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Trudeau's Commonwealth: A Process Rather Than An Influence

If there was one idea to which Pierre Elliott Trudeau remained committed throughout the course of his political life, it was that which asserted that rational political processes are the most desirable and effective instrument for reconciling political interests. Trudeau's political pratice, Reginald Whitaker has observed, was a constant expression of his belief, following the lines of classical liberalism, that primacy must be given not to the ends of political life but to its "procedures", or its rules and processes — precisely because the latter provide the necessary framework within which political actors pursuing different interests can effectively engage in rational discourse and come to a better understanding of their common objectives.[1] All men, Trudeau insisted, have the same basic goals; their primary political concern should be to identify, through rational discussion, the gaining of information and increased understanding, the means of achieving those goals.

Political scientists have devoted some attention to Trudeau's promotion of political institutions and processes as facilitators of rational discussion and the furthering of interests,[2] but they have always examined the implementation of these ideas within the Canadian domestic political process. I shall here examine, as an important example of an application of Trudeau's concept of procedural rationalism, his participation as Canada's prime minister in the international political process operating between Heads of Government at the periodic summit meetings of the member nations of the Commonwealth. My intention is not to chart the history of Canada's political interaction with the other Commonwealth nations at the various Commonwealth summits throughout the Trudeau period; rather I shall analyze the impact of Trudeau's particular conception of that interaction—a conception essentially of a pursuit of interests and purposes through dialogue, information sharing and the achievement of mutual understanding — on the substance of Canada's policy toward the Commonwealth and of

Canadian foreign policy in general in the Trudeau years.[3] We shall see that Trudeau's accentuation of the social virtues of moderation, tolerance, understanding, cooperation and accommodation in Canada's relations with other Commonwealth nations tended to move Canada away from a foreign policy founded upon the principles of moral self-assertion and the use of influence.

It is clear from a reading of his public statements and speeches on the Commonwealth and from his conduct at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings that Trudeau considered the Commonwealth an exceptionally valuable political instrument. It possessed an obvious social and economic value inasmuch as it promoted increased trade, exchanges of people, development assistance, informal diplomatic representation, and various schemes of functional cooperation. But even more important to Trudeau was the fact that it possessed a political process which, unlike the political process of any other international organization, operated on the presupposition that there was a fundamental value in "open discussion and in an exchange of opinions."[4] For Trudeau this was the true significance and worth of the Commonwealth: it permitted, in his words, "an informality of encounter and a meeting of minds" which was "capable of contributing significantly to a better understanding among men of their common ideals and aspirations".[5] This appreciation of the Commonwealth traditions of rational discussion and cooperation constitutes, to be sure, the other side of the coin to Trudeau's praise of those domestic political processes that permit a "resolution of competing demands on a procedural basis acceptable to all reasoning and calculating participants".[6] It derives from the same premise in Trudeau's thought that gives primacy to the virtues of rationality, tolerance and self-restraint. It also grows out of a particular conception held by Trudeau of the Commonwealth as a political entity, which bears close scrutiny.

In fact, as a number of analysts have suggested, Trudeau's view of the Commonwealth was not far from that of his predecessor, prime minister Lester Pearson.[7] Yet there was a distinctive cast to the Trudeau conception, afforded by Trudeau's tendency to treat the political process of the Commonwealth remarkably like the political process of a single political community. Commonwealth summits most notably — the pinnacle of the Commonwealth political process — were, for him, more like meetings of a nation's ministers than conferences calling together the representatives of autonomous and distinct nations. They were participatory affairs almost in the manner, as Hannah Arendt says, that meetings of a society's political representatives are participatory affairs.[8] Commonwealth leaders shared a kind of world or a way of life, which committed them to participate in a

process of exchanging opinions, listening to each others' points of view, and reconciling differences for their common betterment and, ultimately, the betterment of humankind.

Admittedly, if we look closely at the public speeches in which he described the Commonwealth, we will discern that, for Trudeau, there was a significant difference between nationhood and Commonwealth membership. The Commonwealth, he stressed, had evolved into an entity which possessed a decreasing number of the "common ingredients" that were constitutive of a nation: it had "no flag... no constitution... no continuing executive framework..."; "nothing... that one can grasp or point to as evidence of a structure"; "no artificial adhesive or binder";[9] "nor is there any voting".[10] And yet, having made this distinction, he went on to acknowledge that at the heart of the Commonwealth lay a common "idiom"[11] or a kind of way of life which gave it a recognizable character and purpose more like a nation than an international organization.[12] Not the "political idiom" that Commonwealth scholar Patrick Gordon Walker saw reflected in the commitment of Commonwealth nations in the 1960s to a "particular set of democratic institutions",[13] but an idiom in the sense of a traditional way of doing things and, in particular, of resolving differences or problems. As Arendt has said, an essential part of a political community's way of life is the way in which it reconciles differences between its members.[14] Something like this was what Trudeau detected in the Commonwealth — for there was, he observed, a traditional set of working methods and practices accepted by all members for solving problems and differences; or, as Margaret Doxey would put it, a "way of looking at problems and a recognisable approach to dealing with them."[15]

As Trudeau saw it, this common "idiom" of attitudes and methods came not from a set of common political institutions operating throughout the Commonwealth — these institutions were now rare and in most cases obsolete — but rather it reflected the remarkable similarities that still prevailed in the operation of the various Commonwealth members' domestic political institutions and processes. Trudeau's discovery that these similarities were still very extensive was indeed scarcely a novel one; for political leaders, journalists and academics had continued in the modern period to draw attention to the basic continuity in the theory and structure of the political institutions operating in the various nations of the Commonwealth;[16] indeed, the legacy of British law and practice was still very much in evidence throughout the Commonwealth. But Trudeau showed that he discerned in these institutional similarities a kind of Commonwealth political experience, similar to a nation's political experience, when he

suggested at the 1971 Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore that Commonwealth members could learn a great deal from each other by discussing techniques and processes of government.[17] He seemed to perceive trace elements of what Eric Voegelin has called a "belief structure"[18] operating throughout the Commonwealth (perhaps vestiges of an older Empire belief structure) at the base of the various domestic political institutions and processes. Essentially Trudeau's argument was that Commonwealth members had sufficiently similar institutional traditions — he might have added, in the vein of Nicholas Mansergh, sufficiently strong traditions of "excellence in the art of government"[19] — and yet sufficiently divergent administrations to learn a great deal from one another in the area of techniques of government planning, decision-making, budgetting and organization. Trudeau proposed specifically that this item should be taken up for discussion at Singapore; and when, as Derek Ingram notes, it was "crowded out" of the Singapore agenda he convinced the Commonwealth heads that it should be carried over to the next Commonwealth summit where it could be explored fully.[20]

According to one commentator, Trudeau's interest in this subject was sparked back at the 1969 Conference in London: "the first Commonwealth conference he attended fascinated him by the opportunity it provided to learn how democratic techniques work in other [Commonwealth] nations — how cabinets are held together, how ethnic and regional interests are represented, how the breakdown of the parliamentary process is prevented, how opposition parties are dealt with".[21] So convinced was Trudeau of the worth of an intellectual cross-fertilization on these matters — "we need more information", he insisted, "to solve many of our problems"[22] — that he decided that they should be discussed by a special conference of government officials to be held in Ottawa in October, 1972 as a prelude to the Ottawa summit: a large number of senior officials from cabinet and prime ministers' offices throughout the Commonwealth were invited to explore matters such as "the relationship between the public service and the Government, the implementation of Cabinet discussions, the improvement of communication between Government and people, and the role of a cabinet office in co-ordinating submissions to the Cabinet".[23] These discussions between officials were continued at the Ottawa summit, and the Meeting's Final Communique recorded that the Commonwealth political leaders themselves had engaged in a "lively" discussion on the above-mentioned subjects and others like "the problem of ensuring effective implementation of government decisions...the redress of economic disparities; and the problem of correcting economic imbalances as between urban and rural areas."[24] At the close of the

summit, Trudeau reaffirmed the importance of Commonwealth leaders talking to one another about their common "experiences" in the techniques of governing.[25]

For Trudeau, then, a common "idiom" brought the Commonwealth closer, in resemblance, to a classical political community than to an international organization or institution. But he discerned as well within the Commonwealth another strong communal influence frequently found in political societies: the members had a common working language.

That a common spoken language (i.e., 'l'anglophonie')[26] is important to the unity of the Commonwealth has been accepted by various Commonwealth analysts.[27] On how important it is, there have been some differences of opinion. For Roy Lewis it is one of the few remaining vestiges of Britishness (along with a few parliaments on the Westminster model, a number of common educational arrangements, hundreds of societies, and a scattering of colonies) in the Commonwealth.[28] Others like Denis Judd and Peter Slinn see it as a reflection of communal strength rather than weakness — it "cements" the Commonwealth together.[29] An editorialist in the London *Times* wrote perceptively on November 2, 1970 that the Commonwealth's "common language, even more than common institutions, imperceptibly creates common modes of thought and feeling. It is not only at the official level that a Trinidadian will find it easier to communicate with a Mauritian than with a citizen of Venezuela".[30] In a similar vein, Patrick Gordon Walker has written that the English language was one of the "outstanding links of affinity that held the Commonwealth together after the watershed in its history": not only did it serve as "the mother tongue of many Commonwealth countries or in communities within them that had mother tongues of their own", but it "became to some degree a *non-foreign* language, spoken with an unforced usage" or a " 'cultural language', to distinguish it from its role as an acquired language in foreign countries" (emphasis added).[31]

For Trudeau there was likely little persuasiveness in the argument that the English language was important because it was British, or that language is necessarily attached to human feeling or sentiment. His view was indeed much closer to the utilitarian perspective of Commonwealth scholar Andrew Walker: the common language simply made it "easier to get things done";[32] or more elaborately, as the Duke of Edinburgh put it, language "alone makes communication and therefore contact, discussion and cooperation so much easier...one of the greatest divisive forces in the world today [being] the inability of so many people to communicate outside their own country at all".[33] To Trudeau, the English language was invaluable not for historical or

sentimental reasons, but because it enabled the Commonwealth association,[34] like any political association, to pursue its purposes.

A third attribute of the Commonwealth political process appreciated by Trudeau because of its resemblance to a similar worthy feature of ordinary domestic political processes is particularly deserving of our close attention — for it is the attribute that represents most obviously the achievement of Trudeau's system of procedural rationalism. I refer here to the commitment to deliberation — the pursuit of interests through discussion, debate, and the reconcilation of opinions — embodied in the process.

From Trudeau's perspective, there was one basic reason why Canada remained a member of the Commonwealth: it benefitted from the association. "It is my view", Trudeau told the Canadian House of Commons on February 1, 1971 upon his return from the Singapore summit, "that Canada could get along without the Commonwealth but it remains my strong view that we could not get along nearly so well. No problems would be solved by the break-up of the association; not one member would find it easier to advance its own interests in its absence. The Commonwealth benefits all members and harms none."[35] No better illustration may be afforded of Whitaker's point that "interest" (or "benefit") plays a central role in Trudeau's political thought.[36] But what strikes us about Trudeau's conception of the political process by which member nations further their interests through their involvement in the Commonwealth is that it clearly distinguishes the process from the other international political processes through which nations in the world pursue their interests. The interests or benefits that nations secured at summit meetings of the Commonwealth and at annual sessions of the United Nations Assembly might be very similar: a more durable structure of peace between nations; or constructive international relationships developed by the formation of habits of moderation and compromise in international negotiations; or an enhanced material prosperity for all mankind. But the process of securing those interests was qualitatively different and generally much more effective within the Commonwealth.

How it differed essentially was that it was built, much like the political process in a political society, on a commitment among its members to pursue particular purposes through the process of deliberation. Discussion and debate were as central to the Commonwealth's operation as these activities were natural to Commonwealth leaders who had been reared in the parliamentary tradition.[37] Avoiding the normal practice employed at the United Nations of registering by set speeches one's approbation or disapprobation of other nations' international conduct or their ideologies or their international strategies

and tactics, the participants at Commonwealth meetings proceeded by engaging each other in a characteristic deliberation or dialogue that was "unknown",[38] as Trudeau put it, in international institutions.

In the first place, Commonwealth discussions were, to use Trudeau's words, "candid" or "open" or "frank":[39] there was an emphasis on "communicating honestly and fully"[40] with one's colleagues. Views were expressed, canvassed and examined in a basically straightforward manner — normally without suspicions being aroused at once about the motivations of the speakers. In short, the participants were basically well-disposed or showed "goodwill"[41] toward one another. To Trudeau, this goodwill or positive disposition represented what amounted to a spirit of sorts, something like that prevailing within a political society, which tended to distinguish one's relations with "one's own" (i.e., Commonwealth) people from those with "other" peoples. His experience at Commonwealth summits would confirm that "through the very intimacy of Commonwealth consultation, each member could count on a special readiness in the other members to put the best construction on its actions and interests — *a greater readiness than in their relations with outside powers.* Even where there were divergences of policy, members could count on sympathy and understanding from one another"[42] (emphasis added). Just the fact that these leaders gathered or sat down together — the fellowship factor — was important to Trudeau;[43] and indeed he found it as easy (or perhaps even easier) to conceive a care for his Commonwealth colleagues as he did for his political colleagues at home. However, that the Commonwealth heads were committed to proceeding through an open exchange of views was, to him, what made the Commonwealth political process truly distinctive and worthwhile.

A second compelling attribute of Commonwealth deliberation, according to Trudeau, was that it traditionally possessed a strong dimension of informality. Talk, he insisted, always had an intrinsic worth in the practical political affairs of man: "You people", he told a group of journalists at his final press conference at the Ottawa summit, "deal with words and obviously you think that words are important... otherwise you wouldn't write columns or editorials.... Academics spend half their time going to conferences or talking to each other and convincing each other that certain things are important. If it is true for them it is certainly more true for Heads of Government..."[44] Yet while it was important that Commonwealth leaders pursue their interests by means of discussion, that discussion, Trudeau added, was always most effective when it took the form of an informal exchange of opinions rather than formal statements for public (or domestic) consumption. The problem was that this traditional Commonwealth emphasis on

informal deliberative processes had been seriously eroded in recent decades. Indeed Commonwealth summits were no longer informal get-togethers like the old Prime Ministers' Meetings in the forties and fifties — to a considerable degree, of course, because the modern summit meetings were larger and less intimate. But they were also more formal, Trudeau argued, because the participants chose to treat them increasingly like U.N. meetings. Of particular annoyance to him was the increased resort to prepared texts and long speeches containing "too much rhetoric". At a press conference at the Singapore summit he aired his frustrations on this matter: "...Everybody came with long set speeches of the type that one delivers at the United Nations and I suggested that if we were going to do much of that we may as well create the convention of writing our speeches and autographing them and having them handed around taking them as read.... We didn't have to travel thousands of miles to sit for hours listening to (these) speeches."[45]

Thus when the Heads of Government Meeting was brought to Ottawa in 1973, Trudeau introduced two major changes to its format. The first altered the Meeting's formal working sessions so that leaders could be accompanied by no more than two officials; and provision was made as well for cabinet-like "restricted" sessions attended only by the thirty-two heads of government and the Commonwealth Secretary-General. Leaders were instructed to avoid prepared statements and long speeches, and the emphasis was placed on a private exchange of opinions rather than public pronouncements for domestic political consumption. In the event, these changes altered, almost dramatically, the Ottawa summit proceedings, rendering an atmosphere of informality, congeniality and constructiveness that prompted General Gowon of Nigeria to wax eloquent about the "Spirit of Ottawa". There was at these meetings, one commentator noted, "more of the atmosphere of a lively parliamentary debate".[46]

Trudeau's concerns about the use of prepared texts and the lack of spontaneity and openness in the summit discussions were shared by other Commonwealth leaders, notably Mr. Hugh Shearer, the prime minister of Jamaica and Mr. Forbes Burnham, the prime minister of Guyana.[47] But it was Trudeau who would constantly badger Commonwealth leaders at future summits about set speeches, complaining about it on the second day of the Jamaica summit in 1975, and then commending Commonwealth leaders later at Jamaica and at the London summit in 1977 for their overall efforts towards achieving a free exchange of ideas.[48] On the latter occasion, he conceded with some sense of gratification that the Meetings had undergone a significant

"progression" during the eight years of his attendance, evolving in a very real way into a "process of persuasion and conviction".[49]

The concept behind Trudeau's second change to the format of the Heads of Government Meetings might well be credited to Commonwealth commentator Derek Ingram. Having watched the Singapore summit fall victim to the daunting formalities posed by a big meeting room with a huge impassable oval table, the attendance of an excessive number of government officials, and frequent resort to the reading of long rehearsed speeches, Ingram wrote the following: "The week-end that falls during these conferences should be used for informal get-togethers. In past years when the conference was held in London, it was the habit to hold talks at Chequers. Ideally the heads of delegations should go off together into some country retreat and chat and eat and drink and bathe and play golf."[50] As it turned out, this was almost precisely the arrangement that Trudeau set up for the Ottawa summit, as the Commonwealth Heads paused during their meetings to spend a relaxing weekend at the beautiful site of Mont Tremblant, where they were able to chat informally and talk about political matters at their leisure. So successful was this experimental retreat that Trudeau's innovation (or Ingram's) became a permanent fixture at subsequent summits.

On a number of these future occasions, the Heads would make full use of the informal opportunities provided to sort out opinions and even solve some problems. For example, at the London summit in 1977, the Heads retired to the secluded Scottish golf resort of Gleneagles where they spent the weekend working out an agreement ending a quarrel between New Zealand and southern African member nations over sporting contacts with South Africa. The problem had arisen with New Zealand prime minister Robert Muldoon's refusal to prohibit New Zealand teams from participating in sporting contests in South Africa. This was a crucial matter for Canada as the African nations involved were threatening to boycott the forthcoming Commonwealth Games, scheduled for August 1978 in Edmonton, if Muldoon did not change his mind. With the assistance of the representatives of Nigeria, Tanzania, Jamaica and Australia, Trudeau managed — at the "bilateral and multilateral golf games [on] the weekend"[51] — to secure an agreement between New Zealand and the African governments stating (in patently diplomatic language) that sporting contacts of any significance between Commonwealth countries and South Africa were "unlikely" and that members "looked forward with satisfaction" to the holding of the Edmonton Games.[52]

At the Melbourne summit in 1981, the Commonwealth heads took similar advantage of a weekend retreat to secure agreement on a

formal declaration on a new world economic order. This was not quite the same order of accomplishment as was the Gleneagles Agreement, as, immediately upon its publication, the Melbourne Declaration was ridiculed not only by the press but by a number of Commonwealth leaders as a hollow and pious document. But while it indeed fell short of the call of Trudeau and other Commonwealth heads for U.N.-based global negotiations to deal with world economic disparities, the informal discussions that produced it were instrumental, in Trudeau's view, in preventing a confrontation between the industrialized and developing Commonwealth nations; and they allowed him to work "quietly behind the scenes" to defuse differences on the explosive issue of Namibian independence.[53]

For Trudeau, these were the real advantages afforded by the informal weekend sojourns. By making specific provision for what he called "unstructured conversation", they made it less likely that confrontations would occur between the heads of government during the formal sessions, or that their differences on the issues under discussion would render the Commonwealth ineffectual. They created a relaxed atmosphere which inevitably contributed to a moderation of prejudices and idiosyncratic feelings; and thus assisted in the building of a consensus of opinion which would be appropriate to communicate to the public. That there existed a Commonwealth "public" upon whom the heads of government, in taking initiatives, could without question count for support, or that there was a stable social and political base to support Commonwealth action, never seemed to be doubted by the Commonwealth heads and certainly never by Trudeau. The 1961 Prime Ministers' Meeting had been a turning point in this connection when Commonwealth prime ministers, in deciding to refuse South Africa's application for readmission into the Commonwealth, took a major initiative for the first time without seeking approval back home.[54] Certainly by the 1970s Trudeau had as much confidence that major initiatives taken at Commonwealth summits had support throughout the Commonwealth as Mackenzie King had experienced doubts decades before about Canada making commitments at the old Imperial Conferences without letting Parliament decide.

A second means by which these informal weekend retreats helped to prevent confrontations and resolve divergent points of view within the Commonwealth was by affording an atmosphere which was conducive to what Arendt has described, in the context of a society's political deliberations, as "representative thinking" — a process whereby everyone makes himself/herself a "representative of everyone else".[55] This was what cabinet ministers and caucus members did when they deliberated in private -- they searched for a consensus by genuinely trying

to look at the issues from the perspective of their colleagues; such a consensus was eminently possible, of course, because of the participants' strong sense of commitment to furthering the purposes of the nation. In Trudeau's conception, the heads at Commonwealth summits behaved in much the same manner when they engaged in private discourse. On account of their strong sense of relatedness and, as a consequence, common purpose — growing out of their similar political institutions, common working language, common approach to resolving problems, and so on — they displayed an unusual capacity to examine their own views from the standpoint of their fellow leaders. Not only did they manifest a remarkable willingness to discuss issues in an impartial and objective fashion, or to "communicat[e] across differences"[56], but they actively sought to understand and help their colleagues with their problems; as Trudeau put it: "Within the Commonwealth there is a willingness to help one another, and a willingness to believe that that help is genuinely offered".[57]

It is worthwhile for us to explore the basis of this view by Trudeau that the Commonwealth possessed enormous potential for facilitating communication and understanding. For it sheds further light on the practical approach which Trudeau took to the politics of Commonwealth summits. What we will observe is that Trudeau's conviction rested ultimately on an unusual conception of the nature of political relations between human beings and nations.

The grounds of Trudeau's view that the Commonwealth was a unique instrument of communication can be found in his description of a particularly important facet of the Commonwealth summit process of deliberation: the participants' use of persuasion. As Hannah Arendt see it, persuasion is a normal mode of action by which *free* human beings secure agreement with each other: it is achieved where individuals *freely* or voluntarily choose to act in accordance with the will of other individuals.[59] Trudeau no doubt accepted this definition; however, he took the unusual view that persuasion was a truly free activity only when the agreements facilitated by it were the product of a strict application of reason to the problem at hand, or as he put it, the result of some persons "learn[ing] from the wisdom and experience of others".[60] It was not legitimate when it produced compliance out of gratitude, sentiment, positive disposition, or deference to authority or to the power of coalitions of interest. In short, where persuasion was concerned, human reason (understood as the faculty of logical argument) was to have absolute jurisdiction. The proper means of securing the assent of others was by appealing to their rational or logical comprehension. Indeed, enhancing comprehension or understanding was a more laudable achievement than mobilizing political action in so

far as the latter involved too often the use of power and influence to gain non-rational compliance.

It was persuasion for the purpose of extending understanding, Trudeau maintained, that was employed at Commonwealth summit deliberations; political action was less important. He described these deliberations, with almost relentless consistency, as proceedings involving a mutually beneficial exchange of reasoned arguments rather than structured attempts at joint decisions: there occurred an "airing of views"; or an "exchange of ideas"; or an "arguing of viewpoints"; or an "elucidation of problems" where the value lay in the "comprehension gained by delegates, and not by the persuasion which anyone attempted to exercise". Not everyone attending or observing the Commonwealth summits agreed with this interpretation of the proceedings. India's Mrs. Gandhi for one, took the view that the Commonwealth served not only as a "forum in which one can express one's views to other members", but as a "forum for joint action".[61] And the more radical prime ministers from Zimbabwe and Guyana, Robert Mugabe and Forbes Burnham, warned at the commencement of the Melbourne summit in October, 1981 that the Commonwealth must not be a "forum for clever intellectual talk" but rather "a world force of moral muscle".[62] Even those who accepted that the Commonwealth functioned, to a large extent, as an instrument of reasoned discussion did not have a great deal of confidence in its efficacy as such. "He is good", *Montreal Star* columnist W.A. Wilson wrote of Trudeau's involvement in the Singapore discussions of British arms sales to South Africa, "at the technique [of "asking both sides... Britain and the black African countries, the most difficult and probing sort of questions he could find"]... It is one of those [techniques] he uses to maintain his domination of the cabinet in Ottawa, a position that is achieved intellectually rather than through the exercise of political force. Whether it also works in the international arena is another question".[63] At the time of the Ottawa summit, Hugh Winsor, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, wondered how one assessed the worth of a gathering whose avowed purpose had been simply the exchange of ideas: "Unlike arms sales or rebellions, the exchange of ideas is a very difficult subject to monitor, evaluate and communicate to anybody beyond the select circle doing the exchanging."[64] But such doubts and criticisms did not alter Trudeau's convictions, or his practical approach to problem-solving at Commonwealth summits; indeed on three occasions when the meetings fell victim to the purveyors of rhetoric (as opposed to reason) he was quick to try to move the parties to "higher" ground.

The first instance was at Singapore, where Trudeau initially made his presence felt at the Commonwealth summit meetings. At issue was a recent decision by Britain to reverse an arms embargo on South Africa and permit the sale of frigates and other naval supplies. The matter was the subject of fierce arguments on both sides with British prime minister Edward Heath insisting that arms sales were essential to the security of the Indian Ocean, threatened by a growing Soviet naval presence, and that in any case Britain had the right to decide its own policies without Commonwealth dictation; the African members demanded that the arms shipment be stopped on the grounds that they gave support to South Africa's racialist regime. With the heat of the debate growing more intense, Trudeau entered the discussion not so much as the mediator in the style of Pearson, who wielded influence through traditional methods (e.g., persuasion, cajoling, exercising power, appeals for moderation and fairness, calling up favours owed, and so on) but as the quintessential objective observer seeking to surmount a crisis by applying reason to a problem. He was careful not to take sides, on the one hand acknowledging British fears about increasing Russian naval strength, and on the other accepting the African argument that a fundamental principle was at stake.[65] His strategy was to probe the minds of the disputants, leading them through rational discussion to a realization that they were actually pursuing common goals. His own personal evaluation of the Soviet naval threat was, as he told the press, that "if a threat exist[ed]... he [couldn't] get too excited about".[66] But recognizing that this argument (however rational) carried little weight with the British, he instead asked the Africans exactly what they intended to do to prevent a racial war in Africa: were they prepared to commit themselves to preventing freedom fighters in Africa from getting arms from communist sources? If not, could they expect that the British would stop arms shipments to the area?[67] It was an effective argument inasmuch as both sides were, at this stage, amenable to the idea that there was a common goal of preventing war in Africa. In the event, they were able to agree to a written statement of principle, affirming that "no country will afford to regimes which practise racial discrimination, assistance which, in its own judgment directly contributes to the pursuit or consolidation of this evil policy".

As effective as this intervention by Trudeau was his involvement at the Ottawa summit in the equally controversial discussions on the achievement of free constitutional government for Rhodesia. On account of the extensive planning done by Ottawa officials to prevent the sessions from becoming mired in rhetorical arguments, the participants managed to discuss the Rhodesia issue for the most part in an

atmosphere of restraint and even relaxation. However, as the Meeting was drawing to an end, views began to harden and a crisis erupted when the prime minister of Barbados, Errol Barrow went on a tirade upon hearing a wire report of Rhodesian attacks inside Zambia. It was an unfortunate incident as British prime minister Edward Heath had just grudgingly accepted a set of proposals put forward by Forbes Burnham, introducing a Commonwealth military presence in Rhodesia and affirming the principle of no independence before majority rule. When Barrow made his outburst, Heath recanted on the Burnham proposals, announcing defiantly that he was not going to be told how Britain should run its affairs. After a moment of silence, Trudeau intervened from the chair and once again attempted to solve a Commonwealth crisis by an appeal to reason. Nobody, he told Heath, was trying to tell Britain how it should exercise its responsibilities; rather all participants had the right to advance constructive (i.e., rational) suggestions for Britain's consideration. Again Trudeau's approach won success, although Heath's eventual agreement to "take note" of the Burnham proposals was the result perhaps less of the rationality of Trudeau's argument than of his recognition that he was opposed by just about all the Commonwealth leaders, including those of the white Commonwealth.[68]

The other instance worth citing of Trudeau's preoccupation with rationality in the context of the Commonwealth summits involved his leadership at the London summit in 1977 in securing a condemnation of the Idi Amin regime in Uganda for its massive killings and violations of human rights. Never before had there evolved such a strong consensus in favour of condemning a fellow Commonwealth member. While Nigeria continued to maintain, with the support of one or two other members, that Amin should be allowed to put his own case to the Meeting, the great majority of the Heads (including Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda and Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, who had always shown a reluctance to criticize their fellow African leaders) made it clear that they favoured outright condemnation — the only issue really was whether Uganda should be criticized by name. Trudeau was "very satisfied" with the "decisive and extremely clear" statement that finally emerged from the Meeting, condemning not the Ugandan nation as such but the Amin regime for its "sustained disregard for the sanctity of life and of massive violations of basic human rights in Uganda". "It's not a question of looking for lice on one another", he told a news conference, "We are all more or less guilty of errors and mistakes ... But when a regime itself rests not just on whimsical aberrations but on innumerable political murders, I think we must move to the kind of condemnation we made on Uganda".[69] But what was significant about

Trudeau's remarks was his pains to point out that the Heads had approached even this highly provocative and emotional issue in a rational fashion. His description of the Meeting's deliberations on Amin was almost antiseptic in its understatement: the Heads, he stated, had come to London with grave reservations about making direct accusations; "but after everyone had spoken, we realized we had convinced one another to go in a certain direction". Perhaps even more understated was his expressed hope that the condemnation would give Amin "cause for pause and reflection" on his excesses.[70]

That this intellectual detachment on Trudeau's part was interpreted by the African members as implying a lack of commitment to African political causes might well have been the reason for growing African impatience with the Canadian leader by the late 1970s. As one Canadian commentator put it, upon Trudeau's departure for the Jamaican summit in April of 1975: "The backdrop of his trip is a policy plan now emerging in Ottawa to reinforce Canada's tenuous reputation as a friend of the Third World — even if we are white, western and wealthy... Canada's posture of understanding the problems of underdeveloped countries is wearing a little thin in the Third World, and demands by their militants for a new economic order are increasing... The militants are yelling for a global economic revolution and warning that just being good liberal sympathizers is not enough any more".[71] Strong feelings were expressed by the African leaders at Jamaica that Commonwealth summits should not be simply a medium for intellectual talk. These feelings were understandable. For, however compelling might be Trudeau's argument that Commonwealth summits should uphold the virtues of moderation, understanding and rationality, it rested on assumptions that tended to deny to the African Heads any avenue of moral self-assertion. It becomes clear that Trudeau was disinclined to accept that the Commonwealth Heads took emphatic positions on issues simply because they were determined to present and uphold the principles and values for which they and their nations stood — or because they were bent on gaining the respect and esteem of their colleagues who were equally determined to hold to the principles and values for which their nations stood. Rather he seemed to think that they merely displayed a stubborn unwillingness to engage in a practice of moderation through reason, or through that type of self-denial that man engages in when he submits in the first place to be governed in a society. His view was that virtue lay not so much in moral resoluteness or prideful self-assertion in the pursuit of great human causes, but rather in the social practices of moderation, tolerance, understanding and cooperation.

This tendency to view the Commonwealth political process as a medium for strengthening man's capacity for social virtue ran parallel with Trudeau's inclination to see the Commonwealth's interaction with other nations and international organizations as striving to maximize the possibilities of rational discourse. The Commonwealth, to Trudeau, had no business projecting power or wielding influence in the international realm, or exerting itself with force to further the purposes or values for which it admittedly stood. This was essentially why he could not accept, unlike some other Commonwealth leaders, that the Commonwealth should provide support for mercenaries in southern Africa,[72] or arms to nationalists fighting in Rhodesia;[73] and this was why he believed that the Commonwealth had an obligation to try to settle both the Rhodesian and Namibian questions by means of discussion and negotiation rather than force.[74]

The idea that the Commonwealth was not a power working to assert itself in the world was of course not new: Trudeau's predecessor, Lester Pearson had remained convinced as well that the association's *greatest* purpose lay in its advocacy of the social virtues. The dysfunctional side of Trudeau's conviction that promotion of the social virtues was the Commonwealth's *only* purpose was revealed when Trudeau sought, in pursuing his highly publicized "peace initiative", to use the Commonwealth summit process as a platform to make a rational appeal to the great powers to resume a "genuine political dialogue"[75] on nuclear arms control and arms reduction. It might indeed have been his belief that an appeal to reason would be sufficient to move U.S. and Soviet leaders; but their resistance to his rational entreaties simply reflected the reality that they too represented nations who were self-sufficient, self-assertive and resolute in pursuing their respective interests and purposes.

NOTES

1. Reginald Whitaker, "Reason, Passion and Interest: Pierre Trudeau's Eternal Liberal Triangle", *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter, 1980), 10.
2. For example, see G. Bruce Doern, "The Policy-making Philosophy of Prime Minister Trudeau and his Advisers", in T.A. Hockin, ed., *Apex of Power: The Prime Minister and Political Leadership in Canada*, 2nd ed., (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1971).
3. There are a number of written works which cover, to varying degrees, the historical details of Canada's participation at Commonwealth summits during the Trudeau years; for example, see Colin Robertson, "Trudeau and the Commonwealth: A Study of the Development of Canadian Policy Towards the Commonwealth during the Trudeau Administration, 1968 to 1977", Norman Paterson School of International Affairs. Carleton University, 1977; and Peter Boehm, "Canada and the Modern Commonwealth: the Approaches of Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau", *Bulletin of Canadian Studies*, Vol. III, No. 1, June,

1979, 23-39. Probably the best summary account and analysis of the summit meetings in the 1970s is found in Derek Ingram, *The Imperfect Commonwealth*, (London: Rex Collings, 1977). A more recent but more general study of the Commonwealth up to 1980 is found in Denis Judd and Peter Slinn, *The Evolution of the Modern Commonwealth, 1902-80*, (London: Macmillan, 1982).

4. Canada, Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches*, No. 69/5, "The Role of the Commonwealth", Report to the House of Commons on January 20, 1969 by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau concerning the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers recently concluded.
5. *Statements and Speeches*, No. 71/5, "The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Singapore - I", A Statement by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, in the House of Commons on February 1, 1971. One commentator went so far as to interpret Trudeau as saying that the Commonwealth's value lay only minimally in its functional and economic relationships and mainly in the summit activities with "people meeting together, consulting, learning from each other, trying to persuade each other, and sometimes co-operating with each other". "PM opens Commonwealth talks with low-key call for cooperation", *Globe and Mail*, August 3, 1973.
6. Whitaker, 10.
7. See Boehm, Robertson and Margaret Doxey, "Canada and the Evolution of the Modern Commonwealth", *Behind the Headlines*, Vol. XL, No. 2, 1982.
8. For an excellent analysis of Arendt's concept of political community, see Bhikhu C. Parekh, *Hannah Arendt and the Search for a New Political Philosophy*, (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981), 131-72.
9. *Statements and Speeches*, No. 69/5.
10. *Statements and Speeches*, No. 37/25, "The Commonwealth - An Association Unstructured and Unfettered", Opening Statement to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Ottawa, by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, August 2, 1973.
11. *Statements and Speeches*, No. 71/5.
12. Trudeau insisted all along that the Commonwealth was not an "organization" but rather an "organism"; which is to say, it bore some resemblance to a traditional political community. See *Statements and Speeches*, 69/5.
13. Patrick Gordon Walker, *The Commonwealth*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1962), 203.
14. Parekh, 138.
15. Cited in Andrew Walker, *The Commonwealth: A New Look* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1978), 28.
16. See for example, "A civilized institution", *Financial Times*, November 21, 1983; "Bridge-building in Delhi", *London Times*, November 22, 1983; and Judd and Slinn, *The Evolution of the Modern Commonwealth*, xii.
17. While Arnold Smith, the first Commonwealth Secretary-General has claimed credit for the idea behind Trudeau's suggestion, it is clear that Trudeau was very strongly convinced of its validity; see Arnold Smith, *Stitches in Time: the Commonwealth in World Politics*, (Don Mills: General Publishing Co., 1981), 300.
18. Voegelin discusses the "belief structure" of societies at length in *The New Science of Politics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 27-51.
19. Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience*, Vol. II, *From British to Multi-Racial Commonwealth*, rev. ed., (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 44.
20. Ingram, 69.
21. Norman Campbell, "We intend to stay in", *Ottawa Citizen*, January 6, 1971.
22. *Statements and Speeches*, 73/26, "Commonwealth Meetings - Their Special Character", An Address to the Closing Session of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Ottawa, by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, August 10, 1973.
23. Ingram, 69-70.
24. Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Ottawa, August 1973, *Final Communique*, 11.
25. *Statements and Speeches*, 73/26.
26. This term was used by Commonwealth observer Roy Lewis, "Commonwealth as Britain's dowry for Europe", London *Times*, February 21, 1967.
27. See for example, Malcolm MacDonald, "The Commonwealth: a unique international partnership", *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, June 23, 1972; and Andrew Walker, 28.
28. Lewis, "Commonwealth As Britain's dowry".

29. Judd and Slinn, xii.
30. "British indifference: greatest danger to the Commonwealth", London *Times*, November 2, 1970.
31. Patrick Gordon Walker, 205.
32. Andrew Walker, 111.
33. "Strength Without Power", An Address given by H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh at the Men's Canadian Club in Ottawa, reported in the *Ottawa Journal*, August 3, 1973.
34. Association is the term which is most frequently used to described the Commonwealth organization. The word clearly suggests a political entity of a similar essence to a political association or a political community — which is no doubt the reason why it is never used in connection with the United Nations.
35. *Statements and Speeches*, 71/5.
36. Whitaker, 6.
37. The latter observation has been made by Mansergh, 247.
38. *Statements and Speeches*, 73/26.
39. *Statements and Speeches*, 69/5, 73/26.
40. *Statements and Speeches*, 73/25.
41. *Statements and Speeches*, 69/5.
42. Patrick Gordon Walker, 258.
43. *Statements and Speeches*, 69/5, 73/25.
44. Ingram, 84.
45. Ingram, 56. At a luncheon in Ottawa just prior to his departure for the Singapore summit he had argued that these Meetings should be seen as providing an opportunity for a "widespread number of countries to gather and to co-operate with one another in a totally *unrehearsed* and civil fashion" (emphasis added). "Rally around Commonwealth, Trudeau pleads", *Toronto Telegram*, January 12, 1971.
46. Ingram, 84.
47. Ingram, 75.
48. Bruce Garvey, "Commonwealth body is invited to Canada", *Toronto Daily Star*, May 3, 1975; and "Trudeau admits disappointment with conference", *Toronto Daily Star*, May 5, 1975.
49. Max Keddy, "Games: full participation likely", *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, June 16, 1988.
50. Ingram, 54.
51. These were Trudeau's own words; see "Agreement on Games is reported", *Globe and Mail*, June 12, 1977.
52. Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Heads of Government. *The London Comunique*, October 1981.
53. Patrick Newby, "Aussie meet too cozy, some say", *Financial Post*, October 10, 1981.
54. Mansergh, 186.
55. See Parekh, 145.
56. *Statements and Speeches*, 71/5.
57. *Statements and Speeches*, 73/26.
58. Parekh, 142-3.
59. *Statements and Speeches*, 69/5.
60. Ibid.
61. "India questions value of Commonwealth", *Times*, January 2, 1969.
62. Quoted in Michael Valpy, "Mugabe cuts through pomp at Commonwealth opening", *Globe and Mail*, October 1, 1981.
63. W.A. Wilson, "Trudeau plays his best role", *Montreal Star*, January 21, 1971.
64. Hugh Winsor, "Sizing up Commonwealth meet as an idea forum", *Globe and Mail*, August 10, 1973.
65. Clyde Sanger, "Trudeau ready to mediate", *Montreal Gazette*, January 9, 1971.
66. David Van Praagh, "Trudeau heads for Singapore talks after sessions with Heath, Gandhi", *Globe and Mail*, January 13, 1971.
67. A.M. Rendel, "Prospect of race war worries Mr. Trudeau", *Times*, January 21, 1971.
68. The details of this incident were related by Colin Legum, "Ottawa secret session ganged up on Heath", *Observer*, August 12, 1973.
69. "Commonwealth censures Uganda regime", *Globe and Mail*, June 16, 1977.
70. Trudeau was quoted by Max Keddy, "Games: full participation likely", *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, June 16, 1977.
71. Bruce Garvey, "Jamaica talks to tell PM of have-nots' needs", *Toronto Daily Star*, April 18, 1975.

72. Trudeau made known his position on mercenaries at the London summit; see Ian Rodger, "Trudeau asks why oil embargo not fully used against Rhodesia", *Globe and Mail*, June 11, 1977.
73. At Jamaica, Trudeau agreed with the prime ministers of Britain, New Zealand and Australia that while sanctions against Rhodesia should be supported, military assistance for the nationalists was out of the question; see Marvin Howe, "Commonwealth to press Rhodesia ban", *New York Times*, May 7, 1975.
74. Trudeau was quoted as saying that "a negotiated solution is the only one that is really compatible with the maintenance of some measure of prosperity in Rhodesia"; see Ian Rodger, "Trudeau asks why". On Namibia, Canada and Britain were members on the contact group established to negotiate Namibian independence from South Africa; and Trudeau and British prime minister Margaret Thatcher insisted at both the Melbourne and New Delhi summits that the Commonwealth should let these negotiations take their course. See Michael Valpy, "Mugabe cuts through pomp at Commonwealth opening", *Globe and Mail*, October 1, 1981.
75. These were the words contained in the statement issued by Commonwealth leaders at the Heads' Meeting. Quoted in William K. Stevens, "A 'Dialogue' Plea by Commonwealth", *New York Times*, November 28, 1983.