

SIR HORACE PHILLIPS.

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BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Gwenda Scarlett interviewing

Sir Horace Phillips - 22nd January 1997 in London

GS: Sir Horace retired from the Diplomatic Service in 1977 after his final posting, as ambassador to Turkey. He was appointed CMG in 1963 and KCMG in 1973.

HP: That is right.

GS: Sir Horace, you were born in Glasgow in 1917 and you went to school there.

HP: That is right.

GS: Would you like to say something about your education and at what point you decided you wanted to join the Foreign Office?

HP: I was educated at Hillhead High School in Glasgow - one of the leading grammar schools there. In my early teens, reading a great deal about what was then the far-flung Empire and reading about the exploits of great Arabian explorers - Doughty, Bertram Thomas, etc. - I began to think that I would like a career that took me in that direction - not necessarily as an explorer - and it occurred to me that I might find what I wanted in the Consular Service.

Now I say designedly Consular Service and not Diplomatic Service at this stage because there were in those days - I am talking of course about the thirties - there were two separate examinations for these Services and the Consular was not as difficult as the Diplomatic. So it seemed to me that I had a better chance of getting into the Consular. But when I wrote to the Civil Service Commissioners about my desired intention they made it quite clear to me that with my background and with no money I could not even present myself for the Consular examination.

Their mention of my background was a reference to the fact that I was not at university. And money was referred to because a candidate successful in the entrance examination had to perfect a foreign language abroad for a year at his own expense before taking up an appointment.

Now - although I did not need to declare this to the Commissioners - I was the grandson of Jewish refugee immigrants from eastern Europe at the turn of the century and my family had no means whatever. Then my father died very young, leaving nothing to my mother, then aged thirty nine, except seven children of

whom I was the eldest. There were no state welfare benefits in those days and she had to eke out a living by baking and sewing for people in the Jewish community. At least that was preferable to looking for charity hand-outs.

I had hoped that I might win a bursary to go to university; and so had my parents. But in the light of events I had to abandon that hope, and when I was seventeen I decided that I had to go out and earn some money, something to support the family.

The Civil Service Commissioners having turned me down for the Consular Service, I decided that I would get into the Home Civil Service somehow, and later possibly move across to the Consular or eventually even the Diplomatic. So I sat for two civil service examinations - first the clerical then two years later the executive - which I passed, and was appointed to the Inland Revenue. Then the war came and I was called up into the army at the beginning of 1940. I was in it in various theatres for seven-and-a-half years because when I was in Burma as a sergeant after three years in the ranks I was commissioned into the Indian Army and was not demobilised until after the independence of India in August 1947.

But all this time I never lost my ambition to get into the Foreign Service. And my chance came, as it did for many others in the armed services, after Anthony Eden, when Foreign Secretary, told the House of Commons during the war that in his view all these thousands of young men fighting for their country should when they came back have the opportunity of presenting themselves for the Foreign Service, and that the only criterion of their success would be their position in a very stiff examination.

But this would not be an examination as highly academic as pre-war, because he recognised that men on active service would have had no opportunity of studying all these years. In a way you might say that the examination was based on experience in the university of life or the university of war. So I presented myself for it, and passed. It was the beginning of the fulfilment of my earliest ambition, and I was appointed vice-consul in Shiraz, a town in south Persia steeped in history and poetry.

GS: So that was your first posting, which took place in November 1947.

HP: I was demobilised from the Indian Army in September, just after India had become independent; by October I was into the Foreign Service; and in November I arrived in Shiraz, capital of Fars province, from which the name of Persia is derived. My two years there included six months in Bushire on the Persian Gulf a hundred miles south, a very humid and unpleasant place.

I was sent down to close the offices of the British Political Residency which had been there for a hundred and seventy years, having earlier been elsewhere in the Gulf. This had been the headquarters of the East

India Company, Britain's earliest trading company in the East. It had developed into an office supervising British Indian political as well as commercial interests because that part of the Gulf and south Persia and Afghanistan had traditionally been within the scope of interest of the Government in Delhi.

After India became independent in August 1947 the British Government came to the conclusion, in agreement with the new Governments in New Delhi and Islamabad, that it would be inappropriate for Britain to continue to maintain this establishment in Persia. So the Residency was moved across to the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf with the agreement of the Emir there. And I had to arrange for the final closing down of the establishment in Bushire.

GS: How long did that take you?

HP: I think about six months. One thing that stands out in my mind, and fixes the date, was that it was while I was there that the State of Israel was born. I remember the commotion in Bushire at the emergence of this new entity.

GS: What language did you use there?

HP: I learnt Persian in Shiraz.

GS: Had you learnt it before going?

HP: No, I hadn't; but I learnt it thoroughly. My routine in the consulate in Shiraz was consular duties and local political study in the morning and under a big mulberry tree in the garden in the afternoon learning Persian - which I am still fluent in today.

GS: I expect normally you would have had at least a year's lessons before going out?

HP: Normally, yes. Under the system that prevailed later there was a Diplomatic Service Language School in London, where your length of study depended on the difficulty of the language. For Persian you did six months at London University School of Oriental and African Studies, then a year's on-the-job study in Persia. Japanese and Chinese were of course much more difficult; you probably did a whole year in London (but I do not know exactly) and then went out for further whole-time study in the country itself. I was different - in that post-war intake which by and large studied on-the-job.

GS: So you were very motivated.

HP: Oh yes. My ambition was to master this language and I soon found that I was getting the hang of it. Old tribesmen would come into the consulate and kiss my hand and in effect ask if I could get their son or some other relative a seat in the Majlis (Parliament) in Tehran. This approach was an interesting legacy of the old days when the British were influential in the country and could do things like that. The tribesmen could not understand why post-war and post-India that influence had declined, so I had to mollify them.

GS: You wouldn't have felt able to interfere.

HP: No, never. In fact one of the great tenets of post-war service in Persia was to refrain from any kind of interference in the internal affairs of the country - particularly with a young Shah on the throne whom we had put there during the war to replace his father who was turning a blind eye to German infiltration into Persian affairs. As the young man matured and got more confidence in himself he made it quite clear at the end of the war that he would tolerate no interference from either the British or the Russians, who during the war had virtually controlled the country. So yes - no interference - I used to speak politely to the tribesmen and send them on their way.

GS: A consul would normally deal with a lot of British subjects.

HP: In Shiraz there was only a handful of British. You might ask why then were we there at all. The answer is that there was still the tradition and legacy of political coverage because the tribes were often opposed to the Government in Tehran and in earlier times there had been attacks on the British consulate because of our support of the Government. So our role now was really political intelligence, with only the odd consular duty. There were no tourists in those days and only the occasional British visitor: one was Wilfred Thesiger the explorer, who came across from the Arabian side of the Gulf after his epic crossing of the Empty Quarter. The few British residents in Shiraz, besides the staff of the consulate, belonged to the British Bank of the Middle East, the British Council, and the Church Missionary Society. I think that was about all.

GS: The Church Missionary Society?

HP: Reza Shah the father of the young Shah had always been quite tolerant of non-Muslim religions in Persia: there was a Jewish community in the country in those days. The Church Missionary Society had a hospital and a church with a British parson who died in England a year or so ago at the age of ninety nine. The local people used to throng to this hospital for treatment - a very good advertisement for the CMS. There was no such thing as a national health service.

GS: So you are really talking about a world which was very different from the Iran you returned to a bit later on.

HP: Very much so - though there was a residual feeling in the minds of many older Persians that their country was still as it had been before the war; yes, there was still that. Indeed, the Shiraz consulate continued until 1952 when Mussadiq the Persian prime minister, following a dispute with Britain over his nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, closed down the embassy and all our consulates. These were never re-opened, even after relations between Britain and Iran were resumed in 1953. No more consulates in the country - whereas when I arrived there in 1947 there were twelve. Most of these were in the east, reflecting the British Indian Government's concern that the Russians might penetrate through Afghanistan or eastern Persia to the warm waters of the Gulf and the sea route to India.

GS: But then you oversaw part of the change in that world when you went to Bushire - as you mentioned - and the State of Israel came into being and the political complexities of the area were changing dramatically.

HP: Yes, they were; and of course there was another complication in Persia at that time. This was the Russian attempt to set up a communist province in the north-west - in Persian Azerbaijan. The Russians and ourselves had divided Persia for strategic purposes during the war: Britain was responsible for shipping arms and other supplies up through the country to Russia to help the latter. When the war ended, under the treaty we had made with the Shah we and the Russians were to pull out.

We did but they didn't; they continued their effort to set up that communist province, and installed a puppet governor. The young Shah showed his mettle, got on his horse, and with an escort rode out of Tehran a hundred miles up the road towards Azerbaijan to confront the Russian general in his headquarters. When he ordered the latter out, the Russian protested that he was there under the treaty - to which the Shah retorted that the treaty had lapsed. The general went on to complain that no one had told him this - whereupon the Shah said that he was telling him now, and that if he wanted relations between Russia and Iran to thrive then the general would do well to comply with the terms of the treaty and get out with all his troops. Which the Russian did - and that was the end of that. The Shah had made his point.

GS: So he was quite a charismatic character?

HP: Yes, in those early days he was. Too bad that he overreached himself in later years. But at that time

he was all right.

GS: Well, at that point was it straight after Bushire that you moved, or did you return to Shiraz?

HP: I returned, promoted to consul, and remained in charge of the consulate until I was transferred to Afganistan.

GS: Which happened in ..?

HP: October 1949.

GS: How long were you in Kabul?

HP: Two years.

GS: What about the language there?

HP: The court language and the language of the administration was Persian, while the demotic was Pashtu. My designation was Oriental Secretary, which meant that I was responsible for advising the ambassador on local affairs and personalities, and on items of importance in the local press and on the radio.

GS: Did you travel around the country at all?

HP: Not very far; there was not a lot of travelling in Afghanistan. Down to Jalalabad and up to Mazar-e-Sharif. But that whole road from Kabul to the Oxus river (the frontier with the Soviet Union) was a very sensitive and sometimes dangerous road. The Russians were moving up and down it quite legitimately, but the Afghan king - there was one then - feared that they were subverting the tribes.

I went once to Herat, a town of great historical interest. Embassy staff went up and down regularly every month between Kabul and Peshawar on the north-west frontier of Pakistan, through the Khyber Pass - rain, hail, snow or shine. We had an old but stout Albion truck built in Glasgow before the war that did the journey to pick up supplies for the embassy (there was nothing much we could get in Kabul) - everything from whisky to shoe polish; and each month a number of us (including the ambassador) took our turn to escort the truck and get a break from Kabul.

GS: Were you driven? Did you have a driver?

HP: The truck had a driver and his mate - and a full set of chains in winter - especially going over the Khyber Pass. We used to drive our own cars inside Afghanistan and to and from Pakistan.

GS: The embassy building in Kabul was very beautiful.

HP: Beautiful. It was conceived by Curzon when Foreign Secretary, his aim being that it should be the finest mansion in Central Asia. It really was a magnificent place: a very big compound, walls and buildings all stark white. In those days it was a landmark outside Kabul, and some of the staff used to ski into town in the winter: now it is inside the expanded city. In former days the cost of the embassy was divided between the governments in London and Delhi, and a British officer of the Indian Political Service was ambassador - until the independence of India in 1947, when the Foreign Office took control. There then arose a particular problem. After independence the British Government rightly decided that all the assets of the former British Indian Government had to be divided between Pakistan and the new India. This involved the embassy sites in Afghanistan and Nepal. As for Persia, there was no question but that Britain would retain sole ownership of the Tehran embassy; that was never challenged by either India or Pakistan. But there was the question of Kabul and Katmandu.

London looked at this and came to the conclusion that there was a bigger Pakistani interest in Kabul than Indian, and vice-versa in Katmandu. This was agreed; the Katmandu embassy was handed over to India; and we started building ourselves a new embassy there. But India would not agree to the transfer of the Kabul embassy to Pakistan. This had to do with India's encouragement of Pashtu tribes in the south of Afghanistan and the north of Pakistan, who aspired to unite to form a self-contained unit called Pashtunistan. This of course would have suited India, which did not want a close direct relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. So the Indians were opposed to letting Pakistan get the Kabul embassy site. Whereupon we said that if these two countries could not agree we would remain there until they did - with the tennis court, swimming pool, clinic, great ballroom, etc. It wasn't, I think, until 1994 that India reluctantly finally agreed that Pakistan could take it all over.

GS: By which time it might actually have been damaged by some of the shelling?

HP: I am told that it was not badly damaged. So that was Afghanistan for me. Then my ambassador, a splendid man, John Gardener, one of the few men who had graduated from the Levant Consular Service to the Diplomatic Service, reminded me that I had come straight out of the army into a post abroad, whereas normally new entrants would serve in the Foreign Office itself first for two or three years, to learn the ropes. He thought I should know how the Foreign Office works. I agreed. I had been abroad now

continuously for eight years, army and Diplomatic. So he had me transferred to the Foreign Office in 1951.

GS: Right; so you had two years in London - the only years there in the whole of your diplomatic career.

HP: Yes. Just as singular as it was that I should come into the Service without first doing a stint in the Foreign Office first, so was it that I was only two years there out of my whole thirty years in the Service - which was exceptional. Colleagues used to nod their heads knowingly and say that if I were not seen in the corridors of power I would never be seen in any post of significance. But I shrugged that off. And in the long term it did not harm my career.

GS: So you were put into the department covering South-East Asia, an area already familiar to you; and you were then on the other side of the fence.

HP: Yes; I was telling the embassy in Kabul if and where it went wrong.

GS: Did you appreciate the irony of all that? Because in the field one often feels that they do not really understand in London.

HP: That is sometimes said - but not, I think, generally; because often the people in a department in London have themselves been in the field covered by it. In the past there was a tendency to regard the Foreign Office as rather different from - even superior to - the people in the field, even though the two sides were amalgamated years ago. But the Kabul embassy appreciated the views I put forward; I never had any altercation with them - or indeed the embassy in Pakistan - while I was in the department. I think they possibly appreciated that I had just come back with knowledge of the situation on the ground. But of course Afghanistan and Pakistan were not the only countries dealt with in the department: there was Burma, Indonesia, Indo-China, Nepal, Thailand, among others. And I remember we handled the diplomatic clearance for the successful British ascent of Everest in 1953.

GS: Was it a particularly busy time in that department? This was when Pashtunistan ...

HP: The agitation for Pashtunistan was continuing. It was a difficult time because we had to make it clear without offending India, with whom our relations were not of the best at that time, that we opposed the concept of Pahstunistan. The integrity of Pakistan and of Afghanistan were two of our objectives. Another legacy of the division of British India was the problem of Kashmir. The majority of its population is Muslim but the ruler is Hindu, whose original predecessor was installed by the British (as

part of an exchange) a century ago. On the independence of British India in 1947 the ruler had hoped that Kashmir could become independent; but faced with Muslim tribal rebellion in the state he acceded to the new India and sought the support of its army. In 1957 Kashmir was formally integrated into India - a move bitterly challenged ever since by Pakistan, and over which the two countries have gone to war. In the whole at that area there were still echoes of over a century of effort by the Russians, the Afghans, the British, and now the Indians, all striving in their own interest to keep someone out of somewhere. Britain's principal aim was to keep the Russians out of the Persian Gulf - out of the warm waters of the south - a long-standing Russian objective in view of the fact that apart from Murmansk which was so inaccessible, their only major port was Vladivostok, ice-bound for much of the year.

After about eighteen months in the Foreign Office I was enrolled in London University School of Oriental and African Studies for evening classes in Arabic. So after doing a day's work in the department I used to go there for lessons.

GS: Well, again, the provision today would be rather different; you would not be expected to do a full day's work and then go on in the evening to learn another language.

HP: Oh, we were hardy in those days.

GS: Well, with six months of Arabic language classes behind you you were then ready for your next posting - back to the Middle East - this time to Saudi Arabia, where you went in April 1953.

HP: As first secretary and consul, and deputy to the ambassador - after much mulling over by the Foreign Office and myself, since we recognised that as a Jew I might have a hard time in Saudi Arabia. But I told Rob Scott the under-secretary who discussed it with me that it did not seem to me to matter one jot; I was going out as a British diplomat, and after all, the Civil Service and the Foreign Office don't ask if you are Catholic, Methodist, Buddhist, Jew, or whatever. He said yes, but the Saudis might. I replied that I knew that, and was prepared to risk it. So I went.

GS: This was to Jedda, not Riyadh, at that time?

HP: True. Riyadh was then still virtually a village. But it was King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud's seat and I went there a couple of times to see him. There was no foretaste then of the modern city it was to develop into in the decades ahead. Jedda was the business and commercial capital, where all the embassies were at that time. A foetid hole - humid, hot, few facilities; but we were a well-knit international diplomatic community just because of the difficulties. Yes, it was to Jedda that I went.

GS: And the main problems while you were there were to do with undefined frontiers - or, if defined (by us), disputed - between Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Saudi Arabia had visions of expanding - especially with the increasing discovery of oil in that region.

HP: Yes, that is right: it was particularly oil that motivated them. As it became clear that there was oil in and off-shore of the Persian Gulf states on the south - on the Arabian side - the Saudis began to contest the frontiers (most of which had been defined by British officials). They were a remarkably able body of men, these Indian Political Service Officers who did that.

GS: Cartographers as well.

HP: Yes, everything. They went out and defined frontiers, which were then drawn on maps for general use. But the Saudi government said: who devised this frontier or that? Major so-and-so in 1890 or so? That does not give Britain a prescriptive right today to assert that these frontiers are correctly drawn. And so, yes, immediately there was trouble. And the biggest trouble of all was not in the Gulf states themselves but in the inland area between the Gulf and the eastern part of Oman. If you visualise northern Arabia it is a triangle that comes to something of a point which dovetails into the Strait of Hormuz, off the south coast of Persia. The area of that dovetail belongs to Oman, and the Sultan of Oman and the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi (one of the Gulf states) claimed the Buraimi Oasis that lies in the middle of that triangle. Buraimi was traditionally a staging post in a largely trackless desert. The Saudis used it as a crossing point in the area; but now, in addition, they believed it contained oil, and for that reason they contested the Abu Dhabi and Omani claims to it. Most of my three-and-a-half years in Saudi Arabia were taken up with this dispute. When at the end of 1952 the Saudis made an armed incursion into the Oasis we prevailed upon the Sultan of Oman not to send in a force to eject them - which he was anxious to do. We persuaded him to accept a standstill agreement pending negotiations. I always felt that was right - as a first step at any rate. I do not think any good would have come from rushing in by force.

So we continued to negotiate until we got to the point where old Ibn Saud (who did not die until November 1953) agreed to arbitration; and this was set in train. But it took some time to form the necessary committee: this did not meet (in Geneva) until 1955. There was a neutral (Chilean) chairman, a British representative (Sir Reader Bullard, an eminent retired ambassador), a Pakistani representative, and representatives of Gulf states. But we soon discovered that the Saudis were bribing a member of the committee in an effort to secure a vote in their favour. My view was that Britain should pull out - which we did, and the process was left in abeyance until eventually the Saudis were ejected from the Oasis by a tribal force under British command. That was one of several occasions during my tenure

when the Saudis looked as if they were going to break diplomatic relations with us. In the event they didn't; but what they did was when the ambassador was transferred they would not let us bring a new one in. So as ambassador's deputy I was left for - I cannot remember exactly how long - but several months - to negotiate with the Saudis until we finally got an ambassador in. But sadly he had not been there very long before he had to be moved back to England with tuberculosis, and I was in charge again.

GS: No hospitals there at that time?

HP: None to speak of: only a small one run by Lebanese. The RAF were allowed in to fly him out. After a long time he recovered and went on to be an eminent ambassador in the Middle East. That was the saga of my time in Saudi Arabia. Difficult - often critical - but I managed to hold the situation.

GS: But you admired King Ibn Saud?

HP: Yes; he was a typical old Bedouin chief: simple in manner, shrewd in mind. Riyadh was his traditional capital which he had captured by force of arms fifty years before from the tribe that had then held it. The only things of interest in it at my time were his square palace with in one corner a clock given to him by Churchill during the Second World War; and a small wooden fort where in the old days a man would have to crawl in through a low postern, presenting his head at a point where it could be taken off if he was not wanted inside. That was still there, with look-alike blood as if from many heads painted regularly every year on the floor - to keep history alive for the odd visitor like me.

Ibn Saud received me in his wheelchair (he was to die soon after), and I remember him on one occasion striking me on the knee: ya ibni (my son), and pointing vaguely in the direction of the oilfields - that should all have been yours. He was of course referring to two opportunities given to British companies - and lost by them - to explore for oil in his kingdom. The first was in the 1920s to a syndicate headed by Major Frank Holmes, a New Zealander, whose financial backers in Britain withdrew before he had completed his exploration. The second was in the 1930s, when, by its dilatory handling of negotiations, the Iraq Petroleum Company (formerly the largely British-owned Turkish Petroleum Company) lost out to an American group which eventually ran all Saudi oil operations.

Ibn Saud was a man of Bedouin honour. Before I arrived in Jedda one of his teenage sons there had shot and killed one of the British vice-consuls in the embassy who had reprimanded him publicly at a party there for making some suggestive remarks about a pretty young Englishwoman on the staff - remarks made while drinking. The king had his son confined to a dungeon in Riyadh and he sent the dead man's widow a handsome cheque by way of blood money. (When Ibn Saud died, his successor Saud followed

tradition and declared an amnesty, sending me a further cheque - which I felt bound to return. Ex post facto the Foreign Office agreed).

An upshot of this incident was that the import of alcohol was thenceforth denied to the diplomatic corps, who until then had enjoyed dispensation from the general ban on import in conformity with Muslim law.

GS: And that was the beginning of the embargo?

HP: Yes; but I have to confess that we managed to get round it one way or another.

GS: You left Saudi Arabia at a time of great change; Nasser was prime minister in Egypt after 1954.

HP: Yes; and I left just at the time of Suez - November 1956.

GS: But it sounds as if Saudi Arabia was not following the radical path.

HP: Well, there was a great deal of suspicion, and not much love lost, between Nasser the socialist and the traditional conservative Arab feudal monarchies. But the latter could not afford to ignore him. There were many groups influenced by him. And the fact that he had defeated us diplomatically if not militarily at Suez, and that the Arab League was at its zenith, had its spin-off in my next post, the Aden Protectorate.

GS: Aden Protectorate: you went there in December 1956.

HP: I went there as Protectorate Secretary, the only Foreign Office man in a Colonial Service establishment.

GS: Were they normally quite anxious to keep those jobs for their own people?

HP: This was a one-off appointment, arranged by the Colonial Office itself. The whole of the establishment in Aden was Colonial Service but the Governor of the time recognised a special requirement of the Protectorate. The latter was different from the Colony, which was a self-contained unit ruled directly by Britain. The Protectorate was the very wide area of tribal states abutting on Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Oman, the states being under their own rulers. There were different problems there - the tribes, intelligence gathering, oil search - and it was therefore concluded in London that there ought to be a Foreign Office man out there with experience in these particular matters. So it wasn't a case of there having been such a post before that had been filled by a Colonial official; it was a new one for a specific

purpose. I had to work closely with the Colonial Service people.

GS: And there were resident advisers to the tribal rulers.

HP: The Protectorate was divided into a western and an eastern part, with a resident adviser in each. I so to speak ran these and was to the Governor for the Protectorate what the chief secretary (from the Colonial Service) was to him for the Colony. In each of the bigger states in the Protectorate there were, under the resident adviser, British political officers, very good Colonial Service men.

GS: Good linguists?

HP: Yes, excellent in Arabic.

GS: They advised the tribal rulers?

HP: Yes; and through the two advisers I was kept informed about the attitude of the rulers; and the advisers and myself would then discuss with the Governor what our policy should be. It was one of the last outposts of Empire. The Colonial Office ran it, but they were viewing the problems there in narrow focus; they were looking at Aden Colony while I was looking at the problem in wider Arab terms. I could see that Nasser and the Arab League were having great influence in this part of the world because it was the only part of the Arab world still entirely in British hands; and clearly he enjoyed the discomfiture we had suffered over Suez.

The pro-Nasser attitude among Arabs caught on very strongly in the Colony but not so much in the Protectorate, where the rulers knew that it was in their own best interests to support us because we paid them and gave them arms, principally to guard against Yemeni incursions aimed (unsuccessfully) at Aden Colony. Among town Arabs there was a growing feeling that Nasser was the man to support. The effect of this was that the Colonial government was determined to clamp down on the anti-British feeling that was resulting from local support for the Arab League. This resulted in a number of leaders in the Colony being exiled or imprisoned. I felt that this was short-sighted. It seemed to me that some of those being removed were not extremists just because they paid Nasser what was often not more than lip service. What Arab could avoid doing that? In my view we should not have been getting rid of all these people; there were moderates among them, despite their attitude to Nasser, whom we at least knew and with whom we could still have done business in preparation for the future. But I am afraid I was a lone voice in the Colonial wilderness. The net result was that when in 1967 anti-British pressures made it clear that we were not going to be able to stay in Aden much longer (London had already decided on 1968 as pull-out

date), out from under the stones in the depth of the Colony came Marxists, agitators, trade unionists, largely unknown to us, and we had to beat a very ignominious retreat before the end of 1967.

I enjoyed the post, but really I was fighting a battle with my own people for much of the time. I got on well with the political officers, but, although the two resident advisers were amenable and accepted why I was there, one of them tended to be rather superior and to rile me with such questions as: what did I know about the Arabs of South Arabia? To which my retort was that I was not supposed to know in detail - he was, and had to brief me as background to my own wider study of how these Arabs fitted into the big picture of the Arab world and its relations with Britain after Suez. It was an argument that only partly succeeded with him; but in any case in the end the bolt was shot and we were out of Aden after almost 130 years there. The South Yemen flag went up and next day the Russians began to use the port for their naval as well as merchant ships.

GS: So all that work of the political officers ...

HP: ... was not entirely for nothing. They did much to improve administration in the tribal states, and where necessary could co-ordinate local defence against Yemeni incursions.

GS: You then went back to Iran in October 1960, and there you had two years as commercial counsellor followed by another two as political counsellor, the ambassador's deputy.

HP: That is right. My first in a commercial role, highly interesting, and very useful for my future career. I think all ambassadors-to-be should have that experience because after all commerce and trade are part of their *raison d'être*.

GS: And this was mainly to do with oil?

HP: No; only partly. Following the nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1952 there was in Tehran a consortium of the major oil companies - Dutch, French, British, American - and that was managing Persian oil smoothly enough - albeit with frequent dispute with the Shah over prices and taxes. Besides oil, we guided British business in all fields. An important one was arms. I could see the benefit of this for Britain, but I was always against making it high priority. Eventually of course, in later years when she came to power Mrs Thatcher did just that. It was said in a *Times* leader that the evidence was that she was always a great supporter of this business and was not very choosy about the destination of arms. It is true that this trade keeps people in Britain in jobs and earns money for the country. Not so laudable, I felt, was the way we seemed to be flooding so many countries with arms, often countries that

did not need them as much as they professed to, or would use them for some malevolent domestic purpose, or eventually even against Britain.

GS: But the Shah was anxious to build up a military position.

HP: Yes. The 1960s marked the beginning of his climb. Oil was becoming really developed, he was earning a great deal of money from it - he with the Venezuelans had conceived the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which was controlling the market; and we were being held to ransom, prices sky-rocketing.

GS: But they had set this up because they felt they should have a better deal.

HP: That is true, and to some extent they were justified. The oil companies were making a packet out of the producing countries. But with the creation of OPEC the pendulum began to swing the other way, the members of it exploiting their growing power, with the Shah in the lead. True, he did apply some of the country's oil revenue to the benefit of the people. But at the same time he was obsessed with a need to strengthen his position at home and abroad by amassing arms. And the British were very ready to help him.

I used to travel around the country, and when driving down to Shiraz I would see helicopters at Isfahan airport, rows and rows of them lying there. In a barracks elsewhere, Chieftain tanks by the score. On one occasion a BBC reporter who had come to Tehran to interview the Shah remarked to him that he seemed almost to have rather more arms than NATO had - at which the Shah looked at him frostily and retorted that perhaps NATO had too few. And he meant it!

But to come back to your original question: was all my time taken up with oil? No - with trade of all kinds. There was a great deal of normal business, and profitable, to be done in Persia; lots of British businessmen coming out - they used to sit in my office and I would brief them. It was important for them to know the politico-economic background against which they were operating. They wanted to know: would it be risky to do this? Any profit in doing that? What was the economic outlook? etc. They needed advice from someone on the ground who was familiar with the local scene in all its terms.

GS: At that point it did not look as if Iran was going to be unstable.

HP: Not in the 1960s.

GS: This was the heyday of the Shah.

HP: Yes. But there was a growing fear among those of us who had a feeling for Persia that the Shah might just be introducing too much that was anathema to the mullahs, the religious leaders - who had strong influence among the people. There was growing permissiveness; bars were opening; girls were being brought in from Paris, some of them to a luxury island in the Persian Gulf where the well-to-do could go and indulge all their tastes. The Shah and his coterie and all the best people in Tehran lived in the wealthy and comfortable north of the city, while in the south lived people who had to go outside to get water from standpipes. There was a wide social disparity.

GS: Was this when the so-called White Revolution began?

HP: I think our fear was being substantiated by the Shah's action in staging this revolution. He himself was beginning to see that there had to be change from above to forestall possibly violent change from below. This white revolution involved the transfer of title deeds from the owners of big private estates to the small tenant farmers. Not only civil estates but religious endowment estates - which of course antagonised the mullahs.

GS: Was it felt that the white revolution was not being put into practice wisely?

HP: No, I would not say that was entirely so. I would simply say that I did not think it sufficient to change the generally critical attitude to the Shah. For one thing, it did not change people's fear of his secret police. SAVAK was the Persian acronym for this security and intelligence organisation, which could be ruthless against anyone suspected of speaking against the Shah. Even the mildest Persian sitting in a coffee-house felt afraid of talking about him in public. They might be overheard by one of SAVAK's informers and severely punished.

However, the White Revolution went ahead and there were riots in the main bazaar near the embassy, which were put down brutally by the army. The clergy and the bazaar merchants were traditionally hand-in-glove and the riots were encouraged by the Ayatollah Khomeini, the leading cleric in the country and the Shah's implacable enemy. At this the Shah decided in 1964 to exile him. Khomeini went first to Turkey, where he was not welcome; nor was he in Kuwait. He then went to Iraq, to the Shi'ite holy city of Najaf, where he was given asylum by Saddam Hussein, already then emerging as the real power in Iraq.

I should mention at this point that the Kurds in the north of that country were in revolt against the government in Baghdad, and the Shah who was in dispute with Saddam Hussein over their common

boundary in the Shatt-el-Arab (the headwaters of the Gulf) saw an opportunity of adding to his troubles by supporting the Kurds. He did this with the help of Mossad - the Israeli intelligence service - with which he had close relations; and indeed Israel was being supplied with oil by Persia.

GS: So there was a close relationship.

HP: Yes. But there was a development; it was after I had moved on from Tehran. At an international oil conference in Algeria in 1975 a bargain was struck between Saddam Hussein and the Shah which somewhat weakened the position of Mossad in Persia. Saddam agreed to recognise the Shah's claim to a median line in the Shatt-el-Arab if the latter would stop encouraging the Kurds. The Shah added the stipulation (accepted by Saddam) that the Ayatollah Khomeini must be restrained from continuing the anti-Shah propaganda he was sending out from Najaf. In the event, Khomeini would not accept restraint, so in 1978 the Iraqis threw him out. He went to Kuwait but the Emir would not have him. So with a couple of supporters who came to help him he took the first plane from there that was going to the West, to somewhere he did not need a visa. This took him to Paris, where he set himself up outside the city and was maintained by an anti-Shah student group established in France. Here he fell on his feet. In Najaf, only a few hundred miles from Tehran, he had been sending taped propaganda there - but very amateur. But now, in Paris, two-and-a-half thousand miles away, he had access to frequent air flights on which he could send messengers to Tehran with recorded anti-Shah sermons for mosques; he had a telephone on which he could dial to reach any of the clergy there; and he had the world's press clamouring at his door for interviews. He got far more publicity than he had ever had in Iraq.

GS: So the Shah's action in expelling him while you were there did nothing to solve the Shah's problem, and in the end exacerbated it.

HP: Precisely; and Khomeini did eventually return to Tehran, in 1979, almost immediately after the Shah had left - for good. Before then there had been in many circles in the country a growing feeling that it was time to get rid of the Shah, or at least restrain him. Looking back today, the big question for the Americans and British in particular is whether we had had any hint of this development. Well, put it this way: purely politically and diplomatically there was no hint of it in the early seventies. But there were signs of growing westernization which experienced observers of the Persian scene feared could be a catalyst of bad omen.

So it would not be true to say that we in the field had no inkling whatever of possible danger ahead. Of course critics today will say that neither the Foreign Office nor the State Department treated the reports from the field seriously enough. But we had a gut feeling, knowing Persians, knowing the arrogance of

the Shah and by this time his self-importance. He had even gone so far as to change the calendar to correspond to 2,500 years of Persian dynasty. The mullahs were of course outraged at what they saw as desecration of the traditional Muslim calendar used in Persia.

GS: This was to seek an extra legitimacy for himself?

HP: Yes. He was the son of a sergeant who in 1925 had overthrown the ruling dynasty of the time and put himself on the throne. No shame in being the son of a sergeant. But he eventually began to behave as if he was a descendant of the founders of the Persian Empire in the sixth century B.C. And he staged an enormous tented celebration in Shiraz, at the ruins of Persepolis, to which he invited as many European rulers as he could muster.

GS: Was that while you were there?

HP: No, afterwards. But it did not do him any good. His downfall and exile came at the beginning of 1979, after a revolution in Persia engineered by Khomeini from Paris. By then I had retired from the Diplomatic Service at the age limit of sixty. But I was back in Tehran as resident representative of the big British construction and engineering group Taylor Woodrow. I had been in the Service in Tehran in 1964 when Khomeini was exiled by the Shah. Now, fifteen years later, I had seen him come back and the Shah go into exile.

GS: And then after service in the Tehran embassy you went to ...

HP: ...Bahrain, at the end of 1964, where in a way I repeated some of the experiences of my time in Jeddah in the 1950s. I was deputy to the Political Resident, who had been Governor of Aden when I served there and who now asked for me to be appointed to his staff again. And you will recall my account of closing down the Residency at Bushire in Persia for its transfer to Bahrain in 1948 when I was vice-consul in Shiraz.

GS: Britain was responsible for the defence and foreign affairs of the Gulf sheikhdoms.

HP: Yes, we were.

GS: And you were travelling, visiting, negotiating with the sheikhs.

HP: Yes, and in a way keeping them in order. If one of them was getting out of line and the Political

Resident felt that we should read the riot act to him I was usually sent down to do that. But negotiations were already beginning for the eventual independence of the sheikhdoms (Kuwait had become independent in 1961), which ultimately led to seven of the smallest being federated at the end of 1971 as today's United Arab Emirates. By that time I had left and gone as ambassador to Indonesia.

GS: And this was your first ambassadorial post?

HP: Yes. 1966.

GS: And in a completely different part of the world from the Middle East.

HP: Very different - though with the common bond of Islam. And for me it was epic in that here I was at the age of forty eight looking back to when I was eighteen with hardly a hope of anything like this; and now I seemed to be getting somewhere. Why Indonesia? Well, cynically I reflected that it was a 3,000-mile archipelago 7,000 miles away, and the Foreign Office must have thought I couldn't do much damage there - so let's try him!

When I got there I found that Sukarno's days were numbered; he was still President, but General Suharto and the army were gradually stripping him of power. Sukarno was a great demagogue (often using his rhetoric against Britain and America), charismatic: you could like him as a man – many people did. He could have continued to be a President of note if he had not become increasingly full of his own importance, arrogant, acquisitive - his State House full of pictures and ornaments filched from here, there and everywhere. Although he had personality and charm he was in the last analysis an unstable ruler, not least because he was flirting with the communists. It would be wrong to say that he himself was one of them, but he was using the Communist Party of Indonesia (the third biggest in the world after Russia and China) as a vehicle for his own power. And in the end this was his undoing because that policy was taken to the point where a group of his presidential guard murdered some half-dozen of the most senior Indonesian generals and threw the bodies down a well.

GS: Didn't this unpleasant incident happen just before you got there?

HP: Yes. And it led to a fierce reaction because a senior general, Suharto, escaped, having been away at the time; came back immediately, rallied the army and launched a violent anti-communist purge in the course of which the Chinese embassy was sacked. Thousands of communists were killed; Suharto won a vote of confidence in parliament and was eventually elected President of Indonesia.

What was to happen to Sukarno? There were those in the Foreign Office in London who were confident that Suharto would surely put him on trial and execute him. I did not believe that; and reported accordingly. I was hardly an expert on Java. But I shared the view of those who knew the Javanese temperament (and Sukarno and Suharto were both Javanese) that the government would not do that; they would just let Sukarno shrink away - a policy of attrition. Because don't forget (and Suharto could not) that it was Sukarno who opposed the colonial Dutch and founded the republic - something not to be forgotten.

In 1945 Sukarno had drawn up the first declaration of Indonesian independence from the Dutch. (He had done this in what had been the residence of the naval commander of the Japanese occupation forces and was to become the residence of the British ambassador - where I myself lived). True, the Dutch did not recognise independence for another four years, but it made Sukarno the father of the nation; and he was known as that - bapa - among the people. He welded that 3,000-mile archipelago into a new Indonesia with a single language. There had always been a lingua franca, but not widely used: there was Sumatran, Javanese, Buginese, and other regional languages.

Suharto was well aware that whatever the sins of Sukarno and whatever the attitude of the people and the army to what he had done, there was always this feeling on their part that they owed thanks to him for creating Indonesia. So Suharto simply banished him to his country house fifty miles outside Jakarta with his four wives (as permitted by Muslim law), the fourth of whom was a pretty young Japanese who now flits round the resorts on the south coast of France. Sukarno languished there until he died in 1970. For me it was interesting that I had presented my credentials to Sukarno and had taken leave of Suharto (who still rules the country). I had bridged that whole transition.

GS: He has managed things wisely.

HP: To start with, yes; but has become gradually more and more corrupt - his family also.

GS: After two years in Indonesia you left for a new posting.

HP: An abortive posting. In 1968 I got one of those rather typical communications from the Foreign Office when they want to post you to some either difficult, god-forsaken or remote place - the implication being that you are just the right man, and the only one, for this job. I had served in Saudi Arabia, I knew Arabic, I knew the Muslims and the Middle East; I was (the Office said) just the man to be ambassador to Saudi Arabia. I realised of course that this was quite different from being first secretary there as I had been fifteen years before, when not very many Saudis, and certainly none of importance, bothered or knew

that I am a Jew. This time I would be in the forefront and the facts could hardly fail to become known.

But once again, in discussing this with the Foreign Office by cypher telegram before I left Jakarta, I said I would willingly go to Jedda, confident of going simply as British ambassador. So I packed up, sent my wife to London while I made farewell calls, got our baggage ready for shipping to Jedda, then followed her. My commission of appointment had been signed by the Queen and a date made for me to "kiss hands" with her.

I had barely stepped into my house when the Foreign Office phoned and asked me to come and see the departmental under-secretary urgently. It was Friday and they told me that that morning King Feisal, who had given his agreement to my appointment to Jedda, had withdrawn it. This was a complete departure, without precedent, from international diplomatic procedure. If a head of state does not want a man who has been proposed to him as ambassador, he can refuse to agree to his appointment. If a man who has been accepted as ambassador and is in his post but is later guilty of misconduct there, he can be declared *persona non grata* and must leave the country. But for a head of state to give agreement to a proposed appointment, and then withdraw it before the nominee takes up the post, is extraordinary.

The story in my case was quite simple. Some weeks before, a junior civil servant in the ministry of science and technology in London had been seconded to our embassy in Paris as scientific attaché, quite a normal routine appointment. He was Jewish and his appointment was reported in *The Jewish Chronicle* in London as being remarkable. But the paper wondered why there were so few Jews in the Diplomatic Service itself - and none in high rank. Whereupon someone in Glasgow pointed out to the *Chronicle* that not only was I an ambassador but I was being accredited to Saudi Arabia. Whereupon the paper splashed this prominently - and it is the paper that Arab ambassadors in London read regularly with their cornflakes on a Friday morning. So the news got back at once to Riyadh and the king withdrew his acceptance of me. It was a sovereign decision and the British Government had no alternative but to stomach it. When eventually a Foreign Office minister broke the news to the House of Commons there was fierce criticism in the press - even suggestions that Britain should break diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. Of course I agreed with the Office that this was nonsense; we had more interests in our relations with that country than the posting of me there.

The Foreign Office then came to the conclusion that, when the news eventually broke after the minister's statement the following week, the press would be hounding me and my wife at our garden gate in Wimbledon. So we were sent on leave before that and we went to Greece, spending about six weeks there until the ambassador in Athens got in touch with me - we were by then down in the Peloponnese - and said the Office wanted me to return to London. By this time the storm had blown over - but not before a press

polemic over the question why, given my background, I was nominated for Saudi Arabia in the first place. However, the Foreign Office supported me throughout and never lost confidence in me. This was demonstrated now in my appointment as High Commissioner in Tanzania.

GS: So this was a new departure.

HP: I had never served in a Commonwealth country before, or - except for Indonesia - outside the Middle East.

GS: You arrived to reopen the High Commission.

HP: It was reopened by a chargé d'affaires; I arrived soon afterwards and he remained on as my deputy. It was President Nyerere who asked the British government to reopen: a man of integrity, devout Catholic, incorruptible, champion of African interests. Some years before, when Britain's policy over Rhodesia was unacceptable in the African world, the Organisation for African Unity decided, at the end of 1965, that its members should break diplomatic relations with Britain. They did not all do so; but Nyerere did. Then early in 1968 he asked for relations to be resumed. The Commonwealth Office in London then had to decide whom to post to Dar-es-Salaam. At that time that Office was separate from the Foreign Office but of course co-operating with it and pooling staff. But towards the end of 1968 the two Offices were amalgamated.

GS: And you were available.

HP: It was felt that with my background - coming from a modest family in Scotland with Socialist upbringing (Nyerere had graduated at Edinburgh University), and with experience of a variety of diplomatic problems - I would be right for the job. And, as you say, I was available. I should mention that the Secretary of State warned me that there were two politicians (he named them: both dead now) who felt that they should get the job because Nyerere was a very political (and Socialist) animal and a politician would be needed to deal with him. This turned out not to be the case: I was appointed and in the event I dealt successfully with him.

GS: You had a very good relationship with him.

HP: Very good - to the point where I think I can say I was able to contribute towards preventing a possible break-up of the Commonwealth. It came about this way. When Edward Heath's government came to power in 1970 it was widely rumoured in Black Africa that it would resume the sale of arms to South

Africa which his Labour predecessor had suspended because of apartheid. It was a rumour strengthened by the immediate visit to Britain of Dr Muller the South African foreign minister. Ostensibly at any rate (and I believe genuinely) he was over to visit his son at boarding school here; but of course Heath took the opportunity of meeting him, and so the buzz got round Africa.

Nyerere called me in for tea at his beach-house and said he had to warn me that if the new government did sell arms then Tanzania could not stay in the Commonwealth; it would be out of the question. I replied that I did not think the presence of Muller in London meant this. The President said it might not, but he wanted my Prime Minister's assurance. I reported this to Alec Douglas-Home, then Foreign Secretary, who instructed me to give his assurance that Britain was not contemplating selling arms.

When I told Nyerere this he said he knew Home to be an honourable man, but he wanted to have Heath's own word on it. The latter then sent me a sharp message saying surely I could convince the President that the Foreign Secretary's word, given on Heath's authority, was sufficient. I had to tell the Prime Minister I was afraid I could not manage to do so; Nyerere was adamant. And that was that for the moment.

Nyerere then called me in again and said he was going up-country to his village, which he often did to show solidarity with the peasants; and he had given instructions to his deputy that if by the next week Heath had not given his personal assurance, there was to be an announcement in the National Assembly that Tanzania had left the Commonwealth. This was for me traumatic; for, if it happened, then probably Uganda and Zambia would also leave, and Nigeria and Ghana and possibly others. I could see the Commonwealth disintegrating. I sent an emphatic message to that effect to Heath. And in the meantime, in advance of any reply, I got in my car with my driver and went 200 miles into the bush, to Dodoma, to contact the President in his village and do my best to persuade him not to take action precipitately. Next day my deputy in Dar-es-Salaam phoned to say that Heath had finally given me his assurance, rather grudgingly. Nyerere accepted his word.

I returned to Dar next day, Sunday, and to relax in the evening went to the cinema with my wife. We came out at midnight, and I was dumbfounded to see next day's paper on the news-stands with the banner headline "Tanzania To Quit Commonwealth". Well, I thought, either or both - Heath will regard Nyerere as a liar or me as at best incompetent, at worst duplicitous - and that will put paid to my career. I went up to State House straight away that night and called the chief Press Officer out of bed. (It is essential for an ambassador to have official contacts he can turn to in an emergency).

He phoned the Commissioner of Police, who sent men round to collect all the papers. There was, I discovered later, an explanation: the woman editor of the paper, an Indian from South Africa, who was

violently anti-British, had set up the headline on the, to her, firm assumption that Heath would not give the required assurance - in which of course she was wrong.

GS: You can never be sure whether your actions did make a vital difference.

HP: I think they did. Because Nyerere was a man of his word, and, although well-disposed towards Britain, he would not let that stand in the way of an action that was dictated by his principles. That had been evident in his break of relations with us over Rhodesia in 1965 even though some other African states had failed to make the break.

GS: Right! Then before you left Tanzania there occurred the overthrow of Obote in Uganda.

HP: That was while the Commonwealth Conference was in progress in Singapore at the beginning of 1971 and President Obote was attending it. The Ugandan army commanded by Idi Amin (formerly a sergeant in the King's African Rifles in West Africa) took control of the country and he declared himself President. Nyerere brought Obote back with him to asylum in Dar-es-Salaam. They immediately called me in and begged me to press the government in London not to recognise this unstable man as President of Uganda.

I reported this to London, adding that I strongly agreed with Nyerere and Obote. I did not think we should rush in. London told me in no uncertain terms that they disagreed with me. They emphasised Amin's service in the British army, his prowess as a champion boxer, and his pro-British attitude. They reminded me that Obote had been preparing to nationalise British enterprises in Uganda (as Nyerere had already done in Tanzania – paying compensation eventually). That threat would hit us severely, and London were confident that Idi Amin would not carry it out.

That was wishful thinking. He did of course do it. In the meantime Britain recognised him as the new President. He was invited to London, lunched with the Queen, saw everyone who mattered, got a thousand pairs of army boots and a promise of arms. He went back home and ruled as a despot for nine years, nationalised everything that was British, suppressed the people's rights, had a war with Tanzania. A good example of the government in London being, for its own political purposes, unwilling to accept the views of the man on the spot - and coming a cropper.

GS: Then in 1973 you were posted as ambassador to Turkey.

HP: Yes; that was to be my final post before retirement at sixty. As you know - the Republic of Turkey had been created in 1923 by Kemal Ataturk, a general, who had made up his mind, after the Ottoman

Empire collapsed at the end of the First World War, that there should be a new, secular, republican Turkey, a parliamentary democracy. This he set up and it persists to this day. He also built up a strong army which still today plays an important role in safeguarding Ataturk's principles of a secular democratic state that looks to the West.

GS: While you were in Turkey the main crisis was over Cyprus in 1974.

HP: Cyprus was given its independence from Britain in 1960 in a treaty signed by Greece, Turkey and Britain. Under that, these three were the guarantors of the independence and sovereignty of the island, and they could act jointly or severally to maintain that. The Turkish minority there was given a constitutional role under the treaty, but three years later Makarios the President of Cyprus withdrew that right and the Turkish Cypriots became virtually second-class citizens. Turkey observed this with concern but deliberately avoided doing anything that would have brought it into conflict with Greece. In July 1974, however, there was a crisis that the Turkish government could not ignore: the junta of colonels then ruling in Athens decided that Greece should take over Cyprus. This had been a long-standing ambition, the policy of Enosis (Union). They overthrew Makarios, who fled to England. In his place the junta installed a puppet who had been a terrorist in Cyprus against the British. The Greek intention was now clear.

The Turkish government of course found this quite unacceptable and intolerable. The Turkish prime minister Ecevit called me in to say so, and to let me know that his government was going to invoke the right given to it and the other two guarantors under the 1960 treaty to preserve the Cyprus constitution. Well, of course, Greece was out of the count, therefore it was up to Britain and Turkey, and he wanted us to join him. I had no time to refer to London but I told Ecevit that in my opinion Britain would probably not take sides with Turkey if it came to a military showdown. For one thing, we would not want to get into the ring with two other members of NATO. For another, we had 30,000 hostages to fortune in Cyprus - the troops in the two sovereign bases, and their dependants - all targets for attack by Greek Cypriots. Ecevit accepted my view but said he insisted on consulting with the government in London, as provided for in the treaty. I sent a message to Harold Wilson, then Prime Minister, through James Callaghan as Foreign Secretary, forewarning them of this. Ecevit flew to London that evening and came back in twenty-four hours. He called me in and said that I was of course right in my opinion, but he had gone through the required motions and it was now a matter for decision by his government. The decision they reached was of course that they should establish a beachhead in northern Cyprus and prevent the Greeks from taking the island and uniting it with Greece. And that is what the Turks did.

There were sub-crises in the course of the operation: the evacuation of the many British residents (mostly retired) from northern Cyprus; and the question of the security of the two British sovereign bases. On

these and other matters I was in constant touch with Ecevit. I have already mentioned to you in another context the importance for an ambassador to have easily approachable local contacts in an emergency.

On one occasion, at two o'clock in the morning, I had to go and see Ecevit. I went to his apartment, and his wife, whom I knew, answered me in her dressing-gown. When I apologised and made to go away until later she said that, if I did go, when her husband woke up and she told him I had been and gone, he would be annoyed - because he knew that I would not have come at that time of night if it had not been on some matter of the highest importance. So she invited me in, and in half-an-hour the prime minister came out - shaved and neatly dressed.

I explained to him that we wanted to evacuate the British from northern Cyprus that morning and we were sending a Royal Navy frigate to a well-known beach there where people had been told through the BBC World Service to gather. I was now informing him of this so that there would be no attack by the Turkish navy and air force mistakenly taking the frigate to be Greek. Ecevit immediately phoned the chief of defence staff and warned him. In the event the evacuation went off smoothly and without incident.

It has been a matter of regret to me that so many people and newspapers will go on referring to what they call the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. I am a frequent writer to *The Times* on the subject: it was not an invasion, but a legitimate intervention on the strength of a treaty.

That same year, 1974, shortly after the intervention, the Greek junta fell, and towards the end of the year Makarios returned to Cyprus and was reinstated as President. Relations between Turkey and Greece were at least saved from war. But they have never really been safe from mutual animosity, which persists to this day.

GS: And indeed you spent most of the rest of your time in Turkey on the Cyprus problem.

HP: On Greek-Turkish relations in general - Cyprus and the Aegean - with particular reference to the British interest in Cyprus. There were constant disputes between Greece and Turkey over the Aegean - the continental shelf, territorial waters, air space, oil exploration, militarisation of Greek islands offshore of Turkey. It is all too easy for an ambassador to become too partial to the country he is accredited to. I always tried not to be so in these disputes, but I am forced to the conclusion - which is I think widely held - that the greater blame lies with Greece.

First of all it might be said that the Greek attitude is justified by the bitter memory of nearly four hundred years of Ottoman occupation up to the early nineteenth century. But there is now more to it than that. My

undergraduate students at Bilkent University in Turkey where I lecture on international relations tell me they do not believe it is only a matter of history. They sense religion involved. They point out that in 1952 NATO was only too happy to have Turkey join it, and Turkey sent a strong army contingent into the Korean War under the UN umbrella. That Turkey is Muslim and the rest of NATO Christian did not seem to matter then. But today (these young people go on) Turkey does not seem to be acceptable to the European Union. Is it that the difference in religion has now come to matter, and that this as much as anything lies behind the Greek veto against the admission of Turkey to the Union? Turkey is also attacked on the issue of human rights - as if the Greek security authorities are lily-white. Another contrived objection to the admission of Turkey is the allegedly poor state of its economy - yet it is certainly better than that of Greece or Portugal, both members for some years. It is all an on-going vendetta, difficult to know how it can be settled. It is to be hoped that some progress can be made on Cyprus, where Sir David Hannay, a very competent retired ambassador whom I know well, has been appointed Special Envoy.

GS: In your view is it something that can be solved?

HP: I cannot see it being solved easily - if at all - at least until Greece decides to be more flexible. Failing that, I think that the Turks will simply go on consolidating their position in northern Cyprus.

GS: The two communities will remain embittered against each other?

HP: Yes; but without, it seems, any great personal animosity between them. After all, they lived in peace with each other for many years before these recent crises. But they are of course strongly influenced by their respective metropolitan governments and it is difficult to know how things between them will go. Besides that, Turkey itself is today preoccupied with its own domestic problems. Elections in 1997 resulted in a majority for the Islamic party, whose leader Erbakan, as prime minister for a short time, showed signs of wanting to move the country away from secularism, one of the pillars on which Ataturk built the new republic of Turkey seventy-five years ago. It would be wrong to see this development as the beginning of Islamic fundamentalism as practised in Iran, for example. But it was worrying enough to many Turks, and the army in particular - who regard themselves as the guardians of Ataturk's principles - for the generals to give Erbakan a serious warning. Even though he had soon to step down and be deputy to a conservative prime minister he continued to be regarded by the generals as a danger, and they recently had the constitutional court close down his party and bar him from political activity for five years. The party may yet re-emerge in another guise; but it is too early to say. Meantime there is general relief at the development.

GS: You have kept a very close relationship with Turkey.

HP: Yes. I am a member of various societies here associated with Turkey. I keep up my knowledge of the language. And for the past ten years I have been going to Bilkent University in Ankara for one term a year as lecturer in international relations.

GS: And looking back, Sir Horace, on your career as a whole - thirty years as a diplomat for Britain - did it fulfil your expectations?

HP: Without question - but surprisingly; for in my youth, given my background and family circumstances, it seemed most unlikely that I could ever get into the diplomatic service, let alone rise to any height in it. My autobiography published in 1995 said it all in its title: *Envoy Extraordinary - A Most Unlikely Ambassador*. It was more than just a satisfying career: it was a whole way of life and I relished every post I served in. For the most part these were not easy; but I wanted it that way - never striped-pants and cookie-pushing posts, as Americans described sophisticated capitals around the world. My wife was with me every step of the way, living without complaint out of a succession of packing-cases. And our two children, although perforce away from us in their teens at boarding school in Britain, never grew away from us. And today, successful man and woman with grown-up children of their own, are still close. We have been and still are a fortunate family, against all the odds. Like a traditional Jew, I can only reflect on how proud my mother would have been.

GS: Thank you very much, Sir Horace Phillips.
