

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

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

² Interview with Marie-Claire Sandys.

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

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

⁵ Interview 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*s 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 unrelenting 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 unfailing 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 co-ordinated 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-ennervating 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

⁸⁸ Interview with Denis Doble.

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

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

⁹¹ Interview with Denis Doble.

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

⁹³ Interview 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

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Brian Gilmour.

¹⁰⁶ C. 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.

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

¹⁰⁸ Fraser ‘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 *Osagyefo*’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

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

¹²⁵ Interview with Derek Milton.

¹²⁶ Sandys *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

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

¹³⁴ P. 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.

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

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 169.

¹³⁷ Murphy *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.

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