Enoch Powell’s Postbag’ *New Society* 9/5/68, pp. 687–689; Whipple ‘Revisiting the “Rivers of Blood” Controversy’, pp. 717–737.

⁹¹DSND 13/20/3 and 13/20/4.

2% of letters, while Diana Spearman estimated that they amounted to approximately 0.3% of Powell's postbag.⁹² More recently, Amy Whipple's work has queried Spearman's narrow definition of racism but confirmed the broad impression that traces of overt racism were only present in a small number of Powell's letters.⁹³ Although these correspondents were few in number and their arguments were extremist, derogatory and offensive, their significance should not be ignored as they beg a reassessment of Waters' unconvincing suggestion that 'thinking about race and nation in absolute cultural terms' had become 'ubiquitous' by the late 1960s.⁹⁴ The private revelations found in both Sandys' and Powell's postbags suggest that supposedly non-racial public references to numbers of immigrants and pressures on social services may well have been euphemistic in many mouths. Fearful of prosecution under the Race Relations Act after 1965, the British public were guarded when discussing race in public rendering it impossible to come to any firm conclusions about the extent of racism in the later 1960s. These letters therefore offer a unique insight into the terms of the popular debate, giving anecdotal evidence of the nature of private conversations between the extremists that would otherwise remain inaccessible. The letters sent to Sandys, both extremist and moderate, have a further significance as a bellweather of the growing militancy of the anti-immigration lobby. They demonstrate that popular feeling were already running high in the summer of 1967, long before Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech in April 1968.

Amongst Sandy's extremist correspondents, the fear that immigrants were 'breeding like rabbits' was a repeated concern and many demanded action before 'our race as we know it becomes submerged in the rising flood, and sinks into oblivion'.⁹⁵ Miscegenation was also a particular

⁹²D. Spearman 'Enoch Powell's Postbag' *New Society* 9/5/68, p. 687. Spearman points out that other letters drew on language that suggested racial inferiority in making non-racial arguments, but even with these included the total of racialist letters remains small at 1.2%.

⁹³Whipple 'Revisiting the "Rivers of Blood" Controversy', pp. 728–729; Schwarz *White Man's World*, p. 41 also queries Spearman's methodology. Although Spearman was a Conservative Party employee at the time, it should also be noted that her sample of the letters was three times the size of Whipple's.

⁹⁴Waters "Dark Strangers", p. 237.

⁹⁵Letter from Oxford to Sandys, 25/7/67; letter from Surbiton to Sandys, 2/8/67 (DSND 13/20/4).

phobia. 'Oil will not mix with water' appears as a mantra in a number of letters, and another common theme was the perceived 'swamping of our race by coloured, comparable eventually akin to the nature problem of the grey squirrels'.⁹⁶ 'I dare say Wilson, Brown and Co. love them all' an old India-hand judged, but in a typical aside he asked 'would they like their relatives to marry into them?'.⁹⁷ A letter from the Chairman of the Birmingham Immigration Control Association baldly stated that 'abhorrence of miscegenation is common to the vast majority of people', while others lamented that Britain was becoming a 'coffee coloured' nation.⁹⁸

Such concerns were far from unusual. Chris Waters observed that even liberal race relations researchers in 1950s shared a 'discomfort' about the identity of children of mixed marriages, while white women who married black men were described as 'unstable' deviants.⁹⁹ Although Powell differed from Sandys in avoiding public reference, Schwarz also identifies in Powell's postbag an 'erotic dimension, in which love-making between black men and white women would (it was feared) produce identity-less children—"half-castes", "neither one thing nor the other"—destroying England from within, unseen, from within the bedroom, and in the process jeopardizing white mastery itself'.¹⁰⁰

Many correspondents drew analogies with riots in the USA, and some presented personal experiences from their own communities. But when considering the impact of empire on British society it is significant to note that a number drew on Britain's colonial experience in seeking to comprehend post-colonial metropolitan multi-culturalism. Britain's race relations 'problem' was seen as a product of 'the foolish if not shameful "winds of change" policy of Macmillan and Macleod who threw away the Empire with the disastrous results we see in Africa today'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶Letter from Hampshire to Sandys, 25/7/67; letter from Bristol to Sandys, [August] 1967 (DSND 13/20/3).

⁹⁷Letter from SW17 to Sandys (DSND 13/20/4).

⁹⁸Letter from Sutton Coldfield to Duncan Sandys, 7/9/67; letter from SW7 to Sandys, 17/8/67 (DSND 13/20/4).

⁹⁹For example, M. Banton *White and Coloured: The Behaviour of British People towards Coloured Immigrants* (London, 1959) and A. Richmond *Colour Prejudice in Britain: A Study of West Indian Workers in Liverpool, 1942–1951* (London, 1954). Waters "Dark Strangers", p. 228.

¹⁰⁰Schwarz *White Man's World*, p. 47. See also, p. 39–48.

¹⁰¹Letter from Winterbourne, nr. Bristol to Sandys, 12/8/67 (DSND 13/20/4).

Immigration was ‘the final fall of the Empire’.¹⁰² Others looked to the colonial experience for solutions, one pointing out that ‘aboriginals are happier among their own kind’ in Australia: ‘therefore, we have large reservations for them ... so we never see them in the cities’.¹⁰³ Drawing lessons from Africa another correspondent proposed that ‘the process of inter-racial living’ in Britain ‘*must be* very gradual’ bearing in mind the ‘vastly differing standards’ and ‘the incredible acts of savagery Africans can perform – even on their own people’, referencing the Kenyan Mau Mau and the ‘Congo hell’.¹⁰⁴

Sandys’ correspondence offers a significant contribution to the debate about the origins of the resurgence of popular racial feeling in the late 1960s. It has been commonly assumed by scholars that the ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech opened the floodgates of British racism. But a comparison of the letters sent to both politicians reveals that although Powell’s speech caused an exponential increase in letter writing, it appears to have had little impact on the content of popular anti-immigrant feeling. And the far larger number of letters received by Sandys in the second half of 1967 and early 1968 would appear to confirm *The Observer’s* contemporary judgement that it was to Sandys that supporters of a “‘White Britain” policy look’ as ‘their champion’, until Powell gained prominence in February 1968.¹⁰⁵ However small a minority, the extremist correspondents are also significant: firstly giving an insight into the nature of privately held extremist attitudes towards race and, secondly, providing evidence of the ongoing significance of the Britain’s colonial past. Giving credence to Richard Weight’s argument that the British were still wallowing in the ‘ideological legacy of empire’, it would appear that many of Sandys’ correspondents believed that Britain was becoming ever more akin to her former colonies and that politicians would do well to learn from colonial policy in approaching race relations in Britain.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰²Letter from Melbourne, Australia, 29/8/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

¹⁰³Letter from an Australian in SW1 to Enoch Powell, copied to Sandys, 17/7/67 (DSND 13/20/4); letter to Sandys, 29/2/68 also supported this segregation (DSND 13/20/4).

¹⁰⁴Letter from SW7 to Sandys, 3/8/67 (DSND 13/20/4).

¹⁰⁵‘The faces of Duncan Sandys’ *The Observer* 30/7/67.

¹⁰⁶Weight *Patriots*, p. 437.

SANDYS' COLONIAL EXPERIENCE AND OPPOSITION TO INTEGRATION

Sandys' opposition to immigration and racial integration reflected a number of influences, as noted earlier in this chapter. In part it was a response to the racial tension that he had himself witnessed in the USA in 1966 and the news of rioting there in the summer of 1967.¹⁰⁷ Sandys had an ongoing interest in US affairs, having worked closely with a number of politicians including John F. Kennedy as Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary, and in the autumn of 1965 he travelled to the USA to promote his World Security Trust nuclear disarmament initiative, meeting with Henry Kissinger and other leading members of the political establishment.¹⁰⁸

But the USA was only one of a number of examples of racial tension to inform Sandys' frame of reference. Many politicians who took an interest in the race and immigration debate drew on constituency experience, especially in the Midlands. But although Sandys represented a constituency with a sizeable immigrant population, he took little interest in constituency issues, claiming that he had been 'elected to represent Streatham in Westminster not Westminster in Streatham'.¹⁰⁹ Far more than a constituency issue, Sandys' perception of racial tension was a response to colonial and Commonwealth examples, of which he had extensive personal experience thanks to his ministerial career and back-bench campaigns. His ideas provide evidence of the ongoing importance of a colonial paradigm in approaching metropolitan race relations.

In 1962 Sandys observed that 'the most complex and intractable problem of the second half of the twentieth century is undoubtedly that of race relations'. Indeed racial tension had been a major theme of Sandys' work at the CRO Office between 1960 and 1964, most notably in regard to Rhodesia, Kenya and British Guiana (see Chap. 2).¹¹⁰ Out of office he retained a close interest in African politics, thanks not least to personal contacts with Rhodesian and Kenyan politicians. Moreover, his

¹⁰⁷ *HC Debs* 8 November 1966, vol. 735, col. 1189; Sandys 'Race Riots: could they ever happen in Britain?' *News of the World* 30/7/67.

¹⁰⁸ Rabe *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana*, pp. 117-119; 'Itinerary for visit to USA [September - October 1965]' (DSND 11/1/19).

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Stanley Martin.

¹¹⁰ Sandys *The Modern Commonwealth* (DSND 8/22/6).

role as Chairman of Ashanti Goldfields Corporation and his attempts to promote nuclear disarmament and the World Security Trust led him to travel to Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria in 1967 and 1968. Lastly, as Chap. 3 demonstrated, Sandys was intimately involved in the debates over Aden's descent into anarchy in the summer of 1967, serving to reinforce the association between colonial violence and Commonwealth immigration that Wendy Webster identified in her work on the 'Emergencies' of the 1950s.¹¹¹

Sandys readily drew on his understanding of racial difference in specific colonies to make universalised conclusions about the likelihood of racial tension and violence in Britain. Less than a month before passing comment on the 'breeding of half-caste children' in the UK, Sandys addressed a Chatham House meeting on the subject of Rhodesia. The talk was largely devoted to a discussion of constitutional negotiations but it also revealed considerable sympathy with Ian Smith's views towards the black population. Sandys recalled that while visiting the country for the Constitutional Conference of 1961 he had thought he

might rather like to see what some of the more primitive areas in Rhodesia looked like and I went to the Bongos or Bingos or something tribe and I must say I was very much impressed with the arguments that perhaps all the Rhodesians were not yet ready to assume the responsibilities of parliamentary democracy. They were people with yellow mud all over themselves and very nice people I assure you ... The very big mistake that we made in Africa and elsewhere is to imagine that you can transplant the British Westminster parliamentary system into countries where it has no roots and no background at all. I believe we ought to have tried to build upon what already existed and in Africa it is undoubtedly the tribal system. I remember a Nigerian member of parliament once saying to me that the British parliamentary system is the best system in the world for getting rid of the British but when you've done that you must introduce a sensible form of government.

Sandys had long been a firm believer that Africans were ill-suited to the British parliamentary system, commenting to the Ghanaian High Commissioner as early as 1962 that 'the British brand of democracy is

¹¹¹ *HC Deb* 19 June 1967, vol. 748, col. 1181; Webster 'There'll always be an England', pp. 557–584.

not something that can be packaged and exported'.¹¹² It can only be assumed that Sandys approached much of his work at the CRO with a considerable degree of private cynicism since the process of decolonisation sought to do just that. At Chatham House he repeatedly returned to the theme, arguing that 'all semblance of democracy has disappeared from most countries in Africa'. He won vocal agreement from his audience by referring to Commonwealth criticism of Britain's tolerance of Smith's regime, suggesting that 'we've had enough of these double standards'. It was not acceptable for 'countries that are practising dictatorship in the most extreme form, practising racialism in the most extreme form' to 'lecture us on racialism' since 'the majority of our Commonwealth countries in Africa have either scrapped or illegally amended the democratic constitutions that we gave them'. Drawing on a speech that he had made to a 'Peace with Rhodesia' meeting in Glasgow a week before he painted a bleak picture of the situation in Africa, observing that

we have seen a savage racial conflict in progress in Nigeria where thousands of Ibos have been massacred by Hausas, in Zanzibar we have seen the most extreme form of racial discrimination practised by black Africans against Arabs, in the Sudan we have seen the same in reverse, the Arabs against the black Africans. In Rwanda one racial group is flat out to exterminate the other entirely. These are horrid experiences but is there any reason to suppose that majority rule in Rhodesia would in present circumstances, at this stage of African development, turn out any differently?¹¹³

Race and democracy also featured in Sandys' reflections on his two trips to Africa at this time. As the Kenyan Asian crisis reached its height, he visited Nigeria in January 1968. In a meeting with General Gowon to promote the World Security Trust (WST) he took the opportunity to discuss the Biafran conflict. 'As the British Minister responsible for

¹¹²Letter from Sandys to Kwesi Armah (Ghanaian High Commissioner), 15/10/62 (DSND 8/12).

¹¹³Sandys 'Britain and Rhodesia', speech 29th June 1967, tape no. 17/67 (Chatham House Archive, Royal Institute of International Affairs); parts of this text were taken verbatim from his speech of 23/8/67 'Peace with Rhodesia Campaign: Extract from a speech to be made by Mr. Duncan Sandys M.P in the Couper Institute, Glasgow' (DSND 14/25/1/2).

Commonwealth Relations at the time of Nigeria's independence' he had 'watched with sadness the painful events of the last few years culminating in a futile and ruinous civil war'.¹¹⁴ He noted after the meeting that

nothing ... convinced me that Nigeria is ready for a return to Western democracy. Tribal animosities and fears are still much stronger than any feelings of common interest or common nationhood. For some years to come the only hope of maintaining any semblance of unity lies, in my opinion, in the continuance of a strong central government.¹¹⁵

No doubt Sandys was also fully aware of the parlous state of democracy in Ghana having met its head of state, General Ankrah, on a visit to the country in September of 1967, and lunched with the general in London a month later.¹¹⁶ And days after Kenyatta compared the Asian community to 'swarms of locusts', Sandys described the accusation that Kenya was adopting 'racialist policies' as 'unfair criticism', refusing to see the expulsion of Asians as anything other than 'a firm policy to treat all Kenya citizens equally in all respects, regardless of race'.¹¹⁷ His sympathy for the policies of 'friend Kenyatta' provide a revealing parallel with his contemporary attitude towards race relations in UK: in both instances he deemed it quite reasonable for the indigenous population to be spared the prospect of racial tension by the physical removal of minorities, achieved either by expulsion in the case of Kenya, or by closing borders in the case of Britain.¹¹⁸

One final episode served to bring Sandys' attention to the continuities between the colonial legacy and contemporary racial tension in Britain. In the summer of 1967 his comments helped to stimulate a post-colonial critique of British race relations in the Black Power movement. In mid-August *New Society* observed that 'there is now a real possibility that ... the chances of violent racial disharmony in this society will

¹¹⁴[Press] Statement by Rt. Hon. Duncan Sandys former British Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations' [January 1968] (DSND 11/1/5).

¹¹⁵'Note on Mr. Sandys' talks in Nigeria, January, 1968' (DSND 11/1/5).

¹¹⁶'Nice to meet again!' *New Ashanti Times* 23/9/67 (DSND 18/19); 'Ashanti Goldfields Corporation Limited' *The Times* 25/10/67 (DSND 18/16).

¹¹⁷Kenyatta speech, 8/2/68, quoted in Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, p. 198; letter from Sandys to British High Commissioner, Nairobi 20/2/68 (13/20/3).

¹¹⁸Letter from MacDonald to Sandys, 22/7/67 (DSND 11/1/11).

be reduced' but 'unhappily, there is also Section 6'.¹¹⁹ Four members of the Racial Preservation Society had been committed for trial by a magistrate at East Grinstead on 25th July, the day after Sandys' speech on immigration. Then on 10th August Michael X was also charged under Section 6, *New Society* noting that the accusation came 'on the very day that the West Indian Standing Conference called for a similar prosecution of Duncan Sandys'.¹²⁰ Shortly afterwards four other Black Power activists, all leading members of the Racial Action Adjustment Society (RAAS) and Universal Coloured Peoples Association (UCPA), were also charged.¹²¹ The opinion of *New Society* was that Section 6 was 'a bad law, and likely to worsen rather than improve race relations' while one black activist wrote later that attempting to 'legislate against racism' in Britain is 'as effective as legislating against syphilis'.¹²² As Gavin Schaffer has recently argued, these cases reveal much about the operation of the Race Relations Act, in particular its tendency to prosecute outspoken black activists and to defend white racists who carefully avoided direct incitements to violence, as mentioned earlier in this chapter.¹²³

Sandys took considerable interest in both cases since he was being investigated under the terms of the Act himself. He was also asked to stand as a witness by the defence counsel for the RPS.¹²⁴ But it was the Black Power cases that really caught his attention in the summer of 1967, dominating his collection of press cuttings at this time.¹²⁵ Unaware that the likes of De Freitas and Roy Sawh (of RAAS) would be convicted and that the RPS defendants would be acquitted in due

¹¹⁹'Evans on law' *New Society* 17/8/67.

¹²⁰'Five for trial in Race Act Case' *The Times* 26/7/67; 'Evans on law' *New Society* 17/8/67.

¹²¹The word 'raas' was chosen as it referred to sanitary towels in West Indian slang and was also an offensive term, while in Arabic 'ras' means 'king': R. Sawh *From Where I stand: Black People want to Hear and White People Fear* (London, 1987), p. 36.

¹²²'Evans on law' *New Society* 17/8/67; Sawh *From Where I stand*, p. 63.

¹²³Schaffer 'Legislating against Hatred', p. 25; in making this argument Schaffer echoes J. Williams *Michael X: A Life in Black and White* (London, 2008), p. 160.

¹²⁴Letter from Gates & Co. Solicitors, Brighton, to Sandys, 26/7/67 (DSND 13/20/2). Although the accused claimed to be endorsing Sandys' views he refused to support them. Powell was also approached in a similar manner: 20/7/67 Letter from Field Roscoe and Co. to Enoch Powell (D3123-230, SRO).

¹²⁵See DSND 18/17-18.

course, Sandys was greatly concerned by the Black Power rhetoric of violence.¹²⁶ The day after his speech on the dangers of ‘half-caste children’ he wrote to the Home Secretary and the Attorney General arguing the case for an immediate prosecution of De Freitas as leader of the ‘Black Muslims’—described as ‘vicious and nasty people’—referring to De Freitas’ speech at Reading on 24th July in which he had allegedly threatened the white population with murder.¹²⁷ Shortly after, Sandys’ article about the US race riots started with a reference to the supposed threat of the ‘British Negro agitator’ De Freitas: “‘Detroit today, London tomorrow’”, and he was well aware that Black Power members had stated that they were ‘waiting to see when Sandys will be arrested’.¹²⁸ In an interview later in the year, De Freitas referred to Sandys in person as a ‘bloody ass’ and commented that ‘the more white men walking around making stupid and ridiculous statements the happier I would feel, because they will split their camp and eventually would end up killing each other’.¹²⁹ Sandys was also aware that one investigative journalist was making claims that the WISC complaint against Sandys was merely part of a plan to get Michael de Freitas into court and raise the public profile of Black Power.¹³⁰

Reflecting events in the USA, Black Power first became prominent in Britain in the summer of 1967. At the same time Enoch Powell noted in his postbag ‘a new note, which has been absent from the mail on previous similar occasions’ namely the ‘recurrent reference to hostile or insulting behaviour offered by immigrants to natives’, warning Heath that ‘I fear ... news from America will help it to grow’.¹³¹ As Obi Egbuna, leader of UCPA, explained, it was only after Stokely Carmichael’s visit, and in particular his speech at the Dialectics of Liberation Seminar held that July at the Roundhouse in Camden, that Black Power ‘got a

¹²⁶De Freitas was imprisoned for 8 months while Sawh was fined: Williams *Michael X*, pp. 162–163.

¹²⁷‘Action urged over “Black Muslim”’ *The Guardian* 26/7/67.

¹²⁸‘Michael X faces race charge’ *The Times* 12/8/67 (DSND 18/19).

¹²⁹Cutting of an interview with Michael X in *West One* (magazine of Regent Street Polytechnic) enclosed in a letter from Mr. Goldie to Sandys, 21/11/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

¹³⁰What’s boiling: Was the arrest of Malik planned?’ *Time and Tide* 17/8/67(DSDN 18/18).

¹³¹Letter from Powell to Heath, 17/7/67 (D3123/229, SRO).

foothold in Britain'.¹³² More moderate groups such as WISC and the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD) began to take an increasingly activist line, as evidenced by support for a strike amongst black London Transport bus drivers in August and opposition to a ban imposed on Stokely Carmichael.¹³³ With organisations such as the Black Panther Movement and the Black Eagles yet to achieve prominence, the two dominant radical groups in 1967 were the UCPA and RAAS, the latter reflecting the more extremist politics of its founder members who included Roy Sawh and Michael de Freitas in 1965.¹³⁴ In the opinion of veteran activist Darcus Howe, the UCPA and in particular RAAS were a 'joke' and little more than a 'name and a letterhead', whose 'babbling hate talk on park corners' was largely 'ignored' by the black community and lent undue significance by the likes of Powell and Sandys.¹³⁵ Although unity amongst the various groups of the movement remained an 'elusive dream' their central contention was that the policy of integration was a 'subterfuge for retaining white supremacy' and that the dominant CARD was being hampered by the involvement of white liberals.¹³⁶

Unlike their US counterparts, a distinctive feature of the speeches given by British Black Power activists was reference to Britain's colonial past. The papers relating to the trial of the RAAS/UCPA members give a detailed insight into their ideology, which proceeded from a critique of Britain's colonial record to a double attack on Britain's ongoing neo-colonial influence in the world at large and poor treatment of immigrants at home. The case rested on police reports of public meetings in the summer of 1967, potentially posing problems of reliability, although at no point did the defendants challenge the accuracy of the reports. Repeatedly, the conclusion was drawn that it was time for former colonial subjects to seek redress for past wrongs by colonising Britain. Concurring with De Freitas, RAAS/UCPA leaders believed that one of the prime offenders was Sandys. As the Jamaican Tony Watson explained 'when we tell the Englishmen to get off our back they are telling us

¹³²O. Egbuna *Destroy this Temple: The Voice of Black Power in Britain* (London, 1971), p. 16; Williams *Michael X*, p. 155.

¹³³'Black Power leader leaves mark on Britain' *The Guardian* 6/8/67.

¹³⁴D. Humphry & D. Tindall *False Messiah: The Story of Michael X* (London, 1977).

¹³⁵Interview with Darcus Howe, Streatham, 4/4/13.

¹³⁶Sawh *From Where I Stand*, pp. 12–63.

about laws and order. People like Nkrumah and Ghandi stood up and said to their people that it was right and legal to be free ... The British Government put them in jail'. However 'when Duncan Sandys stands up and violates the Racial Discrimination Act by saying that half-castes is a misfit in society no British policeman arrested him'.¹³⁷ A week later Sawh went further. Accepting Sandys' judgment he declared to 'the white niggers' that 'we are halfcaste, you are outcast'. Alluding to the Indian sterilisation programme and Sandys' previous Commonwealth responsibilities, Sawh demanded that he 'should be castrated and given a transistor radio'.¹³⁸ In an essay written a year later Sawh pointed to Sandys, along with Powell, Wilson and Ian Smith, as prime examples of the 'Anglo-Saxon global attitude on racialism' as practised in Rhodesia and South Africa.¹³⁹

Sawh was a Guyanese of Indian origin and had been strongly influenced by his childhood experiences of racial tension growing up on a sugar plantation. In London he became 'Hyde Park's foremost orator and one of Britain's most well-known controversial black leaders' according to Lionel Morrison.¹⁴⁰ Like other Black Power extremists, Sawh believed that Britain in 1960s was guilty of the same state-endorsed racial discrimination that had characterised colonial rule, observing that 'we are good enough to drive for London Transport and look after you in hospital beds', yet 'you build a hotel in [Guyana] and say, "Sorry, no blacks"'.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷Transcript of shorthand notes taken by Det. Sgt. Battye, Special Branch, of parts of a speech made by Tony WATSON at a meeting held under the auspices of the Universal Coloured Peoples Association at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, W.1, on 13th August 1967', in 'Brief for the Prosecution: WATSON, Alton, SAWH, Roy, GHOSE, Ajoy, EZEICIEL, Michael, "Racial Adjustment Action Society" and "Universal Coloured People's Association": s 6(1) Race Relations Act 1965. Using threatening abusive, or insulting words in Hyde Park, London, 6 August 1967' (DPP2 4428).

¹³⁸Report of speech by Roy Sawh, 20/8/67, Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park: Statement by P.C. John Picket, in 'Brief for the Prosecution' (DPP2 4428); 'Radios to Aid India's Sterilization Plan' *Jet* 14/7/67, p. 54.

¹³⁹R. Sawh 'Black Power in Britain' (1968) in *From Where I stand* (1987), p. 79.

¹⁴⁰L. Morrison 'Part I' in R. Sawh *From Where I stand* (1987), pp. 22-19.

¹⁴¹Transcript of shorthand notes taken by Det. Sgt. Battye, Special Branch, of parts of a speech made by Roy SAWH at a meeting held under the auspices of the Universal Coloured Peoples Association at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, W.1, on 20th August 1967', in 'Brief for the Prosecution' (DPP2 4428).

Alongside repeated references to US-inspired arson attacks, the RAAS/UCPA solution to Britain's ongoing colonial and racial oppression was simple: a reverse colonisation. Echoed later by Powell's fear that 'the black man will have the whip hand over the white man', and described by Gilroy as 'the wholesale reversal of the proper ordering of colonial power', Watson announced that, 'you have exploited and robbed our country, but today we are coming home ... and it is your turn to work and keep us'.¹⁴² In a play on colonial language, Watson poured scorn on the 'British Empire upon which the blood of black men never dies' and which had taken 'three hundred years to build'. By contrast 'it took Nkrumah, our saviour, fifteen years to destroy the great British Empire.' White Britons were the real 'savages' who in due course would 'have to resort to your caves in Epping Forest'.¹⁴³ Sawh gave more specific guidance on how to reverse the colonial relationship by ordering his supporters to 'bring the war in Africa home to this country by killing two whites here for every two blacks killed in Zimbabwe'.¹⁴⁴ He also suggested that the oppression of the 'white monkey' was well underway: 'in the West Indies you gave us V.D. We brought it back to you', and echoed many fearful white Britons by suggesting that 'if you don't like the way we run England leave and go to Australia'. Put bluntly, 'we lived in fear for hundreds of years, now it is your turn to live in fear'.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴²Enoch Powell speech, Birmingham, 20/4/68, quoted in Collings *Reflections of a Statesman*, p. 374; Gilroy *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* p. 111; 'Transcript of shorthand notes taken by Det. Sgt. Battye, Special Branch, of parts of a speech made by Tony WATSON at a meeting held under the auspices of the Universal Coloured Peoples Association at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, W.1, on 13th August 1967', in 'Brief for the Prosecution' (DPP2 4428).

¹⁴³'Transcript of shorthand notes taken by Det. Sgt. Battye, Special Branch, of parts of a speech made by Tony WATSON at a meeting held under the auspices of the Universal Coloured Peoples Association at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, W.1, on 6th August 1967', in 'Brief for the Prosecution' (DPP2 4428).

¹⁴⁴Report of Speech by Roy Sawh, 6/10/67, Mahatma Gandhi Hall, 41 Fitzroy Sq., W.1.; Statement by D.C. Edward Ryan, in 'Brief for the Prosecution' (DPP2 4428).

¹⁴⁵'Transcript of shorthand notes taken by Det. Sgt. Battye, Special Branch, of parts of a speech made by Roy SAWH at a meeting held under the auspices of the Universal Coloured Peoples Association at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, W.1, on 6th August 1967', in 'Brief for the Prosecution' (DPP2 4428).

CONCLUSION

Sandys' campaigns to halt immigration and repeal race relations legislation played a critical role in the resurgence of racial tension in the late 1960s. Too often it has been assumed that Enoch Powell was the first influential politician to become 'the touchstone for speaking about race and nation', as Schwarz put it.¹⁴⁶ But thanks to his public profile, Sandys' highly conservative views received much attention and lent racism an unprecedented respectability from the summer of 1967, many months before the 'Rivers of Blood' speech. Indeed, as the journalist Paul Foot recognised at the time, during this early period Powell had evidently 'not yet decided to throw himself wholeheartedly into an anti-immigration campaign', and he generally maintained silence on the subject until he made his Birmingham speech in April 1968, with the exception of two articles (in February and July 1967) and two speeches (in October 1967 and February 1968).¹⁴⁷ Moreover, while Heath had some control over Powell until he was sacked from the front bench in April 1968, Sandys exercised much greater freedom of speech. The press recognised that 'the Opposition leader in exile' was a 'dangerous man to leave out' of the Shadow Cabinet.¹⁴⁸

Although the two issues were intimately linked, the next chapter will demonstrate that Sandys had more success in rousing opposition to immigration than to race relations legislation. Meanwhile, his attempt to repeal or halt the extension of Britain's race relations legislation failed. But the evidence presented in this chapter reveals that Sandys nonetheless played a crucial role in creating a 'race crisis' in 1967 and 1968. His interventions on the question of race relations legislation helped to unnerve the British population at large as he was the first leading politician to upset the bipartisan consensus at Westminster. Sandys not only further radicalised the Black Power movement in Britain, by directly attacking its activists, but also scared the white population with his false

¹⁴⁶Layton-Henry *The Politics of Immigration*, p. 79; Schwarz *White Man's World*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁷Sandbrook *White Heat*, p. 674; E. Powell 'Facing up to Britain's race problem' *Daily Telegraph* 16/2/67; Powell 'Can we afford to let our race problem explode?' *The Sunday Express* 9/7/67; Powell speech on immigration, Deal, 18/10/67 (Papers of Enoch Powell, POLL, CAC, 4/1/3); Powell speech on immigration at Walsall, 9/2/68 (POLL 4/1/3); Foot *The Rise of Enoch Powell*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁸'The faces of Duncan Sandys' *The Observer* 30/7/67.

claims that the aggressive stance of ineffectual Black Power extremists was representative of the immigrant community at large. This agitation reignited the prejudices and tensions that had lain largely dormant since 1964 and, as has been shown, caused individuals on both the Right and the Left to look to Britain's colonial experience to make sense of metropolitan politics.

Lastly, the conceptual origins of Sandys' race and immigration campaigns were also of great significance. Like Powell, whose romanticised memories of colonial India and the chaos of partition led him to fear racial 'communalism' as a threat to British democracy, Sandys readily perceived the parallels between colonial and metropolitan racial issues.¹⁴⁹ In 1967 and 1968 memories of his failed ministerial attempts to resolve the racial conflicts of central and eastern Africa, British Guiana, Malaysia and Fiji, were revived by news of race riots in the USA, the colonial rhetoric of Black Power activists and Sandys own involvement with racial tensions in Rhodesia and Kenya. Sandys' political thought on race thus presents a rare and highly influential example of the impact of the colonial experience on the nature of British politics.

¹⁴⁹Brooke 'India, Post-Imperialism and the Origins of Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' Speech', p. 687.

The Kenyan Asian Crisis and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act

Sandys' campaign to repeal the Race Relations Act attracted considerable public support, but ultimately failed. By contrast, his efforts to halt a mass exodus from Kenya to Britain between 1967 and 1968 met with dramatic success, offering the most striking demonstration of Sandys' informal influence both at Westminster and in a former colony. The success of his public campaign against Commonwealth immigration, as outlined in the previous chapter, not only roused the anti-immigration lobby in Britain but also fuelled a groundswell of panic in Kenya, in turn offering Sandys sufficient leverage to cajole an unwilling Labour Government into passing restrictive immigration legislation.

In the summer of 1967 the Kenya African National Union (KANU) Government began an active campaign of discrimination against Kenya's population of 180,000 South Asian—or 'Asian'—inhabitants, many of whom were second or third-generation descendants of migrants during the colonial period. In 1963 the Asian community had been offered British passports as Citizens of the UK and Colonies (CUKC) under the terms of the independence package offered by Sandys when still a minister, alongside the European settlers whose future had been his primary concern.¹ From 1967 KANU's 'Kenyanisation' (or more accurately 'Africanisation')

¹The right of entry for CUKCs was originally located in the British Nationality Act of 1948, then re-affirmed by the Kenya Independence Act of 1963, which exempted them from the controls introduced by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962. The ensuing British Nationality Act of 1964 was a safety net designed with East Africa in mind and

campaign rendered the 100,000 Asians who had failed to take Kenyan citizenship aliens within the country and deprived many of their work permits, causing a frenzy of uncertainty. Intimately involved with Kenyan politics from 1962 until 1964, Sandys had made lasting personal friendships with KANU ministers and retained considerable status in the country after he left office. Thanks to this residual influence, news of Sandys' anti-immigration campaigning in Britain proved to be the critical factor in persuading many Asians to flee. Between July 1967 and February 1968 approximately 24,000 Asians left for Britain in what community leaders described as 'utter confusion and panic'.² Sandys was thus able to threaten a reluctant Labour Government with both a popular Conservative resurgence in Britain and a growing Kenyan immigration 'crisis', persuading reluctant ministers to propose a highly controversial Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in 1968. The ensuing Act placed stricter limits on the arrival of dependants, introduced a patriality qualification for the issue of CUKC passports and, most controversially, brought to a sudden end the Asian exodus. This abolished the previously unrestricted right of as many as between one and two million potential CUKCs, who were now brought under the limited voucher system introduced by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962.³ Immigration from the whole Commonwealth was now restricted to 8500 per year and, in the case of Kenya, a mere 1500. This rendered the 80,000 Asian CUKCs still remaining in Kenya effectively stateless.⁴

offered former British nationals who had acquired exclusive local nationality the opportunity to resume their British nationality in future, with the aim of encouraging settlement in Africa: A. Dummett & A. Nicol *Subjects, Citizens, Aliens and Others: Nationality and Immigration Law* (London, 1990), p. 198.

²July 1967–January 1968 figures are Home Office estimates: *HC Deb* 15 February 1968 vol. 758, col. 392–393; and 22 February 1968 vol. 759, col. 659; February 1968 is estimated to be 10,000 by Charles Hornsby *Kenya: A history*, p. 198 (to give some context, according to the Home Office the monthly arrivals average for the period 1965–1966 was 540); 'Statement on behalf of British citizens of Asian origin in Kenya', quoted in Rothchild *Racial Bargaining*, p. 383.

³The total number of CUKCs was disputed repeatedly in both Houses. Callaghan's estimate was one million, the Lord Chancellor's two million. Others suggested the figure was much lower. Steel *No Entry*, p. 197.

⁴Steel *No Entry*, p. 182. Punitive as it was, the limit on Kenyan immigration was proportionately generous, Indian entries being limited to 2000: Rothschild *Racial Bargaining*, p. 396. The estimate for the number of 'stateless' Asians left in Kenya excludes a further c. 80,000 who had taken Kenyan citizenship: Hornsby *Kenya: A history*, p. 198.

The impact of this ‘crisis’ in British race relations continued to be felt in the months after the passing of the Act, severely tarnishing the liberal credentials of the second Race Relations Act passed in March and prompting in no small part Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech a month later.⁵ The controversy also further corroded Britain’s relationship with the Commonwealth. Already weakened by the demise of the sterling area, the Rhodesian crisis and Britain’s attempts to join the EEC, contemporary and subsequent scholarship has questioned whether the newly enlarged, post-imperial Commonwealth of the 1960s was in practice a ‘fact or fiction’ as *The Times*’ Africa correspondent put it in 1966.⁶ For one anonymous Conservative member—probably Enoch Powell—writing to *The Times* in 1964, the Commonwealth was a ‘gigantic farce’, reflecting the ‘profound antipathy’ amongst members of the British Establishment identified by Anthony Low’s research.⁷ The Kenyan Asian episode also appeared to confirm David McIntyre’s analysis that the Commonwealth’s ‘brief phase of multi-racial optimism’ that started with the ‘Wind of Change’ speech in 1960 did indeed come to an end in the middle of that decade.⁸

To many involved in the controversy, not least the Kenyan Asians themselves, and a number of Labour ministers, the so-called ‘White Passport Act’ of 1968 was not only flagrantly racist but also a sordid betrayal of trust.⁹ As Ramnik Shah—a Kenyan Asian immigration lawyer—put it at the time, the British Government was guilty of a ‘diabolical piece of chicanery’, arguing that ‘never has Britain’s image abroad as a nation of honourable men and women been shattered so devastatingly and never has she flouted her moral and legal obligations in international

⁵The impact of the Kenyan Asian arrivals on Powell is discussed in my article on ‘India, Post-Imperialism and the Origins of Enoch Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” Speech’, pp. 680–681.

⁶Kirkman *Unscrambling an Empire*, p. 180.

⁷S. Heffer *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell* (London, 1998), p. 350; Low *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 332.

⁸D. McIntyre *The Commonwealth of Nations: Origins and Impact 1869–1971* (Minneapolis, 1977), p. 445; K. Srinivasan terms the period 1947–1965 as the ‘Indian summer of the British Commonwealth’ in the *Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 62.

⁹Editorial *New Statesman* 1/3/68.

law as now'.¹⁰ To Peter Jay—Callaghan's son-in-law—it was a 'shocking thing' and a 'disgrace to any civilised legislature'.¹¹ The conventional narrative of the origins of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 has highlighted the role of the KANU Government, Powell, and the weakness of more or less well-meaning Labour ministers, notably the Home Secretary James Callaghan, in deciding to prioritise the passage of the new Race Relations Bill in the spring 1968.¹² This chapter will demonstrate that thanks to his *post-officio* influence, Sandys also played a leading role in both the creation and the unhappy resolution of this crisis.

THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT AND AFRICANISATION

The KANU government's growing antipathy towards the 180,000 Asians resident in Kenya was a marked feature of Kenya's early independence. By 1967 it was being expressed in increasingly aggressive terms, with the state-controlled 'Voice of Kenya' radio commentary attacking Asians as 'leeches' and 'swarms of locusts'.¹³ As early as 1960, concerns for the community's future in Kenya had given leading Asian businessmen reason to scale down their local investments and a programme of Africanisation was already under way in the previously Asian-dominated

¹⁰R. Shah 'Diabolical Chicanery' letter to *East African Standard* 23/2/68 quoted in R. Shah 'A wrong righted: full status for Britain's "other" citizens' *Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Law*, (17,1) 2003, pp. 20–21.

¹¹P. Deveney *Callaghan's Journey to Downing Street* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 23.

¹²The most authoritative account of the episode remains Steel *No Entry: the background and implications of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968*. See also Dummett & Nicol *Subjects, Citizens, Aliens*, pp. 196–205; J. Hampshire 'Immigration and Race Relations' in P. Dorey (ed.) *The Labour Governments 1964–1970* (London, 2006), p. 314; Hansen 'The Kenyan Asians', pp. 818–819; D. Hiro *Black British, White British* (London, 1971), pp. 223–230; Hyam *Britain's Declining Empire*, pp. 151–152; R. Karatani *Defining British Citizenship: Empire, Commonwealth and Modern Britain* (London, 2003), pp. 154–163; Paul *Whitewashing Britain*, pp. 179–180; D. Rothchild *Racial Bargaining in Independent Kenya: a study of minorities and decolonisation* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 371–407; Shepherd *Enoch Powell*, pp. 329–343; R. Winder *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration into Britain* (London, 2004), pp. 289–290; Joe Garner, Permanent Under-Secretary at the CRO then CO 1962–1968 ignores the episode altogether in *The Commonwealth Office*.

¹³SWB, Nairobi, Second Series, IV, ME/2567 (B2), 13/9/67 (BBC WAC); Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, p. 198.

East African Common Services Organisation by the time that independence came in 1963. In other corporations such as East African Airways, there were even calls for 'immediate Africanisation'.¹⁴ Asian opposition to Mau Mau and association with the colonial government had compounded mutual suspicions of racism between Africans and Asians and an unwillingness to integrate, and with the coming of independence it became almost impossible for Asians to gain government employment. As one of more than a thousand former EACSO Asian employees who left for India in 1964 commented, 'nobody knows what will happen here in the future'.¹⁵ Moreover, as Asian capital was increasingly moved overseas the community left itself open to accusations that they had no commitment to independent Kenya. Few in government offered them any defence, with the notable exception of the Attorney General, Charles Njonjo on constitutional grounds.¹⁶ It was small comfort that politicians such as Tom Mboya were arguing that Africanisation must not be too sudden, if only to avoid harm to 'standards and efficiency'.¹⁷ By early 1967 anti-Asian rhetoric was beginning to gain a new degree of popularity in the wake of a number of deportations in August 1966.¹⁸ Kenyatta commented obliquely in February that 'Kenya will not tolerate those people who practise cat and mouse friendship'; the Vice-President, Daniel arap Moi explained to the press that 'one leg should not be in Kenya and the other in India' and that 'we shall be strict with our borders and tighten entrance rules'.¹⁹

The KANU government had a difficult year in 1967. Kenyatta was forever haunted by the prospect of tribal conflict and the threat of Oginga Odinga's opposition Kenya Political Union (KPU). But he had benefited from the national cohesion generated by the ongoing struggle against the secessionist *shifita* in the North-Eastern Province, supported by the Somalian government, which laid claim to the area and with whom there was an established risk of full-scale war. However, with costs mounting

¹⁴Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, p. 63, 123; SWB, Nairobi (English), Second Series, IV, ME/1362 (B4), 26/9/63 (BBC WAC).

¹⁵Rothschild *Racial Bargaining*, p. 374.

¹⁶Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, pp. 122–123.

¹⁷SWB, Nairobi (English), Second Series, IV, ME/1505 (B8), 16/3/64 (BBC WAC).

¹⁸Rothschild *Racial Bargaining*, p. 382.

¹⁹Theroux 'Hating the Asians', p. 48.

for both sides and following a change of government in Somalia in June 1967, an end to the fighting was negotiated and a 'Memorandum of Understanding' was signed by the two countries at Arusha.²⁰ At the same time Kenya's economy was suffering a dramatic reverse with real GDP falling from just over 14% to barely 4% between 1966 and 1967, and Kenyatta's ongoing programme of ever more autocratic reforms was continuing apace. His first stroke in mid-1966 and the attendant speculation about the succession had only strengthened his resolve.²¹

Deprived of a convenient enemy against which to define national unity and sustain his own government, it came as no great surprise that the President should announce a rapid increase in the pace of Africanisation in July 1967, directed chiefly at the Asian community. Kenya remained heavily reliant on Britain for aid and trade. Kenyan defence also benefitted from an informal arrangement made by Sandys in 1964 that in the case of a Somali invasion it was 'probable' that Britain would 'come to Kenya's aid'.²² However the imminent reduction of the Somali threat meant that Kenyatta was less concerned about the possibility of British criticism of the treatment of its overseas citizens. In fact at the height of the Asian exodus at the end of February 1968 the National Assembly was more concerned with the ongoing debate about tribalism and conflict, the Assistant Minister for Labour reportedly warning that 'if the tendency of tribal practices in the country was not checked immediately Kenya might have another Biafra'.²³

In July 1967 Kenyatta announced that the government would implement a new Immigration Act on 1st December 1967. The legislation required that the 100,000 Kenyan residents who had not gained Kenyan citizenship during a window period between independence and December 1965 would be treated as aliens and would need to apply for re-entry

²⁰Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, p. 179.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 183, 170–173, 164.

²²Account of a meeting between Sandys and Kenyatta, 5/3/64, enclosed in a letter from L. Walsh Atkins (Asst. Under-Sec., CO) to Sandys, 10/1/67 (DSND 14/14); see also Percox *Britain, Kenya and the Cold War*, p. 170. It is telling that the CO should have sought in 1967 to gain clarification of the terms of Sandys' informal offer.

²³SWB, Nairobi (Home Service) précis, Second Series, IV, ME/2709 (B5), 1/3/68 (28/2/68), (BBC WAC).

passes.²⁴ While many who had applied for (but not yet received) Kenyan citizenship continued to face wilful delay and obstruction,²⁵ a Trade Licensing Act was passed on 13th January 1968 that further curtailed the commercial activities of non-citizens.²⁶ Although the increased pace of Africanisation was not as dramatic as the expulsions seen at the time of the Zanzibari revolution in 1964 or Idi Amin's later expulsion of Ugandan Asians in 1972, this populist Kenyan legislation was a radical departure and caused the rapid impoverishment of thousands of Kenyans.²⁷ It was also interpreted by Asians as an indication that the position of the whole community was insecure, regardless of citizenship status. Aware from the autumn of 1967 that Britain was beginning to consider a restriction on immigration from Kenya, Kenyatta was willing to accept the possibility that Asians might be rendered effectively stateless, as indeed happened when the British Commonwealth Immigrants Act came into force on 1st March 1968. In total at least 50,000 Asians left Kenya between 1964 and 1968 and by the time of the 1969 census only 139,000 of the 180,000 Asian citizens at the time of independence were left.²⁸

It was Kenyatta's opinion that the Asians had colonial pretensions. In his set-piece speech on Kenyatta Day 1967, he warned the Party faithful that 'there is still a section of Europeans and Asians who have still not stopped being arrogant and who look down on the African as their personal slave'. In his opinion they treated the 'African as if he were not a human being' and he threatened that 'if a man insults you, he is a man like you, so hit him.'²⁹ During the National Assembly's debate endorsing

²⁴A. Amsden *International Firms and Labour in Kenya 1945-1970* (London, 1971), pp. 122-134; Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, pp. 197-199; K. Kyle *The Politics of the Independence of Kenya* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 202.

²⁵*Kenya National Assembly Official Report* (1st Parliament, 5th Session), 4th March 1968, vol. 13, col. 305.

²⁶R. Gregory *Quest for Equality: Asian politics in East Africa, 1900-1967* (Hyderabad, 1993), p. 99.

²⁷Dummett & Nicol *Subjects, Citizens, Aliens*, p. 199.

²⁸Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, p. 198.

²⁹SWB, Nairobi, Second Series, IV ME/2601 (B2), 23/10/67 (20/10/67), (BBC WAC).

the speech, the member for Butere enthusiastically concurred that ‘he should be slapped on the mouth, and even if it means knocking out some of his teeth.’³⁰ By February 1968 tensions were running high. In contrast to the Tanzanian Vice-President Saykh Karume who was calling for ‘inter-marriages between Africans and Asians’ as seen on Zanzibar, Kenyatta attacked the Asians who were leaving for seeking to ‘remain in privileged positions’. The Minister for Labour accused Asians of wanting to ‘maintain the [colonial] status quo’ in ‘closely guarded enclaves’; after all, the Minister asked, ‘are the [African] citizens of this country to blame that four years after independence some people have and prefer to have ethnic labels attached to them?’³¹ To the young writer Paul Theroux, living in Kenya at the time, the rhetoric was euphemistic, judging that ‘throughout Kenya the feeling against Asians is more than mistrust ... it is hatred—blind, bald, crude, irrational and based solely on race’.³² Even Odinga, who had criticised the KANU government for ‘sacrificing the Asians’ was also reported to have called them ‘bloodsuckers’.³³ Although Odinga’s comment was probably a fiction of the ‘Voice of Kenya’, its effect and that of the government’s own aggressive criticism of the Asian community was only too well understood by its intended audience.

The motives driving this ‘Kenyanisation’ campaign, as it was always formally called, are deserving of greater scholarly attention. The official records available from the period suggest that, despite KANU ministers’ populist rhetoric, there was a general commitment at central government level to multi-racialism and genuine equality for all Kenya citizens, as stated in the citizenship legislation of 1967 and 1968. However, a large number of backbench MPs and, more importantly, those officials who implemented legislation at a local level often took a dim view of Asian citizens, giving the impression of a policy of ‘Africanisation’.³⁴

³⁰SWB, Nairobi, Second Series, IV, ME/2607 (B5), 31/10/67 (26/10/67), (BBC WAC).

³¹SWB, Dar-Es-Salaam, Second Series, IV, ME/2705 (B7), 23/2/68 (26/2/68); SWB, précis of statements, Nairobi, Second Series, IV, ME/2694 (B1), 13/2/68 (9/2/68), (BBC WAC).

³²Theroux ‘Hating the Asians’, p. 49.

³³SWB, Nairobi, Second Series, IV, ME/2705 (B1), 26/2/68 (23/2/68), (BBC WAC).

³⁴For example *Kenya National Assembly Official Report* (1st Parliament, 5th Session), 4th March 1968, vol. 13, col. 348–350.

In a typical exchange, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry in 1966 wrote to his local counterpart in the Eastern Province to warn that ‘the Constitution lays it down that no discrimination may be levelled against any Kenya citizen’. And moreover much ‘development finance’ was ‘at present being provided by non-citizens who must be guaranteed—or rather who must not be discriminated against in business opportunities’.³⁵ But his colleague at Eastern Province remained unconvinced, replying at the risk of sounding ‘a bit too racist on this subject’ that ‘it would be quite in order for business held by Asians in this Province to be taken over by Africans, regardless of whether the Asians are Kenya Citizens or not’. In his opinion it was only ‘in this way the large profits now being made by Asians can pass into the hands of Africans’, which was ‘the reason why we achieved *Uhuru* [freedom]’.³⁶

Historians have failed to note that Kenya was facing its own immigration ‘problem’ at this time of a similar scale and nature to that seen in Britain. This undocumented aspect of early Kenyan independence offers a striking similarity between the motives driving the Kenyan Immigration Act of 1967 and the British Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968. In the years prior to independence, a large number of Asians were sufficiently nervous about their future to leave Kenya temporarily for India (and some for Britain). However, in the period between 1963 and 1967 many thousands returned: the available figures for the port of Mombasa record 36,763 in 1963, 43,801 in 1964, 55,636 in 1965, and 14,522 (January–May) in 1966, of whom approximately 85% were Kenyan Asians or a total of 128,114 between January 1963 and May 1966. Since the returnees had yet to have the chance to apply for Kenyan citizenship, they entered on re-entry permits or certificates of permanent residence as non-citizens. With a national population of only ten million of whom approximately 180,000 were Asian at the time of independence, these arrivals constituted a significant influx and, however recent their previous departure from Kenya, it was perceived by many that the returnees had not only demonstrated a lack of loyalty but also posed a threat to African

³⁵Letter from Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry to Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province, 14/1/66 (AE/36/4 (Cabinet Office) KNA).

³⁶Letter from Provincial Commissioner, Eastern Province to Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, 24/1/66 (AE/36/4).

employment. Fearing an ‘increasing influx’, the Provincial Commissioner of the Coastal Province warned in 1966 that ‘Africans will find it not only difficult but impossible to establish themselves successfully in business, with the results that the Africans will resent the presence of immigrants in this country and might resort to high-handed actions against the immigrants’.³⁷ This major population movement casts a new light on Kenyatta’s newly hostile attitude towards the Asian community in 1967, and suggests that mass immigration served to racialise political discourse not only in Britain but also in Kenya.

The British Government were becoming increasingly worried by the Kenyan government’s newly aggressive stance on the Asian question, and sought to clarify KANU’s position by arranging two fact-finding meetings with Kenyatta, in 1967 and 1968. In both instances British officials sought and failed to persuade Kenyatta to slow the pace of Africanisation and to give assurances to the Asians that they would not be expelled.

In public the Kenyan government position, as represented by the ‘Voice of Kenya’, was that the Asians were not their responsibility, that ‘no one can say that Kenya has done anything to cause the present difficulties’, and that it was Britain that had ‘full obligation to Asians’.³⁸ George Thomson, Secretary of State for the Commonwealth, found on meeting Kenyatta in October 1967 that the President’s opinion was even more muscular when offered in confidence. Thomson asked whether he would assure the Asians that they could ‘continue to make a living here’. Kenyatta replied in a ‘characteristically frank but stern outburst that, so far as he was concerned, the fewer “Indians” remained in Kenya the better: though he would do nothing to force them out he considered Kenya could get along without their skills’. The British High Commissioner recorded that Kenyatta felt that the Asians had ‘had their chance of acquiring Kenyan citizenship in the two years after Independence and though some had done so and thus identified themselves with Kenya, the majority had preferred to demonstrate their basic

³⁷Letter from I. M. Mathenge, Provincial Commissioner to Permanent Secretary, Office of the President, 14/6/66 (CA 27/3 (Coastal Province) KNA), from which the figures in this paragraph are also taken; letter from Senior Immigration Officer (Mombasa) to Provincial Commissioner (Coastal Province), 13/8/69 (CA 27/3) suggests that the numbers of returning residents in 1968–1969 were negligible by contrast.

³⁸SWB, Nairobi (Home Service), Second Series, IV, ME/ 2708 (B5), 27/2/68 (29/2/65), (BBC WAC).

lack of loyalty to Kenya by clinging, where possible, to their United Kingdom passports'. On this particular matter Kenyatta 'questioned [the] wisdom of Her Majesty's Government continuing to issue United Kingdom passports to so many Asians and suggested we should close our doors to them' making it clear that he 'fully understood the difficulties of integrating them in Britain and suggested the only solution was for them to return to "India" where they rightly belonged'.³⁹ This was unexpected. When a *Daily Nation* article made a similar point shortly afterwards, High Commission staff found it 'surprising to have a Kenya newspaper suggest that "Britain should not be overburdened with a false feeling that she owes the rest of the Commonwealth a living" and to go on to say that if necessary immigration should be curbed "even to the extent of imposing a five year ban on it"'.⁴⁰

The second British attempt to persuade Kenyatta to moderate his position took place on the insistence of the Cabinet and was the condition on which most ministers agreed to support the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigration Bill. The Cabinet chose to send the British Government's roving Special Representative to Africa, Malcolm MacDonald, who knew Kenyatta well from his time as Governor-General of Kenya between 1963 and 1964. It was recorded at the meeting in February 1968 that MacDonald sought to sway his old friend by warning that 'if Britain had to legislate, this might seriously prejudice friendly relations between the Kenya and British Governments and peoples' and even making the veiled threat that 'pressure might arise in Britain for a lowering of the large financial and other aid which Britain gives to Kenya'. Nonetheless, the President remained unmoved. Critics of his policies in Britain had to 'understand that Kenya must Africanise' and in fact 'the Indians were not going because they had been refused permits in Kenya—they were going because they *thought* they would not get permits'. As far as Kenyatta was concerned, it was time to 'let them go' and 'the more, the happier we will be'. Refusing to accept sole responsibility for the exodus, the Agriculture Minister, Bruce Mackenzie, blamed the Labour Government's "dilly dallying", as the Asians well 'knew that

³⁹(55) Tel. no. 3638 'S of S [George Thomson] visit to Kenyatta' from Edward Peck (British High Commissioner, Nairobi) to CO, 30/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

⁴⁰Letter [to Reid] from Arthur, 6/11/67 (FCO 31/250).

there would come a time when they must go', making the British position 'a deciding factor'.

This was tough but predictable talk. The meeting took a more unexpected turn when Kenyatta raised the question of what Sandys had recently termed the 'loophole' granted to the Asians in 1963. Kenyatta was recorded as arguing that 'some sections of the British people were afraid of legislation because they did not wish to break their word of honour'. It was wrong to think that Britain had formally 'assured the Indians of protection when the Constitution was being negotiated', and spineless to fear that 'if there was legislation, the Indians would grumble that Britain had not kept her word'. However, it was the President's contention that the 'British Government—and in particular Mr. Duncan Sandys—had voluntarily made promises' on its own behalf and without Kenyatta's blessing. It was thus implied that the 'promises' were colonial and not Kenyan policy and could therefore be treated as having been superseded by the Immigration Act of the previous year. For this reason Kenyatta 'did not think the British and Kenya Governments would quarrel' if the pledges made before independence were ignored, as indeed Sandys himself was doing.⁴¹ Kenyatta's attitude towards the formal pledges made by the Colonial Secretary prior to independence is thrown into sharp relief by comparison with his plea to Harold Wilson only a year before to uphold an unofficial promise of military support in the case of war with Somalia. This pledge had also been made by Sandys, in this instance in his capacity as Commonwealth Secretary, three months after independence.⁴²

KANU's Africanisation campaign was watched with fear and uncertainty throughout the Asian community in Kenya, and there can be no doubt that the marked rise in Asian immigration to Britain in late 1967 was a direct result of the Kenyan Immigration Act of 1967. 'Voice of Kenya' broadcasts, local government correspondence, National Assembly debates, and discussions between Kenyatta and British officials all demonstrate that anti-Asian prejudice was more than mere populist rhetoric and had already become an entrenched feature of African nationalist

⁴¹(132) 'Note of a Meeting between President Kenyatta and Mr. Malcolm MacDonald on Monday 19 February 1968' (FCO 31/252).

⁴²Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, p. 182.

politics in Kenya. Indeed, it would continue to resurface over the following decades.⁴³ That this nationalist antipathy should have arisen in part from the previously undocumented immigration ‘crisis’ that Kenya itself had experienced in the mid-1960s, demonstrates an unusual continuity between Kenya and Britain’s responses to decolonisation that is worthy of further study. But it would be simplistic to assume that the Africanisation campaign caused the Asian exodus alone. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, the majority of Kenyan Asians decided to leave Kenya not when KANU introduced its long-expected legislation but, as Bruce Mackenzie believed, when they began to fear that their right of entry to the UK might be suspended. With the British Government offering nothing but a resolute silence on the matter until late February 1968, Asians had little choice but to take Sandys’ anti-immigration campaigning very seriously.

SANDYS’ RELATIONSHIP WITH KENYAN MINISTERS

Kenyatta received another guest between his official visits from Thomson and MacDonald, in the person of Sandys. The itinerary for the former Colonial and Commonwealth Secretary’s trip to Kenya in December 1967 was a roll call of the great and the good in Kenyan politics and business, and was testament to his ongoing status in the country. Preparing for the trip Sandys wrote down the politicians that he intended to see, in order of preference, namely Kenyatta, Lord Delaware, Tom Mboya, Michael Blundell, Daniel Arap Moi, Njoroge Mungai, Bruce Mackenzie, Ronald Ngala, Charles Njonjo, the British High Commissioner, Malcolm MacDonald and Joseph Murumbi.⁴⁴ Still a household name thanks to his role in managing Kenya’s independence, it was Sandys’ ongoing relations with leading Kenyans since leaving office in 1964 that ensured that his comments were viewed with such concern by Kenyan Asians. Sandys’ personal contacts also enabled him to gain privileged access to confidential information about the scale of the

⁴³Branch *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 157.

⁴⁴Note ‘List of people in Kenya whom I would like, if possible, to see’ [autumn 1967] (DSND 14/14) Cam 24/1/13 164730; see also ‘Programme arranged by Kenya Govt and Mrs. Kennedy [Celia] for the visit of Mr. Duncan Sandys 21 December to the 3 January’ (DSND 11/1/5).

Asian exodus, which in turn coloured his understanding of the tension between the African and Asian communities, and fuelled his fears of racial tension in Britain as outlined in the previous chapter.

Sandys had various reasons for visiting Kenya. His leading role in the anti-nuclear proliferation World Security Trust (WST), which he described as ‘an independent initiative which I have launched with the blessing of the British Government’, had taken him all over the world since 1965 (see Chap. 2) and had given him cause to retain contact with the Vice-President, Joseph Murumbi. While the WST was the ostensible reason for Sandys’ trip to Kenya, coming between meetings in Ethiopia and Nigeria for the same purpose, he also took the opportunity to spend Christmas with his daughter Celia, who had married a white Kenyan and moved to Nairobi.⁴⁵ Kenyatta himself was ‘in general agreement’ with the WST project, according to MacDonald and the subject was no doubt discussed on Boxing Day, which Sandys spent with the President on the coast.⁴⁶ Sandys had ‘warm feelings of affection and respect’ for the *Mzee*. MacDonald believed that these sentiments were mutual, writing to Sandys in July 1967 to let him know that ‘your friend Kenyatta said a lot of nice things about you in our gossip yesterday’.⁴⁷ Mboya was sure that the President would be ‘delighted to see you’ on hearing of his proposed visit, and Celia Sandys recalls that many ministers were keen to see the man who had granted independence to a KANU rather than Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU) government in 1963.⁴⁸ On the day that Sandys left office in 1964, Kenyatta sent a telegram to say that ‘personally I have greatly appreciated the friendly relations between us and the understanding which you have always showed towards Kenya’s aspirations and needs’. Sandys’ tenure would ‘always be remembered as the time when Kenya achieved independence’.⁴⁹ According to MacDonald, Kenyatta had personally dictated the telegram over the telephone from his farm in Gatundu because he ‘knows as well as anyone how much he and the new Kenya nation owe to

⁴⁵Letter from Sandys to Joseph Murumbi (Deputy President), 18/6/65 (DSND 11/1/11); letter from Sandys to Murumbi, 1/9/67 (DSND 11/1/11).

⁴⁶Letter from Sandys to Mboya, 6/11/67 (DSND 11/1/5).

⁴⁷Letter from MacDonald to Sandys, 22/7/67 (DSND 11/1/11).

⁴⁸Letter from Mboya to Sandys, 24/11/67 (DSND 13/20/3); interview with Celia Sandys, 2015.

⁴⁹Tel. from Kenyatta to Sandys, 19/10/64 (DSND 8/22/7).

you'. By contrast, Kenyatta left it to his Permanent Secretary to write to congratulate Harold Wilson.⁵⁰

Sandys had also maintained a strong friendship with the Minister for Economic Development and KANU Secretary General, Tom Mboya. Before Mboya was tragically shot in 1969, he was the most popular candidate to succeed Kenyatta to the Presidency. Charles Hornsby describes him as the 'intellectual powerhouse of the administration' and 'Kenya's most prominent political thinker and political operator'.⁵¹ Having worked closely together on the independence settlement the two men followed each other's careers with interest. A typical exchange followed the General Election of 1966 when Mboya wrote to 'congratulate' Sandys on his successful re-election, looking forward to 'our continued friendship and contacts'.⁵² In return Sandys concurred that 'I greatly value our friendship and hope that we shall continue to keep in touch with one another', telling Mboya that 'I have followed with interest Odinga's latest manoeuvres and have admired the firm and reasonable way in which you have dealt with him'.⁵³ On 7th September 1967 Sandys met Mboya at a wedding party in London for Bruce Mackenzie, just as the Asian exodus was beginning to arouse concern. Sandys evidently felt ill-informed on the subject and took full advantage of the meeting to ask Mboya for advice, in which he was 'much interested'. This led to subsequent correspondence on the matter as Sandys sought 'further elucidation' and presumably further discussion in Kenya in December, a meeting to which he was earlier 'so looking forward'.⁵⁴

Sandys' primary source of information in Kenya on the Asian question was Mboya and, in turn, Mboya's understanding of the problem coloured Sandys' own perception. The Kenyan minister's position was more nuanced than that of the President as he had some reservations about the Africanisation policy and its implications for Kenyan economic development. As early as 1964 he had warned on Nairobi radio that 'although some people have resented being told that Africanisation must not be at

⁵⁰Letter from MacDonald to Sandys, 24/10/64 (DSND 8/22/7).

⁵¹Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, pp. 204, 211.

⁵²Letter from Mboya to Sandys, 26/4/66 (DSND 14/14).

⁵³Letter from Sandys to Mboya, 10/5/66 (DSND 14/14).

⁵⁴Letter from Sandys to Mboya, 5/12/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

the expense of standards and efficiency' he felt that 'we cannot compromise on this vital question'.⁵⁵

However, the advice that Mboya offered Sandys in 1967 reflected a more recent hostility. It was Sandys who had raised the issue at the wedding party in London, but the following day Mboya took the time to write to him to add further comment. The position of Asians

as you know, remains one of our most sensitive questions in Kenya. As I indicated some of the Asians have become citizens but one finds that in one and the same family some of the members are citizens while others are not. In some cases the husband is a citizen while the wife is not. This creates very obvious problems; one of which is the suspicion that it arouses in the minds of our own people who are led to doubt the sincerity of even those who have taken up Kenya citizenship. As well as this, the Asians have British Passports and it is assumed that they are the responsibility of the British Government and may come to Britain as and when they wish.⁵⁶

Sandys was 'most grateful' for the advice but he wrote back to ask for more information on the question of Asians' eligibility for Kenyan citizenship, and the balance of those claiming Indian and Pakistani descent. He also wanted to know why it was such a 'sensitive' question, asking whether there was 'a feeling against the Indians because they are of a different race, or because they have established such a stronghold on the trading business, or because they are keeping apart and refusing to identify themselves with the new Kenya?'.⁵⁷ Mboya replied that 'we find it very difficult' to distinguish between Indians and Pakistanis, and that since the two-year window period for applications for Kenyan citizenship was over, 'whereas some still can become citizens by registration, they cannot be accepted automatically, and they are subject to naturalisation laws'.⁵⁸ Returning to an earlier theme, it seemed that Mboya was concerned about the effects of the exodus but only on the grounds that it might 'merely represent another manoeuvre to beat the Exchange

⁵⁵Nairobi broadcast (English), 13/3/64, text, B8, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Second Series, ME, 1505, 16/3/64 (BBC WAC).

⁵⁶Letter from Mboya (at Kenyan High Commission, London) to Sandys, 8/9/67 (DSND 14/14).

⁵⁷Letter from Sandys to Mboya, 26/9/67 (DSND 14/14).

⁵⁸Letter from Mboya to Sandys, 24/11/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

Control regulations' designed to stem the flight of Asian capital from Kenya that had started with independence.⁵⁹ Mboya answered Sandys' question about the 'feeling against' Asians in some detail, which he felt

stems from their virtual monopoly of trade, including the retail trade in remote trading centres throughout the country. This feeling is strengthened by the methods some of these traders use; it is not uncommon to find them taking advantage of illiterate customers and overcharging them. Then there is the problem of what appears to be their arrogance, especially in the younger generation, who seem to think that because they are wealthy they can do just what they like. They fail to appreciate the need to speak politely and with respect to their illiterate customers or others who come to their business premises. Lastly, but certainly not least, is their inability to mix socially with other races. They have too many communal and religious restrictions. Unlike Europeans, they just cannot feel part of the country, and this applies to even the most highly educated among them.⁶⁰

His questions demonstrate that Sandys was again seeking to exploit his *post-officio* influence to gain privileged access to information about the severity of the situation for Asians in Kenya. In particular he was keen to get a precise idea of the likely scale of the exodus to Britain.

Mboya's letters had a significant impact on Sandys' thinking about the exodus, and race relations in general. Many Asians themselves, and indeed a number of British politicians, believed that Asian emigration to Britain would have remained a 'trickle' without the threat of British restrictionism and that Africanisation itself was not the primary cause for the 'flood' of departures, as one Kenyan civil servant put it.⁶¹ By contrast the thinly veiled assumption that underlay Mboya's opinions was that the exodus was likely to be very sizeable, whatever happened in Britain. Asians were now unlikely to be granted Kenyan citizenship, and could well be rejected by India or Pakistan if it was unclear from which country they or their forebears came. Most importantly, popular feeling was

⁵⁹Letter from Mboya (at Kenyan High Commission, London) to Sandys, 8/9/67 (DSND 14/14). In all £25 m sterling was withdrawn from Kenya by Asians: Hornsby *Kenya: A History*.

⁶⁰Letter from Mboya to Sandys, 24/11/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

⁶¹Interview with Parmeet Singh (civil servant at the Kenyan Ministry of Finance in 1967, and later Director of Statistics), Camden, 12/9/13.

directed against the whole Asian community and not just those Asians who had kept British passports. Basing his estimate on Mboya's analysis of the situation, Sandys reasoned that the whole community might decide to leave, an assumption on which he based his own prediction of 20,000 possible immigrants. This was a highly alarmist figure that was double the number of CUKCs actually threatened by Africanisation in Kenya. Meanwhile, the ending of Kenya's celebrated attempt to build a multi-racial community by means of positive discrimination in employment cast Britain's own race relations legislation in an uncertain light. Mboya's opinion that Asians were never likely to assimilate into Kenyan society seemingly confirmed Sandys' contention that mass immigration would lead to racial tension and violence in Britain.

SANDYS' POPULAR IMPACT IN KENYA

In February 1968 Sandys complained that 'it is being said that the flood of Asian immigrants from East Africa has been provoked by "alarmist speeches" by me'.⁶² As the political crisis intensified the same accusation was made with increasing frequency by the British press, in Westminster and in Whitehall. Kenyatta's policy of Africanisation, the failure of Labour ministers to act and Enoch Powell's occasional comments all contributed to the Asian exodus. But an analysis of the Kenyan press, and in particular Gujerati publications, letters sent to Sandys by the Kenyan public, and the testimony of the Kenyan Asians themselves demonstrates that Sandys is deserving of a leading role in any explanation of the causes of the exodus. Sandys claimed that his statements could not have caused the Asians to start their panic exodus in September 1967 because he did not mention their plight until after Roy Jenkins had admitted on 15th November 1967 that the rate of arrivals from Kenya was increasing.⁶³ This assertion was untrue as Sandys had first referred to the Kenyan Asian influx on 26th October 1967 in the Commons.⁶⁴ But more importantly Sandys' claim also ignored his influence on Kenyan politics much earlier in the year. Thanks to his status in Kenya, Kenyan

⁶²'Sandys says: I warned Jenkins on immigrants' *Sunday Times* 18/2/68 .

⁶³*HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1357.

⁶⁴*HC Deb* 26 October 1967, vol. 751, col. 1861-1864.

Asians readily assumed that his general references to Commonwealth immigration in the summer of 1967 were directed towards themselves and acted accordingly.

The extensive and rapid Kenyan press coverage accorded to Sandys' comments offers a clear indication of his status in the country. In a telling example Sandys' statement on 24th July that 'all further entries should be stopped' was reported on the front page of the *East African Standard* two days before it was covered by the *Streatham News* in Sandys' own constituency.⁶⁵ Sandys was widely known in Kenya as the man who had managed independence. He was also remembered for having orchestrated the swift deployment of British troops to support Kenyatta's government during the army mutinies and in the conflict with Somalia that followed independence in 1964. His ongoing personal connections with Kenya were also well-advertised by the local press.⁶⁶ Comments from letters sent to Sandys from Kenya affirm his public status. At the start of the exodus, in September 1967, a white Kenyan wrote to Sandys to tell him that since the Kenyan press covered his statement of 24th July, 'hundreds more' immigrants had left for Britain 'in case such a ban is imposed in the future':

You seem to be the only person against this steady influx into Britain. Your articles have been given prominence in the newspapers here and clear thinking people regard you as the only hope in Britain today to try and stop this rot. As one of these people I sincerely hope you will be able to do something. Any press statements by you are read with great interest in Kenya.⁶⁷

What is remarkable about this letter is that it was written nearly two months before Sandys made any direct public mention of the exodus. And indeed the correspondent was not alone in believing that Sandys was capable of initiating a change in Britain's immigration legislation: two other white Kenyans and a white Tanzanian made the same

⁶⁵"'End Coloured Influx'" *East African Standard* 26/7/67; 'Sandys calls for halt to immigration' *Streatham News* 28/7/67 (LA).

⁶⁶[Untitled article] *Daily Nation* (Kenya) 22/12/67 (DSND 18/17).

⁶⁷Letter from white Kenyan to Sandys, 5/9/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

assumption in writing to him during that month.⁶⁸ It is interesting to note that in the new climate of Africanisation these three correspondents felt that the issue was sufficiently sensitive to refuse their names and none gave their addresses.

Three weeks later the Kenyan national press linked Sandys directly with opposition to the Kenyan Asian exodus for the first time. An article in the *Kenya Weekly News* quoted Sandys' former father-in-law, Winston Churchill, asking in 1908 whether it would be possible for 'any government with a scrap of respect for honest dealing between man and man, to embark upon a policy of deliberately squeezing out the native of India from regions in Africa in which he has established himself under every security and public faith'. The article proceeded to report for the first time that 'there are deepest misgivings in Whitehall, where officials have long been haunted by the threat of an Asian invasion from East Africa', a problem that had now assumed serious proportions in the light of the racial problem in Britain' and 'rising unemployment'. It appeared that 'with resentment near flashpoint, the Government would be in serious difficulties if the East African Asians descended on the country in mass' and with this in mind the paper judged that 'it would not be difficult for the authorities to devise means of keeping them out'.⁶⁹

At this point it would have been appropriate to mention the fact that Roy Jenkins had made an oblique comment four days previously that the immigration regulations might be reviewed if 100,000 East African Asians arrived over the next two years.⁷⁰ Yet the Home Secretary was not mentioned once in the article. Instead, it was 'of all people, a former Commonwealth Secretary, Mr. Duncan Sandys, who was very worried about certain minorities when he granted Kenya independence' and who was planning 'to ask the Government when Parliament reassembles next month to bring those of non-British origin in East Africa under the terms of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, whether or not they hold

⁶⁸Letter from white Kenyan (Nairobi) to Sandys, 5/9/67 (DSND 13/20/2); letter from a white Kenyan (Nairobi) to Sandys, 11/9/67 (DSND 13/20/3); letter from a white Kenyan (Mombasa) to Sandys, 20/9/67 (DSND 13/20/4); letter from a European Tanzanian (Moshi) to Sandys, 12/9/67 (DSND 13/20/4).

⁶⁹'Asian Exodus: Serious implications for U.K. and Kenya' *Kenya Weekly News* (Nakuru) 29/9/67.

⁷⁰Colin Legum 'Jenkins warning alarms Asians' *The Observer* 24/9/67; see also 'Asian immigrants from East Africa rise to 400 a week' *The Guardian* 25/9/67.

U.K. passports'. This proposal would not only raise 'enormous legal and political difficulties' but was also born of 'sheer inhumanity'.⁷¹ As will be discussed below, the *East African Standard* carried this revelation three weeks before Sandys made any public statement to the same effect, suggesting that the origins of the story were complex and controversial.

From the time that Sandys publicly revealed in Britain that the focus of his immigration campaign was the Kenyan Asians, the Kenyan press treated his role in creating the exodus as indisputable. Although Powell received passing coverage in early November 1967, the Conservative Spokesman for Defence was unknown in Kenya.⁷² However much Powell may have contributed to the creation of British fears, his lack of press coverage in Kenya meant that he had minimal impact on the Asian community itself. Meanwhile, Sandys' campaign was mentioned twice in November by reporters in Nairobi, followed by reports of his visit to Kenyatta in December.⁷³ After a research trip to Kenya later in 1968, David Steel concluded that Sandys' decision to table a motion in the Commons on 12th February was 'one inescapable reason for the added pace of the outflow'. *The Times*' correspondent in Nairobi concurred at the time that the 'exodus has been given momentum by the Commons motion sponsored on Monday [12th February] by Mr. Duncan Sandys'.⁷⁴

It is most striking that during the period of the exodus, Sandys' parliamentary activities continued to be covered by the Kenyan press before British newspapers. This was even the case *before* Sandys had made his statements, as with his initial question to Jenkins in October. On 9th February the British press was dominated by Powell's speech at Walsall. However the Kenyan *Daily Nation* led with 'a report this week from London that a former Conservative Commonwealth Secretary,

⁷¹'Asian Exodus: Serious implications for U.K. and Kenya' *Kenya Weekly News* (Nakuru) 29/9/67.

⁷²(60, E.) 'New UK bid to check inflow of Kenya Asians', *Sunday Post* (Kenya), 5/11/67 (FCO 31/250); (60, E.) 'New Pleas to curb immigrants' *Nation* (Kenya) 5/11/67 (FCO 31/250).

⁷³(60, E.) 'Coloured immigrants' *Daily Nation* 6/11/67 (FCO 31/250); P. Theroux 'Hating the Asians' *Transition* 33 (Oct–Nov 1967), pp. 46–51 [published by Indiana UP for WEB Du Bois Institute]; [untitled article] *Daily Nation* (Kenya) 22/12/67 (DSND 18/17); SWB, Nairobi, Second Series, IV, ME/2656 (B6), 30/12/67.

⁷⁴Steel *No Entry*, p. 140; 'Anxiety in Kenya at Exodus: Loss of skilled Asians' *The Times* 16/2/68.

Mr. Sandys, is to introduce a Private Member's Bill in the House of Commons, seeking to remove from Kenya Asians holding British passports their unfettered right to enter the United Kingdom'. This was still three days before Sandys' motion was publicly tabled in the Commons. The article went on to damn the effect of Sandys' campaigning in no uncertain terms. The early report of the planned motion had

not helped matters one bit. It is sad that one man's word, indeed a mere hope, can have such deleterious effects on an entire community and on the country in which they live. For the damage has been done and the panic has started. Panic far worse than fear. It is the duty of the Kenya Govt to point out to the British Govt that the panic talk sparked by the actions of people like Mr. Sandys is likely to do enormous harm to this country and demand, therefore, that Whitehall issue an unequivocal statement assuring Kenya Asians who hold passports granting them citizenship of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland that it will do the morally right thing by them and ensure them unrestricted entry into the UK.⁷⁵

After 12th February Kenyan reporting broadened its focus to include Powell and also the Commonwealth and Home Secretaries. But by this time the exodus was well under way. In the context of a lengthy silence from the British Government the close reporting of Sandys' campaign since the summer of 1967 had undoubtedly played a large part in provoking panic amongst the Asians.

A curious feature of the scholarly literature on the Kenyan Asian exodus is that the opinions of the people most affected by the crisis—the Kenyan Asians themselves—have received the least attention. However, the Gujarati Kenyan press, surveys and interviews with Asian emigrants, and British High Commission observations yield a wealth of evidence on what motivated Asians to pack their bags and leave Kenya.

One leading Kenyan Asian organisation pointed the finger at the 'utterances of people in the U.K., silence on the part of the British Government and the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill 1968 in the British Parliament'.⁷⁶ A young Asian teacher who fled to London was one of many Kenyan Asians to volunteer an opinion on the origin of those

⁷⁵(106, E.ii) 'Crisis of Change' *Daily Nation* 9/2/68 (FCO 31/251).

⁷⁶'British Citizens of Asian Origin and The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968' paper by Association of British [Asian] Citizens, Nairobi, Oct 1968 (DSND 13/20/2).

‘utterances’: the Asians had ‘come so quickly, so many together, after we heard of Duncan Sandys’ statement’.⁷⁷ The article in the *New York Times* carrying the interview illustrated his point with a photograph of a demonstration in London in late February 1968. Sandys’ name featured prominently on the demonstrators’ placards.⁷⁸ Although Sandys’ campaign was not the only cause of the Asian exodus, ample evidence suggests that the Asians themselves believed it to have been critical in fuelling the crisis.

Further evidence of Sandys’ influence can be found in the fluctuating rate of emigration to the UK. The figures were a matter of some debate as there was no mechanism to record the number of Asians with UK passports entering the UK itself, or indeed how many there were in East Africa. Coincidentally confirming Sandys’ alarmist estimate (as mentioned earlier), Callaghan told the House that there were ‘at least’ 200,000 (mostly in Kenya), and ‘1 million or more’ Asians in such a position in Africa as a whole.⁷⁹ Soon after the Immigration Act had been passed in Kenya in July, the Home Office asked immigration officials to provide an estimated monthly record of entries. According to the figures given to the House by Callaghan in February 1968, the total number of citizens of the UK and Colonies in East Africa who held British passports with a right to enter the UK without restriction was ‘about 230,000’. The annual totals of recent arrivals were 6150 in 1965, 6800 in 1966 and 13,600 in 1967 mainly from Kenya. The monthly totals from East Africa (again mostly from Kenya) during the period of the exodus in 1967 and 1968 are shown in Table 6.1.

Callaghan did not provide figures for February but Hornsby estimates that 10,000 left in that month.⁸⁰ This general trend of a marked and sustained increase after the change in Kenyan citizenship legislation was announced in July 1967 and continued until the end of October, followed by a more relaxed period at the end of the year, then a ‘beat the ban’ rush before the end of February was also evident in the Asian community’s own estimates.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Dom Moraes “‘Shall I paint myself white?’ The Kenyan Asians find that some people with British passports are more equal than others’ *New York Times*, 5/5/68.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1246–1247.

⁸⁰ Hornsby *Kenya: A History*, p. 198. This estimate is confirmed by R. Winder *Bloody Foreigners: the story of immigration to Britain* (London, 2013), p. 290.

⁸¹ ‘Protests pile up from far and near’ *The Guardian* 27/2/68.

Table 6.1 Monthly totals of immigrants arriving from East Africa to UK

<i>Month</i>	<i>Monthly total</i>
July	896
August	1493
September	2661
October	1916
November	1334
December	1907 ^a
January	c. 3800 ^b

^a*HC Deb* 15 February 1968, vol. 758, col. 392–393. The monthly figures for 1967 should be set against a monthly average of 540 for the period 1965–1966

^b*HC Deb* 22 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 659. This figure was again provided by Callaghan but may have been an overestimate

Both Asian and Home Office estimates noted that September saw a particularly rapid outflow, coinciding with the start of rumours that Britain was considering restriction. A survey conducted in Kenya shortly afterwards by the London-based Institute of Community Studies suggested that such rumours were a more significant push factor than the Kenyan Immigration Act of July, finding that while ‘the intentions of the Kenya Govt have been known for a long time’ it was the ‘fear of restrictions on entry to Britain which has provoked the sudden rise’. Commenting on these findings in February 1968, the Director of the Institute, Dr Michael Young, recommended that ‘a firm statement by the Government that we had no intention of restricting the entry of British citizens from Kenya would be just as effective in stemming the present rush as any quota’, suggesting that there remained a widespread belief amongst Asians that Britain would honour its obligations.⁸²

This link between the rate of emigration and rumours about British restrictions was particularly marked in September. On 5th September Reuters’ correspondent in Nairobi filed the first press report to cover the exodus, noting that ‘planes are booked for weeks ahead and an airline spokesman said today that Indians and Pakistanis were queuing at the airport in the hope of buying cancelled seats’. The article observed that ‘most of the people leaving are men hoping to find jobs in Britain and

⁸²‘Survey’s Findings’ letter to editor *The Times* 27/2/68.

send for their families later'. Their motives varied from 'the prospect of early Africanisation' to 'increasing unemployment in Britain', some fearing that 'unless they go now they will have less chance of getting jobs'. But the sudden rush had been sparked by a more specific threat: 'when interviewed at the airport many of the Asians said they had reliable information that new restrictive legislation is to be introduced in Britain on September 15'.⁸³

Both the Home Office and Commonwealth Office were 'at a loss' to explain the origins of this assertion when confronted by press enquiries.⁸⁴ Speculating some months later, Dharam Ghai—a leading academic at University College, Nairobi—suggested that although the 'reasons for the currency of these rumours are obscure' they 'could conceivably be connected with the recent judgement, of questionable validity, in Britain under which some Mauritians were barred entry into the UK, although they held British passports, on the ground that these passports were issued by the Governor of Mauritius and not by Her Majesty's Govt in the UK'. Amongst Asians it 'was feared that this precedent might be used to restrict the entry of East African Asians holding British passports issued under the Colonial Government'.⁸⁵ Whatever the rumour's origins, the Home Office noted that the episode showed 'the insecurity of the Asian community in Kenya' and its 'apparent susceptibility to panic rumours'.⁸⁶ It also demonstrated that from the beginning of the exodus, any indication of a possible change in British immigration policy—even in relation to Mauritius—was being 'examined in Kenya with a fine tooth-comb!' by the Asian community, as a Counsellor at the High Commission in Nairobi observed.⁸⁷

⁸³'Nairobi, Sept 5, Reuter' report, contained in a CO telegram, in (2A) 'Asians in East Africa: Reported Exodus from Kenya' memorandum from Morris to Otton, 6/9/67 (HO 344/323, TNA).

⁸⁴(2A) 'Asians in East Africa: Reported Exodus from Kenya' memorandum from Morris to Otton, 6/9/67 (HO 344/323).

⁸⁵Dharam and Yash Gai 'Britain's Newest Immigrants: Asians from East Africa', enclosed in Letter from Dharam Ghai (Deputy Director, Institute for Devt Studies, University College, Nairobi) to Sandys, 7/2/68 (DSND 13/20/3).

⁸⁶(2A) 'Asians in East Africa: Reported Exodus from Kenya' memorandum from Morris to Otton, 6/9/67 (HO 344/323).

⁸⁷Letter from Stanley Arthur (Counsellor, British High Commission in Nairobi) [to Les Reid, CO], 6/11/67 (FCO 31/250).

However, the most plausible explanation for the rumour about a ban on 15th September is that it was a pre-release distortion of another remarkably prescient report of Sandys' views, in this instance in a piece published on that day by the popular Gujerati Kenyan newspaper *Africa Samachar*.⁸⁸ Entitled 'Demand for restriction in Britain: Stop issuing British passports', it reported that:

The former Commonwealth Secretary, Mr. Duncan Sandys, has demanded restriction on Asians entering Britain. He said that when the House of Commons reassemble next month a law should be passed to apply normal immigration laws to these immigrants. Meanwhile the British Government should stop issuing British passports to those people who have no ties with Great Britain. Mr. Sandys was commenting on the recent exodus of Asians from East Africa and the rumours which have led to this sudden rise of people leaving for Britain. Mr. Sandys who is a strong critic of Mr. Wilson's Labour Govt told the British Home Minister, Mr. Roy Jenkins, that he knew something of this kind would happen.

The article concluded by commenting that 'at the moment the British authorities have no plans to restrict Asian immigration' but 'it is feared that because of rising unemployment, the problem of racial discrimination and public opinion in Britain might force the Government to reconsider the position'.⁸⁹

The *Africa Samachar's* coverage of Sandys' campaign provides striking evidence of just how closely the Kenyan Asians were watching developments in Britain and demonstrates the former Colonial and Commonwealth Secretary's status in Kenya, backbencher or no. Even four decades later, Asians who played a leading role in the crisis recalled that Sandys was a well-known and respected figure in the community.⁹⁰

⁸⁸The publication had a weekly circulation of 16,000: interview with Janardan Bhatt (former owner of United Africa Press, including the *Africa Samachar*), Willesden, 26/3/14.

⁸⁹English translation by High Commission of 'Demand for restriction in Britain: Stop issuing British passports' *Africa Samachar* 15/9/67, enclosed in (30) Letter from Arthur to Reid, 22/9/67 (FCO 31/250).

⁹⁰Interview with Ramnik Shah (Kenyan immigration lawyer), Camden, 18/2/14; interview with Kantilal Shah (Kenyan immigration lawyer), Nairobi, 20/2/15; interview with Suresh Sofat (Kenyan air charter entrepreneur), Harrow, 26/5/15; interview with Parmeet Singh.

The *Africa Samachar* article played a significant role in stimulating the exodus as it was released two weeks before the *East African Standard* reported the story. But what was really remarkable about the article was that it was published a full six weeks before Sandys made any public statement to the same effect.

Before Sandys asked Roy Jenkins to comment on the Kenyan Asian exodus in the Commons on 26th October, he made no public mention in Britain of his intention to question the Home Secretary. In fact during this period he made no reference to the exodus at all. It would appear that this silence was a conscious decision on Sandys' part, Jenkins having confidentially asked him in November 1966 'not to advertise' the Asians' right of entry as it would not be in the 'public interest', a plea that Jenkins reiterated on 7th September 1967.⁹¹ Sandys voluntarily observed this gag not only prior to the *Africa Samachar's* revelation but also for weeks after, keeping his comments on immigration strictly limited to general observations about Commonwealth immigration and particularly the issue of dependants.⁹² The *Africa Samachar's* suggestion that, at some point in the past Sandys had told Jenkins that 'he knew something of this kind would happen' appears to be an allusion to the same gag. This disclosure was even more surprising as it would be another *five months* before Sandys revealed to the British press that he had written 'privately to the Home Secretary about this problem' in 1966. At Jenkin's 'request' Sandys had 'refrained from drawing attention to this in public for over a year'.⁹³

One possible explanation of the origins of the *Africa Samachar's* extraordinary coverage of Sandys' private views is that they were passed on by his friend Tom Mboya, who had met Sandys, as mentioned, at a party earlier in September. Although the evidence is circumstantial, it should be considered that Mboya was the only Kenyan who had been in touch with Sandys that month, and that the two men had discussed the exodus in some detail during a social conversation in which it would have been curious not to mention the possibility of raising the

⁹¹Letter from Jenkins to Sandys, 4/11/66 (DSND 13/20/3); (4) untitled memorandum by Morris to Fitzgerald (Immigration and Nationality Department, H. O.), 7/9/67, para. 1 (HO 344/323).

⁹²*HC Debs* 26 October 1967, vol. 751, col. 1863.

⁹³'Sandys says: I warned Jenkins on immigrants' *Sunday Times* 18/2/68.

issue in Parliament. The then-owner of the *Africa Samachar*, Janardan Bhatt, recalls that Mboya enjoyed a good relationship with the press and regularly dined with journalists at the Press Club of Kenya. Mboya was also close to the Asian Speaker of the National Assembly, Fitz de Sousa who, Bhatt suggests, was a conduit between Mboya and the Asian press.⁹⁴

It is also significant that both Sandys and Mboya had a clear motive to fuel the Asians' panic. Like Kenyatta, Mboya was no lover of the Asians, who he criticised privately to Sandys for their 'arrogance' and 'inability to mix socially with other races'. He thus had every reason to encourage their flight.⁹⁵ Meanwhile Sandys was now aware that his statements were being watched with interest in Kenya, and could only have assumed that his comments to Mboya would sooner or later be discussed in Kenya thanks to the Wilson government's refusal to shed clear light on its own position. Moreover, as was recognised by the likes of Fenner Brockway and David Steel, Sandys' leverage on the Government could only be increased by fuelling the exodus in the short term, and if it could be done without breaking the unofficial gag that Jenkins had imposed on him a year before, then so much the better for his own credibility.

In late September the High Commission observed that 'the English language newspapers are no longer giving' the possibility of restriction 'much prominence'.⁹⁶ However the same could not be said of the *Africa Samachar*. In early October it reported Jenkins' comment in Birmingham that 'if, in two years time, Asian immigration to Britain should increase to danger level, then the Government will have to re-examine its policy', as mentioned earlier, but it added that Jenkins had stated that 'at the moment Asians are entitled to enter Britain and the immigration authorities are not concerned'. Of headline interest, however, was the claim that 'Sandys will raise the question of Asian immigration in the House of Commons during this month's session' and

⁹⁴Interview with Janardan Bhatt.

⁹⁵Letter from Mboya to Sandys, 24/11/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

⁹⁶'Asians on UK passports entitled to enter Britain' letter from C. J. Shah (Mombasa) to Editor of *The East African Standard*, 16/9/67 (FCO 31/250) 14/10/13 150405; (30) Letter from Arthur to Reid, 22/9/67 (FCO 31/250).

that there was a ‘chance that Mr. Sandys will succeed in persuading the British Government to agree not to issue British passports to those people who have no ties with Britain’.⁹⁷ Although the article added little to the report released on 15th September it indicated that the Asian community was continuing to look to Sandys rather than Jenkins as the best indication of the Government’s future course of action.

The article also made another surprising revelation. It claimed that ‘in Mr. Sandys’ opinion East African Asians ... acquired British citizenship due to the change in power [at Independence] and therefore they should not be regarded as ordinary British citizens’. Sandys’ characterisation of the pledge made to the Asians in the Kenyan independence settlement of 1963 as an unintended ‘loophole’ was to become all too familiar in the coming months (as discussed in the previous chapter). But his first public statement of the ‘loophole’ argument was not made in the Commons until 15th November, over a month after the article was published.⁹⁸ Once again the source of ‘Mr. Sandys’ opinion’ appeared to be a leak. The *Africa Samachar*’s coverage of Sandys’ ‘loophole’ argument was noted by its Asian audience. In an unpublished letter written to the editor of *The Times* and copied to Sandys, L. R. Samgadhia observed from Nairobi that ‘of recent months’ Sandys had been referring to Asians’ right to enter the UK from Kenya as ‘a “loophole” in the immigration law’ in statements and also ‘made the same remarks in Parliament referring once more to the “Loophole” in the immigration law and advocated legislation to close the sluice gates’. As far as Asians like Samgadhia were concerned, Sandys’ ‘loophole’ comment was common knowledge over a week before he actually mentioned the term in public for the first time in the Commons debate on 15th November.⁹⁹

Leaders of the Asian community noticed that the panic receded in December and January, but in February when ‘people like Mr. Sandys

⁹⁷(51, E.1) English translation by High Commission of ‘Duncan Sandys to raise the question of Asian immigration to Britain: the law will be examined within two years’ *Africa Samachar*, 6/10/67 in letter from Arthur to Reid, 27/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

⁹⁸*HC Deb* 15 November 1967, vol. 754, col. 504–507.

⁹⁹Letter from L. Samgadhia (Nairobi) to *The Times*, copied to Sandys, 4/11/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

started shouting at the top of their voices' it started again.¹⁰⁰ By the end of that month, the passport officers at the High Commission were reporting that the mood amongst Asians had changed as they were 'no longer in a flap' but 'grimly resolved' and now 'genuinely determined to get to the U.K.' because 'behind their backs is nothing but a wall'.¹⁰¹ Asian reactions to the culmination of Sandys' campaign in late February 1968 demonstrate that Sandys' power to incite panic remained undiminished until the end. News of his decision to table a motion in the House on 12th February led *The Times*' correspondent in Nairobi to observe that 'the exodus has been given momentum by the Commons motion' because, as one intending emigrant explained, 'if Britain refuses entry and Kenya does not allow us to stay here, we could become stateless persons. Obviously we cannot take that risk'.¹⁰² On the day after Sandys revealed that he had observed Jenkins' unofficial gag for over a year, Reuters reported that the former president of the Kenya Indian Congress—S. G. Amin—had stated in no uncertain terms that 'Mr. Sandys has intensified the exodus (of Asians from Kenya to Britain)—indeed, he created it. If this fear of the door being closed had not been raised, certainly there would have been no spurt in this desire to get into Britain'.¹⁰³ Too late, on 26th February a delegation of four leading Asians arrived in London to lobby Wilson, explaining that the exodus could easily be stopped because it was caused not by Africanisation but by the 'shouting' of 'people like Mr. Sandys'.¹⁰⁴ It was with good reason that the *The Observer*'s Nairobi correspondent concluded that Sandys, 'who initially warned about the Asian exodus from Kenya, is the most hated Briton among Kenya Asians today'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰Statement by S. Sandhu, leader of an Asian delegation sent to London in late February 1968, quoted in 'Protests pile up from far and near' *The Guardian* 27/2/68. Meanwhile the *Africa Samachar* had mentioned the prospect of British restrictionism only once during this period by way of reference to Powell: (58, E.1) 'Translation from "African Samachar" 27/10/67: "Animosity from Britain's Cons Party Red Light against loopholes in Immigration Laws", in letter from Arthur to Reid, 3/11/67 (FCO 31/250).

¹⁰¹(136) Letter from Beckman to Forward, 30/2/68, para. 7 (FCO 31/252).

¹⁰²Nairobi correspondent 'Anxiety in Kenya at Exodus: Loss of skilled Asians' *The Times* 16/2/68.

¹⁰³Nairobi correspondent 'Mr. Sandys blamed for increasing exodus' *The Guardian* 20/2/68.

¹⁰⁴'Protests pile up from far and near' *The Guardian* 27/2/68.

¹⁰⁵Nairobi correspondent 'Asians hit at Sandys' *The Observer* 25/2/68.

By the time that Callaghan's Commonwealth Immigrants Bill was hurried through Parliament, Sandys' impact on the Asian community had been publicly recognised even in Westminster. As early as August 1967, David Ennals was aware that Sandys' statements had already 'created fear and resentment and were most unsettling for immigrants' already in the UK. Having earlier led the Movement for Colonial Freedom in vociferous opposition to Sandys' Peace with Rhodesia Campaign, Fenner Brockway denounced Sandys once again, suggesting to the House of Lords that the Kenyan Asians' exodus was 'due to the panic warnings given by Mr. Duncan Sandys'. Brockway recognised that 'in Kenya, panic has developed among Indians who have not registered as Kenya citizens, almost entirely as a result of the fears which have been excited that Britain would soon apply restrictions on immigrants even when they hold British passports'. It was Brockway's judgement that 'for this Mr. Duncan Sandys is mainly responsible.'¹⁰⁶

THE COMMONWEALTH IMMIGRANTS ACT OF 1968 AND SANDYS' INFLUENCE ON THE 'OFFICIAL MIND'

Sandys had long sought to persuade the Labour Government of the need for greater restriction on Commonwealth Immigration, as outlined in the previous chapter. By the autumn of 1967 Sandys' role in driving the exodus from Kenya was becoming increasingly apparent and a groundswell of popular anti-immigrant support for his campaign was developing in Britain. Sandys' efforts to cajole Labour ministers began to produce results. Evidence of Sandys' influence can be found in CO, Home Office and Cabinet level discussions about the Kenyan Asian controversy, demonstrating that Sandys ultimately had a decisive effect on the hurried decision to introduce the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in February 1968.

Sandys might have been expected to focus his energies on his own front bench. Heath himself had discreetly asked the Research

¹⁰⁶ *HL Deb* 22/2/68, vol. 289, col. 587; 'Duncan Sandys' nonsense about immigrants from Kenya' *Morning Star* 23/2/68 (DSDN 18/17); see also similar comments particularly from David Steel in *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1289; Lord Wade in *HL Deb* 29 February 1968, vol. 289, col. 947; Baroness Gaitskell in *HL Deb* 29 February 1968, vol. 289, col. 1028; Eric Heffer in *HC Deb* 28 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1594; Reginald Paget in *HC Deb* 28 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1557, 1595.

Department to consider how the Asian exodus might be curbed, giving Philip Ziegler cause to suggest that he was ‘not wholly unsympathetic to Powell’s views’. Shadow Cabinet minutes record an unusually nervous Shadow Home Secretary, Quintin Hogg, finding the arrivals ‘alarming’, not simply because of the scale but more importantly because ‘it seemed to consist almost entirely of Asians, who were the least desirable immigrants socially’.¹⁰⁷ However, although the Party leadership had also been calling for tougher controls throughout the 1960s, neither Heath nor the Hogg ‘seemed to have their heart in the policy’, as Robert Shepherd has argued, and the likes of Iain Macleod, Edward Boyle and Robert Carr were trenchant in their opposition.¹⁰⁸ Debating the Government’s new bill, the Shadow Cabinet took a more moderate stance than Sandys’ position, judging that the legislation was too restrictive and the number of permits to be offered to Kenyan Asians *per annum* was ‘inadequate and the arrangements too inflexible’.¹⁰⁹ That the Shadow Cabinet eventually decided to support the Bill on 27th February and all but fifteen Conservative MPs joined the government in the division lobby, was less an indication of the popularity of Sandys’ views amongst the party than the ‘movement of the ancient party of empire towards a party ... indifferent to Commonwealth’ as Hansen put it.¹¹⁰

Despairing of Heath and the Party, Sandys set about exploiting his public impact and his connections with Kenyan politicians to the full, pressing his case with the CO, the British High Commission in Nairobi and the Home Office, and using the threat of a private member’s bill to gain leverage over the Cabinet.

Commonwealth Office

The CO remained ostensibly opposed to creating any restriction on the entry of Kenyan Asians throughout the period of the exodus. This position was consistent with the undertaking made at the time

¹⁰⁷P. Ziegler *Edward Heath: the authorised biography* (London, 2010), p. 206; (76) Leader’s Consultative Committee, minutes of 213th meeting, 12/2/68, p. 1 (LCC 1/2/11, CPA).

¹⁰⁸Shepherd *Iain Macleod*, p. 494.

¹⁰⁹(165) Leader’s Consultative Committee, minutes of 218th meeting, 26/2/68, p. 2 (LCC 1/2/11, CPA).

¹¹⁰Shepherd *Iain Macleod*, p. 498; R. Hansen ‘The Kenyan Asians’, p. 833.

of Indian independence in 1947 that the Indian diaspora fostered by the Empire should look not to New Delhi but to Britain for protection.¹¹¹ Throughout February 1968 the Secretary of State for the Commonwealth, George Thomson, refused to abandon this commitment. He maintained a lonely position in Cabinet meetings, 'strongly opposed to depriving citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies of the right to enter this country freely' because it would be 'wrong in principle, clearly discriminatory on grounds of colour, and contrary to everything that we stood for', not to mention a breach of 'legal and contractual obligations which we had undertaken as recently as 1963 and which had been an essential element in the process by which we had been able to hand over our responsibilities in Kenya and the other colonies concerned'. The shameful prospect of rendering the Asians stateless was attracting international accusations of racialism, and Thomson maintained that the government 'should bring pressure to bear on Kenya to control the number of emigrants' by pointing out the deleterious effect of the exodus on the Kenyan economy.¹¹²

Thomson's position largely reflected that of the High Commissioner in Nairobi, Edward Peck. Earlier in the crisis Peck explained to the Deputy Under-Secretary, Morrice James, that he was completely opposed to the idea of a control on Kenyan Asian immigration to the UK because the High Commission had been 'daily reaffirming our responsibility over the past four years by issuing British passports to a total which has now reached some 120,000'. Moreover he felt that the Kenyan government 'would undoubtedly take strong exception' to such intervention by the former colonial power as 'they would consider that we were, by unilateral action, attempting to inhibit the progress of Africanisation.' It would also cause 'a general deterioration in our relations' and difficulties for the '[white] British community' in Kenya. Any such legislation would 'produce feelings of great bitterness at our unwillingness to accept a responsibility that was obviously ours' and Peck expected that 'while the legislation was being enacted, a new level of panic emigration would have to be expected'.¹¹³ James replied from London that as far as the CO was concerned, the 'main argument in

¹¹¹Winder *Bloody Foreigners*, p. 290.

¹¹²Cabinet Conclusions, 15/2/68 (CAB 128/43).

¹¹³(36) Tel. No. 3329 from Peck to CO, 10/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

principle against controls is that action is of doubtful morality' because 'it would suddenly deprive people of rights which they had been led to believe would be permanent'. For James, legislation 'would provoke accusations of bad faith, discrimination and breach of international law', promising 'serious difficulties' not least with 'India, Pakistan, Zambia and Kenya', as well as the practical difficulties associated with implementation.¹¹⁴ For these reasons, Commonwealth Office ministers decided in late October that 'immediate legislation' was not required.¹¹⁵

In response to this decision, Peck advised from Nairobi that 'the best we can hope for at this end is some slowing down of the rate of emigration to match the pace of Africanisation', and the possibility that economic arguments in the Kenyan Cabinet might prevail, pinning hopes that proved futile on his 'allies' Mwai Kibaki and Tom Mboya. Peck also promised 'special steps' to use his 'political and economic networks' and to 'ensure that all friendly expatriate staff [in the Kenyan Government] ... do what they can to help us', offering a useful insight into Anglo-Kenyan post-colonial relations. Peck also felt that Bruce McKenzie, characterised by Daniel Branch as a 'mainstay of British influence on the Kenyan Government', could 'probably be of most help to us in advising on our tactics in dealing with the Kenyans and in helping to create a climate of opinion among his colleagues in which the British point of view is understood', although because he was white and 'because of the nature of the subject we can scarcely expect him to become too deeply involved'.¹¹⁶ Peck also alluded to the possibility of the Indian government accepting Asian emigrants.¹¹⁷ Although it proved futile in the face of Kenyan antipathy and Home Office pressure, Thomson based his position on this advice over the coming months.

However it would be wrong to assume that staff at the CO had no sympathy for the restrictionist argument. Far from closing the case in October 1967, ministers resolved to 'consider [the] question of

¹¹⁴(38) Tel. No. 4159 from [Morrice James, Permanent Under-Secretary, CO] to [Peck], 16/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

¹¹⁵(40) Tel No. 4249 from [James] to [Peck], 20/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

¹¹⁶Branch *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair*, p. 40; for ambiguity about Bruce Mackenzie see also (63) Letter from Arthur to Firman (CO), 14/11/67 (FCO 31/251).

¹¹⁷(56) Letter from Peck to Scott, 31/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

legislation early in the New Year'.¹¹⁸ Even more importantly, they failed to give any public undertaking to the effect that the Kenyan Asians with UK passports would retain the automatic right of entry. Ministers were rightly lambasted in the parliamentary debates of February for this decision, indicating as it did that no firm commitment had been made to defend the Asians' rights, however much Thomson argued their case behind the doors of the Cabinet Room. As was argued at the time by leaders of the Asian community, such an undertaking would have done much to calm and perhaps halt the exodus altogether.

Beneath this reluctance to make a firm commitment to the Kenyan Asians lay a number of concerns. While CO ministers were still debating the wisdom of legislation in October 1967, Morrice James wrote to Peck in Nairobi to explain that while he was indeed aware of the practical and legal problems it might cause, he also felt that the Asians should not be given encouragement to come to Britain: the 'homelands of Asian communities in East Africa are, after all, the East African countries where many of them were born and have lived all their lives'. James alluded to the growing strength of popular anti-immigrant feeling at home, remarking that 'public opinion in Britain and elsewhere would find it difficult to understand why they should be treated as unwanted in those countries', and he cited former colonial policy on the Asian question, pointing out that 'it has always been our view that these communities were part of the countries and should be encouraged to consider themselves as such and behave as such'. Although James was keen that Peck should avoid discussing the possibility of legislation with members of the Kenya government, 'you may however if pressed say that ... it is not possible for you to forecast what might happen.'¹¹⁹

Seeking to replicate the success of his collaboration with Aden High Commission officials, Sandys sought to gain leverage at the Commonwealth Office via High Commission staff in Nairobi. Sandys initially worked on the assumption that legislation would not be necessary. He believed that the Asian exodus could be halted by administrative action, such as a decision on the part of the Consular Division of the Nairobi High Commission to stop issuing passports to Kenyan Asians. In the face of public opposition from the Commonwealth Office he

¹¹⁸(40) Tel no. 4249 [James] to [Peck], 20/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

¹¹⁹(43) Tel no 4277 from [James] to [Peck], 23/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

decided to visit the High Commission himself during his trip to Kenya in December 1967. Some months afterwards David Steel asserted that certain 'British officials' had met Sandys in Nairobi and lent him 'considerable assistance'. In so doing 'senior staff' gave him the impression that 'there was likely to be a great influx of immigrants to Britain'. The 'apparent hostility of the High Commission to the Asians' meant that Sandys' own attitudes seemed to be 'derived to a considerable extent from these consultations'. Moreover, Steel claimed, the links established during his visit 'stood him in good stead' when campaigning to persuade the government to legislate.¹²⁰

Steel's claims are partially borne out by the CO archives. Even before his visit, staff at the High Commission were well aware of Sandys' power to influence events in Kenya. Stanley Arthur welcomed 'a certain calming down of passions in the Asian community' in late October but warned the CO that 'of course if Mr. Sandys does raise the question in the House of Commons the issue may be expected to return promptly to the front page [of the *Africa Samachar*] with the usual effects on the exodus'.¹²¹ The High Commissioner was also concerned about Sandys' influence, observing that the exodus was

subject to occasional panic increases caused by events which draw the attention of the Asians to their essentially precarious position, such as the publication of the regulations under the Kenyan Immigration Act, but most important of all statements made in the U.K. either by Ministers or others which give any hint that we might be considering restricting the entry of Asians into Britain.¹²²

Jenkins' passing comment in September 1967 that legislation might be reviewed in two years was the only such 'hint' to have come from a minister to date, demonstrating that Peck was well aware of the power of individuals like Sandys to influence events in Kenya.

Two months later Sandys was indeed received by senior staff at the High Commission, namely, the High Commissioner, and Counsellors Stanley Arthur and Bruce Greatbatch. According to Peck's account

¹²⁰Steel *No Entry*, p. 133. Steel mistakenly dates Sandys' visit as October, not December 1967.

¹²¹(51) Letter from Arthur to Reid, 27/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

¹²²(56) Letter from Peck to Scott, 31/10/67 (FCO 31/250).

of the meeting, Sandys attempted 'to find out what we in the High Commission thought was the intention of the mass of British Asians: whether to stay in Kenya or to emigrate to Britain' seeking, as he had in his exchanges with Mboya, to gain a concrete prediction of the number of likely emigrants. Suggesting that 'even the present rate of 12,000 a year was totally unacceptable' Sandys also asked 'how we thought the exodus could be stopped'. In view of the interest with which the Asian community were watching Sandys, Peck and his staff were 'of course very cagey on both points'. They drew his 'attention to the various factors which would tend to make the Asians wish to stay if they could, e.g. the relatively good living here, in a country in which many of them were born, against the upheaval and the difficulties of emigrating to the U.K'. However they did admit that 'given the uncertainty of the future most Asians had kept their British passports as a long stop'.

Sandys then proceeded to question officials about the 'attitude of the Kenyans to applications by Asians for Kenya citizenship'. They replied '(since this is public knowledge) that there are about 10,000 applications outstanding' resulting 'partly' from 'deliberate obstruction on the part of the Government'. Peck and his staff also admitted that 'it was the declared policy of the Government to Africanise (and not simply to "Kenyanise") so that even if Asians acquired Kenya citizenship this would not necessarily protect their jobs'. Sandys' interest was evidently piqued by this comment, and he 'indicated his intention of speaking to Kenyan Ministers' on the matter.¹²³ At this point Sandys contacted Tom Mboya again, who subsequently arranged for the Chief Statistician at the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development to provide Sandys with the department's own demographic research. It was estimated that the entire Asian population numbered 192,000, of whom 50,000–60,000 had received Kenyan citizenship.¹²⁴

Although Peck's account of the meeting gives no reason to suggest that the High Commission was particularly hostile to the Asian community, Steel was right to claim that the High Commission did nothing to allay Sandys' concerns about a mass exodus. Peck and his staff effectively confirmed Mboya's earlier suggestion to Sandys that the entire

¹²³(81) Extract from letter from Edward Peck [to CO] 9/1/68 (FCO 31/251).

¹²⁴Letter from A. Brough (Chief Statistician, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Kenya), Nairobi to Sandys 3/1/68 (DSND 13/20/3).

Asian population might seek to flee to Britain, and not just those holding CUKC passports. For this reason Steel was right to suspect that staff had given Sandys an alarmist impression of the scale of possible emigration to Britain from Kenya. Combined with the evidence provided by Mboya, such estimates became a regular feature of Sandys' public statements, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

At the same time Peck did take the opportunity to enlighten Sandys as to the power of his restrictionist statements on Kenyan Asians, 'pointing out that nothing increased the rate of emigration like statements in the U.K. which suggested to the Asians that their long stop might be removed'. But Sandys 'made it clear that so far as he was concerned, there could be no question whatsoever of the Asians in Kenya being allowed to go to the U.K., and the only question was therefore how they could be stopped'. Peck noted that 'he undoubtedly took the point that public statements threatening actions were likely to have the effects of increasing the flow', and with that in mind he concluded: 'I have no doubt that Ministers may expect renewed lobbying from him when he returns to the U.K.'

Peck's account gives credence to Steel's assertion that the trip to Kenya gave Sandys renewed confidence that he might be able to force the government into legislating. However, Steel was unaware that Sandys was not just seeking information but also hoping to persuade the High Commission to halt the flow at source. Peck noted that 'Sandys seemed to think that this was basically an administrative matter of discriminating between British passport holders who had close connections with the UK and others' drawing precedent from 'Rhodesia where, he said, it was proposed in certain cases to remove British passports from their holders where this was thought to be of sufficient political importance'. Sandys had 'at first slightly disconcerted us by asking to pay an informal visit to the Passport Office'. It would appear that he was hoping to persuade passport officials to consider administrative restrictions, or perhaps to replicate the Kenyan government's unofficial reluctance to grant citizenship and let administrative delays curtail the exodus, a suggestion also considered by Roy Jenkins three months earlier.¹²⁵ This tactic was hardly surprising since in office

¹²⁵(4) Untitled memorandum by Morris to Fitzgerald, [probably written on 7/9/67] (HO 344/323).

Sandys had himself advised East African High Commissioners in March 1964 that ‘some administrative delay in the issue of U.K. passports to Asians should be introduced’.¹²⁶ In the event, Peck was able to persuade Sandys that ‘there would be no particular point’ in visiting the Passport Office and further suggested that to ‘discriminate in this way would not simply be an administrative matter—it would be a decision of major political importance’. Peck concluded that Sandys ‘does, I think, realise that the flow can only be stopped by a political decision in London and that the Passport Office in Nairobi is only carrying out orders’.¹²⁷ The meeting closed the door on Sandys’ hopes of influencing policy on the ground in Kenya.

Back in London, George Thomson had no sympathy for Sandys’ campaign and publicly rebuked him for cynically abandoning his pledge to the Kenyan Asians. Nonetheless, Commonwealth Office staff were happy to assist Sandys in his factual enquiries in a manner that undermined their minister. Sandys’ major speech in the House on 27th February, for example, was much strengthened by information that he requested from the department about the status of the Asian community in the Coastal Strip.¹²⁸ However valiantly George Thomson may have fought the betrayal of the Asians in 1968 as ‘contrary to ... our whole tradition in this field’, his predecessor Herbert Bowden’s confidential admission in 1967 that the CRO was committed to a ‘policy of not encouraging the Asians to convert their passive British nationality into an active status’ was far closer to the truth.¹²⁹

On his return from Africa, Sandys tried to use one of his former contacts in the CRO to persuade Thomson that his original offer of British passports to Kenyan Asians in 1963 was only intended as a short-term gesture to calm nerves. On 29th February he got in touch with

¹²⁶‘Note of a Meeting held at the British High Commission, Kampala, on Monday, 2nd March 1964’ between Sandys and East African High Commissioners, and Ministry of Defence and CRO staff (DSND 8/21).

¹²⁷(81) Letter from Peck to [CO], 9/1/68 (FCO 31/251).

¹²⁸(183B) Memorandum from J. R. Williams (Principal Private Sec., CO) to Scott, 27/2/68 (FCO 31/253); *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1276–1277.

¹²⁹Cabinet Conclusions, 22/2/68 (CAB 128/43); (74) ‘Emergency planning in Africa: position of the Asian U.K. Citizens’, memorandum by Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs to Defence and Overseas Policy Committee, 23/2/67 (CAB 148/31).

Donald McColl. The former Assistant Passport Officer in Nairobi had given a television interview the previous day in which he argued that any pledge made to the Asians was temporary. McColl had claimed that ‘a statement was published and appeared in the *East African Standard* to the effect that Asians who took out UK passports would be subject to whatever immigration laws might be in force in UK’ if and when they came to be used.

McColl’s former boss in Nairobi was the erstwhile High Commissioner and Labour MP, Sir Geoffrey de Freitas. De Freitas was no friend of Sandys, who had sacked him in 1964 after only a matter of months in Nairobi. When he became aware from an unnamed source that Sandys had ‘interrogated’ McColl, he immediately warned the CO. It seemed that McColl had ‘told [Sandys] that Alan Free who was [Chief] Passport Officer at the time gave [a] statement to [the] *East African Standard* or *Daily Nation* on these lines, and that [the] issue of [a] warning in these terms was standard practice in [the Nairobi] Passport Office’. The department had also heard from De Freitas that Sandys had a ‘written statement from McColl to the effect that during the first nine months of independence the British High Commission on instructions from the Chief Passport Officer gave to every applicant a warning in terms agreed by [the then High Commissioner] Sir Arthur Snelling in December 1963, to the effect that a UK passport would carry the right of admission to UK only in accordance with the law on immigration prevailing at the time it was used’.¹³⁰

The Commonwealth Office immediately contacted Snelling who had ‘no recollection of [the] warning’ and also Alan Free who ‘completely denies’ issuing any such statement. Thanks to the collaboration between McColl and Sandys, the department was now unsure of the truth of the matter. Evidently panicked, officials contacted the High Commission in Nairobi asking for clarification ‘most urgently’ by ‘flash telegram as [the] Immigration Bill is being debated through the night in Parliament’.¹³¹ Too late to disprove Sandys’ bluff and to prevent the passage of the Bill, Peck replied on 1st March that ‘a careful search of our archives for the time has revealed no press comment as alleged’. However, by highlighting McColl’s dubious claims, Sandys had successfully created uncertainty

¹³⁰(212) Tel. no. 678 from CO to [Peck], 29/2/68 (FCO 31/253).

¹³¹*Ibid.*

at the CO about the nature of the pledge made to the Asians, and helped to undermine Thomson's position at the eleventh hour.¹³²

Home Office

It was at the Home Office (HO) that Sandys' influence was felt most strongly. The department was known for its sustained opposition to mass immigration and it had been responsible for proposing the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill of 1962. However the response to the Kenyan Asian exodus was initially characterised by a prolonged silence.

In 1965 the Cabinet had tasked the Commonwealth Immigration Committee to study the situation of the Kenyan Asians and to make recommendations. But, as Richard Crossman noted in his diary, between 1965 and 1967 'although the problem was known to exist nothing was done about it until it suddenly became acute'. Curious to know why there was not 'at least some contingency planning for a crisis between 1965 and 1967', Crossman found that it was 'because the Home Office didn't want to touch the subject'.¹³³ In July 1967, as Asians began to arrive at Heathrow in increasing numbers, the department appeared to reaffirm their right of entry. David Ennals, the Immigration Minister, reminded potential immigrants that they should apply for entry certificates in their home country. It was also reported in Kenya that 'new legislation against racialism' would be 'brought in soon'.¹³⁴ The Immigration and Nationality Department of the HO at Princeton House noted the introduction of the Kenyan Immigration Bill in July but judged in the first instance that 'it remains to be seen what effect, if any' it would have on immigration to Britain. Experience suggested that 'although the majority of East African Commonwealth countries had powers to expel non-citizens, they have been selective, if not capricious, in using them'.¹³⁵

¹³²For a more detailed analysis of the department's attitude to the crisis see forthcoming article 'The Commonwealth Relations Office and the Kenyan Asian controversy, 1963-1968'.

¹³³Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. II, p. 734.

¹³⁴"End Coloured Influx" *East African Standard* 26/7/67.

¹³⁵'Asians holding exempting passports' note from Morris to R. J. Whittick (Asst. Sec., Immigration and Nationality Dept., HO), 26/7/67 (HO 344/323).

Thereafter, with the exception of Jenkins' vague warning made in Birmingham in September that 'if 100,000 Asians tried to enter this country in the next two years' he would need to 'revise existing legislation', the HO maintained a public silence on the subject until February 1968.¹³⁶ Announcing that the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill would be presented to the House the following day, Jenkins' successor finally conceded that the Government had 'watched with great concern the rapid departure from East Africa'. Callaghan explained that a decision had been taken to curb the inflow of those UK passport holders 'who have no substantial connection with this country, for example, by birth or paternal parentage' because the 'sudden arrival of large numbers of people is placing a serious strain upon the services of those areas where they decide to settle'. Moved either by ignorance or mendacity, Callaghan went on to justify his position by claiming that that 'these persons are still free to apply for citizenship of Kenya'.¹³⁷ According to public statements, the HO had decided to legislate both reluctantly and lately, with Ennals maintaining that Callaghan had 'announced the figures in November, but he did not make any suggestion that the Government would legislate'.¹³⁸

In contrast to the department's public statements, HO records reveal that the decision to legislate had, in fact, been taken much earlier and was caused less by the imagined pressure on social services threatened by immigrants than the real pressure exercised by Sandys on Jenkins and Callaghan. Roy Jenkins had been aware of the possibility of a mass exodus since at least the autumn of 1966, thanks to Sandys. As noted earlier, in October he wrote to the Home Secretary to let him know that he was 'at present giving some thought to the question of immigration' and to ask for clarification of various queries, including statistics relating to the entry of 'European and non-European' Commonwealth immigrants on UK passports 'e.g. East Africa'.¹³⁹ Jenkins was unable to provide accurate statistics. Showing some prescience, Jenkins expected that Sandys was in fact 'principally interested in non-Europeans, e.g. those in East Africa', whose numbers were

¹³⁶ Colin Legum 'Jenkins warning alarms Asians' *The Observer*, 24/9/67.

¹³⁷ *HC Deb* 22 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 659, 664.

¹³⁸ *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1357.

¹³⁹ Letter from Sandys to Jenkins, 31/10/66 (DSND 13/20/3).

‘possibly of the order of 250,000 in Africa alone’, although the Home Secretary was aware that ‘the right is not being exercised to any great extent’. He then gave a clear statement of his position on the question of that ‘right’:

Though these people are citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies, they do not ‘belong’ to the United Kingdom in any real sense. Those in East Africa, for example, ‘belong’ either to the countries in which they or their parents have settled, or to India or Pakistan where they originated. There is much to be said, on general grounds, for bringing them within the immigration control. Legislation would be needed, however, and to deprive citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies of the right to enter the only country they have a legal right to enter would be contrary to principles which the United Kingdom has traditionally observed, and might well bring us into conflict with international conventions to which we have subscribed. This could be a serious problem. Our best hope must lie in the right of entry continuing to be exercised on only the most modest scale.

Since the Home Secretary was evidently uncomfortable about mass immigration by East African Asians, yet also opposed to legislation that would prevent it, he sought to persuade Sandys that it ‘would be in the public interest at this stage not to advertise by discussion in Parliament the fact that people in this category have a right to come here’.¹⁴⁰ Sandys was already aware that a public discussion might trigger an exodus, mentioning in his letter to Jenkins in October that he sought to avoid ‘putting down formal Parliamentary Questions’. As discussed earlier, Sandys observed this unofficial gag for a year until October 1967, refraining from mentioning East African Asians’ rights in all of his speeches and statements on Commonwealth immigration in the intervening months.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless by the next autumn Sandys was no longer willing to leave the matter to Jenkins’ discretion. With both the Commonwealth and Home Offices unable to confirm the numbers of Asians arriving at Heathrow, Sandys decided to ring Jenkins’ Private Secretary (PS).¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰Letter from Jenkins to Sandys, 4/11/66 (DSND 13/20/3).

¹⁴¹Letter from Sandys to Jenkins, 31/10/66 (DSND 13/20/3).

¹⁴²(2A) ‘Asians in East Africa: Reported Exodus from Kenya’ memorandum from Morris to Otton, 6/9/67 (HO 344/323).

Bringing his attention to ‘press reports that in recent weeks there has been a substantial increase in the number of exempt Asians coming to this country from East Africa’ Sandys ‘said that he was considering putting out a statement on the subject’. Sandys was then put through to Jenkins but, following a conversation with the Home Secretary ‘agreed to make no statement for the present’.¹⁴³ This shot across Jenkins’ bow constituted a clear warning from Sandys that he was no longer content to observe the Home Secretary’s gag. Whether the point was made explicitly or not, it was also evident that Sandys’ silence could only now be bought by restrictionist action on the part of the HO itself.

Jenkins’ response was immediate. Having shown no interest in the exodus to date, the Home Secretary leapt into action after Sandys’ telephone call. Shortly after, officials at Princeton House recorded that Jenkins was now ‘most concerned about the present influx and is considering what steps he can take’.¹⁴⁴ For the first time Jenkins also mentioned the possibility of ‘new legislation’, an air of desperation becoming apparent as he tasked his officials to find out whether it would be possible to adopt Sandys’ approach and ‘stem the flow in the interim by creating administrative delays in granting fresh passports during the period before enactment?’. More brutally, he even asked whether the legislation could be ‘retrospective to the date of its announcement?’ to catch immigrants already in transit. Jenkins demanded that a ‘careful watch kept on the numbers of exempt Asians entering this country, and perhaps from now on weekly totals could be submitted’, seeking urgent confirmation of ‘how many passports have so far been issued to exempt Asians, and at what rate our authorities abroad are receiving applications for passports’.¹⁴⁵

Richard Crossman records in his diary that it was at this point that Jenkins ‘suddenly sees the problem as a potential crisis ... and comes to me privately asking me to slot a Bill in secretly’ for early 1968 to ‘deal with the problem’ of some 200,000 potential immigrants from

¹⁴³(4) Untitled memorandum by [D. E. J. Dowler (Private Secretary, H. O.)] to Fitzgerald [6/9/67] (HO 344/323).

¹⁴⁴(5) Note for the file—‘Asians in East Africa’ by Morris, 8/9/67 (HO 344/323).

¹⁴⁵(4) Untitled memorandum by [Dowler] to Fitzgerald [6/9/67] (HO 344/323).

Kenya, which Crossman as Leader of the House duly did.¹⁴⁶ As Robert Winder observes, it is interesting to note that as early as October 1967 Crossman was himself talking about ‘Kenya Asians with British passports’ rather using their legal status of Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies.¹⁴⁷ More significantly Crossman’s record supports the conclusion that the decision to legislate was made far earlier than historians have suggested. On 19th October Jenkins brought the issue to the Home Affairs Committee. Crossman found Jenkins to be ‘indecisive’, but the Committee agreed that it was ‘quite clear we couldn’t allow some 50,000 Asians from Kenya to pour into Britain each year’ and while the legal position was ‘doubtful’ it was ‘finally agreed that Roy must of course face the possibility of this threat developing into reality and that he must work out appropriate policies and consider the practicability of legislation’. Heartened by the committee’s lack of concern for the Asians’ rights, Crossman observed that this was the ‘kind of problem that Labour Ministers discuss rationally and well’.¹⁴⁸ Lest it should be thought that Jenkins was a willing convert to Sandys’ restrictionism, it should be noted that when it came to the decision to introduce legislation in February 1968, the former Home Secretary offered passionate opposition to the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill for offending ‘every decent instinct’.¹⁴⁹

The threat of a public statement had proved such a successful tool in provoking action from the Home Office that Sandys used a similar approach a number of times over the coming months until the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill had been passed. The ever-growing

¹⁴⁶Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* Vol. II, pp. 733, 684, 526; the meeting is also mentioned in Callaghan *Time and Chance*, p. 264. Crossman variously refers to this meeting as having taken place in either September or October 1967, Ponting recording the latter, *Breach of Promise*, p. 332. Crossman’s first reference, on 19th October, suggested that it was ‘soon after we got back from the recess’; since Parliament did not return from recess until 23rd October Crossman was presumably referring to the return of Cabinet from the summer holiday on 5th September. It is therefore likely that the meeting took place shortly after Jenkins’ telephone call from Sandys on 7th September.

¹⁴⁷Winder *Bloody Foreigners*, p. 290.

¹⁴⁸Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* Vol. II, p. 526.

¹⁴⁹Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* Vol. II, p. 684; A. Morgan *Harold Wilson* (London, 1992), p. 302; Ponting *Breach of Promise* p. 333; Morgan *Harold Wilson*, p. 302.

popular interest in his campaign, both amongst British restrictionists and Kenyan Asians, only increased his leverage in the department. Thus with threats of a formal question in Parliament and then a private members bill, Sandys contrived to set the pace and direction of both HO and ultimately government policy.

Within weeks of his first telephone call to Jenkins, Sandys began to feel that he needed to chivvy the Home Secretary into further action. Having alluded to his residual influence in the Commonwealth in a press interview in which he commented that he had ‘more African and Asian friends than most of those which preach about racial equality’ he wrote again to Jenkins, reminding him of his telephone call in September. Sandys asked him whether he could now give figures for the number of East African Asians who had arrived in the UK in recent months since ‘you said that you were watching the situation’.¹⁵⁰ Jenkins refused to commit to anything more than an admission of ‘higher levels’ than in the previous year ‘although not all are likely to have come for permanent residence’.¹⁵¹ Evidently dissatisfied with this evasion, Sandys showed his hand and brought the Asian exodus to parliamentary attention for the first time by asking Jenkins the same question in the House. This forced a disclosure of the figures, showing a near two-fold increase. However the admission came not without a parry from Jenkins that Sandys had now brought a ‘delicate problem’ into the public eye, the sensitivity of which he ‘above all, should know, because he negotiated Kenyan independence and left this problem’.¹⁵² Sandys went on to table an amendment on 31st October calling for legislation. He made his first major Commons speech on the subject on 15th November, and maintained direct pressure through correspondence with the HO thereafter.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰‘Sandys in Immigration Row: one in ten will be coloured, he warns’ *Streatham News* 22/9/67 (LA); letter from Sandys to Jenkins, 12/10/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

¹⁵¹Letter from Jenkins to Sandys, 24/10/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

¹⁵²*HC Debs* 26 October 1967, vol. 751, col. 1861–1864.

¹⁵³‘Sandys Motion on immigrant curbs backed’ *Daily Telegraph* 1/11/67.

HC Debs 15 November 1967, vol. 754, col. 500–507; letter from David Renton to Sandys, 4/12/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

When Jenkins and Callaghan exchanged jobs at the end of November, Sandys wasted no time in writing to the new Home Secretary. He told Callaghan that he had been in touch with Tom Mboya and forwarded him a copy of the letter of 24th November in which the Kenyan minister had outlined his view of the Asian question. Sandys added that he ‘should very much like to come and have a talk to you about the immigration problem in general’.¹⁵⁴ Callaghan had been a great admirer of Mboya as a future ‘world figure’ since his time as Shadow Colonial Secretary in the late 1950s. Understanding that Mboya ‘exercised great influence on all aspects of government policy’, Callaghan readily assented to meet to discuss Sandys’ letter and ‘other problems’.¹⁵⁵ Jenkins believed that his successor was ‘the most reactionary Home Secretary ... for some time’. Unsurprisingly Callaghan was naturally more sympathetic to Sandys’ campaign and readily supplied Sandys with details of the ‘numbers of persons of non-European stock with an entitlement to “exempting passports”’.¹⁵⁶

As the Kenyan Asian controversy reached its peak, Sandys publicly revealed that he had written ‘privately to the Home Secretary’ in October 1966 but that ‘at his request I refrained from drawing attention to this in public for over a year’. However ‘when the number of arrivals from Kenya started mounting steeply and the Government still did nothing, I felt it my duty to press for action’.¹⁵⁷ As mentioned earlier, the Kenyan press had hinted at this months before. Yet the timing of this revelation in Britain seriously undermined the Government’s authority at a critical juncture. It demonstrated that the HO had sought to silence Sandys and, more importantly, had long been aware of the possibility of a mass Asian exodus but had wilfully chosen to do nothing. As will be argued, this contributed to a number of pressures on the Cabinet to introduce restrictive legislation.

¹⁵⁴Letter from Sandys to Callaghan, 5/12/67 (DSND 13/20/3); see also letter from Mboya to Sandys, 24/11/67 (DSND 13/20/3).

¹⁵⁵Letter from Callaghan to Sandys, 19/12/67 (DSND 13/20/3); Callaghan *Time and Chance*, p. 133.

¹⁵⁶Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. II, p. 666; letter from Callaghan to Sandys, 13/12/67 (DSND 13/20/2).

¹⁵⁷‘Sandys says: I warned Jenkins on immigrants’ *Sunday Times* 18/2/68.

Cabinet

During February 1968, the Kenyan Asian controversy was the subject of a number of lengthy and anguished Cabinet discussions. Ministers agreed that the moral and legal obligation to accept the arrival of Kenya CUKCs was irrefutable. Even Callaghan acknowledged that ‘given that these people would not have left India but for the existence of the British Empire, it can be argued that we have an obligation to accept the consequences, as other consequences of the end of the Empire’.¹⁵⁸ But with Sandys’ speeches causing the arrivals from Kenya to increase at a dramatic rate and the popular anti-immigration lobby to become increasingly restless, ministers began to consider restrictive legislation. It also dawned on some Cabinet members that they might find a useful get-out in Sandys’ claim that he had never intended to pledge unrestricted entry in perpetuity. It was Sandys, too, who provided the impetus that finally prompted Callaghan and ultimately Wilson to accept the necessity of government legislation when he threatened to introduce a private members bill himself if no action was taken. The decision to introduce the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in late February 1968 constituted a dramatic ‘U-turn’. The Labour Party had been opposed to the first such Act in 1962 and had been known to be sympathetic to the cause of immigrants since Hugh Gaitskell’s leadership. For this reason Callaghan had to perform a painfully ironic contortion. To justify an undeniably racist bill he was reduced to claiming that it was necessary in order to give the forthcoming Race Relations Bill—designed to outlaw racial discrimination—a fair chance.

Members of Parliament and the public rightly suspected that the government was reacting to pressure from the far-right of the Conservative Party. For Peter Sprenger, writing to *The Times* from Basildon, the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill was the product not only of indecision in the Shadow Cabinet, backbench pressure, and ‘fear of what the kick-out-the-wogs voters would do’ but primarily of ‘Mr. Duncan Sandys’

¹⁵⁸Hampshire ‘Immigration and Race Relations’, pp. 314–316; J. Callaghan *Time and Chance* (London, 1987), p. 264; S. Williams *Climbing the Bookshelves* (London, 2010), p. 193; Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, Vol. II, p. 726; Wilson himself later referenced a ‘right of entry’ in his memoirs: Wilson *The Labour Governments 1964–1970*, p. 640; Annex to Cabinet Memorandum by Home Secretary ‘Immigration Legislation’, 12/2/68, para’s 7, 3 (CAB 129/135).

barking (in his self-appointed role of watchdog for the master-race)'.¹⁵⁹ Similar assertions were being made in Parliament by late February, much to Wilson's embarrassment.¹⁶⁰

Cabinet Papers from the time demonstrate that these accusations were fair. The day before Wilson decided to endorse the proposed legislation, the Cabinet Secretary briefed Wilson on 'Mr. Sandys and the moral/legal situation'. Burke Trend suggested that 'in reaching a decision the Cabinet may wish to take account of the political implications' of the former minister's recent press statements that in fact no pledge had been made to the Asians. Trend concurred with Sandys' assertion that the decision taken in 1963 to 'permit some Kenyans to retain citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies was taken solely in order that they should not become stateless, and that it was not intended that, as a result, they should no longer be subject to the Commonwealth Immigration Act, 1962'. Trend conceded that 'this was in fact the result, since passports after Kenyan independence were issued by the British High Commission there and the holders automatically became entitled to enter this country without restriction'. But the Cabinet Secretary suggested that there was just enough confusion about the issue to enable Wilson to proceed to legislation without being accused of perfidy, as it was 'not certain, however, whether this was recognised by Ministers at the time; and it is to that extent open to argument how far a pledge was given to the East African Asians on their right to enter the United Kingdom whenever they wished'.¹⁶¹

What of Trend's suggestion that the automatic right of entry had not been 'recognised by ministers at the time'? Randall Hansen contradicts otherwise persuasive evidence in his analysis to conclude that the pledge was an 'accident' that 'resulted *unintentionally*' from the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962.¹⁶² Yet it would appear that a permanent right of entry was quite purposefully offered by the Kenya

¹⁵⁹'Insufferable distinction' letter to editor from Peter Sprenger (Basildon) *The Times* 27/2/68.

¹⁶⁰*HC Deb 22 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 664–665; HC Deb 28 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1557; HL Deb 29 February 1968, vol. 289, col. 1015; HL Deb 29 February 1968, vol. 289, col. 1052.*

¹⁶¹'Asian Immigration from Kenya' memorandum from Cabinet Secretary to Prime Minister, 21/2/68 (PREM 13/2157).

¹⁶²Hansen 'The Kenyan Asians', p. 824.

Independence Act of 1963. The exemption from the Act of 1962 was deemed a price worth paying to reassure white settlers and to stabilise Kenya's economy at the time of independence. Sandys himself had written to the colonial authorities in Nairobi a year before independence was granted to 'confirm that those who retain their citizenship of the U.K. and colonies will after independence become entitled to U.K. passports from the British High Commission, and that such passports will confer exemption from U.K. immigration control'.¹⁶³ Sandys' counterpart at the Home Office—Henry Brooke—agreed in 1963 that it would be 'out of the question' to deny Kenyan Asians UK passports as it would be seen as a 'discrimination based on racial origin, and would be tantamount to a denial of one of the basic rights of a citizen, namely to enter the country of which he was a citizen'. The Cabinet Commonwealth Immigration Committee agreed.¹⁶⁴ And as the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill was rushed through Parliament in February 1968, Sandys' immediate predecessors at the Colonial Office—Iain Macleod and Reginald Maudling—both reaffirmed the 'pledge' of 1963. The constitution given to Kenya at independence was 'devastatingly clear', and there could be 'no doubt' that 'when they were given these rights, it was our intention that they should be able to come to this country when they wanted to do so. We knew it at the time. They knew it'.¹⁶⁵ Trend's advice to Wilson flew in the face of the Kenyan Asians' understanding of the pledge and proved to be a highly influential misconstruction of both the moral and legal situation.

As the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill reached its final stages in February 1968, the Lord Chancellor passed a damning indictment on the Government's decision to legislate. Ministers, he claimed 'would not have introduced the measure but for Mr. Sandys' announcing he was proposing a Private Member's Bill to check the influx'.¹⁶⁶ The Cabinet

¹⁶³'Savingram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the officer administering the government of Kenya', 26/11/62 (CO 1032/322, TNA) quoted in Hansen 'The Kenyan Asians', p. 830.

¹⁶⁴Quoted in Shepherd *Enoch Powell*, p. 335; Winder *Bloody Foreigners*, p. 289; Hansen 'The Kenyan Asians', p. 381.

¹⁶⁵Iain Macleod 'Immigration: an open letter to Duncan Sandys' *Spectator* 22/2/68; *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, vol. 759, col. 1345.

¹⁶⁶'Lords agree to short debate on Immigration Bill' *East African Standard* 1/3/68 (FCO 31/253).

had ‘been in a dilemma’ for months, knowing that if they ‘said a word in public’ about the possibility of tighter immigration control ‘then there would be a rush at once’. When Sandys ‘said he was going to introduce a bill to stop them from coming, of course this did it, and we had to act’.¹⁶⁷ Home Office files and Cabinet papers demonstrate that the Lord Chancellor’s account was entirely accurate.

Sandys’ telephone call in September 1967 sufficiently unnerved Jenkins to spur him into immediate action. But it was his threat of a private members’ bill that forced his successor to introduce legislation in 1968. As early as December 1967, the Ministerial Committee on Commonwealth Immigration had been warned of Sandys’ intention.¹⁶⁸ Callaghan himself felt under pressure from Sandys. The Home Secretary warned that ‘if he is given leave, introduction of the Bill might well stimulate a further inflow from East Africa’. He lamented the effect of Sandys’ previous parliamentary questions, which had ‘elicited the figures of arrivals’, thanks to which ‘we have had to give’ statistics to the public, resulting in a ‘general awareness’ of the ‘existence and scale’ of the CUKC passport problem. However, Callaghan was already showing signs that he might yield to Sandys’ pressure, proposing that ‘if [Sandys’] Bill is blocked it should be in a way that would not impair the Government’s future freedom of action’. Indeed, following Callaghan’s lead, the Committee had already suggested that ‘the form of legislation necessary should be considered so that it could be introduced urgently’.¹⁶⁹ Summarising the situation, a draft paper written in January surmised that Sandys’ decision to introduce a bill was one of four ‘main developments since October’ and of equal importance with Kenyatta’s intransigence, the ongoing exodus and new concerns about a similar flight from South Yemen.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ *HL Deb* 29 February 1968, vol. 289, col. 927.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Commonwealth Immigration’ memorandum from Fitzgerald to W. D. Pile (Deputy Under-Sec., HO), 8/12/67 (HO 344/324).

¹⁶⁹ ‘“Asian Immigration from East Africa” draft memorandum for circulation to the Home Affairs C’ttee by the Sec of State for the Home Dept’, [December 1967] (HO 344/324).

¹⁷⁰ Draft paper for Home Affairs Committee, attached to ‘Official Ctee on Cth Imm: Asian Immigration from E Af: Memorandum by the Home Office’ CI(O)(68), January 1968 (HO 344/324).

Sandys' Bill was postponed by three weeks but continued to hang over the Government during the height of the crisis in February 1968, posing an ever-increasing threat as the rate of arrivals from Kenya accordingly rose exponentially. On 13th February Callaghan convened a special Cabinet Committee on Commonwealth Immigration with the 'air of a man whose mind was made up', as Crossman put it. The 'big news in the morning press' had been 'Sandys' call for action against the Kenya Asians', and although only 'a few years ago everyone there would have regarded the denial of entry to British nationals with British passports as the most appalling violation of our deepest principles', now only the Commonwealth Minister George Thomas and the Attorney-General Elwyn Jones stated open opposition. Callaghan admitted that his proposals would not have been feasible in any country with a written constitution but he made his position clear according to Crossman's account, refusing to 'tolerate this bloody liberalism'. 'Anybody who opposed him was a sentimental jackass' in view of the pressure from the public and the Labour Party.¹⁷¹

It was at this stage that Wilson appears to have become aware of the problem. In his memoirs the Prime Minister recorded that he had supported the Commonwealth Immigration Bill because he feared 'strain on the [social] services'.¹⁷² Genuine as this concern may have been, Cabinet records demonstrate there were more urgent reasons why he decided to support Callaghan. Discussing the exodus for the first time at Cabinet level, Wilson judged that his ministers 'were not at present prepared to take a decision' and asked that Malcolm MacDonald be sent to plead with Kenyatta. He also suggested that 'an approach' be made to India and Pakistan. But by now the room for manoeuvre was seriously time limited thanks to Sandys' intention to table his bill 'on 28th February or earlier'. Although Wilson hoped to silence Sandys by asking that 'arrangements should if possible be made for the time to be taken by another Member', the Prime Minister was also aware that Sandys was about to force the issue that very day because Callaghan would 'have to indicate, in reply to [Sandys'] Questions later in the day, that the

¹⁷¹Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* Vol. II, pp. 678–679; Ponting *Breach of Promise*, p. 333.

¹⁷²Wilson *The Labour Government 1964–1970*, p. 639.

problem of Asian immigrants was being considered' for the first time.¹⁷³ Shirley Williams and a few junior ministers including Eirene White, Joan Lester and Reg Freeson threatened to resign, Williams later flying to Delhi to negotiate with the Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh on her own initiative.¹⁷⁴ Aside from Thomas, Thomson and Jones who also sought to quash the proposed bill, only Barbara Castle was minded to oppose Callaghan but she later admitted that thanks to the Home Secretary's 'droning on' she 'just couldn't stay awake'.¹⁷⁵ Callaghan believed that most of the Cabinet accepted that the Bill was a 'distasteful necessity', and although Wilson postponed the final decision until the next Cabinet meeting on 22nd February the result was a foregone conclusion.¹⁷⁶ Malcolm MacDonald's mission to Kenya came to nothing. India and Pakistan offered only outrage at this early stage and refused to grant asylum in the hope that Britain would be forced to recognise its obligations to the Asians.¹⁷⁷ Four months later it would transpire that the Indian government was willing to allow the entry of Kenyan Asians, but the negotiations in February were too rushed to end in success. On 22nd February Wilson requested that 'the necessary Bill should be tabled that afternoon' explaining that 'the need to secure its passage as a matter of urgency precluded the prior notification of Commonwealth Governments'.¹⁷⁸

Sandys' strategy thus deprived the Government of the time necessary to negotiate a solution with Kenya, India and Pakistan. Meanwhile he finally forced a public admission from Callaghan that legislation was being considered. This raised the prospect of a 'beat the ban' rush, and meant that Wilson's only choice was between the urgent introduction of a government bill or the political disaster of allowing Sandys' Bill to pass into law.

¹⁷³Cabinet Conclusions, 15/2/68 (CAB 128/43); *HC Deb* 15 February 1968, vol. 758 col. 396 W.

¹⁷⁴Williams *Climbing the Bookshelves*, p. 194.

¹⁷⁵L. Martineau *Politics and Power, Barbara Castle: A Biography* (London, 2000), p. 198.

¹⁷⁶Callaghan *Time and Chance*, p. 266.

¹⁷⁷Rothchild *Racial Bargaining*, pp. 383, 399.

¹⁷⁸'Asian Immigration from Kenya' memorandum from Cabinet Secretary to Prime Minister, 21/2/68 (PREM 13/2157); Cabinet Conclusions, 22/2/68 (CAB 128/43).

CONCLUSION

Over the course of the Kenyan Asian ‘crisis’ Sandys not only forced legislation on the Labour Government by threatening to introduce his own bill, but also gave Wilson a convenient excuse to absolve himself from accusations of betrayal by suggesting that the Asians’ right of entry was no more than a ‘legal loophole’. Sandys’ allegation that the Home Office had tried to ‘cover up’ the problem further aided his cause. In February 1968 Wilson found himself in the remarkable situation of having to tell his ministers that government legislation must be introduced as a matter of the utmost urgency to stop a private member’s bill from the Opposition backbenches reaching the Commons. The decision to deny the Kenyan Asians right of entry was highly damaging to Wilson. In Parliament the Prime Minister believed that the legislation had ‘created agony for our back-benchers’. Commonwealth governments were at the very least affronted by the lack of consultation if not openly disgusted by the racial nature of the legislation. And the new Race Relations Bill seemed little more than window dressing when it was introduced in April.¹⁷⁹ As Lord Gifford despaired during the final debate on the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill, it seemed as if the Government had decided to ‘join hands with Sandys to produce a panicky Bill’.¹⁸⁰

The nightmare facing Wilson in February 1968 was that Sandys’ bill might actually pass through Parliament. Had it done so the Prime Minister would have appeared not only weak but in fact a hostage of the Conservative Right, with ramifications well beyond the immigration issue. As Crossman noted in early February, ‘we waited and waited and now we’ve missed the right moment because Duncan Sandys is up in arms and Enoch Powell too is demanding urgent action’ meaning that ‘if the Government makes its decision now it will seem to be surrendering to the most reactionary forces in the country’.¹⁸¹ Sandys’ threat to introduce his own bill thus severely limited the time available for the negotiations that Wilson had hoped might bear fruit with the Kenyan, Indian and Pakistani governments. Such talks, as discussed earlier, would have constituted the only alternative to legislation.

¹⁷⁹Wilson *Labour Government*, p. 640.

¹⁸⁰*House of Lords Debates* 29 February 1968, vol. 289, col. 1052.

¹⁸¹Crossman *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister* Vol. II, p. 675.

This sorry epilogue to the story of decolonisation provides a fulsome demonstration of the degree to which a leading architect of British decolonisation could retain considerable post-colonial influence in an erstwhile colony several years after independence. In turn, it was as much Sandys' ability to induce panic amongst Kenyan Asians as the success of his populist campaign in Britain, that won Sandys such decisive influence over his own government. Having fuelled the exodus, embarrassed the HO, then used the threat of his bill as a guillotine to prevent further negotiations, Sandys can fairly be credited with having resolved one of the most difficult legacies of his management of decolonisation in Kenya. Four years had elapsed since he had made his tactical offer of British citizenship to the Kenyan Asians, and three years since he had left office. But thanks to the peculiarities of the decolonisation period, Sandys was able to pressure the Government into rendering British citizens in Kenya effectively stateless. In so doing, he relieved Britain of all responsibility to an awkwardly transnational, diasporic community of British citizens who had dared to claim allegiance neither to Kenya nor to India but to an empire in its final stages of collapse.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Sandys drew on the experience, status and personal contacts afforded by his tenure at the Commonwealth and Colonial Offices to wield a significant *post-officio* influence on British politics in the late-1960s. The success of his backbench interventions—in the form of public activism and private lobbying—both reflected the nature of late British decolonisation and shaped its course. Sandys’ campaigns also offer a unique window on the nature of British Conservatism and, more broadly they provide striking evidence of the interaction between the colonial experience and the post-colonial world.

Sandys’ success with the British electorate was mixed. His postbag and public comment demonstrate that popular feeling on questions of race and immigration ran high, but that relatively few people cared about Britain’s overseas responsibilities to ‘kith and kin’ in Rhodesia and even fewer about obligations to traditional rulers in South Arabia. Sandys’ brief experiment with public rallies during the ‘Peace with Rhodesia’ campaign was initially successful. But after the Trafalgar Square rally, the mass events organised by Sandys failed to capture popular interest, recalling the short-lived achievements of his earlier attempts to create a mass British Movement in 1930s. By contrast, he had a knack for grabbing newspaper headlines. Sandys frequently released press statements confident in the knowledge that they would be published, which generally left him free to ignore the Conservative Party machine. The House of Commons also proved a reliable platform, his controversial speeches often stimulating sustained debate.

More remarkably, and in contrast to the other doyen of the Conservative Right, Enoch Powell, Sandys' status as a former Secretary of State for the Colonies and Commonwealth also offered him influence in more distant colonial or post-colonial constituencies, his views receiving significant coverage notably in Rhodesia and in Kenya. Wilson's comment in 1967 that Sandys enjoyed 'still considerable influence in Rhodesia' proved not only correct but also symptomatic of a much wider vestigial influence in the former empire.¹

Sandys' public interventions not only legitimised and encouraged the popular Right but were also rendered doubly prominent at crucial junctures by silence on the part of the political establishment. As the first prominent Conservative to criticise race relations legislation overtly, he ended the uneasy bipartisan truce that had been observed at Westminster since 1964, and paved the way for Powell's later outbursts. In Kenya, his advocacy of newly restrictionist immigration legislation fuelled the rising panic amongst Kenyan Asians at a time when ministers were refusing to clarify the position of the British Government.

While the response to Sandys' public campaigns sheds light on the nature of British grassroots Conservatism and popular opinion in the Commonwealth, the conceptual foundation of the campaigns offers a useful example of the influence of colonial experience on the post-colonial metropole. As discussed in Chap. 2, Sandys' political thought owed much to the Conservative internationalism of his erstwhile father-in-law. The popularity of his backbench campaigns demonstrates that decolonisation revived the 'great power' aspirations that had underpinned Churchill's popular appeal among the Conservative Right, mirroring the 'die-hard' appeal of the Suez Group and the Monday Club. Schwarz's argument—that the ideological impact of decolonisation extended only to the rise of Powellite 'Little Englander' opposition to immigration—thus presents only a partial representation of the traumatic impact of decolonisation on Conservatism.

Nonetheless, Schwarz was right to suggest that the colonial inheritance was particularly apparent in popular attitudes towards domestic race relations. This feature of decolonisation was exemplified by Sandys' fear of racial tension, born of his recent and extensive colonial experience, universalised and reapplied to Britain in the age of mass immigration from the

¹ *HC Deb* 25 July 1967, vol. 751, col. 229.

New Commonwealth. This fear was located in a Churchillian paradigm that was itself born of the high imperial period, in contrast to the newer and avowedly post-colonial One Nation and New Right traditions within Conservatism and the anti-colonialism of Labour. The conceptual linkage between the colonial ‘multi-racial’ policy of 1950s and 1960s and the introduction of domestic race relations legislation in the later 1960s awaits the scholarly attention that it deserves, but Sandys’ promotion of the former and opposition to the latter is telling. That Sandys was unembarrassed by racial prejudice was evident in his sympathy for colonial white settlers, both as a minister and after. His support for a ‘white Britain’ policy from the backbenches was also symptomatic of the racism that underpinned the ‘multi-racial’ concept of a partnership between races but denied equal rights to the black majority. In this sense, domestic race relations legislation sought to redress the wrongs of ‘multi-racialism’, reacting against the colonial legacy by removing the ‘grave disadvantages’ that Callaghan saw facing Commonwealth immigrants and by offering them ‘equal opportunities ... to prevent the emergence of a class of second-grade citizens’.²

But in other ways Sandys’ criticisms of race relations legislation highlight a conceptual consistency between colonial and metropolitan racial policies. Their aims were entirely different, the former being designed to preserve authoritarian control and the latter to promote integration. But both were premised on the granting of special rights to racial minorities. Sandys’ belief that the Race Relations Act of 1965 was a ‘monstrous encroachment on the right of free speech’ (as discussed in Chap. 5) was born of his familiarity with the ‘multi-racial’ privileges on which settler domination had relied in Central and East Africa. For Powell too, experience of the power of a racial minority to subjugate the majority in a colonial Indian setting was translated into a fear for British democracy in the face of mass Commonwealth immigration. ‘To claim special communal rights leads to a dangerous fragmentation within society’, Powell claimed in his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, arguing that race relations legislation offered racial minorities the opportunity ‘to overawe and dominate the rest with the legal weapons which the ignorant and the ill-informed have provided’.³

Surprisingly, and significantly, the ideas of another leading Conservative demonstrate this post-colonial continuity. Aside from

² *HC Deb* 23 April 1968, vol. 763, col. 55.

³ Quoted in Collings (ed.) *Reflections of a Statesman* pp. 373–379.

Quintin Hogg, Iain Macleod was Sandys' and Powell's most vehement Tory critic and was famously one of the few front-benchers on either side of the House to vote against the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in 1968. As Colonial Secretary from 1959 until 1961, Macleod did more than any other minister to dismantle the empire in Africa, conflicting with Sandys by setting his face against the multi-racial approach of his predecessor Alan Lennox-Boyd. Yet when it came to the introduction of domestic race relations legislation in 1965, Macleod surprised many of his supporters on the Left of the Party by opposing the Opposition Whip and voting against the bill. His reasoning was strikingly similar to that of Sandys and Powell. Macleod objected to the legislation on the grounds that 'for the first time the concept of colour will be introduced into the body of our statute law' and, furthermore, that 'the real danger of this well-intentioned bill is that it will prove to be a threat to free speech'.⁴

Thanks to their colonial experience, all three politicians had had direct experience not only of racial tension but also of constitutionally enshrined racial hierarchy. All three had come to fear colonial racial tension and knew only too well the degree of oppression necessary to maintain the privileges of a racial minority. It was thus only natural to apply such recent colonial experience to the question of how Britain should respond to the arrival of its former colonial subjects, the distinction between metropole and colony becoming blurred. That politicians so utterly different as Sandys and Macleod should share this conceptual continuity is testament to the power of the colonial experience to shape the politics of race in post-colonial Britain.

While his public campaigns achieved mixed results, it was behind closed doors that Sandys' influence was exercised most effectively. As he well knew, his ability to attract popular attention—whether from supporters or opponents—was of little consequence until it became a matter of concern to policy-makers, particularly when his intemperate comments began to fuel the rate of arrivals from Kenya to Britain during the Asian exodus. Sandys also took full advantage of private access to a variety of confidential government documents to embarrass the government. This was not the first time that he had tried the tactic. When Wilson threatened Sandys with prosecution under the Officials Secrets Act in

⁴Quoted in Shepherd *Iain Macleod* p. 493.

1967, the Prime Minister noted that Sandys had form, having attracted controversy as early as 1938 by publicising confidential information about Britain's air defences (see Chap. 2). The South Arabian Federali cause benefitted particularly from Sandys' extensive and repeated access to sensitive documents but, to a lesser extent, so too did the immigration and Rhodesian campaigns. By contrast, the failure of Sandys' efforts to repeal race relations legislation reflected, in part, a complete lack of any such privileged access.

Significantly, the sources of this invaluable material—Kennedy Trevaskis, Donald McColl, and (most probably) Sydney Brice—were recently retired High Commission officials in close contact with former colleagues, or in Brice's case still in post *de facto*. The sympathy of well-placed civil servants was not only crucial to Sandys' success but also symptomatic of a wider official antipathy to the Labour Government, particularly at High Commission level. Although the Permanent Under-Secretary at the CRO claimed that many of his colleagues were 'tolerant and enlightened' and sought a 'clean break' with the colonial past, viewing the CO with some 'disdain', the department was also known for welcoming the colonial 'retreads' who were an inevitable product of decolonisation.⁵ Indeed, according to Bill Kirkman, *The Times*' Africa Correspondent at the time, at least one Head of State felt that the CRO's attitude was still markedly 'colonial' offering the 'proud and tolerant kindness of the mother country towards her adolescent brood'.⁶ A deliberate policy of transferring FO staff to Commonwealth states after the creation of the combined Diplomatic Service in 1965 was in part an attempt to address complaints that CRO staff were 'of a markedly inferior calibre to Foreign Office representatives', as Humphrey Berkeley put it.⁷ The language used by CRO staff in Nairobi, for one, continued to have an uncomfortably colonial tone. Malcolm MacDonald, perhaps the most progressive of all the High Commissioners, did not fight shy of denouncing African politicians as 'utterly inexperienced and helplessly immature' and 'rather like children playing at being statesmen' as they

⁵ Garner *The Commonwealth Office* p. 408.

⁶ Kirkman *Unscrambling an Empire* pp. 187–188.

⁷ Garner *The Commonwealth Office* p. 406, 148; *HC Deb* 2 November 1961, vol. 648, col. 436.

‘strut, and shout’ with emotions. They ‘rarely stop to think before they speak’ because ‘not far behind their masks of modern nationalist politicians lurk the grimaces of their inherited tribal antagonisms and primitive instincts’. Meanwhile, Tom Mboya was simply the ‘blue-eyed nigger of the Americans’.⁸

Scholarly work on the role of officialdom and decolonisation has tended to highlight the progressive influence of senior officials such as Andrew Cohen, as discussed in Chap. 1. However the more conservative sympathies of ‘subaltern’ officials outside Whitehall are no less deserving of interest since the decolonisation period offered High Commission staff an unusually decisive role in negotiating the practicalities of both Britain’s departure and then early post-colonial relations with former colonies. This degree of executive power also reflected the overwhelming ministerial workload at the time of decolonisation, Sandys, for instance, telling his staff that he was simply too busy to deal with Fijian independence.⁹ The power of local officials was a problem of which the Labour Government was well aware, but replacing a ‘die-hard’ individual such as Kennedy Trevaskis with a more progressive character like Richard Turnbull was not enough to change the pro-Federali official culture of the staff of the Aden High Commission. Although in the case of South Arabia a number of supposedly pro-Nasser Foreign Office staff were recruited, including the last High Commissioner, Humphrey Trevelyan, the weight of linguistic and cultural knowledge and the personal trust that had developed between established officials and Federali leaders ensured that the ‘up-country’ lobby remained dominant until the final crisis of withdrawal.

To an extent, this situation was a legacy of thirteen years of Conservative government that had set the tone and pace of much of the decolonisation process. But it also reflected a more deep-rooted feature of British colonialism. In the early stages of the end of empire, colonial staff appear to have offered whole-hearted support to decolonisation, at least in the case of Indian independence. As Nick Owen has noted, new

⁸‘Note on Kenya on eve of Independence conference, Sept. 1963’, 15/9/63, para’s 16, 10 (45/2/8-14, MM); see also my forthcoming article on ‘The Commonwealth Relations Office and the Kenyan Asian Controversy, 1963–1968’.

⁹Interview with Brian Gilmour.

postings were readily available in 1947 and pension arrangements were also generous at the time.¹⁰ Yet the local specialisation of staff so apparent in Arabia—in contrast to the French practice of circulating staff more widely—which had offered manifold advantages in developing local relationships across the Empire, often proved to be problematic at the time of decolonisation. The support of ‘up-country’ staff in Northern Nigeria for the traditional rule of local Emirs in the 1950s offers just one parallel with the situation in South Arabia a decade later.¹¹ Combined with ever-decreasing opportunities for further colonial postings and an erosion of pensions, many officials became increasingly opposed to the rapid pace of decolonisation by the 1960s. Along with a fair degree of administrative foot-dragging, some chose to take more decisive action, as in the case of Trevaskis. In a similar fashion, two other former Governors, Lords Milverton and Twining, were openly critical of the dissolution of the CAF and sat on Lord Salisbury’s Watching Committee. In another parallel with South Arabia, Salisbury’s pressure group also benefitted from access to confidential details of negotiations offered by the Federal High Commissioner in London, Albert Robinson.¹²

Sandys’ campaigns highlight a problematic feature of the British political system that was unusually apparent in the context of decolonisation, namely the constitutional confusion surrounding ‘solemn pledges’. It has long been an accepted principle of the unwritten constitution that no parliament shall bind another, as formulated by A. V. Dicey.¹³ However, it was a convention that sat uncomfortably with Sandys’ work at the CO and CRO. Like other Colonial Secretaries, the various colonial independence bills that he introduced sought to bind post-colonial parliaments in various ways. In particular he tried to commit colonial leaders to the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy and, on occasion, further constitutional safeguards for tribal and racial minorities. Dicey would surely have been pleased to see that, by the end of the 1960s, African post-colonial governments had almost universally exercised their sovereign right to reject these late colonial *diktats* by adopting one-party

¹⁰Owen ‘The Conservative Party and Indian Independence’ p. 431.

¹¹V. Hiribarren ‘A European and African Joint-Venture: Writing a Seamless History of Borno (1902–1960)’ *History in Africa*, 40 (2013) pp. 77–98.

¹²Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization* p. 211.

¹³A. Dicey *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* (London, 1885).

rule. David McIntyre notes with irony that such governments drew less inspiration from British parliamentary democracy than the authoritarian powers of their erstwhile colonial governors.¹⁴

That Sandys and others judged this rejection of the Westminster model to be entirely predictable suggests that the independence conferences he chaired were something of a charade. In practice it would seem that they served more to fulfil the British desire to leave with honour and colonial nationalists' longing to bid a speedy farewell to the colonisers, than any serious interest on either side in the creation of a lasting democracy. In the case of Kenya, not only did the country move towards a one-party system in the mid-1960s, but it also abandoned the principle of 'multi-racialism' in the face of popular anti-Asian sentiment. Kenyatta's racial policy owed more in practice to the Devonshire Declaration of 1923 than the safeguards on which Sandys had insisted at the Lancaster House discussions of 1963.

Sandys also sought to bind his successors at Westminster. Some of his pledges to colonial leaders were honoured, for example, the granting of independence to South Arabia by 1968. But, as has been shown, Labour ministers were caused much trouble by other pledges that he made, specifically the Kenyan Asians' right of entry to the UK and the defence treaty promised to the South Arabian Federation. Federalis and Kenyan Asian attempts to claim that these pledges were binding proved futile in the face of Dicey's principle as both commitments were ultimately rejected by the Labour Government, though not without extensive soul searching. Meanwhile, Sandys insisted that the Arabian pledge was irrefutable but at the same time dismissed the Kenyan pledge as an unintended 'loophole'. This paradox seemed to leave him untroubled. That Sandys' pledges received exhaustive debate in Parliament and at Cabinet level reflected a growing sense of Britain's moral, rather than narrowly legal, obligation to former colonies on both sides of the House. In the same way, it was this moral dimension that enabled Sandys to exonerate himself from the Kenyan pledge, as he claimed that he had only ever meant it to apply to white settlers. It also explains the anguish with which Labour ministers exercised their perfectly legal right to abandon both the Federalis and the Kenyan Asians. Indeed, the hypocrisy of Sandys' 'loophole' argument was matched by the Labour Government's

¹⁴McIntyre *The Commonwealth of Nations* (1977) p. 453.

decision to accept Sandys' logic while refusing to abandon Wilson's 'solemn pledge' of NIBMAR in Rhodesia on the grounds that 'morally it would be impossible to go back on our word, and politically it would have a disastrous effect on all African Governments'.¹⁵

The moral dimension of decolonisation did not go unnoticed by Commonwealth governments either. During the later 1960s they found the Labour Government's pain over Commonwealth immigration and Rhodesia, as well as South African *apartheid*, offered opportunities for humiliation at the UN and at Commonwealth meetings. In turn it also provided a useful source of leverage in their relations with the former metropole.¹⁶ For this reason, Garner judged that the Commonwealth Prime Ministers meeting of September 1966 was 'the high-water mark of African pressure' thanks to Wilson's failure to resolve the Rhodesian crisis.¹⁷ Although India's attempt to block the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill by refusing to offer Kenyan Asians asylum failed in 1968, Kenyan and Indian efforts successfully opened Britain to accusations of racism. This international condemnation culminated in a European Court of Human Rights judgment in 1970 that the British legislation was racially discriminatory.¹⁸ The Bill also cost Wilson his moral authority in his negotiations with Ian Smith. Rhodesian radio coverage of the introduction of the legislation gloated that Wilson's fourth condition for recognising UDI—progress towards ending racial discrimination—had become 'dead letter in Britain'. Taunting Callaghan, the broadcast joked that 'at least one Socialist Minister has discovered the difficulties of unimpeded progress towards majority rule'.¹⁹ And in a fascinating insight into post-colonial Anglo–Kenyan relations, Kenyan ministers even sought in 1966 to exploit British fears of mass Kenyan Asian immigration by threatening to deport large numbers of the community if Britain failed to take military action against Rhodesia. Two years before the Asian exodus, CO officials were told to prepare for '100,000 Asians camping in Hyde Park'.²⁰

¹⁵Memorandum from Garner to Bowden, 17/5/67 (DO 121/264).

¹⁶Louis 'Public Enemy Number One'.

¹⁷Garner *The Commonwealth Office* p. 350.

¹⁸Morgan *Harold Wilson* p. 302.

¹⁹SWB, Salisbury Radio (Home Service), Second Series, IV, ME/2705 (B2-3), 26/2/68 (BBC WAC).

²⁰(94A) R. N. Posnett (East Africa Dept, CO) to J. C. Strong (British High Commission, Nairobi), 25/8/66 (DO 226/9).

Cabinet papers suggest that the introduction of the Race Relations Bill in April 1968 was also driven in part by international moral imperatives. In an attempt both to salve ministerial consciences and to improve Commonwealth relations, Callaghan argued that ‘relations with the independent Commonwealth countries are unlikely to be as good as we would like to see them if relations between the races in this country are not good’. Later in 1968, he stressed the importance of race relations legislation in light of the fact that the ‘Government had thought it right’ to limit immigration and to re-open talks with Smith in the same year.²¹

Lastly, and most significantly, this study has offered the first sustained analysis of *post-officio* influence on late decolonisation during the first Wilson Government. Sandys was by no means the first to exploit the personal contacts and ongoing status offered by a former Colonial or Commonwealth brief. As mentioned in Chap. 1, historians have identified a number of predecessors who took similar advantage from both the Conservative and Labour benches. Informal intervention by former ministers of any department, and even former Prime Ministers, has hardly been a rarity in British politics. Winston Churchill’s backbench anti-appeasement campaign in 1930s offers perhaps the most prominent and successful example in the twentieth century; that Sandys was such an admirer of his father-in-law and played a leading role in the campaign suggests an obvious precedent for his later activism. Nick Owen and Philip Murphy’s work on the period between the 1930s and the early 1960s has demonstrated that the decolonisation era offered other former ministers opportunities to influence policy-making to a peculiar degree.²² This trend was even more obvious in the case of French decolonisation. It was in the name of ‘Algérie Française’ that revanchist Algerian officials and former government ministers such as De Gaulle

²¹Annex to ‘Immigration Legislation’, Cabinet Memorandum by Home Secretary, para. 10, 12/2/68 (CAB 129/135); Cabinet Conclusions, 12/11/68 (CAB 128/43).

²²Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization*; Owen *The British Left and India*; Owen ‘Four straws in the Wind’ pp. 116–139; Owen ‘The Conservative Party and Indian Independence’.

effected the constitutional coup that led to the creation of the Fourth Republic in 1958.²³

Sandys should therefore be understood as the inheritor of an established ‘die-hard’ tradition of Conservative rebellion against decolonisation. Although one amongst many, he nonetheless stands out as a particularly significant member of this reactionary chorus. What distinguished Sandys’ campaigns from those of backbench rebel groups such as the Suez Group and the Monday Club, was the success of his efforts to exploit his *post-officio* status and personal connections with officials and colonial leaders. Two other prominent rebels also took this approach. As discussed in Chap. 1, Churchill’s opposition to the India Bill of 1935 and Indian independence in 1947, and Lord Salisbury’s later attempt to salvage the CAF drew on colonial contacts in the same way. In the final analysis, it is this comparison that reveals the significance of Sandys’ efforts. Churchill and Salisbury’s attempts to halt decolonisation in India and Central Africa ended in failure.²⁴ By contrast, Sandys played a critical role in preventing the PSP gaining power in an independent South Arabia and in halting Kenyan Asian immigration. He can therefore be credited as having been the only rebel to have a tangible *post-officio* impact on the management of decolonisation.

This study of Sandys’ contribution to British decolonisation has demonstrated that the end of empire had a profound impact on domestic politics in 1960s. The continuities between Sandys’ time at the Commonwealth Relations and Colonial Offices and his backbench campaigns provide a rich illustration of the ways in which the colonial experience influenced debates about domestic race relations and Britain’s role in the post-colonial world. Sandys’ activism also had ideological significance to the changing nature of mid-century Conservatism. His political thought provided a bridge between the declining patrician imperialist tradition beloved of Churchill, and the anti-Commonwealth, anti-immigrant populism of Powell. Lastly, Sandys’ campaigns illustrate the degree to which domestic backbench politics shaped the course of Britain’s late decolonisation. The success of his *post-officio* attempts to influence Labour ministers demonstrates that the decolonisation period offered

²³Shipway ‘The Wind of Change and the Tides of History’ pp. 180–194.

²⁴Goldsworthy *Colonial Issues in British Politics* p. 383; Murphy *Party Politics and Decolonization* p. 26.

former colonial ministers an unusual degree of informal influence on policy-making. For these reasons any understanding of the intimate relationship between decolonisation and British politics in the 1960s cannot be complete without Duncan Sandys.

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